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MINNESOTA'S FRONTIER

A Neglected Sector of the Civil War

WILLOUGHBY M. BABCOCK

A HUNDRED and one years ago this summer, the new state of Minnesota, while giving enthusiastic support to the Union in the Civil War, was suddenly confronted with the additional burden of suppressing a major Indian uprising within its borders. From mid-August until early September, 1862, the task of defending the Minnesota frontier fell to the state, which mustered a mixed force of volunteer militia and new recruits under the command of Henry H. Sibley, a fur trader without previous military experience. While these hastily gathered, untrained soldier-citizens were advancing slowly up the Minnesota Valley in pursuit of the Sioux commanded by Chief Little Crow, state officials frantically appealed for help from the federal government. Hard-pressed in its fight against the Confederacy, Washington did not respond until early September. From that time on Minnesota's Sioux Uprising became officially a sector of the Civil War, and responsibility for its prosecution shifted from state officials to the war department.

Minnesota's appeals for help met with little more than shrugs in Washington until Governor Alexander Ramsey addressed a hard-hitting telegram to Abraham Lincoln on September 6. "This is not our war;" he told the president bluntly, "it is a national war."¹ In response to Ramsey's curt wire,

the war department immediately appointed Major General John Pope as commander of a newly created "Department of the Northwest," comprising Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and the territories of Dakota and Nebraska, with headquarters in St. Paul. He was instructed to "take such prompt and vigorous measures as shall quell the hostilities and afford peace, security, and protection to the people."²

The military problem confronting Pope was twofold: to strike at the center of Sioux power, while at the same time protecting the lives and property of settlers along the frontier. Sibley's small army of ill-equipped foot soldiers had relieved Fort Ridgely, survived a disastrous ambush at Birch Coulee, and continued to threaten the main Sioux force. In Minnesota as elsewhere, however, Indian warfare was closely akin to guerrilla fighting. The chiefs had little real control over their warriors, and raiding groups spread out in many directions from the principal field of operations. Over five hundred people had already been killed, and murders continued to occur in rapid succession along the whole western frontier and well to the rear of Sibley's line of advance. It was

¹ *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:225 (St. Paul, 1892).

² *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:225.

therefore necessary to provide for the protection of settlers in hamlets and on isolated farms throughout the vast extent of woodland and prairie from St. Cloud and the Mississippi on the northeast to Fort Abercrombie on the Red River, and south to the Iowa border.

Further complicating the problem was the fact that terror of Indians, real or imagined, reigned everywhere in the threatened area. On August 23 it was reported from Glencoe that "400 women and children" were "gathered there from the surrounding towns. The nearest any Indians had been to that place was within eight miles . . . and they did not seem warlike." The home guard had been called out for protection, and "every able bodied man capable of bearing arms had not been permitted to pass, but compelled to take up arms."³ At Monticello a wild rumor of Indians reached the town in the middle of the night. The women and children were aroused and taken to the hotel, and "men ran in every direction for guns, pitchforks, &c.," though no one had seen an Indian.⁴

Nor did the panic stop there. Fear that the Chippewa Indians in the upper St. Croix Valley and the Gull Lake region of northern Minnesota would join in the outbreak was widespread, and throughout northern Wisconsin and as far east as Milwaukee towns were stockaded and home guard companies went out on patrol duty. The *St. Paul Daily Press* for August 26, 1862, reported that the people along the St. Croix were "coming into the towns in the wildest terror in consequence of reports regarding the Chippewas up in the woods of Wisconsin . . . and the people of Hudson have united in a petition to the Governor of Wisconsin for firearms, &c., for the protection of the border. The excitement has since extended to Sunrise above Taylor's Falls. . . . Even so near St.

Paul as Rice Lake and Little Canada, the settlers were skeddaddling and coming into town with the wildest of stories about the doings of the Chippewa."

Farther north such fears had some justification, for the warlike band of Chief Hole-in-the-Day assumed a threatening attitude, and on August 18 the Chippewa agent, Lucius C. Walker, reported that the warriors were collecting at Gull Lake and talking of an attack upon the agency near Crow Wing. Walker withdrew to Fort Ripley, and many residents of the region also took refuge within the post. There they molded bullets by candlelight and prepared for a desperate defense. Hole-in-the-Day was mollified, however, and no Chippewa outbreak took place.⁵

In southern Minnesota apprehension centered not only on the Sioux but also on the Winnebago, whose reservation south of Mankato was near the area of hostilities, and whose culture and tribal stock were closely akin to those of the Sioux. The Winnebago were strongly suspected of giving support to the Sioux in their war to drive the whites from the Minnesota Valley. On August 28 Captain Alonzo J. Edgerton arrived at the Winnebago Agency with a company of a hundred men and wrote to Governor Ramsey that he "found great alarm existing here among the whites and half-breeds."⁶

