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EARLY HISTORY OF WESTERN IOWA

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EPISODES IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE
WESTERN IOWA COUNTRY

[The writer of this article consulted and weighed the testimony of predecessors in the field: he investigated practically all available sources which deal with the history of western Iowa, sifted a vast number of conflicting and confusing statements, and with the aid of source materials heretofore unused arrived at what he believes is a substantially accurate glimpse of episodes which occurred in that region before permanent white settlements began in the year 1846, not considering for the moment settlements made in 1840 in what are now the southern townships of Fremont County, a strip of territory over which the State of Missouri held disputed sway until a decree of the Supreme Court of the United States decided in favor of Iowa's claim to jurisdiction.]

During the progress of his researches the writer discovered that local historians, though deserving of much credit, are generally not to be relied upon in the matter of dates and are oftentimes untrustworthy in other respects. He has, therefore, whenever possible, resorted to chronicles or records contemporaneous with the events themselves because these unquestionably possess greater historical merit than reminiscences and unsupported statements of individuals.—EDITOR.]

Historical writings which deal with the Mississippi River settlements of Iowa are fairly numerous and extensive; while those relating to the Missouri River region are both few and inaccurate. Indeed, it may be asserted that scarcely more than fragments of history have been preserved in the local accounts of western Iowa. And yet a striking pageant could be arranged to represent in order of time the series of romantic incidents which preceded the inrush of pioneers into the western Iowa country. What happened upon Iowa's western border before the wave of emigration and occupation reached it from the East? The story can be gathered from many scattered sources. And so, "to recover as far as possible those obscure beginnings in the founding of a great empire which the historian has neglected for the more alluring themes connected with the

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building of the superstructure"¹ is a task both interesting and instructive.

For hundreds of years before Mormon refugees founded a community upon the Missouri River bank of Iowa, the country offered its exceptional opportunities to the aboriginal inhabitants. Who these Indians were before the end of the seventeenth century cannot be ascertained. Even after that it is a fact worthy of note that the Red Men preferred to dwell upon the Nebraska side of the river — there they set up their tribal villages and there missionaries, fur-traders, and government agents settled or visited among them after the year 1800. Nevertheless, the Iowa side of the Missouri River was not wholly unpeopled, as numerous early records bear witness.

In the spring of the year 1676 a Jesuit priest, Louis André, wrote a letter in which he referred to some Indians called "aiaoua": they were said to dwell 200 leagues west of Lake Michigan in a village "very large but poor; for their greatest wealth consists of ox-hides and of Red Calumets." This is probably the earliest mention of the Ioway Indians, and indicates that they dwelt somewhere near the famous pipestone quarry in southwestern Minnesota.²

Early in July, 1700, on his expedition up the Mississippi River, the Frenchman Le Sueur received word that the Sioux and the "Ayavois" had defeated their enemies. Turning westward by way of the St. Peter's River, he later canoed into the Blue Earth River (southern Minnesota) and learned that the Ayavois and Otoctatas lived beyond. Two Canadians were then despatched to invite them to build a village near Le Sueur's Fort L'huillier, but they returned without having found the way to these tribes.³

¹ Chittenden's *The History of the American Fur Trade of the Far West*, Vol. I, p. 82.

² Thwaites' *Jesuit Relations*, Vol. LX, pp. 203, 321; and Miner's *The Iowa Indians*, pp. 10, 11, 12, 13.

³ Shea's *Early Voyages Up and Down the Mississippi*, pp. 92, 104, 105.

One of the most interesting records of western Iowa's hazy past is a map of the northwestern part of Louisiana compiled in 1703 by William de L'Isle, the most noted French cartographer of his day. This chart with its French nomenclature indicates a trader's trail, "Chemin des Voyageurs", commencing at the Mississippi River a few miles below the mouth of the Wisconsin River and running westward across northern Iowa to the vicinity of Spirit Lake. There, near one of the many lakes, was a "village des Aiaouez"; thence the trail continued due westward to the Big Sioux River, on either side of which were two more Ioway villages, probably near the site of the present city of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. To the south, below the mouth of the Little Sioux River three Teton Sioux villages are shown, and opposite the mouth of the Platte River were four Yankton Sioux villages. Near the southwestern corner of the present State of Iowa, "Les Octotata" (the Otoes) were located, and south of them three villages of "Yoways".⁴

On the best authority of that early day, therefore, it would seem that French traders came into relations with the Indian inhabitants of western Iowa about the beginning of the eighteenth century. But Frenchmen seem to have aimed primarily at the establishment of trade with the various Sioux tribes of the region now comprised in South Dakota and southern Minnesota, for the Indians there were much more numerous than in western Iowa, which was really little more than the hunting-ground of several tribes. In the year 1737 the French ceased their operations among

⁴ Miner's *The Iowa Indians*, pp. 22, 23, 24. For a small sketch of the map see *The Monthly South Dakotan*, Vol. III, opposite p. 285.

An enumeration of the savage tribes of New France in 1736 placed the "Ayowois" south of the Missouri River, but the Minnesota River was probably meant. The enumerator did not attempt to locate other tribes on the Missouri. — *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, Vol. IX, pp. 1055, 1057.

the Sioux because the Sacs and Foxes from the Wisconsin country had settled among the Ioways west of the Mississippi River and had constantly harassed fur-traders and even killed stray French voyageurs. From this vast region in 1757 the French could report no fort or trading-post, but only an exchange of hundreds of packages of peltries every year by Sioux, Sacs, Foxes, and Ioways.⁵ On the lower Missouri River, French traders had maintained a post as early as 1722, but they had been foiled in their exploitation here also. In 1757, on the site of Fort Leavenworth, they had a garrison — thither came the Missouri and the Kansas Indians with packages of deer and bear skins, and from a point fifty leagues above came “the Otoks and the Ayoués; two hundred men furnish eighty packages, of beaver.”⁶

These few hundreds of Ioway Indians seem to have had the nomadic instinct to a marked degree, as the foregoing accounts indicate. They moved their villages from one locality to another and they journeyed annually to the French markets for the Indian trade: southward down the Missouri or eastward to the Mississippi and even beyond. There is extant a letter which shows the strong grip which the French had on their native subjects of northern Louisiana, when England was waging war for the capture of Canada from France. On the 20th of July, 1757, Vaudreuil wrote to the French minister as follows:

Monseigneur — Previous to my arrival in this colony, the Ayouois killed two Frenchmen in the Missouri country. I at once hastened to give my orders to the commandants of the posts whither that nation might come, that the first officer to whose post they came was to compel them themselves to bring me the murderers.

The commandant of La Baye [Green Bay] had occasion to see those Ayouois. He spoke to them in my name with such firmness that 10 savages of the same nation came to Montreal expressly to

⁵ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVII, p. xv.

⁶ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, p. 178.

deliver the murderers to me. They presented them to me in the name of their nation with great submission and resignation that I might have their heads broken if such was my intention. They nevertheless earnestly begged me to pardon them and assured me that they themselves would avenge the death of the two Frenchmen and would compensate me for their loss by the blows they would strike against the English.

All our nations of the upper countries and our domiciled savages who were in this town, to the number of from 1,700 to 1,800, joined those Ayouois and gave me the most touching words to induce me to pardon them. I did not deem it advisable to refuse them because all those nations were about to start to join my expedition against fort George and circumstances required that I should give proofs of kindness to all those nations.

Nevertheless, I made them very anxious to obtain that favor and granted it only after repeated solicitations.

That favor will contribute more to restrain the savage nations than if I had had the two murderers' heads broken, because all the nations that interested themselves in their fate are, at the same time, obliged to punish them if they dip their hands in French blood in future.⁷

As is well known, England captured Canada and France ceded the province of Louisiana to Spain. But the latter step did not prevent British aggression in the Upper Mississippi River country. Lieutenant James Gorrell of Green Bay was engaged during the whole summer of 1762 “in treating with the tribesmen, ranging from the Menominee

⁷ In June, 1757, General Montcalm wrote that 800 tribesmen had arrived at Montreal, believing that the French cause was likely to triumph over the English, among them the Ioways: “the latter have never appeared before at Montreal”. To quote further from his letter: “There occurred here, yesterday, the grand ceremony of pardoning two Iowas who had killed two Frenchmen, two years ago. They smoked the peace calumet; the murderers were brought out, bound, with the emblem of a slave [prisoner] in their hands, singing their death song as if they were to be burned. Saint-Luc and Marin fulfilled the functions of the chevalier de Dreux and Monsieur Desgranges. These savages, so the ladies say, dance much better than our domiciled ones, and one of these days they are to be reviewed on the plain du Sablon. The generals and the ladies will be present.”—*Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 195-197.

in the neighborhood of the fort, to the Iowa and Sioux in the farther West."⁸ Thus began the British régime. Englishmen from Canada got control of the Indian trade in at least the northern part of the trans-Mississippi region: English presents at the proper time won the good will and patronage of the natives, including the Ioways, no doubt. Spanish reports for the years 1769 and 1777 show that the "Ayooua" or "Hayuas" then dwelt upon the Des Moines River in what is to-day the northwestern corner of Van Buren County.⁹ These Indians and their Sac and Fox friends probably hunted all over western Iowa, while bands of Sioux descended from the north and Otoes and Omahas crossed the Missouri from the west.

