

**Pioneer Heritage Society**  
**Indian Relations with the Whites, Especially the Mormon Pioneers**  
February 2004—By Gail G. Holmes

Indian Relations with the Whites, Especially the Mormon Pioneers: That is not a good title because Indians aren't Indians. They are Omaha, Oto, Pottawattamie/Ottawa/Chippewa, Teton Sioux, Sac, and Fox, etc. Each of those nations had separate languages, separate chiefs, separate needs, separate circumstances.

Nor were whites necessarily whites. Nor were they necessarily EuroAmericans. Some were French, some Spanish, some Canadian, some were of that utterly unique world-wide blend of ethnic groups in a new nation called "the United States of America." Central and South American residents called us Norte Americanos. We could be pegged geographically!

When we talk about relations between ethnic and/or social groups we generally are talking about proximity, interaction, trespass, poaching, or -- extending a helping hand. There was a small creek a little west of our Elkhorn River, perhaps 35 miles west of here, called Raw Hide Creek. Rawhide Creek was so named for a man who was, if I recall correctly from somewhere in the vicinity of Chicago. He thought he had a mission. Traveling with a group migrating to Oregon, this man repeatedly vowed he would shoot the first Indian he saw.

Finally at a nameless little creek just west of the Elkhorn River, north of the Platte our brave white man saw an Indian woman with a child. He shot and killed the mother, the first Indian he saw, just as he said he would. Word spread quickly and a large band of armed braves surrounded the traveling company. They asked for surrender of the man who had shot and killed one of their women. He was handed over and taken back to the scene of the earlier shooting. There he was tied up. Braves tore off strips of his skin before he was killed. Thereafter the little creek was known as Raw Hide Creek.

Was this episode typical of relations between Native Americans and whites? No. It was unique, but in its own way, representative of the treatment any trouble maker might have gotten almost anywhere around the world in the mid-eighteen hundreds.

**French Trader Stopped and Stripped of Supplies**

The stories we hear usually run the other way. Listen to this Litany from French trader/explorer Jean Baptiste Truteau: He was traveling, he thought, up the Missouri River to

the Mandan Nation of south central North Dakota. Truteau's assignment was to build a fort in North Dakota for a following Spanish expedition to do in 1795 what American Captains Lewis & Clark did in 1804 to 1806.

Trapped and stripped of much of his goods by the Teton Sioux of central South Dakota, Truteau went back down the Missouri River to winter near the mouth of the Niobrara River in northeastern Nebraska. Bear with me and we will see how differently the same nation of natives dealt with whites under very different chiefs, separated by 50 years.

On November 11, 1794 Truteau's hunter, Noel Charron, returned to camp with a native. Now, thanks to Prof. Abraham P. Nasatir of San Diego University, we have the translation of journals written in French and Spanish at that time: Truteau wrote:

*"I asked to what nation he belonged. He told me he was an Omaha; and that twenty-two lodges of his nation were encamped at some leagues below us, who would arrive the next day. The chief of this band is named by the French Big Rabbit, and is also recognized as a great rascal.*

*"I experienced a sharp grief over their arrival. I had not yet hidden all the merchandise which remained with us....*

*"Towards the evening the chief Big Rabbit arrived....He told me that he and his people were very glad to have met with us; that the French alone are the support of all the red skin nations; that they felt today more than ever the necessity of having things better, failing absolutely to nourish themselves through lack of guns, powder, balls, etc; that the French only could procure them for them, (flattering and deceitful talk which had continued to hold with the French since the first sight) seeking ceaselessly to deceive us and to extort our merchandise by all sorts of means....*

*"...the old men, women, and children arrived. It was true that they were out of food, eating only herbs, so they crowded around us when we ate our meals, fighting among themselves as to who should have our soup, gathering up the bones which we threw for them to gnaw on. It was a strange sight....*

