

# Chief Hole-in-the-Day and the 1862 Chippewa Disturbance *A Reappraisal*

ON AUGUST 18, 1862, the day on which the Sioux troubles began at the Redwood (or Lower) Agency in southwestern Minnesota, events were already in motion toward a Chippewa uprising at the Gull and Leech lakes reserves in the north-central part of the state. John Johnson (Enmegahbowh), an Episcopalian deacon, spread the word at Gull Lake that the famed chief Hole-in-the-Day was going to clean out the country and drive on to St. Paul. Johnson informed trader Daniel Mooers, and Mooers passed the word to the Chippewa agent, Lucius C. Walker, at the Chippewa Agency, located about three miles from Crow Wing on the north side of the Crow Wing River. Walker, in turn, sent a courier to Fort Ripley, some ten miles to the south, asking for soldiers to come up to the agency. The following morning, August 19 (before even Governor Alexander Ramsey had heard word of the Sioux outbreak), about two dozen soldiers arrived at Crow Wing and were ordered by Walker to proceed to the house of Hole-in-the-Day and arrest him.<sup>1</sup>

Heading in the direction of Hole-in-the-Day's home (about two miles north of Crow Wing), the soldiers under Lieutenant J. B. Forbes discovered Hole-in-the-Day and a companion just outside of the village. The chief quickly darted into the woods and ran back to his house. By the time the soldiers came up, he and his wives and children had almost crossed to the west side of the Mississippi River in canoes. Shots were fired, apparently by both the chief and the soldiers, and it was thought that one bullet hit Hole-in-the-Day, but he made good his escape. He, henceforth, began to incite an uprising in earnest—sending messages of war to all the Chippewa bands as far north as Lake Superior.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Daniel S. Mooers, *Minneapolis Times*, Sept. 12, 1897; John Johnson Enmegahbowh, *Enmegahbowh's Story* (Minneapolis: Women's Auxiliary, St. Barnabas Hospital, 1904), 24; *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865 2* (St. Paul, 1893): 190-191. Although current usage frequently employs "Dakota" for "Sioux" and "Ojibway" for "Chippewa," the terms are used here as they appear in the 19th-century sources. Pugona gesig is one of the various spellings of Hole-in-the-Day's Indian name.

<sup>2</sup> *Civil and Indian Wars 2*:191. Other accounts are in *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat*, Aug. 22, 27, 1862, and *Minneapolis Times*, Sept. 12, 1897. Forbes is listed as Fobes by Folwell and other sources and his troops are variously numbered as 20 and 26; see Capt. F. Hall to Ramsey, reprinted in *St. Paul Daily Press*, Aug. 22, 1862.

Mark Diedrich, who is the author of *The Chiefs Hole-in-the-Day of the Mississippi Chippewa*, will soon publish a new study of Indian chiefs of the eastern Sioux.

Mark Diedrich



In the meantime, Agent Walker fled to St. Cloud with his wife, and after putting her on the stage for St. Anthony on August 20, he said that he was "going out on business." Indian Commissioner William P. Dole, who was in St. Cloud, found the agent so distracted that he could not get an adequate report of the situation at Crow Wing. Walker, despite a bad case of hemorrhoids, took a horse and rode south along the Mississippi to the ferry near Monticello; he cut the lashings and ferried himself across the river. When an irate ferryman demanded that he return the boat, Walker refused, saying that there were 300 Indians after him, and disappeared. His whereabouts were unknown until several days later when his wife sent men to look for him. He was found three miles below Big Lake with a bullet hole in his head and one barrel of his revolver empty. It was generally believed that he went insane and killed himself. Lieutenant Forbes said that when the Indians learned of Walker's death, they felt that "one cause of their trouble was removed."<sup>3</sup>

What had brought about such an explosive situation with the Mississippi Chippewa, a tribe that had never before fought against the United States? Prominent Minnesota historians like William W. Folwell and Newton H. Winchell have believed the reasons given by the then-Superintendent of Indian Affairs of the Northern Superintendency, Clark W. Thompson. He said that the problem arose "out of a difficulty between the late Agent Walker, Hole-in-the-day, and an old firm of Indian traders." Thompson explained that Walker had refused to give Hole-in-the-Day a larger share of annuity money than he should receive unless he obtained the consent of the Indians in council, adding that "This course offended Hole-in-the-day." Furthermore, Thompson said that the traders had been prosecuted by the agent for trafficking in whiskey and that they had exerted a bad influence on the chief. These assertions, repeated by Folwell and others, have been given full credence. Folwell wrote that "A probable explanation of the affair may be found in a concurrence of minor exasperations with Hole-in-the-Day's vanity and greed." The historian also believed that the chief, having been frustrated in getting any satisfaction from the government after a trip to Washington in the summer of 1862, contrived the uprising to extort from the government payment of long-standing claims, perhaps a more liberal treaty, not to mention "the usual accompaniments of gifts and bonuses, of which he would receive a generous share." Winchell summarized: "It appears, from all the evidence available, that this outbreak among the Ojibwa was entirely due to a personal grievance of Hole-in-the-Day, and that its purpose was to rob the United States agents of goods that happened then to be within the purview of his authority." Thus Hole-in-the-Day has been blamed for an unrestrained

greediness and an ugly disposition to concoct schemes of blackmail, while Walker has been applauded for standing up to the chief and dealing righteously with the whiskey traders.<sup>4</sup>

ALTHOUGH the causes of the Sioux war have been examined and re-examined, the Chippewa disturbance has received hardly any attention. It is true that no one died in the affair except for Walker, he by his own hand, and a few cows. Yet the two Indian troubles are linked by a coincidence of timing. Some have seen this concurrence of events as proof of a conspiracy between the two leading chiefs of the tribes, Little Crow and Hole-in-the-Day.

