

## Narratives of the Sioux war /

Jesse V. Branham, Jr. Thomas G. Holmes. Albert H. Sperry .

People Escaping from the Sioux Massacre, in 1862, Under Guidance of John Other Day, at Dinner on a Prairie .

Chauncey Lamson, Nathan Lamson, James Birney Lamson .

### **NARRATIVES OF THE SIOUX WAR.\***

\* Read at the monthly meeting of the Executive Council, September 11, 1911.

BY MARION P. SATTERLEE.

### **The Acton Murders, beginning the Massacre .**

In recounting the occurrences of the Indian Massacre, the necessity of differing with the statements and opinions of eminent writers produces an embarrassment, only relieved by the fact that they could not have witnessed all the incidents, being dependent upon others mostly for their information. Further, the tales here recounted are given but slight courtesy by military historians, and we shall not trespass upon the military field, which has been so copiously covered by able authorities.

To those not familiar with events leading up to the Sioux Massacre of 1862, it may be briefly stated that in 1851 a treaty was made with the Sioux tribes by which they released some 24,000,000 acres of land for a total consideration of \$2,075,000. This was to be paid, a part down and the balance in annuities. The sum of \$495,000 was to be "paid to the chiefs in such manner as they hereafter in open council shall request." Instead, the Indians were forced by the authorities to pay traders' debts to the amount of \$220,000, or go without their money. The payment of 1862 was held back at least two months while

## Library of Congress

the Indians were on the verge of starvation. it is the old, old story of our Indian policy. The Indians could not enforce the treaties made, and it is doubtful if they were competent to buy a sack of flour, especially if a bottle of "firewater" was in the deal. The whole treaty and style of procedure was as farcial as the negro vote in Mississippi after the war. Missionaries and officials talked wisely about the "Father at Washington" and the "Great Spirit," but the effective work was done by unprincipled traders, agents, and the "liquid spirit" which steals away the brains of men, especially Indians. Trite as their saying 350 "We need the money," was the demand, "We want the land;" and a few reckless promises, more or less, given to Indians made no difference—few were recorded.

Lest this appear pessimistic, it is well to explain that it was hard to deal reasonably with these strange people who claimed the land. As said by Rev. Samuel W. Pond, "They were not models for imitation, neither were they properly objects of contempt." Those who care to investigate will find many reasons for the outbreak of 1862, but the essential facts are, that the Indians were obnoxious to and in the way of the whites, were preyed upon by conscienceless traders and boot-legging liquor-sellers, and were neglected by the government and its agents, till at last long smothered anger and acute hunger produced a storm that broke in fury, the opening event of which was the murders at Acton on Sunday, the 17th day of August, 1862.

In Acton township, Meeker county, on section 21, lived Robinson Jones, postmaster, Indian trader, and farmer. He was married to Mrs. Ann Baker the previous year, on January 14; but through some error her name appears as Ann Baker on the monument erected over the remains of the victims at Ness Cemetery. Living with them was Jones' niece, Clara D. Wilson, aged fifteen years, and her half brother, eight months old. The house was a two-story log building overlooking a marshy lake on the south, and was surrounded by heavy timber known as the Acton Woods, a part of the once famous "Big Woods." The Pembina-Henderson trail passed at the back of the house and along the west side.

## Library of Congress

About a half mile southeast of this place was a cabin of small size occupied by Howard Baker, a son of Mrs. Jones by a former marriage. His family consisted of a wife and two small children, and stopping with them on this day were Mr. and Mrs. Viranus Webster, who had a day or two before come from Wisconsin and were looking for a homestead. The house faced south and was surrounded by timber, and the above mentioned trail ran a few feet in front of the house from east to west. A monument, commemorating the "First Bloodshed of the Massacre," was erected in 1909 on the site of this cabin.

On the 10th of August, twenty Indians of the Shokpay (Shakopee) band left the Lower Agency on the Minnesota river 351 to hunt in the Big Woods and were divided into several parties. About nine o'clock on this Sunday morning, six of these Indians appeared at the Jones residence and made the usual demands for something to eat, and no doubt wanted whiskey in addition, as they knew that Jones kept it for sale. Chief Big Eagle, in an account given in Volume VI of this Society's Collections, names four of these Indians, as follows: Sungigidan (Brown Wing), Ka-om-de-i-ye-ye-dan (Breaking up), Nagi-wicak-te (Killing Ghost), and Pa-zo-i-yo-pa (Runs against something when crawling). Rev. S. W. Pond names two more; Hdinapi and Wam-du-pi-dan, as taking part. This treacherous pair had married into the Shokpay band. All of the six claimed the distinction of doing the killing, and all probably did shed blood, as five people were shot down, four of them within a few seconds of time. With the honor goes the disgrace of causing the loss of lands and money of all the Sioux in the state of Minnesota, and the massacre of about a thousand innocent people.

One of these Indians had borrowed a gun from Jones the preceding spring, and had not returned it as agreed. This act might now be deemed a trivial matter, but it was not so when people lived largely by hunting and guns were not on sale. Jones was a stalwart man and had no fear of, or regard for, the Indians. He refused to give them anything, and entered into an altercation with them over the borrowed gun. The Indians became angry and left, going toward the cabin where the Baker and Webster families were living.

## Library of Congress

Knowing that the newcomers would be alarmed at the appearance of the Indians, Jones locked up the house, leaving the niece and her brother inside, and, taking his gun, went over to the Baker cabin, his wife accompanying him.