*"...They represented their misery to me, for the most of them had no guns and asked for ours to hunt deer which we did not like to do, but willing or not it was necessary to consent, for they took possession of them without waiting our approval and we found ourselves dependent upon them for food.*

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*"The next day they assembled to demand powder, balls, and knives on credit. I resisted their demands for a long time, representing to them that I had very few. They persisted which obliged me to give them some.*

*"In order to avoid the tumult which arose when they took things by force, I consented to give them some, provided they would take only for twelve or fifteen hides for each hunter which was carried out in an instant. The chief Big Rabbit and some of the consideres (important men of the tribe) forced me to give them credit for thirty or forty hides. He made great promises for himself and his men, but I have some fear that he will deceive me.*

**French Paid High Price for Loan of Guns, Knives**

*"They went out first for a hunt of wild cattle (buffalo) and returned at the end of fifteen days hunt loaded with dried meat. In recognition of the assistance which they had received from us, they sold me food at exorbitant prices....*

*"The expense which I have been obliged to bear here for the nourishment of nine men is exorbitant. Not having any maize (corn) for food I am reduced to buy dried meat, bit by bit, from this mob, our hunter Noel Charron, not being able to kill anything among them, the wild animals run away. They returned to the hunt for beaver and deer, they said in order to pay me well.*

*"The 18th of December there arrived the great chief of the Omahas (Blackbird) of whom I have spoken above....The arrival of the first (chief) inconvenienced me very much for our departure in the spring and occasioned me much expense...as much for food as for the merchandise which I was forced from time to time to give him. The arrival of this last named chief put a climax on my difficulties.*

*"The great chief of the Omahas (Blackbird) was the most shrewd, the most deceitful and the greatest rascal of all the nations who inhabit the Missouri. He is feared and respected and is in great renown among all strange nations, none of whom dare to contradict him openly or to move against his wishes.....*

**Chiefs Took Goods and Gave Promises**

*"...Upon the arrival of the French at his villages he causes an examination of the goods to be made and then carries off and appropriates whatever is pleasing to him. The engages (trade party workers) are even forced*

*to open their cases or haversacks which he examines. He takes from them a part of their tobacco and other little effects which they may have. The second chief(s) carry on their robbery also, and one is not able to object to them, and always with promises of good pay which ease their own mind and are a loss to the trader...*

*".....he is unable, he (Blackbird) says, to forgive us for passing and hiding from his village. I replied to him that the French always find so much trouble in passing villages situated on the Missouri, that they often decide to pass secretly....That along this river alone did the nations close their ears to the words of their Spanish father, hindering the French from going to seek pelts anywhere they wished; that if on the contrary they left the road free and open they would see all the time boats loaded with merchandise pass and repass their village, where they would stop in safety as in their own places, just as the nations of the Mississippi do where the French come and go freely. What jealousy, I said to him (Blackbird), gets the better of you when you see us carry needs to the nations situated farther on from you? Why do you impede us so obstinately in our course?*

*"....He (Blackbird) replied to me...that he was not ignorant that the white nations were anxious to seek hides among all the savage peoples, whom they could discover...and that he knew very well that in spite of the good heart of the French and their presents that they had often been robbed and killed by the nations whom they visited (except the Omahas). That the road which they had opened had been red with their blood and covered with merchandise as much given away as stolen...I am more and more discontented with the French. They carry great boats loaded with merchandise to the Poncas, the Arikaras and the Mandans and to all the nations who inhabit the Missouri, a people for the most part who kill them every day, and my people who have never killed a white man, are deprived this year as I am myself...*

*"The Omaha chiefs have burdened me with reproaches and insults, and they threaten especially to maltreat Jacques d'Eglise if they catch him traveling stealthily (past their village), and also others who undertake it in the same way....*

*"The 8th of the month of March the great chief of the Omahas and all his family have set out from here to return to their own village without giving me a single hide, saying that the hides were buried in his village, but I hope for nothing from this rascal for (223 pounds sterling*

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*of stolen merchandise), according to my invoice price (list).....*

That is a very long reading, but it should give you some idea of the pre-American era hazards of doing business in the Missouri River Valley. I am suggesting here a change occurred with the arrival of the Americans. What could have changed, except a change in tribal leaders? You understand, of course, the Spanish period from 1762 to 1803 was not all Spanish. The white residents along the lower Mississippi and the traders up along the Missouri were still French, supervised largely by Spanish administrators and some Spanish businessmen.

