

MILITARY POSTS IN IOWA

Map Showing Boundaries of Indian Lands Purchased in Iowa, Location of Military Posts and Red Rock Line.

AN HISTORIC INDIAN AGENCY

By RICHARD C. LEGGETT¹

There is little to indicate to the traveler through Wapello county, Iowa, on Highway 34, that the village of Agency is one of Iowa's historic spots. This little town, long known as Agency City, is located about six miles east of Ottumwa, about six miles northeast of old Fort Sanford on the Des Moines river, and about eight miles northwest of the site of old Iowaville. It is a beautiful spot on the divide between the Des Moines river and Big Cedar creek, and here was located the last Sac and Fox permanent agency in Iowa.

After the Black Hawk purchase in 1832, the cession of Keokuk's Reserve in 1836 and the Second Purchase in 1837, the eastern boundary of the Indian lands in Iowa was some fifty miles west of the Mississippi. The line ran from the Missouri line through the northeast corner of Davis county and thence in a northeasterly direction through Jefferson, Keokuk and Iowa counties to the southeast corner of Benton county, thence in a northwesterly direction through Benton, Buchanan and part of Fayette county to the Neutral strip at approximately the northeast corner of Bremer county.²

Immediately after the ratification of the Second Purchase treaty on February 21, 1838, the Indian Department deemed it advisable to move the Sac and Fox agency from the Mississippi to some point west of the Indian boundary. Black Hawk spent the winter of 1837 in Lee county, but moved early in 1838 to his last home near Iowaville. Appanoose had established his village at the mouth of Sugar creek on the Des Moines river near the present city of Ottumwa. After leaving his Reservation on the Iowa river, Keokuk first had his home on the Des Moines river near Iowaville. In 1868 the remains of the earthen embankment which had been thrown up around

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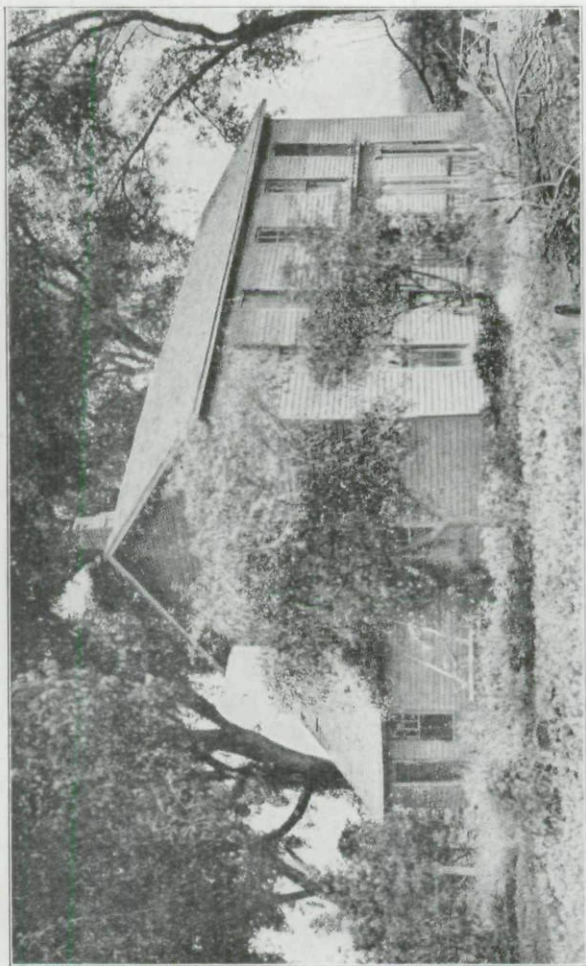
²Map in *ANNALS OF IOWA*, Vol. VII, p. 233; Brigham's *Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 37.

