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Jay Anos Barrette Librarian
Lincoln Nebraska.

Respected Friends,

I received thy letter of 17th instant requesting me to "put" down for the Nebraska State Historical Society my experience with the Omaha Indians, I regret that I am so poorly prepared to do such a service, I will have to rely on my memory entirely for any information I may offer or any reminiscence I may present, as I kept no memorandum of what came under my observation or to my knowledge, which I have often regretted.

I was nominated by President Grant for Agent for Agent of the Indians in December 1875, but through the selfish political influences of the Nebraska Senators, Hitchcock and Paddock my nomination was not confirmed until the following July I believe. I was from Indiana and the Senators wanted the Agent to be a citizen of Nebraska. I received my appointment in August and immediately took charge of the Agency. At that time there were about 1,100 Indians in the tribe, I saw at once that to produce any material improvement in their condition and to bring them to a state of comfortable selfsupport and the adoption of more civilized ideas and habits, would require earnest labor and diligent and persevering effort, not only in the office but out of it and amongst the Indians in order to encourage them through

my presence and advice to more active habits of industry and a better knowledge of their own interests, I tried to show them that I felt an interest in working for their good, and I wanted them to be willing ~~and~~ to, and to feel an interest in working with me, for by doing so they would be improving their condition and adding to their knowledge of how to do the best for themselves. Many of them appeared to understand, and in some measure appreciate my advice, but to accept it gradually in practice, the more intelligent were ready to adopt it,

The Chiefs appeared less inclined to adopt habits of civilization for that would lessen their influence over the tribe, which they held to be of first importance to them, and ^{which} even there was becoming precarious; the tribe was divided at that time into two parties, the Chiefs party and the youngmen's party, and they were nearly equally divided but the young men claiming the preponderance in numbers, but as they had no officers, nor no officers to nominate or elect, nor any money in the treasury there was no active strife among them,

To show the ^{industrial} progress of the Omahas I had the threshing of the wheat crop of 1876. ~~which~~ to do soon after I took charge at the Agency. The crop of that year amounted 50,000 bushels, the largest it was said, they ever had raised, the next winter I had 40 harrows made for them against 10 the preceding year, In the Spring of 1877 I furnished them 100 double shovel plows, against none before, a good

supply of breaking and stirring plows, Harness, and a large number of Wagons, as well as I can recollect 75, but it may have been 100, which gave them material encouragement, and in 1878 I made them another liberal issue of implements and Wagons, And when the wheat crop of 1877 was threshed it yielded a little more than 12,000 bushels as against 5,000 the preceding year, Their other crops were increased but not to the same extent, The wheat crop of 1878 reached 20,000 bushels of choice wheat, and they broke up over 350 acres of new prairie with their own pony teams, The Agent of the Minnebozoes told me that in the same year he found it difficult to get his Indians to break 200 acres, although he paid them \$1.00 per acre, and the Indian department had issued them 100 horses, two years before, In 1879 the Omahas had an increase in acreage of wheat, but the season being unfavorable for ripening the crop was about 1,000 bushels less than the preceding year,

During the three years I was with them the Omahas improved so perceptibly that it became a matter of some notoriety so that the Newspapers, especially the Sioux City papers and the Omaha Herald frequently remarked favorably about it so that visitors from Omaha and other places in the surrounding ^{country} visited the Agency to see for themselves, and expressed surprise at the improvements the Indians had made in a few years in habits of industry and self-dependance, with

some advancement in civilized manner of dress, My predecessor had given them encouragement by moderate supplies of implements, as he thought adapted to their present disposition to use them, and otherwise encouraged them by advice and just and honest treatment and thereby secured their confidence. And when I took charge they were in a condition to improve more rapidly than before, but the change was mostly of gradual growth, and was largely dependant on judicious counsel and the earnestness of example set by the Agents and his employes. Where employes are moral and industrious and show an interest in the service they can do much for the advancement of the the Indians. But to accomplish success the Agent must set and continue the example and oversight, I found that the Indians were pleased when I visited them at their work, and said encouraging words to them,

