

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF LEE CO.

BY ISAAC R. CAMPBELL ESQ.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ANNALS OF IOWA:

I have been attempting, for some time past, to collect and arrange in proper form, information which might preserve a portion, at least, of the early history of LEE COUNTY, IOWA. For this purpose, I addressed letters, propounding questions and making suggestions on the subject, to a number of our surviving pioneers, and have received, in several instances, replies full of interest.

Among others, is a letter from ISAAC R. CAMPBELL, ESQ., of St. Francisville, Mo. I inclose it herewith, and request its insertion in the ANNALS. I am satisfied your readers will be much gratified by its perusal.

I have made no changes in the letter and desire that none be made.

Yours, respectfully,

EDWARD JOHNSTONE.

Fort Madison, Iowa, February 16th, 1867.

ST. FRANCISVILLE, CLARK COUNTY, MO., }
January 4th, 1867. }

HON. EDWARD JOHNSTONE:—*Dear Sir:* It affords me a pleasure to inform you of what I know in relation to the first settlements and early history of Lee County or Southern Iowa. I first visited this locality in June 1821, it being then a wilderness, and inhabited by the Sac and Fox tribes of Indians.

The first marks I observed indicating the proximity of the white man, was at *Puck-e-she-tuc*, or "foot of Rapids," now KEOKUK. A log cabin had been erected here one year before this, under the supervision of Dr. Sam'l C. Muir, a Surgeon in the U. S. Army, located at Ft. Edwards, now Warsaw, Ills.

The next settlement, and probably the first made by a white man in this country, was six miles above, at *Lemoliese*, now Sandusky; a French trader occupying this post, being engaged in traffic with the natives; his nearest neighbor Bloudeau resided about one mile above. Monsieur Lemoliese had a very amiable lady for a wife, who was fond of dress. She frequently, to please him, arrayed her person in gown, bonnet and shoes, but could not be prevailed upon to continue the costume, as her native garb, the blanket and petticoat, were more congenial to her feelings and taste.

At the head of the Rapids, MONTROSE, was an Indian village, Chief's name, in English, "*Cut Nose*." Below the creek running into the river, on the lower side of the Indian town, were the remains of a deserted trading house, around which was growing a number of apple trees.

On the opposite side of the river, (NAUVOO,) was another village of the Sac^v tribe, *Quash-quaw-me*, Chief. I have often heard it remarked that this dignitary, originally sold all the land embraced in the State of Illinois, to the United States Government. The Nauvoo Mansion, formerly the residence of the prophet Joseph^v Smith, occupies a portion of their graveyard, where many a warrior's bones have long since mouldered into dust.

As we passed on up the river, the next place of attraction was old FORT MADISON, ten miles above the head of the Rapids, situated on west side, half a mile below a sand bluff, arising almost perpendicularly from the water's edge. This Fort was constructed by Col. Zachariah^v Taylor, and named in honor of James Madison, President of the United States.

After leaving this old Fort, on the second day we arrived by keel-boat at *Shock-o-con*, (Flint Hills,) now BURLINGTON, situated on the west side of the river, about twenty miles above. Here was a trading post, occupant's name I have forgotten, and at the mouth of Flint Creek, or River, a short distance above, was located a Fox or *Musquaroka* village. Its ruler and law-giver was the patriarch chief, *Timea*.

Fifteen or twenty miles further up the river, on the east side, was OQUAWKA, ("Lower Yellow Banks"). This point I did not visit, and will not attempt to give any account of its early history.

I will now retrace my steps down the River to the North Fabius, in Lewis County, Mo., eight miles west of Quincy, where I remained on a farm for four years. During this period I had occasion to travel over Lee Co. more than once, and at one time in company with an Indian for my guide. I started for "*Cut Nose Village*," (Montr^vose) and on arriving at the Des Moines, we found it swollen so much, as to compel

us to swim our cattle, and construct a raft to cross our wagon and load. After being securely landed on the east bank of the river, after packing up, we pursued our journey, ascending the high lands above Grave-yard Bluff, (Buena Vista,) and following the divide between the Mississippi and *Se-sa-paw-qua-Sepo*, (Sugar Creek,) traveling east of north, we soon came in sight of a lone tree, standing upon the margin of the bluff, two miles south-west of our destination.

