Minnesota State University, Mankato

From the SelectedWorks of Jessica A Helmers

Spring April, 2015

FROM OKOBOJI TO MANKATO: VIEWING CHANGES TO THE MINNESOTA BORDERLANDS REGION’S DAKOTA-SETTLER RELATIONS THROUGH WOMEN’S CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES

Jessica A Helmers

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/jessica_helmers/1/
FROM OKOBOJI TO MANKATO: VIEWING CHANGES TO THE MINNESOTA BORDERLANDS REGION’S DAKOTA-SETTLER RELATIONS THROUGH WOMEN’S CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES

BY JESSICA ANN HELMERS

AN ALTERNATE PLAN PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER’S OF SCIENCE (M.S.) IN HISTORY

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO
MANKATO, MINNESOTA
MAY 2015
Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................. iii
Acknowledgements ..................................................... iv

Introduction ............................................................. 1

U.S.-Indigenous Relations History in Iowa and Minnesota .......... 6
  Spirit Lake Massacre of 1857 and Abigail Gardner ............ 11

U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 Narratives ................................. 15
  Mary Schwandt .......... 15
  Nancy McClure .......... 18
  Mary and John Renville .. 22
  Sarah Wakefield ....... 26

Women’s Captivity Narratives as Historical Sources .............. 30

Conclusion ............................................................... 38

Bibliography ............................................................ 44
Abstract

The research for this paper compares captivity narratives by Abigail Gardner of the Spirit Lake attacks in 1857 with varying viewpoints recounting the United States-Dakota War of 1862 by Mary Schwandt, Nancy McClure, Mary Renville, and Sarah Wakefield. Spanning a publication period of nearly thirty years, these women’s captivity experiences reflected changing attitudes towards racial identity, social organization, and land rights of Dakotas during a period of great change in the Minnesota region between 1857 and 1862.

It is because of the popularity of the Indian captivity narrative, the first major genre of American literature, that the authors’ gendered retelling of events in the Minnesota borderlands region between the years of 1857 and 1862 is important. These women’s accounts recorded white settler and military interactions promoting nineteenth-century ideals of westward U.S. society against traditionalist Dakota society in the Minnesota borderlands region. Using this type of literary genre as primary source material illuminates the ways historical memory changes over time and the importance authorship has in recounting the past.
Acknowledgements

Much love, thanks, and overwhelming gratitude to all of those who have read, heard about, funded, supported, and given suggestions on my work for this research paper. I would especially like to thank my friend, Clayton Kozan, who has always been one step ahead of me in the History graduate program at Minnesota State University-Mankato, and who thus could give me sound advice on all matters academic and personal while studying there. All of my friends and family, including my “big man” who has traveled with me over the past six years across the three states involved with my research’s events, now deserve a (slight) reprieve from hearing me prattle on about things that somehow have something to do with modern discussions of race and gender.

Most thanks should probably be directed towards my parents, Todd and Linda (Hawe) Helmers, without whom I would quite literally not exist. The progeny you presented unto the world in May of 1986 has always felt supported and nurtured throughout her exploration of the world, and her academic level of asking “but why?” was most affectionately borne by you two, repeatedly, on road trips that criss-crossed this fair country of ours. Figuratively, your own personal histories and backgrounds from the towns of Sibley, Iowa and Canton, South Dakota, have lent to the retelling of those tales I covered in my Master’s graduate thesis work. The history from this corner of the world is figuratively and physiologically in my blood because of you two.

Next, I would like to thank all of the teachers, professors, advisors, and educators who have expertly navigated me through the different stages and levels of learning. Most of my attention in this section will be given to Ms. Judy Stukey, whose personal acquaintance with my family in Spirit Lake, Iowa is compounded by her guidance as my fifth grade writing and social
science teacher, including a unit of state history which included a site visit to the Abigail Gardner Sharp Cabin in Arnold’s Park, Iowa. The following product of some eighteen years of schooling would not have happened had teachers like her failed to exist in our school systems. Thanks also to Dr. Michael Mullin at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota for teaching that History of Dakota/Lakota course in Spring 2007, showing me how our past can present us with contemporary answers, and how history is an ever changing, living, breathing aspect of humankind’s existence on this blue marble called Earth.

Finally, I would like to thank the Blue Earth County Historical Society and its staff for allowing me to assist them as a volunteer and then intern during my tenure at MNSU. A random stumbling upon an 1860 public notice while doing other assigned research planted the seed for this ensuing research paper. As reflected in the bibliographical content of my research, much thanks to the Iowa State Archives in Des Moines and Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul, the library and research staffs throughout the Iowan-Minnesotan-South Dakotan corridor, historical site managers, and the donors who help continue their work of preserving and promoting local and state history.

I would now like to close with a quote by the Tenth Doctor:

“You want weapons? We’re in a library! Books! The best weapons in the world!”

Jessica Ann Helmers
December 5, 2014
St. Paul, Minnesota
In historian Sarah Carter’s work on manipulations of cultural imagery, she notes how in the Anglo American and Canadian Wests “pictures of savage attacks on helpless women and children…[became] a staple of nineteenth-century popular histories or fiction about the region.”¹ Traversing down to a remote corner of the Iowa-Minnesota region, this literary genre came to life for thirteen-year-old Abigail Gardner in March of 1857. All the “terrible tortures and indignities” Gardner “had ever read or heard of being inflicted upon [Indian] captives…arose in horrid vividness” in her mind when the Wahpekute-Dakota leader, Inkpaduta, kidnapped her on March 10, 1857.² Even without understanding her captors’ language, Gardner could imagine what would become of her because of the proliferation of the captivity narrative in the United States.

This paper focuses on specific Dakota bands involved with events in the Minnesota borderlands region between 1857 and 1862.³ “Dakotas” or “Dakota” are used instead of “Sioux” to distinguish this tribal group from other Indigenous American groups, except when citing sources or discussing the overarching Indian captivity literary genre.⁴ Accounts like Abigail Gardner’s captivity by Dakotas recorded the changing status of Indigenous American groups in


⁴ For an example of reorienting terminology in historical research of this event see Richard W. Scharf, “The Dakota-White Conflict of 1862” (Alternate Plan Paper, Mankato State University, 1987).
the Minnesota region between the years 1857 and 1862. As recorded in these women’s captivity narratives, this paper will explain the changes in relations between the United States’ military, white settlers, and Dakotas that led to the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Using the selected captivity narratives, this paper intends to refocus the historical narrative of the Minnesota region to give equal treatment to both Indigenous and Euro-American groups living in the area, even as the latter increased its presence in Minnesota society during the 1850s.

In the nineteenth century the United States’ settler colonial project altered the socio-political organization of the Minnesota region. The stipulations of the Traverse des Sioux and Mendota treaties of 1851, as well as subsequent agreements made with the U.S. government, systematically redrew and downsized the size of Dakota lands. The treaties’ stipulations also created a dependency on delayed disbursements of annuities, which led some Dakotas to debate fully assimilating into white settler colonial society or maintaining their traditional social practices, as the selected women’s captivity narratives will show.

Minnesota’s example of settler colonialism followed an emerging socio-political trend in the nineteenth century. Scholars Matthew Lange, James Mahoney, and Matthias vom Hau’s collaborative article “Colonialism and Development: A Comparative Analysis of Spanish and British Colonies” describes how vestiges of British colonialism “laid the basis for future economic prosperity by leaving behind a…legal system that could sustain capitalist development” in their settler colonies of the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, colonies which “experienced the greatest colonial institutional transfer” of this Anglo socio-political tradition. In their article, the three main aspects of settler colonialism are discussed.

---

First, institutions that regulate commerce and markets are controlled more and more by the settler colonial authority or their privileged intermediaries within the receiving community, like the fur trade and those it employed in the Minnesota region before the mid-nineteenth century. These privileged groups would then contribute to the second aspect of Lange, Mahoney, and von Hau’s model of settler colonialism: the level of participation in the dominant political authority’s law making, such as a group’s involvement in treaty writing or like a constituency’s voting rights during territorial and statehood elections for Minnesota. The settler colonial authority would slowly disenfranchise the local power holders, even after initial commercial interest had abated in the area. Third, race and ethnicity, or more specifically, the degree to which all socio-racial groups of a society have equal legal and political rights, would be determined by the new authority’s power structure and maintained through its social and legal institutions.⁶

As these sociologists state, the first component of settler colonialism, its institutions, are especially important “for long-term economic development” and sustainability of settlement; the third component, race and ethnicity, “is important for…social development;” and the second component, political engagement or access, “is highly consequential for both.”⁷ The loss of one component to white settlers’ control would consequentially affect the other two for Dakotas living in Minnesota. For example, local policing institutions, such as military forts, enforced contracts drawn up by the U.S. legal system and protected the property rights of the settler colonial authority in the Minnesota region.

Lange, Mahoney, and vom Hau go on to explain how land policies of white settler colonies “reinforced the prevalence of smallholders and prevented the formation of powerful landed elites with the capacity to establish monopolistic structures harmful to…economic


⁷ Ibid., 1419.
development” for the settler colony.\textsuperscript{8} These land-owning policies would promote small-scale agricultural organization, like that seen in the U.S. West of post-Jeffersonian America, while simultaneously preventing large holdings of land, such as those under Dakota control in Minnesota, from challenging a settler colony’s authority in the region. For example, in Minnesota the 1851 Traverse des Sioux Treaty opened up nearly twenty-four million acres of former Dakota lands for white settlement. This led to an increased white population of 6,000 to 172,000 between 1850 and 1860 in Minnesota.\textsuperscript{9}

Historian Margaret Jacobs describes settler colonialism in two former British colonies, Australia and the U.S., as a socio-racial framework which offered Indigenous societies the options of acculturation or removal from their lands recently acquired by an outsider nation-state or colonial authority. This settler colony’s acquisition of Native land, “the ultimate goal of settler colonialism…lends itself to violence.”\textsuperscript{10} A conflict such as the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 between Indigenous and Anglo Americans in Minnesota is an example of this step in the settler colonial process. Both parties attempted to claim the same areas of land and influence in the Minnesota region between 1857 and 1862. However, after statehood in 1858 and the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 only one of these communities would hold socio-political control in Minnesota.

