

Indian Affairs of the Iowa Region, 1827-1830

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INDIAN AFFAIRS OF THE IOWA REGION, 1827-1830

[From photostat copies, in the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa, of original letters of General Joseph M. Street and others, on file in the Indian Bureau in Washington, D. C.]

Indian Agency,
Prairie des Chiens,¹ July 10, 1827

Sir:

As it is probable that exaggerated accounts of the Indian hostilities may have reached you, I will give you an correct account, that no unnecessary apprehensions may be entertained at Green Bay & vicinity. I had received intelligence from some confidential Indians among the Sioux that the Winnebagoes were about to attack this village and murder all the Americans in it. I immediately sent off expresses in various directions. The hostile Indians suspecting that their intentions were discovered began hostilities about ten days before they had intended. On the 27th Ult. about noon two men were murdered and a child scalped. Three days after a keel-boat returning from St Peters was attacked about forty miles above this place by about one hundred & fifty Indians. After a desperate conflict the savages were repulsed with the loss of ten or twelve of their number—two of the boat's crew were killed and four wounded. Another boat has since been attacked but no person killed.

I set out for the council at Green Bay on the first inst. & on the fourth I met Gov. Cass and returned with him to this place. I went immediately to the Lead Mines and engaged two companies of volunteers who returned with me for the defence of the place. One hundred men are expected to arrive to-day from Saint Peters, so at present we feel quite safe. The Governor has gone to St. Louis to send up troops. He intends to return by the way of the Illinois & Chicago.

The band of Winnebagoes who are known to be hostile do not much exceed One hundred and fifty men, and it is very desirable to detach the friendly Indians from the hostile party, and for this purpose I have directed that they should all go to the Bay immediately where I expect they will be fed and kindly treated. I shall use every exertion to effect this measure, which appears to be the best that can be done at present. I shall make another attempt before the middle of August. You will receive this by a man who came here as interpreter for the Governor, he has been detained here six days and is desirous that I should request you to pay his wages for that time. I have sent four

¹We are following the spelling, capitalizing, etc., used by the writers of these letters.—Editor.

Menomies to accompany him to the Portage—if they should go on with him to the Bay, I wish you would pay each of them about fifteen dollars worth of goods.

I shall send expresses to you about once in ten days, & keep you constantly advised of whatever may occur here.

I am Sir,

Very respectfully

Yo Obt. Sev't.

(Signed) John Marsh
Sub Agent for Ind. Affrs.
and Actg. Ind. Agent.

Col. Thos. L. McKenney,
Green Bay.

United States Indian Agency at
Prairie du chien February 22, 1830

Sir,

Three actions for damages have been commenced in the court at Prairie du Chien against me, in conjunction with Majors S. W. Kearney & Twiggs; for arrests in my official capacity as Indian Agent, under the several laws of the Congress of the U. S. prohibiting foreigners from going into the Indian country, and restraining all persons from Tress-passing on Indian lands. In these cases I am held to bail in the sum of about 2000\$. I presume that Major Kearney has laid before you a detailed account of the transactions in which these cases originated, and I early submitted the facts to the Sup. of Ind. Affs. at St. Louis. Yet as the spring term of the Court at this place is approaching, and I have no prospect of a fair trial before the *presiding Judge from his previous course*, and little hope that an *impartial Jury* can be procured at this place, I am impressed with the propriety of communicating *directly* with you on this subject. I hope, sir, this course may meet your approbation, and that such instructions as the history of the cases may suggest will be given to me.

Two of the cases are brought by Jean Brunette, the Sub-ject at the time of a foreign prince, against Major Kearney & myself. In one case he left this place in the night with sleighs, and I persued him next day in person accompanied by a Military escort, and arrested him (and his party 14 in number (partially armed with Guns) on an Island of the Mississippi about 30 Miles above Prairie du chien. He said his intention was to go up the Mississippi & get pine timber. In the other case he sues for the seizure & detention of a parcel of Walnut Timber below the mouth of the Wisconsin River. The seizure was made by the order of Major K. & not mine, and the timber taken to Fort Crawford where it yet remains. These arrests were made upon written information coming through the hands of Major Kearney. The other case is by a citizen of the U. S. D. Whitney, against Major Twiggs

& myself. On written information coming through Major T. & the complaint of the Winnebagoes, I sent, and arrested several men who were in the Indian country 100 miles North of the Portage on the Wisconsin getting pine shingles. The Inds. desired that white-men should be kept from going North of the Wisconsin untill after the promised Treaty. I am now informed the late Sub-Agent who has purchased a parcel of Ind goods of D. Whitney is to be his principal witness.

