

## JOSEPH M. STREET'S LAST FIGHT WITH THE FUR TRADERS

BY IDA M. STREET

"Acting at the source of life, instruments otherwise weak become mighty for good and evil, and men, lost elsewhere in the crowd, stand forth as agents of Destiny."—Parkman's *Pioneers of New France*.

More than twenty-five years ago, when I wrote my first articles on my grandfather's work among the Indians of Wisconsin and Iowa, I should have liked to write another chapter on his last fight with the traders; but then I had neither the time nor the material; now I have both. Since that time the correspondence of other pioneers of Iowa and the Mississippi Valley has been added to the Iowa Historical, Memorial and Art Department, and I shall use a part of these together with more family letters for material for this article.

In my previous articles I have several times referred to the friction between Joseph M. Street and the fur traders. The frequent mention of the American Fur Company might lead the chance reader to think that there was some deep-rooted antagonism between that particular company and my grandfather; or else that he was a very irascible gentleman who did not get on well with his collaborators in the Indian country. Neither of these is true. He was a genial southern gentleman who could tell a good story and enjoy one, and who made staunch friends among the army officers at the Fort. He had, however, a keen sense of justice. Nothing aroused his ire like the taking of what he considered an unfair advantage of the under dog in any fight. Among his associates he was known as a courageous man. One of his friends once said of him, "Street is not afraid of anything 'in the heavens above, the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth.'" His attempt to expose the Aaron Burr conspiracy in Kentucky, as my father tells it in the ANNALS,<sup>1</sup> illustrates my grandfather's fighting spirit.

Joseph M. Street came to Wisconsin in the fall of 1827 thoroughly imbued with the desire to better the condition of the

<sup>1</sup>ANNALS OF IOWA, Third Series, Vol. II, pp. 83-4.

Indians and, as agent of the government, to protect and educate its wards. On the other hand the fur trader's point of view was that of the commercial exploiter. While the intercourse between the agent and the fur trader, at first and on the surface, might be smooth and mutually tolerant, the divergence of their attitude towards the Indian would sooner or later cause friction.

The traders, of course, were not all alike in disposition, nor all imbued with the spirit of exploitation. The very early French traders, the voyageurs, and courier de bois, were care-free adventurers who fraternized with the Indians, exchanged firearms, bright colored clothing, and liquor—the products of civilization, for his furs—the products of the forest. Frederick J. Turner in "The Character and Influence of the Fur Trade in Wisconsin,"<sup>2</sup> divides the two hundred years of the fur traffic from 1623 to 1834 into three periods: French, 1634 to 1763; English, 1763 to 1816; American, 1816 to 1834. From Champlain's emissary, Jean Nicolet, on through the time of such fur traders as Saint-Lusson, Joliet, and La Salle, the exploring expeditions of the French king were instigated and paid for by the profits of the fur trade of the Great Lakes. The Jesuits followed the traders and were sometimes called in by the Indians to mollify young Frenchmen who threatened or illtreated them. On the other hand, the Jesuits received the protection of the traders and their first missions were on the sites of trading posts, as Allouez and his mission at Green Bay. These wandering traders and their employees dwelt with the Indians, were adopted into many of the tribes, and married squaws.

From the fall of Montreal the English succeeded to the profitable fur trade of the St. Lawrence system and the interior. Under the English there were three general associations, called companies, controlling the traffic: the Hudson's Bay Company on the north, which had largely English employees; the Northwest Company, under Forbisher and Simon McTavish; and the Michilimackinack Company, also a Montreal company formed of thirty trading firms. These last two employed Canadian and French boatmen and traders. Their managers were mostly Scotch Highlanders and carried the spirit of Celtic chiefs at war into the

---

<sup>2</sup>*Wis. Hist. Soc. Proc.*, 36th Annual Meeting, 1889, pp. 52-98.

rivalry with the Hudson's Bay Company. They despised its slow methods and its code of lawful dealing—"one price, no violence, and no rum for Indians." Constance L. Skinner in her *Adventures of Oregon* gives a vivid sketch of this warfare between the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon elements in the English companies.

Meanwhile into this region, from New Orleans, came another incursion of fur traders. In 1764 a trading post was founded on the site of the present city of St. Louis by Laclède Liquest, and Pierre and Auguste Chouteau. It was, however, Pierre Chouteau, Jr., who was the manager of most of the companies formed in the Mississippi Valley to control the fur trade. In 1832 he was director of the American Fur Company at St. Louis. This was the company of which Astor was the chief owner.

With the beginning of the nineteenth century the American enters into the contest for the valuable furs which the Indian knew best how to procure. When President Jefferson sent out the Lewis and Clark Expedition, he instructed them to form trading relations with the Indians. In 1808 the Missouri Fur Company was formed, which followed the new trail across the Rockies into the valley of the Columbia. William Clark of this expedition and Pierre Chouteau, Jr., with Manuel Lisa, a Spaniard, were the principal partners.

In the next year (1809) John Jacob Astor incorporated the American Fur Company in New York. The goal of Astor's ambition was the trade of the untouched forests of the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Slope as it was of all these fur companies after the Mississippi Valley began to settle. In 1810 Astor founded his Pacific Company and sent two expeditions to the Columbia, one by way of Cape Horn, the other overland by way of the Great Lakes, the Mississippi, and the Missouri rivers.

At first Astor had tried to get the Northwest Company to join him in the Columbia trade. He proposed that they should buy out the Michilimackinack Company in order to remove a rival from the Great Lakes. In 1811 he bought out one half of the Mackinack Company and formed the Southwest Company, with the limitation, however, that he should not trade with Great Britain or her colonies. The founding and fall of Astoria, and the race of the Northwest Company for the Columbia trade are

exciting events in the early history of Oregon. After the War of 1812 the Southwest Company failed, and Astor's Company was reorganized as the American Fur Company. In 1818 the Missouri Company was merged with it and a branch under Chouteau established at St. Louis. Thus Astor's company had a complete control of the Indian commerce of the Mississippi and the Great Lakes. This was fostered by a United States law to keep out foreign capital and traders. However the law was so interpreted as to admit British and French boatmen and interpreters. Schoolcraft<sup>3</sup> says that Astor bought out all the Northwest's posts and equipment and employed their smaller traders and clerks. From 1816 to 1834, when John Jacob Astor retired from the American Fur Company, the control of the fur traffic by the American Fur Company was supreme. In 1834 the northern branch under Ramsey Crooks as president was organized, and the western branch under Pierre Chouteau, Jr., of St. Louis. In 1838 the name of the latter was changed to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., & Company.

The comprehension of this control over the Indian hunter depends upon the understanding of the credit system which the French had inaugurated, the English developed, and the American trader, Astor, systematized. The French had shipped goods for the Indian trade from Montreal to Mackinack, then to leading trading posts. The Indian returning from his winter hunting grounds to his village in the spring set his squaw to making maple sugar and planting garden.<sup>4</sup> In the autumn they collected their wild rice and corn, and again the hunter was ready for his hunting ground sometimes three hundred miles away. Then came the trader with his goods without which no family could subsist, much less collect any quantity of furs. Books were kept with each Indian's account and they thus became dependent upon the early settlers of the trading posts. Under the English the control of the company over its traders was so lax that the individual trader often did business for himself, and sometimes a group of them formed a rival company, as the Mackinack Company. Under the American Fur Company there was no competition be-

<sup>3</sup>Schoolcraft's *Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes*.

<sup>4</sup>Frederick J. Turner in *Wis. Hist. Soc. Proc.*, 36th Annual Meeting, 1889, pp. 52-93.

tween the company and its traders. While some private traders cut into their trade, it was the general principle that certain regions and certain Indians were controlled by particular traders. This made the traffic systematic and uniform. Yet the traders under this company did not become wealthy; the company absorbed the profits. It required its factors to pay an advance of  $11\frac{1}{3}$  per cent on English goods, to pay the cost of importing and transporting to Mackinack, and on American goods of  $15\frac{1}{2}$  per cent for transporting, and an advance profit of  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. With the purchase of the Indian lands by the United States, and the payment of annuities, the Indians had some money of their own, and the traffic became less uniform and less profitable. It was in 1834, after the treaty that closed the Black Hawk War, and paved the way for the sale of all the Mississippi Valley lands, that Astor sold out his interest in the American Fur Company to Pierre Chouteau, Jr. This ended the supreme control of the American Fur Company. Yet many evils of the credit system and the liquor habit among the Indians still remained.

From the very start the French had considered liquor as necessary to the trade. The voyageur, and courier de bois drank with his Indian customer, and when the products of the hunt were brought into the post, presents of liquor were given out for the best packages of furs. The priests opposed the sale of liquor, but the French intendant at Quebec found it necessary to have liquor to keep the Indian trade from the Dutch at Albany. The English companies having their headquarters in Montreal continued the French and Canadian boatmen and traders, and with them the custom of selling and giving ardent spirits to the Indians. The Hudson's Bay Company tried to keep clear of this custom. They realized that the output of furs for the company would be better if the Indians were kept sober. When Astor took over the employes of the Northwest Company, he continued the selling and giving of liquor to the Indians. After the United States came into official relations with the Indians, they tried to control the sale of liquor to them, but it was a futile effort.

Schoolcraft says that the manager for the American Fur Company at Mackinack obtained permission from headquarters at Washington to take in openly a quantity of high wines each year.

He learned that one time 200 barrels of whisky and 200 barrels of high wine had been delivered at Mackinack to the American Fur Company by one boat. The Intercourse Act forbade the selling or giving of liquor to Indians. But the company managers at the principal posts could sell it by the barrel to others—white or red men—whose interests he knew it to be to run it over into the Indian country in spite of the agents. This threw another class of duties onto the agents, who were required to search packages and judge if persons applying for licenses would keep the laws. "This mode of evading the Intercourse Act by presenting or selling liquor where the laws of Congress do not operate, the Indian country, and shifting onto the Indian the risk and responsibility of taking it inland is a new phase of the trade, and evinces the moral ingenuity of the American Fur Company or their servants."<sup>5</sup>

Although in 1794 Great Britain had nominally given up her forts in the interior of the United States, it was not till 1816 that the American flag flew from the ramparts of Fort Crawford, a military post of about one hundred soldiers. Prairie du Chien, locally known as the Prairie, was about two miles from the fort. It was a French and Indian village of 500 people, with a considerable lead trade. Many of the French families were from the lead mines at Galena. The principal traders at the Prairie were Hercules Dousman and Joseph Rolette, Sr., both employees of the American Fur Company, and after 1834, members of the reorganized company under Ramsey Crookes, president, and Pierre Chouteau, Jr., manager.<sup>6</sup> Their rival was an independent American trader, James Lockwood, who had been an agent at one time of the American Fur Company.

