



FORT Snelling
and the Indian
agency, 1852

DETAIL FROM A PAINTING BY JAMES MC C. BOAL

The Fort Snelling Area in 1835

A CONTEMPORARY MAP

JAMES B. RHOADS

IN 1835 Lawrence Taliaferro, Indian agent at St. Peter's, at the junction of the Minnesota, or St. Peter's, and Mississippi rivers, drew a map of the adjoining area. It was prepared for his immediate superior, General William Clark, superintendent of Indian affairs in the West, with headquarters at St. Louis. Drawing upon intimate knowledge that resulted from sixteen years of residence in the area, Taliaferro located lakes, streams, and other physical features, and depicted in crude pictorial fashion the Indian villages, Fort Snelling, and various

other structures erected by white men in the vicinity.¹ Many of the latter had been built as a result of Taliaferro's own efforts during the years following 1819, when he made his first entry into the Minnesota country. Fortunately, the agent's crudely drawn map has been preserved, for it is an authoritative and important source of historical information on the site of the future city of Minneapolis. It is now to be found in the cartographic records branch

¹ The Taliaferro map discussed here was treated from a different point of view by Willoughby M. Babcock, the Minnesota Historical Society's curator of newspapers, in an article published in the *Minnesota Archaeologist*, 11:118-125 (October, 1945). Although the information here presented duplicates in part that presented by Mr. Babcock, the editors feel that since the *Archaeologist*, a mimeographed publication of the Minnesota Archaeological Society, is inaccessible to many of the readers of *Minnesota History*, they will find of interest and value this additional treatment of the subject. *Ed.*

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A member of an old Virginia family of Italian extraction, Taliaferro had served in the War of 1812 and held a first lieutenant's commission in the Third United States Infantry before going to the upper Mississippi. Immediately after the post later known as Fort Snelling was established in 1819, President James Monroe appointed the young army officer Indian agent for the St. Peter's area, which embraced the site of the army post. In this civilian capacity, he was charged with the regulation of the fur trade and the safeguarding of the interests and welfare of the Indians residing in the upper Northwest. Originally, he had jurisdiction over both Sioux and Chippewa, tribes long hostile to one another, but after 1827 his authority was confined to the Sioux of what is now southern Minnesota, and the Chippewa living to the north and east were attached to the agency in upper Michigan.

² The map, which measures 21 by 17 inches, is number 540 in the cartographic records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives. Another map of the same area, evidently made by Taliaferro for the explorer Joseph N. Nicollet in the late 1830s, is among the latter's papers in the Library of Congress in Washington. Some information given on the earlier map has been omitted, and certain other items have been added. The Minnesota Historical Society has copies of both maps.

³ For a sketch of Taliaferro and an evaluation of his role in the early history of the Minnesota country, see William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1:140-145 (St. Paul, 1921). Taliaferro's "Auto-Biography" appears in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 6:189-255 (St. Paul, 1894).

⁴ See Warren Upham, *Minnesota Geographic Names*, 231 (*Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 17—St. Paul, 1920); and Babcock, in the *Minnesota Archaeologist*, 11:124, 125. The latter offers an opinion that "From its apparent nearness to 'Six's Village' . . . and the fact that Little Falls Creek (Minnehaha) flows out of it, Lake Leavenworth may have been intended for Minnetonka, then but vaguely known." Grass Lake and Lake of the Woods are shown south of Lake Harriet on James L. Thompson's map of 1839, which is reproduced in Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:424. See also P. M. Dahl, *Plat Book of Hennepin County*, 3 (Minneapolis, 1898). The Taliaferro map in the Nicollet Papers shows two additional lakes—Lake Lucy east of Lake Abigail and Lake Eliza northwest of Lake Snelling.

