

## NEBRASKANS ON A JUNKET



FRANK DU TELL.



BRUCE GILBERT.

The above likenesses, strange as it may seem, are not those of cow punchers or desperadoes, but camera shots at a pair of Lincoln young men, Frank Du Tell and Bruce Gilbert. The pictures were taken on their recent trip to the Pacific coast, Harry Grupe completing the party. On the way they stopped in Arizona and saw the Grand canyon of the Colorado river, the most massive chasm in the world. The pictures were taken while the two were standing near the brink of the canyon. The triangular canvas contrivance, against which each is leaning, is a signal stationed there by government surveyors. This signal is located on the highest point in that portion of the country, the elevation exceeding 7,000 feet, and the white of the canvas can be seen for scores of miles away.

### An Indian Scare In Early Days

Memories of an event that excited great interest among the few pioneers of Nebraska forty years ago are revived in a story told a Courier representative a few days since by Captain Alley, the well known attorney and politician of Wilber. In recounting his memories of the event he refers to it as the bloody battle of the Weeping Water, in which he was a prominent participant. It must not, however, be confounded with that other and earlier conflict from which this romantic little stream that pierces Cass county is reputed by early and long-treasured tradition to have derived its name.

The battle of the Weeping Water to which Captain Alley refers, in his story, the recounting of which rekindles the fires of youthful fervor in his eyes, prompts him to speak in whispered tones of awe and causes him to rear again his brow aloft in defiance of the ravages of time upon his physical posture, was fought and won some time in 1863, and created great commotion in eastern newspaperdom.

"The line of frontier settlement had then pushed no farther west than what was known to early settlers and the Indians as Salt Basin. Of course no resident of Lincoln need be told where that was.

"Rock Bluffs, now an obscure Cass county village nestling on the brow of the Missouri river bluffs a few miles below Plattsmouth, was then the gateway to Nebraska and a place of great and promising importance. Many who afterwards became and still are prominent residents of Plattsmouth were Rock Bluffs pioneers, and it was in Rock Bluffs that the throwing out or manipulation of the precinct election returns defeated the then budding political aspirations of the late Hon. J. Sterling Morton and doubtless changed the entire history of the state.

"Rumors of an incursion of hostile Indians had awakened a reign of terror in the settlers all over the section lying between the banks of the Missouri and the present site of Lincoln. The usually dauntless pioneers were leaving their homes with their families in numbers and in almost an agony of apprehension seeking safety in flight eastward. Within a few days hundreds had come pouring into Rock Bluffs either to find protection there or push

on farther east to points where they might feel assured of it.

"The situation was recognized as a critical one for this new section west of the river. It was reported that the Indians had massacred some whites over on the Little Blue and were moving eastward with murderous intent.

"I had come up from St. Joseph to visit my uncle, N. R. Hobbs, a pioneer settler long since deceased, and was induced to accept a position as principal of the schools. I was then quite young and full of the dauntless ardor of the youthful pioneer. As the stream of frightened settlers poured through Rock Bluffs it was realized that steps should be taken without delay to check the exodus, and a few adventurous spirits determined to go out to meet the Indians and reassure the terrorized fugitives. It took but a few hours to organize. There were fourteen of us, as I recall it, and although the youngest of the little band, I was elected captain. Among those whose names I recall as those of participants in our seemingly desperate undertaking, are J. M. Patterson, the Plattsmouth banker and ex-state senator, and his brother Ambrose, now dead; John C. Clemmons, Neil Bohanan, William Gilmore, still a farmer residing near Plattsmouth, and Charley Cutler.

Mounted on splendid horses and armed with elaborate precision, we sallied forth in the night time to seek and subdue the red marauders. We rode forward cautiously throughout the night, not knowing at any time that the next step might land us within fighting distance of the bloodthirsty savages.

Early the following morning we wearily went down the beautiful valley of the Weeping Water to the pioneer village of that name, for there was even then such a village. As we drew near the settlement the consciousness of fatigue was summarily dissipated by the spectacle of three Indian tepees pitched in a cluster close to it, and although it was time for the denizens of the town to be asleep, not a living soul could be seen. With the caution of trained scouts and the preparedness of road agents we drew close to the tepees, having first separated into two squads in order to head off a possible flight on the part of the tent dwellers. When close to the tepees I hailed them. The reply that came was in unmistakably good English, so that when, a moment later, a number of heads protruded we were prepared to identify them as those of white men. Had there been no response of the kind before the

showing of heads the consequences would surely have been such as I could never since have recalled without a shudder.

"We found sheltered in those tepees a number of men who had just come over from Council Bluffs to put up a stone mill for Gene Reed. They had heard nothing of an Indian scare and I need not tell you that the discovery was a grateful surprise to us.

"Even at that primitive period of the state's development the people of Weeping Water entertained hopeful views of the welfare of their city and were looking askance at the river towns, probably in anticipation of the long and bitter county seat war that raged for years between Weeping Water and Plattsmouth and was terminated but a few years since by the erection of a new court house in the latter city. As a result of this feeling of rivalry the people of the two pioneer towns entertained toward each other no very warm sentiments of neighborhood. Our party had not equipped for a long campaign, and the ride had quickened our appetite. Upon entering the town we found the inhabitants all there, with a few frightened settlers from other points as guests. We canvassed the town from end to end, but were unable to secure even a cup of coffee.

"This indifference to our necessities so irritated us that we became disgusted and resolved to go back home. We determined to first ride over to the home of Kirkpatrick, another old pioneer of that section who was known to us as a good sort of gentleman, who would doubtless extend to us the hospitality of a breakfast.

"As we rode away from Weeping Water toward his place we encountered the town herd, when some of the younger spirits of the party determined to attest their resentment toward Weeping Water in a peculiar way. They accordingly proceeded to cut off the bushy end of the tails of the calves in the herd. We took them, bone and all, and by slitting them down one side and peeling the hide from the bone we secured some very deceptive imitations of Indian scalps. I remember that they were all black but one, which was white. These we fastened to our bridles.

"In due time we got back to Rock Bluffs, but news of our coming and of our bloody trophies preceded us. People whom we met sought to draw from us the story of our crusade of slaughter, but we were all sternly mysterious. Just outside of Rock Bluffs we met old

Abe Towner, a Methodist exhorter, who reproved us for having killed so old a man. He was looking at the white calf's tail.

"The ruse worked like a charm. The belief prevailed that we had wiped out the savages. In fact we had, as their incursion was an imaginary one. The exodus of settlers was stayed, and those who had gone came back rejoiced. I have still in my possession files of many of the leading eastern newspapers of that, the columns of which teemed with graphic descriptions of the battle of the Weeping Water, showing that the war correspondents of that day were as alert and progressive as their successors are today. It was months before the truth became known to the people of eastern Nebraska concerning the bloody battle of the Weeping Water."

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