

# Indian Hill Was Nearly Capital Site

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The following story was written as an assignment for the advanced reporting class at the School of Journalism. The writer, Kenneth Bouc, is completing a journalism internship with the Oakland Independent this summer.

By Kenneth Bouc

An historic spot that was the religious center of the Pawnee nation and, at one time, selected as the site of Nebraska's capital city stands today, all but forgotten, in northern Saunders County, across the Platte River from Fremont.

The story of Pahuk Hill and Neapolis, the capital city that was never built, is told in fascinating Indian legends and the yellowed pages of history books of Nebraska's territorial period.

The event that nearly joined at Pahuk Hill the eras of Nebraska's aboriginal past and her future as the 36th state occurred during the fourth territorial legislature held in Omaha in 1858.

"Stormy" was the mildest word used to describe this session. After a riot on the floor of the legislature, fist fights between members and a flashing of drawn knives, the legislature split into two groups.

The minority group, consisting of delegates from Douglas County, favored leaving the territorial capital in Omaha. Earlier in the session, they threatened to block all legislation until a bill to relocate the capital was withdrawn.

The majority of the legislators, consisting of out-state delegates, seceded from the legislature and met in Florence, while meeting at Florence, this quorum passed several bills, including one to move the capital to the townsite of Neapolis.

Later, all the actions of the Florence session, including the relocation of the capital, were declared void because of the split.

While all this was happening, Neapolis existed only as plans on paper and, perhaps, as a few markers in the wilderness near the Pawnees'

Pahuk Hill. These plans had existed since 1856, when a group of land speculators drew up plans for the city, including broad avenues and streets and numerous parks and public squares.

Neapolis never advanced beyond the planning stage and was soon forgotten when Omaha and Lincoln vied for the Capital a few years later.

But in 1858, Pahuk Hill did not need the white man's capital to be famous on the plains. Nebraska still belonged largely to the red man and Pahuk Hill was known to many of the tribes west of the Mississippi and was regarded by all of them as truly hallowed ground.

In the Pawnee religion, the main diety was Tirawa. Under Tirawa were the gods of the heavens and the gods of the earth, the Nahurak (animals).

There were five lodges of Nahurak in Pawnee country. Pawnee legends place one of these lodges named La-la-wah-koh-ti-to (dark island) in a chamber yonder an island in the Platte near a place they called "the lone tree." This spot is a few miles from Central City.

Another was Ah-ka-wit-akol (white bank) under a large white-colored cut bank on the Loup fork, opposite the mouth of the Cedar River.

Kitz-a-witz-uk (water on a bank) was the only Nahurak lodge located outside of Nebraska. Kitz-a-witz-uk, also called Pahowa, is a large round hill on the Solomon River in Kansas. According to Pawnee legend, the Nahurak lodge was beneath the hill and could be reached by diving into a large spring at the very top of the hill.

The fourth Nahurak lodge was at Pahuk (hill that points the way) near the present Kansas-Nebraska border. Pahur is a hard, smooth, flinty rock jutting up out of the ground. The white man gave Pahur the name of Guide Rock.

And ruling over all these Nahurak lodges was the lodge at Pahuk. Dr. A. E. Sheldon, Secretary of the State Historical Society in 1927, said that Pahuk Hill was to the Pawnee what Mecca is to the Mohammedans and Mt. Sinai to the Christians.

Dr. M. R. Gilmore, an expert on Pawnee ethnology and one-time curator of the Nebraska State Historical Society Museum described Pahuk Hill as follows: "From its nature it is unique, being distinctly different from any other hill in all the Pawnee country. Pahuk stands in a bend of the Platte River where the stream flows from the west in a sweep turning abruptly toward the southwest. The head of the hill juts out into the course of the river like a promontory or headland, which is a literal meaning of the word 'Pahuk.' The north face of the bluff from the water's edge to the summit is heavily wooded. Among the timber are many cedar trees, so that in winter when the deciduous trees are bare, the bluff is dark with the mass of evergreen cedar. The Cedar is a sacred tree, so its presence adds mystery to the place."