The conspiracy theory seems to have grown out of unwarranted suspicions and foregone conclusions based on communications between the two Indian leaders. In mid-July Hole-in-the-Day received a letter from Little Crow, warning that the Chippewa had killed a Sioux and the latter were going to retaliate. According to Ezekiel Gear, the Episcopalian clergyman at Crow Wing, the letter was in answer to one from Hole-in-the-Day, telling the Sioux chief of the Chippewa war party. Gear believed, as did others, that the two Indian leaders had met at some time, probably in St. Paul, and made an arrangement to try to prevent bloodshed. Many white people were aware of this communication, the letters having been written or sent through churchmen. And when this knowledge was added to the chronological coincidence of the Sioux war and the Chippewa troubles, a number of people jumped to the conclusion that there was more to the chiefs' communications than met the eye.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1862* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1863), 15; *Pioneer and Democrat*, Aug. 26, 1862; Augustus Aspinwall, "Reminiscence," 28, unpublished manuscript, Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), St. Paul; Nathan Butler, "Boundaries and Public Land Surveys of Minnesota," *Minnesota Historical Collections (MHC)* 12 (St. Paul: MHS, 1908):667; *Civil and Indian Wars* 2:192.

<sup>4</sup> Thompson to Dole, Nov. 14, 1862, in *Report*, 56-57; Folwell, *A History of Minnesota* 2 (Reprint ed., St. Paul: MHS, 1961):381, 382; Winchell, *The Aborigines of Minnesota* (St. Paul: MHS, 1911), 655.

<sup>5</sup> On the conspiracy theory, see Enmegahbowh, *Story*, 26; Henry B. Whipple, "Civilization and Christianization of the Ojibways in Minnesota," *MHC* 9 (St. Paul, 1901):132; Ezekiel Gear to Whipple, Sept. 11, 1862, Henry B. Whipple Papers, MHS; Abby Fuller Abbe, "Remarks and Reminiscences . . . on Hole-in-the-Day and the Sioux Outbreak, 1862," unpublished manuscript, MHS; Carl A. Zapffe, *The Man Who Lived in 3 Centuries* (Brainerd: Historic Heartland, 1975), 47-48; Bertha L. Heilbron, *The Thirty-Second State: A Pictorial History of Minnesota* (2nd ed., St. Paul: MHS, 1966), 146. Folwell, *Minnesota* 2:380, says that "the direct evidence of an understanding between the head chiefs of the nations is meager."

Most informed historians have failed to see any ground to substantiate a conspiracy theory. But there is one link that connects the two events. The Indian Department, headed in Minnesota by Clark Thompson and the agents of the two tribes, was that vital factor, which merits closer scrutiny because it can explain the real cause of the Chippewa disturbance.

In 1978 historian David A. Nichols examined the massive corruption in the U.S. Indian Department, especially in Minnesota at the time of the two uprisings. He found extensive fraud both before and after the Republican party succeeded in getting Abraham Lincoln elected president in 1860. "Honest Abe" did nothing to correct the system as it had long been and gave Indian Department jobs to the party's faithful regardless of their other qualifications. The Republican senator from Minnesota, Morton S. Wilkinson, took more than the usual amount of interest in Indian affairs in his state; through political wizardry he placed his favorite, Clark Thompson, into the prize position of superintendent. Thompson, who had no experience with Indians but was rather a banker and railroad speculator, had been a territorial legislator and had served the Republican party in its constitutional convention in 1857. Wilkinson, as well as Minnesota congressmen Cyrus Aldrich and William Windom, was active in promoting Lucius C. Walker as agent for the Mississippi Chippewa. And Thomas J. Galbraith, a lawyer and former Republican member of the Minnesota House of Representatives, secured the position of Sioux agent.<sup>6</sup>

Evidence of corruption in Minnesota was found soon after by Special Agent George E. H. Day, who had been appointed on August 10, 1861, to promote peace between the Indians and the whites—a matter of grave concern after the outbreak of the Civil War. Day wrote that he had uncovered "voluminous and outrageous frauds upon the Indians," particularly in the Northern Superintendency. The story can be illustrated quite well in just two letters of Sioux Agent Galbraith

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<sup>6</sup> Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1978), 66; Anna Himrod, "Old Crow Wing," ch. 14, p. 2, unpublished manuscript, WPA Writers' Project Papers, MHS. For more on Galbraith, see Roy W. Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux: United States Indian Policy on Trial* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 109-110.

<sup>7</sup> Day, quoted in Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 71; Galbraith to Thompson, Jan. 31, Feb. 28, 1862, Clark W. Thompson Papers, MHS.

<sup>8</sup> Galbraith to Thompson, Jan. 31, 1862, Thompson Papers; Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 11-13; Isaac V. D. Heard, *History of the Sioux War and Massacres of 1862 and 1863* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 47-48.

<sup>9</sup> [U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs], *Affairs at White Earth Reservation* [Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1887]. The Thompson Papers were acquired by MHS in 1944 and 1969; the National Archives opened in 1935.

to Clark Thompson, only about eight months after the two had taken up their new duties. Galbraith, in presenting \$52,000 worth of claims against Sioux money, stated that he had \$12,000 worth of claims with him and that he had indirectly secured \$3,450 of them for himself. (This amount compares quite favorably with an agent's annual salary of about \$1,500.) He then suggested that Thompson might "Riddle" the reports as he pleased. He further stated that Charles Mix, the assistant commissioner of Indian affairs, "would aid you & I." Earlier in the letter, Galbraith commented that "the biggest swindle pleases" the Interior Department best, "if they but have a share in [it]." A month later Galbraith was fearful that he would have to resign his office, due to the fact that the superintendent of schools on the reservation, A. T. C. Pierson, had discovered that the agency had lost not less than \$5,000 between August, 1861, and January, 1862. The agent's letter to Thompson reveals the extent of the intrigue: "Can a purchase be rigged, or had I better set my house in order & resign. My resignation will save you I hope. His [Pierson's] absences will save both, till I am prepared to Vacate, which I would at any time on your Suggestion & without Blackmailing or throwing you—you & Wilkinson."<sup>7</sup>

Of course, not only were the agents and superintendents involved, but almost anyone who put in a claim might have been defrauding the Indians to some degree. This is demonstrated by Galbraith's words: "The claims all seem fair *ie* in the hands of the claimants, if there is any cheating it is outside these claims & the claims are used as covers." Traders and contractors, too, had means of procuring unfair profits. Is it any wonder that Little Crow, the leader of the Sioux, said that the 1862 war was started "on account of Major Galbraith. We made a treaty with the government, and beg for what we do get, and can't get that till our children are dying with hunger."<sup>8</sup>

If Galbraith and Thompson (with the aid of Wilkinson) were in collusion to embezzle Indian funds, then it would be logical to suspect that the Chippewa agent, Lucius Walker, might also be involved. When Winchell and Folwell published their histories in 1911 and 1924 respectively, neither had access to Thompson's private letters nor any of the letters sent from the Chippewa Agency to the Indian Office. And neither historian seems to have taken into account information that came forth in a congressional investigation in 1887.<sup>9</sup> These unavailable or neglected sources can now shed enough light on Walker's short term as agent to cast him as much into the shadows of guilt as his counterpart at the Sioux Agency. A convincing case can now be made to show that the real cause of the Chippewa disturbance was not the greed of Chief Hole-in-the-Day, but rather the greed of Walker and his superiors.



