

## The Indians.

I find, in recording the activities of the early settlers of Big Spring, much consideration should also be given to the Winnebago Indians, who were living in the area when the first white man arrived.

These people had no written language, but their history was kept alive by legend, and passed along from generation to generation by word of mouth. They had lived here for so long that none knew from whence they came, nor by what means they had arrived here. This area was well suited to the Indian way of life. In addition to an abundance of water and wood, the streams provided fish, and in the open spaces among the great white oak trees were many deer, and smaller animals and birds were always to be found. It was therefore possible for the Indian to obtain his required food, the deer skins with which to cover his lodge, and wood to supply heat in the wintertime. One of these men recently told me that he had been raised in one of these lodges, and that it was always kept warm, even in severe cold weather.

The head man of this local branch of the Winnebagos was one Chief Prettyman, who at the time when I remember him was, or appeared to be, an extremely aged man. Chief Prettyman had two sons, one of whom I can remember. Their English names were Hank and Jake. Hank died quite early in life, but Jake lived to marry an Indian woman of another tribe. She was said to have been Chippewa-Sioux. They had a baby son, and it happened when the babe was about one year old, its father Jake Prettyman, died very suddenly of pneumonia. This disease had been brought to the Indians by the white settlers and, at the time, they had not developed any resistance to it, with the result that many succumbed to the disease.

After Jake's death, life was apparently made most unpleasant for his Sioux squaw, who, it seems was not much loved by the Winnebago women, and as a result the Sioux squaw longed to return to her-own people. The Winnebagos told her to go, "the sooner the better!!", but she must leave her baby because upon the death of old Chief Prettyman, this baby was to be their tribal chief and, therefore, they could not permit her to take him away. The Sioux squaw finally ran away with the baby on her back in a blanket. I remember how I, in company with several of my childhood school-mates, saw her coming up the old clay road which passed our school. She was running and seemed nearly exhausted at that point. Shortly after she had passed us, she disappeared into the brush which bordered the road, climbed through a fence and hid in a pile of leaves which had gathered there. A few minutes later we saw the Winnebagos coming in pursuit. It seemed the whole tribe must have been engaged, along with their ponies and dogs. The road was filled with

them. Just why these dogs did not find her, I do not know to this day, but they passed right on by, and disappeared over a ridge to the north. The squaw then made her way through the woods and hedge-rows to a small tamarack swamp where she hid for a time, until the hue and cry died down, and where she was found by a kind hearted man named Hayes, who gave her food until such time as she could get away and rejoin her own people. This Indian baby, if still living, would now be a man of 70 years of age!

I have never been able to draw the Winnebagos into any conversation in regard to this episode, probably because of what they considered to have been their "loss of face"?

In later years, the children of these Indians have attended our public schools, and now are considered as practically one with the rest of the people of the community. In particular, I recall a girl, Josephine White Eagle, who played a violin in the local high school orchestra. This girl, now a very fine lady, is a social worker in Duluth, Minnesota.

Mr. Green Deer of the Winnebagos now drives one of our local school buses, bringing my little granddaughter Marie home from kindergarten every day at noon.

Most of these people now live in the vicinity of the Dells, and assist in the Indian Ceremonial at Stand Rock Amphitheatre, a widely known entertainment and attraction conducted annually throughout the summer season, on the Wisconsin River, in the Upper Dells.

At the time of the Civil War, when all of the able-bodied white men were in the Army, and no one but old men and boys were left at home, over all our northern states, the Indians, especially the Sioux and tribes affiliated with them, became extremely restive, some of them feeling an opportunity was now presented to exterminate the white settlers. These warlike Indians, to the west of the Mississippi River, fell upon the group of German settlers at New Ulm, Minnesota, and killed most of them, after which they sent runners to all the tribes of Indians living in the northwestern part of the country, urging them to join with them and go on the warpath against all of the white settlements. Some of these runners were known to have infiltrated the Winnebago tribes in Wisconsin. As a result of this, the settlers at Big Spring became alarmed, and formed a military company of boys and old men, which drilled at the village, under the supervision of wounded convalescent soldiers, who had been sent home from the southern battle fronts.

With their muskets, and fife and drum, they created a great deal of noise in an effort in which they intended and hoped might overawe the Indians.

A few of our Indians had already been with the Sioux in the New Ulm massacre and had been killed or wounded there. One of the wounded was afterward around Big Spring for many years. This brave had been shot in the heel and was, for the remainder of his lifetime very lame, and for this reason we called him Limpy Jim.

I remember this fellow very well because of an incident which happened when was only 3 or 4 years of age and still too young to attend school. This Indian perhaps inspired by firewater, or lemon extract, stopped and tying his pony to a post in front of our old house; and knowing my father operated the local threshing machine at the time of the year probably reasoned that father would not be at home, he came limping up to the door, and came in. I had seen him coming, and being very much afraid of him, had told my mother he was coming. He drew his knife and told mother he wanted bread. "Me hungry", he said, and moved toward my mother with his knife. Now it so happened there had been a shower the night before, and my father had not gone threshing that day. Instead, he had just stepped out of the back door and stopped to light his pipe. He heard the Indian and came back in the house and kicked the Indian half way to the road. The Indian then scrambled back on his pony and made a hurried departure.

Going back again to the Indian scare, at the time of the Civil War, some of the old men, including Ira Ward, thought it might be a good idea for some of them to go and pow-wow with Chief Prettyman. Accordingly, a group of them went up to Prettyman's camp on Indian Hill and held a council with him. Chief Prettyman, who had always been friendly toward the people of the community, was persuaded to keep his braves at home, and at peace. It is my belief, in return, the Chief was told he could count on the continued friendship of the white settlers.