\textsuperscript{8} Lange, Mahoney, and vom Hau, “Colonialism and Development.” 1442.


\textsuperscript{10} Margaret Jacobs, \textit{White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 4.
Jacobs states that preexisting communities of Indigenous people “were not necessary or desired as laborers” in settler colonies.\textsuperscript{11} Thus, with the continued westward expansion of U.S. settler colonialism, white leaders would seek to remove Indigenous peoples from lands so that they could be made available for purchase by white settlers. In Minnesota, many Dakotas found themselves landless, in poverty, and starving after being relocated to the Minnesota River Valley reservation of the Upper (Yellow Medicine) and Lower (Redwood) agencies under stipulations from the 1851 Traverse des Sioux Treaty. The treaty’s stipulations displaced some 6,000 to 7,000 Dakotas onto two reservations along the Minnesota River, measuring about twenty miles wide by seventy miles long.\textsuperscript{12}

Women’s captivity narratives recorded attitudes towards Dakotas, as well as the changes large-scale white settlement in Minnesota brought to Dakota society and culture. By comparing the five captivity accounts of Abigail Gardner, Mary Schwandt, Nancy McClure, Mary Renville, and Sarah Wakefield, one can see changes in Minnesota society between 1857 and 1862. The authenticity of these captivity narratives depended in part upon the circumstances surrounding their publication, including their subject’s popularity, whether or not they served as propaganda supporting the U.S. settler colonial project, and how they reinforced or challenged mid-nineteenth century behaviors of the “ideal” white woman.

While their authors had various motivations for writing them, most publications of captivity narratives about captivity among Dakotas between 1857 and 1862 reinforced the nineteenth-century U.S. settler colonial project. The chosen accounts examined in this paper run along a spectrum of what some literary historians call a “propagandist” line of historical

\textsuperscript{11} Jacobs, \textit{White Mother to a Dark Race}, 4.

retelling, such as those written by Abigail Gardner, Nancy McClure, and Mary Schwan dt, towards an empathetic line, such as those written by Mary and John Renville and Sarah Wakefield.¹³

The publishing histories of these accounts also illustrate the mainstream reading audience’s interests from different times of publication. Spanning a thirty-year period of American history, the varying level popularity of these captivity narratives reflected the proliferation of mid-nineteenth century U.S. settler society into the Minnesota region and the differing social attitudes towards women and Native Americans. By the end of that same century, both of these groups represented in captivity narratives had different societal roles and became valued for their contributions to Midwestern history, rather than used solely as mass media imagery for the U.S. settler colonial project.

**U.S.-Indigenous Relations History in Iowa and Minnesota**

The United States’ military presence changed in the Minnesota region during the early half of the nineteenth century. The Black Hawk Wars of the 1830s in eastern parts of Iowa, Minnesota, and southern Wisconsin and western Illinois resulted in large numbers of Indigenous people being pushed further westward into other groups’ areas or onto established reservation lands, for example the Winnebago (Ho-Chunk) tribe’s relocation to south central Minnesota.¹⁴ Thus, during the 1840s the U.S. government established military posts in Iowa to help protect Indigenous Americans living in the newly bordered state “against the encroachments of white settlers on their lands, against exploitation by traders and whiskey-sellers,” or attacks by other

---


¹⁴ The Winnebago were eventually pressured to remove themselves from the state of Minnesota following the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 due to anti-Indigenous attitudes from white settlers, especially from their reservation location near Mankato following the U.S.-Dakota War.
Indigenous people in the region. However, by the mid-1850s defense of the frontier in Iowa had switched from a protection of Indigenous groups from white settlers to protection from them. Further north, Minnesota settlers expanded their presence and protection of their social institutions. This expansion of the settler colonial project into the geography of the Minnesota borderlands region also found its way into Dakotas’ social domains.

Fur traders’ families and their progeny commonly married each other (within the same social class), further solidifying kinship ties and creating networks of power and exchange, not unlike noble or royal families in Europe at the same time. This long-standing tradition of creating an intercultural fabric in the Minnesota region was later supplanted with a more segregated society put in place by white (Anglo American) leaders in the mid-nineteenth century. Between the signing of the Traverse des Sioux Treaty of 1851 and U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, the large numbers of white settlers moving westward prompted U.S. military expansion and building of fortifications in frontier spaces like Minnesota. It became easier to control the cultural and social mixing, i.e., the autonomy of Dakotas and their kin in the region of Minnesota, with greater expansion of white social institutions and the U.S. military.

During Minnesota’s journey to statehood in 1857-1858, a majority of people living in the region would not be included in its preceding territorial census. As historian Mary Lethert Wingerd notes in *North Country: The Making of Minnesota*, “only those Indians who chose the

---


17 Harpole and Nagle, eds. *Minnesota territorial census, 1850 and Population schedules of the eighth census of the United States, 1860 Minnesota*. The 1850 U.S. census did not include most of the Midwest region. It was known as “Indian Country” at that time. By 1860 the U.S. national census’ main racial categories only included “white,” “black,” and “mulatto,” with some rare instances of notation as an Indian citizen.
farmer’s assimilationist path” could become eligible for U.S. citizenship.\textsuperscript{18} Territorial censuses, and thus voting rights, in Minnesota from the 1840s and 1850s provided detailed accounts and inclusion of mixed-raced and assimilationist Dakota, described by Sarah Wakefield as “the Farmer, or Christian Indians.”\textsuperscript{19} However, without an active voice in the decisions being made for their futures, traditionalist Dakotas could argue the legitimacy of U.S. government claims to their lands.\textsuperscript{20}

Regardless, in July and August of 1851 the U.S. federal government made two treaties at Traverse des Sioux with four major Dakota bands: the Mdewakanton, the Wahpekute, the Sisseton and the Wahpeton. The signing of the Traverse des Sioux Treaty in July 1851 marked a turning point in Minnesota history. It greatly diminished the expanse of Dakota-owned lands in the territory and created the Upper and Lower Sioux reservations along the Minnesota River, as well as the grievances against the annuities system they put in place.

After the downsizing of areas where traditional Dakota society and commercial activities operated, most Dakotas in the region relocated to the Upper and Lower Sioux reservation agencies along the Minnesota River. This led to a debate of the stipulations of the 1851 treaties creating an environment of dependency on federal annuities versus entitlement. White settlers like Abigail Gardner thought “the Sioux [were] now all fed and cared for at an enormous

\textsuperscript{18} Mary Lethert Wingerd, \textit{North Country: The Making of Minnesota} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 142.

\textsuperscript{19} Sarah Wakefield, \textit{Six Weeks in Sioux Tepees}, 60.

expense by the government.”\textsuperscript{21} Sarah Wakefield remarked that Dakotas would “starve unless food [was] sent to them” by the U.S. government.\textsuperscript{22} Wakefield noted that there “were…four trading houses, where were kept groceries and dry goods for the Indians, cheating the creatures very much” on these reservations. She noted that Dakotas “would buy on credit, promising to pay at the time of payment” by the U.S. government.\textsuperscript{23} However, historian Frances Kestler notes that this money “always seemed to go elsewhere.”\textsuperscript{24} Thus, a sense of distrust of U.S. government, traders, and other agency workers grew among Dakotas living in Minnesota.

The new area of “unsettled” frontier became one of permanent white settlement in the region.\textsuperscript{25} In early 1853 the U.S. government officially proclaimed the articles and their stipulations from the Traverse des Sioux and Mendota treaties. Soon after township settlement promoters and traders rushed in to make claims “before the land was declared open for settlement.”\textsuperscript{26} White settlement also expanded into former Dakota lands in the neighboring state of Iowa.

Federal officials had declared the Iowa frontier “quiet” and deemed Fort Dodge ready for closure in 1853. Iowa officials moved resources and men to the newly created Fort Ridgely, which neighbored the Upper Sioux (Yellow Medicine) reservation in Minnesota Territory. By 1857, the Iowa state government had stated that Dakotas “had no rights in Iowa, while the

\textsuperscript{21} Sharp, \textit{History of the Spirit Lake Massacre}, 63.

\textsuperscript{22} Wakefield, \textit{Six Weeks in Tepees}, 127.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 61-62.

\textsuperscript{24} Kestler, “The Sioux Indians,” in \textit{The Indian Captivity Narrative}, 349.

\textsuperscript{25} For the full description of which lands were ceded and what areas were designated as reservation lands see Article Two from both Traverse des Sioux treaties: United States, “Treaty with the Sioux - Mdewakanton and Wahpakoota Bands,” August 1851, \textit{U.S. Statutes at Large} (Washington, D.C.) 588-590 and United States, “Treaty with the Sioux - Sisseton and Wahpeton Bands,” July 1851, \textit{U.S. Statutes at Large} (Washington, D.C.), 591-593.

