



BUGONAYGESHIG

[From a photograph belonging to the Minnesota Historical Society, which was taken by James S. Drysdale of Walker on April 7, 1899, at Boy Lake, on the Leech Lake Reservation. Bugonaygeshig is wearing a necklace made of Krag-Jørgensen shells, picked up after the battle. At the time when the picture was taken he was still a fugitive from justice.]

THE LAST INDIAN UPRISING IN THE UNITED STATES¹

During the month of October, 1898, there occurred at Leech Lake, in northern Minnesota, an Indian uprising which may well be called the last of the long series of bloody encounters in which the red man and the white man have clashed in the struggle for a continent. The war with Spain was then occupying the attention of everyone and a skirmish in the woods in an obscure corner of Minnesota passed with little notice. The incident is really of considerable historical interest, however, not only because of its local significance, but also because the causes were typical of those of many similar Indian uprisings and because it was the last time that a band of Indians actually engaged United States troops in battle and inflicted considerable loss upon them.

The fighting which took place between a disaffected band of Chippewa and a detachment of the Third Regiment United States Infantry² was of so hot a character that it recalls some of the encounters of Custer's day against the warlike Sioux. The shores of Leech Lake were the scene of the affair. This lake is a good sized body of water in the north central part of the state, the very heart of the lake region. About sixty miles west is Lake Itasca celebrated as one of the sources of the Mississippi River, and north about forty miles are Cass Lake and Lake Winnibigoshish. The Chippewa reservation prac-

¹ Read at a stated meeting of the executive council of the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, October 13, 1919. Dr. Roddis, the author of this paper, is a lieutenant commander in the medical corps of the United States Navy. The footnotes have been supplied by Miss Dorothy Heine-mann, editorial assistant on the staff of the Minnesota Historical Society, in consultation with the author.—*Ed.*

² The Indians living on the Leech Lake Reservation belong to the Pillager band of the Chippewa. They were often considered rather disorderly and degraded but the reports of the Indian agent of the White Earth Reservation, under whose jurisdiction they were until March 1,

tically surrounds Leech Lake, on the southwestern shore of which is the town of Walker, at the time of the uprising a place of about five hundred inhabitants.³ The country was covered with pine woods with occasional patches of hardwood timber, and was very sparsely settled. The lumberjack, the squaw man, and the backwoods farmer were the builders of most of the log cabins and little frame dwellings on the edge of "clearings" studded with stumps and girdled trees. It was one of our last frontiers and the men of those backwoods clearings were, for the most part, of that rough but picturesque type of pioneer which has filled so large a place in the American conquest of a continent.

Anyone who is familiar with the history of our Indian wars is struck by the almost monotonous sameness of their causes and yet it is surprising how little insight into their real origin is displayed by most of the writers on the subject. The reason appears to be that a certain distance in time is an almost necessary element in the development of a proper historical perspective. It is rare that the participant and contemporary has correctly judged the causes of historical events in which he was an actor or a spectator. There are exceptions to this but, in general, it may be said that Gibbon, for example, more correctly stated the causes of the decline of Roman power than

1899, indicate that in general the reverse was true. With the help gained from annuities they made their living largely from the profit of the sale of fallen timber, by hunting and fishing, and by the gathering of wild rice and berries. At the time of the outbreak they numbered about eleven hundred. The Indians immediately concerned in the uprising were popularly known as "Bear Islanders" from their residence on Bear Island in Leech Lake. There were in all, probably, not more than one hundred men and boys capable of bearing arms among them. The fighting took place on the shore just opposite the island. United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Reports*, 1893, p. 165; 1896, pp. 168, 172; 1898, p. 181; 1899, part 1, p. 209; "Report of the Major General Commanding the Army," in United States War Department, *Annual Reports*, 1: part 3, pp. 23-25; Frank R. Holmes, in *Minnesota in Three Centuries*, 4: 245 (New York, 1908).

³ *United States Census*, 1900, *Population*, 216.

any Roman could have done and it is most probable that the best history of the Great War will be written one hundred years hence.

