
A NEW LOOK AT *The Elusive Inkpaduta*

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THE WINTER of 1856–57 was long and severe in northwestern Iowa and southwestern Minnesota. Heavy snow and intense cold came early in November and continued throughout the whole season. Indians in the area suffered hardships, and so did settlers who had advanced the white frontier to Lake Okoboji and Spirit Lake in Iowa's Dickinson County and had followed the Des Moines River across the Minnesota border to Springfield (now Jackson). The weather was still decidedly wintry in March when a small band of Wahpekute Santee Dakota Indians led by Inkpaduta (Scarlet Point) suddenly killed some 40 white settlers in Iowa and Minnesota and carried off four women captives. Although most of the action was along Lake Okoboji and at Springfield, the tragedy has come to be known as the Spirit Lake Massacre.

Inkpaduta never was captured. After 1857 he became something of a legend among both whites and Indians. His name cropped up frequently on the Iowa-Dakota-Minnesota frontier, spreading terror among pioneers. The government's failure to punish Inkpaduta and his followers after the Spirit Lake affair is usually given as one cause of the Dakota Indian war in Minnesota in 1862.

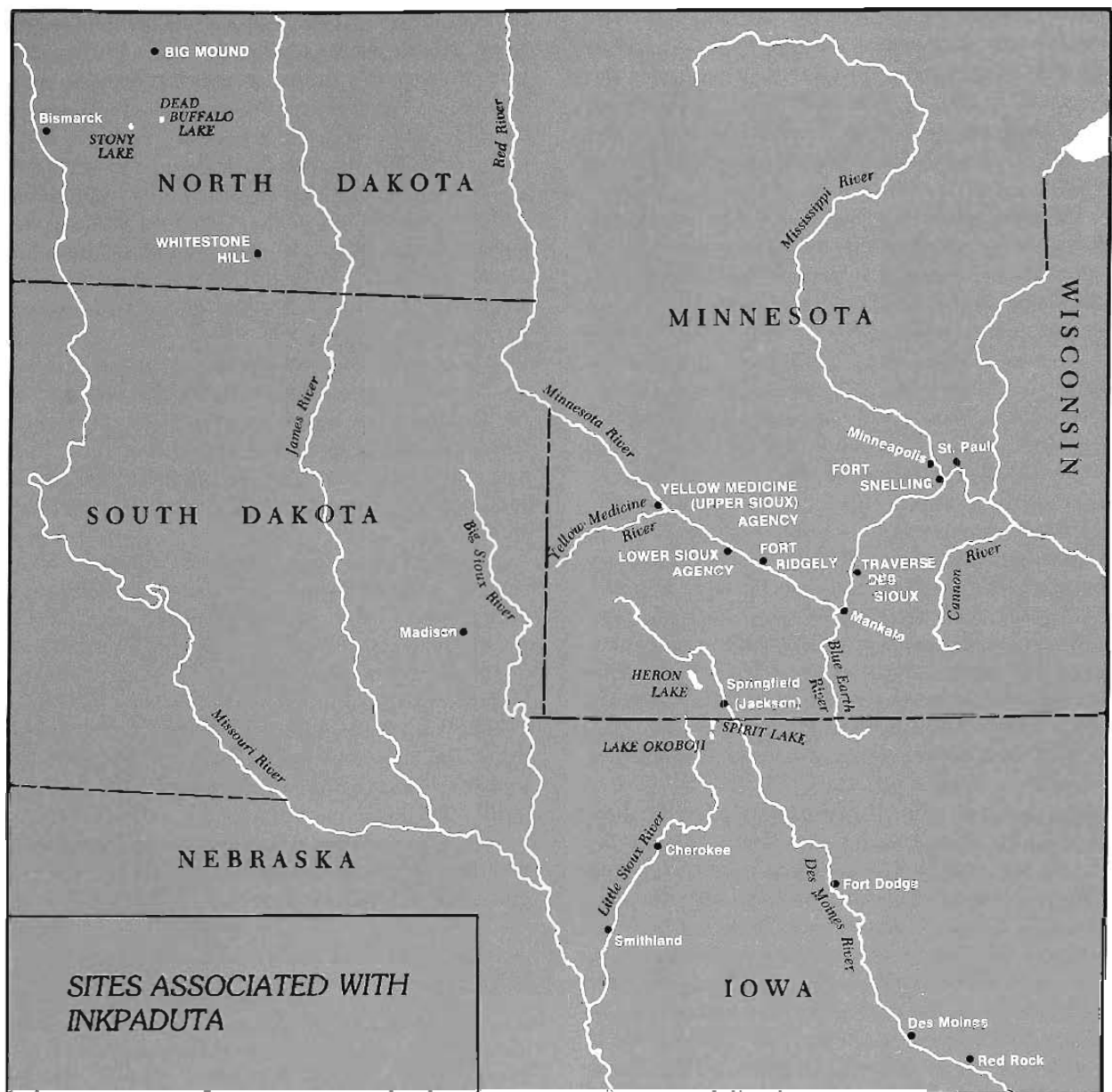
Inkpaduta frequently was reported to be among the Indians who resisted the punitive expeditions into Dakota Territory in 1863 and 1864 after the 1862 uprising was

quelled. And he even was said to have been at the Little Big Horn in 1876 when George Armstrong Custer and his men were surrounded and killed.

This article attempts to put together Inkpaduta's controversial and elusive life story from numerous sources. It also essays some background of the Wahpekute band. Although the author has consulted and used many items in the Inkpaduta literature, she has tried to do so judiciously. Information from white sources, who lacked contact with Inkpaduta, tends to be judgmental and biased. Written Indian sources, as usual, are scarce, and oral ones often come from Indians far removed from relevant events and individuals.¹

¹ Among general sources on Inkpaduta and the so-called Spirit Lake Massacre that have been used throughout this paper are: Thomas Teakle, *The Spirit Lake Massacre* (Iowa City, 1918); William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 2:223–225, 400–415 (Revised ed., St. Paul, 1961); Lucius F. Hubbard and Return I. Holcombe, *Minnesota in Three Centuries*, 3:217–268 (Mankato, 1908); Charles E. Flandrau, "The Ink-pa-du-ta Massacre of 1857," and Thomas Hughes, "Causes and Results of the Inkpaduta Massacre," both in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 3:386–407, 12:263–282 (St. Paul, 1880, 1908); Louis H. Roddis, *The Indian Wars of Minnesota*, 21–48 (Cedar Rapids, Ia., 1956); Doane Robinson, "A History of the Dakota or Sioux Indians," in *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 22:1–523 (Aberdeen, 1904), reprinted in book form by Ross & Haines, Minneapolis, 1956, 1971; Frank I. Herriott, "The Origins of the Indian Massacre Between the Okobojis, March 8, 1857," and "The Aftermath of the Spirit Lake Massacre, March 8–15, 1857," in *Annals of Iowa*, 18:323–382, 483–517 (July, 1932, January, 1933); Abigail Gardner-Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre and Captivity of Miss Abbie Gardner* (7th ed., Des Moines, 1918); Roderick A. Smith, *A History of Dickinson County, Iowa* (Des Moines, 1902). The author is grateful to Kenneth Carley for assistance in preparing this article.