This familiar land mark, to my guide, assured us we were traveling in the right direction, and by increasing our speed we were soon at our journey's end, completing the first trip made through Southern Iowa by wagon and ox team.

As an account of my residence in Missouri will not interest you so much as other localities with which you are more familiar, I will next refer you to my removal and settling at Commerce, (*Quash-qua-me* village) in the fall of 1825.

Capt. James White, my father-in-law, having preceded me here some time before, purchased from Julien, a French trader, all his improvements, consisting of an old dilapidated trading house, and all the land embraced in the Indian village, extending one and a half miles above and below the trading house on the river. In this transfer, Monsieur Julien represented to Capt. White, that this claim could be held as a Spanish grant, as he, Julien, had settled here in 1805, but, eventually the claimants had to pre-empt to secure a good title. A substantial two story stone house, the first in Hancock County, Ills., was erected by Capt. White, on the point near Ferry landing, from Montrose. This building he gave free use of to the county, for a Court House, as no selection had then been made for county seat, and after the Black Hawk war had commenced, settlers far and near, resorted to this house as a safe place of refuge. It may be of some interest to you, to hear the names of some of the first settlers at Nauvoo, the most of whom have gone to "the bourne whence no traveler returns."

White, Willson, Waggoner, Williams, Whitney, Gouge, Dunn, Coon, Dewey, Shoebridge, Hilderbrand, Rev. Mr. Robinson, (among the first to preach the Gospel,) Mr. Hib-

bard, and Mr. Miller, who erected the first mill, which manufactured coarse meal at the rate of three bushels per hour; its motive power—"one horse." Messrs. Forrest and Robinson, were the first to teach the young prodigies their a-b's.

While residing here, I formed my first acquaintance with Black Hawk, the *Mus-quaw-ka*, (or Fox chief,) by agreeing with him to erect a stone wall, for the sum of eight dollars, around the remains of his daughter, buried near my house, and the compliance with this contract, upon my part, engendered a feeling of friendship for me which I reciprocated. It resulted, finally, in the strongest ties of friendship, and lasted until the day of his death. I have now many relics presented to me by him, which I hold sacred and dear—one memento in particular, a buckskin purse, made and given to me by him, the day before his death.

This renowned warrior possessed many sterling qualities, which could only be appreciated by those who knew him as intimately as myself. He never had but one wife, being opposed personally to the custom of polygamy, although never interfering with others of his tribe who approved and practiced this evil. His *Met-a-mo* (old woman) was a good housewife. The arrangement of the interior wigwam was systematic and clean, and the burnished camp-kettle her greatest pride.

I tried hard to dissuade him from the war-path in 1831, but he persisted in his determination, and paid dearly for refusing to profit by my counsel. On his return after his captivity, he paid me a visit, acknowledged his error, and pledged me never again to refuse good advice, which he observed the remainder of his life. His days were ended (1838) on the east bank of the Des Moines river, at Stump Town—a point where the railroad diverges from the river, below Iowa^ville—now *Independent*.

Our commerce, from 1821 to 1832, did not increase in tonnage to any extent. I made several trips during this time, on keel-boats, from St. Louis to Galena, Ills. A number of these boats were owned by Capt. White, and navigated by him, as freighters, on the Upper Mississippi.

Capt. Jas. White informed me that his first voyage up the Mississippi was on the steamboat *Mandan*, being forty days *en route* from New Orleans to the foot of the Rapids, which she attempted to ascend, but could get no higher than Filly Rock, on account of heavy draught and the want of a correct knowledge of the channel by the pilot. He informed me that the Indians, at several localities above St. Louis, were badly frightened, running in every direction when the boat first hove in sight. As they never had witnessed the like before, many of them thought this aquatic monster was the *Mon-i-tou-ke-suth*, (evil spirit or devil,) coming to call on them for a final reckoning. The next steamer, that succeeded in ascending the Rapids, was the *Pike*, which, by many, has been considered the first steamboat that traversed the Upper Mississippi, which is correct so far as being the first to go *above* the Des Moines Rapids.

