

PONCA INDIAN STORIES



Lance Martin

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During 1938 and 1939 I visited and attended Ponca Council and fireside meetings. I collected many of the legends, myths and traditions to be presented to the University of Nebraska and the Smithsonian Institute. I was adopted by a Ponca Indian family and told many stories of past events and adventures. I have written most of them and have selected a few that are unusual and family related.

Animal Trap

Buffalo Bait

Flash Flood

Indian Named Gray Eyes

Snow Shoe Girl

Little Big Chief

Ponca Sisters

Indian Logic



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Related Information



THE ANIMAL TRAP

I usually spent my weekends away from the excavation of the prehistoric Ponca Indian Village with my adopted Ponca family in Niobrara, Nebraska. Their legends myths and stories I recorded. One story I did not submit to Professor Graham Bell of the University of Nebraska and the Director of the excavation of the Prehistoric Ponca Village. It was the story my grandfather, Bird Head told. A story of their past, of cruelty, bigotry, and retaliation which over a period of time I translated and wrote up as The Trap.

Half Leg was Birdhead's brother, Mad Weasel's son, Pronghorn. He had his left leg severed below the knee his ~~knee~~. It was the time when the prairie Indians lifestyles were chagrining. Many were becoming hunting societies, riding horses introduced by Spaniards in the 1500's. Whitemen were settling in the area and inter racial problems arose *between them.*

Mad Weasel and his family lived with a small Ponca tribe on the Southside of the Niobrara River. Some settlers were already farming the lush and fertile praise lands nearby. Whitemen set up small villages and trading posts on both sides of the Niobrara River. Considerable animosity prevailed. Indians were considered savages and at times they were hunted, their villages destroyed. Mad Weasel and a few other Indians set up camp in a desolate area of woods north of the River. Trappers set traps in the woods or in places they felt animals could be trapped, killed and the pelts sold at the trading posts.

At dawn one fall morning ^a ten-year-old ^{Ponca named} Pronghorn was in the woods stalking a wild turkey when he stepped on a bear trap. The steel pronged sides of the trap snapped shut on his leg. He desperately tried to spread open the trap and free his leg but he was unable to do so. The boy was in great pain. Hours later he heard footsteps and voices. A big bearded trapper and a young man with him.

"Look at that damn Injun. He sprung my trap," the trapper said to his companion. "Now I got me good bait, Injun bait." He laughed at the young Indian moaning in pain as he took two large traps from the group he was carrying and set them in place ^{but} and concealed near the trapped Pronghorn. Appealing eyes looked at them but cruel eyes looked back accompanied by chuckles at the boy's moans.

"Let go heck the other traps I set. I'll come back tomorrow and see what animal, maybe a bear, that this Indian bait will get me," ^{he} said as they departed.

laughingly,

ANIMAL TRAP

The sun was high in the skies when Mad Weasel went to look for his son. He followed his trail and found him, unconscious and ~~seminally~~ ^{inert}. ~~He took~~ ^{Taking} a short thick branch ~~and as he opened the trap he~~ ^{placed it} between the jaws of the trap and freed his son. He carried his unconscious ~~son~~ ^{Pronghorn} back to their secluded village in the woods. The Shaman and an old woman treated the boy but the leg below the knee was turning black. They severed the infected portion of the leg and with glowing sticks they cauterized the wound. In time Pronghorn recovered and they renamed him Half Leg.

With concealed emotion and ^{smoldering} passion Mad Weasel felt the need for revenge. Before dawn one morning he set about to learn the trails the trapper took to set his many traps. Near the end of one of the trapper's trails he took a huge bear trap from the end of the trapper's trail; Mad Weasel set a large dead weasel as bait on one of the trapper's huge bear traps. He concealed it near one of ~~hr~~ ^{the} trapper's traps. Mad Weasel sat congealed in a nearby clump of bushes and waited.

^{Eventually,} The trapper came carrying pelts of animals he had ^{caught} trapped and skinned. He put down the pelts when he saw the dead weasel and reached to pick it up. The trap snapped shut, clamping the trapper's arm in ~~the trap's~~ ^{its} steel-toothed jaws. Frantic and wincing with pain the trapper tried unsuccessfully to pry open the trap's jaws with one hand. Mad Weasel watched before stepping out of his hiding. "Injum get me out of this trap," he demanded between ^{groans} ~~goons~~. "Hurry you damn Redskin. Hurry up. Free me."

Mad Weasel did not answer, as he looked unpitying and disdainful at the trapper. And set about setting two bear traps not ~~for~~ ^a from the trapper. "What the hell are you doing you crazy Injun," the startled trapper screamed

"When bear come you make good ^{bait} ~~bay~~," Mad Weasel ~~t~~ said.

"You crazy bastard get me free of this trap,"

I'll come tomorrow morning and see if you are a good bait."

"Don't do this to me. Help me. I'll give you a big reward." The now frantic pleading voice said as Mad Weasel walked away. "Help me. Please help me."

It was weeks later when they found the remains of the trapper among a group of concealed but unset bear traps.

BUFFALO BAIT

Birdhead related the story of his uncle Strong Arm and Buffalo Bait. Strong Arm was walking ahead of his wife Long Hair who was leading their pony pulling a travois laden with their belongings. Their young son, Happy Coyote, with his small bow and arrows walked far to the side looking for game, prairie hens or long eared hares. They were with four other families going east in the same direction. to a small Ponca village some twenty milers from the Whitman's town of Wahoo. ;

A quarter of a mile south of them was a team of two mules pulling a buffalo hunter's wagon laden with buffalo hides and a barrel of buffalo tongues soaking in a brine solution. The buffalo hunter had a rifle that could kill from a long distance. The hunter saw the Indians and took his special rifle, out of its canvas bag, and looked for a target. When he saw the young boy with the bow and arrows he took aim and fired. Happy Coyote fell down dead.

The Indians quickly turned the ponies pulling the travois away. The hunter continued loading and firing at them. The bullets mainly hit the back of the belongings on the travois but one bullet struck a squaw in her shoulder. The firing stopped when they were out of range.

Hours later when the Indian families hurried their pace to the Ponca village, Strong Arm and three Indians who witnessed the killing of Happy Coyote left to pick up the body of the slain boy. They carried the boy's body to his mother to be taken to the Ponca village a death ceremony. Strong Arm and his three companions then turned back to stalk the buffalo hunter

Late that day the buffalo hunter stopped in the shade of a few diamond willows at a small pond fed by small stream. He hobbled the mules and turned them loose to drink and graze. They watched as the hunter carrying a Winchester rifle with him as he walked to the pond. He put the rifle down besides his clothes as naked he sat down in the shallow pond and washed himself, splashing the cool water on his face and hair.

