

THE HISTORY OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA: A SURVEY OF UNPUBLISHED SOURCES¹

A comprehensive survey of the unpublished sources in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society relating to central Minnesota would not be feasible within the limits of this paper; but perhaps some idea of the nature of these materials may be obtained from a discussion of one or two manuscripts relating to each of various localities and phases of the history of the region.

For years before the coming of settlers to central Minnesota, white men — fur-traders and *voyageurs* — were paddling across the lakes and up and down the rivers and plodding over difficult trails through the unexplored woods; and the early history of the region is mostly a story of their activities. The extensive manuscript collection of the historical society is rich in materials such as letters, account books, diaries, and reminiscences that relate to the fur trade in the Northwest or to individual traders or posts in this general region. Among these manuscripts is one entitled "Indian Trade and Its Progress, from the Discovery of the St. Lawrence River by the French," which was written by Allan Morrison, one of the earliest traders in the central part of the state. It is a very good account of the northwest fur trade in general and of the trade in central and northern Minnesota in particular. Under the subtitle, "The way the Trade was done amongst the Chippeways," he describes various trading posts and names individual traders and their routes. He explains the system of credits employed with the Indians and mentions articles used for trading. He gives an account of the Chippewa and relates in detail the incident that he claims gave the Leech Lake Indians the name "Pillagers" — the robbery of a trader en-

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camped on the Crow Wing a few miles above Gull River. Of himself, he explains that in 1823, as an employee of the American Fur Company, he "was sent to oppose a trader that had come up the Mississippi to the two rivers." He then continues, "on my arrival to where Fort Ripley now stands I learned where he was building his Trading establishment. my instructions were that I should build close by him but being possative I could do better a short distance above, I built my house and store on an island." Morrison remained at Crow Wing for fifty years and more, first trading with the Indians and later, when the Indian trade lost its importance, farming. He was a representative in the first territorial legislature and Morrison County was named for him and for his brother William, also a trader.

In the spring of 1849 Fort Gaines, later called "Fort Ripley," was established on the west bank of the Mississippi below the mouth of the Crow Wing. Among the materials relating to the fort is a manuscript history, presumably by one Jasper W. Johnson, compiled from the archives of the war department and accompanied by copies of original maps of the reservation. The author gives as the reasons for the establishment of the fort to protect the Winnebago Indians, who were moved to their reserve west of the Mississippi the previous year, and to keep them on their reservation, as well as "to prevent the other Northern bands of . . . Chippewas from warring with their hereditary enemies, the Sioux." Besides important events in the history of the fort itself, an account of the long warfare between the Sioux and the Chippewa is included.

A very interesting record of the life and conditions at Fort Ripley is the diary kept by the Reverend Solon W. Manney during the eight years when he was chaplain at the fort, from 1851 to 1859. Life at this frontier post was for the most part uneventful but by no means dull. Manney held religious services, taught school, visited the sick, assisted in the post office, and served on boards to examine miscreants. The brief entry for March 20, 1856, "No Service. Had to fix the stove pipe,"

would seem to indicate that he also performed the duties of sexton in the chapel. With the fort doctor or officers of the garrison he hunted grouse, partridges, and pheasants and fished for pickerel. On one occasion Hole-in-the-Day, the Chippewa chief, and his wives took tea with Manney and they discussed "the introduction of Christianity among his tribe & also . . . his own views and feelings in regard to it." On Manney's birthday the "Gentlemen and Ladies of the Garrison," as he puts it, dined with him. Dining was no small item in his life. Seldom does he neglect to record what he had for dinner, and often he notes little else. In August of each year there are numerous entries such as this: "Green corn for dinner. *Very fine.*" It is hard to tell whether green corn or green peas held the more prominent place in his affections. It is certain that green peas were important enough to be coupled with the firing of a national salute on the Fourth of July. Here is the entry: "July 4, 1858 Sunday: Morning Service in the Chapel National Salute of 33 Guns fired at Noon. Green Peas for dinner." Perhaps the reason for this tender affection for vegetables was the fact that he raised them in his own garden, upon which he lavished a great deal of time and care.