LUCIUS C. WALKER, from an 1858 ambrotype

LUCIUS WALKER, by all indications, received his position as agent for the Mississippi Chippewa because of his high standing in the Republican party in Minnesota. He moved to the territory about 1852 and made his home in St. Anthony. In 1857 he was a delegate to the Republican constitutional convention and the following year was a state legislator. According to political colleagues such as Daniel Rohrer and James H. Baker, Walker's standing with the Republicans was impeccable; congressional leaders Wilkinson, Aldrich, and Windom, eager to reward Walker's party services, collected some 200 letters of recommendation and sent them to President-elect Lincoln. The most prestigious recommendation came from Governor Alexander Ramsey, who said that Walker would undoubtedly fill the position of agent "with honor to the government." Walker's position was secured by March, 1861. Even Bishop Henry B. Whipple, who was especially devoted to mission work among the Indians, said that he was pleased with Walker's appointment, although he cautioned Superintendent Thompson in August, 1861: "I fear some sad errors have been made in some of the new appointments. . . . Will you not exercise a double watch for the future." Whipple's concerns in the matter are clarified in his statement to President Lincoln seven months later, that it was "a tradition on the border that an Indian agent can retire upon an ample fortune in four years."<sup>10</sup>

When Walker became agent, the Mississippi Chippewa bands lived on six different reservations estab-

lished by the treaty of 1855 and were receiving annuities by the same treaty. These bands (not including the Pillager and Lake Winnibigoshish bands) were to receive \$20,000 annually, with \$2,000 of that amount to be paid or expended as the chiefs requested. The Sioux author Charles A. Eastman claimed that Hole-in-the-Day had included this latter provision in order that a "surplus" might be given to the chiefs—aside from the regular per capita payment—that would be distributed in proportion to the number of Indians under each chief. Eastman alleged that Hole-in-the-Day had the biggest enrollment and so got a lion's share of the funds, as well as a sum set apart for the "head chief."<sup>11</sup> Eastman's statements appear to be in the main substantive, as will be seen. However, his impression of the chief as being a grafter and betrayer of his people does not seem to be justified.

Hole-in-the-Day succeeded his father as head chief of the Mississippi Chippewa in 1847. The Chippewa generally considered him to be one of their greatest warriors as well as their leading diplomat. His time largely was spent cultivating his farm, tending to In-

<sup>10</sup> Himrod, "Old Crow Wing," ch. 14, p. 2; Whipple to Thompson, Aug. 14, 1861, Thompson Papers; Whipple to Lincoln, Mar. 6, 1862, quoted in C. M. Oehler, *The Great Sioux Uprising* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 250.

<sup>11</sup> Charles J. Kappler, comp. and ed., *Indian Affairs, Laws, and Treaties 2* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1904): 685-690; Eastman, *Indian Heroes and Great Chieftains* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1918), 232.



dian affairs, and making occasional guerrilla raids against the Sioux. Many whites respected him greatly and especially admired his intelligence and his noble, gentlemanly demeanor. When the Civil War broke out (and federal troops were expected to be reduced in the state), St. Cloud newspaperwoman, Jane Grey Swisshelm, spoke to the confidence whites had in the chief: "Twenty U.S. troops at each fort [Ridgely and Ripley] will keep the Indians all right, or if they could not[,] Hole-in-the-Day can be safely trusted to look after the Sioux."<sup>12</sup>

It is important to know that Hole-in-the-Day took his title of head chief very seriously. He tried constantly to make whites aware of this, and he felt that it was his prerogative to be the official through whom all tribal business was conducted. This was undoubtedly the reason that he had wanted a surplus given to him and the other chiefs so they might have some way of supporting themselves while on "chiefly" business. Hole-in-the-Day, especially, was always in need of money to finance his frequent trips to St. Paul and La Pointe, as well as to Washington. He often had to borrow money from friends like trader Augustus Aspinwall. After the chief's death in 1868, Aspinwall put in a claim of \$1,124.99 against Hole-in-the-Day's estate for reimbursement.<sup>13</sup> Although the chief lived as well as any white gentleman farmer, a good deal of his surplus money must have been spent on travel and lodging expenses. Thus, one cannot consider Hole-in-the-Day merely greedy or corrupt, but rather a tribal official who needed some practical way to finance the expenses incurred while he was fulfilling duties.

THE BIGGEST EVENT of the year for the Chippewa, their annual treaty payment, fell in the first few months of Walker's tenure. It was due, as they hoped, in the fall. Thus they would not miss the autumn hunt while waiting for their money. This expectation was reflected in Walker's letters to Superintendent Thompson in St. Paul. Before the payment, which eventually was delayed for several months, Walker became curiously preoccupied with secrecy. He wrote to Thomp-

son: "I hope that the time of payment will be kept a perfect secret. No one excepting those whom we want or need to assist ought to know anything about it. . . . You nor I want *any one* here but them who can render us assistance."<sup>14</sup>

His concerns did not diminish when he learned that the special agent, George Day, was planning to be on hand for the payment. Walker again wrote Thompson: "Our mutual friend and *helper* 'Geo. E. H. Day' has told several persons in this vicinity that this payment is to be about the *first of Nov.* and that he is to be here to attend to it that the Indians are not cheated." Two months later he wrote Thompson: "Every man in the country knows that you are to bring the funds for payment and I should advise great caution and secretiveness in all your movements which I have observed and shall observe in calling the Indians and making other arrangements for the payment." He advised further that Thompson should leave St. Paul before anyone knew he was gone. Five days later, on November 27, Walker again pleaded for secrecy, sending Thompson a list of hotels that he considered "safe." He then added abruptly an ambiguous reference to a money matter: "I wish you would accomodate [*sic*] me by paying that note according to my order and say nothing about it until you see me." Then, after a comment on the weather, he said: "I am keeping the riches very quiet considering."