Peggy Larson attributes her interest in Inkpaduta to having been born and raised in Jackson, Minnesota, scene of the 1857 attack. This article is a distillation of her master's thesis (1968) at Mankato State University.



When whites first visited what is now Minnesota and wrote about Indians they met, they tended to consider the Dakota as a group rather than as individuals. In 1805–06, for example, Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike wrote that the Wahpekute band had a bad reputation and was made up of individuals expelled from other bands because of misdeeds. Major Stephen H. Long was

also critical of the Wahpekute during his exploration of the Minnesota River in 1823. Donald Jackson pointed out that the similarity of opinion “is not so remarkable” because the probable informant for both Long and Pike was “the uneducated but intelligent” Joseph Renville, a mixed-blood trader.²

It is only with the appearance of Tasagi (The Cane), head chief of the Wahpekute, that the written record began to portray an individual personality within that band. After the treaty at Prairie du Chien in 1825 by which the government tried to establish peace among the Dakota and the Sac and Fox, Indian agent Lawrence Taliaferro at St. Peter's Agency adjacent to Fort Snelling recorded visits from Tasagi, who was concerned about

² Elliott Coues, ed., *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, to Headwaters of the Mississippi River* 1:344, 349n (New York, 1895); Donald Jackson, ed., *The Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, with Letters and Related Documents*, 1:213 (Norman, Okla., 1966); William H. Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River*, 402 (Reprint ed., Minneapolis, 1959).

continued warfare with Sac and Fox Indians — warfare that the treaty had attempted to stop.³

In April, 1829, Taliaferro recorded the visit of Wamdisapa (Black Eagle), a relative of Tasagi. Wamdisapa was a subchief who had a small village in present-day Blue Earth County, Minnesota. He was the father of Inkpaduta.⁴

In 1830 neither Tasagi nor Wamdisapa signed the Prairie du Chien pact. In a visit to Taliaferro in the fall of 1830 the Wahpekute leaders seemed to indicate they thought the Sac and Fox would not keep the treaty. And Wamdisapa, whose wife had been killed by Sac and Fox Indians, ignored the treaty by making raids, actions that precipitated a quarrel between him and Tasagi. Henry Hastings Sibley, head of the American Fur Company post at Mendota in 1834, described the two as rival chiefs of the Wahpekute band of 500 or 600 members — Tasagi in the Cannon River area and Wamdisapa on the Blue Earth River.⁵

In 1836 both Tasagi and Wamdisapa signed a treaty relinquishing their questionable claims to lands in southwestern Iowa and northwestern Missouri. After the signing, however, dissension between Wamdisapa and Tasagi became more intense. It was at this time that Inkpaduta was growing to manhood. In about 1839 Tasagi was killed by a member of his own band. Most versions of his death implicated Wamdisapa and his son Inkpaduta in some way.⁶

Wamdisapa still seemed to be in a leadership position in 1841. Stephen Return Riggs, a missionary to the Dakota at Traverse des Sioux, was acquainted with Wamdisapa between 1841 and 1846. He said the chief did not create a pleasant impression. Riggs recalled that the only time the chief paid a visit for reasons other than begging was to offer sympathy after Mrs. Riggs's brother drowned. This was one of the few favorable reports of Wamdisapa by a white man. Perhaps the last mention of the chief was in the summer of 1846 when Wamdisapa was ill, and Riggs visited him. The missionary believed that Wamdisapa died shortly thereafter.⁷

AFTER Wamdisapa's death his band broke into factions. Although Inkpaduta seemed to be in line for the leadership, an Indian named Sintominaduta (Red All Over, also Two Fingers), originally a member of Sleepy Eyes's Sisseton band and said to have been married to one of his sisters, appeared to assume the chieftainship.⁸

Inkpaduta's position after Sintominaduta's rise is difficult to determine. He probably became a subchief, although sometimes he appeared to be the leader. The difficulty in tracing chieftainship is due in part to the fact that Indians did not always consider such knowledge important, even if whites did. The Wahpekute became a loose-knit and divided group at times but banded together on other occasions. After 1846 the band relo-

cated in northern Iowa along and west of the Des Moines River, where the government's removal of the Sac and Fox opened the land for Dakota hunting parties. Although Sintominaduta was occasionally found along the lower Blue Earth River in Minnesota, his main campsite was at the future location of Fort Dodge, Iowa.

White men tended to record friction with the Indians only when violation of the settlers' frontier code was involved. Thus little is known of Sintominaduta and Inkpaduta and their band until 1848 when a group of Indians led by the former attacked and robbed a surveyor's party, claiming it was in Indian territory. This was the first recorded clash between Sintominaduta and whites. Shortly after, several settlers moved into the area above the mouth of the Boone River in Iowa. They reported that Sintominaduta visited them frequently, stealing from them and plundering their property. Depredations such as these caused the army to establish Fort Dodge in 1850.⁹

Once an Indian group acquired a reputation for being lawless, it was blamed for many crimes whether it committed them or not. In 1849 Governor Alexander Ramsey of Minnesota Territory, as *ex officio* superintendent of Indian affairs, was called upon to recognize a new hereditary chief of the Wahpekute. The younger son of Tasagi, Wahnundeeyahcahpee (War Eagle That May Be Seen), was chosen by the Wahpekute braves to receive a soldier's medal that indicated United States recognition of his official chieftainship. In July he and 17 followers were killed, and Ramsey at first believed that this act was the work of Inkpaduta and a group of outlaws from other bands. Also, Sisseton and Wahpeton Indians in-

³Taliaferro Journal, January 25, April 23, 1828, January 11, 1829, in Lawrence Taliaferro Papers, Minnesota Historical Society (MHS).

⁴Philip F. Wells to Herriott, January 4, 1933, in Frank I. Herriott Papers, Iowa State Department of History and Archives, Des Moines: Taliaferro Journal, April 1, 1829. Before his death in 1941 Professor Herriott of Drake University was preparing a biography of Inkpaduta, and his research notes and letters to him have been used extensively in this article.

⁵Charles J. Kappler, comp. and ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 2:309 (Washington, D.C., 1904); Taliaferro Journal, April 1, 1829, August 21, 1830; Nathaniel West, *The Ancestry, Life, and Times of Hon. Henry Hastings Sibley*, 65 (St. Paul, 1889); Teakle, *Spirit Lake Massacre*, 64.

⁶Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, 2:481; Teakle, *Spirit Lake Massacre*, 64-66; Hubbard and Holcombe, *Minnesota in Three Centuries*, 3:220.

⁷Stephen R. Riggs, "Dakota Portraits," in *Minnesota History Bulletin*, 2:500 (November, 1918).

