

The Winnebago Indian School Experiment in Iowa Territory, 1834-1848

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THE CORNERSTONE OF PRESIDENT ANDREW JACKSON'S Indian policy was the concept of removal. For Jackson and his supporters, removal meant the physical relocation of thousands of Indians west of the Mississippi River into relatively unexplored and certainly unwanted territory—the Great American Desert. Jackson deemed removal the singular means by which the Indian could be rescued from extinction at the hands of westwardly advancing hordes of white settlers, but removal also reflected an attitude of expediency on the part of Jackson and the public at large.¹

As population penetrated deeper inland, friction between Indians and whites increased proportionally. Religious denominations, among them Methodists and Presbyterians, sponsored missionary efforts among the Indians to bring white culture and religion to various tribes, but those efforts were grossly paternalistic and focused upon the Indian's supposed

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¹The use of the term "civilized," "civilize," or "civilization," was commonplace in the Jacksonian era. These are contemporary terms which reflect a value judgment of the period under discussion not that of the author. Ronald Satz makes a similar point in his excellent *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 278.

godlessness, lack of culture and civilization, and overall inferiority with respect to white society.

Through Congress, the federal government exhibited a similar predilection. Pressured by white demands for more and more land, and the driving force of Jackson himself, Congress acted to remove Indian tribes wholesale from their traditional territories, and relegated them to areas considered undesirable by whites. The problem of Indian governance and control fell to the federal government, a highly complex task which was approached in a piecemeal fashion, even following the organization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1834. As governmental pressure forced the Indians to abrogate their personal rights and territorial sovereignty through innumerable treaties, the Indian "problem" grew increasingly political in both a state and national sense. Besides the settlers, business interests exploited the Indians. In the Mississippi River region, the American Fur Company, the trading giant conceived by John Jacob Astor, manipulated the Indian trade and reduced many tribes to economic pawns.

Such a seemingly hopeless situation, Jackson believed, could be ameliorated and the Indians assimilated via education. Jackson could claim no originality for the idea, however, as Congress had often wrestled with it. In 1818, the House Committee on Indian Affairs reported:

. . . nothing which it is in the power of Government to do will have a more direct tendency to bring about Indian [civilization] than the establishment of schools at convenient and safe places amongst those tribes friendly to us.

The committee optimistically (and naively) projected that education would encourage a sedentary, agricultural lifestyle among all Indians and they would, in time, become "useful members of society."²

Two of the most knowledgeable men in the realm of Indian affairs, Thomas L. McKenney and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, agreed. McKenney envisioned one central Indian school which would educate Indian youths, promote inter-

²Report of the House Committee on Indian Affairs of January 22, 1818, in *American State Papers: Indian Affairs*, 2:150-151.

tribal cooperation, and improve Indian attitudes towards removal. Schoolcraft was less optimistic. Still, he also held that education would exert a positive influence and speed the assimilation process.³ Jackson echoed those sentiments. His first annual message to Congress stressed education as an essential prerequisite for eventual Indian self-government. Ideally, education would divert the Indian from his nomadic lifestyle and guarantee entry into white society.⁴



Thomas L. McKenney

Commissioner of Indian Affairs Elbert Herring, Jackson's appointee to that newly-created position in July, 1834, was quick to agree with the president. Projecting Indian education as a panacea for Indian hostilities, Herring declared that education would bring about "the substitution of the social for the savage state."⁵

Neither Jackson, Herring, McKenney, nor Schoolcraft accurately foresaw the intricacies inherent in comprehensive dealings with Indian tribes. Religious, business, and even governmental groups were keenly interested in Indian schools. When those groups and their competing, divergent interests acted to control or influence an Indian school such as the Winnebago school in Iowa Territory, an acrimonious battleground for religious, political, economic, and personal squab-

³Satz, *American Indian Policy*, 250; Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Oneota* (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1845), 337; and Schoolcraft, *The Indian in His Wigwam* (New York: Dewitt & Davenport, 1848), 366-367. For additional information on McKenney, see Herman J. Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney, Architect of American's Early Indian Policy, 1816-1830* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1974).

⁴Draft of Jackson's First Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1829, in John Spencer Bassett (ed.), *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1926-1935), 4:103.

⁵*U.S. Statutes at Large*, 4:564; 22 Cong., 2 sess. (serial 233), *House Executive Documents*, no. 2, 166; and Francis Paul Prucha (ed.), *Documents of United States Indian Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 63.

bles and conflicts was created which would affect the school throughout its existence.

A treaty negotiated with the Winnebago tribe, and ratified in the Senate on September 15, 1832, specifically provided an educational clause. Article V stipulated that the school was to be constructed near the Winnebago Indian agency at Prairie du Chien in Wisconsin Territory. The agency itself had been created as part of an Indian treaty, a common practice. The school was to be staffed by at least two teachers charged with instructing the children in reading, writing, arithmetic, gardening, agriculture, spinning, carding, weaving, and sewing, according to their respective ages and sexes. A yearly budget of \$3000 was appropriated for the school's operation.⁶

Notwithstanding such liberal provisions, the prospects for Winnebago education appeared bleak. Indian-white relationships had debauched the tribe as many Winnebago became victims of whiskey drinking. Liquor was employed by the American Fur Company as a major trading item, although the government attempted to prohibit its sale to the Indians. Enforcing liquor restrictions fell to army personnel and local Indian agents. They discovered that enforcement was nearly impossible due to the vast areas which had to be patrolled and the power of the American Fur Company on the frontier and in Washington. Local courts and judges were generally unsympathetic to Indians in general, and resented army interference in civil law enforcement. Army officers and Indian agents failed to enforce liquor sanctions as they were isolated, ill-supported by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in far-off Washington, and regarded their efforts as doomed to failure on account of the fur company's influence. Western artist George Catlin

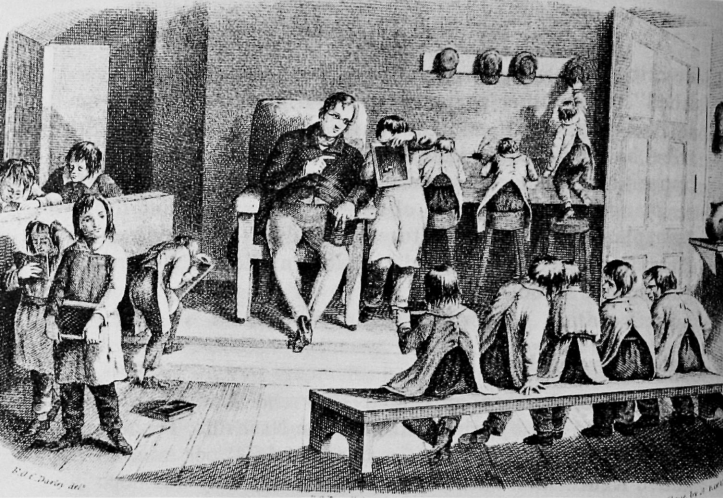
⁶Charles J. Kappler (comp. and ed.), *Indian Treaties, 1778-1833* (New York: Interland Publishing, Inc., 1972), 345-348. The school's \$3000 annual appropriation was generous when compared to earlier expenditures for Indian education. The total amount allotted for Indian education for the whole of 1827 was only \$10,000, and only 82% of that was expended. See: 20 Cong., 1 sess. (serial 163), *Senate Documents*, no. 1, 145-146. A treaty with the Sac and Fox ratified July 15, 1830, also provided \$3000 per annum for education: Kappler, *Indian Treaties*, 305-310. Jackson stressed Indian education, but it would be misleading to assume that every treaty concluded during his administration provided federal funds for that purpose. Of the forty-eight treaties negotiated in the eight years preceeding Jackson's two terms in office, only eleven (twenty-nine percent) contained provisions for educational monies. During Jackson's presidency, sixty-seven treaties were negotiated, with twenty (thirty percent) having like provisions. Clearly, Jackson did not, in fact, place significantly higher emphasis upon Indian education: Kappler, *Indian Treaties*, pp. 198-489.

