

The Second Fort Crawford

At the close of the Winnebago outbreak Major General Gaines, then commander of the Western Department of the Army, made an inspection tour of the posts of the Upper Mississippi region. He began the inspection of Fort Crawford on September 28, 1827, and concluded it on October 4th. He reported that Fort Crawford was so much decayed as to be uninhabitable without extensive repairs and he recommended the erection of a new fort on Pike's Hill on the Iowa side of the Mississippi.

Although the recommendations in this report were not followed by the War Department it disclosed clearly the need for new quarters for the garrison at Prairie du Chien. Another great flood in the Mississippi in the spring of 1828 again caused the fort to be abandoned for a time.

Major Fowle with four companies of the Fifth Infantry left the post in the late spring. He was succeeded by Colonel John McNeil with four companies of the First Infantry. In August, Brevet Major Stephen Watts Kearny assumed command of the post. Major Kearny continued in command of Fort Crawford until the following July, 1829, and during his sojourn there work was begun on a

new Fort Crawford. The site selected was some distance south of Old Fort Crawford on an elevation of the Prairie many feet above the highest rise of the river but easily accessible to a landing for boats.

Preliminary work on the erection of the new post was prosecuted with energy by Major Kearny. Then, in July, 1829, Lieutenant Colonel Zachary Taylor took over the command of Fort Crawford and began a sojourn at Prairie du Chien which continued with the exception of absences on furloughs and special details until he was summoned to quell the Seminole uprising in Florida in the late thirties. Colonel Taylor's command at Fort Crawford at this time consisted of Companies A, D, F, and G of the First Infantry — a total force of ten officers and one hundred and seventy-three men. Dr. William Beaumont was surgeon of the garrison, and Major John Garland was quartermaster in charge of constructing the new post.

One detail of soldiers was sent up the Wisconsin River to cut timber; another was dispatched up the Mississippi to the Menominee and Chippewa River areas to cut logs, hew square timbers, and to make plank and shingles. Still another group was detailed to quarry stone in the nearby bluffs for the powder magazine and other buildings. The Iowa country was not overlooked in the erection of the second Fort Crawford. A detail was sent across the Mississippi to make a lime kiln; another

group proceeded upstream to build a sawmill on Yellow River.

In July, 1830, Colonel Taylor left Fort Crawford on a furlough and Colonel Willoughby Morgan returned as commandant after an absence of several years. Work on the new post continued unabated throughout 1830 and the spring of 1831; but was delayed temporarily in the summer of 1831, when Colonel Morgan and part of his garrison assisted in forcing Black Hawk and his band of Sauk to leave the vicinity of Rock Island for a new home across the Mississippi in Iowa. The work was renewed strenuously in July, 1831. Captain Gustavus Loomis was in temporary command of the post with a garrison of eleven officers and two hundred and twenty-five men. Lieutenant Jefferson Davis, who had been stationed at Fort Winnebago before the campaign at Rock Island, had recently been transferred to Fort Crawford and was now engaged in supervising the sawmill on Yellow River. Throughout the rest of the summer and fall of 1831 work on the new fort was pushed steadily. Morgan resumed command of the post in October and, during the fall, the completed portions of the new fort were occupied by part of the garrison.

Colonel Morgan relinquished command of Fort Crawford to Captain Loomis in April, 1832; and Loomis, in turn, gave way to Colonel Zachary Taylor in August following the conclusion of the

Black Hawk War. This month found fifteen officers and one hundred and ninety-one men at the fort. Although the barracks were not entirely completed, the new Fort Crawford was occupied by all the garrison during this season. Meanwhile, the old Fort Crawford, which had represented the authority of the United States at this point for sixteen years, passed into the limbo of obsolete frontier fortifications.

Throughout 1832 and 1833 construction on the fort continued, being interrupted only by the Black Hawk War and cholera, which raged severely at the post following that campaign. An inspection report on August 21, 1834, shortly before the post was completed, was favorable in almost every particular for which Colonel Taylor and his officers were given full credit.

The new Fort Crawford was an imposing work. It consisted of an enclosure, rectangular in shape, the north and south sides of which consisted of a stockade of pine logs each one foot square and sixteen feet high. The east and west walls of the fort were each formed by two barracks thirty-five feet wide and one hundred and seventy-five feet long, separated by a sally-port twenty-six feet wide. These barracks were constructed of stone and consisted of an elevated basement and one story. Inside the stockade and forming the north and south limits of the enclosed parade ground stood the buildings used for officers' quarters and store-