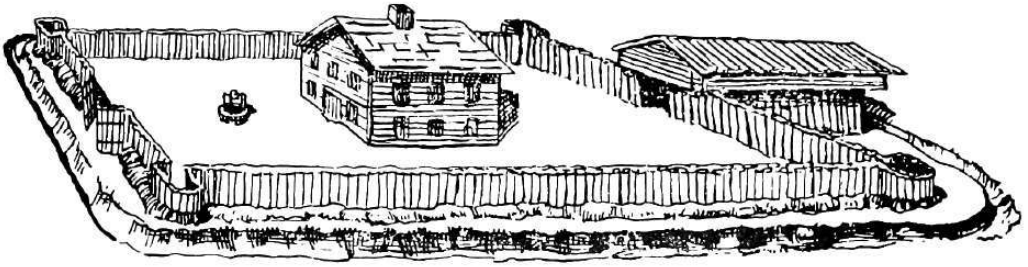
TO ALLAY the panic, companies of volunteers or recruits from Fort Snelling were dispatched by state officials as quickly as possible to garrison communities in the threatened areas. To oversee the troops Governor Ramsey established regional commands. Protection of the southwest frontier, from New Ulm south to the Iowa line, was entrusted to Judge Charles E. Flandrau, who had led the townspeople of New Ulm in their second successful stand against the Sioux. On August 28 Ramsey authorized Flandrau to "take such measures as in his judgment he may deem advisable to secure that portion of our frontier and restore confidence to the settlers." He was to "employ such persons, organize such military com-

³ *St. Paul Daily Press*, August 23, 1862.

⁴ *Press*, August 30, 1862.

⁵ William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 2:374 (St. Paul, 1961).

⁶ *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:209.



THE stockade erected at Forest City in 1862

panies and to use such means as may be necessary for the objects." Flandrau was further given control of any companies Sibley might detail to the region and was instructed to report to the latter as his commander. His area included the Winnebago reservation which was not far from his headquarters at South Bend, now a part of Mankato.⁷

John H. Stevens of Glencoe, who had done good work in organizing defenses in McLeod County, was given temporary regional command over the central area. He was succeeded in mid-September by Captain Richard Strout of the Tenth Minnesota.⁸ On September 5 Colonel Francis R. Delano was authorized to advise and direct the movements of "all officers in command of any troops in the St. Croix Valley."⁹

During the last days of August, 1862, one special order after another had poured out of the Minnesota adjutant general's office, dispatching troops, supplies, munitions, equipment, and horses to points of maximum danger, and authorizing the raising of desperately needed volunteer companies of "mounted infantry."¹⁰ These were to be part of the First Regiment of Mounted Rangers, called for by the adjutant general under authorization from Washington. Each volunteer was asked to furnish his own horse, equipment, and arms until such time as the United States could supply these items. The pay was to be the same as that of other mounted troops, plus a dollar per day for subsistence and risk to the horse.¹¹

Meanwhile Minnesota settlers had not been idle. Gathering for protection in the larger towns, they quickly set to work erect-

ing rude fortifications. These varied in character and efficiency. Some were log stockades, others mere earthworks. In St. Peter a cordwood barricade was set up "around the principal portion of the town," but the editor of the *St. Peter Tribune* commented that "after a careful inspection of this work, we are unable to say which is the safest, inside or out."¹²

At Maine Prairie in Stearns County an isolated band of settlers built a sturdy two-story fort with a double row of timbers, and defenders of nearby St. Joseph erected three pentagonal blockhouses. Timber stockades at Hutchinson and Forest City did good service early in September during attacks by a raiding band of Sioux. Similar small forts erected by the citizens of Sauk Centre and St. Cloud were not put to the test, nor did the citizens of Little Falls have to defend their hastily barricaded courthouse. Along the southwestern frontier Flandrau's

⁷ *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:208; Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:169.

⁸ Adjutant General of Minnesota, *Reports*, 1862 (Appendix), p. 277, 293; *Press*, August 23, 1862.

⁹ Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1862 (Appendix), p. 287.

¹⁰ In Civil War parlance, the term "mounted infantry" applied to troops equipped with infantry weapons who fought on foot, though using horses for quick movement. "Cavalry" on the other hand were trained to fight on horseback and were equipped with sabres and carbines.

¹¹ *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:199; Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1862 (Appendix), p. 241, 247, 251. Subsequent orders transferred most of the costs of the members to the account of the federal government. Many of the men who had first volunteered as irregular militia joined the regiment later under the prospect of pressure from the draft. Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1863, p. 141-143.

¹² *St. Peter Tribune*, September 20, 1862.

men were engaged in erecting "six substantial fortifications, and other defensive works of less magnitude." Starting at New Ulm these eventually extended down the Minnesota River to South Bend and up the Blue Earth to the Iowa line, with advance posts at Madelia and Fairmont.¹³

On September 9, addressing a special session of the Minnesota legislature, Governor Ramsey outlined the widespread defensive measures that had already been taken to secure the frontier in the rear of Sibley's expedition. A total of 2,150 troops plus "several hundred irregular mounted men" were scattered at various points along the "whole Indian border . . . from Chengwatana [*Pine City*], in the St. Croix valley, to Crow Wing, on the Mississippi, and thence to Fort Aber-

¹³ Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1862, p. 86-91; *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:266; Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:169.

¹⁴ "Message of Governor Ramsey to the Legislature of Minnesota, September 9, 1862," 7, in *Minnesota, Executive Documents*, 1862.