The Indians had made no demonstration when they arrived. Baker's little son had given them water, and the men had furnished them with tobacco; but, when Jones came up, the quarrel over the gun was renewed and the Indians became very sullen. Finally, they wanted to trade guns, and incidentally to shoot at a mark. One of the Indians and Baker traded guns, the Indian paying three dollars boot in the trade. A target was fixed on an oak tree some six rods from the cabin, and a 352 trial of guns was made. Afterward all returned to the house, the Indians immediately reloading as if they were going on hunting. Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Baker, with the two children, were in the house, and Baker, after hanging up his unloaded gun, stood in the doorway, leaning against the casing. Mrs. Webster was in the wagon near by, getting out some articles wanted, and Mr. Webster, who had not been shooting with the rest, was carrying the things to the house from the wagon. Jones, evidently suspicious of trouble, had stepped around the corner of the house to reload his gun. One of the Indians walked a distance on the road toward the Jones place, and the others were about the cabin door. Suddenly one of them, carrying his gun across his elbow and standing near Mr. Baker at the door, shot him through without lifting the gun from his arm. Immediately the shooting was participated in by all the Indians. Mrs. Jones was shot while sitting just inside the door, Mr. Webster in the dooryard, and Jones, who ran toward the woods, endeavoring to load his gun as he went, was shot down near a corncrib about three rods from the house. Mrs. Baker had her youngest child in her arms and was either pushed or fell into the cellar through an open trap door, where she stayed until the Indians left. Mrs. Webster in her fright fell down in the covered wagon and was not molested, nor was the oldest child who lay on the bed in the cabin. After the shooting the Indians went north on the trail, and, in passing the house of Jones, caught sight of Clara Wilson, shot her to death through a window in the pantry, and then continued on out of

## Library of Congress

the woods. There were left alive, of the three families, Mrs. Baker and two children, Mrs. Webster, and the baby boy at the Jones place.

Contrary to all succeeding events of this kind, they did not mutilate the dead, nor steal or burn property, which leads to the conclusion that enmity toward Jones and his family was the real motive of the murders. They did not get any liquor at the Jones place, and liquor cannot be blamed for the tragedy, for the settlers found afterward that the house was not entered, nor the liquor kept there disturbed. The fact that Jones kept liquor and sold it to the Indians, led many of the settlers to think that the murders were simply the outcome of a 353 drunken brawl, but that there was no outbreak of a general nature, and some were probably killed while delaying flight on this theory. There are many stories of Indians appearing at different places in the neighborhood during the same afternoon, and probably some of the band of twenty hunters did appear; but it is certain that the six who did the killing were the ones who soon after made a show of arms and stole a team of horses, with which they carried the news of the murders to Little Crow at the Lower Agency that night. The war for the extermination of the whites commenced at daybreak next morning.

Four Indians came to the residence of Peter Wicklund, at Lake Elizabeth, a few miles from the Baker place, while the families of A. M. Ecklund, P. M. Johnson and Jonas Peterson were at dinner with the Wicklunds. Two came to a window and two at the door, and pointed their guns threateningly at the people. Mrs. Ecklund got up from the table and went to them, and, pushing their guns aside, demanded to know what they wanted. They told the men to come out as they wanted to talk with them. The men, four in number, went out with them a few rods from the house and were told that the Chippewa (Ojibway) Indians had murdered the Jones and Baker families at Acton. The settlers did not believe them and went back to the house, and the Indians went away. On going to feed the stock that night, it was found that the team of Mr. Ecklund had been stolen. Indians riding double on two horses, with a third holding to each horse's tail and running, were seen that afternoon going toward the Agency.

## Library of Congress

After the shooting at the Baker place, the women finally came from their places of concealment and cared for Jones, who lived for some time in such terrible agony that he tore up the ground in his death writings. They took the two children and went to the residence of John Blackwell, about four miles west of the present Litchfield; but not finding anyone there, went to the home of Nels Olson and told their pitiful story. Ole Ingeman was at once sent as a messenger to Forest City, the county seat, with the news, and the settlers organized a party to go to the scene of the tragedy. 23

354

The party started from the Iver Jackson place, eleven in number, and, approaching the house from the east, they went up cautiously and called, if any were there alive, to "cry out," but received no response. It was about nine in the evening and the moon was shining, but it was dark in the woods. After a time they went into the house and lit a lamp, with which they found the bodies. They covered the body of Jones, which lay outside, with a wagon box to keep off animals, closed the door of the cabin where the other bodies were, and then debated the safety of going to the Jones place, where the children had been left, fearing that the Indians were there in a drunken carousal. They decided that it would not be advisable to go, and had started to return, when they were joined by another party of six, and as they were now seventeen, they determined to go.

On arriving at the Jones place all was still, and entering the house, with the lamp which they had brought, they found Clara Wilson dead on the pantry floor, where she lay in a pool of blood. On their opening the door into a bedroom, the little boy got up from the bed and began to cry. The slug which killed the girl was found and kept for a number of years by Evan Evanson, a member of the party. Taking the boy, they returned to the Iver Jackson place, where the neighbors had assembled.

