



MONUMENT OF CHIEF JOHNNY GREEN
Marshalltown, Iowa

Erected on June 20, 1918 by the Historical Society of Marshall county
and unveiled by Violet Wanatee, a great grand-
daughter of the Chief

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JOHNNY GREEN'S HIGH AMBITION

By LUCRETIA JUNE HAYDEN¹

The last Indian chief well known to the early settlers of southwestern Iowa was known as Johnny Green, though he had a different Indian name. He wanted to be like the white people. He wanted to be civilized and live as others do. He wanted to and did own Iowa land in his own name and right.

Johnny Green was a Pottawattamie and he and his family later became one with the Musquakies on the Iowa river. Long after there were fine settlements of white people in southwestern Iowa, Johnny Green and his little band of Pottawattamie were familiar in Union, Adair and Ringgold counties. He was always friendly. His people were not troublesome. At one time or another they had been of great help to the white people in fighting off the warlike Sioux Indians who came down into Iowa. There is a monument to the memory of Johnny Green in the cemetery at Marshalltown.

Johnny Green and his band of Pottawattamie Indians, numbering from 150 to 200, camped on what is known as Twelve Mile creek in Union county, about seven miles east of Creston and close to where the present Highway No. 34 crosses the creek. In fact, the road now passes directly through the camping place of that time. That was a fine place for their camp. The creek then carried much water and was somewhat rapid. The Indian camp was on both sides of the creek, the tepee of the chief being on the west bank and those of the followers on the east bank.

¹Mrs. Hayden's maiden name was Emerson. She was a teacher for many years and died in February 1940, aged 80. At the reunion of the Union County Historical association the preceding summer she gave the substance of this paper in an informal way and at the request of THE ANNALS editor wrote it out.

It was an ideal camping place, for the stream was well supplied with fish, as were nearly all the small streams of that time, and there was abundance of timber. The hills were covered with trees of walnut, maple, elm, oak, and hickory. There was an abundance of wild fruit, like plum, grapes and crabapple, and the hazel bushes were everywhere. Hunting was good all along the streams, with good trapping—wild turkeys, deer, otter, mink, raccoons and bobcats. The Indians could live in comfort, and they were very happy.

At this time, about the year 1864, Johnny Green had a squaw and two sons and a daughter, as I remember it. The daughter was known to us as Sunbeam,² a beautiful maiden of sixteen years, but she had that dread disease, consumption, and was slowly fading away. It is of the oldest son that I wish to write. He was to take his father's place at the head of the band.

My father was S. L. Emerson, a pioneer of that region, and one who took great interest in all that related to the people, both white and red. We lived at Afton which was very near. My father and Chief Johnny Green became good friends and often visited together.

One day the chief came to our home and with him was the son John then about 18 years old. The boy was a tall, fine looking young brave, with a kindly way to all, and evidently of superior qualities. My father took quite a fancy to young John and they became fast friends and visited often. Generally the chief and the younger man came together, and many times had a dinner with us.

WANTED TO BE LIKE WHITE FOLKS

Then came a time when the young man unfolded his heart to my father and disclosed to him what was his ambition. He wanted to be a better Indian. In fact he

²C. H. Chuck, a grandson of Johnny Green, lived to an advanced age on the Musquakie farm in Tama county, and was a policeman there. He was struck by a locomotive some years ago and killed. He told the late Curator Harlan that there were four sons and one daughter to the chief, and gave the name of the daughter as Flash of Light which is pretty close to Sunbeam. He stated that she was married and some of her descendants still live on the Iowa river. The name of Johnny Green was Kish-ka-gua, but he was nicknamed Wa-wa-wa. Another form of the Indian name for Johnny Green was Che-me-use. It was under the name Johnny Green, however, that the chief purchased land in Ringgold county, since he could not have so purchased it as an Indian.

did not want to be an Indian at all. He said that he knew he was some day to become chief of the little band and he fully realized the great responsibility that would be upon him. He had learned to speak English very well, as had many of the Indians and the chief.

John Green, junior, said that he knew very well that he could do more for his people if he had education like the white boys. He really had a great desire to better himself and to do better for all his people and asked my father to give him help.

The boy asked my father to come with him to the Indian camp and talk with the old chief, then probably 75 years old, and see if it would not be possible for the younger man to go to school to study and learn like the white people. There was a school in our district being taught by Nancy Barber, an aunt of mine. Father thought it could be arranged.

Well do I remember the day father and mother made the visit to the great chief, Johnny Green. It was on Sunday and they visited together a long time; finally the chief asked father if John might stay in our home and attend school, working for his keep.

Mother made one proviso, that John could visit his father during the day, but could not spend the night there, for we all knew, as mother did, that cleanliness and sanitation was not common to them. John always held that against mother.

Well, John came, and after a good hot bath, clean clothes and arrayed like the boys he was to go to school with, looked quite like our boys, only many shades darker. He would soak and rub and wash his hands, then look at them and say, "Ugh, heap Indian yet." Father told him he could never wash himself white, but could call himself John White, which he did from that time on, and was very proud of his name.

He made rapid progress in his studies, father coaching him of evenings. His one proud possession was his slate and pencil which he prized above his books.

John taught his schoolmates how to make the bow and arrow. The bow of hickory, dressed down just so, and scraped with shells, rubbed down, bent properly, the buckskin string adjusted; then hung up in the fireplace in the smoke to season, and the tension of the string adjusted from day to day, until it was properly seasoned. The arrow very carefully made, with feathers of the same size, to carry it swiftly and straight to the mark. Many happy times were spent together, shooting at game. John formed great friendships among his schoolmates and their parents.

