

BATTALION OF VOLUNTEERS.



COMMANDED BY MAJ. WM. WILLIAMS.

RAISED FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE FRONTIERS AND THE RESCUE OF THE SETTLERS.
ON HEARING OF THE MASSACRE OF THE INHABITANTS OF SPIRIT LAKE, BY
THE SIOUX INDIANS, AND THEIR THREATENING ATTITUDE TOWARDS
THE SETTLERS ON THE WEST BANK OF THE DES MOINES
RIVER.

This is to Certify, That *Orlando C. Howe*... a *Private*
in Company *B.*..... of the said Battalion volunteered his services on the.....
24th day of *March*, 1857, and faithfully served *16* days in
said Expedition, undergoing all the severe trials and privations incident thereto, at all times, under
all circumstances performing his duty and conducting himself as a soldier and a gentleman.
He is therefore honorably discharged.

John F. Doucette
Captain of Company *B.*

Fort Dodge, Iowa, April *20th*, A. D. 1857.

Facsimile of official certificate of Orlando C. Howe's service in
the Spirit Lake Relief Expedition of March 24-April 10, 1857, sent
to Professor F. I. Herriott by Mrs. W. H. (Helen Howe) Cooke
and Mrs. E. F. (Evelyn Howe) Porter of Lynn Haven, Florida.

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THE AFTERMATH OF THE SPIRIT LAKE MASSACRE MARCH 8-15, 1857

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(Continued)

X

Not the least interesting of the developments in the aftermath of the Spirit Lake Massacre were the notable differences in the conduct of the territorial authorities of Minnesota and that of the state authorities of Iowa in respect of their public efforts to secure the recovery of the women taken captive by Inkpaduta's band.

The territory of Minnesota was not as much interested in the catastrophe between the Okobojis as was the state of Iowa if the residential distribution of the victims should determine public concern and limit public effort. But from the outset and throughout the time, when the fate of the four women taken away by Inkpaduta was not known, the authorities of Minnesota were much more alert and forward in their active efforts on behalf of the victims than were the high officials of the state of Iowa. The contrast was rather striking and no one seems to have noted the fact. Mrs. Sharp, one of the victims and one of the notable beneficiaries of the difference, gives the details at length but does not indicate that she appreciated the significance of the difference.

When the Christian Indians, Mak pe ya ha ho ton, Sounding Heavens, and Se ha ho ta, Grey Foot, on their own initiative, journeyed to Inkpaduta's camp on the Skunk Lake and negotiated (May 6, 1857) for the sale of Mrs. Wm. Marble, they delivered her into the hands of the missionaries, Dr. S. R. Riggs and Dr. T. S. Williamson, of the Hazelwood Mission on the Yellow Medicine.⁴⁷ The latter immediately placed her in the

⁴⁷T. R. Riggs, *Mary and I*, p. 139.

custody of Charles E. Flandrau, Indian agent for the Sioux. The Indians asked for a reward for their efforts and outlays. Mr. Flandrau on his own initiative advanced them \$500 each on May 22 and did so on his confidence that the territorial legislature would sanction his act and reimburse him.⁴⁸

Agent Flandrau was either very courageous and philanthropic and a keen forecaster of popular reactions, or very reckless. He paid \$500 outright from his own private funds. The balance demanded he was hard put to find or assure. Conferring with Dr. Riggs in his perplexity they agreed to an extraordinary proceeding, if not a highly presumptuous undertaking, namely the issuance of what they took the liberty of calling a territorial bond whereby the territory was held to pay the payee the sum of \$500.⁴⁹ It was a perfect sample of scriptural faith, the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

Mr. Flandrau was fully justified in his faith that the public would sanction and endorse his act, for without his knowledge or suggestion the legislature of Minnesota had passed on May 15 an act appropriating the sum of \$10,000, or so much thereof as might be necessary to expend, to secure the recovery of the four women held captive by Inkpaduta. Those in authority, the governor in particular, were not hampered by a tangle of "strings" tied about its expenditure. They were at liberty to act instantly and as their wisdom deemed best.⁵⁰

Mrs. Marble immediately upon her appearance at the mis-

⁴⁸Chas. E. Flandrau, *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, Vol. III, pp. 395-96; Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*, pp. 195-96.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰*Laws of Minnesota*, Extra Session, 1857, Chapter LXXXIX. The title of the act and portions of its sections may prove interesting:

A Bill to Appropriate Money to be Expended in Procuring the Release of certain Female Captives now in Bondage among the Indians.

Section 1. . . . Ten thousand dollars, said appropriation to be drawn from the Treasury upon the draft of the governor in such sums and at such times as he may deem proper.

Section 2. It shall be the duty of the governor of the Territory to employ, equip in such persons, and in such manner as he may deem proper to be dispatched into the Indian country under the direction of such persons as the governor may select, for the purpose of finding the Indians holding certain female captives and of effecting the release of said captives either by purchase, strategem, or otherwise in such manner as not to endanger the lives of said captives (if to be avoided) and to provide for their speedy return to the Settlement.

Section 3. This act shall take effect from and after its passage.

Approved May 15, 1857.

S. Medary,
Governor.

If the governor desired complete, unrestricted discretion in the exercise of his executive office in the emergency he was certainly accorded royal discretion by the *Solons* of Minnesota,

sion informed those organizing for the rescue of the remaining women that Mrs. Thatcher had been murdered. Agent Flandrau and Dr. Riggs, because of the reward paid the rescuers of Mrs. Marble, had little trouble in securing offers of assistance in the recovery of Miss Gardner. Three mission Indians were picked to accomplish the task—Che tan ma za, Iron Hawk, Ho ton ho wash ta, or Beautiful Voice, and Ma za in te ma ni, or Man-who-shoots-metal-as-he-walks.⁵¹ The last named holds high place in Minnesota's annals as John-Other-Day, justly famed for his notable services to the whites in the horrible days of the outbreak of 1862 when Little Crow and Inkpaduta wreaked their vengeance on a thousand whites.

In outfitting the three rescuers Agent Flandrau pushed his personal credit with the post traders for the purchase of horses, wagon, clothes, etc., to the amount of \$888.37. Upon the return of Miss Gardner he paid the three Indians \$1,200, or \$400 each for their services.

When the rescue party reached the mission station Mrs. Sharp informs us that they found themselves in the midst of intense excitement, "a scene of wild confusion met us," because the Indians had not received their annuities according to government promise and the Indians were in a state of ugly suspicion that needed but a little jar to bring on a violent reaction.⁵² That she was not imagining things the conditions causing the outbreak five years later may suggest.

The generosity of the people of Minnesota did not stop with the formal appropriation of public funds by their territorial government. The warm-hearted people of St. Paul subscribed and presented to Mrs. Marble before she left \$1,000, and to Miss Gardner \$500.⁵³

Summing up the various outlays: We have the disbursements from the territorial treasury partly in reimbursing Major Flandrau and Dr. Riggs for their advances at least \$1,888.37; then \$1,200, the amount of the rewards to Miss Gardner's rescuers; and finally the \$1,500 in popular donations to the two victims of Inkpaduta. There should be added the various minor sums given to Miss Gardner by Mrs. Barnard E. Bee at Fort Ridge-

⁵¹Charles E. Flandrau, *Collections of the Min. Hist. Soc.*, Vol. III, pp. 395-96; Sharp, *History of Spirit Lake Massacre*, pp. 195-96.

⁵²Sharp, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-51.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 266.

ly;⁵⁴ a popular donation to her at Shakopee;⁵⁵ and the expenditures for sending Col. Lee with Miss Gardner to Fort Dodge. Altogether the people of Minnesota expended much more than \$4,500 and the amount in the conclusion probably approximated \$5,000 on behalf of Iowa's victims of Inkpaduta's hatred of the whites.

The forwardness and generosity of the people of Minnesota may be explained in two ways, or upon the basis of two hypotheses. First, the natural spontaneity of the humanity of pioneers who act instantly and generously in cases of sorry need that has its impetus in the hospitality of the desert and the good will for one's kind bred by the privations of the frontier. Or, second, that generosity may have been due to some misapprehension as to the area of their responsibility—and strangely this conclusion is rather strikingly suggested by Agent Flandrau himself.

In the course of his chapter giving an account of "The Indian War of 1862-1864, and the Following Campaigns in Minnesota" which he contributed to the official publication of that state entitled: *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars—1861-1865* Judge Flandrau in referring to the Spirit Lake Massacre says:

The first Indian trouble that occurred in Minnesota was at Spirit Lake, in the southwestern corner of the state, and is known as the Ink-pa-du-ta^{55a} war. In March, 1857, Ink-pa-du-ta's band had a quarrel with some settlers on the Rock river, in the northwestern part of Iowa. In consequence of this they came north into Minnesota and killed a good many people at Spirit Lake and Springfield, on the headwaters of the Des Moines,—about forty two in all,—and carried into captivity four women—Mrs. Marble, Mrs. Noble, Mrs. Thatcher and Miss Gardner.⁵⁶

It is quite clear that Judge Flandrau in the foregoing assumed, or wrote in the belief, that the Spirit Lake settlement was actually, or substantially, within the territory of Minnesota, to the southernmost boundaries of which his official jurisdiction extended. In his oft quoted official report to the commissioner of Indian affairs upon the outbreak he makes special mention of the program and activities of the Red Wing Land

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 257.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 258.

