

# **CONFRONTING MINNESOTA'S PAST**

**A RESOURCE TO TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING ON THE  
U.S. – DAKOTA WAR OF 1862**

**Compiled and edited by Colin Mustful  
With Introduction by Sean Beggin**



## **A Note about this Text.**

There exist many excellent, thorough sources regarding Minnesota history as it relates to the Dakota Indians and the U.S. - Dakota War of 1862. As a historian, I have spent many years reviewing these sources in order to gather information so that I could write essays and novels about this important part of Minnesota history. In order to further advance my understanding, and with the hope of sharing my work with others, I have also written many brief historical blogs. I have decided to compile those blogs and essays in one document along with necessary citations, relevant images, and interesting discussion questions. However, the work itself does not compare to the sources it relies on, nor is it meant to. This is a broad overview, with concise materials, cut and spliced and put together in order to create a basic knowledge and understanding of the U.S. - Dakota War of 1862. Although I hope and believe I have created a useful historical and educational tool, I encourage all readers to look beyond this introduction. Discover for yourselves the resources that are available to you and find out what really happened and why.

When necessary, I have given specific citations with page numbers to material such as direct quotes or numbers. In most cases, however, the sources are listed in the bibliography or found within the appendix. Everything that follows has been taken from those important and valuable sources with limited amounts of author commentary or arguments.

Throughout the text, notice that some information is given chronologically while other information is placed at random. Generally, events such as battles or treaty signings appear in chronological order while biographies and cultural information are arranged randomly throughout the text. This should allow readers the ability read the text from front to back or to search information as necessary.

I have included throughout the text excerpts from three fiction novels which I have authored. These novels represent a cross-genre which utilized elements of fiction and nonfiction in order to tell the story of the people and events of this history. These novels are my attempt to share with readers this valuable history in a manner that is compelling, informative, and entertaining. These books are written so as not to distort history, but to bring it to life. If you are interested in this history, you will enjoy these novels.

There are many images included in the text. Image source and/or permissions are listed within the captions of every image. Those images credited to MHS were obtained through the Minnesota Historical Society's Digital Image Collection. For those images where permissions were not required or unobtainable, the source of such images are listed or else may be found through Creative Commons.

A special thanks to Sean Beggin for writing an important and valuable introduction not just for this text, but for this history. It is a history that is far too often overlooked, neglected, or misunderstood. In order to shed light on Minnesota's complicated and tragic history, I cannot ask for a more appropriate, intelligent, and dedicated person than Mr. Sean Beggin to help create that awareness.

I hope you enjoy and appreciate the work I have compiled based on a myriad of relevant, thorough, and essential sources. If you have questions, comments, or concerns, please contact me directly via my website [www.colinmustful.com](http://www.colinmustful.com) or email, [colin.mustful@gmail.com](mailto:colin.mustful@gmail.com).

# Headings

There are many different headings throughout the text. Take a moment to familiarize yourself with those headings.

**Test Your Understanding** - This heading refers to essential information in order to understand the U.S. - Dakota War and its context. This heading includes subject matter such as treaties, causes of war, events, or groups of people. I thoroughly encourage readers to know and understand the material within these headings.

**A Little Culture** - Items with this heading should give readers a look at important cultural background within this history. This may include religion, art, or literature.

**Who is that?** - A popular heading, "Who is that?" refers to biographical information regarding the people involved in this history.

**I Never Knew That** - This heading refers to lesser known and lesser documented parts of the U.S. - Dakota War and the Minnesota frontier. This information is every bit as important, but could be surprising to learn.

**Places to Visit** - The history of Minnesota is all around you, though you don't often notice. I encourage readers to look around and discover the history that surrounds you.

**A Personal Perspective** - These are biographies with a more personal touch. It is an attempt to show readers what events looked like from one perspective rather than a broad and layered overview.

**A Battle Scene** - Put simply, these are brief descriptions of the battles or violent outbreaks which occurred throughout this history.

**What do you think?** - After reading the material, these are questions for you to consider and discuss and perhaps to inspire further research.

**Just Imagine - A Fictional Excerpt** - These are excerpts taken from fictional novels which I have authored. The excerpts relate directly to the material.