The *Red Rover*, *Chieftain*, *Mechanic*, *Java*, *Shamrock* and *Mexico*, were the next that made their appearance among us, and after this, in succession, came as regular traders the *Warrior*, *Winnebago*, *Wisconsin*, *Olive Branch*, *William Wallace* and *Heroine*, with hundreds of others since. The steamer *Mexico* was the first boat wrecked on the Lower Rapids, and the remains of this boat are still visible near the shore below Nashville.

The first and most popular commanders, on the Upper Mississippi, were Capts. *Throckmorton*, *Shellcross*, *Clark*, *Crosley*, *Atchinson*, *Lafferty*, *Littleton*, *Camron*, *May* and *Reynolds*.

In the fall of 1830, I sold my farm at the upper landing, *Nauvoo*, Ills., to *Pierce Atchison*, of St. Louis, who considered his acquisition a valuable one, as this point bid fair to become a city. Owing to the detention here of boats, lightening over the rapids, the true channel on the west side of the island, opposite *Cut-Nose Village*, (*Montrose*), had not then been discovered.

Shortly after the disposal of my farm, I removed with my family to the west side of the river, four miles below, to *Ah-wi-pe-tuk*, ("commencement of Falls, or Cascade,") now Nash-

ville. The chain of rocks extending across the river at this point, was considered by the natives as the commencement of the rapids, although many of the first explorers of the country thought the rapids extended from *Puck-e-she-tuck*, ("Foot of falls,") to Skunk prairie, 32 miles above, and as evidence to confirm this assertion, I would refer to the reports of Col. Taylor to the Secretary of War, stating that he had constructed a fort on the west bank of the river, at the head of the Lower Rapids, and called it Fort Madison.

I was persuaded by Dr. Isaac Galland to locate here, as he was anxious to promote the growth and prosperity of the place, and I have no doubt that he had an honest conviction that it in time would become a great commercial city, but our ideal metropolis now, as then, remains but an airy castle. But to this insignificant spot, we owe a tribute of respect, as it was here that the first *white* child was born, Ellenor Galland,* in 1830, her father having located here one year previous, 1829. Also the first school was taught here, in 1830, by Berryman Jennings, now a millionaire of Oregon. And, in addition to these early celebrities, we must not fail to mention the name of James Brierly, Lee county's first representative. Here, in 1835, was enacted the Maine Liquor Law, which some consider of more recent day—Sam'l Brierly, and others, being engaged in the retail whisky traffic, allowed the soldiers to indulge too freely; disturbances arose, and, in consequence, orders were issued by Col. Kearney, of Fort Des Moines, (Montrose,) to destroy all intoxicating liquors found in possession of citizens of Nashville. This order was duly executed, and an eye witness informed me that there was not a DRY LIP on this solemn occasion.

During the winter of my sojournment here, I lost my early companion, and owing to this misfortune, I resolved to depart at once from scenes where every association recalled the past and added fresh wounds to my sorrow. Early in March, 1831, I parted with my associations here, and next located at *Puck-e-she-tuk*, ("Foot of the falls," Keokuk). Upon my arrival here,

*Mrs. McPherson, now residing in Fort Madison, Iowa.

I was furnished with comfortable quarters in a log house—first house built here, by Dr. Sam'l C. Muir. Its location, if standing to-day, would be right-hand corner of Main, as you ascend, and Front street. In addition to the tenement I occupied, was a frame building attached, which the proprietor reserved for his own especial accommodation. As Dr. Sam'l C. Muir was the founder of Keokuk, and the first with whom I became engaged in the mercantile business, as an Indian trader, I feel it a duty I owe to his descendants, to mention all I know of his character and history.

