Forces of nature: An environmental history of Inkpaduta's 1857 attack on Spirit Lake

Kevin Timothy Mason
Iowa State University

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Forces of nature: An environmental history of Inkpaduta’s 1857 attack on Spirit Lake

by

Kevin Timothy Mason

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Rural, Agricultural, Technological, and Environmental History

Program of Study Committee:
Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, Major Professor
Sebastian Braun
Julie Courtwright
Kathleen Hilliard
Christopher Low

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2020

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DEDICATION

To Marissa, Rocky, and Arthur
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While I was growing up my dad would often say, “If you’re going to be a ditch digger, be the best damn ditch digger you can be.” I may not be the best historian I can be yet, but thanks to the people and institutions that have nurtured me I hope to be my best one day. Writing a dissertation is the final ascent in a climb that starts years before, and I have been incredibly fortunate to have exceptional company along the way. The completion of this project was only possible because of the people and institutions that supported me during this journey.

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ABSTRACT

The world in which Inkpaduta grew up in the northern Iowa borderlands rapidly changed during the nineteenth century. As Americans entered Dakota occupied lands, alterations to the environment undercut the ability of the Wahpekute to continue vital sustenance patterns. Decimation of animal species, destruction of plant resources, and the introduction of diseases resulted as eager Americans plowed under the tall-grass prairies. Inkpaduta sought to maintain sovereignty and autonomy for the Wahpekute bands living in Iowa as American encroachment underwrote acculturative efforts. Through quantification of acres surveyed, acres improved, acres unimproved, shifting animal populations, and dendrochronological research a clear picture emerges of the pressures building around Inkpaduta prior to the attack on Spirit Lake. That data, when paired with qualification from Dakota sources and the records of the developing American communities, creates a nuanced account of how the Wahpekute sought to maintain sovereignty and autonomy in the face of American acculturation.
CHAPTER ONE: “A PIONEER’S PROMISED LAND”

A small band of Wahpekute Dakota arrived at the cabin of Rowland Gardner on March 8, 1857, and they made demands for flour and other provisions. Rowland Gardner turned to gather some supplies, and with his back turned, he sustained a shot through the heart. The echo from the shot rolled out of the cabin and across the prairie, alerting more settlers to an intensifying danger. Over the course of the next few days, the band of Wahpekute Dakota led by Inkpaduta attacked scattered settlements throughout the northern Iowa borderlands leaving behind thirty-nine slain settlers.¹ The Wahpekute took Abbie Gardner-Sharp, as well as three other women, captive. Area settlers formed a volunteer regiment from Fort Dodge, Iowa, and a military regiment from Fort Ridgley, Minnesota responded to the attack. Both proved unsuccessful in freeing the captives or exacting revenge on Inkpaduta and his band. Over the course of the months that followed the governor of Minnesota worked to ransom and return to freedom Gardner-Sharp and Margaret Ann Marble, a fate far better than the other two women initially held captive who died as the Dakota fled west beyond the reach of American justice. The event marked the final conflict between the emergent American population and the indigenous inhabitants of the newly created state of Iowa.

In the aftermath of the 1857 violence at Spirit Lake, the Wahpekute Dakota have largely disappeared from Iowa. The southernmost bands of the Dakota lived in the state from at least the earliest recordings of Europeans.² Public memory and the historiographies of Iowa have erased and obscured signs of the Dakota presence. A minimized Dakota existence within the state, weaponized doctrines of effective occupation that obliterated land claims, and manipulated

evidence have obscured the historical record. The natural environment of Iowa has yielded a bounty to those who have called it home from a time immemorial. From their earliest encounters with European explorers through the 1850s, the Dakota navigated a period rife with challenges to their sovereignty and autonomy. Different bands of Dakota responded to the challenges posed by American settlement in a variety of ways including violent resistance, passive rejection, adaptation, and acceptance of acculturation. The culmination of the struggle for the Wahpekute in Iowa, exacerbated by environmental hardship, manifested violently on the shores of Spirit Lake in early March 1857 when Inkpaduta and his band of Wahpekute desperately sought to retain sovereignty and autonomy over the lands they called home.

Rivers prove essential to the story of the Dakota in Iowa. Watercourses made up the boundaries of a rapidly changing Dakota world from before their first-contact with European peoples. Rivers also guided the course of settlement: first through the explorations of the mighty Mississippi and Missouri, and later as settlers slowly crept along sandy banks into the interior of the state. The Wahpekute in Iowa ranged from summer villages at Spirit Lake in the Iowa Great Lakes chain toward the Missouri River through the Little Sioux River Valley in the years preceding the outbreak of violence in 1857. Additionally, Inkpaduta and the Wahpekute asserted their sovereignty and ability to range autonomously from the west banks of the Cedar River in the east to the Missouri River in the west. During the 1840s and 1850s Inkpaduta’s Wahpekute consistently confronted settlers, rival peoples, and government surveyors throughout an area framed by river-based boundaries. In response, the American government and settler communities sought to push the Dakota further north and west during the time period. As tensions grew, the Wahpekute faced a difficult decision: abandon the lands they called home in

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favor of reservation life in Minnesota or fight to preserve their ability to range throughout the northern Iowa borderlands. Following the outbreak of violence at Spirit Lake, the Dakota would not only lose access to the land and natural resources of Iowa, but also to their place as an indigenous people known to occupy the state within public memory.

In the years since Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake, the story of the Meskwaki has dominated the discourse of scholars, educators, and other manifestations of public memory concerning indigenous peoples in Iowa. The Dakota in Iowa’s history have suffered minimization, dismissal, and omission repeatedly. In contrast to the image constructed today, the earliest maps of European and American explorers showcased the prevalence of the Dakota throughout the region. Initial dispatches from military personnel, as well as many accounts from early American settlers, commonly include the Wahpekute Dakota bands of Sintominiduta and Inkpaduta. Early maps of the Des Moines River recorded the watershed about the confluence as the River of the Sioux, pointing to a strong Dakota presence throughout the area.4 Archeological evidence uncovered throughout the northern Iowa borderlands points to continuous occupation of the area by indigenous peoples who practiced lifeways consistent with Dakota traditions. The evidence supporting the Dakota occupying Iowa in the years prior to American settlement proves overwhelming. As historians have sought to bring greater clarity to interpretations of settler-colonialism and a general appreciation for native cultures into the historical record, the historiography has largely continued to ignore the Dakota presence in Iowa. Just as mapmakers moved the Dakota above the northern border of the state between 1845 and 1846, histories have consistently marginalized, minimized, and occasionally erased the Dakota aspects of Iowa’s

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historical past. Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake stands as at least partially responsible for this disappearance. As historians have toiled to better meet indigenous peoples on their own terms, Spirit Lake endures as an event characterized by images of unprovoked blood-thirsty savages attacking unsuspecting and peaceful agrarian settlers. In reality, the Wahpekute under Inkpaduta acted within their traditional cultural constructs to persist in the face of pressures pushed forward by the frontier-line and overwhelming environmental distress during the winter of 1856-57.

The argument presented here appears simple on the surface: the historiography of Iowa has egregiously misrepresented the actions of Inkpaduta and the Wahpekute in the years preceding the outbreak of violence at Spirit Lake in March 1857. In order to fully support and prove the argument five claims will be made over the course of six chronologically organized chapters: any account of the event must begin with understanding how the Dakota lived in Iowa prior to American colonization, treaties made between the Dakota and United States government failed to adequately include the Wahpekute to a point where they ceded their sovereignty and autonomy within the northern Iowa borderlands, the government’s movement of the military frontier line during the mid-nineteenth century erroneously communicated to settlers that the Wahpekute had vacated the area, American settlement of the era radically altered the natural environment in a way that exacerbated Dakota abilities to derive sustenance from the land, and the Wahpekute responded to American settlement in a variety of non-violent ways prior to their attack on Spirit Lake. Bookended by this introduction and a conclusion, the arguments herein seek to create a cohesive narrative that proves these five claims.

The natural environment of the northern Iowa borderlands, how the Dakota drew sustenance from it, and the initial explorations of Europeans and Americans comprise the bulk of the second chapter. The second chapter contains a thorough assessment of how the lands making
up the northern Iowa borderlands formed, as well as the flora and fauna that lived throughout the area at the time of initial American settlement. Understanding the natural environment means understanding the bounty which people enjoyed while living in the northern reaches of Iowa. The second chapter contains an assessment of the natural environment that seeks to extend beyond human institutions to understand how ecosystems provide meaningful context necessary to historical study. “Different peoples choose different ways of interacting with their environments, and their choices ramify through not only the human community but the larger ecosystem as well,” wrote William Cronon in his landmark 1983 work Changes in the Land. Careful examination of the geological formation of the area, the robust soil profiles, natural water features, flora, and fauna stand as necessary to understanding the ecosystem of Iowa and how communities interacted with one another during the first half of the nineteenth century. Changes in animal populations, plant resources, and watershed usage all played a part in exacerbating tensions between the Dakota and American settlers in the years preceding Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake. An ecological frontier developed in the northern Iowa borderlands as game populations vital to the Dakota diminished and as eager pioneers plowed under prairies to create large-scale change in the natural environment during the nineteenth century. Initial records of wildlife populations throughout the area, settler accounts that mark the final sighting of specific vital species, as well as land usage records all help to illustrate a rapidly shifting ecological frontier in the second chapter of this work.

To study the natural environment of the northern Iowa borderlands prior to the arrival of Americans in the nineteenth century means to study a Dakota place. The relationship of the

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Dakota people to their lands, although obscured, exists in the careful study of evidence that preserves folkways, cultural constructs, lingual forms, and place names. Through melding the histories etched on the natural environment, the oral traditions of the Dakota, and thoughtful interpretation of colonial sources, this account consists of complementary information that creates a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional appraisal of the northern Iowa borderlands prior to the onset of American agriculture in the 1850s and 1860s. Throughout this work limited philological and etymological analysis focuses on providing a meaningful linkage to Dakota place names, commonly utilized words, and the processes by which scholars recorded and preserved through the language. Examination of lingual forms illuminates Dakota lifeways prior to their recording.

The Dakota, and specifically the Wahpekute Dakota, had constructed a way of life that expertly used resources from the natural environment to thrive in a difficult climate. Dakota ways of life did not exist as inherently purer than those of the Americans who would come to imperially shift the landscape to agricultural practices, and the Dakota did not personify common tropes of ecological Indians embodying a pure oneness with nature. Important cultural, political, and military considerations prove vital to understanding how the Dakota in Iowa interacted with the natural environment around them, their commonly allied Siouan speaking kin, as well as the other peoples came into contact with during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Notions of kinship, common land use, and treaty making promote understanding of how the Dakota internalized and responded to the onset of American colonization. In order to assess these dynamics in relation to the eventual violence at Spirit Lake, a governmentally created

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dispossession frontier line became formalized in treaties, projections of power embodied in commissioning and decommissioning of military posts, and Dakota attempts to negotiate their place in a world that sought to subvert their sovereignty and autonomy within their homelands. Actions reverberate through history, and the ever-evolving dynamic between the Dakota and United States can be glimpsed through putting Wahpekute actions in appropriate cultural and historical context.

Prior to the wide-ranging negotiations led by William Clark and Lewis Cass at Prairie du Chien during the 1820s and 1830s, the Dakota met eager explorers, sought to adaptively incorporate new technologies into their lifestyles, and formed relationships built on mutual advantage with Europeans and Americans entering their lands. The Dakota sought to maintain their sovereignty and autonomy while gaining advantages over traditional rivals. The second chapter also contains assessment of Dakota responses to initial exploration, the first treaty with Zebulon Pike as a representative of the American government, the role of tribal peoples in the War of 1812, and the fall-out for the Dakota in the years that followed. These events help to illuminate a world that faces east from Dakota lands toward an encroaching American power seeking to establish and maintain dominion over the tribal peoples of the upper-Midwest. Through examining Dakota actions during the years preceding the Multinational Treaties at Prairie du Chien, a better understanding of how the Dakota actively sought alliance with the Americans in order to maintain their sovereignty and autonomy during the earliest interactions between the two powers.

A borderlands exists as a contested space. The northern Iowa borderlands existed as such a space during the years preceding 1857. The Dakota, the Sauk, the Meskwaki, the Ho-Chunk, the English, and the Americans all claimed a place in the area. These competing peoples
adaptively interpreted the space through their own distinct cultural lenses. The Dakota initially sought to incorporate Europeans and Americans into local patterns of land and resource allocation, sustenance, exchange of goods, diplomacy, and warfare. Patrick Wolfe described two formative factors that shape interactions between indigenous peoples and colonizers globally. Wolfe asserted that “territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element,” and that settler colonialism is predicated on elimination as it “destroys to replace.” Prior to American colonization, boundaries consistently shifted between the indigenous peoples of Iowa, as well as between these peoples and the Europeans entering the space. The Wahpekute Dakota represented the southernmost bands of the Santee, itself the southerly branch of the easternmost division of the tribal people commonly called the Sioux. By the 1840s, the Wahpekute ranged from the shores of the Shell Rock River in modern-day Worth County in the east, as far south and west as the confluence of the Little Sioux River and the mighty Missouri. In this range they exercised autonomy and sovereignty, ranged in semi-nomadic ways traditional to the Dakota, and expertly derived sustenance from the micro-climates that made up the natural environment of the area. They practiced governance and diplomacy both inter- and intra-tribally, exercised systems of justice, and participated in extensive trade networks that stretched across the continent. The Dakota had fluid borders, but the extreme edges of the range can be clearly delineated through the recorded movements of the bands within specific watersheds.

Americans, as well as other Europeans, sought to define borderlands. From this perspective of the borderlands, things moved first in an official form in accordance with the doctrine of discovery and European notions of effective occupation. Many historians have

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asserted that Europeans, especially the English, treated the ‘New World’ as *res nullius*, or “no one’s property.” This led to a common misconception that indigenous peoples had no concept of property rights. Although private property, strictly in the European sense, did not find conceptualization in the same way by indigenous peoples, the Dakota understood conceptions of property and authority. Property rights do not solely consist of individually held private property, but also manifest in groups who exercise sovereignty over natural resources and other uses of lands. Indigenous peoples throughout North America exercised sovereignty according to both their own and European definitions. The sovereignty and autonomy exercised by indigenous peoples finds evidence in conflicts over tracts of land and their resources that pre-date European notions of private property entering the contested space. Furthermore, as Europeans entered these spaces they became subject to the sovereignty and autonomy of these indigenous peoples until they established control through projections of force.

Europeans ignored indigenous sovereignty and autonomy and instead focused on a doctrine of discovery. For a space to come under the jurisdiction of a European people initial exploration had to occur. Under this construct, the lands that became Iowa existed under French and Spanish control until the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. The formal transfer of lands from one European nation to another, without the consent or cognizance of the indigenous peoples within the developing borders, existed as a common practice. After the illusory power contained

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8 Boyce Richardson, *People of Terra Nullius: Betrayal and Rebirth in Aboriginal America*. (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1994), xi.
in the exchange of the land title from distant power to another, more concrete measures proved necessary to subvert the sovereignty and autonomy of indigenous peoples occupying the space.

The northern Iowa borderlands changed with the implementation of treaties between the United States and the indigenous peoples who physically occupied the area. From the initial Multinational Treaties at Prairie du Chien in 1825 through the construction of Fort Dodge on the edge of the northern Iowa borderlands during the late-1840s, the time-period of focus for the third chapter of this work, the relationship between the Dakota, other tribal peoples, and the United States rapidly evolved. European agreements made an ocean away did not provide power. The inability of European peoples to adequately project power is well-evidenced by subversive alliances between indigenous peoples, like those of the Dakota and Menominee during the 1820s that undermined American goals in the region.\footnote{Zachary Taylor, \textit{Report on the Battle of Bad Axe}. Prairie du Chien; August 5, 1832. Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.} By incorporating the claims of European peoples, the indigenous peoples who held a territory hoped to strengthen their own claims and positions. As the United States began to enter the upper-Mississippi Valley during the early nineteenth century, they sought mutual benefit with tribal peoples. Often these alliances emerged in the historical record as Anglo-Americans etched the names of tribes on maps to showcase how they had come to claim control through alliance. An important example is the Algonquin derivative word \textit{Ayuxwa}, or Iowa, which came to characterize the land between two rivers.\footnote{Gretchen M. Bataille (Ed. Et.al.), \textit{The World Between Two Rivers: Perspective on American Indians in Iowa}. (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 3.} Even watersheds saw segmentation based on this tribal control. For example, on early maps the Des Moines River only extended to the southernmost extreme of the northern Iowa borderlands at the confluence of the East and West forks, above the convergence
mapmakers inscribed it as River of the Sioux. The Americans first sought to formalize and segment indigenous land claims through treaties during the first three decades of the nineteenth century before moving toward dispossession in the hopes of opening the lands to American settlers after 1830. The United States government communicated treaties poorly, based them on egregiously erroneous cartographic information, and proved impotent to enforce provisions in the face of long-standing conflicts between indigenous peoples. These moments altered the borderlands for all peoples, as the indigenous peoples sought to adapt to the first projections of American power in the region. Indigenous peoples throughout the country roundly tested and challenged the Americans on all sides, both in terms of their ability to protect themselves, as well as in their ability to wield the power they sought to project throughout their new dominions.

In order to formalize power, the American government established a series of military forts. Initially focused on trade and mediation of conflicts between native peoples, the forts grew to serve the function of intimidators, creditors, and disciplinarians in the relationship between the American ‘father’ and his ‘red children.’ The movement of military forts became tied to the frontier during the Andrew Jackson presidency, and a noticeable shift in borderlands relations occurs when with the commissioning and decommissioning of each fort. Indigenous peoples, including the Dakota, carefully assessed these physical manifestations of American power and responded accordingly. Adaptation yielded to acculturation when military power became projected in adequate measure, but indigenous peoples often bided their time and reasserted limited measures of sovereignty and autonomy as garrisons moved on from an area.

14 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa.* Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUF-D-KFMY, 1950).

The decommissioning of military forts became possible due to rises in American settler population. During the long nineteenth century the United States government defined a frontier as a space occupied by two-persons per square mile.\textsuperscript{16} The movement of military forts signaled to hopeful agrarian settlers that an area had become primed for settlement, and population increase often flowed into the vacuums left behind by decommissioned military posts.\textsuperscript{17} The increase in settler population changed dynamics in the borderlands. Where previously the interactions between indigenous peoples and average Americans often proved limited to commercial exchanges in the fur trade, treaty negotiation, and meetings with military personnel, population increase in the form of pioneers drastically altered dynamics. Individuals arriving from the eastern United States and Europe had an expectation of arriving in a “Pioneer’s Promised Land” fit for agricultural expansion and devoid of tribal peoples.\textsuperscript{18} As settlers entered the space they came into contact with a different reality: one where adaptation still proved necessary and fear of the indigenous other existed as a biting reality. Explorers, trappers, traders, priests, soldiers, bureaucrats, wives, children and farmers all comprised the non-monolithic group of settler-colonists that entered the contested space of the northern Iowa borderlands. Each person formed a small portion of the aggregate whole that eventually allowed for new projections of power underwritten by strength in numbers. When Indians outnumbered non-Indians, as did the population in the northern Iowa borderlands prior to the 1850s, indigenous peoples determined the form of and content of inter-cultural relations better than Europeans. As population dynamics shifted, the inter-cultural relationship changed, first from incorporation


toward adaptation, and eventually toward the onset of American acculturation. Chapter three of this work focuses on the time-period of extreme change within the northern Iowa borderlands between the 1830 Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien and the 1850s. The two decade span saw significant initial settlement in the area, as well as the construction of Fort Dodge.

Although population provided the means for the shift from mutual adaptation to American acculturation, the accompanying changes to the natural environment greatly altered outcomes for the Dakota. Agriculture, in the form of acres broken, planted, and harvested, represented a change that undercut the ability of the Dakota to continue traditional methods for surviving on the land. Wild game populations moved toward breaking points while livestock emerged as the dominant non-human lifeforms in the area. Property laws, based on individual ownership, protected these beasts, while pioneer’s plowed under vital forage for wild game relied upon by the Dakota. American agriculture served as the final stage of the frontier, and it forced the Dakota into a bitter struggle to survive.

In order to assess the changes taking place leading up to the critical outbreak of violence, population change will be analyzed in several ways. Assessment of a twenty-five county area examines the natural environment, first known American settlement, population expansion to the two-persons per square mile threshold, and the onset of American agriculture throughout the northern Iowa borderlands. In order to evaluate change in the natural environment, acreage plowed and planted will be quantified to determine when changes to the land altered Dakota abilities to successfully maintain traditional lifeways. To further grasp Dakota understanding and recognition of the evolving northern Iowa borderlands, oral tradition will be paired with critical, against-the-grain reading of a source base that includes reports from the various Indian agents stationed in the area, military personnel, the accounts of early American settlers, data
from pertinent Iowa and national censuses, and recorded interactions between the Dakota and early settler populations. Chapters four and five focus on the 1840s and 1850s, a time-period when American settlement in the region intensified.

Throughout the time-period between the onset of treaties in 1825 and the outbreak of violence in the spring of 1857, the Dakota made adjustments to how they viewed the world around them and their power over it. Conceptions of sovereignty and autonomy undergird this work as drivers of Dakota resistance, and range on a fluid spectrum that spans from violent rejection to coerced acculturation. The theoretical framework embodied in this project developed from the work on Latin American historian Florencia E. Mallon, and showcases how the Dakota, and specifically the Wahpekute under Inkpaduta, sought to navigate the onset of colonization with minimal violence. Dakota responses during the nineteenth century to the onset of American influence in the northern Iowa borderlands focused on two main, broad strands. First, the Dakota wanted access to land and other natural resources. Second, the Dakota wanted political, social, cultural, and economic autonomy. In order to meet these ends the Dakota utilized a range of responses. This work assesses the actions of the Dakota in four broad categories: violent rejection, non-violent rejection, culturally adaptive acceptance, and coerced acculturation. When defined within these characterizations, the actions of the Dakota manifest on a fluid spectrum, as individual agents acted in their personal interest as well as in the interest of specific band and tribal-level groups during contingent moments. This interpretation radically departs from the traditional one that has consistently portrayed the Dakota as reliant on violence as a primary response to interaction with Americans. In reality, Inkpaduta and the Wahpekute displayed a variety of responses as they navigated the onset of American encroachment.
Dakota resistance also falls into the categories of incorporation, adaptive accommodation, and acculturation. The theoretical work of Kathleen DuVal in her 2006 work *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* and Richard White’s landmark 1991 work *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* influenced the conversation contained herein. DuVal’s work built on the initial conception of Richard White’s *Middle Ground* to construct incorporation. In this dynamic, Americans did not colonize native peoples initially. Instead, indigenous peoples demonstrated authority to their European and American counterparts by wielding control over the small amounts of lands held by the newcomers. In this dynamic, indigenous peoples had the role of deciding whether to allow the use of a particular piece of land for a military post, farm, or village within their jurisdiction. For example, until the founding of Fort Dodge in 1848, Sintominiduta and other Wahpekute leaders shaped the focus and scope of the relationships that emerged with newcomers to the northern Iowa borderlands. The initial eviction of Henry Lott from the Boone River area by Sintominiduta in the early 1840s showcased the dynamic of incorporation in action. The Dakota permitted Lott to trade, but his survival in the area relied upon his subjugation to Dakota sovereignty. Incorporation will be assessed throughout the text to follow, especially during the initial phases of American entry into the northern Iowa borderlands.

White put forth a conception of cultural adaptation and accommodation that relied on give and take by both a hegemonic power and the coerced population. White’s cultural adaptation construct underlies assessment of when, where, and how instances of mutual

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accommodation took place between the Dakota and Americans. The adaptation between all peoples on the American frontier of the early nineteenth century existed in social, cultural, and diplomatic actions. In each case, members of divergent cultures established a cautious alliance built on furthering mutual interests. The Dakota and their first European and American neighbors created and maintained a tentative alliance through actions based on cultural parallels and congruences, a process that often proved inexact and artificial. The adaptation phase of these relations developed from compromise, as two peoples cooperated in order to advance their own respective interests. The American-Dakota alliance in the massacre of Black Hawk’s band of Sauk at the Bad Axe River in the first two days of August 1832 exists as an example of this type of adaptation. In that instance, the Dakota allied themselves with the American military to advance their position in their long-standing rivalry Sauk. The United States benefited from this accommodation through utilizing Dakota military strength to reinforce their own power in a critical moment.

As population dynamics shifted to provide greater expansion of American power, the United States projected acculturation upon the Dakota. “Acculturation proceeds under conditions in which a dominant group is largely able to dictate correct behavior to a subordinate group,” wrote White. American acculturation of the Dakota derived from a dependency cultivated through colonization and built upon bringing the upper-Midwest into a global market.

Acculturation also resulted when Americans sought to force the Dakota to acclimate lifeways in

ways reliant on European goods. As American population expansion paired with massive changes to the natural environment through the introduction of agrarian agriculture, the necessary conditions for acculturation became manifest throughout the upper-Midwest. The resistance of Inkpaduta to the onset of American acculturation stands as a focus of this work throughout. By pairing the historical record with the theoretical frameworks detailed above, I hope to provide a meaningful reconceptualization of events that enters significantly into the historiography while also working to advance theoretical structures created by other historians.

The months immediately prior to the outbreak of violence on the shores of Spirit Lake in March of 1857 saw one of the most brutal winters on record for the area. The severity of the winter of 1856-57 exacerbated tensions between the Wahpekute Dakota and settlers in the northern Iowa borderlands immediately before Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake. Primary sources from the era can help illuminate a portion of the story: individuals throughout Iowa qualitatively recorded their experiences over the course of the winter. Accounts of settlers, the extreme circumstances they faced, and what they expected in a normal winter all figure prominently into the conversation. Quantification proves more difficult. Several individuals recorded weather data throughout Iowa during the winter of 1856-57, but each of them lived outside of the northern Iowa borderlands.24 The available data from Iowa, as well as the accounts from the military posts at Fort Ridgely and Fort Snelling, combine to create the case that Iowa’s worst winter in the nineteenth century took place during 1856-57. Dendrochronological research of the time period also provides meaningful evidence of the outlying nature of precipitation over the course of that fateful winter.25 Through combining the

available quantitative and qualitative weather information a clear picture of the severity of the winter of 1856-57 emerges in chapter five.

Chapter five also includes examination of interactions between Inkpaduta’s band and the newly established settler community at Smithland on the Little Sioux River. For at least three years prior to the outbreak of violence, Inkpaduta and his band of Wahpekute wintered on the property of the settler Charles Lamb just north of the small village. Relations between the band and the local settlers proved peaceable, and only minimal incidents of cross-cultural tension took place. Understanding how relations broke down between the Wahpekute and the community at Smithland proves integral to understanding the eventual outbreak of violence at Spirit Lake. The environment undoubtedly played a part: both in the context of the severe winter of 1856-57, as well as in the form of a prairie fire that ravaged the grain harvest around Smithland during the fall of 1856. Scarcity in the natural environment characteristic of population expansion due to Anglo settlement paired with the shortage of grain resultant from the prairie fire to increase tensions between the disparate groups as the brutal winter unfolded. The well-preserved events at Smithland consist of primary source accounts left behind by the settler population. Pairing the existing sources with environmental analysis and an understanding of basic Dakota lifeways illuminates a different interpretation of the events that unfolded during March of 1857.

After Inkpaduta and his people fled north from Smithland they remained relatively peaceable as they encountered settler populations along the Little Sioux River. Violence only erupted on their return to their summer home in the northern Iowa borderlands at Spirit Lake.

Spirit Lake served the Dakota as a place of significance as the origin site of the sacred Corn Dance, and the Dakota trace their history at that location to a time well-before western recording. Inkpaduta led his people back to a traditional home and place of bounty, and the reality he discovered on arrival pushed him to a breaking point. The band, which had ascended the Little Sioux without attacking other settlements, violently attacked the new arrivals at Spirit Lake. Blood soaked through the snow as the band moved from cabin to cabin killing, taking captives, and marauding throughout the area. The events immediately preceding, constituting, and following the attack on Spirit Lake also find assessment in chapter five.

After the attacks, Inkpaduta fled beyond the shifting frontier line and the reach of American justice during the summer of 1857. In his absence, the northern Iowa borderlands became devoid of a significant indigenous presence. After the violent attack on Spirit Lake the State of Iowa effectively banished the Dakota, and tensions moved north to the Minnesota River reservation that served as the next site of major Dakota violence during the US-Dakota War of 1862. Environmental change continued as eager pioneers plowed more acres of prairie under to make way for agricultural production, populations of wild game continued to diminish as a result of settlement, and fledgling communities became incorporated into the broader economic system of the United States. Chapter six focuses on assessing the large-scale environmental change that took place, the fate of the Wahpekute Dakota in the aftermath of the attack on Spirit Lake, and the legacy of the event for the state of Iowa. Assessment of the minimization of the Dakota in the public memory of Iowa through paintings, scholarly texts, educational programming and other means in the decades which followed the violence of 1857 also finds

30 Kintzing Prichette to Commissioner of Indian Affairs James Denver, October 15, 1857, SED no. 49, 35th Congress., Ist Session, Series 919.
inclusion in chapter seven. In placing the Spirit Lake Massacre in the appropriate environmental and cultural context, assessing the lead-up to the event, and carefully exploring the establishment of the public memory of the event, I hope to not only explain why the Dakota have found significant diminishment in Iowa’s past, but place them back into the official history and public memory of the northern Iowa borderlands in a significant way.

The historical record has focused on the ‘Sioux,’ or a broad confederacy composed of a broad tribal structure which incorporates the Dakota, Nakota, Lakota, and other subgroups. However, much of the historiography focuses specifically on the Lakota in the late-nineteenth century. The majority of discourse surrounding the ‘Sioux’ has detailed the tribe in relation to American military operations on the northern Great Plains during the 1860s and 1870s. Although scholars have devoted more attention to the Dakota through recent additions to the historiography, historians have largely treated the events at Spirit Lake during March 1857 as a prologue to the US-Dakota War of 1862. A plethora of research has evolved into a distinct historiography of the Dakota that largely contextualizes Inkpaduta’s actions in 1857 as a minor foot-note to the larger-scale violence that took place near New Ulm, Minnesota in 1862. Works of this type include Gary Clayton Anderson’s 1988 work *Through Dakota Eyes.* Anderson’s work provided meaningful incorporation of Dakota oral history sourcing, and the Dakota sources assessed to do not credit Inkpaduta’s actions at Spirit Lake as a meaningful motive or precursor to the US-Dakota War. Other historical works released in recent years including Marty Duncan’s 2019 work *Black Powder: The Dakota War*, Ruben Rieke and Thomas Phillips’s 2018 work *Fire in the North: The Minnesota Uprising and the Sioux War in Dakota Territory,*

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Gregory Michno’s 2011 work *Dakota Dawn: The Decisive First Week of the Sioux Uprising, August 1862*, Jerry Keenan’s 2003 work *The Great Sioux Uprising: Rebellion on the Plains August-September 1862*, Kenneth Carley’s 2001 work *The Dakota War of 1862: Minnesota’s Other Civil War*, C.M. Oehler’s 1997 work *The Great Sioux Uprising*, and Duane Schultz’s 1993 work *Over the Earth I Come: The Great Sioux Uprising of 1862* all stand as works that attempted to assess the conflict from various perspectives. Each of these works characterized Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake as an event that may have provided the Dakota with an idea for what American military retribution following a violent uprising might look like, but none delve deeply enough into the events that transpired in the northern Iowa borderlands to provide meaningful insight or reinterpretation of the event.

Works, like Amos E. Oneroad and Alanson B. Skinner’s 2005 work *Being Dakota: Tales and Traditions of the Sisseton and Wahpeton*, help to provide a more nuanced understanding of how the natural environment shaped Dakota lifeways. Additionally, Oneroad and Skinner’s text provided contextualization of Dakota culture to show how resistance to colonization remained consistent with traditional responses. Broad works by historians, like the 1967 work of Roy Meyer titled *History of the Santee Sioux: United States Indian Policy on Trial*, also helped to create understanding through assessment of policies, actions, and other factors foisted upon the Dakota since initial colonization. More specific works, most notably Gary Clayton Anderson’s *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* also assessed the Dakota. Anderson explored Dakota kinship and early relations with

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Americans in ways that are vital to this study. Ethnohistorical studies, like that of Guy Gibbon in his 2003 work *The Sioux: The Dakota and Lakota Nations* help to describe Dakota life prior to the onset of American acculturation.\(^\text{34}\) Other works provided basic understanding of the Dakota in ways that have long screamed for reinterpretation with a more modern lens. Foremost among these works stands Doane Robinson’s 1904 work *A History of the Dakota or Sioux Indian: From Their Earliest Traditions and First Contact with White Men to the Final Settlement of the Last of Them Upon Reservations and Consequent Abandonment of the Old Tribal Life.*\(^\text{35}\)

The historiography specifically concerning the events at Spirit Lake in 1857 still largely relies on the published captivity narrative of Abbie Gardner-Sharp.\(^\text{36}\) Gardner-Sharp’s account, originally penned from her memory of the events in 1872, presented a variety of inherent issues that derive from her personal role in the drama that unfolded in early 1857. Gardner-Sharp, a child at the time of the attack, saw her family brutally murdered before being taken captive. Inkpaduta and his band negatively altered her life in ways that defy imagination. Her narrative of the event understandably reflects the burden of her experiences. The narrative also included many common tropes of eighteenth and nineteenth century American captivity narratives. Captivity narratives serve an important role in American culture and identity. “In a pluralist country with no ethnic national identity, captivity dramas have served to rally ‘us’ around the figure of the innocent captive held in bondage by ‘them,’” wrote Gordon M. Sayer in his 2000 work *American Captivity Narratives.*\(^\text{37}\) Sayer firmly asserted that captivity narratives find root in

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encounters between unfamiliar peoples resulting from imperialism. The resulting narratives focus on the “otherness” of a culture a captive finds themselves imprisoned in. “Otherness must be portrayed as racial, religious, or broadly cultural, but in any case it is profound enough that each side regards its own ways as superior to the other’s, and captivity forces this prejudice to the surface, either to be defended or abandoned,” wrote Sayer.38 Gardner-Sharp experienced great suffering during and after Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake, and she etched her feelings of hatred and the subsequently vilified the Dakota within her narrative of the events. In order to provide a more balanced account, a variety of sources beyond the participant account of Abbie Gardner-Sharp prove necessary to provide greater nuance to the narrative. Although Gardner-Sharp’s account contains some inherent flaws, the work stands as vital due to its critical details about the community developing around Spirit Lake in the mid-1850s.

Aside from the work of Abbie Gardner-Sharp, a variety of other primary sources and documents help to reinterpret the event. Local historical societies, libraries, city halls, and small archives throughout the twenty-five county northern Iowa borderlands hold a variety of primary source material relevant to this research. Through the incorporation of a variety of first-hand accounts, store ledgers, early maps, and other source materials, a more detailed picture of the years preceding the outbreak of violence at Spirit Lake emerges. Previously unconsidered and highly localized sources provide new insights, including the journal and store ledge left behind by early settler and trader Joseph Hewitt of Clear Lake preserved at the Mason City Community Foundation Archive.39 Hewitt’s ledger holds the names of many, including Rowland Gardner, who struck out for the Spirit Lake region during the later-summer of 1856.40

39 Mason City Public Library Archives, Joseph Hewitt Journals. (Mason City, IA: Unpublished).
40 Mason City Public Library Archives, Joseph Hewitt Log-Book and Register. (Mason City, IA: Unpublished).
uncovering what settlers brought with them as they removed beyond the frontier line, a better understanding of their outlook for the potential challenges they faced becomes clearer. Additionally, Hewitt’s journal helps to detail general thoughts on settlement as he rode a mail route as far west as Algona. Finally, the source base can help to elaborate on the severity of the winter of 1856-1857. The small repositories of towns throughout the 25-county area contain documents like these, and they help to tell the story with greater depth, insight, and nuance than historians have previously.

Settler-colonist accounts aside, military personnel that arrived in the northern Iowa borderlands and southern Minnesota during the mid-nineteenth century left behind a great deal of source material. William Williams, who originally served as a major on the Dragoon expedition during the 1830s, later went on to found the city of Fort Dodge.41 His experiences help to reconstruct the edge of the Iowa frontier in the mid-1850s. Specific accounts and notes of the various military expeditions to the northern Iowa borderlands during the first-half of the nineteenth century help to provide better understanding of the natural environment and the people who lived within it. Captain Thomas G. Anderson’s Early Experiences in the North West Fur Trade & British Capture of Prairie du Chien 1814, Philippe Regis de Trobriand’s Military Life in Dakota, Louis Pelzer and Nathan Boone’s Marches of the dragoons in the Mississippi Valley: an account of marches and activities of the First regiment United States dragoons in the Mississippi Valley between the years 1833 and 1850, Joseph N. Nicollet’s On the Plains and Prairies: The Expeditions of 1838-39 with Journals, Letters, and Notes on the Dakota Indians, Count F. Arese’s A Trip to the Prairies and in the Interior of North American, 1837-1838, and

41 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950).
Stephen H. Long’s *The Northern Expeditions: Journals of 1817 and 1823*, all helped to create snapshots of the northern Iowa borderlands as they evolved prior to the onset of wide-scale settlement during the mid-nineteenth century. Additionally, reports from post commanders, letters from soldiers, and other important documents pertaining to military and governmental discourse help to provide important insight into the realities of the northern Iowa borderlands of the early to mid-nineteenth century. Reports from Indian agents stationed amongst the Dakota, annuity ledgers and their subsequent notes, as well as the correspondence of governmental officials charged with various tasks in the geographic space can all help to determine the perceptions and realities of the time period. Likewise, early maps aid modern scholars to elucidate the understanding of Americans as they sought to negotiate and occupy a space still being surveyed as events unfolded. Maps show not only where Europeans and Americans found indigenous peoples, but also how borders shifted over time.

Thomas Teakle made the first attempt by a trained historian to relate the events at Spirit Lake in a monograph length project in his 1918 work *The Spirit Lake Massacre*. Teakle, a history teacher at Des Moines North High School, provided an interpretation of the event during the earliest years of the twentieth century. Although well-researched, the book leaned heavily into the pioneer ethos and justifications common to the era. Teakle subsequently released an expanded version of the manuscript that sought to incorporate multiple perspectives entitled *Sioux Massacre at Spirit Lake: Two Accounts of the Santee Sioux Attack on the Iowa Settlements in 1857*. The work provided an updated and slightly revised text of Teakle’s original work, and also included R.A. Smith’s 1902 work *A History of Dickinson County, Iowa: Together With and

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Account of the Spirit Lake Massacre, and the Indian Troubles on the Northwestern Frontier.

Although Teakle’s revision added little to the historiography, his inclusion of Smith’s work exacerbated the deficiencies of the original text through expanding the mythologies of conquest, pioneer spirit, and outright racist undertones. However problematic, Teakle and Smith’s works endured as the major monograph length entries into the historiography of the event.

The twenty-first century saw a renewed interest in the form of two new works: Mary Bakeman’s 2001 collection of source-material entitled Legends, Letters, and Lies: Readings About Inkpaduta and the Spirit Lake Massacre, and Paul N. Beck’s 2008 work Inkpaduta: Dakota Leader. Bakeman’s work, published locally through Park Genealogical and later by the Minnesota Historical Society, provided insight into the events through a compilation of primary sources presented with limited analysis. Bakeman compiled sources primarily from the Minnesota Historical Society archive in St. Paul, Minnesota, and her work approached the event almost exclusively from a settler and military perspective. Paul Beck’s biographical work on Inkpaduta brings the Dakota leader into a different light that any previous work in the historiography. Beck’s interpretation of Inkpaduta’s legacy drew significantly on the correspondence of governmental officials stationed with the Dakota, settler journals, and newspaper accounts to provide a look into the complexities of the notorious chief. Focused on the entirety of Inkpaduta’s life, Beck’s work touched on how perceptions of Inkpaduta formed after the event, while also providing a new interpretation of his decisions immediately preceding the outbreak of violence at Spirit Lake. Perhaps the most important contribution of Beck’s work results from his insistence that the traditional portrayal of Inkpaduta as a blood thirsty man hell-

bent on murdering all the settlers he could find stands as an outright misrepresentation of the historical record. I hope to build on Beck’s findings by expanding beyond biography to show how external factors, most notably stress on the natural environment resulting from population pressure, as well as the varied responses detailed above, also influenced the leader’s decisions in the months and years leading up the outbreak of violence at Spirit Lake.

Other works of military history touch on the events at Spirit Lake tangentially including Beck’s 2000 work Soldier, Settler, and Sioux: Fort Ridgely and the Minnesota River Valley, 1853-1867 and William E. Whittaker’s (Ed.) 2009 work Frontier Forts of Iowa: Indians, Traders, and Soldiers, 1682-1862. Beck’s work provided important understanding of the adaptive accommodation that took place between the Wahpekute, the United States military, and the initial settler population of Minnesota.\(^46\) The work, which focused on the military fort established immediately following the decommissioning of Fort Dodge provided readers with a glimpse of the relationship between Americans and the Dakota during the fourteen years of the fort’s existence. The work focused on more a more northerly geographic context, and also lacked the attention to the natural environment encompassed in the arguments made herein. Whittaker’s Frontier Forts of Iowa provided meaningful archeological context for the movement of the military frontier-line.\(^47\) A series of articles by dozens of researchers, primarily drawn from the field of archeology, made up the book which demonstrated the development, movement, and aftermath of various forts that stretched across Iowa throughout the nineteenth century.

\(^{46}\) Paul N. Beck, Soldier, Settler, and Sioux: Fort Ridgely and the Minnesota River Valley, 1853-1867. (Sioux Falls, SD: Augustana Center for Western Studies, 2000).
A variety of works focused on environment, both inside the historiography and out, have informed this work. James J. Dinsmore’s 1994 work *A County So Full of Game: The Story of Wildlife in Iowa* provided meaningful quantification and qualification of the natural environment before and after American colonization. Considerations of fauna throughout Dinsmore’s text helped to establish last dates of specific species within the state, as well as meaningful quantification of populations prior to American arrival. Also specific to the Dakota is Gwen Westerman and Bruce White’s 2012 work *Min Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota*. Westerman and White’s work explored the Dakota relationship with the land through a variety of oral histories and other sources. The work focused primarily on the state of Minnesota, with limited coverage of the Wahpekute in Iowa. I build on this excellent text to explore the southernmost reaches of the Dakota range more extensively. William Cronon’s 1983 work *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* provided a significant template for assessing how the natural environment shifted from native to European control. Historians must recognize, as Cronon did, that Europeans and Americans did not encounter a wilderness, but instead entered a natural environment occupied, utilized, and mindfully shaped by inhabitants prior to their arrival. Likewise, Alfred W. Crosby’s 1986 *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900*, demonstrated the necessity of considering how manipulation of the natural environment aided and enabled in the diminishment of sovereignty and autonomy for tribal peoples in their traditional homelands. The work of A.T. Andreas in his *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa*, originally published in 1875, help provide a snapshot of the natural environment of the northern Iowa borderlands as settlers shifted the land

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toward agricultural purposes.\textsuperscript{50} The maps and descriptions comprising Andreas’s work provided vital understanding of the land at the time of initial settlement and colonization.

A variety of works not focused on broader interpretations of meaningful theoretical contexts for any indigenous history taking place in the United States also influence this work. Pekka Hämäläinen’s works including the 2008 work \textit{The Comanche Empire}, his 2001 work \textit{Major Problems in the History of North American Borderlands}, and his 2019 work \textit{Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power} all shaped the way I think about borderlands, their evolution, and the inhabitants that call them home.\textsuperscript{51} Patricia Limerick’s 1987 work \textit{The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West}, stands as vital in understanding the conversation surrounding modern-interpretations of Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis, as well as represented a groundbreaking work that asserted the necessity of continued reevaluation of frontier spaces by modern scholars.\textsuperscript{52} Elliott West’s 1998 work \textit{The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado} helped to develop understanding of the shifting dynamics of borderlands.\textsuperscript{53} Jill LePore’s 1998 work \textit{The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity} helped to shape understanding of how the othering of indigenous peoples shaped relations between peoples inhabiting borderlands throughout the United States.\textsuperscript{54}

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{50} A.T. Andreas, \textit{Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa} (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1875).
\item\textsuperscript{52} Patricia Nelson Limerick, \textit{The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West}. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987).
\item\textsuperscript{53} Elliot West, \textit{The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado}. (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1998).
\end{itemize}
Throughout this work I have sought to incorporate the Dakota language as often as practical. Understanding Dakota place names, analysis of terminology related to flora and fauna, and words that help to illuminate sustenance techniques has provided the ability to form a meaningful linkage to the ways in which the Dakota interacted with their environment prior to colonization. Samuel Pond’s accounts that came to comprise *Dakota Life in the Upper Midwest*, as well as his original transcription of the Dakota language which eventually resulted in Stephen R. Riggs’s *Dakota-English Dictionary* proved vital to understanding how the Dakota lived prior to the recording of the language in the 1830s. Each of these sources inherently involved the colonial past foisted upon the Dakota while still allowing the modern reader a glimpse into how the Wahpekute utilized the environment prior to American entry into their lands. Like the bulk of sources that influence and comprise this evaluation of the northern Iowa borderlands prior to 1857, Europeans and Americans authored and influenced many of these documents. European and American anthropologists transcribed the majority of oral histories vital to careful study of the Dakota. Through the examination of these sources over a multi-century time period, I have actively sought to understand, interpret, and correct individual biases, as well as the cultural biases of scholars initially writing and recording documents in their own unique cultural contexts. Each of these sources individually contained significant shortcomings which will be addressed within the text. Collectively these works can work together to provide the basis of a nuanced account of the northern Iowa borderlands during the early and mid-nineteenth century. Each part contributes to a greater whole that can help to provide a new understanding of the

Dakota in Iowa, and how they confronted the radical changes that took place during the years preceding Inkipduta’s attack on Spirit Lake.

A triumphant story of Americans incorporating an important agricultural region into their empire does not follow in the pages to come. Likewise, this work does not an attempt to demonize the settler populations that came to call the northern Iowa borderlands home. Such simplifications belittle the true complexities of interactions between inhabitants of this specific geographic context and how they sought to negotiate and control the world in which they lived. Attempting to understand how the Dakota inhabited the natural environment of the northern Iowa borderlands, how American settlement of the region provoked contextualized responses, and how the events that unfolded in March of 1857 at Spirit Lake influenced the public memory of the Dakota within the state all serve as important goals of this work. When considering the Dakota in Iowa – staggering population loss, dispossessed lands, decline of tribal autonomy, and the increase of American acculturative influence - declension can be found. However, the Dakota did not see themselves as being colonized, nor did the Americans seeking to establish agricultural homesteads see themselves as colonizers. The Dakota have continued to occupy and culturally persist in the face of the enormous changes that they have encountered over the recent centuries. Through an honest effort to understand how markedly different peoples sought to utilize the natural environment around them, their collective responses to those changes and one another, as well as the ramifications of resultant actions we can better understand the history of this place.
CHAPTER TWO: “AN ENCHANTED WORLD”

“To the far-traveled home-seekers, it was an enchanted world,” wrote Agnes C. Laut as she recollected her first impressions of Iowa. “Oak groves fringed the lakes. Myriad wild fowl were flickering up from the reeds; and fish could be seen jumping at gnats in the evening. Here were wood, water, food, camping ground for a night or a lifetime, and never a trace of man by as much as a moccasin print across a punky log.” In reality, Laut entered an environment managed, maintained, and utilized by humans long before the nineteenth century. An ecological principle commonly known as Liebig’s Law helped blind American entering the northern Iowa borderlands to the subtle ways in which indigenous peoples had shaped the environment around them. Liebig’s Law stated that biological populations find limitation not in the total annual resources available to them, but by the minimum amount that they can find at the scarcest time of the year. The Wahpekute Dakota had observed, shaped, and maintained the natural environment of the Des Moines River and Little Sioux River watersheds expertly to derive sustenance from a variety of micro-climates, even in the most challenging seasons of a notoriously difficult climate. The Dakota created a culture and social organization based on what they could sustainably take from the land. By the time of American colonization, the Wahpekute Dakota had made their home in the Iowa and Mankato Drift regions of northwestern Iowa and southern Minnesota. These geological areas exist as some of the most fertile on the planet. The climate of Iowa proved suitable for growing a variety of crops, and the region housed numerous watersheds including the headwaters of the Mississippi, Des Moines, Minnesota, Iowa, and Little Sioux.

Rivers. The area supported a variety of flora and fauna that sustained a diverse diet for the Dakota in the years preceding American settlement.

The Des Moines Lobe stands as the only geological region of Iowa that still shows the results of glacial action. A massive glacier scraped the landscape to form the Des Moines Lobe between 12,000 and 14,000 years ago. As the Des Moines Lobe glacier painstakingly made its way through North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and northern Iowa, it carved out land features and left behind fertile soils. The glacier dragged southward through central Iowa, forming the bed of the Raccoon River before coming to a halt just north of modern-day Des Moines. The Des Moines Lobe constitutes roughly 12,000 square miles and terminates at the confluence of the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers. The Raccoon River forms the southern and western border of the lobe. In a state not known for lakes, the Des Moines Lobe stands out for its open-water lakes including the Iowa Great Lakes, in the heart of the northern Iowa borderlands, as well as a variety of wetlands and prairie potholes.

The rolling prairies broken by river valley oak savannahs and sloughs made up the Des Moines Lobe area that the Wahpekute Dakota occupied prior to American colonization in the nineteenth century. Radiocarbon dating of peat bogs and various types of logs dislodged by the advancing ice have helped modern scientists map a detailed chronology of the advance and retreat of the Des Moines Lobe Glacier. These methodologies, as well as modern topographical and geographic methods help to unlock insights into the history of the land. Glacial moraines, or active oscillations of the ice front, melted to leave behind thick deposits of compact loam called

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Moraines made up ridges that loom over the more gently rolling countryside in a relatively flat landscape. The Algona end moraine, a smooth, prominent, south-facing escarpment reaching up to one-hundred-twenty feet in height ranges across eastern Palo Alto, Kossuth, and Hancock counties. American settlers crossed the Algona end moraine as they embarked from the easterly edge of the Des Moines Lobe at points including Clear Lake and Hampton during the 1850s.

Prairies, the most common landscape throughout the northern Iowa borderlands prior to colonization, extended into the area from the west following the retreat of the last major glacial action roughly 9,000 years ago. Eventually the tall-grasses stretched across the Des Moines lobe and into the central portion of the state by 8,500 years ago. Mesic forests existed in the eastern portion of the state, creating a stark boundary between the eastern and western portions. Oaks stood as the most common trees in the west, and became abundant throughout the state in the form of oak savannahs sometime between 4,000 and 3,000 years ago. Oaks still existed as the most common type of tree in the northern Iowa borderlands at the time of American arrival in the area. Oak savannahs lined watercourses throughout the region, providing sheltered habitat for a diverse variety of flora and fauna. The Dakota drew on the bounty found in these microclimates for a variety of dietary, medicinal, and other needs.

65 Peter Van der Linden and Donald Farrar. *Forest and Shade Trees of Iowa*. (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2011).
A contrast in extremes exists in the observed climate and weather of the northern Iowa borderlands. Iowa has an extreme midcontinental or humid continental climate.\textsuperscript{66} The area has warm, humid summers, which see an abundance of precipitation in the form of rain showers and thunderstorms. Often times beautiful, sunny days will suddenly yield to massive thunderheads that soak the rolling landscape as they slide through the Midwestern skies. As summer fades to fall, temperatures begin to fall toward the bitter extremes of winter. The variability in Iowa’s weather results from the convergence of cold dry arctic air, moist maritime air from the Gulf of Mexico, and dry Pacific air masses. These systems push and pull upon one another to create a variable climate that often proves difficult to predict. Observed temperatures vary widely, as well. Ranging from an average of forty degrees Fahrenheit in the northwestern region, the maximum temperatures can well exceed ninety degrees Fahrenheit during the grueling summer months.\textsuperscript{67} January temperatures often average in the mid-twenties, but can plummet when cold, dry air masses from the Arctic range southward to abuse the inhabitants of the upper-Midwest. Temperatures can plunge to well below negative forty degrees Fahrenheit, and often pair with snows that rapidly amass to several inches.\textsuperscript{68}

Weather and climate determine the length of growing seasons. In the northern Iowa borderlands where the Wahpekute Dakota ranged the average growing season lasts between one hundred and thirty-five days and one hundred and fifty-five days. It typically lasts from May second to October seventh.\textsuperscript{69} Although the northwestern corner of the state has the shortest

\textsuperscript{67} National Weather Service, “Iowa Climate Normals Maps.” https://www.weather.gov/dmx/climatenormals
\textsuperscript{68} National Weather Service, “Iowa Climate Normals Maps.” https://www.weather.gov/dmx/climatenormals
growing season, both indigenous and American farmers found exceptional success in the cultivation of corn and other crops in the area. The northwestern portion of the state receives the least amount of rainfall of all parts of Iowa. Generally, the area averages about twenty-six inches of precipitation per year, falling in the forms of rain and snow. Nearly two-thirds of Iowa’s precipitation commonly falls from April to September, peaking in the late spring and early summer months. Spring can prove a variable time for precipitation in the northern Iowa borderlands where just a few miles of geographic distance often separates a place that receives an inch of rainfall from a location which receives over a foot of snow. The variability and unpredictability of weather in the area exacerbated challenges faced by the Wahpekute Dakota as they ranged throughout the region. Throughout history peoples have eagerly awaited the spring thaw, anticipating the end of dreary months marked with scarcity.

Wind also rips across the landscape of the northern Iowa borderlands throughout the year. Stiff breezes bring arctic chill in the winter, while summer winds can build to exceptional speeds as thunderstorms move rapidly across the state. Modern meteorologists have recorded winds of up to one hundred and twenty-three miles per hour during thunderstorms, while the average thirty-meter height wind measurement for the northwestern portion of the state ranges between 6.0 and 7.5 meters per second. During the summer months inhabitants also can expect threats from tornadoes several times a year, and six F5 tornadoes with winds in excess of two hundred

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and sixty miles-per-hour have pummeled the state in recorded history. Early inhabitants of Iowa had to consistently remain vigilant of weather developments throughout all seasons.

The characteristically still breezes aided prairie fires to rip across the pre-colonial prairies of Iowa. As well-evidenced by historian Julie Courtwright in her work *Prairie Fire*, these natural and man-made environmental management forces shaped the overall composition of the flora and fauna in the Great Plains and upper-Midwest. Due to extensive burning, prairies continued to expand prior to American encroachment, eventually extending to cover approximately 85% of the state. Additionally, prairie fires helped to reinvigorate soils while clearing the land of young trees. Burning promoted the mosaic quality of the northern Iowa borderlands, allowing for forests along watercourses while protecting prairie habitats in other areas. The fires created what ecologists call the “edge effect,” or the creation of boundary areas between forests and prairies that make ideal habitats for a variety of wildlife species. The role of the Dakota in stimulating the benefits of prairie fires in unclear in the historical record. Harvesting foodstuffs from the diverse plant life created by prairie fires allowed the Dakota to live sustainably in a formidable and unforgiving climate.

Due to the prevalence of tallgrass prairies and the fires that shaped them, trees proved less common in the Des Moines Lobe than in many other parts of the state. Stands of trees grew most commonly where wetlands and prairie potholes provided fire protection for oak knobs, allowing young trees to mature into oak savannahs. The variability of the flora throughout the

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72 Bob James, “Iowa Has Had Six F5 Tornadoes.” Cedar Rapids, IA: KHAK. https://khak.com/iowa-has-had-six-f5-tornadoes-two-of-them-were-50-years-ago-today-photos/
74 State Planning Board of Iowa, 1925 http://uipress.lib.uiowa.edu/vpi/IowaFlora.aspx
Des Moines Lobe found protection from the waters, creating a diversified and bountiful natural landscape. Agricultural ditching and tiling has radically reshaped the waterways in Iowa, especially in the Des Moines Lobe. Wetlands alone have declined from a pre-colonial maxim of approximately 1.5 million acres to as few as 27,000 acres, a figure that does not include sedge meadows, fens, or wet prairies. The natural environment surrounding the Dakota made them consummate generalists who moved between woodlands, grasslands, and marshlands in a way carefully attuned to annual natural cycles. As the Wahpekute moved through the prairies they found a wetter landscape than the modern imagination might conjure. As the profile of watered areas within the landscape shifted, so too did the flora and fauna upon which the Dakota depended for sustenance.