Nevertheless, many of the Chippewa continued to float down the Mississippi to St. Peter's, where for two decades Taliaferro served as the "most important and influential civil official on the upper Mississippi." During all those years, his influence was widely felt in the wild frontier area that is now Minnesota, and while others came and went, their prestige rising and waning, he stayed on, effectively striving to maintain peace and promote agriculture among the red men, and at the same time to protect their interests as opposed to those of the traders.³

A glance at the map reproduced with this article provides ample proof that the "Major," as he was generally known, was not a cartographer. The scale is sadly distorted, as the table of distances in the lower right-hand corner proves. The Falls of St. Anthony and the village of Chief Six appear to be nearly equidistant from Fort Snelling, yet the table lists the distance to the falls as seven miles and to Six's village as twenty miles. The relative size of Pike Island, in the Mississippi below the mouth of the Minnesota, and of many of the lakes shown is grossly exaggerated; topography is depicted in at least three different ways; and Taliaferro's crude portrayal of buildings and trees is amusingly primitive. He indicates the ground plan of Fort Snelling, but sketches the exteriors of most other buildings and shows one house upside down and standing on its chimney. Although the map does not convey precise geographical information, it does provide considerable data of value to the historian.

Because of the distortion and the changes in place names, identification of the major natural features shown on Taliaferro's map is needed.⁴ Little Falls on the road from Fort Snelling to the Falls of St. Anthony is, of course, Minnehaha Falls, immortalized by Longfellow. Lake Calhoun, Lake Harriet, Lake of the Isles, and Powderhorn Lake are still known by their early names. Mud Lake is now called Lake Hiawatha.

Lake Amelia is Lake Nokomis, and Lake Snelling is Cedar Lake. The other lakes on Taliaferro's map cannot be identified positively in terms of present-day bodies of water. The tiny Rice Lake apparently no longer exists; Lake Abigail may be Diamond Lake or Mother Lake, which was drained early in the present century; and Lake Leavenworth could be Grass Lake or Wood Lake.

Essential to an understanding of the map's significance are the notations and explanatory text on the document. Since it is almost impossible to decipher them on the reproduction here presented, they are quoted below. On the left edge is a faint notation evidently placed there when the map was received at Clark's office in St. Louis. It reads: "No. 4—Map and Reports—Site of the Agency of St. Peters. Farms, houses, schools, and Post office &c. 1835. Taliaferro. Clark. 'St. Peters.'"

Below is a description in Taliaferro's own hand. He writes: "The Agency is $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile from Fort Snelling 44.54 north and fronting the St Peters, and the Mississippi at their junction and to which all communications intended for Said Agency may be addressed. At Lake Calhoun is the *Farmers Houses* and the Agricultural Establishment commenced in June 1828, for the Medawakanton Sioux as an experiment with two families At Lake Harriet may be Seen the foundation of a new work as a School and permanent village for the Indians, commenced this spring 1835. These two establishments are situated in the midst of a number of beautiful Lakes, and abounding in fish of almost every description for a Northern Climate. They are very contiguous to the Falls of S[t.] Anthony—the Little Falls say 3 & 4 miles and but $6\frac{1}{2}$ from the Agency and Fort Snelling. The face of the country is beautifully undulating, but mostly a level plain, intersperced with small Islands of timber, and the most even and beautiful Roads."

In the right-hand corner of the map is a table of distances which reads as follows:

From Fort Snelling to the Falls	
S[t.] Anthony	7 miles
To Lake Calhoun—Eaton Ville ..	$6\frac{1}{2}$
To Permanent Village L. Harriet ..	7
To Lake Snelling	$6\frac{3}{4}$
To Mud Lake	$3\frac{1}{2}$
To Little Falls [<i>Minnehaha</i>] Creek	$2\frac{1}{2}$
To Upper Trading Post	1
To Lower do do	$1\frac{1}{4}$
To Little Crows Village	9 by water
To the Black Dogs do	4 "
To Late [?] Penetions do	7 "
To the Sixes do	20 "
To Mt. Saujeaukee [<i>Pilot Knob?</i>]..	$1\frac{1}{4}$ "

Under the table Taliaferro goes on to explain that "The Red lines denote all the Main Roads to the Mills and to the different Lakes—and wood & Hay Roads and of Indian traces to & from their villages." He adds that "The Sum of \$400 for only 3 or 4 years out of the \$10,000 Civilization fund would make the Indians here independent. And \$500 for Education, to which they have been entitled Since the 15th of July 1830 by Treaty of Prairie du Chiens would support our School to advantage. This sum is enough with the main sum of \$400 in the incipient stages of my civilization movements—and not a sufficient temptation to a lazy Priest, or a greedy [person] expectant of gain."

