Christopher P. Bolkan (1854-1949) and his brother Ole P. Bolkan (1849-1931) were some of the first Griggs County settlers. They both came here in 1880 and they were each interviewed in about the 1920’s and provided a lot of information on what this area was like in its earliest days. This information was found in the Myrtle Porterville Collection at the Institute for Regional Studies in Fargo. A future article will be devoted to Myrtle Porterville and her many contributions to Griggs County history.

Both Christian and Ole talked about Pete Grant, a “half-breed” Indian who was traveling with others from Stump Lake to Valley City. Pete and his group stopped and spent the night near the Opheims in 1879 while the Opheims were building their cabin. Pete told the story about a great Indian battle that had taken place 24 years earlier which would have been 1855. Two Indian tribes who were enemies had been out hunting. They met and immediately a battle followed. Twenty-eight graves mark the place where this happened. Pete Grant had been 15 years old at that time and had helped to take care of the ponies for one of the parties.

Ole said that the battle had taken place on the Ben Johnson farm, some miles north. He also said that the 28 graves were very evident at that time (early 1880’s) and he had personally counted all 28 of them.

Ole also believed that Indian graves could be found on top of the hills along the Sheyenne River. He had seen parts of skeletons brought to Cooperstown found on Martin Ueland's farm and also on the Aaretad farm. Ole said that Indians brought remains all the way from the Red River Valley to be buried here. He said their belief was that the body would come to life again. This area was considered a very fine hunting ground and so they buried their dead here where upon awakening they would be happily surrounded by a place that was dear to their hearts and good hunting would be possible.

There will be a variety of writers for the Historical Highlights column including Duna Frigaard, Dave Sayer and Mark Sundlov (and usually we’ll collaborate and edit each other’s work).  All of us are looking forward to receiving valuable input from readers to complement these stories. Please contact the editor or writer with any additional stories, memories or documents and we will put them in the historical file for further study or include them in this column.