

HISTORICAL REMINISCENCES

OF SERVICES

IN

DAKOTA AND MINNESOTA

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BY

JAMES P. HART

COMPANY D

SEVENTH MINNESOTA INFANTRY

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ENLISTED AUGUST 22nd 1862

MUSTERED OUT AUGUST 19th 1865

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4233  
James R. Hart  
Frank L. Hart

INTENTIONAL DUPLICATE EXPOSURE

DAKOTA CONFLICT OF 1862 MANUSCRIPTS COLLECTIONS  
MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY. ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA 55102

0035



James Hart.

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Received first pay, August 21st 1865. Enlisted at Red Wing Minnesota. Mustered in at Fort Snelling Minnesota. Company was drilled for six weeks under command of Captain W. W. Phelps, of Red Wing Minn. First Lieut Chas. L. Davis, Red Wing Minnesota. Second Lieutenant W. W. Williams, Red Wing Minnesota.

(Note by Major Anders: Minnesota in the Indian and Civil Wars page 478, confirms dates and it is noted that he was eighteen years of age.)

On October 15th, 1862, twenty four men of Company "D", and twenty four men of Company "E", together with six private citizens were detailed to go with a wagon train to Fort Abercrombie M. D.. Each company had one wagoner and four of these were detailed to go as wagon masters. In charge of each wagon train was a Captain, designated as quartermaster

(Note: Fort Abercrombie was in Dakota Territory at that time. North Dakota came into existence in 1889.)

To guard the train were two regulars in charge of a howitzer, drawn by two big black horses. This gun threw shells weighing four pounds each, and was fired into each grove along the way, to make sure whether there were Indians lurking there or not.

The wagons were loaded at the levee, at Fort Snelling. Each wagon held two and one half tons. The loads consisted of ammunition, rations, blankets, and all other kinds of army equipment, including sixteen barrels of whiskey.

The first day the train drew out from Fort Snelling, crossed the Mississippi, and camped just north of Minneapolis. A wooden bridge spanned the river at this place.

The train consisted of fifty eight wagons, each drawn by six mules, making a total of three hundred and forty eight mules, only two of which had ever been broken to harness. These mules were selected from a bunch of eighteen hundred that had just been driven up from St. Louis.

The second day the train reached Anoka, a distance of twenty miles, where they camped for the night. The next three days were spent in reaching St Cloud where one day was spent in resting and reloading. From this point a distance of ten or twelve miles a day was covered for a period of ten or twelve days, after which Alexandria was reached. The distance thru these woods was fifteen miles, and five days were required for the train to pass thru them. In places corduroy roads had to be built across swamps, for which trees were felled by the soldiers.

(Note: the word "woods" was inserted after Alexandria in the printed account.)

Just after leaving the woods the body of a man, killed by the Indians was discovered besides the road. The body had been terribly mutilated. The abdomen had been opened, the intestines taken out, and the head cut off and placed in the empty abdomen. A grave was quickly dug, and the body given burial. The identity of this man was never discovered.

The next three days travel were uneventful, and at the end of that time the Otter Tail River was reached. By this time the weather had turned cold, and the river was frozen to a depth of six inches. The first team started to

James Hart.

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cross on the ice, but midway of the stream it gave way. Then the soldiers took axes and chopped a passage thru the ice, broad enough to allow the passage of the wagons. As the river at this point was not over forty feet wide, the many hands made light work of it. The banks were very steep and high, and it was found necessary to use the heaviest team of mules at the top of the bank to help pull the others up.

From the Otter Tail River to the fort, was a distance of thirty five miles. The road was smooth and level, and an effort was made to reach the fort that night, but after travelling three miles, one of the saddle horses stumbled and fell throwing his rider. It was impossible to check the team, and a wagon wheel passed over the mans leg and broke it. The Captain who travelled in a light sulky, took this man with him and drove on to the fort. Another man was put in the saddle, but in a very short time the mule fell again, throwing the rider, and both wheels of the wagon ran across the small of his back. He was loaded into a wagon and cared for as well as possible. The faulty mule was removed from the team, and another put in his place as saddle mule. These accidents delayed the train for about one and one half hours, after which the train started on, travelling fast as possible, but were overtaken by darkness when within three miles of the fort, and obliged to camp for the night.

