

Antoine Barada “Mo shi-no pazhi”. (1807-1887): The Metis Paul Bunyan of Nebraska

Antoine Barada was an American folk hero in the state of Nebraska. Contemporary accounts of his prodigious strength helped establish him as a legend in the mold of Paul Bunyan.

Antoine Barada was born at St. Mary’s across the Missouri River from Omaha. He was the Metis son of Michel de Baradat and Te-gle-ha Hacienda (Laughing Buffalo) an Omaha Indian. Antoine was a man of prodigious strength and great size; he was almost seven feet tall. His father was a government interpreter. While Michel was working 200 miles above Omaha, Lakota Indians stole young Antoine from his parents. Six months later they recovered him by paying a ransom of two ponies. To avoid a repeat of this kidnapping, his parents then sent him to St. Louis to live with his aunt. He went to school there but at age nine returned to the plains with a party of Indians. He later became a guide for pioneers moving west. Antoine’s name, along with those of his siblings, can be found on the Great Nemaha Half-Breed Reservation Allottee List of 1860. In 1856 he moved to the Great Nemaha Half-Breed Tract and set up a trading post there, from which the town of Barada grew.

Antoine married Marcellite Vient, a French woman from St. Louis and they settled in Richardson County just northeast of the present Falls City. The town and precinct were named Barada after Antoine. Barada was always in demand for lifting beams in barn building or lifting wagons from the mud. His strength was convincingly demonstrated at St. Louis when as a young man he became the only person to ever lift a huge stone of 1,700 pounds located at the government arsenal. He name and date of the event were inscribed on the stone for future generations. Antoine was also an excellent marksman, he was able to shoot prairie chickens on the fly from horseback and it was said that with his double-barreled shotgun he never failed to drop two quail from every covey. When he died in 1887 he was buried beside his wife in the Catholic cemetery just east of Barada, the village that bears his name.



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