¹⁵ "Message of Governor Ramsey," 6, in *Executive Documents*, 1862.

crombie, on the Red River, and all along the frontier exposed to Sioux depredations, from the Sauk valley, southward, via Fort Ridgely to the Iowa line." Of these, some five hundred were assigned to Flandrau in the southwest. In addition, Ramsey reported, citizens of the threatened areas had been issued "1,056 stand of arms, 3,175 pounds of powder, 1200 pounds of lead, and 88 sacks of shot" — all that "could be obtained from any quarter."¹⁴

THE FIRST outside aid to reach the state came on September 4, when troops of the Third Minnesota arrived from St. Louis.¹⁵ They were on parole, following their surrender and subsequent exchange for Confederate prisoners, and they had been ordered to Minnesota as soon as news of the outbreak reached Washington. Since they were the only seasoned troops available, Ramsey sent the majority of them up the Minnesota to reinforce Sibley. A group of about sixty, however, were retained for service along the stage route from St. Cloud to Fort Aber-

THE Sauk Centre stockade as it appeared in 1864



crombie, a vital link in the strategic and profitable line of communication between St. Paul and the Red River Settlement. Keeping this line open was a matter of major concern to St. Paul business interests.¹⁶

On September 11, therefore, the veterans of the Third Minnesota and two companies of recruits from Fort Snelling, all commanded by Captain Emil Buerger, set out for St. Cloud. Along the way they were joined by other troops, and when the force reached Fort Abercrombie on September 23 after a laborious march, it numbered better than four hundred men. Three days later a brief attack by the Sioux was successfully repulsed, and on September 30 a group of civilian refugees left the fort under a military escort which included the men of the Third Minnesota. They reached St. Cloud safely, and thereafter supplies were sent through regularly to Fort Abercrombie under heavy guard. Along with the military supply wagons went an even larger number

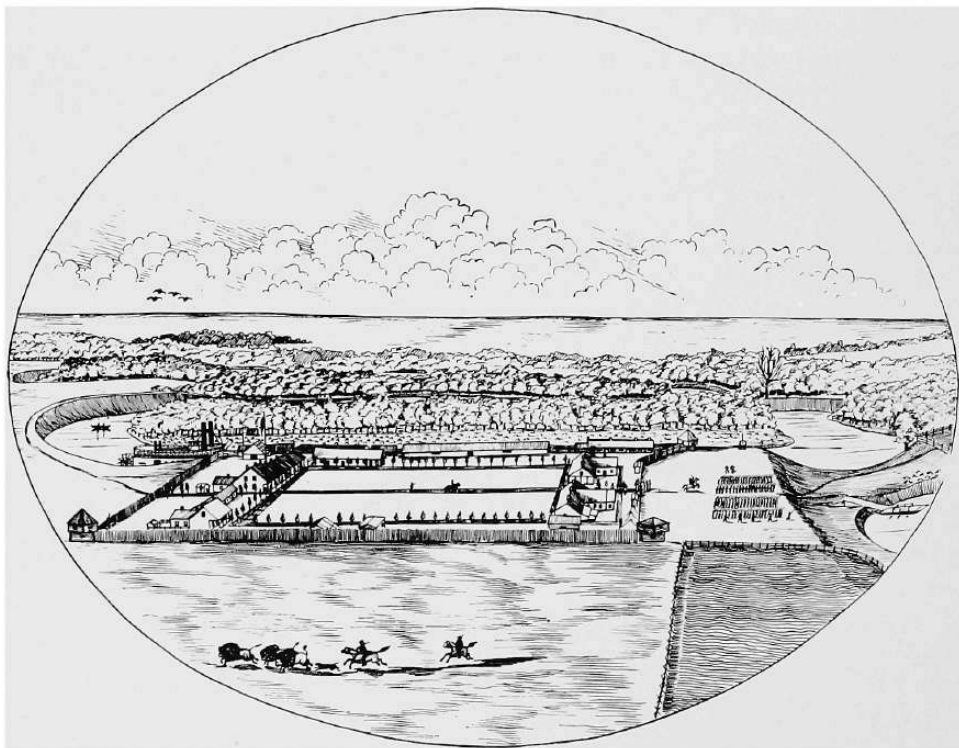
of vehicles owned by St. Paul's Burbank and Company, which held a lucrative contract to transport Hudson's Bay Company goods from St. Paul to Pembina. As time went on, escort duty on the road was divided into sectors, one contingent going from St. Cloud to Sauk Centre, and another from there to Alexandria, where the train would be met by a force from Fort Abercrombie.¹⁷

General Pope arrived in St. Paul on September 16, and the forces hitherto commanded by the state authorities were immediately placed under his control. His first action was to requisition troops from Wisconsin and Iowa and to place an order

¹⁶ Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1862 (Appendix), p. 286, 288-290; *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:230, 294; Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:165.

¹⁷ Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:167; Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1862, p. 500; *St. Cloud Democrat*, October 9, November 6, 1862. See also William M. Goetzinger, "Pomme de Terre: A Frontier Outpost in Grant County," in *Minnesota History*, 38:63-71 (June, 1962).

