



## SHAWNEE COUNTY, KANSAS

### POTAWATOMI BAPTIST MISSION

**Joseph H. Ware**

**1849**

“[In Ware’s *The Emigrant Guide to California*, he recommends that] about ten miles above [a Kansas River crossing], there is a mission station of the M. E. [Baptist] Church where any blacksmith work can be done, which accidents may have been made necessary.”

\*\*\*\*\*Since Ware’s guidebook recommends that emigrants may need to use a blacksmith at an Indian mission school, this shows that emigrants not only passed through Indian lands, but also interacted with a variety of individuals on those Indian lands. **Source:** Barr, Thomas P. *The Pottawatomie Baptist Manual Labor Training School*. Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1984, quote on p. 23.

**Lorena L. Hays**

**1853 May 6**

“[May] 6<sup>th</sup> Two miles from Kansas River. Camped in sight of the Baptist Mission house, built of stone, it is quite a pleasant, romantic situation from here. A small stream passes by along which is scattered a few trees. We have a pretty view of the scenery around us. A great many cattle are in sight scattered here and there over the green sloping hillsides, as if they were all in one large pasture. Tents and wagons are all around us. We are never lonely for we see people continually. We saw a number of log houses and a few fields fenced in which made us think of home. We expect to cross the river to night and hope to meet our friends soon—Israel and Alkire crossed night before last.”

\*\*\*\*\*This Potawatomi Baptist Mission was under construction in 1848, and some missionaries already were trying to start teaching in temporary buildings at that time. Teaching began in permanent buildings in January of 1849. This mission facility remained in operation through 1861, as a boarding school for children of Potawatomi Indians. This Baptist mission was near a branch of the Oregon-California trails. That branch ran westward from the Baptist mission area through the Kansas River bottoms that the missionaries used as farmland. Emigrants regularly camped in that farming area. The main building of that mission still stands, on the ground of the Kansas Museum of History at 6425 Southwest 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Topeka, Kansas. Many families from Barry, Illinois had planned to meet at Westport, Missouri to travel together to California. Not all were ready to leave Westport at the same time, so all the Barry families still were not together when approaching the Kansas River, although this quote shows that the later-leaving



families still hoped to catch up with the ones who left first. Since Lorena knew that Israel and Alkire had crossed the river the night before, this is just one example that shows communication did pass up and down the trail between travelers. **Source:** Hays, Lorena L. *To the Land of Gold and Wickedness: The 1848-59 Diary of Lorena L. Hays*. Edited by Jeanne Hamilton Watson. St. Louis: Patrice Press, 1988, quote on p. 153.