⁸Here and below, see Hughes, in *Collections*, 12:264; Harvey Ingham, *The Northern Border Brigade: A Story of Military Beginnings*, [26] (n.p., n.d.), copy in MHS.

⁹A. R. Fulton, *The Red Men of Iowa: Being a History of the Various Aboriginal Tribes*, 287 (Des Moines, 1882); Francis Paul Prucha, *Guide to the Military Posts of the United States*, 72 (Madison, Wis., 1964).

sisted that Inkpaduta was responsible. It was later established, however, that Wahmundeeyahcahpee had been killed by Sac and Fox marauders.¹⁰

Although Ramsey recommended that the real murderers be apprehended, no action was taken, and Inkpaduta's name undeservedly remained linked to the crime. In August, 1851, when Ramsey and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Luke Lea concluded the treaty of Mendota with the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute, neither Inkpaduta nor Sintominaduta was recognized as a Wahpekute, and neither took part in the negotiations. This contributed to the alienation between whites and these bands — a problem that surfaced later when all of the Wahpekute sought to collect annuities.¹¹

ONE OF THE FEW whites who knew Sintominaduta and Inkpaduta personally was William Williams, who moved to the Iowa frontier from Pennsylvania in 1849. He and the troops at Fort Dodge, where he was sutler,



WILLIAM
WILLIAMS

¹⁰ Annual report of Alexander Ramsey to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 17, 1849, in 31 Congress, 1 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 1, p. 1019 (serial 550). Ramsey's statements indicated he had Inkpaduta in mind, although he did not use his name.

¹¹ De Lorne W. Robinson, "Editorial Notes on Historical Sketch of North and South Dakota," in *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 1:110 (Aberdeen, 1902).

¹² Here and below, see William Williams, *Journal and Letters*, 8, 31, original and typescript copy in Fort Museum, Fort Dodge, Iowa; Thomas Hughes, *Indian Chiefs of Southern Minnesota*, 134 (Revised ed., Minneapolis, 1969).

¹³ Hughes, *Indian Chiefs*, 132; G. Wallace Adams to Frank I. Herriott, August 1, 1933, Herriott Papers.

¹⁴ "Inkpaduatah's Great White Friend," in *Iowan Magazine*, December-January, 1960-61, p. 17-19, 48. Information on Lamb's friendship with Inkpaduta was furnished the *Iowan* by the pioneer's grandson, Vernon Blank.

¹⁵ Josephine Waggoner to Herriott, April 6, 1934, Herriott Papers.

¹⁶ Here and below, see Williams *Journal*, 44-46.

came to recognize the Indians as individuals. Williams estimated their number to be around 500 lodges, many of them Sisseton led by Red Thunder. About 150 of these lodges, most of them located at Spirit Lake and Lake Okoboji, were led by Sintominaduta, with Inkpaduta and Titonka also as main chiefs.¹²

Sintominaduta and Inkpaduta often returned to the Blue Earth County area and sometimes wintered there. In 1853, for example, Sintominaduta's two children attended the first school established in Mankato. The teacher, Mrs. John Marsh, said they were "extremely bright" children, who learned English quickly and taught Dakota to the whites. The 12-year-old son of Sintominaduta, Joshpaduta, became a good friend of the whites. With one small exception concerning a disputed store bill in Mankato, Sintominaduta is said to have had peaceful relations with whites in Minnesota.

Inkpaduta, on the other hand, generally shunned whites and remained quiet and sullen when in their presence. D. C. Evans of Mankato, former state senator and county treasurer, described Inkpaduta as being "rather fat and dirty" in appearance. His face and eyes had an ugly, vicious look; he was pitted with small pox marks." G. Wallace Adams of Smithland, Iowa, remembered Inkpaduta as being morose and sullen but did not notice any hostility in his general nature.¹³

One of the few whites who had good words for Inkpaduta was Charles Lamb, who settled on the Little Sioux River about 30 miles southeast of present-day Sioux City in 1851. Lamb said that Inkpaduta and his band camped near his claim in 1852; that Lamb and two other white settlers did not fear Inkpaduta; and that the Indian attempted to teach Lamb the Dakota language and told him of his distrust of traders, especially because they sold whisky to his people.¹⁴

By contrast to most white accounts, an Indian recollection of Inkpaduta described him as "tall and slender[:] gentle and kind to his family. He was industrious, there was not a summer but he and his band planted a garden at some place . . . he seemed like a pitiful man with a soft voice. . . . Among the Indians the more a man loved his family, kindred and tribe, the braver he was to defend them."¹⁵

But in Iowa the reports of friendly relations between whites and Sintominaduta and Inkpaduta were far outweighed by accounts of violence. The establishment of Fort Dodge seemed to deter raiding expeditions, but incidents still occurred. In 1851, for example, Inkpaduta and several others of his band were held hostage at Fort Dodge until a young white couple was released by marauding Indians.¹⁶

FEDERAL OFFICIALS deemed the Iowa frontier reasonably quiet by March, 1853. The soldiers stationed at Fort Dodge received orders to move to the newly

established Fort Ridgely in Minnesota Territory, where it was believed any significant problems with the Indians could be handled. The new post was located on the Minnesota River near the edge of the reservation established by the 1851 treaties.

As soon as the troops left Iowa, the Indians returned to their former campsites near Fort Dodge, where they annoyed white settlers. William Williams was particularly apprehensive about the behavior of Inkpaduta, who took two men captive in the late fall of 1853. After the pair escaped, Williams called together several of the chiefs in the area and extracted from them promises not to harm any whites again.¹⁷

Adding to the already strained relations on the frontier was the presence of whites of questionable character. One was the notorious Henry Lott, who had arrived at Red Rock in Marion County, Iowa, in 1845. He was a horse trader and Indian trader and was said to have exchanged cheap whisky for furs. In 1848 Lott, then living near the mouth of the Boone River, came into contact with Sintominaduta, whose lost ponies were traced to Lott's stable. Exactly what happened is not known for certain, but a quarrel developed. Lott and his grown stepson fled the area, believing that Sintominaduta had burned their cabin and had killed Lott's wife and children. When Lott reached a white settlement, its members immediately formed an expedition. Arriving at the supposed massacre site, the party found the cabin intact and Lott's family safe. A few months after this incident Lott's wife died, and her husband apparently blamed her death on Sintominaduta.¹⁸

Lott set up an Indian trade in Humboldt County, Iowa, and in the winter of 1853–54 Sintominaduta established a camp several miles from Lott's cabin. In January Lott invited the Indian to hunt elk in the area. Offering him whisky, Lott killed the chief as soon as they were away from the lodges. Then disguising themselves as Sac and Fox, Lott and his stepson returned to Sintominaduta's lodges where they murdered all of his family except two children, one of whom was probably Joshpaduta. Lott then fled the Iowa frontier never to return.

