

MR. BABCOCK, who recently retired as curator of the newspaper collection in the Minnesota Historical Society, is now engaged in a study of Minnesota territorial life as reflected in the newspapers of the period.

## *With RAMSEY to PEMBINA* *A Treaty-Making Trip in 1851*

WILLOUGHBY M. BABCOCK

LATE IN AUGUST, 1851, Governor Alexander Ramsey of Minnesota Territory set out from St. Paul for the distant northwestern border outpost of Pembina in the Red River Valley. Just two weeks earlier he had concluded the treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota by which the United States government secured from the Sioux Indians most of their lands in southern Minnesota. Though the season was already late, the journey to Pembina was undertaken for the purpose of negotiating with the Chippewa for the purchase of the Red River Valley.<sup>1</sup>

This region, though isolated from the main routes of immigration, was settled by scattered white farmers and mixed-blood buffalo hunters who had drifted south from the Fort Garry area (now Winnipeg) across the international border. They had been reinforced

by the establishment of an American fur trading post at the mouth of the Pembina River, and during the late 1840s their economic and political ties with Minnesota had been strengthened by the growth of trade between St. Paul and Pembina via the Red River oxcart trails. Though American citizens, these people were technically residents upon Indian land, and their holdings had no legal status. It was to rectify this situation, as well as to acquire for the United States some five million fertile acres and to "encourage emigration across the line . . . by hundreds of hardy fellows, who are now suffering under the tyranny . . . of the Hudson Bay Company," that Ramsey undertook the negotiations with the Chippewa.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, his effort proved futile, for the treaty he succeeded in persuading the Indians to sign was rejected by the United States Senate. Not until 1863 did the rich Red River Valley pass from Indian ownership. Ramsey's journey, however, and his bargaining session with the Indians, remain interesting episodes in the early history of the region that was to become the nation's bread basket.

With the governor to Pembina went a small official party and an escort of twenty-five dragoons. The group included Hugh Tyler as special agent and acting commis-

<sup>1</sup> 32 Congress, 1 session, *Senate Executive Documents*, no. 1, p. 284 (serial 613).

<sup>2</sup> J. Wesley Bond in the *Minnesota Democrat* (St. Paul), August 26, 1851. For accounts of the fur trade and settlement in the Red River Valley see John P. Pritchett, "Some Red River Fur-Trade Activities," in *Minnesota History*, 5:401-423 (May, 1924); and Clarence W. Rife, "Norman W. Kittson, A Fur-Trader at Pembina," in *Minnesota History*, 6:225-252 (September, 1925). When Minnesota Territory was organized, Pembina was included in the sixth legislative district. See *Minnesota Territory, House Journal*, 1849, p. 216.



A dragoon at Fort Snelling, as sketched by Frank B. Mayer in the summer of 1851

sary, Dr. Thomas Foster in the dual capacity of secretary to the commission and surgeon to the dragoons, and J. Wesley Bond of St. Paul, apparently serving as general clerk. Tyler was a Pennsylvania attorney and lobbyist who had been retained by a group of fur traders to represent their interests in Minnesota treaty negotiations. He did valiant work at Traverse des Sioux in securing Indian signatures to the agreement which provided for the payment of Indian debts to the traders, and later he lobbied in Washington for ratification of the treaty. Foster, another Pennsylvanian, went to Minnesota in 1849 as Ramsey's personal secretary. In later years he was to achieve prominence as a newspaper editor in St. Paul and Duluth. Surprisingly little is known of Bond, although he is said to have gone to St. Paul in 1849, and he lived there until shortly before his death in 1903. He supplied a detailed record of Minnesota climatic conditions from 1850 to 1853 for the *Annals* of the Minnesota Historical Society, and in the latter year he published a

book on the territory entitled *Minnesota and its Resources*. It was Bond who provided the best surviving account of the expedition, for he was both a careful observer and an able reporter. In the course of the journey to and from Pembina he wrote several letters to the *Minnesota Democrat*, a St. Paul newspaper, describing the experiences of the party. Subsequently he reprinted them in his book, along with a rather full journal of the trip, under the title "Sketches by a Camp Fire."<sup>3</sup>