Botanists considered the area a prime example of the tallgrass prairie biome prior to the American conversion to an almost exclusively agricultural landscape that took place over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Tallgrass prairies exist as an extremely complicated web of life that often misleadingly meet the eye as a sea of grasses. Although 80% of the foliage commonly consists of grasses, a single square acre of prairie can contain between forty to sixty unique species. In addition to grasses, most of the remaining twenty-percent of flora variety comes from roughly three-hundred distinct species of forbs and flowers. Over one-hundred species of lichens, liverworts, woody trees, and shrubs that exist on the wet edges of the rolling, grassy hills add to the prairie mosaic. Melvin R. Gilmore’s *Uses of Plants by the Indians of the Missouri River Region* identified ninety-nine unique plants from the ecosystem

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known to be included in the earliest recordings of the Dakota language and utilized by the people for dietary, medicinal and other purposes. The flora of an area shaped the cultures of peoples occupying a region, and peoples also helped to shape the distribution of plants. For example, as the Dakota sought to survive in a variety of landscapes throughout upper-Midwest different plants gained importance. The Dakota cultivated *Zizania aquatica*, commonly known as wild rice, throughout the northern portions of their range. Bands living on the prairies of northern Iowa and southern Minnesota depended more heavily on *Psoralea esculenta*, or prairie turnip. The Dakota paired geographic adaptations like planting specific crops with a variable band structure to allow for adaptability in how many people drew sustenance from specific areas. Robust soil profiles, another legacy of glacial activity, underpin the diverse plant life throughout the northern Iowa borderlands. As the final Wisconsinian-age glacier retreated from Iowa, it left a tongue-shaped area terminating near modern-day Des Moines characterized by poorly drained lands dotted with lakes and prairie potholes. Prairie soil profiles vary by landscape and can be differentiated by depth, moisture, and slope. The variety of soil composition creates a lush foundation for specific niches of plant life to thrive. For example, around a slough, like the Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge in Kossuth County, a wet seep exists. This type of prairie environment allows sedges and prairie cord grass to thrive, but will fatally drown any stray bluestem or buffalo grass fledglings. The soils, when devoid of water impediments, proved perfect for crop production, as well as forage for a variety wildlife.

82 Melvin R. Gilmore, *Uses of Plants by the Indians of the Missouri River Region*. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 4-5.
As the last glaciers retreated, human inhabitants made their way into the area. The Dakota eventually came to occupy a territory stretching from the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers to the lower Missouri. Within this range they faced competition and pressure from peoples including the Ioway, Sauk, Meskwaki, Omaha, and Osage.\footnote{Lance M. Foster, \textit{American Indians of Iowa}. (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2009).} Dakota, a term reflecting a collective identity shared by an array of named bands of Siouan-speaking peoples, referred to themselves as the \textit{Oceti Sakowin} (Seven Council Fires).\footnote{James R. Walker, Raymond J. DeMallie, \textit{Lakota Society}. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.)} The \textit{Oceti Sakowin} consisted of seven \textit{oyate}, or peoples: the Mdewakanton, Sisseton, Wahpeton, Wahpekute, Yankton, Yanktonai, and Teton.\footnote{Raymond J. DeMallie, \textit{Kinship and Biology in Sioux Culture}. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1987.)} The \textit{Oceti Sakowin} served as a designation of Dakota peoples, not a tangible reference to a governing structure. Christopher Pexa, enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Nation and assistant professor of American Indian studies stressed in his 2019 work the importance of meeting the Dakota on their own terms:

\begin{quote}
To hitch our wagon to nationhood’s modern star potentially obscures other ways of thinking about community, belonging, and sovereignty that are not based in the nation form and in the binds of state recognition within which tribal peoples are often caught…Dakota forms of community rebuilding, which were sometimes critiques of the settler-state and involved linking back to and rearticulating older forms of relation based in the \textit{tiyospaye} and the \textit{Oyate}, but that were also in important ways entangled within the settler-state. These countertranslations’ performance decoupled tribal peoplehood from tribal nationalism, tying the nation form most often to the settler-colonial state and to capitalistic exploitation of Indigenous lands, bodies, and lives.\footnote{Christopher Pexa, \textit{Translated Nation: Rewriting the Dakhota Oyate}. (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 2019), 10.}
\end{quote}

The \textit{Oceti Sakowin} bound the people to one another and the universe by the mysteriousness of the universe known as \textit{wakhan}. The Dakota found linkage, not through a governmental structure recognized by colonial powers entering their lands, but instead through kinship, alliance, and language. The subdivisions, or \textit{oyate}, of the \textit{Oceti Sakowin} consisted of groupings of \textit{tiyospaye},
or bands. Each *tiyospaye* consisted of roughly five to twenty families making up an individual camp circle. Although more often associated with the more westerly portions of the *Oceti Sakowin*, the Dakota frequently utilize the term to describe their more clan-like band structure even into the twenty-first century.\(^{88}\) For example, the Wahpekute *oyate* consisted of *tiyospaye* under specific leaders like Inkpaduta or Sintominiduta.\(^{89}\) *Tiyospaye* existed as kin, regardless of biological reality, and these relationships underpinned and the set the patterns of Dakota existence on a day-to-day basis. “The ethical norms of the *tiyospaye* are the complex core set of moral truths that bound Dakhota people to one another, as kin, in mutual obligations of respect, giving, and power sharing,” wrote Pexa.\(^{90}\) Internal composition of *tiyospaye* proved fluid and changed occasionally. The identity constructed through the Dakota kinship system provided organization that extended beyond the *tiyospaye* into larger linked social units making up the *Oceti Sakowin*.

The Dakota are not a fixed relic of the past frozen in a specific moment of time. The Dakota have adapted and evolved over time, utilizing their fluid kinship structure to confront challenges. Modern audiences tend to picture the Dakota as a part of a bygone era often depicted as an esoteric remnant of the frontier, situated on horseback. In reality, the Dakota adaptively faced challenges to persist into the modern day. The regimented yet variable nature of Dakota kinship organization allowed for flexibility and fluidity when encountering new challenges. The Dakota did not exist as a monolithic entity, and the fluid kinship structure allowed for autonomy but not always broad unity. For instance, smaller units could be combined when necessary for


tasks including diplomacy, warfare, or large bison hunts. When smaller units proved more advantageous, specifically during the lean winter months, the Dakota maintained social construction while geographically dispersing to create a lessened burden on the resources available. The consistent formulation and dispersion evidenced by the bands of Sintominiduta and Inkpaduta in the northern Iowa borderlands during the mid-nineteenth century clearly demonstrates the shifting composition of bands, even within the Wahpekute. This non-state entity existed as an imagined social collective resultant as an amplification of seasonal migration patterns. The adaptability of the Dakota provided the opportunity to consistently adjust to the circumstances presented by the natural environment. As new challenges emerged in the form of neighboring peoples pushing into valued lands or the earliest onset of European influence in the form of French traders, the flexibility embodied in Dakota social organization proved critical to adaptability. As the structure came to control a vast territory during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Dakota emerged as one of the most dominant social formations in the world.

By the time of American entry into the northern Iowa borderlands, the Wahpekute Dakota called the area around Spirit Lake home. The pre-history of the Dakota provided a difficult challenge for archeologists. Lloyd Wilford and Elden Johnson, both of the University of Minnesota, have done the most extensive archeological work related to the pre-history Dakota. Their work focused on several village sites near Mille Lacs Lake during the prehistory and contact eras. Aside from their work, professional archeologists have largely ignored the Dakota.

Other archeological work has focused on early times including the Initial (c. 200 BC – 500 AD) and Terminal (c. 500 – 1680 AD) Woodland eras. These studies have found common linkages between peoples occupying sites ranging from the Brainerd Complex in northern Minnesota to the Effigy Mounds site in Iowa. Archaeologists have concluded that that Terminal Woodlands peoples throughout the area shared a similar material culture and mobile hunter-gather lifeway built around gathering wild plant resources including wild rice and hunting deer, elk, and other small mammals. A major shift during the Terminal Woodlands era occurred around 1000 AD as archeologists have found evidence of corn horticulture in abundance throughout Minnesota and northern Iowa. Corn is evidenced as far north as the Dakota sites at Mille Lacs. A great difficulty exists in creating one-to-one correlations between archeological evidence and biological populations, however, the prevalence of evidence uncovered by archeologists has helped to provide some meaningful clues into the Dakota past during the pre-history era.

Oral traditions and written accounts commonly agree that Minnesota, northwest Iowa, and South Dakota served as the late prehistoric homeland of the Dakota, but disagreements exist about where the people originally came from. Aside from archeological evidence, linguistics can also help to illuminate the past. The Dakota speak a Siouan language. James Springer and Stanley Witkowski compared lexical terms from sixteen different Siouan languages and dialects in 1982 in the hopes of better understanding the origins of Siouan-speaking groups. They

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compared basic lexical-vocabulary words common to each of the languages and dialects while also utilizing counterindication. Through combining the methodologies, Springer and Witkowski determined that Dakota exists as one of fourteen mutually unintelligible Siouan languages distributed throughout the eastern Woodlands and northern Great Plains. Additionally, they determined that all fourteen languages derive from Proto-Siouan, a parent language centered in the central Mississippi Valley region around 500 BC. By the onset of European contact, Bdote served as the spiritual center of the Dakota world at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. “From there was a road to Spirit Lake in what is now Iowa,” recorded Gwen Westerman in her 2012 work Mni Sota Makoce. “The people would walk or ride horses, and soon the different groups of Dakota spread out to the south and west of Bdote and lived all through the prairies…many villages were established around Spirit Lake.” The Little Ice Age, as well as the rise of horse culture during the 1300-1870 time-period, played a role inrole in the drift of the Dakota people further onto the prairies of Iowa and beyond. “Their range extended even deeper into the West during the cool and moist Little Ice Age when both grasses and bison proliferated,” wrote Pekka Hämäläinen in his 2019 work Lakota America. The Dakota moved throughout their environment as they sought to meet their dietary requirements. Farming supplemented foraging and hunting to provide a diet moderate or high in protein, moderate in complex carbohydrates, low in saturated

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fats, limited in sodium, scant in cholesterol, and sufficient in a variety of vitamins and essential fatty acids.  

The earliest Euro-American account of the Dakota appeared in 1641 when the Jesuit missionaries Charles Raymbaut and Isaac Jogues recorded the Nadouessis as living eighteen days to the northwest of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Although Raymbaut and Jogues did not make direct contact with the Dakota, their record stands as the earliest the Dakota entry into European archives. The first recorded contact between the Dakota and Europeans occurred during the winter of 1659-60 when Pierre Radisson and Medart Chouart de Grosseilliers visited Wisconsin and Minnesota. After 1660, French archival sources of the Dakota expand with Father Claude Allouez’s trip to the region in 1665-1667, Nicolas Perrot’s journeys throughout the area between 1665-1699, Daniel Greysolon Duluth’s expeditions in 1678-1682, Father Louis Hennepin’s visit to the Mille Lacs Lake Dakota villages in 1680, and Pierre Charles Le Sueur’s account of the winter of 1700-1701 on the Blue Earth River. These accounts began to clarify and expand Euro-American knowledge of the Dakota. The French also made maps of the areas occupied by the Dakota. Jean-Baptiste Franquelin created the earliest known map of the region in 1678, and Claude Delisle utilized Le Sueur’s geographical knowledge of the area to put out an improved map in 1702. Both of these maps make it abundantly clear that the Dakota already occupied the prairies of southwestern Minnesota and northern Iowa by at least 1680.

Situated just south of where Le Sueur spent his winter on the Blue Earth, the Iowa Great Lakes region includes a string of natural glacial lakes in what has now become northern Dickinson County. The lakes straddle the northern border of Iowa and extend into Jackson

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County, Minnesota. Spirit Lake, a common moniker for the entire area in western sources dating at least to French contact, contains a chain of distinct bodies of water known as the Iowa Great Lakes. Big Spirit Lake, West Okoboji Lake, and East Okoboji Lake serve as the primary lakes of the chain. Spirit Lake, or locally Big Spirit Lake, the largest of the lakes, measures at 5,684 acres of surface water. Located entirely in Dickinson County, Spirit Lake stretches its shores to form the largest natural lake by surface area in Iowa. Spirit Lake has 15.25 miles of shoreline, a figure actually smaller than either East or West Okoboji lakes. At its greatest depths the lake reaches twenty-four feet, with the mean depth of seventeen feet. It draws drainage from an area of approximately seventy-five square miles, most of which sits above the northern border of Iowa. The lake houses forty different species of fish including walleye, yellow perch, bullhead, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, northern pike, Muskie, crappie, and bluegill.

Etymologically, early French traders named the lake Lac D' Esprit after legends of an evil spirit who dwelled in the lake. Dakota tradition also references a spirit within the lake, as they described all lakes and rivers as Bde Wakan because they held spirit animals beneath their surfaces. The area around Spirit Lake had seen significant population growth among the Dakota in the pre-colonial era. Fearing food shortages as population grew, the Wapiya Wicasta (Medicine People), told of a person living at the bottom of the lake that could help feed the people. In order to seek the guidance of the spirit of the lake, the Wapiya Wicasta took a young girl to the lake’s center. She swam toward the bottom where she met a woman in white.

102 “Spirit Lake,” Iowa Department of Natural Resources: https://www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Where-to-Fish/Lakes-Ponds-Reservoirs/LakeDetails/lakecode/spl30
buckskin who held a bowl in each hand. The girl accepted the gifts from the woman and returned to the surface. One bowl held four male seeds of corn, and four female seeds rested in the other. The girl relayed instructions from the spirit to the Wapiya Wicasta to plant the seeds in alternating rows in order to grow a bountiful harvest that would ensure the people would not face hunger. Due to the resultant corn production, Spirit Lake emerged as a southern terminus of an important trade route between the area and the heart of Dakota lands at Bdote. Additionally, the area took on additional spiritual significance as the Dakota initiated the green corn dance at the lakes to give thanks to the creator for blessings of bounty.

West Okoboji Lake, which the Gardner family eventually could glimpse from the windows of their cabin, plunges to the greatest depths of any lake in Iowa. Located entirely within Dickinson County and bottoming out at depths of up to one hundred and forty feet, the lake averages thirty-nine feet in depth. West Okoboji covers roughly 3,847 acres, making it Iowa’s second largest natural lake by surface area. The lake draws a more westerly drainage than either Spirit Lake or East Okoboji, but only drains approximately twenty-two acres of the surrounding watershed due to the geographic proximity of the Little Sioux River’s headwaters.

The lake boasts 19.6 miles of shoreline, and contains the greatest variety of fish of any lake in the area, with over forty-seven species. Yellow perch, bluegill, walleye, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, northern pike, Muskie, crappie, and white bass prove the most numerous.

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108 “West Okoboji Lake,” Iowa Department of Natural Resources: https://www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Where-to-Fish/Lakes-Ponds-Reservoirs/LakeDetails/lakecode/spl30
110 “West Okoboji Lake,” Iowa Department of Natural Resources: https://www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Where-to-Fish/Lakes-Ponds-Reservoirs/LakeDetails/lakecode/spl30
Okoboji Lake, also located in Dickinson County and covers 1,835 acres of surface area. The lake has 16.8 miles of shoreline. Rowland Gardner decided to stake his claim at a point between this lake and West Okoboji Lake. East Okoboji does not reach to the great depths of its neighbor, measuring only twenty-two feet at maximum depth and averaging a depth of ten feet. The lake has a much smaller watershed than its immediate northerly neighbor, Big Spirit Lake, and only drains excess water from that body and an additional nineteen square miles. Thirty-seven species of fish common to the lake chain can be found beneath its surface.111

Although the Iowa Great Lakes region served as a home to the Wahpekute, their range extended beyond the shores to encompass an area bordered by the Cedar River in the east, the forks of the Des Moines River in the southeast, and the Missouri River in the west at the time of American colonization. Throughout the range the Dakota hunted and foraged as bands through a rich ecology filled with life. One of the first Americans to venture into the northern Iowa borderlands, an Indian Agent at Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin named Joseph Street, wrote: “I had never rode through a country so full of game. The hunter who accompanied me, through living most of this time in the wood, expressed his astonishment at the abundance of all kinds of game except buffalo.”112 Early accounts of Europeans and Americans all shared the commonality of remarking upon the incredible diversity of wildlife throughout the region. Isaac Galland’s 1840 account further described the fauna of Iowa prior to settlement.113 He noted that large animals native to the state at the time of his record included bison, elk, white-tailed deer, mountain lion, lynx, grey wolf, black wolf, prairie wolves (coyote), and black bears. To the list of large

112 Letter of J.M. Street, February 6, 1840, “Letters from the Correspondence of Joseph M. Street.” Collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.
113 Isaac Galland, Galland’s Iowa emigrant: containing a map, and general descriptions of Iowa Territory. (Originally published 1840: https://archive.org/details/gallandsiowaemig00gall/page/n6).
mammals he added a variety of smaller animals including raccoon, fox squirrel, beaver, otter, muskrat, mink, cottontail rabbit, opossum, skunk, porcupine, and groundhog. Early birds included turkey, prairie chicken, quail, swan, geese, duck, crane, crow, blackbird, bald eagle, hawk, falcon, buzzard, raven, mourning dove, passenger pigeon, woodpecker, woodcock, and hummingbirds. Galland noted that the prairies also contained a variety of reptiles including the timber rattlesnake, prairie rattlesnake, bull snake, black snake, water moccasin, garter snake, and other various water snakes. Even at the time of Galland’s observations in 1840, declines in animal populations had likely already begun to take place. The northern Iowa borderlands hosted an incredible amount of biodiversity, and more than four hundred and fifty unique species of vertebrates bred in Iowa and called the area home.114 All told, over six hundred unique species either migrated through or lived in Iowa prior to American colonization. Enormous declines have taken place since, an after-effect of the environmental imperialism necessary to shift the landscape from tall-grass prairie to one fit for American agriculture.115

<table>
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<th>Group</th>
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<th>Number Extirpated</th>
<th>Number Endangered</th>
<th>Number Threatened</th>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 – Species decline of Iowa wildlife


In addition to agriculture, the early fur-trade significantly diminished specific animal populations including beaver. A court of claims inspection of the 1851 Treaty of Mendota completed by Alan R. Woolworth in the 1980s suggested that wild game, and more specifically, fur bearing animals on Wahpekute lands had diminished at an alarming rate because of over-hunting and trapping related to the demand created by early fur traders.\textsuperscript{116}

All of this wildlife and more made up the texture of life surrounding the Wahpekute Dakota in the Spirit Lake area prior to American settlement. Allusions and references abound in the Dakota oral tradition to a variety of these animals, and those studying Dakota lifeways have consistently recorded the purposes and significance of specific animals. The intellect necessary to shape and maintain environments routinely denied the Dakota by American writers, including Agnes C. Laut, often instead placed the Dakota firmly outside of the realm of humanity by comparing indigenous peoples to animals:

\begin{quote}
To be sure, the wolves make weird music by night in eldritch and unholy howling; but the cattle are secure in the k’raall and the dogs keep guard; and who would be frightened from a Promised Land by the mere uncanniness of a wolf pack filling the wilderness night with unearthly screaming….The settlers had no more notion of being frightened away from Spirit Lake by Ink-pa-duta’s desperadoes than by the howling of the wolves.\textsuperscript{117}
\end{quote}

By equating the Dakota as a threat on the level with that presented by various beasts of the night, Laut demonized the Dakota in a way that undercut their humanity while insisting on the necessity of removing them from the northern Iowa borderlands.

\textsuperscript{116} Alan R. Woolworth, \textit{An Examination of the Treaty of Mendota 1851 for the United States Department of Justice}. Compiled: 1982. Collections of the State Historical Society of Minnesota, St. Paul.

\textsuperscript{117} Agnes C. Laut, “Pioneer Women of the West – The Heroines of Spirit Lake, Iowa” in \textit{Outing} Volume 51 (October 1907: 686.)
The Dakota hunted many animals to underwrite the caloric intake necessary for survival. Bison loom large as a significant staple in the Dakota diet, especially as environmental scarcity emerged during the nineteenth century. North America serves as the ancestral home of bison bison. The Great Bison Belt, a rich grassland that ran from Alaska to the Gulf of Mexico beginning around 9000 BCE, served as the historical home of the bison. Lush short grasses nourished by the consistent rains of spring and early summer made up the majority of vegetation throughout the Great Bison Belt.\textsuperscript{118} The root-dense grasses that made up the belt retained moisture and made them an ideal forage for bison throughout the year.\textsuperscript{119} In North America two subspecies, the wood (or mountain) bison and the plains bison occupied vast swaths of land. Plains bison occupied the northern Iowa borderlands at the time of American colonization. Although many people have traditionally associated bison with the Great Plains more so than Iowa and other regions further east, they once lived in significant numbers beyond the eastern shore of the Mississippi River. A hunter in southwestern Wisconsin in 1832 shot the last two bison recorded east of the Mississippi River.\textsuperscript{120} In Iowa, the greatest numbers of bison prior to settlement lived in the northern Iowa borderlands. In 1833, Keokuk, a noted Sauk chief, ventured with his band to the headwaters of the Iowa River in either modern-day Humboldt or Franklin County. The Wahpekute Dakota waylaid the party of Sauk, who chased them back down the river valley. Once they disengaged from the Dakota, the Sauk located a bison herd numbering roughly three hundred, eighty of which they killed.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{120} A.W. Schorger., \textit{The range of the bison in Wisconsin.} (Madison, WI: Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters Vol. 30, 128. 1927.
Bison figured heavily in Dakota sustenance techniques. Early French explorer Pierre Radisson referred to the Dakota in his account the winter of 1659-60 he spent in present-day northwestern Wisconsin as *Nadoneseronons*, or “the nation of the beefe,” in reference to their prodigious buffalo hunting. Another early observer of Dakota life, the Jesuit Father Louis Hennepin, noted in his 1679 account that the Dakota of Wisconsin ranged south and west during the summer months to hunt bison in the watershed of the Mississippi River in present day Minnesota and Iowa. Specifically, Hennepin noted the prevalence of bison on the Chippewa River near the modern-day site of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Further west, along Lake Traverse on the present-day Minnesota border with South Dakota, Stephen R. Riggs recorded in 1839 that a number of Dakota villages primarily engaged in buffalo hunting for subsistence. As the bison began to diminish during the nineteenth century, the Dakota utilized a variety of other subsistence strategies focused on forgeable fauna, agricultural products, what could be gained through trade or raiding, and American annuities.

Accounts long pre-dating the hunt of Keokuk in the northern Iowa borderlands recorded the presence of bison throughout the state. The earliest European recorded note on bison comes from Marquette and Joliet on their seventeenth century expedition. The two explorer-priests identified roughly four hundred bison, which they described as large, wild cattle, near the Mississippi River during 1673. Although many of the earliest explorations of Iowa did not

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125 J. Marquette. Of the first voyage made by Father Marquette toward New Mexico, and how the idea therof was conceived. (New York, NY: Pageant Book Co., 1959), 111, 113.
send voyagers into the prairie habitats where bison populations existed in the greatest quantities, some mention the animals. In 1820, two separate expeditions, those of Stephen Long and Stephen Kearny, both recorded sightings of large bison herds as they made their way across the Des Moines Lobe. Long noted that his party took twelve bison from a herd on the Little Sioux River in February of 1820.126 Kearney recorded large numbers, writing that he estimated the largest herd he encountered at roughly 5,000 bison near modern-day Northwood.127 Albert Lea’s 1835 trip likewise recounted several instances where the expedition came across the great shaggy beasts.128 However, ecological changes became evident by the mid-1840s, when Captain James Allen disembarked from Fort Dodge and traipsed his way north-by-northwest into Minnesota. He noted numerous bison in Minnesota, but recorded only one instance in Iowa where he encountered a solitary bison.129

The most numerous records of bison in Iowa come from near the headwaters of the Iowa, Cedar, and Des Moines Rivers. For instance, the 1849 account of M.P. Donahey noted the presence of hundreds of bison in modern-day Hancock and Hardin Counties.130 1851 saw the account of Hewitt along the shores of Clear Lake noting the presence of significant numbers of bison, and skulls of the beasts continue to be fished out of the waters as recently as 2019.131

131 Joseph Hewett, General Store Ledger, October 1855-April 1857. The Lee P. Loomis Archive of Mason City History. On file, Mason City Public Library, Mason City, Iowa.
Settlers sighted twenty-eight buffalo on the Cedar River in Black Hawk County in 1852, and Tama County saw its last large herd, estimated at three hundred, during the winter of 1852-53.\textsuperscript{132} Ambrose Call noted upwards of fifty bison in Kossuth County in both 1854 and 1855 near Algona.\textsuperscript{133} Call recorded the last significant herds known to be in Iowa, but reports from various counties record declining numbers in the single-digits into the 1860s. Early pioneers recorded the last wild bison in the state in the heart of Wahpekute Dakota territory along the Little Sioux River.\textsuperscript{134} In 1870, settlers recorded two bison standing on the shores of the river Inkpaduta had traced each spring and fall as his band moved between their summer home on Spirit Lake and their winter camp near modern-day Smithland.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Last bison sighting in Iowa}
\end{figure}

Bison, as evidenced by the map, also show the movement of the frontier-line. As sightings declined from herds into single numbers and beyond, American colonization of the area neared completion. Bison played an important role in Dakota sustenance, but only made up a portion of a broader subsistence strategy. In more westerly bands, location and dispersal of population

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{133} Ambrose Call, \textit{Account, Early Days of Algona}. Algona Public Library Collection, Algona, Iowa.
\item \textsuperscript{134} R.A. Smith, \textit{A history of Dickinson County, Iowa}. (Des Moines, IA: Kenyon Printing and Manufacturing Co, 1902), 378.
\end{itemize}
often became predicated on bison herd sizes. For the Wahpekute in Iowa, bison existed as a portion of a broader diet that incorporated a variety of other types of game. Many historians and archeologists have asserted that bison initially drew the Dakota away from the northern woodlands, leading to their eventual occupancy of the prairies of southern Minnesota and northern Iowa. Archeologists have found few bison bones at digs in the Minnesota north woods, but have speculated that the Dakota cleaned the carcasses while still on the hunt before returning to villages. Other Dakota cultural products including modes of transportation, modes of temporary shelter, and the role finding and harvesting bison influenced many aspects of Dakota life during the years immediately preceding American colonization. Additionally, bison found representation in a variety of cultural and social constructs including the Buffalo Dance, Buffalo Dreamers, various games associated with the animals, and as representations of specific spiritual powers.

Deer and elk also played a critical role in sustenance for peoples occupying the northern Iowa borderlands both before and after American colonization of the region. The Dakota called elk *Upaŋ*. Four varieties of elk reside in North America, and they vary by antler shape and size, body size, coloration, mating behavior, and other attributes. The Manitoban elk and the Eastern elk both inhabited portions of the traditional Dakota range prior to colonization. The Eastern elk has since gone extinct, and the Manitoban elk nearly suffered the same fate in the early 1900s. In Iowa, elk commonly inhabited the grasslands in the western portion of the state. The wide-open nature of the prairies of western Iowa allowed elk to range in smaller

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groups during the summer, while the oak savannas characteristic of Iowa river valleys provided good shelter for larger groupings during the harsh winter months. Accounts of early Europeans and Americans visiting the region suggested that elk proved more numerous than bison prior to the settlement era. On his 1820 journey from Council Bluffs to modern-day Worth County, Stephen Kearney noted the presence of the animals in five separate journal entries. The largest grouping he saw consisted of roughly two hundred cows on July tenth along the Little Sioux River. During his 1833 survey of the Neutral Ground following the Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien in 1830, Joseph Street noted abundant elk populations. Street also estimated that elk existed in greater numbers than bison in the region. The 1844 expedition of the Iowa Dragoons also provided insight into the frequency of bison in the northern Iowa borderlands. Captain James Allen noted a large body of elk, roughly one hundred, near the confluence of the east and west forks of the Des Moines River near Sintominiduta’s summer village and the eventual location of Fort Dodge. Many individuals moving into the area included elk in their writings, with much greater frequency than bison. “The elk’s tendency to scatter during the summer could have given the impression of greater abundance than was actually the case,” cautioned wildlife biologist James J. Dinsmore, however, the evidence preserved in historical resources points to a significant population in the area. Populations of elk plummeted after settlement, and environmental factors played a role. The winter of 1856-57 proved disastrous for people and wildlife in Iowa. Conditions led to limited forage which

generated pressure on herds and paired with overhunting due to the desperation of the people occupying the area to create disastrous declines for elk populations.\textsuperscript{143}

Elk saw significant declines after 1857, and the last elk herd in Iowa located in the heart of Wahpekute lands near Inkapudat’s summer village on Spirit Lake. As American settlement of the area altered habitats, the large herd recorded at the Little Sioux River headwaters began to move down the river valley toward the Missouri. Under stress, the herd subdivided before eventually succumbing to hunting.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure2.png}
\caption{Last Elk sightings in Iowa}
\end{figure}

Many of the 1871 sightings on the map resulted from splintering of the herd, as many settlers slaughtered elk as they arrived in new areas. The Dakota typically hunted elk in the spring, although they also would hunt elk if readily available throughout the fall and winter months.\textsuperscript{144} Similarly to bison, elk held a place of significance for Dakota culture and social construction.

The white-tailed deer (\textit{Odocoileus virginianus}) and the mule deer or black-tailed deer (\textit{Odocileus hemionus}) existed in significant numbers throughout the Dakota range.\textsuperscript{145} Both species proliferate throughout the Great Plains and the upper-Midwest, although mule deer prove

more common on the Great Plains. Both species measure as medium sized deer, but their size varies significantly from one geographic context to another. The average size of deer increases according to Bergmann’s rule that the farther an animal lives from the Equator, the larger size it will reach.\(^{146}\) Male deer common to North America weigh anywhere from one hundred and fifty to three hundred pounds, while females weigh anywhere from eighty-eight to one hundred and ninety-eight pounds.\(^{147}\) Many accounts from early Americans entering the prairies in the nineteenth century point to large populations. Settlers reported herds as large as two-hundred in the northern Iowa borderlands as late as the 1870s.\(^{148}\) Like their relatives the elk, deer populations saw significant reduction due to the harsh winter of 1856-57.\(^{149}\) Deep snow limiting forage paired with desperate over-hunting by American settlers to decimate the population in locations throughout the state. Due to the relatively low human population density in many portions of the northern Iowa borderlands at the time, deer persisted there with more success when compared to other parts of the state. Before being completely extirpated from Iowa by 1890, a settler recorded the last deer in the northern Iowa borderlands in Dickinson County during the winter of 1881-82.\(^{150}\) As any leery motorist will tell you, efforts to reestablish deer in Iowa succeeded during the twentieth century. Most, if not all, deer within the state today descended from captive herds that inhabitants moved in from other locations during the first part of the twentieth century.\(^{151}\)


\(^{149}\) J.M. Brainard, “The great blizzard of 1856.” *Annals of Iowa*, 3\(^{rd}\) Series, 1, 393-394.


\(^{151}\) J.A. Swisher, *Deer in Iowa.* (Chicago, IL: Palimpsest, 1940), 405-409.
Deer form an important staple of Dakota sustenance, especially for the Wahpekute. Dakota bands inhabited river-valley hunting grounds starting each year in late September or early October, where deer hunting took place in backwater regions. The Dakota scoured small streams and valleys, often moving away from the major rivers of an area to provide the geographic dispersion necessary to not overtax populations of deer and other animals.152 Larger bands, like that of Sintominiduta, broke down into smaller groups, like that of Inkpuduta, during “the deer-rutting moon” of Täkiyuh-wi (around November in the western calendar).153 Samuel Pond went on several deer hunting expeditions with various bands of Dakota, remarking in 1835: “I went off with the Indians on a hunting expedition. The Language however was the game I went to hunt, and I was as eager in pursuit of that as the Indians were of deer.”154 Deer hunting continued after the breakdown of bands through December and into January. Dakota women dried the meat to provide a large surplus for the winter months. Also, by January, the deer had become lean from also trying to survive the difficult winter conditions. At this time the Dakota often left traditional hunting grounds to shelter closer to their summer villages.

Of the fish still common to the Spirit Lake area today, the Dakota language provides insight into the familiarity and utilization of specific species of fish at the time of Pond’s and Riggs’s efforts to record the language. The Dakota commonly ate smallmouth bass, northern pike, perch, trout, and walleye.155 The Dakota fished in the coldest parts of the year, often starting as food supplies began to grow scarce during the winter months. Taliaferro recorded

154 Samuel W. Pond, Dakota Life in the Upper Midwest: The Dakota or Sioux in Minnesota as they were in 1834.. (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1908).
155 Samuel W. Pond.,Dakota Life in the Upper Midwest: The Dakota or Sioux in Minnesota as they were in 1834.. (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1908).
Dakota fishing for a variety of species including “Pike, Pickerel, Black bass & Sun fish in all their varieties.”¹⁵⁶ Taliaferro also noted that even Dakota who ranged through river valley watersheds throughout the year took advantage of lakes and ponds to add diversity to their protein intake. The Dakota fished during winter months by cutting holes in the ice and then using spears to stab at fish beneath the surface.¹⁵⁷ In warmer months, the Dakota fished with “a bone hook tied to a long line of sinew attached to the end of a willow pole. Grasshoppers were considered good bait for trout and redfins.”¹⁵⁸ The Dakota also fished with a method based on two people working up a stream toward a waterfall with a large, perforated piece of hide stretched out between them.¹⁵⁹ The fishers moved up opposite banks, trapping fish between the hide and the falls to ensure a bounteous catch. Dakota men often cooked fish immediately after a catch in a small pit constructed with layers of sticks, leaves, and earth. The Dakota often boiled catches that made it back to the village, with the skins and scales left on until right before ingestion.¹⁶⁰ A variety of fish live in the lakes and rivers of the northern Iowa borderlands, and the Dakota harvested many different types to supplement their diet at different times of the year.

Various birds also underpinned the Dakota need for sustenance in the tough environment of the upper-Midwest. The Dakota commonly clubbed birds more often than shooting, and they also utilized traps. Snow birds, or snow geese (*Anser caerulescens*) find their northern range on the southern portion of traditional Dakota lands.¹⁶¹ These birds fly high, and migrate more than

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3,000 miles over the course of a year, ranging along the Central, Mississippi, and Pacific flyways. They migrate in large flocks that blanket entire fields like a freshly fallen snow. The average adult snow goose stands between twenty-five and thirty inches tall while weighing between seven and eight pounds. The Dakota, when not trapping as detailed above, would often hunt these geese and other waterfowl with a wismahi yeyapi or ‘sending-arrow.’ The Dakota made sending-arrows longer than the average arrow by about six-inches, and the Dakota launched them with a stringed whipstick via a notch cut midway down the shaft. The arrow would be placed on the ground behind the hunter, and the whipstick would be lashed over his head, launching the arrow high into the air forward toward a target.

The Dakota also hunted ducks. North America boasts at least twenty-eight varieties of the small, migratory birds that most experts split into dabblers and divers. Dabbling ducks mostly feed in smaller bodies of shallow water along shorelines, determining the viability of a location by their ability to tip forward and poke at food on the bottom. Divers feed in deeper water where they fully submerge and dart toward morsels at the bottom. A variety of both types occupy the northern Iowa borderlands. The Dakota hunted both types of ducks.

Even animals that did not underwrite Dakota sustenance help to illustrate how changes in the land led to decline in animal populations. For example, wild cats did not serve a dietary purpose for the Dakota, but their disappearance from the area show how habitats evolved during the mid-nineteenth century. Settlers killed hundreds of bobcats near Webster City during the 1850s, and bounty records from throughout the state note payments for dozens of the animals

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slaughtered in various locations well into the 1880s. Black bears serve as another example. The largest predator native to Iowa, black bears saw population declines due to hunting during the onset of American colonization. Although most of these beasts made their home in the more densely forested eastern half of the state, they also occupied the wooded river valleys of the northern Iowa borderlands prior to and during the settlement era. Wolves often terrified settlers as they wailed in the night throughout the northern Iowa borderlands. Pinpointing last observation dates for wolves in Iowa proves difficult because they are often recorded as being heard and not seen.

The traditional Dakota moon calendar provides meaningful insight into the importance of specific foods at specific times of year. The Dakota moon calendar divides the year into thirteen moons, each comprised of twenty-eight days. Each of the moons provided a distinct look at Dakota culture through highlighting sacred and important events that took place during each moon. In addition to the division of the year into moons, the Dakota calendar also represented seasons. Wetú, or the moons of renewal and growth, started the calendar in the spring. Magáksicaagli Wi, Wihákata Cépapi Wi, Wójupi Wi serve as the first three moons of Wetú. Magáksicaagli Wi, the first moon, means when the ducks come back. The return of ducks and other migratory birds signaled the end of the harsh northern Midwest winters while also representing an opportunity to include a new dietary element to the staples of dried corn and dried meat that helped the Dakota survive the brutal winters.

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Blokéțu, or the Warm Moons, guided the summer months throughout the traditional Dakota range. Wípazuka Wasté Win, or moon of the berries (also translated as Wipazatkan Wastte Wi, or when the berries are good), marked the emergence of wild strawberries throughout the Midwest. The Dakota gathered strawberries as an important springtime staple.\(^{169}\) The Dakota most commonly ate ripening fruits fresh immediately after picking. Often the Dakota used strawberries as a relish on various types of game. The final summer month, or Wasúton Wi, moon of the harvest, signals the time of Dakota reaping corn, squash, and other agricultural products that provided both immediate and long-term nourishment for the people.\(^{170}\)

Ptanyétu, or autumn, proved a time of preparation for the Dakota. The Dakota gathered various foods including both agricultural crops and foraged foodstuffs, and the women dried meat gathered by men during summer hunts.\(^{171}\) The bands stored dried goods in underground storage caches that contained a bounty of dried meat, fruit, vegetables, and firewood. The final cycle of the Dakota calendar, Waniyetu, means cold and dark moons. By this time the Wahpekute had settled into winter villages along river-bottoms throughout southern Minnesota and Iowa. Fall existed as a quieter time for the Dakota that allowed for the mending of clothing, participating in raiding if weather permitted, and gathering people around warm fires to receive transmissions of knowledge from elders.\(^{172}\) As the winter moons waxed and waned the Dakota continued to live on the fruits of the past year’s labors, as well as any goods that could be gathered from hunting, raiding, or relying on kinship obligations. As these months passed, so


did the end of the Dakota year, and winter eventually yielded to Wetú and its season of renewal and growth.

Outside of the forgeable foodstuffs the Dakota routinely harvested along the calendar cycle, limited agriculture also played a role in ensuring adequate caloric intake. Contrary to characterizations of the Dakota as a non-agricultural people, early observers consistently recorded the Dakota as engaged in the process of growing corn. In the seventeenth century, Pierre Radisson’s account detailed exchanges of iron implements for corn. As Radisson traveled south several days after wintering on Lake St. Croix, he noted: “they sowe corne, but their harvest is small.” Archeological evidence of residues preserved in clay pots suggests that the Dakota grew corn as far north as Mille Lacs. The cultivation of agricultural products in the acidic soil-profiles and less-than-hospitable climate of the northerly reaches of the Dakota range portends well for more extensive agricultural activities in the soil-rich and corn-friendly climate of the Spirit Lake area. Basic cultural lifeways of the Dakota also allude to more extensive agricultural activity than previously thought. U.S. Army topographical engineer Stephen Harriman Long visited Sakpe’s village of Tinta Otonwe in 1823 and recorded extensive corn cultivation on the south-side of the Minnesota River. He also noted the proliferation of scaffolds in the fields, which he dismissed as burial scaffolds, but a greater likelihood exists that the Dakota utilized the structures for the drying of corn.

The Dakota grew corn as a part of their diverse diet, but they also cultivated other plants. Missionary Samuel Pond noted in the 1830s extensive harvests of wild rice, as well as various aquatic roots including psincha.\textsuperscript{177} Archeological evidence from the northerly reaches of the Dakota range evidence extensive wild rice cultivation and storage during the pre-history of the Dakota. Pond also noted Dakota corn cultivation practices.\textsuperscript{178} Early observers recorded that the Dakota would plant corn in hills during early June, and harvest when it reached its “green” state. Although Pond acted quickly to minimize Dakota agricultural practices by suggesting that the Dakota ate all of the harvested corn off the cob within a few days of picking, he also later recorded that “their corn was preserved by boiling it before it was hard, scraping it from the cob with mussel-shells, and drying it.”\textsuperscript{179} Joseph Renshaw Brown, an early prominent settler, trader, and American negotiator at the Treaty of Traverse de Sioux, actively “bought large quantities of it (corn)” from the Dakota in 1831. This instance also points toward more extensive agricultural activity than previously recorded.\textsuperscript{180} The specific motivations of military, missionary, and civilian minimization of Dakota agricultural practice exist in doctrines of effective occupation necessary to nineteenth century treaty practice and serve as a potential motive for under-recording and over-simplifying the importance of limited agriculture within Dakota sustenance techniques. To dispossess the Dakota of lands, Americans readily asserted that they did not use the land in a meaningful way. Dakota agricultural, hunting, and foraging practices creates a clear picture of a people expertly managing the world around them to survive in a difficult climate.

\textsuperscript{177} The psinchina is a round root roughly the size of a hen’s egg. The psincha is a spherical root about roughly an inch in diameter. Both are harvested underwater, and Pond observed Dakota women using their feet to pluck and raise the roots above the water from muddy lake-bottoms. Pond was impressed by their dexterity.

\textsuperscript{178} Samuel W. Pond, \textit{Dakota Life in the Upper Midwest: The Dakota or Sioux in Minnesota as they were in 1834.} (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1908), 24.

\textsuperscript{179} Samuel W. Pond, \textit{Dakota Life in the Upper Midwest: The Dakota or Sioux in Minnesota as they were in 1834.} (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1908), 36.

\textsuperscript{180} J. Wesley Bond, \textit{Minnesota and Its Resources, to Which Are Appended Camp-Fire Sketches or Notes of a Trip from St. Paul to Pembina and Selkirk Settlement on the Red River of the North.} (Chicago, IL: Keen and Lee, 1856).
The Wahpekute Dakota observed, shaped, and maintained the natural environment of the upper-Des Moines River and Little Sioux River watersheds for at least a century prior to the onset of American influence in the region. They represented one part of a far-reaching kinship based alliance system that projected power between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers while adapting to a variety of dynamics shifting around them. From the seventeenth century onward the Dakota recognized the developing influence of Europeans over life in the Upper Midwest. The arrival of French fur traders and missionaries brought the first attempt to economically and culturally reshape tribal peoples throughout the region, and then the commercially motivated English came to incorporate and adapt the Dakota into even newer dynamics. Few representatives of these foreign powers came to permanently settle among the Dakota, and most interactions took place after Dakota journeys of great distances to established locations like Green Bay or Hudson’s Bay. Even when Europeans constructed posts, like the one built by the French on Dakota lands near Lake Pepin in modern-day Minnesota in the early 1700s, they served an almost exclusively commercial purpose. However, with the dawning of the new American republic even greater changes arrived in the land of the Dakota.

The United States came into being, at least partially, out of desire by settler colonists to occupy territories restricted by the British Crown. After Americans successfully overthrew British rule in their colonies, they proved determined to move into the indigenous lands to their west. Framing the move as the Manifest Destiny of a people ordained to take unsettled lands and bring them under the jurisdiction of a legitimate sovereign, the Americans began to push westward. Culturally specific ideas pertaining to land use fundamentally underwrote American doctrines of dispossession, a political philosophy based on Americans triumphantly bringing the advancement of human progress to a vast and empty wilderness. As the treaty system
developed, indigenous peoples, the Dakota included, faced threats to their autonomy and sovereignty. American designs of social transformation that acculturated the peoples of the interior toward a future as citizens of the United States underpinned the doctrine. In order to force this assimilation, indigenous peoples would had to be acculturated from a purportedly uncivilized state of nature and into the pathway of historical time and progress. As the Americans sought to accomplish this task, they reshaped landscapes occupied by the Dakota and other indigenous peoples.

The first governmental representatives of the United States to step foot within Dakota lands in Iowa came ashore of the Missouri River within the modern boundaries of Woodbury County in the northern Iowa borderlands. The Corps of Discovery led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark made its way up the Missouri River from St. Louis while remaining vigilant of encountering the ‘Sioux,’ a people they had heard harassed traffic on the river. Before a tense meeting with the Lakota portion of the Oce
ci Sakowin, the expedition passed the mouth of the Little Sioux River before landing on the opposite shore of the Missouri River, in Nebraska, on August 18, 1804.181 There they met representatives of the Missouri and Oto tribes. After the two day meeting, the expedition set out under “a fine wind and fine weather,” making thirteen miles before landing on the Iowa side of the river to camp for the evening. At that place Sergeant Charles Floyd died. Charles Floyd would be the only member of the Corps of Discovery to perish on the journey from St. Louis to the Pacific and back, and he became the first American to die in the northern Iowa borderlands.

While Lewis and Clark ascended the Missouri, another expedition shoved off toward the headwaters of the Mississippi. Zebulon Pike, a twenty-six year old lieutenant from New Jersey, received orders on July 30, 1805 from General James Wilkerson, commanding officer stationed at St. Louis. Pike, along with twenty men, ascended the Mississippi River in a seventy foot keel-boat to undertake an exploration of the watershed, record the natural resources, describe the indigenous peoples living in the area, and identify what locations appeared most suitable for a military post. On August 9, 1805, Pike completed his preparations and pushed off the bank of the Mississippi in St. Louis in the company of one sergeant, two corporals, and seventeen privates. For the Dakota, their first American treaty interaction took place with the Pike expedition in 1805.

Challenges and modifications to tribal sovereignty occurred during treaty negotiations between representatives of the Dakota and the United States. Tests of sovereignty occurring in the early-nineteenth century created legal precedents for indigenous peoples. The 1823 ruling of the United State Supreme court in Johnson v. McIntosh, an often overlooked yet important ruling, laid the groundwork for later decisions by asserting the dominion and jurisdiction of the United States government over indigenous lands. Additional cases, including the 1831 holding of the Marshall court in Cherokee Nation v. Georgia and the 1832 decision in Worcester v. Georgia built on Johnson v. McIntosh to further establish indigenous peoples as exclusive wards subservient to guardianship of the federal government. However, to apply these definitions

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backwards to the sovereign tribal governments of the early nineteenth century is reckless and insufficient to meet indigenous peoples, including the Dakota, through their own constructs and on their own terms. The insistence on subservience by the United States federal government did not preclude a difference in understanding of sovereignty by the Dakota. Only through violent attempts at subjugation, intentional economic deceit, and cultural acculturation did the United States reshape Dakota willingness to submit to a subsumed form of sovereignty.

Treaty negotiations created distinct moments in time that provide meaningful source-material for interpretation of the past. Artifacts surrounding treaties illuminate the expectations of the American government as clearly outlined in specific language of the document itself, as well as in the personal correspondences of individuals involved in negotiation. These documents help to display the implicit and explicit master story embraced by the United States during this era. Other evidence emerges in the form of physical actions taken during implementation, as well as through the continual renegotiations that characterized the Dakota-American discourse of the early nineteenth century. “Treaties could be instruments of gain as much as they were instruments of loss, and those treaties that were intricately connected to the removal of Indians from their lands in the nineteenth century also provided foundations for survival into the twenty-first,” wrote historian John P. Bowes. The expectations and reactions of the Dakota prove more difficult to ascertain, however, careful attention to oral tradition, examination of physical actions, and the stories still embodied in the land help to amplify the alternative master story to the American progressivist discourse.

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Pike’s expedition marked the opening of the treaty era for the Dakota people. The arrival of American influence in the region, and all that came with it, marked the onset of massive cultural, economic, and environmental change for the entire area. As the Dakota sought to incorporate Americans into their world, the Americans sought to acculturate the Dakota to theirs. The period from 1805 through 1825 opened with an initial treaty, and closed with the preparations for a second. Environmental change, in the form of epidemic disease and alterations to the natural environment, also marked the era. As the Dakota, and specifically the Wahpekute, sought to adapt to the world changing around them, the 1805 to 1825 period served an era of meaningful experience, new strategies, and initial disenfranchisement.

Early in their travels, Pike Expedition had its first encounter with the Dakota when it arrived at the village of Wabasha near the modern northern border of Iowa. Pike came ashore decked out with pistols hanging from his belt and a sword in hand, ready for potential hostility from the Dakota. Wabasha offered peaceful greetings, and Pike gladly accepted. On September eleventh, the expedition again took to the river. The next stop would be the confluence of the Mississippi and the Minnesota rivers, a location Pike noted as an ideal location for a fort. Pike identified that a regiment could control traffic on both rivers from the promontory point, an ideal condition for regulation of fur and human traffic into what he described as “Indian country.”

By the twenty-third of September, Pike had called a council with the Dakota. He opened with a speech describing the aims of his journey. Pike included in his speech an exhortation to avoid the evils of alcohol, an empty plea that immediately preceded the distribution of sixty

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gallons of liquor by the men of the expedition in order “to clear their (Dakota) throats.” Pike distributed gifts before he struck a deal that ceded 100,000 acres of Dakota lands to the United States at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota. Pike recorded that he clearly conveyed that the negotiations meant to secure lands for military posts, however, the likelihood exists that the Dakota believed Pike asked to establish trading posts similar to those they had seen established by the French and English. Upon his return, the United States Senate ratified the treaty. Pike submitted the document with a notable blank: how much money the United States would pay the Dakota for their cession of 100,000 acres. The Senate determined that the United States would pay $2000 for the land.

After concluding the treaty negotiations with the Dakota, Pike continued to ascend the Mississippi in his search of the headwaters. The prevalence of game in the area allowed Pike to continue in good conscience. With great difficulty, the expedition continued to a trading post of the North West Company at Leech Lake. Here Pike suggested that he had reached the headwaters of the Mississippi. During his time at the post he gathered information about the nature of the fur-trade in the region, identifying that the Dakota sent an estimated $26,000 in furs annually to British posts on the South Shore of Lake Superior and at the headwaters of the St. Croix River. Other signs of British influence also troubled Pike: the Union Jack flying above the post at Leech Lake, British medals in the possession of the Dakota, and subversive rhetoric.

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190 Francis Paul Prucha, *Documents of United States Indian Policy.* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 23.
191 As a part of the land cession the American’s allowed the Dakota to continue hunting and fishing in areas included in the treaty. Although the majority of the area has developed into urban space, the Dakota continue to assert their rights to hunt and fish on the treaty lands against resistance from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
192 Pike to Wilkinson, 26 May 1806, in *The Expeditions,* 270-271.
prevalent among the Dakota in regard to the American presence in the region. The expedition shot down the Union Jack in a display of force.\textsuperscript{194}

Pike continued thirty miles northwest, arriving on Upper Red Cedar Lake, a point he further identified as the source of the Mississippi. Another month passed before the river thawed enough to allow travel, and on April 7, 1806, the expedition again headed south, reaching Wabasha’s village in Iowa on April 16. Wabasha had gone into the interior of Iowa to hunt, but Pike left him presents before continuing downriver toward St. Louis, eventually reaching the city on April 30, 1806. Pike had completed his journey, exceeding the expectations of his initial orders. A treaty for 100,000 acres in hand, Pike bragged that he had acquired the land “for a song.”\textsuperscript{195} His logbooks also contained valuable information on the climate, soils, drainage, and natural resources of the region. He had identified sites for military posts along the Mississippi, and had warned both the Dakota and British traders of the new American presence in the region.

Although Pike came back with an agreement for ceded lands at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, the claims looked dubious to the Senate’s Military Affairs Committee not even fifteen years later:

It does appear that General Pike made an arrangement in 1805 with two Sioux Indians for the purchase of lands of that tribe, including the Faribault island, but there is no evidence that this agreement, to which there is not even a witness, and in which no consideration was named, was ever considered binding upon the Indians, or that they ever yielded up the possession of their lands under it…It was never promulgated, nor can it be now found in the statute books, like any other treaty – if indeed a treaty it may be called – nor were its stipulations ever complied with on the part of the United States.\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{195} Pike to Wilkinson, 26 May 1806, in \textit{The Expeditions}, 270-271.
Where ambiguity reigns on the part of the United States congress, the Dakota did not expect a
decrease in sovereignty as an outcome of the Pike Treaty in 1805. As the Dakota had become
accustomed to previous visits from traders seeking to establish an economic relationship with the
tribe, the Pike Treaty showed a willingness of both the Dakota and the Americans to adapt to the
presence of the other within the region. The Dakota may have regarded the visit from Pike as
a signifier that a new source of trade would flow up the Mississippi River instead of down from
British holdings at Hudson’s Bay or posts on the Great Lakes, and the alleged consent to land
transfer may have stemmed from a desire to increase the influx of advantageous trade.

Cultural adaptation between the United States and the Dakota best characterizes the early
period from 1805 to the initial multinational treaty at Prairie du Chien in 1825. A limited influx
of American population arrived in the area, mainly composed of fur traders and those sent by the
government to deter British advances prior to the construction of Fort Snelling beginning in
1820. Despite the new American military presence in the area, the Dakota managed to largely
maintain sovereignty and autonomy. A missionary living among the Dakota, Samuel Pond,
assessed American power in the region in 1834: “The garrison at Fort Snelling protected just so
much of the country as was enclosed within the fort, and they (the Dakota) might have killed
them (Americans) with impunity right under the portholes.” Such limitations on American
power allowed for continued cultural adaptation between the United States and the Dakota,
especially in the earliest years of the nineteenth century.

197 Douglas A. Birk and Elden Johnson, “The Mdewakanton Dakota and Initial French Contact.” *Calumet and
Fleur-de-Lys: Archaeology of Indian and French Contact in the Midcontinent*, edited by John A. Walthall and
199 Samuel W. Pond, *Dakota Life in the Upper Midwest: The Dakota or Sioux in Minnesota as they were in 1834.*
Later in 1806 another group followed Pike downriver and arrive at St. Louis, a delegation of four Dakota chiefs and a contingent of warriors.\(^{200}\) While in St. Louis the delegation met with General James Wilkinson, who sought to firm up the relationship between the Dakota and the United States government. Wilkinson hoped to persuade members of the Dakota to journey to Washington D.C. in order to meet with the President of the United States.\(^{201}\) His efforts proved fruitless. Additionally, Wilkinson came out of the meeting skeptical of the Dakota’s willingness to honor the treaty made by Pike. Writing to Secretary of War Henry Dearborn, Wilkinson stressed that the United States would have a difficult time in building up a meaningful relationship with the Dakota or following through on the plans laid by Pike despite the chiefs showing “strong claims to our attention and courtesy.”\(^{202}\) The first treaty interaction between the Dakota and the United States government had yielded a weak agreement that met with skepticism from elected officials in Washington D.C., local military personnel, and the Dakota.

British traders continued to operate unimpeded and undermined American efforts at making inroads with the Dakota during the early years of the nineteenth century. Captain Thomas G. Anderson, a person whose presence in the Dakota homelands stretched both before and after the visit of Zebulon Pike, recorded many observations about the Dakota in his journal.\(^{203}\) In 1807 he moved to the upper-Mississippi River and began his time with the Dakota.\(^{204}\) Arriving on the St. Peter’s River during the late fall of 1807, Anderson journeyed fifty miles from the mouth to a place rich in game. “I took up my station in a delightful part of

\(^{200}\) Francis Paul Prucha, *Documents of United States Indian Policy*. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 23.

\(^{201}\) Pike to Wilkinson, 26 May 1806, in *The Expeditions*, 270-271.

\(^{202}\) Pike to Wilkinson, 26 May 1806, in *The Expeditions*, 270-271.


the wood-fringe,” writes Anderson. “Each bank of the river was enriched with a strip of timer, which in some places extended back a mile from the stream. Here the deer, wild fowl, and other game were in abundance; and as I had dismissed the Indians to their hunting grounds before reaching this spot, I had all the hunting to myself, and had plenty of meat – roasted geese, ducks, prairie hens, etc., but no vegetables.” By the following winter, Anderson noted the decline of the wild game populations in the area, observing the absence of deer and bison where they had previously proliferated in abundance only a year prior. Additionally, Anderson struggled to connect with the Dakota in a meaningful way. Upon attempting trade, he provided credit. After not reaping any returns from those he had indebted, he refused trade and met with “ill-treatment.” “The interpreter and his wife lay down, and I soon followed suit, and hardly closed my eyes when the interpreter spoke to me in a low voice, not calculated to awaken suspicion, saying his wife informed him, that the Indians were talking of killing us, and seizing the goods.” Moments later a Dakota man entered the lodge and expressed his willingness to die with the trader and interpreter if a planned attack began.