The Indians stealthily took the hobbles off the mule and went to the wagon. They took a large buffalo hide, a small box with sticks of dynamite, a reel of fuse cord, an axe and the long rifle in its canvas bag and quietly crept away. They watched from a nearby gully as the hunter dressed and returned to the wagon. He looked furious as he saw that his rifle and other items were missing. He ran after the mules and caught one of them but the other mule galloped away from him.

BUFFALO BAIT

The hunter spent a worried, angry night sitting in the wagon holding his Winchester rifle and constantly looking about. At dawn ^{the} only one mule pulling the heavy wagon the buffalo hunter started his trek to Wahoo, ^{which} at the rate he was traveling ^{it} would take three days, or more. The Indians sped to retrieve their ponies hidden in a prairie ravine. They mounted keeping out of sight they followed the hunter. They passed the carcasses of slain buffalos, ^w naked and decomposing without their hides. Strong Arm stopped and removed the head of a large bison and placed it on top of buffalo hide he had taken from the buffalo hunter.

They raced ahead of the hunter. Strong Arm saw a buffalo waller, a depression made by buffalos rubbing their hides against the prairie soil. With his friends helping him they made from sticks and dried grasses a decoy an effigy of a resting buffalo. Strong Arm took two sticks of dynamite and attached it to the fuse on. ^{the dynamite} Strong Arm walked slowly back unreeling the fuse to a small gully where Strong Arm and his friends waited. In the far distance they saw the slow approach of the hunter's wagon. In time the hunter noticed a large buffalo in a waller/With the buffalo head fixed in place and the effigy covered with the stolen hide it did look like a buffalo, with its feet tucked under, ^{resting in the} buffalo resting in a waller.

The buffalo hunter stopped the mule pulling the wagon and stepped down carrying his Winchester rifle. The buffalo hunter hunched down as he crept to the edge of the waler. He quickly stood up and fired the Winchester rifle at the buffalo. decoy. ^{the} resulting explosion shattered the air, buffalo decoy and the buffalo hunter.



FLASH FLOOD

PONCA INDIAN STORIES

Bird Head, my Ponce grandfather, told me the story about his brother Long Cloud's experience with a bad White Man and a flash flood.'

Long Cloud was traveling with some wolves and coyote furs to Sloaneville, a small hamlet with a Trading Post and General store near the Missouri River. A small log building served as the trading post and general store. Long Cloud traded his furs for hatchet and a coil of used but serviceable rope. He was about to untie his and mount pony tied to the railing in front of the store when he noticed a White Man in a wagon beating and trying to calm his unruly horse. The horse started to rear and stamp his hooves. Long Cloud put down the hatchet and coils of rope and went to help the man calm the horse. He took the reins near the horse's mouth and was calming the animal when the man lashed his whip again and again on Long Cloud. "Get you damn Redskin hands off my horse," the man snarled. "I don't want a Injun helping me."

Long Cloud let go of the horse's reins and stepped back with a bleeding lash mark across his cheek and nose narrowly missing his eyes. He went and picked up the hatchet and rope, untied his pony and rode away. He could hear the horse snorting and stamping his hooves and the man cursing and whipping the horse. It started to rain and within a short time the rain became torrential.

A few miles from the trading post he crossed a shallow river at the bottom of a ravine. As he crossed he noticed the water was slowly rising. He rode up the slopes and sought temporary shelter in a cave in the side of the ravine, made a small fire and tried to relax..

At times he would touch his face. The bleeding from the whip lash had stopped bleeding but his cheek was swollen. On the other side of the ravine he saw a man in a wagon starting to cross the rising river. When Long Cloud crossed earlier the water was only half way up to his pony's knees. Now it was rapidly rising. He rode down to the edge of the rising water to help if needed.

FLASH FLOOD

The water had risen and was up to the wagon's bottom. The horse was frantic and rearing. Long Cloud was about to ride out to help when he saw that the man whipping and cursing the horse was the same man that had whipped him at the trading post. He vividly remembered the man's words as he lashed Long Cloud, "I don't want a Injun helping me."

The rearing, bucking horse broke loose from the wagon and splashing, at times swimming, crossed the river downstream and headed to high grounds. The horse had heard before Long Cloud did the ominous low rumble far upstream rapidly coming closer. The rain became a downpour, The river became a rapid. The grumbling noise was gaining in volume and getting closer.. The man was standing on the seat of the water covered wagon waving to Long Cloud s.

Long Cloud knew there was time for him to ride out and save the man. Instead he rode to the top of the ravine and looked back, at the debris-laden wall of water of the flash flood as it wept over and carried away the wagon and the man.



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Indian Named Gray Eyes

At a campfire meeting an old Ponca told the story of the Indian named Gray Eyes, His mother, Pale Face, was a white woman with light brown hair and gray eyes, raised from childhood by Kiowa Indians, Grown and wise in their ways she married Totem Stick a Kiowa medicine man. She bore him two children a boy and a girl; Both had dark brown hair and gray eyes. They named their son Strange Eyes and their daughter Gray Eyes. I

It was after the civil t when a frustrated and angry former Confederate captain purchased the property of a homesteader and farmer. He felt demeaned and below his status to be a farmer. He bought his wife and three-year-old daughter with him. Often he would ride with an army pistol in his belt and a cavalry sword at his side. The Indians trading at the Trading Post called him Log Knife.

One day a Kiowa family was traveling to a live with relatives in a Kiowa village near the Missouri River, Limping Brave and his squaw and their four year old daughter stopped in a wooded area at the far end of what was Long Knife's property/ They disengaged the travois holding their meager belongs from their pony and erected a temporary leant/ o

From his house Long Knife holding army binoculars watched them. He saw an Indian, a squaw and a young child. He had a covert hatred of whites that gad supported the victorious Union and an outspoken hatred of Indians. While fuming Long Knife was putting on his officer's hat and attaching his pistol and sword to his belt, Limping Brave rode off on the pony, this dog trotting behind to look for game. His squaw went looking for berries and mushrooms leaving their daughter at the lean-to playing with a puppy.

Long Knife mounted his horse and at full gallop sped to the Indian's campsite. He was furious when except for the little girl and a puppy no one else was present. He dismounted and with explosive violence he drew his sword, stabbed, slashed, and stabbed the little girl and the puppy to death. In a continuing rage he knocked down the leanto then slashed and scattered about the contents on the travois. Mounting his horse je looked with some satisfaction at the lifeless inert little Indian girl and rode t glum but triumphant at his limited victory.

