

Some Iowa Indian Tales

By O. J. PRUITT

FATHER DESMET IN MILLER'S HOLLOW

There is some evidence that Miller's Hollow, in after years known as Kaneshville and now Council Bluffs, received its name from the first man to reside in the location. Two Millers are mentioned in local history and both may have lived in the Hollow. Therefore, it is doubtful to which credit should be given in the naming. One was a soldier serving at Fort Atkinson during its existence, 1818-19, and whose term of enlistment had expired. He married a squaw of the tribe of Bad Heart, who ran a trading post for a decade two miles north of Council Bluffs. This Miller lived with the tribe up to the time of their departure, sometime after 1832, when the meander of the river left Bad Heart's post fully a mile.

Bad Heart was a signer of the treaty of 1836 selling all of the land of southwest Iowa to the government authorities who desired to move here the Indians from Michigan, Indiana and Illinois near old Fort Dearborn. These Indians were the Pottawattamie, Chippewa and the Ottawa. Bad Heart and his tribe then were living on the Missouri Platte river opposite Leavenworth. Miller remained in this vicinity.

The second Miller, less known, but also recorded in history as being the one for whom the location was named, does not antedate the tenure of the soldier. Frances Guittar of the American Fur Company camped at the place as early as 1827.

DeSmet says that the embankments or barricade ruins seen in his early travels were those of the Bad Heart trading post, some two miles north of the Otoe village seen by Lewis and Clark. This village was at Big Lake or Mynsters Springs, within the present city limits of Council Bluffs.

Two conflicting names for Miller's Hollow are mentioned in early history, the other being Duck Hollow, but both names represent the same location. It is possible that Miller kept a flock of ducks and the location was very favorable for the rearing of ducks because of Indian creek and living springs, which for years supplied the early settlers, and also furnished water for street sprinkling within the memory of the writer.

Of the many characters of history relative to the location, the hero at once becomes the ideal of readers of history when perusing that which has been written of Father DeSmet. It is not the purpose of this article to go into detail of his life, but rather to relate some of the trials and hardships he suffered while on duty as a missionary to the Pottawattamies. He was given the old fort building, built of logs, which was for the protection of the Pottawattamie against the Sioux. The building stood at the corner of what is now State and Broadway streets in Council Bluffs. At both corners of the block are markers, one erected on the site of the first house built to accommodate the family of Davis Hardin, Indian agent, and the other erected by the County Historical Society in honor of DeSmet and to mark the site of the old fort. One of Davis Hardin's daughters is still living and taught school for years in the public schools of the city, being principal of the Junior High at the time of her retirement.

The fort was built in the summer of 1827 by a company of dragoons sent up from Leavenworth. Later Captain Stephen Watts Kearny turned it over to Father DeSmet for a mission.

RASCALITY OF THE CHIEFS

That the reader may comprehend the nature of the oversight and work allotted to the Reverend, it is well to know something of the three tribes brought to this territory. The Pottawattamie chief was (Sagonah) Billy Caldwell, a half-breed who accepted the ten thousand dollars from the officials at Washington to induce the Indians to give up their old homes in Indiana, Illinois and Michigan. In collaboration with him

was one Williamette, a French Canadian and squaw man. These two men connived in every way to exploit the Pottawattamie as well as the Ottawa under Big Foot, who had refused to live at the fort or near Caldwell, and the Pottawattamie. The Chippewa or Illinois tribe was located in what now is Mills and Fremont counties. Their chieftain was Waubonsie, a fairly intelligent person, who died while a resident of Fremont county. The late G. W. Kerns related to the writer that Waubonsie was put to rest in a tree burial on or near the farm owned by his father, while other old residents claim he had a natural earth burial near the state park bearing his name.