The next morning settlers from all parts of the surrounding country gathered at the Baker place to bury the dead, and to consider this act of the Indians, whether it was mere murder, or if the long threatened outbreak had indeed begun. Rough boxes were made

## Library of Congress

for the five bodies, and as they were about ready at noon to start for the Ness settlement, eleven mounted Indians appeared over the hill about forty rods to the southeast, coming toward the cabin, who on seeing the gathering stopped. Some of the men hailed them and started toward them, but apparently scenting danger they turned and fled to the south. They were followed to a marshy run which they rode through but the settlers could not cross. A party was then made up, among whom were J. B. Atkinson, A. H. DeLong, and James McGraw, who followed the Indians for several miles but could not overtake them.

355

The bodies were then taken to the Ness settlement cemetery and buried, and the graves are now marked by a monument placed by the State. The day following the burial, the news of the massacre reached most of the settlers by means of a party escaping from the Agency, conducted by John Other Day, a friendly Indian, and the settlers gathered at Forest City, where a stockade was erected and a home guard company organized under Capt. George C. Whitcomb. However, many settlers in the county of Monongalia (the north half of the present Kandiyohi county) did not hear the news in time to escape, and nearly a hundred were killed by the Indians.

### **The Battle of Acton or Kelly's Bluff .**

An English soldier said that “the glory of war, for the private, consists in getting killed in battle and having your name misspelled in the army reports.” This was much the case of the Minnesota settler who fought off the Indians, either alone or in assisting army troops. Perhaps had the civil war been off the map of events, history might have been more kind. It was not for grand parade that citizens were asked to leave their families and go into the unknown districts to rescue friends and relatives from savages; on the contrary, it was to encounter certain hardship and suffering, and perhaps death in a terrible form. Neither was there then, as now, a floating population ready to enter the work from the love of excitement. These men were from the leading business houses and homes of Minneapolis, and they responded to the call of humanity in the same spirit as the “Boys

## Library of Congress

of '76," when danger threatened their homes. They went out to meet a foe that knew no rules of war and gave no quarter in victory. We know now, that had Fort Ridgely fallen, every Indian tribe in the state would have been in war-paint and there would have been a question if the streets of our Twin Cities might not have flowed with blood as did those of New Ulm. While St. Paul's contingent went forth, led by the Indian fighter, General H. H. Sibley, the Minneapolis men were raw recruits, led by an inexperienced leader. It was a body of men to be proud of, who consented to face these conditions, stayed the tide of murder, 356 and stopped the rush of settlers from the state. The band known as Strout's Company, including a part of his Company B, Ninth Minnesota Regiment, were about one third volunteer soldiers and two thirds citizens in and about Minneapolis.

In keeping with the spirit of the times a song was written, commencing thus:

"Brave Captain Strout and Company B, They will make the redskins flee, And drive them west into the sea, And stop the warwhoop forever. Chorus: The Union forever, hurrah, boys, hurrah, Kill every Indian, papoose and squaw; The Indians must be slain or driven to the plain And silence the warwhoop forever."

While the meter and rhyme are somewhat irregular, the emotion is too plainly expressed to be mistaken, and the Indian warwhoop was "silenced forever," so far as Minnesota is concerned. It is endeavored here to collect the full data of this campaign of Indian fighters, and no pains have been spared to get the names, routes, camping spots, and dates, to a nicety, and accurate beyond dispute.

General history is very mute regarding Captain Richard Strout and his men who fought off the Sioux Indians at Acton on September 3, 1862, for three reasons:

First, the petty jealousy in public work, among leaders, including the printed abuse of a former Land Office appointee, who at the time pretty nearly directed the Indian war,—if you let him tell it.



## Library of Congress

Second, the company was composed of citizens who went forth of their own accord, virtually a sheriff's posse, such as might be picked up now to arrest robbers. About twenty were newly enlisted, undrilled soldiers, and the rest civilians. This fact has kept the company out of military history, or, worse, "damned it with faint praise."

Third, the "tee-hee" crowd, who saw an excruciatingly funny side to the Indian war, made these citizen soldiers the butt of much ridicule, despite the fact that, outnumbered more than four times, they beat off a savage foe, who later annihilated the idolized Custer and his unexcelled Indian-fighting soldiers. Add to this the efforts of misinformed writers, who, 357 having no knowledge of the times, Indians, or pioneer conditions, have elaborated or twisted the story until a participant, as Private De Witt C. Handy says, "has to scratch his head to remember if he was in the battle."

It is true that these men were not soldiers, and many were like A. H. Rose, who says, "I had never fired a gun before the battle, but they showed me how to load, and I pointed my gun at the Indians, shut my eyes, and pulled the trigger."

These are the chief reasons that Captain Strout and Company B are almost unknown in their home city. Many parties are now dead, and harsh language is unbecoming; but only the tongue of slander can tell other than this: "Strout and his men went forth in good faith, and performed their duty boldly and without wavering, so far as they were able." For defense of this position read the story.

On Sunday, August 17, 1862, five persons were massacred by Sioux Indians at Acton, in Meeker county. This outrage precipitated the celebrated Minnesota Sioux Indian War of that year. Word was received in Minneapolis the 19th, and following this came tidings from the Lower Agency that every person there had been killed, that Company B, of the Fifth Minnesota, under Captain Marsh, had been ambushed and nearly all slaughtered, and that the Indians had commenced the long threatened "war of extermination." By the next day the refugees from near settlements came pouring through the city in mortal fear

## Library of Congress

of Indians, panic-stricken, deserting everything and fleeing for life. Fears for the safety of relatives and friends on the frontier, and anger at the horrible outrages committed, created intense excitement. Sunday, the 24th, was a memorable time at the churches and public gatherings. It was decided that the state and citizens must act at once, and not wait for the slow moving general government, or the state would be depopulated and ruined.