When Limping Brave returned he found his squaw moaning and holding the mutilated body of their daughter. His aspirations and dreams of a happy future were shattered. Armed only with a bow and arrows he knew it was futile to fight a man armed with firearms. To avoid the return of violence, they removed the bloody torn dress of their daughter and replaced it with a clan dress salvaged from their scattered belongings. Leaving all else, but this daughter's he blood soaked dress he put his squaw holding their dead daughter holding their dead daughter and he behind her on the pthei tiring horse. A few miles away in he left his squaw in a

Indian Named Gray Eyes

secluded area. He told her to stay hidden until he returned. Then, Limping Brave told his squaw they would continue on their journey to the Kiowa village. . Then he mounted his pony and returned to the area where the brutal killing took place/ He arrived before dawn and began to reconnoiter and explore Long Knife's domain. During the morning he saw a woman come out of the house and draw water from a well. Later Long Knife came smoking a pipe and carrying his daughter. After a few minutes he called to his wife. When she came out he had a long conversation with her before he rode away, Confederate officer's hat tilted on his head, and his sword at his side he rode away in the direction to the town, His wife took her daughter to a small sand box and gave her a doll to play with; She then took a hoe from a rack on side the house. She went to the hoe in their vegetable garden in back of the house.

Limping Brave endured with patience the activities of Long Knife and his family. It was now the time for him to act/. Unseen he stealthily moved to the area where the little girl was playing with her doll. He drew his knife from its sheath on his belt. He lifted the knife as vengeance flooded his mind. He wanted to retaliate. . The little girl smiled at him. Memories of his daughter came back; His daughter's hair was black.but this girl had light brown hair. His daughter had dark brown eyes but this girl had strange gray eyes. The girl had a smile like his daughter's.

He put his knife back in its sheath and picked up the happy smiling girl and her doll/ He dropped his daughter's blood soaked dress where the girl had played, then he slipped away to where his horse had been teetered and hidden, He rode holding the smiling and giggling. A flash of awareness cascaded through his mind. The girl giggled as his daughter once did and she smiled like his daughter did. He took a circuitous route to his former campsite. He slashed and cut the doll and threw it down where his daughter's body had lain. Then he raced to where he left his squaw, enjoying the storage feeling that he was holding his daughter again

His squaw took the smiling, giggling girl and held her to her chest as if she was her own daughter. They both felt that they had found their daughter again. They decided to name her Gray Eyes/



Snow Shoe Girl SNOW SHOE GIRL

Bird Head, my Ponca grandfather, told me the story of Snow Shoe Girl. I met her; a small wizened old woman who gave me added details. I wrote in adding conversations that I imagined may have happened. The basis of this Ponca story is as it was told it happened a few years after the Civil War when many former soldiers from both sides decided to live in the West where Indians have lived since the beginning. Most were bad men who exploited, hated and killed Indians. White men were starting to settle throughout the West, some in Ponca territory. They started towns with trading posts, general stores One small village called Lynch was located a few miles north of the Niobrara, and south of the River was a small hamlet of a dozen homes called Red Bird. .

Two buffalo hunters who had hunted there a few years knew the general area and the local trading posts. A few miles east of Red Bird was a Ponca village. The buffalo hunters rode horses and followed by a pack mule laden with Buffalo furs. Late one-day t made camp on the banks of the Niobrara River. They baked buffalo meat on a fire and, drank what was left of a bottle of whiskey. A 12 year old Ponca girl was looking for berries and mushrooms in the bushes near the River when she saw the men and their horses and an odd looking horse with big ears like a jackrabbit She had never seen a mule before and she was curious and went closer. The men looked at her, they seemed friendly when she approached and walked around and looked at the mule. . The men broke camp and talked quietly among themselves before they mounted their horses. One man held a rope tied to the bridle of his saddle and to the mule the other man reached down and grabbed the girl. The girl fought to get loose. The, am punched her senseless and threw her in front of horn on the saddle and they rode swiftly across the river and headed to higher ground and to a trading post in Smithville on near the Missouri River.

It took three days to get there. At first the big man called Steve, the girl remembered his name, tied a rope around her waist and made her walk, behind him. She tried to but could not untie the knot that held her captive. She walked in fear a mile after mile and when she tied and fell down she was dragged along on the ground. The smaller man, called Tom, called for a stop. He dismounted and picked up the girl, her face and hands scrapped and bleeding, her buckskin garment soiled and torn and one moccasin missing. He took the rope from Steve and put the girl in front of him on his horse.

“She and me tires the horse,” Steve said, “Slow us up. If she’s dead dump her and let’s make time. If not best a runt like you take her. We’ll sell her for a good price to Smith at the trading post.”

Snow Shoe Girl

“Smith says his wife’ not well. Needs help around the house, like a maid or housekeeper,” Steve said,” There’s few women around these parts all are married or whores. No maids around.”

“You want to sell hr as a slave. Why’d you steal the Injun gal?” Tom asked.

“Let’s clean her up at the next stream. Clean her clothes a bit. I’ll sell her to Smith’s wife as a house helper. She’d like to have help.”

They rode up to Smith’s trading post and the general store. Smith’s house was behind the store. They dismounted and Steve holding the girl’s shoulder tightly entered the store. Anna, Smith’s wife, a small frail woman was sitting in a corner was watching the proceedings. “Got some Buffalo hides and two wolf skins to sell. “ Steve said. “Can we make the trade fast? Gotta take this Injun girl to sell to a rancher in Platte valley who wants a helper for his wife.”

Anna got up and came to look at the girl. “She’s young, small and all bruised”

“Fell of a horse and down a hill but she’s all right. Young and strong. She’s a Ponca Injun bit talks some English. Cleans, wakes clothes, knows how to care for animals and old people.”

Anna looked very interested. “ While you trade with my husband let me take the girl to the house and fee her. She looks hungry.” With out waiting for an answer she took the girl’s hand. Steve released his grip on the girl’s shoulder. The girl was happy to get away from and quietly and inwardly happy followed Anna out of the store and into her house. She had never been in a White man’s home before and she looked about in amazement. Anna pointed to a chair but the table and in doing so she shawl slipped off one shoulder. The Indian girl quickly adjusted it and sat down looking all around the strange unfamiliar setting but feeling unafraid with the old woman. Anna went to a cupboard, a strange box with doors to the Indian girl. where there were bootless of different sizes and colors. Anna took a jar of jam, cut a slice of bread, and made a sandwich. The Indian girl ate the strange but gook sweet tasting food. What’s your name girl?” Not getting an answer Anna said, “Girl. All right if I call you Girl?” The Indian girl nodded yes.” Would you like to stay here with me Girl?”

