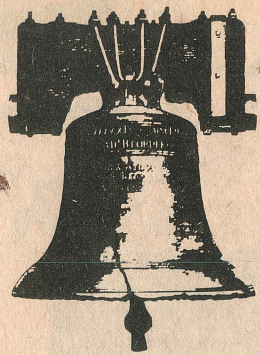
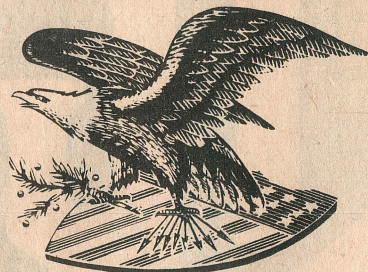


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# BICENTENNIAL



1776-1976

*"Rememberances of Days Gone By"*

## One Time Boone County Settler Blamed for Spirit Lake Massacre

The Spirit Lake Massacre dates back to March 8 and 9, 1857, and it is the belief of many historians that Henry Lott, a white trader, horse thief and outlaw, may have been the cause of this frightening event.

The cause of the incident dates back to December 18, 1846, in Boone County with the death of Lott's son, Milton, the first death in Boone County. This tale is known as Lott's Tragedy and here is a brief account of the event.

Henry Lott made his first appearance in Iowa at Red Rock, in Marion County in 1845, where he played the role of Indian trader while dealing out bad whiskey to the Indians and stealing their ponies while they were intoxicated.

It is said that his neighbors requested him to leave the area in 1846, so he packed up and moved on to Pea's Point, which was then located in the northern part of Boone County. His stay here also seems to have been brief, for evidence is found that in the same year, he was located on the Des Moines River near the mouth of the Boone, where he erected a cabin to resume his whiskey-selling and horse stealing.

His horse stealing activities caused the Indians to grow suspicious of the white trader and finally they traced the location of five ponies directly to him and his fellow marauders. This led to an Indian council in which they decided that Lott should be driven out of the country. The story has it that he was approached by chief Sidominadota, leader of the Sioux and warned that he was an intruder and that he had settled on Sioux hunting grounds. Lott laughed at their remarks and contended that he was not an intruder and refused to go. The Indians then commenced to destroy his property; his horses and cattle were shot, his beehives rifled and his family threatened. Lott seems to have been somewhat of a coward for when the Indians began their attack, he crossed the river and hid among the bushes. Later, he and his stepson, leaving the rest of the family to the mercy of the Indians, fled down the Des Moines River to Pea's Point, a short distance south of the present site of Boone.

Here, he retold the story to John Pea and other members of the settlement. Aroused by the tale, the settlers formed a party to return to the cabin and punish the Indians. An appeal was also made for help at Elk Rapids, some 16 miles away.

Here lived Chemeuse or "Johnny Green," a half-breed Pottawattamie and Musquakie chief, with many of his people who traditionally hated the Sioux tribe. Twenty-six men, the chief and seven settlers from Pea's Point, went to his assistance.

It was now the middle of December and the weather was intensely frigid. After Lott's flight from the cabin, his twelve year old son, Milton started in search of his father, but after traveling approximately twenty miles from his home and three from Boonesboro, he froze to death. The relief party found the body on December 18, a short distance below the village of Centerville. After burying the body, the party con-

tinued to the Lott cabin where they found the Indians gone, the family safe but destitute as they had been robbed of everything and many of the animals shot. The wife, suffering from extreme exposure, died a short time after.

In November, 1905, the Madrid Historical Society decided to place a monument on the grave, commemorating the first death in Boone County. The marker was made by the Norris Brothers of Madrid.

The ceremony took place on December 18, just 59 years after the body was discovered. The monument was placed on the second bottom, above high water mark, and about 30 feet from the grave. An iron marker, a foot wide, three feet long and two inches thick was placed on the grave.

Those men taking part in the ceremony were C. L. Lucas, Dr. H. S. Farr, J. P. A. Anderson, L. D. Norris, Rev. W. Ernest Stockley, H. A. Oviatt and Clarence Peterson.

Vowing vengeance, Lott moved south to the settlements and built a second cabin. Here and at other points in the vicinity, he remained for a few years, according to accounts and bided his time in true frontier style. In the autumn of 1853, he and his stepson moved through Fort Dodge on their way to a new home.