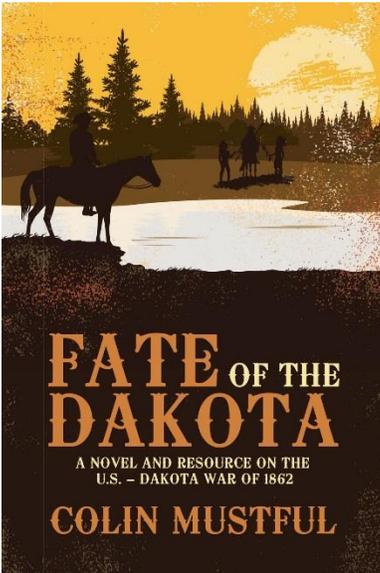
I want to know more! - This is the most frequent heading throughout the text. This will direct readers to sources for further research. In many cases, it includes a link to a digital source where you can easily access the information.

**Can I Visit Today?** - This acts as a reminder of historically relevant places around you that you can visit.

**Who Said That?** - These are direct quotes taken from primary sources. The quotes are related to the material, and act to illustrate or support the information just conveyed.

## Synopsis of the three fiction novels included throughout this text.

### Fate of the Dakota



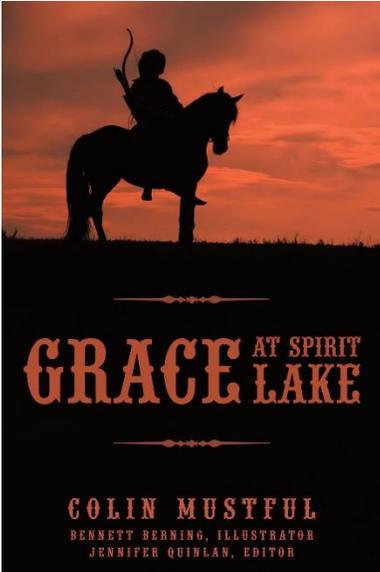
**IN THE SUMMER OF 1862, WAR WAS THE ONLY OPTION, AND DEATH WAS THE FINAL RESULT.**

**ALFRED RIGGS WAS THE TWENTY-FIVE YEAR OLD SON OF A MISSIONARY WHO FOUND HIMSELF HELPLESSLY INTERTWINED IN THE REAL LIFE ACTIONS, EVENTS, AND PEOPLE OF A HARROWING, BUT LARGELY UNKNOWN CONFLICT IN THE HISTORY OF MINNESOTA. ALFRED GREW UP AMONG THE DAKOTA INDIANS OF MINNESOTA AND HE DEVELOPED A PROFOUND RESPECT FOR THEIR PEOPLE AND ESTABLISHED A NEAR KINSHIP TIE TO THEIR SPOKESMAN AND LEADER, LITTLE CROW. WHEN WAR BROKE OUT IN THE SUMMER OF 1862, ALFRED WAS TORN BETWEEN THE SAFETY OF HIS FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND COUNTERPARTS, AND HIS DEEP UNDERSTANDING AND TOLERANCE FOR THE GRIEVANCES AND**

**TRADITIONS OF HIS INDIAN NEIGHBORS. AS DEATH, HATE, GREED, JUSTICE, AND VENGEANCE UNFOLDED BEFORE HIM HE WAS MOTIVATED BY VALOR AND A BRAZEN STRUGGLE FOR PEACE THAT NEARLY LED TO HIS DEATH AND ALIENATED HIM FROM HIS FATHER.**

**THROUGHOUT THE STORY ALFRED MET AND INTERACTED WITH REAL LIFE PARTICIPANTS AND WITNESSES OF THE WAR. HE SHARED IN THEIR STRUGGLES AND SOUGHT TO UNDERSTAND THEIR PERSPECTIVES. BUT, RATHER THAN MITIGATE DEATH AND DISASTER, ALFRED FOUND HIMSELF IN A NUMBER OF DIRE SITUATIONS FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE WAR THAT INCLUDED SEVERAL BATTLES AND A SUSPENSEFUL COURT HEARING. IN THE END, ALFRED WAS HELPLESS TO QUELL THE SENSELESS FEUD BETWEEN THE DAKOTA INDIANS AND THE WHITE SETTLERS. ULTIMATELY, ALFRED WAS FORTUNATE TO ESCAPE WITH HIS LIFE AND FINALLY RECONCILE WITH HIS FATHER.**

