

THE TRAGEDY OF OKOBOJI.

BY HARRIS HOOVER.*

Spirit Lake, called by the Indians "Minnewaukon," is situated in Dickinson county, Iowa. It is nearly circular in shape and seven miles in diameter, and covers an area of nearly fifty square miles.

Immediately south of Spirit Lake and separated from it by a narrow isthmus—eighty rods in width—lies East Okoboji Lake, which extends in a southwestern direction seven miles, where it is joined by West Okoboji Lake, of equal length, the two bending westward in the form of a horse-shoe. These lakes are skirted with timber, the water is pure, the soil rich and productive, and everything conspires to render this section a terrestrial paradise.

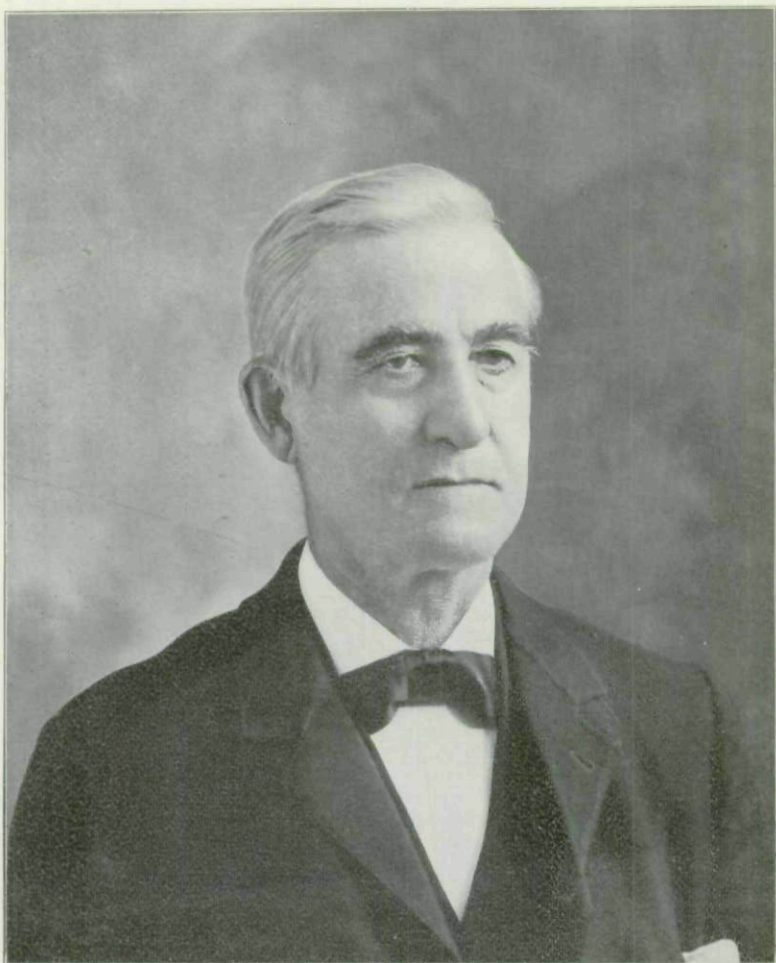
Today Dickinson county has a population of 8,000; the value of real estate is \$6,231,400; personal property, \$1,696,316. It contains ten hotels, twenty churches, sixty schools, seven newspapers, and is traversed by fifty miles of railroads. The people are prosperous and happy, and to a traveler seeking a home in the west it presents a vision of peace and security that lulls the weary pilgrim to rest with the implied assurance that " 'twas ever thus." Ah, no! Had it been so this narrative had never been written.

The following sketch of Spirit Lake was written in 1857:

"As the Pacific ocean stretched out before the astonished gaze of Pizarro, or the grand Mississippi, robed in stately pride, before DeSoto, so Spirit Lake, sleeping beneath her pearly robes, first greeted our vision. Although not able to cope with her larger prototype, the ocean, in point of sublimity, this beautiful sheet of water possesses natural charms seldom equaled. Lying, as it does, surrounded by gently undulating hills and skirted with beautiful groves, to the approaching traveler it presents the appearance of a fleecy cloud floating in a sombre sky, forming a picture on which the imagination loves to dwell and which might furnish an ample theme for a poet's pen or painter's pencil.

