



OLD SOD HOUSE.  
Last House on Trail in Morton County.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE SAVING OF OLD PAWNEE ROCK.

When the Daughters of the American Revolution of Kansas began talking of marking the Old Santa Fé Trail through Kansas, and plans were being made to trace the correct route, a cry went up to the Regent and State Historical Society, "Save Old Pawnee Rock!" Long before the white man came to live upon the sunny plains of Kansas, the Indian tribes had made use of the rock rising abruptly from the plains in Barton county (only there were no counties out there then), as a place for signal-fires and an advantageous look-out to keep watch for friend or foe. At its base, bloody battles were fought between the tribes, one memorable one giving it the name it now bears—from the tribe which won—the Pawnees. Later, the Santa Fé Trail wound its way at the base of the rock, and it became a veritable "Rock of Ages" to many a train of pioneers. Soldiers and settlers carved their names on the Rock, and names illustrious in history today were left there to tell of their owners' visits. Soon, as civilization reached the rock, the owner of the farm on which it stands found it was good building material,—and, regardless of its historic memories, began quarrying it away, and even had a rock-crusher there in order to turn the old landmark into dollars. And so the carved

names were lost. A town has been built not far from it, and is named Pawnee Rock.

A press clipping says: "Pawnee Rock is one single cliff of rock, which the red man could climb upon and view the country for miles over the Arkansas, Ash, and Walnut valleys, and see the white man approaching. It was through this region, hugging the margin of the silent Arkansas, and running under the very shadow of Pawnee Rock, that the old Santa Fé Trail wound its way. In those days this was considered the most dangerous point along the trail. It was here that Kit Carson shot his mule for an Indian, and here "Buffalo Bill" was once captured. It was the battle that followed the next two days, between the whites and the Pawnee Indians, after Carson shot his mule, that gave the Rock its name." [A mistake, as the Rock was named for the Indian battle, which took place earlier.—HISTORIAN.] "It would have been a very interesting scene to witness, if one could have stood on the rock and watched the Indians in their many conflicts and their chases after buffalo."

The following letter to Governor Hoch, who once lived near the old Rock, under date of July 23, 1905, from the town of Pawnee, is one of many received by Mrs. Stanley, State Regent, and Miss Meeker, State Secretary, in regard to the preservation of the old Rock. The letter from T. H. Brewer is as follows:

"The prevailing sentiment now seems to be to preserve historical spots, especially along the Old Santa

Fé Trail. Some of the most noted landmarks are being destroyed through the avarice and unpatriotic, grasping covetousness of the present day. One of the most noted old landmarks of the Old Santa Fé Trail is Pawnee Rock, in the southwest corner of Barton county, close to the town of the same name. But it, as a landmark, is fast being obliterated. Hundreds of names have already been blotted away, though there are quite a few left yet. But it will not be long until they are all gone, at the present rate of destruction now practiced by the owner. I see that the State (or I am under such an impression) has made an appropriation to mark the Trail. If so, don't you think it would be advisable to buy this old Rock as one of the most prominent marks of said Trail? You have seen it in about its original shape, and know something of how it looked. Inman's history of the Santa Fé Trail mentioned Pawnee Rock as one of the special landmarks. It was close here, after a fight held around the Rock, that two men were captured by Indians, and their lives were spared by the younger of the two 'running the gauntlet' and coming out without a scratch. They were allowed to proceed on their way unmolested. Now if the State has made an appropriation for preserving the old landmarks, we think that the remainder of this rock should be preserved." (Signed) T. H. BREWER, Pawnee Rock.

Miss Meeker wrote in reply to this letter, which was sent to her after the Regent had read it, telling Mr.

Brewer how small the appropriation was, and how they hoped to increase it. She suggested that if his county could raise the money to buy the rock, there would be no objection to putting a tablet on it and using it for a monument. She also suggested that it might be possible to put the fund to be raised by the children in his county, into such an enterprise. She offered to lay any plans and suggestions he might offer, before the committee, and also asked him to write out any incidents in regard to the rock he might know to help the school children in their essays.

Mrs. Carrie G. Shaw, of Hiawatha, was appointed on the D. A. R. section of the Trail Committee in the fall of 1905, her special work being to do something to save Pawnee Rock. The owner of the rock asked too much for it and five acres for a driveway to it, and the Daughters knew they did not have sufficient funds to buy it. The Committee almost despaired, though many plans were devised and discussed. Still came the cry, "Save the old Rock!" Under date of December 28th, 1905, Mrs. Shaw received the following letter from Dr. Edward K. Laurence, of Pawnee Rock:

"MRS. SHAW, Hiawatha, Kansas—*Dear Madam:* I received your letter of recent date, and assure you I was glad to hear from you. From the little I know of the Society you are representing, it is engaged in a laudable undertaking and should be encouraged in every way. Now about Pawnee Rock: it is in the middle of a wheat-field, about one-fourth mile north of the

town. From what I have heard, it has already been cut off from the top about forty feet. The stone is used for building material, though it is not of much good. It is now owned by Mr. Benjamin P. Unruh, and a man is at work nearly every day, breaking it up. The work of destruction has been going on for over twenty years, which leaves the rock now only about forty feet high on the highest face. Should the members of your society desire to do anything to preserve it, I am sure they may depend on the hearty coöperation of the Commercial Club of this place." (Signed) EDWARD K. LAURENCE, Pawnee Rock.