### **Americans Used Different Method**

Truteau's northwest passage crew consisted of eight or nine men. How many men were in the Lewis & Clark expedition of 1804? 45! Were they traders? A few who went along as interpreters had been traders. But Lewis & Clark's Corps of Discovery was largely military. They had a big swivel gun on their keelboat and small swivel guns, capable of belching out hands-full of shot, on their dugout canoes. They had an air gun capable of shooting a number of times without having to be reloaded. Every man was well armed and stood at the ready when threatened.

Frenchmen, under both French and Spanish administration before and after 1762, traveled without military support. They frequently intermarried with the natives and sometimes lived amongst them. There were few men in their trading parties. Many of their descendants now live in Omaha, Council Bluffs, Macy, Walthill, and other places.

The Americans did not operate that way. They traveled in crews of 30 or 40 men, all well armed. Many American traders, trappers, and poachers were killed, especially in the Rocky Mountains, but nothing like the number of French in the Middle Missouri Valley, and rarely were they stripped of their trade goods and pelts.

Before we get to the peaceful and pleasing era of the Omaha Tribe, let's step back in time and look at the parade of native and white groups trooping in and out of this area. The last of the prehistoric groups here, the Nebraska Phase, Glenwood Culture natives who arrived about 800 or 900 A.D. and disappeared, mysteriously, from here about 1300 or 1400 A.D.

Among the Native Americans arriving and departing from here were the Oto (1700-

1854); Missouri (1795-1854); Pawnee (1835-1865); Pottawattamie/Ottawa/Chippewa (1837-1847). The mostly white arrivals and departures were the French (1706-2004), Spanish (1762-2004); American explorers (1804-1820); Baptist missionaries (1833-1840); Presbyterian missionaries & teachers (1834-1870s); Oregon migrants (1835-1860s); United States Dragoons (mounted infantry) (1837); Jesuit Catholic missionaries & teachers (1838-1841); California migrants (1844-1860s); Mormon refugees (1846-1860s); Gold Rushers (1849-1860s); freighting wagons (1849-60s).

The first great influx of Americans here was the Mormon religious exodus of 1846-1853. It took seven years for them to stage through here. This area was transformed and never was the same after they left. The Middle Missouri Valley was Native American fur trade area when the Mormons arrived in 1846. It was a booming agricultural area with a brisk Gold Rush and Oregon migration trade when they left. The LDS published seven newspapers, two in Council Bluffs, and one each in Crescent, and Dawsonburg, Iowa and in Omaha, Woodriver, and Wyoming, Nebraska. They constructed roads, bridges, and ferries, organized at least four counties in southwestern Iowa, built a dozen mills, and provided the first regular mail service in the Mid-Missouri Valley.

What were the relations between the Mormons and the local natives? Would you believe United States Indian Sub-Agent R.B. Mitchell at Point aux poules or Traders Point never even mentioned the arrival here of thousands of LDS in his autumn 1846 report? And he had personally invited the LDS leaders to a welcoming dinner the preceding June, a few days after they had arrived! The following year Mitchell wrote in his report that the Mormons and the local natives got along very well.