“Yes. I want to stay here with you.” the Girl rapidly answered.

“Wait here I will come back soon.” Determined Anna marched back to the store and after considerable battering a sale was made. Anna bought the Girl and Steve and Tom rode away without the hides or the girl but happy with the money they made, most of it on the sale of the Ponca Indian girl

Snow Shoe Girl

Anna took the frightened girl's arm and led her out of the store and to the house behind it. This was a new experience for the girl as she had never been in a White man's home before. She looked about in amazement. Anna led her to a chair, and told her to sit down. It was the first time the girl ever sat on a chair, one of four chairs around a table. She watched Anna go to a closet, to her it looked like a box with doors in the wall. Anna opened a closet door and took out a selected jar from the different sized and glass jars with different colored contents. Anna opened another closet door and took out a half loaf of bread and took a large knife from another drawer and with the half loaf of bread and the knife came toward the table. The Indian girl looked wide-eyed and rose to look for an exit. "Sit down girl." Anna's friendly voice calmed her. "You look hungry. I'm making a jelly sandwich for you." She said as she cut a slice from the bread and spread jelly on it then handed it to the now relaxed but hungry girl. The Indian girl took the offering and for the first time tasted, to her very delicious, sweet tasting food. She smiled at Anna as she ate the sandwich. "Tastes good doesn't it?"

The girl nodded and kept eating. There was a mutual liking of each other. The girl noticed Anna was very weak, coughing often and gasping for breath. Anna's shawl slipped from one shoulder and the girl leaped up to place it back, Anna smiled her thanks and leaning against the Indian girl she gave her a tour of the premises. One room served as the parlor, dining room and kitchen. It had the table and four chairs, benches along two walls, a wood burning stove and an amazing wonder called a kerosene lamp that made light at night. Another room was the bedroom with a large bed on a low platform with a straw or feather filled mattress. In another corner was a smaller bed, Anna's bed since she was ill, on a low platform. Anna took some blankets and put it on the floor near her bed and pointed to the girl who understood it was to be hers. At the rear of the house was Smith's workshop which also had a small still to make a few bottles of corn whiskey a week. Smith sold the whiskey but also drank his whiskey. The toilet facility was an outhouse fifty feet from the rear door of the house. To the side of the house was a well and near it a large water trough for the two milk cows and some pigs they raised. It was also the place to wash laundry, wash and bathe. A few hundred yards to the west was a large stream that ran into the Missouri River.

The Smith's called her Girl and she did their bidding. She swept the home and store, washed and cleaned clothes and tended to Anna's special needs. At night and at times during the day Anna used a large copper pot as a toilet. The Girl would take and dump the contents in the outhouse and wash the pot for further use. Anna found the Girl indispensable. During the next few months she taught the Girl to read and write. When she learned the rudiments of reading she read the Bible and the few books Anna had collected.

Snow Shoe Girl

The begging of a Dickens novel "the Tale of Two Cities" left a lasting impression in her mind. She kept repeating over and over again "It was the best of time. It was the worst of times." She felt that it somewhat was her present status. During a year with the Smith's the Indian girl learned to adapt and conform to her plight, a kidnapped girl enslaved in a strange environment. She collected some willow bark and wood and made a basket as a gift for Anna. Smith soon had the Girl make baskets for sale to the settlers that came to the store. It was late summer her small lithe figure was showing changes into teenage adolescence. Smith a belligerent, frustrated man often drank and eyed the Girl.

One evening after supper the Girl went to wash and bathe in the trough. Smith secretly watched her and when she stepped out of the trough he ran, grabbed her and threw her to the ground. Throughout her life she remembered the stench of his whiskey breath and his leering face as he raped her.

Smith went back to the store laughing loud as he pulled up hi pants. Sobbing and trembling the girl went in the bedroom and toward her bed. Anna surmised what had happened and silently crying held out her arms to the girl. They held each other and cried together. Smith raped the girl frequently. Often he laughed as he dragged her to his bed to rape her in front of his wife. Month's later autumn set in, leaves were falling and the Girl's body started showing her pregnancy.

From another room the girl heard the Smith's angry voices. Smith answered one of Anna's questions with an angry response, "No! I am not going to have another mouth to feed. If the Injun spits out a bastard I'll drown it in the river." Anna protested and cried. Listening, the girl cried in silence.

Intermittent light snowfalls heralded the beginning of winter and the beginning of the girl's need for a plan to escape. One day she noticed and some trapper buying supplies had snowshoes with them. They were headed o the high country to trap winter animals with prime furs that would return them more profits. She also heard them mention an Indian camp a few miles west, across the stream/

That information inspired a plan to to escape. During every spare minute she secretly made preparations for her planned escape. Buffalo skins and furs of other animals were available. Over their blankets the Smith's added coverings of buffalo skins for added warmth. The girl slept on a pile of buffalo skins and a buffalo robe as a blanket. In the cold they wore buffalo robes for warmth. With access to hides and furs she made a buffalo skin parka with a hood, trousers and from beaver skins she made herself moccasins. These she wrapped in a tarpaulin and hid it in the snow near the outhouse. Scraps and unused pieces were disposed in the outhouse's malodorous wastes.

While weaving baskets she made two oval shaped rims and fat leather thongs made the webbing for the snowshoes and straps to be tied to her feet. These were concealed near the outhouse. Winter snowfalls blanketed the landscape. To the Indian girl *it was the worst of times*. Often she was grabbed and pressed to the floor with Smith's bulky form on top, laughing at her cries and attempts to push him off her. One night he came from his workroom to the bedroom. He reeked of whiskey as he pulled the Indian girl from her bed on the floor. Anna started to say something but with contempt spit in Anna's face. He dragged the girl to his bed and rapped her again and again. The girl screamed with pain and clawed him. He slapped her face and punched her belly again and again before mounted her. When Smith finished she managed to crawl to her bed. Anna had turned her crying face to the wall with her hands covered her ears. Smith swayed as he went back to his workshop hold an empty whiskey bottle. To the Indian girl this was *the worst of times*. She felt it was the time to make her escape. She pulled a buffalo robe from her bed to cover her and quietly opened the door and walked cold and barefoot on the shoveled path to the outhouse. Shivering from the cold and twitching with the pain in her body she donned the fur garments she made and laced on the snowshoes. As rapidly as she could she went on the snow toward the frozen snow covered stream. She was halfway to the stream when she heard Smith's roaring voice calling for her. Flinching from pain as well as from his voice she hastened her pace. S

Smith opened the door and called for her. He saw the outhouse door open and empty. He saw a dark fur covered from on snowshoes walking west toward the stream. He roared that his victim was trying to escape and started after her. The snow was hip deep but he tried to force himself to overtake her. The Indian girl fought off her fright to replace it with determination to gain her freedom. Words formed in her mind. With each step forward *it was the best of times*. The step she left behind *was the worst of times*. She struggled on; *It was the best of times It was the worst of times. It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.*

In a daze the Indian girl struggled eastward to where she heard a small camp of Indians made a winter encampment. She felt encroaching numbness and pain as she struggled onward Then to the left and in the distance she saw a trickle of smoke snaking skyward.. She forced her aching body on despite the pain in her body and the sensation of wetness or bleeding in her groin. She struggled into the center of the camp and collapsed.

