

The life of the early pioneer of Nebraska was at the worst a very difficult life, and even at the best, not of the easiest. However, this life forty and fifty years ago in the "Dakotas" and Nebraska was full of adventure and extremely colorful.

I have undertaken to write a biography of my father, not as a personal study, but as he is related to pioneer life on our own frontier. A study of Hudson's, that is my father's temperament and character, the study of his personal ambitions and the influence of the frontier life upon his life is all material for another paper. In this one I shall only attempt to portray, with some vividness, the actualities of pioneer life in our own Nebraska.

I had thought that I would begin this story at the time when Hudson first came to Nebraska in 1882, at the age of fourteen, but I feel that when a man starts his pioneering at the age of two he deserves some credit for having done so, even though his "new frontiers" lay in Nebraska's neighboring state, South Dakota.

So, at the aforesaid age of two we find our young adventurer steaming serenely un the muddy Missouri on the "Great Western" steamer with his father John and mother Mary. At this time I would like to divert attention from Hudson for a short time and concentrate it upon his mother and father, both of whom already possessed typical characteristics molded by life on a frontier--the frontier of Michigan.

Mary, at the age of five, having been left an orphan, went "west" with her aunt to Michigan, where at the age of sixteen she began teaching school. John, at about the some time, went from New York to Michigan with his father and mother, where they had to clear the trees in order to farm. Now we see these colorful figures on the "Great Western" with their son, again going "west" seeking the glory, adventure, and

P

security which the new west had to offer them.

This was in the year 1870, the occasion was the buying of half-interest in a store, in a practically unheard of place, Bon Homme, Dakota territory. Business in the dry goods line was good here but John was not satisfied and after two years moved to Chateau Creek up the Missouri from Bon Homme, and here operated a store and stage coach station. This must have been a very interesting place for the horses. were changed here enroute to Bismarck from the Yankton Agency.

During their stay at Chateau Creek, two things deserve notice that, no doubt, are remembered by many an early pioneer of Dakota Territory. First, the grass-hopper plague which needs no description except that it veritably ate up the land through which it passed. This occurred in the late summer of the year 1873 and proved disastrous to many an early settler, for the crops were completely devastated. The insects came in such numbers that they obscured the noon-day sun and literally covered the ground where they settled.

The second occurrence of note followed in the very early spring when General Custer and his commands came from the south and landed in one of Dakota's very worst blizzards. He stopped at Chateau Creek to make camp while a bridge was being built, and Hudson's mother, Mary, found it necessary to feed this crowd of ravenous soldiers. The number of doughnuts, pies, and baking powder biscuits these men consumed reached a fabulous mark. However, they only stayed for two days until the bridge was constructed, when they resumed their journey up into Montana to meet the terrible fate that awaited them.

In the year 1874, the Mead family moved to Grand Island, Nebraska where they took charge of the Union Pacific railroad eating house. This was a very interesting time because of the diversity of people from the east and west they chanced to talk with. During the next

year they moved again to Council Bluffs where Hudson received his first schooling and one of the most memorable trips of his life, for they all attended the Philadelphia Centennial and afterwards took a trip down the east coast, visiting all the points of interest.

Two more years of schooling in Springfield, Dakota, were all Hudson was ever to see, for after living there a short time, they came back again to Nebraska in 1879 where John Mead transported building material from Rosebud Landing to Port Niobrara. As a matter of fact, the building material was for the purpose of erecting Port Niobrara which stood four miles north and east of the present site of Valentine, Nebraska. It was during his stay here that Hudson became acquainted with Bishop Hare, one of the most picturesque and courageous of the early missionaries. He stayed, oftentimes for weeks at Hudson's home, and, on occasion, told colorful and stirring tales of his adventures among the Sioux Indians.

In the fall of 1881 John Mead procured a license to conduct an Indian trading store which was then operated by H. C. Dear. It was located one and one half miles south of the Agency buildings, just a few feet on the Dakota side of the Nebraska-Dakota state line.