"This is Spirit Lake *in winter*. If she is capable of presenting so many attractions under unfavorable circumstances, what may be her charms when freed from the embrace of the 'Ice King of the North' by the balmy breath of the smiling liberator, Spring? When she shall have put on her beautiful garments, her skirts of living green embroidered with flowers of the prairies; when her bosom gently heaves when kissed by the loving south-

*Harris Hoover was born near Clearfield, Pa., April 21, 1833, where he grew up a farmer's boy. He was educated in the common schools and at home, his father being a professional teacher. He came to Webster City, Iowa, in May, 1856. He had learned the carpenter's trade, and assisted in erecting some of the earliest buildings in that town. He enlisted in the Spirit Lake Expedition, March, 23, 1857, returning April 8. He was appointed justice of the peace May 29, 1857, one of the first in Hamilton county—and elected in October of the same year. Later on he joined the Iowa Frontier Guards, Capt. Henry B. Martin, and spent some time in that command near Spirit Lake. June 20, 1861, he enlisted in the First Iowa Cavalry under Colonel Fitz Henry Warren, remaining in the service until September 30, 1864, having participated in nearly all its marches and engagements. After the war he returned to the vicinity of his old home in Pennsylvania, where he resided several years. His present residence is Carnegie, Pa. He wrote one of the earliest and best accounts of the Spirit Lake Expedition for *The Hamilton Freeman*, at Webster City, in the summer of 1857. The publication of the present paper completes the personal narratives in our possession relating to the massacre and expedition. In addition to what has appeared in *THE ANNALS*, reference may be made to Mrs. Sharp's book, as well as to Richman's "John Brown Among the Quakers, and Other Sketches."—EDITOR OF *THE ANNALS*.



Yours Fraternally,
Harris Hoover.

HARRIS HOOVER.

wind, and her blue eye reflects the dancing sunbeam? Then she will appear like a precious sapphire in an emerald setting. While Burns was immortalizing Bonnie Doon, Schiller the Rhine, and Pope the Thames, Spirit Lake echoed only the cry of the red man, and the foot of a Longfellow had not yet trodden our western wilds—

'Else here had been the Iliad changes rung,
And Tempe's vale been left unsung.'

The "voyageur," Radisson, in his "Journal" of 1662, says of the Dahkotahs, or Yankton Sioux: "They were so much respected that nobody durst offend them;" and the Jesuit missionaries, in their "Relation," 1671, say: "They make themselves dreaded by all their neighbors."

At this time this war-like tribe (called by the Ojibways, Nadowaisiwug, or "adders") occupied all the territory west of the Mississippi and east of the Rocky Mountains, including what is now the State of Iowa. A subdivision of the tribe was called Wakpekute, one of whose chiefs was named Wamdisapa, or "Black Eagle," a savage of peculiarly ferocious and quarrelsome disposition. This trait caused him and his followers to secede from the tribe and retire to the vicinity of the Vermillion river in Dakota. On Wamdisapa's death Sidominadota became chief of the band and was holding that position at the time of the settlement of the country about Fort Dodge, Iowa. One day in 1854 he was found dead on the prairie; his squaw and two children were found dead in the lodge. They had all been murdered by a trader named Henry Lott, who immediately afterward burned his dwelling, situated on the west fork of the Des Moines river at the mouth of the creek named for him, and fled the State. How far this treacherous act influenced subsequent events may be a matter of conjecture. But considering the revengeful nature of the average Indian, it is quite probable that such seed, sown in such ground, would in time produce a bloody harvest.

Sidominadota being dead, Inkpaduta, or "Scarlet Point," became chief and was, if possible, more ferocious than his predecessors. His personal appearance was anything but prepossessing. He possessed a robust frame and his face was deeply pitted with small pox. Such a man was only "fitted for treasons, stratagems and spoils," as his subsequent actions proved.

In 1856 a dozen families built their cabins along the Okoboji lakes, and about the same number located at a point north of Spirit Lake, then called Springfield (now Jackson) in Minnesota. There were also a few settlers further south, and others still along the Little Sioux river. To the east along the Des Moines river was a settlement called "The Irish Colony," in all about forty families. The scattered and isolated situation of these pioneers rendered them peculiarly susceptible to an attack from an enemy and equally defenseless in such a contingency.

But in the absence of any knowledge of hostile designs on the part of the Indians no preparations for defense had been made. The winter of 1856-7 was one of exceptional severity. The snow fell to the depth of three or four feet on the level and the fierce winds from the north piled it in the ravines to the depth of fifteen to twenty feet. It was thought that

the extreme cold and deep snow would be unfavorable to migration and that the Indians would remain in close quarters till spring. How delusive this opinion was subsequent events too sadly proved.*

The Indians now made ready to quit the country of the three lakes and the State of Iowa. Before doing so, however, they peeled the bark from a large tree that stood near the Marble cabin on the west shore of Okoboji, and on the white surface thus exposed, left in picture writing, a record of their deeds. The number of persons killed by them was indicated by rude sketches of human figures transfixed with arrows. There was also a sketch of the Mattock cabin in flames.