The murders were discovered by some Indians, reportedly including Inkpaduta, who informed Williams at Fort Dodge. He investigated the scene, determined that Sintominaduta's death was not the work of Sac and Fox Indians, and decided on further investigation that the culprit was Lott.¹⁹

Williams then went to the camp of Inkpaduta, whom he believed was a brother of Sintominaduta, and found the Indians very excited. Promising to track down Lott and his stepson, Williams asked several warriors to help; four accompanied him to Fort Dodge but refused to go any farther.²⁰

A Polk County grand jury indicted the missing Lott, but this act meant little to the Indians. A coroner's jury

to determine the cause of Sintominaduta's death was also held at Homer, but the prosecuting attorney made a travesty of the affair by nailing Sintominaduta's head to a pole over his house. Watching the episode were several Indians, including Joshpaduta. No further attempts were made to find Lott, despite promises to the Indians that all-out efforts would continue.²¹

This incident exacerbated tensions and probably caused general unrest on the Iowa-Minnesota frontier. Although no whites were killed, raids continued along the Des Moines River. Colonel Samuel Woods of Fort Ridgely promised to do what he could to locate Lott; he also warned the Indians that he would take harsh measures if they caused any more trouble. The seriousness of the situation in Iowa was indicated in January, 1855, when Governor James W. Grimes told the general assembly that the state was in no condition to defend against a serious Indian threat. He asked legislators to appeal to Congress for aid and for the establishment of a military post in northwestern Iowa. Later Grimes made a futile plea to President Franklin Pierce for troops.²²

THE DEATH of Sintominaduta probably made a great impression on Inkpaduta. Already he had felt white men's injustices when he was left out of the treaties and their rewards. Some historians have claimed that the murder of Sintominaduta and his family, coupled with the failure to punish Lott, were main causes of the Spirit Lake killings in 1857, and surely the unpublicized massacre of this innocent Indian family triggered the urge for revenge. As Inkpaduta and his band roamed the northern Iowa frontier after those deaths, they needed only the right incidents to spark vengeful acts against newly arrived and unsuspecting settlers.²³

After spending the summer of 1855 near present-day Algona, Iowa, Inkpaduta and his family were next reported living on the reservation near the Lower Sioux Agency during part of 1856. Even though he was not considered an annuity Indian, he evidently received payments for 11 persons in both 1855 and 1856. A special agent said that the Wahpekute allowed Inkpaduta "to receive these payments with them . . . from apprehension of revenge in case of their denial."

¹⁷Williams Journal, 46.

¹⁸Here and below, see Hughes, in *Collections*, 12:264–267.

¹⁹Benjamin F. Gue, *History of Iowa*, 1:291 (New York, 1903).

²⁰Williams Journal, 16.

²¹Hughes, in *Collections*, 12:268.

²²Herriott, in *Annals of Iowa*, 18:365, 374.

²³Here and below, see Herriott, in *Annals of Iowa*, 18:359–362; Smith, *History of Dickinson County*, 37; Kintzing Pritchette (special agent) to James W. Denver, October 15, 1857, in 35 Congress, 1 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 49, p. 389 (serial 919).

Inkpaduta and his people spent part of that summer near Fort Ridgely and some time with the Yankton Dakota on the Sioux River. In early fall they visited the Spirit Lake region, where Inkpaduta hunted and fished and visited the homes of the white settlers.²⁴

By December, 1856, some 39 white people had moved into the lake region of northern Iowa. In Springfield, Minnesota, less than 20 miles from the lakes, there were about 42 white people. Among them was Jareb Palmer, who later remembered that Inkpaduta and his followers camped for a time and traded at the post of William Wood, promising to pay for their purchases in the spring. At that time they boasted of never having shed white men's blood. Palmer claimed that the whites at Springfield did not express fear of the Indians or doubt about their friendship.²⁵

From Springfield, Inkpaduta headed toward the Spirit Lake settlement, camping at Loon Lake until December, 1856. At this time Joshpaduta was living with members of a white family near the Iowa lakes. He warned them that the Indians planned revenge for the murder of his family by killing all the settlers on both branches of the Des Moines. Joshpaduta disappeared shortly after Inkpaduta left Loon Lake.²⁶

The severe winter of 1856-57 added to the misery of both Indians and whites. Agent Charles E. Flandrau claimed the Indians were near starvation and were forced to beg for food from settlers who could not spare any. One of Inkpaduta's grandchildren died of starvation. In December, 1856, Inkpaduta and his followers left Loon Lake and headed south along the Little Sioux River. In February, 1857, they located near Smithland, where the harsh weather had driven large numbers of elk in from the prairie to seek protection in nearby groves. The Indians set out to kill them, and somehow a quarrel developed with the whites. Claiming that the whites intercepted the elk during the chase, the Indians demanded provisions from the settlers. The latter, fearing trouble, went to the Indian camp and disarmed them. This understandably angered the Indians greatly. Not only had they been refused provisions when they were starving, but guns, their best means of obtaining food, were taken from them. They left Smithland with-



CHARLES E. FLANDRAU, about 1862

out harming any whites, however, and moved up the Little Sioux River.²⁷

As Inkpaduta headed north his band apparently split, and his following decreased. At that time there were evidently some 70 people in his band, including about 30 warriors. In a very bad temper Inkpaduta passed through Cherokee and continued up the Little Sioux River until he reached the community of Peterson. Word about his mood had spread to these settlements, and the frightened whites allowed the Indians to do as they wished. Inkpaduta took all the arms he could find and killed all the cattle — perhaps in revenge over the elk incident at Smithland.

When word of the depredations on the Little Sioux River reached Fort Dodge, the citizens at first doubted that Inkpaduta would be so foolish as to attempt such raids. They dismissed the matter as being only petty thievery. When a number of settlers began arriving at Fort Dodge for protection, all telling similar stories, it was decided to send out an investigating party.

William Williams, now a major and authorized by the Iowa legislature to take necessary measures to protect the frontier, organized a company of 50 men. They went as far as Cherokee and noted that the Indians' trail headed in the direction of Spirit and Okoboji lakes. Since Williams may have been unaware of the new white settlements in that area, he did not follow the trail.²⁸

²⁴ Herriott, in *Annals of Iowa*, 18:377; Flandrau, in *Collections*, 3:358.

²⁵ Arthur P. Rose, *An Illustrated History of Jackson County*, 42, 46 (Jackson, 1910); *Platbook of Jackson County*, 11 (Chicago, 1887).

²⁶ Hughes, in *Collections*, 12:269.

²⁷ Here and two paragraphs below, see Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:401n; Smith, *History of Dickinson County*, 53-63. For a detailed account of the Smithland episode, see Miriam Hawthorn Baker, "Inkpaduta's Camp at Smithland," in *Annals of Iowa*, 39:81-104 (Fall, 1967).

²⁸ Rose, *History of Jackson County*, 53.

