

Excavation Shows Holt County Was Once The Home of Many Indians

By J. B. O'Sullivan

(Continued from last week.)

When the white man started to adjust the Poncas and monkey with their natural way of living, there were 768 of them, but the cold and hunger and disease which stepped in as a result, reduced that number to 158. One of those to die was a son of old Standing Bear, and just before death forever sealed the boy's lips, he whispered to his father that he wanted his body to repose in eternal sleep nowhere but in good old Nebraska. That must have been a pretty hard order to fill under the circumstances, but the father knew his business and made every effort a man could to put his son's body under the soil of Nebraska.

Although that winter had been a mild one in the state of Oklahoma, that was no reason it was like that in the territory between there and Nebraska. But a little thing like cold and its deep snows mattered not to the old veteran of the outdoors, and so he made ready to take his son's remains back home.

It must have been along about the middle of winter when Standing Bear selected about 30 of his closest friends and made a quiet French leave and started for Nebraska, a part of their luggage being the remains of Standing Bear's son.

After about three months of terrible traveling on foot this crew with iron nerve reached the city of Omaha. What had been done with the remains of the young man is not known, but it is presumed necessity forced burial along the way and that the young man's last request was not carried out.

The Poncas went to the Omaha Indian headquarters and told their story, and the Omahas saw injustice in its worst form to the honest and hard working Poncas and forthwith gave them part of their land holdings, at least to farm until able to care for themselves.

The Poncas went to work and were happy. After all, the world was not so bad. No, brown man, the world is alright, but it must be admitted the people in it do some things which are hard to explain.

One nice day, with nothing dark on the horizon of the plodding Poncas, a bunch of United States soldiers came along and calmly informed the Poncas they were under arrest. The Ponca hardly believed the words but went along and found it so. There was a trial at Omaha and defense attorneys were Dr. G. L. Miller, A. J. Poppleton and J. L. Webster. They had a fine case for which to argue and they made the most of it. Mens hearts were found kind enough when facts were presented by those who were trained to present them, and a judge named Dundy made up his mind speedily after he heard the testimony of old Standing Bear who knew how to present what his eyes and ears had seen and heard, and what his body had gone thru.

Once again the Poncas that were in Omaha were very much elated at the ways of the old world and their sufferings and mistreatments were forgotten. Looking around his old homeland, Standing Bear found that part of it had not been included in the treaty with the Sioux and the government. This was an island in the Niobrara river, and there he and his co-travelers, and enough others to make 130, went to this island and made themselves homes of logs. There were the Sioux to harass them, but what was a frequent fight to what they had been thru? After all, fighting means living.

Things were beginning to point to peace for the Ponca from several directions. The Sioux were busily engaged on other fronts where soldiers were placing them on reservations, and the whites all over the country had heard of the sufferings of the people and sentiment was strong for their being left on homelands and not hauled around and treated like so many head of livestock. Whites near this island gave every help to those returning and brown and white neighbors became strong friends.

The day was won for the Ponca when Standing Bear took to the lecture platform and told a very interesting story of his people, describing the land of his fathers, their mode of living, their religion, traditions, sufferings and many other things.

It is strange how material wealth held by those not fully entitled to it surely causes one's conscience to dance around like a cricket in a red hot skillet, but it seems to work that way, as a rule. And we find that in the year 1890 there was another treaty signed and this time between the Sioux and Poncas, and in this the former lands of the Ponca nation, held a time by the Sioux, probably thru some mistake, were gladly returned to the Ponca nation.

While all of this was going on in Nebraska, the other two-thirds of the nation, down in Oklahoma, thru talking to white agents and thru their natural desire to do what they were

told, made themselves like the new country and there they remained, leaving but one-third to make their homes in Nebraska near the Nile of the west, the Niobrara.

Standing Bear lived to see at least part of his people happily situated on soil he held almost as sacred, and he must have died a very happy man on the shores of the Niobrara river on September 3, 1908.

Today the remnant of this nation are fine, hard-working farmers, a credit to the flag under which they live.

It took the Indian a long time to decide whether he should fight or submit patiently to some apparent wrong in some cases, in others he seems to have made up his mind instantly. One thing is certain, that when the time came to fight, everyone had to admit he fought just as well as he strove for peace, when he decided there should be peace.

The events leading up to the great 30 years war between the whites and the Sioux are interesting in this connection, and they show the Sioux believed they had been outraged and that there was nothing else to do but fight even if that meant the death of every member of the nation.

History says the Sioux were strong friends of the whites and there was nothing to indicate this state should not continue indefinitely. There was trading between the two people and the whites often left great stores of goods in the keeping of the Sioux and nothing was stolen. Whites on the road frequently lodged with the Sioux, eating and sleeping in their homes and feeling perfectly safe. There were trails for covered wagons running across Sioux lands and some of these were as long as 400 miles.