ALTHOUGH the governor and most of his party traveled by steamer from St. Anthony to Sauk Rapids, Bond went by land, leaving St. Paul on August 17, 1851. He proceeded on horseback up the east bank of the Mississippi, crossing the Rum River by ferry, and soon overtook the escort of dragoons from Fort Snelling, "their train of wagons, looking at first like small white specks upon the prairie, consisting of 3 two horse teams, and 3 mule teams, of 4 mules each, heavily loaded with baggage and provisions." They were commanded by Second Lieutenant James L. Corley of the Sixth United States Infantry, and "all rode splendid animals and were equipped in excellent style for active service."<sup>4</sup>

The party which gathered at Sauk Rapids was a varied one. Among those who accompanied the thirty-six-year-old governor and his official companions, Bond mentions the Reverend John Black of Montreal, a clergyman on his way from St. Paul to the Red River Settlement, and Joseph Courserole, a young half-breed Sioux. The latter, "who is our chief cook . . . was born . . . at Devils lake, and was raised at Mendota by the Hon.

<sup>3</sup> William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1:276, 292 (St. Paul, 1956); Warren Upham and Rose B. Dunlap, *Minnesota Biographies*, 63, 235 (*Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 14); Thomas M. Newson, *Pen Pictures of St. Paul and Biographical Sketches of Old Settlers*, 151-153, 167 (St. Paul, 1886); J. W. Bond, *Minnesota and its Resources*, 255-327 (New York, 1853).

<sup>4</sup> Bond's description of his trip from St. Paul to Sauk Rapids is in the *Minnesota Democrat*, August 26, 1851. This section was not included in the account later reprinted in his book.

H. H. Sibley." The expedition's guide was Pierre Bottineau, "a half-breed Chippewa: of a highly-nervous temperament, with Indian features strongly marked, very swarthy, dark hair, tall, muscular, and active." Supplies and baggage were carried in "eight carts, each loaded with about five hundred pounds of freight."<sup>5</sup>

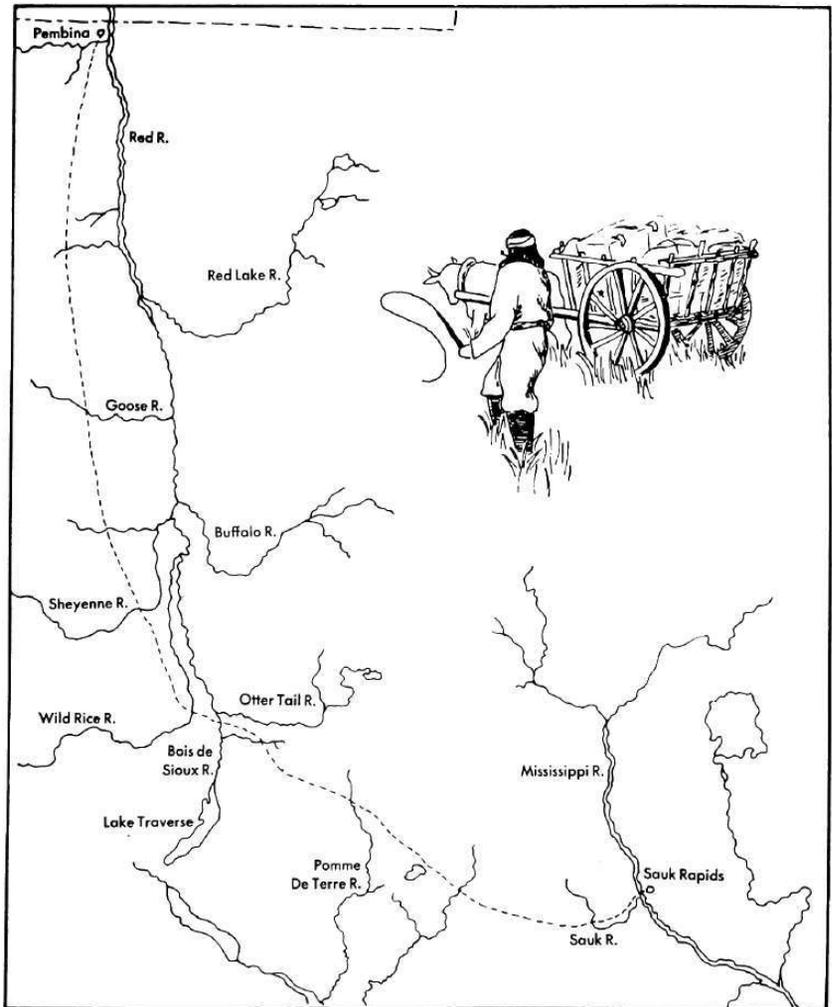
The governor's party assembled at a tavern on the outskirts of Sauk Rapids, while the dragoons got their horses, teams, and baggage across the Mississippi and camped a few miles to the west. This pattern of independent movement by the civilian and

military groups seems to have persisted throughout, for Bond later observed that the escort "is always far ahead or out of timely reach in case of need behind." When, on the return journey, the dragoons took leave of their charges some eight days out of Sauk Rapids, Bond noted, "They have been of no use to us whatever during our march. But Uncle Sam pays for it." No doubt the soldiers' chief function was to lend dignity to the treaty-making ceremonies, since little or no danger seems to have been expected or encountered on the trip.

