

Report of the Okoboji and Spirit Lake Monument Commission

ISSN 0003-4827

Material in the public domain. No restrictions on use.



This work has been identified with a [Creative Commons Public Domain Mark 1.0](#).

Recommended Citation

"Report of the Okoboji and Spirit Lake Monument Commission." *The Annals of Iowa* 3 (1898), 552-553.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.2316>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

REPORT OF THE OKOBOJI AND SPIRIT LAKE MONUMENT COMMISSION.

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

To His Excellency, Hon. Frank D. Jackson, Governor of Iowa:

SIR—By direction of the Commissioners appointed by the Governor, in charge of the erection of the Monument at Lake Okoboji to the memory of the massacred settlers, I have the honor herewith to transmit you their final report.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

CHARLES ALDRICH,

Assistant Secretary of the Commission.

DES MOINES, IOWA, OCTOBER 16, 1895.

SIR—The undersigned commissioners having in charge the matter of erecting the monument to the memory of the pioneer settlers massacred by Sioux Indians in the vicinity of Okoboji and Spirit Lakes, in 1857, in respectfully submitting their final report, deem it proper to a full understanding of the subject to copy the legislation relating thereto, as follows:

CHAPTER 123.

AN ACT to provide for the proper interment of the remains of pioneers on Okoboji and Spirit Lakes, massacred by the Sioux Indians in 1857, and for the erection of a commemorative monument.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa:

SECTION 1. That there is hereby appropriated out of any money in the State treasury not otherwise appropriated the sum of five thousand dollars or so much thereof as may be necessary for the purposes hereinafter provided.

SEC. 2. That the remains of all persons killed by Ink-pa-du-tah's band of Sioux Indians in the vicinity of the Dickinson county lakes in March, 1857, be collected and properly interred.

SEC. 3. That a monument fittingly commemorative of this tragic event be erected, upon which shall be inscribed the names of all persons who lost their lives at that time at the hands of the savages.

SEC. 4. That grounds suitable for these purposes be selected near the scene of the tragedy, title to which shall be acquired and remain in the State of Iowa.

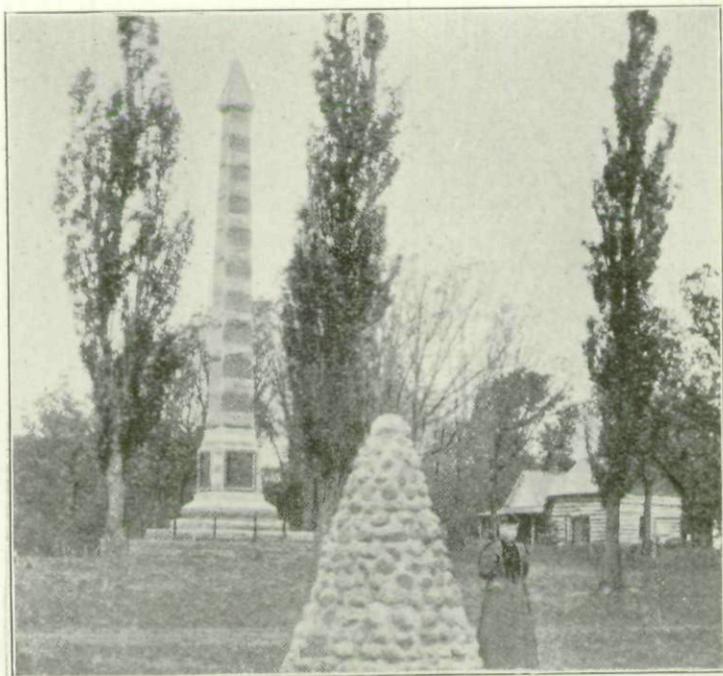
SEC. 5. That said grounds shall be purchased, reinterments made and monument erected before the 4th day of July, 1895.

SEC. 6. A special commission composed of five members shall be appointed by the governor of the State to carry out the provisions of this act, and to take all needful action in the premises consistent with the spirit of the statute. They shall have entire management and control of the funds herein appropriated, which shall be paid out on bills approved by the commission. They shall file with the auditor of State a full and complete account of all expenditures, and shall also report to the governor their proceedings in this connection upon the completion of their labors. The said commission shall serve without compensation.

SEC. 7. This act being deemed of immediate importance shall take effect and be in force from and after publication in *The Iowa State Register* and *The Des Moines Leader*, newspapers published at Des Moines, Iowa.

