

## FRONTIER FEAR OF THE INDIANS

Fear of the vengeance of the retreating Indians held back the conquest of the prairies of Iowa and retarded the growth of the state in its formative days; but not for long. The pioneering man in quest of land from which to earn an honest living finds ways to quiet his fears. The pioneering woman in dead earnest about finding a place for a home will face any danger. It is now ninety years since the last real "Indian scare" disturbed the steady march of civilization in Iowa. It is late, quite late, to indulge in shivers in sympathy with the pioneers and their families; but it would seem as if the end had not yet been reached in disclosing reliable information as to some of the important steps taken to safeguard the northern frontier. In this connection there has come into the possession of the Iowa Department of History very recently some crumbling papers with fading records that give information not before available for the historians of Indian life in Iowa.

The events of the "Spirit Lake Massacre" and what followed have been well covered in the Hawkeye histories. It is also known there was a subsequent relief or defense expedition sent into the Spirit Lake region. It seems that after the repulse of the attack by the Inkpaduta band of Sioux Indians, and the settlement of the region was resumed, there was cause for another great alarm over the possibility of renewed warfare. A band of Sioux Indians appeared near Spirit Lake in January, 1858. They said they were of the party that had been helpful in rescue of the survivors of the Spirit Lake massacre. The settlers were suspicious. The governor was appealed to and under special authority of the general assembly he authorized formation of a military company to protect the frontier. This company was formed at Webster City in command of H. B. Martin of that city, and is listed in the Roster of Iowa Soldiers as the Iowa Frontier guard, to be distinguished from the Northern brigade and other organizations. Evidence now at hand gives opportunity to add materially to information not available when the Roster of Iowa Soldiers

was compiled by Col. George W. Crossley. At first he reported inability to find any roster of this guard company, but later added a muster roll, furnished him by C. C. Stiles from the archives division of the Historical department.

In his History of Dickinson county, R. A. Smith states that ten men from Dickinson county went into the company, but Colonel Crossley did not find all of them in the muster roll. However, the names of several of these men do appear on the payrolls now at hand, and one, Jareb Palmer, who had been mail carrier from Spirit Lake to Sioux City is conspicuous. It is stated that this company was composed largely of men from Hamilton and Webster counties. It went to the scene of supposed danger probably in February, 1858. In July the company was "ordered off but not disbanded," according to Mr. Smith. In fact the company was re-enlisted later and the muster roll in the Roster of Iowa Soldiers is that of the re-enlistment.

The first report from Capt. H. B. Martin was dated March 31, 1858 and gives the names of thirty-three officers and men including himself as having served thirty-one days, or all of the month. This is followed by others in April, May and June, and a statement by J. Palmer, captain, showing part time served in July and August, 1858, by twenty-one officers and men of the Spirit Lake Rangers. Then there is report of Capt. H. B. Martin showing the service of forty-five officers and men during the month of February 1859. This includes all of those who had previously been reported. It is plain, therefore, that the original company was broken up in midsummer of 1858 and then reorganized and returned.

This added information has been made available through the courtesy of Gurney C. Gue, of Merrick, N. Y., who found among the papers left by his father the late Lieut. Gov. Benjamin F. Gue, who was first secretary of the State Historical department, the original reports of officers of the Iowa Frontier Guard, or "Capt. H. B. Martin's company" and forwarded same to be a

part of the state's records. The list of soldiers varies little in the reports. H. B. Martin, of Webster City, was captain in both years, but at one time Jareb Palmer signed himself "Captain of Spirit Lake Rangers." W. L. Church, of Homer, and D. S. Jewett, of Border Plains, were lieutenants. At the outset W. H. Farner was company surgeon, and later Jonas Ball appears as surgeon. The reports were made to Col. C. B. Richards, commissary general.