At the time that the train left Fort Snelling, it was joined by a man named Cobb, a young man of twenty seven years, six feet tall, straight and handsome. This man with his wife and three little girls, had squatted on a piece of land intending to make it their home. Mr Cobb had been obliged to go to St. Paul on business, and was glad of a chance to return with the soldiers. His home was at the exact place mentioned where the train camped for the night. Their little home was found in ashes, in which were found the bones of the wife and children, murdered and burned by Indians. Their heads had all been split open with tomahawks. The bones were collected and carefully buried that night.

The journey was resumed next morning at daylight, and at nine oclock the Red River of the North was reached, on the west bank of which was situated Fort Abercrombie. A ferry had been established at this place, and the train was ferried over, one team at a time. As fast as the teams landed they were driven into the fort, and the wagons unloaded. By three oclock PM, the stores were all unloaded and camp was made.

In the fort were found twenty eight people, men, women and children. These were partly soldiers with their families and the remainder settlers who had found refuge here from the Indians. The Indians had besieged the fort for four days but were unable to capture it. One man in the fort, whose name was Lewis afterwards enlisted in Company "D" and served three years. This man had kept a stage house sixteen miles north of the fort. At the time of the Indian out break, this man was watching for the coming of the stage and saw it coming hotly pursued by Indians. He had the relay team of horses ready when the stage arrived, the teams were hastily exchanged, his family, consisting of a wife and three children, entered the stage, and succeeded in safely reaching the fort ahead of the Indians.

(Note by Major Anders: I have examined the muster roll of the Tenth Regiment, Minnesota Volunteers. Christopher Lewis, aged 20, enlisted in Co. "B" February 23rd 1864 and was transferred to Company "I", April 4th 1864. There was no Lewis in Company "D". However there was a Lewis Lewiston, aged 29, who enlisted August 22nd 1862. It is noted also "Corporal, Absent"



The wagon train was started back the day after arrival and went straight down the river to Breckenridge. Before the Indian outbreak a government saw mill had been established at this place for the purpose of sawing lumber for the settlers and the forts. A large number of brick had also been shipped there. Before leaving Fort Snelling the officers in charge of the train had been ordered to load these brick into the wagons and take them back to Alexandria Woods, where four companies of Wisconsin Infantry had been ordered to spend the winter. The brick were to be used to build fire places for the soldiers.

At this place there had been several families located but at the first Indian alarm, they had left their homes and fled to safety. These homes had not been burned by the Indians, as they had intended to return and live in themselves. The settlers had not time to take their household goods with them. The Indians had entered, slit open pillows and feather beds scattering the feathers over the rooms, and taking the ticks with them. Several head of cattle and hogs were still there, running in the corn fields and to the wheat stacks. Three fat hogs had been butchered by the soldiers when they passed thru her first, and the meat proved a welcome change, from salt pork, which had been their lot before. The trip back to Fort Snelling was uneventful, the entire return trip taking only nine days, while the trip out had taken thirty seven days. The teams were turned over to the Quarter master at Fort Snelling, and the soldiers ordered to report to the company. During their absence, the remainder of Company "D" had gone to Mankato, to be present at the hanging of thirty eight Indians, who were leaders in the outbreak. Then they had returned to Henderson, and were joined by those who had made the trip to Fort Abercrombie, and were quartered there until February 1863. Two Soldiers, Edd Fessenden and Joe Bonnie drank too much and became very drunk. They were placed in jail, locked in and the guard went visiting. These two men thought they would regain their liberty, so piling the beds and bedding in the middle of the floors and set fire to it, thinking that the guards would open the door. The fire was discovered but the guard with the key could not be found. The soldiers tried to force the door with a telegraph pole, but it was strongly built of logs, and they were unable to do so, and the men were burned to death. On February 10th 1863, the company moved sixteen miles west, where they were ordered to build a stockade. This move was made on foot, and the place reached shortly afternoon. In the afternoon a house standing two miles distant was moved to where the stockade was to be built, and made into a bunk house for the soldiers.