Father DeSmet visited Indiantown in midwinter of 1838. It was sixty miles from Miller's Hollow, now Council Bluffs. The weather was very cold and the Father was without boots. He wrapped his feet in rags and gunny sacks. It took him three days to travel there from Miller's Hollow. The first day he made the Indian trail along the West Nishnabotna river, and crossed the ice and slept in the timber on the site of the ghost town of old Macedonia.

The following day he went as far as Wheeler's grove. He had frozen one side of his face and frosted his feet. They were sore and swollen. He arrived the third day, tired and hungry. He dined with the "Princess" and by sign language assured the Princess that he enjoyed the meal which consisted of fricassee buffalo tongue, and bear grease mixed with flour and wild sweet potato. Since he mentioned the Princess, she must have been the daughter of either Waubonsie or Billy Caldwell (Sagonah).

The occasion of the DeSmet visit to Indiantown was to see how the camp was getting along. The Indians had been shipped by boat and marched overland from the Black Snake hills. When the band reached the West Nishnabotna, they followed it north and east to the site of the village. They arrived too late in the season to plant gardens. Hunting and fishing and the food furnished by the government were soon exhausted.

The Missouri river was frozen, so that no boats with supplies could navigate. It was not until late in April that the first boat with supplies reached the old Wray's Landing, south of Miller's Hollow. It was then that it hit a snag and sank. Some writers charged that Father DeSmet consumed considerable whiskey saved. The writer is convinced this assertion is a falsehood, for Father DeSmet always talked long and loud against the nefarious traders who by various tricks got whiskey into the territory.

CONVERSIONS BY DESMET

Now we come to the moot question. Who was the chief or subchief and was the Princess a daughter of Waubonsie? Nowhere in the history of Pottawattamie county does it mention that either Caldwell or Williamette had any children.

These two men dominated the lives of the Indians and influenced the government to permit them to handle the finances, particularly relative to the building of the mill on the Mosquito creek. They delayed the project, and the mill was not finished until after they died. A Mr. Scofield finished the mill and operated it for some time. Afterward it was known as the Parks mill. Whether Father DeSmet converted these two rascals and they repented, is as much of a conjecture as other dim things of the past. Father DeSmet did convert many of the Pottawattamie, however, and one of the women was for a time the wife of John Y. Nelson, the stage coach driver of the Buffalo Bill Wild West Shows.

John Y. Nelson was the man who piloted Brigham Young across the plains and was noted as a champion bull whacker. Nelson delayed the trek two days in Western Nebraska while he went to an Indian camp and traded thirty ponies for a squaw. She soon left him and walked eighty miles back to the Indian camp and to the tent of her father. The father refused to give back the ponies, saying: "You keep squaw; me keep ponies." Nelson's last wife was the mother of the three children who rode atop the stage coach in its bouncing

spin around the rough arena in the show's heyday. She was said to have been a distant relative of Red Cloud, the noted Oglala chief.

There is little authentic data as to who was the chief or sub-chief over the Indians at Indiantown. In the Indian language books of the Pottawattamie County Historical Society we find there were six Indians, all chiefs, named Big Foot. The one accredited to the Pottawattamie was in fact an Ottawa. The Ottawas were the first to leave Illinois, to a number of 151 in 1838. This was three years after signing the treaty. This number was later increased to 203 at Indiantown. It is evident that Big Foot married a daughter of Waubonsie and the "Princess" with whom Father DeSmet dined was the wife of Big Foot, whose Indian name was Maungee-zik. The Indian who was sub-chief at Indiantown was one named "Big Foot." The reason we use the term "sub-chief" is that Waubonsie was the chief of all tribes in these two counties as heretofore set out.

Big Foot took land and established a village at the confluence of Indian creek and the East Nishnabotna river, sixty miles east of Miller's Hollow or Council Bluffs. He had from time to time during his ten year sojourn, a hunting camp at the site of old Macedonia, the second oldest Mormon town in the county. The camp was in the grove known half a century ago as Tompkins.