Being a native of Scotland, he was educated at Edinburgh University, graduated an M. D., and shortly after emigrated to this country. He proffered his services, as a Surgeon, to the Military Department, and was received, and during his engagement on the frontier, formed attachments for an Indian female, (Sac Squaw,) by whom he had five children. Their names were Louisa, James, Mary, Sophia and Samuel. His family accompanied him on all occasions, in the event of removal from one post to another, and from inconveniences of this kind, he was prompted to make the improvements before mentioned at *Puck-e-she-tuk*, that he might have a permanent home. During his engagements with the army and while stationed at Fort Johnson, or Edwards, (Warsaw,) Ills., orders were issued by the War Department, that all officers and attaches of the U. S. Army should at once abandon and refuse to harbor any and all Indian females resorting around the military posts. Upon this announcement being made known to him, he at once tendered his resignation, and before it was accepted, many flattering inducements were offered to him by his associates to abandon his wife (squaw) and remain with them. His only reply on such occasions was by holding up his first-born pappoose, (babe,) and exclaiming, "May God forbid that a son of Caledonia should ever desert his child or disown his clan."

After his resignation, circumstances compelled him to practice in Northern Missouri and Galena, Ills., for several years, and when his lease of *Puck-e-she-tuk*, to Otis Reynolds and

John Culver, of St. Louis, expired, in 1830, he returned and received possession of his long-desired home. During the interval of ten years, many accessions to the population of *Puck-e-she-tuk* had been made. Moses Stillwell, the agent and representative of Reynolds and Culver, being the first to settle here with his family, consisting of wife, child and two brothers-in-law—Amos Vanorsdoll and Valencourt Vanorsdoll. The American Fur Company had established a trading post here, and constructed a respectable row of hewed log buildings for their headquarters, of late years called "Rat Row." The names of the employes of this trading house were Russell Farnham, Manager; Joshua Palen, Mark Aldridge, Edward Brishnell clerks, Francis Labashure and Babbiste, or Battise, a Manominee Indian, principal Interpreters. John Connolly, John Forsyth, James Thorn and John Tolman, were engaged by the company as itinerant pedlers, collecting furs &c. These men all having Indian women for wives, were very popular as drummers with the various bands of Indians.

Andrew Santamount, Babbiste Neddeau, Bruseau and Paul Bessette, of French origin, were among the first settlers here, being indirectly connected with the Fur Company in various occupations.

At the expiration of the first year of my residence here, my associate, Dr. Muir, died of cholera, being the first victim in 1832; since which time his wife and all of his children have followed him, excepting his first born, Louisa, who still remains with us as a link in the chain that connects the pioneers of yore with the generation of to day.

As the population increased, so did competition in trade increase, and owing to this cause, the Fur Company Agents determined to remove to more advantageous grounds. I became the successor, owner and occupant of their buildings, continuing my trade, supplying Indians, Half Breeds and whites with all the necessaries of life. In connection with merchandise, I furnished entertainment for travellers, and towed and lightened around the rapids for steamers.

In our pioneer days there was not the reserve or restraint in society, that there is to day: when our red friends presented us with a painted stick, we asked for no explanation, but followed them to their wigwams and fared sumptuously on dog meat. In winter, whites and half-breeds mingled in the dance; their favorite dancing tune being original, was called *Guilmah*, or *Stump-tail Dog*. Those who did not dance could be found in an adjoining room engaged at cards; our favorite game was *Bragg*, played with three cards, and one who was so stupid as not to understand, or appreciate its beauties, was considered ineligible to our best society. Horse racing was another great source of amusement to us; in this sport our red friends were ever ready to participate, and at times, lost on the result, every article they possessed on earth. *Kcokuk* and *Pash-pe-po*, chiefs of the Sac tribe, were more passionately fond of this amusement than any of their cotemporaries. And when amusements of this kind ceased to be entertaining, we called upon our pugilists, *Hood*, *McBride* and *Price*, to further enliven the scene by a friendly exhibition of their prowess, by knocking down, and dragging out a few of the uninterested spectators. We had no prize belt to award the victor, as the science and courtesies of the ring had not then arrived at the perfection they have since.