\textsuperscript{26} Lucille M. Kane, “The Sioux Treaties and the Traders,” \textit{Minnesota History} 32 no. 2 (June, 1951): 80.
settlers had every reason to expect protection against annoyance or molestation” from them by the U.S. military now stationed at Fort Ridgely in Minnesota. Thus, Dakotas’ resistance to white settlement on their former lands would be seen as illegal.

**Spirit Lake Massacre of 1857 and Abigail Gardner**

As a member of a white settler community living in a frontier corner of the Minnesota region, Abigail Gardner’s captivity experience in the spring of 1857 reflected changes to the Minnesota borderlands region’s social and political organization. In 1856 a land surveying crew from Red Wing, Minnesota demarcated lands around the Okoboji lakes region, about fifteen miles south of the Iowa-Minnesota border. Beyond the bounds of populated white settlement in the frontier corner of northwest Iowa, the Gardner, Luce, Herriott, Noble, Thatcher, and Marble families built homes near West Lake Okoboji.

The harsh Midwestern winter had proved difficult for both the white settlers and Dakota neighbors. However, an altercation between one of twelve Wahpekute men led by Inkpaduta and white settler families escalated into the Spirit Lake Massacre in March of 1857. On March 8, Inkpaduta’s group initially sought out the pioneers’ abodes to find food stuffs. Inkpaduta’s Dakota band had lost significant land holdings and power because of stipulations of the 1851 Traverse des Sioux Treaty. They also blamed the murder of their chief, Sintominaduta, on a white settler, Henry Lott, whom Iowa’s Fort Dodge soldiers had failed to bring to justice.

---

27 Becker, “Formation of the State of Iowa.”

28 It should be remembered that Inkpaduta’s band, while removed from the central political power under Little Crow’s leadership along the Minnesota River, and their actions in Spirit Lake, Iowa and Springfield, Minnesota reflected on the Dakota tribe as a whole at this time in U.S. West history.

While the reason for the attacks escalating into settler deaths remains largely unspecified, after killing thirty-eight settlers in the West Lake Okoboji settlement, Inkpaduta’s group took Lydia Noble, Elizabeth Thatcher, Margaret Marble, and Abigail Gardner as captives.\(^{30}\)

All four women’s ages ranged from thirteen (Gardner) to twenty-one (Noble). The women’s ages put them in the typical age range for Indian captivity. Inkpaduta’s group kept two of the four young women from Spirit Lake alive throughout their flight from U.S. authorities. As Kathryn Derounian-Stodola explains in the introduction to her edited work on women’s captivity narratives, this may be because Gardner and Marble did not present problems of illness, idleness or weakness while traveling, or seemed “particularly resistant” to their capture.\(^{31}\) Elizabeth Thatcher’s death shortly after the Spirit Lake attacks resulted from an illness contracted while on the move into what is now South Dakota.\(^{32}\) Inkpaduta’s group decided to leave behind the cumbersome captive. As noted by historian Sharon Becker in her compilation of events following the Spirit Lake attacks, by the end of May 1857 a member of Inkpaduta’s group killed the “persistently disobedient” twenty-one year old Lydia Noble.\(^{33}\)

The slow reaction of President James Buchanan, poor provisioning of U.S. soldiers pursuing Inkpaduta, and the Minnesota winter coalesced to postpone the return of the women captives to white settler society. The Minnesota River Valley’s Indian agent, Charles E. Flandrau

\(^{30}\) The monument at the Gardner Cabin historic site in Arnold’s Park, Iowa lists thirty-eight adults, including Elizabeth Thatcher who died away from the Spirit Lake and Springfield area, and two unnamed children. However, most historians on this topic agree that the number was thirty-eight killed during the actual attacks. Coincidentally, this is the same number as the Dakota executed on December 26, 1862 following the Dakota War.


\(^{33}\) Becker, “Formation of the State of Iowa.”
voiced his opinions of this expedition in a letter to Congress. Flandrau stressed the need for the establishment of a permanent, substantial force in the Minnesota region to prevent a similar event from happening again.\textsuperscript{34} He detailed the “imbecility of a military administration, which clothed and equipped its troops exactly in the same manner for duty in the tropical climate of Florida, and the frigid region of Minnesota.” He then stated that these prompted him to “[take] advantage of the invitation” by Dakota leader, Little Crow, and other “friendly” Dakotas to pursue Inkapaduta and assist with the return of the surviving women from Spirit Lake, Iowa.\textsuperscript{35}

On May 6, 1857 the group led by Inkapaduta encountered two visitors from the Yellow Medicine reservation. Gardner’s release had been the first suggested by the Dakota men from Minnesota to Inkapaduta, but in her autobiography she stated that “they were informed that [she] was not for sale.”\textsuperscript{36} As negotiations continued the two men from Yellow Medicine “got the impression that [Lydia Noble] was German; and as is well known, the Sioux have a prejudice against the Teutons. So Mrs. Marble was the favored one.”\textsuperscript{37} Thus, the Dakota men from Spirit Lake and Yellow Medicine agreed that Margaret Marble would be the first captive released from Inkapaduta’s band into the hands of friendly Dakotas from the Upper Sioux reservation and returned to white society. Gardner would join her soon after by June 1857. Kathryn Derounian-Stodola points out that “a major reason Native Americans systematically seized captives was for bounty or ransom…[c]ommunities for whom captivity signified civilization threatened by

\textsuperscript{34} Annual report of Charles E. Flandrau to Congress, September 24, 1857, U.S. Congress, Senate Executive Documents, 35th Congress, 1st Session, No. 18, 346.

\textsuperscript{35} Charles E. Flandrau, “The Ink-pa-du-ta Massacre of 1857,” Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society, III, 401-402. Incidentally, Florida is where one of the Dakota War’s captives, Nancy McClure’s, father, Lieutenant James McClure, was stationed. Lt. McClure died there in 1837 when Nancy was one-year-old.

\textsuperscript{36} Sharp, History of the Spirit Lake Massacre, 188. The two men were named Ma-kpe-ya-ha-ho-ton and Se-ha-ho-ta in Gardner’s account.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
barbarity, willingly paid for captives to be returned.”38 Military officers involved with rescuing Abigail Gardner placed her ransom price at around $10,000 in 1857 before her return by Christianized Dakotas, including Paul Mazakutemani, to the Yellow Medicine Reservation’s Indian agent, Charles E. Flandrau.39 One thousand dollars had been raised for the return of Margaret Marble. The remaining $9,000 was appropriated for the return of Gardner and Lydia Noble, however Inkpaduta’s group had killed Noble by the end of May 1857.

In July of the same year as the Spirit Lake attacks, a Hindu leader named Nana Sahib massacred white civilians at Cawnpore (Kanpur) in their British colony of India. As historian Sarah Carter states in Capturing Women, the execution of Nana Sahib’s hostages, including two hundred English women and children, prompted British military responses to the events against the white settler colonists. Carter posits that “the occurrence of even one massacre as Cawnpore endowed all the terrifying tales with their truth-effects.”40 Therefore, one occurrence such as the Spirit Lake attacks, despite their exception in daily interactions between natives and settler colonists, reinforced the rule of Anglo American fears of violent Indigenous resistance. Events such as the Spirit Lake attacks and Abigail Gardner’s captivity legitimized the need for white settler society’s expansion and military protection in lands west of the Mississippi. As historian Peggy Larson notes in her article on Inkpaduta, “[once] an Indian group acquired a reputation for being lawless, it was blamed for many crimes whether it committed them or not.”41 Such was

38 Derounian-Stodola, “Introduction,” Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives, xvi.
39 Sharp, History of the Spirit Lake Massacre, 200. There is no mention of Paul Mazakutemani (Little Paul) or any of the other Christianized Dakotas of the actual rescue party on the monument at the Gardner Cabin historical site in Arnold’s Park, Iowa. Only “the efforts of Gov[ernor] Sam Medary and Hon[orable] Charles E. Flandrau of Minn[esota]” are credited with the successful return of Ms. Gardner and Ms. Marble on the monument. Mazakutemani would be an intermediary for captive trade negotiations during the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 as well.
40 Carter, Capturing Women, 16.
the case with Dakotas as a whole because of the actions of one group of twelve Wahpekute led by Inkaputa in Spirit Lake, Iowa in the spring of 1857.

The settler colonial project expanded further into the Minnesota region between 1857 and 1862. A few months after the Spirit Lake attacks, a territorial census indicated that 156,959 people lived in the Minnesota territory. Political leaders took measures to prevent voter fraud from affecting the vote for Minnesota statehood in the newly created counties of Cottonwood, Jackson, Martin, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, and Rock, those same areas affected by the Spirit Lake-related violence of 1857 in the southwestern corner of the territory.  

By May of 1858, the U.S. Senate approved Minnesota’s statehood. That same year, the U.S. government and Dakotas made another treaty that resulted in more Dakota lands changing ownership. Dakotas’ land claims dwindled down to a stretch south of the Minnesota River, extending ten miles southeasterly from Lake Traverse to New Ulm, Minnesota. This added to existing tensions between Dakotas and white settler neighbors living in the Minnesota borderlands.

While the Spirit Lake attacks were not directly connected with the removal of Dakotas from the Minnesota region, the outbreaks of violence in Spirit Lake and Springfield motivated the U.S. military to reopen Fort Dodge in Iowa, send more men, and direct funding and attention towards places such as Fort Ridgely near the Upper and Lower Sioux reservations. The reservation’s Indian agent, Charles Flandrau’s pragmatism in the Spirit Lake attacks and negotiations for the return of Abigail Gardner and Margaret Marble led to an increased U.S. military presence in the Minnesota borderlands. The construction of new forts throughout

---


43 For a map of the borders for the Minnesota River reservations, as well as site locations related to the Dakota War, see Namias, “Editor’s Introduction,” *Six Weeks in Sioux Tepees*, 10-11.
Minnesota accompanied the recent opening up of former Dakota lands, especially after the Homestead Act of 1862. Increased militarization laid the groundwork for continued settler colonial expansion and land dispossession of Dakotas in the region.