The Nahurak council at Pahuk met in a large cave far under the bluff, according to the Pawnee legends. Captain Luther North, a leader of the famous Pawnee scouts during the Sioux wars, described the entrance of the cave as he had heard it from his scouts.

"Their (the Nahurak) home is deep down in the hill and the entrance is from below the water of the river. There is a long tunnel to go through before you come to the opening of the house and at the door as guards are a huge rattlesnake and a gigantic grizzly bear. Any one entering must pass between them and if they show the least sign of fear they would never be heard from again," according to North. Captain North's version of the legend of the cave, its entrance and the guards are verified in legends gathered by trained ethnologists.

It was at the lodge at Pahuk that the animals of the most powerful Nahurak lodge met to aid or harm the fortunes of men. The Nahurak took favored persons and taught them the things of the medicine man. These men became the great leaders of the Pawnee nation.

These persons also learned to live like the cunning coyote, swim like the turtle and fly like the eagle, according to the legends. The eagle seemed especially important to the Pawnee. Several Paw-

nee legends mention the picturesque sight of "the medicine eagle soaring high over Pahuk."

After the Pawnee were moved from their Nebraska home to a reservation in Oklahoma several ethnologists recorded their myths and legends. Though Pahuk is mentioned in many of these legends, one particular story is dominant.

A summary of a version of this legend recorded by Gilmore is as follows: A man killed his son as a sacrifice to Tirawa and threw the body into the Platte. The boy's body floated down the river until it neared the hill called Pahuk. Two buzzards saw the body and decided to carry it on their backs to the Nahurak lodge nearby.

The messenger of the Nahurak, the kingfisher, flew over the hill at that time and, seeing the boy, took pity on him. The kingfisher entered the lodge and asked the council of animals to help the boy.

After the council had deliberated for a long time, they still could not decide what to do.

So the Nahurak at Pahuk sent the kingfisher to the other lodges of Nahurak with the problem. But at Ah-ka-wit-akol, Kitz-a-witz-uk, La-la-wah-koh-ti-to and Pahur, the councils all gave the same answer. "It is for the council at Pahuk to decide."

The kingfisher then returned swiftly to Pahuk and reported what had happened at the other Nahurak lodges.

The matter was put before the supreme council of four Nahurak chiefs at Pahuk and they decided to let the kingfisher make the decision. The kingfisher answered immediately, saying that he wished the boy to be brought back to life.

Then all the Nahurak gathered around the boy's body at the top of the hill and breathed on him, bringing him back to life.

The boy stayed with the Nahurak from that time, which was summer, until that autumn. While he was there the Nahurak instructed him in the art of healing and imparted to him all their wonderful powers.

He then returned to his people and live a long and

useful life, gaining much honor as one of their great leaders. He gathered about him wise young men and taught them what he knew and they, in turn, instructed others. These mysteries and learning and healing arts have come down from that long ago time to the present among the Pawnee people.

The memory of Pahuk was kept alive only through the legends such as this one, as the Pawnee repeated them on their reservation in far-away Oklahoma. The significance of Pahuk Hill was also remembered by the original settlers of the area, but as they were replaced with succeeding generations, the story of the hill gradually faded.

In 1927, a committee of Dr. Sheldon, Captain North and several interested residents of Dodge and Saunders Counties tried to have Pahuk Hill enshrined as an historic site. Two years earlier, they had brought a 110 year-old Skidi (Wolf tribe) Pawnee chief named White Eagle from Oklahoma to pin-point the location of the hill. The attempt to establish the spot as an historic site failed, however.

Today, Pahuk Hill continues its lonely vigil above the Platte, unnoticed by residents of the area. The dense growth of trees, vines and brush on its sheer bank facing the river is cluttered with trash thrown there by someone not aware of the hill's significance.