Before this era, civil law, of course, was unknown, and our only salutary mode of punishment for crime, was by prohibiting the criminal from the use of intoxicating liquors, this being the greatest punishment we could inflict.

We had no church edifices, or church members, and when the Missionary visited us, I welcomed him in behalf of the citizens, tendered him the use of a part of my house, for church services, and, in the capacity of warden, I announced in my bar room to the loafers who were to compose the audience, when the time of service began.

Our first school in this place was taught by Jesse Crayton, 1833: as his pupils were few, he was enabled to devote a large portion of his time to the mending of boots and shoes, his legitimate occupation.

It will now be necessary to mention other localities in connection with the history and settlement of Lee County, Iowa. I will next refer to *Cut Nose Village*, (Montrose.)

After the Indians vacated this site, Capt. James White, in 1832, enclosed about seven acres of ground, procuring fencing timber from the island opposite. He erected a double log house on the slope, near the creek, about thirty rods from the river. In 1834 he sold his improvements, and a fort was built under the supervision of Lt. Col. Crossman, named Des Moines and occupied by Col. Kearny, in command of three companies of dragoons. The names of Brown, Boone and Sumner, Captains of these companies, will ever be remembered by the surviving pioneers of the half-breed tract, for it was through their vigilance that civilization here received its first impetus. Their bayonets taught us to respect the rights of others, and from *Martial Law*, we learned the necessity of a *Civil Code*.

I will next refer to the first settlement made at FORT MADISON, which was made by Peter Williams, a Botanical Mullen Leaf Doctor. In 1832 he erected a log house on the bank of the river, four or five hundred yards below the old Fort.

Here he remained until removed by troops from Fort Armstrong, Rock Island. His house was demolished by these troops, the logs were rolled into the river, and Peter was taken a prisoner to Commerce, (Nauvoo,) Illinois. Here he was released, owing to the intercession of his friends and family, with a solemn pledge not to cross to the west bank of the river again until the Indian title should become extinct to these lands.

In the latter part of 1833, or early in 1834, Peter again renewed his claim, and about the same time, Rich'd Cheeny, squatted on the flat, above the branch, and near the present site of the State Penitentiary. Those early settlers disagreed about their boundary lines, and in consequence war was declared, which raged ferociously for months, until Peter obtained foreign aid from Fort Des Moines, (Montrose.) On the arrival of his auxiliaries, they fired a round of blank cartridges into old Dick's intrenchments, which made him beg for quarter, and promise ever after to hold his peace.

The first settler on the Des Moines River, was John Tohlman, opposite St. Francisville, Mo. Next after him, at same locality, was Dr. Sam'l Herne, and above his farm was an Indian trail—its course east and west, and terminating at the water's edge of the east bank of the Des Moines, opposite the point of bluff, the first bordering on the river above its mouth.

This being the terminus of bottom lands, subject to overflow, was chosen probably, centuries ago, as a land mark, by the Aborigines to avoid the excessive floods, as they would pass to and from one section of country to another. This trail starting at Lemolise, (now Sandusky Station,) running due west to the Des Moines, as before described, thence onward over hill and dale to the Missouri River, terminating near Kansas City, must have been, at some former period a great thoroughfare, as it was worn in many places on level ground, for miles six inches in depth.

The many mounds observable in Lee County, indicating the haunts of human habitation, in centuries past, cannot have been constructed by the fore-fathers of the present race of Indians, as I have questioned many of their sages in regard to their origin, and none have ever been able to assign an intelligible account of their formation, history or uses. We frequently find the remains of the human skeleton interred in these mounds; but this, I think, is no proof of their being constructed for that purpose, as I have seen hundreds of natives interred, a few rods from the most prominent mounds, in our county. We must assign the construction of these monuments of earth, to a race of people, whose customs were not peculiar to the present North American Savage, and leave to the antiquarian the glory of enshrouding from the mists of ages, their origin and uses.

