

The **P**ALIMPSEST

APRIL 1942

CONTENTS

The Milton Lott Tragedy 113

JOHN ELY BRIGGS

Wahkonsa 121

HAROLD D. PETERSON

Sioux City Frontier Guards 136

C. ADDISON HICKMAN

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSEST

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

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The Milton Lott Tragedy

Sometime in the summer of 1846, while surveyors were busy locating section lines in the Iowa River Valley and Congress was preparing to admit Iowa into the Union, a trapper and trader named Henry Lott settled with his family on the north bank of the Boone River near its junction with the Des Moines. There they built a rude cabin nearly thirty miles from the nearest settlement at Pea's Point down the Des Moines River. To this outpost near the Indian country Henry Lott brought a supply of bad whisky, a few cattle, and some horses.

It was not long before he had customers. Roving bands of Indians liked his liquor, though they resented his intrusion upon their hunting grounds. After a few drinks the braves were willing to trade their ponies and other possessions for more whisky. Later they claimed that Lott had stolen their horses.

Among the most frequent visitors at the Lott

cabin was a band of renegade Sisseton Sioux under the leadership of Sidominadota. They were outcasts whose mutual ostracism united them. Sometimes there were as many as five hundred members of the band, but usually they divided into small groups of less than fifteen braves. The favorite haunts of these marauding bands, feared by white men and Indians alike, were the headwaters of the Des Moines and Little Sioux rivers. Sidominadota, or Two Fingers as he was called, was unusually savage and treacherous.

During the fall of 1846 the Sioux lost several horses which were traced to Henry Lott. When the Indians came to claim their ponies Lott denied that he had stolen them. The anger of the Indians blazed. Sidominadota accused Lott of being a horse thief as well as an intruder upon Indian territory and ordered him to get out of the country. Lott refused. His cabin was located within the region ceded to the government by the Sauk and Fox Indians in 1842 and several miles below the Neutral Ground. If there was any trespass, the Sioux were guilty of that offense. Nevertheless, they resented the westward extension of settlement and probably had a particular grievance against Lott.

It was December when the Indians came to reclaim their ponies. Winter had already begun.

The river was frozen and the snow was deep. Obtaining no satisfaction from Lott they stayed in the neighborhood. Occasionally they shot at the cattle and helped themselves to honey in Lott's bee hives. No doubt they came often to the cabin begging and bartering for whisky.

One day when Lott and his sixteen-year-old stepson were away, leaving Mrs. Lott and Milton, aged twelve, alone, the Indians became unusually surly. They ordered the boy to find all his father's horses and fetch them to the cabin. If he did not do as he was told they threatened to kill him. Without sufficient clothing the boy was thrust out into the cold and trudged away into the woods. Frightened as he was, he realized that he had a chance to escape and bring help to rescue his mother. As soon as he was out of sight he made for the river, which afforded a clear trail to the settlements downstream. Though the snow was deep in the woods it had blown off the ice on the river, so the going was relatively easy.

Meanwhile, unknown to Milton, his father and half-brother had returned. Seeing that the Indians were making trouble at the cabin, and supposing that they would be overpowered and perhaps killed if they should intervene, the white men hid in the brush across the river and watched. Against so many war-painted braves they were

helpless. At last they decided to leave Mrs. Lott and Milton to their fate and go for help. Stealthily they left their hiding place and started for Pea's Point, following the trail through the woods on the east side of the river.

At about the same time Milton set out on the same errand. Mile after mile he trotted along on the ice, keeping as much as possible in the shelter of the hills on the right bank of the river. The northwest wind urged him along. Cold and tired he hurried on, cutting across the land wherever the river made a sharp bend. His heart pounded from fatigue and anxiety and he gasped for breath. Doubt and fear must have occupied his thoughts. Hours passed. The sun went down.

