

CHAPTER 1

THE PALE FACE PEERS INTO THE INDIAN'S EDEN

Pages 17 – 19

(Transcribed by Mark Montgomery)

Pierre Chouteau Acquires Mineral Springs on Extensive Land - Deeded Him by the Osages in a Letter Pledging Friendship - The Wilderness Has All Timbers Common to Temperate Zones and Forests Abound in Game-France Cedes Louisiana to the United States and Lewis and Clark Explore, Finding Few Indian Tribes Along the Missouri in the Present Cooper and Howard Counties but Many Mounds -Ira Nash, and Associates Make Trips up the River Both Before and After the Lewis and Clark Expedition-Early Trappers, Traders and Explorers Find Tribes Friendly but Childlike and Capricious and, While Rovers, Averse to Moving West, for Economic and Religious Reasons.

PIERRE CHOUTEAU and his fur traders paddled up the Missouri river a fine day in 1799. The wilderness belonged to Napoleon and to France. Earlier Coronado and other Spaniards penetrated the land and embittered the Indians.

The French were kind, generous and diplomatic. Father Marquette and Joliet in 1673 created good will. The Chouteaus from the late 1700s entertained generously visiting Indians in their St. Louis homes. And up and down the rivers they bought pelts for glass beads, blankets and trinkets that pleased the children of the forest.

Camping on the south bank of the Missouri about 240 miles by water northwest, of St. Louis, and about 150 as the crow flies - if his wings hold out - Pierre Chouteau and his party stopped for an excursion inland.

In the river bottoms towering trees and velvety blue grass mutely testified to the depth and fertility of the soil. Bluffs bristled with black walnut, white walnut, hickory, all kinds of oak, ash, beach, birch, cottonwood, linden, redbud, sycamore, cedar, haw, maples, elm, pecan, sugar tree and nearly every other variety native to the temperate zones. Passing miles through dense forests cluttered with wild grape, hazel, buck, alder, and other forest dwarfs, they discovered much open prairie where herds of buffalo, elk and deer grazed on billowing grasses.

Miles south of the broad, muddy, river they found bubbling from the earth mineral springs with sentinel sycamores and elms shading the sequestered valley between wooded hills. The Osages told their friend Chouteau of curative qualities of the springs. Their braves stopped often to drink the clear, cold, pungent waters.

It might be a good point for a trading post, Chouteau reasoned. Later at the Fort of Grand Osages he piled up bright blankets, glistening beads, guns, powder and leaden balls and a bargain was struck for 30,000 arpens through the area now known as Chouteau Springs. An arpeit, a Spanish measure, is about 1.28 of an acre.

THE CHIEFTAINS made their marks to the document hastily written by Chouteau. Then the parties sat on the ground in a circle, passed the peace pipe and departed.

Chouteau's paper signed by the Indians read:

Brother: As thou hast, since a long time, fed our wives and our children, and that thou hast always been good to us, and that thou hast always assisted us with thy advice, we have listened with pleasure to thy words, therefore, take thou on *the river La Mine, the quantity of land which may suit thee, and anywhere thou pleasest.* This land is ours; we do give it to thee, and no one can take it from thee, neither today nor ever. Thou mayest remain there, and thy bones shall never be troubled. Thou askest a paper from us, and our names; here it is. If our children do trouble thee, you have but to show this same paper; and if some nation disturbs thee, *we are ready to defend thee.* At the fort of Grand Osages, this 19th of March, 1799.

CHOUTEAU'S friendship for the Indians was genuine. He treated them with a kindly tolerance approaching equality. Later he pushed much farther west and his wigwam on the Arkansas, comprising many cabins and huts, became a feudal barony. He had several squaws and was the father of many half-breed children.

Indians generally were simple peoples. Hernando DeSoto, Coronado and other gold- greedy Spaniards, fanned with cruelty and contempt Indian hatreds in the misty dawn when the kingdom of Castile and Aragon

grabbed title to vast areas in the Western Hemisphere. The French were different. FATHER MARQUETTE in 1673, viewing the tawny waters of the Missouri rolling into the clearer Mississippi, christened it "*Pekito- noni*," meaning muddy water. The name has persisted in the modified "*Big Muddy*," although in 1712 the stream was named *Missouri* for the Missouris, a tribe living near its mouth.

December 20, 1803, the Stars and Stripes supplanted the Tricolor of France over Louisiana Territory, which was divided into Lower and Upper Louisiana. Missouri was included in Upper Louisiana, embracing all lands to the Pacific Ocean below the 49th degree not claimed by Spain.

