



Paul Hill: Removal of the Potawatomi

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See also the related article "[Paul Hill](#): Railroad Builder."

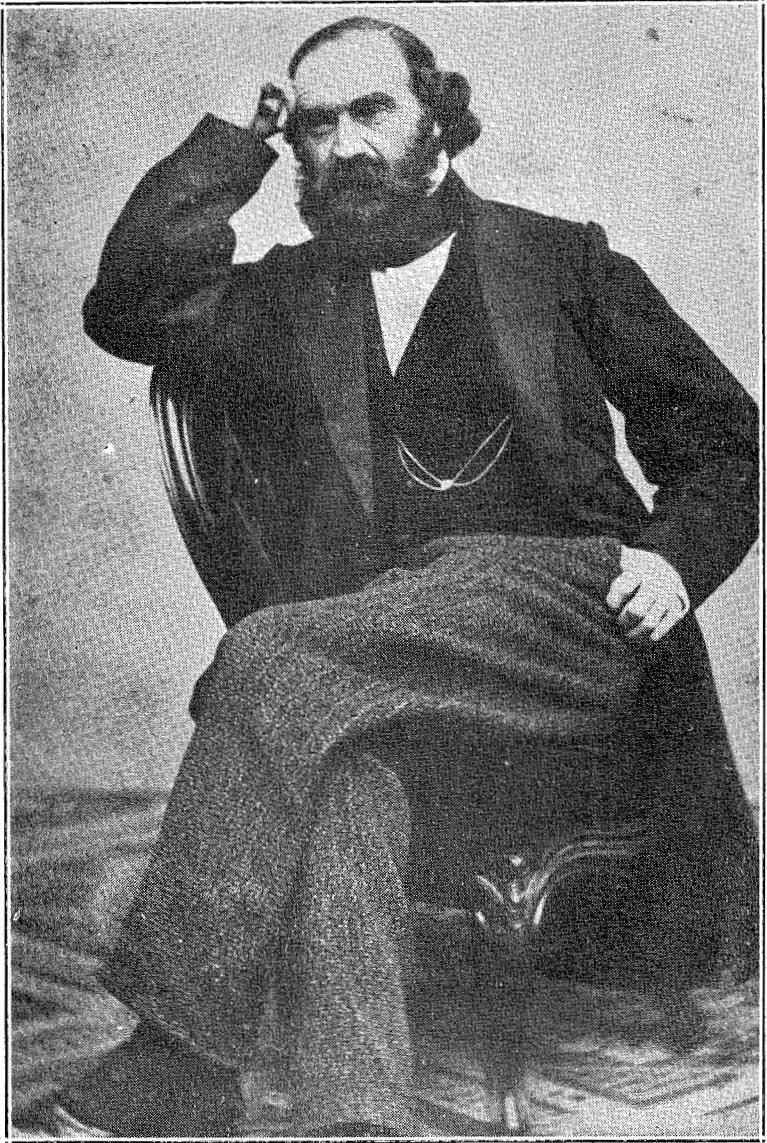
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Paul Hill

PAUL HILL: REMOVAL OF THE POTAWATOMI

By MABEL HILL

When the great panic of 1837 struck the country Paul Hill was a young man of twenty-one who had been spending the winter in Hopkington, New Hampshire, where he had attended a private school for young men. In Hopkington lived his brother, David Hill, who, in 1831, had married Mary Bailey, a woman of distinction and family. The financial depression was felt even in this New Hampshire village. Paul realized that he must go to work instead of finishing his education. Just about this time Mrs. David Hill received a letter from an uncle by the name of Peterson in West Virginia suggesting that both David and Paul go west with him.

Thus it was that Paul Hill and his older brother left New England and went west through Pennsylvania and the Allegheny Mountains. There were stationary engines that pulled them over the mountains. When they arrived in Wheeling, West Virginia, they found to their dismay that Mr. Peterson had left for Cincinnati. He had left a message for them to follow, so they pushed on by steamboat to Louisville, Kentucky, hoping to find Peterson waiting for them in that young city. But again they found he had gone on ahead. The two New England men were shocked with conditions in the city of Louisville. Stores were open on Sunday and Paul wrote in his diary that there were many Jews keeping stores. Evidently there was much drinking at the time.