described the Winnebago as "a most miserable and impoverished" tribe. Other contemporary narratives described them in like manner. In addition, missionary efforts among the tribe had achieved minimal success and the Winnebago's opposition to conventional religion reinforced a strong, basic resistance to the education of their children according to the transplanted European culture. Nevertheless, Commissioner Herring pressed for a speedy implementation of the treaty-guaranteed school.⁷

Yellow River School

In 1833, Jackson appointed Reverend David Lowry, a Cumberland Presbyterian minister from Nashville, Tennessee, the school's first teacher, at a salary of \$500 per annum. A native Kentuckian and friend of Jackson, Lowry was born in Logan County on January 20, 1796. Converted to the faith at eighteen, Lowry became an esteemed church member. On December, 1830, he commenced publication of the *Religious and Literary Intelligencer* at Princeton, Kentucky. Originally a private venture, the journal came under church auspices in 1832, and was moved to Nashville. In 1833, Lowry sold his interest in the publication to accept Jackson's appointment as Winnebago teacher. Lowry was also urged to accept the position by Winnebago Indian agent Joseph Montfort Street, who had been acquainted with Lowry either in Kentucky or Illinois. In a letter to Secretary of War Lewis Cass, Street said of Lowry: "[He] resigned the comforts of civilized life & devoted himself and an amiable partner [his wife], under great priva-

⁷Letter, Elbert Herring to Joseph Montfort Street, March 5, 1833, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, 1824-1881, National Archives, Record Group 75, Series M21, Roll 10, pp. 93-94. (The "M" series denotes microfilm. Hereafter cited as LS with the corresponding microfilm roll number and pagination, e.g., LS/10:93-94); George Catlin, *Illustrations of the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* (London: Chatto & Windrus, 1876), 2:146-147; Juliette Augusta (Magill) Kinzie, *Wau-bun* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1876), 2:146-147; and Thomas L. McKenney, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (Philadelphia: D. Rice and A. N. Hart, 1855), 2:239-240. An attempt to induce Winnebago parents to send their children to the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky had fizzled several years earlier. Education was distrusted, but the physical removal of their children to a distant school was anathema to the Winnebago. Schoolcraft had urged that schools be located near the tribes, a concept soon adopted by the government as the only workable device to bring about even the most basic Indian education. See: Schoolcraft, *Oneóta*, 336-339.



An Indian School. From McKenney's Memoirs.

tions, to the cause of the Indian race.”⁸

Lowry and his wife Mary Ann, who was employed as an assistant teacher, reached Prairie du Chien on September 7, 1833, following an arduous overland trek Lowry emotionally described as “leaving my native land.”⁹ Dismayed at the primitive frontier conditions he discovered at Prairie du Chien, Lowry immediately organized regular church services for the handful of Protestants at the town. Purportedly the

⁸Letter, Street to Carey A. Harris, October 21, 1837, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, 1824-1881, National Archives, Record Group 75, Series M234, Roll 729. (Hereafter cited as LR with corresponding microfilm number, e.g. LR/729. The LR series is unpagged); W. E. Alexander, *History of Winneshiek and Allamakee Counties, Iowa* (Sioux City: Warren Publishing Company, 1882), 368; Ben M. Barrus, Milton L. Baughn, and Thomas H. Campbell, *A People Called Cumberland Presbyterians* (Memphis: Frontier Press, 1972), 14; Benjamin William McDonnold, *History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church* (Nashville: Board of Publications of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1888), 229-230; Moses Paquette, “The Wisconsin Winnebagoes,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 12:405, footnote 1; and Peter Lawrence Scanlan, *Prairie du Chien: French, British, and American* (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1937), 202. Carey A. Harris served as Commissioner of Indian Affairs from July 4, 1836, until October 22, 1838: Felix S. Cohen, *Handbook of Federal Indian Law* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1942), 12.

⁹30 Cong., 2 sess. (serial 537), *House Executive Documents*, no. 1, 462-464; and “Extracts from the Diary of Rev. David Lowry” (held by the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), 1-2. These “extracts” amount to only about three pages, are written in a hand other than Lowry’s, and detail only Lowry’s arrival at Prairie du Chien. Neither the writer’s identity nor the whereabouts of Lowry’s diary are known.

first Protestant to reside at overwhelmingly Catholic Prairie du Chien, Presbyterian Street had conducted prayer meetings and delivered sermons to agency employees, officers from Fort Crawford, and his own wife and five children, but happily relinquished his ministerial duties to Lowry. Lowry strove to preach "nearly every Sabbath," exclaiming "I never saw a place where the Gospel was more needed."¹⁰

Lowry's employment was effective January 1, 1834, but construction and completion of the school buildings was delayed over six months. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Elbert Herring ordered bids let for all farm and school buildings in March, 1833, but Secretary of War Lewis Cass countermanded Herring's order. Intense pressure applied through American Fur Company agents, chiefly Joseph "King" Rolette and Hercules Dousman, successfully delayed immediate construction.

The company's motives were selfish ones. The company maintained an economic stranglehold over the Winnebago and other tribes by purchasing their furs at low prices and selling the Indians overpriced trade goods and illegal liquor on credit. The Indians rarely paid their yearly accounts in full, thereby perpetuating an indebtedness that often increased on a yearly basis. The company's anti-school lobbying among the Indians and in Washington stemmed from a fear that a school would disrupt the exploitation of Indian trappers by educating them (to the inequities of the system), encouraging farming at the expense of fur trapping and hunting, and physically shifting the Winnebago population west of the Mississippi River and away from established company trading posts. When Street, who had accurately interpreted the company's motives and scheme, bitterly protested the delay to Cass and Herring, the go-ahead for construction was approved late in 1833. Unfortunately the building season had expired, and new contracts were not let until the spring of 1834.¹¹

¹⁰Barrus, *A People Called Cumberland Presbyterians*, 137-138; Lowry, "Extracts," pp. 1-3; and Street to Cass, September 12, 1834, LR/697.

¹¹Bruce E. Mahan, *Old Fort Crawford and the Frontier* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1926), 201-202; Street to T. Hartley Crawford, January 1, 1838, Letterbook of Joseph Montfort Street held by the Iowa State Historical Department, Division of Historical Museum and Archives, Des Moines, Iowa, 59. (Hereafter cited as *Letterbook*). T. Hartley Crawford served as Commissioner of Indian Affairs from October 22, 1838, until October 28, 1845: Cohen, *Handbook*, 12.

Contractor Owen Lane of Nashville submitted the low bid of \$2,700, and physical construction commenced in May, 1834. The contract called for a two-storied schoolhouse, the lower floor of stone, the upper floor of planks cut at the military sawmill three miles distant. The building was forty-two feet long, thirty-two feet wide, with four spacious rooms per floor, each heated by a huge fireplace. Additional space was derived from a finished garret, floors were oak planking, and the entire structure was shingled with pine shakes.¹²

The school's substantial construction was due, in large measure, to Street's untiring efforts to dissuade the penny-pinching federal government from erecting log cabins as school buildings. Street initiated numerous alterations during the building's construction phase, but begged Cass's indulgence on the grounds that his actions were due only to his desire to help the Winnebago.¹³

Located in Fairview Township, Allamakee County, the Winnebago school was completed in late summer, 1834, but political intrigues engulfed it even before completion. Thwarted in its initial attempt to block construction of the school, the American Fur Company leveled bogus charges of misconduct against agent Street early in 1834. As construction began in May, Street journeyed to Washington to present his defense of the charges. Colonel Zachary Taylor, commandant at Fort Crawford, future president, and an intimate friend of Street, lambasted the American Fur Company and its agent Joseph Rolette, while praising Street for his dedication, courage, and integrity. Street was exonerated, but in July, 1834, he was notified of his transfer to the Sac and Fox Indian agency at Rock Island. Believing the American Fur Company had engineered the transfer to eliminate his staunch support for the school, Street protested the transfer, as did Lowry (who had found a great friend and supporter in Street), but the protests availed nothing and Street's transfer stood.¹⁴

¹²Street to Herring, May 5, 1834, LR/776, enclosing the building contract and specifications; and Street to Herring, May 29, 1834, LR/776. Elbert Herring served as Commissioner of Indian Affairs from July 10, 1832, until July 4, 1836: Cohen, *Handbook*, 12.