^{55a}In the portions of this article quoted we have allowed the style as to hyphens, capitals, etc., to remain as in the originals.

⁵⁶*Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*, 1861-1865, p. 729.

Company under the management of Hon. Wm. Freeborn of Red Wing. Dr. Harriott's letters, however, indicate that he was fully aware that the company's selection of the town site of Spirit Lake was eight miles south of the Minnesota-Iowa state line; but all of their ordinary reckonings were in terms of Mankato, Red Wing, Shakopee, St. Paul, Minnesota.⁵⁷ Fifteen years later Judge Flandrau in his notable address already quoted, put the matter exactly as it was probably in the popular consciousness:

The country between the Minnesota river at Ridgely and Spirit Lake was, at that day an utter wilderness without an inhabitant. In fact none of us knew where Spirit Lake was, except that it lay about due south of the fort, at a distance of from 80 to 100 miles. . . .⁵⁸

Here again the inference seems clear that he and his companions in the march to Spirit Lake, or Springfield as it proved to be, assumed that Spirit Lake was within his territorial jurisdiction, and was not within the limits of the state of Iowa.

However one may explain the generous course of Minnesota, it is nevertheless strange that none of the annalists or historians of Iowa has indicated his appreciation of the notable generosity of the Minnesotans, and the equally noteworthy lack of similar action, or even suggestion of similar effort, on the part of Iowans. Neither Governor James W. Grimes in his last biennial message submitted to the General Assembly of Iowa on January 12, 1858, nor Governor Ralph P. Lowe in his inaugural, the next day, refers to Minnesota's instant and effective efforts on behalf of Iowa's women held captive by the Sioux outlaws. Mrs. Sharp, one of the two beneficiaries of Minnesota's largess, barely mentions the legislative appropriation, although she acknowledges the generosity of the other donors mentioned.⁵⁹

The mere fact of Minnesota's legislative action is noted by some chroniclers, but its significance did not seem to be discerned. This comment applies to 1857-58 as well as to later years. The explanation is to be found probably in several facts.

⁵⁷*Ante*, p. 283.

⁵⁸Flandrau, *Coll. Minn. Hist. Soc.*, Vol. III, p. 390.

The non-appreciation of the distances and confusion of names and places then and later are strikingly illustrated in President W. W. Folwell's volume prepared for the "American Commonwealth Series" in 1908. He has Spirit Lake located in Henderson County (*sic*); Springfield in Martin County (*sic*); the commander of Fort Ridgely was Captain Alexander Bee (*sic*); and one of the captive women held by Inkapaduta was a Mrs. Markle (*sic*). See his *Minnesota, The North Star State*, p. 146.

⁵⁹Sharp, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-67.

Minnesota's territorial legislature was in session and Iowa's General Assembly did not convene for nearly a year. The national government was specifically responsible for the protection of the public against the depredations of Indians and every one probably naturally assumed that Minnesota would be reimbursed for her outlays, as was the case in major part. Nevertheless, the spontaneous instant action of Minnesota in contrast with the inertia and reluctant action of the legislature of Iowa in the matter of claims of the members of the Relief Expedition has not received the favorable mention it justly deserved.

XI

Accounts of the Spirit Lake Expedition by its own members, written either during or immediately following their notable march are rare. Mr. Harris Hoover, nearly six months after, gave the public what almost purported to be a daily diary or journal of the Expedition.⁶⁰ Col. L. P. Lee of New Britain, Connecticut, who was asked by Governor Medary of Minnesota to attend Miss Abbie Gardner from St. Paul to Fort Dodge on her release from captivity, published later in 1857 what he called a history of the Massacre, based on notes of his interviews with Miss Gardner; but he gives us a curious melange in which what might have been a valuable first-hand narrative is made almost futile by tawdry efforts at melodrama, hasty, ill considered assertion and a superabundance of literary quotations.⁶¹

Major William Williams' official report of April 12, 1857, to Governor Grimes, already referred to, has been generally assumed to be the first definite first-hand report of the experiences of the Relief Expedition. But since the publication of the foregoing sections of this narrative I have come upon a letter written by a member of the expedition at Fort Dodge on April 9, two days before Major Williams returned to his home city. In its issue of April 17 *The Weekly Oskaloosa Herald* contains some extracts from a letter written to Mrs. N. Stephens of Oskaloosa by her husband, who states that he was a member of the expedition, starting from Fort Dodge on March 24, and returning with his company on April 9. As a contemporary document it takes rank with the affidavit of Messrs. Howe et al, the address

⁶⁰*The Hamilton Freeman*, August 27, 1857.

⁶¹Lee, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*, etc. (1857). *Ante*, pp. 248-49.

to Governor Grimes, and Major Williams' report. It contains some items not given by others and with some omissions is reproduced:

INDIAN ATROCITIES IN IOWA

We are indebted to Mrs. N. Stephens, of this place, for the privilege of copying a few extracts, relative to this subject, from a letter written by her husband, and dated at Fort Dodge on April 9th:

"I returned yesterday, near night, from a fifteen days' trip up the Minnesota line, on an Indian hunt. . . . [Here follows a brief account of Howe and Parmenter's discovery of the Massacre and bringing the news to Fort Dodge.]

"It was two weeks ago last Sunday that they came in town. Every effort was made to raise men, and on Tuesday morning near one hundred men, all armed and equipped were ready to march. . . . Time was measured off at ten days, and provisions provided accordingly. The severity of the weather, and the terrible condition of the roads, prevented us from making more than half of the distance per day that we supposed; consequently our supplies fell short, and we had to travel on half rations. We were not well supplied with tents, consequently there was much suffering. . . .

"We all held up very well under the excitement, until we got within about twenty miles, when our angry passions were aroused to a very high pitch. We met some twenty persons who had some three days before been attacked by the Indians, at Springfield, Minn., twenty miles from where we then were. . . . One man had his arm broken with a ball; another shot in the side; a young lady shot through the shoulder; a little boy, shot through the head. Many of their friends were slain. One little boy about the size of Lilly (nine years old) had his father, and mother, and I believe three brothers and sisters, killed. This little fellow, while the Indians were killing the other members of the family, slipped out of doors and hid behind a log, until night and then made his escape. A smart little fellow surely. At this point, we gave a portion of our scanty stock of provisions to those flying to the settlements. They had nothing to eat, and had had nothing for some three days. There were six women, ten children and five men. . . . After seeing these persons on their way, we moved on as fast as possible, expecting soon to meet the red skins, as we supposed they would pursue the persons we met. But to our sad disappointment, nearly to the close of our last day's march, news came to us that the soldiers from Fort Ridgeway [sic] had been there and driven the Indians away, and buried the dead, so that we had to return without achieving any very great victory over the Indians. . . ."

The name of "N. Stephens" does not appear among the members of the Fort Dodge companies, A and B, as they are listed on the west plaque of the Spirit Lake Monument; and if he was

not the "S. C. Stevens," second lieutenant of Company B, then he was a member of the expedition not heretofore mentioned or included in the roster of Major Williams' command.

Mr. Stephens' letter, so far as published, does not give us all of the details we should like to have. The omitted portions might enlarge our desired data, but they probably related to purely personal matters or were of no public concern. He does give us, however, sundry important facts. First, the leaders contemplated that the expedition would not last more than two weeks, whereas it approximated three weeks. Second, the number of the fugitives from Springfield totaled twenty, one larger than most the latter-day accounts indicate. Third, the famished condition of the fugitives severely taxed the commissariat of Major Williams' command, but despite their own dire need they divided with the famished fugitives; but of such are strong states compounded.

One of the natural and sorry results of such a catastrophe as overwhelmed the settlers between the Okobojis is displayed on the editorial page of the *Fort Dodge Sentinel* of April 23:

INFORMATION WANTED

There is now in this city, at the house of Major Williams a little boy about 8 years old who escaped the bloody massacre by the Indians at Springfield, M. T., on the 27th of March last, and who was brought to town by the volunteers who went up to the rescue. He says his name is John Sidman Stewart.

*

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Also a young lady, about 16 or 17 years of age, named Elizabeth Gardner, whose family were also murdered, she only escaping the horrid fate. She says her father's name was Roland Gardner. . . .

Young Master Stewart was probably the "smart little fellow" mentioned by Mr. Stephens. The young lady was the sister of Miss Abbie Gardner. She had gone on a visit to Springfield, and thus escaped capture or death. She soon became Mrs. W. R. Wilson of Hampton, Franklin County.

In Major Williams' official report of April 12 he promised Governor Grimes a second report. That report, like the first one, is not to be found in the State Archives, but Governor Grimes permitted *The Hawkeye and Telegraph* of Burlington to print the letter, in which Major Williams makes his report. It is not long, but its details are interesting for they indicate very

clearly some of the immediate reactions of the Massacre at the Lakes. It is brief, pithy and pointed in its specifications, as the Major was wont to be in his comments or reports; and I reproduce it entire, as it appears in the columns of the *Weekly Ottumwa Courier* of May 7, 1857:

ANOTHER LETTER FROM MAJOR WILLIAMS—LATEST
FROM THE FRONTIER

By the politeness of Governor Grimes we are permitted to copy another letter from Major Williams, conveying the latest intelligence from the scene of the late Indian massacre.