English traders, however, acquired no exclusive monopoly, for after Pierre Laclède and Auguste and Pierre Chouteau founded St. Louis in 1763 as a trading-post for the Missouri River country many Indian tribes were lured southward to trade. Thus in May and June of the year 1769, according to a Spanish account, "they descend the rivers in numerous parties with their traders to declare their furs . . . ; and when they depart one has to make them . . . a present".¹⁰ Englishmen carried on a brisk traffic upon the Des Moines River and penetrated as far westward as the Missouri, no mean contenders with the Spanish licensees for the wealth in furs.¹¹ Spanish governors of Louisiana constantly declared that they could not cope with British aggression in the northern part of their unpeopled possessions.

In December, 1780, Francisco Cruzat, Governor of Spanish Illinois, complained: "Such are the movements which the English show in this barbarous and inhuman war, in

⁸ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, p. 249.

⁹ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 300, 363.

¹⁰ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, p. 305.

¹¹ Houck's *The Spanish Régime in Missouri*, Vol. I, p. 166.

order that they might succeed in their attempts, that even in the Misury they had introduced two of their banners, which I have had surrendered to me by telling the tribes who had received them, that in order to be our allies they ought not to have in their villages other ensigns than the Spanish." The same Governor also remarked that "a band of Aioas, doubtless excited by the enemy, has corrupted the Hotos [Otoes, dwelling near the mouth of the Platte River] tribe which is located on the upper Misury and has promised them to join the other tribes opposed to us in order to show as great hostility as possible toward us. . . . I know by experience that the appearance of gain does not excite them to take action, but the reality of presents does. Since the English make so many of these to all the tribes of whom they wish to make use, they always obtain from them whatever they desire".

Without troops stationed upon the St. Peters and the Des Moines rivers, a Spanish Governor asserted in 1794, St. Louis merchants could not win the immense fur-trade with the nations of the Missouri from the English "who usurp that trade and daily introduce themselves in greater number upon said river and among the nations living near it." Thus it happened that nothing could be done to cause the dominion of Spain to be respected in Upper Louisiana.¹²

In the year 1800 Spain retransferred the province to France and three years later Napoleon in despair sold it to the youthful government of the United States. During this brief period an Englishman named Thomas G. Anderson wintered among the Ioway Indians fifty miles up the Des Moines River as the agent of a Green Bay trader. His competitor at the same point was a Frenchman by the name of Julien. The Ioways, "a vile set", then hunted near the

¹² *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 412, 414, 449, 452; and Robertson's *Louisiana under Spain, France, and the United States*, Vol. I, pp. 335-337.

Missouri. To avoid the expense of shipping goods up the river to the vicinity of their hunting grounds, the traders agreed that both would wait for the Indians to bring their furs to the shops on the Des Moines. Not long afterward the Englishman discovered that he had been deceived by the Frenchman, and after roundly abusing him, Anderson prevailed upon the men of his trading post to journey across country to Julien's house near the Missouri and "started the next day with seven loaded men, taking provisions for one day only, depending on game for our supply." To quote from Anderson's narrative:¹³

The little islands of wood, scattered over the boundless plains, were swarming with wild turkeys, so that we had plenty of poultry. At the end of six days we reached our destination safe and sound, taking Mr. Julien's two *engagés* by surprise. My party soon fitted up a temporary shop. Not long after, the Indians came in, made a splendid season's trade, managed for the transportation of my packs of fur by leaving a man to help Mr. Julien's two *engagés* down with their boat. Thus I completed my winter, and Mr. Julien found his trickery more costly than he anticipated.

Beginning with the year 1803 the United States government seriously turned its attention to the West by fitting out an expedition under Lewis and Clark to explore the new trans-Mississippi purchase. Starting from St. Louis in that memorable year in two pirogues and a keel-boat fifty-five feet long, equipped with large square sail and twenty-two oars, the party of forty-five men slowly journeyed

¹³ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. IX, pp. 151, 152. The late Dr. Draper and Rev. William Salter believed the Frenchman mentioned here was Julien Dubuque. It is doubtful whether Dubuque attempted to cover the whole Iowa country when he had all the work he could do in operating the lead mines near the Mississippi. There is enough evidence to prove the existence of a trader by the name of Julien. In an attack on Fort Madison in September, 1812, the Winnebago Indians plundered and burnt the houses of a "Mr. Julian", the same man who later sold in Illinois "all his improvements, consisting of an old dilapidated trading house" and land which he falsely represented was a Spanish land grant, made to him before 1805.—*Annals of Iowa*, Vol. V, p. 885; and *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. III, p. 105.

northwestward up the muddy Missouri. At one place they met five pirogues loaded with furs and peltries from the Sioux country, stopped the little trading fleet, and engaged an old Frenchman Dorion to act as Indian interpreter.¹⁴

What is now western Iowa came under the observation of the exploring party from July 18 to August 21, 1804, and of the twenty-one camping places selected during that time, eleven were upon the Iowa shore. On the 22nd of July they pitched camp at a point somewhere near the present boundary between Mills and Pottawattamie counties. Here the leaders intended to send for the neighboring tribes to tell them of the recent change of government and the wish of the United States to cultivate their friendship. Here upon Iowa soil Lewis and Clark remained for five days: provisions were dried, new oars made, and despatches and maps prepared for the President. The men also hunted and fished, crossed the river to search for the Otoes and the Pawnees, and returned without success.¹⁵

On July 28, 1804, the party disembarked just north of the mouth of Indian Creek (now called Pigeon Creek) some eight or ten miles north of the present city of Council Bluffs, at "the spot where the Ayauway Indians formerly lived" before emigrating to the Des Moines River.¹⁶ A few days later Lewis and Clark held a council with the Otoes on the west side of the Missouri and called the place Council-bluff,¹⁷ a name which fifty years later became the property of the first town in western Iowa, Council Bluffs.

¹⁴ Wheeler's *The Trail of Lewis and Clark*, Vol. I, p. 148.

¹⁵ Coues' *The History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Vol. I, pp. 52, 53.

¹⁶ Coues' *Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Vol. I, p. 61. The site of this Ioway village is also mentioned in Thwaites' *Early Western Travels*, Vol. XIV, p. 221, footnote.

¹⁷ This place later became the site of Fort Calhoun, Washington County, Nebraska. Many writers on western Iowa cannot get away from the idea that Lewis and Clark met the Indians in council in Pottawattamie County, Iowa. Such an error has been perpetuated by D. C. Bloomer in *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. IX, p. 525, and by the authors of the *History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 5. See Coues' *Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Vol. I, pp. 66, 67.

Lewis and Clark reported that the tribes west of the Missouri River traded with the merchants of St. Louis, and were on friendly terms with the Indians east of the river: the "Ayouwais" and the "Saukees and Foxes", all of whom laid claim to the western Iowa country. The former were said to be "a turbulent savage race, frequently abuse their traders, and commit depredations on those ascending and descending the Missouri; their trade can't be expected to increase much." They were reported to have one village of probably 800 souls including 200 warriors, "forty leagues up the river Demoin, on the Southeast side"; they traded with "Mr. Crawford, and other merchants from Michilimackinac" at their village and hunting camps, and supplied deer skins principally, also skins of black bear, beaver, otter, grey fox, raccoon, muskrat, and mink. It was asserted that "with encouragement they might be induced to furnish elk and deer's tallow and bear's oil."¹⁸

Lewis and Clark also ordered their men to pitch camp just below Soldier's River (Harrison County), and a few miles above the Little Sioux River (Monona County). Here the interpreter told all he knew about the river's sources, also of the Des Moines River. On the 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th of August the party again tarried in what later became Monona County. Then, at noon on August 20th the party put to shore just below the site of Sioux City: "Here we had the misfortune to lose one of our sergeants, Charles Floyd. Died of bilious colic. Buried on top of bluff with the honors due to a brave soldier; the place of his interment was marked by a cedar post, on which his name and the day of his death were inscribed. We called this place Floyd, also a small river about 30 yards wide. Here we camped."¹⁹

¹⁸ *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, Vol. I, pp. 707-710.

¹⁹ Coues' *Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Vol. I, pp. 68, 70, 71, 73, 74, 79, 80.

Dorion, the Sioux interpreter, was well acquainted with the Big Sioux River, which emptied into the Missouri River at this point, declaring it navigable upwards of 200 miles to the falls and beyond. He also told of the pipestone quarries of the Minnesota country.