The route lay "out Sauk River and thence [westward] to the headwaters of the Red River and then North to Pembina." This was substantially the middle or Sauk Valley Red

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise identified, all quotations are from Bond's journal as it appears in *Minnesota and its Resources*.

APPROXIMATE  
route of  
Ramsey's party





Alex Ramsey  
Governor of Minnesota

A sketch by Frank B. Mayer, 1851

River trail, which was well known and heavily used each summer by trains of ox-drawn carts.<sup>6</sup>

FIFTEEN MILES beyond Sauk Rapids Bond and his companions encountered "a piece of swamp-land, about fifty yards in width, and covered by a bad 'corduroy' road," which the dragoons had spent "several hours in repairing for the passage of the teams." Three more miles brought them to "another bad crossing of swamp-land." Here they found the dragoons camped for the night and busy bridging the swamp with "bushes, grass, &c." Next day the group continued its laborious way. In one swampy place "the dragoons mired their horses. Grass was then mowed, a causeway made, the horses crossed on it, and the heavy teams [were] drawn over by ropes."

Meanwhile the sporting members of the party discovered a bear, which immediately took to its heels. There followed "an animated bear hunt," which ended, according to the governor, when the animal "was

slaughtered by the dragoons." To Ramsey it appeared "the size of a large heifer."<sup>7</sup>

Other game encountered along the way included pigeons, ducks, and a skunk, which Bond and his friends pursued with much laughter and "such shying and dodging, to keep to windward of the beast [as] was never seen before." Soon roast skunk was on the menu, for "Some of the party are very fond of skunk, either roasted, fried, or stewed, and attribute the peculiar smell of the meat to the fact that the animal lives on garlic." Bond records with tongue in cheek that on the homeward journey Bottineau roasted a skunk especially for the governor, "who had taken a great fancy to them, and was desirous to have another taste. . . . His *excellency* refused to partake of it, on the ground that it was *very* good when he was *very* hungry, but that an ordinary appetite could not relish it."

The evening of August 23 found the party, by Ramsey's reckoning, about sixty-five miles west of Sauk Rapids and, according to Bond, "encamped on the banks of a lake . . . altogether the best camping-place we have yet had." The following day dawned rainy and cold, and since it was Sunday, the expedition remained in camp all day. The cart drivers busied themselves hunting wildfowl and "making new cart-axles." For several days the weather remained unseasonably cold, forcing the travelers to wear overcoats and huddle closely about their campfires in the evening. On August 27 the expedition crossed what Bond called "potato river" [*Pomme De Terre*] and approached "the dividing ridge between the head waters of the

<sup>6</sup> For information on the routes commonly used between St. Paul and Pembina, see Grace Lee Nute, "The Red River Trails" in *Minnesota History*, 6:278-282 (September, 1925). The route of Ramsey's party was substantially the same as that taken by an expedition under Major Samuel Woods in 1849 and by the Stevens Pacific railroad expedition (also guided by Bottineau) in 1853.

<sup>7</sup> Ramsey Diary, August 22, 1851, Ramsey Papers, owned by the Minnesota Historical Society. Though Ramsey kept a journal throughout the trip, his notations were brief, and having been made in pencil, are often illegible.

Red, Minnesota, and Mississippi rivers . . . an elevated plain for the most part, with less woodland and fewer lakes." Water was becoming scarce, and "a pond full of dirty dark grass" barely took care of the needs of men and animals.