It is proper to say that Governor Grimes has taken steps to furnish the required arms and ammunition.

Fort Dodge April 4 [24?], 1857^{61a}

To his Excellency, James W. Grimes

Sir—In my former communication, made immediately upon our return from the Expedition to Emmet and Clay counties to relieve the settlers and repel the invasions of the Sioux Indians, I stated that I would soon make a further report to you.

Most of our time since our return has been taken up in providing for the wounded, suffering and destitute rescued, and in searching for the bodies of some of our own men, who perished in a snow storm.

Since our return we have been over run by the settlers, who have rushed in upon us, abandoning the whole country north.

We are doing everything in our power to restore confidence and stop the excitement.

We are keeping out our scouting parties to watch the movements of the savages, who have given new cause for alarm, since our return. Two parties of Indians have recently appeared on the east branch of the Des Moines river, near the state line, in Kossuth county, about 40 strong. Another party of about like number has appeared on the west fork of that river. Two of the nine scouts sent out on the east branch are missing, and are supposed to be killed. Two settlers who had abandoned their homes at Big Island Grove, and who had returned to hunt up their cattle are also missing.

It is very evident from what has taken place that a great portion of the Sioux, if not all, are determined to be hostile, and sweep off the settlers, throughout the Northwest portion of our State and the Southwestern portion of Minnesota.

We labor under great difficulty from the want of arms and ammunition. We can raise the men, but we cannot arms.

At Algona in Kossuth County, and at Dakota City in Humboldt county, the citizens are fortifying.

Meetings are holden and committees appointed to address your Ex-

^{61a}Since Major Williams' letter was here set up I have found it in the *Democratic Press* of Chicago of May 5 with a date of "April 24."

cellency and also the General Government upon the subject of aid to defend this portion of the State.

I herewith enclose to you one of our papers which contains a full account of what has taken place.

Any order you may think proper to give will be carried out by me. I have done all in my power and shall continue to do so.

very respectfully W. Williams

Major Williams' letter to Governor Grimes calls for little comment. He repeats very explicitly his confident and persistent opinion that Inkpaduta's attack upon the settlers at the Lakes was part of a general attack upon our entire northwestern frontier. He asserts the presence of other Sioux war parties in the war zone and the death of other settlers subsequent to the Massacre of March 8. The widespread terror is recorded without qualification. The *Fort Dodge Sentinel* of April 27 contains an interesting letter that was an appeal for aid in what the writer felt to be an impending attack upon Algona and Irvington in Kossuth County. I give it as it was reprinted in the *Weekly Ottumwa Courier* of May 7, 1857:

Irvington, April 23d, 1857

Messrs Williams, Duncombe, and others,
Gentlemen:

Mr. W. H. Ingham writes us that there are 400 warriors, with Red Wing at their head, in the neighborhood of Spirit Lake, and advises us to prepare as fast as possible.

We are fortifying here at Algona. We want arms and ammunition and perhaps men.

We wish you to notify the people at Webster City of our situation and wants.

Yours in haste
(signed) George E. Smith

Mr. White, editor of the *Sentinel*, assures his readers that Messrs. Ingham and Smith are both "well known here and regarded as good men, upon whom every reliance may be placed." Five years later, after the attack on New Ulm in August, 1862, Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood gave Mr. Ingham a general commission to organize the inhabitants of the northwestern counties, and to "exercise any power I could exercise if I were present" in safeguarding the exposed settlements against Little Crow's miscellaneous war bands.

XII

The first natural reaction in the aftermath of the Massacre between the Okobojis was first, of course, a widespread general terror that a similar horror might occur at any moment in view of the fact that Inkpaduta and his murdering outlaws had escaped scot free from pursuit and punishment. During 1857-58-59 and 1860 the public mind in the country at large and in the state was chiefly concerned with the violent discussions of the slavery question, the Fugitive Slave Law, "Bleeding Kansas," John Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry, and the presidential election. The Civil War which soon followed naturally monopolized both public and academic interest.

Few of the state's latter-day chroniclers have noted the serious concern of the pioneers in northwestern Iowa and southwestern Minnesota between 1857 and 1861 lest their persons and property be attacked by the Indians. The local contemporary press, however, displays such concern, especially in the terrain affected. At times the displays suggest that the pioneers were in a state of "jumpy nerves" and in consequence easily imagined that they saw "Injuns" and heard "war-whoops." One latter-day chronicler tells us that the settlers of Kossuth County were so nervous that "sandhill cranes, flapping their wings and taking their customary sun dance on the distant hills, were frequently mistaken for the approaching Sioux, and prairie fires imagined to be the camp fires of that dread enemy."^{61b} But their nervous dread was clearly manifest and real, and sundry occurrences demonstrated that they had substantial reasons for their anxiety and fears.

The terrifying effect of the first reports of the destruction at the Lakes, and of rumored new Indian forays, is vividly exhibited in a few lines of a letter written at Fort Dodge, April 29, by George E. Spencer to Orlando C. Howe, who after his return to Fort Dodge from the Relief Expedition to the Lakes had gone to his old home at Newton.

Fort Dodge, April 29th.

Friend Howe

We leave here this morning for Spirit Lake. Parmenter & Wheelock^{61c} have 12 men & our party swells it to 20. . . . We shall have the County organized, [and] as soon as possible the Seat of Justice located. I shall not stay long at Spirit Lake this time but hurry to Sioux City.

^{61b}B. F. Reed, *History of Kossuth County, Iowa*, p. 278.

^{61c}B. F. Parmenter and Robt. M. Wheelock.

When we reached Boonsboro we found it filled with men, women & children from the Boone river. they told us that Fort Dodge had been taken by Indians & burned the night before & Webster City ditto. I never saw Such a perfect panic & a greater pandemonium. We found the farm houses all up to Homer deserted but we were *very brave* you know & came along. There has been no Indians within 70 miles of this place. We had reports from Spirit Lake last night that there is no Indians there now. . . .

In haste faithfully yours

Geo. E. Spencer⁶¹⁴

The writer of the letter, just quoted, was then actively associated with Orlando C. Howe, later district attorney and county judge of Dickinson County. Mr. Spencer's activity then and prominence later are suggested by the fact the county seat town of Clay County, Spencer, was named after him. He had a notable career in the Union Army and was United States senator from Alabama from 1868 to 1879.

The intensity and range of the excitement produced by the Massacre at the Lakes are strikingly indicated in columns of the *Democratic Press* of Chicago for April 23, 1857, in its headlines and summaries of the first reports from St. Paul whence the country first obtained authentic news of the Massacre. I reproduce first the headlines and summary in the first column of its first page:

More Indian Massacres
Rumored Destruction of Mankato
And Massacre of Inhabitants

Intelligence reached us yesterday from Minnesota that a band of six hundred Indians had been committing depredations near the South Bend of the Minnesota river and of a painful rumor that Mankato had been attacked, destroyed by fire, and many of its inhabitants cruelly murdered.

The Indians are said to be of the same band that committed the depredations at Spirit Lake, Iowa, about forty miles distant from Mankato.

⁶¹⁴MS. letter. For the privilege of citing the letter above I am indebted to the consideration and confidence of Judge Orlando C. Howe's two daughters, Mrs. W. H. (Helen Howe) Cooke and Mrs. E. F. (Evelyn Howe) Porter, now residents of Lynn Haven, Florida. They have entrusted me with a number of MS. letters of Judge Howe's, written in February and March, 1857, throwing not a little light upon the dreadful events of the Massacre, together with a MS. account of his recollections of the journey to the Lakes when he and Messrs. Parmenter and Wheelock first witnessed the horrible devastation of the Massacre (see affidavit *ante*, pp. 439-440), his experiences on the Relief Expedition, and sundry letters written to Judge Howe by various ones prominently connected with the first days of Dickinson County. Some of the letters and memoranda I hope may be published in time. They throw various new lights on the events of the stark tragedy between the Okobojis.

The inhabitants of the surrounding country were flocking into St. Peters for security. . . .

Great panic existed throughout the various settlements in Big Woods around Mankato.

On the second or editorial page of the same issue of the *Democratic Press* appeared the following headlines of one account:

The Indian War in Minnesota
Dreadful Massacres at Springfield, Blue Earth Co.
Several Women Taken Prisoners by the Indians
Great Excitement at St. Peters and
St. Paul
Volunteer Companies Raised

Gen. James Shields, who in 1842 challenged Abraham Lincoln to a duel, was among those who raised a company of volunteers at Faribault to protect that and the neighboring communities. A letter of his to the *St. Paul Pioneer* of the 18th denied the general truth of the rumored attacks and murders, but it apparently did not stay the panic.