On March 7, 1857, the Indians arrived at Lake Okoboji and camped near a settler's cabin. A letter written the day before the massacre and found later on the site referred to the Indians' presence but in no way indicated the whites expected trouble. Some trading was done with the Indians, who appeared peaceful. The next morning Inkpaduta with about 14 warriors approached a cabin and, feigning friendship, entered it. They killed all of the family except a young girl, whom they took captive. Then they proceeded to another cabin and killed the fleeing settlers. About 32 whites were killed, with four women taken captive and forced to accompany the Indians to their camp at Heron Lake in Minnesota.²⁹

The first suggestion of trouble in Iowa reached the Springfield settlement in early March when Black Buffalo, a member of Inkpaduta's band and possibly a spy, stopped to trade with the Wood brothers, William and George, informing them that war had broken out between the Indians and whites. Most of the Springfield settlers except the Wood brothers banded together in two cabins for mutual protection after receiving confirmation of the Iowa killings from a trapper named Morris Markham and two others. They also sent two men to Fort Ridgely to request military help.³⁰

On March 26 the Indians left camp at Heron Lake for Springfield and proceeded to murder the Wood brothers at their store. They then attacked some of the settlers' cabins. In all, some seven or eight people lost their lives at Springfield, so the total white loss of life in the so-called Spirit Lake Massacre was about 40. The number of Indian deaths, if any, is unknown.

ABOUT 24 hours after the attack on Springfield, part of a company of United States soldiers led by Captain Barnard E. Bee of the Tenth Infantry arrived. The two men sent earlier from Springfield had finally brought word of

the Iowa murders to agent Flandrau at the Lower Sioux Agency on March 18. He hurried with the news to Fort Ridgely, and the next day Bee and a lieutenant led 48 enlisted men on a circuitous march, first over "a beaten track" and then across "an unbroken waste of snow" to the southwest. They met two Springfield men who reported that about 30 lodges of Indians were camped at a grove some eight miles north of a claim settled by a mixed-blood, Joseph Coursalle, called Gaboo (or Caboo) by the Dakota. Captain Bee decided to march at once to the grove rather than stop at Springfield.³¹

At the grove Bee found Gaboo, who told him Inkpaduta was at Heron Lake to the west. Bee called for volunteers (everyone stepped forward), and the next morning they marched with Gaboo as guide. At Heron Lake they found an abandoned campsite scattered with plunder. Gaboo thought the Indians had left at least the day before. The soldiers followed the Indians' trail four miles to another lake, where they found another campsite which Gaboo claimed was two days old.

Bee decided not to pursue the Indians farther, because his men were tired from marching 140 miles and were running low on supplies. Moreover, it seemed fruitless for untried soldiers riding mules to continue to chase Indians on horseback. Bee himself went to Springfield, where he left a guard of some 22 men before re-

²⁹ Smith, *History of Dickinson County*, 63-65; Herriott, in *Annals of Iowa*, 18:243-246. The letter was written by one of the victims, Dr. Isaac H. Harriot, formerly of Red Wing. No attempt is made here to describe the Spirit Lake killings in detail. Numerous works do that, including Teakle's *The Spirit Lake Massacre*.

³⁰ Here and below, see *Platbook of Jackson County*, 11; Rose, *History of Jackson County*, 58-62.

³¹ Here and two paragraphs below, see Report of Captain Barnard E. Bee, April 14, 1857, in 35 Congress, 1 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 20, p. 350-355 (serial 919).



AN ARTIST'S conception of the Spirit Lake affair, showing Abbie Gardner (left) being taken into camp

turning to Fort Ridgely. His mission of punishing Inkpaduta and his band was not completed.

Major Williams, who organized Fort Dodge volunteers to travel to Spirit Lake after the killings, criticized Bee for not pursuing the Indians and for putting too much trust in Gaboo. The mixed-blood was accused by settlers of being in league with the Indians, and his wife was said to have worn clothing plundered from the citizens. It is true that Gaboo and Bee's guide, Joseph LaFramboise, read the Indian campsites as being two days old when they actually were much fresher than that. Margaret Ann Marble, one of the women captives, later said the troops at one time were so near that the Indians watched their movements from a grove and prepared an ambush.³²

Answering Williams' attack, Bee wrote a letter alleging that Gaboo was not only trustworthy but the victim of rumors started by settlers. Flandrau agreed with Bee that both Gaboo and LaFramboise could be trusted, adding that had the troops overtaken the Indians the women captives all would likely have been killed.³³

The Spirit Lake attacks surprised both the victims and the ill-equipped and ill-prepared troops at Fort Ridgely. The victims were on ceded land, were new to the area, and were friendly to the itinerant Indians. Clearly they were innocent of incitement. The trustful settlers' scattered cabins made them vulnerable to attack. At Springfield a very meager defense by some residents who banded together had stopped the slaughter of the whole settlement, perhaps indicating that Inkpaduta was unwilling to attack unless success was assured.

It is interesting to note that, although the killings at the Iowa lakes and at Springfield, Minnesota, became widely known as the Spirit Lake Massacre, only one death actually occurred at that lake. One reason that the misleading title persisted is that the affair was immediately popularized in the East by the sensational,

³²Williams' letter, published in the *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat*, May 3, 1857, was written to Iowa Governor Crimes, April 12, 1857. For Mrs. Marble's statement, see Flandrau, in *Collections*, 3:392.

³³*St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat*, May 16, 1857. Bee, a Texan, became a brigadier general in the Confederate army and was mortally wounded at Bull Run. Before his death Bee gave General Thomas Jonathan Jackson and his brigade the nickname, "Stonewall," by shouting to his own men: "Look at Jackson's brigade; it stands like a stone wall! Rally behind the Virginians." See Mark M. Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary*, 808 (New York, 1959).

³⁴Lee, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre: 8th March, 1857* (Reprint ed., Fairfield, Wash., 1967). On Abigail Gardner Sharp's work, see note 1, above; Herriott, in *Annals of Iowa*, 18:251.

³⁵Here and two paragraphs below, see Flandrau, in *Collections*, 3:394-398; Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:407; Smith, *Dickinson County*, 127.

fanciful account of one Colonel L. P. Lee of New Britain, Connecticut. Lee happened to be in St. Paul when one of Inkpaduta's four women captives, Abigail (Abbie) Gardner, was formally released by friendly Indian rescuers to Governor Samuel Medary of Minnesota Territory. At Medary's request, Lee escorted Abbie Gardner to Fort Dodge where she joined friends. Lee based his account on interviews with the young woman, who in 1885 published the first of several editions of her own.³⁴

AFTER THE SPRINGFIELD killings, Abbie Gardner and the other three captives were forced to accompany Inkpaduta and his band of about 12 men, plus Indian women and children, on the way west to the James River. Food was scarce, and several of the horses starved to death. The band stopped at the Pipestone Quarry and, ironically, made peace pipes. While crossing the Big Sioux River, one white woman, Elizabeth Thatcher, who had been ill, was killed by the Indians. Sometime later captive Lydia Noble was clubbed to death, reportedly by a son of Inkpaduta. The Indians and remaining captives continued on until they reached Skunk Lake (near present-day Madison, South Dakota), where they found buffalo and made camp.³⁵

Although the whereabouts of Inkpaduta apparently was known, no attempts were made immediately to capture him. Government officials debated how to recover the captives without endangering their lives, and on April 27 the Minnesota territorial legislature met in extra session to consider ways of protecting the southern frontier. Governor Medary asked President James Buchanan to send troops to capture Inkpaduta, but nothing was done. Medary also met with Francis Huebschmann, superintendent of Indian affairs for the northern district, and they decided it would be safer for the hostages to seek their release before pursuing Inkpaduta.