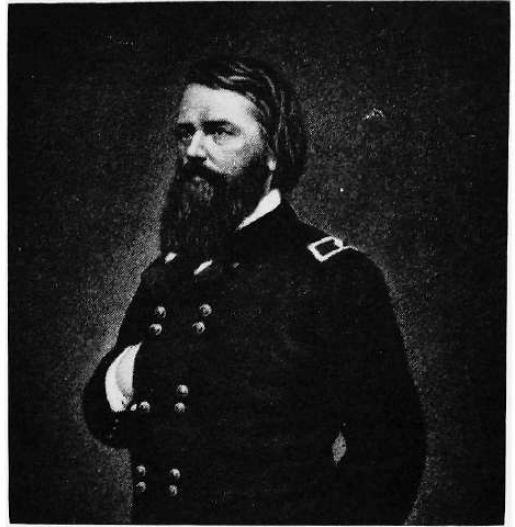
FORT Abercrombie



for 2,500 horses, as "we can do nothing against mounted Indians with footmen."¹⁸

On the following day he wrote to Sibley, confirming the Minnesotan as commander of the Indian expedition and outlining his own plans for a strong defense perimeter. "We can get no cavalry," he wrote, "but I will send 1,000 mounted men as rapidly as I can." To keep open the vital stage route, he proposed to "place 1,000 men (500 mounted) at Abercrombie, 500 mounted men at Otter Tail, [and] 1,000 men at Ripley." A thousand more, half infantry and half mounted, would be placed at Crystal Lake between the Winnebago and the Sioux. He assured Sibley that he hoped further to "put out at once expeditions into Dakota along the Big Sioux and farther west, so as to push the Yankton Sioux at the same time you are dealing with those in front of you."¹⁹

Though not a military man, Sibley knew the country and the difficulty of organizing raw troops. He frankly doubted if the latter part of this ambitious plan could be accomplished so late in the season, and events proved him right.²⁰ Within four days after receiving Pope's letter, Sibley met the main body of the Sioux and defeated them at the battle of Wood Lake. This brought an end to organized warfare by the Indians within the boundaries of Minnesota, but the problem of sporadic raids, murders, and guerrilla fighting carried on by red men based far out on the Dakota plains was to continue for another three years.



GENERAL John Pope

IN WASHINGTON, meanwhile, Pope's first demands evoked a terrific outburst from General Henry W. Halleck. Answering him on September 23, Pope outlined the situation in Minnesota, where there were "including one Wisconsin regiment, about 4,000 men" plus some 1,200 unarmed volunteers and "not a wagon, mule, or horse belonging to the United States."²¹

The Wisconsin regiment referred to by Pope was the Twenty-Fifth, composed of mounted infantry and commanded by Colonel Milton Montgomery, who was ordered to relieve Flandrau as commander of the southwestern sector. On September 20 Pope had assigned it to stations as follows: one company at Sauk Centre; two companies each at Paynesville, Acton, and New Ulm; one company at Leavenworth; one at Fairmont; one at Winnebago City; two companies, already at Forest City, to go to Greenleaf, with a half company at Manannah; and one company, already stationed at Hutchinson, to move to Buffalo Creek and take post near "Two Lakes," ten miles southwest of Hutchinson.²²

The Wisconsin Twenty-Fifth and the Twenty-Seventh Iowa Infantry, which arrived on October 13, were the only regular troops from outside the state that Pope could obtain. With their coming, however, the

¹⁸ *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:232; Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1862, p. 67.

¹⁹ *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:233.

²⁰ *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:236.

²¹ *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:238.

²² The assignments are listed in Pope's General Orders No. 3, which was published in the *Press* and other Minnesota newspapers. It appears in the issue of September 23 and for several days thereafter. The post at "Two Lakes" must have been in the vicinity of Lakes Preston and Allie in Renville County. Early settlers in the area could recall seeing evidences of a fortified camp along the shore of Preston Lake. A similar ruin reported on the shore of nearby Buffalo Lake was probably the remains of a post built in 1863. (See below, p. 283.) See Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, *The History of Renville County*, 1:553 (Chicago, 1916).

Minnesota adjutant general on October 14 directed "all companies of troops and other military organizations in the volunteer State Militia, organized for the purpose of serving within the State only . . . to retire from the active service" unless retained by special orders.²³

The stay of the Wisconsin and Iowa troops proved short, for in early winter, just before the closing of navigation on the Mississippi, they along with the Third Minnesota were sent south. The burden of defending the frontier was left to the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Minnesota Volunteers, and the First Regiment of Minnesota Mounted Rangers.²⁴

At the end of 1862 these troops were stationed as follows: The Sixth Minnesota under Colonel William Crooks had five companies at Fort Snelling, three at Glencoe, one at Forest City, and one at Kingston. The Seventh, commanded by Colonel Stephen A. Miller, had its headquarters at Mankato, where four companies were stationed, with one company each at Fairmont, Tivoli (probably the Winnebago Agency), Winnebago City, Fort Abercrombie, Madelia, and South Bend. The Eighth, with headquarters at Fort Ripley to guard the stage route, was under Colonel Minor T. Thomas, and had four companies at that post, and one each at Chippewa Agency, Manannah, Little Falls, Fort Abercrombie, Sauk Centre, and Chippewa Station. Colonel Alexander Wilkin's Ninth Minnesota had companies at Hutchinson, St. Peter, Judson, Fort Abercrombie, Glencoe, and Butternut Valley, in addition to four at Fort Ridgely. The Tenth, under Colonel James H. Baker, was based at Le Sueur and was even more scattered, having two companies at the Winnebago Agency, two at Henderson, and one each at Garden City, Fort Ridgely, Le Sueur, Swan City, and Norway Lake. Colonel Samuel McPhail's First Minnesota Mounted Rangers had units at Paynesville, Richmond, Sauk Centre, New Ulm, Sunrise, and Fort Ridgely, as well as three companies each at Fort Snelling and St. Peter. A body of scouts,

mainly mixed-bloods and friendly Indians, headed by Major Joseph R. Brown and Gabriel Renville, kept Sibley informed of possible trouble along the western frontier.²⁵

THE MINNESOTA VALLEY campaign and the energetic defensive measures behind the troops left conditions reasonably quiet during the winter of 1862-63. Little Crow, however, was reported to be working among the Sisseton and Yankton Sioux of the upper Missouri Valley in preparation for further warfare. When weather conditions permitted, therefore, the troops busied themselves strengthening or rebuilding the fortifications which had been raised by local defenders at most of the outposts.