Thomas L. Kane, son of a federal district judge in Philadelphia, who hand-carried orders from Washington D.C. to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas territory for the call up of the Mormon Battalion, was more descriptive. In his 1850 address to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Kane, speaking of the Mormons, said:

### **Indians Pitied the Mormons**

*"Like the wounded birds of a flock fired into toward nightfall, they came straggling on with faltering steps, many of them without bag or baggage, beast or barrow, all asking shelter or burial, and forcing a fresh repartition of the*

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*already divided rations of their friends....Further emigration for the time was out of the question, and the whole people prepared themselves for encountering another winter on the prairie.*

*"Happily for the main body, they found themselves at this juncture among Indians who were amicably disposed. The lands on both sides of the Missouri in particular, were owned by the Pottawatamies and Omahas, two tribes whom unjust treatment by our United States, had the effect of rendering most auspiciously hospitable to strangers whom they regarded as persecuted like themselves...*

*"They were pleased with the Mormons. They would have been pleased with any whites who would not cheat them, nor sell them whiskey, nor whip them for their poor gypsy habits, nor bear themselves indecently toward their women, many of whom among the Pottawatamies, especially those of nearly unmixed French descent, are singularly comely, and some of them educated. But all Indians have something like a sentiment of reverence for the insane, and admire those who sacrifice, without apparent motive, their worldly welfare to the triumph of an idea. They understand the meaning of what they call a great vow, and think it the duty of the right-minded to lighten the votary's penance under it. To this feeling they united the sympathy of fellow sufferers for those who could talk to them of their own Illinois, and tell the story how from it they also had been ruthlessly expelled.*

*"Their hospitality was sincere, almost delicate. Fanny Le Clerc, the spoiled child of the great brave, Pied Riche, interpreter of the Nation, would have the pale face Miss Devine learn duetts with her to the guitar; and the daughter of the substantial Joseph La Framboise, the interpreter of the United States, - she died of the fever that summer, -- welcomed all the nicest young Mormon Kitties and Lizzies, and Jennies and Susans, to a coffee feast at her father's house, which was probably the best cabin in the river village. They made the Mormons at home, there and elsewhere. Upon all their lands they formally gave them leave to tarry just so long as should suit their own good pleasure..*

*"The affair, of course, furnished material for a solemn council. Under the auspices of an officer of the United States, their chiefs were summoned, in the form befitting great occasions, to meet in the dirty yard of one Mr. P.A. Sarpy's log trading house, at their village. They came in grand toilet, moving in their fantastic attire with*

*so much aplomb and genteel measure, that the stranger found it difficult not to believe them high born gentlemen, attending a costumed ball. Their aristocratically thin legs, of which they displayed fully the usual Indian proportion, aided this illusion. There is something too at all times very Mock-Indian in the theatrical French millinery tie of the Pottawatamie turban; while it is next to impossible for a sober white man, at first sight, to believe that the red, green, black, blue and yellow cosmetics, with which he sees such grave personages so variously dotted, diapered, cancelled and arabesqued, are worn by them in any mood but one of the deepest and most desperate quizzing. From their first squat upon the ground, to the final breaking up of the council circle, they sustained their characters with equal self-possession and address.....*

*"The renowned chief, Pied Riche -- he was surnamed Le Clerc on account of his remarkable scholarship, ...rose and said:*

*"My Mormon Brethren, The Pottawatamie came sad and tired into this unhealthy Missouri Bottom, not many years back, when he was taken from his beautiful country beyond the Mississippi, which had abundant game and timber and clear water everywhere. Now you are driven away, the same, from your lodges and lands there, and the graves of your people. So we have both suffered. We must help one another, and the great spirit will help us both. You are now free to cut and use all the wood you may wish. You can make all your improvements, and live on any part of our actual land not occupied by us. Because one suffers, and does not deserve it, is no reason he shall suffer always: I say. We may live to see all right yet. However, if we do not, our children will. -- Bon Jour.*

*"And thus ended the pageant. I give this speech as a morsel of real Indian. It was recited to me after the Treaty by the Pottawatamie orator in French, which language he spoke with elegance. Bon Jour is the French, Indian, and English Hail and Fare-well of the Pottawatamies."*