Most of the writers on the Indian wars can be divided into two classes: those who clothed the red man in all the virtues and the white man in all the vices; and those who did just the reverse and described the Indian as a ruthless barbarian who should be exterminated. Both views are wide enough of the mark. The first group of sentimentalists, of whom Helen Hunt Jackson⁴ is a good example, portrayed the Indian as the noble savage who was being robbed of his patrimony by a callous government and an avaricious race. Now nobility of soul is not a thing peculiar to any race. There are individuals who are upright and virtuous and there are scoundrels, murderers, and thieves among any people. To say that the Indians were by right the owners of the North American continent is ridiculous. That such a land was by right the exclusive property of a few hundred thousand seminomadic hunters is a preposterous proposition; yet this was not only solemnly asserted by many writers, but was tacitly admitted by our government in many instances by the purchase of land from the various tribes.⁵

Opposed to this sentimental vein was the general opinion held by the frontiersmen and settlers that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian." This was a natural attitude for men to take who had seen their homes burned, their families and neighbors tortured and scalped by a fierce, barbarous, and cruel enemy. The frontiersmen heard with contempt not unmixed with hatred the sickly sentimentality indulged in by those who sat in safety at their firesides a thousand miles from danger. Yet this attitude of the borderer was almost as erroneous, although it is too much to expect that a man who has perhaps

⁴ *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government's Dealings with Some of the North American Tribes* (London, 1881).

⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, 1:80-88, 331-335 (New York and London, 1889).

found his home in ashes and the mutilated remains of his wife and children in his front yard could make an imparital estimate of those who committed such outrages. The harsh judgment of the border settler was as incorrect as the sentimental attitude of those who apostrophized the Indian as the "Noble Red Man."

The truth is that the Indian was not a bad man judged according to his lights but that those lights were not such as were shed by the torch of civilization, and hence his ideas of conduct and that of civilized man were too far apart to be easily reconciled. The Indian was trained from childhood through many generations to look upon the use of the scalping knife and torture stake as righteous and honorable ways of making war, just as he was trained to view horse-stealing as a creditable pursuit and all work but that of war or the chase as demeaning. To the white man, although war had some amenities, industry was honorable. It was these fundamental differences which were the real or, as one may say, the predisposing causes of our Indian wars. The actual inciting causes of the clashes between the two races were as various as the predisposing causes were unvarying. A horse-stealing expedition, a settler murdered by a drunken brave, the injustice and peculations of an Indian agent, the desire to possess a particular piece of land, or a few bottles of bad whiskey are some of the more common ones.

In the case of the Leech Lake uprising one of the inciting causes was, apparently, certain irregularities in regard to the disposal of the dead and fallen timber on the Leech Lake Reservation. The Indians complained bitterly that they were being defrauded by white speculators, and it seems that on account of these complaints the cutting of dead and fallen timber was stopped shortly after the outbreak, pending an investigation by the department of the interior.⁶ If the petition

⁶ *Correspondence Relating to Timber on the Chippewa Indian Reservations*, 23 (55 Congress, 3 session, *Senate Miscellaneous Documents*, no.

of October 22, signed by fifteen Pillager chiefs and one hundred and twelve of their tribesmen, is an index to the sentiment of the band, this action, also, incensed them, for in this petition they stated that they depended on the continuance of

70—serial 3731); Secretary of the Interior, *Reports*, 1898, pp. xxxi-xxxvi. The Indians' side of the case is stated in the following petition, which was published in the *Cass County Pioneer* (Walker), October 6, 1898.

Leech Lake Indian Reservation, Minn., Sept. 25, 1898.—To the Great Father: We, the undersigned chiefs and headmen of the Pillager band of Chippewa Indians of Minnesota, in council assembled, respectfully represent that our people are carrying a heavy burden, and in order that they may not be crushed by it, we humbly petition you to send a commission, consisting of men who are honest and cannot be controlled by lumbermen, to investigate the existing troubles here.

The great trouble that we have feared for many years has finally reached us, and if you do not reach out your strong arm and correct the existing evils by removing from among us the persons who have caused them, we will be destroyed.

The Chippewa Indians of Minnesota have always been loyal to the United States and friendly to the whites, and they desire this friendship to be perpetual.

We are reluctant about taking such forcible measures to protect our tribal property from spoliation, as existing circumstances warrant us in doing, but we trust that you will protect us when the truth reaches you, which we think could be only through a commission.

