

The Pioneer Monument at the Lincoln County courthouse

A history of the Pioneer Monument erected at the Lincoln County courthouse. The monument is in memorial to a group of early settlers who were massacred by Indians on August 6, 1864.

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Hist 928 Donor, Christian Bernhardt.
1916

The Pioneer Monument erected at Lincoln Courthouse square Lincoln, Kan. is the first pioneer monument in Kansas and it is erected to commemorate the massacre of Fifteen of the first settlers in what is now Lincoln county.

This monument led to the gathering together in book form of the historic facts connected with ^{the} two massacres, namely the Moffitt brothers J. L. and T. Moffitt, John W. Houston and James Tyler. ¹ The two last named were transients just visiting with the Moffitts. The four went out together to hunt buffaloes and were overtaken by a band of Indians and all were killed. This took place the sixth day of August 1864, fifty years ago this sixth day of August 1914. Then monument was dedicated the thirtieth day of May 1909 on the fortieth anniversary of the massacre of the Eleven that were killed May 30th, 1869. At that occasion very little was said about any of the victims as there was no time for any remarks either historical or otherwise. That day is supposed to be G. A. R. day. The G. A. R. and the old settlers had an agreement to divide the time on that day. After several agreements the old settlers were allowed thirty minutes for dedication and we were very thankful for so much of a consideration but we had no time for any speech making in memory of the eleven victims of May thirtieth 1869 so we just had to wait and watch for a more opportune time to have a memorial gathering. While we are not able to say very much of any of them, Houston and Tyler were total strangers here and left nobody to even tell where they came from and the victims of 1869 were all killed except one woman and she was taken a captive by the Indians, so there are no clues left to find out much about them, -excepting the Moffitts. In some way one Miss Martha Moffitt got hold of the news that I was soliciting money here for the purpose of erecting a monument in memory of those slain by the Indians and she sent me ten dollars to help make a success of the undertak-

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ing . This was the first I knew of any Moffitts living, and that brought me into communication with several others, and they all sent me some information. This with what I have found in searching the old records of Courthouses made me think of the fiftieth anniversary of the killing of the Moffitts and after corresponding with Miss Martha Moffitt and Mrs. Hunt of Shenandoah, Iowa in regard to a semi-centennial in memory of the Moffitts I got encouragement to go ahead and have the ceremony here in Lincoln to memorize the killing of our first settlers.

We had to work rapidly as August 6th was near at hand. I did not have any definite understanding that any of the Moffitts would come to Lincoln on that occasion but some two or three weeks before the sixth I got information from Miss Moffitt that her two cousins Mrs. Mary Moffitt Hunt of Shenandoah, Iowa and Mrs. Lizzie Moffitt Fleming of Toulon, Ill and Mr. D. W. Moffitt a nephew living at Wichita, Kansas would come to the semi-centennial on August 6th. Miss Martha Moffitt came all the way from Pitman, New Jersey. It was very gratifying to me to know that the nieces took so much interest in our gathering to take such a long and arduous journey just to see and to go over the ground where their uncles had lived and suffered and died at the hands of the savage aborigines fifty years ago. Now that I was pretty sure that four of the nearest relatives living of the Moffitts would honor us with their presence we got a stir on us to arrange for the celebration. The time was short and we ^{desired} decided to have something in keeping ~~the~~ with the importance of the gathering. In the first place it was desired to treat the visitors in a becoming manner so our City mayor appointed a committee on the part of the citizens of Lincoln to help me in making proper arrangement for their entertainment. I was ordered to go the station and meet them and

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take them to our best hotel and keep them free of all charges while they were in Lincoln. That was done by meeting them with two autos placed at my disposal by Mrs. Marshall and Moss who conveyed them to the Windsor hotel. The first thing after supper I took the visitors to the monument which pleased them very much. They were especially surprised to behold so large and substantial a monument, partly in memory of their uncles and partly at so small an outlay of money. It is constructed of the best black granite rock and the workmanship upon it could not be better, so it naturally pleased the relatives to come and see what had been erected here to perpetuate the memory of their uncles and the past history of this neighborhood. The only thing to regret is that they did not stay long enough to gather all the details from that period. I had Mr. T. Anderson from Salina here on that day to point out everything as it was in '64, he being one of the twelve that came up from Salina to bury the dead. There are two now living of those twelve men, namely, T. Anderson of Salina and John Cline of New Cambria, Kansas.

It will be seen that we did all we could think of to give our visitors all the information and hospitality that circumstances would allow and it surely pleased them wonderfully, which is attested in presenting me with a beautiful gold headed cane as a token of esteem and appreciation of my labors in preserving the early pioneer history and their struggles, hardships and death in order to have civilization supplant savagery and a wild and unproductive land into one of the greatest producing states in the Union. The cane was presented on old settlers annual meeting Oct. 8th, 1914 and the presentation speech which is hereby attached was read by H. C. Berry, president of the Society of old settlers.

While this souvenir has been presented to me as sole promoter of monument and semi-centennial it is also indirectly a present to

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the citizens of Lincoln for their generosity in donating the where-withall that erected it. The citizens furnished the money and I furnished the work connected with it. There were about 450 subscribers to that monument and I have seen practically every one of them personally, so it will be easily understood that there is work to do in such an undertaking, and if you undertake something of this character you will ^{surely} find some small frye that will try to bluff you out every way. I ran across a few such but I won the battle and the small frye--well that is another story.

This is penned down rather in detail. More could be said, but I think enough has been said to answer the purpose of encouragement to others throughout Kansas to look around and see if something can be found that will be of interest to the community or the general public at the present time or in the future. Kansas is rich in history. It is only a question of getting some one interested in it to spend time and money to gather it together.