

## LOGAN FONTENELLE

A EULOGY BY JOHN LEE WEBSTER.

Logan Fontenelle--Shon-ga-ska, a Frenchman--an Indian. On his father's side there was ancestral lineage of French nobility, from the days of King Louis XV, - Marquis de Fontenelle. On his mother's side there was blood of Indian Chieftains, traceable back to the days of the celebrated warrior of the Omaha's, - Wash-in-ga-sabe. He was elected head chief of this Indian Nation in 1853 when but 28 years of age. He negotiated the great Treaty of 1854, whereby his Nation ceded to the United States our surrounding rich and beautiful prairies. He intended and desired by that document that the dim chapter of decaying ruin of an almost exterminated aboriginal and savage conception of human life, might be replaced with a white man's civilization and a modern form of civil government. Soon after he had signed this Treaty, which exhibits evidences of the philosophical wisdom and nobleness of character of this Indian Chief, he was killed, -- assassinated I might say, by a band of hostile Sioux in the year 1855. Such in

a few sentences is a brief sketch of the remarkable  
man whose memory we celebrate - Logan Fontenelle.

## FRENCHMAN AND INDIAN.

To have a true appreciation of the remarkable personal character of Logan Fontenelle we must bring to mind the characteristics, the impulses, the varied qualities, the mental temperament of a cultured Frenchman, and put these in contract with the stoic and almost inscrutable character of the uncultured Indian, and imagine, if we can, the child born by the union of these two strikingly dissimilar races of people.

The Frenchman is highly intellectual, quick of instinct, a lover of the beautiful; most gracious in manner; chivalrous to a degree; and at the same time he is daring and adventurous as a pioneer, discoverer or explorer, and brave and invincible as a soldier.

The Indian presents a striking antithesis to the Frenchman. He is a true child of the wilderness, the forest, the prairie, the desert and the mountains. The Frenchman loves the social life of the city, but the solitude of nature is congenial to the Indian. The Frenchman has affability and frankness of manner, while the Indian Chief in his untamed freedom and inscrutable reserve is a wonder and a mystery. The Frenchman is condescending, while the dignified pose of the Indian Chief comports with his belief in his

own greatness and renown. It has been said of the Indian that he is "hewn out of a rock." "Over his emotion he throws the veil of iron self control."

The Frenchman has made the history by his bravery on many a battle field, but the Indian is equally heroic, and in case of defeat will suffer without a word of complaint the tortures which only a savage can inflict. Few, if any, of mankind are braver than he, and his "love of glory kindles into a burning passion." It is not strange that the Indian is a hero worshipper. It is commendable that on this festive occasion we are free to indulge for a little while in this eulogistic way on the noble quality of the Indian.

We can thus understand how it came that Logan Fontenelle had combined within himself the gracious and pleasing manners and noble graces of a Frenchman; and the commanding qualities of leadership and the brave daring of an Indian Chief; a man who was beloved by all white men who knew him, and commanded the respect and obedience of an Indian race who clung with tenacity to the hunting grounds of their ancestors, which they had held for centuries against the invasions of their hereditary enemies, the Sioux. Thus it was that Logan Fontenelle became the worthy successor to Blackbird and Big Elk, - Wash-in-ga-sabe and Om-pa-ton-ga.

## LUCIEN AND ME-OOM-BAH-THE

Much has been written of Lucien Fontenelle, the father of Logan. He had the wandering instinct of the incessant traveler. While smarting under a rebuke or reprimand from an aunt, which he felt was not merited, he ran away from his home in New Orleans and followed up the Missouri River until he reached the wild regions of Fur Company trappers and adventurers. In his wanderings he had gone as far north as Hudson Bay and westward across the ranges of the Rocky Mountains, and back again along the valleys of the rivers and across the plains to his new home at Bellevue. He became the representative of the interests of the American Fur Company throughout this western country. Captain Bonneville, made illustrious by Washington Irving's picturesque romance, who was more of a wanderer than an explorer, met Fontenelle in 1832, at the head of sixty well mounted men at Scott's Bluffs, and at Fort Laramie, and at Green River on his way to the far off camps of the Fur Company on the Yellowstone. Lucien, with equal bravery with Bonneville, traveled through the rugged regions which were infested by the warlike Crows and Blackfeet as if he were a free lance of fortune, and fearless as Richard the Lion Hearted.

NEBRASKA STATE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The historians have overlooked or forgotten the mother of Logan. I wish for a moment to bring her name back to memory, for to this superior and charming Indian woman are to be traced many of the distinguished qualities of her celebrated son. She was the daughter of an Indian Chief. Her name was Me-oom-bah-the, which in English means "The Sun." It is a name which stands for cheerfulness, for brightness, for warmth of heart and sunshine. She was such an Indian maiden as a Frenchman like Lucien would select for a wife. It might be said of her as an English traveler said of some Sioux Maidens whom he met in his romantic travels on the plains in 1849, "They had extremely beautiful but firmly chiseled features, dark lustrous eyes, raven locks and pearly teeth which they disclosed in gracious smiles that lit up their lovely faces with the most bewitching radiance." Yet she had the courage and natural instincts of her race, a fit squaw for an Indian Chief, and once she killed an Indian of the Iowa's because he had ruthlessly murdered an Omaha Indian boy.

The marriage between Lucien and Me-oom-bah-the was performed by Father De Smett, the most distinguished Jesuit missionary who ever came into the Western Indian country. He had come to America in 1820 from that part of Holland which is now Belgium. A Frenchman for the groom - an Indian maiden for the bride -

a Belgian missionary for the Priest, - the place of the marriage an Indian tepee in the wilds of the wind swept prairies, and the time, - before the white man's civilization had dispelled the Indian mystery that cast its shadow over the western plains. Such is the romantic stage setting for the subsequent birth at Old Calhoun in 1825 of the Indian Chief, Logan Fontenelle.



1800 TO 1854.

It would be difficult to find a more romantic period in all of the pages of American History than is presented in the travels, the explorations, and in the experiences of the bold and daring and adventurous white men who penetrated into these Nebraska regions between the date of the birth of Lucian Fontenelle in 1800 and the death of Logan in 1855.

It was a land where Indian tribes had roamed over their hunting domains from time immemorial, and where Indian nations had engaged in frequent warfare, not as destructive as that now being waged by the great civilized nations of Europe, but equally fierce and as truly relentless.

These pioneers and explorers and trappers and Indian traders were enticed by the solitude and vastness of the plains; they were lured by the mysteries of the mountains beyond; they did not shun but rather invited contact with the dangers which were incident to the wild and savage life of the aborigines, but they left behind them no settlements; they created no land marks of civilization; they came and they disappeared like hermit wanderers over Arabian deserts.

Pierre and Paul Mallet crossed these plains in 1739, but they left to us no heritage except the name which



they gave to the great river they discovered, La Platte.

Manuel de Lisa, of whom it has been said, that in boldness of enterprise and persistency in purpose he was a fair representative of the Spaniard of the days of Cortez, only left to us this brief glimpse of his character, and a tradition that he once stood upon the high ground where Bellevue College now stands, and looking over the beautiful landscape of the splendid valley below him exclaimed, "Bellevue."

Major Long with his topographical engineers and a group of soldiers and some specialists for scientific explorations, crossed through this country to find the sources of the Platte River. He traveled on until he discovered the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, but the heritage which he left to us was but a little more than the description which he gave of our prairies as deserts, and the memory of his name given to a high peak in the Rocky Mountains.

A more interesting incident attaches to the expedition of John C. Fremont to Colorado and the Rocky Mountains in 1842. On his return he followed the Platte River from Grand Island to its mouth and for four days was the guest of Col. Sarpy at Bellevue. Let us tell the incident as Fremont himself wrote it. "I arose from our camp long before daylight and heard with a feeling of pleasure the tinkling of cow bells

at the settlement on the other side of the river. Early in the day we reached Mr. Sarpy's residence and in the security and comfort of his hospitable mansion felt the pleasure of being again in the pale of civilization."

Major General John C. Fremont made for himself a great name as a traveler and explorer, a soldier and a statesman, but he left our prairies and our rivers as he found them, - the roaming lands of several tribes of American Indians.

And so it came about that during the first fifty years of the last century explorers, wanderers, trappers, hunters, and traders traveled over the lands which make up the State of Nebraska, but they left them as barren of improvements and of settlements as they were in the older period before the foot of white men had touched the soil west of the Missouri River.

But a new era was at hand; a great change was about to take place. It required a far-seeing, shrewd, calculating brain of a man who had the qualities of leadership to bring about the conditions whereby the Indian title to these vast prairies might be ceded to the United States so that the Federal Government might grant title to the lands to a new race of occupants, settlers, state builders, - the advance guards of a new civilization. Such a man was Logan Fontenelle.

Logan Fontenelle undoubtedly was familiar with the account which Lewis and Clarke gave of their visit to the grave of Wash-in-ga-sabe, on the top of Blackbird Hill. They described this monument as being twelve feet in diameter and six feet in height. Above it floated a white flag bordered with red, white and blue. Where that flag came from, or who placed it there, or what it represented, no one has told us. It was like a still, small voice speaking to Lewis and Clarke from out of the darkness and mysteries of a past age. The dead Chief had worn a medal of honor bestowed upon him by the Spanish Governor of New Orleans in 1796, but since then the sovereignty over his lands had been transferred from Spain to France, and again from France to the United States, without the consent of his people, and the flag that waved from the top of his monument may have been an emblem of peace and good will to all, and a sign that he, like all of his successors to Logan Fontenelle, was a friend of the white man.

TREATY OF 1854.

In 1853 Logan Fontenelle by the unanimous vote of his people, was elected head Chief of the Omaha Nation. He knew that the time had come when his people stood on the threshold, midway between the savagery and wild Indian life of the past, and the oncoming rush of Anglo-Saxon people and the new civilization of the future. He compared the crudities and the barbarities of the one, with the luxuries, advantages and graces of the other. He weighed in his mind the simple life of the Indian who tells the time of the day by the sun and the stars, with the cultivated life of the white man as he learned it through his French ancestry. He compared the harmonies which he found in the great book of nature and its hidden mysteries, with the libraries of printed books which told of the triumphs of the sciences and the arts. The time had come for him and his people to decide whether they would cling to the life of the past, or accept the great world's new civilization which had been crossing the continent by leaps and bounds from the Atlantic to the Missouri River, and was but waiting for the extinguishment of Indian titles to sweep westward to the Pacific. To the Indian it was the flood tide of life, and a Treaty of Peace with the Federal Government was the Ark of Safety.

Logan Fontenelle was the man for the hour. He assembled the Chiefs of the different bands of his Nation and took them to Washington City where he negotiated the great Indian Treaty of 1854. That Treaty is a remarkable document both from the striking character of some of its provisions, and the great result that followed its approval. It is a document as significant to the beginning of the growth of the structure of our State as is the Declaration of Independence to the Federal Government, or the great Treaty between Napoleon and Jefferson, by which the Louisiana Territory was transferred from France to the United States.

By this Indian Treaty of 1854 the title of the Omaha Indian Nation to millions of acres of Nebraska lands were ceded to the general government and were thrown open to settlements. The prairies which were once ancient battle fields are now being cultivated as farms. Where once there were Indian villages there are now towns and cities. Had it not been for that Treaty of 1854 these plains would still be Indian lands, the property of the Omaha Indian Nation, and no white man would have a right to set foot thereon without the permission of the Indian Chiefs.

The greater Omaha, with its population of more than 200,000 people, the gate way to the vast regions between the Missouri River and the Pacific Ocean, has

been built upon the lands which once belonged to Logan Fontenelle and his people, and its existence only became possible by that Treaty of 1854.

Other important events followed immediately after the execution of this Indian Treaty. Congress passed the Enabling Act by which the Territory of Nebraska was created. The President appointed a Governor and a corps of officers to administer civil government. Then and there were laid the foundation of our Statehood, which became a new star on the azure blue of the flag in 1867.