In order to visit the tribe it required two or three days travel on foot. Father DeSmet did this in all kinds of weather and was always faithful to his charge. He had very little trouble with the tribes living at some distance, but it was an endless task to keep peace among the Pottawattamie who were constantly in contact with traders who filched them out of their annuities with regularity and precision. "Fire water" was their big item of trade and when the poor Indian became a victim of rum, he readily gave away his provisions and cash for cheap liquor. Drunken brawls were frequent and children and women suffered unlimited privations.

1,000 INDIANS ARE CONSOLED

There was a great deal of sickness, many deaths and few baptisms. Hunger was ever present and starvation loomed sure and certain during the winter of 1839. Supplies received before winter set in were inadequate, and the winter was long and bitter cold for the most part. The ice in the river was late in breaking up and when it did, a thousand Indians, consoled by the Father, watched and waited from the bluffs hoping to sight the smoke of a coming steamer.

Days went by, their patience exhausted, their stomachs empty, and they were in despair. Then one morning in April, the faint white wood smoke of a steamer was seen far down the river. A thousand Indians, men, women and children, rushed across four miles of bottom to Wray's Landing, now a part of Lake Manawa. They were led by the Father. His feet were wrapped in rags and had been all during the bitter winter. The steamer in trying to effect a landing capsized and sank, all supplies being lost! Only four articles were salvaged from the wreckage, a hand-saw, a plow, a pair of boots and a jug of wine.

DeSmet says he used the saw to complete the fort for his use and the boots were taken for covering of his feet. The plow was used to plow for gardens and the jug of wine is presumed to have been taken for sacramental purpose at the mission. DeSmet is silent on this.

Behind the mission and higher on the bluff was the cemetery. In after years it was destroyed and the ground used partly for street building and for the erection of Pierce street school. In the graveyard DeSmet performed the last rites for many. Among them were Billy Caldwell and Williamette, whose bones were removed to the Catholic cemetery and today bear the simple marking of "Indians."

Twice while here, Father DeSmet was able to keep the Sioux from attacking the Pottawattamie, but he was not able to keep them from killing hunting parties of Pottawattamies sent north and into the Boyer river

valley, considered Sioux grounds. Hunting parties had to pass through the lands used by the Winnebago and they were none too friendly. General Dodge said that his camp on the Simons run, while surveying for the M. & M. Ry., was constantly harassed by the Winnebagos. The Winnebagos were at that time living along the Pigeon creek, in the vicinity of Bibees camp, about three miles distant from General Dodge's camp. Later the Winnebagos were living on Detrow's Island, where the writer saw them in 1884.

During the time of Sheriff O'Neal's term, a white man named McIntosh and a half-breed named Bozo (probably a nickname) were arrested and charged with the theft of a cow, the property of Mr. Detrow. They were unable to give bond and languished in jail awaiting trial. It was a long and hot summer and an election year. It seems that the white man was tall and nervous, while the Indian was the short one of the pair. Day after day the tall man paced the cell, ever and anon inquiring the time. The laconic reply was always the same. It was a cutting jibe and as sarcastic as any Indian was capable of making: "It's time to milk."

Eventually, after months in jail, the politicians in the face of a coming election decided to free the rascals in order to be sure of some doubtful votes in Boomer township. They gave as a justifiable reason, that the punishment was fully long enough, as the critter was valued at less than twenty dollars, therefore not a penitentiary offense.

FACED DANGER MANY TIMES

Father DeSmet, though his life was often endangered while serving here, never once faltered in the explicit faith and trust in God. One night, cold and bitter, a squaw came to his cottage and demanded protection from her husband, who was on a drunken spree. Closely behind the fleeing squaw came the husband armed with a tomahawk. The Father at once opened the door and admitted the squaw and then knelt in prayer. When the angered Indian saw him in kneel-

ing posture, he hesitated. He feared the Black Robe whose "Medicine" was wrought by prayer. It was long enough for the Father to decide upon his next move. This was for the squaw to place the infant upon his bed and for her to also kneel. This was too much for the angered Indian and he turned away in disgust. He wanted to fight and when he found them in humble prayer and offering no resistance, he sought a more fertile field. He was found the next day just alive, having been severely beaten. Who it was that accommodated the fighter is not stated.