Mrs. Shaw then tried to interest the club women in the Seventh District, where the rock is located, in the hope that they would in some way help purchase the Rock. In March, 1906, Mrs. T. A. Cordry, of Parsons, was appointed on the State Press Committee of the D. A. R., with the special work of creating a sentiment for Pawnee Rock. In Miss Meeker's letter telling her of her appointment, she gives a résumé of the situation, part of which follows (the other has already been given):

"Mrs. Noble L. Prentis is a member of the Trail Committee from the State Historical Society, and has sent out inquiries as to the exact state of things in and around the Rock. Dr. E. K. Laurence, of Pawnee Rock, had written Mrs. Shaw that the Commercial Club of Pawnee Rock had tried to buy five acres, which would include the Rock and a driveway to it. They were prepared to pay \$100 an acre, but



Mrs. T. A. CORDRY,  
State Historian.

the owner, Mr. Unruh, refused this sum, and would not consider less than \$3000 for the five acres. Dr. Laurence suggested that the only way to get hold of it, is for the State to condemn it, or get a cement plant to locate in Pawnee Rock, so there would be no demand for the stone. A letter from Miss Zu Adams, under date of February 21st, states that Prof. C. R. Aldrich, County Superintendent of Barton county, was in her office, and she told him of our efforts to buy Pawnee Rock. He said, 'Why, that is only a hole in the ground.' He also said that the projection known as Pawnee Rock has been cut off thirty or forty feet, and a pit is where it used to be—that the bluff back of the Rock stands devoid of any but a fresh surface,—no names, a rock quarry of considerable value to its owner."

Mrs. Cordry worked faithfully for the Rock, and wrote to many newspapers over the State to have the work noticed, hoping to induce some one to aid in purchasing the old landmark.

Mrs. A. H. Horton, of Topeka, was another Daughter very much interested in the saving of old Pawnee Rock, and at the State Conference held in Parsons in November, 1906, asked the Conference if they were willing to undertake the purchasing and improving of the Rock. The Conference decided that as the Santa Fé Trail-marking was not completed, they could not undertake it.

At the meeting of the Women's Kansas Day Club

in Topeka, in January, 1907, Mrs. Horton proposed the saving of old Pawnee Rock, and told what the D. A. R. of Kansas had already done, and how the Trail-marking was not near enough to completion to enable them to take any more heavy work at present.

On motion of Mrs. Noble L. Prentis, the club then decided to adopt this as their work, and began by appointing a committee to see what the expense would be, and also plan for the raising of the money. Mrs. H. O. Garvey, of Topeka, moved that other women's organizations of the State be asked to help in the work. The motion carried, and the Women's Relief Corps, the Club women, and the W. C. T. U. were asked to help. They all responded nobly. The matter was taken out of the hands of the Daughters of the American Revolution as far as management was concerned, but a committee was appointed in the State D. A. R. to coöperate with the leaders in the movement. Mrs. W. C. Smyser, of Sterling, was the chairman of that committee, and the other members were Miss Grace Meeker, of Ottawa, and Mrs. T. A. Cordry, of Parsons.

The two committees and a committee from the town of Pawnee Rock comprised the Board of Management. Mrs. Smyser wrote to Miss Meeker, under date of May 25th, 1908, as follows:

"This rock has been the dream of many years—to have it beautified and preserved as an old historic spot on the Santa Fé Trail. The Board of Managers visited the Rock on the 28th of April. It is indeed a beautiful place, even as it now appears, just at the head of the

main street of the town. We fully expected to complete the arrangements at this time, but the owner had tacked on several items to the original contract, and we felt that we could not agree to them. We meet again after the return of Mrs. Simmons (Mrs. John Simmons, of Hutchinson, President of the Woman's Kansas Day Club) from the State Federation meeting; so at this time there is nothing settled. I would be very glad to know how much the D. A. R. could raise or the amount each chapter ought to furnish for the Pawnee Rock fund. I took the picture of the bronze tablet with me to the meeting. Mrs. Morgan, our chairman, was much pleased with it, and thought it should be inserted in the Rock."