Surely, he thought, it could not be much farther to his friends at Pea's Point. He was nearly exhausted, and his hands and feet were numb with cold. A short distance below a creek that came into the river from the west he decided to climb the bluff. Perhaps he wanted to see if he could discern a familiar landmark. Perhaps he was looking for a sheltered spot where he could rest and get warm. As he toiled slowly up the steep hillside, grasping small branches and searching for a firm foothold, he slipped and fell back into the snow. A feeling of infinite repose crept over him. The snow was as soft as a feather bed and

the wind no longer cut his face. He closed his eyes and relaxed, forgetful of his mission.

Henry Lott and his stepson reached the settlement at Pea's Point a little below the present site of Boone. Aroused by their tale of Indian hostilities, John Pea and his son John, Jacob Pea, Thomas Sparks, John M. Crooks, and William Crooks volunteered to help rescue Mrs. Lott and punish the Indians. A messenger was sent down the river to Elk Rapids, near the present site of Madrid, where Johnny Green and a band of Pottawatomis were spending the winter. The friendly half-breed chief and twenty-six of his braves, glad to harass the hated Sioux, joined the relief party. But when they reached the mouth of the Boone River, they found that Sidominadota and his band had gone, after ransacking the cabin, stealing the table silver, killing and wounding some of Lott's cattle, and taking all the horses they could find.

Mrs. Lott was alone in the cabin, half crazy with fright and worry. For three days she had remained there wondering what dreadful fate had befallen her family. As the long hours passed the fear that her husband and sons had been killed became a conviction. Why had the Indians spared her life? Perhaps they would return at any moment and finish their awful design. The weight of her grief was too much to bear. Weak and dis-

tracted she was more dead than alive when help arrived. The knowledge that her husband and oldest son were unharmed could not efface the memory of those terrible days and nights. And what had become of Milton?

As soon as the circumstances of the boy's departure were known, Henry Lott and some of the rescue party started a search for him. His tracks in the snow were soon discovered. Obviously he had escaped from the Indians, and presently his purpose became apparent. It was not difficult to follow his trail down the river. As the men went on and on they must have marvelled at the boy's endurance, for he was only twelve years old and they knew he was not warmly clad. For twenty miles they traced the route of the heroic boy. Hope that he had safely reached his destination must have revived as the trail approached the nearest settler's cabin along the river. But suddenly the trail ended. They found his frozen body in the snow where he had fallen.

The searching party had no equipment for digging a grave in the frozen ground or any means of conveying the body to Pea's Point, eight miles away, so they placed it in a hollow log and closed the entrance with heavy timbers to keep out prowling animals. In the following January, when the cold weather had moderated, Lott and his friends

returned and buried Milton on a hill overlooking the Des Moines River. No scripture was read and no prayer was uttered but there were tears in the eyes of the men as they paid their last tribute to the courageous boy — the first white person to die in Boone County. On a nearby tree they cut a sign to mark the spot.

Mrs. Lott lived only a few weeks. Suffering from exposure, grief, and mistreatment by the Indians, she could not regain her strength or emotional composure. Henry Lott laid her to rest near the mouth of the Boone River, gathered up his remaining livestock and household goods, and moved down the Des Moines River to a more settled locality southwest of Elk Rapids. To his friends he vowed to take revenge upon Sidominadota and his band. The bloody sequel of the Lott tragedy culminated in the murder of Sidominadota and his family, which probably contributed to the Spirit Lake Massacre.

More than half a century passed. The hardships of the frontier were forgotten and most of the early settlers were gone. The grave of Milton Lott was neglected. In October, 1903, C. L. Lucas of Madrid, with the guidance of John Pea and Thomas Sparks, who had assisted at the burial, located the spot and marked it with a stake. Two years later the Madrid Historical Society

resolved to place a monument at the grave to commemorate the heroic death of the pioneer boy. The grave itself was marked by an iron slab but the monument was erected on higher ground about thirty feet away. Nearly a hundred people attended the ceremony.

As time went on this spot, too, was neglected. Weeds and willows hid the monument. Again the Madrid Historical Society acted. The monument was moved to a grassy level beside the gravelled highway where it stood gray and lonely for another decade or more. At last, in 1930, the Boone post of Veterans of Foreign Wars placed a white fence about the monument. Any one who passes by may read: "Milton Lott died December 18, 1846, from freezing while escaping from the Sioux Indians. Aged 12 years. This was the first death in Boone County."