The last Territorial Legislature of Michigan have stricken off the whole mining country from this & created it into a new county called Ioway—which leaves only the little Village of Prairie du chien, in this county, the population of which is about 300 Souls, made up principally of ignorant Canadian French and mixed breed Indians, not one in 20 of whom can read or write. Many of these, have been hirelings to go with timber parties, and know little about the law, and *care less, so long as they are not made to feel its penalties.* Of this motley group the Jury will be made up. From such materials I cannot even hope an impartial pannel can be obtained. In relation to the Court,—I now cover to you his own opinion, in his own hand write, on two Indictments in these cases, (or one of them) that were found by the Grand Jury against Sd. Burnette. After reading those opinions I think you will feel that I am justified in saying I cannot expect an impartial Trial before Judge Doty. Brunette was arrested 30 miles North of this place (P. du C.) in an Island of the Mississippi. The U. S. claim not one foot of Country North of this place except at St. Peters 300 miles above. And yet you will perceive *Judge Doty says he is not satisfied that it was the intention of the Government to guarantee any country to the Inds—or protect it from infringements.*—The U. S. have purchased of the nearest Indian Tribes, the Country adjacent to their frontier and all beyond those lines is considered Indian country, until the Ind. title is extinguished by purchase. The U. S. have not guaranteed it to any particular tribe because the[y] do not in fact, in most cases know the country claimed by each Tribe. Yet it is Indian country, and we feel bound to protect the Indian from trespass, least it ultimate in war. And in relation to Foreigners the plain interest of the U. S. is to prevent any Foreigners from having access to the Indian country. Under the opinion of Judge Doty—A Foreigner—no matter how inimical to our Government, may pass through our settlements into the adjoining Indian Country—sow the seeds of the most ruthless war on our frontier, and escape unmolested: Or if arrested, mulct the officer in heavy damages. Common-sense dictates to us the necessity of subjecting the intercourse of the subjects of Foreign powers, with the Indians within the exterior limits of our Country, to the regulation & restrictions of the Government; and it has accordingly been done by our laws; and the act complained of was an enforcement of that law. I have been lead into these remarks by the apparent absurdity of the Judges opinion. I was informed a few days past, that an affidavit has been made at the instance of D. Whitney, in

another action and bail ordered by Judge Doty for a large amount. I cannot divine the new cause of action. Yet the Writ he says is to be held up until a letter from me wd. not reach the City of Washington before the Judge had secured his favour at head quarters. I give this as a report just as it is handed to me. His friend here sd. to me that the Judge calculated on securing his standing through his friends in New York. The course of Judge Doty has certainly been very inimical toward the officers acting under the instructions & laws of the Govt. here, and calculated to create difficulties with the U. S. & the Inds. And at the time Major Kearney & myself were held to such exorbitant bail, the Judge was well convinced there was not 4 men at this place who could consistently be taken for 2000\$—Mayor K. & myself were compelled to give the same person.

That you may feel assured that in these cases I acted from no other feelings than those which ought to govern a faithful public officer, I cover to you a copy of a letter recd. from Major K. the Comdt. at Ft Crawford on the eve of his leaving this post. It is the voluntary offering of a stern republican and candid soldier. I can also safely refer you to Major Fowle, Colo. Z. Taylor, and every Military officer who has been stationed at this post since my appointment to office for the purely rational course which I have pursued.

Deeply impressed with the important consequences that will eventually result from retaining that portion of the Winnebago Tribe of Indians, cut off by the late Treaty at Prairie du chien in their present situation South of the Wisconsin River, and South East of the Portage, I cannot refrain from calling your attention strongly to the subject. The purchase made by the Treaty of 1829 at Prairie du chien, passes from West to East, quite to the S. E. line of the Menominee Country N. of Fox River of Green Bay, and separates the Winnebago Country on the Rock River, & S. E. of Fox River from the main portion of their country which lies North of the Wisconsin, and leaves a detached oblong strip of land bounded on three sides by the land of the U. S. settled, and in rapid progress of settlement. When viewed in relation to the Winnebago Country North of the Wisconsin, this detached section is comparatively very small, and from the vicinity of the Whites on 3 sides, is useless as a hunting country. If the Inds. remain in their present uncivilized state on this land, they cannot live by hunting, but will commence Horse stealing and the consequent chastisement of the Whites in the vicinity will ultimate in wars. Every measure therefore, of the Government. calculated in its effects to cause the Indians to linger in this detached section of their Country, by meeting them near to it—will be alike injurious to the U. S. and the Indians—whose portion of the Annuity, will only serve to debase them & lead to crime & disruption. On the other hand if inducements are held out to these Indians to migrate, it will not be two years before this section of country will be by themselves offered to the U. S. The late Treaty secured principally

the mining district—the remaining Country is the best agricultural district North & West of the Illinois River & East of the Mississippi. It is in fine the fairest portion of the country lying between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi.

I cannot doubt but this subject has been fully & more ably represented to you; yet holding the official station I do, I feel it too important to be left to any casual notice—and prefer laying the subject directly before you. I perceive it is the policy of our Governmt. to withdraw as many of the Indians as they can, from the East to the West side of the Mississippi R. *without the limits of any state*. Here a prospect of withdrawing a large & ferocious band of Indians from the midst of a vitally important portion of Country on the East to the West of that River invites the attention of the Government and its effectuation will throw into our possession several Millions of as rich land as one Country affords, joined to our present lands on three sides. This is to hold a treaty in the early part of the ensuing summer with the Sacks & Foxes & Sioux, who are now at War—for the disputed Country which is the cause of war, lying directly West of Prairie du chien, and extending from the Mississippi to the Missouri. The country in dispute is about 60 or 70 miles wide, Strectching from one River to the other, and is abandoned by each nation. To the Winnegeago Indians, this disputed country is worth three times as much as the one which they occupy. It has never been closely hunted, and now for several years has remained un-hunted by any party, and would hold out great inducements to the Winnebeagoes to migrate to it. If purchased of each Nation (S. & Foxes & Sioux) by the U. S. the Cause of War wd. be removed between the contending Tribes, and the Winnebeagoes, who are connected with both Nations would secure the continuance of peace, by being cast in between them. While on the East the newly acquired country would bind on upon the main body of their Territory North of the Wisconsin & East of the Mississippi, again uniting their now separated Country. This land when purchased might be easily exchanged with the Winnebeagoes for their detached piece S. of the Wisconsin, and verry little inducements would cause them to migrate in small parties at any rate. It is esteemed by the Indians the best hunting country within 300 miles of this place East or West of the Mississippi, except the Country immediately North of it, embracing the heads of the Desmoines, Terre Blue & the St. Peters in the Sioux Country. And if purchased and exchanged with the Winnebeagoes, a great part of the nation North of the Wisconsin—would immediately migrate to it.