(Note by Major Anders: The muster rolls show that Joseph Bonny, aged 26, and Edwin A. Fessenden, aged 30, died at Henderson on December 23rd 1862. Both enlisted August 22nd 1862. Cause of death not stated.)

The stockade was built one hundred feet square, of logs sixteen feet long, stood upright, and the lower end sunk three feet in the ground. Bastions were built in each corner to command the outside of the wall. Two nearby farmers, owning large teams of horses, were hired to haul the logs or to do any other heavy work.

South of  
Ten miles below the stockade, was a grove called Norwegian Grove there had been a settlement of Norwegian people at this place, but when the Indians went on the warpath, in the fall of 1862, they killed twenty eight of these people. There were buildings still standing at this place, and the government bought two frame houses and one log house, all of which were moved to the fort. The frame houses were moved on two big sleighs, while the log

house was torn down and rebuilt on the new site. One of these was used as a store house, one for a cook house, and the other for officers quarters. Five miles north of the fort was a saw mill, owned by James Allison. This was the man who later ran what has always been known as the Allison's Ranch situated seven miles west of Fredrick, Brown County, South Dakota. Mr Hart was sent to this saw mill, with three other soldiers, and a six mule team to help Mr Allison load lumber for use at the fort. It was impossible to get men to stay there and work on account of danger of Indians. Mr Brackett who later was connected with the ranch above mentioned, had contracted to furnish beef for the expedition. Lumber from the saw mill was hauled to build two buildings, each fifty feet long and twenty feet wide. One was for the cook house and the other sleeping quarters for the men. The fort was finished the middle of May and the men ordered back to Henderson with the exception of six who were left at the fort. A patrol had been established from Bird Island, Minnesota, to Fort Abercrombie, with stations sixteen miles apart. The fort just finished was called Fort Goodhue, and was used as a station by members of the patrol. Before leaving Fort Goodhue, Mr Hart was sent to La Sauer for arms and ammunition, a distance of twenty five miles. The trip was made with a wagon and six mules, and three days was used in making the trip down. The load consisted of eighty four Springfield Rifles, six boxes of cartridges and bayonets and scabbards. The roads were very muddy, and when within six miles of the fort on the return trip, his load stuck and the mules all laid down in the mud. A German family lived close by who owned two yoke of heavy oxen. The German took his oxen and pulled the load up to his house. The mules were unharnessed and placed in the barn, when Mr Hart was invited into the house for supper. Upon seeing him the farmers wife exclaimed, "You to young boy to be out like this, I keep you here mit me." The evening was spent in visiting and as it grew late the lady said, "I guess you sleepy, I put you to bed". True to her word she tucked him in between two ample feather beds, where he slept soundly until morning. This was the last he slept in until after the war closed. Before he got started next morning, the quartermaster appeared on horseback, looking for him. Mr Hart told him how kind the people were had been to him and he gave the German a U. S. voucher for three dollars in payment. This was more money than the farmer had seen in a long time. The mules were again hitched to the wagon, and the fort was reached without further difficulty.

From Henderson the company was ordered up the Minnesota River to Camp Hope (?) situated six miles north of Fort Ridgely. (See Notes following.) Congregated at Camp Hope was a regiment of Cavalry, three regiments of Infantry, nine hundred strong each, with eight pieces of artillery. There were ambulances, doctors, large tents for sick and wounded. There was a drove of six hundred head of cattle, furnished by Mr Brackett, and three hundred, six mule teams. Twenty five wagons were loaded with pontoons, planks and stringers for use in crossing rivers. This army was under the command of General Sibley. Each regiment had two sutlers teams loaded with goods to sell to the soldiers.

