

So fundamental to consideration of this bill is this point that I repeat some of the Claim Commission's findings:

One of the basic precepts of Pueblo philosophy and religion is that a way of life was established in the beginning by Mother Nature and the Pueblo's forefathers and that things should be done as they were in the past.

The native religion of the Taos Indians is to this day very much involved with the daily life of the people. This religion does now and has for centuries tied them closely to the land.

Quoting further from the Commission's findings:

"... This attachment to the land is an attachment to the specific, circumscribed area defined in the original petition and encompassed approximately 300,000 acres. It is symbolized by shrines at which the Taos people worship. These shrines are visited almost daily. The attachment to specific geographic sites, which reaches back for centuries, continues to the present day . . ."

The Claims Commission found that specific sites had religious significance to the Taos Indians:

"In the native religion of the Taos Pueblo specific ceremonials were performed at designated spots or shrines. The Indians claimed that a shrine could not be moved. The shrines which were frequently visited by members of the Pueblo of Taos for ceremonial purposes."

The Claims Commission found that the most important site is Blue Lake. This is the most sacred shrine of the Taos Indians. To the Taos Pueblo Indians, Blue Lake is symbolically the source of all life; it is the retreat also of souls after death, the home of the ancestors who likewise gave life to the people of today. The annual August ceremonies at Blue Lake, which have continued uninterrupted for centuries, serve to bind the youths of the Pueblo to the community as it exists and as it has existed for centuries. Thus Blue Lake symbolizes the unity and continuity of the Pueblo, it is the central symbol of these Indian's religion as the Cross is in Christianity.

Because of its sacredness to the Taos Pueblo, it is used every day by at least a few Indians for private religious reflection.

The Taos Pueblo Indians freedom to practice their religion depends on their being able to conduct their sacred ceremonies and religious contemplations in private. The entire watershed of the Rio Pueblo is also a part of the symbolism of Blue Lake because it is the area in which the Pueblo's religious life is practiced. It plays an important role in the physical, social and political structure of the Pueblo.

Under a 1933 act, the Taos Indians have had the use of 32,450 acres of this land under a 50-year permit with provisions for subsequent renewals. This permit though has not proved satisfactory to the Indians. They regard this land as theirs.

They know that Congress could at some future time repeal the 1933 act and thereby deprive them of the use of this land. They believe that trust title to the area would give them a more secure right than they have under the permit. We certainly agree with that.

As I have already indicated, again the Indian Claims Commission entered an interlocutory order on September 8, 1965, which determined that the Pueblo should be compensated for some 130,000 acres, including the area that is the subject of this bill.

In addition to this the Claims Commission found that the Pueblo should be paid the sum of \$297,684.67 for the taking by the United States of the town lots within the town of Taos.