I think I shall interrupt here a moment to give a more vivid idea of western Nebraska at that time. About one fourth of the west end of the state was Cheyenne County with Sidney as its county seat. The only ranch between Pine Ridge and Thatcher was that of Joe Langloy, which was situated about fifteen miles west of where Valentine now stands, but Valentine was not in existence then.

When John Mead went to meet his wife and Hudson, his son, at Thatcher, located twelve miles east of where Valentine now stands, he took a camp outfit, for it took him three and one half days to

make the journey with a team and spring wagon. Thatcher was the end of the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley railroad, consequently he had to go after them to take them to their new home in Pine Ridge.

The **Agency** at this time was rather a different looking prospect than it is now. All the buildings were frame and there were only twenty-six white people living there, while within a radius of ten miles about sixty-five hundred Indians were camped. The new store was a log building, eighteen feet wide and seventy feet long with a stockade construction on the rear about one hundred and fifty feet square. The posts were ten feet high and set in ground close together to protect them from a rear attack.

At this time the Indian Agent was Dr. Valentine T. McGillicuddy, an army surgeon. He was a man of strong will and one of the pioneers who did all in his might to establish law and order among the Indians. He had at his command fifty full blooded Indian police who he had trained himself. They were under a white man and were always reliable and dependable even in the face of an impending crisis.

Dr. McGillicuddy's success with the Indians was largely due to his firmness and boldness. These traits in him were well tested in 1883 at the time Red Cloud, the Sioux Chieftain, felt the urge to rebel against McGillicuddy's orders.

McGillicuddy had sent for Red Cloud, in order to give him orders that had come from Washington. Red Cloud refused to come so McGillicuddy calmly sent his Indian police after him. Red Cloud came, but in the meantime, he had gathered up some 450 of his best warriors. They showed their intentions by their horses, war paint and bows and arrows. However, they were a little discountenanced at McGillicuddy's nonchalant attitude as he stepped forth and walked straight up to Red Cloud. He gave the orders from Washington and said calmly,

"Are you ready to obey?"

Red Cloud replied quite simply, "Yes."

Perhaps the story would have been different had the fifty Indian police behind McGillicuddy turned against him, but they were most faithful of body guards.

The twenty-six white people in the settlement were somewhat terrified by the vicious looking Indian braves and many left the Agency and went up White Clay Creek to safety from an imaginary peril for the Indians did not start any real fighting.

Another interesting personage on the Agency at this time was Jim Dahlman. Hudson first became acquainted with him when he ran a billiard room at the Agency. He was later a cowboy on the Newman ranch, forty miles south east of Pine Ridge, on the Niobrara river. All this time he had been going under the name of Jim Murray, but when he met Miss Abbott of Massachusetts, who was governess to the Blanchard children on the Agency, he decided to get married and took his real name.

In about 1885 Jim Dahlman and Hank Simmons formed a partnership and went into the cow-raising business in earnest. *he was later mayor of Omaha.*

John Mead's little store at the Agency was quite a busy place. The Indians liked young Hudson very much and often talked to him a great deal. In fact, it was here that Hudson learned to speak the Sioux language. The Indian squaws, who like to name everything called him "Up-the-creek-boy," merely because he lived up the creek.

All the currency in the store was silver and the smallest denomination twenty-five cents. At one time John Mead sent forty-five hundred dollars in silver to Sparks Brothers Band at Valentine. The money was shinned in a freight wagon and hidden under a multitude of dry hides.

Hudson's father, John, was at this time elected Treasurer of the

new School hoard of the Pine Ridge district, It was really rather an unhandy affair, for he had to go all the way to Sidney(county seat of Cheyenne County) for the school apportionment.

In December of the year 1883 Hudson, then a young man fifteen years old, killed his first deer. He had gone with John Darr, boss herder at the Agency over on Bordeaux Creek to hunt deer and killed one himself. In fact, he has the horns yet. Deer were fairly plentiful at that time, there being a great many black and white tailed deer in the pine timber. In the White River Valley the antelope were numerous and along the Niobrara there were many elk.