SUNBEAM PASSES TO THE BEYOND

In the spring of 1866 the Indians moved from Twelve Mile creek camp into Adair county, on Grand river. Sunbeam was bedfast at the time of moving; to carry her as gently as they could, they had long poles coming up on the ponies sides, like shafts, a sort of frame covered with buckskin and dragged behind. On this they made a bed of blankets, and there the sick girl lay, bumping along over the rough roads; but they did the best they could, in their primitive way, to make her comfortable.

Several months later, a young Indian came bringing the news that Sunbeam was dying. The father had sent for John. John hastened to go, and was gone a couple of weeks before returning. He was sad and told about the death of Sunbeam, and how sad and lonely his father was, and that his father wanted him to return to the tribe. "What shall I do?" he asked. Father told him that he must decide for himself, as that was a personal matter. John went out into the woods and was gone a long, long, long time. When he came back he said: "I will go to my father and my people."

Mother helped him get his belongings together; and he gave his beloved slate and pencil to my little brother Lincoln, whom he loved so well. Then, after saying "good-bye" to all, he mounted his pony, and with bowed head rode sorrowfully away.

JOHNNY GREEN'S DEATH

Johnny Green died in Marshall county in 1868, soon after coming from southwestern Iowa.³ This band of the Pottawattamie lived part of the time on the Missouri river near Council Bluffs, a part of the time along the Grand river, and both earlier and later on the Iowa river along from Tama to Eldora. They regularly had their allotment from the government, consisting of scarfs, blankets and wearing apparel. They trapped game and traded their furs for coffee, meal, etc.

At the time of the World's Fair in Chicago, my brother Willis visited the Pottawattamie tribe which was camped there during the fair, and made himself known to the chief, John White, then an old man. He cried for joy, being so glad to see brother and hear from the family once more.

Brother learned that he had married a Canadian maiden and that they had several sons and daughters. Our family has often expressed the wish that some of us sometime might come in contact with some of our loved friends, John White's family.

A VISIT FROM THE INDIANS

One day the latchstring at our cabin was out, and mother busy with her home duties, we youngsters playing about, when suddenly the door swung open and seven stalwart Indian braves in blankets, strode into the room in single file.

³There has been some controversy over the place of burial of Johnny Green, but he is said to have lived on land now occupied by the Iowa Soldier's home at Marshalltown. He died in 1868. It was related that at one time the Sioux Indians came into Marshall county with hostile intent, and it was Johnny Green who parleyed with them and secured a conference which resulted in the departure of the Sioux. On June 20, 1918 a granite marker was erected in honor of the chief who had always been a friend of the whites, and a great grand-daughter of the chief, Violet Wanatee, unveiled the same. The inscription follows:

In Memory of
JOHNNY GREEN (CHE - ME - USE)
An Indian Chief
The Friend of the White Man
1795-1868
Erected by the Historical Society of Marshall
County

Mother was concerned, but calm, gave them chairs around the fireplace, gathered we youngsters together, telling us not to be afraid, and waited to see the meaning of their call.

She soon found the old Seth Thomas clock, which hung on the west wall, was the object of their visit. They turned in their chairs, pointed to the clock and chattered together as it merrily ticked away, watching the hands go round. Finally it chimed the half hour, and they laughed and chattered together. The next half hour they sat in silence watching the hands move, finally it chimed the number of hours, they laughed, long and loud, then arose and strutted out Indian file, to mother's great relief.

Perhaps some will not understand what is meant by the latchstring. A board about two or three inches wide fastened on the middle of the door, reaching across to the opening of the door and falling into a socket on the door frame, made of heavy wood; a buckskin string was tied around the latch and slipped through a hole in the door above the latch; during the day the latchstring was outside the door by which the board could be lifted from the socket, but at night the latchstring was pulled in, and this locked the door.

Especially do I remember one Indian named William; he was both vain and tricky. His chief delight was to dress himself up in a beautiful buckskin suit, embroidered with many colored beads, about a dozen strands of beads around his neck, beaded moccasins, face painted in yellow and red stripes, and feathers in his hair. He would come and strut back and forth in front of our door, thinking, I suppose, we would envy his grand dress up. But we could stand that far better than his coming early in the morning before father and mother were up, peeking in the windows. You may be sure we youngsters in the trundle bed, would tuck our heads under the covers. Father would get up and give him a handout, but the

trouble was, William would return to camp with his hand-out, and then a half dozen or more, one by one, during the forenoon would come for his portion.

A WEDDING AND WEDDING PRESENT

During their stay in this camp of about a year and a half, there was a wedding. Eagle Feather and White Swan were to be married. He went to Afton, Iowa to get a present for his bride, and on his way home met father, and confidently showed him the present which was a beautiful red silk handkerchief. This gift to his bride meant to him the same as the ring to us.

There also, was a death, during their stay, a young lad. They buried him with all his earthly possessions, not forgetting his dog.

One day two braves came to father and wanted to trade a long woolen scarf for two bushels of corn. They spread their blankets on the ground, father measured out the two bushels of corn, putting one bushel in each blanket. One Indian a sort of "Doubting Thomas" fellow, counted the ears in each blanket and found his was shy a couple of ears, forgetting the ears varied in size, so father gave him the extra ears.

During the one and a half years they were our neighbors we never heard of them stealing or pilfering. Johnny Green's motto was "Honesty." He was a grand old chief, and we their pioneer friends, enjoyed their sojourn amongst us.

CAMELS ON AMERICAN DESERTS

Fourteen camels from Texas are to be placed in the Central park in New York. Most of these camels were imported by the war department to work in the transportation of supplies across the deserts of New Mexico.—*Iowa Homestead and Horticulturist*, March 4, 1868.

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