It was considered perfectly safe for one to travel on foot over these routes and many persons did so, some even slowed by wheelbarrows and their goods. Others went in wagons, buggies or on the backs of horses. None were molested.

On about the 17th day of August, 1854, some Mormons were slowly winding westward on one of these trails at a point believed to have been 40 miles west of the present Nebraska-Wyoming state line, but at the time were in Nebraska territory, and these people were traveling by covered wagon back of which were livestock.

Following a certain one of these wagons was an old cow that must have been an understudy of Old Nick himself, and a full sister—full of maybe, firewater—of the infamous O'Leary milker that set Chicago afire. This cow went on a rampage. She did not like the idea of leaving Nebraska and so left her wagon train and struck off to make her own living.

The owner of the animal, and others, made every effort at gathering in the recalcitrant cow and failed. Men went to a great gathering of Indians in camp and found that the cow entered the camp and had disappeared. They returned to their wagons and proceeded on toward the setting sun.

Indians gathered at the point mentioned were mostly plains Indians of the Minneconjou, Ogallala and Brule Sioux tribes of the Sioux nation, all of those of the Sioux nation who dwelt exclusively on the prairie. They had congregated because of a governmental promise they were to be issued merchandise in payment for right to maintain trunk roads thru their land holdings.

Happiness prevailed in the great camp. After all, the white lads were wizards, kind, peaceful and liberal. A young man of the Minneconjou, or Shooters-in-the-mist group of Sioux, a tribe that is rated as by far the wildest of those camped there, and probably the wildest of all the Sioux tribes, saw in the cow only another chance for something good to eat and forthwith plugged her and soon he and his companions had her flesh sizzling and on its way to consumption.

The wagon travelers went on until they reached Fort Laramie and there they told the soldiers officers of what had happened to their precious cow while they honestly traversed the valley of the North Platte river.

This man who lost the cow knew how to tell his story, no doubt explaining how her milk was absolutely necessary for the feeding of young soldiers to fight and die under the flag, how her calves were the finest in creation and how she never ran away unless lured off by savage Indians who smacked between her eyes and ate her at every chance.

Soldiers got out of their chairs, walked around and rattled swords, glanced out windows and smacked their lips. Something had to be done. Here were citizens calling for payment for a cow that had been murdered.

On August 19, 1854, 30 soldiers under direction of one of that number, Lieutenant Grattan, with rifles and two cannon, started out for what has been called Brule camp, the place where they met a hot reception in a frying pan, or its equivalent. This lieutenant had been in the West but a brief time. He wanted to fight Indians the worst way. It is possible

he did a lot of reading about blue uniforms parading around while counting dead Indians, but it is fact he had very little actual experience at the game. Some historians say Grattan had absolutely no experience in dealing with Indians. His home town is in the state of Vermont.

The lieutenant reached the camp and told his story. He demanded the man who had made short work of the precious cow. The head chief, the Bear, listened and then told Grattan to go back and he would see that the cow killer was taken in charge and turned over to the soldiers. The Bear explained that it was a terrible disgrace among his people for one of them to be taken prisoner and he wanted time to iron the thing out smoothly so there should be no undue trouble. The friends of the cow killer hid him and refused to divulge one bit of information about his whereabouts.

Grattan saw, or thought he saw, an Indian frame-up against his either collecting for or getting hold of the man who was responsible for disappearance of the animal. He had read much of Indian fighting in the flaming West, and it looked easy for the whites to go out and bag a mess of the browns any old time.

Again the Bear asked the lieutenant to return to the fort and he would give his word of honor the fellow who fixed the cow should be delivered in due time.

The lieutenant gave orders. His 29 soldiers busied themselves at placing their two cannon where they thought they might do the most good. The big pieces were wheeled to the brow of a hill in work-a-day fashion and the leader said there was to be some shooting right away if the man wanted was not produced instantly.

The Chief Bear, threw back his shoulders and came up within speaking distance and said: "Look, young man; these people are under me; they have done nothing against you. I shall bring in the guilty one in time; young fellow, you must be out of your head." The Bear is said to have calmly turned his back and walked toward his lodge, in direct line to the mouths of the cannon. Braves grabbed up their bows and arrows, spears, guns, tomahawks and got ready for what looked like war.

Cannon fire rocked the vicinity and rifle fire followed and the entire assemblage of Indians moved about like so many maniacs. The very first volley from white weapons killed the Bear, beloved chief. In return, spears and arrows fairly rained down on the whites and all died within a few minutes. The Indians felt they had been trapped and at once threw away every bit of respect for the whites.