Leading in the earnest movement, Captain Strout, who was organizing a company for the Ninth Minnesota volunteers, was ordered to gather what he could of his company (the men were on leave preparatory to enter the service), enlist citizens for short term service, and report at Glencoe, McLeod county. On Tuesday the 26th, at noon, the company assembled at Bridge 358 Square, on Nicollet avenue and Second street, about sixty men strong, not including teamsters. They were equipped with discarded smooth-bore Austrian muskets, no uniforms, nor sufficient wagon train, but the captain had authority to impress teams as he might need them. Each member was given his complement of ball cartridge, and they marched away up the river, and camped in the northern part of Brooklyn township that night.

The next morning a team owned by Andrew Smith was impressed from D. B. Thayer's threshing crew, at Osseo, and others were secured along the route till a good part of the men could ride. Wednesday night they camped at Monticello in Wright county, after a hard march. Thursday they made a fifteen-mile march, camping at night in Clearwater. Friday a march of thirty-five miles to Forest City ended at dusk. Saturday they went by way of Greenleaf and Cedar Mills to Hutchinson, where they camped about the church. On the day's march they found one place where the people had fled leaving the table spread for a meal, at another the beds were thrown open as if flight had commenced in the night. But they saw no Indians, nor further signs.

Sunday morning, August 31, they marched to Glencoe, their objective point, and arrived in time for the church meeting. As matters were reported serious at the settlements lying to the northwest, it was decided to return to Forest City, so on Monday they marched back

## Library of Congress

to Cedar Mills, where camp was pitched. On Tuesday they went leisurely to Acton, and considerable time was spent in repairing a bad slough crossing, a fortunate job. On that afternoon they entered the Acton woods from the east, and after inspecting the Baker place, where four persons had been murdered, they marched on to the Jones place and pitched their camp. The place was surrounded by timber, and the tents were set in the yard about the house.

Captain Strout has been criticized for camping in these woods, despite the fact that no damage resulted from the act. In reply to his critics, let us note that the Sioux were prairie Indians, and there is no record of their selecting a battle ground in timber. Birch Coulie and Wood Lake were fought 359 on the prairie; Custer's command was slaughtered in the open. The two latter fields were selected for battle by the Indians. At Acton the Indians had the command surrounded in the dense timber, and could have forced battle had they so desired. The opening tragedy of Birch Coulie is a sample of what Strout might have met had he camped in the open prairie.

The Sioux strong point in fighting was to make themselves invisible by covering their heads and bodies with prairie grass, which practice has caused men time and again to testify that "the Indians seemed to rise out of the ground." Furthermore, the attack was not made next morning until the company was a long mile from the woods, though Indians were in the timber at the time. It is not known that Captain Strout considered the question, but his judgment is not censurable if he did.

On this Tuesday, September 2, Captain George C. Whitcomb and a squad of the Forest City Home Guards were at Hoka Peterson's place, about twelve miles from Forest City. He was watching Indians at the Acton woods, some three or four miles off, when suddenly about 150 Indians rose from the grass a few rods away. The squad escaped in short order but lost a wagon which stuck in a miry place. On arriving at Forest City, Captain Whitcomb found Strout's messenger, saying that his company would camp at Acton that night. From what he had seen, Whitcomb knew that the Indians were preparing to entrap Strout's

## Library of Congress

command. He at once called for volunteer scouts to warn Strout of his danger and tell him to examine his ammunition. Three brave fellows, Jesse V. Branham, Jr., Thomas G. Holmes, and Albert H. Sperry, stepped forward.

A digression here is needed for the benefit of the present generation, regarding conditions of those days. Sioux Indians on the prairie were as treacherous as snakes in grass. They were absolutely noiseless in action, would crawl as fast as white men walk, and were nearly as fleet of foot as a horse. There were no roads, as we know them now; such as there were consisted of trails following the high ground to avoid the marshes, and leading to the best places to cross prairie streams, which often made long detours necessary. Every Indian knew them, foot by foot, and also knew every short cut which might be traveled under favorable conditions of weather or season.

360

It was the duty of these men to find a roundabout way to get to Acton, to avoid usual crossings where they might be waylaid, keep away from the prairie groves where they might be ambushed by straggling parties, discover any Indians endeavoring to cut them off on the prairies, and lastly to discover and approach Strout's camp wherever he might be by breaking through the Indian lines, which they knew were drawn about him waiting only for daylight to give battle. Those who appreciate the conditions will wonder that men would dare to undertake it. The squad was placed in charge of Branham, a man of undoubted ability and courage. Captain Whitcomb wrote later, "I feared I would never see them again." They went east several miles passing between Litchfield and Darwin, as now known, then southwest passing between Round and Minnie Belle lakes, far down into Greenleaf township, thence northwest by Evanson lake, where they struck the Henderson-Pembina trail. At the outlet of the lake they hunted on hands and knees, in the mud, till they found evidence that Strout's train had passed and was following the trail toward Acton.