Leaving the remains of Charles Floyd, "the first white man buried on the Louisiana Purchase beyond the confines of established settlements", Lewis and Clark delved into an unknown wilderness westward. Returning two years later they visited Floyd's Bluff, ascended the hill, and found the grave had been disturbed and left half-covered: after filling it up, they once more paddled their canoes southward. Just above the mouth of the Little Sioux River they met Auguste Chouteau's trading-boat from St. Louis bound for the Yankton Sioux on the River James.²⁰

For many years after the visit of Lewis and Clark western Iowa lay almost untrodden by white men but not unseen by them, for when reports brought the fur-traders of St. Louis assurance "of the rich resources of the upper Missouri River, they made preparations to reap the golden harvest."²¹ Manuel Lisa set out with a keel-boat laden with goods in the spring of 1807 and afterward this daring pioneer made annual trips up the river carrying goods for the Indians and supplies for the trappers.²²

The first American firm to enter the fur-bearing field on the Upper Missouri was the Missouri Fur Company, organized in 1809 with Manuel Lisa as its inspiring genius. In the spring of that year the corporation sent out a party of one hundred and fifty men. They established trading stations far beyond the Iowa country, but owing to the hostility of the Indian tribes in that distant region, the voy-

²⁰ *Iowa Historical Record*, 1900-1902, pp. 362, 363, 398; and Thwaites' *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Vol. V, pp. 376, 378.

²¹ Coman's *Economic Beginnings of the Far West*, Vol. I, p. 303.

²² *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, pp. 201-203.

ageurs were forced southward, and after the year 1811 Fort Lisa near the old "Council-bluff" of Lewis and Clark became for a decade the most important trading-post on the Missouri.²³

In the spring of 1811 unpeopled western Iowa witnessed the spectacle of two rival trading parties rowing their boats with all haste to the Indians beyond. Wilson P. Hunt, leader of the overland expedition sent out by John Jacob Astor, accompanied by the English scientist, John Bradbury, was the first to depart from St. Louis with his Canadian boatmen.²⁴ Three weeks later Manuel Lisa, accompanied by Henry M. Brackenridge, began his chase to overtake the Astor party, in a keel-boat manned by twenty-two oarsmen. Brackenridge and the party passed Floyd's Bluff, "marked with a wooden cross, which may be seen by navigators at a considerable distance." The journalist wrote as if he visited the place, for he added:

The grave occupies a beautiful rising ground, now covered with grass and wild flowers. The pretty little river, which bears his name, is neatly fringed with willow and shrubbery. Involuntary tribute was paid to the spot, by the feelings even of the most thoughtless, as we passed by. It is several years since he was buried here; no one has disturbed the cross which marks the grave; even the Indians who pass, venerate the place, and often leave a present or offering near it. Brave, adventurous youth! thou art not forgotten — for although thy bones are deposited far from thy native home, in the desert-waste; yet the eternal silence of the plain shall mourn thee, and memory will dwell upon thy grave!²⁵

After the War of 1812 began and British influence became supreme in the councils of Indian tribes on the Upper Missouri, St. Louis traders were forced to concentrate upon the

²³ *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, p. 202; and Coman's *Economic Beginnings of the Far West*, Vol. I, p. 307.

²⁴ See Bradbury's *Travels* in Thwaites' *Early Western Travels*, Vol. V, pp. 35, 37, 39.

²⁵ Thwaites' *Early Western Travels*, Vol. VI, pp. 10, 27, 85.

west bank of the Missouri River opposite the Iowa country. Astor's enterprise failed in the Far West, and so often were traders ambushed and waylaid that Congress provided for the sending of a regiment under Colonel Henry Atkinson to establish military posts on the Upper Missouri. These troops arrived at the old "Council-bluff" late in September, 1819, and called their wintering-place "Camp Missouri".²⁶

Colonel Atkinson was followed by Major Stephen H. Long and a number of scientists, in the first steamboat which ever ascended the Missouri, having journeyed all the way from Pittsburgh on the Ohio River. The "Western Engineer" consumed three months in the voyage from St. Louis, passing the remains of an old Ioway village near the mouth of the Mosquito River, a few miles below the present city of Council Bluffs, and arrived at Fort Lisa welcomed by a salute from the establishment. Half a mile above this post and five miles below "Council-bluff" the party set up winter quarters and called the place Engineer Cantonment. In October they held a council with about one hundred Otoes, seventy Missouris, and fifty or sixty Ioways. Dr. Edwin James expressed high regard for the principal chief of the Ioways, but considered the nation a faithless people who cheated the Missouri Fur Company by conveying their beaver skins down the river to Fort Osage, a government post. The Ioways were then about to leave their Missouri River friends to return to their village on the Des Moines River.²⁷

²⁶ Coman's *Economic Beginnings*, Vol. I, p. 342; and Thwaites' *Early Western Travels*, Vol. XIV, pp. 9, 10. After 1821 Camp Missouri was called Fort Atkinson, which was discontinued in 1827, being superseded by the construction of Fort Leavenworth in that year.

²⁷ See Dr. Edwin James' account of the expedition in Thwaites' *Early Western Travels*, Vol. XIV, pp. 221, 229, 236, 265, 269, 270.

It seems that the Ioways were not immune to British influence during the War of 1812, for in September, 1815, the United States made a treaty with them reestablishing peace and friendship.—Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, p. 85.

On Sunday, the 2nd of July, 1820, five army officers, including Captain Stephen W. Kearny, fifteen soldiers, four servants, an Indian guide with his wife and papoose, and eight mules and seven horses were ferried from "Council-bluff" across the Missouri and the mouth of the Boyer, and landed upon Iowa soil. They were despatched as a government expedition to discover a practicable route for the passage of United States troops between Camp Missouri and Camp Cold Water (later called Fort St. Anthony and Fort Snelling) on the St. Peter's or Minnesota River. After traveling northward about thirty miles they celebrated the Fourth of July "to the extent of our means; an extra gill of whiskey was issued to each man, & we made our dinner on pork & biscuit & drank to the memory of our forefathers in a mint julup." Following the course of the Boyer and the Little Sioux rivers, then east and northeast to Lake Pepin, and then northwest the party arrived at the northern post where, Captain Kearny declared, the officers "were a little astonished at the sight of us, we having been the First Whites that ever crossed at such a distance from the Missouri to the Mississippi river." For various reasons Captain Kearny reported that the circuitous route was impracticable and almost impassable throughout the entire year for more than very small military forces, and hence troops seem never again to have traversed this particular region.²⁸

In September, 1825, a general treaty of peace was entered into by the United States and all except one of the Indian tribes of the Iowa country. By reason of the absence of the Yankton Sioux from the negotiations the government agreed that the treaty should not go into effect unless they

²⁸ Kearny's *Journal* in *Missouri Historical Society Collections*, Vol. III, map opposite p. 16. The journal is reprinted in *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. X, pp. 343-371, and see pp. 344, 356, 357.

assented to the establishment of the boundary line between the upper fork of the Des Moines River and the mouth of the Rock River in what is to-day northwestern Iowa. According to the treaty, the Sioux Indians were to remain north of the line to prevent clashes with the Sacs and Foxes, the Ioways, and the Otoes whose just claims to the western Iowa country were duly recognized. The Yanktons acceded to the terms, and in February, 1826, the treaty was proclaimed as law among the native inhabitants of the Iowa land.²⁹

On the 15th of July, 1830, there occurred at Prairie du Chien, Michigan Territory, an event of vital importance in the history of western Iowa. The government effected a treaty whereby several bands of Sioux, the Sacs and Foxes, the Ioways, the Omahas, the Otoes, and the Missouris ceded all their right and title to country situated south of the Rock River (now in Sioux County), east of the Big Sioux and the Missouri rivers, including also the northwestern corner of the present State of Missouri, and bounded on the east by the watershed between the Des Moines and the Missouri rivers.

None of these Indian tribes seems to have had a permanent place of residence in western Iowa at this time, and so they were really parting with whatever hunting rights they may have claimed in the region. By one article of the treaty the President of the United States was empowered to assign and allot the land to tribes living thereon, or to such other tribes as he might locate thereon for hunting and

²⁹ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, pp. 177, 178.

The Yankton Sioux seem to have dwelt along the Missouri in the valleys of the James, the Vermilion, and the Big Sioux rivers, and hunted as far east as the headwaters of the Des Moines River. At different times posts were maintained for their convenience at the mouths of the rivers named above. The Yanktons were said to be the least troublesome of all the Sioux tribes and gave traders little annoyance.—Chittenden's *American Fur Trade of the Far West*, Vol. III, p. 864.

other purposes. Those primarily concerned in this provision were the Ioways who then had a village on the Platte River near the present Iowa-Missouri boundary line, and the Missouri River Sacs and Foxes (as distinguished from the Mississippi River Sacs and Foxes of eastern Iowa) who also dwelt in northwestern Missouri. The Sioux had permanent villages in the region now contained in the States of Minnesota and South Dakota; the Omahas and the Otoes lived upon the west bank of the Missouri; and a remnant of the once powerful tribe of Missouris had found refuge among the Otoes.³⁰ All these tribes, however, continued for many years to hunt upon the lands which they had sold and to their pursuit of the chase in the western Iowa country may be ascribed the bleached remains of the larger game animals of the prairie which settlers chanced to come upon twenty, thirty, and forty years later.