**U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 Narratives**

Mary Schwandt

A family of recently-arrived immigrants, the Schwandts, arrived at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota at approximately the same time as Dakotas awaited annuity payment disbursements. The teenage daughter, Mary, saw Dakotas living on the Upper and Lower Sioux reservation lands in 1862, dwindled down four years previous from their creation in 1851. An 1858 treaty’s stipulations concentrated the population of Dakotas living on these reservation agency lands. By removing the ten-mile land strip north of the Minnesota River, the U.S. government essentially removed lands from Dakotas who had assisted with the rescue of Abigail Gardner and Margaret Marble. This would have been a different view of Dakotas’ domain in the state of Minnesota versus what people like Nancy McClure or even Abigail Gardner would have witnessed in the two decades before. Mary Schwandt describes her German immigrant family seeing their “first Indians…in Minnesota” near Fort Ridgely in the spring of 1862. Schwandt remembered that these Dakotas “were always begging but otherwise were well behaved.”

---

44 An expansion of this topic is discussed in Willoughby M. Babcock, “Minnesota’s Frontier: A Neglected Sector of the Civil War,” *Minnesota History* 38, No. 6 (June 1963): 274-286.


46 Ibid. The polity of “Germany” did not exist at this time in world history, but for conceptualizing Schwandt’s immigrant family the term will be used in this paper.
According to historian Kathryn Derounian-Stodola, German newcomers “generally did not value sharing outside their own community and were culturally and spiritually clannish.” Mary Schandt’s wartime captivity under Little Crow’s stewardship may have been tempered by preexisting prejudices against German (Teutonic) immigrants. Mary states that after passing through Fort Ridgely and meeting Dakotas for the first time, the Schandts’ “nearest white neighbors were some distance away” and “the Indians visited [them] almost every day.” But “their ways were so strange that they were disagreeable” to Schandt.

Dakotas’ aversion of Germans in the mid-nineteenth century could be traced back to German immigrants’ exclusionary society and lack of interactions with neighbors. Kathryn Derounian-Stodola states in *The War in Words* that both Anglo and Dakota neighbors viewed German immigrants “as less empowered – and thus less white, in a way – than the settlers of English descent.” Abigail Gardner pointed out in her narrative of the 1857 Spirit Lake attacks that “the Sioux have a great prejudice against” Germans that “is well known.” Thus, perhaps having heard tales from other German immigrants to this fact, Mary Schandt may have been tempted to paint Dakotas as enemies before meeting those present at Fort Ridgely in the spring of 1862.

Two weeks before the U.S.-Dakota War began sixteen-year-old Schandt left her family’s home. While her family did not want to her to go initially, this perhaps saved Schandt’s life. She would be captured but not killed while in the employ of the Reynolds

---

47 Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, *The War in Words: Reading the Dakota Conflict through the Captivity Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 107.

48 Schandt, “The Story of Mary Schandt-Schmidt,” 393.


50 Sharp, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*, 188.
family in Beaver Falls near the Redwood (Lower Sioux) agency at the onset of violence in August of 1862. If she had stayed with her family she would most likely have died with them.

While a captive in Little Crow’s village, Schwandt came across Sarah Wakefield who was a captive in Chaska’s village. The two women, Schwandt and Wakefield, had different captivity experiences due to their varying familiarities with Dakotas in the Minnesota region. Schwandt openly disapproved of captives like Wakefield who wore traditional Dakota dress and generally seemed to be in good spirits during the war. In her narrative, Schwandt states that “the rest of us disliked their conduct and would have but little to do with them.”

Sarah Wakefield had “become so much accustomed to [Dakotas] and their ways” that when she became a captive she “felt…easy and contented.” Wakefield had been acquainted with her captor, Chaska, for nearly eight years at the time of her captivity. Schwandt had no previous relationship with Dakotas, let alone their war party’s leader, Little Crow, by summer 1862. Like Wakefield, Mary Schwandt testified at the military trials held for Dakotas accused of civilian crimes during the conflict. Unlike Wakefield, Schwandt testified against them. Viewing the differences in these two women’s narratives, one can see the emerging divisions in Minnesota society and attitudes towards Dakotas during the 1850s and 1860s.

Nancy McClure

Another captive’s background reflected changes to Dakota society in the Minnesota region. Nancy McClure’s own personal history encapsulates many of the changing elements in Minnesota society during the mid-nineteenth century. Born near Mendota, Minnesota in 1836 to

---

51 Kestler, “Mary Schwandt-Schmidt – Background,” 391 in The Indian Captivity Narrative.

52 Schwandt, “The Story of Mary Schwandt-Schmidt,” 399.

53 Wakefield, Six Weeks in Sioux Tepees, 61.
an Indigenous mother and white father, Nancy McClure’s origins reflected the common practice of interracial marriage and sexual reproduction found in the Minnesota region before the 1850s. McClure was the daughter of Lieutenant James McClure, a U.S. soldier stationed at Fort Snelling near St. Paul, Minnesota, and a Sisseton chief’s daughter, Winona, which in Dakota means “first born.”  

McClure admits to “[having] a pretty good start in the world for a poor little half-blood.” Her choice to describe herself thus shows awareness to her socio-political status as a mixed-race child in the Minnesota region.

McClure notes that early in her life “mixed blood children were each to receive a considerable sum of money” amounting to about $500. This money had been bequeathed to her under stipulations of an 1837 U.S. treaty with Dakotas in Minnesota. McClure’s family then put this money into the hands of a businessman named B.F. Baker. Working as a fur trader at Fort Snelling, Baker held onto McClure’s and other mixed-race children’s money before dying on his way to St. Louis, Missouri. “That was the last of the money” promised to McClure through the treaty and she “never got a cent of it.”

Despite this early financial misfortune, McClure’s father made provisions for his daughter’s future care and education, similar to the inheritances bequeathed to mixed-race children of the Hudson’s Bay Company examined in Jennifer S.H. Brown’s *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*. Lieutenant McClure had acknowledged his métis child in 1830s frontier Minnesota. He sent money through the head fur trader in the region,

---

54 Kane, “The Sioux Treaties and the Traders,” 71.


56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.
Henry Hastings Sibley, “to provide for” McClure’s mother and herself.\(^{58}\) Much too soon, McClure’s father died in Florida, one year after her birth.

McClure’s mother remarried Antoine Renville in 1839. The McClure women then moved to Renville’s fur trading post near Lac Qui Parle until her mother’s death. McClure remembered how her mother “was anxious that I should be educated and that I should become a good Christian.”\(^{59}\) In 1850, fourteen-year-old McClure went to live with her Dakota grandmother at Traverse des Sioux near St. Peter, Minnesota, where she continued to attend missionary school and assimilate aspects of white settler society.\(^{60}\)

As Dakotas debated signing the Traverse des Sioux Treaty, on July 11, 1851 visiting artist Frank Blackwell Mayer recorded the Christian wedding service joining McClure and David Faribault, Sr., a widower more than twice McClure’s age.\(^{61}\) McClure married Faribault, Henry Sibley’s “longtime friend and trading associate,” whom Sibley championed for being “a good man, a fine money-maker [who] would always treat [McClure] well.”\(^{62}\) McClure remained connected to her Dakota roots through her marriage to Faribault and his business practices, but

\(^{58}\) Ibid.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 404-405.


\(^{62}\) Letter between Return I. Holcombe and Nancy McClure Huggan, April 13, 1894, Nancy McClure Faribault Huggan Papers, Minnesota Historical Society and McClure, “The Story of Nancy McClure,” 405. Holcombe was working as a writer for the St. Paul Pioneer Press and doing interviews on behalf of the Minnesota Historical Society’s compilation project of narratives from the U.S.-Dakota War. The correspondence between Holcombe and McClure formed the basis of the first published version of her captivity narrative. Again, a nineteenth-century captivity narrative was written by a white male editor and not the captive woman herself, despite McClure being noted by missionary Stephen Riggs’ daughter, Martha, as being well-versed in the English language, as well as in French and Dakota. Derounian-Stodola, The War in Words, 205.
she still honored her mother’s deathbed request “not to stay among the Indians.”

For example, the self-proclaimed “stout Presbyterian and...teetotaler” McClure hosted a mixed-race congregation during her marriage ceremony, but distanced herself from traditional Dakota culture by choosing to wear a white settler design of “a pretty white bridal dress” instead of something made in the style of her matriarchal ancestors.

McClure’s “duty was with her husband” and she thus relocated several times between 1851 and 1862 throughout Minnesota, following his business routes as a fur trader and Indian agent. They first moved to Shakopee, then Le Sueur, Faribault, and finally to the Lower Sioux (Redwood) Agency along the Minnesota River, where they lived until the outbreak of hostilities in August of 1862. McClure’s account indicates that annuities had been ready for disbursement to Dakotas at Fort Ridgely before “rebel” Dakotas attacked the white settlers, agents, and other personnel employed by the U.S. government. The paymaster had been “delayed on the road until the time for the payment had passed” and arrived in Fort Ridgely “with the money all in gold when the Indians rose.”