## Library of Congress

Nearly the entire time they traveled on the grass outside the road to deaden the sound of the horses' hoofs. Finally they approached the Acton woods after passing Kelly's Bluff. All was deathly still about them until as they reached the Baker cabin the dogs rushed out barking loudly, no doubt revealing their presence to the Indians, but not to the sleeping company. There is little question, judging from developments and Indians tales, that a score of warriors slunk from the road and permitted the scouts to pass in, believing their prey would be increased just that much. After the noise and alarm they felt their way more cautiously than ever. Branham put his hand on Holmes' shoulder, as they reached the Jones place, and asked if he could not see the white tents in the yard. Holmes assented, they hailed the guard and were admitted, where they delivered to Captain Strout their message. Captain Whitcomb writes:

It has been shown beyond the shadow of doubt that when Branham, Sperry and Holmes were within six rods of Strout's camp, a head warrior, brother-in-law of Little Six (Shok-pay), with his warriors 361 stood on the road, and at their approach eleven on each side stepped back, allowing them to pass in. Red Dog was to lead the attack on the north, Mic-aw-pan-eta on the east, Little Six on the south, and Bald Eagle, a renegade chief of the Standing Buffalo band, on the west. Signals were to be given by hooting, in imitation of an owl from tree tops, to show the location of the leaders. Little Crow had the supervision of the attack. At 3 a. m. the final signal was to be given and the harvest of death to begin, but the awful consequences were averted by the timely message carried by these three brave men who proved themselves the bravest of the brave.

A council was called, and a detail was set at pounding down the large caliber bullets to fit the guns. After consultation it was decided not to break camp till daylight, though some favored an immediate retreat to the open prairie. Instructions were given, in case of attack, "to hug the ground and fight, each for himself." There is some criticism placed on Captain Strout for this misfit in ammunition. The facts are, that the state had a number of Austrian and Belgian muskets, bored 62 and 59 (100ths inch) caliber, and ammunition to

## Library of Congress

fit. Criminal carelessness on the part of the issuing officer transposed the sizes. Captain Grant and Company A of the Sixth Minnesota were confronted with the same mistake, and this in the midst of the bloody battle of Birch Coulie. The proper cartridges for these guns were sent to Fort Abercrombie, where they were too small to be of service, and the bullets flew wild from the guns. The first lot issued by Strout was right, and he had no reason to suspect that the rest was different. That night each man had twenty rounds perfect, the reserve was all wrong.

Camp was broken early in the morning, and Branham, on Strout's advice, was to lead them out without a battle if possible, on account of the poor arms and ammunition. He was placed in charge of the mounted men, consisting of his detail and scout A. H. DeLong, and led the way some distance in advance. Branham intended to go to Forest City by the route the scouts had taken. The command left the woods and proceeded on the trail across a rolling prairie, with Long lake on their left. Passing through a swale and while ascending to higher ground, the scouts saw a peculiar glisten in the morning sunlight and soon became convinced that it was caused by 362 guns in the hands of Indians, who were skulking along a fence in a wheat field near Kelly's Bluff. It was afterward found that these guns were Springfields from Captain Marsh's company, massacred at Redwood Ferry August 18th. Word was sent back to Strout to prepare to fight, and to spread his men in wide open order. The scouts and Indians exchanged shots.

Indian signals, waving blankets and yelling, were commenced ahead; and soon a large body of mounted Indians, from the woods, charged the rear. Sergeant Kenna was ordered to charge them with a squad of twenty men; as he did so the Indians spread out from the trail and came up on each rear flank, trying to encircle the command. At this point the company were on very low ground, and the losses were severe. Privates George W. Gideon and Alva Getchell were killed, several others were wounded, and for a short time there was confusion of both men and teams. Scout Branham was shot through the lungs and thus a valuable aid was put out of the fight. In a few moments Strout had matters in hand. The company was divided into four squads, under Lieutenant Clark and Sergeants

## Library of Congress

Getchell and Kenna, and placed at the front, rear, right and left of the wagon train, and they soon spread out, driving the redskins back, at the same time making less of a target of themselves. By strenuous fighting the left squad kept the Indians from getting between them and the lake, while the others, by driving them back, permitted the wagons to reach the higher and more advantageous ground. It was good maneuvering, and most gallantly performed. Reaching the base of Kelly's Bluff, it was debated whether to entrench or to retreat toward Hutchinson, and it was decided to go to that point. Scout DeLong had already gone through the Indian lines for reinforcements from Captain Harrington at Hutchinson.

Along Kelly's Bluff Private Edwin Stone was killed and several more wounded. The dead were left behind and their bodies were horribly mutilated, when buried by a detachment from the Third Minnesota a few days later. Every wounded man was placed in the wagons, and the retreating fight was continued to Cedar Mills. At the marshy crossing repaired the previous day, the Indians pressed them hard and captured 363 one team and two wagons. In fact they had calculated to capture or kill the whole outfit at this point, and would have succeeded if those repairs had not been made. Everything that could be spared was thrown from the wagons, and the way the Indians fought each other for the food was amusing even in battle. About fifty noble warriors on hands and knees fought for a half barrel of sugar like pigs, and the pursuit lagged. Scout DeLong with reinforcements met the company a short way out of Hutchinson. On that night the wounded were placed in a hotel, just outside the stockade, and at daylight next morning the Indians attacked the town and their quarters were riddled with bullets, but all were safely taken into the stockade.

The losses of the company in the battle were three killed, eighteen wounded, nine horses, two wagons, and all commissary supplies. The battle was the fiery baptism of a number of good soldiers of the civil war, some of whom fell in battle, some perished in Andersonville, and some, thank God, still live. The result of the campaign was the discouragement of

## Library of Congress

Little Crow and his followers. This was the fourth and last battle which he personally conducted in the massacre war of 1862.