The long-delayed payment was finally scheduled to be December 11 and 12, 1861, at the Chippewa Agency. Thompson arrived with the money on the evening of December 9. He had apparently invited some of his friends to come up and "assist" him and Walker. Crow Wing businessman Samuel Abbe wrote on December 12 that quite a few St. Paul notables had arrived, including Governor Ramsey's brother Justus and a well-known former Blackfeet agent, Edwin A. C. Hatch. Abbe commented: "I think the poor devils of Indians stand a poorer show now than ever," intimating that there were schemes afoot to defraud the Chippewa of their money.<sup>15</sup> And the payment was a focal point of the trouble between Hole-in-the-Day and Walker that led to the crisis in 1862.

In his report Thompson claimed that all the Indians were satisfied with the agent and with the course he was pursuing, except for Hole-in-the-Day. However, this was not the case. Hole-in-the-Day and others knew something was wrong as soon as the payment was made. Abby Fuller Abbe of Crow Wing said that the Chippewa "felt hard toward their agent for doing what every official of the government from the cabinet to the quartermasters were doing, viz *stealing* everything that belonged to them." The most concrete allegations of wrongdoing were made soon after the payment by Special Agent Day on December 21. He wrote to Commis-

<sup>12</sup> On Hole-in-the-Day's good reputation, see, for example, C. C. Andrews, *Minnesota and Dacotah* (Washington, D.C.: Robert Farnham, 1857), 76-77; *Minneapolis Times*, Sept. 22, 1897; Aspinwall, "Reminiscence," 17; *St. Cloud Democrat*, April 25, 1861. See also Mark Diedrich, *The Chiefs Hole-in-the-Day of the Mississippi Chippewa* (Minneapolis: Coyote Books, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> Aspinwall wrote that in June, 1868, "Hole in the Day came to my House, he said he was Thinking of Going to Washington before long, and wanted to know if I would lend him some money"; Aspinwall, "Reminiscence," 17.

<sup>14</sup> Here and below, see Walker to Thompson, Sept. 13, 24, Nov. 22, 27, 1861, Thompson Papers.

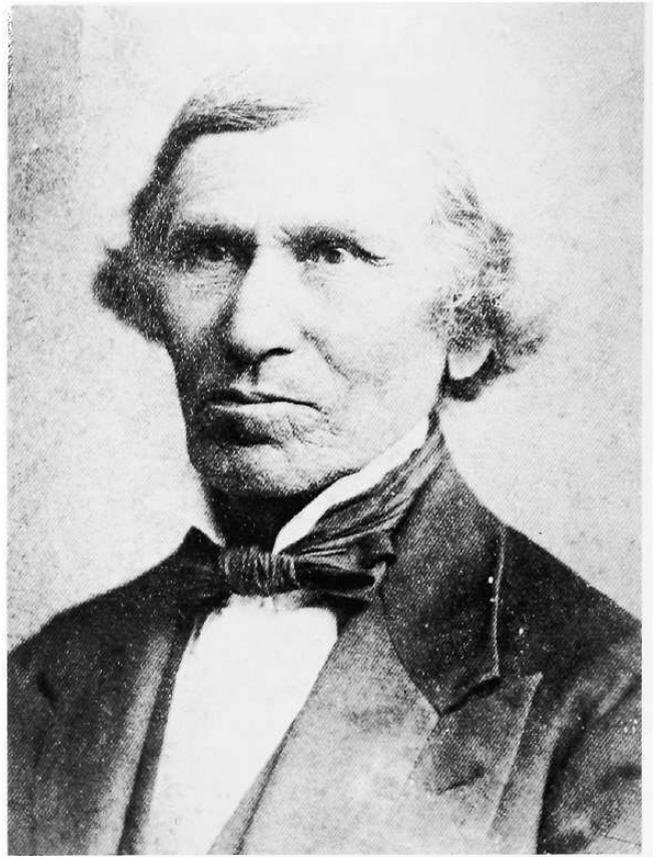
<sup>15</sup> Himrod, "Old Crow Wing," ch. 14, p. 3, 10.

sioner Dole in Washington: "I have proof enough to satisfy the *nation* & *Congress* too of the fraudulent transactions & robberies committed by the Indian officers." He called the Indian system a "*system of wholesale robberies*" and demanded that reforms be made. On January 1, 1862, Day took his case to President Lincoln, fearing that Dole was not favoring his efforts to expose the corruption. By April Day found that he was being attacked for improper use of monies, and his work as special agent was terminated and ignored. Why was Day eliminated? Apparently because he had made specific charges against Agent Walker. Dole had advised Thompson of the situation and the superintendent went to Washington in February to bring charges against Day, with Dole's assistance.<sup>16</sup>

Day was not alone in his concerns. Trader Clement H. Beaulieu, a Chippewa mixed-blood and cofounder of Crow Wing, had become suspicious of Walker as well. With his partner John Fairbanks, Beaulieu was the principal supplier of trade goods to the Mississippi Chippewa bands. As a trader who had given many hundreds of dollars worth of credits to the Indians, he hoped that he would be paid off when the annuities were distributed. Like Day and Hole-in-the-Day, Beaulieu suspected that there was something amiss at the payment and, although he asked the agent about the matter, he could not receive a satisfactory answer. Beaulieu decided to go to Washington to investigate.<sup>17</sup>

According to his testimony in 1887, he spoke with Commissioner Dole, asking to see the payrolls that Walker had sent to Washington. Dole reportedly replied that only copies of the payroll could be obtained, and that these copies would cost Beaulieu \$50. Beaulieu paid the sum, obtained the rolls, and returned to Crow Wing. There he called a council with the Chippewa and made new lists by which he numbered the people in the bands and put down how much they had received. He said that, according to the surplus system, the head chief was entitled to about \$150, other chiefs \$100, and lesser chiefs lesser amounts; the common Indians received about \$10. By comparing his findings with Walker's payroll, he discovered that one band, which numbered 120 people on Walker's roll, actually had only 70 people; furthermore, the chief of that band received only \$5, although the Walker payroll designated him as having received \$50. Beaulieu concluded that Walker stole about \$8,000 through such means.