A meeting of all the members of the committees at Kansas City, Kansas, was called in 1907, when the State Federation of Women's Clubs met there. Mrs. Cordry was the only member present, and went there with five dollars from her home chapter, Parsons, to give to the Pawnee Rock fund. This was the first cash donation to the fund for purchasing the old Rock.

Mrs. Smyser sent circular letters to all of the chapters (nine in number, then) in the fall of 1908, asking for help for the fund, to report before the State Conference to be held in Independence. She wished that the D. A. R. should have a bronze tablet in the face of the Rock. As Mrs. Smyser was not present at the Conference, Mrs. C. W. Bitting, of Wichita, a vice-president of the W. K. D. C., gave a report of the work

and made an earnest plea for the Daughters to aid in this work. She also showed the booklet, "Echoes of Pawnee Rock," which had been compiled for the raising of funds. Mrs. A. H. Horton distributed a circular, telling of the work accomplished. Miss Mecker reported having written a sketch of the Trail-marking for the booklet. The book sold for fifty cents, and proved a valuable help in getting the money needed. The treasurer reported the first five dollars to the fund was given by Hannah Jameson Chapter D. A. R., of Parsons. Topeka had given \$15, Ottawa \$10, Wichita \$25, and Sterling \$10. Other sums were given later. By consent of the executive board and the different chapters, the balance left from the Trail-marking fund, \$23.83, was given to the Pawnee Rock fund. At the suggestion of Mrs. Cordry, the W. K. D. C. had post-card pictures of the Rock made, and these were sold to help the fund. The club women and D. A. R. all over the State sold post-cards, and so, of course, did the members of the W. K. D. C., whose dues also went for the fund.

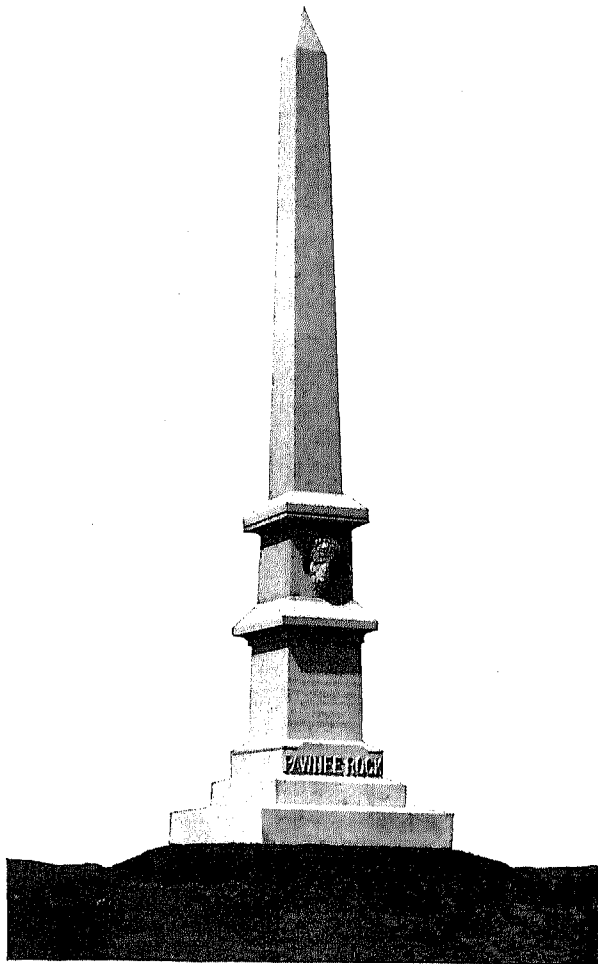
In 1908 the W. K. D. C. contracted with Benjamin P. Unruh, of Pawnee Rock, to raise \$3000 to improve Pawnee Rock and Mr. Unruh was to deed about five acres to the State for a public park, to be open at all times. The monument which Mr. Unruh insisted should be placed on the Rock was to cost not less than \$1,500. Mrs. Smyser wrote thus under date of December 21st, 1908: "I presume Mrs. Simmons told you all about our trip to Pawnee, and the securing of

the deed and the five acres of land including the Rock,—and how happy we felt over the purchase. I have been clapping my hands with joy ever since the 20th of November—the day of the final settlement with Mr. Unruh, the owner of the Rock."

Quite a number of Daughters were present at the meeting of the W. K. D. C. in Topeka, January 29th, 1909. Mrs. Smyser wrote at that time that the D. A. R. had more than enough to purchase a bronze tablet and have it set in the face of the Rock. She stated they had about \$130 in all.