Hercules Dousman, son and grandson of Indian traders, was a typical one. He was born at Mackinack, son of Michael and Catherine Dousman, and sent to New Jersey to school. He acquired his business training in New York. In 1826 he was sent to Prairie du Chien as a confidential agent of the American Fur Company. Joseph Rolette, a half-breed, was afterwards his partner in the reorganized company. His territory was from the

<sup>5</sup>Schoolcraft's *Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes*.

<sup>6</sup>*Memoir of Hercules L. Dousman*, by General H. H. Sibley, in *Collections of the Min. Hist. Soc.*, Vol. III, pp. 192-200.

Dubuque mines to above the Falls of St. Anthony, up the St. Peters, and on the lower Wisconsin and Rock rivers. Joseph Rolette, Jr., was interpreter for the Indian agency at Prairie du Chien. Hercules Dousman's second wife was the widow of Rolette, Sr. The interpreters always and the traders often had Indian blood, either quarter or half-breed. If we are to believe H. H. Sibley, Hercules Dousman was a pattern of business integrity and honor. He quotes Simon Cameron's speech on the floor of the Senate, "A more truthful, energetic, fearless man I have never met than Hercules Dousman, and his talent, if possible, exceeds his virtues." This was after Simon Cameron had received material assistance from Dousman in distributing the funds of the half-breeds and traders for the commissioners of 1838. The scandals attached to the distributing of this fund I have treated in my article on the Simon Cameron Commission.<sup>7</sup> We must remember that these men were all sheep of one color, and two of them of one pasture. General Zachary Taylor, commandant at Fort Crawford, says in 1834, "Take the American Fur Company in the aggregate and they are the greatest set of scoundrels the world ever knew."

George Catlin, the famous painter of Indians, writing in 1835 says, "Prairie du Chien is a large American Fur Company establishment, but does less business than formerly because of the great mortality of the Indians and the destruction of game. There is a continual scene of wretchedness, drunkenness, and disease amongst the Indians, who come here to trade and receive their annuities."<sup>8</sup> He saw Wabashaw's band of Sioux there. "Their annuity fell far short of paying off their account which the traders take good care to have standing against them for goods furnished on a year's credit. Whether they can pay off or not, they can always get whisky enough for a grand carouse."

It is perhaps true that Hercules Dousman, himself, with his mixed strain of French, Irish and English blood—with perhaps a dash of Indian—was of the higher class of fur traders, but he was a product of the French system of dealing with the Indians. The main principle of this trade was, give the Indian long credit, at least a year, buy his furs as cheaply as possible, and give him

<sup>7</sup>See ANNALS OF IOWA, Third Series, Vol. VII, pp. 115-39; 172-95, 1905.

<sup>8</sup>See *The Palimpsest*, Vol. VII, p. 344, State Hist. Soc., Iowa City, 1926.

plenty of whisky very cheap. Of course under such a system the Fur Company did not want the Indian educated nor self-supporting. Naturally the traders would oppose any effort to settle the red men on lands held in severality, or to make citizens of them. That was exactly the plan that Mr. Street favored. Martha Edwards in her thesis on mission schools among the Indians says: "The sectarian influence in the education of the Indians—both Roman Catholic and Protestant—was to keep them in tribes or bands and to educate them not to be citizens but to obey. The Quaker policy was to give them lands in severality and to teach them farming and arts that will help them to become citizens among the whites."<sup>9</sup> This last in general was Mr. Street's plan.

"Cass, secretary of war under Jackson, was not sanguine as to the results of the civilization experiment. He was quite willing to see it tried under the most favorable possible circumstances."<sup>10</sup> The Jackson administration was in favor of the removal of the Indians beyond the Mississippi and the Missouri to get them away from conflict with white settlers. Jackson was also in favor of generous provisions in removal treaties for the industrial education of the Indians. This seems to indicate that he wanted to fit them for settlement among the whites, since he wanted them trained as farmers, blacksmiths, and artisans. "This provision for blacksmiths and farmers created offices which were to be filled by government appointment" but on the other hand "it created a fixed fund which nominally remained at the disposal of the tribe as a whole." The government appointed the officers and teachers, and the tribe paid them. "Here was a chance for the trader to interfere and defeat the original intent of the provision and keep his control over the Indian hunter. If the trader had government influence, he could have teachers appointed who would not have the real, practical education of the Indian at heart. On the other hand he could influence the leaders of the tribe against a settled life and in favor of a nomadic one."<sup>11</sup> In other words he could keep them barbarians through the chiefs, whom he could ply with whisky.

<sup>9</sup>Thesis on "Indian Schools," by Martha Edwards, MS Dept. Wis. State Hist. Libr., Chapters VI and XII.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, Chap. XII.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*



Catlin says in speaking of Keokuk, who after the Black Hawk War was the principal chief of the Sauks, "These Indians have sold so much of their land, that they have the luxuries of life to a considerable degree—They are already drawing a cash annuity of \$27,000 for 30 years, which is increased by this sale to \$37,000."<sup>12</sup> Remember this was paid to the chiefs for the tribe, not divided among the members or families of the tribe. Keokuk usually kept one half the sum, and gave the remainder to the other head men. One reason the Jesuits had worked so well with the fur traders under the French regime was that their system of religious and secular training was based on the unity of the tribe—the absolute obedience of the individual members of the tribe to the chief, or head.

Miss Edwards says, "After 1819 a specified sum was set apart for agricultural and industrial purposes." The experiment was tried first in the Northwest after the treaty of 1821. The appointment of teachers was in the hands of the governor of Michigan, who was Lewis Cass at that time, but Schoolcraft was his advisor as agent for the Chippewas—a man who had the good of the Indians very much at heart. He also carried out the plan of having the annuities distributed to the heads of families and not to the chiefs alone. This last plan Joseph M. Street was never able to carry out, though he believed in it.

Martha Edwards says that between 1820 and 1832 two changes took place: first, there was an increase in the annual appropriation; and second, political and sectarian elements had entered into the considerations which determined its distribution. "In fact there was community of interest between religious and political organizations during a period of economic and religious development, and at a time when political leadership was in great measure dependent upon personal favor and good will."<sup>13</sup>

In carrying out this educational project after the treaty of 1832, it was unfortunate that the Winnebago tribe was chosen for the experiment. "It was not a great tribe and was disunited, restless, and disturbed. Its lands lay in Wisconsin where frontier settlements were pressing hard. For at least a century the

<sup>12</sup>*North American Indians*, by George Catlin, Vol. II, p. 215, 1876.

<sup>13</sup>Thesis on "Indian Schools," by Martha Edwards, MS Dept. Wis. State Hist. Libr., Chap. XII, p. 14.

tribe had been without missionaries or religious traditions."<sup>14</sup> The conflict came in 1833 when Father Mazzuchelli applied to Governor Porter at Detroit for Catholic control of the Winnebago school. He was too late, however, as David Lowry, a protestant, was already at Prairie du Chien. The interpreter, Joseph Rolette, Jr., told the Indians that Lowry had come to make their children his slaves, and even after the school with great difficulty was built the Indian children could not be had to fill it. "The Winnebago experiment proved that sectarian forces tended to focus about a government school. \* \* \* \* The Winnebago School was unique in one particular, it was the first governmental school established for the Indians with no sectarian influence or control. Although Lowry was a minister of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, he held that a minister of the gospel should not take an active part in politics and he had no party allegiance."<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Street chose him from Cumberland College, Princeton, Kentucky, where he had been a teacher, because he had a practical knowledge of farming. He had partly supported himself by cultivating ten acres of land belonging to the college, and had built his own house with \$50 allowed by the college for that purpose.<sup>16</sup>

Colonel Zachary Taylor, commandant at Fort Crawford, in a letter to General William Clark, superintendent of Indian affairs at St. Louis, gives it as his opinion that individuals concerned with the American Fur Company were endeavoring to have Lowry put out of office to make room for a foreigner, an Italian Catholic priest, Mazzuchelli.<sup>17</sup> The population of the lead mines were French and Catholics, and many Prairie du Chien families were from the lead district.

In April, 1833, and again in the winter of 1833-34, Mr. Street had been called to Washington to answer charges against Major Stephen Watts Kearney <sup>17a</sup> and himself. Street's experience in

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, Chap. XII.

<sup>16</sup>*History of Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, Nashville, 1893; Street Letter-book, Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa.

<sup>17</sup>Letter of Taylor, July 2, 1835, and of Elbert Herring to Taylor, Sept. 5, 1835, in MS Dept. Wis. State Hist. Libr.

<sup>17a</sup>Stephen Watts Kearney, stationed at Fort Crawford in 1828, under Gen. Atkinson in Black Hawk War, commander of the first company of dragoons organized by Gov. Henry Dodge to protect the Iowa and Wisconsin border in 1836.

defending the rights of the Indians began with the Brunet vs. Street-Kearney affair. Dr. George Lyman in his "Life of Judge Marsh"<sup>18</sup> of Prairie du Chien, gives the following very concise account of the case:

"By 1828 the lumber interests of Wisconsin were coming to the fore in spite of laws to the contrary concerning trespassing on Indian lands. The whites were accustomed to help themselves to valuable timber. Often in the dead of night they would steal into the Indian country and cut down the trees.

"Once under cover of darkness Jean Brunet, the tavern keeper, managed somewhat surreptitiously to reach an island below the mouth of the Wisconsin and help himself to some walnut timber. But before he could haul it away, Street, then Indian agent and Marsh's superior, heard of what was going on and with a military escort followed him with the purpose of arresting him and confiscating the lumber. Before his arrival Brunet made his escape minus the timber he had cut. Street seized the timber and Major Stephen Watts Kearney, then commander at Fort Crawford, had it hauled into the fort and commenced to use it in the construction of the new Fort Crawford. At the time this occurred Marsh was at Fort Winnebago on another lumber mission. During his absence a writ of replevin was issued and served by the sheriff. Major Kearney resisted the same and retained the lumber until the pleasure of the government could be ascertained concerning it. At the same time he directed the sheriff to let it alone.

"When Marsh returned from the Portage, Brunet appeared before him and complained against the commander. Judge Marsh immediately issued a warrant against Major Kearney and the latter was arrested and held to bail in the sum of four hundred dollars with surety to appear at the next court to answer for resisting the civil authority. This action caused considerable commotion at Prairie du Chien, but did not endear the Judge either to the military or to his superior in office in the agency."