#### BORDER HOMES THREATENED

Aside from the value of these papers in making plainer than ever before just what happened at the time of this panic about the Indians in 1858 and 1859, these records afford interesting reading as to the real condition on the border of civilization. The events of 1857 were not forgotten, but the land seekers continued to come, and there were frequent rumors of renewal of Indian troubles. There were roving bands of Indians to be seen near their favorite hunting grounds. Therefore the Iowa Frontier Guard was organized and sent to the lake region. Captain Martin's report of March, 1858, gave the following information in addition to a roster of his company for payment:

Head Quarters Iowa Frontier Guard  
Spirit Lake, March 31st, 1858.

Sir:

In compliance with Special "Order No. 2" on the morning of the 2nd inst., I divided the Iowa Frontier Guard into three detachments one of which was placed under command of 1st Lieutenant Wm. Church and directed to proceed to Gillett's grove in Clay county and report at Head Quarters; another under charge of 2nd Lieutenant D. S. Jewett was directed to station at Granger's Point in Emmett county; with the remaining detachment I took up the line of march for Spirit Lake where I arrived on the 6th Inst., and was generously furnished quarters and stabling by the citizens. I found the settlers here in a state of alarm caused by the undoubted proximity of Indians and the exposed condition of the frontier. Having allowed two days for the men and horses to rest on the 9th inst. with a part of my detachment I proceeded to Heron Lake, a favorite rendezvous for Inkpedutah's band, about 25 miles distant where from information received I expected to find him. We started early in the morning and after a toilsome march of ten hours arrived in plain view of the

timber on the lake, to which the men eagerly advanced expecting to have an opportunity of avenging the cold-blooded murders committed here last spring but were doomed to disappointment; a camp of six tepis (lodges) was all that could be discovered. On the next day after sending scouts to a number of small lakes and groves in that vicinity I returned to Head Quarters.

Lt. Church not having yet communicated on the 12th inst. I dispatched Sergeant Stratton and Private Laughlin as messengers to his station and to ascertain if possible the location of a band of friendly Sioux Indians (Little Dog or Little John's band) that had left here a few days previous to my arrival and to which I referred in a former communication. The messengers were not able to reach Lt. Church's station on account of high water, but discovered Little Dog's band encamped in a grove on the Little Sioux and returned on the following day. On the 16th inst. I selected one private and set out for the Indian camp to notify them to leave the state and for the purpose of visiting the Sioux (Gillett's) Station; by swimming the horses across the Sioux river I arrived at the Indian lodges late in the afternoon and requested the Chief Little Dog to remove himself and band from the state which he done within four days from that time. I reached the station at Gillett's early the next morning having been compelled to pass the night on the open prairie.

Lieut. Church arrived at Gillett's grove on the 5th inst. and after securing shelter for his men and horses tried at different times to forward dispatches to headquarters, but was prevented in each instance by high water. He had also discovered and was closely watching the movements of Little Dog's band. He reports that a number of dwelling houses on the Sioux river were plundered by the Indians during last winter, and that his men have found a quantity of household articles buried beneath evacuated tepis near his station.

I returned to headquarters on the 18th inst. and visited Lt. Jewett's station on the 22d. That detachment arrived at Granger's Point on the 6th inst., was furnished comfortable quarters by Mr. Granger and has communicated with this station once each week.

Each of the detachments reconnoitre the surrounding country by daily scouts.

#### SITUATION IMPROVES

In the report of Captain Martin to Colonel Richards at the close of April he presents a fairly satisfactory picture of the situation as follows:

Owing to the unpropitious state of the weather and the swollen condition of the streams the operations of the Frontier Guard during the present month have been limited to scouting in the immediate vicinity of the various stations. No Indians have

been seen on this side of the state line. Confidence seems to be restored among the settlers and immigration has begun to pour in. Weekly communication with the several detachments, though with great difficulty, has been kept up.