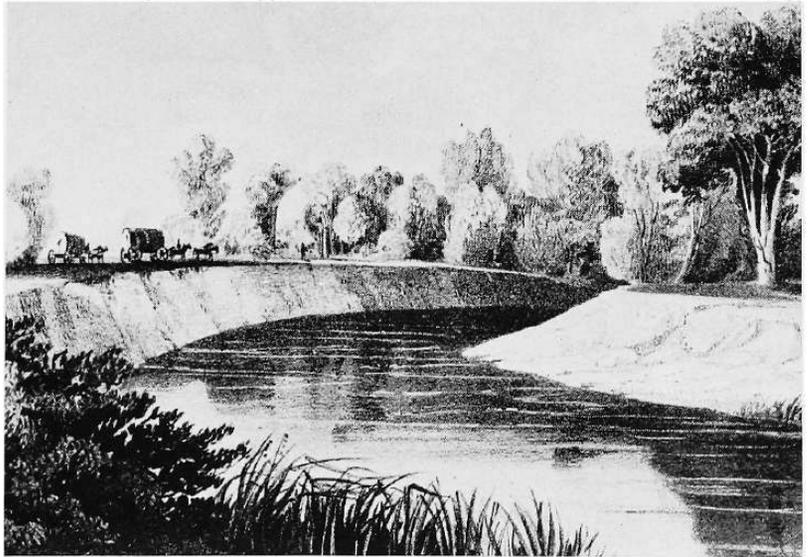
On the afternoon of August 28 the expedition reached the Bois de Sioux River about four miles above its mouth and "camped on its bank alongside the dragoons," who had spent the afternoon making a raft. Late in the evening "a very heavy storm of thunder and lightning came up suddenly. . . . The rain descended in torrents, the winds blew, thunders roared, lightning flashed, the tent flies snapped, flapped and cracked; the water rolled in under our oil cloth floor," while Bond, at least, remained "safe and dry and went to sleep amid the raging and roaring of the tempest." The next morning the dragoons crossed the river, "rafting over their goods, and drawing the wagons over with ropes; swimming and wading the horses." The civilian party then crossed in the same way, and after all the goods were packed once more, the group resumed its journey.

\* Ramsey Diary, August 29, 1851; 32 Congress, 1 session, *Senate Executive Documents*, no. 1, p. 285 (serial 613).

Eight miles to the northwest they crossed the Wild Rice River on a log bridge, which had been constructed the previous spring by the fur trader, Norman W. Kittson, to facilitate the passage of cart trains between his post at Pembina and St. Paul.<sup>8</sup> The party camped on the bank of the Wild Rice, where they were, by Bond's reckoning, some three or four miles below the point where the Red River is formed by the junction of the Bois de Sioux and the Otter Tail rivers. "Tomorrow," he noted, "we have a march of twenty-five miles to the Shayenne, [*sic*] . . . and I am told that we will not see the Red river until our arrival at Pembina, as our road skirts along the high ground on the western slope of the valley, distant on an average some thirty to forty miles. This detour is necessary to avoid the marshes, swamps and bad places along the bed of the valley and nearer the river."

The night of August 30 found the exhausted party strung out along the trail near the Sheyenne River, after a grueling march of nearly thirty miles "over a flat and marshy prairie, with no lakes or streams, the woods along the Red river alone being visible, away off to the right." The weather had turned warm and "the sun was very hot, huge bottle-

THE Bois de Sioux  
River as it  
appeared in 1853



flies and gnats very bad, and our horses most used up." To add to the travelers' misery, the mosquitoes were worse than Bond "ever saw before, or heard of or imagined. . . . I rode a cream-colored horse, and was unable to distinguish the color of the animal so thickly was he covered. . . . During supper they swarmed around like bees hiving, and entered the mouth, nose, ears, and eyes."

FOR THE NEXT five days the weather remained hot and muggy, and insects harried the party relentlessly. But relief from the monotony of prairie travel was provided by their first sight of buffalo, which "afforded for a time much excitement. Guns, pistols, etc., were reloaded, handkerchiefs were tied around heads, waists belted, stirrups tightened," and they galloped off "best fellow foremost." A second hunt the next day nearly proved disastrous, for, says Bond, "during the chase, Pierre Bottineau's horse stumbled, and threw his rider violently to the ground. He was picked up insensible, terribly stunned though not much hurt. He was bled, brought to camp in the carriage, and put to bed." Ramsey, in a rare burst of feeling, recorded that "Gabou & myself overtook and shot the bull — thrilling."<sup>9</sup>

Thereafter buffalo hunting became a regular occupation. With meat so plentiful, the party ate only the choice pieces, leaving the rest for "wolves, who howled, barked, and preyed over it." In this area, buffalo chips provided fuel, for wood had become scarce along the route. The "strong smoke and smell" of the chips, thought Bond, helped drive away the mosquitoes.