#### **Kane Described Poverty Condition of the Omaha**

Thomas Kane, totally overlooking the smallest and by far the most contentious of the tribes, the Oto/Missouri, quite accurately described the 1846 condition of the Omaha, saying:

*"The other entertainers of the Mormons*

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*at this time, the Omahas, or Mahaws, are one of the minor tribes of the Grand Prairie. Their Great Father, the United States, has found it inconvenient to protect so remote a dependency against the overpowering league of the Dahcotahs or Sioux, and has judged it dangerous at the same time to allow them to protect themselves by entering into a confederation with others....When I was among them, they were so ill-fed, that their protruding high cheek bones gave them the air of a tribe of consumptives. The buffalo had left them, and no good ranges lay within several hundred miles reach. Hardly any other game found cover on their land. What little there was, they were short of ammunition to kill. Their annuity from the United States was trifling. They made next to nothing at thieving. They had planted corn in their awkward Indian fashion, but through fear of ambush dared not venture out to harvest it....*

*"The pauper Omahas were ready to solicit as a favor the residence of white protectors among them. The Mormons harvested and stored away for them their crops of maize(corn); with all their own poverty, they spared them food enough besides, from time to time, to save them from absolutely starving; and their entrenched camp to the north of the Omaha villages, served as a sort of breakwater between them and the destroying rush of the (Dakota) Sioux..*

*"This was the Head Quarters of the Mormon Camps of Israel. The miles of rich prairie enclosed and sowed with the grain they could contrive to spare, and the houses, stacks, and cattle shelters, had the seeming of an entire county, with its people and improvements transplanted there unbroken. On a pretty plateau overlooking the river, they built more than seven hundred houses in a single town, neatly laid out with highways and byways, and fortified with breast-work, stockade and block houses. It had too its place of worship, 'Tabernacle of the Congregation,' and various large workshops, and mills and factories provided with water power.*

*"They had no camp or settlement of equal size in the Pottawatamie country. There was less to apprehend here from Indian invasion; and the people scattered themselves therefore along the rivers and streams, and in the timber groves, wherever they found inviting localities for farming operations. In this way many of them acquired what have since proved to be valuable pre-emption rights."*

#### **Kane Left Mormons in September 1846**

Kane left here in September of 1846, heading back to his home in Philadelphia. He had to depend, probably, on Utah's representative to Congress, John M. Bernhisel, for his descriptions of Winter Quarters and the Mormon communities east of the Missouri River when he prepared his 1850 address to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. His description of mills (plural) and factories sounds a bit over blown, although there were some fair-sized workshops to produce baskets, measuring baskets, and wash boards to be traded in Missouri for food, grain, and medicine.

A grand, gracious, and eloquent old man called Big Elk was chief of the Omaha Tribe. He strove mightily to maintain good relations between his tribe and the Mormons. But he frankly explained to Brigham Young that he was an old man (and died of old age perhaps a year later) and that some of his young men would not obey his counsel. Mormon livestock were herded in the grasslands not far from Winter Quarters. Now and then, a few young natives would swoop in and rapidly drive off a single animal. They would kill, skin, and carry off part of the carcass before the Mormon boys herding the cattle could discover where the raiders had taken their animal.

In the March 21, 1849 edition of *The Frontier Guardian*, after the death of Omaha Chief Big Elk, Orson Hyde wrote in editorial:

*"There are two small tribes of Indians directly opposite Pottawatamie county, on the west side of the river. They are the Ottoes and Omahas. These tribes are miserably poor and wretched. They are not disposed to do much evil, only as they are forced by hunger and the want to rob and steal. It is true, they have stolen many horses and mules from us in times when they were going out upon their hunts. They have stolen and killed a great number of our cattle at various times; but not so many of late. They have carried off in the night season, from one to two hundred bushels of corn from Mr. Jesse Louder, this winter, as we are informed, -- taken off also, and killed several fat hogs from the same neighborhood. Some depredations are frequently committed by them if they can get at it.*