Two weeks after the sinking of the boat another hove in sight, and again the grand rush. This time the supplies were plentiful and everyone ate his fill. It was the first substantial meal the Father had eaten for two months. During February, before, he made a long and tedious trip to the village of Big Foot and had eaten of buffalo meat and venison, corn pone and hominy, cooked in the fat of buffalo. It was washed down with cold water taken from beneath the ice of Indian creek below Lewis, Iowa. On his return he trudged through the deep snow along the Indian trail, afterward followed by the Mormons, and slept out in the open, one night in Tompkin's grove, mentioned elsewhere. The next morning he ate the last of the food given to him by the Big Foot tribe and trudged onward toward the mission. He had to spend one more night in the open and reached the mission in the late afternoon of the fourth day. Fortunately the weather moderated and he suffered no frost bites, though he was poorly clad.

Father DeSmet abandoned this field for a mission in Kansas, but it was not for long ere he was sent on a greater mission which took him all through the vast west and among the hostile Indians. He was called Black Robe and peacemaker among the Indians. He did more to keep peace among the hostile tribes than the U.S. army, which he often served and received no pay.

When the marker in his memory was dedicated a few years ago, one of the attending Jesuit priests pres-

ent was one who acted as altar boy in the Catholic church of Omaha, where DeSmet said mass. From St. Louis, all across the country to the Pacific coast, are markers for this man and his deeds. There are streams, towns and places of education all named for the Black Robe. Over his grave in St. Louis is a simple monument marking the resting place, and not far away that of Father Veright, whom Capt. Joseph LaBarge exhumed at the mouth of the Boyer and freighted to St. Louis over the protest of the passengers who were afraid that the dreadful yellow fever germs might again prevail. The elder Father was buried in a wooden casket hewn from a cottonwood log and sealed with pitch. This down boat captained by LaBarge carried a vast amount of gold taken in Montana and those interested were afraid that it would be lost or stolen before they arrived at St. Louis. Every delay, such as exhuming of a body and stopping to refuel, was a source of worry and anxiety. See for confirmation the Life of Captain LaBarge. The Black Robe and the captain were the best of friends. It is regretted that so few of the facts of DeSmet's time at Council Bluffs are recorded.

Itupka's Grave?

On page 202, Bulletin 77, of the Bureau of American Ethnology, is shown a picture of an Otoe village on the Buffalo creek in Nebraska, taken in 1819. This was the home of Itupka, a warrior. Twenty years of war and hunting had injured his health. The exposure weakened his constitution and affected his lungs. He had tuberculosis. The Medicine Man gave him hot and cold baths. He grew worse.

Near the creek an ill-improvised vat was made. It consisted of a pit over which a small tent was pitched. It was filled with water and hot stones were tossed into the water to heat it. The patient was dowsed into the hot water first and then taken and tossed into the cold water of the creek. So says the Reverend Merrill, a missionary among the tribe in 1819.

Chief Elk Horn was the Otoe to whom Lewis and Clark gave a medal, the likeness of Jefferson. Itupka was his younger brother. At the death of the chief, Itupka became the owner of the medal.

The long winter of 1819-1820 had come to a close. April was now nearing the end. The meadow larks were singing. Yellow-headed blackbirds were in the willows and the horses of the village were grazing lazily on the young and tender grass.

It was an ideal springtime. Then it is said, youth turns to romance and in fancy idealizes his companion to be. Itupka was some better but the dreaded cough hung like a bloodsucker to a turtle. He walked and lay in the sunshine on the sunny side of his tent. The ultra violet rays seemed to warm his soul. He prayed fervently to the Great Wakonda for strength—strength that he might make a trip across the prairie some twenty-five miles to again see his sweetheart, Little Deer, in the camp of Bad Heart opposite the trading post of Manuel Lisa.