## FONTENELLE'S ASSASSINATION.

We now come to a sad part of the story. Logan Fontenelle, as one of the first considerations of the Treaty, had a provision put in it by which the United States agreed to protect the Omahas from the Sioux and all other hostile tribes. Yet within a year after the signing of that document, and with the name of our country's President, Franklin Pierce affixed to it, the Government ordered the Omaha Indians to be removed to their northern Reservation on the borders of which the Sioux were constantly committing depredations. Logan Fontenelle appealed to the United States for protection against the Sioux under the provisions of the Treaty, but protection was not given.

Logan Fontenelle declared it was equivalent to murder, and nothing but murder, to place the unarmed and defenseless Omahas in the paths of their hereditary enemies, the Sioux. The power of the United States was too great for his nation to resist and he said: "We will go and meet our fate." They went.

The failure of the Government to fulfill its Treaty obligations to protect the Omahas did result in murder. In 1855 that great Indian Chieftain, Logan Fontenelle, who made it possible that the State of Nebraska might come into existence, and this city be built, and this



STATE ARCHIVES  
NEBRASKA STATE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

magnificent hotel constructed, was assassinated by a band of hostile Sioux<sup>x</sup>. His breast was pierced by seven arrows, his skull was crushed by the blow of a tomahawk, his scalp was carried away as a trophy of Sioux valor. It was a crime that bordered on martyrdom, yet the Government of the United States never punished the perpetrators of that foul deed.

When I reflect upon these tragic circumstances I am frequently calling to memory a statement lately made by Major General Grenville M. Dodge, that there never had been an Indian war which had not been instigated by a failure of the Federal Government to fulfill its treaty obligations.

## A PHILOSOPHER AND A MARTYR.

In conclusion I wish to summarize my conception of the life, character and wisdom of Logan Fontenelle. In my opening I said of him that he was a Frenchman - an Indian. I wish now to add that he was a philosopher of life and a martyr to its cause.

He was in favor of universal peace before Andrew Carnegie and David Starr Jordan became its apostles. he provided in Article 10 of the Treaty that the Omahas would not make war on any other tribe except in self defense, and would submit all matters of difference between them and other Indians to the Government of the United States and abide its decision. No other nation has ever been willing to grant such supreme and unappealable authority to a Hague Congress, or to insert a similar clause in any International Treaty.

He wanted to secure protection to his Indian Nation against hostile invasions, and to surround them by the Anglo Saxon people, so that they might in time throw off their old habits and customs of savage life and take on a new civilization of Peace. He trusted the United States and became a martyr to the cause of his people. But out of his martyrdom, like that of John Brown, the spirit of his masterwork went on. The

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
NEBRASKA STATE

independent nationality of the Indian tribe perished, but Phoenix like, the red men rose up into citizenship in the white man's government. Our Nation has become their Nation, and our flag has become their flag. That great Treaty of 1854 was the sunset of the Omaha Indian nation, but it was the sunrise of the new State of Nebraska.

From a group of Indian wigwams to this magnificent city; from a cluster of tepees standing upon the wind swept prairies or upon the hill tops where the winter breezes blow unhindered, to the comforts and luxuries of these palatial buildings; what a romance in the history of a century! It is a subject too full of soul stirring events and tragic incidents to be told in the dry details of a volume of history. It is a fit subject for an epic such as a Homer might write with Logan Fontenelle as the hero of the poem. Oh! that we had an American Shakespeare who might put it into historical dramas; like those of the Kings of England, or Coriolanus or Julius Ceasar, that the name of Logan Fontenelle, like theirs, might live eternally in memory.

LOGAN FONTANELLE

It appears from evidence found in contemporary sources that Logan Fontanelle was killed on July 16 or 17, 1855.

Grenville M. Dodge who was living on a claim on the Elkhorn river in the western portion of Douglas county wrote on July 24, 1855: "The Omaha Indians arrived in from their hunt, having been driven in by the Sioux. Logan Fontanelle was killed in battle."

The Council Bluffs Bugle, Council Bluffs, Iowa, Tuesday morning, July 31, 1855 printed the following:

"Advices have lately arrived from the hunting grounds of the Omaha bringing the sorrowful intelligence of the death of the Omaha Chief Logan Fontanelle, an intelligent and much esteemed man. His remains were brought to repose with his ancestors near Bellevue, Nebraska, on Wednesday last after having remained uninterred for nine days."

From the above we can determine that Fontanelle was buried on July 25, 1855. The Council Bluffs Bugle states that he was killed nine days before he was buried. If we count his burial day, he was killed on July 17th. If we do not count it, he was killed on July 16th. The Dodge diary serves as supporting evidence to the account in the Bugle. A small party of mounted Indians could well have passed through Douglas county on the 24th and reached Bellevue on the 25th.

The death date of June 15, 1855 is given in Morton-Watkins, Illustrated History of Nebraska, Volume I, (Lincoln 1905) page 66. In the face of the sources written at the time, we believe this date to be in error.

Donald F. Danker

DEATH OF LOGAN FONTENELLE, THE CHIEF OF THE OMAHAS

*Fontenelle*

In 1853, when the government, through the commission of Indian affairs, made overtures to the Omaha for the purchase of their lands, a council of deliberation was called and by acclamation Logan was elected and declared to be their principal chief, and with joyful acclamation was he hailed as such by the whole tribe. For years he had held the position of United States interpreter.

In June, 1855, Logan Fontenelle lost his life while he, with his tribe, were engaged in their usual summer hunt, and had surrounded a herd of buffalo, the Sioux came dashing down upon them in force and the buffalo chase was turned into a battle and at every attempt of the Omahas to get buffalo they were charged upon by the Sioux. Finding it useless to attempt to hunt, the Omahas started toward their reservation. After three days travel, they espied a herd of elk (not the progenitors of the modern tribes of Elks). Thinking they were out of danger Fontenelle, with Louis Saunsoci, started with the intention of capturing some of them and that was the last time that his tribe saw him alive. Shortly after he started the Sioux swept down upon the main body and a fierce battle ensued. After the fight a search was made for Logan and his mutilated body was found about three miles distant. His remains were wrapped in blankets and buffalo robes and taken to Bellevue, instead of to the reservation, for interment. He was buried beside the remains of his father, in the northern part of the village, on a level spot overlooking the Minneshosho (Missouri) River, near where once stood what is known as the old Decatur house. Decatur read the Episcopal burial service over his grave, while around it wierd and piercing cries and lamentations were uttered by the bereft wives, who with knives cut themselves until from the wounds thus inflicted the blood gushed forth.

This was undoubtedly the first time that the Episcopal service was ever used at a funeral in Nebraska and this was at Bellevue. It is impossible, probably, to determine the exact location of Logan's death, but from the best data that I have been able to procure I am firmly convinced THAT IT WAS ON OR NEAR THE LOUP, IN THE NORTHERN PART OF SHERMAN COUNTY. Thus perished a true, honorable and brave man and a warm and firm friend of the whites.

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Taken from the Omaha paper, The Mercury

Article written by John Q. Goss

Points of discussion: Logan Fontenelle's being a Chief?  
Actual place of his death?

DEATH OF LOGAN FONTENELLE

THE CHIEF OF THE OMAHAS

During the early settlement of the territory, as a matter of course, the Indian population was vastly superior in numbers and for years after they had ceded their lands to the United States, many of them roamed at will over the vast prairies and along the streams, hunting, fishing and often begging "towac" or something to eat. This having been their home for so long a time, it is not to be wondered that they considered it their right to roam wheresoever they pleased, unmolested.

This propensity was often a source of much annoyance to the settlers. The newly arrived settler and his wife and children were often startled, while sitting in their cabin, by the sudden darkening of the room. On endeavoring to ascertain the cause they were alarmed by beholding at the window one, and often more, of these noble red men, or their squaws, with noses flattened on the window pane, the hands spread on either side of the face and with piercing eyes taking an inventory of the furniture and inmates, and endeavoring to acquire knowledge of the mysterious secrets possessed by the inhabitants of the cabin. Their appearance, to the newly arrived settler, was somewhat terrifying, yet they were harmless when no opportunity presented itself for them to be otherwise. Sometimes trouble arose between members of the two races and the mediatorial powers of

Sarpy were called into requisition, as he seemed to have an almost unbounded influence over the Indians. They regarded him as their firm friend, which he undoubtedly was.

Among the Indians connected with the agency were a number of half breeds, mostly of the mixture of French and Indian. Among the most prominent of these were the Fontenelles, of whom Logan, who was head chief of the Omahas after the death of Blackbird, was the first to attach his name on behalf of that tribe to the treaty of March 16, 1854. His paternal grandparents, Francois and Marie Louise Fontenelle, migrated from Marseilles, France, and settled in Louisiana, where Lucien Francois Fontenelle, father of Logan, was born. About the year 1816 Lucien came west and was married by Father De Smett to an Indian squaw, one of the Omaha tribe, daughter of an Omaha chief. Logan was one of their <sup>5</sup> ~~four~~ children. Naturally smart, intelligent and active, it is said that at the agency he was the foremost in those exercises and sports common among Indian children. For a time he attended school at St. Louis and was there classed as a bright and apt scholar. He was genial and obliging in his disposition, yet withal he had a firm and dominant will that brooked no factious opposition. Bravery was a prominent trait in his character from childhood. All these elements made him a favorite with his tribe.



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For many years a bitter feud had existed between the Indians of the Sioux tribe and the Omahas and many a bloody skirmish and hard fought battle took place between them. The Sioux were by far the most numerous, cruel and vindictive in their nature, yet they so far respected the courage and bravery of the Omahas that they never inaugurated a fight unless they, the Sioux, were vastly superior in numbers or had a chance to take the Omahas by surprise. It was on an occasion of one of those dastardly surprises that Logan Fontenelle lost his life.

In June, 1855, while he, with his tribe, were engaged in their usual summer hunt, and had surrounded a herd of buffalo, the Sioux came dashing down upon them in force and the buffalo chase was turned into a battle and at every attempt of the Omahas to get buffalo they were charged upon by the Sioux. Finding it useless to attempt to hunt, the Omahas started toward their reservation. After three days travel, they espied a herd

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This was undoubtedly the first time that the Episcopal service was ever used at a funeral in Nebraska and this was at Bellevue. It is impossible, probably, to determine the exact location of Logan's death, but from the best data that I have been able to procure I am firmly convinced that it was on or near the Loup, in the northern part of Sherman county. Thus perished a true, honorable and brave man and a warm and firm friend of the whites.

Some time after the treaty of 1854 the Omahas left Bellevue

and vicinity and went to their reservation, which they still occupy. Bands of them made yearly excursions to this place until about the year 1883,,to visit the graves of their dead who had been buried here on the highest points of the bluffs, where, in many places may still be found traces of their burials. But the burial ground most sacred to them was the high hill about a half mile west of the depot, known as Elk Hill, so called from the fact that on its summit reposed the remains of a former noted and beloved chief of their tribe, Big Elk. Up to 1883, when the college was located on that summit, the top graded down and the bones of those buried there removed, they made annual pilgrimages to his tomb and performed their orgies with cries that could be heard for some distance. But that hill has now become sacred to another race, whose feet climb it in search of knowledge to guide the living, instead of performing orgies over the moldering remains of the departed.

John Q. Goss

Bellevue, Neb., March 28.

#### MORE ABOUT LOGAN FONTENELLE.

Newberg, Ore., Nov. 25. - To the Editor of The Bee: In last week's issue of that excellent paper, the Blair Enterprise, was printed an article relative to Logan Fontenelle of a belittling character and purporting to be based upon the "records" of the Nebraska Historical society. It says he was the son of a French trader and an Omaha woman; that he never was a chief; that he signed his name with a mark; that he was killed while picking blackberries, and that he never was a "hero."

My father, James A. Bell, was one of a committee of about a half dozen members of a company organized in Quincy, Ill., in 1854, for the purpose of locating a colony in the then Territory of Nebraska. They crossed the sparsely settled state of Iowa in a wagon and went to Bellevue, where the Omahas were then located, and had a conference with Logan Fontenelle, then chief of the Omahas. He went with the party on their trip out into the country, which resulted in their locating the town on the Elkhorn river which they named in his honor and named a stream which ran into the Elkhorn above the site of the new town Logan- also in honor of the head of the Omaha Indians.