During these deliberations two Wahpeton Dakota hunters operating on the Big Sioux River learned that Inkpaduta was camped nearby with two captives. They purchased one of them, Margaret Marble, and took her to the Yellow Medicine (Upper Sioux) Agency. There they informed agent Flandrau of Inkpaduta's location and demanded and received \$500 for the return of Mrs. Marble. Flandrau arranged for three friendly Indians to go on a search on May 23. Six days later they found the body of Lydia Noble and the next day arrived at a Yankton camp, which had three lodges from the Inkpaduta band. The scouts learned that Abbie Gardner, the remaining captive, had been sold to a Yankton warrior. After three days of bargaining they were successful in buying her. One month after their departure they delivered her to Governor Medary in St. Paul and received \$400 each.

In late June word reached Fort Ridgely that Roaring Cloud, a son of Inkpaduta, was at Yellow Medicine visit-



ABIGAIL GARDNER, surrounded by contemporary stereotypical sketches of her kidnaping and captivity

ing an Indian woman. A small detachment of soldiers went to the agency, killed Roaring Cloud, and took the woman prisoner. Large numbers of annuity Indians became upset because their sympathies were with the woman and the dead man. In fact, they became so unruly that Flandrau and the soldiers took refuge in a log cabin until reinforcements arrived. The Indians then quieted down to await annuity payments.³⁶

On July 3, however, William J. Cullen, newly appointed superintendent of Indian affairs for the northern district, informed the Indians assembled at the Yellow Medicine Agency that there would be no payments until they caught and brought in Inkpaduta's band. Cullen and James W. Denver, new commissioner of Indian affairs, were both following the established Indian department policy of holding an entire band accountable for crimes committed by its individuals. Friction that developed between the Indians and soldiers was finally alleviated when Chief Little Crow from the Lower Agency offered to lead a party against Inkpaduta.³⁷

Upon his return, Little Crow claimed that he had followed Inkpaduta's trail, killed four men (including another son of Inkpaduta), and taken two women and one child prisoner. The women were released, however, and the annuity payment that was due the Indians in July was finally made in September.

THERE CAN BE little doubt that the actions of Inkpaduta and his band did much to underscore a serious situation developing on the frontier. Yet one cannot help questioning the men and policies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Turnovers in personnel were frequent, and appointments to positions were made as political rewards rather than based on candidates' experience. For example, Commissioner Denver, appointed by President Buchanan, had some excellent qualifications but no experience in dealing with Indians; the same could be said of Superintendent Cullen. Joseph R. Brown, a trader and later an agent himself, doubted that Cullen could tell "the difference between a Sioux Indian and a snapping turtle."³⁸

Charles Flandrau, on the other hand, was qualified to be Indian agent, due largely to the considerable expertise he had gained as a trader. During much of the crisis period following the Spirit Lake affair, however, Flandrau was away from the agency participating in Min-

³⁶ Annual report of Charles E. Flandrau, September 24, 1857, in 35 Congress, 1 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 18, p. 346 (serial 919); Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:408.

³⁷ Here and below, see Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:408-415; Cullen to Denver, July 26, 1857, in 35 Congress, 1 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 33, p. 368-370 (serial 919).

³⁸ Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:409.

nesota's constitutional convention. The inexperienced Cullen thus faced a touchy situation alone when he tried to carry out orders forcing the annuity Indians to punish Inkpaduta and his band for the Spirit Lake Massacre.³⁹

The general confusion on the southwestern frontier was further increased by the panic among whites in border areas after the killings. False reports, for example, reached St. Paul in April, 1857, that 600 Indians had attacked Mankato, and three companies of troops were quickly sent there from St. Paul. Frightened refugees poured into Mankato, St. Peter, and other towns. In Watonwan County several peaceful Sisseton families were attacked by a company of volunteers. In May Sleepy Eyes, whom officials considered innocent of involvement in the massacre, was fired upon near his camp at Swan Lake, and six of his men were killed. Some of the uninvolved Indians reversed the usual frontier situation by flocking to Fort Ridgely for safety.⁴⁰

Inkpaduta's actions pointed up both Indian grievances and white weaknesses and thereby affected future relations between the two groups. The Indians could see the possibility of attacking whites without being punished, and some doubtless thought that a larger uprising might force the whites to keep promises expressed in treaties. Nervous settlers, on the other hand, became increasingly hostile toward their Indian neighbors. "Thus the danger of a real uprising was inten-

sified," wrote one historian, "because of a shift in the attitudes of both whites and Indians."

AFTER the Spirit Lake affair Inkpaduta generally avoided white settlements, and by late 1857 officials for a time gave up trying to capture the elusive chief. But numerous reports of his whereabouts, many of them erroneous or exaggerated, caused settlers to fear his return and to label any suspicious Indian as Inkpaduta, while Indians admired his ability to escape capture. In June, 1858, he was falsely reported as captured near St. Peter; in the same month he was said to have been taken on the Yellow Medicine River; in November that year rumor had it that Abbie Gardner recognized members of Inkpaduta's band near Spirit Lake. In April, 1860, the death of a man on the Cottonwood River was attributed to Yankton Indians and Inkpaduta; annuity Indians reportedly confirmed this. In October, 1861, Thomas J. Galbraith, new agent for the Dakota, assigned the blame for stolen horses in Minnesota and Iowa on "daring outlaws" connected with Inkpaduta.⁴¹

As Inkpaduta became more and more a legend, it was perhaps inevitable that some perceived him to be carrying out planned warfare against the whites. Interpreter Peter Quinn reportedly said that Little Crow and others in council talked frequently after 1857 of how easy it would be to kill all the whites in the Minnesota River Valley. Historian Edward D. Neill believed that Little Crow began to think of driving the whites from the area after this time. But most historians have expressed doubts that any such conspiracy existed: they have concluded that the August 17 events at Acton that triggered the war were not planned. They were merely a culmination of long-standing tensions.⁴²

Inkpaduta and his band may have helped foment unrest among the annuity Dakota just before the events at Acton. In June, 1862, for example, missionary Thomas S. Williamson warned agent Galbraith that one band led by a son of Inkpaduta was among those Indians going to the Yellow Medicine Agency to demand money from the Wahpeton and Sisseton for lands sold in the treaty of 1851. The next month when annuities were due, Galbraith, believing that Inkpaduta and his band were on the prairie near Yellow Medicine, sent soldiers and citizens to capture them. The attempt failed, and the agency Indians made much of how easily the outlaws eluded the whites. Doane Robinson, South Dakota historian of the Dakota, claimed that the pursuing party believed it had chased Inkpaduta into Dakota Territory when actually he doubled back and was near the Lower Agency two weeks before the Dakota War began.⁴³

Little Crow, Inkpaduta, and Little Priest, chief of the Winnebago tribe nearby, attended church services together at the Lower Agency on August 17, 1862, a day before the uprising broke out there in full force, accord-

³⁹Roy W. Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux*, 95 (Lincoln, Neb., 1967); Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:409, 410.