Men on horses went at breakneck speed aimlessly around, the while yipping blood chilling war whoops; tepees went down, beds were rolled and lightning movement was everywhere.

Indians went this way and that. North, south, east and west, all in a frenzy. Their great Chief Bear had been murdered. The pungent smell of black powder smoke had intoxicated. Sioux warriors had crimsoned the earth with blood of wicked whites.

Not far away stood a large storehouse in which was a huge store of merchandise of one kind and another, and this was to be divided among the Indians on a certain day by a commissioner named for the purpose. The goods really belonged to the Sioux, but would not be fully their property until handed to them by the authorized commissioner. That explains why the Indians camped and waited, for the big day of distribution.

As soon as the leaders had time to study the matter, a decision was reached to sack the storehouse, take the merchandise that really was theirs. All that day, old records say, Sioux rode away over the hills loaded down with all they could carry of this or that as suited their fancy. The door was smashed, shelves ripped from the walls, undesirable goods mixed and strewn on the floor and the place generally wrecked.

Chief Bear was not forgotten. His body was painstakingly swathed in colorful strips of cloth and costly robes and finally deposited high in the arms of a tall pine tree standing on the banks of the Niobrara river.

The Sioux rambled over Wyoming, the Dakotas and Nebraska, and pleaded with members of every tribe they met to help them wipe the deadly whites from the face of this part of the earth. The result of this old cow going to the Indian camp was the 30 years war between the United States and the Sioux and Cheyennes, and the best blow struck in that war by the enemy was at the battle on the Little Big Horn when Custer and his men lost their lives.

The 30 years war is said to have cost millions of dollars, thousands of lives and all because a cow went off in disobedience to the wishes of her owner. It must have been sweet medicine to the Sioux to look over the battlefield at the Little Big Horn after the days work had been done June 25, 1876.

It may be interesting to note that

the Indian had his blue days, his tantrums and that individuals placed in high position like some of the European kings, now and then turned out to be a square peg in a round hole.

The historians say that one of the most temperamental of the Indian rulers was Chief Blackbird, of the Omahas, called by them Washing-sah-ba. The Blackbird is said to be the first Indian of Nebraska to become acquainted with the whites. He met his death more than 100 years ago.

His land holdings included that lying between Sarpy and Cedar counties. When Blackbird died, around 1800, there were no whites in this state. The man was very cruel, heartless and hard to please, and he must have caused the people untold anguish as long as he ruled. He had the reputation of being the most cruel and had chief west of the Mississippi river, and that takes in plenty of territory.

Always he kept himself surrounded by orderlies, and others were just nothing but slaves, and should one of these offend him, off went his head as if the person were some puppet. No king wanted more style and pomp than did this man. In some ways he was like a child.

It is said of him that once traders came to his village and he at once issued orders that the rest of the gang bring out every bit of anything that could be traded, robes, furs and beaded goods and all. A trade was made and the rest of the villagers stood around and felt like they had played second fiddle and then had the fiddle taken away from them.

This sort of thing continued until the Omahas were known as a very poor nation of Indians. The chief and those he dealt with became richer. Just as things were at about as low an ebb as possible, a cheap, low, unprincipled white lad came along and traded Blackbird some arsenic and carefully informed the rascal how to use the "magic powder" so as to get the best results.

Blackbird soon became famous as a predictor of sudden death to this and that person who must have rolled his eyes when he saw a certain bony finger lined in his direction.

Now and then some person whose death had been foretold flopped on schedule before astonished tribesmen and the favored are said to have knelt as they tried to kiss the feet of the one whose power-house was believed well fortified. Blackbird liked, yes, he loved all this. That was what he sought, publicity, honor, worship, even and he got it in double measure. He was thought to be some god hobbling around on the banks of the Missouri. He did have enemies and those who would down him if they could, but

under the influence of the wizardry, demonstrated, these were put out of commission and the name Blackbird was on every tongue as well as in some of their stomachs.

Blackbird, just the same, was a pretty handy man to have around when his nation was in a state of war. A man with so much magic should be able to make another nation bite dust in unison. Once the Sioux caught Blackbird napping and when he awoke he was prisoner. He did not believe in being prisoner, so he promptly escaped. In months to come Blackbird taught the Sioux to shiver at mention of his name.

Blackbird went out and assisted at burning one of the largest of the Pawnee villages and he scalped Indians of almost every tribe surrounding the Omahas. One time he was scouting around alone and he saw a big force of Pawnee.

The wily old chief did not sneak away nor lay where he was concealed. He slowly worked his way thru fairly rank grass straight toward the Pawnee, sprang out of hiding like a saber-toothed tiger, fighting like a maniac, slashing this fellow, then rapping another over the head with an over-size tomahawk, dodging, feinting, pretending he had been injured only to lambast someone close to him for placing a finishing blow, yelling and ripping and tearing until the only living person on the little battlefield was our infamous Blackbird.