rooms, each thirty-five feet wide and forty-two feet long. These likewise were constructed of stone and consisted of an elevated basement and one story. A shingled gable roof covered each of these buildings, and these roofs projecting inside the fort, formed the roof of a paved porch ten feet wide facing the parade ground. The parade ground was intersected in the center at right angles by a paved walk running north and south and by a paved sally-port which extended east and west through the fort, thence westward to the river. The west wall of Fort Crawford rested on a ridge some fifty feet above the river and distant several hundred feet. In the southeast corner of the parade ground stood a tall flag staff where the Stars and Stripes were raised daily at guard mounting and lowered at retreat. In the northeast corner of the fort was a huge well six feet in diameter and sixty feet deep. The stone powder magazine occupied the southeast corner of the fort proper, and the south end of the east barracks room was fitted up as a theatre. The windows in the basement of the fort were two feet wide by four feet long and were cross barred with wrought iron slats. Both the hospital and the commandant's home were outside the fort, the former (now restored) a large stone structure to the south, the latter a frame building to the north. North of the commandant's home was the new cemetery for officers and east of the fort was a similar plot for

enlisted men. A large drill ground extended from the fort to the bluffs on the east of the Prairie. The second or new Fort Crawford as finally completed on its high and commanding site was, indeed, a worthy representative of the military authority of the United States.

The Fort and Indian Affairs 1829-1831

Although Prairie du Chien had long been a natural center of trade and intercourse for Indian tribes of the Upper Mississippi, and had been the scene of the Great Council of 1825 and the center of alarm in the Winnebago outbreak of 1827, no other years were so filled with important Indian affairs and treaties as the interval of 1829 through 1831. Two treaties and two bloody massacres were noteworthy features in the annals of Indian relations near Fort Crawford during this period.

The first of these treaty councils was held in the summer of 1829 near old Fort Crawford. General John McNeil, Colonel Pierre Menard, and Caleb Atwater of Ohio were the commissioners and Charles S. Hempstead served as secretary. The commissioners sought to resolve the question of the ownership and settlement of the lead mining region below the Wisconsin River. On July 29th, a treaty was concluded with the Chippewa, Ottawa and Potawatomi, and on August 1st with the Winnebago, by which the government secured 8,000,000 acres of land in exchange for a stipulated amount of money in goods plus annuities for

a period of years. The Indians were loaded with presents, and with the firing of a cannon departed band by band.

But Indian relations in the region about Prairie du Chien were far from settled. Early in 1830, a party of Sauk and Fox Indians killed some Sioux rivals near the headwaters of the Cedar River in Iowa. Captain Richard B. Mason was dispatched from Fort Crawford to the scene of the trouble with a body of troops; but, when they arrived, the Indians had fled.

Later in the spring, a group of Sauk and Fox on their way to Prairie du Chien for a conference was ambushed by a war party of Sioux and Menominee on an island downstream and all of the former, except one brave and a boy who escaped, were massacred. On the next day the victorious Sioux and Menominee proudly displayed on poles the scalps and dismembered fragments of their victims as they paraded and danced on the streets of Prairie du Chien. After roasting and eating the heart of the murdered chief to inspire them with courage, they left the Prairie and ascended the Mississippi unmolested.

To put an end to such clashes, the government appointed General William Clark of St. Louis and Colonel Willoughby Morgan of Fort Crawford as commissioners to hold another general council with the Indians at Prairie du Chien. Sessions of the council began on July 7, 1830, and within three

days the tribes represented had agreed to bury the tomahawk. On July 15th a treaty was concluded which established a neutral zone forty miles wide in the Iowa country between the Sioux on the north and the Sauk and Fox on the south. The government agreed to pay each of the tribes concerned \$2,000 to \$3,000 annually for ten years, to furnish them with blacksmiths, iron, and farm implements, and to establish schools for their children. Again it seemed that peace had been restored.

Unhappily, the Chippewa soon caused trouble by killing two Menominee women near Lockwood's Mill on the Chippewa River. At the same time the Sauk and Fox Indians in the Rock Island area threatened revenge over being removed into Iowa. A climax in Indian relations in the vicinity of Fort Crawford was reached on the night of July 31, 1831, only a little more than a year after the assembled tribes had agreed to live in peace and friendship. A party of Menominee braves with their women and children had encamped on an island some four hundred paces above old Fort Crawford, and distant about two miles from the new fort to which the troops had been transferred. Two or three hours before daybreak a large party of Sauk and Fox Indians slipped quietly across the river from the Iowa shore and crept upon the sleeping camp. Then began an orgy of butchery. Within a few minutes the Sauk and Fox had murdered twenty-five of the sleeping Menominee and

wounded many more before the attackers fled downstream leaving the camp a shambles.