A circular sent in early February, 1863, to the various commanding officers instructed them "that if no sufficient defensive work has been prepared at the post under your command, you proceed forthwith to construct a bullet proof stockade at least nine feet high which [will] serve not only for defense, but as a place of refuge to families in the neighborhood in case of attack by Indians." Where pickets for building a stockade were unavailable, "the defences must be made of earth or logs of sufficient height."²⁶

Pope and Sibley hoped to organize a second major offensive against the Sioux in early summer. Like Pope's abortive plan of the previous year, it called for a pincer movement of two forces. One under Sibley, largely infantry, was to march up the Minnesota Valley from the Fort Ridgely area, timing its

²³ *Press*, October 13, 14, 1862; Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1862, p. 255, 459. Two Brown County companies and one volunteer unit of Mounted Rangers were retained. *Reports*, 1862 (Appendix), p. 248, 298, 305.

²⁴ Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1862, p. 67.

²⁵ Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1862, p. 159; Gabriel Renville, "A Sioux Narrative of the Outbreak in 1862, and of Sibley's Expedition in 1863," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 10, part 2, p. 611-613; *St. Peter Tribune*, February 13, 1863.

²⁶ Rollin C. Olin, Assistant Adjutant General, St. Paul, to Captain Samuel McLarty, February 13, 1863 (photostatic copy), in letterbook of the Department of the Northwest, War Department Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.

movements so as to meet another force, largely cavalry, coming up the Missouri River. The aim was to close from both sides upon the Sioux — presumed to be somewhere in the Devils Lake (North Dakota) area — and break their power in the West. Low water on the Missouri was to prevent the successful operation of this scheme, for the river proved unnavigable, and the troops scheduled to ascend it never arrived. Sibley did, however, engage several bands of Sioux in a series of sharp encounters, and drove them west of the Missouri.²⁷

While plans for the 1863 expedition were being formed, Pope, writing from Milwaukee, told Sibley that it was not “necessary or desirable that you should keep up the small posts you have established for the winter along the frontier. Don’t put yourself on the defensive, but on the offensive.”²⁸ Governor Ramsey disagreed, pointing out to Sibley that “a feverish apprehension exists that you may be unable with the force at your command to protect our border settlements from the stealthy encroachments of the wily foe.”²⁹ The military logic of offensive action might be well and good, but the ordinary Minnesota farmer wanted some assurance that he would not be picked off while plowing his field or have his isolated cabin burned in the night.

Caught in the middle, Sibley acknowledged the need for some protection along the frontier, but nevertheless found it necessary to withdraw troops from many of the garrison outposts. Soon anguished outcries rose from all directions.

A Sauk Centre correspondent writing in the *St. Cloud Democrat* of May 28, 1863, voiced the alarm of many a frontier settler: “The withdrawal of the cavalry from this garrison is looked upon with considerable alarm,” he noted, “and the feeling of secu-

rity varies in proportion as the military are removed. The daily scouting which has been kept up all the spring, for from twenty to thirty miles in every direction has ceased of course since the cavalry left, and a large extent of country is now left open to the incursions of the villainous red skins, if they choose to take advantage.”

Three days later, on May 31, the *St. Paul Daily Press* published what may have been intended as a semiofficial answer to this and similar complaints. It included “a carefully prepared statement of the forces that are to remain, and the places at which they will be stationed,” and attempted to draw for its readers some sort of logical pattern from the confused scattering of posts that had sprung up in response to immediate needs or settlers’ demands. Claiming that there existed both interior and exterior lines of defense, it maintained that the former “commences near the northwestern limit of settlement at Fort Ripley and extends along the border of our most western settlements southward to the Iowa line.” According to the paper, assignments along this line were as follows: Fort Ripley, one company of infantry, twenty-five cavalrymen, and four pieces of artillery; Richmond, a detachment of Company A, Eighth Minnesota; Sauk Centre, one company of infantry and forty cavalrymen; Manannah and Kingston, detachments of Company A, Eighth Minnesota; Forest City, one company of Mounted Rangers, to patrol Meeker, Kandiyohi, Lincoln, McLeod, Sibley, and Renville counties; Hutchinson, one company, Ninth Minnesota, with a detachment at Lake Addie (Brownton); Fort Goodhue near Kelso in Sibley County, twenty-five convalescents, plus others that might become available. Three companies of the Ninth Minnesota were to be stationed at Fort Ridgely, and a company of Mounted Rangers at New Ulm was to “scout from that post through Blue Earth, Faribault, Watonwan, and Martin counties as far down as the Iowa line.”

