

Smutty Bear Tribe

By O. J. PRUITT

Chief Smutty Bear of the Yankton Sioux was a very old man when seen by Sergeant Haas. Sergeant Haas probably knew more about the chief than history records. After his discharge from the regular army, he bought the land on which Smutty Bear had a village. The old chief had died a few years prior to the purchase of the land. A four-mile long canyon leads north from the Missouri river, known as the Smutty Bear bottoms. At the head of the canyon stands the modest home of the old sergeant. His faithful wife and his two sons still live on the homestead. There is a tool shed on the premises, and in this shed, are many nail kegs filled with stone and flint artifacts. These articles were picked up around the house and barn lot, on the exact spot of the old chief's village.

The writer has visited the place on two occasions. The research work consisted of correspondence with South Dakota State Historian Will G. Robinson; and also correspondence with the city librarian of Yankton. My objective was to learn the truth about the cave said to have been built into the chalkrock bluff immediately west of Yankton.

This cave is about twenty feet in diameter, and the dome is badly smoked from hunters building fires in the cave in recent years. The cave existed when the earliest settlers arrived at Yankton. In early time, a road ran from the head of Broadway to and beyond the cave at the foot of the bluffs. The Missouri river cut the road away, and a new road was built on the table land, and rejoined the old road near the cave. Tons of chalk rock had to be blasted out to cut the road to the level of the cave. This road runs for miles up the river, past the old cement works, the Smutty

Bear canyon, and beyond Galvin Point, where a dam is to be built soon. Smutty Bear and his tribe opposed the whites, destroyed a town, and tried to stop the survey of a road to the fort. The two chiefs, Strike the Ree and Lean Wolf, were not hostile to the whites.

When the outbreak of the Indians threatened, Yankton citizens built a stockade on the site of the present court house, and trained its people in military defense. It is not certain that Smutty Bear was the principal leader of the intended outbreak. None ever happened at Yankton.

Old timers insist the cave was used by the old Yankton Brewery to cool and age beer. Others insist the cave was used by the Smutty Bear tribe to cool and store buffalo meat. Both could be true. To confirm that it was used by Smutty Bear, let us repeat what the old sergeant said.

MURKY JIM'S SACRIFICE

Smutty Bear had one distinguished hunter in the person of Murky Jim. Murky Jim owned an old Springfield rifle of the remodeled type, being remodeled from an old flint-lock. He was also somewhat of a diplomat, being trusted by the old chief to carry messages to other tribes, and to negotiate truces and agreements relative to hunting privileges. These tribes were Omahas and Poncas, and they lived and hunted south of the Missouri river. Old Smutty Bear in the last years of his life, became very cautious about Murky Jim. He did not want to risk the lives of his braves in warfare.

Smutty Bear had always provided meat for his entire tribe, and now the buffalo were growing fewer on the Dakota side of the river. So, he sent Murky Jim south of the Missouri river to secure the privilege to make a fall hunt. The chief of the Poncas received him with a grin. Lame Dog was a wise chief, and he had heard of the powers of Murky Jim. He immediately offered to induct Jim into his tribe. As an inducement he caused all the squaws, almost in the

nude, to parade before Jim. He could have as many of them as he desired. Murky Jim refused. All he wanted was to get permission to hunt along the river. While the parley was in progress, Lame Dog's men took Jim's rifle. When he continued to refuse the Lame Dog's proposals, he was ordered shot. As a further insult to the Smutty Bear tribe, a travis was made and the corpse sent back across the river, to the Smutty Bear village, with a courier. The courier told his story from a safe distance.

Murky Jim was buried on top of the chalk rock bluff, on the right side of the canyon about fourteen miles west of Yankton. Here, for years afterward, the remainder of the tribe came each year to mourn for the death of Murky Jim. They camped in the woods nearby, and made daily trips to the grave. They helped themselves to roasting ears, stole chickens and pigs and became a general nuisance. The sheriff had to make them move. They now livé near Wagoner, South Dakota.

DAKOTA'S JUNIPER TREE

It was on this farm I saw my first Juniper tree. Nearby stood a 150-year-old red cedar tree. A pencil manufacturer had offered a fabulous price for the red cedar. Mrs. Haas said, however, that it would stand so long as she lived. She instructed her sons to see that the tree remained untouched by the ax after her demise. To this edict, Amen.

The writer wishes to apologize for his being partial to what the old sergeant said, and the report of the city librarian. The puzzling question is, how could the Indian build the cave with the primitive implements they had at the close of the nineteenth century? It is evidently not a natural formation, but was made by the hands of man or men. It could well be the work of the Smutty Bear tribe. This brings us to the question, how old was the old chief? He was born in the nineteenth century and near the close. The exact

time or date of his death is not known. But from all accounts he must have been sixty years old or more, when he died, comparing his age with that of other chiefs of his time, Strike the Ree and Lean Wolf.

The Old Stone Church

The affection and veneration for the old stone church in Rock Falls, Iowa, is not unlike that so widely held for the "Little Brown Church in the Vale," near Nashua. The sentiment contained in the following verse from Mrs. Irene Gorkowski in the *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, is rather well reflected:

There's a little vine covered church on the prairie
That has become very dear to my heart
It was built years ago just with limestone,
And the prayers of men, with vision, made it start.

Let me tell you why it's found a place so dear
In my heart forever it shall be.
For the rocks and vines that twine round about it
Have become a symbol of life, dear to me.

The old gray stone walls will always remind me
Of God's strength and sturdy character of love
And the vines which entwine round about it
Are the love enriched round us from above.

The open door on each Sabbath morning
Is like the father with his arms stretched out wide
Welcoming home his own wayward child
To the warmth of love and fellowship inside.

Once inside these walls so majestic
We're transformed to realms above
With the songs, tithes and prayers that we offer
We are tied to the great God of love.

So won't you stop your tasks for a moment
Listen with me to the Lord and Master's plea
"Come unto me, all ye that labor,"
And, "Take up your cross and follow, follow me."

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