The fact of this massacre in the lake region of Iowa was discovered on March 9 by Morris Markham, a man who had been living at the house of Noble and Thatcher but who was absent when the attack by the Indians was made. He fled with the news to Springfield, Minnesota. Word was at once sent to Fort Dodge, but the story was discredited until Orlando C. Howe, R. U. Wheelock, and B. F. Parmenter arrived from Okoboji Saturday, March 21, and confirmed the terrible news.

On Sunday, the 22d, a public meeting was called in the school house, and on Monday, the 23d, two companies were organized in the town, Company A commanded by C. B. Richards, and Company B by John F. Duncombe—all of Fort Dodge.

On Sunday, March 22, the inhabitants of Webster City, in Hamilton county, received intelligence that the Indians were murdering the settlers at Spirit Lake, burning their dwellings and carrying the women into captivity. At first the citizens were inclined to discredit the reports from the fact that similar reports had been circulated which proved to be unfounded. But as the messenger, Mr. White of Fort Dodge, was personally known to many, a full investigation was made, and as soon as the people became satisfied of the truth of the statement the excitement became general. A meeting of the citizens was immediately called when a spontaneous expression of feeling took place. A committee of arrangements was appointed to make the necessary preparations for an immediate march to the rescue. A call for volunteers was promptly responded to. Those whose age and circumstances disqualified them from participating in the expedition generously offered every assistance in their power. Owing to the inclemency of the weather, and in view of the hardships and exposure to be encountered, it was deemed prudent that the company be composed of young and robust men, such as in the judgment of a committee, appointed for that purpose, might be deemed qualified to endure the privations of such a tour. Accordingly on Monday morning, March 23, the volunteers, the number of whom exceeded the estimated requirements of the case, were ranged in single file and the selections made by J. D. Maxwell, county judge. Being

*The account of the massacre is omitted from Mr. Hoover's manuscript. It may be read at length in Mrs. Abbie Gardner-Sharp's "History of the Spirit Lake Massacre," published at Des Moines in 1885, and in her letter of Oct. 4, 1887, to Hon. Charles T. Fenton of Webster City. The letter was copied in THE ANNALS OF IOWA, Vol. III, pp. 550-51.

ready, armed and equipped, we left Webster City at one o'clock, March 23, arriving that evening at Fort Dodge, where we were received by a large and enthusiastic meeting of the citizens of Webster county.

Companies A and B being fully organized, it remained for us to complete our organization which we did by the election of the following officers: John C. Johnson, captain; John N. Maxwell, first lieutenant; Frank R. Mason, second lieutenant; Harris Hoover, orderly sergeant, and H. N. Hathway, corporal.

Our force now consisted of nearly one hundred men, under command of Major William Williams, with G. R. Bissell, surgeon, and G. B. Sherman, commissary. (I omit the complete roster of the battalion, as it is to be found in enduring bronze on the west face of the granite monument erected by the State of Iowa at Pillsbury Point, Okoboji, Iowa).

We left Fort Dodge about noon, March 24, but owing to our baggage wagons being detained we did not proceed far, but camped at Beaver creek, about seven miles from Fort Dodge. We now began to realize what the words "active service" meant, for most of us were raw recruits, and soldiering, not only a novelty, but one of the stern realities of life, our appetites emphasizing this view of the case and suggesting prompt action. Three large camp fires were built and I was surprised at the alacrity and cheerfulness with which the boys adapted themselves to their changed environment, and soon became expert cooks. On the morning of the 25th we resumed our march, following the course of the Des Moines river, and as the stream was not as yet much swollen, we used the bed of the same as a thoroughfare, crossing and re-crossing a dozen times before we reached Dakota City (so called) in Humboldt county. We did not find any "city of refuge," so we made the best of what we *did* find—a bed on the open prairie.

Thursday, March 26, as we proceeded on our journey the trail became more and more obscure and the snow deeper and deeper. In some places it was so hard as to require breaking down before our teams could possibly pass. In other places it had drifted into the ravines to the depth of ten or twelve feet. The water had drained off the prairies into these ravines converting the snow into slush and rendering many places almost impassable. It soon became evident that the only practicable mode of procedure was to wade through, stack arms, unhitch the teams, attach ropes to them and pull them through. This done we performed a similar operation on the wagons; then again rigged up we broke roads to the next slough and amused ourselves with a repetition of the aforesaid interesting performance. In this manner we were two days in reaching McKnight's Point, on the west fork of the Des Moines river, eighteen miles from Dakota City, having spent one night on the frozen ground without fire or water. Here we found Captain Duncombe, Lieutenant Maxwell, and R. U. Wheelock, who had gone ahead the day before to select the route to be followed, as no visible trail existed. This proved to be a very arduous task, and before night they all became exhausted and Capt. Duncombe accepted some cordial offered him by Mr. Wheelock. This "cordial" proved to be laudanum and so over-

came the captain that, had it not been for his companions, he would soon have slept his last sleep.