As Anderson’s time continued with the Dakota he found them to be more open to incorporating him into their efforts of survival. When a hard winter set in over 1809-1810, Anderson went with the Dakota on a prolonged winter bison hunt. The relationship of Anderson and the Dakota provides insight into the autonomy of the tribe during the early nineteenth century. As a people the Dakota engaged economically and politically with the British, as well as the Americans, they seemed content to foster relationships that served their own advantages.

Even as Pike treated for 100,000 acres, the experiences of the American General Wilkinson and the English trader Anderson display an autonomous people seeking their own advantage.

Anderson also recorded a hunting expedition he and some of the other English traders in the area undertook with the Dakota named Cut-Thumb into Ojibwe territory. Anderson’s account of the hunt showcased how the Dakota viewed themselves in an adaptive relationship with the European powers in the area during the time period. After the expedition left uncontested Dakota lands and entered a borderlands with the Ojibwe, Anderson’s power became adaptively subsumed to that of Cut-Thumb. Anderson displayed an investment in maintaining his trade relationship with the Dakota, while Cut-Thumb utilized the British and their weaponry to gain an advantage over a rival people. “At length Cut-Thumb requested me to do him the favor to join him in a raid he was about to make on the terrible Chippewa (Ojibwe), and take my artillery with me,” recorded Anderson. Although the expedition would not encounter the Ojibwe, instead inadvertently attacking a flock of pelicans, the relationship still showed the mediation and mutual adaptation that characterized the relationship between the early representatives of European nations and the Dakota.

As evidenced by the relationship of Anderson and the visit of Pike, favor on the part of the Dakota proved critical to the success of both the English and the Americans throughout the region. The tiny European and American outposts established in the region from the seventeenth century onward served as diplomatic and commercial inroads into a space controlled by the indigenous peoples who equated control of lands with those living in the space, if they could

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defend it, and who had buried their ancestors beneath the soil. The Dakota welcomed trading posts as opportunities to gain access to new technologies that could advance their own interests. Traders showed a willingness to locate within the sphere of influence of a specific people, providing access to vital technologies including guns, powder, and iron. This provided an advantage for a specific indigenous people over their rivals. In this context, the initial treaty of Zebulon Pike stands as an opportunistic and savvy decision on the part of the Dakota to advance their own interests through welcoming Americans, and the advantages brought through alliance, into their lands. The initial adaptation of the first years of the nineteenth century between the Dakota and the United States would be put to the test in the second decade of the century.

As the British and the Americans confronted one another in the War of 1812, the conflict tested the established relationships of each power with the Dakota bands. The British displayed their influence throughout the region through the alliance of Wabasha and Red Thunder, among others, to the British cause. As the War of 1812 came to the interior of the North American continent, the British trader Robert Dickson went to St. Joseph’s Island seeking supplies that could continue to ensure the allegiance of the native peoples of the interior while reminding them that their best prospects for the future lay with the British. When he arrived at the portage of the Wisconsin and Fox rivers he met two runners who carried a message from Major General Isaac Brock inquiring as to if Dickson could “assemble and march” a contingent of natives in the interior, as well as provide what goods might be necessary to entrench the alliances. In response, Dickson asked for “flags, one dozen large medals with gorgets and few small ones,”

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211 Captain Roberts to Mr. Robert Dickson, 10 July 1812, and Observations by Tourssaint Pothier, in Cruikshank, *Documents 52 and 214-217*. 
and stressed that his native allies would prove “ready to march under proper persons commissioned for the purpose.” At the same time Dickson also sent out seventy-nine ‘friends’ to carry word of the conflict to peoples throughout the region. By the time he arrived at the Detroit River near the American fort at Detroit on July third, Dickson marched with roughly one hundred and thirty Dakota, Ho-Chunk, and Menominee warriors. Captain Charles Roberts commented on the esteem in which the natives held Dickson, further writing: “the Indians are much gratified with his comportment towards them, and in him they repose the highest Confidence.” On July fifteenth the contingent made a successful attack on Fort Mackinac. The most strategically positioned American fort had fallen, and at the hands of a contingent containing native allies of the British from the Upper-Mississippi region.

Emboldened by his initial success, Dickson next set his sights on a more ambitious plan, which he went to Montreal to present to British authorities in November of 1812. By January, the board commissioned to consider the project appointed Dickson Superintendent for the Indians West of Lake Michigan. He undertook a journey that saw him visit a variety of tribes between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi personally, and sent emissaries with the same message to many others: join the British in ousting the Americans from the area. Dickson’s message promised self-determination, a return to past agreements, and a stop to settlement by land-hungry Americans. By June 1813 he had amassed and mobilized over 1,400 warriors from various tribes west of Lake Michigan and brought them to Detroit. Although his force would

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212 Robert Dickson to Major-General Brock, 12 July 1812, in Cruikshank, *Documents*, 56.
213 E.A. Cruikshank, “Robert Dickson, the Indian Trader,” in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 12 (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1892), 139-141.
214 Captain Roberts to Major General Brock, 12 July 1812, in Cruikshank, *Documents*, 54.
216 Statement of Robert Dickson, 3 December 1812, in Cruikshank, *Documents*, 230-231.
prove ineffective and inefficient at the sieges of Fort Meigs and Fort Stephenson, the alliance of
the indigenous peoples throughout the region still served as incalculably valuable to the British
cause.\textsuperscript{218} The Dakota, as well as the others who aligned themselves with Dickson and the
British, evidenced the continued belief in indigenous sovereignty and autonomy through creating
an international alliance aimed at protecting their lands and power. The rest of 1813 saw
Dickson carefully sending goods and services to his allies throughout the region, a task the
American Indian Agent at Prairie du Chien, Nicholas Boilvin of could not match. Boilvin had
become trapped in St. Louis on a return trip from Washington D.C. with several chiefs from the
upper-Mississippi area. The chiefs continued on from St. Louis, but Boilvin could not ascend the
river due to British-indigenous control of the Mississippi. The next spring, in April 1814,
Dickson made a brief trip to Prairie du Chien where he recruited over three hundred warriors
from the Dakota, Ho-Chunk, and Menominee in the area.\textsuperscript{219} Rumors flew up and down the
Mississippi of imminent attacks: an American expedition to take Prairie du Chien, a British and
indigenous force descending the river to attack St. Louis. Instead, Dickson left Prairie du Chien
and struck out for Green Bay, leaving a local militia sympathetic to the British to protect the
settlement.\textsuperscript{220}

The rumors of a potential American expedition to Prairie du Chien proved true. During
his time in St. Louis, Boilvin made the case that a military post and trading house at Prairie du
Chien would advance American interests “to turn the current of Indian trade on the Upper
Mississippi, and to put an end to the subsisting intercourse between the Canadian traders and the

\textsuperscript{218} Colonel Proctor to Major General Sheaffe, 30 October 1812, in \textit{Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections},
15:174-175.
\textsuperscript{219} Speech of Robert Dickson Esquire to Indian tribes, 18 January 1813, in Robert S. Allen, \textit{His Majesty’s Indian
Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defense of Canada, 1774-1815} (Toronto, ON: Dundurn, 1993), 140-141.
\textsuperscript{220} Instructions for Robt Dickson Esqr from George Prevost, 14 January 1813, 142-143.
Indians.” His assessment led to panic in Ninian Edwards, governor of Illinois Territory, who began to worry that the British also recognized the advantage of fort at Prairie du Chien. “If the British erect a fort at the mouth of the Wisconsin, and should be able to retain it two years, this and Missouri Territory will be totally deserted – in other words, conquered,” wrote Edwards in a March 27, 1813 letter to Secretary of War John Armstrong. American General Benjamin Howard also echoed the necessity of an American post at Prairie du Chien. “Our difficulties with the Indians will not terminate without an imposing campaign carried as far at least, as the Oisconcen, and the erection of a garrison commanding the entrance of that river into the Mississippi,” Howard wrote in an April 4, 1813 letter to Colonel Daniel Bissell. The prevailing sentiment led William Clark to begin fitting out an expedition to ascend the Mississippi in the hopes of retaking Prairie du Chien and establishing a permanent American post. Two hundred men on five barges left St. Louis on the first of May under Clark’s command.

The journey of the flotilla northbound proved relatively uneventful. The only fire the expedition took on their way to Prairie du Chien occurred when a minor skirmish with some Sauk broke out at the mouth of the Rock River. As the expedition put ashore at the village of Prairie du Chien they found a quiet landscape deserted by the local militia, the inhabitants, and the natives of the area. Clark left behind roughly eighty-five men before he headed back down the Mississippi to see to his regular duties at St. Louis. The men immediately began

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221 E.A. Cruikshank, “Robert Dickson, the Indian Trader,” in Wisconsin Historical Collections, vol. 12 (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1892), 140-142.
225 William Clark to Secretary Armstrong, 5 June 1814, in Carter, Territorial Papers, 16:424.
226 Bruce E. Mahan, Old Fort Crawford and the Frontier (Iowa City, IA: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1926), 52.
construction of a stockade they named Fort Shelby. Its first test would come almost immediately
after word of the American capture reached Dickson and his compatriots at Mackinac. Dickson,
one hundred and fifty or so native allies, and a two companies of Canadian volunteers left
Mackinac on June 28, 1814 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William McKay.227 The
small force arrived at Prairie du Chien on July seventeenth. The British contingent under
Colonel McKay had only brought on three-pound gun, an amount of firepower that paled in
colorison to the well-stockaded American fort under the cover of six cannons and a gunboat
well supplied with artillery.228 Despite his deficiency in firepower, McKay sent an ultimatum to
the Americans advising they surrender unconditionally within the hour. A three hour British
barrage followed until nightfall and resumed the following morning. All day the British
bombarded the Americans, eventually leading the Americans to hoist a flag of surrender. A
British runner went out offering surrender under the condition that McKay protect the Americans
from his indigenous allies. McKay, however, failed to control his contingent of natives from the
time his force arrived at Prairie du Chien. McKay determined that releasing the natives to their
homes proved the best course of action, which he did promptly. 229

The next morning the Americans marched out of what would thereafter be called Fort
McKay. He sent the surrendered Americans down the river with an escort as far as the Rock
River where the British released them to find the rest of the way back to St. Louis. However, the
Americans had already become aware of the attack on Prairie du Chien, and had sent out a
regiment over one hundred men, composed of regulars and rangers, from St. Louis on July

227 Robert Dickson Orders, Michilimackinac, 28 June 1814, in Wisconsin Historical Collections, 11:303.
228 Colonel McKay to Colonel McDouall, Prairie du Chien, 27 July 1814, in Michigan Pioneer and Historical
Collections, 15:623-628.
229 “Seventy-two Years' Recollections of Wisconsin,” in Wisconsin Historical Collections, vol. 3 (Madison, WI:
State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1857), 271.
fourth. The Americans continued forward on a crash-course to meet with the British contingent near the Rock River. Before the British arrived, however, the Sauk attacked the Americans. Swarming on both banks and raining fire on the Americans, the Sauk inflicted considerable damage. Eventually the commanders decided to return to St. Louis. A few days later those who had surrendered at Prairie du Chien also arrived in St. Louis.

The Americans decided to send a more formidable force up the Mississippi to engage both the natives and the British. Major Zachary Taylor embarked with a force of three hundred men under the direction of thirty-four officers, as well as several well-armed gunboat crews. As the expedition reached the mouth of the Rock River they anticipated more resistance from the Sauk, however, the British had marshalled a significant native force at Rock Island. The Dakota, Ho-Chunk, Sauk, and Meskwaki formed a force estimated between 1,000 and 1,500 warriors. Additionally, the British sent thirty soldiers under the leadership of Lieutenant Duncan Graham and three small guns to assist in the attack. The forces met near the modern-day city of Davenport on the Iowa side of the Mississippi River in the late afternoon of September fifth. Heavy winds forced the Americans to anchor their boats alongside a small island in the middle of the channel, and the force noted a strong native presence on both sides of the Mississippi. Hostilities finally broke out near day-break, when Captain Samuel Whiteside’s boat took fire. After several frantic maneuvers by Taylor and his men, the Americans determined that they did not have the adequate forces to overcome the small British contingent and the overwhelming
indigenous force. The attempt marked the final American attempt to retake Prairie du Chien prior to the close of the war. The alliance between the British and the indigenous peoples of the upper-Mississippi had proven too much for American forces to handle, and the outcome of the events shaped the developing dynamics between the United States and the indigenous peoples of the area, including the Dakota, for decades to come.

Following the cessation of hostilities at the Treaty of Ghent on December 24, 1814, American power again reigned on the upper reaches of the Mississippi River. As the indigenous peoples throughout the region received word of the British surrender, they felt abandoned. The final peace restored all rights and possessions returning lands to their status in 1811. American messengers conveyed the news to the indigenous peoples of the interior at two separate conferences held during the later summer and early fall of 1815. The Americans held the first at Spring Wells near Detroit, the second at Portage des Sioux, just above the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Despite American assertions of sovereignty, the Dakota and other peoples continued commercial relationships with the British related to the fur trade. To counter British commercial influence, the United States made a plan to establish fur trading factories, Indian agencies, and military posts throughout the region. American power would soon permanently arrive in the Upper Midwest.

The unceasing participation of the Dakota in intertribal conflict and supranational alliance demonstrates continuity in cultural construction from 1805 to 1825. While the

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236 George S. May. War of 1812: The United States and Great Britain at Mackinac, 1812-1815. (Mackinaw City, MI: Mackinac State Historic Parks, 2004).
238 William Clark to the Secretary of War, 17 April 1815, in Territorial Papers, 15:25-26.
intertribal conflicts of the era display a continuation of traditional territorial disputes between autonomous peoples, the Dakota decision to form an alliance with the British during the War of 1812 exhibited continued independence, sovereignty, and autonomy.\textsuperscript{239} Following the close of the conflict in 1815, William Clark represented the United States in a treaty of friendship conducted at Portage de Sioux, Missouri.\textsuperscript{240} This document detailed an end to hostilities between the United States and the Dakota, proclaiming “a treaty of peace and friendship.” The proceedings at Portage de Sioux saw the arrival of roughly two thousand natives, and the Americans formed treaties with the Lakota, Mdewakanton, Wahpekute, Sisseton, Wahpeton, and Yanktonai.\textsuperscript{241} As a part of the proceedings, the United States pardoned past transgressions by the Dakota and asserted American sovereignty to all lands occupied by the assorted bands. In contrast, the various representatives of the Dakota most likely understood the treaty as a return to the pre-war status quo. Seventy-two delegates represented the seven fires, and the post-treaty consensus seemed to favor establishing a commercial relationship with the Americans, but also ensuring that the tribe remained sovereign and autonomous. Of the seventy-two delegates, Manuel Lisa, the American agent for the Missouri River escorted forty-three of the seventy-two delegates to the proceedings.\textsuperscript{242} A murkiness surrounded Dakota representation at the proceedings. Although the treaty declared in Article Three that the Dakota existed “under the protection of the United States, and of no other nation, power, or sovereign,” three “Sioux


\textsuperscript{240} Treaty of Portage de Sioux, 1815; Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.


chiefs” purported to represent the entirety of the Dakota signed the document.\textsuperscript{243} The treaty specified that the Mdewakanton found representation in Tatankamani, a minor figure who had deserted the British in favor of the Americans toward the end of the conflict as a renegade offshoot of Wabasha’s band.\textsuperscript{244} Tatankamani served the Americans as an agreeable stand-in when two messengers dispatched to entice more prominent Dakota leaders proved unable to ascend the Mississippi River due to interference from Black Hawk’s band of the Sauk.\textsuperscript{245} Again, claims of American sovereignty over the Dakota from 1805 to 1825 stand as a projection at best. The Americans identified the bands not represented in the proceedings and over the summer of 1816 made treaties with eight additional bands of Dakota, Lakota, and Yanktonai. Less than a year later the Dakota became alarmed when the Americans began to construct a fort at Prairie du Chien. This led representatives of the Mdewakanton to approach British agents still located on the Great Lakes to plead for assistance in the face of “final extinction.”\textsuperscript{246} When the traders refused, the Dakota began to realize that the British could no longer provide a meaningful counterbalance to American power in the region.

The United States also sought to put American power on full-display to the Dakota in the years following the Treaty of Portage des Sioux. After the close of the War of 1812, American military power physically crept up the Mississippi River. On June 20, 1816, Brevet Brigadier General Thomas A. Smith and Indian Agent for Illinois Territory Major Richard Graham arrived

\textsuperscript{243} Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien, 1825; Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien, 1830; Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
\textsuperscript{244} Mary Elise Antoine, \textit{The War of 1812 in Wisconsin.} (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2016).
\textsuperscript{246} Bruce E. Mahan, \textit{Old Fort Crawford and the Frontier.} (Iowa City, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa Press, 1926), 67.
at Prairie du Chien. The American strategy sought to formally crack-down on the dissention sewn by British influence in the fur trade. Upon their arrival, Smith and Graham demanded licenses from any traders, and arrested Prairie du Chien resident and trader Michael Brisbois for treasonable conduct during the war. The Americans proved intent on proving their power to the residents of Prairie du Chien, native and European alike. On July 3, 1816, workmen and soldiers under the command of Colonel William Southerland Hamilton began to construct Fort Crawford. The Americans built the post on the site of the previous forts Shelby and McKay. American power had arrived on the upper-Mississippi permanently.

The summer of 1817 saw Major Stephen H. Long, a topographical engineer in the United States Army, take a journey with six-oared skiff up the Mississippi to the heart of Dakota lands and the Falls of St. Anthony. Long’s instructions directed him to chart the course of the upper-Mississippi, record the topography of the shores, and identify locations for future military posts. After Long’s trip to Dakota occupied land, he assessed the quality of the site selected for the new fort at Prairie du Chien before heading back down river. He noted that the fort stood in a position difficult to defend, surrounded by unhealthful stagnant water, and subject to spring floods. Long also noted the prevalence of natives in the village. Around this time Benjamin

In 1818 Benjamin O’Fallon, William Clark’s nephew and recently appointed “Indian Agent for the Sioux,” led two heavily armed keelboats up the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers. Between fifty and sixty soldiers accompanied O’Fallon as they journeyed to the Falls of St.

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Anthony in order to council with the Dakota.\textsuperscript{251} O’Fallon found a difficult situation where the Dakota struggled with incursions into their lands by other peoples including the Ho-Chunk and Ojibwe. Shakopee, a Mdewakanton, complained that “I cannot restrain them (Ojibwe).” O’Fallon responded: “If they come upon you, make them drink your balls.”\textsuperscript{252} To which Shakopee allegedly answered “Yes, we will scratch them with our tow and finger nails and we will knaw them with our teeth.” O’Fallon, pleased that he had gained a staunch ally for the Americans, hoped that Shakopee would serve American interests throughout the region. At other locations throughout Dakota lands he had to make a more direct argument. “Sioux, I have come to tell you we have done submitting….From this day you must date your change, or this river’s surface will be covered with our boats, & the land with troops who will chase you, as you do the deer of your plains,” he announced at the village of Grand Partizan.\textsuperscript{253} In addition to the tough talk of O’Fallon, the United States army added to the power projected from Prairie du Chien through starting construction of a fort on the lands Pike had treated for at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. O’Fallon returned to Prairie du Chien where he passed his knowledge along to the newly arrived Lieutenant Colonel Henry Leavenworth.

Leavenworth, along with Major Thomas Forsyth, an experienced Indian agent, went upriver with roughly $2,000 worth of goods meant to fulfill payment for the lands purchased by Pike nearly two decades earlier.\textsuperscript{254} Before the expedition embarked from Fort Crawford, an incident that appears in Forsyth’s journal shortly before helps to illuminate Dakota conceptions of the American justice system at the time. On July eight a Menominee stabbed and injured a

\textsuperscript{251} Benjamin O’Fallon to William Clark, 20 May 1818, in Territorial Papers, 15:407-12.
\textsuperscript{252} Benjamin O’Fallon to William Clark, May 20, 1818, in Territorial Papers, 15:407-12.
\textsuperscript{253} Benjamin O’Fallon to William Clark, May 20, 1818, in Territorial Papers, 15:407-12.
Dakota near Fort Crawford.\textsuperscript{255} The Dakota seized the culprit and put him under guard. After the Dakota held council about what to do with the stabber, they determined that the Menominee should eat from the same dish as the man he had attacked, a gesture meant as promise to forgive and forget the past. In contrast to later actions, here the Dakota did not appeal to American authorities to settle the dispute, an indication that they still defined themselves as sovereign and autonomous, even in the shadow of Prairie du Chien. Into the sovereign and autonomous Dakota state indicated by the incident Colonel Leavenworth and Major Forsyth embarked on their journey. Upon their arrival the Americans quickly worked to build a military post at the mouth of St. Peter’s River during the fall of 1819.\textsuperscript{256} Although Leavenworth departed later the same year, he left Colonel Josiah Snelling in charge of completing the fortification over the next few years. Fort Snelling, as well as the newly established St. Peter’s Indian Agency, marked the arrival of American permanence on previously Dakota held lands. Both locations stood as monuments to a new American presence in Dakota lives, one focused on projecting power, the other altering the commercial lives of the people. With American power on full-display, the government determined the time had arrived for substantial treaty negotiations.

As American power emerged in Dakota lands, the Wahpekute focused their attentions on continued conflict with the Sauk and Meskwaki tribes. Inkpaduta, only a child during the early 1820s, grew up in an environment that saw almost continuous conflict between the Wahpekute and the Meskwaki and Sauk. Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro estimated in his journal that the Dakotas had lost at least one hundred and seventy people in the fighting since 1815.\textsuperscript{257} The war

\textsuperscript{255} Thomas Forsyth to William Clark, 23 September 1819, Forsyth Papers, Letterbook vol. 4, Draper Collection at Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.
\textsuperscript{256} Marcus L. Hansen, \textit{Old Fort Snelling, 1819-1851}. (Iowa City, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1926).
continued from 1822 to 1825, with Inkpata's father, Wamdisapa, a major figure in the fighting. Tasagi, the primary leader of the Wahpekute, worked with Wamdisapa to lead the band in a fierce contestation over the northern Iowa borderlands. The Wahpekute had faced difficult years during the early nineteenth century, which led to the eventual ascension of Tasagi to the position of head chief following the death of his father, White Nails in 1822. As Tasagi came into power, the conflict with the Sauk and Meskwaki dominated the focus of the Wahpekute. The inexperienced Tasagi leaned on the more seasoned Wamdisapa for council as the Wahpekute sought to navigate a world that had begun to rapidly change around them. As the battle for the northern Iowa borderlands continued, Taliaferro and other governmental representatives sought to bring the various tribal peoples of the upper-Mississippi together to clearly determine boundaries and lessen bloodshed from intertribal conflicts.

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CHAPTER THREE: “THEY ARE MOSTLY A DIRTY, THIEVING RACE”

With Fort Crawford complete and Fort Snelling under construction, the Americans sought a large gathering of indigenous peoples at Prairie du Chien in 1825. William Clark and Lewis Cass arrived at the negotiations determined to parcel out lands and delineate territory to specific tribal groups throughout the region. The Dakota, as a wide-ranging and fluid people not composing a confederacy, proved among the most difficult to hem in. The traditional lands and ranges of the Wahpekute prove difficult to accurately understand. As American exploration and settlement crept westward into the upper-Midwest, early maps show a strong Dakota presence. The map of R. Paul, created in 1816 and consistent with the notes of A. Chouteau, showed a Dakota range (listed as Sioux) that extended from the headwaters of the Des Moines River south-by-southeast to near the site of modern-day Des Moines.\(^\text{259}\) The map also depicted Dakota lands extending as far east as the eventual site of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, on the Mississippi River. To the west, mapmakers struggled to clearly delineate the Dakota range due to the tributaries of the Missouri not being well-chartered at the time. The course of the Little Sioux River, which finds its headwaters near Spirit Lake, also failed to find accurate representation on the map. However, as the name Little Sioux suggests, the potentially Dakota ranged along the watercourse. The Spirit Lake region did not make the map.

American negotiators at the 1825 Multinational Treaty at Prairie du Chien relied upon the R. Paul map, granting it significant importance.\(^\text{260}\) At this meeting the Americans gathered Dakota leaders and representatives of at least thirteen other tribal groups to help establish boundaries. Hoping to minimize violence on the emergent Midwestern frontier, William Clark

\(^{259}\) R. Paul, “A Map Exhibiting the Territorial Limits of Several Nations and Tribes of Indians.” Collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa. 1816.

and Lewis Cass also sought to “clear the title” to indigenous lands. The Americans sought to parcel tracts to single tribal entities in order to aid in future dispossessions. Cass and Clark both had a significant interest in the region: Cass as the governor of the Michigan Territory, and Clark as the superintendent of Indian affairs for the upper Mississippi and Missouri River regions. In preparation, Cass and Clark put 85,000 pounds of fresh beef, 900 barrels of flour, and one-hundred gallons of whiskey on order.

Delegations of Dakota, Ottawa, Menominee, Ho-Chunk, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Kickapoo had created a sprawling camp along the banks of the Mississippi River by August third. On the morning of August fourth, the Sauk and Meskwaki arrived in a grand display of power. War canoes, filled with a dozen men each, came up the river as drums beat and loud chants filled the air. The people gathered at Prairie du Chien heard the flotilla well-before it they saw it, and those at Fort Crawford stood on guard. Even once the Sauk and Meskwaki delegation arrived on the river outside of the fort, they delayed on coming ashore, instead staying in the center of the river and creating a spectacle. The men in the canoes had painted themselves for war, wore breechcloths, brandished arms, and had their heads freshly shaved. As they passed back and forth in front of the gathered spectators they raised their paddles high into the August sky and chanted with an intense ferocity. Their intimidating arrival signaled the insistence of tribes throughout the region on maintaining their sovereignty and autonomy throughout their lands at a conference Clark and Cass had viewed as one focused on peace.

261 Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien, 1825; Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien, 1830; Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.

262 Lewis Cass to William Clark, 1 September 1825, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Office Files, box I (photocopies from U.S. National Archives), State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Manuscript Collections.

When William Clark opened the proceedings the following morning, the Dakota found primary representation in Little Crow, Sleepy Eye, Wakute, and Wabasha.264 The ongoing warfare between the Dakota and the Sauk and Meskwaki over the northern Iowa borderlands stood as a focus of the American negotiators, and Tasagi eventually signed the treaty in February of 1826. The Americans sought to create their own intimidating impression as the conference got underway with martial music, American flags snapping in the breeze, and soldiers on parade.

The next twelve days consisted of long orations, political posturing, and pipe smoking. After much hard bargaining, Clark and Cass believed they had successfully worked with the tribes to “reconcile and adjust their conflicting claims,” as well as “remove all probable cause of future difficulties.” At the end of the proceedings Clark remarked that “all parties were satisfied.” In their summary report to the Secretary Barbour they commented: “…we are certain that the feelings of the tribes, heretofore hostile to one another, are entirely changed, and we believe, that if individual aggressions are committed, they will not lead to important results.”265 Clark further added that the indigenous peoples of the region would prove “desirous to terminate their wars, apparently satisfied that their hostilities, without any reasonable object, would produce only mutual injuries.”266 Unfortunately for the United States, Cass and Clark greatly overestimated their success as they simplified generations long intertribal conflicts into trivial disputes which could be rectified in twelve short days. The resultant map clearly showed the Dakota maintaining control over the region that included the Spirit Lake.267 The American negotiators specifically

265 Lewis Cass to William Clark, 1 September 1825, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Office Files, box I (photocopies from U.S. National Archives), State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Manuscript Collections.
266 Lewis Cass to William Clark, 1 September 1825, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Office Files, box I (photocopies from U.S. National Archives), State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Manuscript Collections.
267 Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien, 1825; Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien, 1830; Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
included in the language of the treaty an intention to not purchase any lands northwest of the Mississippi River, although subsequent treaties and land purchases had undermined the statement by the time proceedings began for the Multinational Treaty at Prairie du Chien of 1830.268

The United States had cemented political control of the region following the War of 1812 and the Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien in 1825, and the northern Iowa borderlands saw the first projection of American presence with the creation of a trading post with a limited military presence at Fort Confederation in modern Humboldt County, at the confluence of the East and West forks of the Des Moines River around the close of the treaty negotiations.269 The Americans located the fort there to stimulate commercial interaction between the United States and the Dakota. The location proved ideal because of the presence of a large and consistent Dakota population at the confluence. The fort created a limited military presence, but lacked the necessary firepower to significantly disrupt or alter Dakota sovereignty or autonomy on the upper-Des Moines. During this era the American population lingered well-below the two-persons per square mile frontier designation of the Census Bureau, as no significant American settlement arrived in the northern Iowa borderlands.270 American settlement crept toward the area, however, as the first citizens of the United States began to locate on the western bank of the Mississippi River.

As a side-effect of the increase of American presence in the region, the Wahpekute began to appear more frequently in the historical record. St. Peter’s Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro recorded Tasagi as the leader of the Wahpekute bands that Sintominiduta and Inkpaduta event

268 Collin G. Calloway, One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West Before Lewis & Clark (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 60.
270 United States Census, 1840. Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. Des Moines, Iowa.
would eventually lead, shortly after the 1825 Multinational Treaty at Prairie du Chien. Taliaferro recorded that Tasagi had come to the agency in the hopes of airing grievances against the Sauk and Meskwaki, who in the view of the Wahpekute leader had not respected the established provisions of the treaty. Tasagi complained of incursions on lands surrounding the upper-Des Moines River, and his complaint marks the first significant Wahpekute claim recorded by an American official in regard to the northern Iowa borderlands. The willingness of Tasagi to work within the constructions of justice proves important in considerations of later Dakota resistance. As the Dakota worked from a culturally and mutually adaptive construct toward a climate of American acculturation, Dakota leaders actively navigated the challenges presented by the American imposed system. Tasagi’s visit to Taliaferro shows a belief that the Wahpekute Dakota had at the very least understood and adaptively utilized the 1825 Treaty. However, the lack of action on the part of Taliaferro may have undermined future Wahpekute responses to new treaties and the American justice system. During the same time-period, Taliaferro also recorded that Wamdisapa served as a sub-chief and had a small village on the Blue Earth River. Wamdisapa’s band often ranged south from their summer perch in the Blue Earth River Valley across the northern boundary of modern-day Iowa. From the Blue Earth River, Wamdisapa’s Wahpekute would range into different watersheds, most commonly those of the Des Moines, Cedar, and Little Sioux rivers.

Tasagi signed the 1825 treaty and clearly attempted to respect its provisions. The Dakota and Sauk immediately had a dispute over the exact location of the boundary line. The treaty stipulated that the border existed from the mouth of the upper-Iowa River southwest to the

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second fork of the Des Moines River, with the Dakota living north of the line and the Sauk to the south. The Dakota almost immediately asserted that the Raccoon River constituted the second fork of the Des Moines River, the Sauk alleged that the line stood further north near the eventual site of Fort Dodge. The Americans did not have adequate geographic knowledge to effectively settle the dispute. Despite this discrepancy, peace reigned between the rival tribes in the northern Iowa borderlands for three years following the treaty.

Although peace stood as the norm after the first treaty at Prairie du Chien, an illustrative altercation took place in the heart of the northern Iowa borderlands when a party of Sauk hunters encountered a Dakota hunting party camped along the Raccoon Fork of the Des Moines River, well below the boundary established for the Dakota at Prairie du Chien.273 The Sauk did not attack the Dakota, but instead tested the American commitment to honoring the designated treaty boundaries. In this instance the Dakota exhibited some change. Prior to the proceedings of two years before, the meeting between the Dakota and the Sauk would have resulted in a violent altercation. Instead, the Sauk made their way back down the river to Saukenuk, their largest community near where the Rock River empties into the Mississippi. Led by Black Hawk, a portion of the tribe advocated for war against the Dakota for encroaching on their lands.

Scholars, including Kerry A. Trask in his work Black Hawk: The Battle for the Heart of America, have theorized as to what sparked the desire in Black Hawk to take a stand against the Dakota. “What sparked his hostile outburst against the Sioux is not clear. Perhaps he had simply reached a breaking point where he could no longer tolerate the further insults of enemies or hold back his own accumulated feelings of grievance and outrage. Or maybe the rumors of an

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impending war between the United States and Great Britain had reawakened within him a zeal
for battle that had remained dormant since the War of 1812,” wrote Trask. Other Sauk chiefs
did not support of Black Hawk’s war position. In an attempt to satiate the leader the others
offered him three horses and some other property if he would give up his attempt to raise a
fighting force. Black Hawk took umbrage with his fellow Sauk, and declared that “nothing but
death should prevent him from going to war” with the Dakota. The United States military, in
the form of Forsyth, threatened annihilation of the Sauk if they continued to pursue violence
against the Dakota. Wabasha made overtures for peace that included Dakota pipes and
messages sent to Saukenuk in order to deescalate the conflict. The crisis passed without
bloodshed, however, it displays the complicated web of sovereignty, autonomy, and contingency
within the upper-Midwest of the post-Prairie du Chien Treaty. Individual leaders of tribal
peoples sought to operate in traditional ways, as evidenced by Black Hawk seeking to raise a
faction of dissidents among the Sauk in a way consistent with established customs. Also,
emergent American determination and influence can be seen in the initial reaction of Forsyth, as
well as in his promise to send General Clark with 2,000 men up the Mississippi to make war on
the Sauk if they attacked the Dakota. Finally, Wabasha’s overtures for peace remained
consistent with those expected in a similar situation prior to the arrival of American influence in
the region. The first major anecdotal test of the initial Multinational Treaty at Prairie du Chien
had passed without bloodshed.

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275 Black Hawk. Autobiography. 21, 22.
276 Thomas Forsyth, “Journal of a Voyage from St. Louis to the Falls of St. Anthony, in 1819.” Wisconsin
277 Thomas Forsyth, “Journal of a Voyage from St. Louis to the Falls of St. Anthony, in 1819.” Wisconsin
The year would not pass without escalating conflict. Only a couple of months later, during the early summer, a mixed group of Ho-Chunk and Dakota attacked the Ojibwe, killing at least twenty people. In Forsyth’s report of the incident, he suggested that the attacks might have served as the opening salvo in a Ho-Chunk and Dakota attempt to reassert power in the upper-Midwest, writing that a half-Dakota, half-Ho-Chunk chief commonly called L’Arc (also Lark) intended to “shortly go up to St. Peter and kill Col. Snelling’s hogs (soldiers).” He felt certain of a plot by the Ho-Chunk and Dakota, further adding “I am much mistaken if something very serious is not at the bottom of this affair.” Several smaller incidents occurred throughout the summer, but nothing on the scale of a direct attack on Fort Snelling manifested. American influence lagged behind the presumptuous expectations of American officials including Clark, Forsyth, and Taliaferro immediately following the treaty.

The peace continued to disintegrate in the late-1820s. In February and March of 1828 the Sauk attacked several Dakota villages. Later in the year, on November 15, 1828, a Sauk leader named Morgan attacked Tasagi’s village on the Des Moines River. Both Wamdisapa and Inkpaduta had gone out hunting, and Wamdisapa later commented: “I left my family, as I thought in safety, and went out to trap a little for myself, but on my return to my lodge, everything was destroyed.” One of Wamdisapa’s wives, not Inkpaduta’s mother, died in the violence. The Sauk cut off her head, tore her body into pieces, and threw her into the Des Moines River. During this time Wamdisapa’s frustrations with the changing dynamics of his

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281 Lawrence Taliaferro Journal, April 1, 1829, *Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians.* Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
world become clearly evident. He often complained of traders, arguing that they “wish to push
us into the jaws of our enemies, and on dangerous ground, to get skins to pay our credit.” With
game populations already beginning to decline in Iowa and the recent attack of the Sauk fresh in
his mind, Wamdisapa resumed warfare with the Sauk and Meskwaki. Both Tasagi and
Wamdisapa appealed to the Americans for support, each visiting Taliaferro during 1829.
Wamdisapa told Taliaferro of Morgan’s attack and how his wife had been killed and mutilated
“like the skin of a slaughtered deer.”282 He asked what the United States planned to do about the
conflict, going as far as to suggest that the Americans should arrest his wife’s murderers.
Taliaferro did not record his response in his journal. A few months later, dissatisfied with
American inability to right the wrong he had suffered, Wamdisapa led a revenge raid. His band
killed several Sauk in retaliation for the murder. Shortly thereafter, Inkpaduta went to visit
Taliaferro. He asked the Indian Agent for help in ending the conflict in the northern Iowa
borderlands. Taliaferro again did not record his response.

As the Americans sought to pacify and begin the slow process of acculturation for the
Dakota, Taliaferro firmly believed that the tribe should expand their agricultural pursuits in order
to eventually become self-supporting. Game populations had already begun to decline
throughout the easternmost portions of Dakota occupied lands, and in 1828-1829 a brutal winter
led to at least thirty lodges under Taliaferro’s supervision starving to death.283 He hoped this
would help aid his efforts to move the Dakota toward settled-agriculture, also lamenting his
being “compelled to be the witness of scenes the most unpleasant.”284 The following spring

282 Lawrence Taliaferro Journal, March 29, 1829, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified
Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
283 Lawrence Taliaferro, Autobiography of Major Lawrence Taliaferro: Written in 1864. (St. Paul, MN: Collections
284 Taliaferro to Clark, 9, 10, 14 July 1829. Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified
Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
Taliaferro sent out a soldier from Fort Snelling with two yoke of oxen to plow for nearly a month in the vicinity of Lake Calhoun. Taliaferro intended the Dakota would tend the rows they turned, however, many chose not to participate. Taliaferro also tried to entice the Dakota through beginning construction on a log village he named Eatonville, after the infamous Jackson Administration Secretary of War, that would serve as a home to those who “might submit to become cultivators of the soil.” The project proved a minor success for American acculturation efforts, and when Taliaferro visited Eatonville the following autumn he observed women actively engaged in seed saving and food preservation after a successful harvest. Eventually the project suffered from minor harassments from the Ojibwe, leading to its abandonment prior to 1830. Taliaferro felt encouraged however, believing that he had validated his notions that the Dakota could and would be enticed to farm. The situation displayed a mix of adaptation and acculturation existing during the early to mid-nineteenth century. The major acculturative project of Forsyth met with limited success after environmental forces forced the Dakota to consider new means of subsistence. However, the failure of the project due to conflict between the Dakota and Ojibwe showcased the limited ability of the Americans to adequately project power during the era, as well as the likelihood that the Dakota might have sought other avenues for sustenance beyond the scope of American expectations.

The following summer the 1830 Multinational Treaty at Prairie du Chien aimed to provide significant backing of Taliaferro’s plans for more closely aligning the Dakota with the Americanized future he envisioned. The negotiations focused on alleviating the hostilities between the Sauk and Dakota, which had continued without escalating into the full-blown war advocated by Black Hawk and others. The boundary-line created at Prairie du Chien by the

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signers of the treaty in 1825 had proved inadequate to lessen hostilities between the two tribes. In 1830, the Dakota and Sauk each consented to cede a twenty-mile-wide strip on either side of the 1825 boundary in order to create a neutral zone. American officials hoped that a greater distance between the two tribes would naturally lead to a decrease in boundary-crossing fueled disputes. Additionally, the United States decided to move the Ho-Chunk into the cleared lands, creating a precarious position for those people as they faced removal out of their ancestral Wisconsin homelands. The neutral zone scheme failed on several levels, most notably illustrated by continued conflict between the Dakota and Sauk. Tasagi and Wamdisapa did not attend the treaty negotiations, and never honored the provisions put in place. After Tasagi’s previous experience with the inability of the American’s to adequately execute treaty provisions, he indicated to Taliaferro that he did not believe that the Sauk or Meskwaki would respect the treaty, or that the United States would uphold it. Clark threatened military invasion and a cessation of trade if the tribes did not respect the new neutral zone, but the Wahpekute had already lost respect for the American ability to project power in the northern Iowa borderlands.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 further created pressures, and established of a line of military posts marking the western frontier that extended from Fort Snelling at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers in the north, to Fort Gibson in eastern Oklahoma. In the context of Iowa, the line extended from Fort Snelling to Fort Crawford and on to the newly established Fort Des Moines supported the goals of removal by allowing for more easterly

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286 Multinational Treaties of Prairie du Chien, 1825-1830; Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
288 Council Notes from Prairie du Chien, 2 August 1825, William Clark Papers in the collections of the Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, KS.
populations to relocate, as evidenced by the creation of Fort Atkinson to protect the Ho-
Chunk.\textsuperscript{290} Although not specifically included in the 1830 Indian Removal Act, the legislation
granted the president the power to protect the people, a function served by military forts on the
frontier. Military power actively reshaped the frontiers and borderlands throughout the Dakota
range. The Americans hoped the forts would project power, however, often times the garrisons
struggled to do more than command the grounds around them. The Dakota maintained a
powerfully sovereign and autonomous position even into the mid-nineteenth century. The line of
frontier forts consistently evolved, as one area moved behind the frontier-line. In Iowa and
surrounding lands, the evolution of the frontier finds evidence in the commission and
decommission of Fort Crawford, Fort Atkinson, Fort Des Moines, and Fort Dodge as the
American government formalized power throughout the lands. The movement of military forts
proved a critical signal to settlers hoping to gain access to land at cheap prices that lands no
longer held the dangers commonly associated with entering an area filled with enough ‘untamed’
indigenous people to justify a military presence. In order to climb above the two-persons per
square mile standard an area had to attract more than just the traders, military personnel, and
trailblazers of the earlier frontier. In order to meet the population requirements, families had to
start moving into an area. Following the treaties at Prairie du Chien and the subsequent
movement of forts, American settlement began to slowly creep across the Mississippi and toward
northern Iowa.

The years following the 1830 Multinational Treaty at Prairie du Chien proved a time of
adaptation for the Dakota. New challenges emerged, the relationship between the Dakota and
the United States government underwent strains. As the Dakota sought to adapt to the American

\textsuperscript{290} William E. Whitaker, Ed., \textit{Frontier Forts of Iowa: Indians, Traders, and Soldiers, 1682-1862}. (Iowa City, IA:
University of Iowa Press, 2009).
presence in the region cultural and political structures underwent tests, the environment around
them began to significantly shift, and Americans sought to severely undercut Dakota sovereignty
and autonomy. Although Tasagi and Wamdisapa seemed to be united in their rejection of the
1830 Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien, their formerly cooperative relationships had
changed by the mid-1830s. Henry Hastings Sibley, eventual governor of Minnesota and
American Fur Company representative stationed at Mendota in 1834, suggested in his
correspondence that Tasagi and Wamdisapa rival split the band of five hundred to six hundred
members.291 The leaders had geographically dispersed constituencies with Tasagi leading the
group on the Cannon River while Wamdisapa led on the Blue Earth River.

Although the neutral zone proved inadequate for quelling disputes between the Dakota
and their southerly neighbors, the 1830 treaty had provided the new tools of acculturation that
Taliaferro had hoped for. In compensation for the lands ceded, the government provided each
tribe with a $2,000 annual annuity for ten years that consisted of merchandise, animals, and
currency.292 Additionally the government provided each tribe with a blacksmith, the necessary
tools for the blacksmith trade, and agricultural implements for a period of ten years plus “as long
thereafter as the President of the United States may think necessary and proper.”293 Additionally,
the government created an education fund to provide the Dakota with $500 annually for expenses
related to indoctrinating indigenous youth through education. Twenty-six Mdewakanton, nine

291 Henry H. Sibley, “Memoir of Jean Baptiste Faribault” in Minnesota Historical Collections, Vol. III. (St. Paul,
292 Multinational Treaties of Prairie du Chien, 1825-1830; Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and
Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
293 Multinational Treaties of Prairie du Chien, 1825-1830; Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and
Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
Wahpekute, and two Sisseton signed. The predecessors to the bands of Inkpaduta and Sintominiduta, Tasagi and Wamdisapa did not.

The treaty had also promised in essence to end intertribal hostilities. Tribes consented to allow the administration of American justice by the military in the event of difficulties. However, the agreement proved hopelessly flawed. Immediately, Medicine Bottle, a member of Little Crow’s Band of Dakota, left the proceedings and killed five Ojibwe hunters. The military personnel imprisoned the guilty party at Fort Crawford, but eventually released him due to the high cost of holding Medicine Bottle and his coconspirators. By fall, Colonel Morgan had received so many reports of violations that he deemed it militarily impossible to apprehend those responsible. As time continued things only got worse, as evidenced by a Sauk and Meskwaki attack on a group of Menominee encamped near the gates of Fort Crawford in Prairie du Chien, killing twenty-four. The military made arrests, but the American justice system proved inadequately prepared to deal with intertribal conflict. No laws existed stipulating punishments or recourse for such disputes and attacks, in hindsight a significant flaw of the 1830 treaty negotiations. For the Wahpekute who had not chosen to sign, the failure must have felt like a sign of validation, more evidence for what they had already come to expect from the Americans: empty promises with little hope of fulfillment.

While the Multinational Treaties at Prairie du Chien specifically sought to decrease hostilities between the Dakota and the Meskwaki and Sauk, the treaty aggravated the

295 Morgan to Secretary of War, 18 July 1830. *Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians*. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
circumstances surrounding Black Hawk in the time prior to his leading of followers in violent resistive action during 1832. Forsyth wrung his hands as he worried that settlers in the area actively worked to exacerbate tensions, writing that they “blow the coal of discord among the Indians,” and might incite a “cruel and barbarous war among the Indians.” The government worried that instead of the 1830 treaty creating an atmosphere that eliminated tribal warfare in the region, the tribes had instead formed alliances that threatened to push the area into all-out war. “God knows when such a war would end,” wrote Forsyth. Small skirmishes followed. A Sauk war party killed ten women and two boys in a Wahpekute camp along the Blue Earth River in southern Minnesota. In response, an estimated five hundred Dakota warriors paid a visit to Taliaferro at Fort Snelling “painted, prepared for war.”

Shortly thereafter the Dakota-allied Ho-Chunk arrived at Prairie du Chien to consult with an Indian Subagent named Wyncoop Warner. The Ho-Chunk suggested that the government should invite the Sauk and Meskwaki to Prairie du Chien to decrease tensions. Warner recorded that the Ho-Chunk “were willing to become friendly, that they need not be afraid to come to Prairie du Chien.” After Warner descended the river and invited the Sauk and Meskwaki he stopped at his home at Galena where he dispatched a letter to Joseph Street, writing that the “Foxes (Meskwaki) seem very anxious to be at peace,” while also encouraging Street to involve

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298 Thomas Forsyth to William Clark, 23 September 1831, Forsyth Papers, Letterbook vol. 4, Draper Collection at Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.
299 Thomas Forsyth to William Clark, 23 September 1831, Forsyth Papers, Letterbook vol. 4, Draper Collection at Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.
300 Taliaferro to Clark, 17 August 1830. Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
301 Joseph Street to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 22 February 1830. Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
the Menominee and Dakota in the negotiations if possible. Street replied that “I have strong hope of entirely drawing off the Winnebagoes (Ho-Chunk) from the war,” but he also relayed that Warner should tell the Sauk and Meskwaki “to be on their guard against the Sioux.” By May fifth a group of eighteen Meskwaki had paddled north for the meetings, arriving a few miles below the mouth of the Wisconsin River. As they began to unload their canoes the Meskwaki came under attack from a large fighting-force of Dakota and Menominee warriors. The Dakota and Menominee brutally routed the unarmed and unprepared Meskwaki in only a few minutes. The lone survivor from the delegation, a half-Ho-Chunk male-child, had his arm broken before being put into a canoe, pushed into the river, and implored to return to his village to let them know what the Dakota and Menominee had done.

During the years leading up to the conflict between Black Hawk’s band and the United States, tensions significantly escalated as initial settlement put increased pressure on the band living at Saukenuk. A desire to mine lead by Colonel James Johnson around the time of the War of 1812 led the government to grant leases to Johnson and others. The Sauk and Meskwaki became “much irritated that any white people should work any mines up the Mississippi.” The flock of Americans coming to Illinois following the War of 1812 also contributed to tensions. During the conflict the government had initially offered quarter-section land grants of one hundred and sixty acres, which they later increased to three hundred and twenty acres near the end of the conflict. The federal government set aside over 3.5 million acres of Illinois to
satisfy these grants, and a flood of settler-colonizers eventually ended up in the area. Although many veterans of the War of 1812 sold their land grants to speculators, who in turn sold them to people hoping to settle in the area. By 1830 Illinois had a population of 157,000.307

Tensions had built between the Sauk and Americans entering the area steadily since the Treaty of 1804 where the Sauk had agreed to part with all lands east of the Mississippi in exchange for $2,234.50 in goods and a $1,000 annual annuity. The government also guaranteed the Sauk that they would be able to hold their lands in Iowa without threat from white settlement. As the population of Illinois grew, as well as lead-mining business along the western banks of the Mississippi River, it became clear that the Americans would not honor their word. Saukenuk had served as an important location for the Sauk as a principle village, and remained occupied well after 1804. Black Hawk, whose band had occupied the village, went west for a hunting trip into Iowa during 1830 and returned to find the band’s dwellings occupied by white settlers. The tribe removed the trespassers and threatened violence if encroachment continued. In response, Illinois Governor John Reynolds requested that the United States Army under Illinois Governor Edmond Gaines take a group of mounted cavalry and volunteers to remove the Sauk from the village. Shortly thereafter, Black Hawk led his “British Band” across the Mississippi and their formal boundary into the state of Illinois during April of 1832.308

Citing the dubious nature of American negotiations with his people during the 1804 Treaty of St. Louis, Black Hawk sought to assert sovereignty while acting autonomously in lands previously held by his tribe. A frontier militia mobilized under the leadership of Henry Dodge,

308 Black Hawk, Life of Black Hawk. Originally published 1833.
and General Henry Atkinson and U.S. troops chased the band through Illinois.\textsuperscript{309} Dodge’s troops routed a large portion of Black Hawk’s band at the Battle of Wisconsin Heights on July twenty-first.\textsuperscript{310} In the ten days that followed, Black Hawk’s band made a desperate drive back toward the Mississippi River and their lands on the other side. On August second, American soldiers met with the band again on the shores of the Mississippi, near the confluence of the Bad Axe River. The Dakota, including the Wahpekute under Tasagi and Wamdisapa had allied themselves with the United States during the conflict, and assisted American troops with the infamous slaughter of fleeing men, women, and children recorded as the Battle of Bad Axe.\textsuperscript{311} The alliance of the Dakota with the United States shows a continued mutual misinterpretation of sovereignty. The Dakota viewed their ability to ally with the United States as a signatory of continued autonomy. In contrast, the United States viewed Dakota complicity as a sign of subverted sovereignty.

The conflicts during this era also became exacerbated due to initial declines in natural resources. “An army patrol sent into the upper Des Moines watershed in the fall of 1831 reported that the Wahpekutes relied almost entirely on game,” wrote Gary Clayton Anderson. “They had to hunt in the debated zones or else face starvation; accordingly, they suffered substantial losses in defending these lands.”\textsuperscript{312} As the Wahpekute sought to retain their access to land and natural resources, they had no recourse but to reject the American constructed agreement of 1830 and instead rely on their own sovereignty and autonomy. The Wahpekute

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\textsuperscript{310} Black Hawk, \textit{Life of Black Hawk}. Originally published 1833.
\end{flushleft}
bands successfully continued to occupy an area that ranged northward from the forks of the Des Moines River during the era following the 1830 Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien. Although conflict continued between the Wahpekute and the Sauk and Meskwaki in this region, various expeditions recorded the Dakota in significant numbers throughout the northern Iowa borderlands during this time. Joseph M. Niccollet remarks in the notes from his 1838-39 expedition to the Spirit Lake region that the Wahpekute existed in large numbers throughout the area.313 The Frenchmen attributed this to conflict between the Dakota and the Sauk.

The Americans proved more successful in regimenting the lives of the Dakota living further to the north. Taliaferro worked diligently to stop the flow of liquor into the hands of the Dakota under his supervision, and in August 1830 he issued an independent proclamation prohibiting the use of spirits within his jurisdiction.314 Captain W.J. Jouett of Fort Snelling confiscated seventeen casks of whiskey in August 1832 alone, a sign that military power had begun to check trader influence on the upper-Mississippi.315 Snelling’s pleas did not deter traders hoping to sell liquor to the Dakota, and instead they focused their efforts on bringing the banned substances up the Des Moines River.316 Trade flowed up the river to the Wahpekute, who gathered enough alcohol to share with their more northerly kin. As the focus of traders intensified on the unregulated upper Des Moines, other incidents occurred.

In 1832, an exasperated Taliaferro issued another proclamation, this time stating that if traders suffered at harm at the hands of the Dakota while trading in the area the government

314 Taliaferro to Clark, 17 August 1830. Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
would not protect them. Issues immediately followed. Joseph R. Brown, a clerk working for the trader Bailly and Jean Baptiste Faribault suffered stab wounds while conducting business. The Wahpekute looted supply wagons near the Des Moines River. Another report accused the Wahpekute of killing eight hogs and two cows. The increase in hostilities suggests a breakdown of relations between traders who had previously established kinship relations with the Wahpekute, another sign that American influence with the band had diminished instead of increasing in the years immediately following the 1830 Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien. Taliaferro wrote in his journal that the Dakota “did not like these people” any longer. He believed that the erosion of trust in the traders served as a sign that the Dakota would soon be free of the illegal trader influence on the upper Des Moines and instead be subjected to American authority from Fort Snelling. In reality, the Wahpekute continued to passively reject American influence in favor of exercising their own sovereignty and autonomy in a period of change well outside of the range of American military power.

In 1832, Henry Schoolcraft had charged Captain James Allen with an expedition to vaccinate indigenous peoples against smallpox in western-Michigan Territory while also creating a more accurate map. Allen’s expedition produced the first correct cartographic record of the Lake Itasca exit of the Mississippi River before the expedition ranged as far west as the Missouri River in modern day South Dakota. Allen’s map provided a new level of detail of the Dakota

319 Taliaferro to Clark, 15 August 1833. Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
320 Taliaferro to Clark, 10 July 1833. Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
321 Henry Schoolcraft to James Allen, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
range north and east of the Spirit Lake Region. The Iowa Dragoons’ embarkation from Old Fort Des Moines, near modern-day Montrose, in 1835, further aided in advances of cartographic accuracy. The expedition hoped to reach the village of Wabasha. Upon completion of the meetings with Wabasha, where Lea observed of the Dakota: “They are mostly a dirty, thieving race, living in the most abominable filth,” the expedition pursued a more westerly course. The expedition believed they had followed the Iowa River, but actually they found themselves on the St. Peter River. Once they realized their error they struck out south and west where the eventually encountered the west fork of the Des Moines River. The information gathered by the combined efforts of these expeditions helped to clarify the geography of the north-central portion of the northern Iowa borderlands, but did not range far enough west to provide specific detail on the Spirit Lake area. The accounts prove in descript and undiscriminating in their descriptions of the indigenous peoples of the area, mostly relying on the broader label of ‘Sioux’ to describe their limited interactions with the inhabitants. The Dragoons gathered detailed information on topography and geography, and another map created in 1836 provided even greater detail of the Wisconsin and Iowa Territories. The map shows advancement over previous maps with improved river accuracy, but still does not include Spirit Lake. According to the map the “Dahcota or Sioux Indians” occupied a significant portion of territory ranging well into the Des Moines River valley in the south and the Missouri in the West. The peace settlement of Black Hawk, as well as the Dakota Treaty of 1837, altered Dakota lands, but in relatively limited ways for the Wahpekute in the northern Iowa borderlands.

322 James Allen, A Map of the Mississippi to Lake Itasca. 1832.
324 Albert M. Lea, Notes on the Wisconsin Territory, Particularly with Reference to the Iowa District, or Black Hawk Purchase. (Philadelphia, PA: Henry S. Tanner, 1836), xxv.
The signing by Tasagi and Wamdisapa of an 1836 treaty that relinquished Wahpekute claims to lands in southwestern Iowa and northwestern Missouri proved another curiosity in the leadership of the Wahpekute in the generation before to Inkpaduta. Both leaders agreed to relinquish these lands far outside of the modern-conception of the Dakota range. In the nineteenth century many scholars primarily characterized the Dakota as occupying Minnesota and occasionally moving across the eventual northern border of Iowa. The reality that the Americans had asked the Wahpekute to participate in a treaty negotiation to sign for lands well south of that area suggests that the band either sought to gain financial from the dealings at no loss or may have ranged much further in that direction. Significantly for this argument, the cession of lands in southwestern Iowa would have left the Wahpekute to range on the Little Sioux River, as well as in the general vicinity of Spirit Lake.