⁴⁰Here and below, see *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat*, April 14, 19, 1857; Hughes, in *Collections*, 12:278-280; Francis Huebschmann to Denver, May 8, 1857, in 35 Congress, 1 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 22, p. 355 (serial 919); Meyer, *Santee Sioux*, 101.

⁴¹Stephen R. Riggs, *Tah-Koo Wah-Ka'n; the Gospel Among the Dakotas*, 278 (Boston, 1869); "Inkpaduta — Miscellaneous Narrative and Memoranda," a file in Herriott Papers; Herriott, in *Annals of Iowa*, 18:509, 599; Galbraith to Superintendent Clark W. Thompson, October 1, 1861, in 37 Congress, 2 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 30, p. 703 (serial 1117).

⁴²Edward D. Neill and Charles S. Bryant, *History of the Minnesota Valley*, 183, 188 (Minneapolis, 1882); for statements against the conspiracy theory, see Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:235, and Hubbard and Holcombe, *Minnesota in Three Centuries*, 3:302.

⁴³Williamson to Galbraith, June 2, 1862, in *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:162 (St. Paul, 1893); Hubbard and Holcombe, *Minnesota in Three Centuries*, 3:291-293; Robinson, in *South Dakota Collections*, 2:344. Robinson attributed a greater role in the Dakota wars to Inkpaduta than other writers did. When Herriott was working on an Inkpaduta biography and sought to verify Robinson's accounts, the South Dakota historian could not recall where he had obtained his information but thought it was from discussions he had with Dakota Indians in his area. Robinson said that a well-meaning secretary, while attempting to clean his desk, had destroyed the notes on this material. See file, "Inkpaduta — Miscellaneous Narrative and Memoranda," in Herriott Papers.

ing to one historical account. Josephine Waggoner, a Teton Dakota woman who knew many of the Santee involved in the war of 1862, claimed much later that Little Crow actually sent for Inkpaduta after a council decided to attack the Lower Agency. She recalled that Inkpaduta had always advised the Santee against any sale of lands, but since his band was so small he had little influence. The Santee author and physician, Charles Eastman, said that Inkpaduta assumed an "I told you so" attitude with the Santee but quickly joined in the fight.⁴⁴

INKPADUTA'S ROLE, if any, during the 1862 conflict is difficult to assess because of sketchy information. He may have been responsible for some smaller incidents, but one contemporary account claimed that "none of the members of Inkpadoota's band took any part whatever in the great Sioux outbreak in Minnesota and Dakota." When defeat was imminent, Inkpaduta apparently fled to Dakota Territory with other Santee. After 1862 he seems to have enjoyed an increased status — not so much among the Santee as among the Yanktonai and, later perhaps, among some of the Teton.⁴⁵

In the spring of 1863, Sibley and General Alfred Sully organized a two-pronged punitive expedition to Dakota Territory to capture any hostile Dakota who had fled Minnesota and to demonstrate to the others the power of the United States. The following July Sibley decided to pursue a large number of Indians heading for the Missouri River under the leadership of Red Plume and Standing Buffalo. With this group was Inkpaduta, who was in charge of some Yanktonai and Teton. Sibley sent Joseph LaFramboise as a scout to offer council and to inform the friendly Indians that he would reward rather than fight them. Indications were that Standing Buffalo was prepared to talk to Sibley when a cavalry surgeon

was suddenly shot, reputedly by one of Inkpaduta's men. In the ensuing struggle the soldiers quickly forced an Indian retreat in what was called the Battle of Big Mound in present Kidder County, North Dakota. In 1901 Sisseton and Wahpeton Indians testified that Sibley's foes at Big Mound were Inkpaduta's band, Teton braves, and probably some Mdewakanton. "The willingness of these witnesses to make Inkpaduta a scapegoat is clearly apparent," wrote historian William W. Folwell.⁴⁶

Two more skirmishes followed the Big Mound retreat, one at Dead Buffalo Lake and another at Stony Lake, where historian Robinson believed Inkpaduta led a force of 950 Indians. The soldiers again routed them, chasing them to the Missouri River. Sibley headed back to Minnesota at the end of July without accomplishing his planned meeting with Sully's troops. Within a month this force encountered Inkpaduta at the Battle of Whitestone Hill. By the time Inkpaduta — who believed a purification ceremony necessary before a battle — was ready, a guide for some Iowa troops had alerted Sully.⁴⁷

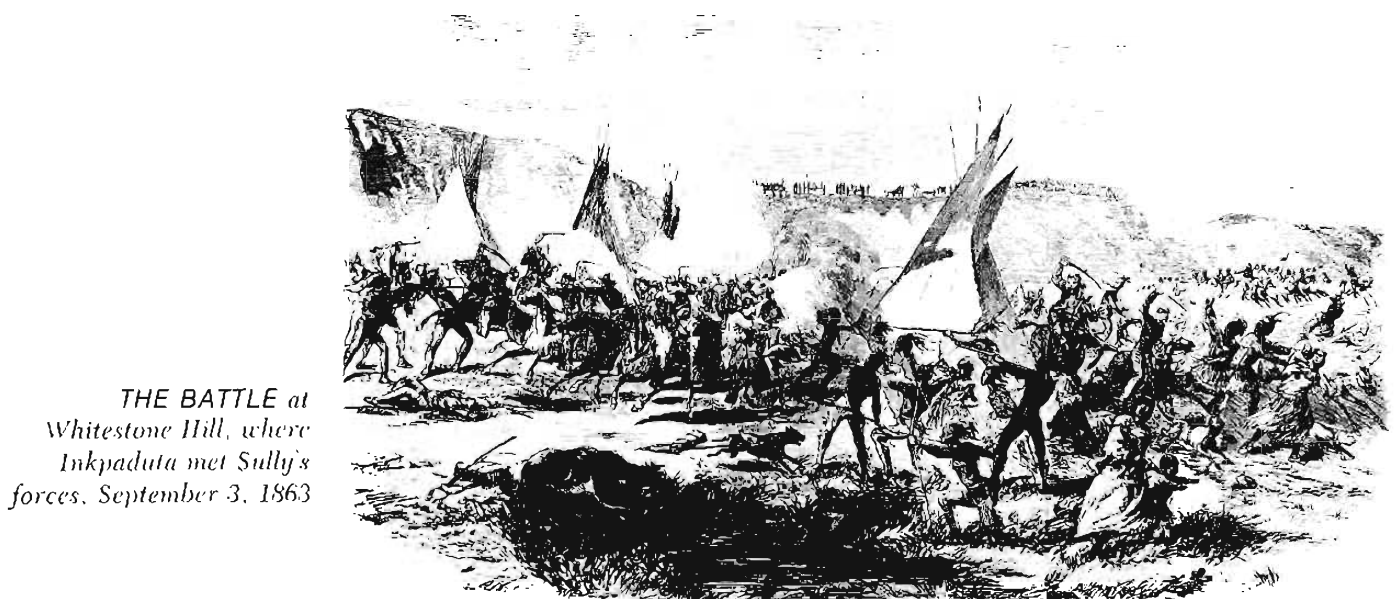
And again Inkpaduta eluded capture, and his following grew. The aging and increasingly nearsighted chief was not yet ready to retire to the protection of Canada as many other hostile Dakota were doing. Biographer Stan-

⁴⁴Neill and Bryant, *History of Minnesota Valley*, 188; Josephine Waggoner to Herriott, December 30, 1932, and Charles Eastman to Herriott, February 3, 1934, both in Herriott Papers.