It is interesting to note in this particular that Brunet sued Street and Kearney for damages and in due time won his case

<sup>18</sup>Manuscript of "Dr. George Lyman's Life of Marsh," Chap. V; also see Street letters, MS Dept. Wis. State Hist. Libr.—Baird to Street, Aug. 31, 1829; Street to Clark, Oct. 31, 1831; Street to Eaton, Feb. 22, 1830; also Street Letter-book in Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa.

in the court of Judge James Doty, formerly of Prairie du Chien, who held that he was "not satisfied that it was the intention of the government to guarantee any country of the Indians or protect it from infringements." Eventually Congress passed a bill to relieve Street and Kearney, but the amount was only sufficient to pay judgment and costs. Both defendants were compelled to pay their attorney's fees out of their own means.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, when Agent Street and Major Kearney, commandant at Fort Crawford, attempted to protect the Indians from men who would steal their timber, they were exceeding their duties as government officers, for it was not the business of the government to protect the Indians from white thieves. Is it any wonder that the Indians who have lived longest near the whites are thieves?

In my article, "A Chapter of Indian History,"<sup>20</sup> I have given William B. Street's account of the delays in establishing the Winnebago school. Also I have quoted freely from Joseph M. Street's letters to the Indian Office in the War Department. The originals of these letters can be seen in the Street Letterbook in the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa. What I have to add now are references to other letters corroborating those already given, and explanations of motives and forces at work against Mr. Street's plans for the Winnebagoes as shown by family letters that have recently come to my notice.

In the establishment of the school at Yellow River the years 1833 and 1834 were crucial ones. These were the years that the school should have been pushed. A great deal of the delay came from the War Department, as has been indicated and as will be shown further as we go on. Yet with a man of Mr. Street's determination and persistence, these could have been grappled with more vigorously than they were but for a domestic handicap. We must here digress to tell something of his private life.

He had the Kentuckian's proverbially large family. He and his wife had fourteen children, of whom eleven lived to grow up. One daughter died in infancy, another at fifteen, and one son at

<sup>19</sup>These statements are corroborated by letters from Gen. William Clark to Secretary of War Lewis Cass, Dec. 6, 1831, Jan. 15, and Feb. 25, 1832; and from Major Kearney to Street July 27, 1829; by Indian office files in Wis. State Hist. Libr.; and by the Kearney letters and papers in the Street Letterbook in the Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa.

<sup>20</sup>ANNALS OF IOWA, Third Series, Vol. III, p. 617.

eighteen. His wife was a frail little woman who never weighed over ninety pounds in her life. I can imagine how the uncertainty and vicissitudes of a frontier life wore upon her nervous temperament. She was not built for such a life. Both she and her husband, although they lived in the wilderness, were desirous that their children should have the education that would fit them for their "station in life." This education had begun for the older boys before they left Shawneetown. A crude and boyish letter from Joseph H. D. Street, the second son, to his mother tells that he and Thomas, eldest son, had just arrived at Cumberland College, Princeton, Kentucky. This is dated January 17, 1827, and addressed to Shawneetown. In June, 1827, Joseph M. Street visited the college, and in September, 1827, he was appointed Indian agent at Prairie du Chien. He returned to the Ohio Valley the winter of 1827-28, and in the spring of 1828 took his family to the Indian country. There are no letters indicating where the boys were that winter. During the winter of 1828-29 the whole family seem to have been at the Prairie.

November 27, 1829, Thomas writes to his father from Cumberland College. He names the studies he is taking, and says that he hopes to complete the course in surveying during the following summer. "When I left home I expected to remain at college one year, which having done I should be glad to return." None of the other sons seem to be with him; he speaks of writing to Thornton. This was a school where the boys helped in the building and maintenance, for he writes, "We are very crowded, there being 102 students—but we are now engaged in building small log houses which will accommodate six boys each. The corn is to be gathered, and the wheat sown." He mentions David Lowry, who was one of the professors, and his father's correspondence with him.<sup>21</sup>

October 27, 1830, Joseph H. D. Street writes to his sister Mary from Illinois College, Jacksonville, Illinois, where he and Thornton, third son, are at school. Thomas had been visiting them for two weeks. He had been visiting relatives in Henderson and was on his way home to Prairie du Chien. Evidently he

<sup>21</sup>Street Letterbook, in Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa.

had been stopping on his way from Cumberland College. Thornton was sick while he was there.<sup>22</sup>

October, 1831, Joseph H. D. Street writes from Jacksonville to his father saying that Thornton had been so depressed that their uncle had been distressed about him and that Joseph gave up his work at college for a week and devoted himself to cheering him up till he was able to go back to his studying.<sup>23</sup> January 17, 1832, Thornton writes his father from Henderson, where he is under the care of his uncle, Dr. Alexander Posey, that he is much better and will go back to college in the spring if his father thinks best. April 2, 1832, Mr. Stuyvesant of Illinois College writes Mr. Street advising that Thornton do not return to college in the fall, as his "constitution is too feeble for him to do college work." January 1, 1833, he died at Prairie du Chien, aged eighteen years and some months.

The letters of Joseph H. D. Street show that the winter of 1832-33 he was at Illinois College and his sister Mary at a girls' school in Jacksonville. The winter of 1833-34, both Mary and Lucy appear to have been at school in Jacksonville and Joseph at Illinois College.<sup>24</sup>

These attempts to educate his children must have been a heavy drain upon Mr. Street's salary, which in his earlier years in the agency was \$1500. He says in a letter to Thomas November 6, 1833, from Jacksonville, "This is the last trip I can consent to take for my children. I shall after this sit down at the Prairie and endeavor to square off with the government and give my children what education I can there, and not attempt to send off another to school, but they must try to make a living by farming or business."<sup>25</sup> In this letter he speaks of his salary of \$2100.25.

In addition to the handicap of a large family to educate was the drawback of his wife's health. From 1832 to 1836 seems to have been a period of continuous ill health with Mrs. Street. She was extremely fond of her children, indeed was foolishly indulgent toward them. Several references in these family letters show that she rarely punished them and that when they were small they were a turbulent lot, only held in check by their

---

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

father's firm hand. Her affections are so intense that any separation from her family affects her physical health as well as her mind. The ill health and death of her son Thornton seems to have had a very depressing result. In a letter from Joseph H. D. dated at Jacksonville October 5, 1833, he writes, "Mother has been quite sick and very low-spirited. She has taken up the idea that she will not live until father comes. It is entirely owing to the state of her mind. Mother is out at Uncle Will's now. He took her out with the small children the other day. Decidedly mother cannot remain here this winter without father; this spring and fall furnish abundant proof of that. You know how the children behave when he is away, and mother lets every little thing prey upon her mind, and looks upon the dark side of almost everything. Father's trip into the Indian country has had a good deal of effect upon her mind."<sup>26</sup>

Another letter of November 2 tells that his father had just arrived from the Indian country on his way to Washington, and wished to take his wife with him. The doctor says it is the best thing for her, but she will not consent. They have had all they can possibly do to persuade her to go on to Kentucky. She does, however, go to Henderson, Kentucky, and the four smaller children with her; the two middle boys, William and Alex., stay in the country at the farm of their Uncle William Posey. Joseph remains at Illinois College and the two older girls at school in Jacksonville. A later letter from Mr. Street at Mr. Beverly's near Henderson, Kentucky, says, "She is lower than I had any idea of till I saw her. She is a mere skeleton; I never saw any one so emaciated but your Uncle Alex. when he lay so long sick at Westwood Place."<sup>27</sup>

Thomas in a letter November 11, 1833, from Prairie du Chien suggests that his father get a workman to come up in the spring and finish off his house "in the woods" (near the Yellow River school) and thinks life there would be better for his mother's health than "cooped up" at the Prairie. January 16, 1834, he writes again to his father that he has had the Yellow River house finished and will have the land fenced and ready for cultivation by the time he comes in the spring. He tells in this letter of

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

charges against his father that he thinks have been sent on to Washington by Dousman and Rolette, but he does not know what they are. It was in May that Wabashaw and his band of Sioux went to Dousman and asked him to write a paper to the President requesting that they be transferred to Mr. Street's agency. Dousman refused to do this saying that a new agent was to be sent soon.<sup>28</sup>

Adverse conditions seem to surround Agent Street this year of 1834—the struggle to educate his children, the ill health and death of his son Thornton the year before, the subsequent effect on his wife's health, and also the uncertainties and hardships of their life in the Indian country—all these tended to take him away from his pet project, the Yellow River School. On top of this came the opposition of the traders. Just at the close of the session of Congress of 1833-34 action was taken making a complete reorganization of the Indian agencies in Wisconsin Territory. The instigators of this we can only guess at. Mr. Street refers to this act of Congress as rapidly run through on the last two days of the session. The agency at Rock Island was transferred to and called the Green Bay agency, and the agent discontinued. The Sacs and Foxes and their country was annexed to and made a part of the Prairie du Chien agency and General Street, the agent at Prairie du Chien, ordered to reside at Rock Island. In June and July of 1834 Mr. Street is in Washington as shown by his letters to Lewis Cass, secretary of war, July 8, and to Elbert Herring, Indian commissioner, June 4, 1834.

Washington City, June 4, 1834.

Elbert Herring,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

Their [Winnebagoes] removal is certain beyond all human control as to the ultimate fact of their removal west, the time is under the influence of measures in the power of the Department.—The cession on Rock River was resisted by white men till yielded by the Indians—and then the agents of the American Fur Company denominated it a cheat and aided by interested whites elsewhere are attempting to visit home upon my head as the active, efficient agent in procuring the cession of the Rock River country the whole of their vengeance. Unable to affect me in any way where we are alike known, their savage vengeance has pur-

---

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*



sued me into your office—and had they the power not only denunciation but proscription and banishment would be inflicted on me.

JOS. M. STREET.<sup>29</sup>

Washington City, July 8, 1834.

To Hon. Lewis Cass,  
Secretary of War.

\* \* \* \* \* Nothing is wanting to effect a rapid removal to the west of the Mississippi but the commencement of the school on the west and the farm, with an assurance of the intention of the United States to establish peace between the Sacs and Foxes, and the Sioux. \* \* \* \* \*

JOS. M. STREET.<sup>30</sup>

The following paper was enclosed with the preceding letter: "General Cass having expressed a disposition in the arrangement of Indian agencies under the law of Congress organizing the Indian Department to consult my convenience as far as the public interest will permit, I respectfully submit the following: Transfer the Rock Island agency to Green Bay—attach the Sacs and Foxes, all the Winnebagoes and Wabashaws band of the Sioux to the agency at Prairie du Chien. The agent at Prairie du Chien directed to spend his time at Prairie du Chien and Rock Island."

This plan of Mr. Street made Prairie du Chien the main agency. If the Sacs and Foxes should be removed to the Des Moines they would form a subagency. Nevertheless, Secretary Cass made Prairie du Chien afterward a subagency with Boyd as agent of Winnebagoes, and removed the Sacs and Foxes to the Des Moines River with Street as agent. This, however, is running ahead of our story.