Historian Kathryn Derounian-Stodola notes that McClure, “like so many other bicultural captives,” was rescued by Dakota relatives and friends after being held captive by Little Crow. Her “brave uncle” told Little Crow that he only wanted to take “‘the people who belong to me,

---


65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., 401.

67 Ibid., 406.

68 Derounian-Stodola, The War in Words, 207. These people were likely part of the assimilationist/Christian or “friendly” Dakotas’ faction before the war.
and I will take them’…to the mouth of the Chippewa” River.\textsuperscript{69} This use of kinship ties for protection appears in Sarah Wakefield and Mary Schwandt’s narratives as well.\textsuperscript{70} It shows how assimilationist Dakotas attempted to work with traditionalist Dakotas, using traditional social practices such as kinship ties during a time of tense relations. These “friendly” Dakotas attempted to work with the U.S. leaders as well by saving or protecting as many wartime captives as possible, especially fellow Christian or Anglophile kin, during the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862.

McClure admitted that she “was always more white than Indian in [her] tastes and sympathies.”\textsuperscript{71} Her approval of white settler society and enrollment at their mission schools showed the changing nature of the state itself in one woman’s personal history. The cultural differences within the Dakota community itself are also shown in McClure’s narrative. She remarked that “rebel” Dakota leaders did not admit “half-breed relatives” into councils and that on one day of her captivity “the cry was raised that the half breeds were all to be killed.”\textsuperscript{72} As the Minnesota Historical Society’s exhibit on the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 suggests, these cultural divisions in society became Minnesota’s own civil war.

Mary and John Renville

An account by a couple living in the racially-prejudiced region of Minnesota in 1862 provides a different view. From the time of their marriage up to the outbreak of the U.S.-Dakota War in August 1862, both John and Mary Renville served as teachers at the Hazelwood Missionary School five miles northwest of the Yellow Medicine (Upper Sioux) reservation. They

\textsuperscript{69} McClure, “The Story of Nancy McClure,” 409.

\textsuperscript{70} Wakefield, \textit{Six Weeks in Sioux Tepees}, 84 and Schwandt, “The Story of Mary Schwandt-Schmidt,” 398.

\textsuperscript{71} McClure, “The Story of Nancy McClure,” 404.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 409.
would thus have been educated and literate at the time of their self-publication, as well as versed in the intercultural negotiations between the white missionary families of the Hazelwood settlement and Dakotas living in the Minnesota River Valley Indian agencies.

Mary Renville first published her and her husband John’s remembrances of the U.S.-Dakota War in the spring of 1863. Historians Carrie Reber Zeman and Kathryn Derounian-Stodola state in their introduction to *A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity: Dispatches from the Dakota War* that at the time of their first complete, book-length publication, the Renvilles “were too poor…and too disenfranchised (as an interracial couple) to afford to do more than publish their story as an inexpensive pamphlet printed at the local newspaper’s job office.”

Zeman first overlooked the original publication in the Minnesota Historical Society’s holdings and dismissed it as yet another postwar attempt to cash in on the popularity of the conflict and defeat of Dakotas in 1862. However, the Renvilles’ account would present a unique view of mid-nineteenth century Minnesota society.

The Renvilles’ co-authored account of events in 1862 seems to be one of the most balanced because like McClure’s narrative, the Renvilles’ provided views of both the U.S. and Dakota sides of the conflict, as well as divisions among Dakotas themselves. Like Nancy McClure, John’s Dakota kinsmen protected the Renvilles and they lived in their “Friendly Camp” during the war, whereas contemporaries like Mary Schwandt lived in the traditionalist or “rebel” camp.

---

73 The Renvilles’ account was published the same year as Sarah Wakefield’s. Wakefield’s empathetic, though ethnocentric, recounting of her treatment by Chaska served to expunge her tarnished reputation from her supportive testimony at Camp Release in December of 1862. Mary Schwandt-(Schmidt) and Nancy McClure-(Faribault)-(Huggan) published their accounts for the Minnesota Historical Society in 1894.


75 Ibid., 31.
A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity was the first book-length narrative published about the conflict without an editor or non-participant co-author. Both Renvilles worked on the collaborative account, although in some of the first publications only Mary’s name appears. Mary’s voice composes most of the narrative but is accompanied by John’s letters. Historian Kathryn Derounian-Stodola says in her War in Words that this “provides an unusual perspective because it is written by an Anglo woman and her Dakota husband.”

According to Zeman and Derounian-Stodola, “[c]ulture as reflected in lifestyle was as central” to white settlers “as it was to traditionalists’ conceptions of being Dakota.” Even with John’s adoption of white settler social norms, including evangelization, dress, economic pursuits, and language acculturation, the Renvilles still had to live with the preexisting prejudices of the white settler community because of his Dakota roots. While the other white mission families lived on an island in the Minnesota River near the reservation, Sarah Wakefield’s narrative notes that the Renvilles lived “in plain sight” of Dakotas on the nearby reservation.

Wakefield’s narrative also relates another instance of division in Minnesota, this time between Dakotas. Wakefield visited the Renvilles while held in the captives’ camp at Fort Ridgely. Another Dakota leader, Eagle Head, entered the Renvilles’ tepee and told Wakefield that she would be safer under Chaska’s protection “three rods away” than in the “half-breeds’ camp.” Eagle Head’s remarks reflect the divisions between assimilationist and traditionalist Dakotas during the war in 1862.

---

76 Derounian-Stodola, The War in Words, 279-280.
78 Wakefield, Six Weeks in Sioux Tepees, 289.
79 Ibid., 107.
Additionally, Sarah Wakefield instantly noted John’s “half-breed” lineage upon visiting the Renville’s tepee.\(^80\) Despite John’s assimilation of aforementioned white settler cultural practices, Wakefield’s attention and language used to describe John reflects racial attitudes of white settlers towards Dakotas in the Minnesota region between 1857 and 1862. In a time when one’s \textit{lifestyle} defined one’s racial status and not one’s \textit{lineage}, it is interesting that white settlers such as Sarah Wakefield still did not accept Christianized Dakotas like John Renville into their mainstream U.S. society. These same Christian Dakotas, like John Renville or Paul Mazakutemani, suffered similar fears and prejudice by the rebel camp of traditionalist Dakotas during the U.S-Dakota War. How Dakotas like Renville and Mazakutemani are portrayed in captivity narratives reflects white settler society’s mainstream prejudices against Dakotas as a whole.

John Baptiste Renville was born at Lac Qui Parle in 1831, eight years before Nancy McClure moved there with her Dakota mother and new stepfather, Antoine Renville.\(^81\) Mary had moved to the state of Minnesota in September of 1858, about a year after Inkpaduta’s attacks in Spirit Lake, Iowa. She resided with Stephen Riggs’ family while first beginning her tenure at the missionary school.\(^82\) The editors’ historical introduction to \textit{A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity} notes “[it] was not every day that a white woman arrived at Hazelwood and vowed to

\(^{80}\)Ibid.

\(^{81}\)Based on information gathered from online DNA genealogy project located at http://www.wikitree.com. An Antoine Renville was born near the Mdewakanton Dakota Indian Camp in 1810 and this birth date lends credit to the researcher’s assumption: while the parameters of this paper did not allow for extensive examination of a possible family tree connection, it is believed that John and Antoine Renville were related and thus Mary Butler Renville and Nancy McClure were also relatives through their Dakota connections at Lac Qui Parle.

\(^{82}\)Stephen R. Riggs, “Dakota Portraits,” \textit{Minnesota History Bulletin} 2 (November 1918): 500. Stephen Riggs served as a lead missionary in both Lac qui Parle and at the Hazelwood mission near the Yellow Medicine reservation. Riggs had helped Charles Flandrau organize the Dakota-led rescue party for Abigail Gardner and Margaret Marble in 1857. Riggs was also familiar with the father of Inkpaduta, Wamdisapa, while in residence at Hazelwood from 1841 to 1847.
stay a lifetime.” Most white women who worked at a missionary school in the American West would serve for a year or two before heading back home to marry.  

Yet Mary Renville had reason to establish herself permanently at Hazelwood. Zeman and Derounian-Stodola remark Mary “came to the frontier to bring [John] inside the picket fence” that physically separated the white missionary families from Dakota neighbors near Hazelwood, “not as a beggar or a boarder but much more intimately, as her husband.” After waiting four months, Mary brought her intended, John Renville, out to the Hazelwood community near the Yellow Medicine reservation. On January 1, 1859 Stephen Riggs performed the marriage ceremony in the Hazelwood chapel “with white Christian friends from the Upper Agency neighborhood.”

Mary Butler “belonged” to the white settler community. She was, in the words of Methodist missionary John Maclean, a “‘wise wom[an] from the east…[who has] travelled westward with [her] gifts of culture, grace and love.’” She married a Dakota man during a period of miscegenation fears and increased westward expansion of the U.S. settler colonial project. In their historical introduction to A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity, historians Zeman and Derounian-Stodola note that “the dominant society believed a woman who chose to marry an Indian fell quite short of ideal white womanhood.” Thus, Mary Butler Renville served

---

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., 30.
86 Carter, Capturing Women, 6.
87 Zeman and Derounian-Stodola, “Historical Introduction,” A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity, 29.
as an example of both the rule and exception to the ideal settler woman image purported by the U.S. colonial project’s mainstream media in the mid-nineteenth century.  