Keokuk's lodge were still to be seen. The enclosure was elliptical in form with an opening or gateway on the south side toward the Des Moines river. It was ninety feet north and south by one hundred and sixty feet long east and west. These dimensions indicate that the lodge of the great chief of the Sacs and Foxes was no insignificant affair.³

The Indian Department directed Gen. Joseph Monfort Street, the agent for the Sac and Fox nation, to move that agency to some point near the villages on the Des Moines river. Consequently, in the month of May, 1838, he organized an expedition to select the new location. Chief Poweshiek and about thirty of his warriors accompanied him as a bodyguard. On leaving their reservation on the Iowa river, they feared they might be surprised and cut off by their ancient enemies, the Sioux, but they were unmolested and safely returned to their homes after accomplishing their mission. A nature lover can easily visualize that cavalcade as they rode from their village on the Iowa river near Columbus Junction, keeping to the ridges, passing among the spring flowers, budding trees and all the beauty of springtime in southern Iowa, through the beautiful prairies of northern Henry and southeastern Washington counties, continuing over the wooded, rolling hills of Jefferson county and finally coming to a point on the divide between the Des Moines river and Big Cedar creek about seven miles west and seven miles north of the southeast corner of Wapello county. Here they located the new agency among the towering elms and majestic oaks which still survive. This location was about eight miles west of the Indian boundary as fixed by the 1837 treaty and a little farther from Iowaville. It lay on the route taken by the dragoons in 1836 when they marched to the Raccoon fork of the Des Moines; the village of Appanoose lay some six miles west, and the various bands of the Sac and Fox nation were located within a radius of about twenty-five miles.⁴

³Fulton's *Red Men of Iowa*, pp. 239-40.

⁴*Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, Vol. VII, pp. 364-378.



THE OLD INDIAN AGENCY HOUSE AT AGENCY CITY

The Official Residence of Gen. J. M. Street while acting as agent for the Sacs and Foxes in Iowa. It stands just below the present village of Agency City in Wapello county, Iowa.

BUILDINGS ERECTED AT AGENCY

General Street proceeded to contract for the necessary buildings, including a council house, a dwelling for himself and his family, a business office, stables and a blacksmith shop. The principal contractor was from Clark county, Missouri, and he proceeded to bring a force of mechanics, laborers and negro slaves to the scene. The council house was first erected and used as a store house. Then came the other buildings, and, in April, 1839, the general moved with his family to the new Agency, to there begin the final chapter of his life.

Gen. Joseph Montfort Street was the strongest personality affecting Iowa history during the period from the death of Julien Dubuque in 1810, to the coming of Governor Lucas in 1838. His life was one of continual adventure and of association with men who made history in the Mississippi valley. He was born in Lunenburg county, Virginia, on December 18, 1772, the son of Colonel Anthony Street of the Colonial army. Early in life he migrated to Kentucky, where he read law with the famous Henry Clay, and, for a brief period practiced law in the courts of Tennessee and Kentucky. With one John Wood, he started a newspaper at Frankfort, Kentucky. His paper made the first public accusation charging Aaron Burr, Judge Innes and others with conspiracy against the government. Street was immediately plunged into litigation, assaulted and finally nearly murdered. He was virtually forced to leave Kentucky and went to Shawneetown, Illinois, where he served as clerk of the courts for sixteen years. His wife was a daughter of Maj. Gen. Thomas Posey of revolutionary fame. While in Illinois he became a brigadier general of militia.

In 1827 he was appointed agent for the Winnebago Indians at Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, and then commenced the development of his true career. Previous to his advent, the Indian agents at Prairie du Chien had been the subservient tools of the Indian traders. But Street was an absolutely incorruptible, high principled

man who had the interests of the Indians at heart. He safeguarded them and obtained their confidence. The American Fur Company, H. L. Dousman, and the rest of the traders conspired against him, involved him in many complications and in two vexatious law suits, but they could not break his spirit or lessen his influence with the Indians. When they brought political pressure to bear on President Jackson, who had known Street in Kentucky, he emphatically informed them that there would be no change while he was president. President Van Buren also refused to remove him. To his last days he was known as a fearless man of absolute integrity.

After the battle of Bad Axe, the end of the Black Hawk war, the Winnebagos captured Black Hawk and the Prophet and brought them to General Street. He, in turn, took them to Col. Zachary Taylor, then in command at Fort Crawford. Gen. Winfield Scott, the future Mexican war hero, was in command at Rock Island, to which point Black Hawk was sent in charge of Lieut. Jefferson Davis. On boarding the boat, Street found Black Hawk in irons. He immediately demanded and procured the removal of the irons. He was present at the treaty negotiations at Rock Island in 1832, at Davenport in 1836, and at Washington in 1837. He personally knew and dealt with Governor Lucas, Governor Grimes, and other illustrious men of his day, and he enjoyed the respect of all who knew him.