## GRACE AT SPIRIT LAKE

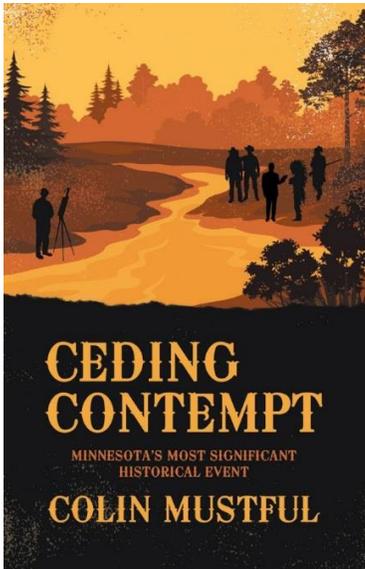


ALONG THE WINTRY LANDSCAPE OF A PRISTINE AND HOPEFUL FRONTIER, TRAGEDY STRUCK AND STRIFE FOLLOWED.

JOSEPH CAMPBELL IS A THIRTY-ONE YEAR OLD, MIXED-BREED INTERPRETER WHO FINDS HIMSELF HELPLESSLY INTERTWINED IN THE REAL LIFE ACTIONS, EVENTS, AND PEOPLE OF A HARROWING, BUT LARGELY UNKNOWN STRUGGLE IN THE HISTORY OF MINNESOTA. JOSEPH GREW UP ALONG THE EXPANDING WESTERN FRONTIER AND HE DEVELOPED AN INTIMACY FOR THE PEOPLE AND PLACES ALONG WITH A DEEP SEATED KNOWLEDGE OF THE VARYING CULTURES AND LANGUAGES. FOLLOWING A MASSACRE INCITED BY INKPADUTA AND THE WAHPEKUTE INDIANS IN MARCH OF 1857, JOSEPH BECOMES TORN BETWEEN HIS DUTIES AS A U.S. INTERPRETER AND HIS DEEP UNDERSTANDING, COMPASSION, AND KINSHIP TIES FOR HIS DAKOTA BRETHREN. JOSEPH STRUGGLES DESPERATELY TO UPHOLD THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIANS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME SEEKING TO CAPTURE AND PUNISH THE GUILTY PARTY. ALL THE WHILE, JOSEPH DISCOVERS A BROODING CONFLICT WITHIN HIMSELF THAT HE LONGS TO UNDERSTAND AND FINALLY OVERCOME.

THE EVENT KNOWN AS THE SPIRIT LAKE MASSACRE OF 1857 WAS NOT AN ISOLATED INCIDENT, BUT RATHER A DEEPLY COMPLICATED ISSUE THAT INVOLVED MANY CONFLICTS AND VARIOUS PARTIES. THROUGHOUT THE STORY, JOSEPH FINDS HIMSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF THESE CONFLICTS AND PARTIES AS HE CONSTANTLY SEEKS UNDERSTANDING AND RESOLUTION. INCLUDED ALONGSIDE JOSEPH'S PROFOUND EXPERIENCE, IS MIXED A SECOND NARRATIVE THAT FOLLOWS A LOVE STORY BETWEEN TWO REAL-LIFE PARTICIPANTS WHO FIND THEMSELVES LONGING FOR THE HOPE THEY ONCE HAD AND THE FUTURE THEY STILL CLING TO. IN THE END, JOSEPH CANNOT SOLVE THE PERPETUAL STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE WHITES OF THE FRONTIER AND THE DAKOTA OF SOUTHERN MINNESOTA, BUT THE GRACE OF ONE CAPTIVE GIRL PROPELS HIM FORWARD AS HE FINALLY DISCOVERS WHO HE IS AND THE VALUE OF HIS OWN IDENTITY.