It was, sir, mainly, from the strong representations made by me to the commissioners, that caused the reservations to half breeds to be left to the Will of the President to locate. In the Pottowatomic Treaty, embracing as much mineral country nearly as the Winnebeagoes the locations were *clap'd on special spots & fixed by Treaty*—I deemed

such course improper & calculated to trammel the Govt. and was fortunate in getting the Comrs. to entertain similar views. Now, sir, I beg leave respectfully, to suggest that those locations if confided to any persons interested at the mines, or with the half-breed may yet be made to operate as injuriously as if made in the first instance in the Treaty & perhaps more so. My views as expressed on this subject were so opposite & offensive to Doctr. Wolcot the Agent at Chicago, that he became my enemy merely from the firm expression of my deep convictions on this subject.

I hope, sir, I shall be pardoned for respectfully submitting these views to your consideration. To me they appear important—and are therefore humbly submitted to your better consideration.

I wrote to you shortly after the departure of the Comrs. transcribing a part of their letters which turned over to me One Hundred & three Barrels of Flour, and Forty-seven Barrels of pork, to be distributed to the Inds.—Of this they verbally directed me to deliver over to Mr. Kinzie & Mr. Gratiot a part which was immediately done. How shall I make the returns for these provisions, which according to their letter has been delivered to the Indians?—Shall I forward returns of the delivery to the Superintendent of Ind. affs. at St. Louis, or directly to the War Department.

With great respect & high consideration

I am, Sir,

Your most obt St

Jos. M. Street U. S.

Indian Agent.

The Honble

John H. Eaton

Secretary of the

Department of War

Washington City.

Prairie du Chien, March 20, 1829.

Genl. Wm. Clark, Supt. of

Indian Affairs of St. Louis

Sir

I wrote you under date of the 22d Sept. last, covering returns for the last quarter of 1828; on the 12 January with returns of the first quarter of the current accounting year and on the 19th February in relation to some Indian disturbances among themselves I am yet ignorant whether my returns for the two last quarters have been read as all those letters remained unacknowledged. I see you have been in the city of Washington during the winter and have concluded that was the reason. Wishing to obtain your friendly aid, I wrote you also to Washington which I hope you read. I now cover my returns for the 2d quarter of the present accounting year ending

28 Feby last, which I hope will arrive safe and meet your approbation. Also an estimate of expenses for the 3d quarter.

Having no goods for presents to Indians and unwilling to risque the purchase of many, I have endeavored to quiet the Indians retain my standing with them and keep up a state of good feeling toward our Government & people by a judicious distribution of corn and some provisions. This is the cheapest mode in which our attention to their wants can be extended to the greatest number of these people, and the peculiarities of the winter have fortunately combined to render my plan more salutary to them and efficient to us. The early part of the winter we had no snow, the Indians could consequently kill but little game and many of their families were suffering for food. Their applications for food were so constant that I determined to lessen the expense of feeding them by purchasing a tolerable large amount of corn. I procured before the rise several hundred bushels and have freely issued it to them by which means less flour and pork was required and Indians are better pleased generally with corn than other issues. Three hundred and four and a half bushels are included in the two quarters last past, and I have about fifty bushels more of the purchase made before the rise of corn, the whole of which I hope may not be wanted, and can extend over into the whole of the remaining year. I hold it subject to be given if required but if not can easily dispose of it without loss and therefore have not included more than is certainly necessary. Corn is now 50 cents higher than when I purchased and the reported advance was my reason for making the purchase of the amount I did. The Indians unable to live on the little game they could kill, and entirely excluded from the south side of Wisconsin by our people, who are spread over the whole face of the country on that shore of the Wisconsin, collected in large bodies above this place and in the vicinity of the agencies on the Mississippi and live on fish speared under the ice, and issues of corn & some few provisions from the agencies. The families of the men who went to Washington particularly claiming a maintenance until their men came back as they had gone at the soliciation of Governor Cass. I believe I have completely succeeded in maintaining the best possible state of feeling for the ensuing treaty which their Chiefs from Washington assure them you and the President promised them. Laterly the fall of snow which has been considerable & the return of the Chiefs to their families has relieved me in a measure, nor do I apprehend any particular collecting of Indians here until the winter hunts close which will be about the first of May. Then the principal part of the Nation come to visit me, and it will be singularly unfortunate if at that time I cannot meet them in the usual manner with some few presents. Yet unless the sum apportioned by you to this agency can be forwarded in suitable presents by that time I shall have not even a pipe of tobacco to give them unless purchased here. The last year

has convinced me that using the small sum allotted to this agency in purchases made here from the increased rate renders it entirely inadequate to the purposes intended to be effected by it. Therefore if the amount could be so arranged as to be laid out in St. Louis it would procure a much larger amount of presents. I thought otherwise & was assured by merchants here that I should have anything wanted for the Indian Department as low as I could get it in St. Louis adding the usual freight. But experience proves to me the contrary.