The exploring party returned to Quincy full of praise of the character of Logan Fontenelle as they had learned it during a week or ten days in his company. One incident of this experience was a

feast which he gave the party at Bellevue. The following summer the Omahas sent a hunting party out west and signs of the presence of Sioux were discovered on Beaver creek (if I am not mistaken as to the name), a stream which runs into the Loup fork of the Platte about where the town of Genoa is now located. Fontenelle told his companions to make their escape while he would mislead the party of Sioux and delay them somewhat, confident that with his swift horse he also could escape after allowing the other Indians time to get away. Fontenelle's plan succeeded in respect to the escape of the others of his party, but he was killed after he had killed several Sioux.

The story drifted back to Quincy and one of the members of the party that had made the trip to Nebraska the year previous wrote a poem, setting out the facts in the case, which was printed in the Quincy Whig. I was a little fellow then, but I remember distinctly the printing of this story of the death of Logan Fontenelle and of the high praise my father gave Fontenelle. I do not know just what would, in the mind of the person who furnished the "records" referred to in the Historical society archives, constitute an act of heroism if this deed of Logan Fontenelle does not fill the bill completely and overflowing.

The body of Fontenelle was recovered and taken back to Bellevue, where the ceremony of burial was of the most impressive character as described in a history of Sarpy county published many years ago by Stephen D. Bangs. It is a long time since I read it, but I remember one incident was of a white woman turning upon Stephen Decatur in great wrath because he, who lacked a whole lot of being a churchman, read over the grave the burial service of the Episcopal church. She considered it a desecration for him to read it.

The "records" referred to, it appears, say that Fontenelle was not a scion of a noble family of France. The Fontenelle family has been distinguished in France for many, many years, and the father of Logan and Henry Fontenelle belonged to that family.

The selection of the name Fontenelle in christening what is said to be one of the finest hotels in the middle west was a credit to those responsible therefor, and in view of the exact facts relative to the life and death of Logan Fontenelle, regardless of what the "records" of the Historical society of Nebraska have to say on the subject, they can always look upon the name and the portrait, which I understands ornaments the hotel, with satisfaction and pleasure. To me it is a matter of gratification that the name is properly spelled "Fontenelle" and not "Fontanelle." Some of the most vivid recollections

of my boyhood are associated with the name and with the personal acquaintance I then had with many of the Omaha Indians.

JOHN T. BELL.



-1-

NEBRASKA STATE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Some additional data concerning the Fontenelle family has recently come to light, and as it is impossible to verify much of the information gained concerning the French and Indian families of fur trading days we give here these later statements for what they are worth and in the hope that they may aid in eventually discovering the true history of the Fontenelle family, which is so closely interwoven with the earliest history of the Nebraska country. It is said that Lucien<sup>l</sup> Fontenelle was left with his sister, Amelia, upon the death of their father, to be reared by their aunt, Mme. Merlier, of New Orleans. Amelia married a Judge Lockett, who became prominent in the history of the southern city. Lucien<sup>l</sup> was placed in a banking house when about sixteen years old, but ran away and was not heard from for twenty years. He was married at Bellevue, by Father DeSmet, to Me-um-ba-ne, "The Sun," daughter of a chief of the Omahas. Of his children Tecumseh, Henry and Sarah were sent, after his death to *the* Shawnee Indian Mission school near Kansas City, where they stayed about two years. Here Henry, after an altercation with a fellow pupil, was punished by the teacher, and ran away to Kansas City to the home of Major Andrew Drips, who had been his father's partner in the fur trade. Here he remained two years, and learned the carpenter's trade. One day Mrs. Chouteau, of the well known St. Louis family, to whose daughter it was said Lucien<sup>l</sup> Fontenelle had been engaged at one time, saw Henry and told him that his brother, Logan, would soon return from St. Louis on the St. Ange. Henry joined him upon his return, and went to Bellevue, where he was employed by Peter A. Sarpy in the ferrying business. At Bellevue he married his wife, Emile, at the home of Samuel Allis, the missionary. Emile's mother was the

- 2 -

NEBRASKA STATE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

sister of White Man, a chief of the Skidi band, of the Pawnee Indians. Her father was a white man. When about seven years old Emile's mother took her to a Mrs. Mather, the government farmer at the mission, and ~~asked~~<sup>asked</sup> that she be educated among the whites, for being a twin she was thought to be especially favored of God. A grandson of Amelia Fontenelle Lockett married Henry's daughter, Emile, who later died of consumption. Only two children of Henry, and the only ones bearing the name Fontenelle, are living. The great-grandfather of Henry Fontenelle was the Marquis de Fontenelle, and his cousins, the Merliers of Havre, France, are the possessors of fine estates and belong to the nobility.

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## The True Logan Fontenelle

Recently the metropolitan papers have given us accounts of the presentation of a portrait and the placing of a tablet to the memory of Logan Fontenelle in the Fontenelle Hotel in Omaha. The spirit which prompts the commemoration of historic persons and events is commendable. But this praiseworthy spirit should be governed by intelligence and discrimination to properly set forth the facts concerning the person or event to be commemorated. The posthumous honor of an historical personage is not enhanced but rather suffers detraction by inaccurate or wholly incorrect statements of fact.

It is unfortunate that such incorrect statements are put forth by those who seek to commemorate the name of the person under present consideration. Logan Fontenelle was a French half-breed, the son of a woman of the Omaha tribe and Lucien Fontenelle, a Frenchman engaged in the fur trade. It was the policy of the fur companies to attach the Indians to their interests by their employees having wives in each tribe with which they sustained trade relations. So the name of an early fur trader may now be found borne by his descendants in each of several tribes which were formerly tributary to trading posts on the Missouri River. For instance the name of Pappan (Pepin) is now found in the Ponka, the Omaha and the Pawnee tribes, these families being descendants respectively of the Ponka, Omaha and Pawnee wives of a French fur trader named Pepin.

Logan Fontenelle is of considerable historical importance for his position as a go-between for the two races, for in 1854 when some of

the chiefs of the Omaha tribe went to Washington to make the treaty of cession of their lands to the United States government they took Logan Fontenelle with them as an interpreter. It appears that Louis Sanssouci was the official government interpreter at that time, but the chiefs took Logan Fontenelle along with them as their interpreter.

It is a pity that those who are disposed to commemorate the name of Logan Fontenelle entirely ignore the real service he did perform as an interpreter in the negotiation of the notable treaty of 1854 by which the United States acquired all of that part of what is now Nebraska extending from the Missouri River to the Sand Hills and from the Niobrara to the Platte. This service is ignored by those who desire to do works of commemoration to his name, while they make assertion of a work and a place for him which in fact he did not hold. Members of the Omaha tribe who were contemporaries of Logan Fontenelle, and familiarly acquainted with him, say that he never was a chief. They have heard that it is reported generally that he was a chief but they say the report is not true and they can not account for the story current among white people. And this which is said at the present day by old people of the tribe is in accordance with accounts left on record by other contemporaries of his who have died years ago.

In Contributions to North American Ethnology, vol. 6, p. 458, there is a narrative by Two Crows of a war expedition in which he took part against the Yankton-Dakota in 1854. In this narrative he refers to the departure of some of the chiefs to Washington "to see land." It is there stated that Louis Sanssouci and Logan Fontenelle went along as interpreters. In the same volume there is a narrative, told by John

NEBRASKA STATE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

26  
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78  
26  
338



Big-Elk, relating an attack on the Omaha in 1855 by the Dakota. This attack was made on the Omaha near Beaver Creek north of the Loup River during the summer buffalo hunt of that year. John Big-Elk was an elder in the Presbyterian Mission Church of the Omaha. He was a nephew of the Big Elk mentioned by Long and other explorers and early travelers. Near the end of John Big-Elk's narrative he refers to the death of Logan Fontenelle in that attack. This will be found at page 464. In reference to the death of Logan Fontenelle Big Elk there says: "They (the Dakota) killed the white man, the interpreter, who was with us."

In United States Statutes at Large, vol. 10, the following names appear as signers of the treaty: Logan Fontenelle, Joseph La Flesche, Standing Hawk, Little Chief, Village Maker, Noise, and Yellow Smoke. In the account of that instrument there given these seven are referred to as "Omaha Chiefs." Recently I asked old men of the Omaha tribe to name the chiefs who went to Washington in 1854 to make the treaty. In answer they named the following: Joseph La Flesche, Standing Hawk, Little Chief, Two Grizzly Bears, Yellow Smoke, Village Maker and Noise. It will be seen that a name appears here which is not mentioned in the Statutes at Large as a delegate, viz., Two Grizzly Bears. The other six names are the same in the account as given by the Indians and as given in the Statutes at Large. In Two Crows' account of his war party in 1854 in Contributions to North American Ethnology, volume 6, p. 458, he mentions Two Grizzly Bears as one of the chiefs about to go to Washington "to sell land." Thus a discrepancy appears between the list of

names as given in the Statutes at Large as signers of the treaty and the list as always given by Omahas of their chiefs who went to Washington "to sell land." Perhaps that discrepancy is explained by the following statements. It is said that when the delegation appeared in Washington, Logan Fontenelle being with them, and not before accounted for to Manypenny, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, he asked who this man was and what he was doing there. Two Grizzly Bears answered for him and said "I brought him here to interpret for me." So the Commissioner was satisfied. This may well be the reason why the name of Logan Fontenelle appears on the treaty instead of the name of Two Grizzly Bears. Thus it would seem that Logan Fontenelle in playing Aaron to Two Grizzly Bears' Moses has had appropriated to himself whatever fame and honor should properly pertain to the latter, while his own proper place and honor have been entirely neglected by those, who in this day purpose to commemorate his public service.

I have stated above that the present living members of the Omaha tribe who by personal knowledge are qualified to answer the question uniformly state that Logan Fontenelle was never a chief. And if one knows anything about the social, political and governmental organization of the Omaha tribe he will see at once on exercising the slightest degree of thought on the matter that it must be true that he could not be a chief. The Omaha tribal organization consisted of two half-tribes and each of these half-tribes comprised five sub-divisions or gentes. Each gens held its own privileges and duties in the tribe. The gentes of one half-tribe shared among them the rituals pertaining to matters connected with the earth and earthy elements, while the gentes of the other half-tribe were the keepers of rituals per-



taining to the sky and the upper world, the winds, clouds, lightning, and all things above the earth's surface. Each gens had its chief and each of the two half-tribes had its head-chief, thus holding the tribe, while fully functioning together, in harmony with the greater and lesser powers of the earth and heaven. For the proper balance and harmony of tribal functions, official place, and the duties thereto pertaining, were constitutionally hereditary. Man and wife were never of the same gens and children belonged to the gens of the father. Sons succeeded to the station and duties of their fathers. Hence it plainly follows that the children of a white man have no proper place in the tribe. They stand outside the scheme of things in the tribal constitution. Logan Fontenelle was a half-breed, the son of a white man. That is the reason Two Crows, in the quotation cited above, refers to him as a "white man."

But was there no way by which a white man or a white man's half-breed son could attain to a place under the tribal constitution? Yes, there was a way; that was by adoption. Under the Omaha law a son by adoption acquired all the privileges, duties and responsibilities of a son by generation. Captives from other tribes at war were many times adopted to take the place of sons lost by death. Other considerations, as affection or expediency, sometimes procured adoption. But Logan Fontenelle was never adopted into any Omaha family. All his life he remained the son of his father, Lucien Fontenelle, a Frenchman. And no one claims that he ever was counted out of his father's family.

But there is one notable instance of the adoption of a half-breed into the status of a member of a gens of the Omaha tribe with all the



rights and duties thereto pertaining. That was the case of Joseph La Flesche. He was a Ponka half-breed, the son of a Frenchman by the name of Joseph La Flesche who married into the Ponka tribe where he was stationed in the fur-trade. This Ponka half-breed, Joseph La Flesche, was adopted by Big Elk, chief of the Wezhinshte gens of the Omaha tribe. This Big Elk was the one who was mentioned by Long and other travelers. The adoption of the young Joseph La Flesche by Big Elk gave him by Omaha law a status such as he would have had if he had been born in that family, and in the course of time and by due process the Omaha tribal law, the young Joseph La Flesche, after the death of his adopted father, Big Elk, succeeded to his place as chief of the Wezhinshte gens.

But it is not claimed, nor would it be true to say, that such a process was followed in the case of Logan Fontenelle. He always remained in the position of a son of his own father, a white man.