## **CEDING CONTEMPT**



**IN MINNESOTA'S FADING FRONTIER THE ONCE VIBRANT DAKOTA INDIANS WERE COMPELLED AND COERCED TO CEDE THEIR BOUNTIFUL HOMELAND TO THOSE OPPORTUNISTS THAT WOULD USHER IN A NEW ERA.**

**IN 1851, THE DAKOTA INDIANS SIGNED THE TREATIES OF TRAVERSE DES SIOUX AND MENDOTA, SELLING THEIR LANDS WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND EFFECTIVELY CREATING THE REGION THAT WOULD BECOME THE STATE OF MINNESOTA. FRANK BLACKWELL MAYER, A YOUNG ARTIST FROM BALTIMORE, TRAVELED TO MINNESOTA TO WITNESS THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE DAKOTA INDIANS AND THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. DOING WHAT HE CAME TO DO, MAYER CAPTURED IMAGES OF THE DAKOTA INDIANS AND THE FLEETING FRONTIER THROUGH A VARIETY OF ILLUSTRATIONS. BUT HE ALSO FOUND MORE. HE FOUND A BEAUTIFUL LAND AND A BURGEONING, MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY WHO SOUGHT A PROSPEROUS FUTURE. HE ALSO DISCOVERED THE UNIQUE AND EXTRAORDINARY NATURE OF THE DAKOTA NATION.**

**THROUGHOUT HIS JOURNEY, FRANK MAYER ENCOUNTERED MANY PEOPLE AND PLACES THAT WOULD BECOME WELL KNOWN TO MINNESOTA'S CULTURE AND HISTORY. DRIVEN BY CURIOSITY OVER THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS AND HIS SYMPATHY FOR ONE DAKOTA BOY, MAYER BECAME MORE THAN JUST AN OBSERVER. DISCOVERING THE FRAUD AND CORRUPTION WITHIN THE INDIAN SYSTEM, MAYER PUT ASIDE HIS ARTISTIC AMBITIONS AND SOUGHT TO EXPOSE THE DECEITFUL INTENTIONS OF TRADERS AND POLITICIANS WHILE PROTECTING THE FRIENDLESS AND IMPOVERISHED DAKOTA INDIANS. HOWEVER, WHAT HE FOUND WAS WORSE THAN HE COULD IMAGINE AND MORE THAN HE COULD SOLVE.**

## Introduction

“The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.”  
- George Orwell

During this time in history filled with “fake news”, perpetuated by social media and preying on primal emotions, it is especially important for people to diligently search for true news, to seek multiple perspectives, and to make decisions based on facts, ethics, and collective knowledge learned from history. Many Minnesotans, either misinformed or uninformed, have been denied the opportunity to have a true understanding of our great state’s infancy.

Colin Mustful has done a brilliant job of researching facts, data, personal histories, primary and secondary sources, and historiographies and brings the real stories to life through his fictional novels set in 1850’s and 60’s Minnesota. His accompanying resource, *Confronting Minnesota’s Past*, is an easy to read, interactive tool that will help Minnesotans reclaim their history. It can be read in small pieces, one episode at a time (perhaps five minutes at a time) or as one complete History from “cover to cover”. Mustful offers many links to further resources, many of which lead to even more resources ... allowing the reader to decide how deep they would like to investigate each topic. *Confronting Minnesota’s Past* is as useful a resource to Minnesota’s 6th grade students as it is to college students and adults just seeking personal enlightenment.

The next time you hear somebody making critical statements about Indian casinos, fishing or hunting rights, or reservation license plates, please encourage them to seek a new understanding of Minnesota’s history. *Confronting Minnesota’s Past* and Colin Mustful’s novels are a great place to begin.

- Sean Beggin

## Test Your Understanding - Minnesota Territorial Seal

When Minnesota became a territory in 1849, it was determined that the state needed an official seal. Choosing such a seal was a chore given to then Territorial Governor Alexander Ramsey and statesman Henry Sibley. The two considered the matter through a number of correspondences before finally deciding on an image and motto sufficient and appropriate for the new territory.



**Minnesota Territorial Seal by Seth Eastman, courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society (MHS)**

The first design for a territorial seal was drafted in a Minnesota territorial congressional committee. The design depicted an Indian family, with a lodge, a canoe, and accessories, receiving a white visitor accepting the pipe of peace. The idea was to symbolize the eternal friendship of the two races. However, this depiction was rejected by the house.