#### **Hyde Advised Force to Stop Indian Theft**

*"These Indians are a singular race. If you feed them, or show them favor, or trade with them, they are more likely to steal from you, than as though you treated them with severity*

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*and rigor. This is true of the Indians on the opposite side of the river from us, but it is not true of the Pottawatamie Nation.*

*"The winter has pinched them with cold and hunger, and the ice has afforded them a very convenient bridge to cross the river upon; and they have ranged up and down -- back and forth, through various parts of our county, begging, and picking up whatever they could find to subsist upon...."*

*"What shall be our treatment towards them, when they pass through among us? ....We do not wish to harm them in any way. Still, we cannot endure their repeated thefts. Again, we ask: What shall we do? They will come to St. Francis, or Trading Point, to do their trafficking, &c. as several Indian traders do business there. With the exception of this place, suffer not the Indians to roam on this side of the river. If they attempt it, apply the hickory to them; mildly at first; but more and more severely if they do not keep away from us.*

*"Mr. Hatch had five head of horses stolen by them in one night last summer. Mr. Lytle had two splendid mules taken at the same time. They even went into a field where a man was ploughing corn with a horse, unsuspecting, and consequently unarmed, and took the horse from him, their guns being presented to his breast. More than a dozen more of our immediate neighbors have lost horses and miles by these characters...."*

*"They stole two good axes from men in our employ the other day, after they had been fed, and provisions given them to carry away. The axes were at the wood-pile. They carried them about four miles and sold them for flour. We would say to our friends, buy nothing of them, neither suffer them to come about you...."*

Incidentally, you may, according to the masthead of *The Frontier Guardian*, buy a single copy of the *Guardian* for 10 cents, or take a year's subscription for \$2.00. Advertising rates, too, are cheap: \$1.00 for one square or 16 lines of type.

The October 30, 1850 edition of *The Frontier Guardian* reported on an inside page:

*"On the 16th inst. (October), the Omaha Indians set fire to the Prairie, a little west of this town, and there being a high wind at the time spread the flames with great rapidity; burning stacks of hay and wheat, fields of corn, and fences, in its fury. At one time it threatened to burn the town, but the wind shearing round, it galloped towards Stringtown, doing immense*

*damage, burning hay, wheat, &c., in its progress. The amount of damage sustained by individuals will amount in the aggregate from five to eight thousand dollars. The loss falls upon those the least able to bear it. It may be very pretty fun for the Indians to destroy the farmers all; but we would like to know where the owners of property are to seek redress for damages.*

*"On the evening previous to the fire, the Omahas commenced crossing the river, and continued during the whole night, and somewhere between three and five hundred had succeeded in getting upon this side of the river, and a portion of them came into town, under the pretence that they were wishing to purchase guns....As soon as the Indians saw the prairie on fire they left town. Two of (our) citizens who had gone to the river, caught some sixteen of them, who were still firing the prairie, and they drove them off, and forced them to cross the river.*

*"We very soon heard of the Indians a little north, where they were committing depredations. The sheriff summoned a posse, and went above with the intention of putting the remainder across river, but from the promises of the Chief, through their interpreter, that they would leave the next day, they were permitted to tarry.*

*"We soon found the people alarmed above by their depredations, and still another force was started out to suppress their thefts, &c., but they would not cross, but continued up north where they intend to hunt this fall, and in all probability we may look for still more depredations upon the cattle, corn, &c., of (our) citizens...."*

*"The Indian Agent, (Maj. Barrow,) is now absent, or these matters might have been regulated by him...."*

### **Omaha, Oto Asked Mormons for Rent**

There was a time, however, when the Omaha Indians, under the direction of Big Elk, were friendly and considerate. Perhaps the best example of that is demonstrated by the August 29, 1846 conference between the Mormons at Cutler's Park, first with the Omaha and then with the Oto. We have conflicting reports on the number of natives who came unannounced. Let's say there were about 80 Omaha and about 80 Oto in the two delegations which came north at the same time from their separate villages to what today is just south-east of the junction of Mormon Bridge Road and Young Street, near the north-west corner of Forest Lawn Cemetery.