JOHN ELY BRIGGS

Wahkonsa

Widely as the name Wahkonsa is now used in Webster County, only scattered facts are known about the Indian boy himself. Son of a Sioux chieftain called Umpashota, Wahkonsa must have been a strong and active papoose because his name meant "One Who Will Go a Long Way" or "One Who Will Be Heard From". Perhaps his parents entertained vague hopes that he would become a more important Indian than his father was. Yet when Wahkonsa was born, about 1838, the coming of the settlers foredoomed to obstruction the normal channels for an Indian brave to win distinction.

Idle as it may be, one does wonder what Umpashota would think if he could return these hundred years later to learn that Wahkonsa, in name at least, has, indeed, gone a long way. So far as can be discovered, Wahkonsa is the only local Indian name in use in Webster County, but it has done unlimited service. The name has been given to two hotels, two schools, the township containing the city of Fort Dodge, many literary, social, and fraternal organizations, a fire company, a baseball club during the infancy of the

game, numerous small local businesses, and a packing plant which has made the name literally true by sending Wahkonsa Brand pork products far and wide.

The story of Wahkonsa really begins before Iowa was opened for settlement and long before he was born. Many years earlier, a Sisseton Sioux murdered an aged chief. For this he was outlawed from his own tribe and expelled with his family and associates in the crime. Attracted to the group were other renegades, including a fugitive slave, until there was a sizable band. In time these roving tribesmen lost some of their outlaw character, but they never became a particularly reputable division of the Dakotas. Some of them were more savage than others. Inkpaduta was the worst and Umpashota among the best.

These Indians, usually referred to as the Red Top band, came to consider the upper Des Moines Valley as their territory, although they were true nomads and ranged west into Dakota and north into Minnesota as they followed the game for food and furs. To the south were the hostile Potawatomi; beyond the Neutral Ground were the equally hostile Sauk and Fox. When the Sioux went south or east, they wore their war paint.

The organization of the band was loose, with several headmen or subchiefs, one of whom was

Umpashota, or Smoky Day. His group consisted of only a few families, perhaps five or six lodges. Sidominadota was probably the band's leader, although his brother Inkpaduta shared in the control and assumed full leadership after the murder of Sidominadota in 1854. The various groups usually lived apart and hunted by themselves, but against a common foe or for a foray into enemy territory the whole band united.

The Sioux were not pleased to see the settlers moving steadily up the Des Moines Valley during the forties. To be sure the Sioux territory was still far beyond the land ceded by other tribes, but the Indians knew well that no existing treaty was a permanent dike against this flood of white people who grubbed in the prairie and drove off the game because there was more than they could eat. The Indians went as far as they dared to discourage the settlers: they begged, they made general nuisances of themselves, by the pioneers' standards they stole, and they drove off the surveyors whose strange instruments left invisible fences across the prairies.

When the cessions of 1846 opened the Des Moines Valley to settlement twenty miles above the mouth of the west fork, the Sioux resented this further curtailment of their hunting grounds. One of their favorite camp sites at the mouth of Lizard

Creek was in the southern half of the Neutral Ground. In December, 1846, Sidominadota's band raided the cabin of Henry Lott at the mouth of the Boone River and caused the death of his wife and son. As more pioneers pushed farther up the valley, conflicts with these Indians became more frequent and alarming. The settlers asked for military protection and on August 23, 1850, troops arrived at the mouth of Lizard Creek to establish Fort Clarke. A few months later the name of the post was changed to Fort Dodge.

"When we first arrived at the site selected for building the fort," wrote William Williams, "no Indians were to be seen. We found all around the site of Fort Dodge their deserted encampments and their trodden paths. They had no doubt been watching our movements from the time we reached the Boone river country. The first tattoo in the evening and the reveille next morning . . . no doubt alarmed them very much. The shrill notes of the fife and the rattle of the drums, followed by the discharge of musketry by the guards caused the whole body of Indians, living on the east side of the Des Moines, to fly to the west side". It was nearly a year before any Indians returned to Fort Dodge or, for that matter, were approachable within speaking distance anywhere within the region.