New images were drafted and sent to Henry Sibley. Sibley found only two that suited him. He sent the images to Alexander Ramsey for review. Between the two drawings, Ramsey selected the one which best represented the equilibrium of the Indian state to that of "civilization" and noted that this equilibrium, "for the present is our more distinctive characteristic."<sup>1</sup> The drawing shows an Indian on horseback, lance in hand, a man plowing, and the stump of a tree with an ax sticking in it, and the Falls of St. Anthony in the background along with the setting sun.

As for the motto on the seal, Governor Ramsey preferred "something characteristic in an eminent degree of American goaheadativeness - something suggestive of enterprise - courage - tireless industry." The two finally decided on a Latin motto which translated to, "I wish to see what is beyond."<sup>2</sup> It was meant to depict the thoughts of the farmer in the image.

### What do you think?

Imagine you are creating Minnesota's Territorial Seal in 1849. How would you make it different? How would you keep it the same?

<sup>1</sup> William Watts Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, Vol. 1, (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society, 1922), 460.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 462.

### I want to know more!

The Territorial Seal represented a period of cultural transition in Minnesota from a place of Indians, French, and mixed-breeds, to one of predominantly white Americans. Learn more about this transition by reading ***The Power of Whiteness*** by Bruce M. White. The article can be found in [Minnesota History, Volume 56, Issue 4, 1998, pages 178-197.](#)

## Test Your Understanding - The Dakota or Sioux Nation

At the time of the U.S. - Dakota War, the Dakota nation was more generally known by the word Sioux. However, this is not a proper term. Sioux is a French corruption of the Anishinaabe word "Nadowessi" which means snake or serpent. The term was popularized by whites and the U.S. government who did not understand its meaning. Some used it in the pejorative sense as a way of being intentionally disrespectful. **The correct term for the entire tribe is Dakota, meaning allies or friends.**

As a tribe the **Dakota consists of seven bands known as the Seven Council Fires.** The bands are closely related in language, culture, and origin and are bound together in alliance for mutual protection. The seven bands are named as follows: Tetons, Yanktons, Yanktonais, Sisseton, Wahpeton, Wahpekute, and Mdewakanton. While their languages are closely related, the Teton speak Lakota and traditionally have lived furthest west, while the Yankton and Yanktonais speak Nakota and traditionally lived across the western plains. Within Minnesota at the time of the war there were four Dakota bands. Together these four bands are called the Santee. Among the Santee there exist the Upper Bands of Sisseton and Wahpeton and the Lower Bands of Wahpekute and Mdewakanton. They have been called upper and lower because of their traditional locations along the upper or lower parts of the Minnesota River.



Courtesy of the North Dakota Studies Program. State Historical Society of North Dakota.

During the war, many white writers and reporters categorized the Dakota as either "hostile" or "friendly." These terms also come from a misunderstanding of the Dakota culture and people. The years preceding war were characterized by increased pressure on the Dakota to give up their traditional ways of living and to take up farming. This led to factionalism among the Dakota which played an important role during the U.S. - Dakota War. **Groups that incited hostilities were typically those that sought to protect the Dakota way of life that had been so threatened.** Others followed the advice of missionaries and government officials to take up farming and Christianity and therefore no longer had a reason to protect a way of living they had already seen taken away.

[I want to know more!](#)

Find out more about the Dakota Nation and Culture by reading ***The Dakota or Sioux in Minnesota as They Were in 1834*** by Samuel Pond. Look for it on [Google Books](#), page 319.

## **Test Your Understanding - Zebulon Pike and the 1805 Treaty with the Sioux**

On September 23, 1805, twenty-six year old United States Army Lieutenant Zebulon Pike signed the first treaty between the Americans and the Dakota Indians. At the time there was almost no American presence in the northern region and it was Pike's mission to change that. The young Lieutenant's objectives included establishing friendly relations with the Dakotas and Ojibwes, to scout out suitable sites for military and trading posts, to negotiate permission from the Indians to build on those sites, to gather intelligence about the scope and value of British trade in the region, and finally to locate the source of the Mississippi.



