

Excavation Shows Holt County Was Once The Home of Many Indians

By J. B. O'Sullivan

(Continued from last week.)

A man who had been assigned to deal the girl her death pounced out of his blind of grass, brush and earth, and, moving rapidly, pulled back his bow and sent an arrow into the heart of the girl. Madly he dashed back to cover as if to hide his shame.

The Indian who had captured the girl usually was the marksman who shot the fatal arrow into her heart.

From some concealment came a brave with tomahawk or stone hammer to pound the girl on her head until there was no doubt about her being alive nor dead. It had to be known definitely if she had accepted the heart and hand of her spouse in the eastern heavens.

A new fire burst forth southeast of the funeral tower and when the priests and medicine men had pronounced the girl dead, a guard walked forward while holding a huge knife of some precious stone. The man who had captured the girl and had sent the arrow into her heart produced the withered heart and tongue of a bison.

A guard opened the body of the girl and the man who had captured her held the heart and tongue of the buffalo so as to wash them in the warm sacrificial blood gurgling to earth. Some scientists believe this rite was performed to guarantee an abundant supply of buffalo during the coming hunting season and to assure them being fat and within easy reach of the huntsmen.

Cheers in unison rent the vicinity at this juncture of the ghastly performance, cheers because the spirit of the girl had gone to her appointed affinity.

A guard stepped forth and ran his hand into the heart cavity of the sacrificial victim and with her blood he painted his face. War cries resounded and every brave present danced about in glee. Arrows were shot into the body of the girl, an act everyone was anxious to accomplish.

The spectators slowly wended away to village grounds where celebrations were on in full swing for several days. Priests and others in charge plucked the arrows from the body and placed them in four quivers. The points of the arrows were pointed to the northwest, northeast, southeast and southwest from the largest fire.

At an appointed period of the mysterious sacrificial proceedings the body of the girl was taken down from the lattice-work and placed on the earth. The first shaft that had pierced the girl's body was drawn out and placed on the heart that had ceased to beat. The heart was never touched again by human beings and was left to the whims and caprices of droves of hungry coyotes and grey wolves. Now the body of the girl was stretched prone, face down, and the Skidi Pawnee studiously avoided the place for a long time.

Perhaps months later the bones were carefully gathered and placed with those of other victims. The ossuary in Merrick county was said to have indicated that more than 700 girls, representing over 700 years of practice of this strange rite, had gone to become brides of the great Morning Star at the whim of the intensely religious Skidi.

The soul of a sacrificial victim was presumed to leave the body suddenly at the time she was rapped on the head with a tomahawk or stone hammer and it was the belief of the tribe some second-order god conducted the spirit to the Morning Star who mantled it with fragments of precious stones from his sky-vaults and then gave it a fixed place among the firmamental luminaries.

Even though the body of the victim appeared to those of earth to be stone dead, she was supposed to be alive and great good was to come of the sacrifice, all the earth to blossom in fruits and other foods as never before.

At the time the skeletons of the sacrificed girls in Merrick county, said to have numbered more than 700, was reported found by a party of investigators a few years ago, it was announced the find was purely accidental. It was strongly hinted the sacrificial angle of the history of the Skidi strongly indicated Aztec influence at some distant period. Ethnologists since have been picking up slender clues to determine if the mysterious and star-born Skidi tribe of the Great

Plains originated in Old Mexico so long ago they lost even legendary tales of some wave of them who moved north to find a new domain.

It is presumed all of the Pawnees practiced the Morning Star sacrifice rite and that for some reason all but the Skidi abandoned the practice so long ago memories of it became lost.

From the opinions of many authorities it is adduced the colorful Skidi band of the Pawnee lived near O'Neill, how long is not known but may be determined by some method not yet clear. After viewing thousands of rock, bone and potsherd finds, it is believed here the Arikara lived on the James McDermott farm, one mile south of O'Neill, at about 1650, or later, and that the Skidi band lived a great many years two miles east and on the farm of the late Michael Gallagher. The Gallagher site is on the north side of the Elkhorn, now one-half mile from the river. The river once ran at the south edge of the village but has shifted south.

The McDermott site is on the south side of the Elkhorn and it is believed the stream has eaten away a large part of this village site. Many artifacts have been found in the river. Buffalo and deer and antelope horns and other remains have been found in the river as far below, east, as the Wolf homestead, in great numbers and showing considerable more age than the tenure of the white man here.