He was an inveterate enemy of the liquor traffic with the Indians and he always used his influence to encourage them to farm, school their children and to learn to live in a civilized manner. Such a man was he who founded Agency and who had charge of it in its formative period.

NO RELISH FOR EDUCATION OR FARMING

For the first year there was little of moment. The Pattern Farm about a half mile northwest of the Council House was rapidly cleared, plowed and planted. Schools were established, the blacksmith shop put in operation and two mills, one on Sugar creek and one on Soap creek,

south of the Des Moines river, were rapidly completed. The Sacs and Foxes did not take readily to education or to farming. General Street was sadly disappointed at their refusal to adapt themselves to the educational measures which he fostered. His theory, as expressed in one of his communications to the War Department, was

To teach him agriculture and his family domestic economy, give him by experience right notions of individual property, and the plan of civilizing the Indian commences with the A B C of civilization.

His influence was combatted by the traders. Their avaricious schemes, sales of whiskey and making of enormous profits from the savages demanded ignorant and besotted customers. In 1841 an investigation of traders' claims by the government disclosed Indian debts to the amount of \$312,366.24. Among the items charged to the Indians were looking glasses at \$30.00 each; "Italian cravats" and "satin vests" at \$8.00 each; "dress coats" at \$45.00 and "superfine coats" at \$60.00. Governor Chambers protested against such charges and succeeded in having the total scaled down to \$258,564.34, much of which still represented waste, extravagance and robbery.⁵ General Street tried to change the whole attitude of the government toward the Indians. He wanted the traders abolished and the sales of liquor, luxuries and trinkets abated. But the government was not yet ready to adopt an enlightened Indian policy and the traders continued to debauch those whose annuities they coveted.

In 1840 General Street was taken seriously ill and passed away on May 5, 1840, at the Agency. His death deprived the Sac and Fox nation of their strongest friend and protector. The *Burlington Hawkeye and Iowa Patriot* once printed concerning him:

We fear that some interested persons have been imposing upon the Indians in making them think that General Street is linked in with Keokuk and others in defrauding the Indians. We have reason to think this, because we have known General Street for many

⁵Cole's *History of Iowa*, pp. 175-6.

years, and believe him to be incapable of injuring the red men. While other Indian agents have by some means or other become rich, General Street has remained comparatively poor, and we do not believe he has ever applied anything but his regular salary to his own private use. We know the interest that he has always manifested in behalf of the Indians and the pains he has taken to expose the frauds practiced upon them by traders and others, have rendered him an object of hate to many of these Indian speculators.⁹

His passing was a sorrow to both his white and Indian friends. Many Indians attended the funeral of their friend and followed his remains to the grave. The Rev. John Cameron of the Cumberland Presbyterian church, a lifelong friend of General Street, conducted the funeral services, preaching a fitting sermon in which nobility of character and unswerving integrity were shown to be the basis of the respect the deceased had everywhere inspired. Keokuk and other chiefs have been pictured as standing over the open grave of their friend, and with simple eloquence giving testimony to the great loss the Indians had sustained.

A touching tribute paid their dead friend was the request they made that his body be buried inside the reservation. The widow consenting, the tribe gladly followed the suggestion of Keokuk that a section of land on the reservation be given Mrs. Street, the land to include a burial spot selected by her. Keokuk was emphatic in declaring that this promised donation was in the name of the whole tribe, and equally emphatic in the assurance that even if only one Indian was left when the land be sold, that one would see to it that this promise to the dead be faithfully kept by the living.

Another touching tribute was paid to this good man's memory. On the death of Wapello, two years later, his dying wish that his body be buried alongside that of his "father and friend" was faithfully executed. The Indians brought his remains many miles and deposited them a few feet from the tomb of General Street.

In a well kept park on the right of way of the Burling-

⁹*Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, Vol. XV, p. 430.