Mr. Unruh's proposition to the W. K. D. C. was this: He would deed the five acres surrounding the Rock and including the Rock, to the State of Kansas as a gift, if the women of Kansas would place thereon improvements to the value of \$3,000. These improvements would include a monument, to cost not less than \$1,500; an avenue 100 feet long, leading from the town of Pawnee Rock to the Rock; a woven-wire fence fifty inches high surrounding the entire property; a well, and a windmill. The avenue on either side and the park of four acres were to be set with shade trees and otherwise beautified, a four-foot cement walk must be laid, leading from the Rock to the town. The face of the Rock, which has been mutilated to some extent, must be restored in mason-work as nearly as possible. He also inserted the condition that the State spend at least one hundred dollars a year on its maintenance or the entire property would revert to him or his heirs.

The citizens of Pawnee Rock added an extra \$1,000



MONUMENT ON PAWNEE ROCK.

improvement. This would make the property when completed, worth about \$7,200.

The work was thoroughly organized, and in 1909 the donation was made to the State of Kansas by the women of Kansas and the Legislature accepted it, and, as a public park, will keep it in repair. The Legislature authorized the Governor to appoint a Board of Management to have charge of the improvements, and see that the monument was duly erected. Mrs. W. C. Smyser, of Sterling, represented the D. A. R. on that board, until the final completion and dedication of the park and monument released her. The entire expense was \$4,700, and the citizens of Pawnee Rock raised \$1,500 of this amount. This was all paid by May 24, 1912, and the dedication was one never to be forgotten. The Daughters' bronze tablet, like all of the special markers, was placed on the face of the Rock.

The monument, of Barre granite, stands about thirty feet high, and is placed on the top of the Rock. The modeling was done by the Italian sculptor, Silvestro Caro, in the employ of C. W. Guild, of Topeka. On a marble base which rests on a rock, is a smaller square which bears the inscriptions. On one side is the name of the former owner of the Rock, Benjamin P. Unruh. On the side facing the town is the dedication: "Presented to the State of Kansas by the Women's Kansas Day Club, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Women's Relief Corps, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union." On this block is raised the shaft, and the genius of the Old World has expressed

in stone the Western ideals. The design is that of Mr. C. W. Guild, of Topeka. On one side of the shaft is carved the head of a mighty buffalo gazing out over the endless plains with melancholy eyes. The design is a medallion, carved in intaglio. On the other side of the shaft is carved a magnificent Indian head in profile. No other emblems would have been appropriate for Old Pawnee Rock, the Guardian of the Trail.

At the dedication ceremonies on May 24, 1912, the D. A. R. were represented by the State Secretary, Mrs. Milo McKee, of Newton. There was an immense crowd present. The State Federation of Women's clubs had been meeting in Larned, and adjourned to the dedication. Mrs. McKee's address was as follows:

"I bring to you today the greetings of more than fifteen hundred Kansas Daughters of the American Revolution who have had their small share in bringing about this memorable occasion. We speak in praise of Massachusetts, who cherishes so tenderly Plymouth Rock, the Minute Men, and Bunker Hill; of Virginia, who has marked so many of her historic spots: but to my mind the winners of the far West fought a more strenuous battle, and the Trail, where Kansas has set up her 'signs' at the cross-roads, with her chain of stones marking the way from border to border, becomes a real battle-field from one end to the other with its unnumbered dead telling the ghastly story. History does not record a battle-field where was shown greater courage, or one which has wrought greater historic

changes to a nation, than this spot upon which we now stand; and its memory should be preserved as one of our great landmarks, that future generations may know of the great struggle to advance our National boundary to the Pacific.

'Count not the cost of honors to the dead.  
 These monuments to mankind, brave and high,  
 Do more than forts or battle-ship  
 To keep our dear-bought liberty.'

"It is told of Henry James, that during one of his visits to England he was asked the question, by an English lady, a member of the nobility: 'Mr. James, if you were not an American, to what nationality would you wish to belong?' With true loyalty to his country and much to the lady's surprise, he replied, 'Madame, if I were not an American, I would wish to be one.' I would supplement that, somewhat, by saying 'If I were not a Kansan, I would wish to be one.'

"To those particularly interested, the task of marking this spot has been a most inspiring one. This beautiful monument will excite an historical interest never before reached. It will promote the study of local history, as the marking of the Old Santa Fé Trail has done.

"The best money a state or organization can expend is that given to the purpose of perpetuating heroic incidents; inculcating patriotism, and local and state pride, resulting in an interested and enthusiastic citizenship: and I am proud to be one of this band of women who have helped in this noble work, trusting

that in the years to come it may bring to mind, not only the early struggle of Kansas, but that body of men now passed beyond, to whose voices these plains reëcho—

“Lest we forget, lest we forget.”

And no more fitting close can the Historian give to the story of the marking of the Old Santa Fé Trail through Kansas, than to say, it is finished,

“Lest we forget, lest we forget.”