Further on in this same paper, Mr. Street says, "The placing of these Indians (Sioux and Winnebagoes) under one agent subjects them to hear the same pacific statements constantly urged by the same person and brings them under a similar course of management and will induce gradually a change of sentiment towards each other, that must ultimately end in lasting pacification cemented by intermarriage."<sup>31</sup>

He adds as a footnote to this paper, "The above is a memo.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

containing what I intended to submit to you personally. Your wish not to give me an audience today prevented my entering upon it. I enclose it for an impartial examination." He cannot afford the time spent in Washington; the expense of a prolonged stay, and his wife's still feeble health demands his return.

That summer of 1834 he was obliged to stay in Rock Island and the supervision of the building of the Yellow River School was delegated to Colonel Taylor, who had not the time nor the inclination to give attention to it.

September 6, 1834, Colonel Taylor gives his opinion as to the location of a permanent agent at Prairie du Chien. This Mr. Street probably enclosed to the War Department. At any rate late in the fall of 1834 he is ordered back to Prairie du Chien, but too late to do any building.

Fort Crawford, Prairie du Chien,  
September 6, 1834.

Gen. Joseph M. Street.

Sir: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your note of yesterday asking my opinion as to the necessity of a permanent Indian agent being located at this place. In reply to which I beg leave to state that I consider the location of an agent here at this moment, and for a number of years to come, of more importance than at any other point on the Mississippi—for the following reasons:

1st. The Indian title to the country on both sides of the river from this down, has been extinguished, and it is rapidly filling up with white settlers, which will form a barrier against all the tribes located to the Southwest. The Sacs and Foxes being the only Indians who now visit the Mississippi between this and St. Louis, and they are rapidly falling back to the west, and must very soon be wholly located on the Des Moines River, and even should it be necessary for them to visit an agent residing on the Mississippi, they had better do so at this place than at Rock Island, as in the latter case they will now be under the necessity of passing through the white settlements to do so, which has on most occasions the effect of producing difficulty. The same objection does not exist here; their country is very near to the point, besides, they have been in the habit, particularly the Foxes, of visiting here frequently for many years for the purpose of trading, etc. On the contrary, on the north, northwest, and northeast, the Indians inhabit and own the country approximating to within a few miles of this place, and will, in all probability, continue to do so, for many years to come; as the face of the country is uneven, scarce of timber and occasionally interspersed with swamps, the soil not being adapted to agricultural pursuits, in fact offering few, or no inducements for our citizens to

possess themselves of it, until the fertile country to the south and southwest of it is fully peopled.

2nd. The Winnebagoes occupy the whole of the country lying between the Mississippi and Wisconsin, commencing immediately in rear of the settlements of Prairie du Chien, extending as far north as Black River seventy or eighty miles up the Mississippi, and above the Portage on the Wisconsin; and the country west of the former, commencing nearly opposite the Prairie, extending forty miles on the river, and running back west to the Red Cedar seventy or eighty miles. The whole of the tribe now reside on the north bank of the Wisconsin, and on the east bank of the Mississippi rivers, between this and Fort Winnebago, on the first, and the mouth of Black River on the latter. They are in the habit of passing almost daily from their villages on one river to the other, which they must do by this place, and as a matter of course, keeps up a constant intercourse between them and their agent, when residing here, which must be the case for some years to come.

3rd. Immediately above the Winnebagoes on the west side of the Mississippi commences the country of the Sioux, extending west to the Rocky Mountains, and north to the Crow Wing River of the Mississippi—the most numerous tribe of Indians within the limits of our country, a portion of which tribe has recently been put under the charge of this agency, in consequence of their near proximity to Fort Crawford, and who have for many years made this the point of holding intercourse with the whites, and the favorable impression that may be made upon this part of the nation by a resident agent here, would have, no doubt, a salutary influence upon the portion of the nation beyond them.

4th. Most of the country lying to the east of the Mississippi, including its sources, and between it and Lake Superior, from Black River of the Mississippi, and from the Wisconsin, a short distance above Winnebago, is inhabited by the Chippeways, one band of which now resides on the Chippeway River, a tributary of the Mississippi, and are so far removed from Mackinack, where their agent resides, that apparently he has but little influence or control over them; they have constantly, not only carried on a predatory war against the band of the Sioux turned over to this agency, but have within two or three years committed outrages on our citizens traveling between this and Fort Snelling, a repetition of which should not pass without notice.—I would under present circumstances, recommend that this band of Chippeways be placed under the agent at this place, and if they could be induced to visit him, that he would soon induce them to continue at peace with their neighbors, the Sioux, as well as prevent them from interfering with our citizens for the future.

Prairie du Chien has been and still is, the great thoroughfare for the Winnebagoes, the lower band of the Sioux, and occasionally for the Foxes. It therefore appears to me that a resident agent could do more good here than at any other place on the upper Mississippi. By re-

ferring to the map of the country in question, I think it will be found that the hasty views I have taken of this subject will be found worthy of consideration.

With respect and esteem,

Yr. Mt. Ob. Serv't,

(Signed) Z. Taylor, Col., U. S. Army.<sup>32</sup>

In the Street Letterbook the original of this is in Mr. Street's handwriting, but the signature is undoubtedly that of Zachary Taylor. This does not mean that Colonel Taylor did not heartily believe in the reasons given. The two men were warm friends from the time Colonel Taylor came to Fort Crawford, and the families were intimate. Although he did not wholly agree with Mr. Street on the question of educating the Indians, he did see the importance of making the agency under the walls of Fort Crawford the principal agency for Wisconsin and the upper Mississippi below Fort Snelling. With a map of Iowa and Wisconsin before one the argument is clear. After the Black Hawk War the Sacs and Foxes had ceded a strip of fifty miles wide on the west of the Mississippi from the Missouri line on the south to the Neutral Tract on the north. This threw the Sacs toward the central part of the present state of Iowa. In 1836 they sold the village of Keokuk, which they had reserved in the treaty of 1832, and in 1837 a narrow strip west of the Black Hawk Purchase. To reach Rock Island they had to cross this cession, which was being rapidly settled, but they could reach Prairie du Chien by going north from their own country to that of the Foxes on the Iowa and Cedar rivers and then along the Neutral Strip to the Mississippi opposite Prairie du Chien. By this route they did not leave Indian territory and were not tempted to molest the whites.

The country north of the Wisconsin River on the east of the Mississippi was, as this paper states, broken, a poorly wooded country, not so well fitted for farming as the open, rich prairies of central Iowa. If there was to be a permanent reservation for Indians kept anywhere in the upper Mississippi Valley, Mr. Street felt that the country of the Winnebagoes in western Wisconsin and that of the Neutral Strip in northern Iowa and southern Minnesota was the most suitable, and least likely to be de-

---

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

manded by the whites for farming. That was the place to put his school to be of most benefit to the Indians and most permanent. For this last reason he held out for stone buildings.

President Jackson's policy was the ultimate removal of the Indians west of the Missouri River, but he did not object to the retention of a part of them on the broken land of the upper Mississippi. One thing is noticeable in the removal treaties, he gave liberal allowances for blacksmith shops and model farms. To that extent he agrees with Mr. Street.

For the purposes of his school Mr. Street would have been glad to have other Indians besides the Winnebagoes in his agency. Wabashaw's band of the Sioux had already asked to be transferred to him. In the Street Letterbook there are accounts of two councils held by Agent Street with Wabashaw and his head men and reported by Antoine Le Claire, interpreter. In this Wabashaw says that they are nearer Prairie du Chien than to St. Peters, and they had seen that General Street made a good father to the Winnebagoes; therefore they wished to be added to his agency. They wanted to be taught to plow and raise corn like the white man, but the man promised them did not teach them. They wanted a Canadian Frenchman for their teacher as he could understand them better. Mr. Street remarked to the white men present that he supposed the traders had impressed this on their minds to get the whole matter into their own hands, as Rolette was a Canadian. His first wife was a relative of Wabashaw's.

Wabashaw thought that General Street had promised to present their complaint of the stealing of pine timber from their lands on the Chippeway River. But Mr. Street said that they had misunderstood him. They were in Major Taliaferro's agency and he could not present their plea. They must get some one else to write the paper. The Sioux interpreter here explained that what Mr. Street said was correct, and that at the time they went to Mr. Dousman and asked him to draw a paper to that purpose, but he declined and persuaded them not to do it, as he expected another agent would be sent in the place of the present. Mr. Street also told them that he was about to build a school on the west of the Mississippi for the Winnebagoes, and that he

did not want the Sioux to molest them. He understood that they had threatened to kill the Winnebagoes if they moved west of the Mississippi. Wabashaw assured him that these threats were made by drunken Indians and that the Sioux would not carry them out.

Whether the order late in the fall of 1834 for Mr. Street to return to Prairie du Chien was the result of the letter of September 6 by Colonel Taylor, or was due to the influence of Richard M. Johnson, later vice president, as William Street thought, it was a happy return. His wife's health was much improved, his family were all near him, and he was near the school. Yet this happy state of things lasted only to March of 1835. The 26th his oldest daughter, Mary, is married to Lieutenant George Wilson, stationed at Fort Crawford, and that same month he was ordered back to Rock Island before he could receive and install the stock and hands that he had ordered from Sangamon County, Illinois. The school and farm were again put in Colonel Taylor's hands. Misfortunes did not come singly. Just at that time Mrs. Street suffered a relapse. General Street thinks it began late in the winter.<sup>33</sup>

In July, 1835, he is in St. Louis on his way to Henderson, Kentucky, to place his wife under the care of her brother, Dr. Posey. In his letter to General Clark he says that one reason he cannot remain at Rock Island is because there are no suitable quarters for his family. In his letter of June 28, 1835, he says: "If I had been permitted to reside at Prairie du Chien where my married son and daughter live, I could have taken care of Mrs. Street, and suffered the surgeon at the Post to try his skill for her relief, but alone with her [he means in Rock Island] I could not think of taxing my friends with her in her present condition.

"When assured that every necessary attention can be given by me to the Sacs and Foxes and yet make my principal residence at Prairie du Chien—I hope the Commissioner will permit me to reside there—granting my actual expenses in traveling from one place to the other. If this cannot be conceded, I hope such repairs will be allowed as to enable me to keep house at

---

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, letter to William Clark, June 28, 1835.