I have been compelled to see the contingencies of this quarter rise beyond what I was endeavoring to fix it at without the power to avert it, only by signing our peace with the Indians and jeopardizing the quiet of the country. The most inconsiderable hostile movement on the part of the Indians in this quarter, I am convinced from experience, would produce a loss to the U. S., in rents alone, of twice the amount of presents distributed, and contingent expenses incurred in any one year. Under these impressions, with a deep anxiety to restrain the contingent expenses of this agency, I have not hesitated to adopt freely the most energetic measures to prevent any interruption of the peace and quiet of this very interesting and important frontier.

In my preceding communications you have been advised that early in the last winter some border hostilities occurred between the united tribes of Sac and Fox, and the Sioux Indians in which several were killed and two Sioux and one Sac made prisoners. Occurring in the neighborhood of our people, I became apprehensive that the spirit of war going forth amongst them, some of our careless citizens on the border, and traders pursuing their legal business in the Indian country might fall a sacrifice to excited hostile feeling and disappointed revenge. Hearing where the Sioux captives were I hastily dispatched a messenger with a small party to demand them. The Fox chief *Morgan* who lead the war party who took them, came and surrendered the captives without ransom to me at this place. I reprimanded him for his conduct, and told him that it was the will of his Great F. the P. under whose protection he and his people were, as well as the Sioux, that they should not go to war with each other—that if any differences came between them he wd. upon application settle them. He plead previous hostility, and the taking a horse and the unsettled state of the line between them and the Sioux from the Upper Iowa to the Missouri. It is unmarked and he and his people believe the Sioux were hunting on the best hunting grounds of his nation. But if it was displeasing to his Father he would no more go to war unless assailed in his own land. Yet he hoped his father wd. cause a good line to be marked between the Sioux and his people.

The prompt obedience of *Morgan* to my request and his mild and conciliatory behavior determined me to promise some presents and give him, which he had solicited for himself & people. Finally he declared his people desired to do nothing that would displease their Father.

Anxious to prevent retaliatory movements on the part of the Sioux, yet ignorant of the fate of their friends that were missing (the woman being the wife of an influential chief) as soon as the necessary preparations could be made—knowing the usages of Indians and that all councils were held by the giving and receiving some few presents—I gave the Sub-Agent a small outfit of necessary articles a — — & horse (the situation of the woman rendering it impossible for her to walk) and sent them into the Sioux country with directions to return the captives to their friends as *speedily* as possible and then pursuing a N. Westerly course by the sources of the Desmoines River to the Terre Blue and down the same to the Saint Peters agency. In his way “seeing as many Sioux Indians of note & standing in the nation as he could! endeavoring upon all occasions to impress them with the desire of their G. F. that they should remain at peace;—collecting & arranging such Geographical information as he might be enabled.” Saying to him in general terms—“The restoration of their captive friends will offer an occasion which you will seize to press this subject strongly upon them, as circumstances at the moment shall dictate.” This mission from which I hoped and expected so much tho’ productive of much essential good was not performed with the expedition contemplated or pressed and extended to the useful objects, desired both in relation to the Indians and the Geography of the country. At the latter the report of the Sub-Agent barely gives in a few uninteresting particulars and the whole of his attention as to the former seems to be absorbed in an erroneous view of the Indians differences among themselves. Enlisting his feelings with the Sioux and becoming a partizan in their differences with the Foxes. The unfortunate connection between the Sub-Agent and a Sioux woman has biased his mind and made him the apologist of their cause. Whereas, I, without entering into the merit of their difference, the cause of which lies in their restless, warlike disposition, desired to say to each in as mild and decisive a tone as possible; but *determined—It is the will of your G. F. that you do not war with any of the neighboring tribes—and if you do you will incur his high displeasure & eventual interference.* His progress was tedious—the country traversed was not of sufficient interest to justify the length of his stay—and I am apprehensive that other objects than those legitimately belonging to his mission occupied too much of his time and observations to the disregard of the paramount claims of the Government upon him. Yet he was the individual placed here, and I could not pass by him, and involve the Government in the expense of a hired agent. These trips are the only duties Mr. Marsh has performed during my residence at the agency. At other times he is merchandising. I am the more particularly led to make the remark, because the conduct of the Sub-Agent has I believe given me much unnecessary trouble and unpleasant experience at an inclement season in a high northern latitude to which I am unaccustomed in order to prevent any dis-

turbances with Indians in this quarter arising out of measures with which I believe he is connected.