¹³Street to Cass, June 13, 1834, LR/776.

¹⁴Zachary Taylor to Street, April 15, 1834, LR/697; Street to Harris, May 28, 1834, LR/697; Herring to Street, July 22, 1834, LS/13:242-244; Street to Cass, September 9, 1834, *Letter*

Commandant Taylor was delegated responsibility for overseeing the school's construction and operation until an agent was appointed to succeed Street at Prairie du Chien. Taylor assumed the new duties with "great reluctance," and remained unconvinced of the school's prospects:

I consider the ultimate success of the school doubtful: it will have like all similar establishments . . . many difficulties to encounter, among which will not be least the opposition . . . from the fur traders in this section of country: that description of people decidedly opposed to everything that will have a tendency in the smallest degree to divert the Indians from the chase or that would enlighten them in such a manner as would make them acquainted with the value of the furs & peltries, as well as the articles they receive in barter for them.¹⁵

Street was granted a temporary reprieve from his transfer in October, 1834. At Taylor's insistence, Commissioner Herring permitted Street to remain at Prairie du Chien until April 1, 1835. Still seething over the transfer, Street seized the opportunity to castigate the American Fur Company. Branding the company an insidious "cabal," Street contended that the traders held the Indian in utter contempt. Either the school would combat the trader's exploitation, Street declared, or the Indians would become extinct.¹⁶

Lowry's annual report for 1834 told a bleak story. The school and all outbuildings were completed, but the prospects for Indian education were discouraging. Lowry had labored to attract students, but only two "scholars" had been entrusted to his care and instruction. Lowry's keen disappointment was tempered by the belief that the school would enjoy a full complement of Winnebago students in the spring, although five years would elapse before Lowry's prediction was realized.¹⁷

The spring of 1835 brought a new problem. Father Samuel Charles Mazzuchelli, an Italian Catholic priest and itinerant

book, 43; David Lowry to Herring, December 31, 1834, LR/776; Street Statement on Indian Affairs for 1834, *Letterbook*, 41; Barrus, *A People Called Cumberland Presbyterian*, 138; and Ida M. Street, "Joseph M. Street's Last Fight With the Fur Traders," *Annals of Iowa*, 3rd series, 17 (October, 1929), 114.

¹⁵Herring to Taylor, July 22, 1834, LS/13:238-242; Taylor to Herring, September 9, 1834, LR/697; and Taylor to William Clark, September 19, 1834, LR/697.

¹⁶Street to Cass, June 13, 1834, LR/697; D. Kurtz to Street, October 28, 1834, LS/14:104; and Street to Clark, November 18, 1834, LR/729.

¹⁷Lowry to Herring, December 31, 1834, LR/697.

missionary, preacher, church-builder, and teacher, had twice requested, in 1833 and again in 1834, that he be allowed to undertake a teaching pilgrimage among the Winnebago, but both requests were denied. Mazzuchelli fumed that a Presbyterian minister had been selected to head the Winnebago school, and he sought redress in a letter to President Jackson. On May



10, 1835, Mazzuchelli wrote that the Winnebago were dissatisfied with Lowry as he had been "placed in that office against their will." Mazzuchelli's statement stemmed more from consternation than truth, but he punctuated his argument by pointing to the successful, Catholic-run Menominee school near Fort Winnebago and its 200 students, and contrasted its success with Lowry's failure among the Winnebago. Mazzuchelli disavowed an interest in any "temporal advantage," a disclaimer softened by his intense religious zeal, but requested that Jackson discharge Lowry and hire him.¹⁸

In a letter of May 23, Herring replied to Mazzuchelli's letter on Jackson's behalf, but refused to accede to the priest's demands:

The Revd. David Lowry and his wife have been strongly recommended to the favorable consideration of the Government. It is proper, therefore, that they should be allowed ample time for a fair trial [as teachers].¹⁹

Herring's weak reply was not the final word in the matter. Winnebago subagent Thomas P. Burnett wrote Lowry that a

¹⁸Mazzuchelli to Andrew Jackson, May 10, 1835, LR/777; and Samuel Charles Mazzuchelli, *Memoirs* (Chicago: Press of W. F. Hall, 1915), 129-131. A number of accounts, most of them highly sympathetic and from a Catholic viewpoint, have described Mazzuchelli's missionary efforts among the Indians. See, among others, Kenneth Colton, "Father Mazzuchelli's Iowa Mission," *Annals of Iowa*, 3rd series, 21 (July, 1937-April, 1939), 297-315; Robert P. Eckert, Jr., "A Missionary in the Wilderness," *Catholic World*, 144 (1937), 590-595; Mathias M. Hoffman, "The Winnebago Mission: A Cause Célèbre," *Mid-America*, 13 (July, 1930), 26-52; and John C. Parrish, "Father Mazzuchelli," *Palimpsest* 1 (October, 1920), 101-110.

¹⁹Herring to Mazzuchelli, May 23, 1835, LS/16:139-140.

movement was afoot in Prairie du Chien to oust Lowry from the school. The scheme was ostensibly supported by Catholics "who [were] interested in getting Mr. Mazzikelli [sic], a Catholic priest, appointed to succeed [Lowry] in the superintendence of the Winnebago school."²⁰

Economic motivations represented the true stimulus for the scheme which was concocted by the American Fur Company agents at Prairie du Chien. Ironically, the company had suffered no apparent reduction in trade on account of the school by 1835, but the imagined prospects of future economic deterioration spurred the company's attempts to undermine the school. And since the citizenry at Prairie du Chien depended heavily upon the Indian trade for its livelihood, they supported, whether openly or tacitly, company actions against the school.

Supporters rallied to Lowry's defense. Nineteen residents of Bowling Green, Kentucky, former members of Lowry's congregation in that state, signed a strongly worded petition which praised Lowry and his dedicated work among the Winnebago. Zachary Taylor entered the dispute on Lowry's behalf. The Winnebago cared little about the religious persuasion of their teacher, Taylor contended. In an outburst of anti-foreigner sentiment, Taylor condemned Mazzuchelli and the American Fur Company, asking incredulously:

Have we come to this: that an American citizen [Lowry], against whom no charges have ever been made . . . either for want of zeal, industry, integrity or for capacity for the station which he fills, is to be turned out of office to make room for a Foreigner, and Italian Catholic priest, at the instance of a few individuals concerned with the American Fur Company . . . [and used] . . . to their pecuniary advantage, which no doubt will be the case.²¹

The attempt to remove Lowry failed, but friction generated by Mazzuchelli would resurface in the years which followed.

The school's painfully slow progress was unimpeded by the emotional Mazzuchelli episode. Street's final agency report, written on May 25, 1835, noted that nine students attended,

²⁰Burnett to Lowry, July 11, 1835, LR/777.