But it is sufficient to give to Logan Fontenelle the proper honor due him for his service as an intermediary for both races whose blood flowed in his veins. It is much better to commemorate his name for the important place which was his than to try to build up a fictitious place which can not be logically or historically maintained.

Melvin R. Gilmore.

THE QUESTION OF THE  
LOCATION OF LOGAN FONTENELLE'S GRAVE.

"Founders and Patriots of Nebraska." Page 115. From the letter of Henry Fontenelle's date Sept. 2, 1894.

In August 1894, "I was in Bellevue to visit my ~~in~~ invalid sister Susan (Neal) about a month ago, while in company with Mr. Patrick (Attorney) Louis Neal and Elton Becksted went in search of Logan's grave but failed to find it on account of the growth of weeds, bushes and trees."

Page 120--"Buried at midnight beside his father. Stephen Deetar read the Episcopal Services with father DeSmét."-----  
The grave has been kept a secret but Isaac Sadler D.A.R set up a marker near the spot on the Missouri where Logan Fontenelle lies buried.

Page 114. "My father buried at Bellevue, Logan by the side of his grave. Albert died in Bellevue and was buried by the side of his mother on the brow of the bluff opposite to where Elton Becksted now lives."

Nebraska Historical --Vol 11--Page 298: "In the middle of <sup>summer</sup> the ~~of~~ 1855 a procession might have been seen wending its way toward the old home of Logan Fontenelle on the Bluffs overlooking the Missouri river and above the stone quarries at Bellevue.---- His remains taken to the house he had left a short time before."

Page 299 "It was the wish of Col Sarpy to have him interred on the bluffs fronting the house in which he had lived."

JOURNAL OF RUDOLPH KURZ--Page 60--May 14, 1851:

"In Belle Vue---- six log houses adjoining the plantations, where half-breeds lived, and the remains (ruin it ~~cannot~~ be ~~##~~ cannot be called) of Fontenelle's earlier trading post, a picture of which one may see in Neu Wied's Atlas."

Note--Locate Neu Wied's Atlas and see what it looks like.

Murray, Nebr. Nov. 30, 1945.

Dear Professor Sellers:

The above are some notes on the location of Logan Fontenelle's grave. "On the bluffs would hardly be where we were and at the D.A.R. marker. "Opposite where Elton Becksted now lives." There should be persons living who knew where Becksted lived in 1894 or the deed records at the county seat might give location "--on the bluff fronting the house in which he lived." This would possibly mean east and toward the river.

Study this over and some time we will locate it.

Yours sincerely

G. H. Gilman



Murray, Nebr. Nov. 20, 1945.

Prof. J.L. Sellers,  
Historical Society,  
Capitol Bldg. Lincoln, Nebr.

Dear Mr. Sellers:

Your letter received regarding historical places in the vicinity of Bellevue, Nebraska and herewith present you with a map showing the location of Logan Fontenelle's grave which is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile north of the town of Bellevue and just west of railroad.

The D.A.R. have a marker near the grave. Dr. W.H. Betze of Bellevue gives the location of the grave 11 feet northeast of the old Fontenelle trading post which would be about 60 feet northeast of the D.A.R. marker.

I have suggested that the graves be definitely located which can be done with a prospect auger. His father and other members of the family are buried here.

The care taker of Fontenelle Park could show Mr. Leermakers the grave very easily. I have visited this place several times.

Plate 20 in the "JOURNAL OF RUDOLPH FRIEDERICH KURZ" give a view of Sarpy's Trading Post in Bellevue--this is Bulletin 115 of Smithsonian Bureau of American Ethnology.

Will try and find data regarding the Indian Agency location.

Yes, we had a fine time at the Deep Site and made several new locations of house sites. Have over 20 located in this deep ravine.

Still working on the Lewis and Clark Trail with County Supt. Behrnes.

Yours sincerely

*G. H. Gilman*

W.W.Winn.

416 Lagunitas Avenue, Oakland 10, California,  
May 11, 1955.

Nebraska Historical Society,  
Lincoln, Nebraska,  
Attention Mr. Donald Danker,  
Archivist.

Gentlemen: I thank you for your answer to my letter of March 15, 1955, requesting information concerning Lucien Fontenelle.

My wife's second great grandfather, Jean Mercier, in his will, executed in New Orleans in 1814 (I have a photostat copy and a translation from the French- it was quite a historical document in some respects) refers to his wife (his third; he was then eighty years old), Mlle. Gracieuse de Fontenelle, and leaves a legacy to her nephew, Lucien de Fontenelle and another to her niece, Lucien's sister Amelie de Fontenelle, saying both of them were actually raised in his home. Their aunt was evidently wealthy in her own right.

My wife was descended from Jean Mercier by his second wife, so there is no blood connection between her family and the de Fontenelles. However, Lucien is an interesting figure for us, as your article seems to indicate plainly that he was the man mentioned in Jean Mercier's will.

I thank you again for your courtesy.

Yours sincerely

  
William W. Winn.

Father Augustin C  
Ward, S. J.  
Archivist  
Saint Mary's College  
Saint Marys, Kansas

Information from St. Mary's College, St. Marys, Kansas.  
Baptismal Records from Father Hoecken Book (D-2)

Dec. 21, 1848 - Marie Fontenelle--Father, Logan Fontenelle  
Mother, Omaha  
Sponsor, Brugiere

Dec. 26, 1850 - Susanne Fontenelle- Father, Logan Fontenelle  
Mother, Omaha  
Sponsor, Brugiere

Dec. 25, 1850 - Louise Paul--Father, Edward Paul  
Mother, Marie Barada  
Sponsor, Michel Thebout

Dec. 27, 1850 - Louis LaFleche---Father, Joseph LaFleche  
Mother, Omaha  
Sponsor, Brugiere

He has a complete  
card file on Indian  
boys who have attended  
his school

Kickapoo and Council Bluffs Register---both Father Hoecken & Father DeSmet used this book.

Sept. 25, 1838 - Maria Deroin--Father, Joseph Deroin  
Mother, Sciouse (Sioux)  
by Father DeSmet

Sept. 9, 1839 - Franciscas LaFleche--Father-LaFleche  
Mother, Omaha  
Sponsor, Henry Fontenelle  
by Father DeSmet

Sept. 9, 1839 - Joesette LaFleche--Father, LaFleche  
Mother, Omaha  
Sponsor, La Flamboise  
By Father DeSmet

✓ June 9, 1839 - Petrus(Logan) Fontenelle---Father, Fontenelle  
Albertus (Albert) Mother, Omaha  
Felix (Tecuaseh) Sponsor, Joannes Gay  
Henryus (Henry)  
Joesphine all baptised by Father DeSmet page 33

July 2, 1839 - Johannes Baptista De Roin---Father, De Roin  
& Mother, Sioux  
Marguerita Sponsor, Logan Fontenelle by F. DeSmet

Mar. 6, 1840 - Magdalena---Father, Paul Jarvo  
Mother, Angel-Chewe!  
Sponsor, Joseph La Flamboise  
Theresa

July 29, 1940 - Theresa Loise ---Father, Loise  
Mother, Otoa  
Sponsor, Logan Fontenelle

Jan. 17, 1840--Fontenelle avec Marie Hemo (Omaha)

Lucian Fontenelle m. Bright Sun

Susan Fontenelle m. Louis Neals

May Neals m. James Lambert

Guy Lambert m.

Lambert  
Clement m. Sarah Beck-  
stead  
James Lambert m. May Neals  
Guy Lambert m.

Robert Lambert

# Fontenelle



The National Society of Colonial Dames Resident in the State of Nebraska extends a warm welcome to the members from our sister Societies attending the 2008 Region I Conference.

In honor of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Nebraska Society in April of 1908, we have re-issued this booklet which commemorates the presentation of William Andrew Mackay's portrait of Logan Fontenelle, the last ruling chief of the Omaha Indian tribe, to the Fontenelle Hotel on March 6, 1916. Sadly, the summer of 1982 marked the demise of the hotel, which was a casualty of urban redevelopment.

The painting now resides in Lincoln at the Nebraska State Historical Society Museum. We hope that you enjoy reading about the birth of our state and also about Logan Fontenelle, the august and legendary tribal chieftain of the Omaha tribe, for which our city is named.

**Jennifer S. Bridges Hicks**  
Archives Chairman and  
Great Granddaughter of  
Harriet F.W. Smith,  
Founder and First President of  
the Nebraska Society of  
Colonial Dames



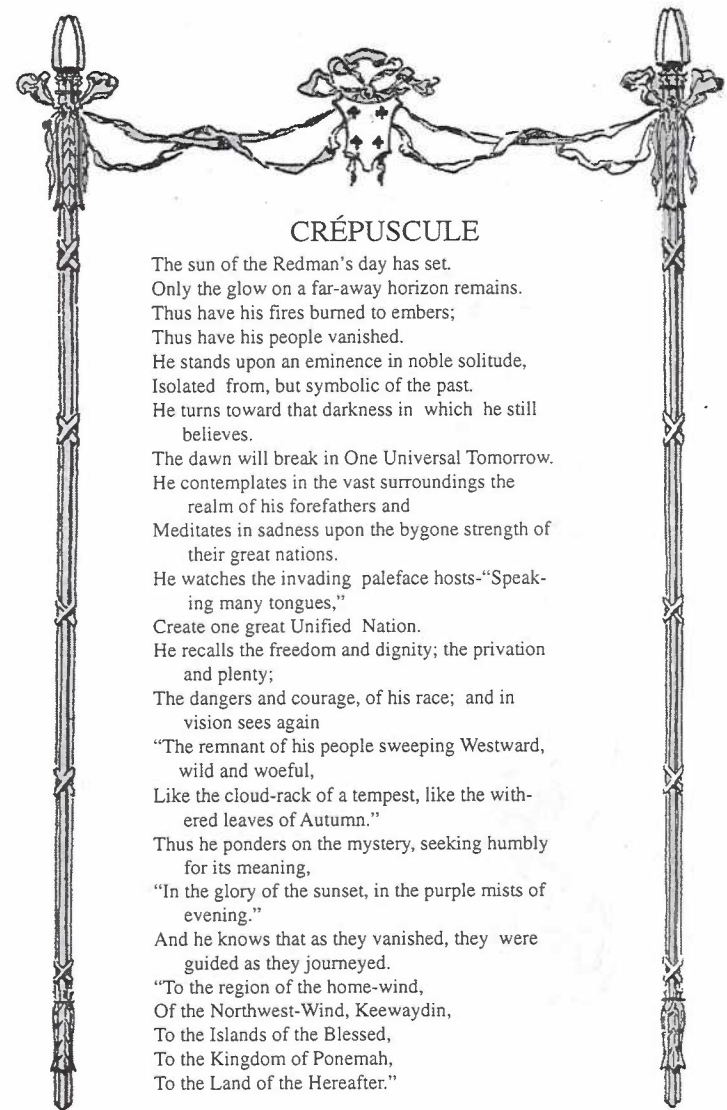
THE COLONIAL DAMES OF AMERICA  
RESIDENT IN  
THE STATE OF NEBRASKA  
PRESENT THIS BRIEF SKETCH OF  
LOGAN FONTENELLE  
THE LAST RULING CHIEF  
OF THE OMAHAS

*IN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.*

*The Society desires to acknowledge its indebtedness to Mr. Thomas R. Kimball, F.A.I.A., for his helpful advice so frequently sought and so generously given; for his beautiful design of the frame for the Fontenelle Portrait and for his kindness in contributing the drawings which adorn this booklet.*