GRAVES OF GENERAL STREET AND WAPELLO
at Agency City

The pillar with urn marks that of General Street; those in the foreground
of members of his family; and that of Chief Wapello next to
the picket fence in back-ground

ton railroad just east of Agency are three vaults each covered with marble slabs. One of these contains the mortal remains of General Street, another those of Chief Wapello and the third those of Mrs. Street. The park is maintained by the Burlington road and is one of the historic spots in Iowa. It lies across the Burlington tracks and about two hundred yards northwest of the location of the old Agency house.⁷

FRICIONS BETWEEN INDIAN FACTIONS

Even during General Street's administration as agent there was continual friction between the two factions of the Sacs and Foxes. One of these, headed by Keokuk, was the faction which had refused to participate in the Black Hawk war and usually had the ear of the government authorities, while the other or Black Hawk band, was usually in disfavor with the governor. The headquarters of the Black Hawk faction were at Eddyville. It must be remembered that Black Hawk had died at his home near Iowaville in October, 1838, and before General Street came to Agency. He was succeeded by one of his sons, Nash-e-as-kuk, Wishelamaqua, or Hardfish,⁸ and by Wapaksheek, the Prophet. Aligned against them was the celebrated Keokuk, recognized by the government as the head of the nation. The main bone of contention between the two factions was the distribution of the government bounty or annuity. Under the prevailing system the money was paid to the chiefs and by them distributed among the various families. In my judgment, from the records, Keokuk and his faction were getting the lion's share of the money. From the *Burlington Hawkeye and Iowa Patriot* of Thursday, January 30, 1840, we learn of a council held between Governor Lucas and a number of chiefs of the Black Hawk band at Burlington on January 23 and 24, 1840. Hardfish, the Prophet, Kekanwena, and

⁷Brigham's *Iowa*, pp. 46-57; *ANNALS OF IOWA*, Vol. II, p. 81.

⁸The name of Hardfish was given by Fulton as Wish-e-co-ma-que and one of his sons was Nes-se-as-suk. In the *Handbook of American Indians* Nasheakusk is given as the name of the eldest son of Hardfish by his wife Ashawequa, or Singing Bird; and Hardfish's two other children were Nasomosee or Gamesett, a son, and Namequa, a daughter. A portrait of Nasheakusk, or as given by Fulton, Nes-se-as-suk, is in the collection of the Wisconsin Historical association.

other chiefs bitterly assailed Keokuk, Appanoose, Wapello and Poweshiek, alleged that their families were destitute and demanded another distribution of the bounty money so that all would receive their proper share. Governor Lucas adroitly assured them the matter would be taken up with the Indian Department and pacified them for the time being. The next day the council was renewed. After a discussion of troubles with the Winnebagos and a forcible expression of their dislike of the Pattern Farm, Nash-e-as-kuk, the son of Black Hawk, said:

I wish to speak to you about the white people, to let you know that the white people have taken away my father's remains from the grave. I don't like it and there is not any one in my father's family that likes it. We did not think any white man would be guilty of this. They came in the summer and took away his head, and they have come since in the fall and taken away his body. We wish the governor to try to find out who has done this.

Governor Lucas assured the Indians that such an act was a grave offense against our law and punishable by a heavy penalty; that the government would seek out the offender immediately. He did locate Black Hawk's bones which were, with the consent of his family, placed in the museum in the Old Zion Church in Burlington and were burned when that edifice was destroyed by fire.

The next chapter in the annuity controversy is a council held at Agency on September 28, 1840. Governor Lucas attended in person and found the traders of the American Fur Company in abundant evidence. From St. Louis, Pierre Chouteau, Jr., himself, and Messrs. Sanford and Mitchell were in attendance. The two Davenports and Antoine LeClaire from near Rock Island, S. S. Phelps of Oquawka, Illinois, and his brother William Phelps of the Indian Agency were all there to watch carefully the trading interests. The council was not a happy one. Major John Beach, a son-in-law of General Street, who had been appointed agent, reported that the Indians refused to come to a reconciliation, and that no agreement could be reached between the two parties as to the method of receiving and disbursing the moneys. The discussion must

have been heated for even Governor Lucas and Agent Beach quarreled. The outcome was that payment was deferred. One can well imagine the chagrin of the traders assembled to get their money. In the midst of this state of affairs Governor Lucas was supplanted by Gov. John Chambers.⁹