In 1822 the Astors of New York decided definitely to engage in competition with western merchants. They established a branch of the American Fur Company at St. Louis, and by trust methods soon obtained the lion's share of the Indian trade of the Missouri Valley. Year after year they shipped merchandise up the river in keel-boats, but so difficult, expensive, and dilatory was this means of transportation that the steamboat "Yellowstone" was built and sent upon her maiden voyage to the Upper Missouri in the spring of 1831. Thereafter the Company sent one or two cargoes each year as long as it continued in business.³¹

³⁰ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, p. 218. See also the names of the separate tribes in *Handbook of American Indians* published by the Bureau of American Ethnology. For other details see *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 23d Congress, Vol. VIII, No. 512, pp. 78, 94.

The extreme northwestern corner of the present State of Iowa, lying north of the Rock River in Sioux and Lyon counties, was not ceded by the Sioux Indians until July 23, 1851.

³¹ Coman's *Economic Beginnings*, Vol. I, pp. 348, 350; and Chittenden's *Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River*, pp. 23, 133, 136, 137, 138.

One of the passengers on the "Yellowstone" in 1832 was George Catlin, the famous Indian painter. Among the letters about his travels in the West can be found a reference to his visit to Floyd's Grave on "one of the most lovely and imposing mounds or bluffs on the Missouri River". To quote further:³²

I landed my canoe in front of this grass-covered mound, and all hands being fatigued, we encamped a couple of days at its base. I several times ascended it and sat upon his grave, overgrown with grass and the most delicate wild flowers, where I sat and contemplated the solitude and stillness of this tenanted mound; and beheld from its top, the windings infinite of the Missouri, and its thousand hills and domes of green, vanishing into blue in distance.

On the third trip of the "Yellowstone" in 1833, Maximilian, Prince of Wied, accompanied the fur-traders in the interests of science. He, too, in his book of travels made mention of Floyd's grave: "A short stick marks the place where he is laid, and has often been renewed by travellers when the fires in the prairie have destroyed it."³³

For scarcely four months emigrants had been crossing the Mississippi River in crude ferry-boats or disembarking from steamboats in order to reach the eastern Iowa country, then called the "Black Hawk Purchase", when the United States disposed of the western Iowa country. On the 23rd of September, 1833, there was concluded at Chicago a treaty whereby the united nation of Chippewas, Ottawas, and Pottawattamies ceded all their lands in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin (west of Lake Michigan) in exchange for not less than 5,000,000 acres of land situated between the Boyer River on the north and the Nodaway River on the south, thus becoming entitled to occupy the southern part of the Indian cession of 1830. They agreed to depart for their new lands as soon as convenient, at gov-

³² Catlin's *North American Indians* (Hazard's Edition), Vol. II, pp. 407, 408.

³³ Thwaites' *Early Western Travels*, Vol. XXII, p. 278.

ernment expense, after a deputation of fifty persons under the general direction of an officer of the United States had visited the reservation. They stipulated, however, that they might remain upon their lands north of the State of Illinois for three years without molestation or interference.³⁴

The United States Senate refused to ratify and confirm the treaty unless the united nation agreed to terms which would entirely exclude them from what is now the north-western corner of Missouri and make the Little Sioux River to its source their northern boundary. To these demands the Indians meekly acceded in October, 1834. In the spring of 1835, an exploring party under Captain Gordon examined the country, then the western part of the Territory of Michigan and returned to Chicago a few days before an emigrating party of Pottawattamies started westward. They were disappointed to hear that the new land was mostly prairie, that there was scarcely timber enough for wigwams, there were no sugar-trees, that some of the land was too poor for snakes to live upon, and that warlike tribes lived to the north. These reasons created a great deal of unwillingness among the emigrants, for the government agents had represented to them that the new reservation was even superior to the lands which they had ceded. Finding themselves deceived they set about to get permission to live upon the timber-land of the northern half of the Little Platte country (now northwestern Missouri), until they should become accustomed to life on the prairies.

³⁴ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, pp. 296, 297, 298. Besides money to be paid for the lands, sums were stipulated for the erection of mills, farm houses, Indian houses and blacksmith shops, agricultural improvements, agricultural implements and stock, and "for the support of such physicians, millers, farmers, blacksmiths and other mechanics, as the President of the United States shall think proper to appoint." Money was also to be expended for education and the encouragement of the domestic arts.

See also *Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, Vol. XVIII, Part II, charts of Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

In the autumn of 1835 a considerable body of emigrating Indians started for their new home. By the month of November, 1837, a little over two thousand members of the united nation had removed west of the Mississippi River, but they had learned to entertain small respect for the government's treaty agents as their addresses to President Andrew Jackson and the following incidents show.³⁵

What is now eastern Nebraska had for many years been the scene of frequent visits by white men with whom the Indian inhabitants had counseled and traded. Western Iowa just across the river had been scarcely more than a hunting-ground: whatever returns the chase may have yielded seem to have been bartered away elsewhere, for all this region, it seems, could boast no permanent trading-station, although Baptiste Roy, Soubllette and Campbell, and the American Fur Company had been licensed to do business with the natives who hunted here. It is probable that skins and furs were brought to them at Bellevue, a point about ten miles south of the present city of Omaha. Here a Baptist missionary, Rev. Moses Merrill, had selected his field of labor among the Otoes in 1833 and later had set up a home and a school near the mouth of the Big Platte River. In his diary for the 28th of July, 1837, he wrote:³⁶

³⁵ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, pp. 306, 307; *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 24th Congress, Vol. I, No. 1, pp. 274, 287; Vol. V, No. 348, pp. 2-7; 2nd Session, 25th Congress, Vol. I, No. 65, p. 18.

³⁶ Rev. Moses Merrill, known by the Otoes as "The-one-who-always-speaks-the-truth". He died among the Otoes in 1840.—*Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, Vol. IV, pp. 158, 184.

Shortly after Mr. Merrill came to the Otoes, Messrs. Dunbar and Allis arrived among the Pawnee Loups, also a missionary to the Omahas named Samuel Curtiss, all of whom gained the lasting ill-will of the traders who exchanged whiskey for furs and peltries. Lieutenant Albert M. Lea visited Bellevue in 1834. Mr. Merrill made several other interesting entries in his diary for 1835: "Doctor Whitman, a Presbyterian missionary, returned from the mountains. He had a prosperous journey"; and "General Hughes with sixty Ioway Indians is at Bellevue for the purpose of making peace with the Omahaws."—Pages 175, 186.

The exact date of the removal of these Indians to western Iowa seems to

A steamboat arrived at Bellevue with 100 Putawatamie Indians, accompanied by Gen. Atkinson, Col. Karney, Indians, and Dr. E. James, sub-agent. These Indians, with many others of the same tribe, are to locate on the other side of the Missouri.

It seems that in March, 1837, Congress had appropriated \$132,000 for the removal and subsistence of the Pottawattamies and for locating a reservation for them. They had been mere tenants by sufferance and had squatted upon the Little Platte country contrary to treaty provisions. Constant encroachments by white settlers from the East had made it necessary for the government to effect some readjustment. The result was that the State of Missouri was authorized to extend her northern boundary westward to the Missouri River. This measure met with opposition: Governor Henry Dodge of Wisconsin Territory (which included the Iowa country) wrote to George W. Jones, Territorial Delegate in Congress, that he had recently received a letter from the Indian agent at the Council Bluffs (Bellevue), telling of Pottawattamie complaints about the State Commissioners of Missouri. Governor Dodge declared that the United States had placed the Indians in possession of the land and that any interference on the part of the State authorities was calculated to produce difficulties between the frontier inhabitants and the Pottawattamies. Nevertheless, the latter were bodily removed northward, some being conveyed by steamer and the larger portion being

have been difficult to ascertain. Rev. William Salter has ventured to give none; Mr. Abernethy in *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. VII, p. 443, gives 1835 as the year; Mr. Pickard in Vol. II, p. 184, places the removal "between 1832 and 1835"; a writer in *Publication No. 11 of the Illinois State Historical Library*, 1906, p. 70, declares: "About 1836 and 1837, under the supervision of the Government, the Indians were removed westward, and Mr. LeVasseur was the Government agent in charge"; and in *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, Vol. II, p. 150, it is stated that General Atchison removed the Pottawattamies previous to August, 1837.