When she opened her eyes she was in a warm place. Friendly Indian eyes were looking down on her. They questioned her in the Ponca Language. She answered in the Ponca language. She told them of her enslavement and escape on home made snowshoes and details of her pursuit.

Snow Shoe Girl

When they spoke to her they called her Snow Shoe Girl. Two Indians put on winter parkas and picked up weapons. One took his bow and arrows the other a rifle. A few hours later they returned and said that at the stream they did not see any wet tracks coming out of the stream on either side only Snow Shoe Girl's tracks. The hole in the ice in the stream was iced over but they saw the body of a White Man just below the surface.

They had a good trapping season and had sold the pelts to fur traders on the Platte and Missouri Rivers

They were laden with trade goods and White Man's wampum, coins, metal discs of different sizes and values. They would break their temporary camp and head back to the Ponca Village in Niobrara. The ponies were rested and the trek back through deep snow would be slow and arduous. They told her that her mother had died but her father, Long Cloud, was alive and well.

Five suns latter they arrived. Villagers gathered around to greet them. Among them was Long Cloud. His solemn face changed to a happy smile when he saw her. *The worst of times*, though it would never be forgotten, was in the past. From now on it would be *the best of times* for Snow Shoe Girl.



Edited 22 December 2007

Lance Martin - Turtle Foot

Little Big Chief

A Ponca Indian Story

Tit was interesting to hear a Ponca Indian story that is associated with the legend of the original Poncas who came from the far frozen north. Over the centuries the legend is as reconstructed by archeologists and studies of their pottery indicates they traveled south to the Great Lakes then to the north east where they split into two factions. One group traveled north and was heard from again. The other group traveled and settled along the Southside of the Niobrara River in Nebraska. The prehistoric Ponca village excavated by archeologists in 1937, 1938 and 1939 was 600 to 800 years old. They were an agricultural society living in houses forty to sixty feet in diameter. With the introduction of horses they started being primarily no one to care for them. They relied on neighbors to offer them food. They were a hunting society. The story I write about deals with a Ponca chief that lived in the frozen north. . The story told to me by Bird Head, Long Cloud and Snow Shoe Girl. Took place at the very beginning of a Ponca legend.

Red Seal was a wise and powerful Ponca chief, Red Seal who had a wife and a twelve-year-old son. It was hard times and hunting was difficult. The Ponca diet primarily of animals, birds and fish. Red Seal was a great hunter and provided the Ponca tribe with the food of seals, walrus, and birds and on rare occasions whale meat and polar bear meat. (*In the story they called seals short tooth water animal and the walrus they called long tooth water animal: the whale they called biggest of all fish and the polar bear they called white bear*).

During a polar bear hunt Red Seal was mauled and died from the wound. Red Seal's son was of small stature and not good at hunting. His wife and son were destitute, relying on neighbors for them food. Loud Voice, Red Seal's brother became chief. With Red Seal's demise his son was no longer invited to Poncas council meetings. His uncle, Loud Voice, b

Loud Voice boasted of his own prowess and belittled those of his nephew, whom he called Little Seal. It was a very hard winter for the Poncas and they looked at Loud Voice for guidance. He offered little direction except to try to eat less and stay warm until better times will arrive. Hunting parties would set out without taking Little Seal with them. Young but wise, Little Seal ignored the hurt that as a chief's son he was to be a council member and concentrate on gaining some semblance of status and to be successful at hunting.

The polar bear was the mightiest and most dangerous game to hunt. It was a difficult animal to hunt or kill. The polar bears flesh and organs made excellent food and its white fur ad skins were highly prized by all the northern Indian tribes.

Little Big Chief

Hunting alone Little Seal was not very successful. His bow was not very strong and had little killing power except on close up shots in vital parts of the animal. It was very cold and the Poncas had little food for quite a spell. He was motivated to overcome the problem and he succeeded. Early one frigid morning t

The villagers watched as Loud Voice ridiculed the small young Ponca boy armed with his bow and arrow went out alone to hunt alone. Villagers came out to see Little Seal return in the after noon carrying the claws and a paw from a large polar bear and its tongue. He took the tongue to his mother and told the villagers where to go to get polar bare food before savaging wolves or foxes would find it. Amazed villagers hurried to find the polar bear dead with a number of Little Seals arrows in vital organs and tin he mouth of the polar bear. From then on Little Seal went out alone to successfully hunt the dangerous polar bear; wolves and once he sent the villagers out to get a polar bear, its cub and a young seal at an ice hole.

Loud Voice objections were over ruled when: Little Seal was invited to a council meeting. Little Seal had learned much from his father and from previous council meetings. Insisting that he hunt alone Little Sisal continued to hunt alone and kill dangerous game like polar bears, wolves and occasional foxes. To the villagers: Little Seal seemed possessed with unusual powers and wisdom. They were beginning to turn to Little Seal for advice. The Poncas believed that the former chief's don was very to hunt alone and that he had mystical powers that enabled him to kill polar bears and wolves. Loud Voice preached that the Poncas should continue hunting and to snore as much food as possible for the following winter season. Little Seal advised them hat they should hunt and store food and to consider migrating south where he heard there were great fresh water lakes and the winters were less harsh.

Frustrated, angry Loud Voice and a few council members secretly followed Little Seal when he went hunting alone. He came upon a female polar bear and cub at a water hole with a seal the bear had killed. Little Seal approached the bears and when the angry mother bear started after him he ran but he kept throwing chunks of/t fat hat had mysterious powers. The following cub stopped and gobbled up the ball of fat and minute's later she was writhing and dying. The mother bear stopped her pursuit and went to the dying. The mother bear also ate a few balls of mystical fat. and soon was dying beside her cub. Then Little Seal shot arrows into the bears and with a piece of stone as a hammer drive them deep into vital spots. Te awed council members went back to tell the Poncas that Little Seal' possessed great and wise powers and should be their chief and henceforth call him Little Big Chief.