On September 7, three weeks after leaving St. Paul, Bond reported that the weather and the country had both improved. He commented that the land was "very beautiful" and "much better adapted to farming purposes than that passed over . . . on our last week's march." September 9 found the civilian party lagging far behind the dragoons, and Ramsey, with Tyler, rode ahead "to overtake and stop our escort — and compel them to accompany us into Pembina." Late

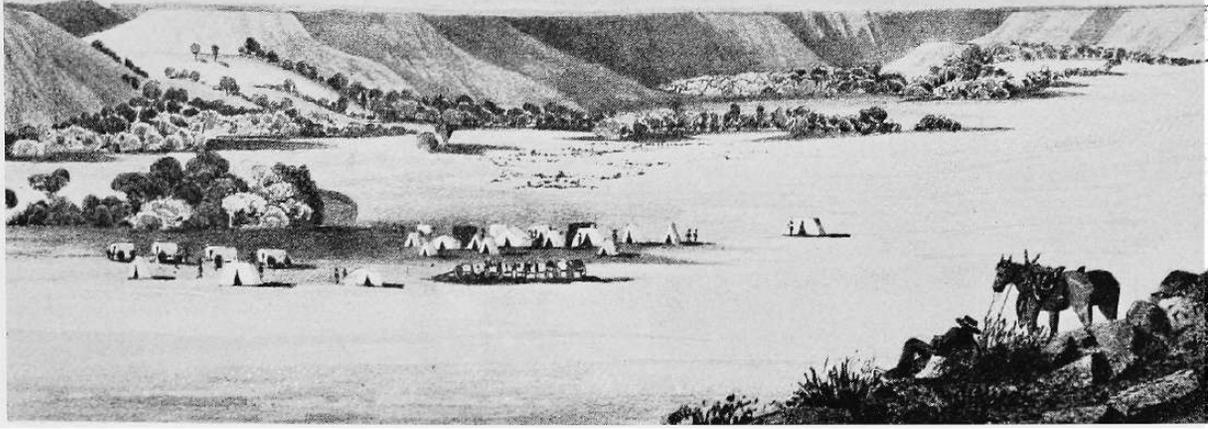
in the afternoon of September 11 the expedition "came in sight of the first houses at the Red River settlement," and was greeted by a salute from the guns of the half-breeds.

A mile farther on, Bond and his companions "came to the junction of the Red and Pembina rivers, and found the trading-post of N.W. Kittson, Esq., and the settlement called Pembina in the angle at the junction. Here we found half a dozen log-dwellings, and a quantity of half-breed and Chippewa lodges; the American flag flying from the top of a tall flag-staff; with barns, stables, haystacks, horses, cattle, &c. . . . On the muddy banks in front stood an admiring group of several hundred whites, half-breeds, and Indians, of all sizes; with any quantity of dogs, very large and wolfish."

Camp was pitched on the south bank of the Pembina, and the travelers "Slept well . . . considering the multitude of discordant and almost unearthly sounds. . . . Now are heard the Indians shrieking and beating upon drums at their camp across the Pembina; and those big dogs keep howling dismally, like a host of wild, voracious wolves."

Next morning the expedition ferried over the river and Bond found "a busy scene" at the fur post. "The houses are built around an open space, and the square courtyard (so to speak) is filled with a miscellaneous crowd of half-breeds [and] Indians . . . with their lodges of bark and skins, together with horses, cattle, carts, dogs, &c." The houses were "built of logs, filled with mud and straw; the roofs thatched with the latter, and some covered over with bark. Around the angles of the yard are various warehouses, an icehouse, blacksmith-shop, and the trading-house, or store, which is covered completely over with large squares of bark, and looked like an entire barkhouse. In front, toward the river, are barns and stables, haystacks, &c. . . . and a general appearance of thrift, comfort, and industry, pervades the scene." Kittson placed his house at the party's disposal "and celebrated our arrival by a sump-

<sup>9</sup> Ramsey Diary, September 1, 1851.



*A camp on the banks of the Sheyenne River in the summer of 1853*

tuous dinner, in which *hot corn* and potatoes [and] onion . . . formed the principal item in the vegetable line. These were grown in the gardens here, and are the only productions of the soil now cultivated at this place.” The absence of agriculture, Bond explains, was the result of floods which had devastated the valley for the past three years. These had induced Kittson to move his main establishment thirty miles to the west along the Pembina River and set up “a new town and an agricultural settlement . . . on what is called the Pembina mountain.”