With the troops, in the capacity of sutler, came William Williams, and his son James, a boy of thirteen. Williams had left his wife and younger children in Muscatine with his brother, Judge Joseph Williams. For four long years and seven months this boy was to see none of his family except his father. But there was plenty to keep young Williams occupied: he was his father's housekeeper and assistant in the sutler's store. Three or four times a year the elder Williams went to Muscatine to see his family and perhaps to get supplies, spending two to three weeks on the trip. At such times James was in complete and lonely charge of the store. At all times there were fish in the river and animals in the woods or on the prairie to be hunted for food or caught for pets. The two cows had to be tended and milked or there would be no cream for the quantities of wild strawberries.

In June, 1851, a party of sixty or seventy Indians was persuaded to visit the fort. Fifteen of their principal men were entertained by the soldiers in a manner designed to show that the white men meant to be friendly but also that they were powerful. The names of the guests are not known, but the group probably included Umpashota. If so the sutler's son may have met his future friend, Wahkonsa, for the first time. After this formal

affair, the Indians returned often in small groups to beg provisions or to trade furs. The acquaintance of the two boys may have begun that summer.

But Umpashota had official business to transact. At the bottom of the treaty between the United States government and the Sioux, signed at Mendota, Minnesota, on August 5, 1851, an X indicated the consent of "Ampayshota (Smoky Day)". This must have been a sad occasion because the Indians agreed to give up all their land in Iowa and find new hunting grounds within a year after the ratification of the treaty. During those years of grace Umpashota and his followers apparently occupied their favorite haunts on the upper Des Moines, trying to make the most of the privilege. During the fall of 1851 he was near Fort Dodge because he and Inkpaduta were held as hostages pending the return of certain property taken from settlers on the Boyer River. There is no evidence that the two men were involved, but they were influential enough to have the stolen goods returned.

Some of the soldiers eventually brought their families to the fort, but among them James Williams found no boyhood companions. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the young frontiersman found a friend of his own age

among the Indians. Though Wahkonsa was a little younger, James was small for his age, so the two boys were nearly the same size. After the first shyness subsided James and Wahkonsa must have found many opportunities to hunt and fish and play games together. Umpashota and his family were friendly to the whites. While the father's feelings may have vacillated, there is no record of a single unfriendly act on the part of the son.

Wahkonsa was an attractive lad. Well-built and handsome even by the white man's standards, he was carefully, if not magnificently, dressed. As the son of a chief he conducted himself with dignity. In the opinion of the soldiers, who did not rate savages highly, he was judged to be intelligent. Wahkonsa must have taught the white boy from Pennsylvania a great deal about hunting and fishing. To the soldiers and settlers he was a ready source of useful geographical information, and "would map out the whole country northwest of this in sand, or dirt, with a stick."

It was not uncommon for the children in this schoolless land to be playfellows. "The small white boys of early-day Lehigh played with the young Indians of the Sioux tribes", wrote a pioneer. "We picked up the tribe dialects easily, and the young whites and reds carried on their conver-

sations in a queer mixture of English and the Sioux. Contests of one kind and another were always the pastime when we played with the Indians. We threw stones at marks, ran footraces, and shot their bows and arrows. The Sioux were a good natured but thieving lot."

Though James Williams spent most of his life in Fort Dodge, he left no written record and few oral reminiscences of the early days. The notes and historical writings of his father were reticent about family affairs. It is known, however, that James and Wahkonsa were almost inseparable when the Indians were camping near. Wahkonsa would spend several days or a week at the Williams cabin; James would then repay the visit by spending an equal period in the tepee of Umpashota. Of all his many friendships in later life, Williams often said none was equal to those with his early Sioux neighbors.

When the Indian title to the land west of the river was officially extinguished, it was taken for granted that the settlers no longer needed military protection, so the troops were ordered to abandon the post at Fort Dodge. The last contingent departed on October 3, 1853, leaving the future city with a population of three — William and James Williams, and one soldier, who was supposed to look after the army property.