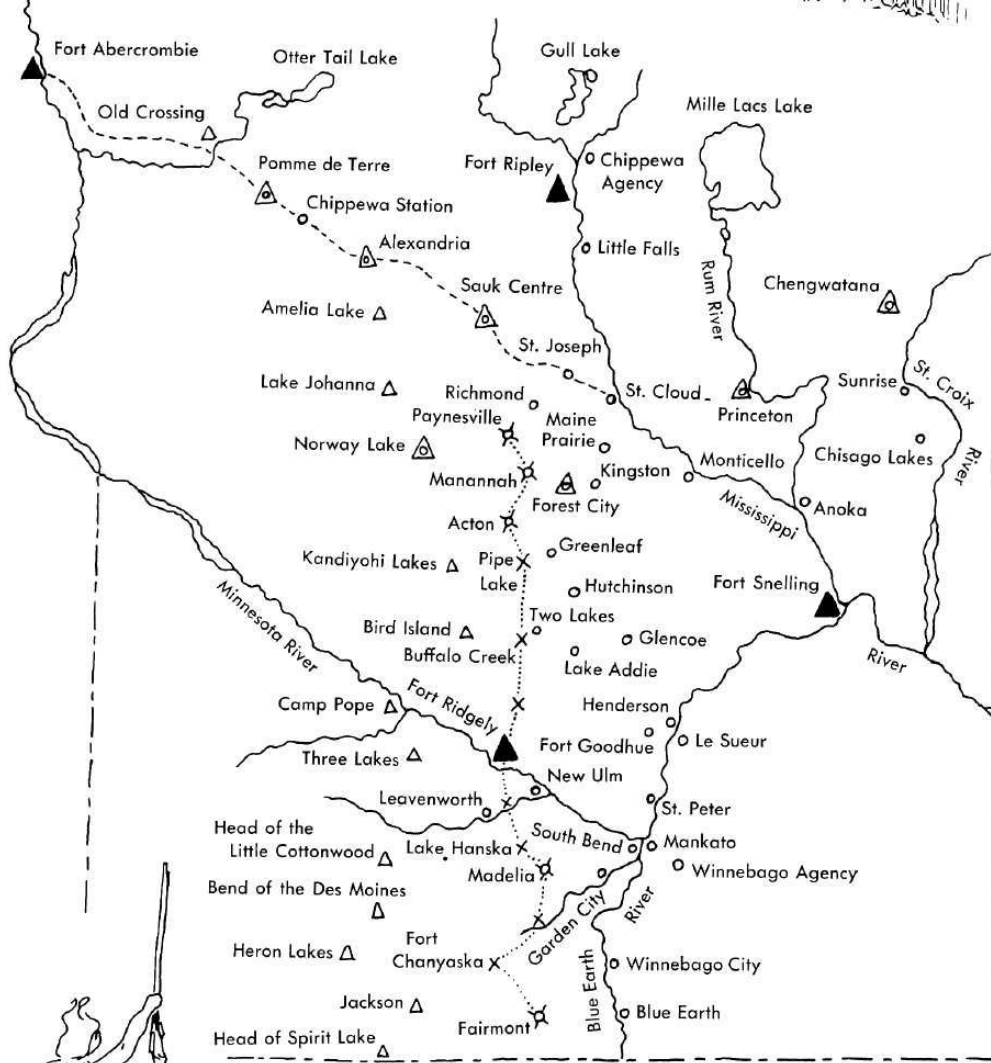
As defined by the *Press*, the so-called “exterior line” was simply the road to Fort

²⁷ Kenneth Carley, *The Sioux Uprising of 1862*, 72 (St. Paul, 1961).

²⁸ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, vol. 22, part 2, p. 123 (Washington, 1888).

²⁹ *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:293.

FRONTIER FORTS OF THE 1860s



- ▲ United States Army posts
- Places fortified or garrisoned in 1862 and early 1863
- × Posts established in June, 1863
- △ Posts still garrisoned in August, 1865
- - - - St. Cloud-Fort Abercrombie road
- Line patrolled daily, summer, 1863

Abercrombie, which was protected by three fortified posts (including Abercrombie itself) extending out to the north and west of the settled region. At the fort on the Red River were stationed four companies of infantry and six pieces of artillery, while the two stockades which covered its supply line were garrisoned by a single infantry company each, the one at Alexandria being mounted.

The entire force that would be left to guard the frontier during the summer's campaign was reckoned by the *Press* at 1,852 men. The paper named no source for this figure or for the statements which preceded it, but the implication was clear that they had official sanction.

THE STATE authorities, meanwhile, had not been inactive. As early as May 8 Emil Munch, a brigadier general of the state militia, had been directed to visit the counties of Nicollet, Blue Earth, Sibley, Brown, Renville, Meeker, McLeod, and Stearns "for the purpose of ascertaining whether Indian raids on the frontier settlements may reasonably be expected and in what condition the people of said counties are to resist attacks." On June 4, his survey completed, Munch recommended a chain of posts some ten or fifteen miles apart on the Fort Ridgely-Fairmont line, to be garrisoned by detachments of from twenty to thirty men each, with patrols of infantry and cavalry moving constantly back and forth.³⁰

Sibley himself had settled upon a very similar plan. On May 27 he named Colonel Miller of the Seventh Minnesota as commander of all the forces that were to be left in garrison. Two subdistricts were created, one composed of the posts held mainly by the Eighth Minnesota, which were to be supervised from St. Cloud by Colonel Thomas. The others were to report to Colonel Wilkin at St. Peter. Fort Snelling was to be under the direct command of Miller.³¹

³⁰ Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1863, p. 152, 39-41.

³¹ *Press*, May 28, 1863.

³² *Press*, June 5, 1863.