In the following year, 1884, an Indian killed what was believed to be the last buffalo in this locality, near Slim Buttes.

In 1884, when Hudson was sixteen years old, he and his fiiother moved onto a homestead, while John Mead kept the store at the Agency. Their new home was on White River about one mile south of the Nebraska-Dakota line. Hudson did very little farming but raised quite a large number of horses and cattle.

Life on the early western cow ranch has been described many, many times and Hudson's life was nractically the same as any other western cowboy's in most resnects. He branded cattle, rode round the herd at night chanting cowboy songs and did all the other things cowboys were known to do.

Most of the cattle on these ranches were steers that the cowboys had trailed up from Texas. They trailed up mostly two-year-olds, kept them two years, then shipped them east (usually to Omaha) and sold them to the government, who later sold them to the Indians.

All the homesteads in this part of the country at that time were cattle ranches. On Beaver Creek there were three ranches, Will Hudspeth's, George Stover's, and the Sioux City Cattle Co. which had

about thirty-five hundred cattle. On White River there was one ranch only two miles from Hudson's, belonging to Henry G. Clifford.

Cattle-raising was done somewhat differently at this time than it is now. Ho hay was nut un to feed them through the winter and the cattle were allowed to graze at large over the wide western plains. It was an interesting life, full of adventure and interest for young and active men.

To go back to the little house on the new homestead. It was a log building which Hudson constructed himself. It had a dirt roof which had to be changed twice a year and a rough board floor. On the walls white muslin was tacked which gave the rooms a cheerful and clean look.

Hudson and his mother had many rather unusual pets at this time, little wild folk that had timidly come up to the house to see what in the world was happening, and had, upon finding that these human beings, at least, were harmless, came again and again. A deer, an antelope, two crows and a chicken hawk were their favorite pets. A red flannel strip was tied around the leg of the deer and antelope so that when the Indians saw them, they would not kill them, knowing they were Hudson's and his mother's pets.

It was during Hudson's first year on his ranch, that Chadron was established. The first buildings were built in the fall of 1884 just this side of the present sight of Dakota Junction, but the following year, on August first, the town was staked out and lots were sold where Chadron now stands. The change of location was due to the fact that the railpoad company did not choose to pay the high price set on the land at Dakota Junction, by Mrs. F. O'Linn. She owned a great deal of the land at the first site of Chadron, but because she would not sell at a reasonable price, the town was moved.

Hudson's father, John, who had moved his store in 1883 from the Pine Ridge Agency to the P. B. Nelson place, east of Chadron, now came to Chadron and established the first meat market. He built, for his meat market a frame building which is the west part of the Ford Motor Company building now. In the fall he sold out his business, which consisted of about eighty or ninety head of steers, to Simmons and Dahlman.

The Indians had been very quiet for a number of years but all of a sudden in the year 1890 they broke out in what is known as the last Indian War.

The trouble originated among the Sitting Bull Sioux Indians along the Missouri River, and gradually spread to the Spotted Tail and Ogallala Sioux.

It seems that a white man appeared among the Indians calling himself a oronhet and Messiah. The Indians are naturally superstitious and religious and they worked themselves up into a hostile frenzy over his preachings. The supposed prophet instigated Ghost dancing wherein he worked on their warlike instincts and promised them "ghost shirts" which he made them believe were bullet-proof.

Members of Sitting Bull's tribe and of Chief Big Foot's tribe came to the Pine Ridge reservation and really got the Indians into a very warlike state.

It was necessary for the white people to have protection so troops from the Seventh Cavalry were posted near Pine Ridge and along White River. They got all the Indians together and surrounded them on Wounded Knee Creek. However, the Indians were not to be so easily subdued, so they opened fire, killing several soldiers, a great number of their own race being killed also. Many of the Indians broke away and went into the hills to hide. They stayed there for sometime defy-

ing the governments' orders to return to the reservation.