A new site was selected in the autumn of that same year about 30 miles north of Fort Dodge in Humboldt County, at a point where the small creek joins the Des Moines River. This creek has since been called Lott's Creek in his honor as the first white settler in the vicinity. With three barrels of bad whiskey, he reopened his trade with the Indians.

In January, following Lott's new settlement, Sidominadota and his family, composed of his wife, mother, four children and two orphans came up the river and encamped on "Bloody Run," a short distance below the mouth of the Creek. Aware of their coming, Lott planned for their death. Going to the lodge of Sidominadota, Lott perceived he was not recognized and told the chief that a large drove of elk were feeding on the Des Moines River bottom at a point known as "Big Bend." The Indians were sorely in need of food at this time so they were easily trapped by the story. Sidominadota, having been intoxicated by the bad whiskey, mounted his pony and set out for the hunt; while Lott and his stepson followed. After securing a safe distance away from the camp and beyond earshot, the two fired upon the Indian, killing him outright. Hiding the remainder of the day, the murderers disguised themselves as Indians and returned to the lodge of the chief and killed the remainder of the family except for a twelve year old boy and ten year old girl.

Completing their work of destruction, Lott returned to his own cabin and burned it to make it look like the work of the Indians. The man and his stepson then fled down the Des Moines Valley and some years later were reported to be heading for California, and were



This photo was taken back in 1905, following the placing of the monument over Milton Lott's grave. The stone, made by the Norris Brothers in Madrid, was placed upon the grave through the cooperation of the Madrid Historical Society. Among those attending the ceremony were C. L. Lucas, Dr. H. S. Farr, J. P. A. Anderson, L. D. Norris, Rev. W. Ernest Stockley, H. A. Oviatt and Clarence Peterson. Others included J. R. Herron, W. H. Gallup, A. J. Barkley, L. Zimbleman, John Pea, J. F. Eppert, S. A. Payne, D. C. Harmon, F. D. Harmon, C. Patterson and Perry Hartman.

lynched by a vigilance committee shortly after their arrival.

More than a week after the murder of Sidominadota and his family, a band of Indians from a camp on Lizard Creek, while hunting in the vicinity where the deaths had taken place, learned of the happenings and reported the incident to Fort Dodge officials demanding an investigation take place. The Indians were firm in their beliefs that Lott was the culprit and a coroner's jury under the direction of John Johns, met at Homer, then county seat of Webster County and placed the guilt upon Lott and his stepson. They were later indicted by a grand jury in Des Moines, which ended the attempt to find and punish them.

Fearing the later unpleasant results, the white attempted to pacify the Indians by making promises to them, but the Indians grew suspicious of their words and behaved in a manner as to create the impression that retaliation would be eminent.

### Spirit Lake Massacre

The heart of chief Inkpaduta, Sioux Indian leader was as bitter as an Iowa winter, as his hatred for the white man grew. Lott had killed his brother and mother three years before in 1854, and he did not seek forgiveness.

Along with 30 warriors, they spread fear and death in the north central part of the state beginning at Gillett Grove in Clay County. They broke in on two unsuspecting families, subjected the women to

outrage and stole or destroyed all household goods. No one, however, was killed.

Then in the Okoboji-Spirit Lake area, they attacked six isolated cabins and butchered men, women and children without mercy. At least 30 persons died, some in flames that consumed their homes.

Children were beaten to death with sticks of firewood, sometimes cabins were burned. One girl, Abbie Gardner, then 14, saw the Indians kill her parents and two brothers and a sister.

The settlers put up a tremendous battle at the James Mattock cabin but the results were the same, many white deaths, and few red deaths. A war dance was heard for miles around that night as other attacks were planned.

Other attacks followed and in four instances, the wife of each settler was taken captive by the Sioux tribe.

The Indians continued northward into Minnesota where they met a military force of volunteers from Fort Dodge, Webster City and Homer.

Inkpaduta and his band fled into South Dakota with the four white women. One was pushed into icy water and shot, one was beaten to death while two were sold to other Indians. Abbie Gardner was also ransomed for a high price.

The Indian chief was never caught or punished and this is regarded by some authorities as being in part responsible for the Minnesota massacre during the Civil War.