We now have only the pine lands of our reservations for our future subsistence and support, but the manner in which we are being defrauded out of these has alarmed us. These lands are now, as heretofore, being underestimated by the appraisers, the pine thereon is being destroyed by fires in order to create that class of timber known as dead and down timber, so as to enable a few squaw men and mixed bloods to cut and sell the same for their own benefit.

We are not opposed to cutting and selling the dead and down timber of our reservation, but we desire it to be conducted in such a manner that the benefits therefrom will accrue to all instead of a few, and that squaw men will be excluded from operating under the names of their wives and others, and that the rules shall be strictly enforced in relation to white labor.

We further ask that no one shall be allowed who has the right to cut and sell the said dead and down timber, to take a tract of more than 160 acres to cut and sell, instead of from 20 to 30 sections, as many have done, to the complete exclusion of many of the Indians.

Until two years ago only one person was employed to superintend the cutting of dead and down timber on our reservation, at a salary of \$200 per month and actual expenses during logging seasons only, but now six men are unnecessarily employed to do this work, and each one receives \$7.50 per day every day in the year. We protest against this wanton and unnecessary expenditure of our tribal funds, while so many of our people are suffering from the want of the necessities of life.

Finally, we ask that a searching investigation shall be made of the manner in which the pine lands of our reservation are being appraised and sold, and also the manner in which our tribal funds are being expended.

the logging operations during the winter to supply their families with groceries and clothing.⁷

Much resentment and bitter feeling had also been occasioned by the rather indiscriminate arrests of Indians by United States marshals, and the trouble at Leech Lake was really precipitated by the attempt of a deputy marshal to arrest certain Indians concerned in whiskey-selling practices on the reservation. On September 15 two Indians were arrested by deputy marshals and were rescued by their comrades. This was an open violation of the authority of the United States and warrants were issued for the arrest of more than twenty Indians who had taken part in the rescue.⁸ As the Indians assumed a rather threatening attitude the marshals asked for troops to assist them. It was believed that a show of force in the form of a detachment of regular troops would induce sub-

⁷ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 29, 1898, p. 2.

⁸ Conflicting stories of the hardships which Indians were forced to undergo when subpoenas were issued against them appeared in the newspapers of the time. It was rumored that when Bugonaygeshig was summoned to appear in Duluth to testify against an Indian accused of selling liquor his testimony was so unsatisfactory that he was dismissed without being paid the usual fee and as a result was forced to make his way back to Leech Lake as best he could without any funds. The official reports, however, present another account. In April, 1895, Bugonaygeshig was arrested by a deputy marshal for disposing of whiskey to an Indian, but was discharged for lack of evidence. In June he and several other Indians were subpoenaed to appear as witnesses in a case against an Indian accused of assault. When none of them appeared writs were issued and Bugonaygeshig was again arrested but was rescued by friends. Subsequently most of the Indians concerned surrendered. Three held out, however, among them Bugonaygeshig and Shobondayshkung. It was these two who were arrested on September 15. In commenting on the wholesale arrests of the Chippewa the commissioner of Indian affairs admitted, however, that, "Often wholesale arrests have been made solely for the sake of the fees which would accrue to the officials. Indians have been helped to obtain whiskey by the very ones who arrested them for using it. In some cases Indians carried off to court have been left to get back as best they could. The whole matter of arrests by deputy marshals had come to be a farce, a fraud, and a hardship to the Chippewas and a disgrace to the community." *Pioneer Press*, October 2, 1898; Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Reports*, 1899, part 1, pp. 133, 135.

mission. Twenty men of the Third Regiment United States Infantry were dispatched to Walker, but as the Indians showed no signs of yielding a request by telegraph was made for more troops and on October 4 eighty additional men of the Third Infantry left Fort Snelling for the scene of the trouble.⁹ They were commanded by Captain and Brevet Major Melville C. Wilkinson and were accompanied by Brigadier General John M. Bacon, commanding officer of the department of Dakota.¹⁰

Two days later the war and interior departments in Washington received a bombshell in the shape of the following telegram from the assistant adjutant general at St. Paul.¹¹

In answer to a telegram to your marshal at Walker, Minn., have received reply giving location of Gen. Bacon on mainland, southwest corner of Leech Lake and saying:

'Commenced fighting at 11:30 yesterday. Indians seem to have best position. Not moving.- Maj. Wilkinson, five soldiers and two Indian police killed; awaiting reinforcements.'