People in Chadron and on nearby ranches were naturally very frightened at the time. Wagons could be seen scurrying across the plains to the little town from every direction. The people gathered together at the courthouse in case of any real fighting in town. However, the soldier troops subdued the Indians in a reasonably short time and the last Indian scare, known as the Battle of Wounded Knee, was over. This was the last Indian stronghold in the Sioux Nation.

The ninth cavalry (Negroes) was camped six miles north of Hudson's place at this time to keep peace and protect the ranchers on White River. Hudson furnished them beef once a week. He also furnished, with another man, Samples by name, saddle horses for a troop of infantry from New York who were to be mounted at Pine Ridge.

In 1892 Hudson decided to try his fortune in the new town so he came to Chadron and built a harness shop where the Anstein Tire Shop now stands. He stayed here for about two years when he returned to the ranch--a more prosperous business.

When Hudson had again begun to tire of the monotony of the ranch a new adventure came along that certainly must have been more than interesting to a young man. He became guide to a group of young men from Princeton University who were touring the west. They started out with two wagons, a mess wagon and bed wagon and first went sixty miles north northeast of Chadron to the Bad Lands where they dug fossils and bones for nearly a month. They sent these back east and traveled around the north side of the Black Hills and into the Big Horn Mountains of Montana. Here they spent several weeks enjoying the wonderful scenery and hunting. At this time it was a practically unbeaten wilderness of beautiful green trees and hills with deer and antelope roaming freely about. They entered the Yellowstone Park on the east side on an un-

beaten trail that had never been crossed by wagon before. After seeing all the wonders of the Park, they went to Livingston, Montana, thence to Fort Custer, the end of the Burlington railroad. Here the Princeton boys boarded the train and waved a farewell to Hudson. He rode his horse and took his wagons alone back over the wagon trail they had traversed.

All in all, Hudson lived on his ranch for eighteen years. Many of these were pleasant, prosperous years and many were terribly trying because of drowth and crop failures. In the early '90's the whole of White River went dry, and the only water for the cattle was the hot, stagnant water in the few deep water holes. Water for the family had to be gotten by digging in the bank of the river to the water line bearing gravel strata. No one had hay to put up for the grass did not grow at all and the corn only grew to a height of two feet with no ears appearing on it. Hudson, bound to get a little hay for his cattle, took a rack and spent two weeks around the country side gathering up what hay he could find. All together he had two tons as a reward for his two weeks labor. It was one of the hardest years for the ranchers, but there were many more, before and later, that were hard enough. If it was not drowth it was grass-hoppers or in the winter freezing blizzards that took a heavy toll in cattle. However, there were rewards for the toil and privations in the adventure of opening up a new country and in a freedom that can never again be attained.

In 1901 Hudson's father bought a store in Vernal, Utah, and after he got established, sent for Hudson and his mother. It was here that Hudson met Miss Nora Blake who became his wife that same year. They returned to Chadron and have lived here continuously for thirty-one years.

Hudson has seen what was once a frontier village grow into a flourishing, modern town. Brickfundings have replaced the frame

ones, paved streets now cover the dirt roads, and the telephone, automobile, radio and aeroplane have come in their turn. Many of the cattle ranches that he knew are gone and hundreds of farms have come in their places. The old wagon trails are gone and new highways run in every direction over the country.

The one little school room upstairs in a frame building that was the first in Chadron, has been replaced by four public schools, a parochial school and a college.

Very few of the early settlers are still here. Many have died and many have gone away, but those who remember the early days love to look back down the dim vista of years and see the rolling plains without a habitation and the wild deer and Indian that once roamed freely where Chadron now stands.

Mr. Mead has always been interested in the early history of North-West Nebraska, and has done all in his power to help with an authentic record of this section.

All of these recollections and facts which I have presented will be considered as mere events in the history of a country. But to Hudson they constitute his life, a life wholly apart and different from life today. A life on the "True" American frontier.