The 1830s and 1840s marked a time of turbulent change for Inkpaduta and his people. Early in the two-decade period, the Dakota faced environmental, political, and diplomatic challenges. As external pressures began to mount on the Wahpekute, internal political struggles unfolded as leadership transferred from one generation to another. The band entered a new era where desperation and destitution had not yet become the norm, but threats to Dakota lifeways
lurked just beyond their geographic periphery. The period from the initial Multinational Treaty at Prairie du Chien in 1830 to the initial establishment of the reservation system for the Dakota in Minnesota through the treaties of Mendota Heights and Traverse de Sioux in 1851 contained a shift in Dakota sovereignty and autonomy. Also during the time-period the vanished potential for supranational alliance between indigenous peoples and the British created a power-shift, while small bursts of violent resistance on the part of specific tribal peoples appeared with greater frequency and intensity. Epidemic disease, amplified population pressure due to settlement, and increased military retribution for intertribal conflict all marked the era as threats to Dakota sovereignty and autonomy.

Continued violence between the Dakota and other indigenous peoples throughout the area during the post-1830 era also shows consistency in conceptions of sovereignty and autonomy. Aside from the conflict between the Wahpekute and the Sauk and Meskwaki in the northern Iowa borderlands, conflict between the Dakota and the Ojibwe during the era displayed continuity in conceptions of tribal sovereignty during the 1825 to 1851 era. Small clashes between these peoples escalated in 1838 when a visiting band of Ojibwe murdered a number of their hospitable Dakota hosts. In retaliation, the Dakota followed a group of Ojibwe from Fort Snelling in order to seek retribution. The Dakota killed over one-hundred Ojibwe in the attack, and Taliaferro’s journal suggested he viewed this incident as a representation of an American inability to control the indigenous peoples of the area. After initial attempts to rely on the Americans for justice by Tasagi and others, the unwillingness of the Dakota to work

within the constructs of the American justice system strongly indicated a lack of subversion to the sovereignty of the United States.

1837 marked a year of significant change for the Dakota. Aside from the Minnesota land transfer resultant from a treaty signed in that year, the Wahpekute continued to struggle with the Sauk and Meskwaki in the northern Iowa borderlands. Tasagi’s Wahpekute became locked in fierce contestation along the 1830 Neutral Zone border, continuing to passively reject American claims that sought to limit Dakota sovereignty and autonomy in the area. The Sauk and Meskwaki also asserted their own control over the lands, going so far as to attack the Ho-Chunk east of the Mississippi River as the latter tribe sought to relocate onto the lands set aside for them in the treaty.328 Governmental authorities feared that the area balanced on the verge of tipping into a state of all-out warfare, and in order to counteract this several Dakota, Ho-Chunk, and Sauk and Meskwaki leaders went to Washington.329 Taliaferro worked to complete the treaty negotiations with the easternmost branches of the Dakota while the chiefs journeyed to Washington. The Wahpekute did not attend at the negotiations. The agreement provided the Dakota with $16,000 worth of goods and currency immediately and a promise of up to $40,000 annually per year for the foreseeable future.330 Traders collected $90,000, most of whom came from the American Fur Company, to pay for debts owed by the Dakota according to the company’s ledgers.331 “Friends and relatives” of the Dakota, a community of predominately mixed-blood individuals resultant from the previous kinship arrangements, received an

331 1837 Dakota-Ojibwe Treaty; Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
additional $110,000. Since the Wahpekute had not negotiated the agreement, trouble arose following the initial distribution of goods to the Mdewakanton. After the government distributed annuities, a number of Wahpekute, Sisseton, and Wahpeton arrived at the St. Peter’s agency asking for their share of the treaty dividends. Taliaferro told the gathered Dakota that unless they sold their own, more-westerly lands, they would not receive any governmental assistance. The Wahpekute felt that they had generously allowed the Mdewakanton to hunt on their lands, and thus deserved to be cut in on the action. As the environmental stresses created by the fur trade and an increase in other population related pressures came to bear, some leaders suggested that selling land might be in their best interests, however no deal would come immediately.

An outbreak of smallpox further strained the Dakota in 1837. Although the most serious recorded losses occurred at Devil’s Lake in now-North Dakota, the infection spread from the Yanktonai villages there eastward toward their kin in Minnesota and Iowa. The plague would ravage the Dakota for upwards of two years, straining the Dakota bands. Samuel Pond, missionary to the Dakota, wrote: “Some were killed by their enemies and others died of starvation, but these were few compared to those who died of diseases.” The Wabasha band suffered the most among the Dakota in the epidemic of the late-1830s, but losses occurred throughout the tribal divisions. As a whole, the Dakota proved more fortunate than some tribal peoples during the epidemic, at least partially due to the introduction of vaccination for some

332 1837 Dakota-Ojibwe Treaty; Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
333 “Claims filed under the treaty of September 29, 1837.” Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
335 Taliaferro Journal, 10 August 1836. (St. Paul, MN: Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society, 1894).
portions of the tribe through the American military during the early 1830s. The military had not vaccinated Wamdisapa’s village, and the Wahpekute suffered incredibly during 1837. Only ten lodges and fourteen warriors survived the disease, and even many of those who survived contracted the disease. Inkpaduta had smallpox during 1837, but survived to wear the subsequent scars for the rest of his life. By 1839, population reduction due to epidemic disease paired with increasing scarcity of game to reduce the Wahpekute population to an estimated three hundred and twenty-five people. In June of 1839, Tasagi again visited Taliaferro and voiced his displeasure with the Americans. “You advised us to keep the peace – we have done so – The result is by listening to you…we are now almost destroyed.” Instead of turning a sympathetic ear, Taliaferro took the opportunity to push the possibility of a land transfer from these bands to the American government, noting the decimation of the Dakota population due to the epidemic disease, the declines in game populations critical to underwriting their sustenance, and that their suffering might make them more liable to an agreement favorable to American interests.

Although the War Department did not support Taliaferro’s plan, the Indian Bureau eventually agreed that southwestern Minnesota and northwestern Iowa might be formed into an ideal site for an enormous reservation for indigenous peoples still living east of the Mississippi.

339 Lawrence Taliaferro to William Clark, August 8, 1831, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
341 Taliaferro to Crawford, September 30, 1839, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
The area would serve as a more northerly compliment to the southern Indian Territory in modern-day Oklahoma. With this in mind, Wisconsin Governor James Doty set out to negotiate with the Dakota. The government convened a council at Traverse de Sioux on July 29, 1841, and over the next six days the Sisseton, Wahpeton, and Wahpekute reached an agreement to sell some thirty million acres of lands. These lands included the northern Iowa borderlands to a significant extent, as well as large portions of Minnesota. The terms included $1,000,000 to be invested for the Sisseton, with dividends of $50,000 being paid out annually. Each band would receive a reservation of up to 200,000 acres. Under the agreement the Sisseton, Wahpeton, and Mdewakanton would be settled north of the Minnesota River while the Wahpekute would be settled to the south. The government planned to settle other tribes from more easterly locales into northern Iowa.

Traders and mixed-blood Dakota relatives had a significant influence on the course of the negotiations. The government included in the treaty a fund of $300,000 to compensate traders for debts they claimed to be owed. Additionally, the mixed-blood community received promise of $200,000 and control of the new reservations as agents. Doty justified these agreements by arguing that the mixed-bloods and traders created a “connecting link between the savage &
civilised man, & ought to be employed by government as its agents, interpreters, & teachers.”

He adamantly asserted that the ratification of the treaty would solve the northwestern troubles on the frontier, but the Senate tabled the resultant treaties in September of 1841. The fight over the treaty would not be resolved until August twenty-ninth of 1842 when it fell soundly on the Senate floor by a vote of twenty-six to two.

Initial American settlement of traditional Dakota lands also escalated pressures during the 1830s and 1840s. As American population climbed, traditional Dakota sustenance techniques became overwhelmed while representatives of the American government continued to push for decreases in Dakota lands that severely limited access to natural resources. St. Paul booster J. Wesley Bond trumpeted: “in the eyes of the world, (Minnesota) is elevated morally as well as physically above the horizon of other new countries.” As the call of boosters reached their target audiences, people continued to stream onto traditional Dakota lands exacerbating strain on sovereignty and autonomy while increasing the likelihood of acculturation. The mid-nineteenth century had seen significant changes to the material environment in Iowa and Minnesota due to increasing population stress that directly came to bear on the Wahpekute. Between the initial settlement of fewer than fifty whites in 1832 and the statehood of Iowa in 1846 the white population soared to more than 80,000. In Minnesota, the white population moved from 3,814 American civilians in 1850 to upward of 150,000 by 1857. The influx of white settlement

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349 Doty to Bell, 4 August 1841. Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
353 Iowa State Census, Special Census, 1836-1860. Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. Des Moines, Iowa.
heavily taxed lands, wild game, and other natural resources essential to the nomadic lifestyle embraced by the Wahpekute. The responses of Wamdisapa and Inkipduta shifted between passive rejection and adaptive acceptance during this time period. The Wahpekute continued to range in lands largely unoccupied by American settlement, and bands continued to operate with indifference to American interference when possible. At the same time, the Wahpekute capitalized on the increased American presence in the region to gain access to technologies and trade goods.355

The depletion of natural resources vital to the Dakota proves difficult to accurately depict during the time-period. However, the decreases in the economically significant products of beaver pelts and deer skins endure as well-documented examples. The Mdewakanton and Wahpekute collectively took in one hundred and eighteen beavers during 1834 according to the archives of the American Fur Company.356 In the same year the Dakota exchanged fewer than six hundred deer skins. By 1836 that number plummeted to zero.357 Although the decline in game proved significant for conversations surrounding sustenance, the declines also increased Dakota dependency and indebtedness to traders, a vital underlying motivation for the later treaties negotiated in the 1840s and early 1850s. As the Dakota became more indebted to traders with less hope of payoff due to declining large-game populations, they harvested more muskrat skins in the hopes of providing some means of meeting their debts. Unfortunately, the market flooded with the skins of the small mammals. A muskrat skin had sold for roughly twenty cents in the region at 1830, but the price had fallen off precipitously to around ten cents only a decade

355 Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1863, pp. 294, 296.
later. As populations of fur-bearing animals declined, many Wahpekute found themselves unable to gain credit from traders. Those who could get credit struggled to meet the agreements put in place at the beginning of each hunting season, leading to increasing indebtedness throughout the tribe.

The 1840s would see significant strain on the Wahpekute as tensions further grew with the advancement of the frontier-line throughout Iowa. During this time, Wamdisapa led his band in a greater geographic area, appearing as far west as the Vermillion River in South Dakota. Wamdisapa drew a small annuity at Fort Vermillion during the early 1840s, and met with the famed Catholic missionary Father Pierre-Jean De Smet. As the Wahpekute ranged far to the west, the government founded Fort Atkinson in 1840 in northeastern Iowa to assist with the forced relocation of the Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin. American military power proved necessary to protect the Ho-Chunk from the Dakota, as well as other indigenous peoples. As the forces at Fort Atkinson sought to protect the Ho-Chunk who had relocated immediately within sight of the fort, the American military also made inroads up the Des Moines River. Captain James Allen became the commander at Fort Des Moines. The following year he led an Army expedition covering seven hundred and forty miles aimed at reaching the source of the Des Moines River. Additional goals for the expedition included providing greater cartographic accuracy for the area in northwestern Iowa that included Spirit Lake. A map

359 Doane Robinson Papers. Collection of the State Historical Society of South Dakota.
created by Lieutenant Potter accompanied the Captain Allen’s report. Although the new map shows greater detail of the region, the cartography fails to accurately depict Spirit Lake’s location at the head of the Little Sioux River in accurate relation to the location of the Des Moines River. The location of the “Sioux” on a string of lakes titled “Lake of the Oaks” on Potter’s map is notable. Even following the efforts of Allen and Potter in 1843, the area surrounding Spirit Lake continues to exist in ambiguity.

Figure 4 - 1844 Potter Map - SHSI

Inaccuracy would continue to characterize cartographic efforts of the 1840s with the “New Map of Iowa” created by W.H. Barrows in 1845. This map displays the transitory nature of Iowa in the year prior to statehood. The establishment and survey of many eastern Iowa counties prove well-documented on the map, as well as the ‘neutral ground’ legacies of the Multinational Treaties at Prairie du Chien. As the detail in the eastern portion of the state had become more

364 1845 New Map of Iowa, W.H. Barrows. Collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa.
exact, the northwestern portion of the territory still displayed the inaccuracies present following the Allen expedition. The map also delineated the northern border as a north-by-northeast boundary extending at roughly a forty-five degree angle from modern-day Sioux City to St. Paul, Minnesota. Further scrutiny reveals yet another complication: mapmakers inaccurately located, misrepresented, or excluded many lakes and rivers all together. The maps had served as a basis for the treaties communicated to the indigenous peoples of Iowa during the era, and topographical inaccuracy led to muddled communication. Negotiated treaties further struggled to find acceptance with indigenous peopled due to the consistently shifting borders of the soon-to-be state of Iowa. When American legislators moved a line, communication to indigenous inhabitants proved incredibly difficult and did not require their consent.

Figure 5 - "A New Map of Iowa, 1845," W. Barrows – SHSI

Spirit Lake serves as an example of disconnect between the American government, settler-colonizer populations, and indigenous peoples. Where cartographic materials failed to accurately place the Spirit Lake region, indigenous peoples knew the locations of these bodies of water. As early treaty negotiations between the United States and indigenous peoples clearly sought to establish defined boundaries for specific peoples, tribes including the Dakota did not internalize, accept, or follow the provisions. The attack on Spirit Lake by Inkpaduta clearly

manifests the inadequacy of early treaty negotiation and practice. Curiously, the historiography of the event has failed to consider this failure in communication. As boundaries formally shifted, the government expected the Dakota to abide by treaties created with erroneous information, as well as understand what changes in boundary definition meant for them as a people. The historiography of the events that unfolded at Spirit Lake in 1857 squarely place responsibility and blame on Inkpuduta’s band of Wahpekute Dakota. However, careful comparison of available maps with specific treaty provision illuminates significant ambiguity.

The Territory of Iowa had formally split off from Wisconsin on July 3, 1838, and found approval by Congress on June 12, 1838. Robert Lucas, the former Governor of Ohio, became the governor of the new territory with the full-enactment of the territorial government occurring shortly thereafter. By 1840 the first significant call for statehood occurred when the territorial legislature passed an act, approved on July thirty-first, asking for a survey of the question of if calling a convention for the revision of the constitution, which saw the proposition voted down by a large majority. By the 16th of February 1832, the people of Iowa again voted to determine if the time had come to hold a convention to frame a constitution for state government. Voters turned out on August 1, 1842, representing seventeen counties and garnering 4,146 votes in favor of a state convention, 6,868 against. Each individual county put forth a majority against statehood. However, the tide shifted by February 16, 1844, when a standing vote of 7,221 for, and 4,308 against. In August the electorate put forth delegates, and on October 7, 1844, drafted a constitution which proposed the following boundaries:

Beginning in the middle of the channel of the Mississippi River opposite the mouth of the Des Moines River, thence up the said river Des Moines, in the middle of the main channel thereof, to a point where it is intersected by the old Indian Boundary line, or line run by John C. Sullivan in the year 1816; thence westward along said line to the ‘old northwest corner of Missouri;’ thence due
west to the middle of the main channel of the Missouri River; thence up in the middle of the main channel of the river last mentioned to the mouth of the Sioux or Calumet river; thence in a direct line to the middle of the main channel of the St. Peter’s river, where the Watonwan river (according to Nicollet’s map) enters the same; thence down the middle of the main channel of said river to the middle of the main channel of the Mississippi river; thence down the middle of the main channel of said river to the place of beginning.\textsuperscript{366}

These initial outlined boundaries would radically shift by the time of statehood in 1846, as the lines detail what would become a large section of the state of Minnesota while excluding a triangular piece embracing the present counties of Lyon, Osceola, and Sioux, and parts of those of Dickinson, O’Brien, and Plymouth, as well as Woodbury. The United States Congress proposed a radically different line. The new proposed western line would serve as an extension of the former western line of Missouri at longitude seventeen degrees thirty west, northward to a point where it intersects the parallel of latitude which runs through the mouth of the Blue Earth River.\textsuperscript{367} The new boundary would be the current dividing line between Green and Carroll counties, just to the south of the area comprising the northern Iowa borderlands. Under this proposal, the Wahpekute could still range on the Blue Earth River, allowing for a lessened likelihood of immediate settlement in the river valley called home by Sintominiduta and Inkpaduta’s ancestors. The people of Iowa Territory rejected the plan in April 1845 in the form of a constitutional vote, which led to a new constitutional convention called at Iowa City on May 4, 1846.\textsuperscript{368} The convention adopted the constitution by the narrow margin of 9,492 votes for and 9,036 negative.\textsuperscript{369} In 1846 Iowa also acquired its current shape. The Big Sioux River came to

\textsuperscript{366} 1845 New Map of Iowa. W.H. Barrows. Collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa.
\textsuperscript{367} A.T. Andreas, Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1875), 7.
\textsuperscript{368} Dorothy Schwieder, “History of Iowa – Iowa Official Register.” (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa), http://publications.iowa.gov/135/1/history/7-1.html
comprise the western border where it departs from the Missouri, and legislators redrew the
northern border to make it parallel to the southern border of the state at the 43.30 parallel.\textsuperscript{370} Iowa’s reshaping stood as a part of efforts to maintain the balance between free and slave states
following the admission of Florida to the Union in March of 1845.\textsuperscript{371} The neutral ground still
existed faintly on the map, but the tag ‘Sioux’ shifted above the northern border of the state.
Although the Americans and Dakota had not negotiated a new treaty since the creation of the
1843 and 1845 maps, the settlers reviewing the map would have gained the impression that the
Dakota had left the state.\textsuperscript{372} At the same time, the Wahpekute continued to range along
traditional watersheds throughout the northern Iowa borderlands. The state would be admitted to
the union on December twenty-eighth 1846, and would be the twenty-ninth star added to the
American flag on July 4\textsuperscript{th} 1847.

While formal political changes came to the northern Iowa borderlands during the 1840s,
internal change also took place within the Wahpekute bands. After the initial split of the
Wahpekute when Wamdisapa favored a position of continued war with the Sauk and Meskwaki
led to him breaking off a faction from Tasagi’s more-peaceable band, he continued to engage the
Sauk and Meskwaki throughout the northern Iowa borderlands. Shortly thereafter, Tasagi died at
the hands of other Dakota, a crime attributed by many writers and historians to Inkpaduta.\textsuperscript{373}
Inkpaduta stood accused of murdering Wamundeyakapi, son of Tasagi, as well as seventeen

other Wahpekute men. Wamdisapa continued to lead the Blue Earth area Wahpekute for at least a few years, even after the dubious nature of Tasagi’s death. Stephen Return Riggs, a missionary and linguist who helped to build on Samuel Pond’s works to record the Dakota language, noted that Wamdisapa visited him following the drowning death of his brother-in-law. Riggs records that Wamdisapa offered his sympathies. A later note in summer of 1846 from Riggs mentions that he visited Wamdisapa and that the chief had suffered from ill health at that time. Riggs goes on to suggest that the leader died shortly after his visit in a later journal entry.

With both Tasagi and Wamdisapa dead, the Wahpekute on the Cannon and Blue Earth rivers began the process of transferring leadership to a new generation. The deeply democratic and fragmentary nature of Dakota society lent itself to factions in a time of succession. Wamdisapa’s band quickly broke into factions following his death, with some members supporting Inkpaduta as the logical heir, while others supported Sintominiduta. Sintominiduta, a Sisseton from Sleepy Eyes’s band, had married into the Wahpekute kinship structure. Sintominiduta seems to have gained a majority of support within the Blue Earth area Wahpekute. Inkpaduta’s role following the ascension of Sintominiduta proves murkier to determine. It appears that Inkpduta held power in some form, but that his power existed as subsumed to that of Sintominiduta. As the Wahpekute went about their cyclical sustenance regime throughout the year, Inkpaduta would often led his own band apart from Sintominiduta. However, when the bands would rendezvous, Sintominiduta would provide leadership. By 1846, the Wahpekute started to consistently remain further south in the western portion of the Des Moines River watershed throughout the year. Governmental officials attributed this to the

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375 Lawrence Taliaferro Papers, Journal, August 2 and 29, 1823, Manuscript Collection, Minnesota Historical Society.
removal of the Meskwaki and Sauk following their signing of treaties throughout the 1830s, however the Wahpekute and other Dakota bands had consistently occupied the Des Moines River watershed for portions of the year well in advance of American encroachment. The 1846 report of Taliaferro records that Sintominiduta’s band of Wahpekute ranged between the Blue Earth River down to a primary village at the confluence of Lizard Creek and the Des Moines River in modern day Webster County.\footnote{Lawrence Taliaferro Papers, Journal, August 2 and 29, 1823, Manuscript Collection, Minnesota Historical Society.}

The Dakota often utilized different watersheds and microclimates within their range on non-annual rotations to avoid over-taxing plant and animal populations. Often times the Dakota would not draw on a specific microclimate more than once every few years. This dispersion created a complication for the missionaries, government officials, and military personnel trying to adequately assess the movements, locations, and geographies of the Dakota world. The move of Sintominiduta to the Des Moines River resulted from a broader range than previously recorded. As the band entered a new era of adaptation and acculturation with increased pressures from settler populations, as well as tribes being removed from other areas, it may have made sense for Sintominiduta, and to a lesser extent Inkpaduta, to keep his people in parts of the range where those pressures had not yet manifested in ways detrimental to the Dakota.

The northern Iowa borderlands stood as a relatively remote and unsullied area for the Dakota to occupy in the 1840s. Although settlement had begun to creep into Iowa, virtually all settlers found themselves largely confined to the eastern third of the state. Even in north-central Iowa, the first settlers arrived only after the close of the decade. Town’s like Forest City, located in Winnebago County and at the extreme end of the Winnebago relocation ‘Neutral Ground’ of
the 1830 Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien, saw their first recorded settlers in 1855. Sintominiduta and Inkpuduta’s bands of Wahpekute Dakota would not have found the lands devoid of all American influence, but with the Sauk and Meskwaki removed from Iowa almost completely and the population frontier line still marching slowly further to their east, the Wahpekute found bountiful sustenance and subsisted largely in traditional ways. Sintominiduta and Inkpuduta’s bands of Wahpekute vanish from the historical record between 1846 and 1848. The bands continued to live in traditional ways ranging on lands in northwestern and northcentral Iowa. Taliaferro and Riggs lived in the more northerly reaches of the Dakota range, and the frequency of entries regarding the Wahpekute prior to 1846 suggest that if the bands spent the time in the Blue Earth River Valley they would have continued to appear with greater frequency in governmental records and settler accounts.

After the band disappeared into the Des Moines River watershed in 1846, they next appeared in the historical record far south of the military and religious infrastructure of Minnesota on the Boone River in Iowa.\textsuperscript{378} The Boone River, a tributary of the Des Moines Rivers, runs one hundred and eleven miles in length and drains a watershed of eight hundred and ninety-five miles. The Boone River finds its head waters twenty-five miles directly south of Spirit Lake.\textsuperscript{379} Even in the absence of existing records, reasonability suggests that Sintominiduta and Inkpuduta continued to operate largely as they had following the deaths of Wamdisapa and Tasagi. Each most likely led a portion of the band throughout much of the year before rendezvousing at critical moments in the sustenance calendar. With the historical record clearly showing that Sintominiduta had established his main village at Fort Dodge, Inkpduta had a

\textsuperscript{379} A.T. Andreas, \textit{Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa} (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1875), 117.
village at another site in relative proximity. The site would have to be far enough to alleviate stress on game populations and other natural resources. The site also had to be devoid of record keeping in the Western sense, as the bands went unheard of during the time period. The area surrounding Spirit Lake, although not the only potential option, meets all of the criteria. According to a variety of sources, Inkpaduta called the shores of Spirit Lake home during the summers of the years prior to American settlement. William Williams, founder of Fort Dodge, recorded that Inkpaduta and Titonka led roughly one hundred and fifty lodges away from Sintominiduta’s main encampment and that they had located in the vicinity of Lake Okoboji and Spirit Lake. Williams wrote of these as separate from the roughly five hundred lodges of Sisseton Dakota, mainly under the direction of Red Thunder that had come to join Sintominiduta in the Fort Dodge area.

Advertisements of Iowa boosters and railroads proliferated in the East and throughout Europe sought out eager pioneers to populate the prairies of Iowa, and the population continued to grow to 192,214 people by 1850. Several factors emerge as critical to the explosion of population within Iowa in the periods immediately preceding and following statehood, perhaps most notably the extension of railroads to the Mississippi River and the ability of steamboats to provide transportation to many points in the state via the Missouri, Mississippi, and Des Moines Rivers. Both rail and steamship companies advertised extensively as they sought to provide initial transportation to people moving into the state, and also provided the eventual transport of grains harvested from Iowa farms. The planned extension of rail beyond the Mississippi River provided the hope that any agricultural market that might form around Gardner would be

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380 Jacob Van Der Zee, “British Emigrants to Iowa,” (The British in Iowa, 17, 32, 1922).
connected to the broader economic system developing in Chicago. The progression of rail behind the advancement of the frontier created the necessary means for William Cronon’s reciprocal economic relationship to develop between urban centers and the countryside as detailed in his 1991 work *Nature’s Metropolis.*

Hardin County stood among the first counties in the northern Iowa borderlands to see American settlement during the 1840s. The county stands in the fourth county tier south of Minnesota, and marks the approximate geographic center between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Initial American settlement followed the Iowa River valley into the more timbered southwestern portion of the county, with the other 9/10ths of the prairie-laden county following behind. Similar to other counties throughout the region, robust soil profiles provided early American arrivals with enticing lands for the establishment of agricultural homesteads. In contrast to several other area counties, sporadic coal deposits provided an additional energy source for early settlers. Additionally, large deposits of building stone, including limestone, abound in the Iowa River watershed.

Hardin County saw its earliest arrival of American settlers in 1849 when Greenberry Higgins, previously of Keokuk, Iowa, settled with his family along the Iowa River at a location that would one-day serve as the site of Iowa Falls. Several families arrived the following year from Pleasant Plain, previously the furthest settlement west on the Iowa River. The early settlements proved well-positioned for growth due to their placement on the developing road between Fort Dodge and Cedar Falls. Coal and limestone deposits blanketed Hardin County, however, rumors of gold sparked a marked increase in American settlement during the fall of

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An innkeeper named John Ellsworth, namesake of the current community college located in Iowa Falls, made reports at the land holdings office of gold on his Iowa River adjacent farm.

Shining particles of a substance resembling gold were found mixed with the sands along the river and in the ravines, and immediately it was proclaimed to the world that gold had been discovered. The reports spread far and wide, and for a time the newspapers of the country teemed with reports from the Hardin County goldmines. At one time, from five hundred to one thousands persons were encamped in tents and wagons along the river between Eldora and Steamboat Rock, all engaged in prospecting for gold. The excitement, however, gradually subsided, but was revived again to some extent in 1857.

Hardin County would see population fluctuations, yet American settlement had arrived for good. Reports of indigenous people in the area recorded by initial settlers do not exist, illustrating that the Dakota did not range on the Iowa River at least by the late 1840s. Only as American settlement continued to creep west beyond the original 1825 Prairie du Chien Treaty line do colonial sources begin to note the presence of the Dakota.

Woodbury County, a county on the opposite edge of the northern Iowa borderlands, saw settlement during the late-1840s. Woodbury County makes up the western border of the state in the third tier of counties from the northern boundary. Deep loam soil blankets the lands throughout the relatively flat county, and served as an enticement for early American settlers fixated on establishing an agricultural homestead. However, the water-table in the county proved higher than many others in the area, creating major moisture issues that often rendered the lands unmanageable for early farmers. The east and west forks of the Little Sioux River

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385 William J. Moir, *Past and Present of Hardin County Iowa*. (Hardin County, IA: Unigraphic, 1911).
provided drainage, fresh water, and power for the first communities to develop in the area.\textsuperscript{386} Groves of valuable of cottonwood, hickory, oak, walnut, elm, and maple made up a limited yet valuable resource along the Missouri River and Little Sioux River at the time of initial American settlement.

The Corps of Discovery of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark became the first Americans to step foot within the modern boundaries of Woodbury County. The first permanent settler to follow in the wake of Lewis and Clark in Woodbury County did not arrive until the spring of 1847 when William Thompson settled at Floyd’s Bluff.\textsuperscript{387} After passing a lonely winter as the sole American settler in the modern boundaries of the county, Thompson set to work in the spring of 1848 to lay out a town named in his own honor, Thompsonville. He erected a new cabin in that year, and started to make improvements on the land that resulted in the county seat being located there upon organization in 1853. Thompsonville served primarily as a post for trade between various indigenous peoples located on the other side of the Missouri during the early years, but it proved a poor location for expanded settlement. “It was a sort of post for Indian traders for some years, but the city lots were too steep for cultivation or for building, and, unfortunately, there was no place for a landing on the bank of the river, and the stakes are all that now remain to mark the progress of the town,” wrote Andreas in 1857.\textsuperscript{388}

Worthy competition arried for Thompsonville in May of 1849 when a French-Canadian named Theophile Brugnier settled about two miles above the confluence of the Missouri River

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\textsuperscript{386} A.T. Andreas, \textit{Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa} (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1875), 212.
\textsuperscript{387} A.T. Andreas, \textit{Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa} (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1875), 378.
\end{flushleft}
and the Big Sioux River near modern-day Sioux City. Three years prior, Brugnier had selected the location while working out of St. Louis in the employ of the American Fur Company. At that time he located with a band of Yanktonai under the leadership of Huyaneka (War Eagle). Brugnier lived with the band for about ten years, before relocating with his Yanktonai wife and their children to his selected city at the Big Sioux and Missouri. Huyaneka, the father of Brugnier’s wife, Santee Dakota by birth, had relocated out onto the plains before being adopted into the Yanktonai. Huyaneka had relocated with Brugnier, and died in the trader’s cabin during the fall of 1851. A smattering of other settlers also arrived in the area during the late 1840s and early 1850s, and surveyors laid out Sioux City in the winter of 1854-55.

Steam navigation on the Missouri River aided significantly in the settlement of the community, and the first steamboat, the Omaha, arrived there in June of 1856.

Sintominiduta reemerged in the historical record in 1846 when his band clashed with a surveyor’s party in the northern Iowa borderlands. The band ambushed and robbed the party, claiming that the men had no right to chart Dakota lands. As argued herein, the government had poorly communicated the treaties of Prairie du Chien in the 1820s and 1830s, based the negotiations on erroneous cartographic and geographic data, gathered signatures of individuals with power only over specific portions of subtribes, and worked minimally to enforce the provisions. Following the first treaty of the Prairie du Chien in 1825, Tasagi and Wamdisapa felt

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392 A.T. Andreas, Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1875), 378.
the American government had failed to uphold their commitments to keeping the Meskwaki and Sauk out of Dakota lands. The leaders of the Wahpekute then refused to sign the 1830 treaty.

Further evidence of Sintominiduta and the Wahpekute not accepting the cession of lands they occupied appeared as the band repeatedly sought concessions and tributes from the first settlers to arrive on the confluence of the Des Moines and Boone Rivers. The band constantly interacted with new arrivals in the area. Sintominiduta also often visited settlers and asked for specific items. Plundering and stealing only occurred in instances when settlers proved unwilling or unable to provide Sintominiduta with what he asked for.394 As the supposed depredations of Sintominiduta and the Wahpekute amassed against the fledgling population along the Boone and Des Moines rivers, the government decided to position a military fort near the village in early 1849.

Although the military arrived in the 1840s, some limited settlement had occurred along the Des Moines River extending into the northern Iowa borderlands. Henry Lott had arrived prior to Williams and the group from Muscatine. “Lott was a bad man, a refugee from justice, and kept on the outskirts of all settlements.”395 A noted horse thief along the creeping frontier, Lott had acted as a part of a band led by Jonas Carsner.396 During the early 1840s, the band of horse thieves plied their trade around the second Fort Des Moines, where military officials eventually hunted down and charged Carsner for various thefts against settlers. He often perpetrated crimes against the Dakota in the area as well. On one occasion Captain Allen brought in Carsner and

395 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 17.
attempted to try him, but the prosecution could present no meaningful proof of the charged crimes. Forced to let Carsner walk, Allen decided to turn him over to Sintominiduta’s band of Wahpekute. “Captain Allen delivered Carsner over to the Indians, who took him out, tied him to a tree and gave him a most unmerciful whipping.”

Carsner almost immediately left the area.

Leaderless, Carsner’s band of outlaws dispersed and Lott headed up river to the confluence of the Boone River and the Des Moines River. At the confluence Lott again established himself as an able thief and trader of horses. “As early as 1847 all stolen horses were taken to that point and from there run off for disposal. Horses stolen in Missouri were run off to Wisconsin, and those stolen in Wisconsin were taken to Missouri.”

Lott’s place at the confluence served as the center point of the exchange. Although American justice sought to punish Lott for his crimes, he wiggled out of several tight spots due to lack of witness testimony and that he had not in fact purchased the horses found in his possession. He used the remnants of the Carsner band as witnesses, allowing him to avoid successful prosecution. Unfortunately for Lott, the Dakota still exercised autonomy in the area during the late 1840s, and eventually Sintominiduta’s caught Lott attempting to steal a half-dozen of the band’s horses. With the river frozen during the winter of 1848, Sintominiduta and the Wahpekute attacked Lott by crossing over the frozen river. Lott ran, leaving his family vulnerable to whatever depredations may befall them. Luckily for the family, Sintominiduta’s band did not harm them. Lott’s property did not fare as well: “the Indians….took all the horses they could find, killed his cattle and robbed his cabin of sundry articles.”

In addition to the killing of livestock, the band also

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399 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 12.
destroyed Lott’s beehives. Lott’s youngest son Milton, twelve years of age, attempted to follow his father down the frozen river and subsequently froze to death. After the Dakota cleared out, Lott returned to his cabin where he soon suffered the death of his grieving wife. Lott swore to anyone that would listen that he would someday gain revenge on Sintominiduta for the loss of his child and wife, and claimed $3,000 in damages from the federal government.\textsuperscript{400} He did not receive payment.

The United States government also undertook a significant survey of the northern Iowa borderlands in 1848. James March began to survey the public lands north of the Raccoon River, specifically hoping to run a correction line from the Mississippi River in Dubuque to a specific point on the Missouri.\textsuperscript{401} March ascended the Des Moines River and met with Sintominiduta roughly three-miles north of the eventual location of Fort Dodge. Sintominiduta directly confronted Marsh, forcefully asking him to leave the area. Marsh, although unarmed, refused. In response, Sintominiduta and his band smashed the surveyor’s wagons, stole their provisions, broke their instruments, and made off with their horses.\textsuperscript{402} Stranded and unsupplied, Marsh abandoned the project and slowly made his way back down the Des Moines River. The Wahpekute had actively asserted their sovereignty and autonomy over the northern Iowa borderlands.

The summer of 1848 also saw an uptick in settlement within the area that came to comprise Webster County. Jacob Mericle, his brother Lodewick, as well as their families, arrived during the summer of 1848. Both recorded “depredations at the hands of roving bands of

\textsuperscript{400} Harvey Ingham, “Ink-Pa-Du-Tah’s Revenge.” \textit{Midland Monthly} (July-December 1895): 269-272.
\textsuperscript{401} Benjamin F. Gue, \textit{History of Iowa From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century, Vol. 3}. (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1903).
\textsuperscript{402} Joseph Henry Taylor, “Inkpaduta and Sons.” \textit{North Dakota Historical Quarterly} 4, no.3 (October 1929-1930): 153-64.
wild Indians,” and asserted that once the government decommissioned second Fort Des Moines two years prior the Dakota had become bolder in their willingness to force their will upon the settlers in the area.\footnote{“Jacob Mericl,,” \textit{The Annals of Iowa} 6 (1903), 80. http://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2930&context=annals-of-iowa} In response to the complaint, the United States military decided that a more northerly post on the Des Moines River had become necessary to check Dakota autonomy and sovereignty in the area. Brevet General Mason, Colonel of the Sixth Regiment of the United States Infantry, acted on orders to determine which site on the Des Moines River would serve most suitably for a military fort during the early months of 1849.\footnote{Samuel Storrs Howe, \textit{Historical Sketches of Northwestern Iowa}. (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1893), 135.} His instructions further stipulated that he locate as close to the furthest point “practicable to the northwest corner of the neutral ground running from the Des Moines River to a point below Dubuque…This neutral ground was established by treaty between the Sac and Fox Indians, the Sioux Indians, and the U.S. Government.”\footnote{Samuel Storrs Howe, \textit{Historical Sketches of Northwestern Iowa}. (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1893), 135.} The positioning of Fort Dodge marked the governmental understanding of the extension of the Dakota range in 1849, and the alignment matched the understanding demonstrated by Sintominiduta. When settlers moved beyond this neutral ground into Wahpekute lands, Sintominiduta’s band exercised sovereignty and autonomy in their dealings as evidenced by their interactions with Lott, as well as those with the Mericle brothers. Mason chose a location roughly twelve miles below Sintominiduta’s main village, about ¼ mile south of where Lizard Creek empties into the Des Moines River.\footnote{Paul N. Beck, \textit{Inkpaduta: Dakota Leader} (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 37.} The fort would be completed and opened for business as Fort Clarke on August 2, 1850. “A reservation was laid off with the flag-staff of the fort as an initial point, with lines running four miles to the north and south, along the
Des Moines River, and two miles to the east and west on either bank.**407 The military renamed the fort to honor Colonel Henry Dodge in 1851. Life at the fort for the average soldier proved relatively dull. Patrols commonly made excursions into the northern portion of the state where they often came into contact with the Dakota. Reports from individuals at the post suggest that these run-ins occurred frequently, routinely, and peacefully. The Dakota did not understand that they occupied lands that did not belong to them, and the government did not treat them in the same way as other tribes that appear in the historical record. “We were frequently called upon to remove parties of Sac, Fox, and Pottawattamie Indians who were continually returning to the state after they were removed to the country assigned them west of the Missouri; they being dissatisfied with the country,” recorded William Williams.408

Webster County became the final county that saw significant settlement within the northern Iowa borderlands during the late-1840s. Home of Fort Dodge, Webster County served as a critical location in the evolving relationship between the Dakota and the United States during the 1840s and 1850s. The settlement manifested itself first as the location of the military fort frontier line from the mid-1840s until the forts’ decommission in 1851.409 The Des Moines River, which finds the confluence of its east and west branches just to the north of the county line in Humboldt County, locates centrally in the northern portion of the county before meandering diagonally through the southeastern quadrant toward its exit into Boone County.

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The Boone River finds its confluence with the Des Moines River near the eastern border of the county with Hamilton County.

William Williams, the credited founder of the community of Fort Dodge, wrote the best preserved early history of the county. Williams, born in Greensburgh, Pennsylvania on December 6, 1796, found inspiration to join the military from the various conflicts between indigenous peoples and the United States during his boyhood.

When the British and Indians under Tecumseh attacked our frontiers in Ohio and Indiana, everyone was excited, from the time the Battle of Tippecanoe was fought until the victory of Jackson at Orleans, particularly when the British burned Washington City, all the old and young were ready to march. I commenced in great earnest to study Military Science; my aim was to get a position in the Army.

Following a brief career in banking, Williams eventually gained commission into the army where his first assignment brought him through Iowa. “On my trip to the Canada line, I was so much pleased with Iowa, I concluded to emigrate to that state. In March of 1849, I set out for Iowa.” Alerted of “trouble with the Indians” upon his arrival at Muscatine on the Mississippi River, Williams embarked under the command of Major Samuel Woods up the Des Moines River to what would soon become Fort Dodge.

Two things immediately stand out to the modern observer of Williams’s writings: he refers to the eventual location of Fort Dodge as “Indian Town” on the “Sioux River.” He also immediately points out that “the Des Moines River, originally known as the River of the Sioux,”

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stood as a part of the purchase made by the Commissioners of the United States from the Sauk and Meskwaki October 11, 1842. The United States and Sauk and Meskwaki, agreed to construct Fort Des Moines at the confluence of the Raccoon River and the Des Moines River in May of 1843, the location the Dakota asserted as the boundary line following the 1825 Prairie du Chien treaty. The fort lasted until June 1846. “The territory then lying north and west of the Raccoon Forks was comparatively an unexplored region of the county, the habitation of the wild Sioux Indians and ranges of buffalo and elk.” Captain Boone of the United State Dragoons had previously explored the area. The expedition proceeded from the Raccoon River north to what they called the “Sioux Forks,” or the confluence of the east and west branches of the Des Moines River twelve miles north of present-day Fort Dodge. There they engaged with the Dakota in a military conflict before retiring east to Albert Lea, named for Lieutenant Albert Lea of the expedition. The earliest recordings of the era abound with a Dakota presence. Place names, observations, and military actions all point to Dakota control, in the form of sovereignty and autonomy, over the land and natural resources making up the northern Iowa borderlands north of the eventual location of Fort Dodge.

Upon Williams’s arrival in 1848, surveying of the lands north of the Raccoon River’s confluence with the Des Moines commenced. A surveyor named Marsh came into conflict with Sintominiduta while attempting to conduct his work. After initially being told to clear off by Sintominiduta’s band of Wahpekute, Marsh decided to continue up the river. “After some hesitation, Mr. Marsh concluded to go ahead and he and his company had not proceeded a mile

413 Sauk and Fox treaty 1842, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75, National Archives. Washington, D.C.
414 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUF-KFMY, 1950), 10.
from the river, when at a point at the head of a large ravine, the Indians surrounded them in force and robbed them of everything, taking their horses, breaking their wagons and surveying instruments, pulling up their stakes and forcing them back across the river to find their way home the best they could," recorded Williams.416 At the earliest attempts at American surveying of the area of the northern Iowa borderlands the Wahpekute actively resisted American encroachment. Sintominiduta acted as if determined to check the introduction of American influence into the area he called home.

The government did not build the fort immediately after Mason’s recommendation, due to the Meskwaki exercising a different form of autonomy in another part of the state. In Tama County, a large group of Meskwaki had returned and established what the government called “Indian Town.”417 Following initial removal, the Meskwaki had found Kansas unappealing. Instead of settling on their reservation they pooled their annuities to purchase a large tract of land in Tama County. The United States government responded to this presumed undermining of American sovereignty by dispatching three companies of troops from Fort Snelling.418 The military removed the Meskwaki to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas. With the Meskwaki situation under control, Brevet General Mason sent Company E under the direction of Brevet Major Samuel Woods to begin construction on the site he had selected in the northern Iowa borderlands.

416 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 11.
Upon arrival, the bounty provided by the Des Moines River Valley struck Samuel Woods. “On reaching the point, after examination of the surrounding districts, the officers were much pleased with the location, the find body of timber above and below, the springs and streams together with the appearance of stone and coal. All admired the location and pronounced it the most beautiful part of Iowa they had seen.” Technologies helped Company E draw on the bounty around them. Soon a steam saw mill, a kiln for brickmaking, and tools for quarrying stone arrived to aid in the construction of the fort. The skills necessary to utilize these technologies also necessitated an influx of population, and non-military mechanics, carpenters, masons, and brick-makers found their way to the area in order to aid in the construction of the fort. By November of 1850, the government christened Fort Clarke and the soldiers hunkered down to prepare for the oncoming winter.

Aside from the materials necessary for construction, the environment in the Des Moines River valley also provided a rich bounty for the garrison.

When we came to this post and for 3 years after, this county abounded with wild game – buffalo, elk, deer, bear, panthers, lynx, wild cats and catamounts were numerous. Buffalo wallows and trails were to be seen in every direction. The buffalo were crossing the river below us for some time after we came here….As emigrants came in, the buffalo gradually fell back to the north. There were also the large white wolf, the black wolf, the bridle wolf and a great number of prairie wolves. The wild turkeys and wild geese, swans and every variety of wild duck were very numerous.

Williams also noted the prevalence of fish in the rivers as a meaningful source of protein to the early American arrivals on the Des Moines River, writing: “The rivers abounded with the finest

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419 Thomas Teakle, *The Spirit Lake Massacre*. (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1918), 179.
fish and the surrounding county with game and water fowl.”

These animals paired with early agricultural efforts to provide the garrison at the fort and the attached settlers with what they needed. In order to offset threats from the predators, especially wolves, settlers utilized strychnine strategically to destroy the population in the vicinity of the fort. The agricultural efforts of the garrison had not happened immediately, but the spring of 1851 saw the troops engaged in the production of a variety of crops. The garrison primarily planted corn, oats, and vegetables at Fort Dodge, and privates from the post tended the plants throughout the growing season. The post managed to break and fence the land, successfully plant a crop, and harvest it in order to move the fort toward self-sufficiency.

The situation surrounding Sintominiduta also became further complicated in 1849 when Minnesota Territorial Governor Alexander Ramsey sought to recognize a new chief of the Wahpekute. Although Sintominiduta clearly led a large group of Wahpekute on the Des Moines River, the government gave Wahmundeeyahcahpee (War Eagle That May Be Seen) a soldier’s medal granting official chieftainship following a vote of Wahpekute braves. Wahmundeeyahcahpee, the youngest son of Tasagi, and had continued to live in the more northerly reaches of traditional Wahpekute territory near the Cannon River. Shortly after his coronation by Ramsey, Wahmundeeyahcahpee and seventeen of his followers turned up dead. Ramsey responded by condemning Inkpaduta and a group of outlaws from other bands, also insinuating that Sintominiduta had prior knowledge of the July murders. Ramsey’s interpretation of the events found reinforcement through reports of Sisseton Dakota and Cannon River Wahpekute rumors of the murderous plot. However, deeper investigation later established that a

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marauding group of Sauk and Meskwaki attacked and killed Wahmundeeyahkahpe and his followers in an ambush. Although Ramsey formally sought to punish the Sauk and Meskwaki, he never apprehended and punished the true murderers. Inkpaduta would continue to be linked with the murders in rumor and reputation.

Inkpaduta continued to live relatively peacefully in the northern Iowa borderlands. Settler Charles Lamb, who got to know the Wahpekute leader while living on a claim along the Little Sioux River roughly thirty miles southeast of present-day Sioux City, recorded of Inkpaduta: “He was industrious, there was not a summer but he and his band planted a garden at some place.”

Accounts of Inkpaduta seem to suggest that he largely rejected the onset of settler-colonialism and American acculturation in the lands he considered home. Where Sintominiduta proved friendlier and open to conventions of white society, Inkpaduta remained at a calculated distance. Sintominiduta enrolled his children at the first school established at Mankato, Minnesota, where they the wife of Captain John Marsh taught them. Mrs. Marsh recorded that the children proved “extremely bright.”

Inkpaduta on the other hand did not enroll his children in the school.

As the Wahpekute measured their responses to the uptick of American influence and settlement in the northern Iowa borderlands around 1850, times of extreme change confronted the Wahpekute. From 1830 to 1850 they had passively rejected American authority by ranging beyond the reaches of American influence and settlement. However, the time period also saw the gathering of external factors that signaled the beginning of the end of the Wahpekute’s ability to passively resist American encroachment. Between 1840 and 1850, the population of Iowa

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rose from 43,112 to 192,214, a 345.8% change.\footnote{Figures and quantitative tables throughout this section drawn from the compiled 1836-1880 Iowa Historical and Comparative Census. F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed. 1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).} Although much of the American settlement still rested in the eastern portion of the state, settlement of the northern Iowa borderlands loomed. The establishment of Fort Dodge to the south of the Wahpekute created a physical presence for the American military in the area, and developing communities on the Cedar River hemmed in the Dakota to the east. Additionally, the Missouri River continued to gain traffic and the other trappings of American influence throughout the 1840s. During the decade the state as a whole crossed the United States Census Bureau standard from the frontier of 2.0 persons per square mile, moving from just .8 in 1840 to 3.5 by the 1850 census. The climb of population pressure proved extremely limited in the northern Iowa borderlands, however, the frontier stood poised to swallow the lands the Wahpekute autonomously operated in during the years leading up to 1850. By 1860 they would be overrun and pushed out.

Table 2 – Iowa population and land changes 1830 to 1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1830</th>
<th>1840</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1860</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Official Population</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>43,112</td>
<td>192,214</td>
<td>1,194,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-year % change</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>345.8</td>
<td>251.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Density</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Citizen Population of Iowa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>170,931</td>
<td>568,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Born Population of Iowa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20,969</td>
<td>106,077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Lands</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>824,682</td>
<td>3,792,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimproved Lands</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,911,382</td>
<td>6,277,115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Politically, Iowa had shifted from territorial status to statehood, another change that portended poorly for the Wahpekute. Where they had previously rejected American treaties following the initial 1825 Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien, their claims had become undermined by the willingness of other Dakota to partially sign them away. 1851 would see another treaty, this time at Traverse de Sioux on the Minnesota River, and the Wahpekute’s kin signed away any right to continue to occupy lands in the northern Iowa. Where the Dakota expertly subsisted on the microclimates found throughout the region, the initial inroads of American agriculture dictated change for the landscape. By 1850, Iowa had emerged as a burgeoning agricultural power. In 1850 the gross number of farms within the state at 14,805, and Iowa had crept into the top-twenty nationally in the overall production of grains, at eighteenth, with a total of 11,809,250 bushels harvested. Corn had already emerged as the leading agricultural crop within the bounds of the new state, with 8,656,799 bushels, good for a nineteenth national ranking. A fifteenth ranking in wheat, resultant from a harvest of 1,530,581 bushels, as well as significant oat production to the tune of 1,524,345 bushels, contributed to the rapid rise of Iowa farm production as a vital driver of economic development. Early Iowans also grew significant quantities of potatoes and hops, although these projects largely centered on local consumption instead of sale on wider markets. By 1850 Iowa had already established itself as a major grain producing state with an agriculturally driven economy.
Table 3 - Iowa agricultural change, 1830-1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1830</th>
<th>1840</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1860</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gross Number of Farms</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14,805</td>
<td>61,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn Production</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8,656,799 (19th)</td>
<td>52,410,686 (7th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat Production</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,530,581 (15th)</td>
<td>8,449,403 (8th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oat Production</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,524,345 (20th)</td>
<td>5,887,645 (7th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All grains</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11,809,250 (18th)</td>
<td>57,613,564 (10th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes (Irish)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>234,063</td>
<td>276,120</td>
<td>2,806,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hops</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>8,242</td>
<td>2,078</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The development of the livestock industry during the 1840s also evidenced the agricultural future of Iowa. By 1850, Iowans held 38,536 horses on farms. These animals served as the primary work animals on farms within the state, as illustrated by the proliferation of the animals over the nearest competition, oxen, of which the census recorded 21,892. Settlers also brought mules and asses to the area, of which only 754 found record in the 1850 census. Horses, oxen, mules, and asses underwrote the ability of Iowans to break through the dense prairie soils of the state, plowing under native grasses for more orderly row-crops. Of the 2,736,064 acres surveyed by the time of the 1850 census, only 824,682 found listing as improved. The government and settlers planned improvement for the other 1,911,382, and surveys efforts began for the rest. Over the next decade the government surveyed over 7,333,834 acres, including the vast majority of the northern Iowa borderlands, and marked the lands for improvement. The recorded the total value of farms in the new state $16,657,567, with the value of farm implements and machinery at $1,172,869. As lands underwent drainage projects, pioneers turned over the prairie, and the soil of Iowa opened to agriculture. The conditions proved ripe for a 719% increase in farm values over the course of the 1850s.
Table 4 – *Iowa livestock and farm values, 1830-1860*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1830</th>
<th>1840</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1860</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horses on farms</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38,536</td>
<td>175,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mules &amp; Asses</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>5,734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Oxen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21,892</td>
<td>56,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of farms (USD)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16,657,567</td>
<td>119,899,547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of farm implements and machines</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,172,869</td>
<td>5,327,033</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although livestock including horses, oxen, mules, and asses proved vital to providing physical power to drive changes in the land that allowed for the onset of American agriculture in Iowa, other livestock pursuits existed as a central focus of farmers. By 1850 the state recorded 45,704 within its boundaries, as well as 69,025 beef cattle. Butter and cheese production soared from 1840 to 1850. In 1840 Iowa farms produced 23,609 pounds of butter, a number that rose to 2,171,188 by the time of the 1850 census. On a slightly less astronomical trajectory, cheese production in the state began that decade at 23,609 pounds and closed at 209,840. Both industries would continue to grow significantly in the era prior to the onset of railroads in the states over the course of the following decade. Although cattle provided a meaningful protein source, the most prevalent livestock animals on the earliest Iowa farms were pigs and sheep. 323,247 swine lived on Iowa farms in 1850. Hogs provided vital sustenance for Iowa farmers while also serving as a marketable commodity. Sheep, of which the 1850 census recorded 149,960, yielded Iowa farmers 373,898 pounds of wool, a marked increase over the 1840 total of 23,039 pounds. The census bureau calculated the total value of livestock on Iowa farms at $3,689,275.
Table 5 – Iowa livestock and livestock by-products, 1830-1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1830</th>
<th>1840</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1860</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horses on farms</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38,536</td>
<td>175,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mules &amp; Asses</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>5,734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Oxen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21,892</td>
<td>56,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>1860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk Cows</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45,704</td>
<td>189,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Cattle</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>69,025</td>
<td>293,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>149,960</td>
<td>259,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>323,247</td>
<td>934,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Value of Livestock on Farms</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$3,689,275</td>
<td>$22,476,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wool (pounds)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23,039</td>
<td>373,898</td>
<td>660,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter (Pounds)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23,609</td>
<td>2,171,188</td>
<td>11,953,666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese (Pounds)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23,609</td>
<td>209,840</td>
<td>918,635</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As word spread of the agricultural competency yielded by the soil and climate of Iowa to the east coast and beyond to Europe, a rush of individuals and families began toward what Abigail Gardner-Sharp would call “a pioneer’s paradise.” Her family ventured west to Iowa during the 1850s. The lands they eventually occupied in the northern Iowa borderlands had long served as a paradise to the Wahpekute, who would prove willing to defend their access to land and natural resources in the region.
CHAPTER FOUR: “UNTIL THE LAST BAND SHOULD BECOME EXTINCT”

The years 1850 to 1855 brought a time of extreme change to the northern Iowa borderlands. For Inkpaduta and the Wahpekute a variety of challenges, both internal and external, threatened their continued existence. The formal dispossession of all Dakota title to lands in the area, the arrival of first settlers to the majority of counties throughout the area, the introduction of livestock, initial conversions of the landscape from prairie to plowed fields, and an increased scarcity of game all strained the ability of the Wahpekute to continue a peaceful existence in the area. Additionally, pressure and conflict with new people arriving in the area, both military and civilian, tested the adaptability of Dakota kinship constructs while taxing natural resources to breaking points. Inkpaduta gained greater personal responsibility for providing leadership during this time of extreme change following the murder of Sintominiduta. The mid-1850s pushed the Wahpekute toward a material breaking point as they sought to navigate an increasingly turbulent situation in the northern Iowa borderlands.

Following the organization of Minnesota Territory in 1849, Governor Henry Sibley lobbied for authorization to negotiate a treaty that would severely reduce Dakota lands while providing an annuity that would last “until the band should become extinct.” In 1851, Sibley’s dreamed of treaties become reality as the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux and the Treaty of Mendota. Historian Roy Meyer wrote of these treaties: “By a remarkable coincidence, what

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was deemed best for the Indians was invariably also to the advantage of the government, the traders, and above all, the land-hungry settlers. The treaties exchanged twenty-four million acres of Dakota lands for $275,000 in up-front cash, provisions, and payment of existing debts to traders. The government promised another $1.4 million to the Dakota in the form of an annuity to last for fifty years. After the deductions for the debts owed to traders and mixed-blood Dakotas, the final selling price for the lands exchanged averaged out to almost seven cents per acre. As stipulated by the treaty, the United States government expected the Dakota to relocate to a reservation straddling the Minnesota River that measured one-hundred-fifty by ten miles. Sintominiduta and Inkpaduta did not attend. Two Wahpekute chiefs including the son of Tasagi, Red Legs, as well as Gray Back, signed the treaty as officially recognized representatives of the Wahpekute. The governmental representatives had not invited Inkpaduta and Sintominiduta to the proceedings or recognized either as leaders within the tribal structure.

