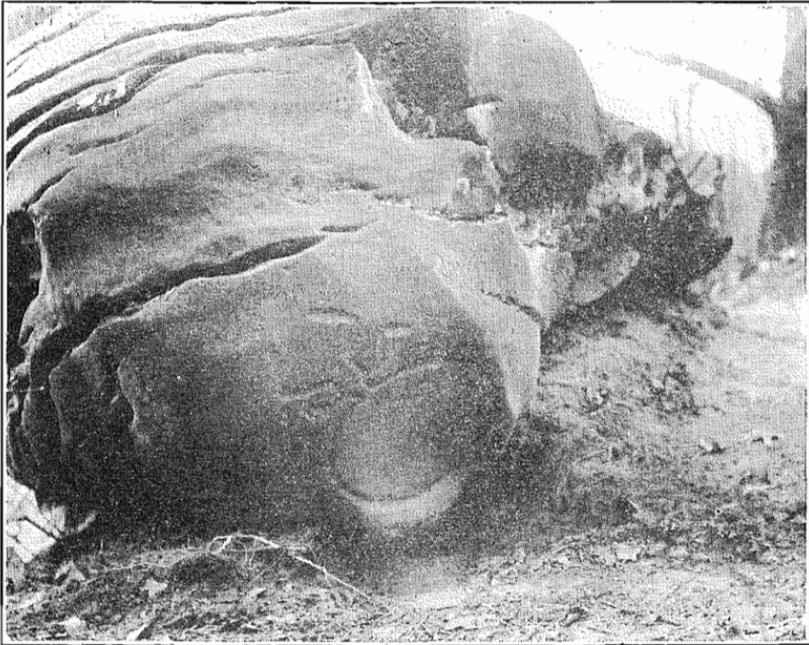

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THE PICTURE ROCKS OF TABLE ROCK

The original "Table Rock" was on the hill about one-half mile east of present Table Rock Village. It was one of the "balancing rocks," frequently found where geological conditions favor—a large, smooth, flat rock, balanced horizontally on a round stone leg much smaller than the top. This rock caught the fancy of the white settlers and was adopted as the name of the first village laid out in 1855. At some date, not fixed with historical accuracy,



Picture Rock with Hieroglyph, Table Rock

the Table Rock pedestal was undermined and the table crashed and disappeared as a conspicuous feature of the landscape.

The forested hill and the rocky ledge fronting the Nemaha river valley still abide. The tract of land, some years ago, became the property of Rev. Peter Van Fleet, a widely known minister of the Methodist Episcopal church, now a resident of Lincoln. The tract is an ideal place for a summer camping or picnic ground. It combines the elements of large and small trees, blue grass sod, rocky hillside and hill top, river front, supply of pure clear water, nearby highway and fine view of the town of Table Rock across the Nemaha river. Under the name of Van Fleet Park the place became popular.

About 1930 Rev. Thomas N. Russell, pastor of the Christian church at Table Rock, led an active boy scout movement. This scout band and leader explored the Nemaha river, woods and hills thoroughly. They camped in the woods, cleared up the underbrush, and made the valley ring with the merry voices and laughter of boyhood.

As the underbrush disappeared and the rocky hillside came into clearer vista the workers began to study the peculiar shapes of the boulders and ledges. Resemblances to animal and human forms appeared. Continuing study of the rocks at different dis-

I showed "Chief Tomo," the guide, some of the pictures taken near Table Rock. He said, "You have been where my ancestors or their relatives lived. Where did you get those?" On being told, he said, "Those markings were made thousands of years ago."

The rain god picture was shown. He explained that there is or was a lake close, that turtles, bats, serpents and toads were chiefs over the lake. "The horned toad is big chief," said he, "because he eats so many insects and if swallowed by a snake, he roots out."

When asked if his ancestors were cannibals, he laughed and said, "You must have found our ceremonial stone on which we give the closing part of the initiation of boys into manhood."

When shown the photograph of the stone that I had thought of as a place of human sacrifices, he laughed again and said, "You should find a cave near. Our folk isolate the boys approaching manhood, give them special food and instructions for a period of months. The same is done at Taos Pueblo. In ancient days, tradition says, they were isolated a year or more. In the closing part of the ancient initiation they were undressed and thrown into a lake. They were then placed on a ceremonial stone like the one of which you have a photograph. Small stones were used to peck on the large one. Dust was created and then rubbed into the pores of the skin. When the young man shone from such treatment holy water taken from a special basin on a rock near and sent by the rain god for the occasion, was sprinkled on them. They were then released as men among men of the tribe."

The cave is the one around which our activities had centered. The basin for holy water had been found and named "Turtle Back Wash Basin."

He said, "You should be able to find lots of images of snakes, bats, frogs, turtles and such, because they played an important part in the lives of the people and are held as sacred by our old people of today."