²¹Taylor to Clark, July 2, 1835, LR/697; and Citizens of Bowling Green, Kentucky, to Cass, August 25, 1835, LR/777.

with bright prospects for others: "Many Winnebago are visiting the school preparatory . . . to bringing their children to the school."²²

However, it would take more than Street's optimism to insure success. By the fall of 1835, dwindling enrollment, aggravated by undelivered food and material supplies, threatened to permanently cripple the school's operation. Herring was dismayed that so few children were enrolled, but unrealistically failed to appreciate the school's seasonal enrollment pattern: greater enrollment was experienced during the spring and summer months when the Winnebago occupied their nearby encampments, lesser enrollment during the fall and winter months when hunting expeditions drove them hundreds of miles from the area. The seasonal enrollment pattern was never reversed—it was a fact that had to be recognized. Herring either ignored or totally failed to perceive the problem. Unless the school's enrollment increased immediately, he informed Taylor, the teacher's salaries would be reduced, although no reduction ever took place.²³

Lowry's annual report for 1835 reflected his continuing hope for the school's progress in the face of numerous obstacles. Enrollment remained at nine students, but the problems of bureaucratic confusion, Winnebago intransigence, frequent raids by hostile parties of Sac and Fox braves, and the lack of competent interpreters, remained. Still, the school boasted two teachers, a gardener, a cook, and educational instruction, albeit limited in scope and extremely basic, for its pupils. Lowry paternalistically maintained that the educational experiment in progress was at least a limited success:

I will add, that in our attempts to improve the condition of the Savage, but little reliance should be placed in sudden and powerful efforts. Nations, like individual character, degenerate or improve gradually. Prejudices that have been planted in infancy, nurtured by habit, confirmed by example, and consecrated by tradition cannot be expected to yield at the first touch. But be-

²²Street to J. Brant, Quartermaster General of the United States, May 25, 1835, LR/777; and Street to Clark, May 25, 1835, *Letterbook*, 56.

²³Street to Brant, May 25, 1835, LR/777; Herring to the Board of Inspectors for the Winnebago School, Prairie du Chien, June 24, 1835, LS/16:233; Herring to Taylor, September 5, 1835, LS/17:51-53; Brant to Herring, October 10, 1835, LR/777; and 24 Cong., 1 sess. (serial 279), *House Executive Documents*, no. 1, 273.

cause the Indian will not meet us on our first approach, throw down their blankets, decline the hunt, and become agricultural people at once, they should not, therefore, be abandoned as incorrigible. Neither nation, nor individual, could be reformed this way.²⁴

Lowry's optimism was rewarded with an increased enrollment to seventeen students by April 1, 1836. Lowry felt sufficiently encouraged to request the construction of additional school facilities and housing for Winnebago families that had settled close to the school. By the fall of 1836, Lowry assumed responsibility for both the farm and school, believing the former required increased supervision. By year's end, total enrollment peaked at twenty-five, an increase which pleased Lowry enormously. A continuous welter of problems always remained to absorb Lowry's energies, but he was encouraged at the promising rise in student enrollment and the sedentary habitation of several Winnebago families living near the school and agency.

However, Lowry's enthusiasm was tempered by the knowledge that governmental food subsidies and military protection from enemy tribes contributed significantly to the Winnebago's residence near the agency and Fort Atkinson, a ward status which was characteristic of Indian-white relations in the United States.²⁵

Lowry's flagging spirits of 1834 and 1835 were sharply contrasted by the attitude he revealed in 1836. Low enrollment figures, Catholic agitation, and governmental indifference and ignorance had discouraged Lowry to the brink of resignation, but his dedication, buoyed by Street's encouragement, led him to reconsider and he remained at the school. Lowry never again contemplated a voluntary departure from the school.²⁶ By September, 1837, the school's future appeared assured. Forty-one pupils, sixteen girls and twenty-five boys, were enrolled. The school farm produced abundant quantities of vegetables, and others were grown by the Winnebago living

²⁴Lowry to Taylor, December 31, 1835, LR/777.

²⁵Lowry to Taylor, March 26, 1836, LR/777; and Lowry to Street, November 29, 1836, LR/777.

²⁶Street to Harris, October 21, 1837, LR/729. Although not formally involved with the school's operation after 1835, Street maintained a strong interest in it until his death in May, 1840.

near the school and farm. Lowry urged the purchase of livestock to reinforce the Indians' new-found, agricultural lifestyle, but Commissioner Harris rejected Lowry's proposal as too expensive and doomed to failure as the Winnebago would immediately eat the livestock and not breed them.²⁷

Lowry continued to struggle to implement a truly effective plan for Winnebago education based upon instruction in English and the basis "3 R's," agricultural instruction for the boys, and domestic training for the girls. One chronic problem manifested itself in the want of a competent interpreter. Sign language remained the sole method of communication until Lowry and his students learned sufficient portions of the other's language to communicate effectively. Children stayed on at the school for varying lengths of time, but rarely for more than three years, scarcely adequate time to master English, let alone rudimentary reading, writing, and arithmetic. Nevertheless, the Winnebago progressed to the stage where Lowry felt confident to predict:

I have no doubt these Indians have now commenced their march from the aboriginal to the civilized state, and nothing is wanting but the patient and persevering effort to place them by the side of the white man, enjoying the rich benefits of science, agriculture, and religion.²⁸

In June, 1839, Lowry earned a promotion to subagent. Justifiably wary and slightly paranoid from years of governmental dealings, Lowry worried lest his annual salary of \$750, doubled to \$1,500 with the subagent promotion, let loose a flood of partisan clamorings for his position. However, his security was not seriously threatened at this time and he retained his office.²⁹

Turkey River School

By 1837, white settlers had encroached to within a few miles of the Yellow River school and agency. This pressure led

²⁷Lowry to Street, September 1, 1837, LR/778; Street to Harris, October 13, 1837, LR/778; and Street to Harris, October 21, 1837, LR/778.

²⁸Crawford to Dodge, December 14, 1838, LR/698; and 25 Cong., 3 sess. (serial 338), *Senate Documents*, no. 1, 519-522.

²⁹Dodge to Crawford, February 5, 1839, LR/699; Crawford to Lowry, June 5, 1839, LS/26:381; and Lowry to Judge Fletcher, November 6, 1839, LR/699.

to a second major Winnebago treaty and land cession which was finalized on November 1, 1837. The treaty ceded Winnebago lands east of the Mississippi River and as far west as the Yellow River establishment. The treaty necessitated a Winnebago removal fifty miles further west to the Turkey River. Street rationalized:

If they remain where they are a few more years, there will be few to remove any where, for they are rapidly wasting away, and perishing before the advances of the white population that is crowding into this country.³⁰

White advances underscored a major problem among the Winnebago—liquor. As discussed earlier, traders plied the Winnebago with whiskey until the tribe, unable to resist its uninhibited imbibing, possessed little with which to barter, either in furs or allotted annuities which passed into the trader's pockets, a situation which complicated and handicapped any educational efforts among the tribe. Lowry believed the move would encourage Winnebago education in an area devoid of the negative influences of the white population nearby.³¹

The migration to Turkey River commenced in April, 1840. Commanded by General Henry Atkinson, an army detachment from Fort Crawford was delegated supervisory responsibility for the transfer of the Winnebago. Lowry participated in an advisory capacity to maintain order among the Indians. Contracts for construction of the new agency and school were let simultaneously so that the buildings would be completed by fall. Plans detailed separate dormitories for the male and female students (Lowry disdained as "unhealthy" the physical proximity of both sexes in a single building). The Turkey River Indian agency and school buildings were great improvements over the Yellow River facilities. Besides the students' quarters, an agent's house, principal's house, recitation room, stable, meat house, privy, chicken house, and three blacksmithies were provided for. An appropriation of \$22,000 was

³⁰Lowry to Loomis, February 8, 1837, LR/778; Dodge to Harris, February 15, 1837, LR/729; Street to Harris, March 16, 1838, LR/778; Lowry to Street, September 1, 1837, LR/778; and Kappler, *Indian Treaties*, 498-500.