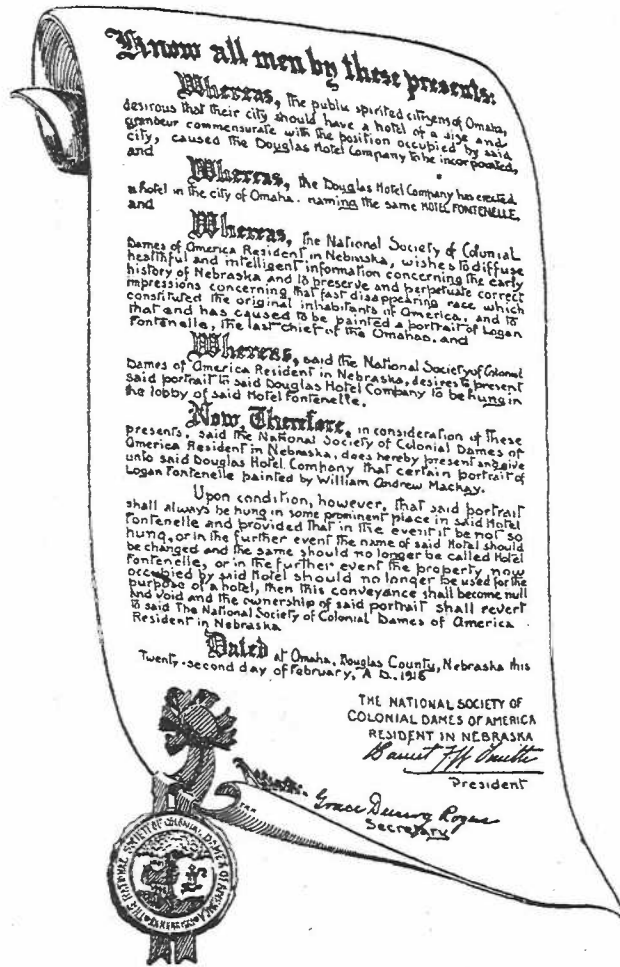
*The Society desires to express its appreciation for the scholarly preparation of the Fontenelle Portrait Deed of Gift, and for valuable legal advice always willingly and liberally contributed by Mr. Edgar M. Morsman, Jr.*

“Should you ask me, whence these stories?  
Whence these legends and traditions,  
With the odors of the forest,  
With the dew and damp of meadows,  
With the curling smoke of wigwams,  
With the rushing of great rivers,  
With their frequent repetitions,  
And their wild reverberations,  
As of thunder in the mountains?  
I should answer, I should tell you,  
‘From the forests and the prairies.’ ”



### CRÉPUSCULE

The sun of the Redman's day has set.  
Only the glow on a far-away horizon remains.  
Thus have his fires burned to embers;  
Thus have his people vanished.  
He stands upon an eminence in noble solitude,  
Isolated from, but symbolic of the past.  
He turns toward that darkness in which he still  
believes.  
The dawn will break in One Universal Tomorrow.  
He contemplates in the vast surroundings the  
realm of his forefathers and  
Meditates in sadness upon the bygone strength of  
their great nations.  
He watches the invading paleface hosts—"Speak-  
ing many tongues,"  
Create one great Unified Nation.  
He recalls the freedom and dignity; the privation  
and plenty;  
The dangers and courage, of his race; and in  
vision sees again  
"The remnant of his people sweeping Westward,  
wild and woeful,  
Like the cloud-rack of a tempest, like the with-  
ered leaves of Autumn."  
Thus he ponders on the mystery, seeking humbly  
for its meaning,  
"In the glory of the sunset, in the purple mists of  
evening."  
And he knows that as they vanished, they were  
guided as they journeyed.  
"To the region of the home-wind,  
Of the Northwest-Wind, Keewaydin,  
To the Islands of the Blessed,  
To the Kingdom of Ponemah,  
To the Land of the Hereafter."



## THE PAINTING OF THE PORTRAIT

"At the annual meeting of the Society of Colonial Dames Resident in Nebraska, held May the twenty-eighth, Nineteen hundred and thirteen, at the residence of the President, Mrs. Arthur Crittenden Smith, it was suggested that inasmuch as the new hotel, built by the citizens of Omaha, was to be given the name, 'Fontenelle,' it would be fitting that a portrait of the man whose name it bore, should adorn some chosen space in the new structure, and that the Society should offer the hotel such a portrait, painted under suitable direction, as a gift from the Colonial Dames of Nebraska. The suggestion was received with enthusiasm and the corresponding secretary was authorized to present the matter to Mr. Gurdon W. Wattles, President of the Douglas Hotel Company, and to Mr. W. R. Burbank, President of the Leasing Company, and to ascertain if they would approve such a proceeding."

(taken from the records of the Historian, Mrs. Charles M. Wilhelm.)

In accordance with these resolutions, the Corresponding Secretary sent the following letter to Mr. Wattles:

Mr. Gurdon W. Wattles,  
President Board of Directors,  
Douglas Hotel Company,  
Omaha, Nebraska.

My dear Mr. Wattles:

That I may make a more formal announcement of the desire of the Nebraska Society of the Colonial Dames, to present to the Fontenelle Hotel a portrait of the picturesque and locally historical personage for whom the beautiful building is named. I repeat in writing those enquiries I made in the name of the Society the night of the banquet. And further, to have from your hand the words that came so directly and graciously from your heart, in expressing your kindly acceptance of our offer, in order to place them among our treasured records.

In the conception, and construction of the palatial build-

ing now gracing our largest city--and in which we have an united pride--there has been from the first, a desire in our Society, to offer it some testimonial of appreciation and admiration. In the selection of the name "Fontenelle" for the hotel, there was an added enthusiasm, inspiring the thought now materialized in the offer to place before the public, in the hotel, a likeness of the features and figure of the man whose character is so exquisitely typified in the building itself. There is also the desire to pay a tribute to the Indians' life; the Pioneers' service--giving our people a larger conception of, and a higher reverence for, those who "blazed the trail" toward that civilization and those opportunities, which this hotel represents, --and to those men who provided it, and who in their public spirited labors have widened the Trail into a beautiful Highway for many to travel--not in file, but abreast.

In highest esteem,  
Very Faithfully yours,  
HORTENSE FERGUSON CHILDS,  
Corresponding Secretary.

Mr. Wattles cordially replied as follows:

Mrs. Lowrie Childs,  
Corresponding Secretary,  
Colonial Dames of Nebraska  
Omaha, Nebraska.

My dear Mrs. Childs:

I am very sure that the Douglas Hotel Company and the Managers of the Hotel Fontenelle will be glad to receive, and install the painting of Fontenelle which your Society proposes to give in recognition of the monument we have erected in the building of the new hotel in Omaha.

Very truly yours,  
G.W. WATTLES,  
President Douglas Hotel Company.

In response to the letter of enquiry addressed to Mr. W. R.

Burbank, the following gracious reply was received:

Mrs. Lowrie Childs,  
Corresponding Secretary,  
Colonial Dames of Nebraska  
Omaha, Nebraska.

My dear Mrs. Childs:

I beg to acknowledge your esteemed favor of the 8th inst., containing a most flattering offer from the Colonial Dames to provide the new Hotel with a portrait of the Omaha chief, Logal Fontenelle. I am much impressed with the generosity and thoughtfulness of the offer, and in behalf of this Company, wish to express great pleasure in sending an acceptance of so fitting a gift. The portrait may be hung for all time in an appropriate space that you yourselves may choose. I am gratified that an acquisition of so much historical worth and artistic possibilities will be executed under the guidance of so worthy and well qualified a body as your Society. I will be pleased to confer with you or the ladies of the Society, at your convenience at any time when I am in the city.

Again thanking you, I am,

Sincerely,  
W.R.

BURBANK.

"In November, Nineteen hundred and fourteen, a committee, consisting of Mrs. John C. Cowin, Mrs. Myron Learned and Mrs. Lowrie Childs, Chairman, was appointed and given full authority to take the preliminary steps toward having the portrait painted. It immediately procured all the information possible--local, historical, lineal,--concerning Logan Fontenelle, that would in any way assist the artist. Satisfied only with the effort to obtain the best advice, the committee wrote to prominent artists and art critics, and to other chapters of the Colonial Dames Society which had successfully undertaken similar work. One letter was addressed to the eminent portrait painter, Miss Cecilia Beaux, telling her of the plan, asking

her counsel and assuring her of the Society's ambition to procure the best portrait possible within its means. Miss Beaux replied with an eagerly interested request for definite information regarding the character of the portrait required--even suggesting the possibility that she might wish to paint it herself, but assuring the Committee that in any event she would recommend an artist well qualified for the task. This letter brought the most unexpected and joyous hope to the Society."

(From the records of the Historian, Mrs. Charles M. Wilhelm.)

All data, photographs, and sketches obtainable were sent to Miss Beaux, and the following letter was received in reply:

My dear Mrs. Childs:

First, let me apologize for the long delay and seeming neglect in regard to the Fontenelle portrait. It has really been a subject of much thought and care to me, and not until now have I been really ready to write finally and fully about it. All the data, prints, etc., have come.

I hope you will not be very much disappointed when I tell you that I have been obliged to abandon the idea of doing the work myself. I, at first, supposed that it was to be a head only. A full length figure in Indian costume is more than I can undertake, interesting as it might be. When I had definitely decided this, I went to work, as you asked me, to suggest some one who could and would do it--to find a suitable artist. I have consulted Mr. Arthur Hoerber, an artist, and one of our foremost *art critics*, and after much consideration we have agreed to propose an artist who is in every way fitted for the work. His name is William Andrew Mackay.

Mr. Mackay is a thoroughly well trained artist, and also perfectly reliable and capable, has painted many Indian pictures and decorations, assisting the late F.D. Millet in his work, and the architect Cass Gilbert in the State Capitol at St. Paul. What is still more interesting, Mr. Mackay's father lived in Omaha and

knew Logan Fontenelle. He will tell you further of this, for I trust that you will be satisfied to give him the commission, and will communicate your desire to him personally.

When I hear from you I will turn over all the material to him. I consider that he will make a better success of this work than I should, as it would have been quite a new kind of venture to me. The times are so hard now for artists that men who would usually be able to command high prices for their work are now willing to accept modest commissions. Mr. Hoerber writes: "Mr. Mackay is just the person for the work; indeed, I believe the Committee would be most fortunate to get him."

With kindest regards,

Most sincerely yours,

CECILIA BEAUX

This letter brought keen disappointment, but was also the introduction to one who has in every way fulfilled the prophecy of Miss Beaux and Mr. Hoerber. Mr. William Andrew Mackay entered into the spirit of the work with all the ardor the Committee could possibly desire. The added touch of personal interest brought to the work through the singular coincidence of Mr. Mackay's father's acquaintance with Fontenelle is expressed in the following extracts from his letters:

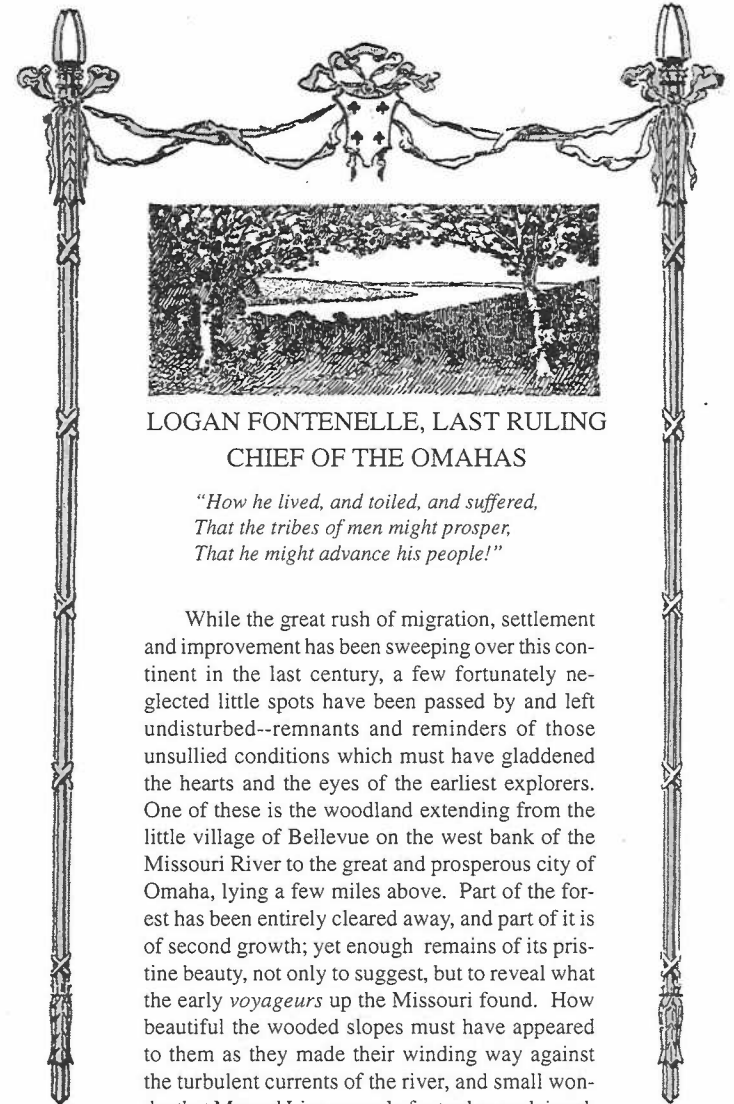
"My father was giving a series of readings in 1855 and was in Omaha for some time. While there he saw Fontenelle on many occasions. It seems strange that a story, told so often to us (my brothers and myself), should perhaps become a real event in my life; but, believe me, the very mystery of it will guide and control my conception of our famous chief. Your description of Fontenelle is the same that my father gives: The face was strong--both French and Indian ancestry being apparent."