Dr. S. R. Riggs, the celebrated missionary among the Sioux, tells us that all the members of the mission station on the Yellow Medicine on the St. Peters, or Minnesota River, were put in a state of acute anxiety for months by reason of the Massacre at Spirit Lake, and the anxiety was widespread. "As a consequence of this Spirit Lake trouble," he says, "we lived in a state of excitement all the summer. At one time the report came that Inkpaduta's sons, one or more of them, had ventured into the Yellow Medicine settlement. . . . The excitement was very great, for Scarlet's End's family had friends among White Lodge's people at the Yellow Medicine. For awhile it was uncertain whether we were to have war or peace."⁶²

The nervous anxiety of the Minnesotans was reflected with equal certainty and intensity two hundred miles south of the Iowa boundary line. On May 9, 1857, a correspondent of the *Keokuk Gate City*, Mr. Isaac C. Dillon, writing from the state capital, Des Moines, reported the following which appeared in the *Gate City* May 14:

The people here were much alarmed last week, by very startling reports, from Fort Dodge, varying greatly in character, some even asserting that the place had been attacked by the Indians and all the

⁶²Riggs, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-43.

inhabitants murdered! A band of music paraded the streets for volunteers for rescue and vengeance, when in the midst of all the hubbub, a later arrival proved to be wholly uncalled for, nothing whatever having happened at the Fort to mar the peace and happiness of the Community.

Mr. Dillon's story had its origin in the vasty extensions of leaping imaginations of those who read Mr. W. H. Ingham's letter to Mr. George E. Smith quoted in the preceding section, some rumors saying, according to the *Fort Dodge Sentinel* (April 7, 1857), that 5,000 to 7,000 Sioux were sweeping down the Des Moines Valley.

The readers of *The Oskaloosa Herald* were informed, May 8, 1857, that conditions all along "the western border of Iowa and Minnesota" were seriously disturbed; "the excitement is very great, caused by the depredations of the Sioux Indians." It then gives the following particulars:

The Indians attacked Wawanton, Minnesota, on the 12th inst. and killed fifty-three of the inhabitants. Gen. Dodd pursued with a company of volunteers and killed seventy Indians—the Indians have threatened "that when the Grass should grow and the green leaves were on the trees, they would sweep the whites from the Blue Earth settlement."

Last week three hundred Indians made an attack upon a small town in Nebraska, but were repulsed with the loss of few lives.

Governor Grimes has taken active steps to protect the settlers on our western frontier.

What precisely Governor Grimes did at the time does not seem to be known, unless it was his letter to President Buchanan previously quoted, calling his attention to the reported attack upon the settlement at Spirit Lake.

The general state of terror in south central Minnesota is vividly described by a writer of a long letter, dated at Greenville, in Wabasha County, May 11, 1857, and printed in Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*, Monday, May 25. The purpose of the writer was first, to deny that the Spirit Lake Massacre was the work of the peaceful, or better class of the Sioux, or those bands "under the treaty"; and second, to denounce the general treatment of the Indians by the whites. Portions of his letter relate to the subject here referred to and some of his observations are interesting:

This chief [Inkpaduta] has two daughters married among the "Yankton Sioux," which formidable tribe . . . are, if I mistake not, a portion of those Indians whom Gen. Harney has so severely chastised. This small band, headed by "Ink-ta-pu-dah" (sic) were beyond Mankato, and were passing along when a settler's dog attacked, and one of the Indians shot the dog. In the evening the settler got his neighbors together, went to the encampment of the Indians, took away their guns, tore down their tents, and drove them off with clubs. The Indians, as soon as they got at a safe distance, commenced the work of slaughter and reprisal. All this disaster and bloodshed [Spirit Lake Massacre] lies at the door of the half-drunken fools who assaulted the Indians. . . . This was not bad enough, but the volunteer troops, who assembled in hot haste, showed themselves ready to shoot anything in the shape of an Indian, guilty or not guilty. So, marching out of Mankato, they came upon "Red Iron's" band—a small company of friendly Sioux (who perchance had not heard of the affair) engaged in the peaceable occupation of sugar-making—and fired upon them, when the Indians fled in dismay, one of their number being shot through the elbow. The excitement was intense. The settlers beyond and around Mankato in many instances packed up a portion of their goods in wagons, and with their cattle and horses fled from the country forever. . . . They reported as they fled that they saw their cabins on fire, and that hundreds of Sioux were assembling to attack Mankato, St. Peters, and Traverse de Sioux. . . . The excitement spread as the settlers fled, and the people of Rochester were much alarmed, and the settlers around Faribault left their homes and came into town and camped for safety; and in consequence of the Raglan-like dispatches sent to St. Paul from St. Peters by a *terribly scared* man named "Hezlep," calling for "men, arms and ammunition for God's sake," the good people of St. Paul became quite alarmed for their own safety, and one of the papers published a startling cry, "To arms," and the people assembled and deliberated as to the propriety of raising troops to defend the city. St. Paul, you will recollect, is some hundreds of miles from the scene of the massacre, and the danger was not *very* imminent.

The writer of the letter just quoted, who signed himself "G. P. W.," wrote either in some confusion and haste, or in ignorance of events and places. His own locus in Wabasha County, on or near the Mississippi River, midway between Red Wing and Winona, was a hundred miles or more from Faribault, or Mankato. His knowledge of the western geography of the terrain involved in the disturbance was evidently misty and vague, for the *Tribune's* readers would naturally infer that the incident of the shooting the dog occurred between Mankato and Spirit Lake, whereas it took place near Smithland in the southeastern

corner of Woodbury County, a hundred miles southwest of Spirit Lake.

Further, he evidently confuses the affair with the dog with sundry other aggravating incidents prior to and following that clash to which Messrs. Fulton, Smith, and Teakle refer; and he does not mention, if he knew, the major incident at Smithland, namely, that the guns of the Indians were taken from them by the whites when the Indians were killing the elk found huddled in the snow in a ravine or valley near Smithland.⁶³ Finally we may ask with no little skepticism what warrant he had for asserting so dogmatically that the whole "disaster and bloodshed lies at the doors of the half-drunken fools who assaulted the Indians." The settlers were annoyed and aggravated and anxious, and they probably blundered in their effort to disperse them, but the writer should have had abundant and substantial proof for his sweeping assertion that their action was the insane performance of intoxicated frontiersmen.⁶⁴

The most extraordinary explanation of the immediate or precipitating cause of the Spirit Lake Massacre that I have come upon is found in the columns of Mr. A. B. F. Hildreth's *St. Charles Republican Intelligencer* of Charles City, under date of April 23, 1857. In cool, deliberate language in his first and only comment or notice of the catastrophe Mr. Hildreth says:

We learn from various sources that great excitement prevails in the counties west of us, consequent upon recent murders and outrages committed by the Indians living in the northern part of this state and southern Minnesota. We are not disposed to countenance those actions of barbarity, yet from what we learn, but little blame ought to be attached to the Indians. That the Whites have been the aggressors, none deny. Facts prove conclusively that the Indians have been deceived, persecuted and foully wronged. Designing men—civilized—Christians—have been among them, gained their confidence—and for what? To rob them of their independence! Furnishing them with rum, they could easily be induced to barter the results of a long winter of

⁶³Teakle, *op. cit.*, Chap. X, pp. 78-83.

⁶⁴Since writing the above, through the good offices of Mr. C. R. Marks, attorney of Sioux City, I have come into a correspondence with Mr. J. Wallace Adams of Smithland, where he has resided continuously since June, 1856, and still retains vivid memories of Inkpaduta's band's visit to his father's neighborhood in December, 1856. He was a lad of sixteen years when his father moved there in June of that year. He writes me that there was no trouble with the Indians until the disarming episode. Inkpaduta never visited his father's home, remaining in his tepee, morose and sullen; but the other braves and their squaws and children were almost daily visitors. The assertion of the *N. Y. Tribune* correspondent, quoted above, that the men who disarmed the Indians were "half drunk," Mr. Wallace denies specifically as wholly unwarranted.—*Mss.*, letter, September 8, 1932.

successful hunting for that which was not even the shadow of an equivalent. But even this did not arouse the spirit of revenge which lives in every Indian's breast. It was not until a party of these plunderers set fire to a wigwam, in which was several intoxicated Indians, to whom the damning poison had been dealt out by the whites, and two of the number perished in the flames—that their spirit of vengeance was aroused. They determined on retaliation, and the result is, the innocent as well as the guilty have suffered. They have become blood-thirsty, and blood alone can satisfy their unforgiving and unrelenting spirits. . . . The most lamentable state of affairs exists in Webster, Dickenson, Joseph [Jackson?] and Palo Alto counties. Entire settlements have been broken up. Men, women and children are fleeing in every direction and are often overtaken and cut down with the murderous tomahawk, or shot with the rifle. . . . We have conversed with men who have come from the settlements where those outrages have been committed.

Mr. Hildreth was a scholarly New Englander and no seeker after sensations nor a monger of wild stories. Some of the men with whom he had conversed prior to writing his editorial notice of the Massacre had repeated to him his assertion about the holocaust of the inebriated Indians, but I have not encountered it among the many variant accounts of Inkpaduta's attack upon the settlement on the shores of Mde-Mini-Wakan.⁶⁵

XIII

For six or seven months following the Spirit Lake Massacre the contemporary local press contained few or no reports of the presence or prowlings of Indians in northwestern Iowa—save the one that so stirred the state capital mentioned in the next preceding section. But in November of that year members of some of the Sioux bands began again to descend the branches or vallies of the Big and Little Sioux rivers, and to follow game into the counties previously terrorized by Inkpaduta's band. How serious or significant their appearances and doings were it was not (nor is it now) easy for any one to appraise correctly. Those within the affected area over-emphasized their adverse import, and those outside were just as likely to discount or minimize their true nature.