³¹Lowry to Crawford, January 1, 1840, LR/700; and Lowry to Dodge, January 13, 1840, LR/700.

budgeted for all construction projects, and the final expenditure, doled out under governmental exhortations of "strict economy," totaled \$21,479.³²

A small contingent of Winnebago was transported to Turkey River in the spring and summer of 1840. Lowry shrewdly suggested that the Winnebago's annual annuity be disbursed only on site at the new agency, thereby forcing the recalcitrant Indians to trek to the new agency to receive their goods and monies. The Yellow River school, and all its various buildings, was sold in November, but a complete removal to Turkey River was not accomplished until May, 1841.³³

The new agency boasted nearly twenty buildings, twenty-four employees in all capacities, and three teachers besides Lowry. Atkinson's army detachment erected a fort close to the school. Named Fort Atkinson, the fort served not only as a military outpost on the Iowa frontier, but also doubled as a guardian of the Winnebago school and agency.³⁴

The first Winnebago school at Yellow River had been a limited success. Formidable problems had confronted Lowry, not the least of which had been Winnebago opposition to the school. That opposition was compounded by governmental indifference and the entrenched, vested interests of the American Fur Company which feared the school would disrupt the fur trade. Consequently, exiguous enrollment and the serious language barrier prevented the implementation of effective educational programs. Few details of the school's day-to-day operation were reported and Lowry rarely reported specific instances of student progress simply because there was none, as

³²Crawford to Lowry, March 12, 1840, LS/28:200; Lowry to Dodge, April 6, 1840, LR/702; Crawford to Atkinson, April 10, 1840, LS/28:268; Crawford to Lowry, April 20, 1841, LS/30:231; and John B. Newhall, *A Glimpse of Iowa in 1846* (Burlington, Iowa: W. D. Skillman, 1846), 37. For additional information on the Winnebago move, see also Roger L. Nichols, *General Henry Atkinson: A Military Career* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965); and William J. Petersen, "Moving the Winnebago into Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, 58 (October, 1960), 357-376.

³³Lowry to Dodge, November 16, 1840, LR/700; Dodge to Crawford, October 26, 1840, LR/700; Dodge to Crawford, November 26, 1840, LR/700; and General George Brooke to Atkinson, May 5, 1841, LR/702.

³⁴Contracts for Employees of the Turkey River Agency, April-October, 1840, LR/700; and Charles Philip Hexom, *Indian History of Winnishiek County, Iowa* (Decorah, Iowa: A.K. Bailey & Son, Inc., 1913), [p. 52]. The military routinely aided the Winnebago agency and school. By May, 1841, the fort was disbursing rations to starving Winnebago hard-hit by the severe winter of 1840-1841: Crawford to Commandant to Fort Atkinson, May 24, 1841, LS/30:296-297.

minimal teaching was accomplished during the years 1834-1840. The move to Turkey River would encourage consistency in every phase of the school's operation, Lowry believed, and permit the introduction of comprehensive instructional programs. He asserted that while adult Winnebago were "debauched" and beyond reclamation, hope existed for their children "to enjoy the means of intellectual and moral [education]." ³⁵

Unhappily, Lowry's optimism was short-lived. Much as school enrollment fluctuated on a cyclical basis, so did poor Lowry's moods, moods evident in letters written only days apart. On January 31, 1841, Lowry wrote James Doty, Wisconsin Territory's congressional delegate and later Wisconsin Territorial Governor, expressing fear that the incoming presidential administration would precipitate a great clamor for his job, and Lowry solicited Doty's aid to stave off any such attempts. ³⁶

Lowry seriously misjudged the origin of criticism against him. No ouster attempts originated from the capitol. However, a second removal attempt materialized in March, 1841, in the form of a petition signed by nearly 100 Catholic residents of Prairie du Chien. The petition was forwarded to President Harrison demanding Lowry's expulsion from office. The petition was based upon nebulous, unsubstantiated charges of misconduct, misappropriation of governmental funds, and mismanagement leveled against Lowry by a recently hired teacher, Theopilus Lachappelle. Lachappelle had been hired the prior October, and scarcely had time to gather information upon which to base such serious charges. Iowa Territorial Governor John Chambers, appointed to that post in 1841, instructed Lowry to submit a full report on his agency. Chambers then appointed General Joseph D. Learned of Iowa City to investigate the charges in July. Throughout September, Learned conducted hearings which, corroborated by over 200 pages of testimony, exonerated Lowry. And Lachappelle's resignation from the school during Learned's painstaking investigation cast suspicion on his credibility as

³⁵26 Cong., 2 sess. (serial 382), *House Documents*, no. 2, 334-338.

³⁶Lowry to Doty, January 13, 1841, LR/701.

well. Lowry was, nevertheless, admonished that he employed too many relatives and personal friends in agency jobs, although friends and relatives were generally the only individuals Lowry could persuade to undertake difficult agency positions for the meagre salaries paid.³⁷

Substantial strides in "civilizing" the Winnebago were achieved during 1841. Lowry wrote Governor Chambers that growing numbers of Winnebago children were showing signs of progress. More students were enrolled and attendance, once the source of pessimism, was regularizing with each passing month. Ninety-five students, fifty boys and forty-five girls, were enrolled, far surpassing any attendance record achieved at Yellow River. Students were divided into five classes: female students outnumbered male students in the two most advanced classes. Geography, arithmetic, and astronomy were taught, and students "readily answer[ed] questions on the Globe." Boys worked the school farm and garden, while the Winnebago girls learned to sew, eventually making and mending all the clothing required by the school.³⁸

Tremendously heartened and even inspired by these tangible successes, Lowry wrote Commissioner of Indian Affairs T. Hartley Crawford, detailing his plans for Winnebago education. Lowry proposed sending Winnebago children to white schools for study in the hope that they would, in turn, become teachers for their own people. Lowry believed, unrealistically, that white attitudes, customs, and beliefs could be universally instilled in Indian youths in this manner. His feelings reflected

³⁷Contract of Theopilus Lachappelle, October 20, 1840, LR/701; A Petition Against David Lowry by the Residents of Prairie du Chien, March 4, 1841, LR/701; A. Brisbois to Doty, March 7, 1841, LR/701; Lachappelle to Doty, March 16, 1841, LR/701 (Variant spellings of Lachappelle's name were found in this correspondence: Lachappelle, La Chappelle, La Chappele, etc. The spelling chosen was selected for the sake of consistency); Crawford to Lowry, April 22, 1841, LS/30:236; Chambers to Crawford, July 24, 1841, LR/701; Crawford to Chambers, August 19, 1841, LS/31:30; and Chambers to Crawford, September 30, 1841, LR/701. Even as the hearings continued, a petition by Winnebago chiefs, originating from Prairie du Chien, also demanded Lowry's termination. Traders at the town were incensed that Lowry had demanded a strict accounting of all Winnebago credit charges on the trader's books before the yearly annuity would be paid. Lowry's action prevented large-scale cheating and padded accounts which the traders considered almost a sacred right, hence their pressure on the Winnebago to demand Lowry's removal, but the petition accomplished nothing: Petition of the Winnebago Chiefs to President John Tyler, September 20, 1841, LR/701; J.C.S. [John C. Spencer] to Chambers, October 22, 1841, LS/31:202-203; and Lowry to Chambers, September 8, 1841, LR/701.

³⁸Minerva Bronson to Lowry, June 12, 1841, LR/701; and Lowry to Chambers, June 15, 1841, LR/701.

the prevailing white attitude, one noticeably stronger among religious missionaries, that Indian cultures were automatically abhorrent simply because they were vastly different from white culture. Lowry argued that the Winnebago were ultimately capable of achieving education and civilization:

If the Indians *cannot* be civilized, it is important to know why they cannot. Does the obstacle lie in the nature of the work, in its magnitude, or in the extraneous circumstances surrounding it? If everything else can be done, why not this? If we can wage war with the red man, expend millions, conquer and drive him[,] why not tame him? Why not invade those gloomy and hateful legions of superstitions which he inhabits with a knowledge of letters and with the light of the gospel of Christ. This can be done. It must be done.³⁹

Lowry was apparently insecure about his effectiveness in educating the Winnebagos: “[My] highest object, in residing with the Winnebagos, is to benefit their condition and, however unworthy my plans may be of consideration, *I am sure they are disinterested.*”⁴⁰

Lowry’s plan never reached fruition. Governor Chambers, who believed the Winnebago incapable of education outside of their own country, vetoed Lowry’s plan. However, Lowry’s proposal to adopt and raise an orphaned Winnebago boy “and prepare him for usefulness to his tribe” was granted.⁴¹

Religious jealousies resurfaced in May, 1842. Lowry indignantly reported that Father Mazzuchelli had made an unauthorized reappearance, intent upon “maneuvering among the Indians . . . for the purpose of withdrawing their minds from the school.” Lowry inferred that the priest utilized liquor as an inducement to disrupt the school, bring its curriculum under Catholic auspices, and throw Lowry out of office. And, Lowry declared, Mazzuchelli incited the Winnebago with inflammatory, anti-government harangues.⁴²

Commissioner of Indian Affairs Crawford expressed con-

³⁹Lowry to Crawford, February 26, 1842, LR/780.