Sarah Wakefield

Sarah Brown Wakefield also lived among Dakotas before the beginning of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 and challenged notions of white womanhood in mid-nineteenth century America with her narrative. Sarah Brown married Dr. John Luman Wakefield near Jordan, Minnesota in September 1856. By 1858 Wakefield had moved to Shakopee, Minnesota where her husband worked as a doctor. He treated several wounded Dakota after a battle between them and the Ojibwe of northern Minnesota occurred during the summer of that same year.  

Similar to the Renvilles, the Wakefield family lived near the Upper Sioux (Hazelwood) Agency at the outbreak of hostilities in August of 1862. In June of 1861 Wakefield’s family relocated near Fort Ridgely in south central Minnesota. Dr. Wakefield had been appointed physician on the reservation and “on Sundays Sarah and her son sometimes rode to [Stephen Riggs’] mission church.” Historian Kathryn Derounian-Stodola remarks that the Wakefield family generally enjoyed a “surprisingly comfortable, even luxurious lifestyle” near the Upper Sioux Agency.  

June Namias suggests that one of the reasons why Wakefield published her narrative was to deflect rumors of infidelity during her captivity and separation from her husband for the

---

88 This complexity and challenge to the U.S. settler colonial ideal (their intermarriage) is perhaps why Mary Renville and her husband’s voices are often left out of mid-nineteenth century U.S. historical narratives.

89 Their 1858 treaty with the U.S. government would later limit Dakotas to inhabiting lands south of the Minnesota River to prevent further intra-Indigenous fighting with the Ojibwe. June Namias states that Wakefield’s notoriety as the doctor’s wife allowed for the special treatment she received during by some Dakotas during her captivity in August-September of 1862. Namias, “Editor’s Introduction,” Six Weeks in Sioux Tepees, 40.

90 Ibid., 25.

91 Derounian-Stodola, The War in Words, 68.
duration of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. While living in Shakopee, Wakefield may have begun her acquaintance with her future captor, Chaska. By the time of her captivity Wakefield would have known Chaska for eight years. Thus, it would not be unusual for Chaska to apply kinship ties to protect Wakefield and her children during their captivity in August-September of 1862. However, this action by Chaska would be the main evidence for rumors of romantic relations between the two following the war. These rumors were fueled even more so by her subsequent defense of Chaska at the military trials at Camp Release during the fall of 1862.

Sarah Wakefield stood as an example of the ideal white settler woman. However, after Wakefield’s captivity experience, she sympathized with the Dakotas including her captor, Chaska. In the words of historian Kathryn Derounian-Stodola, this signaled “a double transgression” of “ethnic and gender betrayal” to mainstream American culture. Therefore, Wakefield would be ostracized by white society after the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 because her narrative “did not…adopt the standard anti-Indian propagandist line” which supported the U.S. settler colonial project.

As pointed out by Christopher Castiglia in *Bound and Determined: Captivity, Culture-Crossing, and White Womanhood*, Wakefield’s account and intercessions on Chaska’s behalf with state officials formed powerful resistance “to the binarisms – of white and Indian, civilized and savage, masculine and feminine, captivity and liberty – on which white, middle-class

---


95 Ibid.
ideologies of class, race, and gender rested.”

Mary Schwanrt’s narrative remembered “how angry the soldiers were at the Indians who surrendered [at Camp Release] and how eager they were to be turned loose upon the vile wretches.” Kathryn Derounian-Stodola remarked in War in Words that Wakefield felt the military and government had “allowed politics and prejudice to prevail rather than an interest in the truth” during the court trials and execution of thirty-eight Dakotas in Mankato, Minnesota on December 26, 1862. It has since been proven that Chaska, a name meaning “first born” in the Dakota language, had been confused with another guilty Dakota man, Chaskadon, during the roll call for execution. After hearing that her captor had been wrongly named as one of those found guilty, Wakefield “felt as if the Indians” and herself “had been deceived.” Thus, like the Renvilles’ co-authored captivity account, by defending herself and Chaska in her narrative Six Weeks in Tepees, Wakefield voiced criticism of white society and its prejudice against Dakotas. Her challenge to the status quo of the U.S. settler colonial project in the Minnesota region gives her narrative importance as a historical source.

In the November 1863 preface to her narrative, Wakefield states her desire to “vindicate” herself “as [she] [had] been grievously abused by many, who [were] ignorant of the particulars of

96 Christopher Castiglia, Bound and Determined: Captivity, Culture-Crossing, and White Womanhood (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 83.


99 Ibid., 71. Chaskadon had killed and mutilated a pregnant white woman during the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862.

100 Wakefield, Six Weeks in Sioux Tepees, 115. Of the original 392 Dakotas taken into custody, 303 were tried and sentenced to death at the military court temporarily set up at Camp Release. After letters were written and audiences made to President Abraham Lincoln, including those by Sarah Wakefield and Episcopalian Bishop Henry Benjamin Whipple, 265 were pardoned, but not Wakefield’s captor, Chaska.
[her] captivity and release by the Indians.”

Wakefield felt it necessary to present her reasons for speaking well of her captor, Chaska, during the military trials at Camp Release. Wakefield “always found Chaska truthful and honest” and had Chaska treated her poorly or harmed her children, Wakefield attests that she would have spoken truthfully about it. Yet lines such as “I…began to love and respect them as well as if they were whites” suggest an ethnocentric appreciation of Dakotas during the war of 1862, rather than a true rejection of the settler colonial society Wakefield inhabited.

Wakefield proclaims in the preface of her narrative that “it was not intended for perusal by the public eye. [She] wrote it for the especial benefit of [her] children” who would be too young to remember “the particulars” of their captivity. Yet her choice to use a low cost printer to publish her account shortly after the U.S.-Dakota War may suggest otherwise. Did Wakefield write her narrative to refute charges of treason, purge herself of guilt for Chaska’s death, clear her sexual reputation, convey a moral message, or make a profit? As June Namias states in her editor’s introduction to Wakefield’s account, “let the reader be the judge.” As the content of this paper has shown, Wakefield’s is not the only captivity narrative from this 1857 to 1862 time period that reflected many views of white settler and Dakota society or motivations in publishing captivity accounts during outbreaks of violence between the two societies.

Women’s Captivity Narratives as Historical Sources

101 Ibid., 53.

102 Sarah Wakefield was the only captive among approximately one hundred to come forward and testify for an accused Dakota man. Namias, “Editor’s Introduction,” Six Weeks in Sioux Tepees, 39.

103 Wakefield, Six Weeks in Sioux Tepees, 86.

104 Ibid., 61.

105 Ibid., 53.

Using 1850s and 1860s captivity narratives as historical sources presents certain difficulties. Attitudes towards white women during the mid-nineteenth century color versions men wrote or edited. Some accounts change severity in vocabulary recounting maltreatment or expand to include more information surrounding the selected woman’s captivity experience in later publications. Therefore, understanding conditions under which their authors wrote them is important to an analysis of these historical records.

Male editors and writers produced most of the initial accounts of Dakota captivity published between 1857 and 1863. They portrayed the central women actors as frail creatures in need of protection. The threat towards white women by Indigenous peoples’ presence in male-composed captivity narratives supported U.S. military actions in the Minnesota region between 1857 and 1862 to protect a growing white settler population.

The Spirit Lake Massacre of 1857 serves as an early example of where Dakota-white settler relations were heading by 1862. Most public history representations of the events in Spirit Lake fail to put them within a larger historical framework or explain altering socio-political trends happening at the time within the Minnesota region. In *Capturing Women* Sarah Carter argues that the idea of white women in Indigenous captivity “served to promote hysteria over the issue of the safety of white women in the West and to provide a rationalization for the repressive

---

measures taken against the supposed perpetrators.”

Kathryn Derounian-Stodola states that most “European Americans saw themselves as victims, not oppressors, when Natives tried to reclaim their rightful lands.” Thus, as Derounian-Stodola later notes, the novelty of negative interactions such as the Spirit Lake attacks and later the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 nevertheless helped reestablish “conflict with Native Americans as a central topic in the national imagination” and supported further expansion of U.S. settler society.

Changing cultural attitudes towards Indigenous peoples are reflected in selected works about Dakota captivity. The use of these captivity narratives helps recreate portrayals of Anglo American society in mid-nineteenth century Minnesota from the inside looking outward. The accounts of Sarah Wakefield and Mary and John Renville are important not only to show changes to Dakota-U.S. relations, but are the few self-published accounts that exist from immediately after the U.S.-Dakota War. The rapid pace of military trials following the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 and public sentiment made equal representation of Indigenous actors a low priority, despite firsthand experience with the accused, as Sarah Wakefield described in *Six Weeks in Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity*, published shortly after the military trials in early 1863. However, as the fervor for U.S. settler colonialism reached a close in the American West, the 1890s saw a tendency to romanticize Indigenous-Anglo American history. Communities affected by the U.S.-Dakota War, such as St. Peter, Minnesota, established “Red

---


110 Ibid., 95.

111 Wakefield, *Six Weeks in Sioux Tepees*, 122-123.
Man Clubs” which, contrary to the title, honored their founders’ perspectives more so than the traditions and culture of people their ancestors had expelled from the state thirty years before.\textsuperscript{112} The borderlands of the Minnesota region no longer existed. In 1894, the Minnesota Historical Society compiled and published a collection of archived state history, including accounts of captivity during the U.S.-Dakota War by Mary Schwandt and Nancy McClure. This publication came out after a period of major defeats for Indigenous Americans and the greater Sioux Nation, most notably the Wounded Knee Massacre in western South Dakota.\textsuperscript{113} After the Dakotas’ forced expulsion from the state of Minnesota, white settlers no longer had to fear reprisal attacks by them. Therefore, white women captives like Mary Schwandt, Nancy McClure, and Abigail Gardner could reflect on their experiences in safety and after nearly thirty years of contemplation.

