

Silas Armstrong

Silas Armstrong and his brother John were prominent members of the Wyandot tribe. Born near Upper Sandusky, Ohio in 1810, and a member of the Bear Clan, Silas Armstrong was a landholder, a merchant, and a civic leader. He married Sarah Preston in 1832. He and his siblings inherited the family farm and John McIntire Armstrong, sold his inheritance in order to finance his law studies. Silas held together the farm, known as the "Armstrong Bottom." Silas and John supplemented each other in their activities, Silas in the day-to-day affairs of the nation, and John working on legal matters in his capacity as a lawyer.

In 1843, George I. Clark, Silas Armstrong, and their families, arrived in the Town of Kansas to prepare the way for the Wyandot emigrants. Armstrong opened a trading store in a rented building in Westport and in 1854 he built a substantial, two-story brick house of eight rooms in the city of Wyandott at the present northwest corner of 5th Street and Minnesota Avenue. He was a successful merchant, a sawmill owner and operator, a land speculator, and farmer. He also served as an interpreter for the Wyandots. He was President of the Wyandott Town Company, and it was likely due to his prominence in the community that one of the early towns was named Armstrong. The town of Armstrong later merged with other towns to form Kansas City, Kansas. Armstrong's wife, Sarah died in 1842 and before leaving for the Kansas Territory in 1843, he married his second wife, Zalinda Melissa Bigtree Hunter.

Armstrong was 48 years old when he became Head Chief of the Wyandot Nation in 1858, serving in that capacity until his death. In September 1865, Armstrong, accompanied by Matthew Mudeater, acted as a delegate from the Wyandot Nation at an Indian council called by the government at Fort Smith, Arkansas. He became ill during his travels and never recovered. Armstrong died in December, leaving 13 children. It is said that over 1,000 people attended his funeral. He is buried at the Wyandot National Burying Ground in downtown Kansas City, Kansas.