**Lieutenant Zebulon Montgomery Pike,**  
courtesy of MHS

Establishing friendly relations with the Dakota and negotiating permission to build on suitable trading sites proved easy. The Dakota welcomed the Americans as another trading partner, something that would increase competition and therefore act toward their advantage. **In giving up their land, they considered it no loss because, as the treaty stated, the Dakota retained the right to "pass and repass, hunt, or make other uses of the said districts as they have formerly done."**<sup>3</sup>

The remainder of Pike's expedition proved more challenging. As Pike and his company continued north, they had no way of knowing the hardships that awaited them during winter travel. In a letter to an American General, Pike complained of the cold being so severe that it froze the ink in his pen. The men set up winter camp near Little Falls, but had to rely on the hospitality of the North West Company traders. When Pike continued his journey northward, the difficulties proved too much and Pike gave up, declaring Leech Lake as the source of the Mississippi.

Pike was also unable to establish any sort of American dominion over the northern British presence. Although British officers paid Pike and his company lip service, they made no attempt abide by Pike's unenforceable directives. In the end, Pike could not achieve all of his objectives and wrote in his journal that he and his company had been through "as many hardships as almost any party of

Americans ever experienced by cold and hunger."<sup>4</sup> However, **the Sioux Treaty of 1805 proved to be vitally important toward establishing an American presence and led to the erection of Fort Snelling in 1819.**

[I want to know more!](#)

Read the terms of the 1805 Treaty with the Sioux found in Appendix 3A of this text.

## **A Little Culture - Bdote, the Center of Dakota Creation**

The confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers is located almost directly between the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Just above the confluence sits Fort Snelling, a military garrison built in 1819. Since the time that Fort Snelling was built, the junction of these two rivers has become a major point of influence in the history of modern Minnesota. But well before the European-

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<sup>3</sup> Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*, Vol. 1, (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1895), 263.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Lethert Wingerd, *North Country: The Making of Minnesota*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 78.

American influence settled upon this land, the confluence of these two rivers was important and sacred to the Dakota people who have lived here since time immemorial. **This sacred place is known as *Bdote Mni Sota*.** *Bdote* literally means the junction or joining of two bodies of water and

*mni sota* refers to the clarity of the water and its reflection of the sky. For the Dakota, *Bdote* is the center of everything. It is the place where thousands of years ago their people were first created by the land. For many years *Bdote* was an important gathering place for the Dakota nation and it remains sacred today as both a place of pride and pain.



A view of Bdote in a painting by Seth Eastman, courtesy of MHS

I want to know more!

To learn more about Bdote and what it means to the Dakota people as well as other important creation and historical places, please visit the [Bdote Memory Map](#).

I want to know more!

Learn more about the Dakota nation, culture and history by reading *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota* by Gwen Westerman and Bruce M. White.

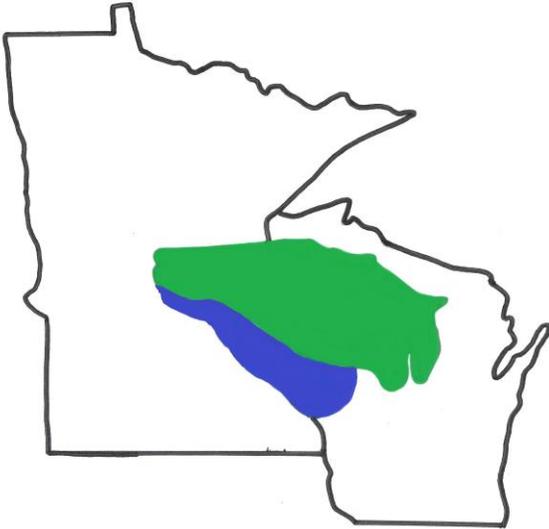
### ***Can I Visit Today?***

*Bdote is located within Fort Snelling State Park and can be visited year round. Plan your visit at the [Minnesota Department of Natural Resources website](#).*

## **Test Your Understanding - 1837 Treaty with the Sioux**

The first major land cession treaty with the Dakota Indians was signed at Washington, D.C. on September 29, 1837. **A delegation of Mdewakanton Dakota traveled to Washington with the belief that they would be negotiating their southern boundary, but instead they were convinced into selling their lands east of the Mississippi River.** The treaty coincided with the

White Pine Treaty in which the Ojibwe to the north also agreed to sell their eastern lands. The motivation for the sale was brought about for two reasons. Firstly, Wisconsin had recently become a territory stretching as far west as the Missouri River and they sought to extend their area of settlement. Secondly, the lumber companies sought access to the rich timber in the triangle of land between the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers.