⁶⁵Mr. J. Wallace Adams of Smithland writes me, September 13, 1932, that he cannot recall ever hearing of such a story, and he knows of no incident in Woodbury or adjacent counties, that would give currency to such a story as Mr. Hildreth reports in his editorial.

Mrs. J. F. Waggoner of Hot Springs, South Dakota, of the Teton Sioux, writes me (November 30, 1932) that she has recollections of such a story being current among her people when she was a girl, but she can give me no particulars as to dates, place, or persons.

Such migratory Indians, prowling about promiscuously, are more often than not, heedless, idle, irresponsible, reckless individuals, aimlessly seeking here and there anything on which they can lay hands, if they can do so without danger of punishment. Systematic hostility and gross depredations of a malevolent type are not usually in contemplation at the outset. But aggravations accumulate, and anon irritation suddenly flames into fire and bloodshed. Those who have endured much—and especially those who have suffered gross wrong—regard every Indian with alert suspicion and interpret their every act adversely. This state of mind was illustrated in the reports that came from Clay County in the later weeks of 1857 which produced some sharp reactions in the fore part of 1858 and effected legislative action in the General Assembly in session at Des Moines.

On January 14, 1858, *The Hamilton Freeman* contained the following from the pen of Jared Palmer, who was one of the first to view the slaughter and wreckage at the Lakes in March, 1857, going with Morris Markham to confirm the latter's story, which the people at Springfield, Minnesota, were much inclined to doubt at the outset:

INDIAN DIFFICULTIES

Little Sioux, Dec. 30, 1857.

Mr. Editor,—I hasten to inform you of the recent troubles with a party of Sioux Indians, on the Little Sioux river.

I am carrying the United States Mail from Spirit Lake to Sioux City—I left Spirit Lake Saturday the 29th ult., came to Mr. Ments, on the Little Sioux, intending to remain there over Sunday. But about 2 o'clock p. m. we got word that there had been seven Indians seen that morning about 12 miles up the river. We immediately collected together the men in the settlement (being eleven in number) and repaired that evening to Barnes' place, which is in the immediate vicinity where the Indians had been seen.

In the morning we proceeded to Mr. Bell's house, (Mr. B. and family having gone away to spend the winter intending to return in the spring, had left some of their furniture in the house) when at the house we found the door broken down and furniture destroyed; we then proceeded to Mr. Willcox's place, Mr. W. being likewise from home, we found that the house had been burnt. There were Indian tracks about the place and there had been no prairie fire near the house. We still continued our search for the red skins and found them about three miles from the last mentioned place encamped on a small creek. On our approach they fled and left their tepees and took posses-

sion of a ravine with timber and long grass in it, . . .; we found them to be eighteen in number; we advanced to within about forty rods of them and then halted to consider what was best to be done. While we were thus consulting, an Indian made his appearance at the edge of the timber and commenced halooing and supposing he wished to communicate with us, I immediately handed my gun to one of my comrades and advanced several rods towards the Indians when several other Indians made their appearance and fired upon us. We returned the fire and kept it up till our ammunition was nearly exhausted, when considering the disparity in numbers and the advantage they had in the ground we concluded to return and get a reinforcement. We had one man slightly wounded in the hand. Whether we killed any of the enemy I cannot presume to say. It is expected that another company will be ready to go after them in a day or two. The people at Spirit Lake know nothing of the difficulty and much fear is entertained for their safety.

When will the eyes of Government be opened, or how long must the frontiers be drenched in *blood*?

Yours truly,

Jared Palmer.

Mr. Palmer had more than ordinary right to have his report accepted at maximum credibility and reliability. He had joined the Relief Expedition when he and the refugees from Springfield met Major Williams' command near the state line in April preceding. He had written a careful report of the massacre for Mr. Aldrich's *Freeman*, now one of our original sources of information. His periodic task as carrier of the mails between Sioux City and Spirit Lake gave him the best of chances to learn of the events in that sparsely settled area. His account we shall see met with immediate credence.

Mr. Palmer did not let the matter rest with merely communicating his information to the press. Knowing what the late horror between the Okobojis meant, and how heedless the public had been of previous warnings and appeals for help, Mr. Palmer proceeded to Des Moines and in person called the attention of the leaders of the state's major party to the danger threatening, and earnestly insisted upon some definite action on the part of the authorities to safeguard the helpless settlers against the danger of another attack. Mr. Palmer took with him to Des Moines a memorial signed by all the citizens or residents of the region immediately concerned, praying the legislature to authorize the governor to create a military troop of at least a hun-

dred mounted men that would afford that exposed region a mobile force which could be sent easily to exposed or threatened points with the minimum delay and the maximum energy.

Mr. Will Porter closes an editorial relating to the foregoing with the words, "There is no doubt but what those settlers are in danger. They should be protected."⁶⁰ Mr. Palmer's efforts were effective, as we shall see.

Among the men Mr. Palmer interviewed was the editor of *The Iowa Citizen*, Mr. John Teesdale, who besides being one of the foremost Republican editors of the state, was then Iowa's state printer, and potent within the counsels of the Republican party then in control of the state's government. He evidently not only made Mr. Teesdale listen to his recital of the then recent Indian foray, but he clearly compelled him to discern the need for some definite protective measures by the state's legislative and executive departments, for in the *Citizen* of January 19, 1858, appeared two different articles, showing that public alarm was becoming manifest. The first one was the publication of an editorial on Mr. Palmer's disclosures, which I reproduce, and second, of a letter of Mr. A. S. Mead to Major William Williams.

INDIAN DIFFICULTIES

Our readers are referred to a letter, published in another place, concerning the Indian disturbances in Clay County. A day or two since, we were introduced to a gentleman—Mr. Palmer—who had just arrived from the scene of the excitement. He informed us that some weeks since a party of Indians—supposed to be of the Sioux tribe—made their appearance in the settlement on the Little Sioux in Clay county. Two or three houses were entered and robbed; and one unoccupied building was burned to the ground. Other depredations were committed; but fearing an attack from the whites who were organizing for defense, the Indians retreated from the neighborhood.

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Clay county is very sparsely inhabited. Hardly a dozen families live in the entire county; and their unprotected condition, remote from populous communities, and unsupplied with the means of defense, has stimulated the savages to open acts of hostility.

Immediately after the retreat of the Indians, a small force, consisting of eleven men, started in pursuit. . . . [follows summary of Palmer's letter—q. v.]

The difficulties that have transpired in Clay, Dickinson and other counties of the North, indicate a purpose on the part of the Indians

⁶⁰*Iowa State Journal*, January 18, 1858.

to give the infant settlements on the frontier still further trouble. When the news came last winter, of the terrible butcheries committed in the vicinity of Spirit Lake, many of our citizens disbelieved the report. The idea of an Indian war in Iowa at the date of the Spirit Lake Massacre, was considered absurd; but the report of the Massacre was confirmed. Settlers were murdered and property wasted; and while people at other points were shaking their heads incredulously, outrages of the most fearful character were perpetrated.

A Letter dated January 11th at Spirit Lake, was written by Orlando C. Howe to Hon. C. C. Carpenter, informs us that the indications of a general invasion from the savages are numerous. The settlers for forty miles around are anxiously marking the course pursued by the residents at Spirit Lake; and in the event that the settlers near the Lakes move away to the more secure neighborhoods to the South of them, a general *stampede* will take place in the northwestern counties. Homes will be deserted, and a vast amount of valuable property will be left to the tender mercies of Indian pillage and hostility.

A result of this kind would be disastrous in the extreme. The frontier settlements, in their exposed condition, have a just claim upon the Government for protection. It is true that Fort Ridgely in Minnesota has been fortified by a detachment of the United States army; but removed as this Fort is from the scene of disturbance, it accomplishes nothing towards checking Indian aggressions.

The claims of sufferers in the Smithfield [Smithland?] massacre have never been recognized by the Government. A man by the name of Thomas . . . had one of his arms shot off; and a considerable amount of valuable property belonging to him was destroyed. He afterwards applied to the Government to render him assistance; but no recognition of his claims was made. A selfish Administration acknowledges no obligation to protect our frontier regions from hostile incursions, and the many who have suffered, or who will suffer, from the outrages of the savages, may expect but little sympathy and protection from the Federal Government.

It is a matter of justice to state, that the Governor of Iowa within the past two years, has repeatedly reminded the Administration of its duty to prevent, by decisive steps, the encroachments of the savages—But it seems that the President has preferred to garrison forts that are not needed, and quarter an army upon Kansas to subserve his proslavery purposes, rather than to protect the citizens of Iowa from the murderous onslaughts of Indians. Not an Administrative finger has moved in cooperation with the Governor: and our outposts now are in as defenseless a condition as though there were no military power in the country.