A pleasant correspondence, giving evidence of Mr. Mackay's enthusiasm and interest, marked the course of the

painting and kept the Society in close touch with its progress, until the delivery of the picture, January thirty-first, Nineteen hundred sixteen. The Society feels that it has enjoyed a special privilege in having obtained through the gracious recommendation of Miss Beaux the enthusiastic and able services of Mr. William Andrew Mackay. A letter from Mr. Mackay, which accompanied the delivery of the portrait, contained the following delightful words of approval:

"Just before shipping the canvas I had my father look at it again. He told me that the coloring and features were those of Fontenelle and that the position carried with it the same dignity that marked our Indian hero in life."

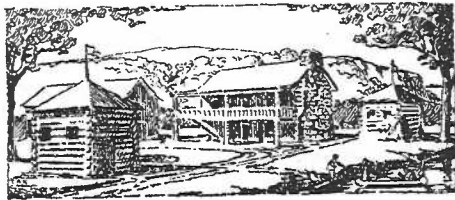
The frame for the portrait was designed by Mr. Thomas R. Kimball, F.A.I.A. It is composed of an inner and outer frame of beautiful design and exquisite workmanship. The symbolism of its decoration, which represents the lineage of the great chieftain, is expressed in the Indian spears, spearheads and feathers, combined with a French arrangement and the Fontenelle coat of arms.



LOGAN FONTENELLE, LAST RULING  
CHIEF OF THE OMAHAS

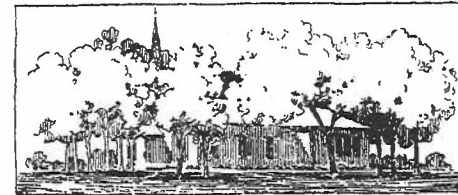
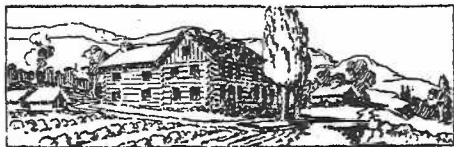
*"How he lived, and toiled, and suffered,  
That the tribes of men might prosper,  
That he might advance his people!"*

While the great rush of migration, settlement and improvement has been sweeping over this continent in the last century, a few fortunately neglected little spots have been passed by and left undisturbed--remnants and reminders of those unsullied conditions which must have gladdened the hearts and the eyes of the earliest explorers. One of these is the woodland extending from the little village of Bellevue on the west bank of the Missouri River to the great and prosperous city of Omaha, lying a few miles above. Part of the forest has been entirely cleared away, and part of it is of second growth; yet enough remains of its pristine beauty, not only to suggest, but to reveal what the early *voyageurs* up the Missouri found. How beautiful the wooded slopes must have appeared to them as they made their winding way against the turbulent currents of the river, and small wonder that Manuel Lisa, an early fur trader, exclaimed,



"La belle vue," and so named the little hamlet that came into existence as the earliest permanent settlement in the State of Nebraska.

But while we consider those places which nature made beautiful, we must likewise consider those events which time has made reverent. The present peaceful little town of Bellevue, with its New England-like aspect, was the theatre of the early drama of the State. Here, immediately following French sovereignty, the fur traders established a trading post and built their block houses for protection; here, on the twenty-second of July, Eighteen hundred and four, Lewis and Clark encamped while on their way to explore the vast territory, then recently purchased from France by the United States; here, were established the first mission, the first school and the first church in the State; and here, assembled that strange, picturesque and mixed throng of trappers, traders, sol-



diers, explorers, missionaries and settlers which clustered about the early frontier towns.

As one stands today upon the hillside above the village, where a college has been built, and looks southward toward the confluence of the waters of the Platte and the Missouri, one feels that time must have ceased its flight; that over the wide vale with its winding and merging water courses and its encircling hills, the same light, the same green, blue, and purple distances, and the same pure air and sunshine delight the heart as on that long-ago day when the Indians beheld Lewis and Clark's strange craft sailing up the river with its little following flotilla of canoes. It was then nearly two hundred years since the Pilgrims landed on the shores of Plymouth Bay, and this great region was still unexplored and unknown except to a few adventuresome fur traders and the Indians. Since then *only a hundred years* have passed and behold the change! Productive farms







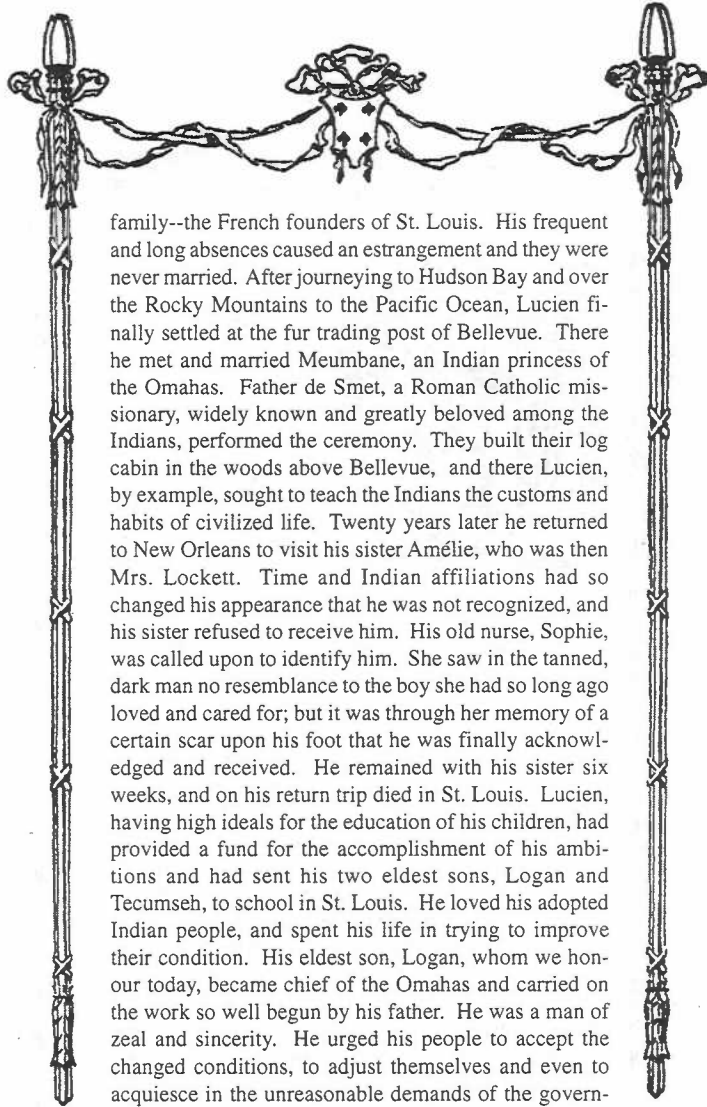
and populous cities cover the land, and the unsettled territory has become a prosperous state. Its history is enriched with the stories and traditions of its early days. Men are now reaching mature life whose parents braved the perils and privations of the pioneer days and whose memories all future genera-

tions must honour. A few years after the Lewis and Clark expedition, and in a springtime when the shade-blossoms spread their white veils through the woodlands along the river, and the violets were carpeting the ground, a little boy of Indian and French parentage was born. His life was to become a notable example of bravery, uprightness and self-sacrifice, and to acquire all the beauty and picturesqueness of an old legend. The historian has no need to embellish it with fictional beauty, but rather to seek a poet's language to tell its truth. His mother was Meumbane, a princess of the Omahas, and his father Lucien Fontenelle, a Frenchman of noble lineage. Years before his paternal grandfather, François Fontenelle, son of a French Marquis, came from France to the old Creole city of New Orleans and established himself with his family on a nearby plantation, close to Pointe à la Hâche. He sent his son Lucien and his daughter Amélie to his sister, Madame Mercier, in New Orle-

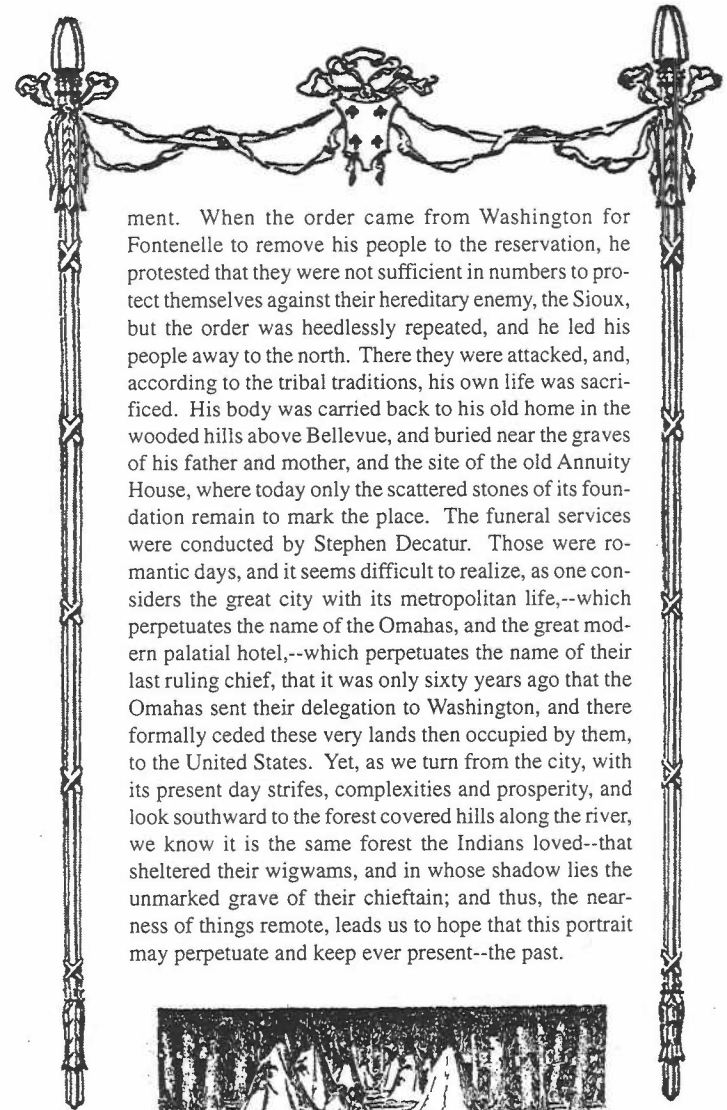


ans, to be educated, and while the children were with their aunt a great tornado swept the coast, and François Fontenelle, his wife and other children perished, and all traces of their plantation home were lost. An old colored nurse who had accompanied Lucien and Amélie to the city, stayed and cared for

them with tender devotion in the home of Madame Mercier. When Lucien reached the age of eighteen he was placed in a banking house, but having a disagreement with his aunt, who was a person of imperious and exacting temper, and who spoke harshly to him, he resolved to go away and to seek his fortune alone in the world. His sister, and the old nurse, Sophie, pleaded with him to stay, but his feelings has been deeply hurt and he packed his small possessions in a little bundle, told his aunt he would never give her cause to speak to him in such a way again, and with his old nurse pleading against his going, all the way to the garden gate, he started for the new French city of St. Louis. There he became a fur trader. We know that many were engaged in this adventurous pursuit, or only need to reread Francis Parkman's books of the Northwest, and Washington Irving's *Åstoria* to remind ourselves. Lucien became engaged to a daughter of the Chouteau