Placed outside the formal structure of the treaty proceedings, Inkpaduta worked to maintain autonomy and sovereignty through other means within the lands he occupied, specifically the Spirit Lake region and the Little Sioux River Valley. During the early 1850s, the Wahpekute under Sintominiduta and Inkpaduta continued to range in Iowa as far east as the

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Shellrock River in now Worth County, as far southeast as Fort Dodge, and as far southwest as Smithland. Inkpaduta and his band ranged as far west as the modern location of Madison, South Dakota, during summer bison hunts. Inkpaduta actively cultivated relations with settlers, through forming neighborly relationships with some, while actively asserting power over others. Additionally, Inkpaduta worked to exercise de facto control over the Little Sioux River Valley as he met with the Omaha during the early 1850s to create a mutually advantageous relationship between the two tribes. Although the de jure title to the land had changed without Inkpaduta’s consent, he actively worked in a variety of ways to maintain the ability of his band to range throughout their home in the northern Iowa borderlands.

These treaties, as well as the period following their inception in 1851 through the 1858 Dakota Land Cession Treaty, represent the completion of the shift from cultural adaptation to the final onset of American acculturation of the Dakota. The vast increase in American settlement throughout Iowa and Minnesota, as well as the ability of the military to project power with the help of settler militias, diminished the ability of the Dakota to act as equal partners with the United States in an adaptive construct. The treaties diminished Dakota sovereignty as bands moved to small reservations with limited access to natural resources and began to receive greater punishments for actions against settlers arriving in the area. Inkpaduta rejected the provisions of the 1851 treaty and continued to range throughout the northern Iowa borderlands prior to 1857. However, the ability of the Dakota to passively reject the onset of American influence

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435 Kintzing Prichette to Commissioner of Indian Affairs James Denver, October 15, 1857, SED no. 49, 35th Congress., Ist Session, Series 919; Bureau of Indian Affairs. Records. Annuity Payrolls for the Mdewakanton,
in the region rapidly diminished as game became scarcer, pioneers plowed under prairies, and the white population of the area steadily increased.

As the 1850s dawned in the northern Iowa borderlands, the American frontier had reached the Hawkeye state in a variety of ways. The next ten years brought immense changes for all peoples living in the land between two rivers. In addition to the national censuses taken in 1850 and 1860, the State of Iowa also conducted censuses in 1852, 1854, 1856, and 1859. Through careful examination of the compiled data, the external pressures mounting on Inkpaduta and the Wahpekute become clear. The overall population of the state grew significantly during the decade, jumping from 192,214 in 1850 to 647,913 in 1860.436

Table 6 – Iowa population, 1850-1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1851</th>
<th>1854</th>
<th>1856</th>
<th>1859</th>
<th>1860</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>192,214</td>
<td>229,932</td>
<td>326,500</td>
<td>517,875</td>
<td>642,578</td>
<td>674,913</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Much of the settlement during the first-half of the decade took place in parts of the state other than the northern Iowa borderlands, however, by the 1856 Iowa State census, ten of the twenty-five counties had American residents.437 Population has typically defined frontiers, specifically within the historical conversation of the American West.438 When an area reached the minimum

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436 F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed., 1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).

437 F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed., 1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).

of two-persons per square mile the frontier had passed it by. The movement of wilderness to frontier discounted the indigenous persons already living within an area. When considering the northern Iowa borderlands from a population density perspective, only a portion of the area moved above the two-persons per square mile threshold by the year 1860. However, the area had become virtually devoid of indigenous population and had begun to see rapid declines in wildlife and undeveloped lands by that time.

Figure 6 – Iowa population density, 1850 vs. 1860

The natural environment played a critical role in the slow development of the northern Iowa borderlands as it transitioned out of the population frontier phase. The diversity of landscape, as well as the saturated nature of many of the counties, left the first American settlers with a tall
task. In some counties, most notably Kossuth, large areas of swampland and slough posed a challenge that the first American residents believed they could quickly overcome through drainage, ditching, and other improvements. However, the northern half of the county proved nearly impossible to drain, eventually leading to the state of Iowa’s decision to reform the two counties into a single county. The significant challenges posed by the natural environment did not dissuade eager settlers from entering the area in order to gain an opportunity at the Jeffersonian agrarian dream.

![Figure 7 – Iowa county-by-county population change, 1852-1859](image)

As individuals and groups began to arrive in the northern Iowa borderlands they entered a space already occupied by the Wahpekute. The garrison stationed at Fort Dodge, as well as the developing community of settlers around the fort, observed the significant presence of the Wahpekute in the area.

When we first arrived at the site selected for building the Fort, no Indians were to be seen, but we found all around the site of Fort Dodge their deserted encampments and their long trodden paths. They, no doubt, had been watching our movements from the time we reached the Boon [sic] River country. They all deserted their encampments on the east side of the Des Moines river and fled to the west side, which was at the time Indian territory.  

No interactions of note between the garrison at Fort Dodge and the Wahpekute occurred until June of 1851 when Major Woods and two men crossed the river to hunt. There they encountered a Dakota man, who they spotted solitarily standing on the prairie. Upon their approach, approximately sixty or seventy Wahpekute emerged from the surrounding terrain. After shaking hands, the participants conducted a conversation utilizing Indian Sign Language and made arrangements for a meeting at the fort to take place the following Sunday. Roughly fifteen peaceable Dakota arrived at the fort at that time. After an American show of pomp and circumstance in the form of a military parade, the Dakota became alarmed and made to leave, but stayed after being convinced that no harm would befall them. “This was the first interview with the Indians after we arrived on the Des Moines, and, no doubt, had the effect of intimidating them, seeing the force and manner in which our troops were armed. After this interview with the Indians, they came in frequently in small parties begging for provisions and trading off their

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440 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 22.
441 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 23.
furs,” recorded Williams. The American projection of power embodied in the garrison stationed at the fort worked to check Dakota autonomy and sovereignty in the area. Instead of leaving the area, as might be expected if the bands believed they stood in violation of the treaty agreements previously made, the bands consistently visited the fort, mainly for commercial purposes. The United States military used the growing familiarity between the two groups to better assess the Dakota presence in the northern Iowa borderlands.

Reconnaissance efforts provided the Americans with a picture of the Dakota presence throughout the region. “It was found the main body of Indians were congregated along the Des Moines from the forks up in the neighborhood of Lizard Lake, Spirit and Okoboji Lakes, on Little Sioux River, and a body of them harbored at Buffalo Grove and the head waters of the Boon [sic], also at Twin Lakes.” The observations of the settlers and military personnel at Fort Dodge match with Dakota accounts that suggested the bands under Sintominiduta and Inkpaduta had spread throughout the area. Accounts consistently confirm the large village of Sintominiduta at Lizard Creek. Additionally, Williams’ account recorded that the Dakota occupied the area surrounding Spirit Lake and Lake Okoboji. Later in his account he further asserted that Inkpaduta had a summer village located at Spirit Lake.

Several counties saw their first American settlement during the earliest years of the 1850s. Hamilton County, which originally made up a part of Webster County prior to being split off by the Iowa Legislature in 1856-57, stands in the central tier of counties in the fourth row.

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442 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa.* Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 23.
444 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa.* Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 25.
The vast majority of the county at the time of American settlement consisted of rolling prairie with a limited amount of timber along the county’s watercourses. The Boone River follows the western boundary of the county from north to south, and reaches a depth and flow-rate that allowed for the construction of mills in several locations during the settlement era. Limestone deposits provided early settlers with quarryable stone throughout the county, and the soil proved well-suited to provide forage for livestock and the nutrients for successful grain crops.446

Arriving in November of 1850, Wilson Brewer became the first permanent settler of the county.447 He located on forty acres to the east of modern-day Webster City and helped to lay out the town of Newcastle on the opposite bank of the Boone River. 1851 saw several other men arrive to settle at various points along the watercourse, and by 1852 settlement reached a point that led Andreas to remark in 1875: “since that date the county has rapidly settled up in all parts.”448 Prior to the on-set of large-scale settlement and the location of the military post at Fort Dodge, settlers had to journey to Des Moines for supplies. Hamilton County seemed to be located in a position already behind the Dakota perception of the frontier-line by 1851, as “no Indians were seen by the settlers until some six years after settlement, and no depredations were ever committed by them (there).”449 Again, the evidence illustrated that in the central portion of the state, the Dakota appeared to consider the east fork of the Des Moines River the terminus of their range. Even in the first interaction between the military personnel at Fort Dodge, the Dakota rapidly made to cross back beyond the Des Moines further suggests this stood as a

449 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa.* Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 27.
mutually accepted boundary. In the more northerly sections of counties, the Wahpekute seemed to also range along the Winnebago and Blue Earth Rivers, while they did not appear in accounts from American settlers occupying the Iowa and Boone rivers.

Settlers did record the Dakota on the Shellrock River, a tributary of the Cedar that runs through eastern Cerro Gordo County. Cerro Gordo County stands in the second tier from the northern boundary of the state and in the firth column from the Mississippi and saw its first permanent American settlement during 1851. The population frontier-line reached the county during 1856, and served as a temporary home to many of the eventual settlers at Spirit Lake including the family of Rowland Gardner. With the status of a transitory home for many Spirit Lake settlers, the area provided them with experiences and expectations that would shape their outlook as they continued further west. Clear Lake, the first site of settlement within the county, drew settlers to its location on a natural spring fed lake roughly 3,684 acres in surface area.

Nathan Boone, son of Daniel Boone, first recorded the lake during a land survey he conducted in 1832 as a part of the establishment of the Neutral Zone following the 1830 Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien. Immediately prior to his survey of northern Iowa, at fifty-one years-old Boone served in the regular army as a captain in the United States Regiment of Dragoons during the Blackhawk War. The survey only reached to Cerro Gordo County, and did not extend further west into the northern Iowa borderlands and toward the Spirit Lake region. The county has numerous creeks and streams providing drainage and a consistent landscape of high prairie lands and low-lying marshes. The Shellrock River and the Winnebago River serve as the two

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principle watercourses, and both proved unnavigable for the initial American inhabitants of the county. Clear Lake measures as the largest lake in the county in shoreline and total volume. Several smaller lakes appeared in the southwestern portion of the county on the maps provided by A.T. Andreas in his 1875 *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa*, however, modern farming practices have eliminated these bodies of water to provide greater tillable acreage.

Permanent American settlement did not come to the area until the arrival of Joseph Hewitt and James Dickirson during 1851. Both came together with their families from Clayton County, directly across the Mississippi River from Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. They happened upon the lake while attempting to capture buffalo calves and elk, which they recorded as existing near the lake in significant numbers. They continued to range west during July of 1851, however, they stopped within twenty miles of the western terminus of the lake when they came across a series of impassable streams and sloughs. Returning to Clear Lake they began the construction of cabins “some 50 miles from the nearest white neighbor, cut off from retreat to any settlements by the high waters and almost bottomless sloughs.” They decided to pass the winter on the shores of the lake and laid in an ample supply of “buffalo meat, venison, and other game, as well as fish.” The following spring the men decided to permanently reside along the lakeshore, squatting on well-timbered government lands which had yet to be surveyed. Neither farmed, instead relaying on relays of supplies from Dubuque, some one hundred and eighty miles across the Iowa prairies. Hewitt operated the first store and trading post, and ran a mail-route that eventually ranged as far west as Algona in Kossuth County.

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Even at the time of Hewitt and Dickirson’s arrival in 1851, the county had exceptional natural resources. A mix of burr, red oak, black oak, walnut, butternut, hickory, lime, and white elm blanketed the northern portion of the county. Groves surrounding the major watercourses in the county, as well as the area surrounding Clear Lake, furnished settlers with an ample supply of wood for fuel and other purposes. Soil also emerged as a blessing to those seeking to start an agricultural homestead. Andreas recorded in 1875: “Like most portions of Iowa, the chief source of wealth for the future, as well as the sure support of the present inhabitants of Cerro Gordo County consists in its rich and fertile soil, which is peculiarly adapted to the growth of small grains, vegetables, and esculent roots, through corn is grown with a good degree of success.”

Prolific deposits of limestone throughout the county serve as another major asset, both in the early days after settlement and into the modern day. After the initial decision of Hewitt and Dickirson to call the shores of Clear Lake their home before the winter of 1851-52, settlement momentarily paused.

Further to the southwest of Cerro Gordo County, the garrison and surrounding village at Fort Dodge continued to grow during the 1850s. The population of the fort grew during 1851 to between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and thirty men, as well as an unspecified number of officers’ wives and children who arrived during that year. The garrison that manned the fort largely consisted of people born outside of the United States. The garrison had an international flavor typical of the United States army of the era, with nearly half the garrison born in Ireland, and another quarter of the fort’s population made up of German immigrants. Over 80% of those stationed at the fort had served in the Mexican-American War that had ended

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458 Wood to the Assistant Adjutant General, 24 August 1853. Fort Dodge. Letterbook. Letters Received and Sent. Record Group 393. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
two years prior to the fort’s construction. The fort’s name changed during the winter 1851-52 due to the military’s construction of another Fort Clarke further to the west. The government renamed the fort in honor of United States Senator General Henry Dodge of Wisconsin. A veteran of the War of 1812 and the Black Hawk War, Dodge created a legacy of mixed interactions with indigenous peoples. In the War of 1812 he rapidly rose from captain to major general in the Missouri Militia, a position he used to save roughly one-hundred-fifty Miami Indians from massacre after they raided the Boone’s Lick settlement during 1814. The Black Hawk War allowed Dodge to rise to prominence as a colonel in the Western Michigan Territory Militia, where he organized the construction of fifteen forts, fortified homes, and blockhouses before eventually leading troops into action against indigenous peoples at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, the Battle of Wisconsin Heights, and the massacre at Bad Axe.

Even as the American military presence in the area grew, the fall of 1851 also saw an assertion of Dakota autonomy in the lands to the southwest of Fort Dodge on the Boyer River. Roughly sixty miles from Fort Dodge and just outside the area defined herein as the northern Iowa borderlands, a settlement had sprung up consisting predominantly of families emigrating from New England. Four families settled at some distance up the Boyer from the main settlement, and there they found resistance to their incursion lands occupied by the Dakota.

When they had all (but the uppermost family) gone some miles down the stream to help a neighbor raise a house, the Indians attacked the lower house of the four, broke everything open and carried it off, or destroyed all their property. Passing

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upstream from house to house, the houses being half a mile to a mile apart, they robbed all as they went. When they reached the upper house they captured a young couple who occupied it and took them as prisoners.465 The men of the settlement, upon discovering the incursion, made pursuit, eventually encountering between thirty and forty Dakota a short distance from the settlement. They made chase for fifty miles before returning and sending messengers to the fort seeking assistance.

Three settlers by the names of Durham, Butler, and Reed arrived at the fort early on a November Sunday morning, where they reported that the Dakota had raided the settlement and headed north in the direction of Spirit Lake. A detachment of thirty-six men from Fort Dodge joined with the impromptu settler militia and set out up Lizard Creek, hoping to head off the band of Dakota. As the Americans traveled they stopped to search Dakota encampments they met along the way. Eventually they determined that the Wahpekute had made for the Chain Lakes, just south of Spirit Lake. Here the chase stagnated in the frigid November air. Williams, who took part in the excursion, noted that the pairing of cold temperatures and a lack of snow aided the Dakota escape, writing: “As is their custom in fleeing or when they wish to conceal the direction they have traveled, they travel by keeping generally on the high grounds. Frequently when they have travelled for some distance and made a fair trail, they make for a high gravelly point from which they will scatter in every direction, making a dozen trails in as many different directions which all come together again at some point agreed upon.”466 Knowing this ploy, the force from Fort Dodge did not fall for the ruse, and eventually successfully tracked the Wahpekute to a point between the west fork of the Des Moines River and Spirit Lake. However, there the trail went cold. Ten days into their hunt, the party determined that the band had

465 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 60.
466 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 62.
actually split apart and abandoned their pursuit. As the American force descended the west fork of the Des Moines River they happened upon the encampment of Inkapduta four miles from the shores of Spirit Lake, as well as that of Umpashotah near the present-day site of Estherville. After a search of each encampment failed to yield any evidence of the kidnapped couple or of possessions missing from the Boyer River settlement, the Americans took Inkapduta, as well as Umpashotah and Chaskanak, prisoner.\textsuperscript{467} The military contingent held the prisoners ransom for the return of captives and possessions from the Boyer River.

Ten days passed after the return of the American contingent to Fort Dodge before the two captives, as well as some of the missing property, turned up at the fort under the care of several members of Inkapduta’s band. “They (the Wahpekute) said they had caught the bad Indians far out on the prairie, but they took good care not to deliver up any Indians who could be charged with the robbery,” wrote Williams. He went on to postulate: “No doubt, the very party we seized upon or at least a part of them had a hand in the robbery.”\textsuperscript{468} Williams credited this event as being a moment of assertion of American dominance in the area, and the subsequent actions of the Wahpekute illustrated at least a tepid willingness to adhere to limited American acculturation. “Great pains were taken before releasing the hostages (Inkapduta included), to exhibit the force of the garrison to them, the number of arms and equipments we had to use against them in case they should commit any further outrages. At the same time, we gave them to know they should be well treated if they behaved themselves well.”\textsuperscript{469} The settlement of Fort Dodge had successfully displayed an ability to check Dakota power in the area.

\textsuperscript{468} William Williams, \textit{The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa.} Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 63.
\textsuperscript{469} William Williams, \textit{The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa.} Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 63.
Near the Boye River settlement another county saw its first settlement around this time. Monona County stands in the fifth tier of counties from both the Minnesota and Missouri borders. The Missouri River makes up its western border, and the Little Sioux River meets it within the county. The Loess Hills, a geographic formation of undulating uplands, stand tall as a major topographical feature. Deep soil, consisting of black mold or fine loam, ranges from six to fifteen feet in depth. Large groves of cottonwoods grow along the Missouri River, while smaller groves of various types of hardwood border the Little Sioux River. The land proved well-suited for not just agriculture, but also commercial activity, as both major watercourses reached a sufficient depth and current to support heavy mill activity.

When Isaac Ashton arrived near the modern-day site of Onawa in 1852 he became the first permanent American settler in the county. Several others arrived and settled along the banks of the Missouri River in that same year. Each individual who arrived that year disembarked from either Illinois or eastern Iowa. Charles B. Thompson, a Mormon previously affiliated with the congregation of Joseph Smith at Nauvoo, arrived after an unsuccessful attempt to start a church in St. Louis. In 1854 he arrived with some fifty or sixty families and established a colony in the southeastern portion of the county. “Thompson regulated and controlled all the affairs of the colony, both temporal and spiritual, pretending that he had

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authority to do so under the direction of a spirit which he called Baneemy. Among other assumptions, he claimed to host the spirit of the veritable Ephraim of the Scriptures, and taught his people to call him Father Ephraim." By the fall of 1855, Father Ephraim found himself in the midst of a rebellion led by one of his Elders. Former followers eventually arrested Father Ephraim and sent him back to St. Louis. Many of his followers also departed, leaving only three or four families behind permanently. The citizens organized the county officially in 1854.475

Summer 1852 brought a noticeable disappearance of Dakota men from the area around Fort Dodge. “Their encampments were deserted with the exception of a few squaws, and children and some old men,” wrote Williams.476 The departure of the younger male portion of the band proves consistent with Dakota sustenance techniques. What Williams and other settlers mistook for a retreat from the area proved more likely a temporary departure to the Great Plains to hunt game. Several settler accounts noted a decline in large game, specifically elk and bison, and the corresponding departure of a Wahpekute hunting party could correlate to these declines.

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476 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa.* Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 64.
Williams did not view their departure as such, writing: “It was suspected that they had put out on some robbing excursion.”477 A detachment left the fort to alert and monitor area settlements, and reports indicated that the Dakota had gone west. Although the initial allegation that the band had gone marauding throughout the area failed to bear out, the likelihood that the Dakota just continued operating in a way consistent with their traditional lifeways did not change the beliefs of the settler population. Instead the Americans believed the worst, asserting that the Dakota had most likely crossed the Missouri to wage war on another tribal people.

Late in the fall the men of the Wahpekute bands returned. Williams informed the Dakota that the government had purchased all of the land between the Des Moines River and the Missouri. Williams, a non-governmental entity, relayed that the title to the lands held by the Wahpekute no longer belonged to them. Williams’s does not record how the Dakota responded, and he moved forward in his account unaware that his simple declaration might stand as suspect to the Dakota or later generations. The winter of 1852-53 marked a significant change in the tone of interactions between the Dakota and the Americans due to an incident that occurred in Humboldt County immediately to the north of the fort.478

Legislators laid out the north and northwestern counties in Iowa during the 1852-53 legislative session. Two counties, Yell and Risley, each named for American heroes of the recently concluded Mexican War contained the lands that became Webster County and Fort Dodge.479 Fifty or so persons from the area came together and petitioned the legislature to combine Yell and Risley into Webster County. Population had gained steadily around the

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military presence, eventually leading to a significant enough number of Americans to warrant official status as a county. Organization followed in April of 1853, and fifty persons voted to appoint county officers.\footnote{S.J. Clarke, \emph{The Biographical Record of Webster County, Iowa}. (Chicago, IL: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1902), 352.} Shortly thereafter, in July, the garrison at Fort Dodge received its marching orders. They abandoned their stronghold on the Des Moines River and embarked north and west to a new location on the St. Peter River in Minnesota. Although the military had formally moved on, several of the officers, William Williams included, decided to stay behind and permanently settle at Fort Dodge.\footnote{William Williams, \emph{The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa}. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 31.} Settlers viewed the decommissioning of the fort as a signal that the area now would prove safe for settlement, kicking off an increase in emigration.

Although the military presence had dissolved in the area, the Dakota remained. Williams and his son, James, squatted at the fort and continued relations with the Wahpekute. “When the Indians came in with their squaws and children, we knew them well enough to know their intentions were not hostile, but when they came without them, we always required them to give up their arms for safe keeping before we would let them enter our house (the fort).”\footnote{William Williams, \emph{The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa}. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 32.}

Interactions between the settlers and the Wahpekute continued in the adaptive fashion that they had for the previous decade. However, tensions began to steadily build after 1851. Following the decommissioning of Fort Dodge, the Dakota sought to reassert their sovereignty and autonomy. Accounts noted that Sintominiduta and his band reoccupied their village site above Fort Dodge in large numbers, and that between sixty and seventy lodges relocated below Fort Dodge on the Des Moines River.\footnote{William Williams, \emph{The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa}. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 33.} Without the military to project power, the settler community
warned the Dakota that the Sauk and Meskwaki had arrived in the area and had threatened to attack the village below Fort Dodge. In response, the Dakota removed further up river to where the village of Sintominiduta provided greater protection.

An incident involving Inkpaduta recorded during the fall of 1853 occurred when his band encountered two American hunters on the Shellrock River. The Shellrock, a tributary of the Cedar River and located in Cerro Gordo and Worth County, appears to have served as the easternmost boundary of the Dakota conception of the northern Iowa borderlands during the 1850s. The two men, James Chambers of Linn County and a Mr. Madden of Muscatine, had occupied themselves with hunting on the western shore of the Shellrock when a small contingent of Wahpekute under Inkpaduta came upon them. A confrontation ensued, and settler accounts characterized the interaction as an attempt by Inkpaduta to kidnap the men. The men told the Dakota that they had a wagon some short distance away that they would give to Inkpaduta if they could go and retrieve it. Before departing, they gave the Dakota an assortment of goods to hold until their return. Four armed Dakota men went along, but as they approached a glen of trees where the settlers claimed to have left a wagon with other members accompanying the hunt, Chambers asked the Dakota to hang back so as to not cause a commotion. The forest-ensconced wagon turned out only to be a clever ruse by Chambers and Madden, and after gaining a several hundred yard head start, the men whipped their horses and hastily made their escape.

The matter seemed trivial on the surface, but it drew the attention of Stephen P. Hempstead, Iowa governor from 1850 to 1854, who sought to bring Inkpaduta to justice for the alleged attempted abduction of the two American men. Hempstead appointed William Williams

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484 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 47-49,
as Executive Officer to keep the Dakota in the northern Iowa borderlands in check.\textsuperscript{485} Williams’s authority included the ability to raise a contingent of troops, if necessary, “to chastise them.” Williams met with Sintominiduta, Inkpaduta, and other Wahpekute, asserting that such behavior would not be tolerated. Sintominiduta consented to Williams’ demands. Again a tense peace reigned throughout the borderlands. “Putting very little faith in their promises, we kept strict watch on their movement,” wrote Williams.\textsuperscript{486}

Williams recorded that later in 1853 a noticeable change in relations arrived with a moderately sized contingent of Wahpekute. They showed up at Fort Dodge in the mid-afternoon, and Williams noted that he did not recognize many of them. The Dakota asked to view his supply of weaponry, a request Williams denied. That evening the relatively small group of Dakota encamped in a small grove of trees before departing the following day. Williams left shortly thereafter on a planned trip to Muscatine, a journey that kept him away for roughly three weeks. Upon his return upriver, at Fort Des Moines several settlers told him that a large contingent of about fifty lodges of Dakota had encamped six miles above Fort Dodge, roughly where Sintominiduta had previously located a village on Lizard Creek.\textsuperscript{487} George Werner relayed that he had scouted up the river and that the Dakota rested there, and that there appeared to be no women and children among the group. He also relayed a demand from an unidentified Dakota chief that if those in the area did not surrender Henry Lott and his son to the Dakota within six weeks’ time the fort would be razed and every settler in the area would be in mortal

\textsuperscript{485} Benjamin F. Gue, \textit{History of Iowa From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century, Vol. 3}. (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1903), 258.
\textsuperscript{486} William Williams, \textit{The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa}. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 27.
\textsuperscript{487} William Williams, \textit{The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa}. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 29.
peril. Werner also relayed the six week window rapidly neared closing, and that Lott would need to be surrendered in three days’ time. Williams left Des Moines with a small group on a forced march. As he raised the alarm and exchanged information with those closer to the threat, he became more at ease but still alert. He arrived back at Fort Dodge to see that the settlement still quietly stood silhouetted against the northern Iowa sky. James Williams convinced his father that the rumors circulating to the south would prove just that, rumors, and that the Dakota had posed no significant threat to Fort Dodge in the recent weeks. In 1853, the Dakota still stood in a position to strike very real fear into settlements as far south on the Des Moines River as Polk County. Additionally, settlers lived with an awareness that the Dakota population in the region remained large enough to wipe out both settlements and settlers if provoked. Finally, it shows that the settlers did not expect the Dakota to operate within the bounds of the American justice system. The rest of 1853 passed quietly in Fort Dodge as Williams sought the title to the abandoned fort, and sightings of the Dakota during the time became limited and unremarkable.

Located directly north of Webster County, Humboldt serves as a home to both branches of the Des Moines River and the Boone River. Additionally, Lott’s Creek flows within the modern borders of the county. The east and west branches of the Des Moines River prove significant because they demarcate where settler accounts most frequently record the Wahpekute in Iowa during the era. Dakota interactions with other tribal peoples, most notably in incidents with the Sauk and Meskwaki, as well as emergent settler communities like Clear Lake, underscore the Dakota understanding of the boundary. Humboldt County, which only hosted a

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489 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa.* Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 41.
population of 9,815 at the 2010 census, served a critical role as a geographic location in the northern Iowa borderlands of the 1850s. Large stands of timber lined the watercourses throughout the county at the time of American colonization. “A large proportion of the county is prairie, but no part of it is more than eight miles from a grove of timber,” recorded Andreas in his 1875 atlas. The county also contained large deposits of limestone, and small amounts of coal and peat also provided energy to settlers. At the time of American arrival, the Dakota numerously occupied lands throughout the county. Sintominiduta, chief of the Wahpekute, kept his sizable summer village of an estimated five-hundred lodges where Lizard Creek empties into the Des Moines River within the modern bounds of the county. The initial and current county seat, Dakota City, speaks to strong Dakota presence in the area at its initial settlement in 1852.

Henry Lott became the first recorded American settler in the county when he erected a cabin in Humboldt County sometime during the early 1850s. Some accounts of the later murder of Sintominiduta at the hands of Lott suggested he arrived as early as 1851; Williams noted the presence of the noted horse-thief in the area for the first time in 1853. After being chased out of Webster County by Williams and others, Lott squatted on what would become Lott’s Creek. He and his son cleared two acres of timber for a cabin site, and planned to extend their eventual farm into the prairies that stretched out in every direction. The watercourse Lott located on proved semi-navigable before finding its way into the east fork of the Des Moines River just

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493 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa.* Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUF-D-KFMY, 1950), 27.
below the Lott cabin site. Sintominiduta had already established himself in the area at the time of Lott’s arrival, and the Dakota leader’s sizable summer village stood immediately to the south on the west bank. Proximity between settlers and indigenous peoples often seemed tense in the best of circumstances, but Lott and Sintominiduta had a history.

Henry Lott again moved up the Des Moines River in order to continue to ply his trade as a horse thief by late 1853.\(^{496}\) Ascending the creek some thirty miles into Humboldt County, Lott arrived equipped with a variety of items to trade with the Dakota including three barrels of whiskey. Williams and others attempted to persuade Lott to abandon this pursuit, but Lott persisted and told the Fort Dodge sutler he hoped to trade with the Wahpekute band under Sintominiduta.\(^{497}\) However, Lott’s past interactions colored the interactions with the chief, and soon trouble stirred. After successfully lobbying for Williams for the removal of Lott from the area, Sintominiduta continued to lead his band of Wahpekute largely as he had done for over a decade. The band ranged widely, expertly drew sustenance from the environment around them, and lived with limited adaptation when they needed to obtain new goods through trade. Henry Lott, however, had taken personal affront to Sintominiduta’s insistence on the horse-thief’s removal from the Boone River during the decade prior. By the time of his arrival in Humboldt County, Lott appeared bent on revenge. He quickly learned that Sintominiduta had encamped with his band some twenty-five miles north of Lott’s cabin site. He went and asked Sintominiduta if he would care to join him and his son on a hunt for elk. “Burning with revenge for the old offense, Lott conceived and carried into execution the horrible project of murdering


\(^{497}\) William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa.* Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 31.
Si-dom-i-na-do-ta and his entire family…. The settlers shot the chief a short distance from his lodge, and two squaws and four children also met their end there. Two others, a boy and girl, made their escape to tell of the perpetrators deed. Lott dumped the bodies in the Des Moines River, and attempted to make the killings look like a roving band of Meskwaki or Sauk had perpetrated them. Accounts, including that of Williams, suggested that Sintominiduta stood as the object of Lott’s desires as he moved into the area.

Lott had always said that Sidom-i-na-do-tah [sic] was the leader of the party that drove him off and robbed him when he first settled at the mouth of the Boon [sic] River, and frequently said he would be revenged. Lott professed friendship with the Indian and frequently gave him liquor. Lott and his son managed to get the old Indian out on the prairie to hunt elk. There they waylaid him and shot him off his poiny. In the night after murdering him, they blackened their faces and disguised themselves as Indians, attacking the Squaws and children in their teepees and murdering six of them, two only escaping, a boy about 10 years old and a little girl. The boy was severely cut in the head and left for dead but recovered. The little girl, escaped from the teepee with her mother who fled, was overtaken about 100 yards from the teepee where the mother was killed. The little girl escaped by hiding among some bushes where she remained for days until a party of Indians from the Lizard who were on a hunt discovered the fate of their friends and took her in charge. As soon as Lott and his son committed the murder they set a fire to their cabin and fled.

Lott, seeking to settle an old score, had set in motion a chain of events that some have traced all the way north to Spirit Lake and several years into the future. However, the events following the incident must be examined in order to determine how relations evolved between the Wahpekute Dakota and the American settlers in the northern Iowa borderlands in the wake of Sintominiduta’s tragic demise.

499 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 32.
The community of settlers in the area of Fort Dodge during January of 1854 immediately recognized the potential powder-keg nature of the murder of Sintominiduta. The Dakota had managed to form a peaceful relationship with the new arrivals at Fort Dodge, even if things occasionally turned tense, but the murder of the most important chief within the tribal sub-group might upset the precarious balance. The Dakota initially believed that Lott and his son had died during the confrontation, but later realized that two corpses could not have made off with Sintominiduta’s pony and personal effects before burning down a cabin. In response, the Dakota made preparations to pursue the murderer. L. Ketzman, a former soldier and 1854 arrival to the area, as well as William Williams, immediately sought out the Dakota when they learned of the murder. Intent to show good faith, the duo of Americans ascended the river to where they found the encampment of Inkpaduta and his band some nine miles north of Fort Dodge on the eastern bank of the river. After a brief conversation, Inkpaduta agreed to Williams’s suggestion that four Dakota warriors go with the two Americans to seek out the killers. Titonka, his son, Cosomenah, and Tineah accompanied Williams back to Fort Dodge where the group planned to stay the night before striking out in the morning. When the sun rose, the Dakota refused to pursue the murderers further south down the Des Moines River. Williams, however, persisted, eventually finding out from Pelamon Johnson, a settler on the Boone River, that Lott had attempted to sell him a stolen pony and an assortment of furs. Williams continued his search, eventually ranging as far as the Missouri River where he determined that Lott had crossed that

500 Alan Foster Nelson, *Fort Dodge: America’s Frontier Town*. (Fort Dodge, IA: Independently Published, 2018), 27.
501 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa*. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 34.
artery of the Great Plains on his way west to California. Eventually, several letters arrived from James Lott stating that his father had died from a gunshot sustained in an unrelated quarrel.⁵⁰²

Lott may have received his just reward, however, the Dakota seemed unsatisfied with the results. The Wahpekte failed to locate Sintominiduta’s body immediately following the murder, but eventually arrived at the small town of Homer where the collective citizens called for a coroner’s inquest.⁵⁰³ Here confusion reigned. Expectations for both sides proved difficult to assess, although Williams recorded: “The Indians gathered around at a loss to know what was to be done. No doubt they expected that Lott and son were taken and a grand pow-wow was to be held before the Lotts were delivered over to them.”⁵⁰⁴ However, legal proceedings began with William R. Miller presiding.⁵⁰⁵ One after another the judge called the Dakota to the stand in order to testify, the prosecuting attorney Granville Berkley claimed that Greek served as the basis of the Dakota language before attempting to translate, and the testimonies proved inadequate to provide any insight into the crime. Sintominiduta’s children who had survived the attack, including his son Josphaduta, attempted to use their training from a school in Mankato to testify in English, but their pleas for justice fell on deaf ears. A hung jury resulted due to the inability to understand the Dakota, and the proceedings lingered unresolved for over a year. On the close of the initial trial, the “translator,” Mr. B, took the head of Sintominiduta with him under a promise that he would examine it for further evidence before burying it. Instead, he took

⁵⁰⁴ William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa*. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 34.
it into the town of Homer where he hung Sintominiduta’s decapitated head from a corner of his house to display to the entire community.  

Inkpaduta’s initial attempts at gaining justice through the American system had failed, yet he pressed on. Inkpaduta traveled north to Fort Ridgely, the main military presence in the area, and asked the commandant, Major Woods, for assistance. In response, Woods sent out a detachment of men to search for Lott, although unsuccessfully. Frustration extended beyond the Wahpekute, with Woods noting that many on the new reservation along the Minnesota River had hard feelings over the incident. Additionally, Inkpaduta visited with other Dakota living on the reservation during his visit, learning that late annuities in 1853 and 1854 had forced many living under American acculturation to seek out more traditional means of sustenance. To Inkpaduta, the way of life advocated by the American government had not provided the Dakota with a better life. Although the Dakota had pursued justice through the American system, they found a grossly inadequate result as their reward. Many historians have drawn a singular line from the murder of Sintominiduta to the attack of Inkpaduta at Spirit Lake, but in reality the ties prove tenuous at best. Sintominiduta and Inkpaduta both led the Wahpekute Dakota, and Inkpaduta sought recourse through the established Iowa government and the United States military. While his attempts at seeking justice through the proscribed means of the state and federal government of the United States points to at least a begrudging acceptance of American acculturation, the United States did not bring Sintominiduta’s killers to justice.  

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506 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa.* Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUF-D-KFMY, 1950), 35.  
Inkpaduta then waited several years to seek revenge in a different geographical context over one-hundred miles away and in contrast to the other extenuating circumstances proves near-sighted and highly circumstantial at best.

The event, however, undoubtedly shaped Inkpaduta’s worldview going forward. Inkpaduta knew that Lott had murdered Sintominiduta soon after the first settler arrived in the vicinity of his summer village. Although other Americans had entered the area and become well-established to the south through the development of Fort Dodge and Webster City, Sintominiduta’s band of Wahpekute experienced little acculturative change during those first few years. However, when the geographic proximity shrunk to a neighborly distance, death immediately found the Wahpekute leader and his family. The attack of Inkpaduta on Spirit Lake occurred upon the band’s arrival at the location of their summer village during the spring of 1857, and the settler community in the area had only developed since the band’s departure the previous year. If Inkpaduta’s decision to attack the new community developing around the site of his summer village remains open to interpretation, however, the murder of Sintominiduta may have nudged the Wahpekute leader toward violent resistance.

In Humboldt County, Lott’s murder of Sintominiduta led to the murderer’s decision to flee the area, yet American settlement soon followed. The fall of 1854 saw the first significant settlement of several families at the location on the east fork of the Des Moines River destined to become Dakota City. The Dakota largely removed from the area following the murder, opening the area to further white settlement. Surveyors laid out Dakota City in 1856, with Asa

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C. Call, notable from our discussion of Kossuth County directly to the north, appointed commissioner and he located the county seat at that location.\textsuperscript{511} 

On April 1, 1854, John Scott arrived in a panicked flight at the Fort Dodge settlement from his lands six miles to the south on the west side of the Des Moines River. “The appearance of prairie fires, the hooting of owls and strange sounds heard by them alarmed them, and they left their claim and fled to the fort.”\textsuperscript{512} They remained with Williams at the former fort site for the duration of the summer. In June C.C. Carpenter, future governor of Iowa and a member of the eventual relief expedition to Spirit Lake, joined them.\textsuperscript{513} Several other families filled in as well that summer, and the population in the vicinity of the settlement began to grow steadily. Williams also noted an uptick in the Dakota presence in the area over the course of 1854, writing: “the Indians again gathered in around us, and encamped and erected their teepees on their former sites, especially along the Des Moines above and along the branches of the Lizard. Their appearance in the neighborhood kept our citizens in a constant state of alarm.”\textsuperscript{514} The growing settlement had seemingly slowed with the reassertion of a Dakota presence in the region. Also during 1854, many of the Wahpekute joined with their more northerly relatives on an expedition against the Omaha. \textsuperscript{515} The fall of 1854 marked a retreat in the Dakota presence in the vicinity of Fort Dodge as they moved toward their winter villages, and the settlers focused on a fight between Fort Dodge and the town of Homer over which would serve as the county seat.

\textsuperscript{511} Florence Call Cowles, \textit{Early Algona and Eda’s Cradle}. (Des Moines, IA: Des Moines Register and Tribune Company, 1964), 37-38.
\textsuperscript{512} William Williams, \textit{The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa}. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 37.
\textsuperscript{513} Mildred Throne, \textit{Cyrus Clay Carpenter and Iowa Politics, 1854-1898}. (Iowa City, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1974), 21.
\textsuperscript{514} William Williams, \textit{The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa}. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 38.
Eventually, Fort Dodge prevailed and population growth accelerated to a point where many of the marks of a non-frontier settlement emerged.

Other parts of the northern Iowa borderlands also saw an uptick in Dakota resistance during 1853 and 1854. Away from Fort Dodge, settlement in Cerro Gordo had picked back up by July of 1853, this time on the shores of Lime Creek. David and Edwin Wright made the first settlement along the watercourse, roughly three miles north of present-day Mason City. As population began to slowly rise as 1853 faded into 1854, the first recorded interactions between the indigenous peoples of the area and the newly forming settler communities took place. Hewitt, who had gained some familiarity with the Ho-Chunk as a trader in the neutral ground around Fort Atkinson prior to his arrival at Clear Lake, welcomed a band under To-Shan-e-ga (Otter) during the fall of 1853.

Word traveled over the winter to Dakota ears, and in the early summer of 1854 several settlers noted the arrival of a large Dakota contingent intent on pushing the Ho-Chunk off of their lands. “The Sioux, who lived farther north in Minnesota, learning that some Winnebagoes had come upon the ‘neutral ground,’ determined to exterminate them. About 500 of them came down during the summer of 1854, and for some time feigned to be very friendly with the whites and Winnebagoes, eating and smoking the peace-pipe with them,” recorded Hewitt. Initially, the Dakota did not appear to represent any threat to either the settler community or the Ho-Chunk. However, over the following two weeks tensions ran high as both tribal peoples lingered around the lake. The Dakota had arrived to contest the Ho-Chunk occupation of their lands, and

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their presence and friendly demeanor had not led to a Ho-Chunk departure. Tensions slowly escalated until two Dakota shot a sixteen-year-old Ho-Chunk who wandered into their camp.\textsuperscript{519} The Dakota mutilated the corpse through beheading, and some members of the band absconded with the body. Hewitt and Dickersin organized several wagon teams to move the assembled Ho-Chunk out of the county, back east to where a larger tribal population could provide greater protection.

Once the Ho-Chunk had departed, the situation did not immediately deescalate. The Dakota questioned Hewitt and Dickersin about why they had assisted the Ho-Chunk, and asked to search Dickersin’s house to see if they had hidden any Ho-Chunk there. Many members of the settler community had gathered there for mutual defense, and a tense three days followed. “The Indians came in force within a quarter of a mile of the house, and made demonstrations which indicated hostile intentions, repeating their maneuvers at intervals for several days.”\textsuperscript{520} Eventually, the settlers allowed the Dakota to search the house, and to their satisfaction no Ho-Chunk remained inside. Twenty-one Dakota who had gone to search the house emerged and brandished pistols and other firearms in a display of power to the assembled settler community. Hewitt immediately dispatched a runner for help, and the governor of Iowa responded by sending fifty soldiers to aid the settlement at Clear Lake.\textsuperscript{521} However, before the military arrived from Minnesota, the Dakota had vanished into the rolling prairies and sloughs to the west.

The interaction between the Dakota, Ho-Chunk, and Clear Lake community provides a vital glimpse into relations as they existed in 1854. First, the Wahpekute, contrary to assertions of the 1851 treaty, still viewed Cerro Gordo County as a part of their territory. When they

\textsuperscript{519} Mason City Public Library Archives, \textit{Joseph Hewitt Journals}. (Mason City, IA: Unpublished).
\textsuperscript{520} Mason City Public Library Archives, \textit{Joseph Hewitt Journals}. (Mason City, IA: Unpublished).
\textsuperscript{521} Fort Ridgley, Letterbook. Letters Received and Sent. Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
received word that a rival tribe had arrived in the area, they showed up in force, initially sought peaceful eviction of the rival group, and then committed an act of violence to signal their sincerity in maintaining their control over the area. The Dakota display of power indicates an adaptive, not acculturative outlook for the band. Throughout the actions the tribe postured to the settler community at Clear Lake: initial friendly relations followed by several displays of power after the departure of the Ho Chunk, and finally an overt display of firepower prior to their departure. The Dakota did not capitulate to American power in the northern Iowa borderlands in 1854, and the dispatch of an American military force following settler cries for protection indicated the submissive position of the settler community. Hewitt’s insistence that the Dakota stood outside of their Minnesota boundaries, as stipulated by the 1851 treaties, did not seem to trouble the Wahpekute. Hewitt’s assertion that the Dakota had abandoned the lands finds contradiction in the actions of the Wahpekute.

Following the conflict between the Wahpekute, the Ho-Chunk, and the settler community at Clear Lake, Inkpaduta reemerged in the records of an Indian Agent north of the Iowa border at the Minnesota River reservation of the Dakota. He arrived during the late summer of 1854 hoping to obtain an annuity payment. Inkpaduta showed a willingness toward adaptation as he sought to supplement the dwindling natural resources of his range with annuities. Inkpaduta turned away empty handed because he had not signed the initial treaty in 1851 or taken the initiative to locate permanently within the bounds of the Minnesota reservation. Disappointed, Inkpaduta and his band headed back south to the Spirit Lake region. As the fall progressed the band made their way back down the Little Sioux River to the farm of Charles Lamb where they spent the winter much as they had for the previous two years.
As the winter of 1854 melted into the spring of 1855, Inkpaduta departed the Lamb farm and again showed up in other parts of the northern Iowa borderlands. Late in the spring Inkpaduta harassed surveyors in the general vicinity of Dakota City in Humboldt County, and drew accusations from newly arrived settlers for having removed game from traps in the vicinity of the Des Moines River above Fort Dodge. Additionally, he plundered the cabin of E. McNight, also of Dakota City, before escaping to the Spirit Lake area. Later on, in early July, Inkpaduta encountered the first settler of Kossuth County, Ambrose Call. Call complained that Inkpaduta robbed him, as well as another man named Maxwell. When Call confronted Inkpaduta, the Wahpekute leader told Call that the men of his band had left to hunt elk in the vicinity, and he would depart the following day. The Dakota proved good to their word, but the interaction with Call wouldn’t be the last tense moment between Inkpaduta and the Algona inhabitants.

Slightly later in the summer of 1855, another telling interaction between the Dakota and settlers of Clear Lake occurred. Known locally as the “Grindstone War,” the event made it into local accounts, including that eventually written by the newly arrived Abbie Gardner-Sharp. The “Grindstone War,” the Gardner family’s first experience with indigenous peoples, should have alerted them to the realities they might face the following summer as they departed Clear Lake toward the Spirit Lake region. Andreas records that “In this, our old pioneer friend, James Dickirson, figured prominently on one side, against twenty-one marauding, vagabond Sioux warriors on the other side.” Andreas’s description of the ‘Sioux’ as vagabonds and marauders suggests that Inkpaduta’s Wahpekute could be the band that arrived at Clear Lake that summer. Accounts from the period consistently characterize Inkpaduta’s band as made up of ‘marauders,’

and the estimated size of his band commonly ranged around twenty. With Sintominiduta’s head on display in downtown Homer, and no other large unaccounted for bands of Wahpekute known to be in the vicinity, it seems likely that Inkpaduta may have arrived at Clear Lake during 1855. The geographic location exists within the range of Inkpaduta and settler accounts put him under fifty miles away at several locations earlier in the summer, but there remains a slim possibility that some other southerly-ranging band of Dakota may have ventured outside of a known range.

The Dakota arrived in the area and did not immediately proceed to either of the major settlements in the county, instead camping about seven miles north of the Clear Lake settlement on Lime Creek. Many band members did visit the settlements in Cerro Gordo County, interacting with the newly arrived Americans and asking for various gifts and other concessions. Abbie Gardner-Sharp recorded her perception of this band, writing:

> It is impossible to express my abhorrence for those repulsive and ferocious looking beings, as they entered our house and began at once to ask for something to eat; nor did they ask for victuals alone, but whatever they thought serviceable, or what please their fancy, they persistently demanded, all the while jabbering their Indian jargon. To get rid of them as soon as possible they were fed bountifully, and what they asked for was given them, if it could be spared.\(^{524}\)

In their first experience with an indigenous people, the Gardner family felt obliged to comply. Over the course of the next year as the Gardner’s gained greater familiarity with Iowa, their willingness to accommodate the Dakota demands waned and their prejudice morphed toward outright contempt. The tense conflict between the settlers Clear Lake, the Dakota, and the Ho-Chunk during the previous year had left other, more seasoned settlers less inclined to meet the Dakota demands. James Dickirson had participated in the tension of the previous year and objected to the Dakota shortening his wares when they arrived at his homestead about one-mile

east of Clear Lake. After Dickirson’s refusal to provide the Dakota with provisions, they attempted to kill his chickens and broke his grindstone. One of the Dakota attempted to leave with the grindstone, but Dickirson hefted a large rock into his hand and made chase.

At the entreaty of his wife and Mrs. Tuttle (both of whom were at his cabin), he threw down his weapon, fearing that if he struck the Indian, the others might be so exasperated as to endanger all their lives. He forced the grindstone away from the Indian, and in doing so threw him several feet, sprawling on the ground. He recovered and followed Mr. Dickirson with a club, striking him slightly on the head. The latter returned the blow with the grindstone, inflicting a wound which laid the Indian out on the ground for several minutes.

The rest of the Dakota band had become aware of the situation, and after a brief discussion amongst themselves, they suggested that Dickirson pay the wounded man $100 or provide him with a horse. Dickirson flatly declined, but his wife gathered up six dollars, some quilts, and “several other articles” to give to the wounded Dakota. After the Dakota collected the bounty, the band departed. The Dickirson’s had capitulated to Dakota demands after a limited outbreak of violence, however, the settlement stood in a better position to assert its authority over the Wahpekute than when the troubles arose just one year prior.

Word spread through the settlements like prairie fire, and by the next day a small company of twenty-five well-armed men on horseback had “started out resolved to clear the county of the troublesome invaders.” The group set out for the Dakota encampment seven miles away on Lime Creek. When they arrived, roughly sixty Dakota men, women, and children

526 Mason City Public Library Archives, Joseph Hewitt Journals. (Mason City, IA: Unpublished).
527 Mason City Public Library Archives, Joseph Hewitt Journals. (Mason City, IA: Unpublished).
made up the camp, and the settlers demanded the refund of the Mrs. Dickirson’s six-dollars.529 The Dakota, in the face of twenty-five well-armed men on horseback, reluctantly returned the money and began to break camp. In contrast to the previous episode between the Wahpekute and the Clear Lake settlement the military did not prove necessary. Instead, the combined Cerro Gordo County settlements mustered a sufficient militia to assert their control over the area.

The next morning early a man went out to see if the Indians had left their camp. Not one was to be seen. Such was the beginning and happy ending of the once famous ‘Grindstone War,’ without shedding of other blood than that of James Dickerson’s old rooster, whose lustrous feathers and lordly strut were the innocent cause of the outbreak. From that day to this (1890) the Sioux have never crossed the boundary to Cerro Gordo County.530

Again the triumph, disdain, and pioneer-ethos fueled naivety of Gardner-Sharp shines through.

The ‘Grindstone War’ provides a meaningful snapshot of Dakota-American relations. In 1855, the Dakota returned to a place where they had encountered limited settlement the previous summer. At that time the area had not yet reached the two-persons per square mile threshold, but had seen significant population growth over the year prior. A community consisting of only a handful of settlers the year before had now ballooned to a settlement able to trot out twenty-five well-armed men for defense in threatening situations. The Dakota, who only numbered roughly twenty adult males, undoubtedly noticed this population expansion. The odds had shifted away from the Wahpekute. The events that occurred in 1855 largely mirror those of 1854 in some ways. The Dakota arrived peacefully, content with extracting tribute from the settler community. Although the Ho-Chunk no longer create a point of consternation for the Dakota, tensions still existed between the Dakota and settlers there the previous summer. Dickirson, undoubtedly

529 Mason City Public Library Archives, Joseph Hewitt Journals. (Mason City, IA: Unpublished).
530 Abbie Gardner-Sharp, History of the Spirit Lake Massacre & Captivity of Miss Abbie Gardner (London, UK: Lenour-Oakpast, 1893), 21,
emboldened by the increased settler population in 1855, flatly denied the Dakota the tribute they believed they rightfully deserved. Similarly to 1854, the Dakota sought to display power through the killing of chickens and the seizure of the grindstone. Even after Dickirson’s display of violence, the Dakota displayed a willingness to simply extract compensation and leave the community. After the settlers met the Dakota demands, the Wahpekute peacefully disappeared into the prairie. However, the circumstances had shifted from the mutually adaptive situation of 1854 toward a more acculturative context in 1855 when the settler-colonizers arrived in force with threats of violence on their tongues. The Dakota capitulated, removing further west beyond American settlement, an act of passive-rejection of American power.

Following the close of a Dakota presence in the county, Cerro Gordo County continued to enjoy a rise to prosperity. The adaptability of the soil provided the opportunity for farmers to plant a variety of crops, while the well-watered nature of the land provided excellent conditions for raising livestock. Many arrivals to Cerro Gordo county in the 1850s aside from Rowland Gardner stand as representative of their times. Most men moving to Iowa were in their mid-to-late twenties or early thirties, already married, and looking to create a better life for themselves and young children. Many Democrat and Protestant sons of northeastern farms made up the majority of the population. Another New Yorker, Alonzo Willson, left New York in 1836 and moved to Illinois. Illinois had gained territorial status after being carved out the old Northwest Territory in 1809. The state officially became the twenty-first state in 1818. Willson, at fourteen-years old, arrived and began to work toward the establishment of a farm. The state, gripped with terror during the Blackhawk War just four years prior, had successfully worked

toward the final removal of tribal peoples from the state. Although not in contact with any indigenous peoples during his time in Illinois, Willson embodied the typical pioneer dismissal of “bloody savages” repeatedly in his journal.\textsuperscript{534} After struggling to find agricultural success, Willson went west on horseback in 1853 with a team of forty men, several of whom brought their families. The party headed for California, a journey that covered over 2,000 miles and ended in Marysville, California.\textsuperscript{535} Willson recorded that along the way they came into contact with natives several times, but he smugly wrote that they “worsted them.”

Willson’s stay in California proved short but prosperous. Although the New Yorker turned pioneer turned potential prospector did not strike it rich in the goldfields, he amassed a little over $10,000 in cash from his commercial dealings with gold miners.\textsuperscript{536} Although Willson’s journal failed to record what led to his California prosperity, historians have speculated that he provided transportation and various financial services in the Bear Flag Republic.\textsuperscript{537} In 1855 he returned east, this time locating near modern-day Mason City in an early Cerro Gordo community known locally as Owen’s Grove.\textsuperscript{538} In the northern Iowa borderlands Willson put his business acumen to work as he set up a business that loaned money to farmers who put their land up as collateral. He quickly rose to become one of the wealthiest land owners in the county. After moving to Shibboleth (now Mason City), Willson established the first public library in the county, a forerunner to the one which would be immortalized by his grandson, Meredith Willson, in the 1957 Broadway hit \textit{The Music Man}.\textsuperscript{539}
During the mid-1850s, settlement began to accelerate in other parts of the northern Iowa borderlands, as well. Wilson Brewer became the first known white settler of Webster City when he built a cabin on a creek he named for himself.\(^{540}\) Brewer referred to the settlement that sprung up around him as Newcastle-on-the-Boone, a reference to his boyhood hometown of Highcastle-on-the-James, Virginia.\(^ {541}\) By 1854 Brewer had enticed many people of English and Scottish descent to settle in his community, beginning a permanent settlement that endures today. Known as only Newcastle by the time of first platting during October of 1854, the settlement consisted of an area two blocks wide and four blocks long. The citizens renamed the town Webster City following Walter C. Willson’s purchase of the plat from Brewer for $22,000 in 1855.\(^ {542}\) An official United State Post Office became established on October 9, 1855.\(^ {543}\) Willson ran a hotel in the city, and the citizens elected him to the Iowa State House in 1856 where he proved critical in getting Webster County split off from Hamilton County to become its own entity with his city as the seat.\(^ {544}\) Willson also encouraged and oversaw the construction of the Dubuque & Sioux City Railroad through the small town during the 1860s.\(^ {545}\)

Although Cerro Gordo County embodied the northwestern most reach of the Census Bureau’s frontier line in the mid-1850s, Algona, located in what would become Kossuth County, existed as the furthest north significant settlement in Iowa during the mid-1850s. Kossuth

\(^{540}\) Harriet M. Bonebright Closz and Sarah Brewer Bonebright, *Reminiscences of Newcastle, Iowa 1848: A History of the Founding of Webster City, IA.* (Iowa City, IA: Historical Department of Iowa, 1921), 255.

\(^{541}\) Harriet M. Bonebright Closz and Sarah Brewer Bonebright, *Reminiscences of Newcastle, Iowa 1848: A History of the Founding of Webster City, IA.* (Iowa City, IA: Historical Department of Iowa, 1921), 17.

\(^{542}\) Harriet M. Bonebright Closz and Sarah Brewer Bonebright, *Reminiscences of Newcastle, Iowa 1848: A History of the Founding of Webster City, IA.* (Iowa City, IA: Historical Department of Iowa, 1921), 87.

\(^{543}\) Harriet M. Bonebright Closz and Sarah Brewer Bonebright, *Reminiscences of Newcastle, Iowa 1848: A History of the Founding of Webster City, IA.* (Iowa City, IA: Historical Department of Iowa, 1921), 103.

\(^{544}\) Harriet M. Bonebright Closz and Sarah Brewer Bonebright, *Reminiscences of Newcastle, Iowa 1848: A History of the Founding of Webster City, IA.* (Iowa City, IA: Historical Department of Iowa, 1921), 87.

County stands tall as the longest county in Iowa from north to south, taking up the two northernmost positions in the grid, and locates as the seventh county west from the Mississippi River. The east fork of the Des Moines River and its tributaries water the southern two-thirds of the county, while the Blue Earth River rises in the northern part of the county before flowing into Minnesota. As a location where the Blue Earth and Des Moines nearly meet, the county saw significant Wahpekute traffic as they moved between the two rivers prior to American colonization. At the time of first American settlement, roughly 10,000 acres had timber, and contained top-soil consisting of vegetable loam that reached several feet deep throughout most of the county.