Little Big Chief

Little Big Chief until years later when he was a very old man and the Ponchos had over the years migrated south to set up their village by the fresh waters of great lakes. Little Big Chief took the elastic baleen teeth of whales and sharpened both ends into six to ten inch long flexible spikes. He made an impression in the snow, and put a few coiled sharpened spikes in place and poured warm fat into the cavity. In a short time the fat froze and imprisoned the lethal coiled spikes in a ball of frozen fat. Little Big Chief would throw that to the animals. When eaten in a short time the fat would melt in the animal's body and the sharp spikes would uncoil and pierce the animal's stomach and intestines and kill the animal. Little Big Chief would then shoot arrows into the animal and with the help of a piece of stone he would hammer them deeper into vital organs. In that manner he would kill polar bears, wolves and foxes.

With Little Big Chief leading the Poncas they and migrated to the south to the great fresh water lakes. A few years at the great fresh water lakes he advised them to migrate to the east where he heard there was an abundance of food to the wooded game laden mountains and forests that ended with the endless salt waters of the ocean. In the last year of his life they started to migrate east as he had advised them, with respect and admiration they called him their Little Bug Chief.

Archeological examination of pottery showed that some of the incised designs and type of pottery they made adapted techniques and patterns used in the areas around the Great Lakes and pottery styles used in the New England States. The Ponca legend is that the Poncas split into two groups. One group migrated north and was never heard of again. The other group migrated and settled along the Niobrara River in Nebraska. The expedition excavated the prehistoric Ponca village that existed over a long period of time between 600 to 899 years ago..

Ponca Sisters

Ponca Sisters

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t council meetings and around campfires I tried to research and write down the Ponca Indians many rituals, traditions and ceremonies. In the two years that that I spent and often lived with them I amassed information to be forwarded to the University of Nebraska and the Smithsonian Institute.

I was fascinated with the variations and nuances of their traditions. I was honored to made a member off the Ponca Council

Council meetings often lasted far into the night at times until dawn. None wore traditional buckskins or leather garments but we wore ordinary store bought work clothes and denims. To an unknowing observer they looked liked a group of farmers or cowhands

We sat and passed around the calumet, commonly called the peace pipe. On a few occasions a euphoric producing weed replaced at times tobacco. To further enhance the meetings, a mescal button derived from a species of cactus was to be chewed and swallowed. I recalled the first time I experienced Piute and mescal reactions. It was at that meeting I naively experienced the euphoria of Piute and mescal that a Ponca Indian I befriended spoke first in the Ponca language to the members before he turned to me and solemnly said, "I have two daughters but I have no son. Will you be my son?"

Though I was in a euphoric daze I recall answering, " Yes."

Thus I now had Ponca father, White Shirt, and a grandfather, Bird Head. And two sisters, Helen and Mary. At a subsequent meeting we were discussing marriages between clan and tribe members White Shirt may have surmised my covert lush for beautiful lithe Helen and petite Mary when my father White Shirt punter a finger at me and then he pointed it in all directions before he solemnly said, "Look elsewhere for love with a Ponca Maiden," and adamantly emphasized, "Helen and Mary are your sisters>"

Ponca Logic

We, Alex Praus the expedition's Supervisor and I his assistant were to be present when Margaret Mead, noted anthropologist and author was to arrive with her entourage to visit the Niobrara Ponca Indian Reservation. I had a dual role, as a representative of the University of Nebraska and Smithsonian sponsored Prehistoric Plains Indian Archeological Expedition, and since I who had been adopted into the Ponca tribe to be an intermediary.

Alex and I sat in the meeting hall, an adjunct to the schoolhouse, with council members of the tribe. My father White Shirt and n my grandfather, Birdhead, a medicine man, were seated when Margaret Mead and companies arrived, After the interchange of greeting and introductions she briefly questioned some of the council members, concentrating on the medicine man Birdhead. Afterwards she went out and began interviewing Indians,

Standing near her I could hear how she ^{solicited} felicitated answers. In did not eke of her method aside from the fact I had a dislike of her. If that was the technique she had used with her work in the Polynesian Islands the brought her fame it was prone to receiving incorrect answers, as an example she would ask a question from a girl. With a smile and a slight tilt of her head she would offer and hold in her hand the trinket or candy, she would ask a girl, "Are you enjoying ask a question, are you having sex before you will be married?" Mead was eliciting a response and the person questioned that would rant to please Margaret Mead. Bribed questions and seeking to get answered she choreographed and cued was not my way to ask questions My sponsor, Franz Boas at Columbia one told me, "Mead? She's a frau with a big mouth. Don't believe what she writes" Boas admired Malinowski who spent seven years living in the Trobriand Islands before writing his book, Sexual Life of the Savages in the Trobriand Islands. His work was more authentic than that the shot time eliciting Mead. ^{spent}

On our walk in the reservation I introduced her to a very old Indian who had been sitting on near the council house. "This is Walking Rock who they claim to be 104 years old. He speaks English and his grandson, Brown Bear, goes to Caryle Indian College."

Mead chatted amiably with the old Indian, praising him for having a grandson ^{who} that wants to be educate because most Indians are uneducated. U could see that some of her remarks did not suit Walking Rock. He leaned toward Margaret Mead as he tried to focus his watery old eyes on her and with anger said, "Indians much educated in Indian education."

Trying another approach she smiled and asked, "Tell me wise old man, when does the sex life of an Indium end?"

Ponca Logie

“You have to ask someone older than me,” he answered and closed his eyes and did not answer any more questions. Later she came back alone and handed him a tin of Prince Albert tobacco. She was observant and noticed the he had a well worn corn cob pipe and an empty tobacco tin beside him. They spoke for a short time. A few hours Mead and her entourage left I Told Alex there would be a council meeting/ I was invited and I would stay overnight in the reservation. Alex said he would return Sunday afternoon and take me back to out rented rooms in Lynch. It was a very hot day and I was dripping with sweat when Whiteshirt, the Indian who had adopted me as his son, suggest we wash and bathe in the Niobrara before we go to the council meeting. I panted, “Yes! I need a bath.”