For a list of licensed Indian traders see *House Executive Documents*, 1st Session, 23rd Congress, Vol. I, No. 45.

escorted across the country by a special force of cavalry.³⁷

Dr. Edwin James, who had been the surgeon and historian of Major Long's expedition in 1819-1820, became sub-agent of the Pottawattamie Indians by appointment on April 28, 1837, at a salary of \$750. The temporary buildings of the sub-agency were set up one mile east of the mouth of the Big Platte River, "in a small walnut grove surrounded by a small bottom prairie, dry and fertile." Here a blacksmith shop for the making and repair of agricultural implements in the spring and of guns, traps, axes, knives, fire-steels, and so on the rest of the season, and a dwelling-house were constructed, perhaps in the year 1837. Dr. James with his wife and son called upon the Merrills at Bellevue, their nearest white neighbors in this vast Indian territory. When the Otoes of the Nebraska country murmured loudly because their principal support in Iowa game was cut off, and seriously debated crossing the river to make their abode among the Pottawattamies, Dr. James and Rev. Merrill dissuaded them from taking such a step because some of the newcomers were intemperate and quarrelsome.³⁸

³⁷ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. III, pp. 395, 396; and *Iowa Historical Record*, 1885-1887, p. 268. See also *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 25th Congress, Vol. II, No. 57, p. 22.

This removal did not occur in the spring of 1838 as stated by D. C. Bloomer in *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. IX, p. 526, and Vol. II (Third Series), p. 549; and in *History of Pottawattamie County*, Vol. I, p. 6. The writers of these accounts disagree on many points and cannot be corroborated by the consultation of other sources.

The State Commissioners of Missouri fixed the boundary line about ten miles north of a line surveyed and marked by John C. Sullivan in 1816. The Indians must have felt that they were being cheated out of a big strip of country, for the old Sullivan line had been recognized for years as the correct one, and on that basis the Indians had bargained. The dispute started in 1837 was ended by a decree in favor of Iowa in 1849.—7 Howard's Reports, 660, 674-677.

³⁸ *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, Vol. IV, pp. 185, 186, 187, 188; *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 26th Congress, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 503; 2nd Session, 26th Congress, Vol. I, No. 1, pp. 321, 322.

Dr. James continued to reside at "the Council Bluffs sub-agency" until his resignation in 1838, and after that the Council Bluffs agent at Bellevue took charge for a while. David Hardin and his family arrived early in the spring of 1838 on board the steamer "Antelope" from Fort Leavenworth. He had been appointed farmer to the Pottawattamies in September, 1836, at a salary of \$600. It is said that he located near a big spring on what is now East Broadway, Council Bluffs. The Pottawattamies planted very little corn or anything else, "except here and there one, who happened to have a hoe or a plough." One band, consisting of about one-third of the united nation, headed by Chief Big Foot, did not enter the Iowa country until the fall of 1838 and then retired eastward to set up a village on the Nishnabotna River almost fifty miles away. All the other villages were from two to fifteen miles distant from the agency buildings.³⁹

Trader's Point, situated in the northwestern corner of the present Mills County and opposite the Council Bluffs agency at Bellevue, a well-known crossing-place on the Missouri, became the site of a few establishments licensed specially for trade with the Indians. Here, for instance, Pierre A. Sarpy, the American Fur Company's agent, kept a station. It came to be a "noted place of rendezvous, alike for Indians and traders."⁴⁰

³⁹ For items of information concerning Edwin James see *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 25th Congress, Vol. VI, No. 135, p. 4; 3d Session, Vol. III, No. 103, p. 5; and Vol. IV, No. 174, pp. 53, 59, 61. Dr. James later became a resident of Burlington, Iowa. See his biography in *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. VIII, pp. 161, 217.

As to David Hardin see *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 25th Congress, Vol. VI, No. 135, p. 17; and 3d Session, Vol. III, No. 103, p. 18.

D. C. Bloomer is authority for the statement that Mr. Hardin settled in the present city of Council Bluffs.—*Annals of Iowa*, Vol. IX, p. 526.

As to Chief Big Foot see *Senate Documents*, 3d Session, 25th Congress, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 504, and 2nd Session, 26th Congress, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 321.

⁴⁰ D. C. Bloomer in *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. IX, p. 526, is supported only

The city of Council Bluffs, so named in 1853, may lay claim to a tradition that as early as 1824 a French trader called Hart built his cabin on the bluffs above what later came to be known as Mynster Spring, within the present city limits. How long Hart traded there cannot be ascertained, but he must have maintained his post for some years, for the locality was always known among employees of the American Fur Company as "les côtes à Hart" or "Hart's Bluff". Francois Guittar, a Frenchman in the employ of the Astors and years afterward a resident of Council Bluffs, recalled having encamped in the timber there with his "companions de voyage" in the year 1827.⁴¹

Scarcely had the united tribes numbering a little over 2000 individuals set up their tepees in the bluff region of southwestern Iowa when their peace of mind was disturbed by fierce tribesmen from the north. Occasional hunting parties of Sioux from the Minnesota country pursued the chase southward and committed offences which threw the newcomers into considerable consternation, for they had not bargained on the hostility of others. To quiet their alarm and apprehensions Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny hastened from Fort Leavenworth in command of a body of dragoons, arriving on board the steamer "Antelope".

by Fulton's *The Red Men of Iowa*, p. 170. Mr. Bloomer in *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. II, pp. 480, 488, asserts that the Indian agency was established in 1838 at a place known as Trader's Point and later Kaneshville. This is certainly incorrect and confusing because the latter place-name was supplanted by the name "Council Bluffs", a town which lay six or seven miles north of what was known as Trader's Point.

The name "Council-bluff" was first applied to a bluff on the Nebraska side of the Missouri River, then to the Indian agency at Bellevue on the Nebraska side, then to the subagency at Trader's Point, and was perpetuated when the present city of Iowa was incorporated in 1853.—*Proceedings and Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, Vol. XV, p. 8.

⁴¹ D. C. Bloomer in *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. IX, p. 526, which information is repeated in *History of Mills County, Iowa*, p. 172. The name "les côtes à Hart" can be found in a log-book quoted on page 146 of Chittenden's *Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River*, Vol. I.

They at once erected a block-house twenty-four feet square and set up barracks and tents on ground near by. This military stronghold, such as it was, came to be known as "Camp Kearney near Council Bluffs".⁴²

This crude house of logs, however, was destined to play no great part in the military annals of the West, but rather to diffuse the arts of peace and the teachings of the Christian religion, for it very soon became the scene of the first missionary enterprise of the Jesuits of St. Louis and especially of a man who achieved distinction as "the greatest and most practical missionary who has ever labored among the Indian tribes of the United States." Starting the humble St. Joseph mission among the Pottawattamies and later penetrating to Indian tribes on the Upper Missouri and beyond to the Pacific, the St. Louis members of the Society of Jesus led by Father Pierre Jean de Smet gained enduring fame for themselves and their Master.⁴³

Father de Smet⁴⁴ left St. Louis on the steamer "Howard" on May 10, 1838, accompanied by Fathers Verhaegen and Helias. Near Fort Leavenworth he bade good-bye to his companions and continued the journey with Father Felix Verreydt and Brother Mazelli on board the "Wilmington". They encountered the usual difficulties of Missouri River navigation, stopped several hours at the village of the Ioways in Kansas, talked with their chief Mahaska or

⁴² *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 28th Congress, No. 52, p. 94.

⁴³ "The history of the Catholic missions in the Rocky Mountains is little more than a record of the work of Father P. J. De Smet, S. J., one of the most interesting and noteworthy characters in the annals of the West."—Chittenden's *American Fur Trade of the Far West*, Vol. II, p. 648.

Four large volumes have been prepared by Messrs. Chittenden and Richardson on *Father de Smet's Life and Travels among the North American Indians*. See Vol. I, p. 8.

⁴⁴ This remarkable man was born at Termonde, Belgium, in the year 1801 and received his education in a religious school at Malines. At the age of twenty, in company with five other young men, in response to a call to labor among the Indians he crossed the Atlantic in 1821. He spent two years in the

White Cloud, and farther on visited the Otoe village at Bellevue, where they met Rev. Moses Merrill.⁴⁵ On the afternoon of the last day of May the missionaries arrived among the Pottawattamies: Father de Smet's letter in French to his superior deserves to be quoted with reference to this event:⁴⁶

We arrived among the Potawatomes on the afternoon of the 31st of May. Nearly 2,000 savages, in their finest rigs and carefully painted in all sorts of patterns, were awaiting the boat at the landing. I had not seen so imposing a sight nor such fine-looking Indians in America: the Iowas, the Sauks and the Otoes are beggars compared to these. Father Verreydt and Brother Mazelli went at once to the camp of the half-breed chief, Mr. Caldwell, four miles from the river. We were far from finding here the four or five hundred fervent Catholics we had been told of at the College of St. Louis. Of the 2,000 Potawatomes who were at the landing, not a single one seemed to have the slightest knowledge of our arrival among them, and they all showed themselves cold or at least indifferent toward us. Out of some thirty families of French half-breeds two only came to shake hands with us; only a few have been baptized. All are very ignorant concerning the truths of religion;

Jesuit novitiate in Maryland, then journeyed with twelve others to Florissant, Missouri, not far from St. Louis, and there established the second novitiate of the Society of Jesus in the United States. From their small log cabins sprang the now splendid St. Louis University, founded in 1829.

