

History of the Delaware Tribe

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Peacemakers on the Frontier: A History of the Delaware Tribe of Western Oklahoma. By Duane Kendall Hale. Anadarko, Oklahoma: Delaware Tribe of Western Oklahoma Press, 1987.

I bought this above book about ten years ago when our route took us through Oklahoma. I had done a little research on the Delaware Indians to find out whether there was anything left of the tribe involved in the so-called Hochstetler Massacre. I found the headquarters of the Delawares in Andarko, Oklahoma. In that small town a number of Native American tribes have their headquarters. In the Oklahoma system, each tribe living there has a central office for cultural and business affairs, and the tribesmen live all over the state in their own allotments. You may recall that Oklahoma was once promised to them as "Indian Territory." After the great land rush of 1906 there wasn't much space left for the Indians.

The author of this book calls the Delawares "Peacemakers of the Frontier." They first welcomed the English settlers and sold the land to William Penn, who in turn made it available to German settlers like the Hochstetlers. The Delawares lived in what is now Pennsylvania and New Jersey, but withdrew to the forests north and west of the European settlements. In the French and Indian War, the French from Quebec encouraged the Indians to attack the English colonies, and took captives far to the north and west of the European settlements. The Delawares, who were native to the area, preferred to make peace, migrating farther to the interior of Pennsylvania. There is a long history of being promised lands in the West, first by the British, and then by the Americans. They first agreed to settle in Ohio, then as more European settlers moved in, they were moved to Indiana, then Illinois, and finally to Missouri and Texas. The last two were still in Spanish territory. The Delaware Indians, along with other Indian groups in the Ohio Country, were transplants from eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. In the eighteenth century they lived in villages comprised of 20 to 40 one-family log houses. Delaware lineage came down through the mother's line and women owned the houses.¹

At last the Delawares, by then a small minority, were allotted lands in Oklahoma Territory. This is a graphic story of families that could be compared to ours. The book has numerous pictures showing the life and customs of the Delaware tribe, and maps showing the routes they took in the long quest for a home.

Editor's note: The Delawares were earlier known as the Lenape Indians. Perhaps the memory of the attack can be healed by learning more about the Delawares and seeing them as a people who preferred peace, but were themselves subjected to major injustices by the white people.

¹ "Indians of Pennsylvania", Wallace, pp. 28-29, 31-32, 57