He spoke in Ponca to Walking Rock who seemed pleased. “He is happy we ask. He will also bathe with us,” Whiteshirt waved to his daughters Helen and Mary who was standing outside their shack they called a home. “Your sisters are coming to help with Walking Rock. We all wash in river” Helen and Mary came wearing gingham dresses but barefoot and gently helped Walking Rock to his feet and helped him walk with us slowly to the nearby Niobrara River.

The river had been formed at the terminal and bordering g edge of the last glaciation some 200,000 years ago. On the north of the river were rolling hills on the south of the river were flat plains.’ The prehistoric Ponca village was located on the south side of the river. The Niobrara was shallow but the fastest running river in America.

When we finally arrived other Indians, men women and children were washing themselves and enjoying the cool water. Some youngsters were swimming. Some tried swimming against the current, which only swept them backwards. All were naked their clothes in neat pile along on the bank of the river.

We took off our clothes and put them in separate piles. Helen and Mary gently helped Walking Rock take off his clothes before they took theirs off. There was no lewdness or modesty exhibited. It was an accepted way of life. I had heard about the communal bathing of family and friends in Japan. This were not different.

No soap was used and the silt in the river scrubbed me bathers clean, sitting in the shallows of the cooling water. Helen and Mary walked out of the water, took my clothes, as well as the others, back to the river, to swish them clean then spread them out on the banks for the sun to dry. In a short time the clothes had been washed was dry. Helen and Mary dressed and walked graceful and vibrant to their home

Ponca Logic

We continued talking about the poor conditions on the reservation, the difficulty of Indians being hired or finding an opportunity in the White Man's world, the problem that many found relief was drinking alcohol, Despite their improvised conditions the older Indians were a proud people and proud of their heritage. I felt proud and honored that the Ponca Indians member. Fr a long while the Federal government did not recognize the Ponca tribe. It was recently that the ornament relented and gave the Ponca a recognized as a Tribe. They were now included in the official list as one of the many Plains Indian tribes.

I reflected on our archeological findings and on Ponca legends that long age they from the far north and migrated south to spend a few years by the Big Sweet Waters (the Great Lakes) then the tribe led by two brothers went West spend a few years in the mountain and woods, in the area know called ear Pennsylvania. There the tribe split and one brother led his followers back into the North again. The other brother led the others to settle and start an agricultural society by the backs of the Niobrara River. They were the Ponca's and they had their own unique langue. Much of the proof was in their pottery, which indicated the areas that used cretin techniques, Broken bits clamshells in the pottery pieces we found was typical of the Herons and Erie's near the Great Lakes. Tapered bottomless pottery was a technique used only by woodland Indians in the northeast. A few years ago the Niobrara postmaster who spoke Ponca was traveling in Canada when he heard Indians talking Ponca. He knew all the Nebraska Poncas, there were only a few hundred, but he did not them. They were Indians that lived Canada and their legend was that a chief brought then from the woodlands in the east to settle in Canada]. They intermarried and joined other tribes; they did not call themselves Ponca Indians but some of them the unique Ponca language. Neither the Canadian nor Nebraska Indians knew of each other.

After my sisters, by adoption, left to prepare a meal for us before we went to the council meeting. We put on our river cleaned and sun dried clothes we continued to talk and joke. White Shirt told me that girls, not boys, were told they should only try to swim upstream, if they tried to swim downstream the silt would get into them and they would sink and drown.

We all laughed at this old Ponca Indian joke. Walking Rock sitting in the river near me turned his head toward me and said, That white woman who come to talk to me- second time -she come alone and ask me, "They say you always tell the truth. Tell me if were in a canoe. You, a pretty Indian girl and me and the canoe turned over, whom would you save?"

I answer her, "Woman like you should learn to swim."

Archeology

The Lost Village

Prehistoric Ponca Indian s
1000 AD – 1400 AD

Located at Redbird, Nebraska on the
south banks of the Niobrara River



Lance Martin

Ponca Indian Tribal Adoption



The prehistoric Ponca village we were excavating was over six hundred years old. It spread for two miles on the south side of the Niobrara River. The University of Nebraska and the Smithsonian sponsored the excavation. Alexis Ales Praus and I were supervisors. WPA laborers and a few reservation Indians made up the work crew.

I washed in the Niobrara River because there was no running water, shower or tub in the dollar a month house I rented in Redbird, a ghost town with a population of fourteen. The swimming hole was a curve in the bank where I let the soothing, river wash me clean. This was reflection time for uncertainty of my future in archeology during the Depression.

The prehistoric Ponca village we were excavating housed thousands of inhabitants who lived in forty to sixty foot circular diameter log houses. Now there was less than three hundred Ponca Indians living in shacks and poverty on the Niobrara Reservation. Despite opposition of the locals I hired a few Indians to work excavating their ancestors.



Ponca Indian Tribal Adoption

One weekend I was invited to a council meeting in the reservation. Unexpectedly I was to be honored by being adopted into the tribe. Worn denim-clad members sat cross-legged in a circle around a small campfire on the outskirts of the reservation. Bird Head led the ceremony and I sat beside him and White Shirt. They gave me mescal to chew and then passed a calumet of smoldering peyote. I was starting to hallucinate when White Shirt explained that he had two daughters but no son. He solemnly asked if I would be his son. I took the pipe, inhaled the euphoric vapors, nodded acceptance, and passed the pipe back to him. I now had a father and two sisters, Helen and Mary who shortened their surname to White. The conversations were enhanced with weird and fantastic dreams as we chewed mescal. I never forgot the ritual.

Living in Merrick, A half century later, AICH, the American Indian Council House on New York contacted me to be a member, as the only Ponca Indian in the area. I learned that Helen White had informed them that her brother was living somewhere in New York under the name of Lance Martin. The Bureau of Indian Affairs gives funds to the reservation based on the number of Ponca Indians involved. On 2004, because of my work as an archeologist on prehistoric Indians, plus that I was in the national register as a Native American, I became a Charter Member of the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian.



BREAK

Ponca Indian Archeology Excavation

Antidotes & Observations



After the workers left I went to the edge of the edge of the 'dig' to wash away the grime and salty sweat. The Niobrara River in Nebraska was the fastest running river in the States. racing at fourteen miles an hour, brown with silt and paralleling the terminal moraine of the last glaciations. A flat alluvial plain spread to the south of the river and to the north rolling hills extended to the Badlands. The prehistoric Ponca village dating back six hundred years that we were excavating had spread for two miles on the south side of the Niobrara. The excavation was sponsored by the University of Nebraska and the Smithsonian, Alexis Ales Praus and I were supervisors and a few Indians from the reservation and unemployed farmers hired by the WPA made up the work crew. The 'Lost Village' as the dig was referred to the site of a prehistoric village spreading two miles on the south banks of the Niobrara River. The Niobrara River is the fastest flowing river in America, flowing at 14 mph.