On June 4 Sibley directed Miller to station his troops along a line "From Paynesville, in Stearns County—leaving that post and Manannah garrisoned—directly south to Fort Ridgely, thence to the station on the Watonwan River, and southeasterly to Fairmount." Stockades or earthworks "of a defensible character" were to be constructed about ten miles apart along this line, "having reference in the selection of points to conveniences of wood and water." The men at posts inside the new line were to construct these fortifications, and then abandon their old locations, taking up stations along the outer line of posts "in numbers according to their importance and more or less exposed condition." Daily communication was to be maintained by mounted men riding between the posts.³²

Sibley's order meant the evacuation of garrisons at Richmond, Forest City, Kingston, Hutchinson, Fort Goodhue, and New Ulm, and the construction of a new line of posts somewhat farther west. That this movement was promptly accomplished is indicated by the *Mankato Weekly Union* of July 17, 1863, which published a tabulation of the posts in Colonel Wilkin's subdistrict. It listed the garrison and the commanding officer of each and showed the distances which separated them. Between Manannah and Fairmont were ten fortified points, which, with the exception of Fort Ridgely, were garrisoned by from twenty-five to fifty-eight men. The distances between them ranged from seven to fifteen miles.

From Manannah they extended in a more or less direct line south to Acton and Pipe Lake in Meeker County, then to Buffalo Creek and "Camp Burns," eleven miles north of Fort Ridgely. Twelve miles south of the fort was a post on the Cottonwood River, another was located at Lake Hanska, and only seven miles farther stood a station listed as "Camp Wilkin" (probably on the site of the substantial Madelia stockade erected the year before by Flandrau's men). Three more posts completed the line, one on the south branch of the Watonwan River,

another listed as "Camp Changuska" (possibly a misspelling of Fort Chanyaska, which was located in northwestern Martin County), and the last at Fairmont—again the location of one of Flandrau's advance posts.

DESPITE daily patrols between these points, small groups of Indians continued to slip through and make sporadic raids behind the lines. Some 1,800 men could not seal off completely a frontier four hundred miles in length, particularly when they were handicapped by a continuing and acute shortage of mounted troops.

After numerous thefts and several murders, some of which occurred almost as far east as the border of Hennepin County, the state authorities once again took the matter of local defense into their own hands. On July 4, 1863, the adjutant general ordered "that a corps of volunteer scouts be organized immediately for sixty days . . . to scour the Big Woods from Sauk Centre to the northern boundary line of Sibley County." The corps was to be composed of a captain and sixty men, "divided into squads of not less than five men under the immediate command of their own chosen leader." The volunteers would have to furnish their own equipment and supplies, but would be paid at the rate of \$1.50 per day with additional compensation of twenty-five dollars "for each scalp of a male Sioux delivered to this office."³³

On July 20 the plan was modified to increase the regular pay of scouts to two dollars a day and establish a reward of seventy-five dollars for the killing of any hostile Sioux warrior by a private citizen acting as an "independent scout." The organized volunteer scouts were mustered out at the end of the summer, but the reward for independent hunting was raised to two hundred dollars.³⁴

No great number of the enemy was disposed of by this method, but the public assumption of an open season on Indians brought at least one important result. On July 3 two McLeod County farmers, on a

deer hunting expedition some six miles north of Hutchinson, spied a pair of Indians picking berries. Shooting on sight, they killed one of the two, while the other fled. The dead Indian was later identified as Chief Little Crow.³⁵ The death of the Sioux leader, the defeats inflicted on the Indians by Sibley in the Missouri Valley, and the vigorous patrolling and scouting along the border, all lessened the tension on the Minnesota frontier.

THE WINTER of 1863-64 passed peacefully and saw most of the regular Minnesota infantry regiments sent south. The Sixth and Eighth remained to garrison the frontier posts, while a newly recruited body of mounted troops was sent north to patrol the Red River-Pembina area against forays by hostile Sioux who had fled to Canada. This force, known as "Hatch's Independent Battalion of Cavalry," had been organized by the United States in the summer of 1863 for the express purpose of Indian fighting. It was led by Major Edwin A. C. Hatch.³⁶

With the coming of spring the five companies of Hatch's battalion were moved south to relieve the regular regiments of garrison duty. The Sixth Minnesota was ordered to Arkansas in June, 1864, and the Eighth, along with six companies of the Second Minnesota Cavalry and two sections of the mixed gun and howitzer battery of the Third Minnesota, was sent to join General Alfred Sully's 1864 expedition against the Sioux in western Dakota Territory. Following the close of that campaign it, too, was ordered south.³⁷

³³ Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1863, p. 132.

³⁴ Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1863, p. 136, 138, 157.

³⁵ Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:283-286; Walter N. Trenerry, "The Shooting of Little Crow: Heroism or Murder?" in *Minnesota History*, 38:150-153. Though the hunters were not registered as "independent scouts," one received the regular bounty on the chief's scalp, and the actual slayer was voted a reward by the state legislature.

³⁶ Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:289-292.

³⁷ *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:524; Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1863, p. 21; 1864, p. 6.