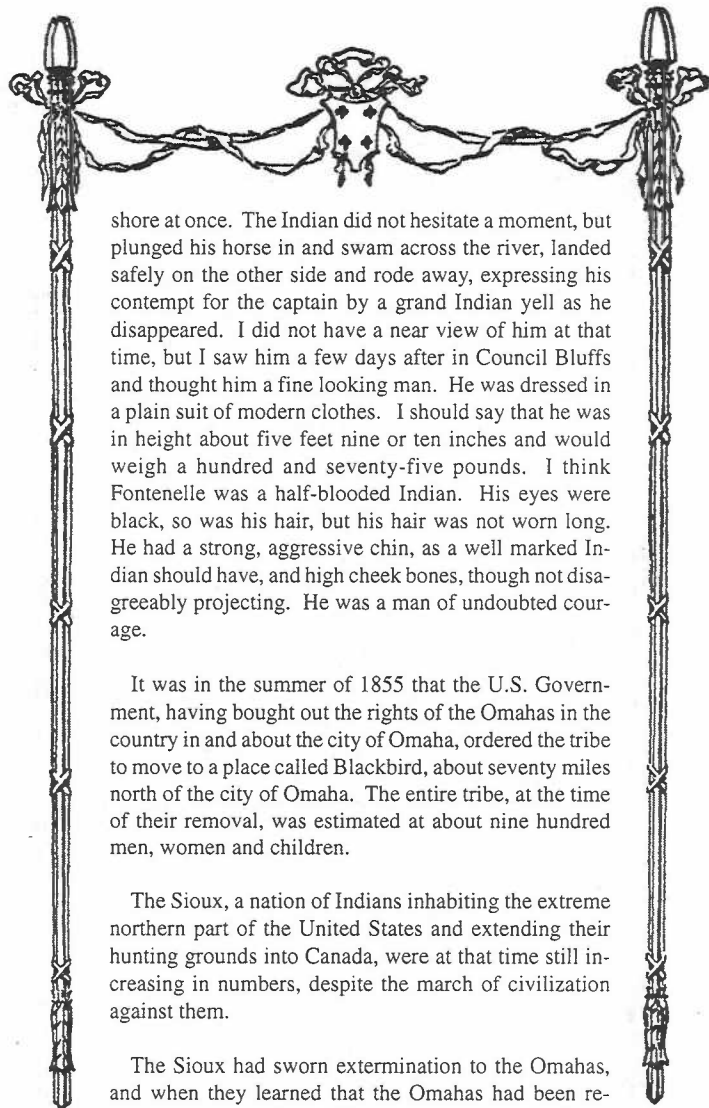
family--the French founders of St. Louis. His frequent and long absences caused an estrangement and they were never married. After journeying to Hudson Bay and over the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, Lucien finally settled at the fur trading post of Bellevue. There he met and married Meumbane, an Indian princess of the Omahas. Father de Smet, a Roman Catholic missionary, widely known and greatly beloved among the Indians, performed the ceremony. They built their log cabin in the woods above Bellevue, and there Lucien, by example, sought to teach the Indians the customs and habits of civilized life. Twenty years later he returned to New Orleans to visit his sister Amélie, who was then Mrs. Lockett. Time and Indian affiliations had so changed his appearance that he was not recognized, and his sister refused to receive him. His old nurse, Sophie, was called upon to identify him. She saw in the tanned, dark man no resemblance to the boy she had so long ago loved and cared for; but it was through her memory of a certain scar upon his foot that he was finally acknowledged and received. He remained with his sister six weeks, and on his return trip died in St. Louis. Lucien, having high ideals for the education of his children, had provided a fund for the accomplishment of his ambitions and had sent his two eldest sons, Logan and Tecumseh, to school in St. Louis. He loved his adopted Indian people, and spent his life in trying to improve their condition. His eldest son, Logan, whom we honour today, became chief of the Omahas and carried on the work so well begun by his father. He was a man of zeal and sincerity. He urged his people to accept the changed conditions, to adjust themselves and even to acquiesce in the unreasonable demands of the govern-



ment. When the order came from Washington for Fontenelle to remove his people to the reservation, he protested that they were not sufficient in numbers to protect themselves against their hereditary enemy, the Sioux, but the order was heedlessly repeated, and he led his people away to the north. There they were attacked, and, according to the tribal traditions, his own life was sacrificed. His body was carried back to his old home in the wooded hills above Bellevue, and buried near the graves of his father and mother, and the site of the old Annuity House, where today only the scattered stones of its foundation remain to mark the place. The funeral services were conducted by Stephen Decatur. Those were romantic days, and it seems difficult to realize, as one considers the great city with its metropolitan life,--which perpetuates the name of the Omahas, and the great modern palatial hotel,--which perpetuates the name of their last ruling chief, that it was only sixty years ago that the Omahas sent their delegation to Washington, and there formally ceded these very lands then occupied by them, to the United States. Yet, as we turn from the city, with its present day strifes, complexities and prosperity, and look southward to the forest covered hills along the river, we know it is the same forest the Indians loved--that sheltered their wigwams, and in whose shadow lies the unmarked grave of their chieftain; and thus, the nearness of things remote, leads us to hope that this portrait may perpetuate and keep ever present--the past.





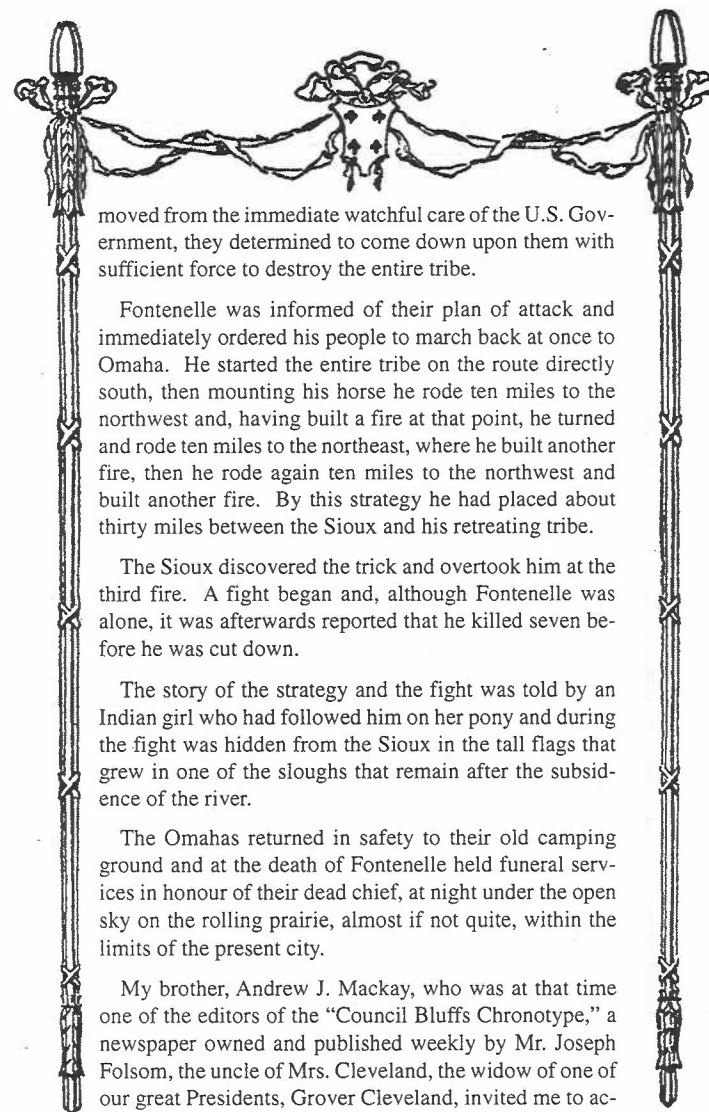


shore at once. The Indian did not hesitate a moment, but plunged his horse in and swam across the river, landed safely on the other side and rode away, expressing his contempt for the captain by a grand Indian yell as he disappeared. I did not have a near view of him at that time, but I saw him a few days after in Council Bluffs and thought him a fine looking man. He was dressed in a plain suit of modern clothes. I should say that he was in height about five feet nine or ten inches and would weigh a hundred and seventy-five pounds. I think Fontenelle was a half-blooded Indian. His eyes were black, so was his hair, but his hair was not worn long. He had a strong, aggressive chin, as a well marked Indian should have, and high cheek bones, though not disagreeably projecting. He was a man of undoubted courage.

It was in the summer of 1855 that the U.S. Government, having bought out the rights of the Omahas in the country in and about the city of Omaha, ordered the tribe to move to a place called Blackbird, about seventy miles north of the city of Omaha. The entire tribe, at the time of their removal, was estimated at about nine hundred men, women and children.

The Sioux, a nation of Indians inhabiting the extreme northern part of the United States and extending their hunting grounds into Canada, were at that time still increasing in numbers, despite the march of civilization against them.

The Sioux had sworn extermination to the Omahas, and when they learned that the Omahas had been re-



moved from the immediate watchful care of the U.S. Government, they determined to come down upon them with sufficient force to destroy the entire tribe.

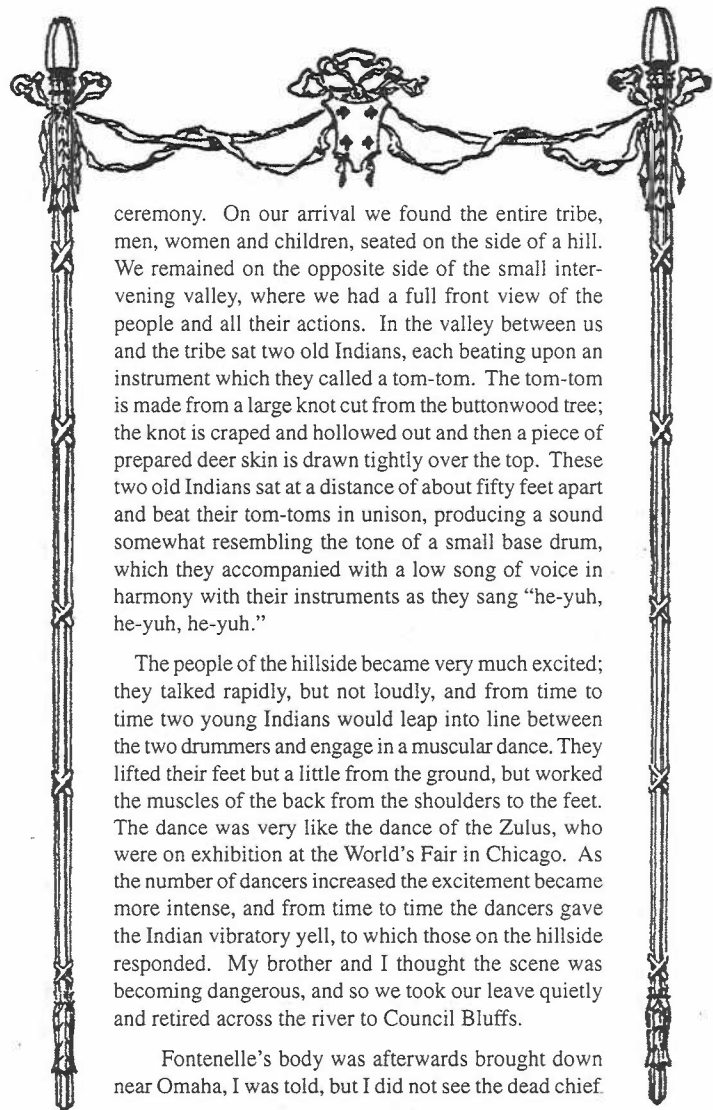
Fontenelle was informed of their plan of attack and immediately ordered his people to march back at once to Omaha. He started the entire tribe on the route directly south, then mounting his horse he rode ten miles to the northwest and, having built a fire at that point, he turned and rode ten miles to the northeast, where he built another fire, then he rode again ten miles to the northwest and built another fire. By this strategy he had placed about thirty miles between the Sioux and his retreating tribe.

The Sioux discovered the trick and overtook him at the third fire. A fight began and, although Fontenelle was alone, it was afterwards reported that he killed seven before he was cut down.