In Nov^r 1876 the time came for the annual annuity in money to be paid them, which had been about \$8,000. Believing as I did that the less they depended on annuities the more they would strive to help themselves, and the less they would depend on extraneous assistance, so I estimated for \$5,000, and stated my views on the subject to the ~~Indian~~ Commissioner of Indian Affairs which were approved and I was authorized to pay them that amount. The Chiefs and a few of their

followers complained at being cut down in their annuity ex-
 pectations but I told them that was the amount
 the Indian department allowed me to pay them that year,
 that the Commissioner thought they were getting able to
 support themselves and they ought to save their money for
 future needs, They were generally satisfied, or did not complain,
 The white trader at the Agency appeared to be most dis-
 satisfied, After they received their annuity a large number of
 the Indians determined to go on their annual winter hunt
 for buffalo and would not be dissuaded from it, Mostly
 taking their families and about all their subsistence with
 them, The winter proved an unusually severe one, and the buf-
 faloes were getting scarce and further off, on account of the
 more western tribes killing them and driving them further
 west, so that the Omahas had very poor success in hunting,
 And the snow being unusually deep and the weather very
 cold they found returning extremely difficult so that they
 could make but little progress so that they were on the bor-
 der of starvation, their supplies becoming exhausted, and their
 ponies in but little better condition than they were themselves,
 could help them but little, Their condition was such that Army
 officers ^{in the west} interposed and induced the Indian department to ren-
 der them relief, They came home late after losing two men and
 two or three children, as I now recollect it, On their return they

were impoverished, as they had left nothing at home to supply their wants on their return, and were dependent on those who stayed at home, which was a serious burden to them.

Knowing their condition I asked and received authority to issue \$3,000 to the tribe in cash to support them until they could raise a crop, ^{which was the last annuity I paid them,} After resting a short time they went to work with a will that was really creditable to them, and raised much the largest crop they had ever raised.

That experience put an end to their hunting expeditions,

The Omahas were much annoyed and injured for many years by the Winnebagos stealing their ponies, they reported 125 stolen and several were stolen afterwards, The Omahas never retaliated in the same way, and the Winnebagos tantalized them with being too cowardly to steal from them, they resented the insinuation and said it was not because they were afraid but it was dishonest and mean, and they ^{did} not want to do like the Winnebagos. But when the last raid was made on the Omahas ponies the Indians ^{came} to me and said the stealing must be stopped, that they had stood it as long as they would and if the Agents didn't stop it they would take the matter in their own hands and that would make trouble between the tribes and likely bloodshed. I then went to see the Agent to try to induce him to take more prompt action with his Indians in order to prevent a collision, but he told me as he had told the Omahas, that he didn't be-

lieve he could stop the stealing, that the ponies, when stolen, were run across the Missouri into Iowa, and that his policemen would not pursue or arrest the thieves, that that they would rather help them to escape, I then proposed, as his Indians had committed the depredations, that he appeal to the Indⁿ department for means to employ a capable white officer to discover and break up their rendezvous for the sale of the stolen property. He replied that he thought that would be useless as he did not suppose the department would take any notice of his application.

I then appealed to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, myself stating the situation and the trouble likely to arise if the Omahas were not protected in their property, and asked for \$100.00 for the purpose of employing a competent white man to serve as a policeman to pursue and break up the den of pony thieves and their confederates. The Commissioner promptly responded allowing me to use that amount. I at once employed an energetic white man who traced them up the place of concealment and sale of ponies at or near Spirit Lake Ia. That broke up pony stealing from the Omahas, while I was there. And five years after I visited the Agency and was told by the Indians that there had not been a pony stolen since I left.

I have written the above to show the more than ^(usual) ~~usual~~ civi-
 zed patience ~~patience~~ and forbearance ^{of the Omahas} under trying circumstances

I have written in a somewhat fragmentary just as
memory has been pleased to come to my aid, with a
pretty clear perception of the correctness of what I have written.
I have written of my experience, and what may be of interest to
me in my experience may not be so with others. If it is thought
of sufficient interest to print, or any part of it, I suppose
it will require considerable amount of transposition and
elimination. I concluded not to write any more now, until
I knew whether more would be acceptable. If I should write
more I think I will give some of my experience with the
treatment of the Poncas, who were a few weeks at the Omaha
Agency after their return from the Indian Territory.