**Land sold by the Dakota (blue) and Ojibwe (green) in 1837 treaties**

According to the terms of the treaty, \$300,000 was to be invested and the **interest was to be paid to the Dakota annually "forever."** Also, the "relatives and friends" of the Dakota were to receive \$110,000 while the traders were to receive \$90,000 for debts owed. Finally, small annual grants were to be made to pay for physicians, farmers, blacksmiths, and the materials of their respective callings. However, some of the treaty terms were not met. In 1851, when asked to sign the Treaty of Mendota, the Mdewakanton initially refused because some of the promised payments from the 1837 treaty had not yet been made.

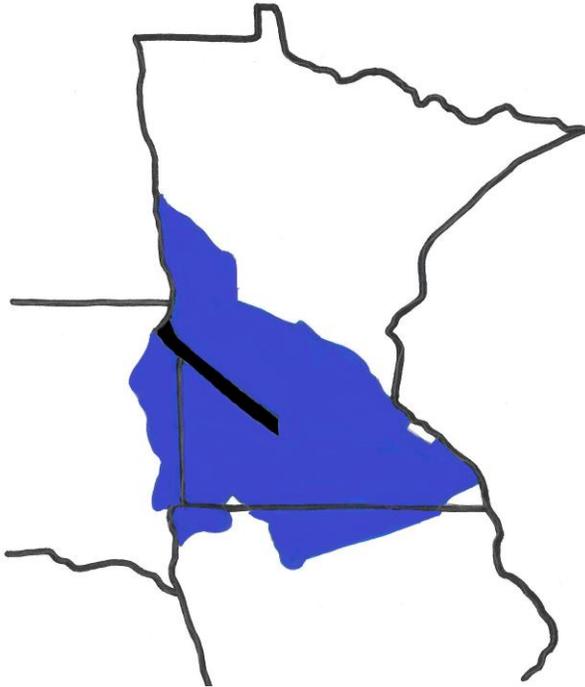
I want to know more!

Learn more about the treaties made between the United States Government and the Dakota and Ojibwe of Minnesota by visiting the website [Treaties Matter](#). Or, read the terms of the 1837 Treaty with the Sioux found in Appendix 3B of this text.

## **Test Your Understanding - The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux and the Treaty of Mendota**

In 1851, the four Dakota bands living within Minnesota Territory signed an agreement with the United States Government ceding their lands west of the Mississippi River in exchange for a reservation along the Minnesota River and annual payments. The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, signed July 23, 1851, was an agreement with the Sisseton and Wahpeton Dakota. The Treaty of Mendota, signed

August 5, 1851, was an agreement with the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute Dakota. The land ceded was **more than 30 million acres** and included nearly all of present day southern and western Minnesota, parts of Iowa and parts of South Dakota.



**Land sold by the Dakota in 1851 treaties,  
Reservation land in black**

Then Territorial Governor Alexander Ramsey and prominent fur trader and politician Henry Sibley negotiated the treaties. The acting commissioner was Luke Lea. Ramsey and Sibley argued that the beautiful and lush western lands were being underutilized and were of no use to the Dakota. Settlement in the region was growing, and **Ramsey and Sibley were anxious to open the lands to settlers that would plow and till the soil.** They further argued that the Dakota would benefit from a much smaller territory where they would be much closer with the other members of their nation. For the Dakota, survival had become difficult, as their hunting grounds were depleted through many years of the fur trade. The promise of annual payments was

attractive to the Dakota, many of whom were starving, as a way to gain the resources they needed to survive.

**The Dakota chiefs were reluctant to sell their land, but felt as if they had little choice.** If they had not agreed to sell, they might have lost their land and been left with nothing. Unfortunately, for the Dakota, the terms of the treaties were rarely met or were unfavorable. Avarice traders often inflated their claims and found ways to obtain the money promised to the Dakota. Reservation life was difficult, denying the Dakota of their traditional culture and ways of living. All these things led to poor conditions and discontent that eventually resulted in the U.S. - Dakota War of 1862.