The chief of scouts was named Joe Brown. He had spent most of his life among the Indians, and had an Indian wife. General Sibley and Joe Brown would not have mules to haul their luggage, so each had three six ox teams for their own personal use. General Sibley's wife was also a squaw. (?) (See Note)

(Note by Major Anders; He refers to "Camp Pope". He has the location wrong. "Camp Pope" was located as follows; "It (the expedition) was to assemble at a point near the mouth of the Red Wood River, some twenty or twenty five miles above Fort Ridgely". "Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars" Vol. One, page 749." See also map, Page 268, Folwell's History of Minnesota. As to the nationality of General Sibley's wife. See West's Sibley Pages 84-85-86 etc. She was the daughter of Fredrick W. Steele of Baltimore, and a white woman.)



General Sibley rode on horse back but Joe Brown insisted on a horse and buggy. From Camp Hope this army followed the Minnesota River, north west until they reached the eastern Coteaus, in the vicinity of the present town of Gayuga. Near this place they discovered a great big black U. S. ox, jet black, who had been left there by a wagon train the fall before, tired out and who had spent the winter there alone. Camp was made at Skunk Lake, where the soldiers went swimming. The lake abounded with fish, which was much enjoyed by all. From this point we travelled north all day and camped that night on the Sheyenne River, near the present site of Lisbon. Our next days move took us fifteen miles north, where we crossed the river and camped on the west shore. The next day being July fourth, we stayed in camp all day, and also the next day, as we expected twenty five wagons, of supplies from Fort Abercrombie to meet us at this place. They arrived on the fifth and on July sixth we started north west. After travelling two days we reached country where the grasshoppers were so thick, we thought we would have to turn back, as they had eaten up all the grass. We sent scouts on ahead, to see if there was sufficient grass for the horses, as we camped in the place for two days. On their return they said we would be able to pass thru the grasshopper district in two days so we resumed the march. Several days later we reached Lake Addis, where we established Camp Atkinson, where we threw up sod works, four feet high, around a place containing about two acres. These earth works are still standing and are covered with vines. Here we left forty wagons and all the poorest mules, all the sick men, about one hundred and fifty, together with twenty well ones to herd the mules and care for the sick.

From here two companies of soldiers were sent to Devils Lake in charge of Major Birch(?) (Hart) of the Seventh Minnesota. The rest of the command pushed on to the Missouri River, which took about four days. We encountered a party of fifteen hundred mounted Sioux Warriors about fifteen miles east of the river. They were out on a buffalo hunt. A party of four men consisting of a doctor named Wiseman, (?), a Lieutenant, and interpreter and an Indian scout named Chaska were sent under a flag of truce, and carry ing many presents to make a treaty with them. They refused to make treaty, shot and killed the doctor, the Lieutenant and the interpreter, and took Chaska prisoner. The Indians turned Chaska over to the Squaws, and they put poison in slits cut in his thumbs, thrust fivebrands in his flesh, and then literally cut him to pieces and threw him out on the prairies to the wolves. Then the mounted warriors would ride up and fire on the train, trying to stampede the stock, but the wagons had been drawn up in a circle with the stock inside. Outside was a guard of infantry, and farther out one of cavalry, who returned the fire of the Indians and drove them back. Finally they surrounded the Indians and drove them westward five or six miles where they took refuge in a dry lake bed. Rocks were piled around the edge of the lake, making a natural breast works.

(Note by Major Anders: The above account of the expedition and its progress from "Camp Pope" is so utterly at variance with historical fact that is worthless from a historical standpoint. Corrections cannot be made here. The reader or student is referred to West's Sibley's Life and Times; To Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars; Folwell's History of the State of Minnesota and to other reliable accounts of this campaign. In fact the account of Doctor Weiser's death, to the death of Chaska makes one who knows the facts wonder if Hart was not drawing on his imagination in order to impress some one.)