When within two miles of the grove Mr. Wheelock kept himself from freezing by keeping Captain Duncombe awake, while Lieutenant Maxwell—too much exhausted to walk—lay down on the crust of the snow and rolled over and over to a cabin in the grove. At the cabin Mr. Maxwell found the old pioneers, Jeremiah Evans and William Church, and these two men followed Maxwell's trail to where he had left Duncombe and Wheelock. By almost superhuman effort they succeeded in dragging them to the cabin, where Duncombe fell asleep and only awoke late the next day. We naturally expected that Captain Duncombe would resign in favor of Lieutenant Stratton and return to Fort Dodge; but the next morning he was again on duty and insisted on resuming his command and persevering in its arduous labors.

On Saturday, March 28—for reasons best known to themselves—some eight or nine of our party grew faint-hearted, turned their backs on their gallant comrades and their faces toward the "flesh-pots of Egypt." One man, an old Mexican soldier, declared that it was suicidal to continue the march, and that "it would result in the destruction of the entire command." But this defection only drew the balance closer together, and with set lips they declared that only death should prevent them from discharging their solemn duty to the suffering and distressed.

Under this complication of difficulties the conduct of our gallant commander, Major Williams, was deserving of the highest praise and worthy the emulation of those of greater physical strength and fewer years. He was always on the alert, as from the signs we knew not at what moment we might find ourselves in a savage ambushade. Frequently he was on foot, wading through the snow at the head of his men and by his voice and example cheering and inspiring them on their weary way, proving himself entitled to the name of an experienced soldier and gentleman. On the 28th we got a good start and camped that night at Shippey's, near the mouth of Cylinder Creek. At McCormick's, a mile below Shippey's, we found C. C. Carpenter, Angus McBane, William P. Pollock and Andrew Hood, who joined Company "A" and went with us from that point.

Sunday, March 29, we reached "the Irish Colony" (now Emmetsburg), in Palo Alto county. Here we obtained some provisions and were joined by several recruits.

Monday, March 30, we left our teams, which were pretty much exhausted, and, having supplied ourselves with fresh ones, proceeded onward.

After leaving the Irish Colony signs of Indians became quite frequent and constant vigilance was exercised. A detail of scouts under Lieutenant Maxwell was sent ahead to reconnoiter and report in case they should meet any straggling bands of Indians. After traveling about ten miles the advance guard discovered in the distance what they supposed to be Indians, and prepared for an attack; but which, upon inspection, proved to be a party of fugitives, men, women and children flying from the scenes of butchery which they had just escaped. Several of them were recognized

as former citizens of Hamilton county, but recently of a settlement in Minnesota, then called Springfield (now Jackson) about eight miles north of the Iowa line. They were in a pitiable plight, wounded, cold, hungry and exhausted by three days and nights of travel over the bleak prairie, the women's skirts and shoes worn to shreds. One man—Mr. J. B. Thomas—had his left arm broken and horribly mangled by a rifle ball. Mr. D. N. Carver was shot through the arm, the ball lodging in his side. Miss Drusilla Swanger (sister of Mrs. Church) was shot through the left shoulder and severely wounded. Proceeding to a grove in sight we camped and rendered them such assistance as we could, Dr. Bissell dressing their wounds and accompanying them to the Irish Colony. The refugees informed us that on the evening of March 26 Mr. Thomas' house, where four or five families had collected for safety, was surrounded by Inkpaduta's band, and while a number of them were standing in a group at the door were fired upon. Little Willie Thomas fell shot through the head, and others were wounded. The door was closed and a gallant defense made, during which it is known that Mrs. Church killed an Indian. At dusk the Indians were beaten off and the siege raised. The other houses in the settlement were pillaged and the contents either destroyed or carried away.

About midnight the besieged determined to start south, to reach the nearest settlement, with but an ox-team and sled, their only means of transportation. The wounded and small children were placed upon the sled, together with such supplies as were absolutely needed, while the women walked and led the larger children. When almost exhausted this forlorn band of refugees came face to face with what they supposed to be their deadly foes. As may easily be supposed, they were in no condition to defend themselves, and prepared for the worst. But just here occurred an instance of heroism that has never been excelled and seldom equalled. John Bradshaw took eight loaded rifles and marching a few rods in advance, stacked seven of them, and taking the eighth in his hands prepared to sell his life as dearly as possible—a single Greek at the pass of Thermopylae, a Marius leaping into the gulf in the Roman forum. A few minutes of agonizing suspense and walls of grief were succeeded by shouts of joy. The supposed Indians proved to be the advance guard of the relief expedition, one of whom, William Church, had recognized his wife among the refugees.