If the Skidi lived here, where is the place the bones of the sacrificed young women were deposited? It would be possible there are caches to be found here that would engage the attention of leading archaeologists.

According to general Indian practices, the top of some hill, perhaps any round and flat point higher than surrounding points, would be likely sites for interment of the bones of the sacrificed persons. Any rise where the earth appears to have been disturbed with earth from lower stratas visible, shown in discoloration or texture, if that would be possible after so many years, should be worth spading to determine if the ground there is impregnated with bone. There should be petrified bone in short lengths. Frost would cause breakage unless burials were placed more than four and one-half feet down and even then erosion might cause frost to reach the material.

Such a find might be proved out if the bones could be determined as those of women and if arrowheads showed Skidi Pawnee manufacture and the kinds of rock are those known to have been favored by this clan.

Pottery, pipes and arrowheads would come close to informing an authority who, when, and how many persons were involved in an occupancy. The Skidi may have left stone writing in such burial places. They were so intensely religious and prompt and regular as to ceremonials it would be a wonder if they interred no records of such performances.

Here is a brief quotation from one who was on S. H. Long's expedition to the Pawnee Indians, taken from a book, "Early Western Travels" and reprinted in the Nebraska History magazine, July-September, 1927: "The village of the Loup Pawnees, or Skeree, (Skidi) as they call themselves, is situated on the bank of the river; it contains about 100 dirt lodges, 500 families, or 2,000 souls, making an aggregate of 6,500 souls belonging to the three villages.

"The name of their principal chief is the Knife Chief. A few years since the Loup Pawnees had a custom of annually sacrificing a human victim to the Great Star, but this was abolished by their chief, aided by the noble darling of his gallant son. They appear unwilling to acknowledge their affinity with other Pawnees; but their language being very nearly the same, proves them to be of the same origin."

Jumping to another phase of the Pawnee, one previously mentioned, the same issue of the Nebraska history magazine quotes John T. Irving as follows: "We found the Pawnee village had been rebuilt since it was burnt by the Delawares. It is situated in the open prairie, at the foot of a long range of hills, and within about 50 miles of the Platte. The river at this place is about two miles broad, and very shallow, being constantly forded by the squaws, who visit the different islands, and obtain from them the only fuel and building materials, to be found in this part of the country."

The Delaware, it was mentioned, or intended to be mentioned, were in the habit of walking from the Atlantic to the Pacific, each trip requiring three years.

(Continued next week.)

THE DAYS OF COURT BATTLES
 "Judge," attorney I. J. Dunn, of Omaha, said to Judge Dickson during court recess here, "it seems to me they put the witness chair as far away from your seat as they could, making it inconvenient for you as to hearing what is said."
 "This arrangement was made in the early days so as to keep opposing attorneys as far apart as possible," the judge answered.

EDUCATIONAL NOTES

The county Eight grade examination will be held on Thursday and Friday, April 5 and 6 and on Friday, May 4, at Stuart, Emmet, Atkinson, O'Neill, Inman, Page, Ewing, Chambers, Dustin, Amelia, Deloit No. 18 1/2, Kola No. 226, Meek No. 27, Emporia No. 88, Scottville No. 38, Phoenix No. 51, Dorsey No. 4, Ash Grove No. 251 and St. Boniface school.

Seventh graders will write on general geography, english composition, physiology and farm accounting, only. These subjects will all be given on Friday, April 6 so seventh graders need not come to the examinations on Thursday.

Registration numbers for all seventh graders and eighth graders who did not take the examination in January will be sent to the conductor of the examination at the place where they will write.

Where Is There A 100 Percent Precinct?

Where is the outstanding corn-hog precinct in Nebraska? Who are the temporary precinct committeemen who

have come the nearest to signing up their neighbors 100 per cent?

The state corn-hog administration at Lincoln would like to know where the 100 per cent precinct is located. There is no contest on, nor any prizes to offer, but if any committee has signed up every one in the precinct, the committeemen deserve the recognition.

To begin with, the state corn-hog committee would like to hear from those with more than 90 per cent sign-up. Total number of farmers in the precinct should be reported. Total number of farmers signing corn-hog contracts should be listed next, then the total number of contracts and the base corn-acres, contracted corn acres, and base hog numbers should be given.

Any special methods used by the committeemen to get the high sign-up would be interesting to other committeemen who have been working hard on the job.