Time away from their initial capture allowed for these women to compile more information from contemporaries or include more memories of their captivity experiences. An autobiographical captivity narrative in general tends to evolve from a person’s letters, diary, or journal, such as with Mary Butler and John Renville’s account, to either newspaper accounts or pamphlets, and then later into book form.\textsuperscript{114} As each tale of captivity made its way to the next stage of publication, whether the author’s original intent had been for public consumption or not, the nature of each narrative expanded to grab a wider audience or to include more detailed content. For example, Sarah Wakefield’s first published captivity narrative numbered fifty-four pages in 1863 but by 1864 grew to sixty-three. This eighteen percent increase in new material

\textsuperscript{112} Conversation with Drs. Lori Ann Lahlum, Melodie Andrews, and Marlene Medrano, December 1, 2014, Mankato, MN.

\textsuperscript{113} Dakotas belonged to the greater Sioux Nation. For a chart showing the various branches of the Great Sioux Nation, see Bakeman, Legends, Letters and Lies, 13.

\textsuperscript{114} Zeman and Derounian-Stodola, “Literary Introduction,” A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity, 131.
might not be a product of exaggeration or embellishment, but could be a result of a clearer memory following a traumatic captivity experience.\textsuperscript{115}

Even the publication process of a captivity narrative reflected the changing attitudes towards Dakotas living in Minnesota. For example, Mary and John Renville first published their account in a small-town newspaper in Wisconsin. This correspondence formed the first installment of their narrative, which came out on Christmas Day, 1862, one day before the execution of thirty-eight Dakotas in Mankato, Minnesota. The \textit{Berlin City Courant} in Wisconsin published the Renvilles’ last installment of their captivity narrative on April 9, 1863. After the \textit{Berlin City Courant} found out about John’s Dakota heritage and ceased printing the interracial couple’s captivity account, the Renvilles moved their business to a printing office in Minneapolis and self-published their remaining chapters.\textsuperscript{116}

Including what historian Carrie Reber Zeman called the “chronic memory lapses and bureaucratic arthritis” of the U.S. government, the Renvilles’ captivity narrative criticizes the treatment of Dakotas by the federal troops and the Indian reservation (agency) system.\textsuperscript{117} In her introduction to the Mary and John Renville narratives, Zeman explains that knowledge of the Renvilles’ story’s existence in the archives of the Minnesota Historical Society was limited by its opening paragraph of melodrama, poor quality of printing, and “its sympathetic humanization of the Dakotas…[that] was unwelcomed in postwar Minnesota.”\textsuperscript{118}


\textsuperscript{116} Zeman and Derounian-Stodola, “Literary Introduction,” \textit{A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity}, 116.

\textsuperscript{117} Zeman and Derounian-Stodola, “Historical Introduction,” \textit{A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity}, 15.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid, 1.
The Renvilles also included the good deeds done by Paul Mazakutemani, the Dakota man who helped retrieve Abigail Gardner, in their account. Only five years previous some of Little Crow’s people and others from the Upper and Lower Sioux Agencies, such as Paul Mazakutemani, had been part of the party sent to rescue captive Abigail Gardner from Inkpaduta’s band. Yet Mazakutemani failed to be mentioned in Gardner’s captivity narrative.

Yet the Renvilles’ narrative saves their positive view of Dakotas for those who practiced Christianity and other white settler traditions, much like John and Paul Mazakutemani. “The Dakota war faction treated Anglo and Franco Dakotas harshly because they tended to be pro-white,” but rebel Dakotas treated both Anglo- and Franco- descent Dakotas with equal harshness during the U.S.-Dakota War. For example, Mary Renville described “how glad the captives [were] to get among the friendly Indians! The praise is all due to the gospel which makes the savage heart become humane, and man respect the rights of his fellow man.” While their narrative portrays the friendly Dakotas as allies, many white settlers called for all Dakotas to leave Minnesota after 1862. With this in mind, the Renvilles’ narrative thus challenged mainstream conceptions of all Dakotas as guilty parties following the U.S.-Dakota War.

In 1863, the Atlas Company’s Book and Job Printing Office of Minneapolis, Minnesota printed both the Renvilles’ and Wakefield’s captivity accounts. Since the Renvilles and Wakefield self-published their accounts, male editors did not have control over the content of these particular captivity narratives. The Atlas Printing Office merely reprinted what the authors wished to be made public for a small fee. Historian Kathryn Derounian-Stodola’s analysis in

119 Mary Butler Renville, *A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity*, 164.
121 Renville, *A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity*, 163.
Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives suggests that the level of men’s involvement with writing or editing accounts of Indian captivity had a changing effect on how they portrayed white women, Indigenous people, and any violence between them and white settlers.  

As Frances Kestler points out in her preface to the Abigail Gardner account, Colonel Lorenzo P. Lee “hoped that the publication of the narrative would raise funds for [Gardner’s] future.” Kestler notes that this is a common deficiency with captivity narratives as historical record. Kathryn Derounian-Stodola notes that Mary Schwandt understood how many white authors and commentators on the war in Minnesota “had cynically cashed in on the rhetorical and discursive uses” of violence and “[used] it to make money and spread propaganda” in support of the U.S. settler colonial project. Publication of accounts like Lee’s about Gardner’s captivity played on existing prejudices and fears of their white settler audiences.

For example, Colonel Lorenzo Porter Lee penned the first account of Abigail Gardner’s abduction by Inkpaduta in 1857. Gardner did not publish her own autobiographical account of captivity until 1885. As such, some supposition can be inferred by Lee’s secondhand account of the event, as well as the coloring made to his recounting as an officer in the U.S. military. Lee had been tasked by the government with the recovery of Gardner and the three other women taken from Spirit Lake. His word choices describing the group of Dakotas led by Inkpaduta woven into what historian Kathryn Derounian-Stodola called “the evangelical prose of a ‘typical’

---


124 Kestler, “Miss Abigail Gardner,” in The Indian Captivity Narrative, 358.

125 Kestler, “Preface,” The Indian Captivity Narrative, xiii.

126 Derounian-Stodola, The War in Words, 55.
white male after hearing the violence enacted upon white women settlers.\textsuperscript{127} For example, in the following passage Lee describes Gardner’s hopelessness upon her capture:

Oh! how full, to bursting, must the tender young heart of Abigail have been that awful night! What marvel were it if she buried her streaming eyes in her hands while she lay sleepless on her comfortless lair and prayed to God! \textit{Leave me not thus alone! O God! Wilt Thou leave me thus alone?}\textsuperscript{128}

In Gardner’s own recollection of her capture she remarks that her “tearless acquiescence and willingness to die seemed to fill [Inkpaduta’s Wahpekute band] with wonder, and even admiration, as they thought it a sign of great bravery, a quality they highly [appreciated] but which they did not suppose” their white settler neighbors to have.\textsuperscript{129} This temperance of emotion in relating the same sequence of events to a reader illustrates the difference in both men’s and women’s writing of Indian captivity narratives. Additionally, the assumptions on Lee’s part of knowing Gardner’s personal reactions upon being captured by Inkpaduta’s group, and relating them thus in his version of her captivity experience, in effect removes her from the retelling of her own captivity tale. Abigail Gardner did not write and publish her own autobiographical recollections until the late 1880s. Even then, Gardner had to include supplemental materials from others involved with her captivity to provide a complete picture of the events, including letters from the other surviving captive, Margaret Marble, and the Indian agent at the Yellow Medicine reservation and later Minnesota statesman, Charles E. Flandrau.

\textsuperscript{127} Derounian-Stodola, \textit{Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives}, xxvi.

\textsuperscript{128} Lee, “History of the Spirit Lake Massacre,” \textit{The Indian Captivity Narrative}, 363. Italics have been added to the quotation to denote where Lee’s writing switches to what is supposedly Gardner’s voice in his version of her captivity experience.

\textsuperscript{129} Sharp, \textit{History of the Spirit Lake Massacre}, 85.
The tone of Mary Schwandt’s captivity narrative changed from her first recounting in 1864 to the compilation published by the Minnesota Historical Society thirty years later. According to historian Kathryn Derounian-Stodola, the differences in recollection between Mary Schwandt’s captivity account in 1894 and from immediately after the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 “[illustrated] a compelling truth about war and memory: ‘How wars are remembered can be just as important as how they were fought and first described.’”

Mainstream Anglo American fears of sexual assault towards white women by Indigenous men mentioned in Schwandt’s 1864 version of her captivity failed to be included in any of the later publications of her accounts. Schwandt’s retelling of the “‘loathsome attentions’ of several Dakota ‘fiends,’ who ‘took me out by force, to an unoccupied tepee…and perpetrated the most horrible and nameless outrages upon my person’” made an emotional impact on a white settler audience immediately following the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 and their attitudes towards the Dakota community in Minnesota. Whether or not this passage’s absence is a result of Schwandt’s reluctance to talk about the incidents later in life when the Minnesota Historical Society’s 1894 compiled narratives for its project, or if Schwandt’s first editor, Charles S. Bryant, alluded to greater mistreatment of Schwandt than actually occurred, is unclear.