Approved March 30, 1894.

As soon as practicable after receiving our commissions we met at the Duncombe House in Fort Dodge, and afterwards at the residence (Gardner cabin) of Mrs. Abbie Gardner Sharp, near Lake Okoboji, where the massacre was commenced on the 8th day of March, 1857. An organization was effected by appointing Cyrus C. Carpenter, chairman, Mrs. Abbie Gardner Sharp, secretary, Charles Aldrich, assistant secretary, and John F. Duncombe, attorney. The first action of the commission after organizing was to decide upon the location, which was fixed on the lot south of that owned by Mrs. Sharp—provided it could be secured without expense to the State. This lot, 100x180 feet, was owned by the Okoboji South Beach company, who promptly conveyed it as a free gift to the State of Iowa for this purpose. An advertisement was then prepared and published in several newspapers asking for plans and bids for the erection of the proposed monument, the commissioners reserving to themselves the right to accept



MONUMENT TO THE MASSACRED SETTLERS.

Erected at Pillsbury Point, Lake Okoboji, by order of the 25th General Assembly of Iowa, and dedicated July 26, 1895. The log structure is the original Gardner Cabin. The spot where the family was buried is marked by the pile of stones.

any plan or bid or reject all that might be made. The meeting for the examination of the plans and bids took place at the Gardner cabin on the 20th day of June, 1894. Upon a full and careful examination of the several propositions, many of which possessed high merit, it was decided to accept that of P. N. Peterson, doing business under the name of the P. N. Peterson Granite company, of St. Paul, Minn. This contemplated a shaft 55 feet high above the foundation, in alternate blocks of rough and polished Minnesota granite, with a die 6x6 feet, upon which should be placed four bronze tablets—for the sum of \$4,500. The inscriptions placed upon the tablets may be described as follows: On the east, the list of murdered settlers; on the west, a complete roster of the relief expedition commanded by Major William Williams; on the south, historical memoranda relating to the loss of Capt. J. C. Johnson and Private W. E. Burkholder, the list of settlers who escaped from Springfield (now Jackson), Minn., etc.; and on the north, the coat of arms of Iowa, with these words: "Erected by order of the 25th General Assembly of the State of Iowa."

While the time for the completion of the entire work as stipulated in the act was fixed for the 4th of July, 1895, it was completed and ready for acceptance in March preceding that date. A meeting was therefore held on the monument grounds on the 14th day of March, 1895, at which the work was carefully examined and formally accepted by the commission, the contractor's bill for the cost of its erection approved, and the auditor of State requested to issue his warrant upon the State treasury for the payment thereof. In this connection it is but just to state that, in the judgment of the commission, Mr. Peterson carried out every stipulation of his bond and contract, giving to our State a work which in its beauty of design, the durability of its material, and the honesty with which it was built, is without a rival in the northwest. This is also the unanimous judgment of all who have examined the monument.

To Mr. R. A. Smith of the commission was assigned the duty of grading the grounds, superintending the construction of the monument, including the foundation, and gathering together and re-interring the remains of the murdered persons. These last were buried in one broad grave on the east front of the monument.

To Mr. Charles Aldrich was assigned the work of preparing the inscriptions for the tablets.

The following is a recapitulation of the expenses incurred and paid in this undertaking:

J. & R. Lamb, for tablet designs and drawings.....	\$ 30.00
The contract price paid to P. N. Peterson	4,500.00
Expenses allowed to C. C. Carpenter.....	40.67
Expenses allowed to John F. Duncombe.....	11.00
Expenses allowed to R. A. Smith	252.88
Expenses allowed to Mrs. Abbie Gardner Sharp.....	118.33
Expenses allowed to Charles Aldrich.....	44.82
Total.....	\$4,997.70
Amount of appropriation.....	5,000.00
Balance unexpended.....	2.30

In concluding their duties the commission respectfully beg to suggest, that provision should be made by the legislature for providing the monument lot with a permanent fence. Regulations should also be made for the appointment of a custodian and the care of the grounds.

All of which is respectfully submitted.
July 4, 1895.

CYRUS C. CARPENTER,
JOHN F. DUNCOMBE,
RODERICK A. SMITH,
ABBIE GARDNER SHARP,
CHARLES ALDRICH.

Commissioners.

TO HON. FRANK D. JACKSON,
GOVERNOR OF IOWA,
DES MOINES.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.