Rock Island. I presume that one hundred and fifty dollars would repair the roof and other parts of the old house of the agency as to enable me to live in them. Heretofore I have refrained from asking this believing that the site of the agency would be removed so soon that the expense would be useless—feeling also that I could reside at Prairie du Chien and transact the required business at Rock Island on occasion of the visits of the Indians to that place.”<sup>34</sup>

In the fall of 1835 the family are back in Prairie du Chien and November 18 the second son, Joseph H. D., is married at his father's house there to Emily Burnett, younger sister of Judge Thomas P. Burnett. The family seem to have remained there until the river opened in the spring, probably because there were no quarters in Rock Island to accommodate them. Lieutenant Beach, stationed at Fort Armstrong, is ordered to turn over for their use the headquarters of the commandant in the spring of 1836. From this on for some time her daughter Lucy seems to be the one upon whom the mother depended most.<sup>35</sup>

For two years Mr. Street had no official connection with the school at Yellow River, yet he did not lose sight of its interests, as the account will show. Why, in his plan for Indian betterment, since he was removed from direct touch with the Winnebagoes, could he not have substituted the Sacs and Foxes for them? Martha Edwards says that the Winnebagoes were an unfortunate tribe for this experiment as they were restless and disturbed. But the Sacs and Foxes were a loose confederation, broken and discouraged by the Black Hawk War. If the quiet and conservative chief, Wapello, had been the leader of the two tribes the result might have been different, but the brilliant and greedy Keokuk would have nothing to do with schools. “Bad, very bad” he said with contempt.<sup>36</sup>

In General James C. Parrott's “Reminiscences,” Keokuk is described as follows: “politic, a brilliant man, a born orator, but a coward; wily, drunken, dissipated, using policy in all that he did. ‘Squaw chief’ his people called him. He never lacked for

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, also photostat letters from War Dept.

<sup>35</sup>Street Letterbook, in Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa.

<sup>36</sup>“A Second Chapter of Indian History,” by Ida M. Street, ANNALS OF IOWA, Third Series, Vol. VI, p. 365.

money, as the government annuities allowed him were divided into two equal parts, one for his people, one for himself."<sup>37</sup>

June 3, 1836, General Street at Rock Island writes to his son, Thomas, at Prairie du Chien: "The Indians [Sacs and Foxes] have been here for several weeks and part of the time from 450 to 500 men. No drinking but one day, and then they confined them to their lodges and suffered no disturbance. These are a greatly superior Indian to the Winnebagoes—in dress, appearance, and sobriety. Some of the latter have just left here; they are poor, miserable, and ragged, and while here constantly drunk. I told them to be off. Today I see their lodges are down."<sup>38</sup>

In spite of their superiority Agent Street was not in favor of putting the school in the Sac and Fox country, chiefly because he knew they would soon be pushed west of the Missouri River by the white settlers, their country being much more coveted by the whites than the more broken country to the north. Then, too, his heart was in Wisconsin. With his usual sympathy with the under dog he felt that the Winnebagoes needed it most, and had had the poorest chance to improve. If Wapello or Poweshiek had been head of the confederation, it might have been different; but William said that his father never had the confidence in Keokuk that he had in the Fox chiefs, he was too wily.

The irony of the situation just at this time is that although Mr. Street is nominally agent of the Winnebagoes as he is of the Sacs and Foxes, he is stationed at Rock Island, and the subagent Boyd is at Prairie du Chien in direct contact with the Winnebagoes. The building and starting of the school, however, is put in the hands of an army officer, not in the hands of Mr. Boyd. January 24, 1835, Elbert Herring, commissioner of Indian affairs, asks the inspector of Indian schools to report particularly about the Winnebago school.<sup>39</sup> December 29, 1835, E. A. Brush reports to Lewis Cass, secretary of war, on the Winnebago school and gives the adverse opinion of Hercules Dousman and others interested in keeping the Winnebagoes from removing to the Neutral territory. February 26, 1836, Henry Gratiot, subagent of the Indians at Rock River, in a letter to Cass enlarges on the expense of removing them to the west of the Mississippi, and

<sup>37</sup>"Reminiscences of Gen. James C. Parrott," by Mary R. Whitcomb, *ANNALS OF IOWA*, Third Series, Vol. III, p. 378.

<sup>38</sup>Street Letterbook, in Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa.

<sup>39</sup>Indian Office files, Wis. State Hist. Libr.



the lack of agricultural preparation in the Neutral territory. March 1, 1836, Cass sends these reports to Martin Van Buren:

I transmit also an extract from a report of Mr. Brush, who was selected last year to visit the Indians between the Mississippi and Lake Michigan in order to explain and remove certain difficulties which had occurred in our intercourse with the Indians of that region. Mr. Brush executed his duties in a very satisfactory manner and his report is an able and interesting one.

In 1832 after the termination of the campaign against the Sauk and Fox Indians and a portion of the Winnebagoes, treaties of cession were entered into with these tribes. These latter Indians ceded all their rights to the country described in the resolution of the Senate, and besides securing to them certain annuities and other stipulations there was granted to them a country west of the Mississippi for their residence and to which they were to remove on or before the first day of June, 1833. The tract assigned by this treaty for the residence of the Winnebagoes had been ceded to the United States by the treaty of Prairie du Chien of July 15, 1830. This treaty was entered into by various Indian tribes, who granted to the United States a large extent of country west of the Mississippi for the purpose of being "assigned and allotted under the direction of the president of the United States to the tribes now living thereon, or to such other tribes as the president may locate thereon for hunting or other purposes."

The tract granted to the Winnebagoes for their residence by the treaty of 1832 had formerly belonged to some of the bands of the Sioux tribe, parties to the treaty of Prairie du Chien, and made part of the cession then obtained. It is not so extensive or desirable as the land which was ceded by the Winnebagoes, and independently of this circumstance, there was another which rendered these Indians indisposed to remove to it. Recent events upon the frontier had created unpleasant feelings among some of these tribes, and the Winnebagoes were probably under some apprehensions, if they placed themselves so near the Sauks and Foxes, without some previous arrangement that hostilities with them might ensue. Measures were taken soon after the ratification of the treaty with the Winnebagoes for their removal from the ceded lands. That step was deemed essential to the tranquility of that part of the country, which had been recently disturbed by war, and representations were received at the department, urging the subject upon the immediate attention of the government. After some delay, nearly all of them quitted the ceded country. Only a small portion, however, removed to their land west of the Mississippi. Most of them went north of the Ouisconsin to their old possessions, which they have never ceded to the United States. Subsequently they have gradually returned, until agreeably to the estimate of Mr. Gratiot, their numbers now amount to about 2500. I have always understood that their country north of

the Ouisconsin is a sterile, barren region, almost destitute of game, and very unfavorable to any of the products raised by the Indians. I do not believe that the whole body of the Winnebagoes can subsist comfortably upon it, at any rate, with their habits of indolence and improvidence. [Mr. Street, as his letters show, tried his utmost to have the most of the tribe move west of the Mississippi. President Jackson's policy also was for removal.]

It is very desirable, therefore, that they should be speedily removed to the country west of the Mississippi; and under all the circumstances of the case, it appears to me that the arrangement proposed by Mr. Gratiot for that purpose is the proper one. This tribe has yielded valuable and extensive possessions to the United States. They are now dispersed, poor, and miserable. We might, no doubt, expel them by force, though as a mere matter of pecuniary calculation, that measure would be an inexpedient one. But it involves much higher considerations.

It will be perceived by the accompanying report of Mr. Brush that the Sioux have sometimes objected to the transfer of the Winnebagoes, because it was expected that the cession made by the treaty of Prairie du Chien would remain as neutral ground between them and the Sauks and Foxes, and not to be assigned to any tribe. No such provision exists in the treaty, and I have no doubt that the Sioux are under a misapprehension on this subject. From the intimate and friendly relations which exist between them and the Winnebagoes, I feel confident that if the arrangement proposed by Mr. Gratiot is authorized, a Winnebago deputation sent among the Sioux, with a small amount of presents as a token of good will, would soon remove all the difficulty.

Very etc.,

LEWIS CASS.<sup>40</sup>

General Cass says nothing about the school which General Street wished to use as an inducement to get the Winnebagoes to cross the Mississippi. The time has come, however, when the Indians must be moved farther west. Shall they be kept there temporarily till the settlers demand their land and then moved farther west, as the Sacs and Foxes were on the Des Moines? Or shall the school be put on a permanent basis and the Winnebagoes civilized enough to become citizens? This last was Agent Street's dream, and that in ten or fifteen years with a good school they might be ready for at least partial citizenship.

In 1836 Henry Dodge was appointed governor of the newly organized Wisconsin Territory. June 22, 1836, Elbert Herring wrote to him concerning the Winnebagoes of Fort Winnebago

---

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

and those at Prairie du Chien, that they were in his jurisdiction as superintendent of the Indians of Wisconsin. Their agent was General Jos. M. Street, "who was now stationed at Rock Island in immediate supervision of the Sacs and Foxes and the Sioux of Wabashaw's band, and the Winnebagoes intrusted to Colonel Taylor at Prairie du Chien. If Dodge thinks best he can station Street at Prairie du Chien."<sup>41</sup> Governor Dodge makes an examination of the school and in February, 1837, makes a favorable report. In consequence of this Street is ordered back to the Prairie in the early spring of 1837.

Governor Dodge upholds Lowry and recommends an interpreter who is in sympathy with the plan in place of Joseph Rollette, Jr. He also recommends that the unexpended balance not required by the school and farm be used to buy provisions for the starving tribe around Fort Winnebago. Later Lowry was appointed agent for the Winnebagoes in place of the dissipated subagent Boyd.<sup>42</sup> Dodge also writes a letter to Mr. Street to the same effect.<sup>43</sup>

By this summer Jackson and Cass were both out of office. Let us pause to consider Mr. Street's relation to both of them. When Andrew Jackson was riding the judicial circuit of Kentucky and Tennessee, Mr. Street was a young attorney in Frankfort, Kentucky. He evidently at that time formed a good opinion of the young man's character, and Jackson was a man of strong convictions. When Secretary of War Cass asked for Mr. Street's removal because he was a Whig, Jackson replied, "I know General Street is a Whig, but he is an honest man and as long as I am president he shall be Indian agent." He kept his word, Mr. Street never was without an agency, but the secretary of war kept him moving. Why was General Cass so antagonistic? William B. Street says that from the time Mr. Cass came into Jackson's cabinet he tried to annoy his father. In the early summer of 1834 when he was in Washington trying to get an audience with Cass concerning the transfer of the agency, he writes to Subagent Thomas P. Burnett, "Cass is slippery." In a letter of August 26, 1833, to his uncle Montford Stokes he wrote: "Some

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>Street Letterbook, in Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa,

late events go strongly to corroborate your opinion of the potency of Cass. In that case I shall act to more effect through my friends by corresponding. C. is extremely cautious and timid in politics, and I shall have more correctness on my side in his view by letting him feel who are my particular friends. His first coolness towards me grew out of the warm confidential friendship between the late Major Thomas Biddle and myself. An extremely severe criticism upon some of C.'s Indian treaties, followed by some very severe personal remarks in the newspapers against him, was saddled upon me, and one of 'his creatures' asked me in his name if I was the author. I replied that I was not but had seen the paper in manuscript and knew the author, but was not authorized to give his name. I assured him that an application to the printer by C. would obtain the name as I had been assured by the writer. He made the application and Major Biddle was given up. He wrote an apologetic explanatory letter to Major B. and assured him he never would again be an Indian Commissioner. But I have never been forgiven, as many of the views on the subjects relating to Indians and the treaties were nearly in the same words of letters of mine to the department." He goes on to tell of the constant opposition of the American Fur trader at Prairie du Chien (Dousman). He had learned that he and his trader are doing all that they can to get him removed. "I learn through a friend they are endeavoring through Kinzie to work upon Cass in such a way as to get me removed if possible."<sup>44</sup>

In the Street Letterbook are the Biddle letters.<sup>45</sup> In the letter of June 27, 1828, Major Biddle says that the commissioners appointed under the last act of Congress to treat with the Winnebagoes are Colonel P. Menard and Governor Cass. He had asked Menard to have Street appointed as secretary to the commissioners. This was the summer before Mr. Street was appointed agent to the Winnebagoes.