⁴⁰Lowry to Crawford, May 12, 1842, LR/862.

⁴¹Chambers to Crawford, March 19, 1842, LR/862; Crawford to Chambers, April 14, 1842, LS/32:108; Chambers to Crawford, August 2, 1842, LR/862; and Lowry to Chambers (official copy), March 31, 1842, in the Letters of Thomas B. Boyd, 1837-1843, Microfilm #148, held by the Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, 258-259.

⁴²Lowry to Crawford, May 10, 1842, LR/862.

cern over the vituperative tone of Lowry's official correspondence on the subject of Mazzuchelli and Catholics. Fearing that a renewed religious confrontation would reflect negatively on his department, Crawford instructed Governor Chambers to tactfully inform the priest to abandon the immediate area of the school. In the meantime, Lowry apprised Doty, who had been appointed Wisconsin Territorial Governor, of Mazzuchelli's presence. Doty dispatched a scathing letter to Secretary of War John C. Spencer, exclaiming that a "*Catholic priest*" had settled near the Turkey River school "contrary to the wishes of the agent, Mr. Lowry." Piqued at Lowry's handling of the entire Mazzuchelli episode and the unfavorable direction which events had taken, an exasperated Chambers exclaimed: "The great fault in [Lowry's] character I take to be *obstinacy*."⁴³ Crawford bowed to Catholic pressure and agreed to allow their schools in the area under strictly controlled conditions.

Drawn by annuity payments and governmental food subsidies, Winnebago in and around the agency numbered over 2,000 by the summer of 1842. The agency house and school buildings were renovated to accommodate increased numbers of pupils. Sadly, one way in which the Winnebago students' cultural identities were obscured was to assign each a white man's name. School rolls listed Thomas Jefferson, Martin Van Buren, Andrew Jackson, John Chambers, Joseph Street, and David Lowry as students. After being appointed subagent in 1842, Lowry hired J. W. Hancock as head teacher. In the agency's annual report dated August 30, 1842, Hancock noted the recurring difficulty of irregular attendance, but cited examples of promising improvement among the Winnebago students. Moreover, Lowry was delighted when nearly the entire school band of Winnebago signed a temperance pledge to abstain from all liquor.⁴⁴

⁴³Crawford to Chambers, June 18, 1842, LS/32:257-258; Loras to Spencer, June 18, 1842, LR/780; Chambers to Crawford, August 2, 1842, LR/862; Doty to John C. Spencer, August 12, 1842, LR/862; Crawford to Chambers, October 27, 1842, LS/33:62-63; Chambers to Crawford, November 10, 1842, LR/780; Chambers to Crawford, December 19, 1842, LR/862; and A. C. Dodge to Crawford, December 21, 1842, LR/780.

⁴⁴Lowry to Crawford, June 15, 1842, LR/862; Lowry to Crawford, July 24, 1842, LR/862; Report of the Turkey River Agency (duplicate), August 30, 1842, LR/862; 27 Cong., 3 sess. (serial 413), *Senate Documents*, no. 1, 480; Willard Barrows, "In the Neutral Ground," *Palimpsest*, 2 (April, 1922), 113; and "Indians of Iowa in 1842," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 13

Governor Chambers was dubious of the school's supposed progress, believing the school was ultimately doomed to fail. Nevertheless, he felt Lowry was an excellent and dedicated servant of the government and Indians:

Mr. Lowry certainly manifest [ed] a most laudable zeal in his wish to advance his Indians in education and civilization, but truly his success has been by no means commensurate with his zeal—even to judge from his own representations communicated from time to time.⁴⁵

Whether from an honest conviction or political exigencies, Commissioner Crawford's annual report for 1842 sounded the trumpet of unqualified success. Crawford envisioned the struggle for Indian education as nearly won. He postulated:

The greatest good we can bestow upon [the Indians] is education in the broadest sense—education in letters, education in labor and the mechanic arts, education in morals, and education in Christianity, [and] the first two . . . should go hand in hand.

And when Crawford informed Chambers,

The Winnebago School and farm are institutions of great importance and interest both on account of the large sums expended and the beneficent results contemplated and anxiously desired by the government,⁴⁶

the governor then embraced an upbeat, positive attitude more consistent with the commissioner's viewpoint.

However, Lowry's extended tenure at the school had been undermined. Uncertain enrollments, difficult-to-measure progress of the Winnebago pupils, Catholic friction, and fur trader agitation had greatly disturbed Commissioner Crawford who disliked controversy in his department, and by the spring of 1844, Lowry's position was shaky.⁴⁷

(April, 1915), 251. Lowry had hoped the move to Turkey River would eliminate the liquor traffic among the Winnebago, but white traders plied their liquid wares at the new site, albeit from a safe distance.

⁴⁵Chambers to Crawford (official copy), September 21, 1842, LR/363; Chambers to Crawford, January 3, 1843, LR/781; and Crawford to Chambers, January 25, 1843, LS/33:252.

⁴⁶Crawford to Chambers, June 15, 1843, LS/34:59-61; Chambers to Crawford, August 23, 1843, LR/781; Chambers to Crawford (official copy), September 27, 1843, LR/363; and 27 Cong., 3 sess. (serial 413), *Senate Documents*, no. 1, 385-387.

⁴⁷Lowry to Chambers (official copy), March 16, 1844, LR/782; Chambers to Crawford, April 2, 1844, LR/781; Crawford to Chambers, April 17, 1844, LS/35:141; and School Attendance Report for May, 1844, LR/863. By 1844, Lowry's support, firm throughout the Jackson and Van Buren administrations, had waned, due at least in part to a party shift in Washington, and Lowry's fears for the safety of his position were finally realized.

On July 5, 1844, Crawford wrote Lowry informing him that James MacGregor of New York had been appointed to replace him. Crawford offered no concrete explanation for Lowry's dismissal. On the contrary, Crawford's letter was brutally succinct. On September 14, 1844, Lowry left the Turkey River school and traveled overland to Lebanon, Tennessee. Not content to accept a summary dismissal without an explanation, Lowry wrote Crawford from Tennessee and inquired into the circumstances of his removal from office. Lowry inquired whether any charges had been made against him, indignantly exclaiming (and rightfully so): "[I never sought] the office from which I was displaced . . . The man is not living who dare face me with charges derogatory to the character of an honest man, a Christian, [and a] minister of the Gospel." Crawford tersely replied only that President John Tyler had ordered MacGregor's appointment.⁴⁸

MacGregor assumed his duties at Turkey River in mid-August, 1844. By September, enrollment had soared to 170 students, but the increase was obviously due to the efforts of Lowry, not those of MacGregor. The burgeoning enrollment merely aggravated the fluctuating enrollment problem. School principal John L. Seymour complained that "the irregularity of the pupils, their dread of restraint, and general ignorance of our language . . . renders it scarcely impossible to keep any two of them in the same degree of advancement, and requires of the teachers an amount of labor and patience that can be estimated by experience only."⁴⁹

Supervising the agency proved no easy task. MacGregor was immediately forced to deal with disgruntled agency hands who demanded a three dollar per month raise and a teacher corps which remained fiercely loyal to Lowry, a situation hardly surprising since Lowry had nominated all of his teach-

⁴⁸James MacGregor to Crawford, July 3, 1844, LR/863; Crawford to Lowry, July 5, 1844, LS/35:327; Chambers to Crawford, September 15, 1844, LR/863; Lowry to Crawford, October 24, 1844, LR/863; and Crawford to Lowry, November 11, 1844, LS/36:51. Judging from the dates of this correspondence and MacGregor's letter of acceptance (July 3), the position had been offered to, and accepted by, MacGregor well in advance of Lowry's termination. And there is some indication that MacGregor lobbied for the position for more than a year. See: Crawford to Chambers, March 14, 1843, LS/33:363.