Manney kept a more or less faithful record of temperatures. On January 23, 1854, he wrote: "Mercury in Ther. frozen. Ther graduated to 45° . . . Mercury clear below the bulb . . . some mercury was put in a charcoal cup and exposed. It froze solid in less than 15 minutes." He records marriages, births, deaths, and baptisms at the fort, and he never fails to enter the text of his sermon on Sunday. An interesting entry is that recording the sale of the reservation on October 20, 1857. "Besides the six claimants who were allowed to enter their land at \$1 1/2," he writes, "the whole Reserve, about 60,000 acres sold for 1800 dollars, 3 cts an acre. The last 40 acres sold, brought the highest price, 25 cts."

On July 31, 1857, shortly after the withdrawal of the troops from the fort, Manney wrote: "We may now expect personal violence & murders & the destruction of property on the Ceded

Lands and all along the frontier. The withdrawal of the troops from this section can result in nothing else." His fears proved to be well founded. The Indians became insolent and threatening. The cattle were killed at the Gull Lake mission and in August a white man was killed by three Indians. The culprits were arrested, but a mob took the prisoners from the sheriff and hanged them. The Indians in the vicinity were incensed and threatened revenge. The missionaries from Leech Lake and Gull Lake were forced to take refuge in the fort, where they stayed for several months. It was reported that Hole-in-the-Day planned to have one of his braves proceed to Crow Wing and kill the first white man he met and have others burn all the mission buildings at Gull Lake. The fort was soon reoccupied and these threats were not carried out.

Manney records that in the spring of 1858 there was trouble between the Sioux and the Chippewa. A large party of Sioux went into the Chippewa country in pursuit of an escaped captive, causing general fright among the whites and the Indians of the region. Fifteen Chippewa scalps were taken within two days, according to the diary. On May 3, 1858, Manney wrote: "Called in from the Garden to day about 4 p. m. by an alarm from the Bugle. Cause the proximity of a large body of Sioux. Guns taken to the block house. Water drawn, etc & men quartered there ready for an emergency We learned today that seven Chippeway scalps were taken at Swan River last night."

Hard on the heels of the traders and in advance of settlers came the missionaries — a sequence typical in the development of Indian country. In 1852 an Episcopal mission to the Chippewa, called "St. Columba," was established at Gull Lake by the Reverend James Lloyd Breck. Lydia B. Funk, a teacher at St. Columba in 1856, in an account written some years later, describes the mission buildings. There was a whitewashed log church surrounded by a cemetery, and near by was a mission house, also of whitewashed logs, inclosed by a picket fence. "The house was very finely situated," she records, "fronting

the lake, which was about fifteen or twenty rods distant, with a gentle slope almost to the water's edge." A letter written by Breck in 1857 summarizes the work accomplished by the mission.

There was . . . with me one of the best native Interpreters in the Chippewa nation [*he refers to John Johnson Enmegahbowh*], besides both male and female assistants for the schoolroom, for the domestic departments, for the shop and the field. Men including chiefs and braves went to work with the axe and the plow and other implements used in agriculture and carpentry. Women rapidly learned sewing, cookery, washing and ironing. . . . Houses were built and as many as thirty-five children at one time admitted within their walls for education in the arts and duties of life, as well as in book learning.

In the fall of 1856 the Reverend E. Steele Peake succeeded Breck, who left St. Columba to establish a new mission at Leech Lake. A comparison of Peake's journey from St. Paul to Gull Lake, as described in his diary, with the trip made by the present convention party over much the same route may prove interesting:

Nov. 10 [1856] Left . . . St. Paul by stage coach up the Mississippi at 4 a. m. following East side to Crow Wing, the end of the road — from which a government road extended to Leech Lake, 70 miles north. We arrived at Watab about 2 o. c. at night

Tuesday 11th and remained there to breakfast, going on to dinner at Little Falls & Belle Prairie stopping a few minutes at Fort Ripley with Rev. S. W. Manney & family Chaplain of the fort and reaching Morrison's Crow Wing at 5 o'clock P. M.