The survivors of the Springfield tragedy numbered thirty-three, as follows:

- J. B. Thomas, wife and five children.
- Mrs. Church and two children.
- Mrs. Nelson and one child.
- Mrs. Dr. Strong and two children.
- Mrs. Harshman and two children.
- J. B. Skinner and wife.
- Harshman and wife.
- Morris Markham.
- Smith and wife.

Drusilla Swanger and Eliza Gardner.

John Bradshaw and David Carver.

George Granger and A. P. Sheigley.

Jareb Palmer and John Stewart.

Dr. E. B. Strong's name does not appear in the above list as he prudently took time by the forelock and fled to the Irish Colony in advance, leaving his wife and children to follow at their leisure.

John Bradshaw, Morris Markham and Jareb Palmer joined Company C and returned to Granger's Point.

Tuesday, March 31, we reached Big Island Grove, where we camped to reconnoiter, as we expected to find Indians in that vicinity. We were disappointed, although comparatively recent signs were visible. We found an ox which had been killed, his horns cut off and the hide laid open along the back to secure the tendons, which are quite useful to the Indians.

Wednesday, April 1. This morning, when a short distance on our way, an amusing incident occurred. Major Williams had sent forward a party of scouts with orders not to fire a gun unless they encountered Indians. Some of our party hearing the report of a gun, a halt was ordered. We then heard a number of shots in rapid succession, and directly a party of men was seen issuing from the grove in advance of us, as though they were pursued. The cry of "Indians" was at once raised and our men (exasperated by the recital of deeds of treachery and violence to which they had just listened) became ungovernable and rushing from the ranks threw themselves into defiant attitudes. Some even went so far as to cock their guns, although "the enemy" was at least two miles distant! However, the Major soon succeeded in restoring order and convincing the fast young men that their movement was somewhat premature. The supposed Indians proved to be our scouts who had encountered some beavers on the lake, and in pursuing them had become so excited as to entirely forget their orders. These scouts reported that they had discovered an Indian lookout scaffold on a tree on Big Island from which the country could be surveyed for miles around. A fire, still smouldering, indicated that the "look-out" had been recently occupied.

Proceeding on our way we reached G. Granger's, on the river near the Minnesota line. Here very unwelcome news awaited us. We learned that the main body of the Indians had left Springfield five days in advance of our arrival, and that a detachment of United States troops, sixty in number, had arrived from Fort Ridgely on the 27th of March and were then quartered at Springfield. This was disappointing in the extreme. We had hoped that if we did not reach the scene of action in time to afford the distressed settlers relief we might, at least, be in time to deal out justice to their murderers. After all our toil and privations endured in hopes of being able to accomplish something, the reflection that we had arrived too late was anything but cheering. Upon inquiry we learned that the United States troops had arrived the same day that the Indians left and that a few of them had followed the marauders a short distance, discovered where they had camped the night before and from the number of "teepees" com-

puted them to number about forty warriors. On the way they found various articles of clothing and other materials cast away by the Indians on account of the great amount of plunder with which they were burdened. The fact that the Indians were allowed to escape without any effort to pursue them seems quite unaccountable, except upon the hypothesis of the cowardice or incompetency of Captain Bee,* their commander.

Our position at this time was a rather perplexing one. Anticipated by the United States troops, the Indians five or six days in advance of us, and our provisions almost exhausted, it soon became apparent that the only alternative left us was the melancholy one of paying the last tribute of respect to the remains of the unfortunate settlers and returning home. Accordingly, on the morning of April 2, a company of twenty-five men was selected and placed under the command of Captain J. C. Johnson, with orders to proceed to Lake Okoboji and bury the dead, while the residue were to return to the Irish Colony.

The names of the burial detail, as far as can be ascertained, were as follows:

Captain J. C. Johnson, Lieutenant John N. Maxwell, Jesse Addington, William E. Burkholder, A. Burch, Henry Carse, Henry E. Dalley, William Ford, O. C. Howe, Elias D. Kellogg, William K. Laughlin, R. McCormick, Jonas Murray, B. F. Parmenter, George P. Smith, R. A. Smith, O. S. Spencer, C. Stebbins, J. M. Thatcher, S. Vancleave, R. U. Wheelock, W. R. Wilson, and three others whose names have not been preserved.