Even the Indians practiced diplomacy. Hardfish, with a delegation of his principal men, hastened to Burlington for the purpose of interviewing the new governor. When they arrived in the vicinity of the town, they sent notice of their presence, with a request that suitable provision be made for them during their visit. The governor declined to receive the party, but sent them word that it was his purpose to visit their country in a few days. Hardfish and his men returned home very much disappointed. Keokuk, pursuing a wiser and more politic course, chose to communicate with the governor through the agent, and, in due time, it was arranged for the governor to meet the Indians at the agency.

SAGACITY OF CHIEFS COMPARED

On the day fixed the Indians were encamped near Agency, ready for the grand council. Long before the hour appointed for the opening of the council, Hardfish and his band, arrayed in great style, and mounted on their ponies, rode up in front of Governor Chambers' quarters, where they indulged in various equestrian performances. Then they dismounted and marched into the assembly room, where Hardfish and some of his principal men shook hands with the governor. While these proceedings were going on Keokuk was arranging a different program.

Keokuk had been apprised of the ardent attachment existing between President Harrison, who had appointed Chambers as governor but had died since the appointment, and Governor Chambers. He knew how close the two had been and how Chambers grieved over the death of his old commander. It was long after the hour for the council when faint sounds of music were heard in

⁹Parrish's *John Chambers*, p. 170.

the distance. The sounds gradually became more distinct, but the notes were not of a joyous character. They were solemn and dirgelike. At last the procession appeared, but there were no gaudy ribbons or feathers; no merry tinkling of bells responding to the tramp of ponies; no faces painted with vermillion, no bright colors in dress or gaudy ornaments. Instead of these, Keokuk and his party appeared arrayed in the garb of grief and mourning. The somber hues of clay had been substituted for the vermillion, while their lances and other implements were wrapped with wilted grass. Even Hardfish himself was astounded to behold the solemn cortege, and thought it strange that a death could have occurred to call forth such proceedings without his knowledge. When the procession had reached the vicinity of the council chamber Keokuk ordered a halt, the solemn dirge ceased, and the interpreter was instructed to announce to the new father that Keokuk would take his hand after explaining to him what all this meant. Keokuk, addressing the governor, then said:

Father: We were told not long ago that our great father at Washington was dead. We had heard of him as a great war chief, who had passed much of his time among the red men, and knew their wants, and we believed we would always have friendship and justice at his hands. His death has made us very sad, and as this is our first opportunity, we thought it would be wrong if we did not use it to show that the hearts of his red children, as well as his white children, know how to mourn over their great loss, and we have had to keep our father waiting while we performed that part of our mourning that we must always attend to before we leave our lodges with our dead.

At the conclusion of his remarks, Keokuk stepped forth and extended his hand to Governor Chambers, whose hearty grasp attested that the chief had touched the right spot. By his tact and ingenuity he had won the heart of the new father, and Hardfish had to content himself with a second place in the esteem of the governor.¹⁰

¹⁰Fulton's *Red Men of Iowa*, pp. 243-46.

The plight of the Indians was growing steadily worse. The wiles of the traders had plunged them deeper and deeper into debt, and the "water that burns" had undermined the health of both male and female. White men looked with covetous eyes upon the beautiful Iowa land and the scene was all set for another sale of their lands which would pay their debts and make more land available to the whites.

GOVERNMENT'S PURCHASE PROPOSAL

On the 15th day of October, 1841, there was convened at Agency a council whereat Gov. John Chambers, Hon. T. Hartley Crawford and Hon. James Duane Doty were commissioners on the part of the United States. James W. Grimes, later governor of Iowa and United States senator from Iowa, was the clerk of the session. The minutes as recorded by him are found in Vol. 12 of the ANNALS OF IOWA, 3rd series, Page 321 et seq., and are very interesting.

