

THE MORMONS OF 1846.

We take from the *Niobrara Pioneer* the following interesting sketch of the earliest settlement of Knox county. The *Pioneer* is one of that sturdy band of country-town newspapers that are performing their work of education, quietly and without ostentation, every week upon the people of Nebraska. It is in its 27th year, and its motto is "There is no place like home."

Mormons Fix Old Landmarks.

Isaac and John H. Riddle, accompanied by J. W. Townsend, of Crete, arrived in town Friday. They were here to locate the remains of Newill Knight, and 15 others, mostly children, who died during the winter of 1846-7 while the Mormons were in winter quarters on the opposite bank of the Niobrara river. The Riddle brothers are Mormons, and were with the first party that ever crossed the Missouri river on their way to "the promised land." They are here at the instance of the son of Mr. Knight, who proposes to erect a handsome monument. Secretary Fry, of the L'Eau qui Court cemetery, offered in behalf of the association a plot of ground in our cemetery if they would exhume the remains and deposit them in Niobrara's cemetery and erect such a monument as they say will be erected, which is under consideration.

The early history of Niobrara is very vague as to this settlement of Mormons, and the arrival of these gentleman has settled some points of history not known before. Isaac Riddle is from Provo, Utah, and was 16 when his father and family came here in the fall of 1846.

"My father was the van guard of the Mormon pioneers," said Mr. Riddle. "We first struck up the Missouri in 1845 with 30 other families. A little below old Fort Vermillion, South Dakota, we fenced in 2,000 acres of bottom land along the Missouri--the south line being fenced by the Big Muddy itself. Here we put in a crop and spent the winter of 1845-6. Word came that Prophet Smith and his son had been killed, and we were ordered down the Missouri to Kaneshville, where we were to meet the exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois, which we reached three weeks in advance." Here Mr. Riddle described the persecution under which these pioneer families had passed from the hands of the gentile.

"Being at Niobrara was an accident," continued Mr. Riddle. "We were ordered away in the spring to the Rocky mountains--150 wagons. The first wagon wheel that ever made its mark where Omaha now counts its hundreds of thousands was made by our party. We were the path-finders. We left the Missouri river in the month of July, 1846, after the president had issued a call for troops to fight Mexico, and 500

of our people responded. Our main camp was at Kaneshville, (Council Bluffs) as a supply and outfitting point midway to the land of promise. We proceeded up the Platte, and while in camp at Pawnee Station, a courier arrived with orders that we should proceed no farther, as it was feared we could not reach the end of our journey before winter. Soldiers were stationed here and the government had put in a crop of wheat, oats, potatoes and corn. The Pawnees were troublesome that spring and frightened the farm laborers out of the country. When we arrived this crop was abandoned, and we contracted to harvest it for half the crop. After this had been garnered orders came for us to hunt winter quarters. About a dozen Ponca Indians were on a visit to the Pawnees, who reported we could get excellent winter quarters with them. They piloted us from the Platte along about the route of the Elkhorn railroad. There was motive, however, in the desire for our company. We had a small cannon along with us, and they had seen us shoot it. Having had much trouble with the Sioux at the west of them, this cannon was considered a 'heap big iron killer.' Our company went out with the Poncas in their winter hunt, going where the pine was quite heavy. The woods were full of wild turkey, and all along the bench land where your town now stands were Indian camps--from the mouth of the Niobrara to about half way to the Five-mile creek (Bazile). The whole prairie was alive with buffaloes then, and there were large quantities of timber skirting the two streams."

It has always been supposed that the reason the Mormons left here was because the Poncas made them trouble. Mr. Riddle said that there was nothing in the story. "It was not our purpose to remain there--merely to winter. During the winter we had eaten the harvest of the former season and returned to Kaneshville. We went down to Five-mile (Brazile) creek, going to about where Creighton is now, then struck southeast."

"How does it come, Mr. Riddle, that what is known as the 'Mormon trail' goes west of Creighton?" asked the *Pioneer* interviewer.

"This was due to the high water in 1850, when the main camp moved. The water was very high that season and the Platte and Elkhorn impassable. Our old trail was taken to the point where the trail bore easterly, and we then started due west in order to 'head the Elkhorn,' going into the Black Hills and then onward. We crossed the Niobrara river at the 'big falls' with a good rock bottom."

Isaac Riddle is an old white-headed man. He said that he was the husband of three wives and the father of twenty children, twelve of whom are still liv-

ing. "When the hour came to give up my wives or go to the penitentiary," continued Mr. Riddle, "I chose the latter, and am, in the eyes of the law, an ex-convict. Peace came to two of my wives and I have but one now."

"During the winter of our camp at the mouth of the Niobrara, Newill Knight made two mill stones out of the drift boulders found on your hill tops with which we were to grind our corn by horse-power. There is no such thing as a 'Mormon canal' as you suggest. This was here the same as now, except perhaps it has been enlarged by the elements. These old mill-stones we should like to embrace in our proposed monument to their maker. We have trailed them pretty close, but whether they can be found or not we cannot say now. The son of Newill Knight is what we call 'a lucky miner' and counts his income with six figures. His tithe to the church is \$1,000 per month, has leisure and is liberal hearted. He has sent us out to locate the grave, which we have succeeded in doing, exhumed some of the ashes buried 55 years ago and found remains of the fire-brick. The buildings were built as stockades against the encroachment of the Sioux warriors, and what we found was, of course, only a small portion of the enclosure that held 65 families. The graves are about 60 rods from there on Buffalo Chipp's land overlooking the Niobrara Island and your Running Water. We shall return probably in the fall and begin operations."

TOLD BY A TREE.

Railroad Commissioner Rogers, who was here a few days ago, was talking about the value of North Carolina timber. He said that he had only one story to relate, and that was a big one. A man in western North Carolina was selling standing timber--walnut trees. The man who was buying came to one very handsome tree. He told the owner he could pay as much as \$50 for that tree. This excited the owner. He did not sell, but sent for experts. The owner got \$1,500 for the tree (curled walnut) as it stood. The man who cut it down realized \$3,000 for it on the cars. It was shipped to New York, veneered one-sixteenth to one-quarter inch. The sales were watched and estimated as best as could be done, and when all was disposed of, it turned out that the tree brought nearly \$60,000. The point of it is this: We have no idea as to the value of our timber, much of which is being sent North for a mere song. We can become rich in North Carolina if we work our raw material as others work it for us,—High Point Enterprise.