De Smet was ordained a priest in 1827, but several years more were to elapse before he could realize his ambition to labor among the American natives. The years 1833-1837 he spent in Europe to recruit his health and secure supplies for the infant University. Not until 1838 did he begin the missionary labors which extended over the remainder of his life—until 1873. See Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 6-14.

⁴⁵ About the Baptist missionary Father de Smet wrote: "The \$600 that the Government grants every year to this reverend gentleman; the aid which the Boston propaganda sends his Reverence; and a fine farm . . . are so many items which prevail on him to remain among them; for in the five years that he has been here he has not yet baptized a single person. Indeed, that is all that this horde of apostles of Protestantism, with which all the Indian territory is flooded, are doing."—Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 155, 162.

⁴⁶ Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, p. 157.

they can't even make the sign of the cross nor say a pater or an ave. This as I suppose, is the cause of their great reserve toward us. They change wives as often as the gentlemen of St. Louis change their coats.

"Billy" Caldwell, chief of the united nation, received the "Black Robes" very favorably and showed his willingness to assist them. The half-breeds generally were declared to be "affable and inclined to have their children instructed," while the Indians themselves gave many tokens of affection, paying their respects to the missionaries every day. The chief presented them with three cabins and Colonel Kearny donated the fort, about which Father de Smet could report later:

We have a fine little chapel, twenty-four feet square, surmounted with a little belfry; four poor little cabins besides, made of rough logs; they are fourteen feet each way, with roofs of rude rafters, which protect us from neither rain nor hail, and still less from the snow of winter.⁴⁷

On the day of Corpus Christi I put up a cross on the roof, and while I climbed the ladder to put it in place, and my flag floated from a hole in my breeches, Father Felix beheld the devil clap his tail between his legs and take flight over the big hills.⁴⁸

Father de Smet and his companions spent their days instructing the children, baptized them from time to time, and once a week visited each of the different bands of the nation, living from five to twenty-five miles apart. One village was located as far east as the present town of Lewis in Cass County. Thus the "Black Robes" taught the children and preached to the elders through an interpreter. But they complained of the Indian scourge as follows:

⁴⁷ Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, p. 168, written July 20, 1838.

⁴⁸ Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, p. 158, written June, 1838.

For a short account of the block-house chapel see *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. II, pp. 549-552.

Providence has placed us at some distance from any great number of these savages, for since the arrival of the steamboat, which brought a large quantity of liquor, they are quarreling and fighting from morning till night. When they are sober the most perfect harmony prevails throughout the nation: whole years often pass without quarrels. They are not at all addicted to the pernicious practice of slander; the most corrupt regard a slanderer with disdain, while the more respectable avoid him as they would a snake. No one would dare make accusations against those who enjoy a good reputation, and as for the good-for-nothings, they do not lower themselves so far as to speak of them.⁴⁹

The Fathers were consoled in July, 1838, by the admission of one hundred and eighteen children to their little school and the baptism of one hundred and five. They received a call from the head chiefs of the Pawnee Loups of the Big Platte River, who bitterly assailed the Protestant missionary⁵⁰ among their people and invited de Smet to visit them. Two chiefs of the Omahas with some forty warriors also crossed the river to St. Joseph Mission and treated the Fathers to a calumet or friendship dance.⁵¹

Father de Smet wrote that the architecture of an Indian village was quite as outlandish as their dancing. To quote: "Imagine a great number of cabins and tents, made of the bark of trees, buffalo skins, coarse cloth, rushes and sods, all of a mournful and funereal aspect, of all sizes and shapes, some supported by one pole, others having six, and with the covering stretched in all the different styles imaginable, and all scattered here and there in the greatest confusion, and you will have an Indian village."⁵²

⁴⁹ Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 158, 159.

⁵⁰ Probably Rev. John Dunbar, and Samuel Allis, who later became a citizen of Iowa.— See *History of Mills County, Iowa*, p. 643.

⁵¹ Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 164, 167.

⁵² Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, p. 168.

In August, 1838, the Protestant missionary at Bellevue reported visits from two daughters of "Mr. Harding" and also from "Mr. Smith, a Catholic priest from the Putawatomes".⁵³ Early in the spring of 1839 occurred an event of considerable importance in this wild region: Jean Nicolas Nicollet, a celebrated Frenchman employed by the United States government to map out the Upper Mississippi Valley, accompanied by his assistant, Lieutenant John C. Frémont, a German botanist, and Major John F. A. Sanford of the American Fur Company, arrived on the steamboat "Antelope" from St. Louis. Other passengers on board were various employees of the company, among whom were sixty or seventy creoles, Canadians, and half-breeds, "who, in the fur country, are dubbed 'pork-eaters' until a more hazardous and useful course of life entitles them to the high qualification of voyageurs."⁵⁴

Such was the group which Father de Smet joined on April 29, 1839, starting out on his mission to establish a durable and advantageous peace between the Pottawattamies and the Sioux, for in the words of the ambassador himself: "Our savages have lived, during the last two years, in a terrible dread of this numerous and warlike nation; lately, also, two of our people have been massacred." The "celebrated Mr. Nicollet" presented Father de Smet with several instruments — thermometer, barometer, compass, etc., to take observations during the summer, to supplement those he was making in the upper country. To quote from Nicollet's report: "We stopped before night at the foot of the bluff on which is Floyd's grave; my men replaced the signal, blown down by the winds, which marks the spot and hallows the memory of the brave sergeant". On May 11th Father de Smet disem-

⁵³ *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, Vol. IV, pp. 188, 189.

⁵⁴ *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 28th Congress, No. 52, pp. 41, 42.

barked at the mouth of Vermilion River in the present State of South Dakota. There he was hospitably feasted and entertained by the Yankton Sioux and succeeded in obtaining promises to keep the peace. After urgently inviting them to visit the Pottawattamies he returned down the Missouri in a canoe piloted by two skillful paddlers.⁵⁵

In determining the altitude of places in the upper Mississippi Valley Nicollet acknowledged the services rendered by "the Revs. P. J. Smedt and Felix Werreydt, missionaries among the Pottawattamies at Camp Kearney, near Council Bluffs, on the Missouri." It is a noteworthy fact that of the two fixed barometer stations which Nicollet established north of St. Louis one was conducted by the Jesuit Fathers. In the words of the official government report, "Mr. De Smedt . . . soon made himself acquainted with the manner of taking observations; and proved it, in furnishing me with a four months series, made with a care that the most scrupulous examination could only confirm, and embracing the period between the 17th of May and 17th of September, 1839".⁵⁶

From May 10th until December, 1839, Father de Smet kept a journal of the most noteworthy events in the neighborhood, "of a rather gloomy nature, disgusting and discouraging". His indictment of the traders and especially of the American Fur Company may be gathered from the following entry under date of May 30:

Arrival of the steamer *Wilmington* with provisions. A war of extermination appears preparing around the poor Potawatomes. Fifty large cannons have been landed, ready charged with the most murderous grape shot, each containing thirty gallons of whiskey,

⁵⁵ Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 179, 180, 186, 189, 190; and *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 28th Congress, No. 52, p. 34.

⁵⁶ *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 28th Congress, No. 52, pp. 94, 98, and Father de Smet's table of calculations on p. 99.

brandy, rum or alcohol. The boat was not yet out of sight when the skirmishes commenced. After the fourth, fifth and sixth discharges, the confusion became great and appalling. In all directions, men, women and children were seen tottering and falling; the war-whoop, the merry Indians' songs, cries, savage roarings, formed a chorus. Quarrel succeeded quarrel. Blows followed blows. The club, the tomahawk, spears, butcher knives, brandished together in the air. Strange! Astonishing! only one man, in this dreadful affray, was drowned in the Missouri, another severely stabbed, and several noses lost. . . . A squaw offered her little boy four years old, to the crew of the boat for a few bottles of whiskey. I know from good authority, that upwards of eighty barrels of whiskey are on the line ready to be brought in at the payment [annuity paid to the Indians by the government].

May 31. Drinking all day. Drunkards by the dozen. Indians are selling horses, blankets, guns, their all, to have a lick at the cannon. Four dollars a bottle! Plenty at that price!! Detestable traffic.⁵⁷

In the month of April, 1839, the arrival of a new sub-agent in the person of Stephen Cooper checked the liquor sellers. Elijah Stevens became blacksmith, John La Framboise his assistant, and Claude La Framboise interpreter. In August came the "Antelope" with more whiskey and a few days later the "St. Peter's" with \$90,000 in annuities, which were distributed to the Indians amid great glee and much activity on the part of traders to obtain their credits. Then once more liquor was "rolled out to the Indians by whole barrels; sold by white men even in the presence of the agent. Wagon loads of the abominable stuff arrive daily from the settlements, and along with it the very dregs of our white neighbors and voyageurs of the mountains, drunkards, gamblers, etc., etc."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 172, 173, 184, 185.