To complicate matters, the Indians, whose friendship on the whole was questionable, returned in numbers to their old camping spots. According to the terms of the treaty they were not required to vacate until February 24, 1854. "After the troops left the fort," noted the elder Williams, "the Indians again gathered in around us, and encamped & erected their tepees on their former sites, especially along the Des Moines above and along the branches of the Lizard. Their appearance in the neighborhood kept our citizens in a constant state of alarm." Settlers were slow to arrive. "We had a long and lonely time of it," declared the former sutler. "We lived on slap jacks, molasses and boiled rice. James was the cook. He amused himself in feeding and working with his pets. He had at one time three buffalo calves, three elk, three or four raccoon, a badger and several cats, feeding and working with them. Fishing and hunting was our employment and amusement when we were not engaged in watching the Indians."

In January, 1854, Henry Lott murdered Sidominadota and his family. Only two foster children escaped — Joshpaduta, aged about twelve, and his younger sister. They probably found shelter, at least temporarily, in the tepee of Umpashota. In spite of his shocking experience Joshpaduta did

not nurse his hatred for the white people. Perhaps the attitude of Wahkonsa toward his white friends had a salutary influence. About three years later, according to A. B. Carter, then living in Palo Alto County, "One of the Indians came back and stayed with us all summer. He was a young boy, the only one among them who would do any work. He came to help do the chores and took quite a fancy to me. He tried to learn the language and learned very fast. We called him Josh."

The murder of Sidominadota caused a crisis in the relations with the Indians. None too friendly at best, the Sioux became definitely hostile when Lott was not caught and punished. "We were always on our guard and well armed", recalled Williams. "James and myself had a Sharps rifle and two other guns, two horseman's pistols, a Colt revolver and any number of knives, hatchets, &c and a good supply of ammunition." As the summer wore on, the Indian scare subsided; a few more settlers came, so that by July the population at Fort Dodge numbered nineteen.

By winter there were enough children in the community to justify the maintenance of a school. C. C. Carpenter, later to become Governor of Iowa, was the first teacher. He remembered that hunting and trapping parties of Indians frequently

visited the settlement that winter. Carpenter lodged at the tavern which was presently to be named the Wahkonsa House after "a young Sioux Chief who was a great favorite with us, a very intelligent young Indian."

One morning when the teacher came downstairs, he found Wahkonsa, his sister, and other Indians had "camped" the night before in the common room of the hotel. "The Indian belle broke out into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. Those present tried to ascertain the cause of her mirth. For answer, she pointed to the head of the honorable gentleman, and exclaimed: 'Hedgehog! hedgehog!' The Governor, who was then a young man and a teacher, wore his hair quite short, and it had assumed a position at right angles with his pericranium, hence the hilarity of the Indian princess, and her rather inelegant comparison. Mr. Carpenter enjoyed her amusement as well as anyone present."

By the following spring, 1855, the Indians had withdrawn to the upper Des Moines where William H. Ingham, who was exploring that region, encountered them. He explained that he was making a map of northwest Iowa and Umpashota drew a sketch of the country with a stick on the ground. Wahkonsa was not mentioned but Ingham said that several of the brightest Indians

"became very much interested in the map making", which might imply his presence, for the youth was known for his ability and willingness to make such maps for the settlers. The lakes and streams were found to be accurately located by the Indians. When Ingham continued on his way, Umpashota overtook him and for three days they traveled together, neither fully trusting the other.

During the following year, Umpashota and his little band were frequently in the vicinity of Algona. Ingham and the chief became good friends. He probably knew Wahkonsa also, a handsome youth sixteen or seventeen years old who usually wore beaded deerskin and took pride in his good appearance. Ingham saw Umpashota for the last time in April, 1856, as the chief rode off over the prairie, eating the lunch he had begged for his squaw.