Asa C. Call and Ambrose A. Call first settled the county when they arrived at the modern site of county-seat Algona on July 9, 1854. Algona, originally founded in 1854, found its name in an Algonquian word meaning ‘Algonquin Waters.’ Located along the East Fork of the Des Moines River, the settlement served as the northwestern terminus of the mail-route run by the trader Hewitt out of Mason City. “At the site of Algona, I found a tract of good land with a fair supply of timber, some water-power, and near the center of a county; and with those advantages, if I could not make and hold a county seat, it was because I was not the right person,” recorded Call. Similar to Willson, Call had recently returned from a trip to the

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548 Chicago and Northwestern Railway Company, *A History of the Origin of the Place Names Connected with the Chicago & North Western and Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railways.* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 1908), 36.
goldfields of California. Unable to strike it rich out west, Call headed out from Iowa City hoping to find terrain that met his qualifications for settlement. “I was determined to find a place where I could get fine lands and as many other advantages as possible….At the time there was no settlement north of Fort Dodge, which was forty miles from us, and no one on the east nearer than Clear Lake, something over 40 miles east.”\textsuperscript{551} As Rowland Gardner would a couple years later, Call had sought to find a distinct advantage by pre-emptively moving beyond the frontier line. After bringing his wife to his claim in November of 1854, Call spent the winter in Iowa City seeking to enlarge the boundaries of the county and locate the seat at his claim.\textsuperscript{552}

Although Call found the natural environment an ideal location, issues with the Wahpekute complicated initial attempts to survey and settle the area. In June of 1854, two surveyors by the names of Ellis and Colonel Leach began to survey the county, but abandoned their task when confronted by a group of Dakota about six miles north of Algona on the east fork of the Des Moines River.\textsuperscript{553} On July 2, 1854, Ellis and Leach worked on surveying in the northern portion of the county in Cresco Township when a band of Dakota came upon their camp and made off with all of their goods. “This party (Ellis and Leach), not wishing to have a clash with the red skins, while no white settlers were in the county, picked up their instruments and went to Fort Dodge where they told the Calls what had happened only a few days before.”\textsuperscript{554} Unwilling to risk outright confrontation, all at Fort Dodge agreed that they would simply let the

\textsuperscript{551} Benjamin F. Gue, \textit{History of Iowa From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century}, Vol. 3. (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1903), 373.

\textsuperscript{552} Benjamin F. Reed, \textit{History of Kossuth County, Iowa: A Record of All Important Events in Any Manner Relating to Its Existence, Organization, Progress and Achievement from the Earliest Times to the Mid-summer of 1912}, Vol. 1. (Algona, IA: Brookhaven Press, 1913), 39.


\textsuperscript{554} Benjamin F. Reed, \textit{History of Kossuth County, Iowa: A Record of All Important Events in Any Manner Relating to Its Existence, Organization, Progress and Achievement from the Earliest Times to the Mid-summer of 1912}, Vol. 1. (Algona, IA: Brookhaven Press, 1913), 51.
transgression pass. The lack of military support in the area loomed as a major underlying factor of their decision not to seek retribution. “When the detachment abandoned the barracks (at Fort Dodge) in the fall of 1853 and went up into Minnesota to build another fort, the Indians assumed a more warlike appearance and became more daring,” recorded Williams555. While the removal of the military garrison for Fort Dodge had signaled to settlers back east that they area had become safe to settle, it had signaled to the Dakota that the a major threat to their sovereignty and autonomy had disappeared.

Leach’s troubles do not stand as the first recorded assertion of Dakota sovereignty within the county, however. In 1852, a trapper named William Burgart of Northwood recorded a territorial dispute between a band of Dakota and a band of Meskwaki which took place in northern Kossuth County.556 Ko-ko-wah, a Meskwaki leader, first arrived at Clear Lake earlier in 1852 where he learned that roughly sixty Dakota lodges had located on the west side of the East Fork of the Des Moines River. “Ko-ko-wah, with sixty of his warriors, determined to attack them. They arrived in the night and concealed themselves in the grove on the east side of the river about one mile above the Sioux encampment, where unperceived, they learned the exact position of the enemy. In the morning, after many of the Sioux warriors had gone away to hunt, Ko-ko-wah and his men crossed over the river and attacked the Sioux.”557 The attack proved successful, and the Dakota could not hold off the raiding party. The Meskwaki killed sixteen Dakota, some of them women and children.558 The Meskwaki also slaughtered several horses,

555 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa*. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 41.
558 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa*. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 41.
and took a fourteen year old boy captive. “As the Musquakas rushed into the camp of the Sioux, a squaw shot Pa-tak-a-py in the breast. He started to run away, and the same squaw, at a distance of twenty rods, shot him through the body with an arrow, when he fell and expired. But few of the Sioux made their escape, and all their dead were left on the ground unburied.”

The Meskwaki quickly buried the four dead they had lost, and then made haste southeast where they arrived back in Tama County. They prepared for a counterattack, fortifying their village for roughly a week, eventually relaxing when no attack came. They burned the captive boy alive.

Both early stories concerning indigenous peoples in Kossuth County provide meaningful insight into Dakota life in the northern Iowa borderlands in the early 1850s. The Dakota conflict with the Meskwaki illustrates that traditional engagements between autonomous peoples continued into the 1850s, especially beyond the population-based frontier line. The Dakota, victims in the ambush style attack aided by the passing of information to the Meskwaki by white settlers at Clear Lake, actively engaged in occupying and maintaining their role within lands they ranged through for some time. The expected counter-attack which led the Meskwaki to fortify their village also illustrated that they did not expect their ambush to go unpunished, even after they had fled southeast nearly two-hundred miles.

Between the Dakota range in the north and the Meskwaki settlement in central Iowa population consistently built as the frontier continued to stretch west. Franklin County stands as the fifth county west of the Mississippi River in the third tier from the north line of the state.

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559 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa*. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 42.
The Cedar River and its tributaries provide abundant water throughout the county, and the Iowa River crosses the southwestern corner. The county had good quantities of timber in the areas adjacent to the rivers, and large quantities of quarryable stone in the forms of limestone and sandrock. Additionally, deposits of clay suitable for making bricks existed throughout much of the county at the time of initial American settlement. The dark, loamy soil throughout the county provided those hoping to establish grain crop and livestock businesses with suitable conditions for both field and pasture lands.\textsuperscript{562}

A phantom event that occurred on July 9, 1854, stands as the only recorded instance of near-contact between early settlers of Franklin County and indigenous peoples. On that date a report reached Mayne’s Grove, the first town in the county, that “three hundred hostile Indians were on the war path, and marching directly for the settlement.”\textsuperscript{563} Panic gripped the small group of settlers as they surveyed their options: stay and fight to their likely destruction or flee east toward greater security at a more established and populated location. “It was deemed best not to attempt a defense against so formidable a force of savages, so it was determined that the whole population of the county should retreat to Beaver Grove.”\textsuperscript{564} The entire settlement took flight roughly twenty-five miles southeast into Butler County, lingering in Beaver Grove for three weeks before returning to their claims. When they arrived back in Franklin County, they found nothing to indicate that anyone had visited their settlement.\textsuperscript{565} Just the fear sparked by a rumor drove early settlers back from the frontier line in the northern Iowa borderlands of 1854. The

\textsuperscript{564} A.T. Andreas, \textit{Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa} (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1875), 420.
decision to retreat to a more established settlement to the southeast suggests that the settlers believed the roving army of people would come from the west or northwest. The only likely tribal people in the area at the time in that vicinity would be the Dakota. As several other incidents around the same time throughout the counties in the northern Iowa borderlands illustrate, settlers not only expected to encounter the Dakota on the lands from which the government had allegedly dispossessed them of, they believed that the tribe might amass an army in order to maintain their autonomy and sovereignty.

Hampton, the seat of Franklin County, rapidly gained population during the mid-1850s. Surveyors split the county into sixteen congressional townships during the early 1850s, and held its first-election when forty-eight men voted for a slate of officers in the home of James B. Reeve on August 5, 1855. The citizens elected Reeve to the position of judge, and he helped to determine both the location of the seat, two miles east of the geographic center of the county. Reeve also named the town of Hampton, after Hampton Rhodes, Virginia. Reeve had arrived in Franklin County in 1852 to a largely un-colonized landscape. One log cabin, belonging to another arrival of that year, John Mayne, stood as the only structure. In April of 1853, Leander Reeve arrived to meet his brother after taking a train from Ashtubula County, Ohio where their parents farmed. He rode the railroad to its western terminus in Rockford, Illinois, before heading further west by stage coach to Galena, Illinois. From there he walked the one hundred and fifty odd-miles to Mayne’s cabin. The following year, the brothers broke ten-acres of lands adjacent to Mayne with the help of an oxen team and an 1837 John Deere plow.

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567 Tom Savage, *A Dictionary of Iowa Place-Names.* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2007), 386.
purchased in the Cedar Falls area. After a successful first year, Leander briefly returned to Ohio to visit his wife before returning to focus his attention a grand plan: the construction of a stone house. The James brothers worked with their oxen team to haul limestone from nearby Mayne’s Creek, and harvested walnut timbers from a stand known locally as Mayne’s Grove that became the location of the first settlement in the county. In 1855, the town continued to expand with some signs of civilization emerging: church services, a functioning court, and even a class for children taught by the sixteen-year-old Octiva Smith. Mayne’s Grove appeared to be headed toward a bright future. Geographically, however, Mayne’s Grove proved an out of the way location compared to the eventual county-seat. Hampton soon developed as a stop for settlers and goods headed west. Geography provided Hampton with good fortune, its location as a central hub north-south between the communities growing around the military forts in Des Moines and St. Paul, as well as its east-west centrality between Cedar Falls and the site of Fort Dodge. These advantages paired with a proximity to the geographic center of the county to allow for prosperity in the second-half of the nineteenth century. Settlement crept west from Hampton as the mid-1850s continued. Directly to the west of Franklin County lies Wright County. Wright County saw its first American settlement when Major W. Brassfield settled on the Boone River in 1854. Wright County would not see significant population numbers

initially as many settlers located around Hampton, or continued to push west toward the more established Fort Dodge.

Even with the military post abandoned, Fort Dodge still served an authoritative role in the northern Iowa borderlands. In the fall of 1855, the newly elected Governor of Iowa, James W. Grimes, renewed the appointment of William Williams as Executive Officer of the area.\(^{574}\) Also at that time a party of Wahpekute attacked and robbed a man named Broadskenk living on Lizard Creek.\(^{575}\) Williams raised a posse and made out to punish the band. However, before the group of bloodthirsty settlers arrived at Lizard Lake, the band had removed to the Spirit Lake area. Williams speculated Inkpaduta would prove the culprit, and he asserted that the Wahpekute leader often resided in the area surrounding Spirit Lake.\(^ {576}\) After the incident, the Wahpekute seem to have conceded the area around Fort Dodge as settlement continued to build. “Finding that we had a sufficient force at Fort Dodge to meet them, they generally fell back and kept aloof from our neighborhood at the Fort. Little was seen or heard from them during the year of 1856. Small parties only occasionally were seen on or about Lizard Lake, on Indian Creek and along the west branch of the Des Moines above McKnight’s Point, and Big Island Grove.”\(^{577}\) Following a tense summer where Inkpaduta appeared in settler accounts across the northern Iowa borderlands he ventured north to Minnesota where he again tried to draw annuities. This time he proved successful, obtaining annuities for himself and eleven men of his band. After obtaining

\(^{574}\) William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa*. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 51.

\(^{575}\) William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa*. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 52.

\(^{576}\) William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa*. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 54.

\(^{577}\) William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa*. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 56.
the annuities, Inkpaduta lingered briefly before crossing through the Spirit Lake region, down the Little Sioux River, and to the farm of his friend Lamb.

As Inkpaduta ranged throughout the northern Iowa borderlands during the mid-1850s, many parts of the region continued to gain population. New settlers arrived intent on drawing sustenance from the environment, even while actively working to change the landscapes they encountered. New settlers relied heavily on game for sustenance, especially in the time leading up to an initial agricultural crop. As the Wahpekute continued to seek sustenance through ranging west of the developing counties in the eastern and southern portions of the northern Iowa borderlands, a steady stream of new arrivals continued to stake claims to lands throughout the region. Worth County, the northern-most county in the fifth tier of counties from the Mississippi River, began to populate in the mid-1850s. The Winnebago River barely crosses the extreme southwestern corner of the county, and the Shellrock River, a tributary of the Cedar River, provides primary drainage. With the Dakota known to be ranging on the Winnebago River into the mid-1850s, they had a presence in the county prior to American settlement. However, the Shellrock River seemingly represented the easternmost Dakota border during the era.

The first settlers in the county arrived as an off-shoot of a Scandinavian colony in Mitchell County, directly to the east. Reverend C.L. Clausen led his group of Swedish immigrants into the county during the spring of 1853. Settling on the Shellrock, the colony occupied one hundred and sixty acres near the modern site of Northwood, Iowa.

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during the first two years proved static, with many arrivals and departures between the other Swedish colony in Mitchell County. In addition to the Swedes, a colony of Norwegians located slightly to the west, and settlement by these transplanted Americans began to accelerate by 1855. Population reached the frontier-minimum of two-persons per square mile by the summer of 1856. The local histories and other resources curated by the Worth County Historical Society hold no mention of the Dakota, however, the pattern of settlement may have prevented interactions between the settlers and the Wahpekute. The historical record clearly shows that the Dakota moved along the Winnebago River at least until the ‘Grindstone War’ of 1855, at which time they encamped seven miles north of the Clear Lake settlement.\textsuperscript{582} That location would have put the Dakota in Worth County where the river crosses the southwestern corner. The only American recorded instance of the Dakota ranging to the Shellrock took place, as detailed above, between Inkpaduta and two American hunters during 1854. Again, watersheds prove more critical to understanding Dakota boundaries than the survey grid system.

Hancock County, located in the second tier south of the Minnesota border and at the midline of the east-west state line, first had American settlement when Anson Avery arrived on September 9, 1854.\textsuperscript{583} The Winnebago River waters the county in the northeastern portion and several tributaries of the Iowa River water the southern portion. The forested land characteristic of the Winnebago River watershed continues south into Hancock County, and provided early settlers with building materials and fuel. Peat moss, another popular fuel-source in the mid-nineteenth century, covered about 4,000 acres of the county at the time of first settlement, with some of the deposits reaching ten feet in depth in the central and western portions of the

\textsuperscript{583} Pioneer Publishing Company, \textit{The History of Winnebago County and Hancock County Iowa: A Record of Settlement, Organization, Progress and Achievement.} (Chicago, IL: The Pioneer Publishing Company, 1917), 68.
Settlement of the county slowly began during the early 1850s. In addition to Avery, George Nelson also arrived in October of 1854. Although 1855 saw the arrival of a few other families, most of the other arrivals in the mid-1850s chose to either locate at the more established Clear Lake settlement in Cerro Gordo County, or the more northerly settlements on the northern border with Winnebago County along the Winnebago River. The county, originally a part of Wright County due to low-population, officially organized on June 28, 1858.

Winnebago County, the middle one of the northern tier of counties, contains the point where the Winnebago River enters Iowa from Minnesota before exiting into Cerro Gordo County on its way to the Cedar River. Several small prairie pot-hole lakes exist throughout the county, although agricultural tiling practices have eliminated several more diagrammed on the earliest maps of the county. Timber blanketed the southeastern corner of the county at the time of American arrival, while most of the rest of the county contained a rich soil profile covered by prairie. Heavy groves of Black Walnut trees drew interest from early settlers, as well as numerous peat-bogs amassing some two thousand acres and reaching up to six feet in depth in the more tree-free areas. Settlement began in 1855 when George W. Thomas located a cabin on the north side of Rice Lake, and settlement came to Forest City, the county seat, with John Maben and his family when they settled on the east side of the Winnebago River on September

Many of the earliest American arrivals in the forested area along the Winnebago that would become Forest City remarked on the quality and quantity of game in the area.

The heavy groves bordering Lime Creek at the time of the early settlement of the county were prolific in game of different kinds, and many a fine deer from time to time was returning home after an unsuccessful chase after a fat buck, when within a mile of his cabin, and not exceeding a mile and half from the place where Forest City is now located, his attention was attracted by a rustling of the dry leaves and bushes near him. He raised his gun in readiness for a shot, when an enormous black bear presented himself in full view. In the excitement of the moment he fired wide of the mark, while bruin made a charge upon him. Dropping his gun, Mr. Bearse seized his knife and prepared for the contest. The fierce animal sprang at him with open jaws, crushing him to the earth and rolling completely over him. As the hunter fell, he plunged the knife to the hilt into the body of the bear. This only enraged the animal more, and the contest continued, until at last the knife did its fatal work, and the bear rolled over dead, after twenty-four wounds had been inflicted. Mr. Bearse was fearfully lacerated and feinted from exhaustion, but in a short time recovered sufficient strength to crawl to the edge of the timber, where he was found by one of his neighbors and taken home.

Although tales of man triumphing over nature abound in the annals of Forest City, the indigenous peoples that occupied the area up to the year of initial settlement do not appear in many recorded sources. A single, solitary newspaper article from the 1870s Winnebago Press memorializes the close of indigenous occupancy under the title “Early Settler Recalls Indians’ Last Days.” The story, a recollection of an early settler of Fertile, Iowa, in Worth County near the border with Winnebago County, suggested that as the first American arrived on a promontory they saw a retreating line of Ho-Chunk (or Winnebago) exiting in a single-file line to the west.

The settler commented that the peaceable people filed off into the sunset, before commenting that it seemed a fitting analogy for the fate of indigenous peoples as a whole. Forest City has

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maintained ambiguous ties to its indigenous past, while little to no scholarship exists on the peoples who occupied the area prior to American settlement. The place has a distinctly indigenous past, as evidenced by the uncovering of a massive lithic horde by archaeologists and laypeople alike. The collection of local man Arlo Johnson, now on display at Heritage Park of North Iowa, numbers over 10,000 objects. The name stands as an interesting link to the indigenous past of the area, as well as renaming Lime Creek in 1923 to the Winnebago River. Both of these names memorialize a non-existent indigenous past, utilizing the Ho-Chunk, who actually never occupied the area located just outside of the 1830 Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien Neutral Zone boundary, while ignoring the likelihood of a Dakota, Sauk, Meskwaki, and Ioway past.

Inkpaduta and his band of Wahpekute also undoubtedly frequented Buena Vista County, located in the third tier from the western boundary and the third row of counties south of the Minnesota border. The county contains a meandering portion of the Little Sioux River in its northern reaches, and the Wahpekute passed through the area in the mid-1850s each year as they travelled from their summer home around Spirit Lake to where they wintered near the village of Smithland.591 A large tributary flows into the Little Sioux River from the south, and along these watercourses stood the vast majority of timber stood at the time of initial American settlement. “In the southern part of the county is situated Storm Lake, a beautiful body of clear water, with steep banks, with fine undulating prairie farming lands stretching away in all directions,” recorded Andreas in 1875.592 With limited timber supplies and no quarryable stone, early settlers

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592 A.T. Andreas, Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1875), 456.
relied on the manufacture of bricks from the clay found in the county.\textsuperscript{593} The initial government survey of the county began in 1855, and the first American settler became Abner Bell, of New Jersey, in May of 1856.\textsuperscript{594} His brother-in-law, William R. Weaver, as well as his family, also arrived at that time. Seven other male settlers resided in the county by the close of 1856.

Further down the Little Sioux River, another settlement formed. Although Sioux City features most prominently in the history of Woodbury County, another adjacent early settlement garners the lion’s share of our attention in this work. Smithland grew on the shores of the Little Sioux River, roughly thirty-five miles southeast of Sioux City.\textsuperscript{595} A caravan of twenty-three persons arrived at Smithland on June 5, 1856.\textsuperscript{596} The leader of the caravan, a prosperous farmer from Illinois named Elijah Adams, arrived with one-hundred head of cattle and had purchased three-hundred-twenty acres of land in Little Sioux Township, Woodbury County, for $3.60 an acre.\textsuperscript{597} His wife Rebecca Buntin Adams joined him, as well as their four children.\textsuperscript{598} In 1830 both of their families had relocated to Boone County, Indiana, where the couple married in 1837.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{595} Will Leach Clark, \textit{History of the Counties of Woodbury and Plymouth, Iowa: Including an Extended Sketch of Sioux City, Their Early Settlement and Progress to the Present Time, a Description of Their Historic and Intersecting Localities, Sketches of the Townships, Cities and Villages}. (New York, NY: Brookhaven Press, 1890), 832.
\bibitem{596} Will Leach Clark, \textit{History of the Counties of Woodbury and Plymouth, Iowa: Including an Extended Sketch of Sioux City, Their Early Settlement and Progress to the Present Time, a Description of Their Historic and Intersecting Localities, Sketches of the Townships, Cities and Villages}. (New York, NY: Brookhaven Press, 1890), 63.
\bibitem{598} Will Leach Clark, \textit{History of the Counties of Woodbury and Plymouth, Iowa: Including an Extended Sketch of Sioux City, Their Early Settlement and Progress to the Present Time, a Description of Their Historic and Intersecting Localities, Sketches of the Townships, Cities and Villages}. (New York, NY: Brookhaven Press, 1890), 172.
\end{thebibliography}
With three children in tow, the young couple headed west in the fall of 1844 to Rock Island County, Illinois. Following the birth of a son, Lige, the family headed toward Iowa in 1856.

The Hawthorns stand as the other prominent early Smithland family that left behind a bevy of historical information. Born in Washington County, Maryland, David T. and Catherine (Harshberger) Hawthorne married on December 21, 1848. In the spring of 1849 the couple headed west, eventually arriving in Rock Island County, Illinois, where they first met the Adams’ family and David came into their employ. Agreeing to assist with his boss’s livestock on the march west to Iowa, the Hawthorns, as well as their three children, Mary, John, and Virginia, embarked in a convoy of ox teams pulling five covered wagons and two open wagons. Other Rock Island County residents ready to strike out for the chance at a better future beyond the frontier made up the rest of the party. Upon arrival in Smithland, the group found about a dozen log huts containing roughly twenty-five people. James A. McDonald had arrived from Illinois to settle at the location in 1854. Inkpaduta’s friend, Curtis Lamb had arrived in Woodbury County in 1851. While constructing cabins, Adams and the other families from Illinois slept in wagons for over a month. The long stay in the wagons resulted from the priority given to agricultural pursuits. “Breaking prairie, planting, and harvesting were the tasks of first importance. Only a week’s rest was allowed the oxen after the arduous journey.” By the close of July, Adams and Hawthorn, as well as their sons and hired men, had turned over one-hundred acres of sod with the aid of two yoke of oxen and two twenty-four inch breaking plows. The group hoped to raise enough hay for the one-hundred head of cattle that Adams had brought

west with him. Their hopes would be dashed when a roaring prairie fire emerged from the south, decimating over two-thirds of the crop right before harvest.

Inkpaduta and his band had become familiar to the settlers who lived at Smithland prior to 1856, and Curtis Lamb recorded that he had established friendly relations with the Wahpekute from his earliest days on the Little Sioux River.

He (Lamb) even entrusted his wife and children to the Indian’s care when it was necessary to make a trip to Kanesville for supplies. If logs were needed for the fireplace, Inkpaduta sent squaws to carry them in. He kept Mrs. Lamb’s table supplied with fresh fish and venison in her husband’s absence. Lamb learned the Sioux language from Inkpaduta, according to his own account. In one of their first encounters, when Inkpaduta and his warriors were in an ugly mood, Lamb succeeded in pacifying them with some of his best turnips. The Indians at first spurned his offering, but later tasted the turnips and accepted with thanks.601

Relations proved friendly, adaptive, and showed compromise between the Dakota and the initial settlers at Smithland. Others in the area, including a trader originally from Traverse des Sioux named Martin McLeod also spoke to the neighborliness of Inkpaduta during the early 1850s. McLeod often extended Inkpaduta credit, providing a line between fifty and sixty dollars, a significant sum for the time-period.602

The following three years saw Inkpaduta and his band return each fall to Smithland. Vernon Blank, one of Lamb’s descendants, wrote: “for three successive autumns, the now friendly Indians camped on Lamb’s place and traded with him. Every spring the Indians went north to where the wild ducks and geese laid their eggs. Lamb became the Indians’ trader, lending them steel traps to help with their hunting, which they returned in the spring. They would trade elk, deer, otter, mink, beaver, wolf, fox, and other skins and venison hams, which he

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hauled to Kanesville ninety miles south, to sell for cash.” Inkpaduta and his band adapted to their changing surroundings through forming new relationships with the developing settler community at Smithland while adjusting their lifeways to an emerging system.

Lamb’s son John asserted that Inkpaduta had initially seemed intimidating and even potentially violent, he explained a relationship built on tribute and mutual adaptation, writing: “(Inkpaduta) came to our house with intention of killing us (in 1851). My father gained their friendship by treating them kindly and giving them food. At that time there were lots of elk, deer, buffalo, wild turkey by the thousands, and cougar. The river was alive with fish and there was wild fruit of every kind. We were all neighbors and truly enjoyed ourselves.” However, the younger Lamb’s statement also shows misinterpretation of a basic Dakota cultural construct.

The Dakota practices of dropping by unannounced and begging illustrate a basic cultural misunderstanding. Since stopping by a neighbor’s home unannounced was not considered rude or unacceptable behavior to the Dakotas, they did not understand the whites’ objections. Furthermore, to the Dakotas, there was a difference between begging for food and goods and making a request for them. When the whites first arrived, the Dakotas offered them ducks, prairie chickens, and other game, along with maple sugar and wild rice. In this way they showed generosity and hospitality, both important virtues to the Dakotas. When whites were reluctant to share or refused to give food or gifts in return, the Dakotas saw them as stingy and socially rude, especially when the Dakotas were hunger and greatly in need.

Without the pressure of declining game and winters of a normal ferocity, relations seemingly flourished between the earliest settlers at Smithland and Inkpaduta’s band of Wahpekute, even if initial meetings often proved tense. The population consisted primarily Lamb and his family during those first few years.

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Inkpaduta specifically got along well with Lamb due to the American’s dislike of trading alcohol with natives. Inkpaduta once directly asserted to Lamb that he disliked many American traders because they often utilized alcohol to gain more friendly terms while bartering. Early in their relationship, in 1852, members of Inkpaduta’s band had gotten drunk and fought with members of another Dakota band.\textsuperscript{605} An unnamed brother of Inkpaduta died in the resultant violence, and Lamb helped to treat the wounds of the attacker. Inkpaduta took offense, and showed up at Lamb’s door painted for war. However, Lamb calmed Inkpaduta down to a point where the two resumed amicable relations. The next fall, Inkpaduta again arrived at Lamb’s door. This time, Inkpaduta requested Lamb’s help in deciding what to do about several traders who had arrived in the area and trading in alcohol. Inkpaduta suggested confronting the men and breaking their barrels of liquor, however, Lamb convinced him that talking to the men might work just as effectively. The two went and confronted the traders together, and the men agreed to leave the area.\textsuperscript{606} The two men had formed an adaptive relationship that mutually benefited everyone living in Smithland. However, with the arrival of the Adams family and the others from Rock Island, the population of the small settlement had grown significantly by the fall of 1856.

As the calendar turned from 1855 to 1856 the northern Iowa borderlands had experienced a half-decade of significant change. Counties throughout had seen their first settlers, first towns, and gained population to a point where they embodied the American frontier. The military presence provided by the garrison at Fort Dodge no longer seemed necessary to the United States government, and the soldiers moved on to Fort Ridgley north of the Minnesota border.

Government hired men surveyed thousands of acres, and eager American settlers arrived to plow under the prairie. Plant and animal species vital to Dakota sustenance in the region had begun to fail, and the murder of Sintominiduta shifted responsibility to Inkpaduta during a time of extreme adaptation for the Wahpekute. Tensions continuously waxed and waned between the Dakota and their new neighbors, as evidenced by a series of incidents at diverse geographic localities throughout the northern Iowa borderlands. At the close of 1855 the Dakota continued to range from summer villages just beyond the frontier at Spirit Lake to just north of Smithland, but 1856 proved to be the final year that Inkpaduta and the Wahpekute lived in the northern Iowa borderlands without major incident.
CHAPTER FIVE: “THE REVENGE OF THE INDIANS WAS SATISFIED”

After the tumultuous first-half of the 1850s, Inkpaduta arrived at Smithland in the fall of 1856. He and his band would not be settling in for a restful winter in the Little Sioux River Valley. Over the past year, American populations throughout the northern Iowa borderlands had expanded, further taxing natural resources while creating the potential for conflict between the Wahpekute and their new neighbors. Smithland had also grown, and Inkpaduta arrived to find his old friend Charles Lamb had sold his lands and moved to Sioux City.607 In Lamb’s place several new arrivals proved less neighborly. Many of the arrivals had heeded the call of the age, striking west in the hopes of realizing a dream built on Jeffersonian Agrarianism and landing on the far-famed prairies of Iowa. Many new settlers arrived throughout the northern Iowa borderlands, taxing natural resources heavily. A brutal winter lingered on the horizon for all, and the challenges resultant pushed many throughout the region toward critical breaking points.

New settlers streaming into the area reshaped lands and changed the nature of relations between the environment and the inhabitants of the northern Iowa borderlands. In 1856, seven out of twenty-five counties in the northern Iowa borderlands had seen survey and improvement of acres. By 1860 that number ballooned to twenty-four out of a possible twenty-five. First settlers squatted in promising river valleys, colonies of people relocated from further east hoping to find a better life. They plowed land, planted crops, and agriculture took root to a point where some farmers sent goods to broader markets. 1856 saw seven counties record a harvest for external markets, and by 1860 that number rose to twenty-four. People arrived in the area for a variety of reasons, among them a man named Rowland Gardner and his family.608

608 All paragraph statistics derived from: F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed. 1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the
Rowland Gardner clearly perceived himself as moving beyond the marching advance of civilization when he sold his lands in Cerro Gordo County and removed beyond the frontier-line to the shores of Lake Okoboji during the late summer of 1856. Gardner sought to establish an agricultural homestead with the help of his son-in-law, wife, and children. Gardner’s reliance on the town of Fort Dodge to provide supplies during the first year on Lake Okoboji illustrated that had not sought to remove entirely from the reach of civilization or its markets, but instead found the best opportunity to obtain land in pre-emption of unsurveyed lands in order to provide competency for his family in a way underwritten by the prevalent nineteenth century cultural conception of Jeffersonian Agrarianism.

Competency, as articulated by Daniel Vickers, included the participation in the developing agricultural market that advanced into Iowa alongside the railroad. Removal beyond the frontier-line into an area not yet settled by other Americans provided Gardner with his best chance at establishing competency on an intergenerational level. The allure of a potentially better tomorrow, like that which drew Englishmen from the Old World to the New, stood as Rowland Gardner’s best option to seek a stable life through the establishment of an agricultural homestead just beyond the advance of the frontier-line. Rowland Gardner stands as representative of the typical Iowa pioneer of the 1850s. Scholars have mythologized the Iowa pioneer after the fact to become central to the identity of the state in its modern context. Festivals and small museums throughout the state mythologize the men and women who ‘broke the prairies,’ and genealogies that mark descent from pioneer families continue to be pointed to

*territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data.* (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).
with pride. The pioneer ethos of Iowa was well summarized by Robert G. Cousins in his address at Iowa Day of the Trans-Mississippi Exposition held in Omaha, Nebraska, during 1898:

Our pioneers left doubt sitting on a boulder in the east and packed their things and started for the west. Rivers had to be forded, trees had to be felled; cabins had to be built – the rifle must be kept loaded – so much the better, there was self-reliance. Corn and coffee had to be ground, and on the same mill – so much the better, there was ingenuity. Teeth had to be filled, and there was no painless dentistry. Disease and injury must be dealt with, and the doctor fifty miles away. Life must be lightened, lonely hearts must be cheered . . . . hold fast, thou sturdy denizen and gentle helpmate of the rich and wondrous empire, infinite goodness guards thee and the fertile fields are ready to reward.

Ah, pampered people of later generations, when you imagine modern hardships, think of the courage and the trials and the ingenuity of pioneers when there were no conveniences but the forest and the axe, the wide rolling prairie and the ox-team, the great blue sky, the unsolved future and the annual ague!609

To understand the motivations and outlook of Rowland Gardner and those like him, the simplistic tropes and mythologies that have come to be associated with the early pioneer must be abandoned. Hamlin Garland and Herbert Quick, found fame and success through creating nostalgia filled works of their own boyhoods on the prairie. Writers, including most famously Laura Ingalls Wilder, would continue to preserve and transmit the pioneer ethos, a fondness for the ‘wild’ country, and a sense of pride in challenges overcome through generations of proud Midwesterners.

Consciously or not, Rowland Gardner had heeded the cries of “Go west young man, and grow up with the country,” written by John Babsone Lane Soule in an 1851 *Terre Haute Express*

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editorial. Those words echoed through the hearts of minds of individuals throughout the nation as many folks decided to strike out for the ever-developing American frontier during the middle of the nineteenth century. Gardner stands as representative of that class of men who actively sought to help tame the continent, and although settler population often did not consider the repercussions of American expansion their actions had consequences for indigenous peoples.

It stands to reason that the actions of American citizens in the first half of the nineteenth century helped create and sustain the long era of Indian removal as much as the soldiers acting on the orders of a distant president did. In other words, American expansion on the local, regional, and national levels has always been about Indian removal. It is not isolated to a particular moment in time, and it is not the handiwork of a lone-wolf president or Congress. Instead, removal is an ongoing historical process, from the American past to the American present, in which every generation has the opportunity to sanction or condemn the dispossession and dislocation enacted by the generation that came before.611

Although Gardner undoubtedly did not view his actions as dispossessive or in the wrong, understanding the role of settler-colonizers in the undermining of indigenous sovereignty and autonomy stands as necessary to new narratives of events like Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake.

Gardner, the humble employee of a comb factory in Cayuga, New York, took up the line of march with many others during the period. What motivated Gardner, and men like him, to leave a stable life in the gradually industrializing Northeast United States to wander beyond the ambiguous frontier-line to start an agricultural homestead? Gardner found motivation in potential economic gain through pre-emption, through the attainment of ‘competency,’ and other ideals of his day including agrarianism. Gardner’s understanding of how the frontier moved, the contemporary location of frontier in relation to his time of movement, and how it continued to

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move in order to provide the optimal opportunity for pioneering individuals underlie any considerations of economic and cultural motivations for his quest westward.

When viewed through the lens available in the historiographies of American agriculture and the American frontier, historians can gain better insight into the motivations of Rowland Gardner. The lack of evidence left behind by Rowland Gardner makes thoroughly assessing what might have led him to pack up his family and move from the settled comforts of upstate-New York to the fertile plains of Iowa more difficult. Aside from his purchases in the register of Joseph Hewitt, the writings of his daughter, and a few other primary documents, not many other sources exist. However, the reconstruction of Gardner’s motivations can be achieved through understanding what economic and cultural realities faced Gardner each day, evaluating the specific decisions he made, and how his actions manifested the culture of his times. A full investigation of Gardner and his motivations must include not only the primary evidence he left behind, but also how historians have assessed the developing frontier, as well as the communities developing within it, as the settlement era took shape during the mid-nineteenth century.

The existing evidence suggests that Rowland Gardner fit an ideal of the former Northeasterner turned pioneer. Born on a family farm in the rural area surrounding New Haven, Connecticut, in 1815, Gardner eventually struck out from the family’s established agricultural enterprise to find gainful employment at a comb factory in Cayuga, New York. Gardner, a devout Methodist Episcopalian who lived in the ‘burned-over’ district of upstate New York found himself at the head of a rapidly growing family following his marriage to Frances M.

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Smith in March of 1836.613 In the fall of 1854, facing a limited income and a growing household, Gardner heeded the advice of John Babson Lane Soule and struck-out for the eight-year-old state of Iowa. “Father was an energetic, wide-awake man – a true type of pioneer – and when he left the state of New York it was his settled intention to go west of the Mississippi, and make his home on the far-framed prairies of Iowa,” wrote Abbie Gardner-Sharp. “We turned our backs upon civilization, its comforts and refinements, to take up again the line of march.”614 The Gardner’s eventually arrived in the northern Iowa borderlands, first purchasing land on the edge of the existing ‘frontier line’ in modern-day Cerro Gordo County, before eventually deciding to sell and pre-emptively strike out into the unsurveyed area beyond the frontier line.

Preemption, or “the preferential right of a settler on public lands to buy his claim at a modest price,” played an important role in the motivations of men like Rowland Gardner during the nineteenth century.615 In his monumental work History of Public Land Law Development, Paul Wallace Gates wrote: “the occupying settler’s preferential right to buy the public land he had squatted upon and the right to the value of the improvements inadvertently made on private land – were carried wherever land-seeking pioneers went and were incorporated into the land systems of colonies and states and later into that of the Federal government.”616 In 1853 the United States Congress made an adjustment to existing pre-emption laws to allow for settlement on unsurveyed lands in specific geographic locations, and the government slowly extended the

practice to more locales until it officially became the law of the land in 1862.\textsuperscript{617} By leaving the surveyed lands in Clear Lake to extend to unsurveyed lands beyond the frontier line, Rowland Gardner hoped to capitalize on pre-emption in order to gain an advantage in the lands he planned to settle on long-term.

Daniel Vickers conception of competency in his 1994 work \textit{Farmers & Fishermen} provides another way to consider the motivations of Rowland Gardner. A common conception throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the United States and England, Vickers theorized that competency motivated settlers to establish comfortable independence for themselves and their offspring.\textsuperscript{618} Vickers ties his conception of competency back to the original Puritan settlers of New England, suggesting that individuals had decided to embark on the journey to the New World in the hopes of establishing the security embodied in a settled life based around agriculture. Vickers defined competency as independence primarily based on land ownership, although he also highlighted the importance of skill and capital.\textsuperscript{619} “They were willing to chance their removal to the wilderness only on the promise of ‘land and means of livelihood,’ which the founders had extended to all comers of good quality.”\textsuperscript{620} The establishment of competency as a cultural construct throughout the northeastern United States influenced the ideas of individuals living in the area even as continued cross-Atlantic migration and the reproduction of individual families made the dream of intergenerational security less and less available to individuals throughout the region. As historians have asserted, most notably Hal

S. Barron in his 1988 work *Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century New England*, economic vitality drained out of many northeastern rural communities as falling land availability made it incredibly difficult for families to settle their children around them.\(^{621}\) If Gardner, and others like him, wanted to farm, they needed to seek out new lands in the west.

Rowland Gardner found motivation to head westward in the hope of securing land of good quality that could furnish him with competency in the traditional cultural conception inherent in the New England of his Connecticut youth. As Vickers moved through the early establishment of the New England economy to close his study at the year 1850, just a few short years prior to the Gardner family’s departure for the frontier, he concludes:

> But in time, as labor and capital accumulated within the colony and the easy access to uncleared land diminished, recourse to paid employment became a necessity - either as a means to establishing one’s independence in later life or, for the less fortunate, as a permanent condition rooted in lifetime poverty. Thus an internal market in labor gradually came into being.\(^{622}\)

Rowland Gardner had found his chances at gaining competency through his own intergenerational family farm in Connecticut insufficient, and had become a participant in the developing internal market for labor in New York. Realizing that he could not achieve competency through the existing labor market, he sought long-term stability through removal beyond the Mississippi River and onto the frontier. In this way, Gardner embodied the same drive as the early Puritan settlers migrating to the New World. Gardner fits into the model created by Vickers as an individual who sought to achieve independence later in life, utilizing his


position at the comb factory as a means to the end of eventually removing to Iowa in hopes of gaining an agricultural homestead suitable for establishing a better life for his family. As Gardner’s family grew, he needed to parlay his earnings at the comb factory into the necessary means for removing to the frontier.

Scholars have consistently discussed the problem of exactly when, how, and to what ends pioneers crossed the imaginary frontier line. At the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893, the fifth speaker in a sparsely attended symposium presented a thesis on *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. Although Frederick Jackson Turner’s presentation may have battled through the drooping eyelids of those who second-guessed their decision to attend an academic symposium over Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, his work opened eyes and debates throughout academia that rage into the modern-age. Turner theorized that the consistent movement of the frontier-line forced the young United States to create a distinct identity through adaptation to the conditions created by pioneers interacting with and overcoming primitive societies. “This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character,” wrote Turner. According to Turner, the fluidity of American life borne out of the frontier environment established and refined the ideals of freedom and democracy that enjoy common centrality in the American identity.

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To formally proclaim the end of the frontier, as well as its central importance to American identity, Turner had relied upon a definition of the frontier based on population density explained aptly by census geographer Henry Gannett in 1882 when he wrote:

…an arbitrary line must be drawn somewhere beyond which the country must be considered as unsettled, although it may not be absolutely without inhabitants. Such a line may be properly taken as to exclude regions having less than two inhabitants to a square mile. All the country outside this line may fairly be considered as unsettled territory, peopled, if at all, by a few scattering hunters, prospectors, and cattle herders.\(^{626}\)

This relatively unpeopled area serves a central importance to considering the motivations of Rowland Gardner in his selection of lands in the west. When Gardner originally arrived in Iowa, he purchased lands near modern-day Clear Lake, an area that had risen above the frontier-minimum of two persons per square mile. Cerro Gordo County had seen significant growth during the early 1850s. The towns of Nora Springs, Masonic Grove (now Mason City), and Clear Lake all initially settled between 1850 and 1855.\(^{627}\) Although the government did not survey the county in the 1850 United States Census, it contained in excess of two persons per square mile at the time of the 1860 United States Census.\(^{628}\) The Account book of Joseph Hewitt, the first American to settle in the county and a merchant who conducted business with Gardner and other citizens in the area starting in 1855, further illustrated the movement of Cerro Gordo County beyond the frontier line limit of two persons per square mile.\(^{629}\) Starting with Hewitt’s first log-book entry upon his arrival in the county during 1851, the steadily increasing


\(^{627}\) Skipper, John, Ed. *Mason City and Clear Lake Memories: The 1800s-1930s.* (Mason City, IA: Globe Gazette, 2016).

\(^{628}\) F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed., *1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data.* (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).

\(^{629}\) Mason City Public Library Archives., *Joseph Hewitt Log-Book and Register.* (Mason City, IA: Unpublished).
number of customers, the diversification of needs, and other attributes point to the area’s population rising beyond individuals simply seeking to homestead and to a more dynamic community structure. By opting out of his initial land purchase in favor of removing beyond the frontier line into unsettled territory, Rowland Gardner had chosen to not participate in the developing community structures of Cerro Gordo County in favor of pre-emption.

When Rowland Gardner sold his lands at Clear Lake and pushed west beyond Cerro Gordo County, he struck out for a chain of lakes where no other Americans had yet settled. He wound up on the shores of Lake Okoboji, in what would become Dickinson County.\footnote{Abbie Gardner-Sharp, \textit{History of the Spirit Lake Massacre & Captivity of Miss Abbie Gardner} (London, UK: Lenour-Oakpast, 2011), 27.} Located in the third tier of counties from the western border of the state, Dickinson stands as the northernmost county in that line. The most elevated county in the state in regard to sea level, the county’s drainage comes primarily from the Little Sioux River and its tributaries located in the western portion.\footnote{Pioneer Publishing Company, \textit{History of Emmet County and Dickinson County, Iowa: A Record of Settlement, Organization, Progress and Achievement. Vol 1.} (Chicago, IL: Pioneer Publishing Company, 1917), 1-15.} The large chain of lakes known commonly as the Iowa Great Lakes covers a significant part of the eastern half of the county. Aside from the surface covered by water, the terrain of the county consisted of undulating prairie blanketing rich soil. “(The county) has a good soil of dark loam and exhaustless fertility, well adapted to the growth of all kinds of grain, vegetables, and grasses cultivated in Northern Iowa. It is also a good stock raising county, and there is an abundance of pure water and nutritious grass, combined with shelter in the groves about the lake,” recorded Andreas in 1875.\footnote{A.T. Andreas, \textit{Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa} (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1875), 467.} The county housed the site of Inkpaduta’s summer
village prior to the arrival of American settlers in the summer of 1856, and here the Dakota flexed their power in a last desperate action against the onset of settlement.

As the Gardner family pushed west, they crossed just south of Emmett County. Located in the northernmost row of counties south of the Minnesota border and in the fourth tier from the western boundary of the state, Emmet County contains the main branch of the Des Moines River, as well as east fork which originates in the county at Lake Okamanpadu.633 “Numerous small lakes of beautifully clear water are scattered over the county, among which are the Iowa in the northeast corner, the Tuttle five or six miles west of it, while near the center of the county is Swan Lake, a very irregular body of water several miles in length.”634 The western portion of the county also had roughly nine prairie pothole lakes at the time of initial settlement. Each of these bodies of water contained stands of timber prior to settlement, making it one of the best timbered counties in the state. Fish abounded in the many rivers, streams, and lakes, providing sustenance for occupants both before and after American settlement. Oak, walnut, maple, hickory, elm, and cottonwood comprised the bulk of timber throughout the county.635

Similarly to many of the bordering counties, 1856 saw the first arrival of American settlement in Emmet County. Each of the initial eight male settlers who arrived during the summer of 1856 located near the present-day town of Estherville.636 Settlement slowed after the attack of Inkpaduta and his band of Wahpekute Dakota in March 1857, and the state would not officially organize the county until February of 1859. The population of the county stood at one

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hundred and five at the time of the 1860 United States Census. In 1858 surveyors laid out the town of Estherville on the most suitable site of water power in the county along the Des Moines River. Following the events to the west at Spirit Lake in 1857, the government stationed a small military garrison at Estherville in order to provide “protection of the border against the Indians.” The garrison consisted of a fort and stockade. No records remain that indicate the Wahpekute Dakota interacted with the first settlers of Emmet County.

While the Gardner’s moved west from Clear Lake, they stopped briefly at Algona in Kossuth County. The Gardner family did not extensively document the particulars of their stop in Algona, however, the location represented the most westerly settlement in the northern-most potion of Iowa in 1856. During the previous year, Algona had seen the occasional presence of indigenous peoples. Asa Call did not record the specifics of what tribe he came in contact with, but he does note that the leader of the band drew a map detailing with great accuracy the general geography of the upper-Midwest and Great Plains.

I was much struck by the accuracy of this Indian’s geographical knowledge. He made a map on the sand in which he marked every river, from the Red River of the North, the Missouri, and Yellowstone, the Running Water and Platte, and the Minnesota, showing just how it interlocked with the Red River and the Des Moines and the Mississippi. No white man who had studied the geography of the country could mark them down more accurately. He located all the forts and every settlement of the Waseches [sic] and where they were cultivating Waheska [sic].

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637 F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed., 1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).

638 Marshall McKusick, The Iowa Northern Border Brigade. (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1975), 38.

Call ascribed great geographic knowledge to the leader of this band concerning the general geography. Rivers and the watersheds they form served a critical purpose for treaty negotiation and implementation. Clearly, whomever Call encountered had an excellent grasp of not only the local area, but also the broader geographic domain. Secondly, although Call’s ethnocentricity prevented him from recording the chief’s name or even tribe of the people he came into contact with, his utilization of indigenous language allows some insight into the identity of the mysterious band. Waseches, which Call later noted as ‘white man’ could easily be a misspelling of the Dakota word wabaçiçu which most commonly translates as a word meaning a non-Indian, white, or European person.640 Additionally, Waheska, which Call later indicated to mean corn most likely translates to be the Dakota word for corn, Wamnaheza.641 Call most likely had encountered a Dakota band. With most other bands accounted for north of the Iowa border by the agents at the reservations, Inkpaduta stands out as the most likely chief that Call could have met one year prior to the outbreak of violence at Spirit Lake.

Aside from the map-making prowess of the chief who came into contact with Call during the summer of 1856, Call additionally recorded that a “large body of Indians came down and….the Chief of the band took particular pains at my house to restrain his people.”642 Call says during that visit he did not fear attack, but that he stood “always on guard and permitted no liberties” when native people arrived in the area. With no military protection, Call’s settlement met his list of necessities for a successful future county-seat, however, being on the edge of the frontier constantly worried him until the attack at Spirit Lake. “Up to the time of the massacre, I had always been afraid of an Indian attack, but after that I knew that we were safe. The revenge

of the Indians was satisfied, and also their care for their own safety would take them out of this range. Call’s words reflect that he felt some type of last stand by the indigenous population of Iowa would prove necessary before the area would be safe for final settlement.

During this time settlers also arrived in Palo Alto County, located in the fourth tier of counties from the western border of Iowa and in the second row south of the Minnesota border. The county contains the west fork of the Des Moines River, a watershed that winds its way diagonally from the northwest to the southwest corners. Bridge Creek and Cylinder Creek make their way into the Des Moines River from either side, to provide drainage for the northeast and southeast corners of the county. Several small prairie pothole lakes, including Silver, Lost Island, Elbow, Rush, and Medium, all rest near the western boundary of the county. Containing in excess of 2,000 acres of native timber along the Des Moines River and tributaries, Palo Alto contained burr oak, walnut, hickory, cottonwood, maple, elm, ash, and hackberry to furnish settlers with energy and building material. Rich soil lurks beneath the rolling surface of the county and yielded a variety of wild fruits including plums, grapes, strawberries, and raspberries in the pre-colonial era.

Similarly to Dickinson County, Palo Alto saw its first American settlement during the summer of 1856 when a colony of Irish farmers arrived near the present town of Emmetsburg on July 5, 1856. Seven families made up the initial group, all migrating in masse from a colony in Kane County, Illinois. During the duration of 1856 and 1857, several large influxes of population arrived and spread throughout the west fork of the Des Moines River. Settlement

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stalled in March of 1857 when Inkpaduta and his band of Wahpekute Dakota attacked the settlement of Spirit Lake to the northwest, and about fifty residents made up the population of the county at its date of organization on December 20, 1858. Rowland Gardner pushed through Kossuth, Emmet, and Palo Alto Counties as he made his west, continuing to look for an ideal location for his family to create a new home. Gardner arrived at Lake Okoboji during the late summer of 1856. Gardner set about providing his family with shelter almost immediately. On the south shore of West Okoboji Lake he built a lofted cabin that measured fifteen feet by twenty feet. The Gardners shared the small cabin with the Luce family. Rowland, his wife Frances, daughters Mary, Eliza, and Abigail, son Rowland Jr., as well as Mary’s husband Harvey Luce, all shared the space during their first few months on the shores of West Okoboji Lake. By the end of the summer they had neighbors, James and Mary Mattock, located roughly a mile away. Too late in the season to begin farming, the Gardners passed the fall gathering what supplies before settling in for winter.

In 1856, Inkpaduta and his band of Wahpekute again showed up at the Minnesota River reservation of the Dakota seeking to draw an annuity payment. He had journeyed north from Spirit Lake, and the agent responsible for the annuity initially seemed determined not to provide the band with annuities citing their non-recognition in the 1851 treaty and the reality that they did not live on the reservation as stipulated in the documents. Several Dakota living on the reservation stressed to the agent that Inkpaduta had marriage and blood ties to the Wahpekute and Sisseton listed in the treaty. These likely relatives of Inkpaduta suggested that these ties

entitled the band to a share of the annuities. Kintzing Prichette, an Indian Bureau Official, firmly recorded that the Dakotas who vouched for Inkpaduta only did so because he threatened them, but the greater likelihood rests in Inkpaduta drawing on traditional kinship ties for leverage. Eventually, the agent agreed to furnish the annuities for Inkpaduta and eleven men in his band. Also while on the reservation, one of Inkpaduta’s sons married a Wahpekute woman from another band.

Following the ceremony the band departed to hunt buffalo in South Dakota before returning to Iowa. As they made their way back from the west they stopped in the town of Springfield, Minnesota. Another small group of settlers had made inroads in the unsettled reaches just beyond the northern Iowa borderlands in the summer of 1856. William, George, and Charles Wood arrived in what they named Springfield on account of a spring near their initial cabin site in July of 1856. The brothers had left behind a farm in Indiana before embarking west for the opportunity to pre-emptively find better lands beyond the frontier line. Initially arriving at Mankato, the brothers struck due south by southwest and arrived on the northernmost reaches of the west fork of the Des Moines River at the modern-day site of Jackson, Minnesota. The brothers quickly built up a large cabin that served as both a residence and a store for those who would hopefully soon arrive to also settle in the area. They did not have long to wait, and by the end of the summer an infusion arrived of mainly recent English and Scottish residents who moved north from near Fort Dodge in Webster County, Iowa. The settlers completed over a dozen log cabins and hunkered down in advance of the bitterly cold winter. The settlement struggled with resupply, relying primarily on Fort Dodge roughly one-hundred miles

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to the south and Mankato roughly seventy-five miles to the northeast. When Inkpaduta visited Springfield he told the Wood brothers that he had never harmed a white man.

From Springfield Inkpaduta moved to Loon Lake by November. While there the band met Orlando C. Howe, R.V. Wheelock, and B.F. Parmenter. Howe, a young lawyer originally from Vermont, had journeyed to Iowa in 1855 hoping to parlay his legal services into a sustainable living. Howe and the other men had journeyed into and beyond the northern Iowa borderlands in order to find suitable lands to pre-emptively settle on. Loon Lake, just north of Spirit Lake in Jackson County, Minnesota, did not appeal to the settlers and they soon headed back south. They eventually went to Newton, Iowa, to gather supplies before making an arduous journey back to the Spirit Lake area during February 1857. At that time Howe discovered the carnage left behind by Inkpaduta’s band. Their visit at Loon Lake in the fall of 1856, however, proved friendly. After an initial meeting, Inkpaduta and his band took their leave and crossed the border back into Iowa in order to winter along the Little Sioux River. As the band descended the river they encountered settlers in a variety of locations including the newly forming towns of Peterson and Cherokee. Relations between the band and settlers continued amicably, and two of Inkpaduta’s sons even had shooting and wrestling contests with several settlers at Peterson. The band eventually continued down the Little Sioux, arriving near the confluence with the Missouri in early December.

As Inkpaduta prepared to depart Peterson for Smithland and the Gardner family prepared for their first winter on the shores of Lake Okoboji, old man winter arrived in the northern Iowa borderlands. Both the Wahpekute and the new settlers at Spirit Lake carefully prepared for

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653 Joseph Henry Taylor, “Inkpaduta and Sons.” *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 4, no.3 (October 1929-1930): 153-64.
winter. Settlers checked provisions against proven experience, carefully estimating what they might need to survive the winter. All residents of northern Iowa anticipated the typical challenges of winter and prepared the best ways they knew how. However, the preparations of some immediately proved inadequate. At Peterson, the December first blizzard of 1856 caught some settlers unprepared. Jane Bicknell, a child in Peterson at the time, remembered that a neighbor came after the initial storm already begging for food.\textsuperscript{654} He said that he had lived on nothing but potatoes for three weeks, and the Bicknell’s provided him with some supplies. Later in the winter the man returned with his wife to stay with the Bicknell’s until January third when the host families provisions had also started to run low. Jane Bicknell’s father told the man and his wife they needed to leave, and the couple later froze to death. Inkpaduta and the Dakota also had not adequately prepared for the winter. Caught off-guard by the early December snowstorm, the band had not yet arrived at their final destination of Smithland. Additionally, the band could not hunt due to the deep snows blanketing the area. They ate whatever they could find including muskrat, skunks, and even their horses.\textsuperscript{655} In the traditional Dakota way they begged food from the Peterson settlers, and they showed their appreciation. Eventually the band departed as the weather slightly improved, and they made their way peaceably down the Little Sioux River to Smithland.

The winter of 1856-57 would prove to exceed the imaginations of even the most prepared people throughout the region. Since the earliest days of Iowa’s settlement by Americans and Europeans, individuals have recorded fearsome winter storms known as blizzards. Daily weather reports depicting conditions in the state date back to the establishment of the earliest...
American military fort, established in Council Bluffs on October 22, 1819. In addition to the military records, those kept by Professor Theodore Parvin of Muscatine and Iowa City provide additional data. Parvin began keeping continuous records of daily weather starting in 1838. Although geographic considerations limit these sources, many settler accounts help to fill in missing parts of the picture, especially in regard to large storms like blizzards.