⁵⁸ Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 174, 175. See *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 26th Congress, Vol. IV, No. 126, p. 5.

When Father de Smet wrote his last letter from the Potawattamie mission in December, 1839, he reported that Mr. Hardin's family was well, and that Mrs. Scugin and her son Ramsay, Miss Henrietta, Messrs. Dick and Allen were below at Westport, Missouri. Twenty-three Indian couples had been married, one hundred and sixty-two children and eighty adults had been baptized, mostly half-breeds, and forty had been admitted to the Lord's Supper. The chapel was tolerably well attended on Sundays, though most of the Indians were then absent on hunting expeditions. Father de Smet concluded his letter by telling of a visit then being paid by the Yankton Sioux:

We have forty of them in our bluffs, and of their bravest warriors, caroling together with the Potawatomies, and behaving towards each other like true brethren and friends. Last night they honored us with their great pipe-dance, and gave a serenade before every wigwam and cabin. They appeared to be very much pleased with all the people here.⁵⁹

On the 18th of September had occurred an event which proved to be fraught with much significance in the life of Father de Smet: a deputation from the Flathead Indians who dwelt high up on the Missouri stopped at St. Joseph Mission on their way to St. Louis to make a request for missionaries or "Black Gowns". The Flatheads proceeded to St. Louis and made application to the bishop as they had done repeatedly before. Their persevering entreaties were not rewarded until Father de Smet volunteered to undertake the task alone. He accompanied them home from St. Louis in March, 1840, and thus ended his missionary labors in the Iowa country, but not his interest. In the autumn of that year, on his return from the Far Northwest, he encountered at Fort Vermilion a Santee Sioux war-party "just back from an excursion against my dear Potawatomies",

⁵⁹ Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 177, 178.

bringing one scalp with them on the end of a long pole. In the midst of their dance of victory Father de Smet appeared, and in council rebuked them for breaking their peace promise: they begged him "to assure the Potawatamies of their sincere resolution to bury the hatchet forever."⁶⁰

Continuing southward in a canoe piloted by an Iroquois half-breed amid floating ice, Father de Smet was at length compelled to stop at the Council Bluffs. There in his "budding mission", he was grieved to see the ravages caused by the traffic of unprincipled men: "drunkenness, with the invasions of the Sioux on the other hand, had finally dispersed my poor savages." Fathers Verreydt and Christian Hoecken, however, still busied themselves among some fifty families that had "the courage to resist these two enemies." Indeed, after the murder committed in the month of September, 1840, Colonel Kearny had to come with a force of dragoons and established a certain degree of confidence among the Pottawattamies who then feared a general descent upon them by the Sioux. After a brief visit with them, Father de Smet made the remainder of his journey on horseback to Independence and by stage to St. Louis.

In the month of October, 1840, the sub-agency buildings still stood opposite the mouth of the Big Platte River. The agent reported that there was no farmer to teach the two thousand Pottawattamies agriculture. He also credited the Jesuit priests with having done considerable service as physicians when sickness became prevalent immediately after the Indians' return from the spring hunt. One year later the agent, Cooper, had been succeeded by a man named Deaderick. He expressed alarm because the Pottawattamie warriors were seeking to engage several tribes for a joint

⁶⁰ Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, pp. 256, 257, 270.

expedition against the Sioux; there was no farmer, no teacher, and not enough blacksmiths to do all the work; the whiskey traffic was awful; and Chief Billy Caldwell was dead.⁶¹

The Pottawattamie mission at Council Bluffs lost its inspiration with the departure of Father de Smet: it is of particular interest in Iowa history and that of the West because here commenced that famous series of letters which made Father de Smet's name "well known throughout the world. . . . They were probably not intended for publication for they lack something of the clerical dignity in which the writer then doubtless thought he ought to appear in public; but they are all the better for the omission and are equal, in force of expression, to anything he afterward produced." His missionary enterprise lasted but a few months longer, for in the month of October, 1841, the Indians were without teachers and one year later Fathers Verreydt and Hoecken were engaged in eastern Kansas.⁶²

That "Council Bluffs subagency" opposite the outlet of the Big Platte River was more than a mere agency can be gathered from the diary of John C. Frémont who had just returned from his first expedition to the Rocky Mountains. Under date of October 1, 1842, he wrote: "I rose this morning long before daylight, and heard, with a feeling of pleasure, the tinkling of cow-bells at the settlements on the opposite side of the Missouri."⁶³

⁶¹ Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, p. 258; and *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 26th Congress, No. 1, p. 56; 2nd Session, No. 1, pp. 321, 322, 377; and 2nd Session, 27th Congress, Vol. I, No. 1, pp. 281, 357.

Father de Smet later returned to the Flatheads of the Upper Missouri region and traveled extensively among the western tribes, beloved and respected by them all.

⁶² Chittenden and Richardson's *Father De Smet's Life and Travels*, Vol. I, p. 16. See also *House Executive Documents*, 3d Session, 27th Congress, No. 2, pp. 487, 488. For references to the mission see Kempker's *The Catholic Church in Council Bluffs, Iowa*, pp. 1-6.

⁶³ Frémont's *Memoirs of My Life*, p. 162.

In April, 1842, a company of dragoons commanded by Captain J. H. K. Burgwin was despatched by steamboat from Fort Leavenworth to the Pottawattamie country. This time there were strong reasons to expect the breaking out of war between the Sioux and the united nation. Therefore, "prompt and rigorous measures were adopted to prevent this outbreak, which, if it had commenced, would have involved consequences of the most hazardous character to the combatants; would probably have embroiled neighboring tribes, and could have been arrested by the Government only at great cost." Accordingly, Fort Croghan was constructed as a temporary post on May 31, 1842, midway between the outlets of the Boyer and the Mosquito rivers, near the southwest corner of the present city of Council Bluffs. The united tribes were now assured of protection while the Sioux were warned to desist from the threatened attack.

The troops of the new fort also helped to suppress illicit liquor traffic with the Indians, assisting the resident agent in the enforcement of the intercourse laws. At this time every accessible tribe of the Indian population of the United States fell a prey to the scum and refuse of American society. To this depraved and criminal element belonged deserters from fur-trading posts on the Upper Missouri, renegades from Santa Fé, discharged and deserting soldiers, and fugitives from justice. With such persons around, the Federal government could not hope to uplift the Indian. And with such private traders, all licensed traders had to reckon.⁶⁴ At least one cargo of liquor was

⁶⁴ In a short sketch of Fort Croghan in *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. III, p. 471, the writer asserts that the name first given to the post was "Camp Fenwick". Chittenden is, of course, mistaken when he declares in his *American Fur Trade of the Far West*, Vol. III, p. 950, that Fort Croghan "stood a little above the present Union Pacific bridge in Omaha".

Senate Documents, 3d Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, Chart, and pp. 210, 387; 1st Session, 28th Congress, No. 1, p. 395; and *House Executive Documents*, 3d

smuggled past the garrison at Fort Croghan. Liquor was the one article above all others which the traders considered indispensable to the promotion of their business interests: seldom did they fail to smuggle their casks into the Indian country. The American Fur Company was no insignificant offender in this respect, being forced to it in order to compete on an equal footing with private traders.

The "Omega" had got safely past Bellevue without being subjected to inspection and had reached Hart's bluff when "a couple of shots were fired across her bow". She brought to at once and made for the shore. Captain Sire was then presented with a polite note from Captain Burgwin apprising him that his ship must await inspection. On board were John James Audubon and his party of scientists, who had a government permit to carry with them a certain quantity of liquor. To the lieutenant who had stopped the ship he "expressed a desire to visit the camp, and the lieutenant detailed a dragoon to accompany him." To quote further from Mr. Chittenden's story:

The great naturalist rode four miles to call upon an obscure army officer whom he knew he could see in a short time by waiting at the boat. The officer was overwhelmed at the honor of the visit, and when Audubon offered to present his credentials he politely and gallantly replied that his name was too well known throughout the United States to require any letters. Audubon says of the occasion: "I was on excellent and friendly terms in less time than it has taken me to write this account of our meeting." Between his entertaining conversation and the shooting of some birds he contrived to detain the Captain for a good two hours before they returned to the boat.

Meanwhile the boatmen had not been idle. In the hold of the ship they had loaded all casks of liquor on small cars which traveled on a circular track.

Session, 27th Congress, No. 2, p. 424; and 1st Session, 28th Congress, Nicollet's map, p. 7.

When Captain Burgwin arrived in Audubon's company, he was received most hospitably and treated to a luncheon, in which was included as a matter of course, a generous portion from the private store embraced in Audubon's "credentials". By this time the young Captain was in most excellent temper and was quite disposed to forego the inspection altogether. But the virtuous Sire would not have it so. "I insisted, as it were," says the worthy navigator in his log of May 10, "that he make the strictest possible search, but upon the condition that he would do the same with other traders."