The communication referred to by Mr. Teesdale was Mr. A. S. Mead's letter to Major Williams, that apparently had been forwarded to Mr. Teesdale for publication, or possibly brought

by Mr. Palmer to Des Moines to confirm his own contentions and plea, relates substantially the same facts presented in Mr. Palmer's letter to the *Hamilton Freeman*. Mr. Mead, like Mr. Palmer, had a right to speak on Indian depredations and outrages. His own family had suffered sadly in the preliminaries of the Spirit Lake Massacre, his wife and daughter having been beaten by Inkpaduta's braves and held as captives for a few days in February, 1857.⁶⁷

XIV

Among the persons conferred with by Mr. Palmer was C. C. Carpenter, the representative of Webster County in the lower house of the General Assembly then in session at Des Moines. Mr. Carpenter, it will be recalled, was one of the notable members of the Spirit Lake Relief Expedition in March-April, 1857. He did not need to be worked upon in order to arouse his interest in the problem and its dread possibilities. He did not permit any grass to grow under his feet, or dust to accumulate on his desk.

Governor Grimes's last message to the General Assembly, January 12, 1858, called particular attention to the exposed condition of the frontiers and the catastrophe at the Lakes which had resulted because of the lack of protection to the frontiers, notwithstanding repeated efforts on his part to have the matter remedied by the national government and then by the state. The letters of Messrs. Mead and Palmer suddenly brought the matter to focus. The House of Representatives, on Friday, January 15, 1858, appointed a special committee of five to consider the Governor's recommendations, of which committee Mr. Carpenter was made chairman. On January 20 the committee reported several bills, among others, House File No. 47, an act to authorize the governor to raise, arm and equip a company of men for the defense and protection of the frontiers. Under Mr. Carpenter's chairmanship the bill passed the House on January 26 without dissent. It was concurred in by the Senate on January 30 without dissent and was signed by Governor Lowe on February 9, 1858.

That act became Chapter 10 of the Acts of the Seventh General Assembly and the editor gave it the impressive title of

⁶⁷Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 61; Teakle, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

"Standing Army." Under its terms the governor was empowered to raise "one company of mounted volunteers, to consist of not less than thirty nor more than one hundred men" which company is not to be called out save in case of "absolute" necessity. Mr. J. Palmer of Spirit Lake was specifically named in the act as the agent of the state to represent the chief executive in enlisting, equipping and organizing the company. The act became effective February 15.

Mr. Palmer did not allow any grass to start under his feet, because on or before the governor had signed the bill, he had proclaimed his plans and asked the public to forward the enlistments and the formation of the company. Mr. Aldrich was foremost in aiding him, as the following editorial note in the *Freeman* of February 11 may indicate:

HO! FOR SPIRIT LAKE!

The Company of mounted men, destined for Spirit Lake and vicinity, is now being enlisted in Hamilton and Webster counties. J. Palmer, Esq., of Spirit Lake, is the recruiting agent of the State, and is now giving his attention to that business. It is the intention of the act that the Company shall rendezvous at Fort Dodge. . . . All intending to enlist are requested to meet at Fort Dodge next Saturday.

For reasons, not quite apparent, nearly all of the company hailed from Webster City. The *Freeman* of March 4 gives us an account of the departure of the company, the new Spirit Lake Company as it was currently designated, and of a banquet at the Willson Hotel at Webster City and the presentation of a flag to its standard bearer.

The company left Fort Dodge on Tuesday, March 2. Mr. A. S. White, editor of the *Sentinel* of that city, expressed (March 6) the common feelings of its community, and his sentiments in view of developments later are interesting and instructive:

THE FRONTIER GUARDS—This fine body of men under the command of Capt. H. B. Martin, left our town on Tuesday last *en route* for their rendezvous at Spirit Lake. The Company numbers about 40, rank and file, and is composed of volunteers from Boonsboro, Homer and Webster City. Fort Dodge we believe is not represented. . . .

. . . for the "Guard," as men moving to the defense of our unguarded frontier, as fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers leaving "home, friends and kindred" . . . and that too for the paltry sum of \$45 *per*

month and find themselves, they are deserving of all the encomiums that can be showered upon them. Here's our hand.

Mr. White suggests no doubt as to the need or the wisdom of the Frontier Guards. There was no regional or factional opposition manifested against the creation of the guard at the time and there appeared no signs of doubt or discontent on the horizon when the guard marched out of Fort Dodge en route to the Lakes. That general approval should be kept in mind as a base line for measuring the public discussion which followed in the course of the next year.

XV

In the main we see the things that we are looking for. From time to time during the following spring, summer and fall months of 1858 the press of Northwestern Iowa published items of news, and extracts from letters, which indicated the constant concern of the pioneers in the possible and actual incursions of Inkpaduta's and other bands of Sioux. Thus Mr. Aldrich's account in the *Freeman* on March 4 of the banquet at Webster City to the guard on the eve of its departure closed with the following:

A letter from Spirit Lake, dated February 25th, states that Inkpaduta and his band are prowling about in that vicinity urges the immediate march of the Guard. If this proves true, the expedition will doubtless get a chance to do "the state some service" in good earnest. They are as noble a set of fellows as ever lived, and we trust that their patriotism may meet with a proper reward.

In the issue of the *Freeman* of March 25 under the caption "From Spirit Lake" a paragraph reports that the settlers about the Lakes saw signs of Inkpaduta's elusive, ubiquitous person and his followers, and they were painfully anxious to run him and his outlaw band to earth:

John Lyon and James Neary, soldiers of the "Army of Occupation" at Spirit Lake, arrived here on Tuesday last, after provisions. . . . They have scouted over the whole country and have discovered indications and evidence which prove conclusively that Inkpaduta's band has been prowling about the neighborhood during the winter. As soon as the grass starts, they will make an effort to hunt out and punish the savage old ruffian.

One of the primary facts in western pioneer life was the incessant public effort on the part of resident promoters, itinerant

writers, and sundry sorts of commercial agents to encourage immigration. The adverse effect of the Spirit Lake Massacre was clearly suggested in an interesting and scholarly article contributed to the *Iowa State Journal* of Des Moines, May 1, 1858, by one who signed himself "W. H. F." He gives an effective account of the physical features of the northwestern counties, of the stretches of prairies, of the streams lined with forests, of the numerous attractive lakes stocked with many varieties of the "choicest kinds" of game fish, and the favorite habitats of innumerable waterfowl. But in his title and several times throughout his article he refers to the public concern about the dread of Indian forays:

NORTHWESTERN IOWA—INDIAN DEPREDATIONS, ETC.

Friend Porter:—At the present time North Western Iowa is attracting more general attention than any other portion of our State, and nothing but a general fear of massacres of the whites by the Sioux Indians will prevent a settlement of all the counties bordering on the Minnesota line. [Here follows some interesting descriptive paragraphs.]

* * *

ITS DANGERS

The dangers of emigrating to North Western Iowa grow out of the fear of a general massacre by the Sioux Indians. This fear is the result of former outrages and present warlike demonstrations of the Yankton and Sisseton Indians.

* * *

These outrages gave a great check to settlement and civilization: but few pioneers had the courage to commence a settlement during the past summer, and those who had, abandoned them in the fall, and returned this spring to find their houses burned and plundered by the same Indians.

This region affords such facilities for hunting and fishing, for plunder and violence and sure retreats for bands of savages—the Missouri a refuge—the vast country, with its lakes and groves and impenetrable thickets—the prairies, with their unequalled growth of grass and wild rice affords places of concealment and inducements for savages to become hostile; and just as certain as winter succeeds autumn, unless our State or the United States shall establish a military post in that section of the State to protect the frontier settler—similar massacres will occur for years to come. . . .

* * *

Ink-pa-du-tah is an old and favorite chief among the Sioux, and not an outcast as many represent—but allied by relationship to many of

the leaders of the bands of the Yankton and Sissetons, and can at any moment command a host of warriors or precipitate a general war between the Sioux and the Whites.

Let those whose cold philosophy leads them to think lightly of efforts to secure the protection of our frontier settlements, pay a visit to the places of massacres and plunder of the last two winters . . . and examine the blood-stained floors, and have some eye witness recount to them the horrid mutilations of the bodies of old women and hoary men, of innocent children, . . . and knowing that similar outrages must and will occur for years to come, unless our State or nation should interpose protection, and my word for it, they will *demand* as a *right*, efficient protection.

Our State can send arms and munitions of war to the Free State men of Kansas; the General Government can send troops to protect the same Territory; but when our own citizens are stricken down on their own hearthstones it is thought magnanimous and praiseworthy to send out *an army of thirty men* for two months to protect our frontiers and subdue the Sioux nation, armed with muskets manufactured at Harpers Ferry in 1825, and a less amount of lead and powder than a hunting party of half a dozen men would take on an ordinary hunting excursion.

W. H. F.

Several facts stand out in the foregoing article or letter from W. H. F.'s pen that are worth noting in passing.

The writer, apparently, was not a land agent or land speculator, at least if he was such he was not an ardent boomer or aggressive propagandist. There was a scholarly balance and reserve in his narrative that suggests the careful observer and experienced traveler.

The article's appearance in Mr. Porter's *Journal* at that time induces divergent observations as to its political significance. From one angle it seems to have had little or none, for the General Assembly had adjourned and it could have no bearing upon the legislative debates relative to creating the "Frontier Guard," which, as we shall see, became the center of an acrimonious discussion. From another angle point Mr. Porter seems to sanction a sharp fling at the national administration (of which he was an ardent and vigorous supporter) for its failure to provide Iowa with adequate protection against the Indians. This notable contrast excited much bitter comment then and later.