When Walker heard of the trader's investigation, he revoked the Beaulieu brothers' trading license. When Beaulieu's sons asked the reason for the revocation, Walker responded that there were enough traders in the Indian country and that Clement Beaulieu was in fact the main person he wanted out of business, because he was "an unfit person to be in the Indian Country." The Beaulieus demanded better reasons but could not get



CLEMENT H. BEAULIEU, about 1890

any. Beaulieu considered that Thompson and others were behind the revocation for the reason that "the rascalities they were committing through their agent" were being found out. As Beaulieu had about \$8,000 worth of credits due him, license revocation meant financial ruin. He asked his friend, attorney George S. Sweet of Sauk Rapids, to help him. Sweet at that time was already representing a number of Chippewa mixed-bloods who had been denied money at the payment, ostensibly because they lived off the reservations. (He took their complaints by letter to Congressman Cyrus Aldrich but was unable to get any satisfactory reply.) Sweet went to Thompson on behalf of Beaulieu and asked why Beaulieu's license was revoked; Thomp-

<sup>16</sup> Himrod, "Old Crow Wing," ch. 14, p. 10; Thompson to Dole, Nov. 14, 1862, in *Report*, 56; Day to Dole, Nov. 8, Dec. 20, 1861, quoted in Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 72-74; Thompson to Dole, Jan. 21, 1862, Office of Indian Affairs (OIA), Chippewa Agency, letters received, National Archives Record Group (NARG) 75, microfilm copy in MHS. Years later Mrs. Richard Chute recalled that "Agents always got rich. L. C. Walker . . . had been making money"; Folwell interview with Chute, Nov. 18, 1905, Folwell notebooks, William Watts Folwell Papers, MHS.

<sup>17</sup> Here and below, see Beaulieu testimony, *Affairs at White Earth*, 25.

son said that Beaulieu was not a Republican. When Sweet stated that he did not see how this could affect Beaulieu's standing as a trader, Thompson responded: "Well, if there are any good things, we propose to have them." Sweet then asked if Beaulieu was considered personally unfit to trade; Thompson said: "There is nothing; there are no charges of that kind, only we do not propose to let him trade there." Sweet then went to Walker to see if there were some way Beaulieu could collect his credits, but Walker refused to allow it. Sweet testified in 1887 that, as a result, Beaulieu, "a man who had lived in affluence and who could command thousands of dollars at any time . . . became a very poor man, in fact so that he hardly knew where he could get his bread."<sup>18</sup>

The real reason for the revocation was clear, at least to a few. E. Steele Peake, the Episcopal minister of Crow Wing, wrote Bishop Whipple after the Chippewa disturbance had begun that the "Agency clique" blamed Beaulieu for the state of things because he "has been a chief instrument in exposing the corrupt management of Indian affairs in this part of the country." Some believed Beaulieu's influence over Hole-in-the-Day so great that the chief would drop the whole affair on Beaulieu's say-so. John M. Gilman, a St. Paul lawyer, wrote Thompson that the trader "is no doubt prepared . . . to quiet Hole-in-the-Day & would have done so when you were there, had his wishes been gratified. But now he expects no favors from you or the Genl [Dole]."<sup>19</sup>

PRACTICALLY everyone in Chippewa country was furious with Walker. Daniel Mooers commented years later that "Walker thought he could fire out all of the old traders, who had been there forty or fifty years. . . . Very naturally the traders hated him; he got Hole-in-the-Day down on him; all the men that had any influence with the Indians in this upper country were against him, even the whisky sellers of Crow Wing. I think the man was half-crazy." Mooers said, too, that one of Walker's first moves "was to attempt to reduce Hole-in-the-Day to the level of a common In-

<sup>18</sup> Walker to Messrs. Beaulieu Brothers, Feb. 17, 22, 1862, Beaulieu Brothers to Walker, Feb. 21, 25, 1862, and Sweet to Aldrich, Jan. 3, 1862—all in OIA, Chippewa Agency, letters received, NARG 75; Beaulieu and Sweet testimonies, *Affairs at White Earth*, 25, 154-155. On agents' licensing practices, see Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 94, 164, 301.

<sup>19</sup> Peake to Whipple, Sept. 12, 1862, Whipple Papers; Gilman to Thompson, Sept. 14, 1862, Thompson Papers.

<sup>20</sup> *Minneapolis Times*, Sept. 12, 1897; Walker to Thompson, Mar. 20, 1862, Thompson Papers.

<sup>21</sup> *St. Paul Daily Press*, May 3, 1862; *Pioneer and Democrat*, May 4, June 6, 1862.

dian by giving him no more rations than a common Indian got." Walker was not unaware of the pandemonium he had caused, reporting to Thompson: "The Beaulieus are howling and will not be comforted. The Half Breeds who did not draw pay are howling. Hole in the Day is howling . . . The Whiskey Bloats are howling." Walker also learned that Beaulieu was trying to induce eight or ten of the Leech Lake chiefs, as well as Hole-in-the-Day and Shabashkung of Mille Lacs, to visit the Great Father in Washington and make complaints against him and Thompson. Beaulieu was also saying that a certain member of Congress would appoint a committee to investigate.<sup>20</sup>

Beaulieu apparently was unable to succeed in his plans. Hole-in-the-Day, however, was not taking the matter lying down and characteristically decided to take action himself. He made a trip to St. Paul in early May, along with trader George Morrison and interpreter Peter Roy. What he did there, besides visiting the newspaper printing establishments, is not known, but it is almost certain that he made various arrangements for his planned trip to Washington. The chief returned to Crow Wing for several weeks and then went back to St. Paul; on June 5, 1862, he journeyed east.<sup>21</sup>

Hole-in-the-Day's trip did not go unannounced. Thompson telegraphed Cyrus Aldrich that the chief had left Minnesota against the wishes of the agent and "without permission of the superintendent—look to him." Aldrich promptly informed Commissioner Dole,

COMMISSIONER William P. Dole (left) and John G. Nicolay en route to the Chippewa Agency, August 24, 1862, photographed at Big Lake.



saying, "Please be on the watch for him and oblige." Shortly afterward, Dole received a letter from Hole-in-the-Day, stating that his visit to Washington was prompted by matters of great importance to his tribe. Of five main points he listed, the first two concerned money matters related to the treaty of 1855; the remaining three points concerned the recent payment made by Walker:<sup>22</sup>

Third—At the annual payment last fall, his [Hole-in-the-Day's] Indians did not receive the usual amount of money. He has not been able [to find out why], and desires to know the reason. And he wishes the Commissioner will allow him to see & examine the pay roll of last fall's payment, which the agent, Major Walker sent to Washington.