He comes in from the Sioux Tour, and without advising with me, has caused an article to be inserted in the Galena paper calculated to incite alarm as to Indian hostilities in this section abroad. Declaring that 4000 Sioux will descend the Mississippi in the spring!!! *Object unknown!* And that great dissatisfaction exists among the N. W. tribes of Indians in consequence of some misunderstanding with the whites! Why, Sir, here is a Pandora's Box filled to the brim, ready to fly open at the least unskillful handling and deluge our frontiers in blood and sweep from its surface with the besom of war the busy miriads who are quietly persuing their fortunes in the mining district!! The man is absolutely mad, or his ideas have been deranged by entering into the feelings and views of some border savage warriors. I rather think tho' his strong party Sioux feelings have induced him to make this publication to scare the Foxes. How shallow this is even in relation to Indians you know better than I do. Morgan has more sense than he imagines—he knows that Indians cannot do without food—and that if 4000 Indians were ever collected they could not remain together without starving for more than a few days unless *subsisted* by white men. Indians cannot be induced to prepare provisions before hand for a large body of men. Every threatened attack of Indians in large bodies at a distance are idle, and perfectly ridiculous, unless they are to be subsisted by the forethought of white allies. Small war parties with a little dried meat, parched corn, &c do nearly the whole of Indian warefare at any distance from home, and these calculate to fast half the time. The hostilities of Indians unassisted by white allies only as maurading bands are powerless.

Understanding from other more correct sources of information than the Sub-Agent, that he was idling away his time on the way, and stopping at trading houses—I abandoned the hope of much benefit from his tour, and with a deeper interest perseveringly pushed my inquiries into the whole E. & N. E. section of the Sioux country as far north as Lake Traverse and embracing the country he was passing through, and extend'g beyond him far to the west within 2 days march of the Missouri near the mouth of the Vermillion River of the Missouri. The result of these inquiries enabled me confidently to assure you that the warmest feelings of friendship for the whites and gratitude for the late friendly interference pervades the different tribes of the Sioux nation. And this opinion is strengthened by letters from Maj. Taliaferro the Indian Agent at St. Peters, who quotes their disposition as *friendly towards the white people*. There then remains only the Sac and Fox and Winnebagocs who could well be meant by *N. W. tribes* by a person writing in the Galena papers & dating them. My inquiries into the upper part of the country of the first two tribes, had been carefully extended to all their most influential men, and with the principal chiefs

and head men of the latter my intercourse has been personal and my inquiries unremitting through the most unquestionable channels during the winter. I am, therefore, I conceive enabled with still more confidence to assure you that there is no unfriendly feelings entertained by either those tribes towards us, and the Sioux and Sac and Fox Indians have no points of contact with us or our people out of which any misunderstanding could reasonably be hatched up. As to our unsettled line with the Winnebagoes Governor C. and Col. Menard made a satisfactory temporary arrangement with them last fall with which they are well satisfied until the coming summer when they are in expectation of a treaty and speak of selling a large body of their lands. I repeat upon the most unquestionable ground, *all is quiet with the N. W. Indians*, and there are *no grounds to apprehend its interruptions*.

Early last fall I notified the white people that having recd a speech and pipe from a considerable Sioux Chief requesting me to prevent any white-men from going into their country to get Timber, as some of his young men were discontented with it—and the Winnebagoes complaining of encroachments on their lands, and the S. & Foxes of the habit of getting timber and hunting on their land.—I wd. not permit any timber or other parties of men citizens or Foreigners to go on the Indian land or to commit any cut amounting to trespass. Hoping by this early notice to prevent those engagements which might lead to a violation of my notice & the law. Notwithstanding several attempts have been made to violate the law. One party hearing of my movements made their escape after getting some timber which the commanding off. of Ft. Crawford has hawled into the Fort—a writ of replevin was issued and resisted by the Major and the timber returned until the pleasure of the Government is known. I have had no further agency there in leaving the party or escorts, seizing the timber and transferring the possession to the Major. No process has been or will I learn be issued against me. I heard of the intended departure of another company in time to stop them here and a few days past another party of 14 men and 3 trains got off in the night time. I pursued them in person with a military escort of a comd. off. & 12 men, overtook and brought them back to this place, where they are all recognized in the sum of 150\$ to appear at the next court by the civil magistrate. Major Twiggs sent me a complaint by two Winnebago Indians against some who had passed into the Indian country north of Fort Winnebago and Mr. Marsh Sub Agent is now absent with my orders to bring them in & deliver them to the civil authority. He freely declared he only went because he was compelled—that he disliked the duty &c: and I have little calculation on his doing anything unless the officer detailed by Major T. (who appears anxious that no complaint should exist on the part of the Winnebagoes toward us) shall press him—I even apprehend from some reports and circumstances that the Sub Agent was engaged previously in the party I apprehended and brought back on the Mississippi. More

of this hereafter. One fact is gratifying—unless the Sub-Agent is connected with the party I apprehended these depredations and attempts at transgression are mostly confined to Foreigners—Canadians—and mixed breeds.

I am now endeavoring to prepare the Indians for the events of the council they say was promised to their chiefs at Washington. Will you be so obliging as to give me such information relating to the subject as you can that you may deem proper to communicate. I shall be greatly obliged by it.

With high considerations of respect and real friendship

I have the honor to be Your Mo. Obt. St.

Jos. M. Street,

U. S. Indian Agent at Prairie du chien.

Prairie du chien 8 April 1829.