It is but fair to say that fortune was kind to Strout and his men, but none the less must we commend the noble intentions and acts of those heroic citizens who placed their lives in jeopardy for the stricken, outraged settlers. The savage hordes have gone; the commander and most of his company are beyond the veil of death; and glorious Minnesota has risen from an unknown wilderness to a peerage among the States.

This account is as accurate as can be given at this time, and is verified by several members of that gallant body of home defenders. On the 21st of August, 1909, a monument was placed at Acton, at the Baker place, by the state, marking the site of the "First Bloodshed." There were present, of the survivors of this battle, A. H. Rose, De Witt C. Handy, Milton C. Stubbs, James Marshall, Scouts Jesse V. Branham, Albert Sperry, and A. H. DeLong; of people interested in the event, Evan Evanson, who accompanied the party to the Jones house after the murders of the 17th, Nathan Butler, who built the Baker house in 1857, Hon. G. A. Glader, who assisted in burying 364 the bodies of Stone, Getchell, and Gideon, a few days after the battle, and Mrs. Ellen, widow of Capt. Lewis Harrington, of the Hutchinson Home Guards. To all of these thanks are due for the details of this account. The exercises were under the supervision of Senator J. W. Wright of Litchfield, and were participated in by several thousand citizens.

About a year after the foregoing narrative was read in the meeting of this Society, a banquet was given at the Nicollet House in Minneapolis, on the evening of November 20, 1912, to commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Acton and to honor its survivors.

At the appointed hour the tables were filled by groups of men whose past career or present relations made them congenial company, and not the least in the pleasures of the evening were the visits of friends recounting the events of a half century ago. After the



## Library of Congress

repast, which was accompanied with patriotic selections by veteran Charles H. Freeman's orchestra, President Anton Knoblauch opened the meeting with the following words:

“Friends and Members: We are guests of the Center Improvement Association, whose object is not only that which its name implies, but also to preserve and perpetuate the history, traditions, and landmarks of this section of our city. We are here this evening to honor Captain Strout's Company of citizen soldiers, partially made up of business men from this part of the city, who in September, 1862, went to battle at Acton and Hutchinson against the Sioux Indians, so that the settlers might pursue the tilling of their lands unmolested.”

Mr. Knoblauch then introduced Marion P. Satterlee as master of ceremonies for the evening, who, by the aid of Edward A. Bromley's stereopticon views, told of the upbuilding of the Association district since 1858. Then followed a description of the organization of Strout's Company, during the excitement of the massacre tidings of murder and destruction; of the sacrifices of these men, who left their families and homes to fight the savages. A detailed statement of their marches and the battles was given, also an account of the killing of Chief Little Crow by Nathan Lamson and his son Chauncey, near Hutchinson, on July 3, 1863.

365

A most able address was given by Ex-President William W. Folwell of the State University, on “The Causes leading to the Massacre of 1862.”

The roll of the men composing the Company was then called; ten responded to their names, eleven were reported absent, 27 were reported dead, and for 22 no report was made.

In response to the toast, “To the Dead,” Ex-Governor Samuel R. Van Sant gave a fine eulogy of the men who died for their country fighting rebellion in the South or the Indians

## Library of Congress

at home. He declared that the present generation is receiving the benefits of the deeds of patriots, Union, Confederate, and civilian soldiers, whose work lives after them.

To the toast, "To the Absent," Edward A. Bromley responded, comparing the sad absence long ago of loved ones "gone to the war" with our regrets for those absent from this reunion.

The toast, "To those Present," was responded to by J. H. Crandall, a member of Strout's Company, who encouraged all to show their appreciation of our triumphal progress as a nation, in war and in peace, by true manhood and right living.

At the call for soldiers of the Sioux War present, twelve men who fought at Birch Coulie, and four or five each from Fort Ridgely, New Ulm, Forest City and Wood Lake battles, responded by rising and were heartily cheered.

### **Roster of Captain Strout's Company at Acton.**

At the Roll Call after the banquet those present responded to their names; for the dead and the absent, response was made by members of the Company.

Adkins, F., dead.

Allan, William C., present.

Ames, James A., dead.

Beadle, Frank, sergeant, dead.

Bennett, Abner C., died of wounds.

Blondo, Lyman, dead.

Bostwick, R. C., dead.

## Library of Congress

Brown, W., quartermaster sergt., dead.

Carr, Ezra T., sergeant, dead.

Chambers, Thomas, dead.

Clark, W. A., lieutenant, dead.

Corratt, C., no report.

Crandall, James H., present.

Cushing, M., no report.

Day, J. W., in California.

Doherty, A., in city.

Douglass, C. H., no report.

Florida, Joel, dead.

Friederich, A. A., present.

Gemasche, George, no report.

Getchell, Alva, killed at Acton.

Getchell, D. W., sergeant, in city.

Gideon, George W., killed at Acton.

366

Green, John, dead.

## Library of Congress

Ham, C. D., no report.

Handy, DeWitt C., present.

Handy, Joel, dead.

Hanscomb, A. B., no report.

Hawkins, D. C., no report.

Hart, Joseph, no report.

Higgins, Judson C., in city.

Hoag, A., no report.

Hubbard, R. R., no report.

Huckins, J. W., Northfield.

Hunter, William, no report.

Jacques, Winter, in city.

Johnson, C., in city.

Kenna, Michael, sergeant, dead.

Kirtz, Fred, no report.