THE FOCAL PORTION of the map is the area near the junction of the Minnesota and the Mississippi rivers. In the triangle between the rivers stood Fort Snelling and the Indian agency buildings, and across the Minnesota River, at what is now Mendota, was the American Fur Company post. Probably this is the "Lower Trading Post" of Taliaferro's table of distances. Fort Snelling, originally called Fort St. Anthony, was erected in the years following 1820. During the first two years of its construction, troops were temporarily stationed on the present site of Mendota and, during the summers, at Camp Coldwater, near the spot indicated on the map as Benjamin F. Baker's trading post. This doubt-

less is the "Upper Trading Post" of Taliaferro's table.⁵

With its stone walls and buildings dominating a bluff overlooking the rivers' junction, Fort Snelling must have deeply impressed the nomadic Indians. To it and to the near-by agency went large numbers of Indians who learned to appreciate the largess of the white man. Looking to the fort also for protection were several hundred refugees from the Red River Settlement, white and half-breed civilians many of whom in 1835 were squatting on the military reservation, especially in the vicinity of Baker's post. Military officers stationed at Fort Snelling well understood the need for the base. Major John Bliss, commandant in the 1830s, for example, wrote to General Clark as follows: "From my own observation & information of the position & comparative advantages of this district of country in its situation, soil, climate & productions I should suspect that many years must elapse under the most favourable circumstances before its increase of population would supersede the necessity of a military post for its protection."⁶

The council house shown on the map near the agency and described as "unfinished" was being built to replace an earlier one erected in July, 1823, at Taliaferro's instigation. The original building was erected by soldiers from the fort, and according to Taliaferro, most of the inside work was completed at his own expense. He described the two-story building as "82 feet long—18 feet wide" with a "basement of stone," an upper story containing six rooms constructed of weather-boarded logs, "a 70

foot piazza in front," and brick chimneys. The rooms were "lined and sealed with fine plank," and the center part of the building was "in hexagon form." This structure burned to the ground shortly after midnight on August 14, 1830. Taliaferro reported to General Clark that when the fire "was discovered from the Fort" the building was "too far consumed for us to arrest progress of the flames, or to save any portion of the public property." He added: "The general impression here is, that fire was put to the house by some drunken Indian."⁷

Of the buildings shown within an enclosure designated "Agency" near the council house in the center of the map, one was certainly the agent's house and a second may well have been the "armorer's shop," where blacksmith work was done. In 1830 Taliaferro reported that the agent's house cost seventy-five dollars and was "put up by the Troops, but not finished and come into my possession in the spring of 1828. . . . This building is entirely of stone—

MAJOR *Lawrence Taliaferro*



⁵ Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:137 and n. 19; Babcock, in *Minnesota Archaeologist*, 11:125.

⁶ Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:217, n. 10; Bliss to General William Clark, April 30, 1835, among the records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, St. Peters Indian Agency File, National Archives. Unless otherwise noted, all letters and reports cited are in this file.

⁷ Taliaferro, "Property of the Agency of St. Peters," a report dated January 21, 1830; Taliaferro to Clark, August 17, 1830.