Prior to the winter of 1856-1857, early American settlers of Iowa had experienced winter and its characteristic storms. 1848 had a major “unprecedented snowfall” taking place on December twenty-first. At Muscatine, Theodore Parvin recorded 20.5 inches of snow on that date. Settlers found themselves snowbound in cabins, and snow piled up in even the southern portion of the state to over three-feet in depth by the end of February. The experiences and records of the winter of 1848 would all pale in comparison to the onslaught that Mother Nature unleashed on people throughout Iowa in the winter of 1856-57. “The most severe winter ever experienced in Iowa occurred during 1856-57,” reported the Oskaloosa Herald over one-hundred years later. Settlers during the era noted many folksy signs of a tough impending winter in the months preceding its onset. Bee hives overflowed with honey, corn husks displayed an extra-thick quality, trappers noted thicker coats on ensnared wildlife, and squirrels put up greater-than-usual stores for winter.

The first snows of the year blanketed Iowa during the month of November, cycling through heavy precipitation followed by an arctic-fueled deep freezing of temperatures. The

656 U.S. Weather Bureau and Iowa Weather Division, Climatological Data, Iowa, 1890-1969.
657 Theodore S. Parvin Collections, The Iowa Heritage Digital Collections. (Des Moines, IA: State Library of Iowa).
658 Birdsell and Williams, The History of Polk County, Iowa. (Des Moines, IA: Union Historical Company, 1880), 7-16.
Great Blizzard of 1856 arrived on December first. The storm dumped wet, heavy snow in intervals as the temperature undulated wildly, eventually leading to the storm closing with a shower of freezing rain.663 As the storm trailed into the second and third days of the month, the Dubuque Express and Herald recorded: “…the weather was unusually severe. Snow which commenced to fall on the evening previous continued throughout the entire night and day, and was swept through the streets by an angry wind with blinding velocity. The amount of snow which fell must be in the neighborhood of 16 to 18 inches…The wind, too, was exceedingly chilly.”664 The opening salvo of the winter of 1856-57 had ravaged the state.

By the tail-end of December, conditions turned lethal. On December twenty first the Dubuque Express and Herald recorded: “…Travel has been most difficult (due to deep snow) and several persons froze to death on the prairie during the late severe weather.”665 Meteorological records hold that the winter of 1856-57 exposed Iowans to the coldest December, January, and April in the nineteenth or twentieth century. The prolonged winter and unseasonable April saw massive snowfalls that further complicated struggles of early settlers and indigenous peoples alike. On Christmas Day 1856 temperatures registered at -22 F in Des Moines, just one of twenty-two days below zero degrees Fahrenheit in the month.666 Reports suggest that January ninth brought a respite after nearly five continuous weeks of snow following the initial storm at the start of December, and temperatures spiked to nearly fifty degrees in parts of the state.667 The higher temperatures allowed for a downpour of rain that flash-froze as

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666 Theodore S. Parvin Collections, The Iowa Heritage Digital Collections. (Des Moines, IA: State Library of Iowa).
667 U.S. Weather Bureau and Iowa Weather Division, Climatological Data, Iowa, 1890-1969.
temperatures then plummeted nearly fifty degrees in a span of twelve hours. People and animals throughout the state suffered extreme hardships as the winter coated their entire world with ice.

Fauna also experienced the detriments of the severe weather that year. Pioneer families recorded increases in abductions of livestock by half-starved wolves, and reports of death in wildlife communities also abounded. Losses of livestock, especially in the northern portion of the state, proved catastrophic. One Humboldt County farmer reported that he lost three-hundred out of four-hundred sheep over the course of the devastating winter. Deer, prairie, chickens, and quail died in large numbers. Many of the smaller game sought sustenance from farmer’s laid-away supplies. “Men and boys, with dogs and guns, made savage onslaught upon these (game),” wrote J.M. Brainard who lived through the winter while serving as a schoolmaster in the Charles City area. A Floyd County family nearly starved to death before sending two of their younger sons, Will and Frank, out into the forbidding conditions in search of game. A blizzard descended upon them as they scoured a nearby wood, and Will grabbed Frank by the collar in order to drag him back home. After becoming disoriented, the brothers staggered into a neighbor’s cabin. Will’s hand had become so frost bitten he could not separate it from the wool collar of Frank’s jacket, eventually leading to amputation. Iowa’s thirteenth governor, William Larrabee, shared another representative story of the hardships experienced during that winter. As a young man living in the northern Iowa borderlands, he lost his way in a New Year’s Eve snowstorm. Temperatures held steady at -20 F, and winds blew ferociously out of the

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672 William Larrabee Papers, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, Iowa.
northwest. As Larrabee began to give up hope, he thought he saw a light shining from inside a snowbank. As he walked closer he realized that he had stumbled upon a settler’s cabin nearly entombed in snow. The nearly-frozen Larrabee found shelter with the family who eventually nursed him back to health.

The initial December first snowstorm killed two experienced pioneers residing in Winnebago County near Forest City when they attempted to trek out toward a settlement known as Old Grove some twenty-seven miles south in Hancock County. As the storm came up, they found themselves caught, became disoriented, and eventually succumbed to the storm. Other settlers eventually found their bodies west of Clear Lake, frozen stiff, and in a crawling position on their hands and knees. They had attempted to walk, and then crawl to safety. The settlers also found the horses, also dead, several miles to the south. The trader John Hewitt, worked a sixty-mile route to deliver supplies and mail throughout northern Iowa during the winter months that included the area where the unfortunate Winnebago County pioneers had met their desperate end. From the shores of Clear Lake to the new settlement at Algona, Hewitt drove a team of oxen year-round. As a veteran of the area, he knew that winter would come, and when it did he knew the likelihood he might find himself caught in a life-threatening situation. During the fall he drove logs into the ground all along the route that could later serve as guideposts when he ventured out in the snowier months. He also made careful preparations with his wagon to ensure that if he found himself caught in storm he could hunker down for the night in safety. He would put up a canvas barrier to the lee-ward side of the wagon, light a few candles, and wrap himself up thoroughly in buffalo robes. In this way he survived in the most adverse conditions, including

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a stint that saw him stuck for several days during the early winter of 1856-1857, even as an old-
man of sixty-three. In Worth County residents also suffered through the extreme conditions that
winter. “Winter (1856-57) is known as the hard winter by the pioneers. The snow fell to an
uncommon depth, and proved, much of the time, impassable to teams. Settlers hauled provisions
on hand-sleds from Osage and other points. The log huts, many of them without floors, allowed
in the snow in drifts. Deaths by freezing were quite common,” recorded one of the early
settlers.675 In the northernmost reaches of Iowa conditions proved downright deadly, and even
well-prepared inhabitants struggled to survive.

On the southern edge of the northern Iowa borderlands terrible conditions also prevailed
throughout the winter. At Fort Dodge, William Williams noted how the severity of the winter
made it the worst he had seen since arriving in the area. “The winter of 1856-57 was a very bad
winter with very deep snow, so much that it was difficult to travel. The snow was from two and
one-half to three feet deep on the level and very much drifted with a hard crust formed on it. So
bad was the traveling that the frontier settlers were for two or three months entirely cut off from
any intercourse with more thickly inhabited districts of the county.”676 Settlers’ ability to
resupply, especially in remote locations, meant that the stores laid-in prior to the winter had to
last. In settlements where preparations had failed to come together perfectly, inhabitants found
themselves in a dreadful situation.

As the winter of 1856-57 closed in and the Wahpekute arrived, conditions at the
settlement of Smithland looked dire. Many in the settlement had suffered when a late-seasons
prairie fire devastated grain crops, and survival would have proven difficult even if the area

676 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort
Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFS, 1950), 68.
experienced a mild winter. Instead of relying solely on laid-in provisions, settlers sought to survive through the bounty found in the natural environment surrounding them. “All during the winter of 1856-57 the Adams and Hawthorn families depended upon a water hole in the Little Sioux River, for themselves and for their livestock. The women had gathered wild plums and wild grapes, preserving as much as they could. The men had butchered three wild hogs, left behind by the Mormons, and kept the meat frozen in the attic for their winter supply. They had milk and butter, and had laid in a stock of stables before the December 1 blizzard.”677 They had scavenged and saved, and their meager provisions would have to hold them through the winter.

Inkpaduta’s band of Wahpekute arrived shortly after the initial blizzard on December 10, 1856 and they established an encampment on the Little Sioux River.678 Trouble loomed due to Lamb having left the settlement with his family to relocate to Sioux City during the spring of 1856.679 Lamb rented his farm to a man named Livermore, and the new tenant did not seek to foster positive interactions with the Wahpekute when they arrived late in 1856. After finding Livermore inhospitable, the band relocated to the land of another settler, Elijah Adams.680 “Ten or twelve ponies dragged the tepee poles, loaded with tents and a few papooses. They pulled up the bank right in front of us, proceeded to clean off the snow and erect their nine tepees. They used water out of that same waterhole all winter,” wrote Wallace Adams, son of Elijah.681 Inkpaduta’s band numbered roughly thirty-five persons in total, according to cross-referencing of the settler accounts. Relations initially got off to a good start, and Wallace recorded that he met

677 Will Leach Clark, History of the Counties of Woodbury and Plymouth, Iowa: Including an Extended Sketch of Sioux City, Their Early Settlement and Progress to the Present Time, a Description of Their Historic and Interesting Localities, Sketches of the Townships, Cities and Villages. (New York, NY: Brookhaven Press, 1890), 172.
almost daily with the band at the common watering hole in the Missouri River. Other accounts recall Wahpekute women visiting cabins in order to trade bead work for food, as well as hunting expeditions where settlers and members of Inkpaduta’s band embarked into the rough winter in the hopes of reinforcing food supplies together. Initially, the Wahpekute traded venison for pork, but the trade ceased as food supplies began to dwindle later in the winter. After trade with the settlers no longer seemed practical, the band left the area briefly to cross the Missouri and trade elk and deer skins for corn with the Omaha.

By the time Inkpaduta and the band returned to Smithland the conditions in the settlement had continued to deteriorate. The grain shortage resultant from the prairie fire the previous fall began to take its toll on livestock, exacerbating tensions within the community. Many of Adams’s cattle began to die. The Dakota, also in an increasingly desperate condition, began to eat the emaciated cattle. Although the Wahpekute helped themselves to the starved-to-death cattle, they never helped themselves to any of Elijah Adams’s living stock. “When other families were having a ‘tough time’ of it that winter, the Adams family were able to draw upon their large store of provisions and share with the Indians neighbors.” The charity of the Adams family did not go unnoticed by their less fortunate neighbors, many of whom fostered some resentment that the leader of their caravan shared provisions with the indigenous people while other neighbors suffered.

Relations between the settlers and their indigenous neighbors became further strained early in the winter when the Wahpekute collected unhusked corn left in fields south of Smithland.

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by settlers during the fall. The band set about gathering the corn and bringing it to their settlement, when O.B. Smith and John Howe, two 1856 arrivals, accused them of stealing the corn from cribs. Smith and Howe decided that they would punish the Dakota and they “procured switches and began whipping the squaws, who dropped their burdens and ran to the camp, pursued and punished all the way.” As the unbelievably harsh winter continued, food supplies depleted and relations deteriorated further. In another incident, the Wahpekute had a deer they had shot stolen from them by a settler. Later in the winter, the Wahpekute spotted a large grouping of elk in a stand of trees along the Little Sioux River, and prepared to go out for a hunt. The stored energy and protein of the elk could prove vital to maintaining the band as it lingered on the brink of starvation. The Wahpekute headed out for the hunt, and a dog belonging to a settler attacked one of the band. The Wahpekute killed the dog, and the settler severely beat the offending Wahpekute. The beating disturbed the hunt, and the Wahpekute failed to reinforce their food supply.

Another incident, again involving O.B. Smith, occurred not long after. According to a Methodist circuit preacher in the area, Smith and “a number of other young scoundrels filled up on whisky and (went) out to have a drunken man’s good time.” They headed into the Little Sioux River Valley where they encountered the women of Inkpaduta’s band digging for clams along the bank. The women dropped the clams they had already gathered, and fled for the encampment on the Adams property. When Smith and the others arrived, the entire camp fled.

689 Joseph Henry Taylor, “Inkpaduta and Sons.” *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 4, no.3 (October 1929-1930): 153-64.
north up the Little Sioux River, showing a determined non-violent response in the face of a direct attack on members of the band by a group of drunken settlers.\footnote{Frank Herriott, “The Origins of the Indian Massacre between the Okobojis.” \textit{Annals of Iowa} 18 (1932): 323-82.}

Relations after these incidents did not improve. Thomas Teakle, in his history of the events at Spirit Lake that would follow, wrote:

The settlers now assumed a plainly unfriendly attitude toward the Indians, which in turn gave impetus to a change in the temper and attitude of the Indians toward the whites. They soon became sullen and insolent, with a manifest tendency to commit a variety of malicious acts, probably for the purpose of trying the temper of the settlers. Only acts of a trivial character, however, were actually committed; and so the wiser heads in Smithland were successful in warding off for some time any serious trouble.\footnote{Thomas Teakle, \textit{The Spirit Lake Massacre}. (Iowa City, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1918).}

Exacerbated by the deadly winter conditions, both the Wahpekute and the settler populations headed toward a tragic clash. At least eighteen settlers (Seth Smith, Eli Lee, John Howe, Eli Floyd, Jim Kirby, M.L. Jones, O.B. Smith, William Turman, Ed Howe, John Kinnea, Thos. Nagle, M.B. Mead, Thos. Davis, Wesley Turman, John Floyd, Thos. Bower, Jonathan Leach, and A. Livermore) found themselves ready for open confrontation with the Wahpekute by early to mid-February of 1856.\footnote{Frank Herriott, “The Origins of the Indian Massacre between the Okobojis.” \textit{Annals of Iowa} 18 (1932): 323-82.} Although some accounts listed twenty-one men at the confrontation and the date as late-February, that proves difficult to substantiate. The eighteen men listed above appear in a variety of sources, as well as the diary of Jane Bicknell, a settler higher on the Little Sioux River at Peterson who recorded she saw the band in the vicinity of her claim in mid-February.\footnote{Joseph Henry Taylor, “Inkpaduta and Sons.” \textit{North Dakota Historical Quarterly} 4, no.3 (October 1929-1930): 153-64.} Also, the duration of the band’s stay in specific locations indicated by other sources along Inkpaduta’s trail toward Spirit Lake point to a date of early February. Although the
possibility lingers that either the men of the Adams family or the Hawthorne family participated in the confrontation, both families firmly denied any involvement.695 “D.T. Hawthorne had refused to be a party to the disarming of Inkpaduta’s hunting camp, characterizing it as an unjustifiable proceeding, lacking cause,” recorded his contemporary Taylor.696

During early 1857 the settlers of Smithland called a meeting where they accused the Dakota of stealing corn and hay. Additionally, the group agreed that the Dakota had become a burden on the community and should leave. They decided to organize a militia and drive the band away from the area. Seth Smith, a resident of Monona County, a major in the Ohio militia prior to moving to Iowa, led the delegation. “He (Smith) had brought a full suit of regimentals – cocked hat, gilt epaulettes, glittering sword, and split tail coat, and these evidence of greatness made him a man of mark. He was chosen captain of the group partly because he was a good man for a leader and partly because he owned that magnificent suit of regimentals,” recorded Taylor.697 Dressed in his finery and backed by a group of settlers that included individuals who had consistently harassed the Wahpekute camp on the Little Sioux throughout the winter, Seth ambled up to the Dakota camp and sought to instigate a confrontation.

When the militia arrived at the Wahpekute encampment, they found that the majority of men had gone out hunting. The militia tore down the nine tepees that made up the camp, took any guns and ammunition that they could scrounge, and chased the women and children into the neighboring woods.698 The rag-tag group of settlers demanded that Inkpaduta and his band

695 Will Leach Clark, History of the Counties of Woodbury and Plymouth, Iowa: Inculding an Extended Sketch of Sioux City, Their Early Settlement and Progress to the Present Time, a Description of Their Historic and Interseting Localities, Sketches of the Townships, Cities and Villages. (New York, NY: Brookhaven Press, 1890), 190.
698 Will Leach Clark, History of the Counties of Woodbury and Plymouth, Iowa: Inculding an Extended Sketch of Sioux City, Their Early Settlement and Progress to the Present Time, a Description of Their Historic and Interseting Localities, Sketches of the Townships, Cities and Villages. (New York, NY: Brookhaven Press, 1890), 191.
disembark from the area immediately. Inkpaduta refused, citing that the snows to the north in their traditional range had become so deep that survival would be impossible. He also pointed out to the militia that without guns his band had no way to harvest game necessary for survival. Smith told Inkpaduta to go to the Omaha across the river. Inkpaduta asserted that the Omaha would kill the Wahpekute if they showed up invited and without any means of protecting themselves. Although Inkpaduta protested, the bend reluctantly handed over their arms. That night the band left Smithland, heading up the Little Sioux River and into the forbidding winter landscape.

Following the altercation with the settlers at Smithland, the Wahpekute made their way north through the Little Sioux River Valley toward Spirit Lake. Before completely departing the Smithland area, the band stopped at the cabin of Elijah Adams. Adams had not participated in the militia, and he traded a light double-barreled shotgun to the Wahpekute for four buffalo robes. Next, the band went to the homestead of David Hawthorn, also not a member of the militia. Although David had ventured away from the Hawthorne farm, Inkpaduta entered the cabin with several of his men, and sharpened several knives and axes. The Wahpekute frightened Hawthorne’s wife, and she sent one of them to find Elijah Adams. Adams quickly arrived, and furnished the Dakota with some ammunition and blankets to get them to leave the Hawthorne farm. On their way out of the area the Wahpekute made a final stop at the former farm Lamb farm where they had peacefully spent winters for much of the previous decade.

Lamb’s tenant Livermore had taken part in the militia, and Inkpaduta entered the house and exchanged five dollars for several of the guns that the militia had confiscated.\textsuperscript{702} After leaving Smithland, the Wahpekute passed through Cherokee County, the second county east of the Missouri River in the third tier of counties from the Minnesota border.\textsuperscript{703} The largest watercourse in the county, the Little Sioux River, enters near the northeast corner and passes out some seven miles east of the southwest corner, splitting the county diagonally. The rolling surface of the county contains soil of excellent quality composed of rich vegetable mold and bluff deposit. “There are many picturesque views along the Little Sioux River, meandering, as it does, through one of the most fertile and beautiful valleys of the state, skirted in many places with fine groves of native timber.”\textsuperscript{704} During the mid-nineteenth century the Little Sioux River also housed a great diversity of fish. Even at the time of first settlement in the spring of 1856, settler’s found large artificial mounds and traces of ancient pottery consistently along Mill Creek, a tributary of the Little Sioux. A colony of settlers from Milford, Massachusetts styled “The Milford Emigration Society,” first permanently settled in the county during 1856.\textsuperscript{705} Twelve or thirteen other families quickly joined the settlement, locating just below Milford on the Little Sioux River. In the days following the confrontation between the settlement community at Smithland and Inkpaduta’s band of Wahpekute, the settlers in Cherokee County came into contact with the fleeing Dakota as they headed north toward their summer home on Spirit Lake.

\textsuperscript{702} Miriam Hawthorn Baker, “Inkpaduta’s Camp at Smithland.” \textit{Annals of Iowa} 39 (Fall 1967), 88-89.
\textsuperscript{703} Wesley N. Clifford, \textit{Dodge’s Geography of Iowa}. (New York, NY: Rand-McNally, 1907), 11.
\textsuperscript{704} A.T. Andreas, \textit{Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa} (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1875), 237.
\textsuperscript{705} Thomas McCulla, \textit{History of Cherokee County, Iowa, Volume 1}. (Chicago, IL: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1914), 63.
Inkpadata’s band arrived in Peterson on February fifteenth as they made their way north. The community where the band had participated in wrestling and shooting contests just a couple of months before now suffered depredations. The band primarily sought guns, but settlers also reported the band killed livestock to provide food as it moved north. The Wahpekute beat Robert Hammond when he sought to put up resistance to being disarmed.⁷⁰⁶ The band sojourned in Cherokee County for several days. “After remaining two or three days, feasting, carousing, and menacing the settlers, they passed on up the valley in the direction of Spirit Lake, where their fury culminated in deeds that form one of the bloodiest chapters in the history of Indian ferocity,” recorded Andreas in his 1875 atlas.⁷⁰⁷ Before leaving, the band went to the home of a settler named Taylor where they beat the man of the house and kicked a young son into the fireplace where he suffered serious burns. The band also abducted Mrs. Taylor, a Mrs. Harriett, and Harriett Mead. The band took the women back to their temporary encampment and raped them before letting them go.⁷⁰⁸

Following the violence at Spirit Lake, locals would form a militia at Cherokee. They erected a stockade and block-house that enclosed about 1/8th of an acre within its walls.⁷⁰⁹ The county would be relatively depopulated following the outbreak of violence, as the Milford Emigration Society decided that their New Milford might be better built in a more established location.⁷¹⁰ The 1863 census of Iowa only lists ten adult males and five adult females in the

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⁷⁰⁷ A.T. Andreas, *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa* (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1875), 381.
⁷⁰⁹ James A. Sawyer, Report from April 7, 1863. Published in *Annals of Iowa,* 1903, 504.
county, a precipitous drop from the population of fifty-eight listed in 1860.\footnote{F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed. 1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).} Here, the frontier had momentarily retreated in the face of Dakota resistance.

Twelve miles north of Peterson the band came across the small settlement of Gillett Grove. The band immediately ransacked cabins and raped two additional women.\footnote{Mary S. Bakeman, Legends, Letters, and Lies: Readings About Inkpaduta and the Spirit Lake Massacre. (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society, 2001), 29.} A Mr. Gillett shot one of the Wahpekute as the warrior harassed his wife. After the incident, Gillett gathered his family and made haste to Fort Dodge.\footnote{Benjamin F. Gue, History of Iowa From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century, Vol. 3. (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1903), 294.} Gillett made a claim that he lost forty head of cattle, and had four horses driven off by the Dakota. He also asserted that Inkpaduta and his band made off with the majority of their other miscellaneous property and possessions. Gillett arrived at Fort Dodge and warned William Williams of the hostile nature of the Dakota band moving up the Little Sioux River. Williams gathered together a militia of roughly fifty men and struck out for the area. They got as far as the town of Cherokee. There Williams made a fateful decision to abandon the trail of Inkpaduta, as he believed that no Americans lived in the Spirit Lake region and that the band could do no harm as they continued further north.\footnote{William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUF-KFMY, 1950), 20-25.}

As Inkpaduta and his band of Wahpekute Dakota made their way north from Gillett’s Grove, they also passed through another small settlement near modern-day Sioux Rapids. “The men were captured and guarded, and some of the women led away to the Indian Camp, but the Indians committed no murders here,” asserted the official Buena Vista County history.\footnote{A.T. Andreas, Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa (Des Moines, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1875), 547.}
seems typical of the weeks leading up Inkpaduta’s raid on Spirit Lake; the Wahpekute drove off livestock in unknown quantities and some property suffered depredation. After the Wahpekute band had moved on up the Little Sioux River, word eventually reached the Sioux Rapids settlement of what had occurred to the north. Abner Bell and a companion ventured out across the snow-drifted prairies to raise the alarm, eventually arriving at Fort Dodge. Although the settlers of Buena Vista County did not flee as their neighbors in Clay and Emmet counties did, population growth stagnated following the outbreak of violence at Spirit Lake. The county would not be officially organized until early 1859.

As Inkpaduta and the Wahpekute fled Smithland, the also crossed through Clay County. Within the limits of Clay County the Little Sioux River winds in a serpentine fashion in excess of seventy miles within the twenty-four square miles of the county. Many smaller tributaries, the most notable being Ocheyedan Creek, provide the county with excellent supplies of freshwater. Undulating prairie covered rich soil throughout most of the county. Settlers who arrived during the mid-1850s quickly converted to production of livestock, wheat, oats, corn, and various root crops. Ambrose S. Mead and Christian Kirchner, as well as their families, first settled in the county during July of 1856. John J. Bucknell, also a summer of 1856 arrival, holds the distinction of being the first to break the prairie with a hand-plow during that same summer. Ambrose Mead drove the first plow pulled behind oxen, also during late-1856.

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716 William Williams, *The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa.* Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 22.
During the late-winter following these initial agricultural pursuits, Inkpaduta and his band of Wahpekute visit the settlement as they made their way up the Little Sioux River.\textsuperscript{720} Christian Kirchner recorded the loss of four head of cattle slaughtered by Inkpaduta’s band, while Ambrose Mead claimed that he had ten horses and six head of cattle driven away by the band of Wahpekute.\textsuperscript{721} The settler community virtually abandoned the area when news arrived of the attack on the settlement at Spirit Lake to the north.\textsuperscript{722} These settlers fled east, back beyond the population supported frontier to the more established communities of Fort Dodge, Clear Lake, and Hampton. Population eventually began to build back into the county, leading to its official organization on October 18, 1858.\textsuperscript{723} At the time of organization a limited number of settlers had arrived back in the county, with the vast majority locating in the only heavily timbered area along the Little Sioux River in the southwest corner. At this place, John A. Kirchner relocated upon his return to the county, erecting the first grist and sawmill in the county.

As Inkpaduta made his way up the Little Sioux River during late-February 1856, firmly nailing down all of the specific individuals within the band proves difficult at best. Four sources provide the primary source material related to the topic: the Commissioner of the U.S. Office of Indian Affairs Report for 1857, the memoir of Abbie Gardner-Sharp, the journal of Return I. Holcomb, and the writings of Doane Robinson. The annuity records from when Inkpaduta drew rations for himself and eleven other men two years prior provide further evidence of the band’s

\textsuperscript{722} F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed. \textit{1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data.} (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).
specific composition. Women and children did not draw annuities as individuals, and do not enter the record. Although women and children do not find note in records of the Spirit Lake attack, they continued to have a presence with Inkpaduta’s band before and after the events. Abbie Gardner-Sharp recorded that her family let down their guard prior to the onset of violence on March seventh because of the presence of women and children.

Inkpaduta remained the stalwart figure at the head of the band throughout early 1857. Abbie Gardner-Sharp described Inkpaduta as powerfully built, hideously scarred from an earlier smallpox infliction, and full of vengeance. Sharp’s words must be tempered because she watched as the Wahpekute murdered her family, then experienced other afflictions after being taken captive by the band. Makpeahotomani (Roaring Cloud) and Makpiopeta (Fire Cloud), the twin sons of Inkpaduta, also participated in the violent attack. All sources consistently recorded each of them as being in camp with their father during the 1850s. Holcomb credited Makpeahotomani with killing one of the captives, Mrs. Marble, following the abduction of the women from Spirit Lake. Makpiopeta died later in the summer of 1857 when Little Crow and other Dakota sought retribution against Inkpaduta’s band in order to ensure the Indian agent would release annuities. Tateyohhe, or Shifting Wind, also likely took part in the action. Tateyohhe did not appear in the accounts of Gardner-Sharp and Robinson, only appearing in Holcombe’s reports as

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an outcast Sisseton who had found a place in Inkpaduta’s band after he allegedly murdered his own family.\textsuperscript{729} He, along with an old man named Tawahchehawaken (His Mysterious Feather/His Sacred Plume), both served contemporaries and historians as evidence that Inkpaduta’s band consisted primarily of murderous outcasts from other bands.

Tawahchehawaken initially hailed from the more northerly Cannon River Wahpekute and may have taken part in the plot to murder Tasagi.\textsuperscript{730} Contemporary accounts and historians recorded Bahata (Old Man) as another reputed renegade with Inkpduta during 1856-57. Bahata had married one of Inkpaduta’s daughters after a disagreement with his fellow Yanktonai. His frustrations had stemmed from his belief that others in his band had sacrificed themselves to the Americans by succumbing to the reservation and annuity system.\textsuperscript{731} Holcombe also made notice of another renegade Yanktonai, Kahahday (Rattling), who had married one of Inkpaduta’s other daughters.\textsuperscript{732} The presence of these two Yanktonais, and the reputed cause for their defection to living with the Wahpekute, suggests that the small band following Inkpaduta gained traction not just with outlaws, but with others who viewed the leadership of the Wahpekute chief as a significant chance at maintaining a more traditional way of life.

Following the incident at Spirit Lake, Inkpaduta’s son Eetoatank, or Big Face, gained notoriety as the most violent of the attackers. Eetoatank had reached about sixteen years old at the time of the attacks. Recorders alleged he killed at least three of the settlers, and many accounts judged him as the most bloodthirsty, sexually aggressive, and cruel to the women taken captive. The zeal displayed by Eetoatank understandably fits within expected behavior for a

\textsuperscript{729} Orlando C. Howe, “The Discovery of the Spirit Lake Massacre.” \textit{Annals of Iowa} 11 (July 1914): 409-25.
\textsuperscript{730} Thomas Hughes, “Sioux Indians Harassed the Early Iowa Settlers.” \textit{Annals of Iowa} 34 (1957): 137-41.
young Dakota eager to assert himself as a valued part of the tribe. The four other men that consistently appeared in accounts provided fewer details: Kepchoman (Putting on as he Walks), Hahsun (One Leg) or Hoosha (Red Leg), Tatelidashinkshamani (One who makes Crooked Wind as he Walks), and Tachanchegahota (His Great Fun). The group of men, as well as many unrecorded women and children, followed Inkpaduta to the shores of Spirit Lake. Inkpaduta expected to arrive at the previous site of his summer village and wait out the last weeks of the terrible winter. When the Dakota had left during the early summer of 1856, settlement had not yet reached the shores of Spirit Lake. However, when the band crossed from the headwaters of the Little Sioux River to their traditional place of rest on March seventh they beheld an unexpected sight. Settlers had located throughout the area. A letter written by one of the area settlers dated March 7, 1857, noted the arrival of the band, and mentioned trading with them. During the evening the Wahpekute set up a camp less than one mile from the cabin of Rowland Gardner, and commenced with a war dance in preparation for a revenge raid resultant for the warrior killed by Gillett.

The next morning, Rowland Gardner got up earlier than usual and began to prepare to cross the forbidding winter landscape on a desperate trip to Fort Dodge for supplies. The Gardner’s had departed Clear Lake during late-summer, arriving on the shores of Spirit Lake too late to plant crops. Prior to embarking, Rowland Gardner sold lands he had purchased just sixteen months earlier. Gardner utilized the proceeds to purchase “several yoke of oxen, a

735 William Williams, William Williams’ Memoir. Transcribed by Maude Lauderdale. On file, Fort Dodge Public Library, Fort Dodge, Iowa.
number of cows, and quite a herd of young cattle; still reserving enough means to provide for the family until new land could be located and crops raised." In late May of 1856, Gardner appeared twice in the ledger of the trader Hewitt at Clear Lake, making trade for $75 in cash as well as other vital items. The Gardner family planned for these meager supplies, as well as some stored grain, to sustain the family during the course of the winter. The environmental conditions which threatened Inkpaduta with starvation also haunted the Gardners during their first winter on Spirit Lake.

Inkpaduta showed up outside the cabin with several of his men while Gardner made his final preparations. One of the men asked Gardner for food, and Rowland’s wife Frances agreed to give him some. Other members of the band began to ask for food, and soon all had situated themselves at the table in the Gardner cabin and began to eat. The food quickly ran out. Inkpaduta demanded ammunition, and one of his son’s pointed a gun at Garner’s son-in-law, Harvey Luce. Luce pushed the barrel away from his chest, and the intense moment ended. The Wahpekute left the cabin and shot several of Gardner’s cattle as they left the property. Shortly thereafter, two other settlers, Dr. Harriott and Bertell Snyder came to the Gardner cabin with letters they hoped he would take with him to Fort Dodge. Gardner told them he no longer wanted to risk leaving with the seemingly hostile Dakota lurking about the lakes. On their way back to their own cabins, the two men learned that the Dakota had also visited the James Mattock

738 Hewett. *General Store Ledger, October 1855-April 1857*. The Lee P. Loomis Archive of Mason City History. On file, Mason City Public Library, Mason City, Iowa.
739 Hewett. *General Store Ledger, October 1855-April 1857*. The Lee P. Loomis Archive of Mason City History. On file, Mason City Public Library, Mason City, Iowa.
cabin. A small group gathered there for mutual defense in case things should take a turn for the worse.

Around noon, Inkpaduta and several other men returned to the Gardner cabin and chased off the rest of their cattle. Luce and another man named Robert Clarke left shortly thereafter to go warn the assembled group at the Mattock cabin. They did not return. The Dakota ambushed the two men, and Gardner heard the shots. He began to prepare his family to go join the group at the Mattock cabin, but before they left nine Wahpekute men arrived at his door. Hesitant to unlock the door, Rowland eventually gave into his wife’s pleas to let the men enter. Frances worried that Rowland could not hope to defend the family from so many men, and placating the Dakota would serve their best interest. The Wahpekute demanded supplies, and violence broke out almost immediately.

William Marble’s claim stood alone on the shores of Spirit Lake during early 1857. As the outbreak began on March eighth, the Wahpekute killed Rowland Sr. and his wife Frances, as well as Rowland Jr., age six, first. The Dakota took Abigail, age thirteen, captive. Eliza, age sixteen, happened to be away from home visiting a Dr. Strong in Springfield, Minnesota on that fateful day. Mary (Gardner) Luce died at the Gardner site that morning, as well as her

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children Albert, age four, and Amanda, age one, who the Dakota purportedly smashed to death against a tree.\textsuperscript{745}

Inkapaduta and the Wahpekute attacked the Mattock cabin next, a site which overlooked both of the Okoboji Lakes. James R. Mattock, age forty, and his wife Mary, age thirty-seven, as well as their five children Daniel (age seventeen), Agnes (age fourteen), Jackson (age six), Jacob (age four), and Terressa Alice (under age one), all died in the violence.\textsuperscript{746} The Mattocks, much like the Gardner family, had previously settled further east in Iowa prior to deciding to embark beyond the frontier-line in 1856. Six years earlier the couple had originally settled in rural Delaware County, Iowa.\textsuperscript{747} A traveler named Joseph Harshman also died at the Mattock cabin site. Robert Madison and his fifteen year old son John, both who had embarked across the frontier with the Mattocks from Delaware County, Iowa, also met their end at the cabin.

The Granger cabin also saw action as the third, and final site on March eighth. The group killed at the Granger cabin had largely arrived from Minnesota, near modern-day Red Wing, Minnesota.\textsuperscript{748} The brothers William and Carl Granger arrived at the Okoboji and Spirit Lake area at roughly the same time as Rowland Gardner. Inkpaduta allegedly confronted and killed Carl, as well as his large bulldog, in the cabin the brothers shared.\textsuperscript{749} A providential visit back to the homestead of his parents near Red Wing spared a third Granger brother named George. George would eventually seek to muster a rescue and retribution party from Red Wing following

\textsuperscript{748} H.W. Granger, “From Spirit Lake; Particulars of the Late Outrages, Derived from Eye Witnesses.” \textit{Minnesota Pioneer & Democrat}, 24 April 1857.
the massacre, presenting a claim to Congress for supplies and services.\textsuperscript{750} Dr. Isaac H. Harriott and Bertell Snyder, both also from Red Wing, also died at the Granger site. Inkpaduta’s band abducted Harriott’s prized Shetland pony, the only animal that survived the grueling trek of the Wahpekute as they escaped beyond the reaches of American justice.\textsuperscript{751}

The following day, March 9, 1857, Inkpaduta’s band continued their attack at the Joel Howe cabin.\textsuperscript{752} Joel died roughly a ¼ mile from his cabin toward the homestead of Joseph M. Thatcher. Howe had set out for Thatcher’s in the hopes of borrowing some flour. He would not have fared better had he stayed at home. Joel’s wife Millie, their twenty-three-year-old son Jonathan and his fiancé a Miss Sardis (age eighteen), as well as sons Alfred (age fifteen), Jacob (age thirteen), Philetus (age eleven), and Levi (age nine) all perished.\textsuperscript{753} Jonathan Howe and Miss Sardis had arrived only the Friday before the attack. Joel’s daughter Lydia managed to survive the initial attack, but only because the Wahpekute took her captive.\textsuperscript{754}

Close in geographic proximity and kinship ties, the Thatcher and Marble families’ cabins saw the arrival of the Wahpekute next. Both families had arrived late in the previous summer from Hampton, Iowa, on the eastern edge of the northern Iowa borderlands, extending their journey beyond the frontier. Originally from Indiana, both families had ventured west together. Joseph M. Thatcher, as well as his wife Elizabeth, age nineteen, both escaped the initial attack. The Wahpekute took Elizabeth captive after her three-week-old baby Dora died when the Dakota

\textsuperscript{750} H.W. Granger, “From Spirit Lake; Particulars of the Late Outrages, Derived from Eye Witnesses.” \textit{Minnesota Pioneer \& Democrat}, 24 April 1857.


held the child by the legs and bashed her head against a tree.\textsuperscript{755} Joseph had left before the attack began when he went to try to procure desperately needed supplies. He should have arrived back at the scene prior to Inkpaduta’s arrival, however, his oxen had become bogged down by snow at Shippey’s Point.\textsuperscript{756} Alvin Noble and his two-year-old son Johnathan died in the violence. The Wahpekute took his wife, Lydia Home-Noble, captive.\textsuperscript{757} Alvin Nobel’s brother-in law Enoch Ryan, also died as a result of the attack. Asa Burtsch, Elizabeth Thatcher’s brother, died as well. By the end of the second day, Inkpaduta’s band had killed thirty-four settlers at four sites in the general vicinity of Okoboji and Spirit Lakes. The violence, however, had not ended.

March tenth saw the band proceed to the William Marble cabin. Things there began friendly enough.\textsuperscript{758} Located far enough from the sites of the other killings, William Marble had no way of knowing what fate might have arrived at his threshold on that spring morning. According to the account of his wife, Margaret Ann Marble, the Wahpekute suggested a rifle trade and asked William to shoot at a mark to prove the accuracy of the weapon.\textsuperscript{759} After Marble discharged his firearm, Inkpaduta and his men allegedly turned their weapons on him with deadly result. The Wahpekute took Margaret Ann captive, and she noted that they robbed the family of gold coins they had saved to buy spring supplies, as well as other goods. The Marbles had arrived near the western shore of Spirit Lake from yet another settled part of Iowa, Linn County, following their marriage in September of 1856.\textsuperscript{760} Following the killing of William and

\textsuperscript{758} Margaret Marble to James Denver, July 23, 1857. Collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.
\textsuperscript{759} Margaret Marble to James Denver, July 23, 1857. Collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.
the captivity of Margaret Ann, Inkpaduta and his band left the shores of Spirit Lake. Behind
them they left the bodies of thirty-five settlers, and carried with them four captives. They would
not appear again until they attacked Springfield over two weeks later on Wednesday, March 25th.

In the days leading up to the attack of the Wahpekute on Spirit Lake, Inkpduta fled
Smithland following a confrontation with the developing settler community. As the band
embarked north facing starvation, they headed for a land of traditional refuge which had served
as a summer home for at least much of the previous decade. Along the way one of Inkpaduta’s
grandchildren died of starvation and exposure, and the band raided several cabins. A strong
possibility exists that the band had corn and other vital supplies stored in the vicinity of the lakes
that served as the initial site for the Dakota corn dance. When they arrived, they encountered
settlers at their ‘Place of Rest’ (Okoboji). Desperate, they approached a cabin, demanded tribute
for what they had established as believing as native lands as recently as the previous summer
during their confrontation with settlers at Clear Lake. When rebuffed, violence erupted.

As Inkpaduta and the band rested after their attack on the Spirit Lake area, settlers had
already become aware of the attack. Around 11:00 p.m. on March ninth, a local trapper named
Morris Markham discovered the bodies at the Gardner cabin. Finding the shocking carnage,
Markham immediately headed for the Mattock place. There he again found only signs of
slaughter. He continued on to the Granger and Howe cabins, hoping to spread alarm, but also
only encountered death and destruction. Late in the night he almost inadvertently stumbled into
Inkpaduta’s camp, but realized the danger and made haste across the frozen waters of West
Okoboji Lake. He then encountered the victims of the attack on the Thatcher home. He

sheltered in a nearby ravine and attempted to sleep until dawn. In the morning he went to
Granger’s Point on the Des Moines River and passed word of the attack to George Granger that
his brother had died. Almost immediately, the two men headed for the community of Springfield
to the north in the hopes of warning them. They arrived on March eleventh.\textsuperscript{762}

Others also stumbled upon the carnage at Spirit Lake including Orlando C. Howe. Howe,
who had met Inkpaduta and his band at Loon Lake just a few months before had traveled through
the brutal winter with Robert Wheelock, B.F. Parmenter, and Cyrus Snyder in order to pre-empt
claims in the area. The men ignored William Williams when they reached Fort Dodge as the
sutler told them that no one had gone further than twelve miles north of Webster County since
fall, and that many living in the northern Iowa borderlands faced starvation due to the harsh
weather. Driving a sleigh and hand-sleds, the men arrived at the Howe cabin Spirit Lake on
March fifteenth. They entered the cabin and found Mrs. Howe with her skull smashed in, as well
as the disfigured corpses of her two sons. Predictably disturbed, the men headed back toward
Webster County to raise the alarm.

Word passed through the Dakota kinship structure as well. Umpashota had a small
village of Wahpekute that had decided to winter near Springfield. The Dakota encampment
consisted of four families, and they located only a mile from the Wood brother’s trading post.
Another group of Dakota resided nine miles up the Des Moines near the trading post of a man
named Joseph Coursalle. The Dakota knew of the attack on Spirit Lake by March ninth, and a
man named Black Buffalo went to the wood trading post and warned the brothers. The brothers
did not believe his story, however, other settlers in the community began making provisions and

\textsuperscript{762} Orlando C. Howe, “The Discovery of the Spirit Lake Massacre.” \textit{Annals of Iowa} 11 (July 1914): 409-25.
establishing defensive positions. When Markham and Granger arrived, they brought along confirmation of the deadly scene at Spirit Lake. Two men, Joseph B. Cheffin and Henry Tretts, left to go to Fort Ridgely to seek help. There they encountered Charles Flandreau, the Indian Agent for the reservation since the previous August. By March nineteenth soldiers at the fort had moved out in pursuit of Inkaputa and the Wahpekute.

After two weeks had passed from the initial attacks, Inkaputa and his band again struck out against settlement in the vicinity of the Spirit Lake and Okoboji area, this time due north roughly twenty miles at the town of Springfield, Minnesota. Upon arrival in the vicinity, the first stop the band made was at the Wood brother’s store. The Springfield settlement straddled the Des Moines River, with the Wood brother’s store on the west side of the river, and the majority of the cabins constructed on the east. At the store, the Wahpekute bought $80 worth of gunpowder, ammunition, and other supplies with gold coins they had stolen from the Marble cabin at Spirit Lake. Despite the evidence presented to them previously, the Wood brothers continued to deny that any danger existed.

Wary after the news of the outbreak of hostilities at Spirit Lake, the majority of the Springfield residents gathered together in a cabin owned by James B. (JB) Thomas. The Wahpekute attacked several locations simultaneously including the Thomas cabin, the Church cabin, the Strong cabin, the Smith cabin, and the Stewart cabin. The Wahpekute fired a single volley at JB Thomas’s cabin, and a shot struck his nine-year-old son Willie while he played outside in the yard. JB sustained a gunshot wound in the wrist, and escaped with his life but

not his arm which he later lost to amputation. After the initial volley, the inhabitants escaped, limiting the casualties to just the young boy. Marietta Thomas, JB’s daughter, contracted pneumonia during the flight south toward Fort Dodge, and eventually succumbed to the illness shortly after their arrival. The Stewart cabin also saw casualties. Josiah Stewart, his wife and three children met the Wahpekute at their claim after they left the larger group gathered at Thomas’s cabin. Umpashota indicated to Stewart that he would like to purchase one of the settler’s hogs. As the two looked over the fenced stock, shots rang out. Mrs. Stewart ran toward her husband, and the Dakota shot her as well. Two of the newly orphaned children met their demise when executed by the Wahpekute. One son, the eight-year-old John, hid behind a log near the stock pen, and safely returned to the cabin after the Wahpekute had moved on.

After hearing the gunshots from the attack on the Thomas cabin, William Wood left his store and walked down the frozen river to investigate. As he descended, his brother George watched as he fatally received a gunshot wound. The Wahpekute dragged his body off the river and started it on fire. George immediately fled, attempting to cross the river. The Dakota quickly discovered and executed him. The Wahpekute raided the store, taking ammunition and other supplies that helped to sustain the attacks.

Also at Springfield, the Church and Smith cabins saw attacks but no casualties. The Dakota pillaged the cabin of Mrs. Louisa Jane Church and her two sons. Drusilla Swanger, Mrs. Church’s twenty year old sister suffered a gunshot wound to the shoulder during the attack.

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766 H.W. Granger, “From Spirit Lake; Particulars of the Late Outrages, Derived from Eye Witnesses.” Minnesota Pioneer & Democrat, 24 April 1857.
Eliza Gardner, daughter of Rowland, went uninjured in the raid. Swanger and Gardner had spent the time between the attacks melting down tableware and recasting the remains into bullets for the defense of the community. When the others eventually fled to Fort Dodge, John Henderson stayed behind due to an inability to travel due to the recent amputation of his foot due to front-bite. The Iowa Expedition eventually came to his rescue. The Dakota killed two dogs and an ox at the Church cabin. A Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Skinner, Mrs. William Nelson and child, and Adam P. Shiegley and his son also survived the events uninjured while staying at the Church cabin during the attack. The Dr. E.B.N. Strong family, whom Eliza Gardner had come to visit prior to the violent outbreak at Spirit Lake, also suffered an attack. Dr. Strong deserted his family prior to the onset of the attack, and his wife subsequently divorced him. The wife and both young children did not suffer injury in the attack. At the Strong cabin David Carver suffered a shot through his body. Jareb Palmer, John Bradshaw, George Granger, and a Mrs. Harshman and children also survived the events at the Strong cabin uninjured.

As Inkpaduta and his band left Springfield after their successful attacks, the surviving settlers made the decision to abandon the community and strike out for Fort Dodge. The party left at midnight, struggling south across the snow covered prairie. On March thirtieth the survivors from Springfield encountered a militia from Fort Dodge led by William Williams. Williams had raised a militia organized into three companies and left Fort Dodge on March twenty-fourth. Captain Charles Richards of Fort Dodge led Company A, Captain John Duncombe of Fort Dodge led Company B, and John Johnson of Webster City led Company C.

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770 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 65.
771 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 66.
Laden with heavy wagons, the companies moved slowly toward Spirit Lake during the final week of March. “By forced marches through snow banks fifteen to twenty feet deep and swollen streams, we forced our way up to the state line, where we learned the Indians were two or three hundred strong at Spirit Lake and Big Island Grove. Never were harder services rendered by any body of men than by the one hundred and ten men under my command who were able to reach the state line,” wrote Williams.772 As the group slowly made its way north, men had to march in front of the supply wagons to trample down snow, breaking a passable path across the prairie. As the initial enthusiasm of the volunteers began to stagnate, new men continued to join the militia from farms and homesteads along the route north.

On the first day of April 1857, Williams and all three companies arrived at Granger’s Point with a total of one hundred and twenty-five men. From the settlers at that location the militia learned that the Wahpekute had fled north to avoid retribution. After considering the situation, Williams released all but twenty-five of the men before continuing the trek toward Spirit Lake. Aside from the task of locating and burying the dead, the smaller contingent found little else to do at Spirit Lake. Arriving first at the Mattock Cabin, Williams believed strong resistance had led to the death of twenty or so Dakota.773 The over optimism of Williams resulted from his belief that hand-to-hand fighting had occurred at the cabin. The militia also found the carcasses of between forty and fifty cattle at the site. The column made quick work of the burial, and more men headed back to Fort Dodge. The largest group, led by Captain Johnson, consisted of seventeen men.774 Almost immediately the group got caught in a late-

772 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 68.
773 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 69.
774 William Williams, The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 70.
season blizzard, leading to the death of Johnson and another man named Burkholder from exposure. Three other men died of pneumonia while attempting to return to Fort Dodge.\textsuperscript{775}

While the Fort Dodge delegation toiled north, a delegation from Fort Ridgely made its way south. Under the direction of a forty year old South Carolinian named Captain Bee, the soldiers slowly moved toward the attacked settlements. “The narrative of a single day’s march is a history of the whole. Wading through deep drifts; cutting through them with the spade and shovel; extricating mules and sleighs from sloughs, or dragging the latter up steep hills or over bare spaces of priaire,” recorded Bee in his official report. “The snow lay in heavy masses on the track which I was following but these masses were thawing and could not bear the weight of the men, much less that of the heavy sleds with which I was compelled to travel.”\textsuperscript{776} The deep drifts of the prairies forced Bee to lead his men on an indirect course that tracked down the Minnesota River and eventually onto the course of the Watonwan River. Slowly the column made their way through deep drifts, and on March twenty-eighth they arrived in the area of Springfield at a trading post.\textsuperscript{777} From those at the post Bee learned of the attack on Springfield that had just ended two days prior. He also met two mixed-blood Sisseton Dakota named Joseph La Framboise and Caboo. The two mixed-bloods told Bee that Inkpaduta and the Wahpekute had concealed themselves in a nearby grove.\textsuperscript{778} Bee decided to strike out immediately.

The first location where the soldiers followed La Fromboise and Caboo did not contain the hoped for encampment of Inkpaduta. Bee and twenty-four men surrounded the grove, but

\textsuperscript{776} Bee’s Report, April 9, 1857. Fort Ridgley. Letterbook. Letters Received and Sent. Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
\textsuperscript{777} Thomas Hughes, “Sioux Indians Harassed the Early Iowa Settlers.” \textit{Annals of Iowa} 34 (1957): 137-41.
\textsuperscript{778} Bee’s Report, April 9, 1857. Fort Ridgley. Letterbook. Letters Received and Sent. Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
came away empty-handed. After the unsuccessful initial expedition, Caboo offered another location, roughly fifteen miles distant on Huron Lake. Bee mounted his horse and led his weary men across the frozen Des Moines River and through the drifted snows to Heron Lake. Upon arrival the column discovered some fires that appeared to have recently burned, but Caboo assured them that the fires had gone out at least a day or two before. In reality, Inkpaduta lingered in the immediate vicinity. Inkpaduta and the Wahpekute had spotted the approaching column shortly before they arrived, and prepared to defend themselves. Women had put out the soon-to-be discovered fires, pulled down the lodges, and helped a man injured during the recent raid on Springfield. Inkpaduta had abandoned the site discovered by Bee two days prior, but had moved just two miles away. Bee broke his troops into search parties to scour the area, but they did not discover the Wahpekute concealed in the nearby woods. Inkpaduta’s near confrontation with the soldiers from Fort Ridgely proved the closest he would come to being apprehended following the attacks. After the unsuccessful search, Bee sent twenty of the men under his command south to Spirit Lake to bury any dead they could find, while he gathered his command and went to Springfield. Upon his arrival at Springfield, Bee set about burying the seven dead and seeing to the needs of two men and a baby that the fleeing settlers had left behind following the attack. He traveled solo back to Fort Ridgely on April 4, leaving behind the rest of the military detachment to help protect any settlers remaining in the area.

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779 Bee’s Report, April 9, 1857. Fort Ridgley. Letterbook. Letters Received and Sent. Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
780 Bee’s Report, April 9, 1857. Fort Ridgley. Letterbook. Letters Received and Sent. Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
781 Bee’s Report, April 9, 1857. Fort Ridgley. Letterbook. Letters Received and Sent. Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
782 Bee’s Report, April 9, 1857. Fort Ridgley. Letterbook. Letters Received and Sent. Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
783 Bee’s Report, April 9, 1857. Fort Ridgley. Letterbook. Letters Received and Sent. Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
Bee hoped that the incident would not strike fear throughout the settlers in the northern Iowa borderlands, but these sentiments proved for naught. Before Bee had even departed Springfield, the attacks had already appeared in the *Daily Pioneer and Democrat* from St. Paul, Minnesota, on March twenty-fifth, the *Henderson (Minnesota) Democrat* on March twenty-sixth, as well as the *Des Moines Citizen* on April second. The initial details reported varied widely and proved inaccurate, but by April sixteenth the *Henderson Democrat* reported Inkpaduta’s band of Wahpekute as the attackers. However, after the initial facts of the attack on Spirit Lake came to light, sensational stories began to circulate in a variety of papers throughout the region. Stories of “25,000 Indians in Arms!!,” the siege of Mankato by nine-hundred Dakota, and other sensationalized reports caught the attention of readers near and far. In Iowa, the *Oskaloosa Herald* reported that the Dakota had killed fifty-three people on the Watonwan River, the *Keokuk City Gate* alleged that an attack had wiped out the entire settlement at Fort Dodge, and the *Fort Dodge Sentinel* told its audience that between 5,000 and 7,000 Dakota marched toward them down the Des Moines River. Startled settlers heeded the warnings of their local newspapers and fled out of the area in droves.

Algota had grown to a fledgling population that outstripped the initial settlement on Spirit Lake to the west by the time of Inkpaduta’s attack. Being the closest substantial settlement left Algota in an interesting position. Some settlers found themselves deep in the grips of paranoia, at one point taking cover after mistaking the flapping wings of an approaching flock of Sandhill cranes for Dakota warriors. Others, most notably the initial founder of Algota

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785 *Henderson Democrat*, March 26, April 6, May 7, 1857. Microfilm at Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN.
786 *Oskaloosa Herald*, May 8, 1857. Microfilm at State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, IA.
Ambrose Call, did not believe that a threat existed after the initial outbreak of violence at Spirit Lake. Although unconcerned with the threat posed by Inkpaduta and the Wahpekute, Call did journey south after hearing of the violence. “I remember that the spring of ’57 was very late, and…I had to walk from Algona to Dakota (City, approximately thirty miles directly south), as it was impossible for a horse to get through.” He recollected that he came to a slough that he couldn’t cross, even on foot, until he found a ten-foot deep drift that he ventured the risk. Learning at Dakota City of the events that had unfolded due west of his settlement, Call did not express alarm, again alluding to the late spring as an aid to Inkpaduta and a comfort to the settlers:

The Indians are not by any means fools. The snow was deep and the waters were all over the bottoms. There was no foliage to conceal them, and as the settlements were all aroused, and as every man was well armed, the Indians would not be likely the settlements that were comparatively strong here. But as we had no means of knowing the extent of the combination, it was not impossible that we might have a long Indian war on our hands, which would last through the summer. In any event to hold the settlements it was necessary to take some measures of safety. We sent out scouts in every direction; Levi Maxwell, A.A. Call, W.H. Ingham, and others, who explored the whole country and reported that there were no Indians on our river and that we were at the frontier, all the settlers beyond us having fled. In two days we had got up a fort, made partly of four inch plank and partly of logs set in the ground, barricaded with bastions and loop-holes. I considered it entirely proof against any Indians that had no artillery.

Call provided an update on the perceived frontier line when he noted that everyone abandoned all settlements to the west, choosing instead to cluster into sites with the potential for better

fortification. No known accounts detailing settlement east of the Des Moines River’s east fork include an indigenous presence after those recorded earlier in the 1850s.

Settlers in Worth County did not record any struggles with indigenous peoples, although great alarm resulted in 1857 following the outbreak of violence in Spirit Lake.

Many fled, but a portion of the men in the northern parts of the county organized themselves into a military company, with Doctor Cutter as Captain. A mud fort was hastily constructed on the west side of the river at Belmond, overlooking the river. For better security, the women were all gathered into one log cabin, while the men remained in the fort and established regular military discipline. Pickets were established and sentinels posted, but no enemy came. After several days scouts reported all the settlers as having fled to Webster City. The cause of all danger having passed, the people returned to their homes.790

Aside from the initial flight of settlers from areas throughout the northern Iowa borderlands toward more established locales, settlement slowed in many of the westernmost counties. Emmet, Palo Alto, Pocahontas, Clay, and Dickinson counties had all gained their first American settlers during the summer of 1856. After Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake, entire communities in each of these counties fled toward the safety of more established population centers. By the Iowa State Census of 1859, Emmet and Clay counties still had not seen resettlement, while the populations of Dickinson and Palo Alto had recovered to just over one hundred inhabitants.791

Even as settlers started to slowly trickle back toward the abandoned portions of the northern Iowa borderlands as early as the summer of 1857, Inkpaduta still escaped the clutches of American justice. Immediately following the close encounter with Bee’s forces near Huron

791 F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed. 1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).
Lake, Inkpaduta led the band to the Pipestone Quarry in southwestern Minnesota to wait out the unfavorable weather. Over the previous weeks the band had gathered ample amounts of supplies to sustain them through the early spring. After spending a few days making pipes, the band continued westward. The American women captured in the earlier attacks faced great difficulties as the band moved well-beyond the frontier line and onto the Great Plains. “(We had) to bear heavy burdens and plod our weary way with our feet entirely naked, through snow to the depth of 2, 3 and 4 feet,” recorded the captive Margaret Marble. The difficulties faced by Marble paled into comparison to those of another captive, Elizabeth Thatcher. Thatcher had recently given birth only to see her child killed during the initial attack of the Wahpekute. She sustained an unknown injury to her leg that led to significant swelling and discoloration, and she struggled to keep up with the band as it made its way to the Big Sioux River in South Dakota. Thatcher struggled across the river on a fallen log, eventually falling into the water. Although she struggled the rest of the way across and onto the river bank, the Wahpekute clubbed her to death. Her injury had slowed the band down, and the supplies from the raids had already started to diminish. The band had grown desperate enough to begin slaughtering horses for food, and Thatcher’s injury had become an unacceptable liability.

