

Mary Gale, Wao-Winchtcha, “One Woman” (LaFlesche). (1823-1909)

Mary Gale was the Metis daughter of military officer and surgeon, Dr. John Gale and his Omaha wife, Nicomi (Voice of the Waters) an Omaha-Ioway-Otoe woman who was the daughter of an Ioway chief. At a young age Gale sent his daughter to be educated at St. Louis. After a brief stay she returned to Jean Pierre Cabanné’s Otoe Post to be with her parents. In 1827, Dr. Gale was transferred. Forced to leave his wife and daughter behind, he made provisions for their future by creating a trust, which he placed in the control of his friend Peter Sarpy, a trader with the American Fur Company who operated near Fort Atkinson. Four years later, in 1831, Sarpy married Nicomi. The couple had no children of their own but Sarpy did care for Mary. In her younger years she was known by the Indian name Wao-Winchtcha, in her old age people called her Hinnaugsnew (Old Woman).



Hinnaugsnew (Nebraska State Historical Society)

In 1846 Mary Gale married Metis trader Joseph LaFlesche. Joseph was employed by Peter Sarpy at his trading post, and this is where he met Mary Gale. They had five children: Suzette (1854-1903), Rosalie (1861-1900), Marguerite (1862-1945), Susan (1865-1915), and Louis who died in childbirth. Mary Gale was the mother of Louis (1848-60), Susette (1854-1903), Rosalie (1861-1900), Marguerite (1862-1945), and Susan (1865-1915). All of the girls went on to become accomplished and famous. Joseph refused to abandon all Omaha traditions, and for a while he maintained three wives—Mary Gale; Tainne; and a third woman, whom he took as a wife in 1862. Tainne probably died in April 1883 and Mary Gale died on February 28, 1909.

Daughters of Mary Gale (Metis) and Joseph La Flesche (Metis)

Marguerite LaFlesche, (Diddock). (1862-1945)

Marguerite was born on the Omaha Reservation. Marguerite was educated at the reservation school then attended the Elizabeth Institute for Young Ladies in New Jersey.

Her sister Susette accompanied her there. She completed her course in 1882 and returned to the reserve to take a job teaching at the Mission School. In 1884, Marguerite and Susan returned to the East and enrolled in the Hampton (Virginia) Normal and Agricultural Institute, a school set up for Blacks and American Indians. She studied in the Normal course for one year, returned home, but re-entered school in 1886 and graduated in 1887.

After graduation she began teaching on the Omaha Reservation. While at school she had met fellow student Charles Felix Picotte Jr., a Sioux. Charles was now teaching at the Yankton Agency and in late 1888 they married. Picotte left Yankton to join his wife in Nebraska. Joseph LaFlesche died in 1888 and Charles took on management of the family farm while Marguerite continued to teach. During the winter of 1888-89, Picotte accompanied his sister-in-law Suzette Tibbles and her husband to the Pine Ridge reserve and acted as their interpreter as they reported on the Ghost Dance Movement and the later violence at Wounded Knee. In 1891, he returned to the Omaha Reservation but his health was failing and he died the next year.

Marguerite continued to teach and in June of 1895, she married Walter Diddock who was in charge of the farm and was teaching agriculture to the boys from the school. Together they reared five children.



Susan La Flesche Picotte, her sister Marguerite and their husbands, brothers Charles and Henry Picotte, early 1900s

Marguerite was active as the tribal interpreter and participated in the federal government negotiations leading up to the end of the trust period in 1910. She worked to bring library facilities to the area and she served on the Election Board once the Indians gained the right to vote under the Nineteenth Amendment. She died in 1945 in the Memorial hospital named after her sister Dr. Susan Picotte.

Rosalie LaFlesche, (Farley). (1861-1900)

Rosalie was born on the Omaha Reservation. Rosalie was educated at the reservation school. Whereas three of her sisters attended post-secondary schools in the East, Rosalie stayed on the reserve.

Rosalie and her husband Ed Farley her father and sisters other than Susette became active in the movement for self-government for the Omaha's. A government that would be independent of both the State of Nebraska and the federal government. Susette and her husband, Thomas Tibbles were in opposition as they were advocates for assimilation.