One morning after an April shower, the sun broke through the clouds in all its blazoned glory. The clouds slowly dissolved and the sky became clear and it was warm. Itupka chose a stout stick to help his progress as he trekked across the long stretch of prairie. Ever and anon he sat down to rest. He arrived at the Lisa trading post at sundown. He was given food and a place to sleep.

Would morning never come, thought Itupka. He was very anxious. He was so near, yet had the dangerous part of the trip to make. Crossing the Missouri river in a dug-out skiff requires skill and strength. Could he make it? Again he called upon the Great Wakonda. The sun was peeping over the walls of the bluffs on the Iowa side. He climbed into the skiff and set it adrift.

When he reached the midstream and the current, his strength failed. Despite his efforts the current was carrying him down stream. He gave up and lay back to rest.

Little Deer on the Iowa shore was watching. She took a bull boat and raced after the drifting dugout. She caught the skiff and tediously towed it ashore. They were a mile below the Bad Heart village. She made Itupka comfortable and went to the village for a horse and travois. When she had him safely in the tent of her father, she placed him in her bed and brought some warm broth. Itupka drank it and lay back and presently fell asleep. Soon he awakened with a fit of coughing. Blood streamed from his mouth. A hemorrhage of the lungs had taken place. Itupka sensed his life was fast passing.

"Little Deer, come close," he whispered. "I go, you stay. I go to meet the Wakonda. I go to the Happy Hunting Grounds." Then in his native tongue he said, "Thata" and gasped the last breath. It was "Goodbye."

The writer opened a rock lined grave on the Al Riche farm three miles north of Council Bluffs, Iowa. The mortuary offerings were three arrowheads, a small clay pot and a bronze medal with the likeness of Thomas Jefferson. Could this be the grave of Itupka? Archeology is sometimes a mystic thing. The slab rocks for this grave were transported fully three miles from the site of the old lime kilns in Lime Kiln Hollow. There are very few rock lined graves in this territory and those that exist are the work of the Cherokees. East of Loveland Doctors Stanliff and Stageman opened a mound that contained one rocklined grave. This is in the vicinity where the Woodland Culture held tenure in the past. They later moved ten miles south and remained along the North Pigeon creek for a few years. They were succeeded by the Cherokees and last by the Winnebagos under Chief Mud Turtle.

Grandma Kellogg's Indian Suitor

I pondered just how I would caption this story, for it has more than one feature. First, it deals with a near crime and a plucky pioneer woman. Second, it tells of a loyal husband and about the prairie chickens

that are now nearly extinct in western Iowa. I like to write stories of Indians when the parties interviewed are known for truth and veracity.

Mrs. Ed. Wilson, living in the famous Pony creek district of Mills county, told this story concerning her grandmother. Mrs. Wilson is a very dramatic story teller. She emphasized and stressed the tenseness of each move made by the attacker, and her grandmother's offensive, or counter action.

The heroine grandmother, pioneer, with her husband, James Kellogg, bought their land for \$1.25 per acre. The deed was signed by President James K. Polk. They built a one-room log house, with a fire place and crane, tongs and andirons. On the hearth of the fireplace grandma had a handmade rag rug. It took hours of labor to make it. This rug and some calico curtains at the windows are the only decorations. On the chimney was hanging an almanac which cost twenty-five cents. The only book in the house was the Book of all Books. This was read constantly, for they were devout Christians, living many miles from any "meeting house."

Ed. Kellogg owned a single-barrel, percussion cap, shotgun. In spare time he often hunted along the Missouri river bluffs. There were yet a few deer, a few wild turkeys, and occasionally he found an elk. The prairie cock and hen were plentiful, and he never returned empty-handed.

