

"I Saw Them Hang Thirty-Eight Indians . . ."

Mrs. Marcia Doughty Pike, 68, long-time resident of Beaverton, Or., is probably the only person now living who witnessed the historic hangings of those 38 Sioux Indians 78 years ago.

Mrs. Pike, it will be noted, still speaks—as regards Indians—with the air and the belief of the early pioneers.

Long-Time Resident of Beaverton, as a Girl, Witnessed Last

Chapter of Famed Sioux Indian Incident in Mankato, Minn.

BY MARCIA DOUGHTY PIKE
as told to
MARY EVELYN YOUNG

IT WAS in the fall of 1862—in Mankato, Minn.—and when I was a girl of 10 years, that I witnessed the hangings of the 38 Annuity Sioux Indians who had been condemned for their atrocious participation in the massacre of white settlers. Thirty-eight savages paying dearly for their crimes! Seventy-eight years have passed, yet the imprint of that scene on my film of mind has never dimmed.

I saw the great crowd of outraged citizens as they gathered around the gallows, and I understood well the meaning of their cries of justified approval in what was about to take place. Those hangings, deplorable though they were, yet filled the hearts of the settlers with thankfulness and reverence to their God, for it marked the end of terror, waged by the hostile red men.

MASSACRE:

Had Preceded
The Executions

A boy-soldier who was standing near me watched intently the final arrangements. His own mother and brothers and sisters had been cruelly slain. His face was pale and quivering, but he gave a shout of righteous exultation as the drop fell and justice had carried. In my child-like sympathy, I reached for his hand and pressed it warmly. He seemed grateful. I never saw him after that day, but I trust he found his pathway not too thorny as he faced the world alone.

Before going on with my story of the executions, I must first recount something of the massacre.

On Monday morning, the 18th of August, 1862, a party of white settlers—citizens of New Ulm, Minn.—left that place to

recruit for volunteers under the call of President Lincoln for the union army in the south.

When some seven or eight miles west of New Ulm, they came across dead bodies of several white persons lying in the road. Becoming satisfied that it was the work of Indians, they turned to retrace their steps and give warning. While on their way back, a party of the savage monsters fired from ambush, killing several of the men. Those escaping, continued on to the village and gave the alarm.

The people from the surrounding country soon began pouring into the village, fleeing for their lives and bringing news of a general massacre in the country above and the country back of that point. Many of the feeling inhabitants had left members of their families murdered or in the hands of the savages. Some stopped in New Ulm, others fled to St. Peter and still others to points below.

An indescribable panic at once seized the populace of this hitherto quiet settlement. Many of them immediately sent their women and children to St. Peter for safety, and by midnight the stream of frightened fugitives was filling that place. However, many others of the citizens, including my father, deemed it no less safe in New Ulm. So we remained there.

Women and children were taken at once to hastily improvised fortresses in the center of the town. My brother and several of the younger children in our family of 13—together with a number of other families—were taken to what was called the fort. This was a sizable building, but, having no beds, we had to sleep on the floor—if at all.

Though stricken with utter panic as they fled from their homes, a few of the women yet had the presence of mind to seize a blanket or a quilt or perhaps a pillow or two—barely enough for needs of their own children, it may have been, yet somehow they managed to share with those souls who had been too frightened even to think, and had brought nothing. The spirit of Christian love which prevailed among these people was manifestly even greater in this, their hour of extreme peril. Guards were stationed outside these shelters.

Three of my brothers—Thom-

as, Frank and Martin Doughty—had enlisted in the regular army, and I was very proud to be their little sister. Strangely enough, it so happened that these three soldier brothers were among those patrolling the fort. But I did not know it at the time or I'm sure I would have felt safe indeed.

INDIANS:

Race About Country
Slaying Settlers

During all that night and the next day the Indians overran the country roundabout, murdering the inhabitants and burning their buildings, and late in the afternoon of Tuesday, a party of mounted Indians appeared on the outskirts of the town. Dismounting, they advanced at once upon the place. The people were panic-stricken and nearly helpless. Their firearms were, for the most part,

unfit for use in heavy fighting and they were in a seemingly hopeless condition. Fortunately for them, a party of well armed men—including soldiers—arrived from St. Peter and Nicollet.

All the vast region over which these savage monsters swept in their desolating march was abandoned by such of the inhabitants as survived, and in one week from the morning of August 18 all that scene of smiling beauty was reduced to utter desolation, and from a position of comfort and plenty those many thousands of fleeing fugitives became pitiful objects of misery and want.

During the entire week over all that wide region, the midnight sky was red with the lurid flames of burning buildings and stacks of grain and hay. Losses by fire were immense. The household goods of these people, including even their personal clothing, were either carried

away by the Indians or broken up and destroyed.