SOME two hundred and fifty members of the Pembina and Red Lake bands of Chippewa were already assembled at the post, for Ramsey had sent a messenger well in advance to announce his coming and summon them to the council. In addition there were present several hundred half-breeds—the actual occupants of the land in question, who were not slow to press their claims for compensation should the government agree to purchase it. The position of the United States, however, was that the land belonged solely to the Indians, and the half-breeds

<sup>10</sup> 32 Congress, 1 session, *Senate Executive Documents*, no. 1, p. 285. Though Bond claims (p. 316) that the Pembina and Red Lake bands were represented by only about two hundred fifty members, there were nearly twice that number of Indians present, including contingents from the Pillager band and possibly other neighboring groups.

were thus barred from participation in the treaty council.<sup>10</sup>

They did share, however, in the daily ration of provisions issued by the government to all in attendance at the treaty-making. According to Bond, “Their occupation at present is exclusively that of hunters; and their life is naturally a free and easy, and a careless one; hunting buffalo and making pemmican and ox-carts, occupy all their time. These carts are made entirely of wood, not even an iron nail is used, wooden pins, and thongs, and bands of hide being substituted. . . . [They] are sold for thirty shillings; which is the average price, except in the hunting seasons, when in demand, they sell as high as ten dollars. A pair of wheels alone, are then worth five dollars.” Bond was certain that “The half-breeds had counted on the reception of a portion at least of the annuities . . . and had hoped for the consummation of a treaty . . . with that view only.”

At noon on September 15 “the Indians met, and the treaty commenced in front of the governor’s [Kittson’s] house; his excellency, with Dr. Foster as secretary, and others, were sitting at a table at the front door; the principal chiefs, braves, and head men . . . were sitting on low seats in front, while around behind them in a semi-circle stood a numerous crowd of half-breeds and Indians, men, boys, squaws, and papooses,

accompanied by their dogs, who, for once during our stay here, were quiet.”<sup>11</sup>

Ramsey opened the council with a rather lengthy address, much of which was recorded by Foster. Speaking through an interpreter, the governor identified himself as “the representative of your Great Father” who “has learned, in regard to this portion of his red children, that the game has been cleared away . . . and that your lands here are of no further use in that way. And he has been informed that you are poor and need his help.” Such assistance their father would gladly give by buying some of the Indians’ “comparatively useless” land and giving them money with which their “condition could be much improved.” This was “the principal reason your Great Father wishes to make a Treaty with you.” He went on to dwell at length upon the benefits that would result if the Indians would abandon their traditional way of life and cultivate the land as their white brothers did. In fact, Ramsey said, it was “to enable you to commence this state of improvement” that the Great Father proposed to purchase “a piece about 30 miles in width on each side of the Red River of the North, from the international boundary line to the Buffalo river on the east side and to the south branch of Goose River on the west side.” In return the Indians would receive “a considerable amount down . . . and annually thereafter (say for 20 years) about 8,000 dollars.”<sup>12</sup>

A long silence followed Ramsey’s speech, and then an old brave of the Red Lake band replied on a somewhat sour note. “I am not at all satisfied that you have not been fuller and plainer in what you said to us,” he declared. “Do not put anything sweet in your voice, but speak right out. . . . Say all you have to say, and be plain, and be full in what you intend to do, to all, and then I shall go off and with the rest get in a circle and talk it over.”<sup>13</sup>

Ramsey had a ready response to the Indian’s bluntness. “If I have mentioned any sweet things,” he answered, “they naturally follow from the new state of things I want to

bring. . . . I have made a proposition for a certain portion of your country, but you must understand it is not that we want the country badly, but to make a provision for you.” He then suggested that they talk it over among themselves and decide whether they wished to sell, presenting them with a gift of tobacco to help in their deliberations.<sup>14</sup>

The following day a steady rain prevented the council from continuing, but on September 17 the Indians were with some difficulty assembled once more. Ramsey opened the meeting by asking what conclusion they had reached. It soon became obvious that nothing had been agreed upon. The Indians protested that some of their more important men had not yet arrived, and that without them they could not make a decision. At the request of Moose Dung, a chief of the Red Lake band, Ramsey restated his proposition. The chief then replied: “I think a great deal of the piece of land my father points to. Upon it is where my own father raised me. . . . Just as my father supported me, so that land yet supports me. I love it—I love it, for I live by and on it.” Similar hesitation was expressed by an aged warrior of the Pembina band, who rose to say, “I do not bring to recollection the poverty we seem to be in here. I am accustomed to such manner of living.”<sup>15</sup>

Seeing that the trend was unfavorable, Ramsey brusquely closed the meeting, noting that night in his diary that he “adjourned the council suddenly to leave the impression that I was dissatisfied and might not meet

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<sup>11</sup> Bond witnessed only the first session of the council, for he left the following day on a trip to Fort Garry, from which he did not return until after the treaty had been signed.