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Both parties asked for rent for use of the land occupied by the Mormons.

It was late in the day, so the LDS agreed to meet with the two delegations the next day. The two delegations were invited to camp on the hill just to the east of what now is the west entrance to Forest Lawn Cemetery. The Oto were fearful and asked if they could stay in amongst the Mormon wagon squares, so the Omaha could not attack them during the night. Permission was granted.

Early the next morning a large double tent was set up near where the Omaha camped on the hill. When it came time for the conference, the Oto refused to enter the same tent with the Omaha. The conference started then between the Mormons and the Omaha. The double tent was so full of natives and Mormons, the recorder of the meeting sat just outside the canvas wall behind the spot where Brigham Young stood and spoke. President Young spoke of the relations between his people and the Omaha. He addressed the request for rent by offering to help them farm, repairing guns for them, hiring some young Omaha to help herd Mormon livestock, and by building a blockhouse for them on a high hill where they could see their enemies coming from afar off.

Big Elk, noted as far away as Washington, D. C. as a great orator called upon other Omaha chiefs to respond to Brother Brigham. Finally the old, nearly blind Chief stood and said:

*"I like very well what you have said. Nobody could have said it better. I will have to call you all my sons...we are happy you have come and opened a store where we can buy things cheap. I would like to know what the Oto say; if they claim this land, you can stay where you please. If they do not, I am willing you should stay. One half of the Oto are willing the Omaha should have these lands.*

*"We have been like a hungry dog which runs through camp in search of some-thing to eat and meets with enemies on every side...many times we could have defended ourselves, but our great Father has told us not to fight with any tribe unless they came to our village to destroy us."*

*"Do not cut all the trees here or I will be the last tall tree left."*

The Omaha offered to let the Mormons live where they were for two years, or longer if needed. Then they left the meeting. The Oto filed into the big double tent. They were attentive but quiet. Brigham Young repeated his

message and offer, just as given to the Omaha. When concluded, the Oto Chief stood and asked: But what have you offered the Omaha? President Young responded that the Omaha received the same offer.

The Oto were outraged. They stormed out of the tent, threatening war -- against the Omaha. Although the Oto had never lived where Cutler's Park was then located, they had hunted these grounds since 1700 A.D. The Omaha had fled here in 1845, one year before the Mormons arrived. They had been encouraged to do so by the United States Indian Agent at what today is Bellevue, in order to get further away from Dakota Sioux raiding parties coming down from South Dakota.

The Quorum of the Twelve met and considered the problem. Two men were sent to the Oto village to try to mediate the problem. The Oto refused. Then it was decided the LDS would move from Cutler's Park. Scouting parties were sent out in various directions, especially north of old Fort Atkinson (now Fort Calhoun), which was traditional Omaha territory. Finally it was agreed to move to the high plateau overlooking the Missouri River, where the Omaha Waterworks are today.

Then a marvelous calm settled over the district. There was no more talk of war. There was no more call for rent. I have puzzled for years over an explanation of that sudden calm. It seems to me, finally, the natives all recognized the river as a highway, open to all travelers. If you were to camp by the river, you were not intruding on anyone's land, but on the shoulder of a common highway.

#### **War Threat Moved Winter Quarters**

Thus came about the September 1846 move of Mormons from Cutler's Park to Winter Quarters. Not because the eloquent old Big Elk willed it, but because the jealous Oto threatened war against the friendly Omaha. It made a great difference who was chief and what was his counsel to tribal members. The same cannot be said of the Oto and their now nameless chief.

What were relations between Indians and whites? That depends. Only the circumstances of each situation, supported by original documents can give a true answer.

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