The stature of the hill has suffered since the Pawnee left. Undermined by the action of the Platte and numerous natural springs in its sides, great chunks of the bluff have dropped into the Platte. At the top of the hill, only a few cottonwoods and scrubby cedar trees remain of the forest and clearing that formed the great council circle of the Pawnee.

The only visible sign in the area of Pahuk Hill's historical significance is a small, knee-high marker erected by a boy scout troop in 1932. Placed a few hundred yards west of the hill, in the shadow of a pair of large maple trees in the ditch of a neglected dirt road, the marker reads: "The legislature located the capital of Nebraska Territory at Neapolis on this spot adjacent to Pahuk, Holy Hill of the Pawnees in January, 1858."



Smith

## Husker Giant 'Dieting' On Rice

By Harry Argue

One might think that going from the beef plenty football training table to an experimental rice diet would be a difficult switch.

However, Bruce Smith, 1964 football fullback and graduate student in chemistry, says that he has had little trouble making the transition.

Smith is one of twelve presently taking part in the food and nutrition department's five year study on the effect of cereal grains. One group of six is eating rice as the main part of their three daily meals for 55 days this summer. The other six are doing the same with algae.

Smith explained that the amount of rice they eat every day is determined by four alternating consumption levels. Those on the highest level eat a pound of rice daily with the lower levels taking respectively smaller amounts. They stay on one level for five days and then have blood samples taken to determine the changes in amino acids.

"For quantity, we get enough to eat," Smith said. He added that while they get no meat or milk, they are allowed as many 100 calorie dry muffins as they want. The liquid portion of their diet consists of an amino acid solution that "tastes like sour lemonade" and a bottle of diet cola.

The former Husker football standout said he volunteered for the program to help him decide what he would eventually like to do.

He added that he was most impressed by the serious attitude that everyone involved had toward the experiment.

**Movie Time Clock**  
Varsity: 'Genghis Khan', 1:27, 4:05, 6:43, 9:21.  
State: 'The Train', 1:00, 3:24, 6:13, 9:02.  
Stuart: 'Harlow', 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00.  
Nebraska: 'The Art of Love', 1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15.  
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VARSITY

## 'Far East' Campus Trains Doctors, Nurses

Continued From P. 3  
The inadequacy of clinical facilities has been recommended in every medical report. Prompt action is needed."

Most of the buildings at the College of Medicine are relatively new.

The library's 130,000 volumes make it one of the most valuable and complete libraries in the country. Its medical books have nearly the highest circulation in the country.

The College of Medicine Li-

brary not only serves the University of Nebraska students, but also Creighton University, all the doctors in the state and many out-of-state doctors.

Library Small

The present library is small for the large number of people it serves. There are 85 seats. On the walls in book-cases, in the stacks one floor down and on shelves are the 130,000 volumes. These are

broken down to 30,000 pamphlets, unbound issues and theses, 25,910 monographs and texts and 76,730 journals.

The library has subscriptions to 1,500 journals. Mrs. Bernice Hetzner, librarian said, "Ours is an outstanding medical collection, especially because of the long and complete runs of journals. We have the complete and bound volumes of all medical journals."

Locked in glass bookcases are some of the prizes of the College of Medicine... the ones that no one checks out, but the ones that doctors around the United States request.

The oldest book in their possession is a wooden and leather bound French handbook written in 1478 by Albertus Magnus and titled Les Admirables Secrets d'Albert le Grand.

The Magnus book is part of the Charles F. and Olga C. Moon collection on obstetrics and gynecology given to the College of Medicine in 1955.

**Psychiatric Institute**  
The Nebraska Psychiatric Institute is controlled and operated jointly by the state Board of Institutions and the University of Nebraska. It is a treatment and evaluation center for the mentally ill and the center for teaching and research in psychiatry and neurology.

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