### What do you think?

Do you think the Dakota should have agreed to the treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota? What might have happened if they had not signed the treaties? Do you think their loss of land to the United States Government was inevitable, or did the Dakota have other options?



**Treaty of Traverse des Sioux by Francis Millet, courtesy of MHS**

[I want to know more!](#)

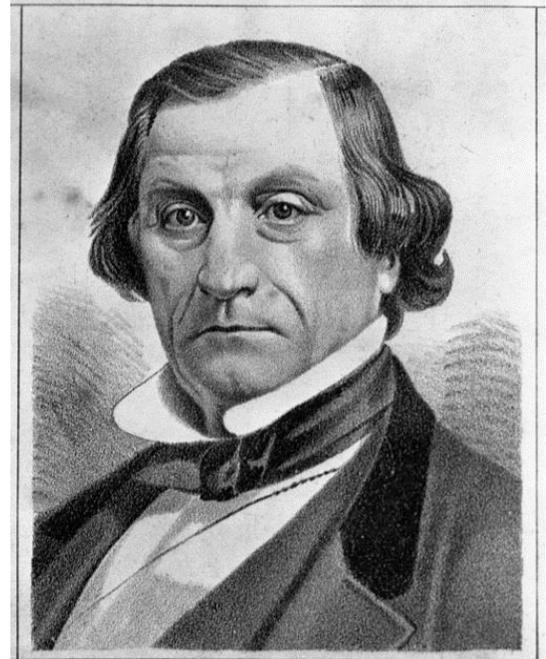
Read the actual Treaty of Traverse des Sioux which can be found in Appendix 3C of this text or it can be found [digitally through Oklahoma State University](#). Read the actual Treaty of Mendota which can be found in Appendix 3D of this text or [digitally through Oklahoma State University](#). Or, read the official report of the treaties written by Treaty Commissioners Alexander Ramsey and Luke Lea. It can be found in Appendix 3F of this text.

### **I Never Knew That - The Traders' Paper**

On July 23, 1851, the Upper Bands of Dakota Indians signed a treaty with the United States, ceding their lands west of the Mississippi River. After signing the treaty, the chiefs and headmen were then called upon to sign a second document known as the Traders' Paper. According to the **Traders' Paper**, the Dakota agreed to pay their debts to the traders directly out of their annuity funds which they were to receive as a part of the treaty. However, the Dakota were unaware of what they were signing. Instead, they were "**pulled by the blanket**" and led to believe they were signing a third copy of the treaty itself. When asked that the Traders' Paper be read or explained, the trader Joseph R.

Brown replied that the Indians already knew what it said and that reading the document would only create a disturbance.

Although the Traders' Paper was an acknowledgment by the Dakota to pay their debts, it can be argued that it violated an act of Congress which required treaty monies to be paid directly to the Indian heads of family unless directed otherwise in open council. Since the document was not read or explained, it does not necessarily represent an agreement made in open council. Rather, the **traders coerced the Indians** into signing away the majority of their funds which they required for removal to their new reservation and for other provisions.



**During the signing of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, Joseph R. Brown sat near the Treaty signing and instructed the Dakota to sign a second document known as the Traders' Paper. Courtesy of MHS**

[I want to know more!](#)

Read the Traders' Paper, which can be found in Appendix 2C of this book.

### What do you think?

Did the Traders' Paper create an environment of mistrust between the Dakota Indians and the white and mixed-breed traders? If so, how did the Traders' Paper play a role in the U.S. - Dakota War of 1862?

### Who said that?

**During the Investigation of Governor Alexander Ramsey for his conduct during the treaty negotiations, Chief Wahmundaynechah (The Orphan) was asked if the Traders' Paper had been interpreted to him. He responded by stating, "It was not explained to me at all. I was pulled by the blanket, and made to sign it."<sup>5</sup>**

### Who is that? - Little Crow/Taoyateduta

Little Crow, or Taoyateduta (His Red Nation), was the **Chief or Spokesman for the Mdewakanton tribe of the Dakota Nation** from 1849 until 1862. Little Crow played a prominent political role in the

<sup>5</sup> 33 Congress, 1 Session, *Senate Executive Documents*, no. 61, (serial 699), 177.