Press dispatches and private Western Union dispatches seem to support these statements. Reinforcements will doubtless reach the command this evening. Reliable information indicates Indians

⁹ The first detachment, under the command of Second Lieutenant Chauncey B. Humphreys, left Fort Snelling on September 30 and arrived at Walker in the evening of the same day. Two representatives of the Indian office, John H. Sutherland, agent at White Earth, and Inspector Arthur M. Tinker, also arrived at Walker on September 30. On the following day, October 1, a call was sent out for a council to be held on October 3. None of the Bear Islanders attended this council, but the other Indians claimed that their failure to appear was due to the bad weather which made it impossible for them to cross the lake. The council was adjourned, therefore, until the following day. The next morning Marshal O'Connor and Inspector Tinker went to Bear Island unarmed and held a conference with the Indians but failed to persuade them to surrender. The second detachment of troops arrived in Walker late in the afternoon of October 4. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Report*, 1899, part 1, p. 132; *Pioneer Press*, September 29 to October 5, 1898.

¹⁰ General Bacon was attached to the Eighth Regiment United States Cavalry but had temporarily relieved Brigadier General James F. Wade. Headquarters Department of Dakota, *Special Orders*, no. 136, October 3, 1898; Secretary of War, *Reports*, 1899, pp. 23, 24; *Army Register*, 1898.

¹¹ *Pioneer Press*, October 7, 1898, p. 1.

quiet in vicinity of engineer dams to the northeast. No report yet from Gen. Bacon. No need for further reinforcements unless to send to vicinity of Leech lake dam to cut off escape of Indians. Would suggest authority be given to utilize one battalion of Minnesota volunteers in case of need. Report just received of arrival of Col. Harbach's command at Walker about 4 o'clock.

The events which occasioned such a telegram had not been anticipated by the military. According to one of the newspaper correspondents who accompanied the expedition, General Bacon did not believe that there was likely to be serious trouble. The correspondents and United States Marshal O'Connor, however, did not agree with him and thought that an Indian outbreak was inevitable. It was fully decided that in any event a force should go to a point on the northwest side of the lake where Bugonaygeshig, one of the two Indians rescued from the marshals on September 15, and a number of his rescuers were known to be living.¹²

The force consisted of seventy-seven men from the Third Infantry under Captain Wilkinson and Second Lieutenant Tenny Ross, General Bacon, Acting Assistant Surgeon Henry S. T. Harris, Marshal Richard T. O'Connor, six deputy marshals, a few Indian policemen, and four newspaper correspondents, K. C. Beaton of the *Minneapolis Tribune*, Harry L. Knappen of the *Minneapolis Times*, A. F. Morton of the *St. Paul Globe*, and William H. Brill of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. The plan was to embark the troops in two small lake steamers, the "Chief" and the "Flora," and a barge which was to be taken in tow. The start was to be made at four o'clock Wednesday morning, October 5, but it was about six o'clock when the boats shoved off from the dock at Walker. General Bacon, Marshal O'Connor, several deputy marshals and

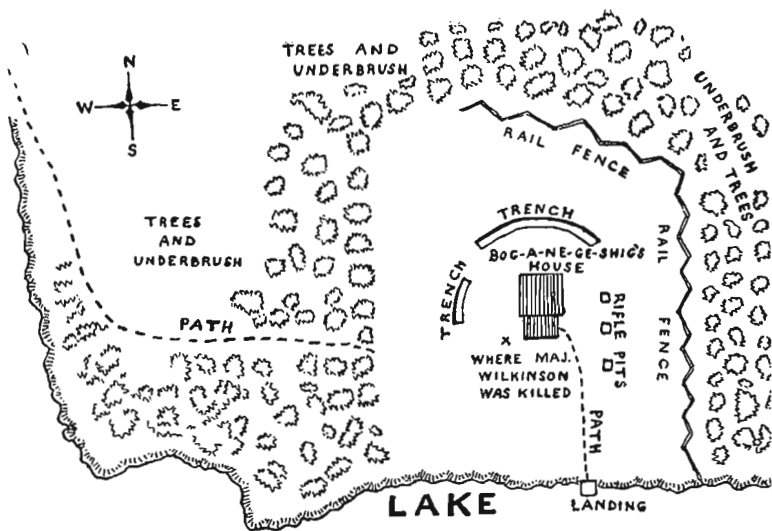
¹²The narrative of the encounter at Sugar Point is based on the accounts written by William H. Brill and published in the *Pioneer Press* for October 8 and 12, 1898, and on General Bacon's report to Adjutant General Corbin, dated November 1, which is published in part in the *Pioneer Press* for November 2, 1898.

twenty-five troops under Lieutenant Ross were on board the "Chief." On the "Flora" and the barge towed by her were Captain Wilkinson with the remainder of the troops, Dr. Harris, Deputy Marshal Sheehan,¹³ the Indian policemen, and the newspaper correspondents.