Needless to say, the liquor got past, for while the two captains were groping along by the light of a dim candle, peering into nooks and corners, some boatmen were slowly shoving the cars around the tramway behind the inspector so as to keep them out of his reach as he went. So the American Fur Company's agents went on their way rejoicing. "But woe to the luckless craft of some rival trader who should happen along with no Audubon in the cabin and no tramway in the hold."⁶⁵

In a journal of the voyage Audubon chronicled the visit to Fort Croghan, but did not record the incident so well described above. Concerning the fort itself, he wrote that it "was named after an old friend of that name, with whom I hunted raccoons on his father's plantation in Kentucky, thirty-five years before. His father and mine were well acquainted, and fought together with the great Generals Washington and Lafayette, in the Revolutionary War against 'Merry England.' The parade ground here had been four feet under water in the late freshet." He also recorded the fact that the officers of the post were nearly destitute of provisions the year before, and sent off twenty dragoons and twenty Indians on a buffalo hunt; and that they killed, within eighty miles of the fort, fifty-one buffaloes, one hundred and four deer, and ten elks.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Chittenden's *American Fur Trade of the Far West*, Vol. II, pp. 678-681.

⁶⁶ *Life of John James Audubon*, pp. 420, 421.

Sub-agent Richard S. Elliott, who had followed John B. Luce in March, 1843, made a lengthy report in the fall of that year. He conceived the idea that although the government had stationed a company of dragoons there, being under tacit obligation to protect the Pottawattamies, yet if the troops were withdrawn, the Indians would have additional reason to make a treaty to cede their lands to the government the coming spring or summer. The agent took care to state that he offered this not as a recommendation but as a suggestion only. Late in September, 1843, the dragoons marched away.⁶⁷

In the spring of 1843, it will be remembered, began the first united movement of emigrants from the settled States to distant Oregon. Among the ten-year-old pioneers of Iowa Territory also there arose much interest, ending sometimes in the organization of Oregon emigration societies. The newspapers of eastern Iowa, then the only settled portion of the Territory, advertised and recommended the advantages of Burlington as a suitable starting-point on account of its abundance of necessary supplies, and an excellent and very commodious steam ferry-boat across the Mississippi. Emigrants were urged to choose the short and easy route from Burlington by way of the Skunk and the Des Moines rivers to Council Bluffs, a distance of 350 miles, and cross the Missouri on a ferry at or near that point.⁶⁸

In the last week of May, 1843, fourteen or fifteen ox-wagons and a number of young men on horseback passed through Iowa City, headed for the Far West. Iowans of that day prophesied nothing but danger, privation, suffering, and death by famine or savage foes. The adventurers proceeded to Fort Des Moines, then just established at the Raccoon Fork of the Des Moines River, where they expected

⁶⁷ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 28th Congress, Vol. I, No. 1, pp. 391-396.

⁶⁸ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, March 25, 1843.

additions to their company. From there they intended to direct their course to Council Bluffs.⁶⁹ How many other bands of emigrants crossed Iowa Territory and followed the northern route to the West must be left to conjecture, and whether much of a trail was made across the Iowa prairies at this time cannot be ascertained. Many Iowans, however, were seized with the Oregon fever at this early date and the "Oregon trail" leading west of Fort Des Moines into the uninhabited portion of Iowa Territory was plainly visible and even used by a force of dragoons under Captain Allen in the spring of 1844.

Captain James Allen, commandant at Fort Des Moines, led a dragoon expedition up the Des Moines River through the Sioux Indian country in what is now the southwestern corner of the State of Minnesota to the Big Sioux River. This body of horse troops consisting of fifty-seven men marched southward down the beautiful valley of the Big Sioux and camped near the picturesque falls where the city of Sioux Falls now stands. On the 14th of September, 1844, they continued their course over a rough country, cut up by various brooks in what is to-day Lyon County. Captain Allen recorded in his *Journal* that they "en-camped at the mouth of one of them, and killed a bull standing across the river, six men firing at him by volley, and each ball taking effect"; and that buffalo had been in sight almost continuously since they struck the Big Sioux River so that they might have killed hundreds.

On September 15, they ascended some high bluffs, then made their way over smooth prairie, and in the afternoon struck what is now the Rock River in Sioux County, a clear little stream which they followed to its mouth to find a trading-house which the Sioux Indians had declared stood there. The dragoons pitched camp but saw no signs of a

⁶⁹ *The Iowa Standard*, June 1, 1843.

trading post, no trails nor any evidence of near habitation. For the next four days they drove their weary horses through the western part of Plymouth County, met with all sorts of trouble, declared that "the romance of marching through a wilderness country is much abated", and then turning eastward, completed their journey back to the advance post of civilization, Fort Des Moines. Captain Allen and his dragoons were the first white men who set foot in Iowa's northwestern corner, so far as the records show.⁷⁰

Not until the summer of 1845, it seems, were the original buildings of the Council Bluffs sub-agency abandoned and a new location found at a point opposite Bellevue, twenty miles below the mouth of the Boyer River and about thirty-five miles from the Missouri line. This place, long called Trader's Point, also went by the name of "Point Aux Poulos", and consisted of three trading-houses.⁷¹

The year 1846 was marked by a treaty for the departure of one race and by the permanent advent of another: before the exit of the Pottawattamies came the Mormons fleeing from their enemies in the State of Illinois. These refugees traversed the southern portion of the Territory of Iowa, through the settled counties and then the remaining two-thirds of the distance over a roadless, bridgeless, unpeopled stretch of country. East of their settlement at Mt. Pisgah (now Union County) they came upon traces of the Indians, for a Mormon elder wrote on May 11: "No game or wild animal of any description to be seen, having been thinned out by a tribe of Indians, called Pottawattamies, whose trails and old camping-grounds were to be seen in every direction."⁷²

⁷⁰ *House Executive Documents*, 1st Session, 29th Congress, No. 168, which is reprinted in *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XI, pp. 73-108. See pp. 84, 101-105.

⁷¹ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 29th Congress, Vol. I, No. 1, pp. 546-554.

⁷² *Journal of History* (Lamoni), Vol. II, p. 189.

The Mormons encountered no opposition: they passed the Indian village in what is now western Cass County, and when they reached the Council Bluffs agency in June, they were welcomed in a most friendly manner, winning the hearts of the Indians by giving a concert at their agent's residence. At a council their chief made an address in which he gave the newcomers "permission to cut wood, make improvements, and live where they pleased on their lands." Opposite Bellevue, at Trader's Point, the Indians had cut an approach to the river and established a ferry: they now did a big business carrying over, in the flat-bottom boats, the families and wagons, and the cows and sheep of those Mormons who were to spend the next few months at Winter Quarters (on the site of Florence, Nebraska). Many Mormon families, however, tarried permanently in what later became Mills and Pottawattamie counties.⁷³

The treaty made and concluded between the United States and the Pottawattamies at the agency on June 5th, 1846, was ratified by the Senate and formally proclaimed in July as the law of the land. The Indians surrendered all their lands in the Territory of Iowa in return for a tract of land upon the Kansas River, and on being furnished with wagons, horses, and other means of transportation agreed to remove to their new homes within two years.⁷⁴ The sub-agent, R. B. Mitchell, expressed a belief that they would depart during the winter or spring. In September he reported that nearly one-tenth of the Pottawattamies had died that year.⁷⁵

During the winter and spring the two government blacksmiths were constantly engaged in repairing guns, traps, and other implements required for their hunting expedi-

⁷³ Linn's *The Story of the Mormons*, pp. 367, 375, 376.

⁷⁴ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, pp. 413, 414.

⁷⁵ *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 29th Congress, Vol. I, No. 4, pp. 285, 300.

tions, and during the summer and autumn of 1847 they repaired wagons, and made log-chains and other articles for the emigration southward. Their miller was busy grinding and sawing, and "contributed largely to their wants in breadstuffs." Some of the Pottawattamies had been down to examine their new country and reported unfavorably. Thomas H. Harvey, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, came all the way from St. Louis to the Council Bluffs sub-agency to be present at the annual payment of the Indians and urged them to remove at once. In October they set out in large parties for their new homes, crossing the Missouri River at different points. By the winter of 1847, with the exception of a small band which determined to remain and hunt about the headwaters of the Des Moines River, all the Pottawattamies had taken leave of their Mormon neighbors, then the only settlers in the western part of the State of Iowa, and had vanished one stage farther on the journey westward, thus making room for the permanent occupation of their hunting-grounds by enterprising emigrants from the East.⁷⁶

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⁷⁶ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 30th Congress, Vol. I, pp. 738, 837, 877.

Strictly speaking the first settlers in western Iowa were the men who in 1840 and almost every year thereafter founded homes in the southern townships of what many years later became Fremont County, Iowa. These pioneers believed they were actually citizens of the State of Missouri because the boundary then was declared to be ten miles north of the present boundary. Had it not been for Missouri's mistake the survey and entry of lands as early as 1840 would have been prevented in territory still owned and occupied by the Pottawattamie Indians. See Howe's *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. II, p. 38.

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