Sir,

I regret to inform you that a report believed to be correct, reached here two days past with the news that an indented Servant of the American Fur Company (Canadian Voagieurs) was murdered by 4 Sioux about the first week in February, at a trading House near the Sources of the Desmoines between that and the mouth of the Vermillion River of the Missouri, within 2 days march of the latter River. The traders and one man constituted all the whites at or near the place. The former came in to renew some part of his outfit, and during his absence the man was murdered, and the articles taken which were left in his care. Few particulars are known. It is supposed that the 4 Sioux who committed the murder, came to get some articles of Mdz, and being refused, and not understanding each other (the white man not speaking Sioux) a contest ensued in which the whiteman was overpowered & slain. A painting left by the four Indians represents the whiteman standing in the door of the Store-room, with an ax in his hand, and the 4 Indians assailing him.

This occurrence is much to be regretted, tho' I see no reason to believe that this is a national act, & have no doubt the Sioux will disavow the murder, and surrender the perpetrators, on the demand of the Agent. It is too far from this place to be attended to by me, and before this time I presume that the Indian Agent at St. Peters has taken the necessary steps to secure the delivery of the Indians. The Agent of the American Fur Company here is so fully convinced that this difficulty has grown out of some personal misunderstanding, or from not understanding each other, that not one Trader has come in nor will any be ordered to leave their posts, tho' extending from about 60 or 70 miles North of Prairie du Chien to Lake Traverse North of the sources of the St. Peters River, and from 100 to 150 miles West of the Mississippi far into the interior of the Sioux country.

From other quarters of the Sioux country, the latest arrivals, are

calculated to increase the confidence in their friendly feelings towards the U. S. strengthen the assurances contained in my letter of the 20 ult. That the disposition of all the Indians on this border is evidently decidedly friendly. A longer residence with, and more practical knowledge of Indians confirms the opinion given by me on a former occasion that, "if the Winnebago murderers in confinement were convicted and subsequently released, it wd. be highly injurious to our Indian intercourse."—emphatically adding, "*a free pardon will be a chart Blanc for innumerable murders.*" Lately whilst interfering to arrest the border war between the Sacs & Foxes & Sioux Indians, my messenger after delivering my speech to them, in which I expressly threatened that if the mild conciliatory measure taken to quiet the disturbance did not succeed, their G. F. the President who would not suffer Indians on his border to war with each other, would certainly and effectually interfere by punishing the aggressors. The chiefs replied in substance, "we are not the aggressors, Morgan the Fox chief commenced an unsuspected warfare upon us, Killed one of our people, and took the two captives now returned by the friendly exertions of the Agents of our Father. Since that time some portions of both nations have been slain between the Des Moines and the Missouri. We now promise our Father that we will remain peaceable unless assailed, until the ensuing Spring, when we hope our G. F. will settle our line with the Sacs & Foxes, and require them to do us justice for the injury done to us this winter. The Sioux are friendly to the U. S. and desire to do what is pleasing to their G. F. Some years past Sioux were delivered to the Chippewas for the murder of some Chippewas visiting at St. Peters, and put to death. We submitted because we love peace. But now we cannot sit still in our lodges and see our friends killed around us, and submit to it quietly. We will wait & see what our G. F. will do—if he will order Morgan to be given to us—or in what way he means to prevent any more murders of Sioux by the Foxes. The Foxes have not been friends of the white children of our G. F. like the Sioux. All the Indians except Sioux have killed his white children, and yet he does not take his *revenge* and his love to the murdering nations is as great or greater than to the Sioux. The Foxes, have not been killed & the Winnebagoes after killing many at several times have been turned loose to Kill more. We cannot understand this. We gave up our people for the Chippewas to kill, and now we ask that the Sac's & Foxe's be given to us. We are friendly & give you our hand in peace." I deeply lament that this occasion was not taken, to impress the Indians with our abhorrence of the principle of *revenge* as understood by them, and that convictions and executions of Indians by their G. F. was to deter others from similar offences. Had the Sub-Agent when sent with the Captive Sioux to their friends, occupied the determined ground assumed in my instructions, and which gave rise to the mission, the most beneficial results would have been experienced and a deep sense

of fearful responsibility as a nation, as well as individually, effectually guarded the path of every white man in the Sioux country. The projected rout was directly through the country where the recent murder has been committed and where the greater part of the hostile Indians reside. The projected rout was abandoned, and one pursued skirting the western bank of the Mississippi, and nowhere approaching the Desmoine or the principal stream of the Terre Blue, where few Indians could be seen of the hostile bands. To these *few*, a spiritless temporising attitude was taken in no way calculated to impress them with the full importance of the interference, and the danger of *lightly disregarding the known wishes* of their G. F. the President. I clearly infer this from the report & subsequent conversations with the Sub-Agent, who enters into the Indian differences as a warm partizan of the Sioux who he encouragingly represents as the most powerful, and almost irresistible nation. In reporting to me that part of the Sioux speeches relating to the Chippewas—the murdering Winnebagoes—he remarked with great emphasis—“*What could I reply to this?*” Considering this appeal quite unanswerable. When to an efficient agent, that was the very fortunate moment to assume the attitude of dictation. To press home to the feelings of the Indians the fixed resolves of their G. F. the efficiency of his interference when he chose to exert it, and that he would not suffer them to judge when that firm steady interference should be successfully exerted. And that in the case of murderers of his white children, he wd. shew his power to punish, and when convictions had been fastened on the culprit, he would shew his mercy in knocking off the bands of the Felon, and letting the guilty go free. That he delighted not in *revenge*; but when his sense of right required it he caused the murderers to be executed as a *terror to others*. I can but deeply lament that I could not in person have performed the rout, or been enabled to send a more efficient agent, whose conduct had not let him down to a level with the Indians themselves. The late murder wd. have been in all probability prevented, as he wd. be in that neighborhood about the time the affair took place. A war between Indians rarely exists long without extending to some lonely white-man.