A trip of about three hours brought them to their destination, a peninsula jutting into the lake from its north shore and about opposite a wooded island known as Bear Island. Here was a little clearing of fifteen or twenty acres and a log house, the home of Bugonaygeshig. The point of land was about eight or ten feet above the level of the lake, with a gradual slope covered with shrubs and boulders. There were half a dozen Indians to be seen standing about the hut and as the boats drew near the shore one of these, wrapped in the traditional red blanket, came down the path to the landing in the most friendly manner.

The water shoaled so gradually off the point that the steamer "Chief" went aground about fifty yards from the shore and the "Flora," the smaller of the two vessels, was able to get only a few yards nearer. The barge was then poled into the beach and Captain Wilkinson, the four correspondents, the deputy marshals, and the soldiers from the "Flora" and the barge landed. The troops were formed near the landing and a third of them marched up and halted in front of the log house. The deputy marshals had already preceded them. One of the Indians near the hut, Mahqua, was identified by Deputy Marshal Sheehan as a dangerous member of the Pillager band who had taken a leading part in the rescue of the two Indians from the officers. Mahqua resisted arrest most vigorously, twisting the handcuffs from the hands of the marshal and attempting to hit him on the head with them. The marshal

¹³ Colonel Timothy J. Sheehan had served in the Fifth Minnesota Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War and in the Sioux Massacre of 1862. *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865*, 1:245-251, 734 (2d edition, St. Paul, 1891).



MAP OF THE BATTLE GROUND OPPOSITE BEAR ISLAND



MAP OF THE LOCALITY OF THE INDIAN HOSTILITIES

[Redrawn from sketches in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 6, 8, 1898.]

parried the blow, the irons bruising his right hand. Sheehan and the Indian grappled, several of the soldiers and deputy marshals joined the fray, and the Indian was overpowered, handcuffed, and sent on board the "Flora" under guard. While the arrest was being made five Indians armed with Winchesters left the house and made their way to the nearby woods, but, as none of them were recognized as persons wanted by the authorities, they were allowed to leave unmolested.

In the meantime General Bacon, Marshal O'Connor, and the remainder of the expedition landed and the clearing and its surroundings were examined. This clearing, which contained about twenty acres, was nearly square and was bounded on one side by the lake and on the other three sides by dense woods of maple and ash beneath which was a thick underbrush. The cleared land was overgrown with grass and weeds and dotted with stumps and a number of large maples, some girdled and others in leaf. To the south of the log house which stood in the center of the clearing was a patch of turnips and to the east side was a small field of potatoes. A rail fence covered with wild cucumber and other vines extended from the edge of the lake along the east and about three-fourths of the north side of the clearing. The green of the forest was already turning to the somber hues of autumn save that here and there the leaves of the soft maple and the sumac glowed like tongues of flame against the dark background of the forest.

After a brief consultation it was decided to scour the adjacent woods for Indians and a skirmish line of twenty-five men was sent out across the clearing and a short distance into the woods with orders to bring in any Indians seen. This searching party returned in about fifteen or twenty minutes, having seen two armed Indians, and those running along the shore at such a distance as to make their capture impossible.

There were three small Indian villages on the point and the next step was to visit these and see if any of the men wanted by the marshals might not be apprehended there or in the

nearby woods. Lieutenant Ross with about sixty men was left to guard the landing while the detachment of twenty-five soldiers, General Bacon, Captain Wilkinson, Marshal O'Connor, three of the deputy marshals, and the four newspaper correspondents set off on a "hike" across the point. They followed a path which, leading out from the west side of the clearing and along the shore of the lake, came to an inlet about fifty feet wide and two or three feet deep. This had to be forded. They all waded through with the exception of Deputy Marshal Sheehan who was strongly opposed to a wet-feet campaign and who turned back to the clearing. The others followed the path, which meandered through the woods for about two miles. Three Indian villages were passed and although numbers of old men, women, and children clustered about the log and birch bark huts looking at the soldiers, no young men and no arms were seen. After a short halt at the last village the party returned to the clearing.