In May, 1864, some companies officially known as the First United States Volunteers, composed partially of Confederate prisoners who had taken the oath of allegiance, began to arrive in Minnesota for frontier service. "They are hard looking customers," commented the *St. Cloud Democrat* of May 19. Among these volunteers were some so-called "bounty jumpers."³⁸ Sibley obviously did not think much of the caliber of these troops, for he wrote to Pope on October 10, 1864, "Many . . . are desperate characters, requiring an equal number of men to keep them in subjection and prevent their desertion." Some of the United States Volunteers accompanied the Minnesota brigade to join the Sully expedition in 1864, while others did duty at Fort Ripley, Sauk Centre, and elsewhere.³⁹

Reports of Indian murders and outrages in Blue Earth County during August, 1864, caused the adjutant general to direct "the volunteer organization of 'Mounted Minute Men' to co-operate with the U. S. forces stationed at . . . frontier settlements." One company of "Minute Men" was to be organized at Mankato and one at New Ulm, each composed of between eighty-five and a hundred men. Smaller squads, of thirty to forty men each, were to be organized at Vernon Center, Blue Earth City, and Winnebago City. A later order added another squad from Martin County. The

³⁸ These were men who "volunteered" in order to get the sizable bounty offered for enlisting. Having received the money and been sworn in as soldiers, they deserted at the first opportunity, went elsewhere, and repeated the performance. Five such "bounty jumpers" were tried at Fort Snelling in November, 1864, and sentenced to be shot, but President Lincoln suspended the sentence after appeals by Governor Stephen A. Miller and former Senator Henry M. Rice. *Press*, November 15, 1864; *St. Paul Pioneer*, November 15, 16, 18, 22, 26, 1864; *St. Cloud Democrat*, November 17, 1864.

³⁹ *Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:526.

⁴⁰ Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1864, p. 30, 118, 120.

⁴¹ Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1865, p. 173, 174.

⁴² *Press*, May 10, 1865.

⁴³ *Press*, May 10, June 4, 1865. See also Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:346-351, for an account of the statewide hysteria.

whole force was stationed "along the line of frontier defenses." Officers and men received \$2.50 per day of active service in lieu of all other payments. They remained active until October 2, when they were retired, "perfect quiet being restored to the frontier and all fear of danger from attacks removed from the minds of the people."⁴⁰

The following May another multiple murder in Blue Earth County touched off a second wave of terror. For several months, while the rest of the country slowly came to the realization that the four-year agony of civil war was over—while the Union army disbanded and thousands of weary soldiers turned toward home—Minnesota was gripped by a surge of Indian hysteria. Though no hostile force of any size existed within hundreds of miles of the state's border, the adjutant general once again called the "Mounted Minute Men" into active service and ordered the organization of volunteer militia forces "not to exceed in the aggregate six hundred men" in each of the northern and southern subdistricts.⁴¹ A half-breed implicated in the Blue Earth County murders was summarily lynched at Mankato, and newspapers throughout the state raged at "the milk-blooded, white-livered Pharisaic hypocrites" who held out against a policy of Indian extermination.⁴² The *St. Paul Press* of May 7, 1865, declared that "the only way to defend the frontier is to hunt the Indians to their holes and to kill them there." Accordingly it started a subscription to buy bloodhounds for tracking red marauders and called for a reinstatement of the bounty on scalps.⁴³

Gradually, however, confidence was restored, and the militia was disbanded. The forts along the frontier had been continuously occupied, and troops were maintained there throughout the summer. In July an army quartermaster advertised for bids on furnishing hay for garrisons at Fort Snelling, Manannah, Amelia Lake, Head of the Little Cottonwood, Salmon Lake, Bird Island, Camp Pope, Three

Lakes, Big Cottonwood, Princeton, Forest City, Lake Johanna, Kandiyohi Lakes, Fort Ridgely, Paynesville, Fort Abercrombie, Norway Lake, Alexandria, Fort Ripley, Jackson, Pomme de Terre, Heron Lake, Bend of the Des Moines, Head of Spirit Lake, Sauk Centre, Chengwatana, Madelia, Fairmont, and Old Crossing.⁴⁴ Aside from the four forts, only Princeton, Alexandria, Pomme de Terre, and Sauk Centre required more than fifty tons, so the troop detachments must have been very small. At the end of the year the adjutant general reported about 1,400 men "retained for the protection against Indian depredations, of the frontiers of our own State, and in great part stationed within her borders."⁴⁵

Some of the posts, at least, were occupied as late as the spring of 1866. Between December and June the troops on garrison duty were gradually mustered out, the last to be released being those of Hatch's battalion.⁴⁶ The stockades and blockhouses

either rotted where they stood or became sources of lumber and firewood for nearby settlers. At last, so far as Minnesota was concerned, the war within a war was over.

⁴⁴ With the exception of the four forts and the garrisons at Chengwatana, Princeton, Forest City, Pomme de Terre, Sauk Centre, and Alexandria, these posts seem to have formed a new line from north to south along the state's western frontier. (See map, p. 282.) The exact location of many of them is difficult to determine. There is, for instance, no record of a "Salmon Lake" in the state. However, Solomon Lake in Kandiyohi County is approximately half way between Norway Lake and Big Kandiyohi Lake, at a point where a post might logically have been located.

⁴⁵ See *Press*, July 18, 1865; *St. Cloud Democrat*, August 13, 1865; Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1865, p. 5.

⁴⁶ Adjutant General, *Reports*, 1866, p. 3.

THE DRAWING on page 276 is by John Bodin and appeared in the *Condensed History of Meeker County* (Litchfield, 1939). The picture on page 277 is from an oil painting made in 1864, and the sketch of Fort Abercrombie was drawn by George K. Elsbury, a member of the Seventh Minnesota, in May, 1863. The sketch below is by Edwin Forbes.





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