During the winter of 1856-57 Inkpaduta and his band, including Umpashota, were on the Little Sioux River. Times were hard for the Indians and Inkpaduta still harbored a grudge against the settlers who had protected the murderer of Sidominadota. The climax of bad feeling came in the spring at Spirit Lake. While there is reason to believe that Umpashota did not have any bloody part in the massacre, he knew it was planned and, with Joshpaduta, served as a messenger between

bands. Wahkonsa, apparently, had no part in it. On March 19, 1857, ten days after the massacre at the lakes, Umpashota was encamped near Springfield, Minnesota, where he learned from visiting Indians of the tragedy at Spirit Lake. This news he reported to the whites and warned them that the hostile band might come that way. "At any rate," he said, "I am going to remain close to my camp for a while."

It must have been at this time or soon afterward that Wahkonsa went to Fort Ridgely and gave himself up in order to establish his innocence in connection with the uprising. On April 13th a party from Algona, seeking evidence of further raids, found five tepees near Fairmont, Minnesota. There was no trace of plunder in these, but the Indians present were told to move on for their own protection. The fifth tepee, they said, was Umpashota's, who was away looking at his traps. The rest of the Indians struck their lodges and decamped, but Umpashota's tepee was still there the next morning. He may have been alarmed by the searching party and left the region without returning to get his property.

Many of the Indians involved in the massacre sought oblivion beyond the Big Sioux River, but not all moved to Dakota or stayed away. In February, 1859, the settlers in Dickinson County

heard of a party of Indians encamped at the head of Spirit Lake. Henry Martin, captain of an informal company of frontier guards, who was sent to investigate, found Umpashota, his family, and a few followers. Martin arrested the Indians on the pretext that they were out of their territory, which was a common occurrence. Not knowing what else to do, Martin then ordered Lieutenant Church to escort the prisoners to Fort Dodge. Church, grasping the situation, took them as far as Gillett's Grove and turned them loose, after obtaining their promises to stay away from the lakes in the future.

That is the last definitely dated reference to Wahkonsa and his family, but the descriptions of Umpashota and his son in the notes of William Williams are in the present tense and were evidently written sometime later. "Wahkonsa his son, aged now about 23 or 24 years, is about 6 feet high, exceedingly well made, light copper color, a well formed face, aquiline nose, prominent chin, very fond of dress, generally dresses in tanned deer skin with a great many extra trappings about his leggings, very particular in dressing his hair, paints uniformly in one way, that is a star in his forehead, one on each cheek and one on his chin, a very cheerful pleasant looking fellow."

There is no account of the parting of Wah-

honsa and James Williams. It may have occurred before the massacre when they were boys playing together at Fort Dodge. The evidence of that friendship is preserved in the parting gifts of the Indian youth to his white friend. These were treasured throughout the lifetime of James Williams and are now kept in the Webster County Museum in Fort Dodge: three skillfully made beaded buckskin bags, containing traces of red, yellow, and green paint; one beaded headband; an elaborate "money" bag; and a bow with five arrows — all personal treasures of the Indian brave.

What finally became of Wahkonsa and his family is not known. Westward into the Dakotas the Indians went. After the Spirit Lake Massacre it was not safe to be known as a member of Inkpaduta's band. Following the general uprising in Minnesota in 1862 it was still more difficult for any Sioux in that region to establish innocence, so the bands broke up and were assimilated by other western groups until they completely lost their original identity. Thus it was that Wahkonsa, One Who Will Go a Long Way, passed out of Iowa history toward the setting sun.

HAROLD D. PETERSON

Sioux City Frontier Guards

During the spring of 1861, many of the citizens of Sioux City were apprehensive about Indian depredations. The town was but a sprawling frontier outpost, isolated and relatively vulnerable to concerted attack. While the panic which followed the Spirit Lake Massacre of 1857 had abated, sporadic Indian outbreaks continued to remind Sioux Citizens of their potential danger. Refugees from these raids filtered into the small city and rumor spread concerning Sioux activities along the Floyd and Little Sioux rivers. Simultaneously, regular army troops needed in the South were being withdrawn from garrisons in Minnesota and Dakota. Under these circumstances it seemed advisable to organize a militia force to protect the town and to patrol the neighboring territory.

Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood realized the imminent danger and asked the War Department to send arms and ammunition. To direct the organization of home guards he appointed Caleb Baldwin of Council Bluffs and A. W. Hubbard of Sioux City as his aids and proposed that the companies be called Frontier Guards. When the

General Assembly met in May to consider emergency legislation, the Governor urged provision for the defense of the settlers in northwest Iowa. In response to his appeal the legislature authorized the enlistment of home guards and a regiment of mounted riflemen to be armed and paid by the State.

Meanwhile, a small company of Guards had been recruited in Sioux City. While these militiamen were not in active service, they were supposed to patrol the streets at night and be ready to go on expeditions into the hinterland. It was also hoped by some of the harassed local merchants that the Guards might curb Indian begging. If these native vagrants did not actually beg, they often wanted to bargain a bowl of unappetizing berries for scarce, long-hoarded sugar or make some equally unwelcome trade.

Another group of citizens favored the formation of the Guards as a palliative for the economic distress that had afflicted Sioux City since the depression four years earlier. The small frontier city had developed more rapidly than had the surrounding country, and it still lacked railroad connections with the eastern markets. Although the economic crisis of 1857 had passed, it remained sharply etched in the memories of most Sioux Citians. Indeed, the town had not yet completely

recovered, since a number of merchants were still going bankrupt and many men were still unemployed in the spring of 1861. Thus the formation of the Frontier Guards, as a State-supported company, was welcomed as an effective form of work relief.

The original commissioned officers were William Tripp, Captain; William R. Smith, First Lieutenant; and Andrew J. Millard, Second Lieutenant. Although these officers often had difficulty in mustering more than a score of guardsmen, ninety-five names appeared on the roll at various times. Many men would plow corn or cut grass for a week and then be called off for an expedition. They served terms of various lengths and claimed pay for the actual number of days on duty. Since the Frontier Guards existed but a few months, no one was on active duty for any considerable period. Governor Kirkwood, in scrutinizing the pay roll, commented in some bewilderment that this was a strange method of operating a military organization. He did admit, however, that apparently the Guards had been honest in presenting their claims.

The dauntless Frontier Guards conducted several military expeditions into the surrounding territory. While the troop often marched on the basis of unconfirmed rumor, prompt action was

necessary if the small and mobile Indian bands were to be intercepted. A few weeks after the organization of the Guards, reports of Indian thefts in the region along the Little Sioux River reached Sioux City. In the absence of Captain Tripp, Lieutenant Smith and fifteen men started in reasonably hot pursuit.

The company was scarcely prepared for a long expedition, since the commissary outfit was woefully inadequate. It was in the charge of a man whose sole qualification consisted of a few months' service as a private in the Mexican War. After the troops had left the city, Lieutenant Smith discovered that although the supplies included a surprising abundance of sugar there was no whisky, very little meat, and almost no flour. While the company did not know just where the Indians were or how many of them to expect, it pushed on into the valley of the Little Sioux. Unfortunately, the Indians, if Indians there were, disregarded the rules of military campaigning and did not move in the direction expected. The command was gone about three days but never succeeded in locating the elusive enemy.

When the troop returned to Sioux City, Lieutenant Smith made a stirring speech. In this oration he praised the valor, if not the sense of direction, of his men. The only flaw in the wel-

coming ceremony was the obvious inability of the Guards to execute the manual of arms. Since this traditional military ritual was considered both effete and superfluous in the frontier country, the incident caused little embarrassment.

A few days after the troop had returned, another cry for help came from the Little Sioux River section. Two aged settlers of the threatened region brought the news to Sioux City early in July. Since the first of April, they said, more than thirty horses had been stolen at Smithland, Correctionville, and Ida Grove. Under the command of Captain Tripp, the Guards again departed with flying banners and stirring martial music. This time there could be no doubt that Indians were about, since only the prompt action of a sentry prevented them from stealing all the company's horses. The shouts of the sentry drove the marauders into the blackness of the night: his attempt to shoot was balked by the fact that there was no cap on his gun. Nevertheless, the troop was aroused and followed the Indians for several miles until dawn broke in the eastern sky and further pursuit seemed futile.