I was prevented from joining the party by an accident (a severe sprain of the ankle) which unfitted me for traveling.

The sad task performed by these men of burying the dead at Okoboji and their subsequent perilous march to the Irish Colony, has been so well described by Lieutenant John N. Maxwell and W. K. Laughlin in *THE ANNALS*, Vol. III, pp. 525-32 and 541-5, that I need only refer to the same.

Major Williams being at the Colony dispatched runners down the river to look for Captain Johnson and the four men with him. They returned that evening without any definite information. The next morning Smith, Addington and Murray came in. They stated that they had separated from Capts. Johnson and Burkholder early the previous morning; that the latter had taken off their boots at night and that in the morning they were so frozen that they could not get them on again. That while cutting up their

*Barnard E. Bee was born in South Carolina, and appointed a cadet at large in the United States Military Academy in 1841. He graduated 33 in his class of 41 in 1845, and was at once promoted to brevet 2d lieutenant, 3d U. S. Infantry. He had an active and honorable career in "the old army," serving in Mexico, and several years on the southwestern and northwestern frontiers. He was promoted for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battles of Cerro Gordo and Chapultepec, and his native State, South Carolina, presented him, in 1854, with a sword of honor "for his patriotic and meritorious conduct in the Mexican War." He resigned from the Union Army in 1861 and joined in the Rebellion against the United States. He became a brigadier general and was killed at the Battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861, at the age of 37. While his early career was a very active one and generally brought him great credit, his conduct in abandoning the pursuit of the Indians at Spirit Lake was at the time severely criticised, and the more, perhaps, because in those days the regular army was often called upon to aid in returning fugitive slaves to their southern masters.

blankets and tying them on their feet they disagreed about the course to be taken. Pulling off their boots was a fatal mistake. They were last seen traveling in a southeasterly direction, and their bleaching bones were found on the open prairie eleven years afterward, being identified by the remains of their guns and powder flasks. Thus perished two brave and true young men in the very flush of early manhood. Their melancholy fate cast a deep gloom over the entire company, as they were especial favorites. I was not personally acquainted with Mr. Burkholder but Captain C. B. Richards of Company A, says of him:

"William E. Burkholder was a young man of rare promise, educated, brave, generous, and unselfish. He volunteered for this expedition knowing that it would be at a great sacrifice, having been nominated by the Republicans of his county as their candidate for treasurer and recorder, knowing that his absence might, and probably would, result in his defeat. But he never gave it a regretful thought. His patriotism and his manhood called him and he went to lay down his young life that he might protect his fellow citizens and their frontier homes from the merciless savage."

I had the honor of being the friend of the lamented Captain Johnson. As such I feel it to be my duty to offer, in my humble way, that tribute which is justly due to his memory.

John C. Johnson was born and reared in Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania. With a view to bettering his condition in life he removed to Illinois, and subsequently to Webster City, Hamilton county, Iowa. It was here I first became acquainted with him. His gentlemanly manners and generous, frank disposition, won my esteem and confidence. When the news of the Indian outrage reached us his business claimed his attention at home, but unmindful of self, he thought only of the sufferings and wrongs of the unhappy victims, and knew no other way than that pointed out by duty and patriotism. On the morning of our departure to the front he remarked to me that "Pennsylvania's sons should not be 'weighed and found wanting,'" and most nobly did he sustain his assertion throughout the arduous labors of the expedition. So favorable was the impression made by him on the company that he was unanimously chosen our captain, and subsequently proved himself worthy of the confidence reposed in him. He faithfully executed the orders of his superiors, maintaining order and decorum in his company. His orders were given in a manner to insure promptness of action, yet in such a courteous way that it was a pleasure to obey him. He appeared to have the comfort and welfare of his men at heart, and by his self-sacrificing nature won the esteem of all who became acquainted with him. I marched beside him through the day and slept beside him at night, and must say that I never met any one to whom I became so much attached in so short a time. I believe I but reflect the sentiment of his company in saying that there was not one who did not esteem and love him.

But to return to the fortunes of the main body of the expedition:

Thursday, April 2. We marched from Granger's Point and camped a short distance above Prairie Creek.

Friday, April 3. We reached the Irish Colony where we expected to meet the burial detail, but as yet none had arrived. The following morning, April 4, was very disagreeable, rainy and cold. But as our provisions were daily diminishing in quantity and deteriorating in quality, it was deemed prudent to resume our march homeward.