In a letter of November 7, 1828, Major Biddle says, "The proceedings of Governor Cass in relation to the Winnebagoes last summer was in strict keeping with the character I entertain of him. Your Illinois member, Mr. Duncan [of Congress] told

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 138 *et seq.*

me that Governor Cass upon leaving Washington City last spring left a letter for the secretary of war requesting that Mr. McKenney might not be appointed commissioner, that he considered him unfit and unworthy. This is the man to whom he holds the most friendly front, and whose panegyric he asks to shelter himself from well-founded accusations. If I did not know I was writing to a gentleman of firmness and prudence, I should not freely express my opinion. Governor Cass belongs to your department and has the will and perhaps the opportunity of doing injury."

I have not at present any means of knowing what these criticisms in the newspaper of the Winnebago treaty of 1828 were. Perhaps the Cass letters in the possession of the Michigan Historical Society would throw some light on the matter. Did the American Fur Company have any influence upon General Cass's mind and intention towards Mr. Street? Cass seems to have been most active in 1834, that is the year that Astor sold out and Ramsey Crooks became president of the northern branch, with Dousman one of the chief western partners.<sup>46</sup>

In 1837, however, both Cass and Jackson are out of office.<sup>47</sup> Martin Van Buren, Jackson's friend and successor, was president. He seems always to have been friendly towards Mr. Street. Yet 1837 is too late to do what might have been done in 1834. With his usual optimism Mr. Street returns to the Prairie to do the best he can.

In spite of his general desire to make the best of all circumstances, he does enter a protest against the frequent moves he has been compelled to make. In a letter from Rock Island to his son Thomas at the Prairie, on March 2, 1837, he says, "I shall hold myself in readiness to get on the first boat, as I have my orders to go up some time since. These movements are peculiarly heavy to me, the expenses are considerable, and I am prevented from doing anything on a farm and compelled to depend entirely on my salary—and also to leave many little useful things that I perceive won't sell for anything in your country, here I think

<sup>46</sup>See Wis. Hist. Proc., Vol. I and II, p. 301.

<sup>47</sup>Among the Street letters there is plenty of evidence that in 1834 and 1835 both Dousman and Cass are very active in trying to annoy and remove Agent Street. I have not time to go into that here, as I wish to go on to the last of his life. Letters on pages 44, 45, 46, 50, and 52 of the Street Letterbook show this most plainly.

what I can't bring will sell pretty well." Then he gives a detailed statement of the pigs, cows and chickens he has to dispose of and the probable prices he can get in each place.<sup>48</sup>

During the winter of 1836-37 Captain Jowitt, who was commanding Fort Crawford in Colonel Taylor's absence, made requisition for hands and oxen for the Yellow River farm, but they did not arrive until after Mr. Street came up from Rock Island late in the spring. Since the Indians had not yet sent children enough to require the whole of the school fund, Mr. Street changed the entrance regulations and in January, 1838, when he reports to the commissioner of Indian affairs, Mr. Lowry assures him that he can get pupils to any amount he may inform the grown up Indians may be taken.

In August he is obliged to return to Fort Armstrong for a council with the Sacs and Foxes who wish to sell another strip of land to the government west of the Black Hawk Purchase. This will take them still farther from Rock Island and make necessary a separate agency on the Des Moines River. Will Mr. Street be their agent? Or can he return to the Prairie? Mr. Boyd is still subagent there.

September 1, 1837, he writes to Thomas from Rock Island. He is waiting for the rest of the Sac chiefs to come who are to go on to Washington with him to make the treaty selling their land. He hopes that Dr. Moore and Mr. Boyd "will be ready to join me here with the Winnebagoes, for I greatly desire the Doctor's company on this trip."<sup>49</sup> Later on while returning from this trip, he writes to his wife from Wheeling, "To Thomas you can say, I could do nothing with or for the Winnebagoes. The word among the clerks in the Indian Office just before I left was 'last night the Winnebagoes, their agent, and the whole of the men along with them were drunk, and two Indians badly stabbed.' I tried to have some talk with Boyd, but he was generally too high for me to do anything with. Doct. M. seemed too like he liquored high. Since I left Wash. I see the Win. made a treaty selling all their country east of Miss. and 20 miles on the Miss. west, and all to go west of the Miss."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup>Street Letterbook, in Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>H. H. Sibley, Am. Fur Co. Agt., was with this delegation and was one of the witnesses to the treaty.

These two treaties block Mr. Street's work for the Winnebagoes, and make it very probable that he will be sent to the Des Moines River. Domestic affairs are paving the way for future trouble, but Mr. Street does not see this. In the letter of September 1 to which I have just referred, he gives detailed instructions to Thomas exactly what to do to make his mother comfortable. He evidently feels uneasy about her. He says, "The situation of your dear mother is peculiar to her, separated from Lucy with whom she has so long lived, and from myself at the same time, and I hope you will try to comfort and oblige her all in your power." It seems from this letter also that her daughter Mary Wilson is with her at this time, but no one in their opinion seems to take the place of Lucy.

August 21, 1837, Lucy Frances Street is married at her father's house in Prairie du Chien to Lieutenant John Beach. Up to this point I have corroborated the family history I have given by quotations from contemporary letters or papers. In order to make clear certain conditions in the last years of Mr. Street's life, I shall now venture to give purely family tradition. When I was a young girl, old Aunt Patsey, Grandmother's body servant back in Virginia and the nurse of all her children, said to me, "Chile, your poah Aunt Lucy never should have married Major Beach, he wrecked her life; she ought to a married Major Hitchcock." When I questioned Father about the matter, he confirmed Aunt Patsey's verdict. He said that when his sister Lucy came back from school at Jacksonville, both men courted her for nearly two years. Grandfather would naturally have preferred his friend, Hitchcock, who agreed with him in his Indian policies and was a congenial friend in many things. But John Beach was more suave and ingratiating in manner, younger and more of a lady's man than Hitchcock, and seems to have won Aunt Lucy's heart. Hitchcock was quiet and thoughtful, a man to be relied upon; Beach was talkative, versatile, and unstable in character as his subsequent history shows. The winter after their marriage Beach was stationed in New York as a recruiting officer; after he retired from the service in 1838 he made his home at the agency on the Des Moines until his father-in-law's death. Aunt Lucy died in 1845 at the Raccoon Agency of quick consumption, after several years of almost continual ill health.

It may seem inconsequential to drag in this bit of family history to a discussion of Indian affairs, but I believe that often a man's private trials explain his public actions. While it was a great pleasure to both Grandfather and Grandmother to have Aunt Lucy with them, she was a favorite daughter, I strongly suspect his son-in-law was not always congenial to Grandfather.

Mr. Street's family remained in Prairie du Chien from the spring of 1837 to the spring of 1839, but he is busy making preparations to move to the Des Moines, and doing what can be done for the Winnebagoes. March 4, 1838, George Davenport writes from Washington to him that the Sac and Fox treaty has been ratified and that Harris, commissioner of Indian affairs, will soon send him formal instructions. The provision for blacksmith shops and a model farm is to be carried out on the Des Moines and the shops and agency buildings at Rock Island sold and the money spent on buildings at the new agency. "Capt. Hitchcock had given him [Harris] information of the situation of the Winnebagoes, letters have been sent to Mr. Boyd on the subject, and no doubt he will be removed. This was said to me in confidence by the Commissioner. The Winnebago and Chippeway treaties have been objected to, but great exertions is making to get them ratified, and I believe they will be."<sup>51</sup> Boyd is not removed, however, until the following year.

It is very evident that Mr. Street has not been able to do much for the Yellow River School during the preceding year. He had lost his direct touch with the Indians, and Mr. Boyd's influence with the head men seemed to have undermined his. No real work could be done on the model farm because of the late arrival of the hands and tools. Was Mr. Lowry the very best man he could have had for the head of the school? Miss Edwards speaks highly of him, and when he was employed Mr. Street thought he had every qualification for the position. But was he as strong a man as such a difficult position called for?

William, who was in the Indian school under Mr. Lowry, had told his father that Mr. Lowry was double-faced, and Mr. Street had reprimanded him severely.<sup>52</sup> But in later life A. W. agreed

<sup>51</sup>Street Letterbook, in Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, letter of Jan. 15, 1836.



with his brother's estimate, though he was younger and had not been in the school.

In a letter written October 28, 1839, from the Prairie by Thomas and quoted in full in my article on the Simon Cameron Commission,<sup>53</sup> he says of Mr. Lowry, "I am compelled to judge harshly. I had supposed he would make an independent, active, and energetic subagent. Activity he does not lack, but he is too subservient to the A. F. Co. He has, in my opinion, scarcely any opinion of his own, but runs to Dousman for his. When Boilvin came on, he took him by the hand, had him to assist him, sent him on expresses for Indians in the country, and gave him consequence and countenance, though there was no earthly reason for it, and he knew well Boilvin's character and actions. Other persons of far less exceptional character might have been found who would have answered as well or better. Had Boilvin been a stranger it would have been different. But Mr. Lowry said that the company and Broadhead still countenanced Boilvin, and he thought it was to his interest to do so. He was too shortsighted to see that there would be a blowup in the end, that rogues would quarrel. It is disagreeable to thus animadvert severely on Mr. Lowry; but I am certain there is reason for it, and he has not gained much credit among the lookers-on by his course. I have heard much of his lack of firmness. I am still friendly to Mr. Lowry, nor has any difference occurred between us. I have occasionally spoken of some of his acts to himself in a disapproving manner. He endeavored to explain and the matter passed." With such a reed blown by the wind at the head of the school, and Mr. Street away from the Prairie a great deal of the time, could it prosper?<sup>54</sup>

The last thing Agent Street did for the Winnebagoes was to expose this fraud of the Commission of 1838 to E. A. Hitchcock, head disbursing officer at St. Louis at the time, who refused payment until the matter could be brought to the notice of T. Hartley Crawford.<sup>55</sup> He had a new commission appointed for the next year, yet not all the wrongs were rectified as Thomas

<sup>53</sup>ANNALS OF IOWA, Third Series, Vol. VII, pp. 115-39; 172-95.

