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First White Child Born in Nebraska

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When it was in existence the Missouri river ran up to the trading post. In 1832 the river left it, and since that time it goes by the name of "Heart's Cut-Off," having a large lake above Council Bluffs city. Fourth. "Do you know of either soldiers or Indians ever having resided on the Omaha plateau?" I do not know. A noted trader by the name of T. B. Royce had a trading post from 1825 till 1828, established on the Omaha plateau, and may be the first white man who built the first cabin on the beautiful plateau where now stands the flourishing city of Omaha. I cannot call to memory the signification of the word Omaha.

My time is much occupied at present. Should I find later any point worthy of communication in reference to our old mission, the New Council Bluffs, the early history of Omaha and Nebraska, I shall take great pleasure in forwarding it to you.

Very respectfully, dear sir,

your humble servant,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

FIRST WHITE CHILD BORN IN NEBRASKA.

The following correspondence relating to the first white child born in Nebraska was published in the *Omaha Herald* at dates indicated therein:

BROWNVILLE, NEB., January 29, 1880.

Dr. Geo. L. Miller, Omaha:

DEAR SIR—The enclosed letter I have just received. Being of a historical character, I hand it to you for publication, hoping by that means Mr. Harnois may be able to obtain desired information.

I would ask, too, that any one being able to communicate any facts, would do so either through *The Herald* or direct to me, as President of the State Historical Society, that we may have them for file.

As Father Hamilton, now of the Omaha Indian agency, was, in an early day, connected officially with the Indian tribes named, he will be more likely to know of the matter referred to than any other person. Send him a copy of *The Herald* containing this correspondence, "marked," please.

Yours,

ROBERT W. FURNAS.

The letter of Mr. Harnois is as follows :

ST. JOSEPH, MO., January 23, 1880.

R. W. Furnas, Esq.:

DEAR SIR—I have for quite a while past thought I would write you inquiring who were the first whites (of whom you have any knowledge) born in your State. My father, Mr. Peter Harnois, thinks that my sister, Mrs. Rosa Knight, of this city, has the honor, she being born in 1842, November 11th, and I in 1844, November 12th. My father at the time was a government blacksmith and was working for the Pawnee Indians. Think he worked for them five years, and five years for the Otoes and Omahas. My father and mother are both living and are here, have lived here over thirty years.

Very respectfully

your obedient servant,

JOHN HARNOIS.

BROWNVILLE, NEB., February 2, 1880.

Dr. George L. Miller:

Relating further to the question, "Who was the first white child born in Nebraska?" I have received the following letter from Father Hamilton, which I hand you for publication. Yours,

ROBT. W. FURNAS.

OMAHA MISSION, NEB., February 13, 1880.

R. W. Furnas, Esq.:

DEAR SIR—Your favor was duly received, but in the pressure of matters relating to the mission school, was forgotten, till I accidentally picked up a fragment of the *Omaha Herald* (sent to Susette La Flesche), containing your letter and Mr. Harnois' letter also.

I answered a similar inquiry some years ago, when Judge Kinney, of Nebraska City, thought a child of his, born while on the way to Salt Lake, in 1833, was the first white child born in Nebraska.

I came to the Iowa mission at or near Highland in 1837 (Dec. 29), Mr. and Mrs. Irvin came out in the spring and met in St. Louis. Rev. Mr. Dunbar and Samuel Alice, who had spent some time with the Pawnees and had gone that far east to meet their future companions in labor, returned to the Pawnee mission on the Platte river that same spring of 1837. I do not know how many children

these men had. Mr. Alice had four grown up and still living as far as I know, and some I think died. Mr. Dunbar I think had several, one not long since in Topeka, Kansas, John B., I think professor in some institution there. He could give more definite information as to the time of their several births.

But these were *not the first* born in what is now Nebraska. Rev. Moses Merrill was missionary to the Otoes, Mr. Irvin thinks, for about ten years. He died near Bellevue, I think about the time Mr. John Harnois thinks his sister was born. Mr. Merrill had been laboring many years among the Otoes before Mr. Irvin and myself come to the Iowas. I saw an account of a missionary meeting in Maine a few years ago, at which a Mrs. Merrill made some remarks, an aged lady, and I have no doubt his companion in labor among the Otoes. They must have gone there in '32, '33, or '34, I think not later. I never saw them. Mr. Irvin did, and said they had several children.

I think a family by the name of Chase lived there about the same time. In the winter of '37 and '38 I met a gentleman who had been among the Poncas (it may have been the year following), who spoke of a missionary who was appointed to the Poncas, but resided some distance this side of their village with his wife.

Rev. Edmund M. Kinney went to Bellevue in 1846. I went there in 1853.

If any one wishes the honor of being the first white child born in Nebraska he will have to search records about 10 years before 1842.

Yours truly,

WM. HAMILTON.

Dr. G. L. Miller:

I will endeavor to throw some light on the subject of the early births of Nebraska, as propounded by John Harnois, through the solicitation of ex-Governor R. W. Furnas, President Historical Society. During the lengthy correspondence that I had with Capt. Bissel and General Ranney, some years since, in which I took issue with those eminent and worthy gentlemen in reference to the location of Council Bluffs, I obtained many historical and interesting facts, among which were the marriages and births of those early days. Mr. E. Luther wrote to me that he went to Fort Atkinson, afterward Fort Calhoun, and formerly Old Council Bluffs, in 1818, and remained there until 1823. During that time he said there were two

marriages and two births, but did not inform me as to what were their name or even the sex.

After Omaha had become a village of some importance, a young gentleman informed me that he was born at Fort Atkinson and was the first white child born in Nebraska.

Mr. Allison, who came to Bellevue in 1834 as a teacher and missionary, informed me that a Mr. Rentz, a blacksmith and married man, resided there, to whom was born the first male child of that agency, and that his, Mr. Allison's, daughter, afterward Mrs. Captain Holland, our former city marshal, was the first female born at that mission.

Fort Calhoun was abandoned and the troops sent to Fort Leavenworth about 1827. If the young man above referred to was born even up to the year of evacuation, he was ahead of Mr. Harnois. But we have at least two others. Mr. Rentz's son born at Bellevue previous to 1834, and Mrs. Holland, daughter of Mr. Allison, born at that mission in 1834, and others a few years later, were all older than Mr. Harnois.

ALF. D. JONES,

Secretary O. S. A.

The following letter is from Rev. Wm. Hamilton, who was a Presbyterian missionary among the north-western Indians, commencing in what is now Kansas, in 1837:

OMAHA MISSION, March 4, 1868.

A. D. Jones, Esq.:

DEAR SIR—Yours of February 22d is received. I would have replied at once, but thought I would enquire of Le Fleche, to see if the traditions of the Omahas was the same as that of the Iowas, from whom I first received the traditions. It is as follows:

A long time ago the Iowas (they call themselves Pa-ho-cha or Pa-hu-cha), Otoes, Omahas, and Missourians (called Ne-yu-ta-ca) were one people, and in their traveling they encamped in four bands on the river (perhaps the Missouri or Mississippi). The Iowas encamped on a sand-bar, and the dust blew in their faces, and they received the name of Pa-hu-cha, or "Dusty Men." They are called Iowas only by other tribes and the whites. Long, in his "Expedition," interprets it "Gray Snow." "Pa," or "pah," is used for the nose of the