About 2 o'clock Saturday we reached the banks of Cylinder Creek, which, owing to the recent rains and the melting of the snow, was impassable. This creek pursues a meandering course in a little valley of perhaps a half mile in width. The flats were overflowed with water, about waist deep, while in the channel or bed of the stream the water was ten or fifteen feet deep. A halt was ordered and council of war held. C. C. Carpenter and one or two others went on a reconnoitering tour southward toward the timber on the Des Moines river, but found only a wide expanse of water. So they returned and reported—"No thoroughfare in that direction."

Major Williams, with one of the wagons containing the sick and wounded, returned to the Irish Colony, about twelve miles distant.

Captains Richards and Duncombe constructed a boat by calking the cracks of one of the wagon beds and selecting Guernsey Smith and Solon Mason to assist them, endeavored to construct a ferry by means of a rope, with the laudable design of transporting us across "the vasty deep." But alas, for human foresight. They succeeded in reaching the other shore, but at that moment the boat (?) collapsed and the four occupants were precipitated into the water. An attempt was made to build a raft, but that too proved abortive. Added to these discouragements the high wind and extreme cold resisted all the endeavors of the experimenters to return, and as night was coming on they sought shelter at Shippey's cabin, two miles below. While awaiting the result of the aforesaid experiment I was irresistibly reminded of a certain couplet relating to the river Jordan:

"Part have crossed the flood
And part (fain would be) crossing now"—

the only impediment being the entire absence of means. We now found ourselves in a most unpleasant situation. A prospect of drowning if we proceeded, a prospect of starving if we remained where we were, and ditto if we returned. Various plans were proposed only to be abandoned as impracticable, and it appeared to resolve itself into a case of every man for himself. For my own part I confess to being a little puzzled to know just how to dispose of myself. I knew there were not provisions sufficient for us all at the Colony, and as to staying where I was I looked upon the chances as being one to ten of freezing to death. It was growing colder every minute, and the wind blowing a hurricane. The only avenue open to me seemed to lay in the possibility of crossing the creek. Even of this "Hope told no flattering tale"—but the chance was at least one in a hundred and I resolved to make the best of possibilities. So I gathered up my belongings and, accompanied by a friend—Amos K. Tullis—I started northward. When asked where I was going I replied: "I am going to walk around Cylinder creek." Apparently my comrades did not think there was much danger of my putting this threat into execution, so we were allowed

to depart in peace. We ascended the stream about one and a half miles where I saw a bunch of willows, which I knew must grow upon the bank of the channel, and might perhaps assist us in crossing if we were fortunate enough to reach the place. After wading about eighty rods we reached them and found behind them a bank of snow or drift formed during the winter in the eddy of the bunch of willows, now a compound of slush and frozen snow, and extending, perhaps, half-way across the bed of the stream. By breaking willow brush and covering the snowbank we made a partial bridge which served to support us as far as it went. The only alternative was now to jump, which I did, and to my surprise and gratification I brought up in about five feet of water, being lucky enough to reach the opposite bank of the channel. My comrade now threw our blankets and followed. He was not so fortunate as he landed (?) in deeper water and was temporarily in danger of being swept away; but I quickly reached him the muzzle of my rifle and drew him to my side. By again wading about a quarter of a mile we gained the bluff, thankful that "the Rubicon" was passed. By running about four miles we reached the cabin of the Shippey family and obtained shelter for the night. The same evening Captains Richards and Duncombe, with Smith and Mason, came in.

Sunday morning, April 5. We returned to the creek to look for our companions, but as there were no signs of life, the conviction was forced upon us that our fears were realized, and that they were all frozen to death. The stream was by this time frozen over except the channel, about fifty feet wide, in which the ice was partially formed, but not sufficiently solid to walk upon. The captains deserve praise for their noble efforts in behalf of their men. They worked for two hours in the severe cold, attempting to crawl over the ice to reach the opposite shore, but, notwithstanding their warm hearts, the intense cold overcame them and they were obliged to abandon the attempt. Returning to the Shippey cabin another night of horrible suspense was passed. Comparatively comfortable as we were, the condition of our comrades haunted us like a grim spectre. We could not imagine how it was possible for them to survive the horrors of such another night, while our utter inability to relieve them added poignancy to our grief.

Monday, April 6. We again proceeded to Cylinder Creek *and found the ice strong enough to carry a horse.* Crossing over we were overjoyed to find all our companions alive. They were piled up like so many flour bags in the most approved style, under a frail tent, constructed of a wagon cover, partially banked up with snow which served to check the fierce wind and saved them from freezing to death. Now they crossed the creek on the ice, (the formation of which they had patiently waited), after lying in this position *over forty hours, without food or fire, on the open prairie, with the mercury at 32° below zero.*

Those of us who had succeeded in crossing Cylinder Creek now thought best to reach home as soon as possible.