Fourth—He respectfully suggests to the Commissioner that when next paid the Indians shall all receive a like amount—Chiefs included. He believes this is the only way the Indians can be secured in their rights or it will be very easy—knowing the amount to be distributed and the number of persons to ascertain whether the distribution is fair. Where unequal amounts are paid, this result cannot be easily arrived at.

Fifth—He wishes to say that, he believes, the present agent, Maj. Walker, is not acting justly with his tribe, and that his removal is desired by himself & all the Indians he represents. But as the department may be unwilling to act on his mere opinion, he respectfully suggests that the Commissioner either send a *reliable person* from Washington, or appoint a *reliable person* in Minnesota or elsewhere, to go to Crow Wing & investigate the condition of affairs & particularly the manner in which Major Walker has discharged his trust—he desiring permission, in that event, to appoint a friend to assist in the investigation, and to report.

It is interesting to note in point four that the chief was willing to see the surplus system done away with in order to prevent future fraud—such a statement does not support the contention of those who claim that the chief was avaricious.

By the time Hole-in-the-Day sent a second letter to Dole, it is evident that he had been granted his request to see the original payroll lists and had been able to compare them with lists which he had made, or perhaps obtained from Beaulieu. Hole-in-the-Day notified Dole of the results of his comparison between the two. He demonstrated how a chief like Crossing Sky had been designated as having received \$100 on the Walker

roll, when the chief claimed to have gotten only \$27. He therefore charged that Walker's rolls were "grossly inaccurate." He also pointed out that an Indian who was not a chief was listed by Walker as having received \$50, when he was sure that the said Indian never received such an amount. Hole-in-the-Day also illuminated his own situation at the payment. The Walker payroll listed him as having received \$600 when he actually had gotten \$300. He requested Dole to "call upon Major Walker for such explanations as he may be able to give, & trusting that the wrongs practised or attempted upon his band may be corrected with a firm & unsparing hand."<sup>23</sup> Dole apparently made promises of an investigation, and the chief went home.

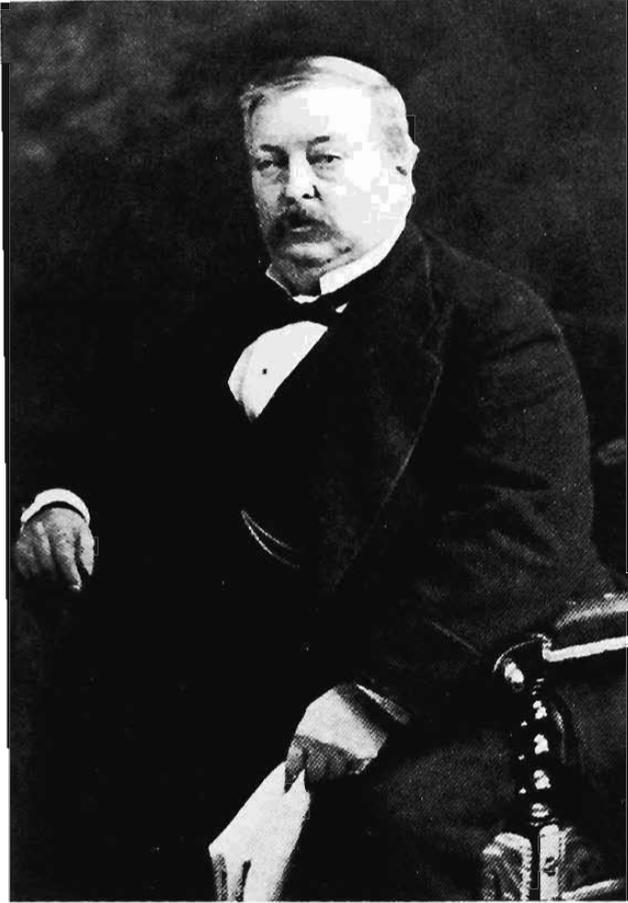
Despite Thompson's later assertions that the chief did not get a hearing as soon as he deemed proper and returned to his reservation to commence "plotting" a blackmail scheme, Hole-in-the-Day was apparently content, at least initially, that something would be done, although he took the precaution of informing the Lake Superior bands of how much their payment should be. After his return to Crow Wing, the chief sent a thank-you note to Dole saying that he and his family were in good health and that he was much obliged for "all the kind favors conferred on him while in Washington"; he wished the commissioner "health and prosperity"—not the kind of greeting one would expect from a chief who was in the midst of contriving an uprising. However, Dole, if indeed he was planning to honor the chief's request for an investigation, apparently soon after curtailed it. Later that fall, Hole-in-the-Day's attorney and counselor, Judge David Cooper of St. Paul, publicly circulated word that the Minnesota congressional delegation had derailed any plans Dole may have had for an investigation of Walker.<sup>24</sup>

WHILE Hole-in-the-Day awaited some redress of the situation with Walker, President Lincoln made a call for 600,000 more volunteers to fight the Confederacy. According to Julia Spears, sister of Chippewa historian William Warren, some of the whites of Crow Wing enlisted a company of young mixed-bloods while they

<sup>22</sup> Here and below, see Thompson to Aldrich, June 10, Aldrich to Dole, June 11, Hole-in-the-Day to Dole, June 11, all in 1862, OIA, Chippewa Agency, letters received, NARG 75.

<sup>23</sup> Hole-in-the-Day to Dole, June 19, 1862, OIA, Chippewa Agency, letters received, NARG 75.

<sup>24</sup> The sum the chief gave was \$7.50 to each Indian; Agent S. E. Webb to Thompson, Aug. 26, 1862, Thompson Papers. See also Thompson to Dole, Nov. 14, 1862, *Report*, 57; Hole-in-the-Day to Dole, July 2, 1862, and Aldrich to Dole, Sept. 20, 1862, both in OIA, Chippewa Agency, letters received, NARG 75; Theodore C. Blegen, ed., *Lincoln's Secretary Goes West: Two Reports by John G. Nicolay* (La Crosse, Wis.: Sumac Press, 1965), 31.



