

Chief Little Crow and the Unnecessary War of 1862

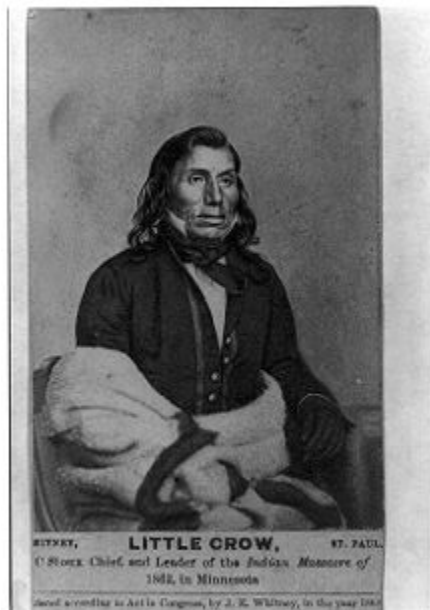
By Rick Wood


Editor's Note" In the latest issue of MF, Sept Oct 2010 on page 16 we have an article by Fern Marie Cloud who is the great-great granddaughter of Chief Little Crow.

Little Crow was Chief of the Dakota Sioux tribe near present day South St. Paul, Minnesota. His story and that of his people is one of betrayal, broken promises, racial hatred and murder at the hands of the US government and white settlers, but it did not have to be this way. Like many instances in the long battle to occupy the continent, the white settlers could have lived in peace with Little Crow and his people. But instead of love and respect as the gospel demands, the white settlers of the area responded with hatred and callous disregard for the needs of the Dakota Sioux. The result was a senseless war with atrocities committed by both sides. I present this story as one example from the thousands of "woundings" that Satan has inflicted on the hearts of the Native peoples of North America so that their hearts would be hardened and they would reject the truth of the gospel.

Under treaties signed in 1851, Little Crow and the Dakota Sioux agreed to leave their ancestral land for a reservation in exchange for promises by the US government for yearly appropriations of funds for food.

Little Crow tried to get along with the customs of the United States. He visited President James Buchanan in Washington, DC, replaced his native clothing with trousers and jackets with brass buttons, joined the Episcopal Church and took up farming. However, by 1862, stress built up in his community as cheating by traders came to light and Congress failed to pay the annuities mandated by treaty. As the tribe grew hungry and as food languished in the warehouses of the traders, Little Crow's ability to restrain his people deteriorated.



 Little Crow, ca. 1862

On August 4, 1862, about five hundred Dakota broke into the food warehouses at the Lower Sioux Agency. The agent in charge, [Thomas J. Galbraith](#), ordered defending troops not to shoot and called for a council. At the conference, Little Crow pointed out that the Dakota were owed the money to buy the food and warned that "When men are hungry, they help themselves." The Dakota complained, "This is our reservation, and yet you cut our grass for your animals. You cut down our trees for your building and your fire. You shoot our game, which we have very little of anyway. It's ours, you leave it alone. "

The representative of the traders, Andrew Myrick, replied, "So far as I am concerned, if they are hungry let them eat grass or their own dung." Within weeks, on August 17, 1862, a band of Dakota crossed paths with a group of white civilian settlers. The Dakota killed 5 of the white civilians and mutilated their bodies.

The tribe's need for food, and hatred for the white settlers led to the Dakota War of 1862. The Dakota first attacked Andrew Myrick's house; they killed him and stuffed his mouth with grass in revenge for his words. In spite of a number of victories, Little Crow's forces suffered a rout at the Battle of Wood Lake on September 23, 1862, and Little Crow was forced to flee to Canada

Deciding that the tribe must adopt a mobile existence, having been robbed of its territory, he returned to steal horses from his former land in Minnesota. On July 3 1863, while he and his son Wowinapa were foraging for berries a white settler shot and killed Little Crow and his son escaped. When the townspeople of Hutchinson, Minnesota discovered that the dead Dakota man was Little Crow, they mutilated and displayed the body. The settler received a standard bounty for the scalp of a Dakota, plus an additional \$500 bounty when it was discovered the remains were that of Little Crow. A small stone tablet sits at the roadside of the field where Little Crow was killed.