Here nothing of any importance had taken place except that a brave who had taken part in the rescue of Bugonaygeshig had given himself up. He was sent on board the "Flora" under guard together with two sick men, a hospital steward, and Marshal O'Connor. Morton, the correspondent of the *Globe*, also returned to the "Flora."

It was now about 11:30 and the men were drawn up near the house and ordered to stack arms preparatory to dismissal for dinner. As nearly as can be made out, one of the recruit's rifles was fired accidentally as the men were stacking arms. This, according to most of the witnesses, was followed by two shots from the woods, evidently fired as a signal and then by a volley from the three sides of the clearing. The men without waiting for orders snatched their guns from the stacks and jumped for the cover afforded by the house, the stumps, and the irregularities of the ground. A soldier who was present told the writer that in half a minute after the first fire from the Indians there was not a man in sight. There were only



PART OF THE LEECH LAKE BATTLE GROUND
[From a contemporary photograph belonging to William H. Brill, St. Paul.]

nineteen veterans in the detachment, the remainder being raw recruits who had never been under fire before and some of whom scarcely knew how to load and fire their own rifles. That there was a sort of panic for a few minutes as stated by some of the eyewitnesses is not strange. The suddenness of the attack from the concealed foe would have shaken the courage of veterans. Encouraged, however, by the shouts and example of their officers and by the old soldiers in the force, the men quickly recovered themselves and formed a rough skirmish line in the shape of an irregular crescent, facing toward the wooded sides of the clearing and with their backs to the lake. Here from the best cover they could obtain they vigorously returned the Indians' fire. General Bacon with Captain Wilkinson took charge of the center of the line, Lieutenant Ross the left, and Deputy Marshal Sheehan, who was an old soldier, the right. General Bacon, rifle in hand, fought like a common soldier, while he continued with the other officers to encourage the men by word and example. All the officers exposed themselves freely to the Indians' fire, walking up and down the line to see to the disposition of the troops. Captain Wilkinson proved himself true to the traditions of the brave though profane old army as he walked along the line shouting: "Give it to them boys; give 'em hell! We've got 'em licked! Give 'em hell." He was in the full uniform of his rank and evidently drew the fire of the Indians for he soon received a slight flesh wound in the right arm and a few minutes later a bullet struck his left thigh just above the knee. He fell to the ground saying to Lieutenant Ross: "I'm hit, Ross, but not badly. Keep 'em at it." He was carried behind the log house where the hospital steward dressed his wound as the captain sat propped up against the wall. But nothing could keep him out of the fight and as soon as his wound was dressed he was back on the firing line. He had scarcely returned when a bullet struck him in the right side passing completely through the abdomen and he fell mortally wounded.

"Give 'em hell," he shouted to General Bacon as he breathed his last a few minutes after being hit.¹⁴

For a time both Indians and soldiers kept up a hot fire although neither side had much to aim at save the puffs of smoke. By the volume of fire from the woods it appeared that the braves were about equal in number to the soldiers. It was very easy to distinguish the rifle fire of the Indians for most of them were armed with Winchesters whose duller reports were punctuated by the sharp staccato crack of the soldiers' Krag-Jörgensens.

At the end of about half an hour the fusilade from the woods slackened and there was a short respite after which it broke out again more fiercely than before. Altogether there were six separate attacks or rather bursts of fire from the woods with short intervals between until about three o'clock in the afternoon when apparently the main body of the Indians withdrew. Occasionally a few shots would come from the woods but the main attack was over. It had lasted for three hours and a half and had resulted for the troops in the loss of one officer and five men killed and ten men wounded.¹⁵ There were plenty of narrow escapes among the remainder. A num-

¹⁴ The *Pioneer Press* of October 7, 1898, contains a brief sketch of Captain Wilkinson.