<sup>54</sup>For further account of what Street did for the school, see "A Chapter of Indian History," by Ida M. Street, ANNALS OF IOWA, Third Series, Vol. III, pp. 601-23.

<sup>55</sup>See ANNALS OF IOWA, Third Series, Vol. VII, p. 115-39.

Street's letter shows. Also letters from Ramsey Crooks concerning the second award show that the American Fur Company managed to get nearly as good a "haul" the second time.<sup>56</sup>

During the summer of 1838 Mr. Street is planning and building the model farm and agency on the Des Moines. He is not, however, through with Mr. Dousman and the American Fur Company. After Major Hitchcock had, as chief disbursing officer at St. Louis, called the attention of the government to the frauds of the commission and got the promise of a new commission, Hercules Dousman wrote an article for the *Missouri Republican* of July 6, 1839, in which he roundly abused General Street. Among the Street papers is a very rough draft of an article for the *Missouri Republican* in reply to Dousman. Among other accusations is this, "That last summer Dousman purchased flour and 12 or 13 beeves, during the sitting of the commission, which had been delivered to the Indians by the government, and afterwards were sold by D. at a high rate."

In 1904 my uncle, A. W., wrote me from St. Louis that he had recently examined the files of the *Missouri Republican* (now the *Missouri Republic*) for 1838 and 1839. I quote from the letter:

The first reference to the Commission was on May 31, 1839. This is an editorial evidently suggested by Pub. Doc. 229, H. R. last congress. The editorial calls attention to the matter, lest it may not reach the people, the editor having seen no reference to it in the public prints.

The editorial quotes a letter from General Joseph M. Street to Major E. A. Hitchcock entire, and also one from Hitchcock to T. Hartley Crawford, commissioner of Indian affairs. It states that the pub. doc. is the correspondence of the department relating to the commission for adjudicating the claims of the Winnebago half-breeds authorized to be paid to them under treaty stipulations, also claims by traders and others on these half-breeds. That this correspondence was printed in response to a motion by Mr. Everett of the House of Representatives. From the editorial the information appears to have been derived solely from this correspondence, and the editor in this and in subsequent editorials assumes the sole responsibility. In Father's letter he handles Dousman *et al* without gloves. States that believing there was a conspiracy between Dousman and others and the commissioners to defraud the Indians and half-breeds, he refuses to pay the payment, to them, but turned it over to the quartermaster, Lieutenant McKissock, at Fort Crawford. He gives the information upon which he reached his conclu-

<sup>56</sup>Indian Office files, 1839, MS Dept. Wisc. Hist. Libr.

sions. He mentions Boyd, subagent, Levi N. Marsh, T. P. Street, and others. He does not say that he has it from Boyd in person, but does in Marsh's case. This letter was evidently not intended for publication but to put Hitchcock in possession of the facts.

I presume Dousman saw the letter in Pub. Doc. 229 and smarting under the publicity given to it by the *Missouri Republican* or perhaps having first seen it in the paper, and smarting under Father's statements that he had been the advisor and even a sharer in the profits made by the purchase of claims, he attacks Father in scurrilous and abusive language, charging him with falsehood, malicious motives, denying any complicity with the commissioners, or that he had actually bought any claims. He fortifies his assertions by statements from Boyd, and Marsh, and an affidavit from "Joe Brisbois." Boyd was subagent and father had given him possession of the agency house at Prairie du Chien. He had married Sister Mary Jane's (Thomas' wife) sister Patty, and was at one time friendly with Father. He may not have been openly hostile until this time. Marsh had also been friendly. Perhaps as Father was going away, they may have thought the good will of Dousman more valuable. Joe Brisbois was a French Canadian—interpreter—without character, a tool of Dousman's.

I should have noted that in this same issue, July 4, 1839, was an editorial referring to this communication from Dousman. It is very courteous to D., commends him for confining himself to his own defense. For Dousman stated that Cameron and Broadhead were able to take care of themselves. But he quietly gives him this thrust: "There is however one point on which we think that Mr. Dousman has not reflected—nothing is gained by the use of harsh and intemperate terms, they only detract from the merits of the defense, whilst they add nothing to the force of justification." July 16, 1839, there is a short notice that a new commission is appointed, commending the action of the department and denouncing Cameron.

I have an impression that I have seen a copy of a communication from Father that appeared in the *Missouri Republican*, but I was not able to find any in this file.

In the winter of 1838-39 Mr. Street is back in Prairie du Chien with his family. His son J. H. D. and his son-in-law George Wilson are in the Wisconsin legislature at Madison, and his son William is a clerk there.<sup>57</sup> In one letter to William he speaks of not feeling well and of finding it difficult to write. In a letter of A. W. to me written twenty years ago, he speaks of a slight attack that his father had before they left Prairie du Chien very similar to the two strokes of apoplexy he had down on the Des Moines. He had failed in his plans for the Winnebagoes

<sup>57</sup>Street Letterbook, in Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa.

and had no bright prospects for doing much for the Sacs and Foxes. To a man of his sanguine temperament to give up hope would be practically to die. Nor was an agency for the Sacs and Foxes all smooth sailing.

He has the ever present American Fur Company with him. Complaint has been made that Mr. Phelps, their agent, has kept the Indians in the New Purchase by keeping his store there. General Street reports to General Clark a council held at Rock Island, October 19: "In justice to Mr. Phelps I feel bound to report all that subsequently came to my knowledge. The Indians declared their intention to remove to the heart of their country on the Des Moines; that Black Hawk was collecting the discontented under him who were opposed to removal, and would remain and hunt on the ceded land on the Miss., and that insubordination was thus encouraged by Mr. Phelps and other whites not named; that Mr. Phelps lived on the Mississippi near the Iowa reserve and desired to prevent the removal of the Indians.

"Mr. Phelps denies the charge and he has sent to the War Department a paper extensively signed by Indians, and his own affidavit to exculpate him, and on mentioning the subject to Black Hawk he denied that Mr. Phelps had done anything to reinstate him in power.

"In making these communications it is due from me as the agent of the government to remark that more is generally gathered from a strict scrutiny of the conduct of Indians, than from their declarations, and especially from *ex parte* statements and disclaimers which should be received with great caution, unless made in the presence of the agent or commanding officer with the official interpreter. For it is lamentably true that large bodies of Indians will assent to almost any statement read to them by a trader, the bearing of which is not particularly explained to them."<sup>58</sup> He does not say that Mr. Phelps is liable to the charge, but incidentally he is the cause of keeping the Indians on the Mississippi, and necessity compels them to hunt for food on the ceded lands. "Also they are hanging in numbers about Mr. Phelps' house, taking credits and hunting and bringing in fur skins and exchanging them for merchandise. Whether the open

<sup>58</sup>Photostat letters from the War Department, in Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa.

declaration is made seems to me to be unimportant, when the conduct of Mr. Phelps goes on to produce the evil complained of."<sup>59</sup> Black Hawk asked for leave to remain and hunt on the Mississippi, but it was refused and explained that this was to prevent such scenes as he was witness to in 1832.

After Mr. Street had in the summers of 1838 and 1839 located the farm and agency on the Des Moines River, the American Fur Company placed their trading post opposite. I can hardly believe that Mr. Street chose to locate close to Mr. Phelps.

In September, 1834, a month before the usual time of paying the annuity, Keokuk and some of the chiefs went to St. Louis and received the payment for the whole tribe, Major J. B. Bruat acting as paymaster. Captain Hitchcock in writing to Agent Street speaks of this as instigated by the American Fur Company. In a letter to General Clark November 16, 1834, General Street says, that he preferred the payment to heads of families rather than to chiefs, and under that system this irregular payment could have been avoided.

In the Council held at Rock Island June, 1835, General Street held in his hand papers that had been sent to Washington from Indians complaining of the irregular way of paying annuities the year before. They were read and explained to the Indians and they were asked if they held their opinions and were signed by them.<sup>60</sup> Keokuk said that he was well known to the chiefs and braves present and would let them speak on the papers. The principal men of both the Sacs and Foxes spoke and called the papers lies. They got their proper share of the annuity and are satisfied. One calls Appanoose a fool, says he has collected all the discontented and gone off and made a separate village far from them all. He does not attend their councils. Metaaqua speaks for Powesheik who is dying. His name is said to be on that paper. "Who put it there? Wapello and Keokuk did well last year. We all love Wapello." Now shock speaks, "These papers tell lies, they were not read true to us. White man sometimes put sticks in Indians' path for Indians to stumble over—those papers are sticks to catch Indians. Our Great Father sent you here as our friend. We didn't like you at first. The Red-

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*

head (General Clark) told our chief to try you—you were a good man and would be our friend, and we are now pleased to have you as our friend. If anything is wrong, we will tell it to you. Why will our Great Father listen to any one but you?"

Keokuk was the chief of the two tribes recognized by the government, and no matter what Mr. Street's private opinion may have been concerning the payment of the year before, he could not work with a divided tribe, he must have an authorized leader. He may not have had much direct influence over the politic Keokuk, but he did over the Fox chief, Wapello.

When in 1838 Iowa was organized into a territory, Robert Lucas, first territorial governor, became superintendent of Indian affairs. He seems to have started out with the idea of reforming the administration of Indian affairs in the new territory, and especially were his efforts directed to the American Fur Company. With the zeal of a novice he began "on his own hook." Perhaps he would have acquired some wisdom if he had consulted with a seasoned fighter against the American Fur Company, Joseph M. Street. But he does not seem to have tried that tack. Although Agent Street was nearing his defeated end, the two men might have worked together to the advantage of both. The fall of 1838 was when Mr. Street and Major Hitchcock exposed the frauds of the Simon Cameron Commission. Perhaps Mr. Lucas, who was new to the western country, did not know of this or he may have given Hitchcock the entire credit of the exposure. Still he ought to have known that Mr. Street had something to do with it, and with the Winnebago School on Yellow River. It would seem that a superintendent zealous for reforms would have been glad to co-operate with an agent whose previous record had been all towards reform. If Mr. Street had been himself, he would no doubt have met Governor Lucas half way, and discussed the situation in Iowa as he had that in Wisconsin with Governor Henry Dodge. On the contrary Governor Lucas seems to have pinned his whole faith to a man named Goodell, of whom Mr. Street had a poor opinion.