After a few introductory remarks, Mr. Crawford made the proposition to the Indians as follows:

We propose to you in behalf of the President of the United States to cede to the United States all that portion of the lands claimed by you and embraced within the present limits of the Territory of Iowa. For this we propose to give to you one million of dollars and money enough to pay your debts. The country we wish you to remove to should such cession be made, will be on the head waters of the Des Moines and west of the Blue Earth River. To remove apprehension of hostilities from your red brothers in that section, we propose to establish and man three forts there for your protection and to be established before your removal from your present villages. Out of the million dollars we propose you have farms and farmers, mills and millers, blacksmiths, gunsmiths, school houses and a fine council house. But what will be of more value to you than all, we would propose to erect a house for each family, each house to be worth not exceeding one hundred and fifty dollars, to fence and plow six acres of ground for each family. We propose to build for each of the chiefs a house worth not exceeding three hundred dollars and to plough twelve acres of ground for each. We intend you all to live in one village like brothers. This is the proposition we are authorized to make. If you will once

try this mode of life you will never quit it. The white people have found it good. You will be happy with your wives and children in fine, warm and close houses. Your children will grow strong and healthy, if kept from the weather and well fed and you will all live long.

Governor Chambers talked in favor of the proposition, urging the Indians to accept it for their own good and concluding:

In deciding upon the acceptance of our proposal we wish you to use your own judgment without the control of others. We have forbidden white men to have any intercourse with you during the progress of this treaty.

Another conference was held on the 16th of October, but the Indians were not yet ready to decide. On Sunday, October 17, 1841, the Indians concurred in refusing the proposition. Both Sacs and Foxes were unanimous in their refusal to sell and leave their homes. Wapello, the chief of the Fox Nation, pathetically said:

You said you were sent by our Great Father to treat with us and to buy our land. We have had a council and are of one opinion. You have learned that opinion from our chiefs and braves who have spoken. You told us to be candid and we are. It is impossible for us to subsist where you wish us to go. We own this country by occupancy and by inheritance. It is the only good country and the only one suitable for us to live in on this side of the Mississippi river and you must not think hard of us because we do not wish to sell it. We were once a powerful, but now a small nation. When the white people first crossed the big water and landed on this island they were then small as we are now. I remember when Wiskonsin was ours and it now has our name. We sold it to you. Rock River and Rock Island were once ours. We sold them to you. Dubuque was once ours. We sold that to you and they are now occupied by white men who live happy. Rock River was the only place where we lived happily and we sold that to you. This is all the country we have left, and we are so few now, we cannot conquer other countries. You now see me and all my nation. Have pity on us. We are but few and fast melting away. If other Indians had been treated as we have been, there would have been none left. This land is all we have. It is our only fortune. When it is gone we shall have nothing left. The Great Spirit has been unkind to us in not giving us the knowledge of white

men, for we would then be on an equal footing, but we hope He will take pity on us.¹¹

To those who know eastern Iowa, the beauties of the lands he referred to—"The hills, rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun, the vales stretching in pensive quietness between, rivers that move in majesty and the complaining brooks that make the meadows green"—there is no fairer land. A candid review of the treatment accorded the Sac and Fox nation, of the swindling, whiskey selling traders, of the bad faith in treaty making, leads one to sympathize with Wapello. Yet, liquor, gambling and laziness seem to bring the same reward to both red and white men.

The council adjourned, with Governor Chambers admonishing the Indians:

It was kindness on the part of your Great Father which induced him to offer to buy your land, to furnish you money with which you could render yourselves, your wives and your children comfortable and happy. It is my business to superintend your affairs and watch over your interests as well as the interests of the government, and I want you to reflect upon the fact that in a few days your money will be gone, you will be without credit—you may be unsuccessful in your hunts and what will become of you. Even your whisky sellers will not sell you that without money or an exchange of your horses, guns and blankets for it. Many of you do not reflect upon this now, but you will before a year, with sorrow.¹²

DEBT AND POVERTY INDUCED ACTION

Among the Indian villages in the winter of 1841-42, debt and poverty were working a change of heart. One day in February, Keokuk, Appanoose, and Wapello came to the Agency house and told Captain Beach that they desired to cede a part of their land and so pay off their debts. They added that it would please them to be invited to Washington to see the Great Father and there have a treaty council. And the next day Hardfish came also to the agent and expressed his concurrence with the plan. Early in September Governor Chambers paid a

¹¹ANNALS OF IOWA, Vol. XII, p. 329.