Inkpaduta and the band arrived on the James River in early May where they found bison, as well as other food sources. After spending some time recovering, the band continued to

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793 Margaret Marble to James Denver, July 23, 1857. Collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.
move. When the band arrived at the Skunk Lake two Wahpeton Dakota authorized by the territorial legislature of Minnesota to trade for the captive women approached them. The two Dakota, Sounding Heavens and Gray Foot, met with Inkpaduta and attempted to convince him that his actions would bring punishment not just on the band, but on other Dakota also.\textsuperscript{798} Inkpaduta agreed to release one of the remaining captives, Margaret Marble, to help ease the burden on other Dakotas, and in return received horses, powder, and lead. The two Dakota returned Marble to Flandreau, who then paid Sounding Heavens and Gray Foot five hundred dollars for their services.\textsuperscript{799}

After his dealings with the Wahpeton, Inkpaduta and his band moved to the confluence of the James and Snake Rivers where they joined an encampment of Yanktonai roughly two hundred lodges in strength. Inkpaduta sold the two remaining captives, Lydia Nobles and Abbie-Gardner Sharp, to a one-legged Yanktonai man named End of Snake.\textsuperscript{800} A few weeks later, in June, Roaring Cloud arrived in End of the Snake’s village and demanded that Lydia Nobles fulfill his sexual desires. After Nobles refused Roaring Cloud’s advances, he dragged her out of the lodge where End of the Snake held the captives and beat her to death with a piece of firewood. Gardner reported that she saw the Dakota using Nobles’ corpse for target practice the following day.\textsuperscript{801} Just six days later, a group of three Dakota men sent by Flandreau discovered Nobles’ body. Iron Hawk, Paul Mazakutamane, and John Other Day had left the Hazelwood Republic in Minnesota on May twenty-third in the hopes of securing the release of the remaining

\textsuperscript{798} Mark Diedrich, \textit{Famous Chiefs of the Eastern Sioux}. (Minneapolis, MN: Coyote Books, 1987), 51.
\textsuperscript{799} Flandreau to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 24, 1857. Record Group, 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
They discovered Nobles’ body and buried it before meeting with Inkpaduta. They found the Wahpekute leader’s band greatly diminished, after a disagreement his sons had led them to split back toward the lands they had previously occupied near the frontier in Iowa and Minnesota. Only three lodges remained with Inkpaduta. The disagreement resulted from Inkpaduta’s insistence that the band remain in the west with the Yanktonais in order to stay away from potential retribution from the Americans. The negotiations for Gardner lasted three days. In the end, End of Snake set the price for Gardner at one box of tobacco, two horses, two kegs of gunpowder, seven blankets, and a few other small items. The three men representing Flandreau agreed, loaded Gardner in a wagon, and headed back to the Upper Sioux Agency on the Minnesota River. They arrived on June tenth, effectively ending the chain of events that had begun at Smithland in late-February. Inkpaduta remained in the west, outside of the reach of American justice. Gardner returned to the northern Iowa borderlands to a life much different than the one she would have imagined just a few months prior.

Following the cessation of violence and the successful return of the captives, Congress passed an act to reimburse the local militias for their expenses in pursing expeditions against Inkpaduta and his band. The government also agreed to pay claims for expenses related to the rescuing of captives. At least two individuals also sought to make claims for losses incurred during the outbreak: James B. Thomas and Abbie Gardner-Sharp. W.J. Cullen, Superintendent of the Northern District and the Bureau of Indian Affairs had the task of sorting through and

approving or denying the claims.\textsuperscript{807} Sharp did not make her claim to the United States Court of Claims until 1885, but her request provided further insight into the state of the Gardner property at the time of Inkpaduta’s attack.\textsuperscript{808} The Honorable Hiram Price, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, initially approved Gardner’s claim and wrote “the land at the time of her father’s and her brother-in-law’s death, well worth the sum of $5,000.”\textsuperscript{809} The land near West Okoboji Lake had already become a significant tourist destination and gathering point for the people of northwestern Iowa. Gardner also won her claim for personal property, as best she could remember in 1885:

The personal property of Gardner and Luce destroyed by said Indians consisted of, as near as she can recollect, namely,

- 6 yoke of working cattle, valued at $100
- 5 cows, valued at $50
- 12 head of young cattle, valued at $250
- 3 lumber wagons, at $80
- 2 breaking plows, ox-yokes, chains, &c., at $90
- Mowing-scythes, hay-rakes, pitchforks, several hogs, a large amount of poultry, seed wheat, seed corn, corn for keeping stock, potatoes, two double-barreled guns, household goods, consisting of 5 beds and bedding, 2 cooking-stoves, 2 tables, necessary dishes, knifes and forks, table linen, &c., 50 yards of carpet, a clock, and all personal clothing, and numerous articles which are not stated, valued at $1200

Total amount claims $10,630\textsuperscript{810}


\textsuperscript{809} Hiram Price Papers, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.

Working from the memory of thirteen year old girl, the list represented many of the necessary items required for a quality agricultural homestead in the 1850s. The Gardner’s possessions likely included all of the implements integral to not only surviving, but thriving in their new environment. The Gardner’s had worked a successful season in 1855, before choosing to sell their claim and embark toward Spirit Lake in 1856. The land proceeds would have provided a significant start on acquiring the goods listed by Gardner-Sharp’s claim. Henry Luce’s possessions when he arrived from Hampton later in 1856 added to the plurality and diversity of goods and supplies.\(^{811}\) Rowland Gardner had undoubtedly established his family on a great piece of land with many of the implements, livestock, and supplies necessary to sustain the family as they survived the winter of 1856-57 and into the growing season of 1857.

Abbie Gardner, just thirteen years-old at the time of Inkapaduta’s attacks, found herself at an age that would have put her on the cusp of womanhood on the 1850s frontier.\(^{812}\) Gardner would have had an understanding of the implements, livestock, housewares, and other accoutrements possessed by her family entering the spring of 1857. In Gardner-Sharp’s account of the fateful day in question she asserted repeatedly that the family nearly had run out of provisions. She related the story of Henry Luce and Jacob Thatcher embarking across the snow-bank drifted prairie landscape for supplies in February of 1857. “In spite of the snow-banks, sometimes fifteen and twenty feet deep; in spite of wind and cold…They secured as large a supply as they thought possible to convey, with their weary oxen, over the untrodden drifts; and succeeded in making their way back as far as Shippey’s cabin, in Palo Alto County.”\(^{813}\) That

\(^{811}\) H.W. Granger, “From Spirit Lake; Particulars of the Late Outrages, Derived from Eye Witnesses.” *Minnesota Pioneer & Democrat*, 24 April 1857.


Luce and Thatcher even attempted such a journey speaks to a harsh reality facing the community at Spirit Lake. She goes on to relay that even through Luce returned to the Gardner homestead on the evening of March sixth, “my father at once began preparations for a needed trip to Fort Dodge, also for provisions.”\(^{814}\) Gardner-Sharp’s claim provides quality insight into the agricultural equipment and other goods present at the Gardner claim during late-winter 1857. The proximity of the trips of Henry Luce and Rowland Gardner suggest that although the cabin site had the necessary agricultural implements, the reality of scarcity that faced many frontier outposts in Iowa during the 1850s also threatened the Gardner family. On Luce’s eastward journey he had stopped in Hampton, Shell Rock, and Cedar Falls prior to arriving in Waterloo.\(^{815}\) Scarcity lurked all over Iowa throughout the winter of 1856-57. Although the Gardner family had plenty of material goods, they still suffered from a lack of food vital to survive the winter.

Another citizen purchased Rowland Gardner’s property shortly after he died, creating the eventual need for Abbie Gardner-Sharp’s claim. On August 27, 1857, the citizens of Dickinson County presented a petition stating that Abbie’s sister Elizabeth had sold the claim of Rowland Gardner.\(^{816}\) While Abbie still lived in captivity, Elizabeth had married a Mr. Wilson and moved safely behind the frontier to Hampton in Franklin County. “Mr. and Mrs. Wilson warranted the claim and agreed to satisfy the demands of Abigail Gardner, if she ever returned.”\(^{817}\) Following Abbie’s release by Inkpaduta and the Wahpekute, the petition circulated but Abbie chose to initially relocate with her sister. Mr. Prescott had paid $500 for the claim, which the petition


\(^{815}\) H.W. Granger, “From Spirit Lake; Particulars of the Late Outrages, Derived from Eye Witnesses.” *Minnesota Pioneer & Democrat*, 24 April 1857.


stated: “we view as an adequate one for the value of the claims at the time and was all that was asked by Mr. and Mrs. Wilson.”

James B. Thomas filed his claim in 1860 and found resolution with the legislature of the State of Minnesota. However, Thomas’s claim lacks the specificity of Gardner-Sharp’s claim. Thomas’s claim focused on the loss of his arm in the attack, the death of his nine-year-old son Willie, and his young daughter’s death from pneumonia on the flight to Fort Dodge. The resolution went on to state “he is now entirely destitute and in a great measure unable to support his family.” As Thomas remained in possession of his cabin following the unsuccessful March twenty-fifth attack, he did not claim the bevy of household and agricultural goods claimed by Sharp. The secretary of state for Minnesota forwarded a certified copy to Amos Coggswell, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives. Thomas never received remuneration.

Despite Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake, settlement in the northern Iowa borderlands continued. American population grew to a point where the entirety of the area either exceeded or sat on the cusp of the two-persons per square mile marker by 1860. The landscape continued to undergo significant alteration as eager agriculturalists plowed under the undulating prairies and split timber to erect homesteads. Plant and animal life throughout the region continued to shift from the great diversity of the pre-colonization era toward the monoculture of modern American agriculture. The Dakota had departed, choosing homes either on reservations in Minnesota or out west with relatives in the broader Oceti Sakowin where they could continue to range with

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autonomy. With the departure of the Dakota the military presence in the region also dissipated, and the focus of Iowans moved from initial settlement toward developing communities. The attack of Inkapatta on Spirit Lake would linger, however, in the minds of people throughout the state as a final moment of desperate violence by Inkapatta and the Wahpekute as they sought to maintain sovereignty and autonomy over the lands they had drawn rich sustenance from during the pre-colonial era.
CHAPTER SIX: “THE FAR-FAMED PRAIRIES OF IOWA”

By the close of the 1850s the northern Iowa borderlands had undergone significant changes. The land, as well as the life living on it, had endured a transformation that changed the area forever. The original inhabitants had been forced to choose between staying in the area or retaining sovereignty and autonomy in distant lands to the west. New residents quickly filled newly surveyed spaces and ardently worked to break the prairie and convert the landscape for agriculture. Towns sprung up out of the soil, and as 1860 loomed workers laid railroad tracks that connected the northern Iowa borderlands to wider horizons and distant markets. Treaties between the United States government and native inhabitants had largely cleared the state of indigenous peoples while making the way for American settlement to a point where governmental officials no longer deemed a significant military presence necessary to protect the recently transferred lands. The attack of Inkpaduta on Spirit Lake had already began to be cast as the last stand of indigenous peoples in Iowa.

The Dakota relocated either on reservations to the north in Minnesota or further west where they would continue to push against American threats to their continued way of life for subsequent decades. The Dakota faded from the memory of Iowans, gaining recognition only in relation to the final, desperate attempts of Inkpaduta and the Wahpekute to maintain some measure of control of the lands they had called home for much of their lives. Following the attacks of Spirit Lake and Springfield, historians began to portray Inkpaduta as a bloodthirsty renegade. Doane Robinson of the South Dakota Historical Society described Inkpaduta as “a fiend incarnate, of whom there is not recorded one single act that was not steeped in blood-
thirsty deviltry thrice refined."\textsuperscript{821} Frank Herriot, a Minnesota historian working in the 1930s, compared Inkpaduta held an “intense, relentless, and notorious” hatred for all whites.\textsuperscript{822} Iowa historian Benjamin Gue relied on racist tropes to cast Inkpaduta as the vilest representation of “cowardly savages” who embodied “the relentless cruelty of his race.”\textsuperscript{823} Historian Edgar Stewart consistently referred to Inkpaduta as an “Indian gangster.”\textsuperscript{824} L.P. Lee, another historian, wrote that Inkpaduta was “universally reputed as one of the most blood-thirsty Indian leaders in the northwest.”\textsuperscript{825} Attention focused on Inkpaduta while also erasing the Dakota history in Iowa that long predated the attack on Spirit Lake.

To fill the void, Iowans created a public memory that minimized the indigenous past of the place, instead focusing on narratives built around triumphant pioneers breaking the prairies and altering the landscape. The dominant narrative of Iowa’s past became one of humankind gloriously prevailing over an empty wilderness to feed the world. For generations the books written by scholars, the paintings commissioned for public buildings, and the statues looking over the manicured lawns of parks have resounded with a message that silenced the sacrifice of Iowa’s indigenous past. The time has come for recollection and reconciliation in order to cleanse the sins of forefathers concealed in silence.

The first changes for the lands and peoples of Iowa came in the form of initial explorations by Americans, efforts to map the area, and treaties designed to section the lands. For the Dakota, treaty negotiations began in 1805 with the expedition of Zebulon Pike up the

\textsuperscript{821} Doane Robinson, \textit{A History of the Dakota or Sioux Indians: From Their Earliest Traditions and First Contact With White Men to the Final Settlement of Them Upon Reservations and Consequent Abandonment of the Old Tribal Life.} (Aberdeen, SD: State Historical Society of South Dakota, 1904), 342.


\textsuperscript{825} L.P. Lee, \textit{History of the Spirit Lake Massacre.} (Iowa City, IA: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1918), 26.
Mississippi River and the agreement to the cession of lands that eventually became Fort Snelling.\textsuperscript{826} Pike had started a relationship with the Dakota that marked by bad faith negotiations, misunderstanding, and duplicitous dealings. The initial treaty kicked off decades of dispossession that ultimately led to the establishment of the reservation and annuity system, while creating a dynamic where Dakota, like Inkaputa, who did not wish to sacrifice a more traditional life for one on a reservation, became marginalized.

Successive treaties negotiated at Prairie du Chien in 1825 and 1830 brought together the vast diaspora of tribal peoples from the Upper Midwest to first segment, and then reduce lands throughout Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. In 1825, the United States sought to parcel out lands in an attempt to hem in indigenous peoples, while also seeking to reduce violence by establishing clearly delineated boundaries.\textsuperscript{827} Peoples, even those that signed the treaty, largely ignored the specific lines drawn on maps to hem them in. The document codified an American belief that indigenous peoples would ignore the agreement, specifically acknowledging that a great likelihood existed that the tribes would simply ignore the new borders. Conflicts almost immediately followed the 1825 negotiations, and the conflict between the Wahpekute Dakota and the Meskwaki and Sauk in the northern Iowa borderlands underscored the inadequacy of the treaty or the American’s ability to enforce its provisions. The Wahpekute had sought to incorporate the United States into existing dynamics, seeking to utilize the emerging power as an arbitrator of long-standing tribal conflicts based on access to land and natural resources. The failure of the 1825 treaty undermined the Wahpekute’s belief in the validity of American treaties,

\textsuperscript{826} Zebulon Pike. \textit{An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and through the Western Ports of Louisiana}. (Washington, D.C.: Coues, 1807).
\textsuperscript{827} Council Notes from Prairie du Chien, 2 August 1825, William Clark Papers in the collections of the Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, KS.
and the fallout led to portions of the band ignoring subsequent treaties. These critical flaws of the 1825 treaty necessitated a second treaty in 1830.\textsuperscript{828}

The proceedings for the second treaty demonstrated a willingness toward adaptability for indigenous peoples throughout the region. Each sought, as a sovereign and autonomous power, to adaptively negotiate to their own greatest advantage. Tribes vied for territory, as well as trade goods, as William Clark and Lewis Cass sought to ease tribal conflicts and create boundaries that the original inhabitants of the upper-Midwest would respect.\textsuperscript{829} Many tribes and tribal subgroups, the bands of Wahpekute that eventually passed leadership to Sintominiduta and Inkpaduta among them, did not attend the proceedings after frustrations arose with the first American attempt at negotiations five years prior. The government acknowledged that subsequent treaties would prove necessary to complete their stated goal of “clearing the title” to the lands in order to allow for future purchases, but the Wahpekute band eventually led by Inkpaduta would not take part in another meaningful negotiation during the era.\textsuperscript{830} A provision of the treaty sought to move the Ho-Chunk into a newly created “neutral ground” to serve as a buffer between the Sauk and Meskwaki and the Dakota, but the eventual arrival of the Ho-Chunk only exacerbated tensions for indigenous peoples, the military, and settlers alike. Eventual conflicts between the Dakota, the Ho-Chunk, and the settler community like the one at Clear Lake in the early 1850s illustrated how resistant the Wahpekute proved toward agreements they

\begin{footnotes}
\item[828] Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien, 1825; Multinational Treaty of Prairie du Chien, 1830; Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
\item[829] Council Notes from Prairie du Chien, 2 August 1825, William Clark Papers in the collections of the Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, KS.
\end{footnotes}
had not consented to, as well as their willingness to harass anyone in league with their traditional enemies.

The United States government did not rightfully acquire the bulk of the northern Iowa borderlands until the wide-ranging treaties of 1851.\(^{831}\) The Dakota sold the vast majority of their lands for roughly twelve cents per acre while creating the reservation and annuity system in Minnesota. The United States expected the tribe to locate to a twenty-mile wide strip of land along the Minnesota River. Sintominiduta or Inkpaduta, both now leading bands that ranged throughout southern Minnesota and the northern Iowa borderlands, did not sign the treaty.\(^{832}\) Both continued to lead their bands along the Blue Earth, Des Moines, and Little Sioux Rivers, leading lives more consistent with typical Dakota folkways. The creation of the treaty and annuity system stimulated settlement in Minnesota and Iowa, exacerbated cultural tensions between the settler community and the Dakota, and created an illusion of safety for eager pioneers hoping to homestead in lands still occupied by bands of Dakota. The 1851 treaty stands as a culmination of the bad faith dealings of the United States government as desperate fur traders offset losses due to declining animal populations by capturing over half a million dollars of the treaty proceeds. The Dakota who honored the agreement and moved to the reservation faced radical life changes that ultimately led to the 1862 US-Dakota War, while those who chose not to follow the treaty became outcasts and renegades.

To enforce treaty provisions and provide a sense of security for eastern American migrants hoping to settle on agricultural homesteads the government commissioned and

\(^{831}\) Treaty of Traverse de Sioux, 1851; Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
\(^{832}\) Treaty of Traverse de Sioux, 1851; Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians. Record Group 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
decommissioned a series of forts throughout Dakota lands to continue the march west. Fifteen years after the first Dakota treaty made with Zebulon Pike, the military arrived at the heart of Dakota lands to begin construction on Fort Snelling. Fort Snelling served as the northernmost fort in a chain that extended southward to Oklahoma and existed to provide protection and regulate interactions between formerly sovereign and autonomous indigenous peoples. The military struggled initially to adequately project power throughout the region, but the forts proved vital to reassuring people that an area had opened for settlement.

After American military might in the Upper Midwest failed during the War of 1812 in the face of a British alliance with the majority of indigenous peoples in the area, Fort Crawford was built to house treaty negotiations and serve the interests of the American government from Prairie du Chien. When the government completed the treaties of 1825 and 1830, a new fort near the edge of the northern Iowa borderlands became necessary. The military frontier extended to Fort Atkinson in northeastern Iowa, while the first Fort Des Moines marked the emergence of American power in the central portion of the state. The military positioned both forts strategically to ease tensions between the Dakota and their traditional enemies the Meskwaki and Sauk, while also providing protection of the Ho-Chunk who underwent forcible removal from their more easterly homelands during the time period. The location of each fort marks a different boundary than would eventually be codified for the Dakota, and settlement that developed under the protection of each fort pushed the Dakota north and west.

The military continued to push west in tandem with the settlement of larger populations in the eastern portion of Iowa. The construction of Fort Dodge in 1850 marked the arrival of the United States military in the northern Iowa borderlands.\textsuperscript{836} The fort, constructed specifically at the edge of Dakota lands along the Des Moines River to project power near the village of Sintominiduta at Lizard Creek, signaled to pioneer populations that the northern Iowa borderlands had opened for settlement. The fort established a military presence that precipitated population growth throughout the region in the first half of the 1850s. The fort also served as an introduction to American justice for Inkpadata following the murder of Sintominiduta by the horse thief Henry Lott in 1852, as well as when the military arrested the chief and several band members following depredations along the Boyer River around the same time.\textsuperscript{837} Fort Dodge projected weak power at best, and the Wahpekute continued to range throughout the northern Iowa borderlands much as they had in previous decades. The military post at Fort Dodge only had a limited presence in the region, and did not find service in many meaningful interactions protecting settlers from the Dakota. In 1853 the fort was decommissioned in favor of Fort Ridgely, located in Minnesota.\textsuperscript{838} The decommissioning of the fort signaled to pioneers that Dakota had again moved further north and west, but in reality Inkpadata continued to lead the Wahpekute in a life centered on summering at Spirit Lake and wintering near the confluence of the Little Sioux and Missouri Rivers. Through the 1851 treaty and the abandoning the fort, the government led settlers to believe that they had cleared the northern Iowa borderlands of an indigenous presence while opening the lands for settlement. In reality, Inkpadata’s continued

\textsuperscript{836} Wood to the Assistant Adjutant General, 24 August 1853. Fort Dodge. Letterbook. Letters Received and Sent. Record Group 393. National Archives. Washington, D.C.

\textsuperscript{837} William Williams. \textit{The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa}. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 26.

\textsuperscript{838} William Williams. \textit{The History of Early Fort Dodge and Webster County, Iowa}. Edited by Edward Breen. (Fort Dodge, IA: KUFD-KFMY, 1950), 34.
expectation to live sovereignly and autonomously would come into direct conflict with settlers throughout the area repeatedly in locations stretching across the northern Iowa borderlands from decommissioning of the fort in 1853 through his attack on Spirit Lake in 1857.

Inkpaduta entered the world in a time of incredible change for his people. Growing up in the early 1800s, Inkpaduta came of age in a world much like the one his Dakota ancestors had inhabited for centuries. He learned the various ways in which the Dakota could range throughout their lands to expertly derive sustenance from the flora and fauna of the upper-Midwest. Life for the Dakota found structure in cycles carried out to provide for basic needs while also not overtaxing the environment around them in. As Inkpaduta grew, the world around him radically began to change as treaties and military power opened Dakota lands to a variety of challenges including population pressure, complete restructuring of the land, declines in animal populations, epidemic disease, and other threats to Wahpekute existence in their traditional ranges. To navigate these challenges Inkpaduta and other Dakota leaders responded in a variety of ways. For many, Inkpaduta included, passive rejection served as an initial response to American inroads into Dakota lands. The Dakota ability to passively ignore the growing American presence in their proximity faded as treaties sought to dispossess them, the reservation and annuity system sought to hem them in, and the natural environment failed to support their lifeways as it once had. Some Dakotas chose a path of adaptation to American demands that eventually ended in acculturation, but Inkpaduta sought to maintain his sovereignty and autonomy even to the point of extreme violence.

Inkpaduta experienced each of the challenges to traditional Dakota life uniquely. As a boy, he suffered a bout with smallpox. As a young man he watched as Wahpekute leaders tested treaty provisions and sought to lead their people through the initial adaptations necessary to the
increased American presence in the region. When Inkpaduta reached adulthood he took on the responsibility of helping to navigate the unique challenges faced during the most extreme time of change in the northern Iowa borderlands. He showed a willingness toward adaptation when he sought justice after the death of Sintominiduta through the American system, but also showed a desire to assert his sovereignty to settlers in geographic locations across the northern Iowa borderlands from Clear Lake to Smithland throughout the 1850s, and continued passively rejecting American checks on indigenous autonomy by ignoring the segmentation of Dakota lands through the treaties negotiated without his band of Wahpekute during the early nineteenth century.

By the fall of 1856, Inkpaduta had created a mixed legacy in the northern Iowa borderlands. He had proven friendly with settlers who sought accommodation with the Wahpekute like Charles Lamb at Smithland. He had also proven to be fair in trade with several traders throughout the northern Iowa borderlands who continued to extend him credit well into the 1850s. Inkpaduta sought to adapt to the onset of American power in the region as evidenced by his actions following the murder of his close friend Sintominiduta. In contrast, he had also challenged settlers consistently from the Cedar River to the Missouri. He captured two men on the Shellrock River, confronted settlers at Clear Lake for housing his enemies, and harassed surveying parties in Algona. Inkpaduta ignored treaties that he had not participated in, but also showed his knowledge of the treaties when he sought to draw annuities on two separate occasions during the early 1850s. Like all people, Inkpaduta stands as a complex person actively seeking to navigate the challenges of the world around him.

The harsh winter of 1856-57 paired with increasing population pressure to create a desperate tipping-point moment for Inkpaduta and his band of Wahpekute. Confronted and
disarmed by settlers at Smithland in late-February of the worst winter of the century, instead of resorting to violence Inkpaduta led his starving band up the Little Sioux River toward their traditional summer home at Spirit Lake. Along the way the band suffered casualties as members starved to death, including one of Inkpaduta’s grandchildren.\textsuperscript{839} The band pillaged the countryside, taking guns and foodstuffs from a variety of settlements without perpetrating any large-scale violence as they struggled north. As Inkpaduta made his way to Spirit Lake up the Little Sioux River his motives come into clear focus. Where past chroniclers of the event have dismissed the motivations of Inkpaduta as unexplained and unexplainable, or misattributed the motive to the murder of Sintominiduta, the evidence paints a clearer picture. Inkpaduta had arrived not at an isolated moment frozen in time, but one that had built over the course of his lifetime. The band had sought to avoid confrontation when it actively courted them at Smithland, and expected to arrive at a Spirit Lake devoid of settlement. Instead their frustrations boiled over as they came upon cabins erected at the site of their summer village.

American settlement had arrived on the shores of the sacred lakes where the Dakota first learned to plant and harvest corn. Desperate and frustrated, Inkpaduta entered the first cabin he came to and demanded supplies to sustain his band. When Rowland Gardner refused, violence erupted. The Wahpekute brutally killed, captured, and robbed virtually all of the settlers on Spirit Lake before making their way north to attack the settlement of Jackson two weeks later. In all, they would kill thirty-nine people, including two of the four initial captives.\textsuperscript{840} Inkpaduta then set his eyes west where he could continue to elude American justice and join with Yanktonai relatives who still lived a more traditional life than the one offered by the reservation.

system. He sold the two remaining captives, and had a falling out with his sons over if the band should return to their lands in Iowa.\textsuperscript{841} Inkpaduta stayed west, continuing to live in ways consistent with his Dakota upbringing and fighting when necessary to preserve what sovereignty and autonomy he continued to wield. He fought against the forces under Brigadier General Henry Hastings Sibley during 1863, again against Brigadier General Alfred Sully in 1864, and finally against Brevet Brigadier General George Armstrong Custer in 1876 before absconding with Sitting Bull to Canada following the Battle of the Little Bighorn.\textsuperscript{842} He spent his adult life fighting and fleeing to maintain his freedom from American acculturation, and eventually died outside of the United States in Manitoba, Canada in 1881.\textsuperscript{843} The Americans may have forced him to abandon his traditional lands, but he went to his grave actively seeking to maintain the sovereignty and autonomy of his people while practicing a life culturally consistent with that of generations past.

The lands Inkpaduta left in the northern Iowa borderlands had undergone significant change by 1860. The “enchanted world” described by Agnes C. Laut had yielded to the eager pioneer’s plow.\textsuperscript{844} The state of Iowa had organized and surveyed the vast majority of the counties encompassing the watersheds of the Des Moines and Little Sioux rivers, signaling an end to the lives of plant and animal species throughout the area. The Oak savannahs of the area yielded to the settler’s ax, and in time a greater diversity of trees came to cover portions of a landscape formally inhospitable to trees due to annual prairie fires. The process of ditching and draining wetlands throughout the region had begun, a process that would see over 1.5 million

\textsuperscript{841} Flandreau to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 24, 1857. Record Group, 75. National Archives. Washington, D.C.
\textsuperscript{843} Mark Diedrich, \textit{Famous Chiefs of the Eastern Sioux}. (Minneapolis, MN: Coyote Books, 1987), 51.
\textsuperscript{844} Agnes C. Laut
acres repurposed into agricultural lands.\textsuperscript{845} The complicated web of life in the northern Iowa borderlands found itself at the beginning of a century long shift from a prairie biome to an agricultural landscape.

The first American settlers of the northern Iowa borderlands quickly set about converting the tallgrass prairie biome consisting of forty to sixty distinct species per acre into one focused solely on agriculture.\textsuperscript{846} Over the course of the 1850s alone, an area that the government had not record as having a single improved acre had converted to agriculture in most areas. The process of land conversion in the northern Iowa borderlands continued to develop well after the 1860s, but the process had begun. The government had completed survey of 294,092 acres throughout the northern Iowa borderlands by 1860, and considered 93,564 of those acres improved.\textsuperscript{847} Over the course of the following decades the land would continue conversion to a point where agriculturalists converted 33,359,000 acres of Iowa’s total land acreage of 36,016,500 into agricultural lands by the twenty-first century.\textsuperscript{848} Although modern crop agriculture in Iowa focuses predominantly on corn and soy beans, a variety of crops had popped up in the northern reaches of Iowa by 1860. Where the United States Census recorded no agricultural yields in the northern Iowa borderlands in 1850, the 1860 census recorded a harvest in the area consisting of 616,273 bushels of corn, 80,212 bushels of wheat, and 102,200 bushels of oats.\textsuperscript{849} Although

\textsuperscript{847} F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed. \textit{1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data}. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).
\textsuperscript{848} Iowa State University: Extension and Outreach. “Crop and Land Use: Statewide Data.” Ames, IA: https://www.extension.iastate.edu/soils/crop-and-land-use-statewide-data
\textsuperscript{849} F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed. \textit{1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data}. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).
those numbers pale in comparison to the eventual agricultural output of the northern Iowa borderlands, the numbers signify a shift from sustenance farming toward participation in a broader market.

As settlers converted lands toward agricultural pursuits, the diversity of wildlife throughout the region also suffered. The great diversity of larger animals declined to a point where of two of nine initial large mammalian species continue to occupy the region.\textsuperscript{850} Although smaller animals and birds fared better during the environmental changeover, the diversity in those areas declined as well during the time-period following initial American settlement in the northern Iowa borderlands. All told, twenty-nine species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish would be extirpated from Iowa, while thirty-eight would become endangered, and nineteen more gained threatened status over the course of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{851} Many of the animals the Dakota depended upon had disappeared by 1860. Although a few bison sightings lingered in solitary settler accounts, bison had vanished from all but four counties in the northern Iowa borderlands by 1860.\textsuperscript{852} Likewise, sightings of elk had largely ended by 1860, with only six of twenty-five counties recording the animals after 1860.\textsuperscript{853}

In place of the rapidly disappearing wildlife of the northern Iowa borderlands settlers introduced new animals. Beasts of burden vital to breaking the tough prairie sod proliferated throughout the area, and settlers relied on horses and oxen to complement their own labors on newly founded farms. By 1860 the northern Iowa borderlands hosted 3,203 horse on farms, or

\textsuperscript{850}James J. Dinsmore in \textit{A Country So Full of Game: The Story of Wildlife in Iowa}. (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1994).
\textsuperscript{851}James J. Dinsmore in \textit{A Country So Full of Game: The Story of Wildlife in Iowa}. (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1994).
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\textsuperscript{853}James J. Dinsmore in \textit{A Country So Full of Game: The Story of Wildlife in Iowa}. (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1994).
roughly one for every eighth person.\textsuperscript{854} Cattle also proliferated throughout the northern Iowa borderlands. By the 1860 census 13,145 cattle found homes on pasturage throughout the area, a number roughly half of the newly arrived human population of the area.\textsuperscript{855} The Census Bureau did not record hogs individually by county in the 1860 census, but list the total number in the state at 540,088 in that year.\textsuperscript{856} All of the new inhabitants of the northern Iowa borderlands, human and animal alike, reshaped the world around them into one that capitalized on drawing sustenance and profit from the rich, loamy soil of the region.

The first-half of the nineteenth century also saw wide scale change in terms of population. At the onset of the century a variety of indigenous peoples lived in, partially occupied, or regularly crossed through the northern Iowa borderlands. By 1850, the population had critically shifted toward American settlement. By 1860, the indigenous presence in had declined to include almost solely the “Indian Town” establishment in Tama County and a few individuals existing on the margins of a predominantly white society.\textsuperscript{857} The American population of the state exploded: from the first census recorded during the territorial census of 1836 to the United Census of 1860 the recorded population of Iowa climbed from 10,531 to 674,913.\textsuperscript{858} Many of the inhabitants of Iowa still clustered in the eastern half of the state, even at

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\item F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed. 1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).
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1860, but settlement had arrived in the northern Iowa borderlands to a point that made it a rapidly closing frontier.

By the 1860 census, twenty-four of the twenty-five northern Iowa borderlands counties recorded population. Many saw losses following the outbreak of violence at Spirit Lake, but population throughout the area continued to recover as the 1850s came to a close. The 1860 census recorded only Franklin, Hamilton, Hardin, and Webster counties as exceeding the two-persons per square mile population threshold for the frontier. By 1865, Cerro Gordo and Worth had joined the group of counties in the area considered behind the frontier by the United States government. In reality, the entire area had ceased to be a borderlands space by 1860. No longer did two distinct populations seek to call the area home, and the major conflict in the area shifted from one of one people against another to a dynamic of humankind against nature. Farms continued to proliferate throughout the area, agricultural ditches drained off wetlands, and freshly sharpened axes toppled oak trees to provide shelter to the new inhabitants of the area.

The people that entered the space the government had dispossessed the Dakota of had unique stories and individual reasons for arriving. People came from the eastern United States and foreign shores seeking a better life for themselves and the generations to follow them. They responded to the call of boosters and railroad advertisements portraying a pioneer’s paradise. They found a land that could yield a bounty only after incredible toil. The family of Rowland Gardner arrived during the earliest period of significant American settlement in the northern limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).

859 F.M Mills and Geo. E. Roberts, Ed. 1836-1880 Census of Iowa for 1880: and the same compared with the findings of each of the other states, and also with all former enumerations of the territory now embraced within the limits of the state of Iowa, with other historical and statistical data. (Des Moines, IA: Iowa General Assembly, 1883).
Iowa borderlands. Gardner dreamed of a life that provide for not only himself, but also his children for years to come. In anticipation of realizing that hope he followed the call west from New York to Ohio, then Indiana, then Clear Lake, Iowa, and ultimately to the shores of Lake Okoboji. Instead of a competent life, Gardner instead had his dream destroyed as the majority of his family died in Inkaputra’s attack on Spirit Lake. Only two daughters, one away visiting the site of Inkaputra’s next attack and another captured by the escaping band, survived.

Abbie Gardner-Sharp lived through horrors that escape the imagination. As a young girl she watched as the Wahpekute killed her family before taking her captive. While in captivity, Abbie undoubtedly suffered physical, mental, and emotionally as she marched through the brutal snow barefoot, watched two women die, and then waited for her own release. After four months, the governor of Minnesota secured her ransom. She faced the difficult challenge of returning to regular life without her parents or siblings. After learning that her sister, Eliza, had survived the Springfield attack, the two reunited and moved to Hampton, Iowa, with Eliza’s new husband William Wilson. Abbie eventually married Cassville Sharp, a relation of the Thatcher and Marble families who also suffered in Inkaputra’s attack, and the two married shortly after her release on August 16, 1857. Only fourteen years old at the time of their marriage, Abbie Gardner-Sharp had already survived a more difficult life than most can imagine.

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Abbie’s life continued as itinerant and difficult after her marriage. The family moved to Grundy Center, Missouri, in 1859 only to have their house burn to the ground.\textsuperscript{865} Next she moved to Kansas where they faced extreme challenges from drought before moving to Bremer County in northeastern Iowa.\textsuperscript{866} In 1870, Gardner-Sharp’s house again burned to the ground.\textsuperscript{867} During this time-period she completed and sold her memoir of the experiences and difficulties she had faced as her family moved into the northern Iowa borderlands of the 1850s. After failing to recover the deed to her father’s lands on Okoboji Lake during 1858, Gardner-Sharp utilized the proceeds of her book sales to purchase a portion of the thirteen-acre the lot and the original cabin in 1891.\textsuperscript{868} She spent the duration of her life seeking to make the site a historical site, appealing directly to the Iowa legislature during the 1893-94 session about the possibility of erecting a monument to the memory of her family and the others who perished at Spirit Lake in 1857. The 25\textsuperscript{th} General Assembly of Iowa voted $5,000 in funds for the project in 1894.\textsuperscript{869} Gardner turned the cabin into a museum and commissioned four paintings of the attack and her captivity. She operated the museum until her death on January 21, 1921, and joined the rest of her family in burial across the street from the cabin site.\textsuperscript{870}

Abbie Gardner-Sharp represents just one side of the Spirit Lake story, but hers has resonated the loudest as Iowa’s public memory has developed over the course of its first two centuries. The cabin site still stands, and the State Historical Society of Iowa operates a small

museum at the site. The large stone monument constructed in 1894 still looms among the ancient oak trees of the Gardner’s lot, casting a shadow over the graves of the Gardner family as the sun sets each evening. Gardner’s book still finds publication, most recently in a 2011 international reprinting, and her story has dominated the discourse of the events that unfolded in the early spring of 1857. Gardner-Sharp’s representation of the events has shaped the way Iowans see themselves and their past, and the public memory of indigenous peoples in Iowa has developed with great influence from her. The stories Iowans tell themselves echo stories like Gardner-Sharp’s depiction of her father early in her narrative:

But, like many others, my father was confident that greater success awaited him. His ambition was like that of thousands of others, who seem to think that because it is best for some to go west, it is best for each one to go farthest west of all. Thus the race is kept up. We chase the setting sun; and, like the boy in pursuit of the rainbow, we hope to find the pot of gold just beyond. The Gardner’s never found their pot of gold, but their memory lingers as a sacrifice to the pioneer ethos in the settlement of Iowa. Although Gardner-Sharp worked to faithfully record her perspective in relation to her tragic personal experience, it has served as a cornerstone for historians, archeologists, teachers, artists, and others seeking to minimize the significance and relevance of the Dakota to Iowa history. By relying on Gardner-Sharp’s account as the definitive description of events in the northern Iowa borderlands during the settlement era, more nuanced narratives have failed to materialize and discourse has suffered.

Over one hundred years after Gardner-Sharp’s death visitors climb the marble staircase leading to the second-level of the Iowa State Capitol building in Des Moines, and come upon an

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enormous depiction of Iowa’s pioneer past. Each day during legislative session, hundreds of congresswomen and men from throughout Iowa gaze at the image that depicts American settlers bringing light to darkness as they stretch across the colossal canvas edged in a gilded frame. Painted by Edwin H. Blashfield in 1905 for $10,000 dollars, the six canvas image has sat at the top of the grandest staircase in Iowa’s most significant building for well over a century.  

Blashfield, a muralist from Brooklyn, New York, most famous work endures on the dome of the Library of Congress Main Reading Room in Washington D.C. Ten years prior to the commission to commemorate Iowa’s triumphant pioneer past, Blashfield also took on another grand task: painting the largest unencumbered dome to date in the 30-acre Manufacturer’s & Liberal Arts Building at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois.

Blashfield’s work in the Iowa State Capitol depicts a sprawling scene reminiscent of other Manifest Destiny works common of the era including John Gast’s 1872 work “American Progress,” and Frances Flora Bond-Palmer’s 1868 work “Across the Continent: Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way.” In each of the paintings the canvas to the viewer’s left-hand becomes obscured by darkness quickly fading before the march of representations of western civilization and progress. For Gast a floating angel stringing telegraph wire, for Bond-Palmer a train trailing black smoke, and for Blashfield a series of four angels carrying various representations of civilized man including a book, a mirror, and a breadbasket.

Blashfield’s work lacks an indigenous presence, creating a contrast with that of Gast or Bond Palmer. In Gast’s “American Progress,” viewers can observe six fleeing natives of

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unknown origin frantically high-tailing it toward the left-hand (western) side of the image. The group includes a man on horseback, a woman with a small child riding on a horseback-pulled travois, and a man with bow in full headdress sprinting with a dog at his heels. Immediately behind Gast’s cast of indigenous characters a herd of bison fled before an ox-pulled wagon similar to the Schuttler design common to the era. Other depictions of the westward advancing American society find representation behind the wagon: a draft-team of oxen pulling a plow, a train nearing the end of what appears to be a new track, a raggedy group of prospects with picks, a lone Pony Express Rider, and six-horse team pulling a Wells Fargo type wagon. The indigenous people in the painting are portrayed as fleeing animals, a contrast underscored by herds of bison and deer near the top of the painting and a bear snarling backward over his shoulder at an advancing group of prospectors.

Although oriented in the reverse of Blashfield or Gast’s works, Bond-Palmer depicts a similar scene. On the left-hand side of the image an emerging frontier community complete with log cabins, a public school, and train depot stand in bright colors. Stark contrast is rendered in the painting by a train slicing from the bottom-right corner across to near the upper-left corner. The pioneer activity in the painting is all on the left-side of the tracks and telegraph, line, and the painter depicts the area as being tamed through lumber-cutting and a general lack of natural elements. The right-hand side of the tracks, however, depicts a much more ‘wild’ scene. Forested mountains are bordered by a large and winding river, and patches of trees break the level portions of terrain. The artists strikingly depicted two natives mounted on horseback, enveloped by the long trail of smoke emanating from the engine of the train. Bond-Palmer

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painted each of these men holding lances, wearing feathers, and buckskins. Bond-Palmer clearly showcased the thinking of the age that as “westward the course of empire takes it way” the indigenous peoples and the lands they occupied would stand as necessary sacrifices.

Blashfield’s painting in the Iowa Capitol Building goes further to create an image devoid of any real suggestions of indigenous presence at all. The artist created contrast by using darker hues on the left-hand side of the painting while brightening the pioneers and their wake on the right. Blashfield depicted on the left, or western portion, of the painting a leafless scrub oak and a sun-bleached bison skull. Immediately above these objects a child driving an ox cuts across the canvas. Throughout the painting several faded figures allude to earlier settlers journeying across the prairies. Two women, one clutching a small child to her breast, and the other tending a prepubescent girl, ride on a large covered-wagon dominate the center of the painting. In front of them a woman with a basket kneels to pluck a wildflower. Two domesticated dogs trail her, in lock-step with a woman dressed in white and holding the hand of small girl in a green dress. The woman carries a long stick that is pointed toward the ‘westward’

part of the image. The first men lead a horse behind the woman with the long-stick. Blashfield depicted the three men sowing the landscape with seeds. An indeterminate number of pioneers and angels trail the covered wagon behind the men sowing seeds. The extreme right-side of the painting is abloom with tasseled corn and a ripened watermelon. Aside from the complete lack of indigenous presence in the painting, the environmentally imperial tone of the painting stands out. Where other artists depicted dark moving to light paired with markers of technological progress, the image from the Iowa State Capitol depicts a barren land being remade into a fruitful agricultural landscape by triumphant pioneers taming a wilderness. Blashfield perhaps summed up his own work best when he described his focus: “The main idea of the picture is a symbolical presentation of the Pioneers led by the spirits of Civilization and Enlightenment to the conquest by cultivation of the Great West.”

The image, like the work of Abbie Gardner-Sharp, contributes to a triumphant representation of pioneers overcoming challenges from the external environment with little regard for the natural or indigenous history of the region.

Representations of Iowa’s past have also prioritized pioneers, as well as other indigenous peoples, over representing the Dakota presence in the region realistically. Gretchen M. Bataille, David M. Gradwohl, and Charles P. Silet compiled *The Worlds Between Two Rivers: Perspectives on American Indians in Iowa* leading up to an initial 1978 release date. The work contained a variety of essays from anthropologists, laypeople, and representatives of indigenous communities to provide a wide representation of viewpoints focused on the indigenous past of Iowa. The Dakota find mention sparingly throughout the work, and the vast portion of the attention focused to Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake. In his essay “An

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Archaeological Perspective”, archeologist David Mayer Gradwohl asserted that the lithic evidence uncovered in Iowa “most of the names given to the archaeological remains representing prehistoric people do not correspond to known ‘tribal’ names; these are beyond the scope of archaeological evidence.” He detailed how archeologists found large hordes of lithic objects throughout the state, but that scholars can only categorize the objects into specific time-periods that do not hold clues to who occupied what parts of Iowa or when. Many objects from the time-period highlighted by Gradwohl have been found throughout the area. In present-day Winnebago County, an exceptional lithic horde of objects collected along the Winnebago River by Arlo Johnson. The collection, which the Iowa Archeological Society awarded the Keyes-Orr Award in 1991 for collection in the Des Moines Lobe, is claimed to be the largest “collection of Indian artifacts in Iowa and one of the biggest in the United States.” The collection contains over 10,000 cataloged items ranging from the Paleo-Indian period through the Early Historic period, many of them consistent with recorded Dakota flint-knapping practices and known Dakota tools or weapons. Archeological evidence exists that does not contradict that the Dakota likely occupied the northern Iowa borderlands for a significant portion of time prior to American colonization.

Aside from artistic works and the interpretation of archeological artifacts, public memory finds perpetuation in educational practices. Edward Purcell’s essay “Sources for History Education,” called for a reinterpretation of the attack on Spirit Lake that has still not emerged over fifty years after initial publication:

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The killing of White settlers in 1857 by a band of dissident Sioux near Spirit Lake is another matter. There is no denying that this event was a part of Iowa’s past, but the textbooks dwell on the massacre in bloody-minded detail and at unreasonable length. There is usually an extreme emphasis on the violence, almost as if it were necessary for pioneer Iowa to live up to the latter-day image of the western movie. Given the impressionable nature of grade school children, this treatment probably has a lasting effect. It may be that children remember little else about Indians in Iowa history. Worse, perhaps, than the overemphasis is the garbled way the massacre is presented. A few of the textbook authors do note that the leader of the dissident band, Ink-pa-du-ta, had some provocation: a starving winter, the murder of another Sioux leader by a White man, and exclusion from the 1851 treaty. Yet, in every case, other facts are wrong. All the texts miss the point that the settlers had no business being so far in advance of white settlement.  

Purcell went on to assert that the story of the Meskwaki practicing acculturation through the purchase of settlement lands in Tama County during the 1850s and beyond stands as the story of Iowa’s indigenous peoples that should educator’s should emphasize. By asserting that the only indigenous stories that matter are those of peaceful natives capitulating to the norms and requirements of white society, Purcell undercut his own call to action for a more nuanced conversation of indigenous peoples in Iowa’s history curriculum.

Although some progress has been made in academic circles, the curriculum of Iowa and Minnesota has changed little since Purcell’s call for reinterpretation in the late 1970s. In a 2018 NPR radio segment for the program This American Life entitled “Little War on the Prairie,” third grade teacher Patricia Hammann of Monroe Elementary in Mankato, Minnesota, discussed her approach to the curriculum related to the attack on Spirit Lake and the United States-Dakota War. “We just talked about, like a conflict is a disagreement. And we talked how the Dakota

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Indians didn’t know how to solve their conflicts. And the only way they knew how to solve their disagreements was to fight, which we know, we don’t fight to solve conflicts. We use our words. But that was their only way that they knew to solve a conflict. They fought. And so then the white settlers needed to fight back to protect themselves. And then we talked about, people were killed.”

The Iowa Core Curriculum, although not specifically emphasizing the event or Dakota history in the eighth grade “Iowa History” content standard, does provide a link to a video created by Iowa Public Television for classroom use. The video shows Henry Lott murdering Sintominiduta before using the murder as the sole motive for Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake. Grainy footage and a bobbing-camera overlaid with a series of war-whoops asserts “It was the worst mass murder of innocent people by Indians in Iowa history. The Spirit Lake massacre caused panic on the Northwestern frontier and settlers feared further bloody raids by the Sioux,” before fading to black. The video has served Iowa teachers as a jumping off point for a discussion of an event still commonly used to provide justification for dispossession and the erasure of the Dakota from Iowa’s history.

A variety of historians, archeologists, and other interested individuals have weighed in on the diaspora of indigenous peoples in Iowa prior to on-set of meaningful American colonization during the early nineteenth century. In broad histories focused on Iowa, most historians commonly provide an initial section seeking to quickly summarize the realities of life in the land between two rivers prior to American settlement. Dorothy Schweider’s 1996 book Iowa: The Middle Land stands as perhaps the most significant and nuanced work focused broadly on Iowa

history. The first eighteen pages of Schwieder’s three-hundred twenty-seven page work comprise the initial chapter entitled “Native Americans in Iowa.”\textsuperscript{888} Although the chapter opened with what has become a characteristic emphasis on the Meskwaki common to Iowa histories, Schwieder importantly highlighted the importance of the Dakota, writing: “the last tribe to relinquish its Iowa lands, the Santee Sioux, left in 1851.”\textsuperscript{889} Schwieder opened her analysis of Iowa’s indigenous peoples with another Siouan speaking people, the Ioway. Within the analysis of the Ioway, Schwieder locates them through the utilization of early French accounts as a mixed sustenance people practicing limited agriculture on the Upper Iowa River and the Blue Earth River, however, the journal of Frenchman Pierre Le Sueur from the early 1700s indicated that the tribe did not live in the area as originally thought. Instead, Le Sueur noted the prevalence of Dakota in the area, who he thought to have aggressively pushed the Ioway out of the area prior to his construction of Fort Vert at the mouth of the Blue Earth River.\textsuperscript{890} The Ioway traded with both the French and Spanish, but these sources often echo the expectant but empty sentiments expressed by Le Seur that displace the evidence of a Dakota presence in the northern Iowa borderlands with an instance that the Ioway must have lived there at some point prior to recorded history. When more consistent and reliable source material emerges in the 1800s, the Ioway are located in southeastern Iowa and northern Missouri along the Mississippi and Rock rivers.\textsuperscript{891} In the 1835 treaty at Prairie du Chien, the Ioway would sign away lands in western Iowa that Le Sueur had recorded them as occupying, further undercutting Dakota claims. Schweider also highlighted another possibility that underscored Dakota power in the northern Iowa borderlands:

\textsuperscript{890} Marc de Villiers Du Terrage. \textit{Noms de lieux Sioux tires d’un dictionnaire inedit et probablement perdu de Le Sueur}. American Society of Paris, XIV (1922), 220-21.
\textsuperscript{891} Greg Olson. \textit{The Ioway in Missouri}. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 2008).
Governor Chambers quickly presented the government’s offer: In exchange for their remaining land, the Indians would receive $1 million in annuities and the government would assume the tribes’ debts to traders of $350,000. The Indians would then be removed to the headwaters of the Des Moines River, an area west of the Blue Earth River. To insure their safety from Sioux attacks, the government proposed to build three military forts.892

The recognition of Dakota strength in the areas occupied by the Wahpekute along the Blue Earth and Des Moines Rivers, including the Spirit Lake region, exist in the instance of the Sauk and Meskwaki on protections. Chiefs Keokuk and Wapello objected vehemently to the proposal, citing a lack of any validity to past negotiations and the consistent penchant of the American government to continue pushing indigenous peoples out of areas shortly after the close of each treaty negotiation, as well as their reluctance to move closer to a location where their traditional enemies lived in large numbers.

The final two pages of Schwieder’s section on Native Americans in Iowa focused on the Santee Sioux. Although she previously dated the Dakota presence in Iowa to dovetail with the retreat of the Ioway in the 1700s, here Schwieder provided an earlier origin date of at least the early 1600s that finds validation from French and Spanish colonial sources and other early accounts.893 Schwieder moved on quickly to a firm assertion that the Dakota ceded their lands in 1851, followed by an account of Inkpaduta and the 1857 attack on Spirit Lake. Schwieder put the motivation for the attack at least partially on the environmental factors of the winter, and also highlighted that settlers could not expect any protection from the military after the abandonment of Fort Dodge in 1853. The two paragraphs focused on Inkpaduta make up the bulk of the account, representative of a common tendency of Iowa historians to focus on that singular event

while fast-forwarding through the hundreds of years of Dakota history in the state or the decades of dubious dispossession that preceded Inkaputu’s actions in 1857. Schwieder represented the Dakota as a valued part of Iowa’s history, but her account still lacked the exploration and nuance necessary to provide full representation of the Dakota significance in the history of Iowa.

One of the greatest challenges of understanding the cultural and environmental landscapes of Iowa prior to European advancement is the lack of evidence and conflicting source material. Misinformation, misnomers, and inaccuracies plague sources from the era that have not found meaningful interpretation over time. As new institutions emerged and the indigenous landscape, cultures, and other mitigating factors changed, true clarity was lost to the ages. Further providing complication are academic histories that draw from competing indigenous source bases. Lance M. Foster’s 2009 work *The Indians of Iowa* stands as representative of this issue. Foster, an enrolled member of the Ioway Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, thanked members of his own tribe, the Meskwaki people, and several enrolled Ojibwe members in the foreword to his work.894 The lack of association with the Dakota, emerged throughout Foster’s work.

Foster alluded to the importance of the Dakota indirectly in his introduction: “Other nations, like the Sioux, Sauk, and Meskwaki, are so much a part of Iowa’s history from the earliest written accounts by European explorers that they may be considered native to Iowa.”895 Foster went on to suggest that although the prehistoric homelands of the ‘Sioux’ were in Minnesota, they eventually spread south and west to find new hunting grounds. He further asserted that the Yanktonai Sioux (Nakota) and Santee Sioux (Dakota) “are the ‘Sioux’ who are associated with Iowa history, primarily from 1720 to 1861.”896 Although archeological and

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historical evidence, as well as anthropological sources have pointed to a much longer Dakota history in Iowa, Foster chose to establish a specific date range that is unsupported by the historical record and undercut Dakota existence in what would become the northern Iowa borderlands. Foster also noted that prior to the 1700s the Dakota often ranged into Iowa to hunt the Des Moines River and Big Sioux River watersheds, yet then again asserted that the Dakota did not begin to stay in Iowa until the 1700s.897

After providing his basic introduction of the Dakota as a late-arriving and often absent tenant of the lands that would become Iowa, Foster focused a great deal of his attention on an inset section titled: “A Closer Look: The Spirit Lake Massacre.”898 Foster’s account of the massacre simplistically echoes traditional colonial narratives of the event that depict Inkpaduta as the bloodthirsty leader of a renegade band. Foster wrote: “This small band was a disaffected group of tribal outlaws and castoffs from different Santee groups that the rest of the Wahpekute had rejected.”899 This is categorically false, as evidenced by the relationship between Inkpaduta, Sintominiduta, and other Dakota bands well-recorded in a variety of sources. The account continues in the traditional tropes, offering no new insight while propagating misunderstanding of the event in an academic publication that reads like a distant echo of Abbie Gardner-Sharp’s writing for the twenty-first century.

Gardner-Sharp’s voice has dominated the discussion of Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake for nearly one hundred and seventy years. The time has come to accept a more nuanced account, not only of Inkpaduta’s attack on Spirit Lake, but a more realistic interpretation of the Dakota in Iowa’s past. It is clear that the Dakota not only ranged into, but lived in Iowa as far back as

899 Lance M. Foster. *The Indians of Iowa.* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2009), 84.
western sources date. The observations and maps of the earliest European explorers to enter the lands that became Iowa clearly displayed a strong Dakota presence as far south as the confluence of the Des Moines River’s east and west forks. With this knowledge, the story of Inkpaduta gains new levels of complexity that link to a much deeper Dakota past. The incredible change encountered by the Dakota in Iowa as they navigated the first-half of the nineteenth century precipitated the decision by Inkpaduta to attack the community he found on Spirit Lake. Only through understanding environmental change, population expansion, duplicitous governmental dealings, and erroneous communications to settler communities does a nuanced picture emerge that significantly alters the way in which Iowans should remember their shared past, as well as the role the Dakota played in the state from a time that predates history.
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