Anxiously looking forward to the contemplated purchase of the lead mines every effort has been unceasingly used to maintain upon proper principles of dignity and respect, a perfect good understanding with the Winnebagoes. Between 50 and 60 have visited me within the last 8 days and I am expecting many more in the ensuing 10 days. They are passing from their hunting camps on the upper Mississippi to their summer villages & cornfields on & near the Wisconsin & Pine Rivers. They appear perfectly reconciled to sell a *part* of their lands South of the Wisconsin; but say that the Nation must all be present, that their women and children may get their part of the price. That many of their principle chiefs have been to the mines until they have become

whiskey drinkers, and their heads are injured. *The Nation must sell their lands themselves. The chiefs would drink the whole land up and want more.* Many of their heretofore distinguished chiefs have become intolerable Sots & are lying two thirds of their time drunk at some of the places on & near the Wisconsin. Among them are several of the Chiefs who went to Washington. Since the establishments of Dodgeville English Prairie, &c., I can apply no effectual corrective. I endeavored to prevent these from going on the Wisconsin but did not succeed. The answer was there is our Summer villages, and corn fields, and all the nation has agreed to meet on the Wisconsin previously to a council, to determine how much of our country we will sell. This latter measure is desirable to us & I therefore only lectured them in relation to drinking and more especially at this time.

The miners are at some places giving away great quantities of whiskey and I shall not be surprised if innumerable difficulties are cast in the way of negotiations by persons wishing to obtain special grants for *half-breeds* with whom they have the necessary secret arrangements.

Under instructions from you, calling my attention to the Act of Congress of 1802, in relation to trespassing &c on Indian lands, and a more specific order of the Secretary of War in relation to the same subject, after the council last summer by Gov. Cass & our mutual friend Col. Menard—I have succeeded in preventing any disturbances with Indians on that subject, tho' not without great vigilance & some personal exposure at an inclement season. I brought back a party of 14 from above on the Mississippi, and they were recognized to appear at court. The *sub-agent* brought in a party of 100 above the portage, on both sides the Wisconsin, much against his judgment & will, as he told me, since when no further attempts to violate the law have been made.

The course of the Sub-Agent has been so entirely adverse to the views of the Agent, acting under a deliberate impartial consideration of the laws, and the instructions of the Department, that a clear development ought to take place. If I have misunderstood the laws, and misconceived the views of the Govt. in endeavoring to prevent a lawless violation of Indian property, by the seizure & arrest of the persons, I ought to be officially instructed to that effect. As my course has been dictated by the law and urged on by the instructions emanating from the Department. The Sub Agent holds the office of Justice of the Peace, and unfortunately we have but *one*. Not only has he shewn & declared a course adverse to the law, but as a Justice of the peace is casting difficulties in the way of the proper execution of the duties growing out of the law of 1802. As well as inspiring ignorant men to resist the legitimate exercise of the proper authority for arresting these marauders. The opinions of *Justice Marsh* are quoted in support of the violations of the laws, and his authority as a civil magistrate made to bear upon the officers executing the trusts reposed in

them. I seized a parcel of Timber that a party had got, who fled before I reached them,—the timber was hawled into the Fort for safe keeping a writ of replevin was issued, and the sheriff's man directed to *let it alone*, since Mr. Marshe's return from Ft. Winnebago a forthwith warrant was issued against Major Kearney, and he was held to bail in the sum of 400\$ with surety to appear at the next court to answer for resisting the civil authority. The replevin was issued on the oath of a Foreigner, swearing to a property in Timber obtained by trespass on the U. S. or Ind. lands, it is difficult to say which and still remaining where it was made. The Replevin was not executed the right subsequently abandoned, and the plaintiff requested that nothing further should be done. Yet *Justice Marsh*, has taken it up on the oath of a man professing to be deputy sheriff and held to bail. I have no disposition to injure the man without a cause, yet if he is placed here to aid in the discharge of the duties devolving by law on the Ind. Agent, he is certainly obstructing instead of aiding. And if the Department wish to know more of his course I will *make and sustain these charges against him*.

The Horse left with me by Mr. McNail was given to the *Sub-Agent* to go into the Sioux country, he strayed from his camp and I apprehend is irricoverably lost. In 1827, Marsh sent an express on his Horse to St. Peters—afterwards he obtained Col. Snellings certificate that the Horse was lost in the public service, and recd. the price of him from the Government. The Horse is now found and Marsh claims him. Certainly this Horse belongs to the U. S.—What is your opinion—Shall I take him subject to your order? I had nothing to give the Winnebagoes but corn to plant and provisions, except some inconsiderable articles purchased expressly for the occasion. I had all their tools mended, and gave them all corn to plant. They left me apparently being friendly tho' a little disappointed to get no goods.