Agent Joseph M. Street in Prairie du Chien and Captain Loomis at Fort Crawford, when informed of the attack, took steps to comfort the Menominee, and to apprehend the murderers, but the fugitives had a sufficient start to escape. The year 1831 ended with the Menominee and Sioux plotting vengeance on the Sauk and Fox, and with Black Hawk plotting revenge on the whites.

The Black Hawk War — 1832

The Black Hawk War was an effort by Indians then living in Iowa to recover lands which they had lost in Illinois. It soon became a retreat by the Indians with a few brilliant rear guard actions on the part of the Indians and a series of victories on the part of the whites. For Illinois it was the riddance of a few Indians; for Wisconsin it served as an object lesson to the Winnebago and prepared the way for their subsequent removal to the Neutral Ground across the Mississippi; while for Iowa it was a prelude to settlement by the whites. Perhaps no other Indian war in history was participated in by so many men who later achieved prominence. Two future presidents of the United States — Abraham Lincoln, captain of a company of Illinois volunteers, and Coloney Zachary Taylor, commandant of Fort Crawford — took part. The future president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, then a young lieutenant stationed at Fort

Crawford, was recalled from a furlough and took charge of Black Hawk after his surrender. A later presidential candidate and for years the most notable soldier in America, General Winfield Scott, came all the way from the eastern seaboard to Fort Crawford under orders from President Jackson to put an end to the struggle. The list of future senators, governors, and generals who took part in this brief campaign included A. C. Dodge, Henry Dodge, John Reynolds, Henry Atkinson, Albert Sydney Johnston, Joseph E. Johnston, David E. Twiggs, William S. Harney, Robert Anderson, and many others.

Officers and troops from Fort Crawford participated in the brief campaign. Colonel Taylor joined General Atkinson at Fort Armstrong with two companies of the First Infantry, and aided in the pursuit of Black Hawk. A detachment of troops under Lieutenant Joseph Ritner stopped a large number of Indian women, children, and old men trying to escape down the Wisconsin River after the battle of Wisconsin Heights. Colonel Taylor and soldiers from Fort Crawford participated in the defeat of the Indians at the Battle of Bad Axe which ended the inglorious conflict with the capture of Black Hawk. General Scott sent the old chief from Fort Crawford to Jefferson Barracks under the escort of Lieutenant Jefferson Davis. In June, 1833, Black Hawk was released from prison in Fortress Monroe, Virginia, and

taken back to Iowa. His spirit was crushed and death was not far distant. The Black Hawk Purchase, which the bitter chief neither negotiated nor signed, remains a monument to his memory.

The Fort and Indian Affairs 1834-1848

Colonel Taylor continued as commandant of Fort Crawford until October 4, 1834, when he turned over the command of the post to Captain E. A. Hitchcock, and departed on a sixty-day furlough. The records for that year show that from eight to thirteen officers and from one hundred and ninety-one to two hundred and fifty-seven men comprised the garrison from time to time during the year. The fort was supplied with an amazing array of material and equipment for frontier defense. A detail from the fort was engaged in building a school for the Indians on Yellow River not far from the site of the sawmill which had been used to make lumber for Fort Crawford.

In November, 1834, the Winnebago Indians had gathered at Prairie du Chien for their annuities, and as was usually the case the money was out of their hands and in the pockets of the traders within a few hours after it had been distributed. The Indians lingered on an island near Prairie du Chien, drinking and dancing, and preparing to cross into Iowa to join the Sioux for the winter's hunt. On the night of November 6th, while the Winnebago slept, unconscious of any danger, a band of Sauk and Fox crept upon them and began

their ghastly work of slaughter. Ten braves, three or four women, and a number of children were horribly mangled by the murderers in a swift orgy of destruction. A little boy, about twelve years of age, who brought word of the massacre to the fort, said he fired at the attacking party before he ran, and thought he saw a man fall. It turned out that he had shot a Fox Indian through the heart. On the next day he was all decked out as a brave and had as trophies of his exploit the scalp, rifle, and tomahawk of the vanquished Fox.

As soon as he heard of the affray, Captain Hitchcock sent two officers to the scene of the massacre. They reported appearances on the island shocking in the extreme. Captain W. R. Jouett was dispatched with a detachment down the Mississippi in pursuit of the murderers while Lieutenant G. H. Pegram with another detachment scoured the region above Prairie du Chien and up Turkey River. Both efforts were unsuccessful; the Sauk and Foxes had escaped.

An exterminating war was expected to result from this bloody deed, but prompt efforts on the part of Colonel Taylor, who returned in December, and Indian Agent Joseph M. Street prevailed upon the Winnebago to let their Great White Father punish the Sauk and Fox.