Next they took a stage for Logansport, after learning that Mr. Peterson had pushed on to that town in Indiana. As they travelled through the battle ground of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too", their experiences were thrilling. At least his children found them so when their father recounted the story of the journey.

Peterson was finally found. He had acquired a saw mill on the Eel River where there were four frame houses, a landing office, a tavern owned by one Col. Virgeo and a blacksmith shop. But in spite of all Uncle Peterson had to offer, David Hill decided at once to leave Logansport and to return to Lowell, where his wife was awaiting him impatiently at the home of his mother, Mrs. John Hill.

Note:—This story of early adventure of Paul Hill was prepared by his daughter from her recollections and from her father's papers. Miss Hill lives in Wellesley, Massachusetts (1937).

But young Paul Hill had more adventure in him. He stayed on at the hotel and soon became very friendly with Lieutenant Sands of the United States Army, who was organizing a company to move Indians from South Bend to land on the Missouri River. Within three weeks the friendship between the two men led to Paul Hill receiving an appointment as assistant conductor to convey the Potawatomi Indians of South Bend across the prairies to Nebraska. Paul was given a horse, a servant, and \$3.00 a day.

There were 500 Indians to be moved. A young Captain McCabe was made first conductor, and Paul, just twenty-one in years, the second conductor. It took a month to organize the expedition. Finally they started, pushing on to Niles, Michigan, where they camped near Lake Michigan. For forty miles they crossed the prairie of Illinois and camped for a week en route while they awaited the arrival of one Lieutenant Sprague of the United States Army who was bringing to them an allotment of blankets which were absolutely necessary to the Indians in their new Iowa reservation, and over \$6,000 in money to be distributed amongst them.

Before they broke camp late one afternoon a horseman came dashing across the prairie with the news that Lieutenant Sprague had been shot. Great excitement prevailed. Lieutenant Sands, with others, organized a party to push on to the scene of the accident, and Paul Hill and McCabe were left in charge of the Indians. The sad accident had occurred because Lieutenant Sprague's team had become mired in the mud, and in attempting to unload the silver out of the wagon, his pistol went off, the ball going through his mouth.

During the nights the Indians were terribly afraid of attacks from other bands of Indians who were less civilized and who might at any moment appear across the prairie.

In fact the Indians were so excited that some of them suggested mutiny. But a strange piece of good fortune arrived. On the horizon there appeared a cloud of dust, and Paul Hill, in mad haste, mounted his horse and rode in a southerly direction, not knowing the meaning of the strange dust movement, but hoping that something might develop that would break the mutiny and save the lives of the white men with him. He found a train of schooner wagons with a regular circus company en route to some Mississippi town. There were the clown and the tumblers, the trapeze men and woman, a snake charmer, and a large exhibit of animals,—monkeys in particular, and possibly an elephant. (The writer cannot remember the exact story.) But for a sum of money the circus company were inveigled into pitching their tents

and giving a circus performance then and there to the Indians. Child-like, the tribe of red men quite forgot their grievances in watching the performance. One feature which particularly delighted the Indians, was the singing by the clown of the song "The Long-Tailed Blue".

Then followed the payment of annuities to the Indians and the march began again.

Somewhere upon the expedition ten young Indian boys were taken out of the tribe and sent to Louisville, Kentucky, to be educated at the Richard Johnson school. Each of these boys was given a name of a white man in the expedition, and the young redskin who took the name of Paul Hill was given \$5.00 by him before starting for the school. Alas, the young Indian went out and got beastly intoxicated. They had to tie and bind him on his return to the camp, throwing him into one of the wagons to sleep off his orgy. And that was the last that Paul Hill number one ever heard of Paul Hill number two! Throughout the whole route white people followed the expedition, selling to the Indians the worst kind of whiskey, and the conductors, McCabe and Hill, underwent great annoyance from this illicit sale of liquor.

In Missouri—after crossing the Mississippi at St. Louis—they found some farms. People from the East had taken up land there, and New England folk had brought with them two or three apple cuttings, starting orchards and sowing grain. They followed a trail through Iowa which was part of the Indian Territory at the time. In recounting the story of this long journey across the new United States of America, one of the outstanding remembrances to young Paul Hill was the fact that the country was all a vast prairie land, trees growing only on the banks of the rivers. Again and again the party met Indians from other tribes, and much to Hill's surprise he found that the Indians from different reservations could not understand the language of each other.