Governor Lucas in his letter on Indian Affairs in 1840 admits that he was sending Goodell among the Indians without consulting their agent, Mr. Street. Hardfish had complained of the

money chiefs and had gone off and formed a separate village. Mr. Street dictates a letter to Governor Lucas the day of his death, May 5, 1840, from which I quote as follows:

Enclosed I send a letter to General Atkinson on the subject of the deputation to settle the difficulties with the Winnebagoes, which you will please forward. The Indians have just informed me in council today that they had agreed upon their deputation to go up to Prairie du Chien to meet the Winnebagoes and General Atkinson in council to settle their differences with that nation. They handed me the names of the deputation. The council was fully attended from all the villages. Deputation—Names of the chiefs—Keokuk's village: Keokuk, principal chief, two chiefs and six principal braves. Wapello's village: Wapello, principal chief, two chiefs and nine braves. Appanoose's village: Appanoose, principal chief, two chiefs and six braves. Poweshiek's village: Poweshiek, principal chief, two chiefs and six braves, making thirty-nine in all, equally divided—Sacs and Foxes. I advised them to take fewer, but they said they have a mode of doing business among themselves and cannot meet the Winnebagoes in the right manner with less. They will leave on day after tomorrow and call on you at Burlington. I have at their special request concluded to send my son and the interpreter with them. A party of Indians passed here today on their way to Prairie du Chien (as the chief informed me). They only stopped a few minutes and talked with the other Indians. They made no call on me, or do I know their business, only from hearsay. They said to the Indians here that you had sent Goodell to them to come to Burlington and go on to the Prairie to meet the Winnebagoes. I told them it was not the case. I had received letters from General Atkinson ["you had sent me" erased] and yourself, which I had communicated to them, and that was all you had sent on the subject. That you sent all your communications to the Indians through me, their agent; that the man who told them you had sent for them through him told them lies. I sent word to Hardfish, the Prophet, and others with him—when I heard they were going by—that I had something to say to them. I wished to tell them what you had said, but they did not come to see me. This man Goodell was evidently going among the Indians and telling them that you had sent messages to them through him and deceiving the Indians, trying to make them think that it came through you. I fear it will. I tell the Indians not to believe him, that you send what you have to say to them through me, and if you wished them to come on to you, you would send me word to tell them to come on.<sup>61</sup>

It is to be regretted that the letter from Lucas to which Mr. Street refers above is not now among the Street papers, at least to my knowledge. It would be enlightening to know what Gover-

<sup>61</sup>Street Letterbook in the Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa.

nor Lucas had written to the agent that he had not written to the commissioner of Indian affairs as shown by a letter published a few years ago in the ANNALS OF IOWA. In Mr. Street's then physical condition it would be comparatively easy for any one, say John Beach, or even Governor Lucas to play double with him. He was shut off from direct personal touch with Governor Lucas by the peculiar disabilities of his last illness.

The following is from a letter from Thomas P. Street to William Street, March 24, 1840, in Street Letterbook:

"The conduct of Goodell and Labusier is a disgrace to the Department and if recognized by Governor Lucas, certainly a most shameful transaction. It is degrading to the Indians and an interference with the duties of the agent, which ought not by any means to be permitted, much less countenanced by the superintendent. I hope Governor L. has nothing to do with it. I should dislike to entertain such an opinion of him as such a course would compel me to do.

"I would again represent the conduct of those men to the Governor and request him to remove them out of the country and represent the matter to the Department at Washington. I would say that it was useless to place an agent among the Indians for the purpose of transacting their business with the government if two or three drunken discharged soldiers, men of no character or respectability, were allowed to go among the Indians, misrepresent the agent and endeavor to repudiate and destroy his influence. And this, too, under the sanction of the superintendent of Indian affairs and governor of a territory, whose high functions should at all times place him above the suspicion of using such tools as Goodell and Labusier.

"I must still think that if the matter were strongly represented to Lucas, he would immediately put a stop to such disgraceful proceedings."

In the fall of 1839 after he had in the spring moved his family to the Des Moines River agency, he had a stroke of apoplexy. This produced partial paralysis of the right arm and aphasia amnesia. Later in the year, William in describing his father's symptoms to his uncle, Dr. Alex. Posey, says, "Father's speech is wholly affected and although at times he pronounces many



words perfectly plain and distinct, probably the next time he tries to speak the same word he pronounces it very indistinctly and frequently so as not to be recognized. His memory is very differently affected. It is apparently only in part impaired. The many and varied scenes and transactions of a long life seem as vividly present to his mind now as at any time previous to his sickness and yet he cannot pronounce the name of a single individual of his acquaintance, but if we mention any circumstance about them, he recognizes them at once."<sup>62</sup> In writing to his brother-in-law, George Wilson, concerning his father, William says, "He is feeble and thin, but the worst trouble is his inability to express himself. Dr. Beaumont and Dr. Spaulding both thought that he might recover, though the recovery would be slow."

From this description it is evident that Agent Street would be much hampered in trying to talk with a comparative stranger like Lucas. He would have to depend somewhat upon others to interpret his ideas for him. The recovery might have been possible, as the doctors seemed to imply, if he had had nothing to worry him. The attack had been brought on by worry and disappointment, and he was having new and greater worries all the time.

Mr. Street from the first seems to have been despondent about his own case, a very unusual state of mind for him. William, a young man of twenty, acted as his clerk and bookkeeper, and the smooth-spoken, ingratiating John Beach acted as his outside spokesman; but the two men had different viewpoints on at least two matters of Indian policy. In 1834 Mr. Street had written very severely against specie payment of annuities; later he had to accept this form or a modification of it in good bank bills. John Beach had from the first that he came to the West as a lieutenant in the paymaster's department been in favor of it. Mr. Street thought that it was more just to pay the heads of families, but the American Fur Company, Keokuk and the money chiefs, and John Beach thought it best to pay the chiefs and let them divide with the tribe. There may have been other minor points also upon which they differed.

<sup>62</sup>Street Letterbook, in Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa,

Mr. Street became so worried over his business that in mid-winter Thomas came down for two months to straighten out things. Among other annoying things was the Chapman charges. November 29, W. W. Chapman wrote to J. R. Poinsett, secretary of war, accusing Agent Street of favoring the American Fur Company in paying the accounts of the Indians at the annuity payments. He recommends the removal of "General Street, and the appointment of Dr. Gideon S. Bailey of Van Buren County, I. T., now a prominent member of the assembly. \* \* \* Gov. Lucas will concur with me in the recommendation." This letter had been sent to Governor Lucas by the commissioner of Indian affairs and by him forwarded to the agency. The refutation of these charges in detail was prepared under Thomas' direction and accompanied by affidavits from Mr. Phelps, American Fur Company agent, and Josiah Smart, interpreter, to the effect that General Street had not favored the company; on the other hand Mr. Phelps seemed to think that at times he had been hard on the Fur Company. February 18, 1840, Governor Lucas writes to Agent Street, "Your letter of the 6th inst. in reply to the charges exhibited against you by Mr. Chapman received, with the statements of your son and Messers Phelps and Smart—which I consider a triumphant refutation of Mr. Chapman's charges." All the papers pertaining to this incident can be found in the Street Letterbook.

After his father's death Thomas seems a little uneasy over Mr. Beach's ability to manage a difficult situation. He says in a letter of August 20, 1840, to William, "The large balance reported against Father by Auditor Lewis is a source of great uneasiness to me. Get Mr. Beach to assist you and look over all the papers—this subject calls for serious attention. I sincerely regret that misunderstanding should arise between Mr. Beach and the Governor. I know the sneaking and underhanded course Governor Lucas has always pursued towards Father, and will of course towards Mr. Beach, but Lucas is pretty strong and I would advise Beach to keep on the safe side, and not allow himself to exhibit too much haste or impatience and give Lucas no clue, but pursue a temperate course—bearing constantly in mind the benefit of the Indians, and the interest of the government. I

would urge him to cultivate and improve a good understanding with the Indians and avoid harsh expressions or correspondence with Lucas."<sup>63</sup>

Here Thomas is giving the advice that his father would have given had he been alive. He understood his father and his ideas on Indian policy better, perhaps, than any other member of the family. He is perhaps beginning to understand Mr. Beach better. It is interesting to note that after Thomas and his sister Lucy are both dead, Mr. Beach married Thomas' widow and later they are divorced.

While Thomas is with him and he is under Dr. Spaulding's treatment, Mr. Street improves greatly, but later he fails again and Dr. Alex. Posey is sent for. In April J. H. D. Street comes from Cassville to assist in looking after his father's affairs. The question of a successor comes up. The Secretary of War says he will appoint any one whom Mr. Street will designate. From the first John Beach had been talked of, but Mr. Street withheld his consent. He seemed to approve heartily of George Wilson, who emphatically refused, as did Thomas Street. William was too young. So J. H. D. and John Beach put in applications at Washington. The Secretary of War preferred Beach as he had known him before. General Street apparently grew reconciled to this arrangement although he never gave his hearty consent.<sup>64</sup>

After Dr. Posey arrived Mr. Street improved so rapidly that on the morning of the Indian Council, May 5, 1840, he seemed almost himself again. His son A. W. has described the events preceding his father's death.<sup>65</sup> Agent Street came back from the council apparently so much better that the family were not uneasy. As he sat in front of the fire in his own room eating the apple his little son had roasted for him, he must have reviewed the situation in the council that morning—the divided tribe of Indians, the almost triumphant Fur Company, the lack of support from his superintendent, Governor Lucas—all these things portended a stiff fight. The thought of it brought the red blood to his head. He called for a glass of water. As he slowly sipped it, his surging blood cooled somewhat, yet the weakened brain

<sup>63</sup>Street Letterbook, in Hist., Memo. and Art Dept. of Iowa.

<sup>64</sup>J. H. D. says in a letter to his brother Thomas, "Father is becoming reconciled to the thought of Mr. Beach as his successor."

<sup>65</sup>See ANNALS OF IOWA, Third Series, Vol. VI, p. 375.

cell was ready to give way. He rose to put the glass on the mantel. This was the physical straw that broke him. He fell never to rise.

Let us transpose what Shakespeare has said,

The good that men do lives after them;  
The evil is interred with their bones.

The mistakes of judgment that Mr. Street made are forgotten. The Indians have gone "West"; but here and there a few of them have been built into the polity of the white man's society as citizens. They stand as sentinels to mark the plan that at least one man tried to follow, one who would have stemmed the tide of restless, self-absorbed white men here in the Mississippi Valley, and saved his red brother. He would have rescued the remnant of the Indian of the Great Lakes system, by making him ready to meet the white man as an equal in his own body politic.

---

#### J. G. BERRYHILL'S ORATION

---

The University Chapel yesterday afternoon was well filled with students and citizens. The occasion was the opening of the series of rhetorical for the term, and the appearance of the first section of the seniors. Prof. Pinkham presided and opened the exercises by introducing Mr. J. G. Berryhill, who delivered a well prepared oration on "The Increase of Ignorance." Although this gentleman is one of the youngest members of the class and has not had the experience in public speaking of some of the others, yet he ably handled his subject, forcibly impressing upon the minds of his audience the truth of his remarks, especially in regard to the strong hold that ignorance has attained in our land.—*Daily Press*, Iowa City, Iowa, October 19, 1872. (In the Newspaper Division of the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa.)

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.