The captain indicates that the first detachment of his little company is at headquarters, under his command, which headquarters was at the old fort in Spirit Lake town. The second detachment was in charge of Lieut. D. S. Jewett, at Granger Point, and the third was directed by Lieut. Wm. S. Church, at Gillett's Grove. When the captain turned in his report for payment of the men May 31, he stated he had withdrawn the detachment from Granger's "as there has been a heavy settlement made farther north since the first of last March." Then he added:

The officers and soldiers of the company are all in excellent health and have thoroughly and satisfactorily searched the country in all directions during the present month. The settlements are rapidly augmenting and I think within one year will be fully able to protect themselves.

The next report was dated at Fort Dodge June 30, 1858 and gave thirty-two names for payment, and added this as to the situation in general:

The company has been engaged in scouting during the present month. No Indians have been seen and all is quiet on the frontier. On the 26th inst., in compliance with Order No. 5, I took the line of march for this place. The company arrived today and awaits further orders.

It may not be improper to here call your attention to the faithfulness and alacrity with which the officers and soldiers have performed every duty required of them during the campaign. They have been exposed to much inclement weather and have suffered many privations, and although the guard has not had an opportunity of meeting the enemy in the field yet in my humble opinion its presence on the frontier has had a very beneficial effect in intimidating and keeping at bay the roving bands of savages that have heretofore so frequently molested the settlers in the northwestern counties, and in encouraging immigration to that part of the state.

#### SPIRIT LAKE RANGERS

At this point the record is not entirely clear as to what was done to protect the settlements from the supposedly dangerous Indians. The Iowa Frontier Guard seems

to have been sent home, but the company not completely disbanded. The name of Jareb Palmer, the intrepid mail carrier, is at the front. He had been a private in the guard company, and having borrowed \$75.00 from Dr. W. H. Farner, the company physician, gave an order, which Captain Martin approved, for payment out of the sum due him for April.

It was this Palmer who was placed at the head of an informal company called the Spirit Lake Rangers. He listed himself as serving twenty-five days in July and August; also some others the same length of time and the majority of the rangers serving for ten to fifteen days. There were twenty-one members reported for pay as follows:

Captain J. Palmer; 1st Lieut. A. Hingman; 2nd Serg. William Donaldson; 3rd Serg. G. W. Rogers; 1st Corp. Thompson Mead; 2nd Corp. J. P. Gilbert; 4th Corp. W. D. Carsley; privates: George King, Ephraim King, W. C. Swett, Lewis E. Strate, William Jordan, Isaac H. Jones, O. M. Barker, Peter Holland, Harney Abbott, Addison Arthur, W. E. Root, Jacob Kirkman, Henry Brockshrub, William Oldham.

The payroll seems not to have been presented until a year or more later, but was sent by Captain Palmer to Governor Kirkwood with the following letter:

Spirit Lake, Nov. 15th, 1860.

Gov. S. J. Kirkwood.

Dear Sir:

Inclosed please find statement of services rendered the state of Iowa by the Spirit Lake Rangers to which I wish to call your attention, and if you can possibly pay my men out of the appropriation made by the General Government I trust you will do so for they were to a great expense to get their outfit, provisions, etc., and also they were obliged to leave their crops without tending while they were gone. My men were all mounted. This company was raised by order of Governor Lowe with instructions to act in case of any emergency making it necessary to protect the lives or property of the citizens of the state from Indian depredations. If you wish any affidavits showing the necessity of the service I will procure and forward them to you. The service comprised to (two) separate expeditions, one of 10 days and the other of 15 days. If you wish any further particulars I shall be happy to furnish them, or would refer you to Hon. O. C. Howe, Spirit Lake, Dickinson county, Iowa, or to Ambrose S.

Mead, Peterson, Clay county, Iowa. Hoping that I may hear from you I remain your obt sert, J. PALMER, Capt. Spirit Lake Rangers.