On reaching a river named Chariton, they met with great floods, and later snow set in. Lieutenant Sands called his officers together in council. They must encamp on the banks of the river and send to the Government to take the Indians from them. At this point Sands asked Paul Hill if he would go on a special mission, and Hill agreed to, if he might have an interpreter with him. Lieutenant Sands agreed to stay with the Indians until the following spring. They found on their approach to the [Chariton?] river that the shores were so muddy that they could not drive their horses into the water, so they took off their harnesses and saddles, and pushed them into the stream. They cut down cottonwood trees, cut

them in eight foot lengths, lashed them together and made rafts for themselves and saddles. Thus they crossed the river in safety. But by the time they reached the other shore they were a mile further down on account of the current. Some of the horses were nearly frozen, but they were saddled and started for their destination. They reached the Council Bluff Indian Agency, [probably the sub-agency opposite Bellevue] the following evening. Paul Hill wrote later in a diary, "I looked into the Missouri River and I caught impressions of its peculiarities. Years afterwards I saw it as an old friend,—not changed." It was just 32 years after, in fact, when he saw it again, arriving with an engineering outfit to ferry tons of material across it and to build bridges across its tributary, the Platte.

The following day Hill and the interpreter started out again, only to learn that Sands was leaving for the East, fearing that they would be starved out for lack of commissary goods.

Somewhere at this time they met Joseph Smith, the Mormon leader, who was then living in St. Louis. Smith preached a sermon which made a great impression upon the young man. During the years when Paul Hill had attended a private school in New Hampshire, he had entertained thoughts of becoming a minister himself, but the hard times of the panic of 1837, and the need for money in the home in Lowell, had turned aside all hopes of studying for the ministry. But throughout his life one reads in his diary references to his great interest in men who were able to go out and preach the gospel.

The story of the arrival of the Potawatomi tribe across from Omaha, Nebraska, was spoken of very briefly in his diary. But years afterwards, when he told his children of the adventure, its hardships, its humorous sides, and its little tragedies, he always dwelt on the fact, that he, Paul Hill, was really the first white man to step upon the ground which is now Omaha.

In 1869, when Paul Hill, together with Thomas Doane, the brilliant civil engineer from Massachusetts, went west to build a railroad from Plattsmouth to Kearney, it was possible for him to find the exact camping grounds of his Indians of '37, and to trace even the location of certain pegs that were driven into the earth when they were setting up their tents.

On their return from this reservation on the Missouri where they left the Indians under the care of a Nebraska Agency [Bellevue, and its Potawatomi Sub-Agency across the river], they made their way to Detroit [?] where a re-

ception was given them. But before the reception took place, Paul Hill writes that he burned his clothes, which were full of lice, took a bath, dressed himself in everything new and fresh, and at last felt himself a new man. There was a General Worth at the camp and the party was royally entertained. Immediately following this unusual demonstration of camp hospitality, Lieutenant Sands and Paul Hill separated, never to meet again. Sands evidently headed for Washington. Paul Hill stopped at Niles, Michigan, where he was very ill with fever and ague. Finally he was able to travel and he started home by stage and railroad, crossing the Green mountains and finally landing in Keene, New Hampshire. From there he took a stage coach to Lowell, Massachusetts, and his mother's home.

So ends the story of one young man who dared in the days of depression to do the unusual thing.

POTAWATOMI TO SCHOOL

(This is an exact reproduction of a hand written document in the Paul Hill papers. Note that the list of "aliases" gives the names of the white men in charge of the removal of 1837.)

List of Potawattimine boys sent to the Choctaw Academy this 1st day of September 1837 by Lewis H. Sands, Superintendent of the Chicago Emigration — viz —

John la Lime	
Awk-koo-nauk-koo-say	alias Paul Hill
Ka-kauk-a-me	" Isaac Shelby Berry
Joseph Gladue	" John T. Jones
To pash	" John T. Sprague
Num ku	" Moses M. Scott
Chi-quen-mo	" Joseph Walker
Ko-kit-te-ah	" Robert Adams McCabe
Pierre Navarre	
Francis Page	
Laurence B. Bertrand	
Tec-naus-wah	" James Harvey Hook

Done at Camp Shab-o-na's Grove, Ill
70 miles west of Chicago
this 1st day of Sept. 1837.