Wednesday, Nov. 12 — Left Morrison's Crow Wing at 6 A M . . . Reached St. Columba Mission Gull Lake at 10 A M . . . Mr. Fairbanks took me over to . . . the Indian Reservation . . . we met in the pine forests great numbers of Chippewa Women carrying heavy wigwams &c on their backs on their way to the Annual payment at the Agency.

In 1859 Peake moved to Crow Wing, leaving Enmegahbowh, the Ottawa Indian who had been his interpreter and was now an ordained minister, in charge at Gull Lake. Enmegahbowh remained there until the summer of 1862, when the mission buildings were burned by the Chippewa during the

Sioux Outbreak. Some reminiscences of Bishop Whipple include interesting biographical data concerning Enmegahbowh, who was one of the most influential of the missionaries among the Chippewa.

At the time of the Sioux Outbreak in 1862 rumors spread among the white people of central Minnesota that the Chippewa under Hole-in-the-Day were planning an attack. There was general panic; martial law was proclaimed over the surrounding country by the commander at Fort Ripley; and settlers of the region fled to the fort for protection. Although no attack was made, it was some time before the excitement died down. There are several manuscripts containing accounts of this disturbance or references to it, including "Remarks and Reminiscences . . . on Hole-in-the-Day and the Sioux Outbreak," by Mrs. Abby Fuller Abbe, who was living in Crow Wing at the time and took refuge in the fort; a manuscript narrative by Enmegahbowh with the title, "Extracts from Letters Written to Hon. Nathan Richardson"; and numerous letters in the state archives from settlers and others of the region appealing to Governor Ramsey for protection. Peake, in a letter to his wife dated at Fort Ripley, September 12, 1862, reports that "Hole-in-the-Day's house was burned last night, supposed to be by the Indians though soldiers and citizens had threatened it. Mr. Beaulieu and Mr. Morrison's families have come to the Fort & pitched their tents under its guns. Capt Libby's company is still stationed at Crow Wing & several citizens remain under arms. Capt Burts company is still at the agency . . . Mr. Morrill, who is acting as agent pro tem, did not venture over from Crow Wing today . . . The stage driver tells me the Indians came in force to the river bank opposite Crow Wing and one of the party cut the Ferry rope . . . Capt Libby sent 40 of his men up to the place. He has made block-houses of the Romish ch and Mr. Abbe's old store."

In his later years at Crow Wing Allan Morrison kept a diary, from March 1, 1867, to June 22, 1870. It is concerned

mostly with affairs of his farm and but few references are made to people or events outside its limits. But unusual events alone do not make history and a record of everyday life on a frontier farm is just as valuable as an account of an Indian raid. Considering the many activities in which Morrison seems to have been engaged, it is no wonder that the entries are brief; the wonder is that he found time to keep a diary at all. He speaks of cutting rails in the tamarack swamp, splitting "Leakes for the sugar Camp," building a lodge and a fence, sowing, planting, plowing, making hay, hauling loads with his oxen, sending supplies to the Indians, cutting ice and hauling it to his ice house, and acting as host for travelers. But the labor on the establishment was fairly well divided. Morrison's young son Allan and his half-breed wife did their full share of the work and Indians were hired when times were especially busy. On November 7, 1868, Morrison records: "Allan starts with his mother for the fishing at White Fish Lake"; and two weeks later he notes that "Allan has started for White Fish Lake to get his Mother from the Fishing." In the spring when the sap was running Allan took his mother, with bag and baggage, to the Indian sugar camp, where she stayed for several weeks making maple sugar and syrup. On her return in the spring of 1869 Morrison wrote: "They have had pretty good luck Made 9 Mocoeks They will average 130 lbs each Besides the Syrup Cake Sugar &c." In the entry for June 28, 1868, Morrison describes the murder of Hole-in-the-Day by a band of Pillager Indians. On December 6, 1869, he notes that "We are going to have a daily line from St. Pauls to this place. Begins to run this day." He records temperatures and the rise and fall of the river, and gives prices of various household necessities. In the back of the diary are copies of letters from Morrison to the commanding officer of the fort, most of them asking special favors for individual Indians.