Finally, the participants in that savage massacre were captured and found guilty by a military court, instituted for that purpose. Then after the troops had gone into winter quarters and the campaign of 1862 was over, there arose the question whether all those condemned ought to suffer the extreme penalty of the law. Three hundred three red men had been condemned and recommended for capital punishment. These were confined at Camp Lincoln, awaiting further orders of the general government. The idea of executing 303 Indians, murderers though they were, aroused the sympathy of those who were far removed from the scenes of their inhuman butcheries, and President Lincoln was importuned beyond all reasonable bounds by interested friends for the release of these savages.

APPEALS:

Brought Reduction In Death Sentences

Had these red-skinned natives been engaged in open war, such as the law of races or of nations tolerate, their advocates might well have claimed for them the rights extended to prisoners of war. But these savages had declared no open war. They had secretly conspired against the lives of men, women and children in a time of peace when the hand of genuine friendship was extended for their relief. There is a wide difference between killing of men in open war and brutal massacre in time of peace. The former may be excused, or perhaps justified, while the latter must be condemned by every moral code entitled to the least consideration.

The tide of sympathy, however, rolled on and the persistent appeals to the president were finally successful. So, instead of 303 Indians condemned by military court, only 40 were to be executed. The sentence of one of these was afterwards commuted to the penitentiary and one died a natural death, leaving the number to be executed at 38.

These prisoners had been removed to apartments separate and distinct from the other Indians, and the death warrant was made known to them

through an interpreter—the Rev. Mr. Riggs, one of the Sioux missionaries. Through this interpreter Colonel Miller addressed the prisoners in substance as follows:

"The commanding officer at this place has called to speak to you upon a very serious subject this afternoon. Your Great Father at Washington, after carefully reading what the witnesses have testified in your several trials, has come to the conclusion that you have each been guilty of wantonly and wickedly murdering his white children and for this reason has directed that you each be hanged by the neck until you are dead, and that order will be carried into effect on next Friday at 10 o'clock in the forenoon. Good ministers, both Catholic and Protestant, are here and from among whom each of you can select your spiritual adviser, who will be permitted to commune with you constantly during the few days that you are yet to live."

The occasion was one of great solemnity, yet little emotion was manifested by these Indian prisoners. Only one, a half-breed named Mulford, seemed not so calloused and hardened, and he was the only one who evidenced any depression of spirit. All listened attentively, and at the conclusion of each sentence gave their usual signal of comprehension—"Ugh! Ughm!"

RESPONSE:

To Death Warrant Quite Feeble

At the reading of that portion of the warrant condemning them to be hung by the neck, the response was quite feeble, and was given by only two or three. Several of the condemned smoked their pipes during the reading, and one in particular when the time of execution was designated, quietly knocked the ashes from his pipe and filled it afresh with his favorite kinnikinnic, while another was slowly rubbing in his hands a pipeful of the same article, preparatory to a good smoke.

Finally, on the 25th of September, 1862, the time had come for the condemned Indians to march to the gallows which had been erected in Mankato. All during the time of necessary arrangements the prisoners kept up a mournful wail, but were or-

derly—even as the ropes were placed around their necks not the least resistance was offered. The white caps which had been placed on top of their heads were now drawn down over their faces, shutting out forever the light of day from their eyes.

Then ensued a scene never to be forgotten. Captain Burt hastily scanned all the arrangements for the execution and motioned to Major Brown, the signal officer, that all was ready. The signal bell sounded, there was one tap of the drum—then another, and the stays of the drop were knocked away. Only one detail remained! One tense second and then the rope was cut! With a sickening crash the drop fell and those 38 Indians passed together into eternity!

Although everything was conducted in the most orderly and quiet manner, yet as the drop fell the citizens could not repress a shout of righteous exultation.

The people who had gathered in great crowds and who maintained a degree of order that had hardly been anticipated, now quietly dispersed as the wagons bore the bodies of the murderers off to burial. However, few, I am sure, who had witnessed the awful scene would ever have voluntarily looked upon its like again.

That event of 78 years ago marked the turning point in the history of Indian troubles in Minnesota. Thereafter, the white settlers had less difficulty maintaining law and order within the tribal ranks. The red man's enmity gave way to friendliness and good will, and he came to know the white man as truly his benefactor. The gallows used at those historic executions is now in a museum in Mankato, Minn.