CLARK W. THOMPSON

were under the influence of liquor. She said that Hole-in-the-Day was very angry when he heard about it and said if those men took any more of his young men, there would be trouble. Thompson later claimed that Hole-in-the-Day felt that before long the Indians themselves would be compelled to enlist.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time that Hole-in-the-Day's ire was being raised over the enlistment issue, Dole and Thompson were leaving St. Paul as commissioners to make a new treaty with the Red Lake Chippewa. Again, in retrospect, Thompson considered that Hole-in-the-Day, having become aware of the proposed treaty-making expedition in Washington, began plotting an uprising. Thompson thought the chief used the

<sup>25</sup> Julia Spears, "Reminiscence, of a short history of . . . Hole-in-the-Day," 2, unpublished manuscript, MHS; Thompson to Dole, Nov. 14, 1862, *Report*, 57.

<sup>26</sup> Thompson, *Report*, 57; Rev. Solon Manney, *Diary*, Aug. 16-24, 1857, Manuscripts Relating to Northwest Missions, Grace L. Nute Papers, MHS; *Daily Minnesotian* (St. Paul), Sept. 28, 1857; Johnson to Whipple, Aug. 25, 1862, Whipple Papers.

<sup>27</sup> Wesac testimony, *House Executive Documents*, no. 5, 37 Cong., 3d sess., serial 1157, p. 220; Enmegahbowh, *Story*, 18-19, 24.

enlistment issue to incite the Indians, in order to blackmail the treaty commissioners into giving him the goods and money destined for the Red Lakers. Some of this may well be true. By mid-August Hole-in-the-Day had grown tired of waiting for Dole to act on his behalf. In the past he had often reacted quickly to any perceived injustice to his tribe and himself. In the summer of 1857, for example, three drunken mixed-bloods, who had murdered a German peddler, were lynched at Swan River by a mob of whites. Hole-in-the-Day, infuriated by this vigilante justice, tried to get one of his warriors to kill a white man in revenge. A St. Paul paper summarized the flare-up: "Hole-in-the-day" is somewhat offended because the mob hanged three bad men of his tribe without saying anything to him about it, and feels that the pale-faces have offered wanton offense to his dignity and importance by not taking pains to recognize his authority." But the chief certainly was not motivated by pomposity alone; John Johnson cited this incident as one of the foremost causes of the Chippewa troubles.<sup>26</sup> The chief's bitterness over Walker and the enlistment practices brought him inevitably into his usual pattern of action.

On about August 17 the chief sent messengers to the Pillager bands at Leech Lake, urging them to take prisoner all the whites who were at the lake and to seize their horses and goods. His reason, according to a Pillager warrior, was that "our Great Father intended to send men and take all the Indians and dress them like soldiers, and send them away to fight in the south, and if we wished to save ourselves we must rise and fight the whites." John Johnson claimed, too, that Hole-in-the-Day had told him that he was going to kill the whites, massacre the agency people, and attack Fort Ripley.<sup>27</sup>

Whether the chief actually intended to carry out such a plan as Johnson described is debatable. For one thing, Johnson admitted that such warlike threats dated back two years. Furthermore, why would Hole-in-the-Day explain his secrets to a mission worker who would be sure to warn the whites? It seems more likely that the chief might have planned to have word of an uprising leak out to give the country a good scare. He obviously "used" the Pillagers to carry out some of this dirty work; a few Gull Lakers were sent to kill some cows at the agency. If this scare was what the chief had planned, it worked very well, though it nearly cost him his life. But if the chief had really wanted to perpetrate a full-scale massacre, one needs to remember that there were only about 30 soldiers at Fort Ripley at the time, and that the chief was an expert guerrilla fighter. Hole-in-the-Day had become decidedly more hostile only after he was fired upon in August, for then he sent a message to the Pillagers to *kill* their prisoners. Fortunately, old Buffalo, the Pillager chief, knew Hole-in-the-Day well and so kept his warriors from doing any-

thing drastic until they had gone down to Gull Lake to see the real situation.<sup>28</sup>

Providentially for both the Indians and the whites, war did not break out immediately. On August 22 Hole-in-the-Day allowed George Sweet, Judge Cooper, Clement Beaulieu, and others to visit his camp at Gull Lake. He told them that he did not want war, but only his rights—"that the government agents had been stealing from them: that they had brought new traders into the country with whom the agent was in partnership, and whom the agent insisted they should do all their trading. That the agent had put annuity goods into these traders' stores to be sold to the Indians."<sup>29</sup>

Hole-in-the-Day agreed to a four-day truce to hear what Commissioner Dole would do about his complaints; Dole sent word that he would come up to Crow Wing and, after some delay, a council was arranged there for September 10. It produced no results. Dole left for Washington, leaving matters in the hands of the Crow Wing postmaster, Ashley C. Morrill, who was made interim special agent after Walker's death. One source quoted Judge Cooper as saying that the troubles had remained unsolved because Dole's mismanagement had caused the chief to remain belligerent—that all of Dole's actions exhibited stubbornness and either ignorance or incompetency.

Meanwhile, on September 11, several whites from Crow Wing burned the chief's home. In spite of this, Morrill was able to convince the Pillagers to give up their hostile posturing. They in turn defused Hole-in-the-Day's planned show of force against the Chippewa Agency on September 12. On September 13 the Pillager chiefs, with Hole-in-the-Day following behind, surrendered to Morrill. Hole-in-the-Day still requested, however, that he be given \$10,000 worth of goods (probably the amount he thought Walker had stolen) to settle, plus payment for the loss of his house and effects.<sup>30</sup>

The chief's apparent defeat was quickly turned around on September 15 when he was called upon to council with the so-called St. Paul commissioners. The group—consisting of Senator Henry M. Rice, Judge Cooper, E.A.C. Hatch, and a missionary, Frederick Ayer—was appointed by the state legislature to parlay with the Chippewa "in conjunction with the commissioner of Indian affairs" concerning both Walker's activities and the annuity payments. Disregarding the fact that only the federal government had the power to treat with the Indians, the commissioners asked Governor Ramsey to lead the party to Crow Wing. The commission's conciliatory attitude, though initiated by anxiety over the Sioux uprising and possible collusion between the two tribes, may have been somewhat prompted by at least secret acknowledgement that the Chippewa were not wholly to blame for the disturbance. John Gilman implied this when he wrote to

Thompson: "Ramsey & [former superintendent William J.] Cullen will claim the gratitude of the country for repairing the mischief which the Genl [Dole], yourself, Maj. Walker, & Col. Aldrich have done."<sup>31</sup>