Another interesting diary — one that gives some idea of Brainerd and Crow Wing in 1871 — is that of Frank Johnson,

a telegraph operator who arrived in Brainerd in the spring of 1871 looking for work on the Northern Pacific Railroad, which was then being built. By that time the line had been extended through Brainerd, but as yet no trains were running. According to the diary, Johnson "Put up at the Brainerd House, only a tent with wooden frame, \$10 per week in advance for board. . . . Houses all rough boards or tents, about 100 houses altogether, half of them saloons or gambling houses." Two days later he records: "There is a good bridge across the Mississippi here. The only building worthy of note is the large hotel so called because the civil engineer corps live there, they do not take boarders. It is a large wooden building fixed up in pretty good shape, two stories high." Johnson found the town full of men "waiting for situations, can get all they want and more to work for \$2 per day . . . on the grade." Toward the end of the month he notes that "Telegraph men have commenced setting poles."

Early in May Johnson got a position as telegraph operator at Crow Wing. This is his impression of the town at the end of the first day: "This is the worst place I ever got into for drinking. It is the first place the lumbermen can get any liquor after staying in the woods all winter and they all get on a spree." On May 7 he "Visited the Indian wigwams, lots of them around here, in fact there are only 20 white people here, all the rest have more or less Indian blood in them. This is an old Indian trading post."

Johnson has much to say about the heavy drinking in the place. A week after his arrival he observes that some men have not been sober since before he came. Although he has discovered that "if a man don't drink here he is not considered anybody," he has decided to "play out on it altogether." The following entry covers two weeks: "Every day the same thing over, more drinking and fighting. Indians coming in with skins and maple sugar to get whisky in return." He gives an entertaining account of a medicine dance at Gull Lake and an-

other of an Indian ball game. In the middle of May he records that millions of logs are going down the river every day.

By far the most exciting happening during Johnson's short stay in Crow Wing was a series of horse races. His account of it begins with the entry for July 19:

A little fun to-day. Mixer challenged Crow-Wing for a horse race of half a mile dash with his fancy pony, \$100 aside. His challenge was accepted, all the old working horses taken out on the prairie and tried to see which was the fastest. They picked one belonging to Albert Fairbanks and have been training him for the last eight days. I was appointed one of the judges and after chaining off half a mile . . . on the prairie the word was given to start and Mixer's fancy pony had the conceit taken out of him in about a minute. Dan Moore then challenged the C. W. horse for \$100 to run in ten days. Challenge accepted on the spot by Fairbanks.

Two days later the Crow Wing horse was challenged to race another horse, and again he won the race and a hundred dollars. On the twenty-ninth there was still another race. By this time the Crow Wing horse races were becoming so popular that people came from surrounding towns to see them. "This afternoon quite a crowd came to see the race," according to Johnson, "some from Brainerd and Little Falls and Dan Moore's mare got beat most beautifully the first two heats. The driver of the Crow Wing horse even went back and gave him another start after the word go had been given and then beat him. . . . Bully for the Crow Wing plug. . . . Great time, boys all drunk tonight." The Crow Wing horse won the next race also, on August 13. After this race Dan Moore, whose horse had been beaten twice, went to St. Paul and bought a fast horse, Hoosier Boy, to beat the Crow Wing horse on the following Saturday. But even Hoosier Boy was no match for the nameless Crow Wing Pegasus. Johnson left Crow Wing a few days later for Detroit, Minnesota, and we hear no more of the races or of the Crow Wing "plug."

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