In 1869, seven years after that perilous summer and fall in the New Ulm country, Marcia Doughty, at the age of 17 years, married Alonzo Pike in Mankato, Minn. Shortly after that they moved to Oregon and located in the beautiful Tualatin valley. Mrs. Pike, now widowed, lives in Beaverton, which has been her home for 62 years. She is both the oldest and the longest-time resident in that city. Living alone, she derives much pleasure yet to be at the head of her own household, and possessed of a keen memory her friends also derive much pleasure in her narratives of early-day experiences.



Mrs. Marcia Doughty Pike of Beaverton. She recalls the day they hung 38 Indians at one time for the Minnesota massacres.

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away by the Indians or broken in and escape.

But the Indians were not the only ones who were executed. They were also executed by a military court. They were executed for that purpose. Then after the troops had gone into winter quarters and the campaign of 1862 was over, there arose the question whether all those condemned ought to suffer the extreme penalty of the law. Three hundred three red men had been condemned and recommended for capital punishment. These were confined at Camp Lincoln, awaiting further orders of the general government. The idea of executing 300 Indians murderers, though they were, aroused the sympathy of those who were far removed from the scenes of their inhuman butcheries and President Lincoln was importuned beyond all reasonable bounds by interested friends for the release of these savages.

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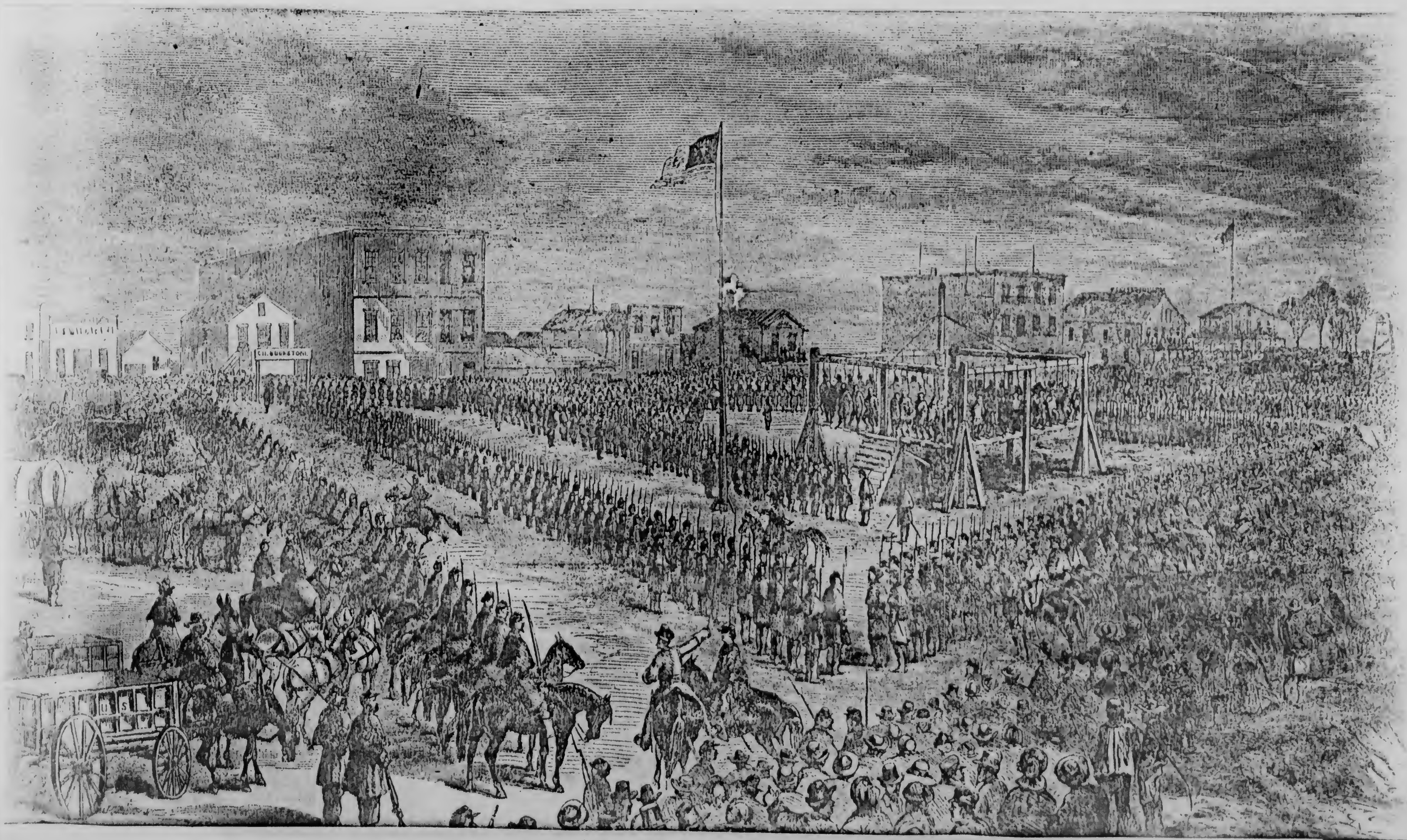
Mrs. Marcia Doughty Pike of Beaverton. She recalls the day they hung 38 Indians at one time for the Minnesota massacres.