The story of the strategy and the fight was told by an Indian girl who had followed him on her pony and during the fight was hidden from the Sioux in the tall flags that grew in one of the sloughs that remain after the subsidence of the river.

The Omahas returned in safety to their old camping ground and at the death of Fontenelle held funeral services in honour of their dead chief, at night under the open sky on the rolling prairie, almost if not quite, within the limits of the present city.

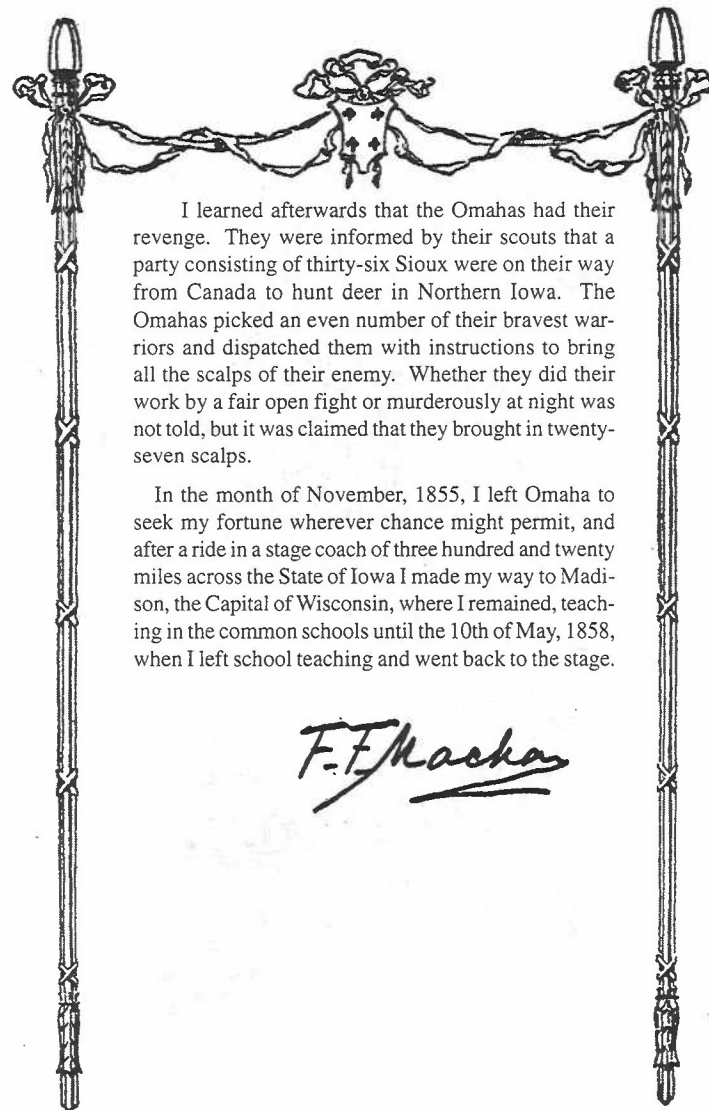
My brother, Andrew J. Mackay, who was at that time one of the editors of the "Council Bluffs Chronotype," a newspaper owned and published weekly by Mr. Joseph Folsom, the uncle of Mrs. Cleveland, the widow of one of our great Presidents, Grover Cleveland, invited me to accompany him as he was going over to take notes of the



ceremony. On our arrival we found the entire tribe, men, women and children, seated on the side of a hill. We remained on the opposite side of the small intervening valley, where we had a full front view of the people and all their actions. In the valley between us and the tribe sat two old Indians, each beating upon an instrument which they called a tom-tom. The tom-tom is made from a large knot cut from the buttonwood tree; the knot is craped and hollowed out and then a piece of prepared deer skin is drawn tightly over the top. These two old Indians sat at a distance of about fifty feet apart and beat their tom-toms in unison, producing a sound somewhat resembling the tone of a small base drum, which they accompanied with a low song of voice in harmony with their instruments as they sang "he-yuh, he-yuh, he-yuh."

The people of the hillside became very much excited; they talked rapidly, but not loudly, and from time to time two young Indians would leap into line between the two drummers and engage in a muscular dance. They lifted their feet but a little from the ground, but worked the muscles of the back from the shoulders to the feet. The dance was very like the dance of the Zulus, who were on exhibition at the World's Fair in Chicago. As the number of dancers increased the excitement became more intense, and from time to time the dancers gave the Indian vibratory yell, to which those on the hillside responded. My brother and I thought the scene was becoming dangerous, and so we took our leave quietly and retired across the river to Council Bluffs.

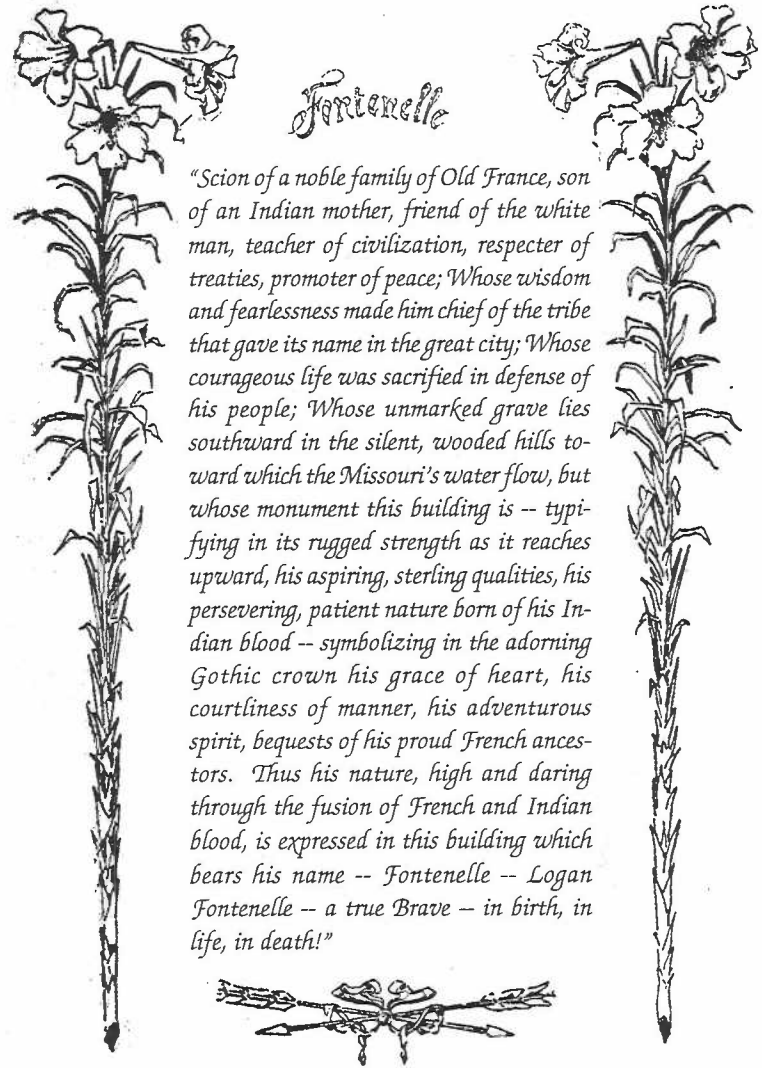
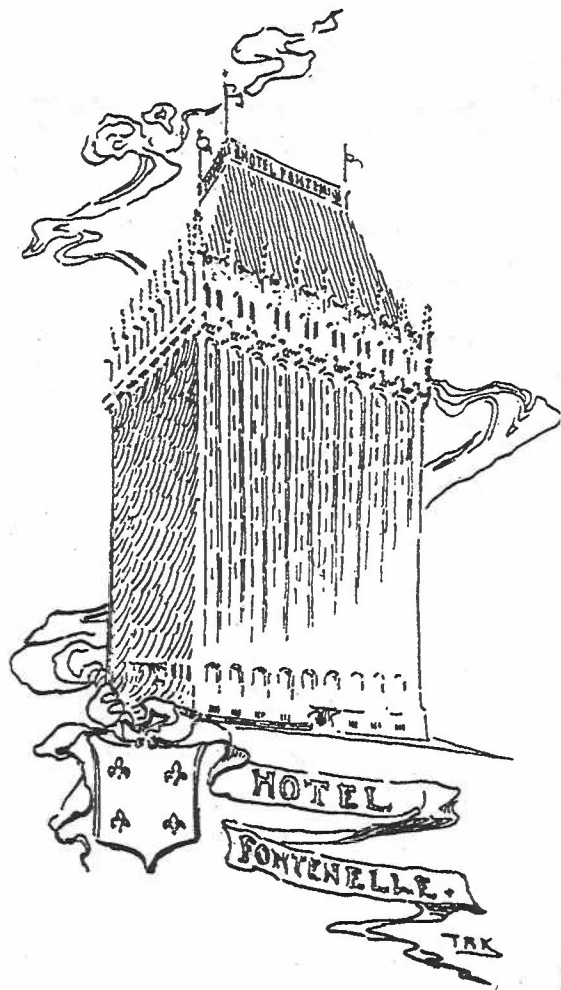
Fontenelle's body was afterwards brought down near Omaha, I was told, but I did not see the dead chief.



I learned afterwards that the Omahas had their revenge. They were informed by their scouts that a party consisting of thirty-six Sioux were on their way from Canada to hunt deer in Northern Iowa. The Omahas picked an even number of their bravest warriors and dispatched them with instructions to bring all the scalps of their enemy. Whether they did their work by a fair open fight or murderously at night was not told, but it was claimed that they brought in twenty-seven scalps.

In the month of November, 1855, I left Omaha to seek my fortune wherever chance might permit, and after a ride in a stage coach of three hundred and twenty miles across the State of Iowa I made my way to Madison, the Capital of Wisconsin, where I remained, teaching in the common schools until the 10th of May, 1858, when I left school teaching and went back to the stage.

*F. F. Maska*



Fontenelle

"Scion of a noble family of Old France, son of an Indian mother, friend of the white man, teacher of civilization, respecter of treaties, promoter of peace; Whose wisdom and fearlessness made him chief of the tribe that gave its name in the great city; Whose courageous life was sacrificed in defense of his people; Whose unmarked grave lies southward in the silent, wooded hills toward which the Missouri's water flow, but whose monument this building is -- typifying in its rugged strength as it reaches upward, his aspiring, sterling qualities, his persevering, patient nature born of his Indian blood -- symbolizing in the adorning Gothic crown his grace of heart, his courtliness of manner, his adventurous spirit, bequests of his proud French ancestors. Thus his nature, high and daring through the fusion of French and Indian blood, is expressed in this building which bears his name -- Fontenelle -- Logan Fontenelle -- a true Brave -- in birth, in life, in death!"



*The Presentation Ceremonies*

Monday, March the Sixth,  
One thousand nine hundred and sixteen  
at three o'clock

Hotel Fontenelle.

Presentation of the Fontenelle Portrait and the Deed of Gift,  
by the President, Mrs. Arthur Crittenden Smith

*The Unveiling*

(The flag covering the portrait was Logan Fontenelle's Flag)

The Acceptance of the Portrait  
by The Honorable John L. Kennedy,  
for the Douglas Hotel Company

The Explanation of the Portrait,  
by Mr. Thomas R. Kimball, F.A.I.A.  
for the Society

*The Salute to the Flag*

*The Flag Song*

Music composed by Mrs. Myron L. Learned for the  
Society of Colonial Dames of America Resident  
in Nebraska.

Adapted and arranged for four voices by Mr. Sigmund  
Landsberg.

Words by The Honorable Wilbur D. Nesbit.

Sung by Miss Silver, Mrs. Miller, Mr. Hunt, Mr. Mc-  
Crary.

Afternoon Tea graciously served by the Hotel Management  
to the Society and its guests in the Banquet Room  
immediately following the Presentation Ceremonies.

“SALUTE TO THE FLAG”

*“To the Glory of God;*

And in grateful remembrance of those, our an-  
cestors, who through evil report and loss of for-  
tune, through suffering and death, maintained stout  
hearts and laid the foundations of our country, we,  
the National Society of the Colonial Dames of  
America, pledge our loyal and affectionate alle-  
giance to these our Flags.”