Captain Jones brought up his battery of eight guns and fired six rounds from each gun, the shells all landing in the lake bed. This started the Indians out, their ponies being with them in the lake bed. They fled to

to the Missouri River, where they tried to make a stand, at the point where Apple River empties into the Missouri just four miles below the present site of Bismarck. Here they tried to hold the soldiers back until the squaws and papooses had crossed the river. They were riding ponies, some ponies carrying a squaw and three or four papooses, they plunged into the water and swam across. Captain Jones once more turned his guns on the warriors, and they were obliged to take to the water. They entered the timber on the opposite side and tried to keep the soldiers from reaching the river to obtain water for themselves and stock, by firing across.

Once more Captain Jones brought his guns into action, threw a few shells across and they soon stampeded up the hill and disappeared. This was the last we ever saw of them. General Suully, coming from St. Louis with another army had expected to meet us here but he was two weeks late. It had been agreed that the army that reached the river first was to signal the other by firing rockets. This we did from the top of the highest hill for three nights, but receiving no answer, we turned back.

The property of the Indians left behind was gathered up, during the time we waited here and burned. It consisted of many tepees, one hundred and seventy five wagons and buggies, stolen from the Minnesota settlers and loaded with household goods, stolen from the same settlers, thirty tons of dried buffalo meat, and strangest of all, a new J. I. Case threshing machine separator which they had stolen in Minnesota, and hauled out there with oxen. No doubt they were attracted by its red color.

From here we went back to Camp Atkinson where we were met by Major Birch on his return from Devils Lake. While at Devils Lake Major Birch had captured the son of Chief Little Crow. From this Indian we received the first news we had had from home since we started out on our trip. There was an old Frenchman with our army who acted as drummer, and he had known the young Indian all his life. To him alone would the Indian boy talk. This is the story he told. Early in the spring of this year, 1863, Little Crow and his son and nine warriors had gone from their camp at Devils Lake where they had spent the winter and returned to Minnesota to steal horses, and also to get a large amount of jewelry they had stolen and left buried. They had all been killed by the settlers with the exception of this son. The nine warriors were killed first leaving Little Crow and his son. Near the town of Hutchinson, Minnesota, had lived a man named Lampson and his family. During the Indian outbreak they had left their home and taken refuge in Hutchinson, where they were still staying. Mr Lampson, one day in spring, took his two little sons and went out to his farm where his stock were confined in a pasture. While walking along the road they discovered Little Crow and his son picking strawberries. Mr Lampson and Little Crow both fired, but as they were both very much excited, neither bullet took effect. The little sons of Mr Lampson hid in the brush, and Mr Lampson jumped behind a big popular tree, standing near, from which he fired again. The bullet struck the stock of Little Crow's gun, glanced and passed thru his body killing him instantly. Believing more Indians to be near at hand, Mr Lampson and his sons hurried back to Hutchinson and told their story.

A party of twelve cavalrymen and some citizens took spades and went out to bury the dead Indian. They suspected it to be Little Crow, but were not sure, and hastily buried him. In the town was an old man named Davy Jones who had known Little Crow and who said he had a crooked wrist, caused by a knife cut in a fight, and also that his teeth were all molars. The next day they went back, dug up the body and brought it into town, where Davy Jones identified it



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as Little Crows body. His skull is in the Capitol at St. Paul at this time.

Little Crows son started back to Devils Lake to join his people. He had a very hard trip, but following the route taken by the soldiers, he was able to pick up food at the abandoned camps. He had taken his fathers shot gun as well as his own but becoming too weak to carry both, he hid his in a hollow log, near the present site of Valley City. At one time he was very hungry and had only one shell left in his gun. This last shell he shot at a wolf and wounded it but the wolf succeeded in reaching his hole. The young Indian sat down by the side of the hole and waited until it came out, then attacked it and killed it with his hunting knife. He suffered a severe wound in one leg from the claws of the wolf. He skinned and dressed the wolf, cut the flesh into strips, and stuck stick in the ground to dry it on. While waiting for the meat to dry, he was surprised and taken prisoner, by a party of scouts from Devils Lake, where two companies of soldiers were stationed (?). They took him back to Camp Atkinson where his wounds were dressed, his hair cut and his person thoroughly cleansed. From there he was sent to Fort Snelling where he was confined in jail until after the Civil War was closed. Then in company with several other Indian prisoners, he was sent out to Pine Ridge Indian Agency, west of the Missouri River in South Dakota, where they were given their freedom.