⁴⁵Hubbard and Holcombe, *Minnesota in Three Centuries*, 3:267; Eastman to Herriott, February 3, 1934, Herriott Papers.

⁴⁶Robinson, in *South Dakota Collections*, 2:344, 346n; West, Sibley, 303; Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:429.

⁴⁷Robinson, in *South Dakota Collections*, 2:323-325; U. S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: Compilation of the*



THE BATTLE at
Whitestone Hill, where
Inkpaduta met Sully's
forces, September 3, 1863

ley Vestal claimed that in July, 1864, Inkpadata fought with Sitting Bull at Kildeer Mountain in present west-central North Dakota and that Sitting Bull and the Tetons relied on his military advice. Seven years later General David S. Stanley, commander of the military district of Dakota Territory, reported that among the hostile Indians under Sitting Bull were fragments of three bands of Santee and Yanktonai, one led by Inkpadata.⁴⁸

In June, 1876, Inkpadata may have made his final and still disputed appearance at the Battle of the Little Big Horn in southeastern Montana where Custer and his men took their "last stand." Robinson, basing his information on a *Chicago Times* interview with Chief Crazy Horse, claimed that the Indian village attacked by Custer was divided into seven different bands — one of them Santee and Yanktonai under Inkpadata. Robinson said that other South Dakota Indians would back up this story and named two participants in the battle who agreed that Inkpadata had been active there.⁴⁹

Two Minnesota historians agreed that Inkpadata was present at the Little Big Horn but noted that he was old, blind, "and no longer regarded as a leader of anybody." Black Elk, a relative of Crazy Horse, also counted Inkpadata among the "great men" present at the Little Big Horn "with the Santees and Yanktonais."⁵⁰

AFTER THE BATTLE Inkpadata and his followers evidently retired to Canada, joining some roving

Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, series 1, vol. 22, p. 555-561 (Washington, D.C., 1886-1901); *Spirit Lake Beacon*, August 3, 1933. Folwell doubted that Inkpadata "was given or took the leadership of the warriors and conducted their retreat with consummate skill, defeating Sibley's hope of capturing or destroying the whole Sioux force." See Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2:429.

⁴⁸Roy W. Meyer, "The Canadian Sioux: Refugees from Minnesota," in *Minnesota History*, 41:13-28 (Spring, 1968); Stanley Vestal, *Sitting Bull: Champion of the Sioux*, 55, 57 (Revised ed., Norman, Okla., 1957); George W. Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory*, 1:767 (Chicago, 1915).

⁴⁹Doane Robinson, "Crazy Horse's Story of Custer Battle," in *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 6:226 (Sioux Falls, 1912).

⁵⁰Hubbard and Holcombe, *Minnesota in Three Centuries*, 3:267; John C. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, 95 (Lincoln, Neb., 1961).

⁵¹Here and below, see Meyer, in *Minnesota History*, 41:19; Eastman to Herriott, February 3, 1934, and Waggoner to Herriott, September 5, 1933, both in Herriott Papers; Robinson, in *South Dakota Collections*, 6:346; Gontron Laviolette, *The Sioux Indians in Canada*, 115 (Regina, Sask., 1944); Laviolette to Peggy Larson, May 15, 1969, in possession of author. Father Laviolette said Inkpadata died near Batoche, Saskatchewan.

⁵²Robinson, in *South Dakota Collections*, 2:342; Eastman to Herriott, February 3, 1934, and Waggoner to Herriott, February 27, 1932, both in Herriott Papers.

Wahpekute near the Turtle Mountain area in Manitoba for a while. Eastman claimed that Inkpadata finally became a successful farmer on a reservation near Brandon, Manitoba. Robinson believed Inkpadata died there about 1879. His death, according to Mrs. Waggoner, was caused by pneumonia contracted when he suffered exposure during a hunting expedition.⁵¹

Eastman said that Inkpadata had about a dozen sons, including two sets of twins, and many daughters — all members of his band. After his death they seemed to seek anonymity. Father Gontron Laviolette, historian of Dakota Indians in Canada, talked with two sons of Inkpadata, one of whom said he witnessed the Custer battle as a child. The other said that most of the Minnesota Dakota who fled to Canada, among whom were Inkpadata's people, had returned to the United States. This was the last known direct reference to Inkpadata and his legendary band.

WAS INKPADATA a noble outlaw, a patriot of his people, or a common criminal who surfaced on the frontier from time to time? It could be expected that whites called him unflattering names — like "conscienceless Ishmael." The few Indians who have characterized him spoke so long after his death that one cannot know whether they were attempting to create a legend or were testifying to his true character. Doctor Eastman said that the chief and his sons made a great impression upon him as a boy. When Inkpadata was compared to other Indians in light of Indian customs, Eastman said, he "was not a bad man," but was respected by individuals in several tribes and was a person of "considerable mental gift and force." Mrs. Waggoner, who was acquainted with a half sister of Inkpadata, said she spoke of her brother as a humble man who avoided trouble until the whites so provoked him that he took extreme action.⁵²

With the passage of time come inevitable questions and reassessments. Could Indians who sided with the whites as their nations fell really be called noble? Villainous as Inkpadata was, he acquired a sort of dignity by never surrendering. Regardless of whether he was a patriot or a criminal, he was part of the frontier scene when great changes were occurring. The somewhat notorious reputation of the Wahpekute — in particular the band that Inkpadata led — characterized them as angry and resentful. Inkpadata's defiance takes on nobility when viewed as a refusal to accept the white man's ultimate takeover.

THE ILLUSTRATION on p. 27 is from *Annals of Iowa*, 2:146 (July-October, 1895); the one on p. 30 is from Smith, *Dickinson County*, 68; the sketches on p. 32 are from *Ballou's Pictorial* (Boston), August 22, 1857, p. 1, the scene on p. 34 is from *Harper's Weekly*, October 31, 1863, p. 693. There are, unfortunately, no available pictures of Inkpadata or the other Indians who appear in this article.



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