This man even led war parties down to the Kansas Indians, in Kansas, where his reputation was so bad he finally could find no one at home when he called and had to return in a mood of disgust.

Away back, Poncas got up their nerve and made a raid on the holdings of the Omahas. Blackbird squinted one eye and gazed around. Both horses and good looking women had been stolen and kidnapped. Finally his war party was ready and it went out and found the Poncas, who were put in a hole within a short time by superior generalship, and the Poncas as a last chance got extra busy and dug earth and built a protective wall. Some say this was in a circle.

However that may have been, it did not take the Ponca long to find they were in a deadly trap and that the cat was at hand for the finish. A messenger was dispatched by the Poncas to Blackbird, bearing a note pleading for peace right away. The messenger came smoking a peace pipe so there could be no mistake, but that did not save him.

Blackbird quickly whipped out something that looked larger than a wagon tongue and killed the pipe-bearer right in his tracks. Within a few minutes

another Ponca came bearing a smoke-emitting pipe and Blackbird knocked him cold and hoped the entire Ponca nation would come, one at a time.

The head of the Ponca war party, the Big Chief, used his head at last and fixed up his own daughter, a renowned beauty, had the women-doll her up the very best possible, and then sent her over to make eyes at old Blackbird. The Poncas had no chance whatever of winning out. There were three Omahas to one Ponca.

On came the beauty, robed in finest clothing, snowy buckskins, and in her hands she carried a wonderfully carved tobacco pipe of some wonderful stone, certainly red pipestone, catlinite, at sight of which every Indian dropped everything he held and meditated on something that must have a lot of power of some kind.

The Big Chief knew his business. Blackbird looked up and beheld the living apparition, the wraith that proved to be the beautiful daughter of the Big Chief.

Next thing the people knew there was a wedding and this girl became Mrs. Blackbird. It is of record this wife was one of the favorites of Blackbird for many years, but just how many he had is not known.

Often enough this wife petted and pampered the chief to bring him out of some dangerous mood and generally was rewarded by a halo of sunshine in the shape of smiles on the face of her lord and master.

(Continued next week.)

Miss Ponderosa: Mr. Mushley is so poetic. Did you hear him speaking of my luminous eyes?

Miss Skattish: You got him wrong, dearie. He wasn't saying anything about your luminous eyes. He was talking about your voluminous size.

Daughter: Henry says he will die if I don't accept him.

Father: Let him die—the worthless fellow!

Daughter: But, father, he's had his life insured in your company.

The Barber: Yes, sir, we guarantee our work to please. If it ain't right we'll make it right. Is your hair cut to suit you?

The Victim: Naw. You've cut it too short.

According to the Chicago Tribune the government is constructing a new \$19,000,000 irrigation dam in Arizona at a point where there isn't any water. Well, what's wrong with that? After the project is completed, Congress can appropriate another nineteen million to haul water to the dam.

In The WEEK'S NEWS



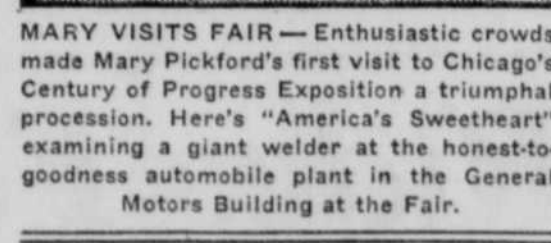
CHALLENGER—T. O. M. Sopwith and Mrs. Sopwith, who will sail as a member of the crew, at the wheel of the Endeavor, Sopwith's English challenger for the America's Cup.



SWASTIKA AT AN AMERICAN BOYS' CAMP—Two hundred brown-shirted German boys from New York, wearing the Nazi Swastika on their uniforms, have opened a camp on the banks of the Delaware-Raritan Canal at Griggstown, N. J. The camp is sponsored by The Friends of New Germany.



NEW FALL COAT—Ann Harding, famous screen star's, black tweed swagger coat of simple design, is accented by the eel-gray hat and shoes which she wears with it. The galyak collar and tie are also of eel-gray.



MARY VISITS FAIR—Enthusiastic crowds made Mary Pickford's first visit to Chicago's Century of Progress Exposition a triumphal procession. Here's "America's Sweetheart" examining a giant welder at the honest-to-goodness automobile plant in the General Motors Building at the Fair.



ADDS TO STABLE—D. K. Weiskopf, backer of the Pulitzer Prize Play "Of Thee I Sing," who added to his stable of racers at the recent race horse auctions at Saratoga, N. Y. He is dean of American distillers, and senior vice-president of National Distillers Products Corporation, largest single unit in the industry.