Very respectfully

Jacob Vore



As I stated in my former Communication the Omahas are peaceable and honestly disposed, with a higher sense of morality, backed by industrious habits than any of the tribes I had any acquaintance with, except the Poncas, who were formerly of the same tribe, and between those two tribes there was kept up a friendly correspondence and interchange of presents,

The Omaha Chiefs and their tribal relations, which it seemed to be their object and chief purpose to maintain, were the most apparent obstacle to the more rapid advancement of the tribe in civilization and the adoption of the customs of the Whites. The Chiefs had long considered themselves the heads of their tribe, and highly valued their tribal authority and influence and did not willingly relinquish them; indeed but little more so than partisan politicians do their positions and influence in more civilized and intelligent forms of government.

I understood that prior to the time that my predecessor was appointed agent it had been usual for Indian candidates for policemen for the tribe to appeal to the Chiefs for their endorsement, and that the candidates who could offer the most liberal bonus in prices to the Chiefs generally

secured their indorsements. Whether the aborigines learn-
 ed that art from Civilization, or Civilization from
 the Aborigines, or whether both Classes had the will and
 inclination inherently I will not attempt to decide.

My predecessor had exerted some influence over many of
 the Indians by showing them the disadvantages of their
 tribal habits in comparison with more civilized modes of living,
 and wherein their condition would be materially improved
 by giving up their tribal relations and Customs, and em-
 bracing the whiteman's ways of living and dressing, and
 so far as I observed the Chiefs did not appear to exert
 any arbitrary authority over the tribe, nor any encourage-
 ment to improve or progress, but by appealing to their ances-
 tral lives and Customs with the view of persuading them to
 maintain their standing and identity as a tribe among the
 Indian nations, which, with civilized peoples would
 hardly be considered unpatriotic.

But being surrounded by civilized life and Customs
 and the evidences of plenty and comfort, through moder-
 ate industry and economy, it only requires patience, persev-
 erance and just dealing, with good example, to convince the
 tribe, young and old that civilized life with its inviting
 advantages is, ^{not only} much preferable to their former lives, but desira-
 ble to strive for. The Chiefs said they were too old to change

but the young men could change if they wanted to, But their advancement will depend much on their teachers, on the energy and good judgement of Agents and those having the oversight of them, and that requires ^{extra} labor and vigilance, and that without any extra Compensation, and frequently with less than thankfulness, both from the department and interested whites,

In 1885 I believe, about 50,000 acres from the west portion of the Omaha reserve were sold, and as I understood for near \$500,000, and the proceeds annually distributed to the tribes, which I have been informed has not operated as an incentive to many of the Indians to work and provide for themselves, but on the contrary seems to have induced a return to their old habits of indolence and dependance,

After the Spring of 1877 when the Omahas returned from their unfortunate hunt until the fall of 1879. when I gave up the Agency I paid no annuity. The first year the Chiefs complained some, mostly through the counsel of one of the traders who I learned was holding caucuses with them late at night to induce them to believe that I could get them annuities if I would. When I discovered that I called on the trader and told him what I had learned, and that he was going too far, and that if he did not change his course and correct the impressions he had tried to make on the Chiefs

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it would be necessary for him to look out for another trading post.

I was troubled with the Chiefs but little afterwards, indeed, considering that I was as firm as I was, although I aimed to treat them respectfully and becomingly. I thought it was remarkable that I appeared to have their confidence and good will as I did, but I found they respected that spirit,

To illustrate their feeling I may say that when I was about to retire from the Agency I called a council of the Indians at which the Chiefs were all present and on my informing them that I was about to leave them the head Chief addressed me about as follows, Major, we are sorry that you are going to leave us, we want you to stay with us because we have got to know your ways, for awhile after you was Agent we did not understand your ways, your ways were different from other Agents ways and we did not understand them for a good while and we did not like you very well, but when we got to understand your ways we found they were good ways, and now we like them and want to follow your ways, and we are afraid if another Agent comes his ways will not be like your ways and our young people will go back like the Winnebagoes, several of the other Chiefs expressed the same feelings.

In conclusion I may say that I had no trouble with the Indians, I never enjoyed myself more than when I was faithfully laboring for the improvement and the interests of the Indians.