If you could forward me some it wd. be a great benefit to the views of the U. S. in relation to the intended treaty for the Mines.

I have heard little from the City—please let me know what has been done, *and is to be done*. Who are to treat with the Winnebagoes & where? I hope you have stood the trip well & have had your health—Who will be our Governor, Judges, Secretary &c. & where will be the Seat of Justice, the Portage?—Make my respects to Mrs. Clark, to Col. Menard when you see him and all friends

Accept for yourself assurances of high respect and unfeigned friendship.

Your mo. Obt. St.,

Jos. M. Street, Ind. Agt.

Gov. Wm. Clark

Superintendent of Ind. aff.;

At St. Louis

Rocky Island, 6th May, 1830.

Sir:

I yesterday received your two letters of the 20th and 22d ult. by Mr. Marsh from the Prairie du Chiens, and had Mr. Taliaferro delivered these letters on his way up, their contents would have been communicated to all the Chiefs of the Sauk and Fox Indians who were then at this place.

Strawberry, the Fox Chief, coming into my quarters, inquired of Mr. Marsh the news from Prairie du Chien. Mr. Marsh told him, that Genl Street and Mr. Rolette told him at P. du Chien, that the Sioux, Winnebago, and Menominee Indians had joined together in confederacy to make war against the Sauk and Fox Indians, and were shortly coming down for that purpose; that the belt of wampum sent by the Sauk Indians, to the Winnebago Indians to assist in making up the matter about killing of a Winnebago woman (by the Stabbing Chief and party last fall or winter at Rolette's Fort, as I presume) was torn to pieces by the Winnebago Indians, and destroyed; that there were many Sioux, Winnebago, and Menominee Indians at P. du Chien continually drunk. This story of Mr. Marsh's will be recollected by the Strawberry and repeated to the Sauk & Fox Indians at their villages at the Grand Mascotin and Thoway river, and, in my opinion, will do much to prevent the Sauk and Fox Indians from going up to P. du Chien to listen to the words of the President about peace, which the elder part of the Sauk and Fox Indians wish for very much. Strawberry, the Fox Chief, left this place this morning, to return to his home near the Flint Hills. By him I sent the wampum, and what you directed me to say to the Indians, about remaining quiet at their homes, and if any war parties were sent out, to send after them and bring them back. It is really lamentable that white people should blow the coal of discord among the Indians, to thwart the good intentions of the Government, and continue, or rather augment, a cruel and barbarious war among the Indians. This news of the confederacy of the Sioux, Winnebago, and Menominee Indians, will not damp the ardour of the Sauk and Fox warriors, and they will meet any attack that may be made from any quarter.

I hope that what Mr. Marsh was informed at P. du Chien, are mere threats, and will not be put into execution; for, if any thing of the like was to take place, the Kickapoos, Chippeways, Ottowas, and Potawattonies, would join the Sauk & Fox Indians, and God only knows when such a war would end.

7th May, 8 o'clock evening.

About four o'clock this afternoon, four Fox Indians arrived express from up the river. They said that four or five days ago, all the principal Fox Indians at Dubuque's mines, set out in canoes to go to Prairie du Chien, on the invitation of Captain Warner, the subagent at Fever River, to meet the Sioux Indians and have a talk with them, at

a prairie below the mouth of the Wisconsin river, on the east side of the Mississippi. The Fox party amounting to sixteen men and one woman, put to shore the day before yesterday, for the purpose of cooking; that while there, the Fox party was attacked by a large party of Sioux, Winnebago and Menominie Indians, and every one killed except one of the Fox party; that this one that was spared, is a half Winnebago & half Fox, and he has one of his arms broken; that he was put in a canoe and pushed off from the shore, and told by some of the Sioux party, to go to his home (at Dubuque's mines) and tell the news; that none of the Fox party were armed, as they were going up to the Prairie to do a good work, therefore had no means of defence, not having taken any guns with them; that Pimosky—two brothers of the late Kettle Chief, and the Broken or Cut Head are among the slain. Morgan remained at home, and escaped the vengeance of the Sauk and Menominie Indians. My speech and wampum sent yesterday by Strawberry to the Sauk and Fox villages, to prevent any more war parties from going out, and to send and bring back any war parties that may now be out, was to be delivered to the Sauk and Fox Chiefs this day, and the runners that left this, with the news of the killing the Fox Indians by the Sioux, &c will reach the Sauk and Fox villages below this to-morrow; therefore there will be a very great contradiction in what they heard to-day from Strawberry, and what they will hear to-morrow from the runners from this place. It is impossible but many persons about Prairie du Chien must have known of the Fox Indians going up to P. du Chien, and also have known of the preparations made by the Sioux, Winnebago, and Menominie Indians to attack the Fox Indians on their way up; and I must certainly say it will make some of the Agents of Government look little in the eyes of the Indians hereafter. From this affair happening to the Fox Indians, it will put an end (in my opinion) to any meeting this summer at Prairie du Chien, among the hostile nations of Indians.

I remain, very respectfully,

Your Obt. Servt.

(Signed) THOMAS FORSYTH.

Genl. William Clark
Supt. Ind. Affs. St. Louis

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