¹⁵ Those killed were: Captain Melville C. Wilkinson, Sergeant William S. Butler, and Privates John Onstead, Albert Ziebel, Edward J. Lowe, and Daniel F. Schwallenstocker. The wounded were: Sergeant Le Roy Ayres, and Privates Charles Turner, John Daly, George Wicker, Edward Brown, Jess S. Jensen, Gottfried Ziegler, Ermenigildo Antonelli, Charley Francone, and Julius A. Boucher. Adjutant general's records in the war department, Washington. See also Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Reports*, 1899, part 1, p. 134; and Secretary of War, *Reports*, 1899, p. 24.

The civilian losses were: one killed, an Indian policeman; and six wounded, among whom were Deputy Marshal Sheehan and Indian Inspector Tinker. At first it was believed and reported that the Indians suffered heavily, but as they carried away their dead and wounded none were seen. The Indians were very uncommunicative in regard to their casualties long after the engagement and what statements they did make were so conflicting that their actual loss is still problematical. According to some of the chiefs no Indians were killed and only two were wounded. Colonel Sheehan, however, considered the fact that six Winchesters were

ber had bullet holes in their clothing, one man had a bullet graze his chin, and another had a bullet take a piece of skin from the bridge of his nose. A bullet went through General Bacon's hat passing within an inch of his head. All from the general to the last recruit fought well and instances of individual gallantry were common. General Bacon, Lieutenant Ross, and Marshal Sheehan as well as Captain Wilkinson all showed great coolness and resolution, as did the noncommissioned officers, particularly First Sergeant Kelly who took charge of the center of the line after the fall of Captain Wilkinson. Sergeant Butler was killed by a bullet through the head while exposing himself in the carrying of a message. The hospital steward, Burkhard, distinguished himself by his disregard of danger while bringing in wounded and by rendering first aid to the wounded under fire. The surgeon, Dr. Harris, was equally devoted to his duty. He was on board one of the steamers when action began, having accompanied one of the sick sent to the steamer. He returned to the command again by rowing ashore under fire in a small skiff. Together with his hospital steward he upheld the highest traditions of his department for matter of fact courage and efficient performance of duty in the face of danger and difficulties.

At the commencement of the firing the steamers lying off the point were exposed to a sharp rifle fire from the Indians and in a short time they stood out from the shore and returned to Walker where no little excitement and consternation was caused by the report which they brought. Indian Inspector Tinker, Marshal O'Connor, and several of the deputy marshals were aboard, and their rather hurried return to Walker, leaving the soldiers to fight it out or be driven into the lake, caused a great deal of unfavorable comment and a good many broad hints that the courage of those aboard was rather questionable.

found after the engagement sufficient evidence that six Indians were killed. He believed that an Indian never dropped his gun until he was dead. *Pioneer Press*, October 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 1898; *Cass County Pioneer*, October 13, 1898.

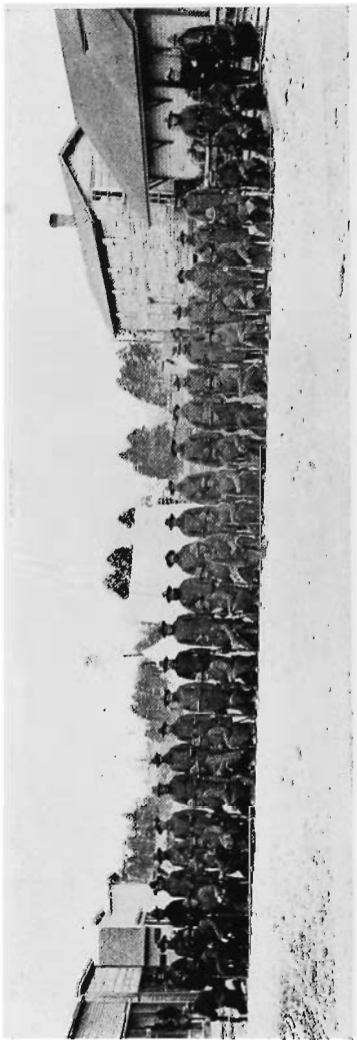
It seems, however, that both Inspector Tinker and the marshal were desirous of getting to town to hurry up reinforcements as well as to send food and blankets to General Bacon's detachment. The boats themselves were quite unable to render any material assistance as their sides and pilot houses were readily pierced by rifle bullets.