The menace of Indian attacks upon Iowa's northwestern frontier counties was assumed to be an imminent danger that few or

none in that region doubted, however much the probabilities might be scouted in the older portions of the state.

The writer's assertion about Inkpaduta's popularity and influence warrants two inferences—either that the notorious outlaw, while not countenanced at the council fires of the Wahpetutes or at the federal council fires of the seven bands of the Sioux, was potent, nevertheless, in their common life, and any extraordinary or concerted effort to mistreat him or his bands might precipitate a general outbreak, as Dr. Riggs' *Memoir* and Mrs. Sharp's *Reminiscences* clearly disclose; for his achievement at Spirit Lake had made him a hero among the Sioux and his person summed up the red man's hatred of the whites.

Further, the writer's prediction of continuous trouble if the state or the national government did not institute adequate measures for the protection of the exposed counties was verified in the subsequent careers of Inkpaduta, Little Crow, Crazy Horse, Gall, Rain in the Face, Red Cloud and Sitting Bull, and it was demonstrated with horrible conclusiveness.

XVI

Public interest was whetted in June, 1858, by the report that Inkpaduta had been captured on the Yellow Medicine near Fort Ridgely. *The Sioux City Eagle* of June 12 informed its readers that according to the *St. Peters Free Press* "the celebrated Indian Inkpadutah has been captured," on "the prairie, a short distance back of this place! At present he is held a prisoner here. It is not yet determined what disposition shall be made of him." Unfortunately the report was the issue of an active imagination and a fertile hope. Inkpaduta was, as Dr. Riggs has already told us, in the neighborhood as rumor had it, but he had so many friends among the "treaty Indians" thereabouts who kept a sharp lookout for his enemies and pursuers and kept him so advised that when Lieutenant Shecan thought he could lay his hand on the ubiquitous Sioux chief, the wily outlaw was not there.

During the summer and fall of 1858 there were not many rumors as to Indians either frequenting or molesting the settlers, but here and there reports were current. On November 27 the *Sioux City Eagle* had an editorial entitled, "Fears of the Indians," in which it is stated that Indians had recently appeared

again within the environs of Spirit Lake, and Miss Abbie Gardner (then Mrs. Sharp) is alleged to have recognized some of them as members of the Sioux band or bands associated with her captors.

A week or more later the *Sioux City Register* (December 9) under the heading "Indian Troubles" informed its readers that various reports of Indian incursions were appearing in the press of the eastern part of the state and that in consequence Governor Lowe had again ordered the Frontier Guard to "the scene of the threatened difficulties." The writer of the editorial, Mr. F. M. Ziebach, was frankly skeptical as to the truth of the rumors and pronounced the governor's action "premature, if not altogether unnecessary." There were enough settlers in the lake region to protect themselves against the "unfriendly savages in that part of the state." The settlers, he bluntly stated, "are too lenient with the thieving dogs. If they would unite and make an *example* of a few of the leaders of these marauding bands . . . their troubles would soon cease. . . . There is no policy in mincing matters with Indians." Mr. Ziebach might have been reminded that such drastic treatment, as he commended, had been resorted to at Smithland, nearly two years before with unexpectedly disastrous results.

In the *Register* of December 18, 1858, Mr. Ziebach printed with no little satisfaction the substance of an extended letter of Dr. J. S. Prescott to the *Free Press* of Newton, Jasper County. Dr. Prescott was a resident of Spirit Lake, the purchaser of the Gardner and other claims (concerning which more later). In blunt language he denounces as a canard the story that Indians were threatening the peace of the lake settlement, and he declares that during the past year he had traveled through the entire northern stretches of Iowa and southern Minnesota, between La Crosse, Wisconsin, and Sioux City and he had seen and had heard nothing of hostile Indians. He scouts the Abbie Gardner story referred to above and brands the stories taken to the governor by a "special messenger" as "dispatches of his own concocting" and his unwarranted reports "exhibit a wantonness of wickedness rarely met with." With utter contempt he concludes: That "a troop of soldiers should be sent to watch the faint trail of three Indians and a couple of squaws [those

mentioned by Mr. Gaylord] speaks not much for the bravery of some seventy men, with weapons so numerous that our wives threaten to throw them into the lake as nuisances in their way."

Again, it is pertinent to observe that the fact that Dr. Prescott did not see or hear of any Indians while he was traveling throughout the northern counties, was equally true of Dr. Isaac Harriott; he apparently never thought of them, and saw none that he deemed hostile—but suddenly he and forty associates were slaughtered.

Mrs. Sharp tells us in her *History* in which she has incorporated her reminiscences of the days and months following her captivity and release from her Indian bondage, that she revisited the scene of her family's tragedy some eighteen months after her marriage in August, 1857. This return visit occurred in the midweeks of February of 1859. While at the Lakes she relates (p. 278):

While we were there, an intense excitement was raised on account of the reports of the presence of hostile Indians in the vicinity. One man came in and reported that he had been shot by an Indian. The next day a small party of Indians was discovered approaching the town. They were halted a short distance from the place, and I went out to see if they belonged to Inkpaduta's band. Had I recognized any of them the citizens stood ready to shoot them down. As they were not the marauders, they were allowed to depart; but they were not permitted to enter the town, as they were believed to be spies trying to find out the situation of the settlers.

United States soldiers had been ordered to the lake to give security to the settlement for the winter, and were expected soon. In the meantime, the citizens stood guard at night, and for days nothing was thought of, or talked about, but the Indians.

Mrs. Sharp's recollections as to dates do not coincide exactly with those indicated in Dr. Prescott's letter cited in the *Sioux City Register*, but the basic facts are substantially the same. Her reference to the coming of national troops refers to an incident to be mentioned in the next section.

XVII

Developments in 1859, and especially the progress of discussion, illustrated Herbert Spencer's Law of the Rhythm of Motion. Governor Lowe's reordering of the Frontier Guard to the Lakes started a discussion that soon became a variegated affair

shot through with partisan political prejudices and recrimination. What precisely induced it I cannot say, but various miscellaneous facts or items may give us parts of the explanation.

In 1858 and 1859 the people of Iowa were in the midst of the sorry reactions from the panic of 1857 and the general financial and industrial depression resulting. Low prices, delinquent taxes and debts harrassed the average citizen sadly. The critics of the "party in power" were looking for needless expenditures and ready on the slightest impetus to cry to the heavens in protest and scorn.

Petty items may also account for adverse drifts. Mr. Will Porter, who commended the governor's sending the Guards, told the public that "the troops" "are there in comfortable quarters"; that "they pass away the time as best they can"; and the company physician, Dr. Farner, "not having any special calls for his medical or surgical science is reported as being busily engaged in catching fish and slaying game."⁶⁸ The editor of the *Acts and Resolutions*, Seventh G. A. (1858) gave Chapter 10 the ponderous title, "Standing Army." Mr. Aldrich at times referred to the Frontier Guard as "The Army of Occupation."

Tragedy and comedy are cheek by jowl in ordinary life. It was not long before Democratic partisans began to throw bricks, sticks and stones and facetious flings at the "Army of Occupation." On March 19, 1859, A. S. White, editor of the *Fort Dodge Sentinel*, under the terrifying heading, "Startling Indian Rumors from Spirit Lake," printed a letter from that point written by one G. H. Bush under date of February 2, 1859, which begins: "One little, two little, three little Indians, with their sires and dams have been taken prisoners here by the immortal Guard stationed here." Two of those arrested by Capt. Martin were alleged to be members of Inkpaduta's band. Mr. Bush scouts the truth of the charge. He closes his letter with: "The state is uselessly burdened by the stationing of troops at this point."

As Mr. Bush was an agent and a stout partisan of Dr. Prescott in the local conflicts, which were many and almost constant, keeping the community incessantly wrangling, his words represent a partial judgment. It was a weather signal, however, of a growing discussion of the need or wisdom of keeping the "Army

⁶⁸*Tri-Weekly Iowa State Journal*, March 22, 1858.

of Occupation" at the Lakes. Mr. Will Porter of the *State Journal* apparently joined the critics of the governor and drew from Mr. Charles Aldrich's pen the following sharp editorial in the *Hamilton Freeman* (April 2, 1859):

SPIRIT LAKE MATTERS

Recently we hinted that certain individuals whose extraordinary courage had prevented their stay at Spirit Lake during the past winter, had gone up and down the State, denying that any necessity existed for calling out the troops, &c. requested the *State Journal* to put the suggestion in its pipe and smoke it. It copies our brief paragraph, which it makes the text of a column of abusive and irrelevant comment upon the action of the Governor. . . .

This subject has been very fully discussed by the press of this State, and the People are everywhere satisfied that the action of the Governor was eminently just and proper. . . . We . . . propound a few questions to the *Journal* . . . to which we hope it will give categorical answers:

1. If there is no need of protecting our exposed frontier, why have Senator Jones and other leading Democrats exerted themselves to the best of their ability to secure the establishment of a military post at Spirit Lake, by the General Government?

2. If protection from the General Government would be right, and proper, how does it happen that protection from the State is all wrong?

3. Granting that there has been danger of savage incursions heretofore, (as in 1857, when 50 to 60 people were brutally butchered) what evidence has the *State Journal* that that danger has ceased to exist?