After paying dearly for our accommodations where we stopped over Sunday, we "departed every man to his tent," some going by way of Fort

Dodge, and others striking across the prairie to Boone river. I was one of a party of eleven that took that route. The first night we slept at the house of Elwood Collins on Lott's creek. These good Quaker people not only gave us the best treatment in their power, but volunteered to take care of two of our exhausted comrades—A. N. Hathway and E. W. Gates.

Tuesday, April 7. We arrived at Corsaut's on Boone river about ten o'clock at night. The next morning Mr. Corsaut hitched up his team and hauled us to Webster City. We arrived at home Wednesday, April 8, about noon, having been gone seventeen days and marched 250 miles.

In the course of this narrative it has been mentioned that four women were taken captive at Spirit Lake. At this date they were trudging painfully toward the northwest as slaves of the braves of Inkpaduta's band. One of the braves was wounded and borne on a litter. He had received his wound at the hands of Dr. Harriott, and was the only member of Inkpaduta's band injured, except the one killed by Mrs. Church, at Springfield, Minnesota.

The captives were treated as beasts of burden and, after suffering untold hardships and indignities at the hands of their captors, two of them were murdered.

Six weeks after the massacre at the lakes the Indians reached the Big Sioux river, about where the town of Flandreau, in South Dakota, now stands. While crossing this river Mrs. Thatcher was pushed into the stream by a young brave (?) and her attempts to reach the shore thwarted by him and others of the band who forced her back into the current and as she drifted away she was shot.

The fate of Mrs. Noble was similar to that of Mrs. Thatcher. Having displeased Roaring Cloud—son of Inkpaduta—she was brained with a club. The wife of Marble, after much bargaining, was purchased by two Indians and brought to Chas. E. Flandreau, agent for the United States government for the Sioux Indians, at the agency at the Yellow Medicine river in Minnesota, May 21, 1857.

Miss Abbie Gardner was ransomed through the efforts of the Indian agent, Flandreau, and Governor Medary, of Minnesota, June 23, 1857. The price paid for her was two horses, twelve blankets, two kegs of powder, twenty pounds of tobacco, thirty-two yards of blue squaw cloth, thirty-seven yards of calico, a few ribbons, etc.

That Inkpaduta himself, or any of his band, except Roaring Cloud, ever suffered for his bloody deeds is doubtful in the extreme. Roaring Cloud was killed. He ventured back to the Yellow Medicine to woo, it is said, some dusky maiden, but his presence was revealed by an enemy and a detachment of soldiers from Fort Ridgely surrounded him. He fought his pursuers but fell pierced by many balls.

Years have come and gone. Time, the mighty magician, has wrought wondrous changes in the landscape about Minnewaukon and Okoboji.

Where once stood the rude log cabin of the early pioneer now is reared the stately mansion. Where once the industrious beaver patiently wrought, the otter played, and the lordly elk stooped to slake his thirst, may now be seen domestic fowls and lowing herds. Where once the tall prairie grass waved, now ripening wheat covers the earth as with a mantle and waving corn nods its tassels in the breeze. And where blood once splashed and enriched the soil, flowers spring to please the eye and charm away bitter memories of the past.

No excellence is attained without a corresponding sacrifice, and the blessings of peace are often purchased at the price of blood and treasure. That ingratitude is not a characteristic of Iowa people is fully attested by the granite monument at Okoboji and the brass tablet at Webster City, recording the names of those who suffered or died that the present generation might live. Having myself participated in those early scenes and struggles, I value them at their true worth, and here offer my humble tribute to the brave.

HIGH WATER PREVENTS WORK.—State Fish and Game Warden Delevan was in the city Wednesday and is greatly put out because the work of taking fish from the lakes and bayous, for distribution throughout the state, cannot be commenced. The mighty "Father of Waters" is on a rampage, and unless it begins to recede soon and goes down very rapidly, there will be very little, if any work done here this fall. As a matter of fact the gathering of fish should have commenced about September 1st and Deputy Warden Swift had everything in readiness for an active season's work, but the fates appeared to decree otherwise, and the unusual and unlooked for high water has made the work entirely out of the question. Such high water in the fall of the year is an unusual occurrence—in fact, it has occurred but once before in 25 years, and that was in the fall of 1884. There is still hope for two or three weeks' work during the latter part of this month and the first of next, and should the opportunity be offered, three or four crews of fishermen will be put on.—*Sabula Semi-Weekly Gazette, Oct. 13, 1900.*

QUICK TRIP.—Mr. Peter Mertz made the trip from San Francisco to Burlington, Iowa, in the short space of 30 days.—*Western American, Keosauqua, Iowa, Jan. 17, 1852.*

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.