THE SUNDAY OREGONIAN NOVEMBER

INTENTIONAL DUPLICATE EXPOSURE

DAKOTA CONFLICT OF 1862 MANUSCRIPTS COLLECTIONS
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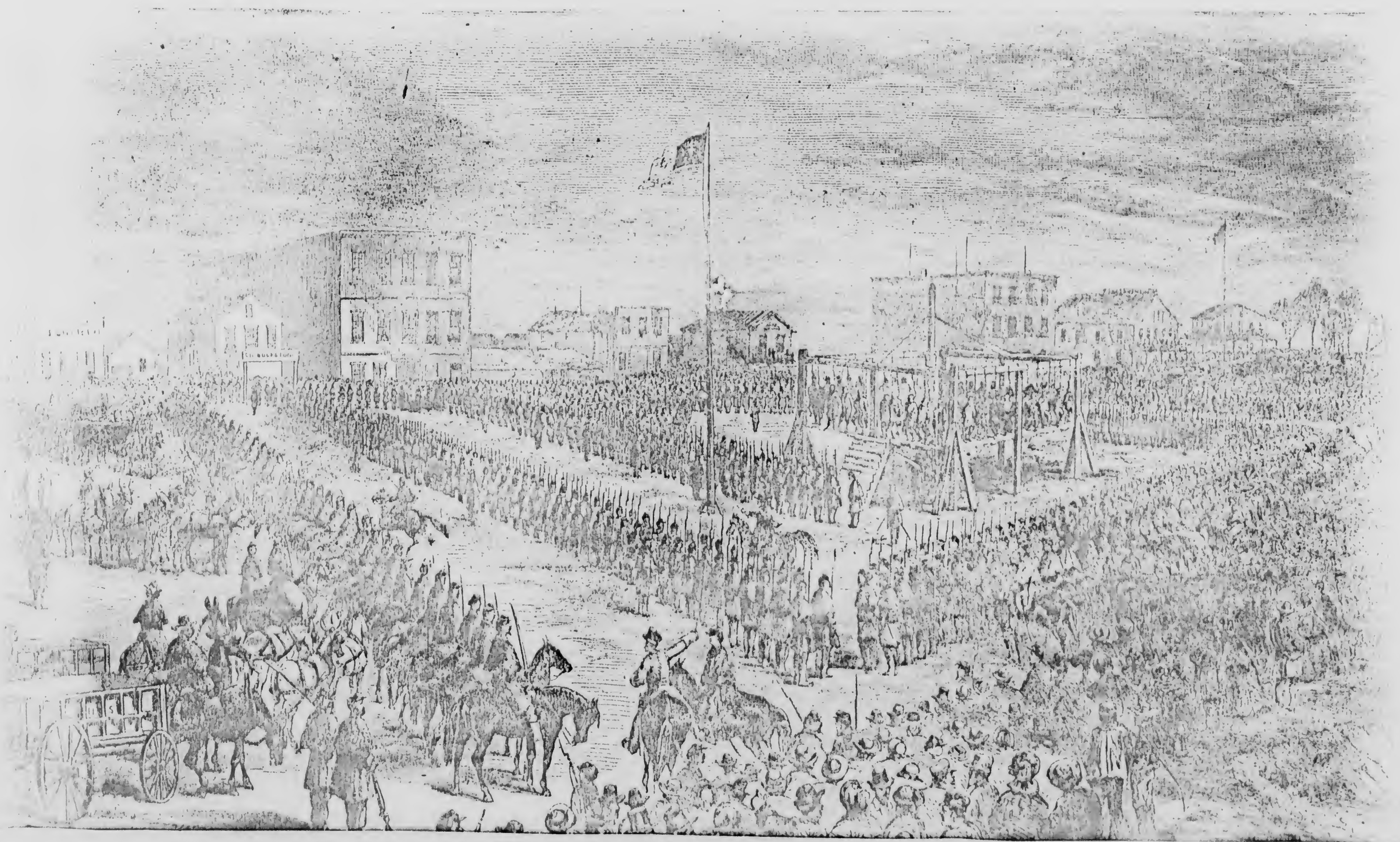


This pen and ink sketch of the Indian hanging appeared in a newspaper. It is one of Mrs. Marcia Doughty Pike's treasured keepsakes.

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