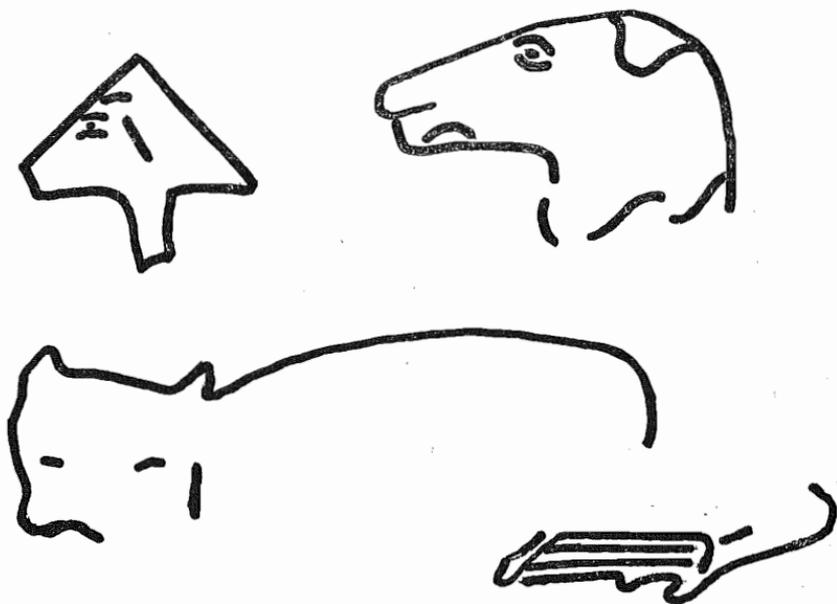
On returning to Table Rock I explained my discovery in the light of my information, to M. B. Johnson. We used his team more than a week clearing brush and dirt from the sand stone cliff.

I shall mention only a few more of my entire findings. Near the cave are several interesting rocks, including one combination that from different points of view is a bear, a toad, reptiles, a flying monster and other things. At the foot of the hill below the cave is one on which the camera revealed the face of a buffalo cow, calf and a male, a ram, a ewe and a lamb, an owl, a man, two wild cats, a fox, an opossum, a woman with a baby on her back, besides pictures of other things. Higher and in the sand stone cliff is a great stone face. I had shown the picture of these (before we had cleared the dirt away from them) to Chief Tomo of Puye.

He said, "The cow protects the calf. The male protects her. The ewe protects the lamb. The ram protects her. The woman protects her baby. The man protects her and the domestic animals from the wild beasts. The great stone face is not a man but a super-man. Our way to think of God is in terms of a good man. So above all, is God."

Space will not permit me to describe the entire eighty acres. For the last year I have been away from Table Rock except when, on June 25th, Monroe Weece of Keota, Oklahoma, Clarence Young of Westville, Oklahoma, and I took you, Dr. Sheldon, to see this wonderfully preserved ancient ceremonial ground.

You know the results of our trip. I certainly appreciate your courtesies, recognizing your standing among men and women



Animal Forms and Faces at Table Rock, from sketches
by Rev. T. N. Russell.

of learning. I have neglected other things but left nothing undone that I could do to find out the meanings attached to this picturesque amphitheater.

Yours for co-operation,
THOS. N. RUSSELL,
B. D., A. M., B. S., of Ed., A. B.,
Gold Medal for Debate. Teacher,
Preacher, Scout Master.

Additional letters from Mr. Russell, dated August 8, and September 26, 1932, give further results of his studies at Van Fleet Park. He is still engaged in clearing up the park and finding new faces and figures in the rocks. Among his visitors this summer are boy scout companies, prominent citizens and an Indian from Oklahoma.

The Oldest Nebraska Newspaper Editor

Veteran Nebraska Editor Lou W. Frazier, of the Fillmore Chronicle, writes a letter to correct the statement made in the last issue of this magazine that A. B. Wood of the Gering Courier is the oldest newspaper publisher in continuous service on one newspaper in Nebraska. The day this letter was received Editor A. B. Wood was present in the Historical Society rooms in the State Capitol. The letter was read to Senator Wood and received his assent. Editor Frazier's statement is here given as an historical statement:

"Years ago it was conceded and publicly declared by the State Press Association that my continuous years of ownership and editing of the same Nebraska newspaper, in the same town, was unequalled. My service on the paper started, in December 1883. I became owner and publisher July 1, 1885—more than forty-seven years ago. There has never been a day since that date that I have not retained the connection, and the newspaper has not missed a single issue."

AN ILIAD OF EARLY NEBRASKA

By Edward Manley

(Henry R. Corbett, of Chicago, was State Superintendent of Nebraska Schools 1895-97. He is a member of Nebraska State Historical Society. From him the following letter, introduction and manuscript has recently been received.)

Chicago, July 14, 1932.

Dear Dr. Sheldon:

Recently I wrote you, transmitting for the archives of the Society, a paper by Mr. Edward Manley entitled, "A Day that is Dead," on early life at Lincoln, Nebraska. I regret now to advise you that Mr. Manley departed this life recently, and I am enclosing herewith a biographical note which might well be attached to his paper.

I might add that I think it quite deserving of your attention whether or not it would be well to find a place in the publication of the Society at an early date, for edited selections from his paper, together with a note regarding the writer.

Sincerely yours,

HENRY R. CORBETT.