Laraway, Albert, dead.

Larkins, J. K., no report.

## Library of Congress

Little, George W., no report.

McConnell, J. C., no report.

McNeill, Neill, dead.

Marshall, James, present.

Marshall, Thomas, dead.

Mayer, Robert, no report.

Merritt, L. W., in city.

Morrison, George H., dead.

Muir, Robert, no report.

Murch, J. P., no report.

Murray, John W., present.

Perkins, J. H., dead.

Rose, Anson H., present.

Smith, H. A., no report.

Snell, S. D., no report.

Stone, Edwin, killed at Acton.

Strout, Richard, captain, dead.

## Library of Congress

Stubbs, Milton C., present.

Sweeney, James, Robbinsdale.

Sweesing, Fred, present.

Thompson, N. R., dead.

Tippin, F., no report.

Weeks, N. R., died of wounds.

Wise, A. H., no report.

Wolverton, J. A., dead.

Worthingham, Emory, dead.

Scouts.

Jesse V. Branham, Jr., Fargo,

Thomas G. Holmes, Long Beach, Cal.,

Albert H. Sperry, present, these being of Captain Whitcomb's Company, Forest City.

Albert H. DeLong, Forest City,

Citizen guide for Captain Strout.

### **The Killing of Chief Little Crow .**

Tay-o-ah-ta-doo-tah (His Scarlet People) was the third chief of the Kaposia band of Medawakantonwan Dakotas (Sioux) to be known by the name of "Little Crow." This

## Library of Congress

tribe was divided into eight bands. The lower band, called Kiuska, lived where Winona now stands; the Kaposia band, just below St. Paul; Black Dog, just above Fort Snelling; Pinisha, at Nine Mile creek on the Minnesota river; Reyata Otonwa, at Lake Calhoun; Tewapa, at Eagle creek; and the Tintatonwan, at Shakopee, the largest village of the tribe. Little Crow had six wives and at least twenty-two children. He put away his first two wives when he married the third one. His mother was named Minne-okha-da-win (musical sound of water running under the ice). His family history was one of 367 tragedy. His father was accidentally shot while pulling his gun from a wagon, and died of the wounds. Two brothers were killed by the Chippewas, and two sisters committed suicide. Little Crow's braves killed two of his brothers in a battle for the chieftainship, and he was shot through both wrists in the fight. Army surgeons would cut off the maimed wrists, but it was refused and the Indian medicine man proved his superiority by saving his patient and both wrists. The wounds were disfiguring and were always concealed by bands of skunkskin, as degrading to a chief.

Little Crow is the reputed leader in the Massacre of 1862, though he was only a minor chief in the Sioux tribe. As a matter of fact, he was defied by a large number of friendly (or at least neutral) Indians, who threatened several times to take his captive whites from him, and who saved many white people from being murdered. Little Crow had more credit than was his due, and investigation will show that the massacre was chiefly the work of a disorganized gang of cutthroats whom no one could call warriors in a true sense. After the crushing defeat at Wood Lake by Gen. H. H. Sibley, Little Crow fled into Dakota, from whence he returned the following summer (1863), for the purpose of stealing horses and provisions from the Minnesota settlers. His companions were his son, Wo-wi-napa (One who appeareth), Hi-u-ka, a son-in-law, and a number of others. They committed a number of depredations, among others killing James McGannon in Wright county. The story of the shooting here given is related by J. B. Lamson (called Birney), of Annandale, Minn., the brother of Chauncey, and son of Nathan, who jointly killed Little Crow on July 3, 1863.

## Library of Congress

In the early summer of 1863 (following the massacre, which commenced August 17, 1862), most of the neighboring settlers at Hutchinson were gathered at the village so as to be near the stockade, which was guarded by soldiers and civilians, in expectation of attack by the Indians who had been on the warpath since the outbreak, and who had previously attacked the town in September, 1862. Some of the settlers were trying to raise a little crop for food, on their farms, and the work was done by a part of the family while others were scouting for Indians. I had spent most of the spring on our homestead, about six miles directly north of the village, caring for the 368 stock and crops, which though small were very valuable to the settlers who were defying the savages and holding to their homesteads.

On the 3rd of July I had gone to the village to spend the Fourth, and father and my brother Chauncey had taken my place at the farm and on that evening were out hunting for deer. About an hour before sundown they were a strong two miles northwest from the farm, on a road running by a marshy lake (there were a number of such marshes or lakes called by the Indians "Scattered lake"); and at the point described there was a low place where the water crossed the road in the spring, and just beyond the ground rose again. Farther on was a bend where the road bore away to the right to pass around the lake, and at the opposite side from the marsh there was a black-berry patch of considerable size. Where the road ran out into the clearing, it was some distance of open brush to the dry run. Father and Chauncey walked into this open space for several rods in plain sight of the patch, when suddenly they observed an Indian jump on his pony and then off on the other side from them. Providentially, the Indian had not observed them, and they immediately sought cover in the brush and laid their plans; for to see an Indian meant death to him or his white enemy in those days.

Father was past sixty-three years old, but he was a true frontiersman, and brother Chauncey was not behind in frontier training. They had hurriedly noticed that there were two Indians and did not know but that there were more. After consultation Chauncey took



## Library of Congress

a position which covered the road between them and the Indians. Kneeling on one knee, with his rifle cocked, he held his position while father crept forward and to the left till he got a poplar tree in the black-berry patch in direct line between him and the Indians. He then went forward to the poplar which was covered with vines, and from this vantage point, at a distance of about thirty-five feet, he shot the larger one of the two Indians (Little Crow), the ball entering the left groin. Both Indians and father went to the ground at the shot, and all was quiet as death, while each was trying to locate the other. Father was armed with a Colt revolver and thought he would try another shot at them with this, but he was not expert in its use and concluded to keep it for close quarters, if necessary.