The fact is that by the time of the disturbance people close to the Walker—Hole-in-the-Day affair assumed Walker's guilt and presumed that others were involved. Ezekiel Gear's letter to Whipple, for example, said that friends of Walker, "if not concerned with him in the plunder," would have supported an investigation of his affairs. One, George A. S. Crooker, sent his evaluation of the subject to President Lincoln, stating that the cause of the Minnesota Indian wars lay "in the thievish and dishonest conduct of Government Agents, Officers, Traders, and the vile confederates that procured their appointment and share their plunder and then gloss over and hide their iniquity."<sup>32</sup>

Thompson felt a need to defend the Indian Department's actions and tried to allay the suspicions of the general public with a long statement to the *St. Paul Daily Press*. He stated that at one point when he spoke with Hole-in-the-Day on September 10 he promised the chief that Commissioner Dole would make an investigation of Walker's transactions. Thompson said that Hole-in-the-Day replied that "he cared nothing about the investigation" but rather wanted to make a new treaty so that the Chippewa could move far away from the whites. Six weeks later, Thompson penned his official report in which he stated his oft-quoted opinion that Hole-in-the-Day fomented the disturbance because Agent Walker refused to give him a larger amount of annuity money than was his proper share under the treaty.<sup>33</sup>

Thompson's statements can now be seen as obvious attempts not only to play down the lack of an investigation into Walker's handling of annuity money as the major cause of the disturbance, but also to shift the

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<sup>28</sup> Henry B. Whipple, *Lights and Shadows of a Long Episcopate* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1899), 317; Johnson to Whipple, Aug. 25, 1862, Whipple Papers.

<sup>29</sup> Here and below, see George W. Sweet, "Incidents of the Threatened Outbreak of Hole-in-the-Day and Other Ojibways at Time of the Sioux Massacre of 1862," *MHC* 6 (St. Paul, 1894): 403-404; *Minneapolis Times*, Sept. 22, 1897; Gilman to Thompson, Sept. 14, 1862, Thompson Papers.

<sup>30</sup> Morrill to Thompson, Sept. 13, 1862, reprinted in *Pioneer and Democrat*, Sept. 16, 1862; Peake to Whipple, Sept. 12, 1862, Whipple Papers.

<sup>31</sup> Ramsey, Cooper, and Hatch to Minnesota legislature, reprinted in *Pioneer and Democrat*, Sept. 19, 1862; Gilman to Thompson, Sept. 14, 1862, Thompson Papers; Folwell, *Minnesota* 2:378.

<sup>32</sup> Gear to Whipple, Sept. 3, 1862, Whipple Papers; Crooker to Lincoln, Oct. 7, 1862, quoted in Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Thompson, "History of the Chippewa Troubles," *St. Paul Daily Press*, Oct. 2, 1862; Thompson, *Report*, 66.

blame to Hole-in-the-Day's greed. Despite Thompson's assertion that Hole-in-the-Day no longer cared for an investigation, the chief brought the matter up directly to the St. Paul commissioners on September 15, saying, "that they had sold their land to the government; that they had been promised a great many things in return, but had never received them; that they had complained to their Great Father of these things, and had been promised redress, but it had never come; that they were poor and in rags, as we could see, the whole wealth of their bands being upon the backs of those present, and their families at home naked; but if they had been fairly dealt with, they would not now be in that miserable condition. . . . They then stated that they now again asked to have some persons appointed to investigate their affairs, in whose selection they might have a voice. If this was done, all these troubles might be settled. That they were willing that the persons so selected should investigate every thing—the charges made against the Indians, as well as those made by them."<sup>34</sup> The newly gathered evidence would suggest almost conclusively that Superintendent Thompson's stated

reason for the cause of the Chippewa disturbance was a cover-up. Instead, the evidence would indicate that it was Agent Walker, with Thompson's assistance, who was embezzling Indian money by means of inaccurate payroll lists. The evidence also indicated that not only was Thompson involved, but also Commissioner Dole, who, by every indication, was lax in investigating the allegations of fraudulent conduct of those under his authority. Despite the uncovering of Walker's activities by George Day, Clement Beaulieu, and Hole-in-the-Day, the chief repeatedly has been made the scapegoat for the Chippewa disturbance. Although his means of getting attention to the problem may well be criticized, his end had simply been justice for his people.

What, then, did this patriotic leader achieve in his struggle for redress from the Indian Department? Although the government did not recognize the treaty drawn up by the St. Paul commissioners, it did in effect honor at least the stipulation concerning the annuity. Payment was made on October 27, 1862. The commissioners received *de facto* recognition in 1863 when the federal government paid their expenses of \$1,338. And in 1864 a tacit admission of governmental responsibility can be read in the treaty of that year: Hole-in-the-Day received remuneration of \$5,000 for his loss of house and other property, and the money claims that resulted from the depredations committed by the Chippewa were also reimbursed. Finally, although major changes in personnel did not result, the government did prove willing to continue to treat with the Mississippi bands, thereby legitimizing the Chippewa grievances.<sup>35</sup>

THE PHOTOGRAPH of Hole-in-the-Day on p. 193 was taken by Joel E. Whitney in 1858; the map on p. 196 is by Alan Ominsky; the picture on p. 199 is courtesy of the National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana. All other illustrations are from the MHS audio-visual library.

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<sup>34</sup> *Pioneer and Democrat*, Sept. 19, 1862. Even Indian enemies of Hole-in-the-Day like John Johnson and Chief Bad Boy agreed that the main cause of the trouble was the government's taking of Chippewa lands "for almost nothing" and cheating them; Johnson to Whipple, Aug. 25, 1862. Whipple Papers; Capt. F. Hall to Ramsey, Aug. 24, 1862, reprinted in *St. Paul Press*, Aug. 27, 1862. It is interesting to note that Alexander Berghold maintained that Thompson was heavily in debt before becoming superintendent but afterward had enough money to invest "a million" in southern Minnesota railroad bonds; Berghold, *The Indians' Revenge: or, Days of Horror* (San Francisco: P. J. Thomas, 1891), 143n.

<sup>35</sup> Kappler, ed., *Indian Treaties* 2:840,863. See also Folwell, *Minnesota* 2:378-379; Chippewa annuity rolls, Oct. 27, 1862, OIA, NARG 75 for other payments made; *Pioneer and Democrat*, Feb. 7, 8, 1863.



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