To help the band become independent, Rosalie and Ed became managers of a large tract of unallotted land that they leased to white cattlemen to generate revenue. They also managed the allotted lands of some Indians who were not interested in working their own property. Rosalie handled most of the business, negotiations with government and tribe, individual accounts, and contracts. She vigorously defended the tribe's interests against white squatters and land speculators. The self-government issue was settled in 1887 when the Omaha's were made citizens and came under State jurisdiction.

Susan LaFlesche, (Picotte). (1865-1915)

Susan was born on the Omaha Reservation. Susan was educated at the reservation school after which she and Marguerite followed their elder sister Susette to the Elizabeth Institute for Young Ladies in New Jersey. She took three years there then returned to teach at the Presbyterian Mission school. In 1884, Marguerite and Susan returned to the East and enrolled in the Hampton (Virginia) Normal and Agricultural Institute, a school set up for Blacks and American Indians. She graduated with honours in 1886 and entered the Women's Medical College in Philadelphia the following October. She again excelled and graduated at the top of her class in 1889. She thus earned the distinction of being the first Native American woman to become a doctor of medicine.



Upon completion of a four-month internship she returned to the Omaha Reservation and worked as a physician at the local school. Shortly thereafter she was appointed as doctor for the entire Omaha Agency (1889-1893). The work included advising, teaching and interpreting and was overwhelming. In 1893 she took leave to care for her infirm mother. Additionally, she was in ill health herself. In spite of this she announced that she intended to marry Henry Picotte, the brother of Charles Picotte, her sister's husband. They married in 1894 and settled at Bancroft, Nebraska, where he farmed and she practiced medicine. They had two sons, Carl and Pierre. Her husband died in 1905 and she took a subsequent appointment as missionary to the Omaha on behalf of the Presbyterian Board of Home

Missions, in addition to her medical practice. On top of this, she became politically active and, in 1910, headed a delegation to Washington to address the Secretary of the Interior on citizenship for the Omaha's. Meanwhile she advocated for better health practices and preventive health care. She campaigned for a hospital and the facility opened in 1913. She was an inspiration to countless young Omaha's until her death in 1915 .

Susette LaFlesche, (Tibbles). (1854-1903)

In the 1880s, Susette LaFleshe writing under the name "Bright Eyes," published what is believed to be the first non-legend short story written by a Metis. The story, "Nedawi" was published in *St. Nicholas*, a children's magazine. Susette (Insta Theamba or Bright Eyes) was born on the Omaha Reservation, the Metis daughter of Joseph LaFlesche and Mary Gale. Joseph LaFlesche was the son of a Ponca mother and a French trapper-trader father. His mother was the sister of Ponca chief Standing Grizzly Bear. Susette's mother, Mary Gale, was the daughter of military officer and surgeon, Dr. John Gale and his Omaha wife, Nicomi (Voice of the Waters).

Susette was educated at the reservation school until it closed in 1869. In 1872, she attended the Elizabeth Institute for Young Ladies in New Jersey. Her sister Marguerite accompanied her there. She was an excellent student and excellent writer; some of her school essays were published in a New York newspaper before she graduated in 1875. She returned to teach at the reservation but could not obtain a position until 1877. She continued at the school for three years.

The next years were distressing ones for the Indians. In 1878, the neighbouring Poncas were forcibly removed to Indian Territory in Oklahoma. This alarmed the Omaha's because they felt they would be next, further they had many relatives among the Poncas. In the winter of 1878, Chief Standing Bear led his group back to their traditional home on the Niobara River. He was arrested and brought for trial in 1879. Susette took up the Ponca cause and offered expert testimony at his trial. This appearance and her subsequent reports on the awful conditions among the Ponca people started her career as an orator, writer and advocate of Indian rights.

During 1878 and 1879, Susette and her half-brother Francis went East with Standing Bear to dramatize the plight of the Poncas to the public. Thomas Henry Tibbles, assistant editor of the *Omaha Herald*, organized this tour. For six months they spoke to civic groups, Indian Reform organizations and literary clubs in America's largest cities from New York to Chicago. Susette became the star of the tour and her fame as an orator spread. In December of 1880, she testified before the US Senate on the removal of the Ponca. Her friendship with Tibbles led to marriage after his wife died. She continued to work for Indian citizenship (they did not have the right to vote) and land rights, they also lectured in Scotland and England. Susette was correspondent for *The Omaha World Herald* and contributed to her husband's populist paper, *The Independent*. She continued her advocacy for Indian people right until her death in 1903.

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