<sup>12</sup> “Journal of the United States Commission to Treat with the Chippeway Indians of Pembina and Red Lake, from August 18 to Nov. 27, 1851; with the Proceedings of the Council held at Pembina,” 3–7. Ramsey Papers. This manuscript is apparently a rough draft of the record kept by Thomas Foster as secretary of the commission. The official copy is in the National Archives.

<sup>13</sup> “Journal of the United States Commission,” 7.

<sup>14</sup> “Journal of the United States Commission,” 8.

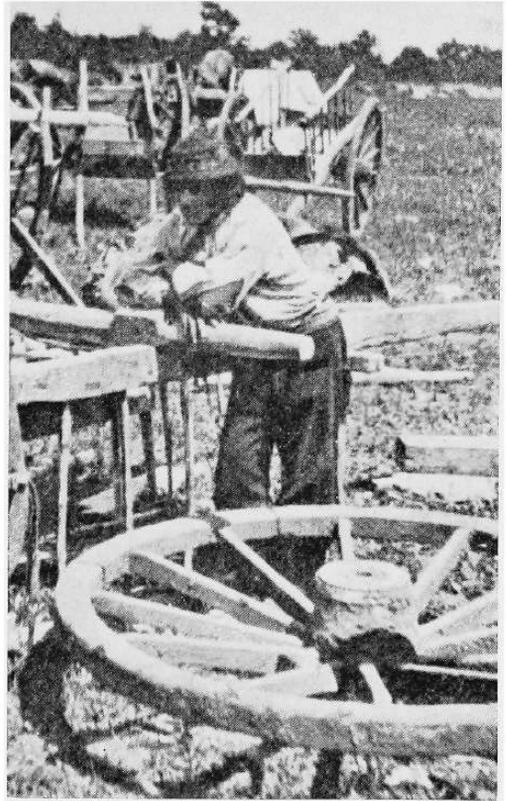
<sup>15</sup> “Journal of the United States Commission,” 10, 13, 15.

them again [...] this soon I saw had the desired effect."<sup>16</sup>

The next two days, according to the official record, were "spent in holding informal interviews with the chiefs and headmen, and in endeavoring to fix upon the terms of a Treaty mutually advantageous to both parties."<sup>17</sup> Ramsey's diary is more revealing. On the evening of September 19, he noted: "No council with Indians on yesterday but their traders busily engaged with them to bring them to terms. . . . In the evening had a dance from the young men, which was in fact intended as a demonstration against the treaty. . . . every prospect that on tomorrow we shall treat."

HIS PREDICTION proved accurate, for despite numerous last-minute objections and demands from the refractory Moose Dung, the chiefs signed the treaty as the governor had presented it to them. Perhaps they were aided in their decision by the words of the Reverend J. P. Bardwell, a Congregational missionary who had worked among them for many years. He "advised them to accept the Treaty as offered" and "cautioned them against . . . asking so high a price that they would get nothing."<sup>18</sup>

As finally drafted, the treaty provided for the cession of a tract approximately thirty miles wide on each side of the Red River and extending on the eastern bank as far south as the Buffalo River, to the territory recently ceded by the Sioux. In return the United States agreed to pay thirty thousand dollars to the chiefs "for the purpose of making provision for their Relatives of mixed blood, and to enable them to arrange their affairs." (The "affairs" referred to presumably consisted of



REPAIRING a Red River cart at Pembina

debts to Kittson and other traders.) In addition the Indians were to receive ten thousand dollars a year for twenty years, two thousand of which might be set aside for "agricultural, educational, and such other beneficial purposes" as the government saw fit. Another article provided for their union with other bands of the Chippewa and the pooling of lands and annuities whenever such an arrangement should be agreed to by the remaining bands. This would implement the government's recently adopted policy of consolidating Indian tribes and their holdings.<sup>19</sup>

In his report to the secretary of the interior, Ramsey thought it "not improbable the Indians might have been induced . . . to part with them [*the lands*] for a much less

<sup>16</sup> Though apparently made on the seventeenth, this entry was dated by Ramsey September 18. From the fourteenth to the nineteenth his entries are incorrectly dated.