The Sauk and Fox Indians were summoned to a conference at Prairie du Chien, and they came in May, 1835. In the presence of Colonel Taylor and

Agent Street a treaty was negotiated between the Menominee and Winnebago on the one hand and the Sauk and Fox on the other whereby all concerned agreed to forgive each other for past offenses, and to live in peace in the future. Six of the chiefs and braves including the principal sufferers were among the signers. The council was conducted with much ceremony. Forty horses were presented to the Winnebago by the Sauk and Fox as full compensation for the loss of about half that number of people who had been murdered. The indemnity was accepted, belts of wampum given by the offenders, and the pipe of peace smoked.

In May, 1835, three companies from Fort Crawford began the task of constructing a road from Prairie du Chien to Fort Winnebago, and by August they had completed their section of the road. The road as constructed by the soldiers was a crude affair, but it shortened the distance at least a third over the river route between Fort Crawford and Fort Winnebago.

No unusual Indian problems demanded the attention of Colonel Taylor or the garrison at Fort Crawford during the rest of 1835 or 1836. An inspection of the post in October, 1836, gave a high rating to every aspect of the operation. In the absence of Colonel Taylor at Jefferson Barracks in November and December of 1836, Captain W. R. Jouett assumed command of Fort Crawford. In January, 1837, Brevet Major Gustavus Loomis re-

lieved Captain Jouett, and remained as commandant until Taylor's return in May. All three of these officers took a sympathetic interest in the efforts of Agent Street and his son, Thomas P. Street, to provide a school on Yellow River and a farm for the Winnebago in the Iowa country.

Colonel Taylor left Fort Crawford in July, 1837, with a detachment for the Seminole War in Florida. He was succeeded by Brevet Brigadier General George M. Brooke, who tore down and rebuilt the commandant's home at a cost of \$7,000. In May, 1839, the arrival of several companies increased the garrison from seventy to one hundred and seventy-five officers and men. By December, the number had been increased to almost two hundred as the difficult task of moving the Winnebago from their old homes in Wisconsin to the Neutral Ground in Iowa faced the soldiers in 1840.

The removal of the Winnebago from Wisconsin to Iowa began in the spring of 1840 with Brigadier General Henry Atkinson in command of the project. Some went willingly, but others held back. Soldiers from the fort helped erect a new post, Fort Atkinson, on Turkey River in the Neutral Ground. Meanwhile, a company under Captain Isaac Lynde protected the Winnebago in their new home from attacks by the Sauk and Foxes. Other soldiers erected a storehouse near the landing on the west bank of the Mississippi, while another detail improved a road from the river to the

site of the new fort on Turkey River. Later this road was known as the old military trail. For several years thereafter troops from Fort Crawford were called upon to round up straying bands of Winnebago in Wisconsin and return them to Iowa.

The outbreak of the Mexican War necessitated the withdrawal of the regular garrisons of Fort Crawford and Fort Winnebago in the early summer of 1846; and the posts were then manned by volunteers from Wisconsin and Iowa. These troops were kept busy trying to keep the Winnebago within the Neutral Ground.

The biggest task facing these volunteers was the removal of the Winnebago from Iowa to Minnesota in the summer of 1848. In September, 1848, both companies were mustered out of service. For more than two years Iowa and Wisconsin volunteers had performed the most arduous frontier duties with honor and credit.

Late in September, 1848, Lieutenant Colonel Gustavus Loomis with his staff, band, and Companies B and F of the Sixth Infantry occupied Fort Crawford. Upon the departure of Loomis on October 31, Captain Charles S. Lovell became commandant, and occupied this position until the troops were withdrawn in the spring of 1849. On April 14, 1849, Company C from the recently abandoned Fort Winnebago, with the band and non-commissioned staff, left Prairie du Chien on the steamboat *Senator* for Fort Snelling; while

Companies B and F left the following day enroute for Fort Leavenworth. Lieutenant R. W. Foote with a small detail of soldiers remained behind to dispose of government property and stores. The sale of these goods took place on May 30, 1849; and the remaining troops departed. A lone caretaker was left in charge of the silent post.

Late in 1855, and for a few months in 1856, Fort Crawford was occupied by a detachment of the Tenth Infantry from Fort Snelling under Brevet Lieutenant Colonel E. R. S. Canby as protection against a threatened return of two bands of Winnebago under Chiefs Dandy and Little Hill. Brevet Colonel C. F. Smith relieved Canby in December, 1855. On June 9, 1856, the Indian scare being over, the soldiers left on the steamboat *War Eagle* for Fort Snelling.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the State of Wisconsin leased the property as a site for enlisting and quartering of troops, and the Thirty-first Wisconsin Infantry was enrolled there. For a period from 1864-1865, Fort Crawford was occupied by Provost Marshal Captain John G. Clark with an enrolling commission to secure troops for short time service. This was the last time Fort Crawford served any military purpose.