⁴⁹Seymour to MacGregor, August 15, 1844, LR/863; Seymour to MacGregor, September 2, 1844, LR/863; and 28 Cong., 2 sess. (serial 449). *Senate Documents*, no. 1, 357-358.

ers personally. MacGregor wrote Governor Chambers that disruptions caused by the teachers were imminent, and that only by replacing the entire teaching staff would harmony and uninterrupted instruction be insured.⁵⁰

Chambers expressed little confidence in MacGregor, due primarily to the latter's antipathy towards the teachers whom Chambers felt had been very successful. Internal differences and bickerings obscured the true object of the teachers' labors. Teacher Benjamin Terrel stated that the Winnebago were thoroughly confused by the cross-purposes of groups like the Catholics, fur traders, and even the government itself, a confusion which, when added to the unsettled feelings among the tribe prompted by land cessions and frequent territorial dislocations, retarded Winnebago education.⁵¹

True to his word, MacGregor fired the teachers in early October, 1844. MacGregor cited their lack of "moral influence" over the students, and stressed their hostile attitude towards himself. Buoyed by Commissioner Crawford's backing and his own acute displeasure at MacGregor's course of action, Governor Chambers reinstated the full group of teachers on October 31. The governor reasoned that the teachers had performed their assignments extremely well, and that discharging them for an unsubstantiated animosity toward MacGregor could not be tolerated.⁵² Governor Chambers, whether justified or not, was henceforth consistently critical of MacGregor. And MacGregor did not endear himself to his superior when he left behind much unfinished agency and school business, and took an unauthorized leave of absence beginning November 18.⁵³

A Catholic himself, MacGregor's blustery denunciations

⁵⁰MacGregor to Chambers, September 14, 1844, LR/863; and MacGregor to Chambers, September 26, 1844, LR/863.

⁵¹Benjamin Terrell to [Chambers?], September 2, 1844, LR/863; and Chambers to Crawford, September 28, 1844, LR/863.

⁵²Crawford to Chambers, October 18, 1844, LS/36:5-6; MacGregor to Chambers, October 26, 1844, LR/862; Chambers to MacGregor (official copy), October 31, 1844, LR/782; and Chambers to Crawford (official copy), November 2, 1844, LR/782.

⁵³Chambers to Crawford, November 10, 1844, LR/782; MacGregor to Chambers, November 12, 1844, LR/863; MacGregor to Chambers, November 13, 1844, LR/782; Crawford to Chambers, November 14, 1844, LS/36:54; MacGregor to Chambers, November 18, 1844, LR/863; Crawford to Chambers, November 23, 1844, LS/36:64; and Chambers to Crawford, December 22, 1844, LR/863.

of disloyalty among the teachers nearly concealed his true motive for firing them—his sympathy for Catholic efforts to gain control over the school. MacGregor nominated Father Joseph Cretin to the school's headmastership only a few days after firing the school's teachers. MacGregor was undoubtedly emboldened to the firings and nomination of Cretin by principal Seymour's refusal in late September to grant Bishop Mathias Loras of Dubuque permission to conduct Sunday church services at the school. Fretful that the incident would rekindle latent religious jealousies which had earlier plagued the school, Chambers vented his anger at Seymour's intransigence:

. . . the conduct of Mr. Seymour was unbecoming a Christian or a gentleman. Indeed I am astonished at such treatment towards such a man as Bishop Loras, who is a most excellent man, and a gentleman in his manner and deportment. This Mr. Seymour is, I presume, an obstinate bigot and his conduct on the occasion alluded to will reconcile me to his dismissal whenever Mr. MacGregor may think there is sufficient cause for it.⁵⁴

MacGregor wrote Loras of Cretin's nomination the same day he wrote Governor Chambers to recommend the priest. Extensive documentation inundated Commissioner Crawford on Cretin's behalf. One petition, signed by Winnebago half-breeds at Prairie du Chien, was, in reality, fomented by whites using the unwitting Indians as a mouthpiece and front. "These documentations are got up," Chambers surmised, "by persons having more feeling in the matter than the petitioners."⁵⁵ Seymour was a friend of Lowry and kept him informed on all developments. Thus Lowry once again entered the arena of controversy. Lowry declared in a letter to Commissioner Crawford that MacGregor's actions smacked of religious nepotism. Crawford agreed wholeheartedly and he affirmed Chambers' reinstatement order for the teachers.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Chambers to Crawford, October 4, 1844, LR/863. See also M.M.H. [Mathias M. Hoffman], "Joseph Cretin," *Dictionary of American Biography*, 5:542.

⁵⁵MacGregor to Loras (copy), and MacGregor to Chambers, both dated October 29, 1844, LR/862; Letters of Charles Conklin, John King, and Timothy Davis (official copies), November 2, 1844, LR/782; and Chambers to Crawford, December 5, 1844, LR/862. It is interesting to note that a letter supporting Cretin written by Prairie du Chien merchant James H. Lockwood was dated October 9, 1844, which predated the firing of the teachers. MacGregor apparently enlisted the aid of Lockwood, a wealthy resident of that town, at a very early point to oust the teachers and install Cretin as head teacher: Lockwood to Chambers, October 9, 1844, LR/782.

⁵⁶Lowry to Crawford, November 13, 1844, LR/782; Crawford to Chambers, December 2,

The Cretin affair dramatically opened the final Catholic confrontation which the school would face. Not unexpectedly, religious frictions adversely affected the Winnebago. Uncertainties stemming from religious infighting among the whites continued for an entire year, and hampered the school's educational programs. The Catholic missionary-teachers drew strength from Father Cretin's near-victory. On April 7, 1845, they announced their intention to establish a school near the fort. Loras and Cretin had not secured official permission for the proposed school, but mistakenly interpreted Bureau of Indian Affairs' policies as anti-Catholic persecution. Chambers showed great concern over MacGregor's supposed Catholic bias, more so than with any other issue at hand, and Chambers cited the impetus his bias had given to further Catholic efforts. Chambers felt strongly that MacGregor's moves to deliver the Winnebago school over to the Catholics had to be stopped.⁵⁷

Chambers' attitude served to provoke Father Cretin into agitating for a school to teach the Catholic doctrine to the Indians. Chambers was furious with the priest but relented, allowing Father Cretin to build a school in Winnebago country. He insisted, however, that it be sufficiently distant to "prevent collisions" with the established school at Turkey River. Incredibly, Cretin never established his proposed school.⁵⁸ Chambers held fast to his low opinion of MacGregor, and fired him effective June 3, 1845. The resulting confusion within the Winnebago agency and school lasted for months. Crawford appointed Jonathan E. Fletcher to succeed MacGregor, but the appointment did little to normalize the agency's operation. Fort Atkinson's commandant was directed to oversee the agency pending Fletcher's arrival, which added to the confusion.⁵⁹

1844, LS/36:77; and Crawford to Chambers, December 18, 1844, LS/36:108.

⁵⁷Dearborn to Chambers, April 7, 1845, LR/782; Crawford to Chambers, April 18, 1845, LS/36:306; Chambers to MacGregor, April 22, 1845, LR/782; and Chambers to Crawford, April 22, 1845, LR/782.

⁵⁸Cretin to MacGregor, May 20, 1845, LR/863; Chambers to Cretin (official copy), July 11, 1845, LR/782; Crawford to Chambers, July 24, 1845, LS/37:4; and Chambers to Fletcher, July 11, 1845, in "Letters of Governor John Chambers on Indian Affairs, 1845," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, 19 (April, 1921), 285-286.