I will now return home to *Puck-e-she-tuk*, and mention a few more incidents in connection with its growth and prosperity. During the first four years of my residence here, I had cleared and fenced something over twenty acres on the top and side of the hill; this I used for corn and potatoes. The present land-marks embracing the primitive potatoe patch,

are from Front Street up Blondeau to Tenth, down Tenth to Timea, thence along Timea to Second Street, thence along Second Street to Main, thence down Main and up Front Street to place of beginning.

Up to the year 1835 the settlement at the foot of the rapids had been without a distinctive name: its various aliases were "*Puck-e-she-tuk*," "Point," "Foot of the rapids," &c. It was finally proposed by a number of steamboatmen, while detained here, in lightening over the rapids, that it should commemorate the name of the Peace Chief of the Sac tribe, owing to his fidelity and friendship for the white people. From this time the name Keokuk was adopted, and, in 1837, I sold my potato patch enclosure to Dr. Isaac Galland, agent of New York Land Company, and under his supervision a city in embryo was formally inaugurated and recorded as "KEOKUK."

In the fall of 1836, a public meeting was held at the forks of the road, six miles west of Keokuk, on what was then known as John Gaines' claim. The object of this first meeting was for mutual consultation regarding the organization of Iowa Territory, and to know to what rights this locality might be entitled, as heretofore it had been thought by many of us that this reservation of lands for the half-breeds of the Sac and Fox Indians could not be included or embraced in any other organization. We thought seriously of setting out on our own hook by forming an independent government of our own, but after James Brierly and Henry J. Campbell had, in succession, mounted upon the head of a whisky barrel and unburdened themselves of a vast amount of eloquence, we became convinced that this reservation *did* owe allegiance to the United States Government and we must abide by its declarations.

During this convention the name of "*Lee*" was suggested as an appropriate name for the county, owing to his survey of the rapids bounding it upon the east. Others among us thought "*Sprigg*," or "*Rapids*," more appropriate than the first, and to what source it owes its present name, if not to

Lt. Lee, I cannot state as I removed from the county before it was named.

Before closing my narrative of pioneer life, I feel it a duty I owe to history to record the names of many of my associates and companions in later years, who were among my best friends. Some have paid the debt of nature, others that are living I have not seen for many years.

Horton and Wm. McPherson, Peter Avery, and Wm. Phelps, have not been forgotten, although a part of this number is no more. Jas. Jordan and brothers, McMullen, Belle, Nathan Smith, and Wm. Harrison, all Indian traders, have left, and will leave indelible traces behind them in the Des Moines Valley.

And the name of John Gaines I hold in grateful remembrance, being my last associate and co-partner in business in the Half-Breed Tract. He possessed many sterling qualities, being honest and upright in all his dealings, and, owing to his integrity, was appointed the first Justice, or Notary, of (Lee county) the half-breed reservation of Sacs and Foxes, Ouisconsin Territory, in 1836. He, too, like many others of my associates, has long since passed from the stage of life, and all that remains to perpetuate his name is a rough limestone monument standing on the corner of Second and Blondeau streets, Keokuk, Iowa. This only remaining tomb, indicating a hallowed spot of ground once held sacred by every pioneer, stands, like a sentinel upon the watch-tower of time, warning the new-comers that they are only lingering in the footprints of the pioneers, and, like the tabernacles of earth, must soon crumble and pass away.

Many of the pioneers fill premature graves, owing to habits of intemperance. I think I can safely assert that thousands have ended their existence by an over-indulgence of intoxicating liquors, and I feel thankful that I have ever been strictly a *tee-to-tal-ist*, which, I have no doubt, has conduced greatly to my present good health and vigor.

In the month of May I will be 69 years old—42 of which I have passed in, and in sight of, Lee county, Iowa.

Hoping the above record may be of some use to posterity, entrusted to your care, I remain

Yours truly,

ISAAC R. CAMPBELL.

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