NAPOLEON, aware that he - was selling a rich possession for a pittance, rejoiced in helping create a nation continental in scope, and predicted *it some day would rival his enemy*, 'England.

Immediately after the purchase President Thomas Jefferson and his aids arranged for extensive exploration of the little known territory stretching from the Mississippi to the Pacific. On June 7, 1804, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, well equipped and accompanied by frontiersmen and Indian guides, arrived at the mouth of Bonne Fenime creek. There they camped for the -night.

At the mouth of Big Moniteau creek hieroglyphic paintings covered a point of rocks but many rattlesnakes prevented close examination. The party arrived at the mouth of the Lamine river the following day and at Arrow Rock June 9.

RETURNING in 1806 after having achieved all objectives, the party camped opposite the mouth of the Lamine September 18, and the following day passed the site of Boonville.

Later, in 1807, Captain Lewis succeeded General James Wilkinson as governor of Louisiana Territory, which was organized March 3, 1805. In 1809, after death. of Governor Lewis under mysterious circumstances, General Benjamin Howard of Lexington, Kentucky, was appointed governor. He resigned October 25, 1810, and Captain William Clark of the Lewis and Clark expedition succeeded him. His tenure continued until Missouri was admitted into the Union in 1821.

FOUR MONTHS before Lewis and Clark paddled west past Cooper County, Ira P. Nash, a deputy United States surveyor, Stephen Hancock and Stephen Jackson navigated the Missouri amid the ice floes of February. From 25 miles west of the site of St. Charles they rowed to the Lamine river, locating a claim in the Missouri river bottoms along its North shore. They surveyed, fished and hunted, then returned down the river in March.

Close behind Lewis and Clark, **Ira** Nash made his second trip into what was already known as the Boon's Lick country. Accompanied by his brother, William, and James H. Whitesides, William Clark and Daniel Hubbard, he arrived in July, 1804, near the site of Old Franklin and surveyed land there.

End of Page 18

In the meantime Pierre Chouteau and his kinsmen had acquired many interests, demanding time and energy. So Chouteau later, sold his 30,000 arpens to William H., Ashley who became territorial representative in Congress. Ashley is said to have traveled horse back to Washington to have title to the land perfected. He named the springs in honor of the Chouteaus.

THE EARLY EXPLORERS, hunters and fur traders -who briefly glimpsed the Indian's Eden found few and small tribes hereabouts. The Sacs, also known as the Sanks and the Saukees, were ruled by Chief Quashgami on Moniteau creek. They also had as chiefs Keokuk and Blundo, the latter half French. Blackhawk still was an obscure brave. A tribe of Fox Indians, also known as the Renards, roved in the vicinity.

These groups subsisted from hunting, fishing and trapping. Forests and prairies abounded in game whose natural increase supported the small numbers widely separated. Squaws cultivated small patches of maize, tobacco and a few vegetables. Tepee villagers were ever alert to drive away hordes of wild game constantly threatening to devour growing crops.

Small crop areas of the alluvial soil, mostly of limestone foundation, sufficed the simple needs of a tribe. Corn ground into rough meal provided coarse, palatable bread to go with the mainstays of life, wild meats and fish.

EXPLORERS found in the present area of Cooper County many burial mounds. Scientists still disagree as to whether they are of Indian or earlier origin. Some say they originally were baked by fire to make bricklike walls to store Indians' grain. Then, after seeping moisture rendered them unfit for grain, they were utilized either for burials or rubbish dumps.

The Indians welcomed traders bearing gifts. Even the early settlers were treated as neighbors until the Indian became apprehensive of invasion and depleted game reserves. Most tribes, including the cultured Cherokees who then lived in Tennessee and regions of the deep South, east of the Mississippi, had an aversion to moving west, believing it the land of death and oblivion. They were loath to be pushed from the verdant, well watered lands and salubrious climate to the parched plains, intense temperatures and thinning herds toward the sunset.

THESE, children of the forest were irresponsible. They would give and then take back. They would fish and hunt with the first white men, then yield to temptation, stealing horses, livestock and other personal property. The white man, ever encroaching on the Indian's domain, found him hard to "socialize."

In *"The Raven,"* a biography of Sam Houston, James Marquis says of Tennessee civilization a few years after the Louisiana purchase, "To kill an Indian was a public spirited act; to swindle one an act of common sense.

End of Page 19

End of Chapter 1

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