<sup>17</sup> "Journal of the United States Commission," 17.

<sup>18</sup> "Journal of the United States Commission," 19, 21.

<sup>19</sup> "Treaty with the Chippewas of Pembina & Red Lake, concluded 20th September, 1851." The original is in the National Archives and a copy is in the Ramsey Papers.

sum” had it been consistent with the government’s dignity or humanity “to insist upon making the best bargain with poor, ignorant savages it was possible to obtain.” He voiced pride in the clauses which provided for the Indians’ gradual adaptation to civilized ways and also in the arrangement of boundary lines which would cut off the remaining lands of the Chippewa from those of their traditional enemies, the Sioux.<sup>20</sup>

RAMSEY CONFIDED to his diary on the evening of September 21 that he felt “very much relieved about the conclusion of the treaty.” With the main business of the expedition thus accomplished, he and the other members of the commission turned their attention to sight-seeing and spent a week visiting Fort Garry and the Selkirk Settlement north of the international boundary. When they arrived at Pembina once more, they found preparations nearly complete for the return journey. On October 2 the dragoons and the majority of the civilian party set out on the long march back to Sauk Rapids. Ramsey and two or three others made a detour to visit Kittson’s post at Pembina Mountain, catching up with their companions two nights later.<sup>21</sup>

Hints of the coming winter were already in the air; on the morning Ramsey left Pembina Mountain the prairie was white with hoar frost and the thermometer stood at 24°. Soon the weather turned wet and stormy with occasional snow flurries hastening the steps of the travelers. Bond described their mode of lighting a fire upon the drenched and chilly prairie as follows: “Some dry Kinne-kin-nick bark is generally carried along, cut very fine for the purpose of smoking. . . . A small portion of this, together with a little tow, or paper . . . is placed in as dry a place as possible, and shielded from the rain . . . some wet powder is then thrown on, together with a little of the dry explosive, and the whole ignited with flint and steel. . . . and in a few minutes a cheerful fire is blazing.” Each member of the party “then gathers closely around, while the

steam and smoke from his scorching garments ascend in perfect clouds.”

The return trip was enlivened by more buffalo hunting, a brief scare over hostile Sioux, and considerable hilarity and practical joking. On October 17 near the Pomme De Terre River, Bond recorded: “Our salt gave out to-day, and there is great grumbling in the camp. We have plenty of whiskey left, however, uncle being very liberal in his supply.” The remaining distance was not great, but the travelers were slowed by the exhaustion of their horses, several of which died on the trail. They arrived in Sauk Rapids on October 24 and reached St. Paul two days later, “with faces browned and beards long,” having been absent for ten weeks and traveled more than twelve hundred miles.<sup>22</sup>

When the Pembina treaty along with the two Sioux treaties came before the Senate late the following spring, all three faced vigorous opposition from southern leaders who opposed expansion of northern territory. On June 23, 1852, the Sioux treaties were ratified with amendments, but Henry H. Sibley, the Congressional delegate from Minnesota, wrote to Ramsey: “Never did any measure have a tighter squeeze through. The Pembina treaty. . . . had to be offered up as a conciliatory sacrifice.” The remoteness of the area it covered was the chief argument used against it, according to Sibley.<sup>23</sup> Twelve years were to pass before another treaty, also negotiated by Ramsey, finally extinguished Indian title to the Red River Valley.

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<sup>20</sup> 32 Congress, 1 session, *Senate Executive Documents*, no. 1, p. 285 (serial 613).

<sup>21</sup> Ramsey Diary, September 22–October 1, 1851.

<sup>22</sup> *Minnesota Pioneer* (St. Paul), October 30, 1851.

<sup>23</sup> Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:291; Sibley to Ramsey, June 26, 1852, Ramsey Papers.

THE ORIGINAL of the sketch on page 2 is in the Newberry Library, Chicago. The scenes on pages 5 and 7 are by John Mix Stanley and are included in the report of the Stevens Pacific railroad expedition of 1853–55. Mayer’s sketch of Ramsey and the photograph on page 9 are from the picture collection of the Minnesota Historical Society. The map on page 3 is the work of the editor.



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