



NEBRASKA BY HEART

Folk Arts • Traditional Arts • Folklife
Curriculum Unit • Grades 6–8
nebraskafolklife.org



Antoine Barada

A Legendary Nebraska Strongman

From the *Daily Tribune*, Hastings, Nebraska; Monday, September 8, 1975

Antoine Barada----of Paul Bunyan mold Pioneer was half giant, half legend.

FALLS CITY, Neb. (AP) - One of Nebraska's first pioneers was Antoine Barada-half French; half Indian; half giant; half legend. Antoine Barada was a man of prodigious strength of the mold of Paul Bunyan and Febold Feboldson, but there was one difference. He was real.

Barada was born at St. Mary's near Fort Calhoun, across the Missouri River from Omaha, in 1807. His father, Michael Barada, was from France. His mother, Laughing Buffalo, was a full-blooded member of the Omaha tribe of Indians. The elder Barada worked for the United States government as an interpreter.



Antoine Barada on the main street of Barada, Nebraska, Circa 1880

Was Stolen



Portrait of Barada as a young man

As a youngster, Antoine Barada was stolen from his parents at a time they were stationed at Fort Lisa on the Missouri, some 200 miles above Omaha, and taken to live with the Sioux. Ransom was demanded and Antoine was recovered some six months later upon the payment of two ponies to the Sioux.

Fearful of a repeat of the kidnapping, Michael Barada sent the boy to St. Louis to live with an aunt. In St. Louis, Antoine Barada received his education. But he soon returned to the plains with a party of Indians when he was only nine years old, and remained in this area as a guide to the pioneers. He married a French woman from St. Louis, Marcellite Vient, and settled in Richardson County some 15 miles northeast of the present site of Falls City, where the village of Barada and the precinct of Barada were named after him.

Tales of Antoine Barada's strength are many. He was known as a huge man, measuring well over six feet tall and guessed as close to seven feet by many-a giant of a man for that day and age.

Called Upon for Help

It was Barada who always was called upon to help pioneers build their barns, because he would hold heavy beams in place while they were fastened down. It was Barada the farmers called upon to help load their hogs for market. He needed no loading chute, he picked the hogs up one at a time and gently deposited them in the wagon. It was Barada who was called upon for a variety of tasks requiring strength, from minor jobs to lifting wagons from the mud.

Proof of Barada's strength was demonstrated to the folks of St. Louis when he was a young man. At the government arsenal there, he became the only man ever to lift a huge stone, which weighed 1,700 pounds. His name, the date of the feat and the weight were inscribed on the stone for future generations.

Not only was he strong, he was also an excellent marksman. His prowess with the gun dated from the time when a good shot meant food on the table and a well-aimed bullet was the difference between life and starvation. It is said that he was able to shoot prairie chickens on the fly from horseback. And later, when shotguns became popular in Nebraska, his double-barrel dropped two quail from every covey. And, the story goes, he never shot a bird on the ground.

Barada died in 1887 and is buried alongside his wife in the Catholic cemetery just east of Barada, the village that bears his name.

More information on Antoine Barada is included in folklorist Louise Pound's book ***Nebraska Folklore***.



Antoine Barada and his wife,
Marcellite Vient Barada.
Circa 1885