The night was an anxious one for General Bacon's men. The wounded were made as comfortable as possible and a trench and some rifle pits were dug and pickets posted. Several alarms took place and an Indian policeman was killed by a sentry who mistook him for one of the hostiles. The provisions were scanty and the men did not have their blankets. When morning came the little force was well intrenched and felt confident that it could easily repulse the Indians if again attacked. Most of the enemy had apparently left the peninsula but occasional shots from the woods proved that some of the Indians were still lurking there. A chance shot killed a soldier digging potatoes in the neighboring field, and the situation was hardly a pleasant one, particularly for the wounded. The arrival of a steamer from Walker with blankets and a quantity of food greatly cheered the men. The steamer was fired upon and consequently was able to take off only one of the wounded.

About 3:30 p. m., October 6, Lieutenant Colonel Abram A. Harbach with a force of two hundred and fourteen men and a Gatling gun arrived at Walker to reinforce the detachment at Sugar Point.¹⁶ About two hours later the steamer "Flora," returning with the dead and wounded of General Bacon's party, brought the report that fighting had practically ceased and that the steamer had established satisfactory communication with the shore. Indeed from about noon on the sixth no Indians were seen and only one or two shots were fired. The wounded were sent to the Walker hospital and the bodies of the dead were taken to Bailey's warehouse near the dock.¹⁷

¹⁶ Secretary of War, *Reports*, 1899, p. 24.

¹⁷ *Pioneer Press*, October 7, 1898; *Cass County Pioneer*, October 13, 1898.



DETACHMENT OF THE THIRD UNITED STATES INFANTRY

[From a photograph belonging to William H. Brill, St. Paul. The picture was taken in the streets of Walker a few days after the Battle of Leech Lake, in which the detachment participated.]

About noon on Friday, October 7, General Bacon's force embarked on the steamer "Leila D." arriving about five-thirty in the afternoon at the Walker dock where they were warmly greeted by the citizens and by the men of Colonel Harbach's command. The next morning the latter force went to the Indian agency five miles north of Walker where they pitched tents and went into camp. Runners were sent out inviting the Indians to come to the agency for a council to discuss the surrender of the braves for whom warrants had been issued and to investigate and settle the complaints in regard to the disposal of the dead and fallen timber. The United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs, W. A. Jones, arrived from Washington, October 10, and the next morning he and Father Aloysius, a priest who had great influence over the Indians, went to Bear Island, where they had a long and friendly conference with those chiefs of the Pillager band who were principally concerned in the outbreak.¹⁸

The news of the clash between the troops and the Indians spread like wildfire and resulted in a general alarm throughout the northern villages. The settlers and timber cruisers poured into the towns for protection and telegrams were sent to the adjutant general of the department requesting that troops be sent to Walker, Bemidji, Farris, Cass Lake, Deer River, and Aitken, while, at the same time the citizens of these towns armed and organized for the defense of their homes. At Bemidji something like a panic took place. The women were collected in the court house and two hundred armed citizens kept watch and ward. The arrival of detachments of troops in the villages soon quieted the alarm and caused the excitement to subside.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Cass County Pioneer*, October 13, 1898.

¹⁹ *Pioneer Press*, October 7-11, 1898. One hundred men of the Duluth Battalion, Fourteenth Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, were sent to Bemidji on October 9, 1898. Headquarters Department of Dakota, *Special Orders*, no. 138.

Troops were poured into the Indian country, not only for the sake of actual protection in case of an extensive uprising, but also to impress the Indians with the fact that recourse to arms was hopeless and that the government was determined to suppress any armed resistance to its authority. At the same time a thorough investigation of the Indians' complaints in regard to the disposal of the dead timber on their land was promised. Influenced by the tact of the Indian commissioner, persuaded by the chiefs and leading men of the tribe, which has always been conspicuously friendly to the whites, and also, probably, impressed by the military force brought to the scene, the Bear Islanders gradually acceded to the demands of the marshals and by the middle of October practically all the men for whom warrants had been issued were in the hands of the authorities. They were transferred to Duluth for trial. When their cases came up before Judge Lochren on October 21, all were found guilty and were given sentences varying from sixty days imprisonment and a fine of twenty-five dollars to ten months and one hundred dollars. On December 13, the Indian office recommended that the term of imprisonment be commuted to two months and that the fines be remitted, and finally on June 3, 1899, the pardons were granted.²⁰

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²⁰ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Reports*, 1899, part 1, p. 134; *Pioneer Press*, October 12, 23, 1898.



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