The Indians seemed unable to locate the spot from which the shot had come, but father knew that the smoke from the black powder would soon rise from the tree and realized that he must get away from there. He had crawled back in his own path for about two rods when they riddled the tree with shot. It was afterward found that one slug and thirteen buckshot had struck it. One buckshot struck father on the left shoulder, as he was crawling away on hands and knees, which made a slight flesh wound about four inches in length; this caused him to change his course and get out of the line of fire. He turned squarely to the right and went a few feet, and then he tried to load his rifle but got a bullet several bores too large for the gun; it stuck about five inches from the muzzle, and he could not force it home. Being afraid that his white shirt would be seen by the Indians, he took it off and tucked it inside his trousers from where he subsequently lost it. Crawling to the road, he crossed it and concealed himself in a clump of hazel brush about sixteen feet across. He determined to stay there and to use his revolver if discovered.

Little Crow skulked round the raspberry patch, following the road, and as he came in range Chauncey saw him and rose to his feet to shoot. Both fired, and so close were the reports together that the roar of Little Crow's shotgun drowned the crack of Chauncey's rifle to father. Little Crow was skulking in the Indian style, leaning far forward, his gun extended, with the butt almost at his shoulder, so as to get instant aim. He shot from the left shoulder, but evidently he did not get his gun to the shoulder before firing, as

## Library of Congress

Chauncey's bullet struck the stock of his gun and then entered the left breast. Passing well through his stooping body, it stopped just inside the skin of his back, only a few inches from where father's bullet had come out. A slug from Little Crow's shotgun grazed Chauncey's head. Both went to the ground, and Chauncey commenced to reload his rifle, when he discovered that he had no bullets, and then he remembered that on leaving the house father had taken all the bullets from the table and slipped them into his pocket. This also accounts for father getting a bullet too large for his gun, as the rifles were of different caliber or bore.

Being thus unarmed, and not daring to approach the brush where he had seen father go, Chauncey determined on a ruse to draw the Indians away from him, if possible. He crept away a few rods, then boldly rose up in plain sight and started on a run for Hutchinson. Father could not see this from his place of concealment, nor did he know the effect of Little Crow's shot. He did know that the Indian had fallen not ten feet from where he lay, and he could hear his groans of anguish, and he lay perfectly still waiting events. After a time the son Wo-wi-napa came up to his father, and they talked for nearly an hour before the chief died. Father, not understanding the Sioux language, could not know what was said, but he heard the son mount the pony and ride away. He had placed a new pair of moccasins on his father's feet, and on leaving threw away his own single-barreled shotgun and took the double-barreled gun of his father. The single-barrel gun was afterward found by scouts.

After all sounds had died out father crept away, and he finally reached Hutchinson about four o'clock the next morning. In the meantime, Chauncey had reached town about ten o'clock at night, and on hearing the news a party of thirteen soldiers and five civilians was organized to go to the scene of trouble. I accompanied them out to our homestead, where we waited till nearly daybreak and then went on to the place of the shooting. As I was familiar with every foot of 24 370 the ground, from having hunted over it time and again, I was slightly in advance, leading the party.

## Library of Congress

On arriving at the turn in the road I saw a body lying at my feet in the dull light of morning, and I was terror-stricken with the thought that it was father, but it flashed through my mind that the bare breast was copper-colored and not that of a white man, and without a second glance I shouted, "Here he is, boys." We soon found the shirt which father had lost, and some thought he had been killed, but from the bullet holes in the shirt I knew that wound had been a slight one, though I could not know but that he had been killed later. We could not find him nor any more Indians, so we took up the trail of the pony. Before we had gone a great way we were overtaken by a troop of soldiers scouting for Indians, and they kept on the trail while we returned to town. While we were gone, father had returned from town to the place of shooting, with a neighbor and his team to take the body into town. When he arrived at the body he found that the troop in passing had taken the pains to scalp the Indian, probably to get the reward offered by the state at that time for Indian scalps. They placed the body in the wagon and drove back to Hutchinson, all unaware that the corpse was that of the hated Little Crow.

The fact that there was one more "good Indian" was enough to add to the joy of the celebration of the "Fourth." Among those in attendance was Hiram Cummins, a private of Company E, Ninth Minnesota Volunteers, who at once declared that the body was that of Little Crow. Many treated his statement as a joke, but he said, "There is no doubt about it. Here are marks that no man could mistake. He has a row of double teeth all the way around, and both his wrists are broken and ill set." On pulling up the skunk skins from the wrists the truth was apparent, though hard to think true.

Little Crow's son, after leaving his father, went northwest-ward to Devil's lake in Dakota, where he was captured later in a starving condition by General Sibley's troops. When killed Little Crow had on a coat which the son says was given him by Hi-u-ka, the son-in-law. This coat was taken from James McGannon, whom they murdered on the Kingston road in Wright county. The bones of one arm and the skull and scalp of Little Crow are in the

## Library of Congress

Museum of this Historical Society. The remainder of his body was taken by the medical fraternity and treated with their usual courtesies in such cases.