

HISTORY OF KEWANEE TRIBE

A. A. LANG, Past Sachem.

December 14, 1913, marked the fifteenth anniversary of the institution of Kewanee Tribe No. 123. The older members are the ones to whom the credit of organizing a tribe in Kewanee must be given. Just who started the movement I am unable to find out. Redmanship had been established in Illinois for many years, though evidently the Order was not in a flourishing condition until about ten or twelve years ago. Other orders had had lodges in Kewanee for many years and just why the Improved Order of Red Men was not represented no one

after which a hall was secured in the Odd Fellows property on Second street, where the meetings were held until the present wigwam was completed.

In selecting a name the members made a wide selection because the name Kewanee is known throughout the world wherever boilers and steam fittings are used. A name, of course, does not make an institution or a city but what is the use of burdening a tribe with a name that indicates the product of a typewriter gone on a rampage?

The word "Kewanee" is an Indian



HOME OF KEWANEE TRIBE NO. 123

knows. It was not until in the fall of 1898 that anything was done toward starting a Tribe in this city. A class was gotten up and on the night of December 14, 1898, Wilson Brooks, who was then one of the Great Chiefs of Illinois, came to Kewanee and instituted the Tribe which has since been known throughout the United States for the great work it has done during the fifteen years of its existence. The installation exercises took place in the old Masonic hall over Guest's laundry, where the Tribe continued to meet for a number of years,

name meaning "prairie chicken" or "hen." This Tribe is one of the few to take the name of the names of the cities in which they are located. The number, 123, also shows that it is one of the oldest tribes in this reservation.

The Red Men whose names appear on the charter are:

Robert Steer, W. E. Sanford, J. K. Smiley, F. M. Smiley, J. H. Kersten, S. A. Oliver, George Wiley, Marlon A.

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Oliver, Edward Corkill, A. P. Gates, D. J. Hewitt, C. E. Richards, R. Scholz, Barney Michaels, P. D. Mankin, I. F. Meyers, F. H. Davis, Carl Sorenson, H. Winters, C. W. Page, F. M. Wedge, John F. White, E. M. Guest, J. C. Quade, Norman P. Oliver, Chas. N. Weaver, W. A. Winslow, John B. Henry, Samuel Atkinson, G. Goodrich, F. M. Brown, J. D. Bauer and Warren M. West.

The degree team of King Philip Tribe, of Moline, was present and performed the degree work. Members of King Philip Tribe were greatly interested in the organization of this Tribe and the bonds of friendship that were then established have never been broken. They kept a watchful eye on the Kewanee infant until it outgrew them. Moline talent has been used by this tribe on many occasions, around peaceful council fires and when

on the warpath fighting our enemies.

The first officers of the Tribe were as follows:

Sachem—F. M. Wedge.
Senior Sagamore—J. K. Smiley.
Junior Sagamore—I. F. Meyers.
Prophet—F. M. Smiley.
Chief of Records—John H. Kersten.
Keeper of Wampum—W. A. Winslow.
Trustees—F. M. Smiley, A. P. Gates and S. A. Oliver.

The sachem appointed the following stump holders:

First Sannap—Barney Micheals.
Second Sannap—John C. Quade.
First Warrior—D. J. Hewitt.
Second Warrior—C. E. Richards.
Third Warrior—W. E. Sanford.
Fourth Warrior—J. E. White.
First Brave—Edward Corkill.
Second Brave—Marion Oliver.
Third Brave—F. E. Goodrich.
Fourth Brave—J. D. Bauer.
Guard of the Forest—Norman P. Oliver.

Guard of the Wigwam—Warren M. West.

The officers and members of the new tribe were greatly interested in Redmanship and they got busy at once to increase the membership. Applications commenced coming right from the start and from that time on the membership grew until Kewanee was the largest tribe in Illinois. On April 3, 1903, a class of 101 palefaces was adopted. Of all the big classes adopted by the tribe this perhaps was the most notable of them all on account of high-class of men secured, although Kewanee Tribe has always endeavored to maintain a high standard in that regard. Many business men were in this class who became active members.