⁵⁹Chambers to Crawford, May 31, 1845, LR/863; Crawford to MacGregor, June 3, 1845,

The confusing, if not comical, welter of charges and countercharges continued unabated, obscuring the basic importance of the school itself. When Cretin boldly threatened to lodge derogatory claims against the Winnebago school in territorial newspapers, Chambers lost all patience, and served notice to Commissioner Crawford that Cretin's expulsion from the region was imminent, but once again no action was taken.⁶⁰

School principal John Seymour was so disturbed by the infighting and lack of resolution that he left his post. He traveled to Washington to personally petition Commissioner Crawford and seek a meeting to discuss "the condition of the Winnebago & the interest of education among them." Crawford never consented to an interview with Seymour, who oddly continued to bombard the commissioner with correspondence detailing elaborate, bizarre schemes to promote Winnebago education, schemes which Crawford totally ignored. Seymour then returned to Turkey River and lied to Fletcher that the commissioner had reinstated him as principal. Fletcher, skeptical, refused to reinstate Seymour without official authorization which, not surprisingly, never came. A dejected Seymour departed the agency in December, 1845.⁶¹

When Seymour had been in Washington, he had recommended Lowry's appointment as school principal, but no action was taken at that time. Fletcher, however, realized that Lowry was probably the only person possessing the knowledge and capabilities to restore order out of the chaos which had developed in the wake of MacGregor's dismissal. Iowa Territorial Governor James Clark, appointed to that position in 1845, was quick to support Fletcher's nomination of Lowry. The governor realized that Lowry's experience and credibility were essential to revive the school and he appointed Lowry principal

LS/36:421; Crawford to Fletcher, June 3, 1845, LS/36422; Chambers to Crawford, June 14, 1845, LR/862; and Fletcher to Crawford, June 17, 1845, LR/863.

⁶⁰Major G. Dearborn to Crawford, June 29, 1845, LR/863; Crawford to Chambers, June 28, 1845, LS/36:452-453; and Chambers to Crawford, August 9, 1845, LR/863.

⁶¹Chambers to Crawford, August 8, 1845, LR/782; Seymour to Crawford, August 25, 1845, LR/782; Seymour to Crawford, August 29, 1845, LR/863; Fletcher to Chambers, October 11, 1845, LR/782; and Commissioner of Indian Affairs William Medill to Iowa Territorial Governor James Clark, December 20, 1845, LS/37:298. Medill served as Commissioner from October 28, 1845, until May 31, 1849: Cohen, *Handbook*, 12.

in February, 1846. In May, 1846, Lowry resumed residence at Turkey River after an absence of nearly two years.⁶²

Lowry returned to find the school's affairs badly wanting a competent supervisor. With Agent Fletcher's blessing, and drawing upon his years of experience among the Winnebago who had respectfully dubbed him "Little Father," Lowry soon restored order and productivity. In August, 1846, Lowry reported the Winnebago students manifested significant potential for civilization through education as evidenced by their command of English, their writing skills, and competency in disciplines such as geography, spelling, and reading. However, he decried the school buildings' decrepit, inadequate state of repair. Lowry's answer to the problem of motivating the Winnebago students to learn was in providing the families with adequate, permanent housing: "*But give them a home that they can call theirs forever and their circumstances will soon create literary wants and dictate a change of habits.*" He further counseled that the educating-civilizing process could not be accomplished in a year, or even in a generation.⁶³

Fletcher was optimistic about the agency's prognosis. Under Lowry's guidance, the school was operating smoothly and showing increased signs of progress. The school farm was operating exceptionally well, with plans being formulated for an "agricultural society" whose membership would consist of Winnebago farmers. Farming and the assimilation of white burial practices and dress were praised as healthy signs of the tribe's acculturation. Liquor and spotty school attendance were the only vestiges of the Indians' former "unenlightened" habits.⁶⁴

However, a second major Winnebago land cession in October, 1846, dashed any further prospects for continued educational improvement. The impermanence of the Turkey River location, assured by the escalating white demand for the fertile farmlands within the Winnebago territory, forced a

⁶²MacGregor to Chambers, August 20, 1845, LR/864; Fletcher to Clark, January 12, 1846, LR/783; Clark to Medill, January 27, 1846, LR/783; Medill to Lowry, February 19, 1846, LS/37:15; Lowry to Medill, February 28, 1846, LR/783; and Lowry to Fletcher (official copy), August 15, 1846, LR/864.

⁶³Lowry to Fletcher, *ibid.*

⁶⁴Fletcher to Clark (official copy), August 15, 1846, LR/864.

comprehensive Winnebago cession of their remaining Iowa lands in exchange for others in Minnesota. Assigned to the St. Peters agency, Winnebago residence in Minnesota was scheduled for the spring of 1848.⁶⁵ Needless to say, the treaty demoralized the tribe. Indians and whites alike feared the move would destroy the strides which had been made toward educating the Winnebago. Powerless to resist the forced cession, the Winnebago's fragile beginning in Iowa Territory was shattered.

Only occasional, mandatory reports were issued by the school in 1847 as the Winnebago abandoned the school, farm, and agency. Some drifted north to Minnesota, others merely expressed a deeper disappointment by simply quitting the establishment altogether. Apparently the idea of yet a third school, this time in Minnesota, held little attraction.⁶⁶

Fletcher was notified in April, 1848, that the agency was formally discontinued and the transfer to Minnesota should begin immediately. Lowry accompanied the Winnebago exodus to Minnesota to pacify tribe members among whom intense grumblings of displeasure were widespread. The entire removal process was completed by August, 1848, when the Winnebago began their sojourn in Minnesota.⁶⁷

The impetus for Indian education grew out of an emphasis on assimilation and acculturation which began in earnest during Andrew Jackson's administration. White expansion necessitated Indian land cessions through treaties which, in a few cases, provided for an Indian school. The schools were not necessarily designed as benevolent institutions to better the Indians' lot. Rather, Indian schools were vehicles intended to solve, at least in part, the question of what to do with Indians displaced by settlement. Education and farming seemed likely devices to encourage Indian assimilation into white society.

However, the Winnebago school in Iowa demonstrated that the task was nearly impossible. Superimposing white cul-

⁶⁵Kappler, *Indian Treaties*, 565-567.

⁶⁶Kappler, *ibid.*; and Barrus, *A People Called Cumberland Presbyterians*, 144.

⁶⁷Medill to Fletcher, April 12, 1848, LS/40:458-460; Fletcher to Thomas Harvey, June 4, 1848, LR/784; 30 Cong., 2 sess. (serial 537), *House Executive Documents*, no. 1, 462-464; Barrus, *ibid.*; and Bruce E. Mahan, "Moving the Winnebago," *Palimpsest*, 3 (February, 1922), 33-52.

ture through education was resisted by the Winnebago. And worse yet, the school became enmeshed in personal, political, economic, and religious squabbles which retarded Indian education tremendously. The American Fur Company with its agents Hercules Dousman and Joseph Rolette, the Catholic Church represented by the unyielding, intransigent missionaries Joseph Cretin and Samuel Mazzuchelli, and David Lowry with his self-imposed servitude to the Winnebago, represented groups of widely varying interests and goals. When the aims of those groups conflicted, Winnebago education suffered. Not even the efforts of men like Winnebago Indian agent Joseph Montfort Street could tip the balance favorably.

However, the most contradictory, debilitating influence was that exercised by the government operating at all levels. Ambivalence and ignorance marked the efforts of Commissioners of Indian Affairs Elbert Herring, Carey A. Harris, T. Hartley Crawford, and William Medill who demanded results, but had no real grasp of the forces or problems operating on the school. The same mentality was evident to a lesser degree in Iowa Territorial Governors Robert Lucas, John Chambers, and James Clark.

Considering these factors, it is hardly surprising that the school made little appreciable progress either in regard to Winnebago education or the civilization of the tribe as a whole. The Yellow River school was a failure. However, it paved the way for some educational advances at Turkey River, but these were, in the final analysis, minimal. Even basic learning and instruction was impossible due to the chronic language barrier which remained throughout the school's existence in Iowa.

Nevertheless, the *spirit* of the two treaties establishing Winnebago schools had been realized. An opening step had been taken to implement Winnebago education and assimilation. Neither education nor assimilation were fully achieved, but the power of governmental influence over the Winnebago was established, and would never be relinquished.

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