I. B. Duret
Apt. Superintendent

FRONTIER LETTERS, 1837-1839

Sands Answers Attack

Lieutenant Sands defends himself from criticism of others who were on the 1837 expedition, plans to continue conducting removal of Indiana and Michigan Indians. This letter was addressed to Paul Hill at Chicago, and forwarded back to Logansport, Indiana.

Farm near Green Castle In-
Dec 30th 1837

Dear Paul

I am at home and suffering under the worst of pains rheumatism— I have authority from the Dept to visit my home and in receipt of authority (sent me some time ago to Fort Leavenworth) to bring M Luther Rice back as local interpreter. As respects the Indian delegation I have not heard further than I told you I am too unwell to think of going on to Washington shortly, **but may** if I get better. My official doings has been sanctioned by the Dept as far as heard from. I am this moment in receipt of a letter saying that the accounts rendered relative to Indian boys was correct As soon as possible I will visit the agency. had you not better come to Logansport, I acknowledge the receipt of yours and did anticipate that charges would be fwd by that scoundrel Isaac S. Berry and his friends. That he was a professional Gambler and deteriorated from the dignity of an officer by his associations in that respect, is **Known to all** the Camp (Men Women & Children) had I reported to the Dept his doings, had I reported the doings to Lt Sprague in many respects those men could then be clear of the charge of **Ingratitude** And if Maj Scott & Col Durett have aught to say against me I am willing to have it in **Golden letters** recorded in the proper place

I cannot think that they will act unmanly and join my enemies to sacrifice me—if they had a friend it was **me** Send all my letters to me here until you hear from me again

Col Durett & Maj'r Scott were quite friendly with me. We joined company at Vincennes and came on to Terre Haute together. They may probably go with me next year again, and you **Paul** shall have a good place. As charges are preferred and I do not know what they are, can you send me a letter on the subject. State what you know of my official conduct whether **right or wrong**, so that I may forward it to the Dept—Write me forthwith on receipt of this if you send me a letter to be fwd to the Dept send it enclosed.

Doc Berry cannot injure me. My people know me I could have been in Congress this year if I had asked the favor and been at home. Profit was elected to the legislature.

As with me forth-with

Your Friend

Lewis H Sands

I have preferred charges against Lt. J. T. Sprague

Proposal To Return to the Frontier

These letters are addressed to Hill at Lowell, Massachusetts. Both are on the same sheet of paper, folded, wax sealed and addressed without an envelope.

Racine Wisconsin Territory

February 23 1839—

Dear Paul

Since you left White Pigeon [Minnesota] I have written you two letters upon the subject of business, & not hearing from you I return I presume that the letters must have misscarraied, be that as it may, I am now able to state to you definately the final conclusion of Mr. Howell & myself upon the matter of a Partnership business proposed between Howell, Hill, & Myself. We have upon making inquiry—and looking about the country concluded to locate at this place & we think with every prospect of success in our undertaking. The land is now in market & the country rapidly improving—& is in need of goods. We think that you will upon examination be much pleased with the location.

We are now anxious to know of you what amount of money you will be able to bring on & at what time you will be here, be particular that we may know all the whys & wherefores, that we shall not be disappointed in our arrangements in going to N. York early in the spring—We have purchased some lots & have a building now ready for business. Let me impress upon you an early answer, or soon see you which would be much more agreeable.

Very Respectfully

Yours.

Lin[?] Mason

Racine Feb 23 1839

Dear Friend Paul

I suppose you will stare at receiving a line from me Dated at this place. I came up here to look about, & we have decided as Mason has written. I start for home tomorrow where I hope to find a letter from you full of good news. I have been absent about four weeks. Paul you must do your D——dst, to raise all the money you can and if we can get fairly started there is no mistake but

what we can do well. I intend to get here by the first of April, and you must come right here as soon as you can and we will start Mason right off East as Early as possible. if you cant get away till some time into April it will make us late with our goods I have got a first rate chance in the tavern here. It is much better house than the one at Pigeon. they give me the rent for three years, and a Village Lot to boot, to induce me to come here,— I must repeat it raise all the money you can.

Yours in the bonds of
friendship
D. Howell

P. S. Write me at Pigeon as soon
as you receive this DH.