4. Had Gov. Lowe refused to call out the troops, would he not in case of Indian troubles on the frontier, receive the condemnation of the Democratic press everywhere?

5. Does the *State Journal* wish to be understood as deouncing Maj. Williams, Judge Smeltzer, of Clay Co., and other prominent Democrats who have lived many years on the frontiers, who speak from actual knowledge in the premises, and who have fully sustained the action of the State Government?

6. Were Iowa only a Slave state would not its frontiers have bristled with Federal bayonets ever since the massacre of 1857?

The *State Journal* will confer a great favor by presenting the People of Iowa with straightforward replies to these pertinent queries.

Mr. Aldrich was nothing if not clear-cut and forthright. He struck straight out in front of him. In every line and word one may discern or sense the prejudices and suspicions and tactics of ardent political partisans, alert and active in maneuvering for advantage in the ceaseless struggle of men for place and power. The Massacre between the Okobojis was merely a radiant angle point in the give-and-take, in their thrusts and parries.

It would be interesting if we could canvass Mr. Porter's rejoinders to Mr. Aldrich's pithy and pointed questions, but unfortunately the files of the *State Journal* for April and May of 1859 are not available, so far as I can discover.

Mr. Bush's caustic letter and Rev. Prescott's much quoted letter with its animadversions upon the use of troops at the Lakes brought a broadside from Captain Martin that Mr. Aldrich printed at length in the *Freeman* of April 16. The air was full of darts and missiles. Acrimonious debates which the local rivalries in and about Spirit Lake had kept everybody in a state of intermittent high heat levels for the major part of two years following the Massacre. They related in large part to conflicting "claims" to land, a sawmill site, and saw logs. Writs of replevin, injunctions and sundry judicial processes made life fast and furious among the energetic pioneers of the environs of the Okobojis.⁶⁹ One can perceive some of these facts on the edges in the following sharp observations and comments of Captain Martin which follow:

LETTER FROM SPIRIT LAKE

Mr. Editor: I notice in the Fort Dodge *Sentinel* of the 19th instant [March] a communication from this place over the signature of G. H. Bush, to which I wish to make a brief reply.

Since the Guards have been in service, the "Sentinel" has published with avidity, statements in reference to Spirit Lake affairs by every *poltroon* who would degrade himself by writing for its columns. But well knowing the character of that paper and the little influence which it is capable of exerting with the public I have heretofore passed in silent contempt its petty efforts to libel and abuse the officers and soldiers of my company, and the pioneers of the Frontier who petitioned the Governor for protection. And I would not now condescend to notice anything which has appeared in that subservient sheet, were it not that the correspondence above alluded to, purporting as it does to emanate from a citizen of Spirit Lake, is calculated to mislead those unacquainted with the character and motives of its author. Mr. Bush, after willfully misstating the facts concerning the capture of the Indians recently taken prisoners by the Guard, says: "A very great effort has been made to prove that two of these Indians are or were members of the celebrated Ink-pa-du-tah's band," thus conveying the impression that I endeavored, regardless of means, to procure testimony convicting the prisoners—which is a base falsehood. The facts in the case are as follows: A day or two after the prisoners were captured, Messrs. Chiffin and Dodgson, residents of Brown county,

⁶⁹Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-7.

Minnesota, while passing through this place on their way to the Little Sioux River, learned that we had captured some suspicious looking Indians, and expressed a desire to see them, and were conducted to the Indian lodge by Lieutenant Church. On seeing the Indians they immediately recognized one of them as a member of Ink-pa-du-tah's band; the Indian also recognized *them* and acknowledged through the *Interpreter* that he had seen them before. As soon as I learned this, I caused the accused Indian to be placed under close arrest and requested a citizen of this place to obtain the testimony of the witnesses in writing, which they willingly gave affirming to the same before a magistrate. The other Indian was arrested on testimony voluntarily given by H. M. Weltfong who has long been a resident of the frontier, and has seen every one of Ink-pa-du-tah's Indians.

These were the "great efforts" made to obtain evidence against the *poor* Indians. And as to the reliability of the affiants I would state that Chiffin and Dodgson are of the class of pioneers met with in the west who have become inured to hardship, court danger, and value honor more than life, and they will no doubt bring the poltroon, Bush, to a strict account for his cowardly attack on their reputation. They have been engaged in trapping on the Des Moines river (in the vicinity of Springfield) for several years, were there during the troubles of '57 and previous to that time had traded for months with Ink-pa-du-tah and his followers, and are perhaps better qualified than any other persons living to recognize and point out the members of that band of Indians.⁷⁰ With Mr. Weltfong I am not so well acquainted, but will consider him "reliable" until he is impeached by better testimony than Mr. B.'s opinion.

[The writer then insinuates that Bush was the tool of one who had fled when the recent scare was on and that Bush too had tried to get away. He then concludes:]

Now I do not wish to meddle in any manner with the claim broils, or neighborhood disputes of this or any other community—they are mere personal affairs which exist in all new countries—but I do not consider it just that a whole Frontier should be deprived of protection, because one man asserts that there is no danger; for it is a notorious fact that with the exception of J. S. Prescott and his hirelings and dependents, every inhabitant of Dickinson county is solicitous for the continual presence of troops here, and would feel insecure and unsafe without them; and if the Guards were recalled at this time, many settlers would abandon their homes.

Very Respectfully yours,

Spirit Lake, March 31, 1859.

Henry B. Martin.

⁷⁰Messrs. Chiffin and Dodson lived near the Springfield settlement. Henry Chiffin had a cabin about a mile north on the east or left bank of the Des Moines River and Mr. John Dodson had his cabin about a mile west of Woods Store located on the right or west bank. The tepees of Umpashota's camp were midway. Henry Chiffin was one of the messengers sent by the settlers to Fort Ridgely to ask for troops when Morris Markham brought the news of the Massacre to the Springfield settlement.—Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 113, 197-198. For location of their cabins, see map, *ante*, p. 252.

Any one familiar with the recklessness of aspersion in communal and partisan dissention will sympathize with Captain Martin's resentment of the public treatment to which he was subjected. The militia, precisely as is the case with artillery, we seldom need to call into action, and we never want to do so; but when we do need either or both we need them suddenly with certainty and dispatch; and in consequence the troop must for the most part simply stand at attention, hold the fort, and pass their time in drill and constant preparedness, biding the contingent time of public need. In the miserable muddle, which the bitter and incessant contenders for power or preference had produced, legal processes were either ignored or defied. Mr. Smith informs us that Captain Martin was called upon to maintain the authority of the sheriff in executing a writ and came very near a serious clash with the followers of Dr. Prescott. These controversies and clashes were almost all the consequential incidents of Inkpaduta's massacre of the original settlers between the Okobojis.⁷¹

Captain Martin's experiences with the various bands of Indians that came within the region under his supervision were far from serious, although in the then nervous condition of the settlers he must needs deal with them summarily. The two Indians mentioned in his letter just quoted he decided to send under guard to Des Moines for investigation, but en route they managed to escape from their guard much to the delight of the cynical critics of the "Standing Army." The remainder of the band Captain Martin escorted to the Minnesota border and ordered to return to the agency on the Yellow Medicine. Another band under an aged chief, Bad Hail, came down the Little Sioux and camped west of Milford and gave the settlers another scare and they were brought in under guard; and guards and settlers then had a mixture of fright, fun and hocus-pocus curing a sick squaw who chiefly engaged the concern of army and community. This band was escorted back to the Minnesota border and told to go north and stay there. Finally much excitement was caused by the discovery of Chief Umpashota with his squaws and a few followers at the head of Spirit Lake. They were surrounded and brought into the fort. Captain Martin de-

⁷¹*Ibid.*, p. 203.

cided to send Umpashota to Fort Dodge. Lieutenant Church was detailed to escort him and his band. Appreciating the aggravating perplexities that would ensue Lieutenant Church, when he reached Gillet's Grove, decided to let his prisoners go on their promise to stay away from the lakes. It is not disclosed in the local annals whether or not he suffered court-martial for his exercise of extraordinary discretion in the premises. Tradition has it that every one was satisfied.^{71a}

(To be concluded)

^{71a}*Ibid.*, pp. 198, 199, 200, 205.

TOASTS AT A FESTIVAL IN 1858

We clip the following toasts from the *Des Moines Citizen* that were given at the Printers' Festival, held at the Collins House on Monday evening last:

Benjamin Franklin—The statesman, the philosopher, the patriot, the printer. By ingenious perseverance he grasped the lightning's fiery wing, established in our land the press, and transmitted to us the benefit of a noble example.

The Editors' Fraternity—Doorkeepers in the Temple of Freedom and Liberty, and pilots on board the Ship of State. When internal tempests approach they calm the troubled waves.

Iowa—The Western Empire State, the infant prodigy, the nation's pride. May she always shine, a bright star in the galaxy of states!

Des Moines—The Infant Capital. May the hand of progress mark her onward course, and may she wear with honor the name and position she has assumed.

Printers and Editors—The engineers and conductors who direct the train of thought to every house in the country.

Woman—The edition being extensive, let every man possess himself of a "copy."—*Montezuma Weekly Republican*, Montezuma, Iowa, February 20, 1858. (In the Newspaper Division of the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa.)

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