#### GUARD COMPANY CALLED BACK

The muster roll of "Capt. H. B. Martin's Company for the Defense of the Northwestern Frontier" in the Division of Public Archives shows mustering in for service Nov. 22, 1858, and the list as published in the Roster of Iowa Soldiers is that taken from the payroll dated Jan. 23, 1859. The report of Captain Martin the following month, gives the names of his company, and also the following interesting account of services rendered:

Head Quarters Iowa Frontier Guard  
Spirit Lake, February 28th, 1859

Sir:

. . . The bearer of this report will deliver into your custody two Indians who were found prowling in this vicinity and taken prisoners on the 22nd inst., also the affidavits of Messrs. H. M. Wiltfong, J. N. Dodgson and J. B. Cheffen identifying them as members of Ink-pa-dutah's band.

One of the prisoners came into our camp on the morning of the 22nd inst. accompanied by a half-breed who calls himself John Campbell. This half-breed speaks good English and on his arrival asserted that himself and companion were members of Little Crow's band and received their annuities at the Redwood or Lower Sioux Agency. He further stated that his brother Joseph Campbell with eighty or ninety warriors had recently been ordered by Major Cullen to go to the falls of the Big Sioux river for the purpose of capturing Ink-pa-du-tah and his band who have been encamped near Sioux Falls all winter; that himself and comerade were members of the expedition; that the expedition left the Redwood Agency in several parties all of which were to rendezvous at the forks of the Big Sioux river; that there were three squaws and eleven warriors in the party to which himself and companion belonged; that the squaws were at their "Teepah" or lodge and the other men had gone to select a place for camping on some west of this; that after their departure from Redwood a bad Indian stole and absconded with all the flour which Major Cullen had furnished them and they came this way for the purpose of obtaining supplies from Joseph Campbell who would certainly be here on the 22d or 23d inst. with a party of sixty warriors. Knowing that this place is many miles south of a direct course from Redwood to Sioux Falls, I placed no reliance whatever in this story, but retained the Half Breed and Indian in camp and detailed five men to accompany me and followed their trail to their lodge, which I found at the head of

Spirit Lake about eight miles distant from camp. Before arriving at the lodge we saw an Indian running from us and in the direction (as we afterwards ascertained) of the Teepah. He soon entered a grove of timber and we did not succeed in getting sight of him again. At the lodge we found three squaws and as many papooses. Not deeming it advisable to permit these Indians to depart without knowing more of their precedents and intentions, I returned to camp and sent out the Half Breed and his companion under a strong guard directing the guard to compel the Indians to remove their lodge to the immediate vicinity of our camp which order was promptly executed; the guard succeeding in capturing another Indian on its return. I caused the Indians to erect their lodge near the barracks and kept them vigilantly guarded until the next day when I ordered two of them, who were recognized by Messrs. Wiltfong, Dodgson and Cheffen as members of Ink-pa-dutah's band to be placed under close arrest.

I now send these prisoners to you together with all the evidence which I have been able to obtain against them, in order that you may use your own discretion as to the proper course to be pursued with them, respectfully recommending that they be treated in a very kind and humane manner, as it is possible that the affiants are mistaken. The name of the elder prisoner, as given by the Half-Breed, is Wau-kunka-she-taw-kah or Lying Wanderer; of the younger, Taw-an-a-tah.

The presence of this band of Indians and the report that they were daily expecting to be joined by a large party of warriors has caused much alarm among the settlers here. As I have before stated since the Massacre of 57 the inhabitants of this frontier are alarmed at every indication of the approach of savages and for that reason I think that measures should be taken to prevent even friendly Indians from visiting the settlements with impunity and imposing upon and terrifying the citizens of our state.

It is perhaps sufficient to recall at this time the disturbed condition of affairs on the northwestern Iowa frontier following the attack by Inkpadutah and his band, and the difficulty of travel in that part of the state. It is not known what became of this vindictive Indian leader, but there was rumor among the Indians that his sons had a hand in the defeat and killing of General Custer, in Wyoming, many years later.

The activities of Captain Martin's company, or the Iowa Frontier Guard, were the last of military operations in Iowa against the Indians.



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