One nice warm November day he went along the bluffs to see if he could find and shoot some prairie chickens. Grandma, in anticipation of his return, kept a kettle of water boiling, so she would have it to scald the birds for plucking.

The door of the cabin was wide open, to freshen it up a bit. She went about her work humming a tune. Presently she heard footsteps. She thought it was Ed. and he would be laden with chickens. Upon looking up, however, she saw instead an ugly pox-marked Pottawattamie Indian, who strode in without the usual Indian salutation of "How!"

He said: "Injun want white squaw. Me come for you."

Grandma said: "Get out of here before I sic the dog on you."

The Indian advanced, drawing a long sharp knife, hoping to intimidate her. Mrs. Kellogg ran around the table in the center of the room, swung the crane out, and grabbed the iron kettle, which by now was filled with steaming hot water. She swung it in such a manner that the scalding water splashed on his moccasins. In the language of today: he received a "hot foot." That was enough to cause the Indian to retreat. He fled out the door and soon disappeared into the woods. She yelled, "Sic 'em Tiger" to the vicious half-breed hound. The dog, however, ran around the house in the opposite direction from the one the Indian had taken. The dog was untrained. Any high pitch of voice he understood to mean that he was the reason for the trouble. That meant he must make himself scarce for the time being. All this was before the Pottawatamie Indians were removed to Kansas.

Some place in this tale the Star iron kettle should be described. It had a sliding lid and the star on the lid was cast at the time of making. It held a full gallon of water, and when full, weighed eighteen pounds. Very few of these exist today outside of museums. They are relics of the past, like the spinning wheels, ox yokes, Conestoga wagons, and many other things of pioneer days.

The prairie chickens Ed. Kellogg shot that day must not be forgotten. He had three. The hound dog stole one of them and ran into the woods and ate it. The dog died with a full stomach, because he was shot as he came back toward the house licking his chops.

Horse Thief Hollow

In a box canyon in Oak Township, Mills county, are the remains of five caves where horse thieves lived and stabled horses. After some camouflaging the horses were sold to the Mormon Emigrants, Oregon Trailers and California gold rushers.

The first cave on the left as one enters, to be seen today, has part side wall and the entire back. Here visitors have carved their names. Further along, as one travels up the winding canyon, are four more of vestigial evidence and an almost filled well site.

The story of the deeds of the thieves was told to the writer by Mr. Mead whose farm adjoins the land upon which are located the caves. Mr. Mead is a very peculiar man, very reticent about personality, but overzealous in relating the story of the cave. For the above reason I refrain from quoting him, preferring to tell the story of the caves from what others have said.

The last person to inhabit one of the caves was Adam Fernow, a Pawnee Indian. This was twenty years ago. Upon being told the place was once the home of horse thieves he began to pack his traps and clothing and rubber boots. When he had these securely tied to the saddle he headed for Nebraska via the Douglas street bridge. "Ugh," he said, "Me move, me no like law to think me horse thief." He had been trapping muskrats, skunks, 'coon and 'possum. Two hours later I saw him on Broadway astride his horse with his traps clanking at the saddle side.

A little later I met the Pawnee Indian at Spaulding, Nebraska, where he was building a house of the ready cut variety. In 1927 we boarded at the same place and played pitch almost every night for pastime. He had been sent from Geneva, the Indian School, where he learned the carpenter trade. He is a fine cabinet maker.

One hundred and four years have elapsed since the horse thieves were active in this vicinity. The last one was hung by being placed upon a mule with a rope around his neck, then the mule was led from beneath the thief. The Smith and Wesson revolver the thief owned is now the property of a Sears Roebuck employee, who does not want his name given. Upon opening the gun handle he found a twenty dollar paper bill. George S. Wright had a duplicate of the gun. This sort of historical data is very interesting, but it falls out of the category of Indian Stories which I prefer to write.

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