I spent most of my spare time with the Indians living in and off the reservation. In time they accepted me despite the Depression and difficult times the Ponca. They had their own sense of humor and regaled with laughter even when they had a sense of humor of their own and though jokes were repeated. Following are typical Ponca jokes.

White Shirt, my Ponca father, told me old Ponca jokes.

A woman could swim upstream, against the current, in the rapid silt laden Niobrara River. But if she swam downstream, with the current, she would fill up with sand and silt, and drown.

A wide stream ran through the camp where the tribe set up their wigwams. The wife of a warrior of the Crazy Dog Society, made him a pair of fine moccasins, embroidered with quills. That evening, dressed in all his finery, the warrior prepared to attend a meeting in the chief's tent on the other side of the stream. As he neared the stream his wife warned him not to get the new moccasins wet. He retorted that the stream was too wide to jump across. She suggested that he take off one moccasin and hop across on one foot. He then took off the moccasin on his right foot, and hopped across the stream on his left foot.

Ponca Indian Archeology Excavation

Antidotes & Observations

An important visitor, they said was the world renown anthropologist, Margaret Mead, It was an important occasion and she had an entourage of a few professors and politicians, She was middle aged and not of a striking appearance. She questioned a 104-year-old Ponca, "Tell me, if you and I were in a canoe with that (pointing to ma young and pretty Indian girl) and the canoe turned over, who would you save?"

The old Indian replied, "*Lady you can swim.*"

Humor of the older Ponca Indians on the Niobrara Indian Reservation. The newer generation of Ponca Indians was influenced by the humor they heard on the radio and in the movies. Surviving in the present times also meant the gradual extinction of their ancient culture and traditions.

While at a ceremony with nine elders and; passing the calumet (peace pipe) with smoking piute and chewing on mescal *White Shirt* who worked on the dig said "I have two daughters but no son. Would you be my son?"

My senses were whirling in a euphoric state as I managed to mumble, "Yes". There was some chanting and conversation and I had an In Indian father, *White Shirt*, and two sisters and grandfather, *Bird Head*. ". *White Shirt's* wife, of Kiowa/Ponce origin had died years earlier.

Having seen me at the dig hunched and on my knees digging with my hand gave them the inspiration to name me, "*Turtle Foot*."

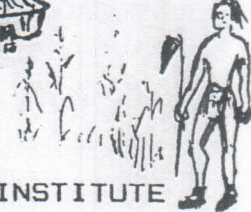


Archeologist's Reflections

I thought of America and my part of a later immigrant wave that came to these shores. I visualized America as a living entity and in my mind lectured to it. You are a nation that has not set aside your armaments and with a piston rod of power in your hand are confused by the dazzling light of unemployment and uncertainty. Even here in the dust bowl of Nebraska where the dust fell week long as a vengeful curse from the sky, I think of New York, the East Side, where I bought fresh fruit and old clothes from pushcarts in the street markets of immigrant hope. America, you minted out your soul in alloy nickels, faced with an Indian, backed by a buffalo, and spent it in the dime store of mad dreams. I recalled studying Florida Seminoles where the white egrets fly over the wild Everglades, bull alligators bellow up to the moon, and in nearby towns strutting swell-headed youth and head-hunting Amazonian women, envious and unemployed, eyeing the elegant mansions of the wealthy, emphatically illustrating the avenging fate of financial stratification while I pity those living in a tumbleweed land of heat cracked plains, where the dust of abraded visions disperse futile hopes to a tribe of Indian survivors.



PONCA ROUND HOUSES
11TH CENTURY



PREHISTORIC PONCA

EXPEDITION: 1937-1938 WAS SPONSORED BY THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA.

EXPEDITION SUPERVISOR - ALEXIS ALES PRAUS
ASSISTANT EXPEDITION SUPERVISOR - LANCE MARTIN
AIDES: UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA STUDENTS

WORKERS: 40-80 MEN FOR MANUAL LABOR AND EXCAVATING SUPPLIED BY W.P.A.

In the mid-thirties, *Dr. Linton Strong* of the University of Nebraska discovered the remains of ashes from man made fires while digging in 'buffalo wallers' and found evidence of an early agricultural Indian society. Without adequate funding, it became impossible to form an expedition to excavate the site. *Dr. Strong* was appointed chairman of Anthropology at Columbia University when world renowned *Dr. Franz Boas* died. *Dr. Strong* was instrumental in getting funds and approval for the expedition, evacuation and study of the prehistoric Ponca village.

SITE LOCATION: REDBIRD, NEBRASKA - 1 mile from the South shore of the NIOBRARA RIVER (the fastest river in the U.S.) with its current racing along at 14 MPH. The Niobrara River runs along the base of hills denoting the southern and extreme range of the Last Ice Age (12 -18,000 years ago).

EXCAVATION: "LOST VILLAGE" was the community village of the Prehistoric Ponca. It ran along a strip of fertile land for a distance of two miles. The uppermost layers of the excavation was from the culture dating back 800 years, and preceded the arrival of the White man in America. Deeper layers indicated that the site area had been in use for thousands of years.

Prior to the 1600's, the early Ponca Indians were primarily agricultural and lived in round houses that were 40 to 60 feet in diameter. They stored their agricultural products in cache pits. They were artisans and created functional and decorative pottery. Between 1613 and 1620, horses that were abandoned or had escaped from the Spanish explorers appeared on the Western Plains. The Ponca culture underwent a transformation. The agricultural aspect of their culture was abandoned and supplanted by hunting. Horses were responsible for the change and gave the Plains Indians mobility and the opportunity to hunt buffalo and game that were previously difficult to hunt on foot. The stationary round houses were replaced by easily erected and transported wigwams, or teepees. The fragility of pottery became a detriment in a mobile society and the making of pottery soon became a lost art.

Currently the present few remaining Ponca Indians live on the Niobrara Reservation in Nebraska.

In 1938 *Lance Martin* was adopted into a Ponca family and tribe, and given the name *Turtle Foot*. His Indian father was *Bird Head* and his grandfather was named *White Shirt*. *Lance Martin* is a member of the AICH (American Indian Council House).

RELATED ARTICLES AUTHORED BY LANCE MARTIN
LOST VILLAGE, NOT ALL INDIANS RODE HORSES, PREHISTORIC PONCA



BONE
FLINT



BISON



CORN
MAIZE



TEEPER,
WIGWAM
18TH CENTURY
& LATER