One historian said that “history is a never ending argument”. I think that’s true and how it should be.

We had some great response with last week’s article on Butte Michaud and Horse Hill. Jan Steffen sent us six pages of work that the Griggs County historian Allen Osmundson (1926-2008) had done on it in 1998 and 1999. Some of it was published in the Courier. It mostly complements but sometimes contradicts the information in previous articles.

I had mentioned in a previous article that C. P. Bolkan had said that when two Indian tribes met in 1855 that a battle had immediately ensue and the result was 28 graves for the dead warriors. This story was from Pete Grant who was a half-breed Indian about 15 years old and who was watching the horses for one of the war parties.

I think Allen Osmundson adds quite a bit to the details which he apparently got from Dana Wright’s conversation with Anton Olson3 (1881-1942), Bernt Olson2(1855-1933), Ole Olson Bjornstad3 (1820-1895) who had grown up near Horse Hill.

Anton said that the original name was Horse Butte, but that everyone just called it Horse Hill now and that it was named in about 1835. In about 1853 a group of Metis had grazed a herd of horses near the hill, and then a group of full-blooded Indians had tried to stampede and run off these horses, so a battle had ensued, and as a result 28 people of both groups were killed. He also mentions a 15 year old Metis who had been watching the horses, but doesn’t identify him by name.

The most likely motive for stampeding the horses would be to steal them, always a good military maneuver. The details from Anton Olson and C. P. Bolkan don’t really contradict each other and I think Allen Osmundson has a much more complete version.

Anton Olson’s version were that the 28 graves were on the north side of Horse Hill. C. P. Bolkan said that the graves were on the Ben Johnson farm and that he had walked amongst the graves and counted them. Since C. P. Bolkan is giving a first-hand account, it may be more accurate.

Allen Osmundson’s research also led him to investigate Andre Michaux (1746-1802) to see if he could find a relationship to the name of our Butte Michaud. Andre Michaud had explored three fourths of the states east of the Mississippi for the French between 1787 and 1796 with his son Francois Andre Michaux (1770-1855).

No one has found any records yet that either Andre or Francois Michaux were in this area or that Butte Michaud was named after them. The possibility of mixed race children of either Andre or Francois bearing the Michaux surname also needs to be investigated.

Another saying is that historians are always skeptics. I think it’s inevitable that all of us might be skeptical of any version of our history in the “never ending argument”, but it’s always fun to try to discover more and more information about it and to make it public for everyone’s benefit. Please keep sending us any writings or stories that you might have on any topic.