While the troops were resting at Camp Atkinson, a terrible storm arose one night, which blew all the tents down, tore the wagon cover off and stampeded the cattle, of which there were six hundred head. There were thirty cavalrymen with them, and they followed after. The cattle ran for six miles and there the storm passed on. This happened on Wednesday and the cattle recovered were not counted until Sunday, when it was found there were one hundred and fourteen missing. Scouts were sent out after them, but the prairie was dry and hard so it was found impossible to trail them. Later it was found that they had travelled straight back to Wankott, near which place they had been purchased, and were later recovered, with the exception of four head.

The trip back to Fort Snelling was begun on September 10th and the first night out two privates died. (Note; Folwell says the expedition reached Fort Snelling September 13th; West says that the Cheyenne was crossed on way back on August 13th. Fort Abercrombie August 21st. The Tenth Regiment was at Bank Center on September 2nd 1863. Major Anders) They were buried there on the prairie the next morning. The troops moved on leaving four men with a team and wagon to gather stones to cover the graves completely, to guard against the bodies being dug out by wolves. Before night these men again joined the army. At Fort Abercrombie a four days rest was taken, after which the march was resumed and on October 1st, Fort Snelling was reached. (Note; it is evident that Mr Hart is just about one month late in his dates beginning August 10th, Major Anders.) Here the men were given a seven days furlough and on October 7th they were ordered to report for service. The army had split at Sainesville Minnesota, the Tenth Regiment going to Fort Ridgely, and the Sixth and Seventh only going to Fort Snelling. After reaching Fort Ridgely, Colonel Jennison, went on to Fort Snelling to get permission to go south. The permission was given and on his return the regiment moved on to Fort Snelling, and on the way met the Sixth Regiment who were going back to Fort Ridgely. The Tenth Regiment dubbed the Sixth Regiment the home guards, a name they carried all thru the war. Just after leaving Fort Abercrombie, they came to a farm, where there were large quantities of potatoes and green corn. As the soldiers had had no vegetables for a long time, they were delighted to buy these things, and left the farmer with more money in his possession than he had seen in years. In July of this year three of Little Crow's men had come to this place, to steal this man's

James Hart.

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three horses. Early in the morning the old couple heard the horses running about the yard, and upon looking thru the window, saw the Indians chasing them. The old man had two guns and with one shot killed two of the Indians. Then his wife handed him the other gun, and he shot and killed the third. Fearing there were more Indians near the old couple dared not go out of the house. From the back of their cellar they had dug a trench, leading backward and upward, until it reached the surface of the ground, in a patch of brush some distance back of the house. They crawled out this trench into the brush and then thru the brush to the prairie, from which they saw the patrol coming. They signaled these soldiers by swinging their hats, and they went back to the house. Searched but found no more Indians and buried the dead ones. After reaching Fort Snelling we were furloughed for seven days, with orders to report for duty on October 7th.

James R. Hart was born at Beaver Dam Wisconsin May 30th 1845.

He died at Ellendale, North Dakota, April 28th 1927, and was buried at Ellendale.

Note by Major Anders, March 15th 1936; This is a most interesting narrative and would be valuable if the subject matter had been edited and the obvious errors eliminated. His account does not agree as to sequences of camps, dates of camps, location of camps and other material facts, recorded in official reports diaries and other sources of information. When it is noted that the Indians travelled nearly five hundred miles, over a country without roads, it does not seem likely or probable that they pulled a Case Threshing machine that far. However this is an inference and each must form his or her opinion as to the accuracy of the story. On the other hand there are many things in the story that agree with official history. Any one using this story in an attempt to obtain historical material should carefully compare with Folwell, West, Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars and other authorities, also the Reports in the War Department Records, more especially "War of the Rebellion, Official Records".