The building between the agency and the fort, designated as the "Treaty Shop" on Taliaferro's map, doubtless was erected after the treaty of Prairie du Chien was signed on July 15, 1830. Article 4 of that document provided for a blacksmith and the necessary equipment for his shop. The smithy was probably in very bad repair when Taliaferro drew his map, for he had requested funds to build a new blacksmith shop as early as the fall of 1834, and on July 4 of the following year he reported that "The Smiths Shop is now unfit for further use, and requires to be removed, and rebuilt which under Treaty provisions can be done at a small expense." In the late autumn he submitted to General Clark specifications and a drawing of a proposed building to be used as "a house for the Treaty Smith," with "a shop and Coal House attached, and under the same roof."¹⁰ The proposed structure was "to be built of logs, with shingled roof" at an estimated cost of a hundred and twenty-

¹⁰ United States, *Statutes at Large*, 7:328; Taliaferro to Clark, July 4, October 31, 1835.

five dollars. Taliaferro added that the site of the new building "will be within 20 paces of the old Council House and 100, or less from the Agents Office, sufficiently convenient for his constant observation."

Somewhat removed from the fort itself, but connected with it by a road, were the "Public Mills" on the west bank of the Mississippi at the Falls of St. Anthony, which appear in the extreme upper right-hand corner of Taliaferro's map. They consisted of a sawmill and a flour or grist mill, both of which were operated by the federal government. The sawmill was erected in 1821 and 1822 by soldiers attached to the fort, and was equipped with a "quick acting upright saw," popularly known as a "muley-saw." The building measured about fifty by seventy feet. The flour mill, housed in a building about sixteen or eighteen feet square, was built and fitted in 1823. The third structure shown at the falls was erected to provide quarters for the "sergeant and eight or ten men who had charge of things" there for the government.¹¹

Across the Minnesota River, on the site of present-day Mendota, Taliaferro shows the "Am. Fur Cpy. Post, 1825." The date refers to the year when the trading post was established. In 1835, when the map was made, the New Hope post, as it was then known, consisted only of a few log houses. Henry H. Sibley, who took charge for the American Fur Company in 1834, began in the following year to erect the "substantial and commodious stone dwelling" which still stands at Mendota.¹² It is not, however, shown on the map.

NEAR THE upper edge of the map, Taliaferro locates Lakes Calhoun and Harriet, two points of early contact between whites and Indians. Both are now in the city of Minneapolis. Along the southeastern shore of Lake Calhoun Taliaferro indicates the "Agricultural Establishment" mentioned in the text with his map—a project very close to his heart. Believing as he did that the Indian must be civilized before he

could be Christianized, Taliaferro had in 1828 persuaded a few Sioux families to cease their nomadic life and settle down at Lake Calhoun in the neighborhood of Cloudman's village to learn agriculture. This settlement he called Eatonville, for Secretary of War John H. Eaton. Writing to him in 1830 to appeal for funds for his "little colony of agriculturists," Taliaferro described its progress. "During the summer of last year," he said, "three men were employed for the purpose of collecting materials for a log village, and also for a house for the protection of the property belonging to the Indians generally who might submit to become cultivators of the soil." He went on to tell the secretary that "six or eight hundred dollars would mature what has happily been begun."¹³

When Samuel and Gideon Pond, two young New Englanders who were intent on civilizing and converting Indians, arrived at Fort Snelling in May, 1834, Taliaferro saw in them the qualities needed to make a success of the Lake Calhoun venture. Since they possessed some knowledge of agriculture and a sincere desire to help the Indians, Taliaferro encouraged them to settle on Lake Calhoun. On December 2, 1835, he wrote General Clark requesting permission "to retain the Services of Samuel and Guedion [*sic*] Pond, at the special desire of all the Indians" residing in the Lake Calhoun colony. The rectangles and trapezoids shown on Taliaferro's map near Lake Calhoun evidently represent fields under cultivation. The upside-down building to the right of the fields is doubtless intended to indicate the location of the cabin built by the Pond brothers in 1834 on the east bank of the lake. This two-

¹¹ Edward A. Bromley, "The Old Government Mills at the Falls of St. Anthony," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 10:636, 639 (1905); Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:140.