As historian Sarah Carter noted in her work on nineteenth-century Anglo women in Canada, “women are not always free to project their own images or identities, nor are they free to author their own texts fully.” This theme emerges in the publication of women’s captivity narratives from the Minnesota region between 1857 and 1862. Sarah Wakefield’s and Mary and

---

130 Derounian-Stodola, _The War in Words_, 105.


132 Carter, _Capturing Women_, xv.
John Renville’s accounts did not have much contact with male editors and publishers. As implied in Derounian-Stodola’s examination of captivity narratives from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, this would affect the vocabulary used and the framing of events in the narratives meant for white audiences. For example, Derounian-Stodola notes that of the accounts chosen for her analysis “at least five…were edited, written, published…[and] appeared under the names of, or within texts by, male writers who wrote with propagandist…agendas.”  

Where literary critique comes into play is in distinguishing where the captivity narrative account ends and fiction begins. Derounian-Stodola notes that for white settlers, tales of Indian captivity “[had] been part of the American psyche” since colonization began in the eastern United States. She goes on to say that “some scholars see [captivity narratives] as archetypal texts about the individual/imperial American experience.”

Gary L. Ebersole’s *Captured by Texts: Puritan and Postmodern Images of Captivity* examines how captivity narratives “have been used ‘as vehicles for reflection on larger social, religious, and ideological issues.’” Therefore, using the aforementioned captivity narratives of Abigail Gardner, Mary Schwandt, Nancy McClure, Mary and John Renville, and Sarah Wakefield as historical sources to chart socio-political changes in Minnesota offers a unique, gendered lens for viewing the North Star State’s history.

**Conclusion**

---

133 Derounian-Stodola, “Introduction,” *Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives*, xxv-xxvi. The reason for Wakefield’s decision to publish her private accounts of her captivity included exoneration of her memory from charges of disrespectability during captivity with Chaska and allegations of being an “Indian lover,” of having intimate relations with an Indigenous man during a time of exacerbated tensions between the white settler and Dakota communities in Minnesota.

134 Derounian-Stodola, *The War in Words*, 47.

Little Crow’s letter to Henry Hastig Sibley on September 7, 1862 outlined that the “reason [Dakotas]…commenced [the] war” was a string of broken promises made in treaties with the U.S. government, reservation agents “defraud[ing] [Dakotas] of [their] money,” and Dakota children “dying with hunger.” The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 occurred between Dakotas and their white neighbors in Minnesota. The latter’s popular media representations of horrors against white women by Indigenous men and continued land dispossession of Dakotas added to the tense socio-political environment leading up to the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Their portrayal of Indigenous actors in publications of white women’s captivity narratives during periods of tense Indigenous and Anglo American relations included some of those examined for this paper from the 1857 to 1862 period.

Women’s captivity narratives from the Minnesota region between 1857 and 1862 provide a unique view in the retelling of Dakota life as the area transitional from an unsettled frontier space to state of the Union. They record events and daily occurrences reflecting how Dakotas assimilated U.S. socio-cultural practices, either as an attempt to maintain their lands and lifestyles alongside the expanding white settler colonial project of the mid-nineteenth century or to become part of it. While some Dakotas acquired the trades and traditions of emigrating white settlers, outbreaks of violence occurred during the years 1857 and 1862 between neighbors in the Minnesota region because of grievances against the government and loss of livelihood.

The violence in Spirit Lake, Iowa had drawn some of Little Crow’s Mdewakanton-Dakota people in to assist with the pursuit of the Wahpekute-Dakota leader, Inkpaduta, and return of the white women captives, Abigail Gardner and Margaret Marble. The U.S. military force in place at Fort Ridgely’s cooperation with Dakotas from the Yellow Medicine reservation

during Abigail Gardner’s rescue in 1857 demonstrated that some intercultural relations in the Minnesota borderlands were positive.

Following its successful vote for statehood in 1858, Minnesota saw a great change to intercultural exchanges in the region since the first introduction of the fur trade in the 1600s. Treaty stipulations opened up the frontier and made former Dakota land claims available for purchase to white settlers. Attitudes between white and Dakota neighbors hardened as the former increased its presence on the latter’s lands. Forced changes to traditional Dakota society, as well as broken or belated promises made by the U.S. government, reservation agents, and traders, continually worsened relations between Dakotas and white settlers in the Minnesota region.

The Traverse des Sioux Treaty removed Dakotas from the land they called home for over two hundred years to make way for the continued westward expansion of the U.S. settler colonial project. Following the proclamation of the 1851 Traverse des Sioux Treaty many “newcomers from the settled East…viewed the state [of Minnesota] as the unsettled West.”\textsuperscript{137} The rate of Euro-American populations emigrating to recently opened lands in Minnesota increased during the early years of statehood.\textsuperscript{138} The state systematically expelled Dakotas from their lands to make way for the growing number of white settlers and immigrants moving westward for Minnesota farmland, industry, and opportunity.

The continued land dispossession and encroachment of white settlement upon Dakotas in Minnesota exacerbated existing grievances to such an extent that open warfare broke out between the two communities living in August of 1862. The U.S.-Dakota War, a symptom of a decades-long settler colonial process between whites and Dakotas living in Minnesota, ended

\textsuperscript{137} Derounian-Stodola, \textit{The War in Words}, 26.

with the military trials of civilian Dakotas and resulted in a thirty-eight man execution in
Mankato on December 26, 1862. Since Dakotas lived as a separate, sovereign nation fighting the
United States, Kathryn Derounian-Stodola points out that the accused Dakotas “should have
been considered ‘legitimate belligerents’ and ‘tried only on charges that they violated the
customary rules of warfare, not for the civilian crimes of murder, rape, and robbery.’”^{139}
Therefore, Derounian-Stodola believes that the military court tried and wrongly sentenced the
accused Dakota civilians.^{140} Regardless, the war left Minnesota divided and most of its
Indigenous citizens with little choice but to leave the state’s four-year-old borders.

After the U.S.-Dakota War, the U.S. government decided to suspend annuities Dakotas
would normally receive and redirected those funds towards depredations costs for those affected
by the violence of the war.^{141} This financial reprimand following the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862,
ironically, reflected the causes of it: continual removal of traditional Dakotas, westward
expansion of white settlement, failures of the agency system, lost annuity payments, and broken
promises from the Traverse des Sioux treaty. An Iowa newspaper article provides a common
attitude towards Indigenous Americans during this time period of Minnesota regional history:

The time has arrived when the tribes to which these marauders belong, must
receive bullets from Federal muskets instead of dollars from the Federal
treasury…It is difficult to distinguish the difference between a friendly and a
hostile Indian; and in the present state of feeling which exists in some sections
upon the frontier, an Indian — be he friend or foe — holds his life by a very
precarious tenure when within the range of a settler's rifle.^{142}

^{139} Derounian-Stodola, *The War in Words*, 42.

^{140} For an argument of how events such as the Mankato military trials reflected greater social trends in

^{141} “Depredation Claims,” from online resources of “The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862,” *Minnesota Historical

^{142} Editorial, *The Sioux City Register*, July 13, 1861.
The published interactions between white women and Dakota neighbors reflected socio-political changes in Minnesota between 1857 and 1862. Most accounts from the Indian captivity narrative genre emphasized fears awaiting women from American nineteenth-century society on the frontier from their Indigenous neighbors. The American military presence increased in the Minnesota region to deter future Indigenous violence upon the white settler community as whole and against the “virtue” of the pioneer woman specifically. The expulsion of most Dakotas from Minnesota to Crow Creek Reservation in South Dakota helped alleviate white settler fears of violence or humiliation that they had read about in captivity narratives. Thus, by 1865, Minnesota’s settler population could grow to 246,852, an increase from 168,972 in 1860.\footnote{Harpole and Nagle, eds, \textit{Minnesota territorial census, 1850} and \textit{Population schedules of the eighth census of the United States, 1860 Minnesota}.}

Historian Peggy Larson notes how “white men [tend] to record friction with the Indians only when violation of the settlers’ frontier code was involved.”\footnote{Larson, “A New Look at the Elusive Inkpaduta,” 26.} With events such as Abigail Gardner’s captivity holding onto the nineteenth-century American imagination, white leaders felt a military presence needed to be increased in the Minnesota region to deter future Indigenous American violence upon the white settler community and against the “virtue” of their ideal image of settler women.

The research for this paper included comparing captivity narratives by Abigail Gardner of the Spirit Lake attacks in 1857 to varying viewpoints recounting the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Their multifaceted accounts recorded white settler and military interactions protecting nineteenth-century ideals of westward U.S. society from the traditionalist society of Dakotas. These captivity narratives also show how Dakotas encountered changes in a new socio-cultural
environment brought on by increasing white settlement into the Minnesota borderlands region.

The selected works of these white women showed changes to Indigenous-Anglo American relations, as well as divisions within Dakota society, in mid-nineteenth century Minnesota.

It is because of the popularity of the captivity narrative, the first major genre of American literature, that the authors’ gendered retelling of events in Minnesota between the years of 1857 and 1862 is an important aspect for using this type of primary source materials as a record of historical memory. These women did not always have control over the editorial process of their narratives’ publication. Audiences attributed their own views onto the stories these women told of Indian captivity when published versions, written primarily by white men, made their way into U.S. popular culture and media. Spanning a publication period of nearly thirty years, these women’s captivity experiences reflected changing attitudes towards racial identity, social organization, and land rights during a period of great change in the Minnesota region between 1857 and 1862.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary

Manuscript Collections
Schmidt, Mary Schwandt Papers. Minnesota Historical Society.

Government Documents

Newspapers
St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat, April 1857.
The Sioux City (IA) Register, 1861-1862.

Published Works

**Secondary**

**Books**


**Articles**


**Dissertations and Theses**

**Websites**

https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1503055:

http://www.usdakotawar.org/.