¹²ANNALS OF IOWA, Vol. XII, p. 321 et seq.

visit to the Indian country to arrange for the payment of annuities which was made in that month. Upon his return to Burlington he found waiting for him instructions from the United States government to enter into negotiations with the Sacs and Foxes and with the Winnebago Indians.¹³

So, on October 4, 1842, a council was called at Agency for the purpose of negotiating the purchase of the Sac and Fox lands in Iowa. This was the beginning of the end of those Indians in our state. Governor Chambers was commissioner for the United States. The traders were well represented but were not permitted to interfere with the arrangements. Antoine LeClaire of Davenport and Josiah Smart of Agency were the interpreters.

I quote from the account of an eyewitness, Hon. Alfred Hebard:

“At the appointed time the tribes had been gathered and camped near the site of the present town of Agency City. Captain Allen, with his command of United States dragoons stationed at Fort Des Moines, had been ordered to be in attendance to guard against disturbances—and more needed to watch over troublesome whites than over Indians. For a council chamber the agent, Captain Beach, had prepared a large circular tent, with a slightly raised platform on one side for the commissioner, his interpreter, and a few others. The interpreter was the well known Antoine LeClaire, of Davenport. A circular row of seats ran around the body of the tent for the accommodation of the chiefs.

“By the advice of General William Henry Harrison (Old Tippecanoe), whose early life had been spent among the Indians as governor of the Northwest Territory, our commissioner donned the full uniform of a brigadier general of the United States army. After taking his seat with his interpreter and his unadorned aids, Keokuk and his fellow chiefs filed in slowly and as gravely as a band of Roman senators—Keokuk directly in front of our now

¹³Parrish's *John Chambers*, pp. 177-179.

General Chambers, with his braves on either side. All being seated, our showy general arose and addressed his friends and brethren in a very complimentary speech, which was Indianized by our interpreter as he went along, sentence by sentence. This speech was full of fine adjectives and friendly sentiments, but meaning little more than a cordial, ceremonious introduction. In response, Keokuk quickly rose, took a few measured steps to the middle of the open area, raised his right hand, glanced at his comrades, and said: 'We are happy to meet you here today, as the representative of our Great Father in Washington, in friendly council.' His address was also Anglicized by the interpreter as he spoke, but was apropos and fitted to the occasion. A glance at his bearing—his self-possession—his intellectual and expressive countenance—at once revealed his great superiority over his fellows. All was in keeping with the fashion of the present day—considerable fine talking, but little of importance said. After these opening speeches and general greetings at the first council, there was a general handshaking and all retired. The Indians in their appearance were not outdone by our showy brigadier. Each wore bracelets on their wrists and various dangles in their ears, having a fancy war-club in one hand, richly embossed with large-headed brass nails.

KEOKUK THE MASTER MIND

"In the daily meetings of the council the fact was still further revealed that there was one master mind among the Indians, and that was Keokuk, not only head chief but head and shoulders above all his associate chiefs. His individuality was marked—his oratory was proverbial—so intense and energetic were his words and his gestures, when aroused, that he would carry his audience with him whether they understood a word or not. He was the Daniel Webster of the tribe. Our organization being completed and ceremonious introductions over, the first thing by way of business was to ascertain the amount of obligations the Indians were honestly under to their white

neighbors, as well as to the large licensed traders. To this end all parties interested were allowed to present their claims with such explanatory statements and evidence as they were disposed to offer. After careful examination, each claim was presented to the Indians in council, to hear what they had to say, and no claim was to be allowed until after such presentation. The duty of examining and sifting these claims was assigned to the late Gen. A. Bridgman, of the city of Keokuk, and myself—and a heavy job it was. In amount it ran up to about a quarter of a million dollars, and kept us very busy for over three weeks, all the days and half the nights—for which service we received our camp fare free, and the liberal sum of three dollars a day in cash for the time actually employed. Financially, it did not make us, and I trust it did not break Uncle Sam or anybody else. There were three large firms licensed to trade with the Indians. The principal or largest one was that of a fur company in St. Louis, headed by a Mr. Chouteau and conducted by his son-in-law, Major Sandford. Another was that of the Ewing Bros., of Indiana. Both of these were located on the Des Moines river where the city of Ottumwa now stands. The third establishment was managed by a former merchant of Burlington by the name of Eddy, from whom the Eddyville of today took its name.