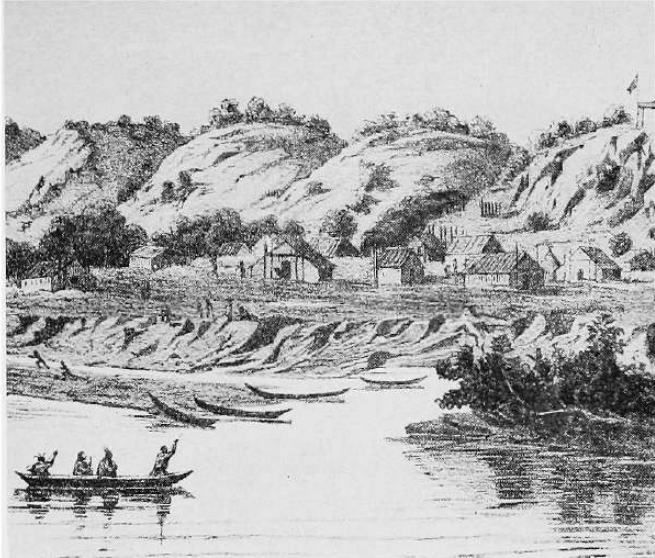
¹² Theodore C. Blegen, ed., *The Unfinished Autobiography of Henry Hastings Sibley*, 35 (Minneapolis, 1932).

¹³ Taliaferro to Eaton, February 23, 1830; Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:185.

room structure of oak logs measured twelve by sixteen feet.¹⁴

On the shore of near-by Lake Harriet, Taliaferro sketched the Sioux mission school, where another attempt was made in the 1830s to instill in the Indians the virtues of industry, sobriety, and Christian meekness. A mission was established in the summer of 1835 by the Reverend Jedediah D. Stevens, working in collaboration with the Pond brothers. Stevens, a Protestant clergyman, who was sponsored by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, opened two schools for Indian and mixed-blood children on the northwestern shore of the lake. In the text on his map, Taliaferro refers to the Lake Harriet project as the "foundation of a new work as a School and permanent village for the Indians." At the time the map was prepared, the grand array of buildings he sketched probably existed only on paper, although a mission house had been started. Samuel Pond worked, none too harmoniously, with Stevens until 1839, when the latter was transferred to another station and Pond took charge at Lake Harriet. Before the end of the year, however, the Indians moved to a new location, and the mission projects at Lakes Harriet and Calhoun were abandoned.¹⁵

These Indians located at Oak Grove on the Minnesota River, not far from other Mdewankanton Sioux villages indicated along that stream on Taliaferro's map. "Six's Village," in the upper right-hand corner of the map, was near the present site of Shakopee. The chief of the band was known by that name as well as by the name of Six. Although the distance is not



FROM LEWIS' MISSISSIPPITHAL

LITTLE Crow's village

correctly indicated on the map, Taliaferro notes that the village was twenty miles from Fort Snelling, which is fairly close to the actual mileage. Moving downstream, seven miles from the post, he shows "Penetion's Village." The chief there was usually known as Pinichon, and the whites called him Good Road. Still farther east, four miles from the fort, Taliaferro locates "Black Dog's Village." East and south of the fort, on the Mississippi, he shows "Little Crow's Village." This community, usually known as Kaposia, was near the present site of South St. Paul.¹⁶

HUNDREDS of other maps of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area have been prepared, a few before and many after Taliaferro's cartographic venture of 1835. Most of them offer a far more exact portrayal of physical features and give more accurate locations for buildings, villages, and missions. Major Taliaferro, nevertheless, did posterity a real service by capturing on paper a graphic record of the area as it was in 1835. In the hundred and twenty-one years that have since elapsed, change has followed change with increasing rapidity, but this primitive map provides a glimpse of the almost unsullied land as it looked before the white man in his westward march broke the soil and built great cities.

¹⁴ For an account of the arrival of the Pond brothers and their early work among the Indians at Lake Calhoun, see Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:183-187. Folwell also describes the Ponds' cabin.

¹⁵ Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:189, 193-196.

¹⁶ E. D. Neill, "Dakota Land and Dakota Life," and "Pike's Explorations in Minnesota," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 1:262-264, 380 n. (1872); Frederick W. Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians*, 1:826-828, 2:521 (Washington, 1912).



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