Find Copy Of A Valuable Book In Their Home

While reading a magazine article about Edgar Watson Howe, "the sage of Potato Hill," Mr. and Mrs. George

Ashford learned that a copy of Howe's book, "Story of a Country Town" of the 1883 issue, is worth about \$75 if in good order.

Search of the Ashford home was made and a fine copy of the book was found. The Ashford's live at Homer, Nebraska.

South Dakotans Using Adobe For Buildings

Adobe brick buildings are being tried out in South Dakota and if they prove sound this type of structure might be satisfactorily erected here in Holt county. There are many tough varieties of clay available here and plenty of labor.

The South Dakota mud bricks are similar to those made in Colorado. They are made of gumbo, straw and water. The earth is mixed and the straw added last, the mixture packed in forms measuring 9x6x4 1/2 inches. The bricks are thrown on the ground and when dry are very hard and are waterproof. A sort of mortar mixture is used in laying the walls and when the building is up a coating of plaster is smeared inside and out. The finished job looks like a stuccoed building.

An adobe building is frost proof and is cool in summer and warm in winter.

Why Not Plant With Fish?

Fishermen are hoping some one decides to permanently fill with water the choice pond beds south of town, made by those raising the grade of a section of highway No. 281. If fish were planted in them, they say, there should be no clouds of mosquitoes to kidnap citizens boating, swimming, skating and wading grounds of the first order would be available. Several acres of such beds are within one mile of town.

Officers of the Taxpayer's Economy league expect a big crowd at their meeting next Saturday afternoon at the court house. They have trimmed the number of meetings yearly to about four, making the matter to be handled more compact and allowing more time to prepare subjects to be discussed in sessions. Discussion of the possible change from the supervisor system should interest every citizen.

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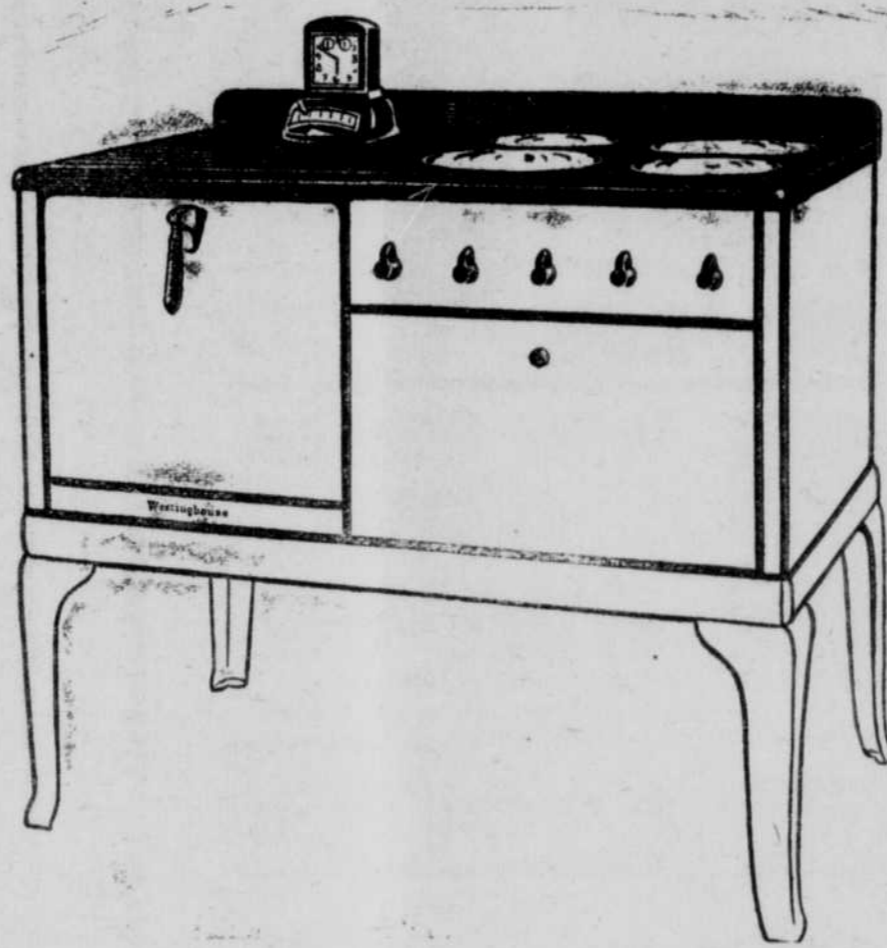
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