“When the real question—the terms of sale—was taken up, the claims and debts having been pretty thoroughly considered there was little of incident worth recording—except the speechmaking, and the great effort to brag up the country—an effort in fact to drive a good bargain as well as to make a display. Keokuk was too shrewd and too wise a man not to have seen the end from the beginning. He said little at first, but allowed bucks and braves to talk all they pleased—in fact allowed them to think they were doing it all. Their general oratory, in which many seemed to take pleasure, followed a common line of thought, giving it a tone of sameness and monotony; and still, it was not without interest. They claimed that the Great Spirit made this beautiful country, and

made the Indian and put him in it. His title then ran back to the beginning of things. There was no question about that. No memory of man recalled—no tradition ever taught anything to the contrary. Tribal relations sometimes changed and occupied different localities, but the race held possession. The features and good qualities of the country were a prolific theme, and no one familiar with the virgin lands of Iowa, before they were marred and disfigured by the plow and the harrow, would gainsay a word of their proud description. In journeying over them one felt a quickened motion in his pulses, there was so very much air to breathe, such endless range, unhindered by a single line of severalty or demarcation. Evidently the Indians were lovers of nature and appreciated her beauties. They talked of their great meadows of green, gay in the aftermonths of the season with blooming flowers—of the springs and running streams—of the groves that bordered the streams, and especially of the great sycamores and walnuts, that stood in vast numbers on all the larger alluvions. They talked of the sun and the moon, as though made for them—of the stars, with a kind of wondering delight, as guardian watchmen—of their Great Spirit hovering over them, perhaps, but they did not know. Wherein do they differ from us? Who does know? Science, taking a hint from nature, has wrought out wonderful problems. But whoever attempts the 'Starry Realm' will soon find a limit to his pen.

"After this efflorescence of oratory by the chiefs and braves were over, and the real business was brought forward, Keokuk resumed his place as head chief of the tribes. The terms and details were soon arranged. A public sentiment had been worked up in favor of the proposition of the government, as presented by the commissioner, so that the whole subject became a matter of easy solution. A small tract of land, or reservation, was to be assigned them in Kansas as their future home, and a money balance of twelve hundred and fifty thousand dollars allowed them, for relinquishing their entire body of lands in Iowa. From this sum was to be deducted the

amount of their debts ascertained as before described, leaving about a million dollars or more to be invested in the usual way, from which they were to derive a stated income. This, added to previous resources, made them very independent, becoming more so, individually as their numbers diminish. The cost to the government of the land released did not vary far from twelve cents an acre. The bargain was a good one for all concerned—especially for the Indians. Though still intense in their native prejudices, they had borrowed habits from their white neighbors, giving rise to wants, which the chase and their indolent habits could not supply. They were human and needed food and raiment of some kind. The Great Spirit had made them swift of foot, and they were skillful marksmen with the bow and arrow, but the buffalo had disappeared, and smaller game was becoming less. They needed blankets for their braves, and clothes and chintres for the use of their squaws and papposes.”¹⁴

Thus did the Sac and Fox nation barter away the last of their Iowa lands. The terms of the treaty were in short that the Indians ceded to the United States all of their lands in Iowa, reserving the right to occupy for a term of three years from the date of the treaty, all that part of the lands lying west of a line running due north from the painted or red rocks on the Whitebreast fork of the Des Moines river, and received therefor Eight Hundred Thousand dollars and the payment of their debts to the amount of approximately Two Hundred Sixty Thousand dollars.

The Sac and Fox agency was maintained at Agency until the spring of 1843. Then the agent went with the Indians to the Raccoon forks of the Des Moines where the new agency was established for the last three-year period of the Indians stay in Iowa.

And so we see Agency was the stage on which an important part of Iowa's early life was enacted. Its importance waned with the passing of the Indians. Yet, it is a marked spot in Iowa history.

¹⁴ANNALS OF IOWA, Hebard's *An Indian Treaty*, Vol. I, p. 397 et seq.

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