This was the first class of any size that was initiated by the Tribe. The degree work was performed by the splendid degree team of Huron Tribe No. 93 of Peoria, and was one of the biggest Redmen events ever held in the city. The Great Council of Illinois offered a beautiful prize banner to the Tribe securing the largest number of candidates during that year. This banner was won by Kewanee Tribe, though not without a struggle as the crooked gang that was operating some of the Great Council machinery didn't relish the idea of passing it this way. King Philip Tribe came to our assistance, landing the flag, and gold watches for Brothers Steer and our present Senior Sagamore Gestrine. A year or two after Kewanee paleface hunters brought home another pennant. From July 1, 1904, to April 1, 1905, the Tribe made such large gains in membership that it won three out of four prizes offered by the Great Council. Since that time the Great Council has not been offering prizes. On July 11, 1907, one of the largest classes ever adopted in Illinois, or even in the United States, was initiated by our own degree team. This class put Kewanee Tribe on the map of Redmanship as nothing else ever did. It was talked about all over the country.

Since Kewanee set the pace other tribes have adopted large classes, East St. Louis, Sterling, Kankakee, Elgin, Monmouth, Pontiac and Chicago being leaders in that regard.

Right after a successful pow wow held in the fall of 1904, a wigwam was talked of. Other pow wows were held, constantly swelling the building fund until matters progressed so far that a lot was purchased and plans for a handsome wigwam were drawn up by Brother John McCullough who was called to the Great Spirit before the building was completed. The following building committee was selected by the Tribe to go ahead with the plans and to whom we owe much for their work in connection with the beautiful wigwam that stands on Main street:

President—G. A. Anthony.
Vice President—Robert Steer.
Secretary—B. E. Gilfillan.
Treasurer—E. D. Gable.
Directors—Peter Gestrine, H. A. Dustin, E. C. Elliot, F. W. Plummer, and John McCullough. W. P. Mumford was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Brother McCullough.

Work on the building commenced in September, 1906, by Contractors Mercer & Peterson. To the Secretary Gilfillan belongs the honor of laying the first brick. About July 1, 1907, the building was completed and was dedicated on the 18th. The dedication exercises were in charge of the Great Chiefs of the United States and of Illinois and the event was one of the greatest gatherings of Red Men ever held. The cost of the building and the furnishings amounts to something over \$28,000.

The building is a two and one half story, pressed brick structure, 125x43 feet. The first floor is occupied by Brother W. E. Good in conducting his hardware business. On the second floor are the club rooms and hall. The rooms are open every day from 9 A. M. to 11 P. M. to any member of the I. O. R. M.

The tribe has its annual religious services second Sunday in March; the memorial exercises are held the first Sunday in June. These exercises are always well attended, in fact Kewanee Tribe has the reputation for large attendance at the various functions.

The officers have invariably been deeply interested in their work, take pains to learn their respective parts and conduct the meetings in a business-like manner.

A thirty-two piece band and a uniform rank, as well as a progressive Degree of Pocahontas, help to make Kewanee Tribe No. 123 an ideal, clean, thriving organization, a credit to the community and the means of improving its citizenship.

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have one of the best social organizations in the city.

The Council held its election December 5. It was a spirited election in every respect. Most of the offices were contested which shows that the members take an interest in the affairs of the council and that they are far from being dead ones when it comes to supporting their friends for an office. The result of the election is as follows:

Prophetess—Winifred Young.
Pocahontas—Anna Paul.
Powhatan—Ed. Melbourne.
Keeper of Records—Olive Edwards.
Collector of Wampum—Florence Young.
Keeper of Wampum—Mrs. Frank Wetiz.
Trustee—Oscar Nelson.
Delegate to Great Council—Mrs. Maggie Oliver.
Alternate—Mrs. Frank Winquist.
Captain of Degree Team—Olive Edwards.
Electrician—Carl Lindberg.