There was a brief exchange of shots during the night, in which William Roberts and Isaac Pendleton were wounded. It was not definitely established, however, whether these men were wounded

by the Indians or inadvertently shot by their colleagues. In the darkness and extreme confusion that prevailed, it was difficult to distinguish between friend and foe. While the troop did not actually catch the Indians during that hectic night pursuit, the chase apparently drove the robbers away.

On the same day that the Frontier Guards departed on their Little Sioux campaign, an Indian band struck at the outskirts of Sioux City. On July 9, 1861, the Indians killed two prominent citizens, Thomas Roberts and Henry Cordua. These men were tending their crops on a tract about a mile and a half east of the city. After slaying the two settlers, the Indians stole their horses and fled. Since the two whites were well-liked and both left big families, popular indignation ran high and retaliatory action was demanded of the Guards. Captain Tripp and an augmented company marched about fifty miles northeast of Sioux City. Although the Indians were reported to have fled in that general direction, they left no discernible traces. The Guards returned after a few days of determined but fruitless search.

In the autumn of 1861, the Frontier Guards conducted an extended campaign in the direction of Sioux Falls, about one hundred miles distant. They returned by way of Spirit Lake, the site of

the massacre in 1857. Since the troop did not engage in actual combat with their Indian adversaries, the only casualty suffered was the accidental wounding of John Currier, a private in the company. The Guards found no Indians, but they did operate as a sort of preventive patrol which probably minimized Indian raids and reassured the settlers.

The Guards were not elaborately equipped on these expeditions into the surrounding territory. While the company possessed adequate mounts and fairly high-calibre arms, other supplies were never abundant. War bills for goods bought in Sioux City on behalf of the Guards reflect the small-scale nature of their procurement. These documents make strange reading in 1942, when mechanized, "total" war has rendered expenditures of billions a commonplace.

One of these bills reads: "Lieut. W. R. Smith bought of D. T. Hedges this, the 10th day of June, 1861, 8 lbs. of Ground Coffee, \$2.00". Another bill, presented by the Pioneer Stove and Tin House, included these items:

12 Qt. Pail and Cover	\$1.00
3 Pt. Cups @ 10¢	.30
10 Tin Plates @ 10¢	1.00
	<hr/>
	\$2.30

A bill on behalf of L. D. Parmer included the following enlightening items:

1 Bbl. (60 lbs.) Soda Crackers @ 12½¢	\$7.25
2 Lbs. Jap. Tea @ \$1	2.00
3 Boxes Matches @ 10¢	.30
50 Lbs. Brown Sugar @ 12½¢	6.25
56 Lbs. Clear Side Bacon @ 12½¢	7.00
1 Keg Powder (best)	20.00
50 Lbs. Bar Lead	6.25
2 Grain Sacks @ 20¢	.40

\$49.45

(Allowed June 14, 1861)

In the fall of 1861, it became apparent that the Frontier Guards had outlived their usefulness. In accordance with a special order of the Secretary of War, under date of August 14, 1861, the Sioux City Cavalry, a United States Army unit, was formed. This mounted company, recruited chiefly in Sioux City, included some of the guardsmen. Andrew J. Millard was the captain. The final meeting of the Frontier Guards was held at Casady's Hall on October 12, 1861. Thus passed a slightly comic-opera phase in the basically grim and unremitting struggle to eradicate the menace of Indian attack.

During the fall of 1861 and through the following winter, only occasional rumors of Indian

depredations disturbed the quiet on the northwest border. Then suddenly, in August, 1862, a spark touched off the powder keg of Indian hatred and the Sioux under Little Crow went on the warpath. At New Ulm and other places not far above the northern border of Iowa, they perpetrated the bloodiest massacre in American history. Terror-stricken settlers fled from their homes to seek protection in larger communities. Troops were rushed to Sioux City. The Indians, however, did not invade Iowa. Later that fall the Northern Iowa Border Brigade was organized to guard the frontier at a chain of garrisons. Part of the cavalry company was stationed at Sioux City and part at Spirit Lake. But the danger was over. The Federal government punished the hostile Indians so severely that they never again seriously menaced the tranquillity of the Iowa frontier.

C. ADDISON HICKMAN

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