



Dakota War, 1862

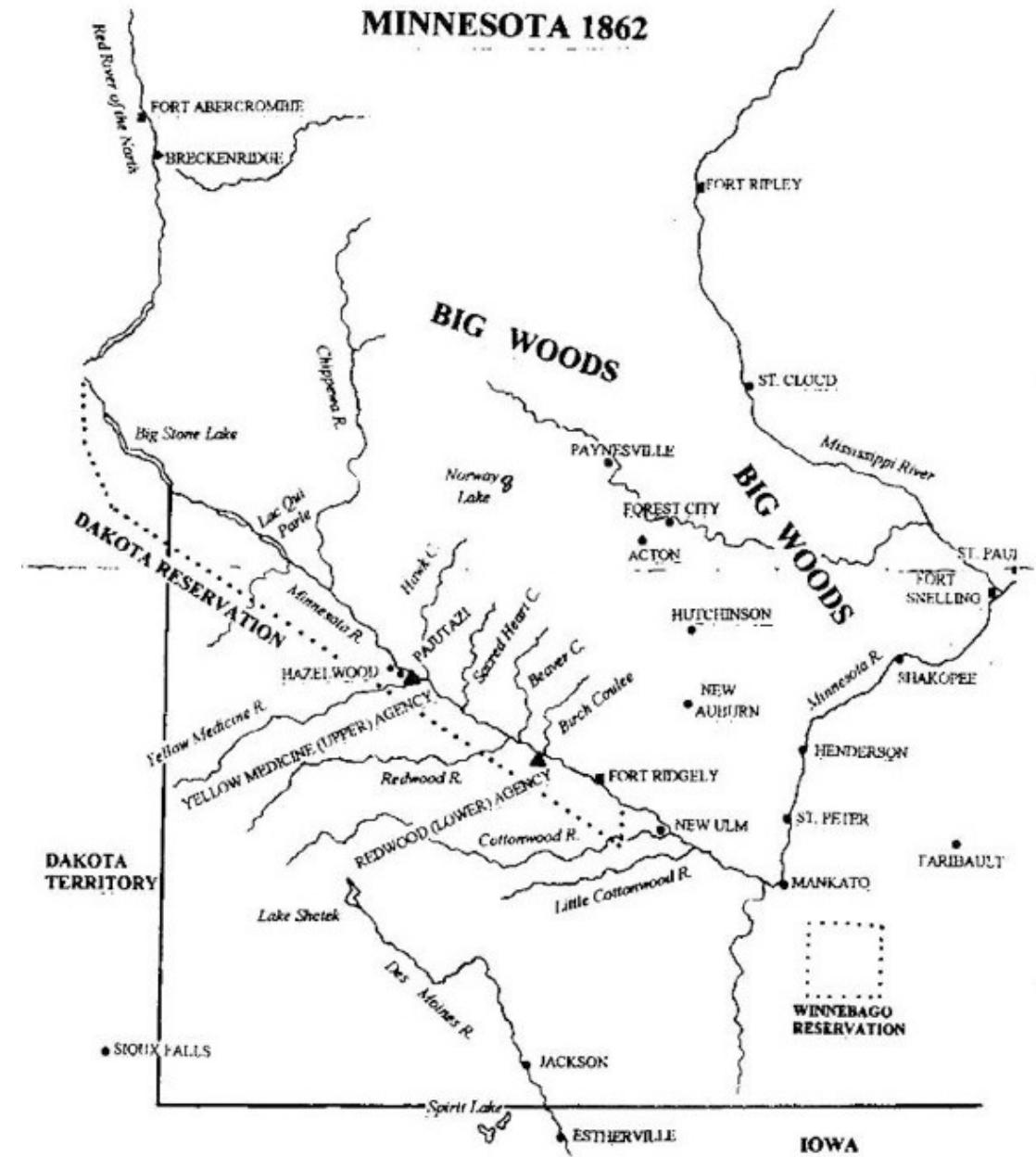
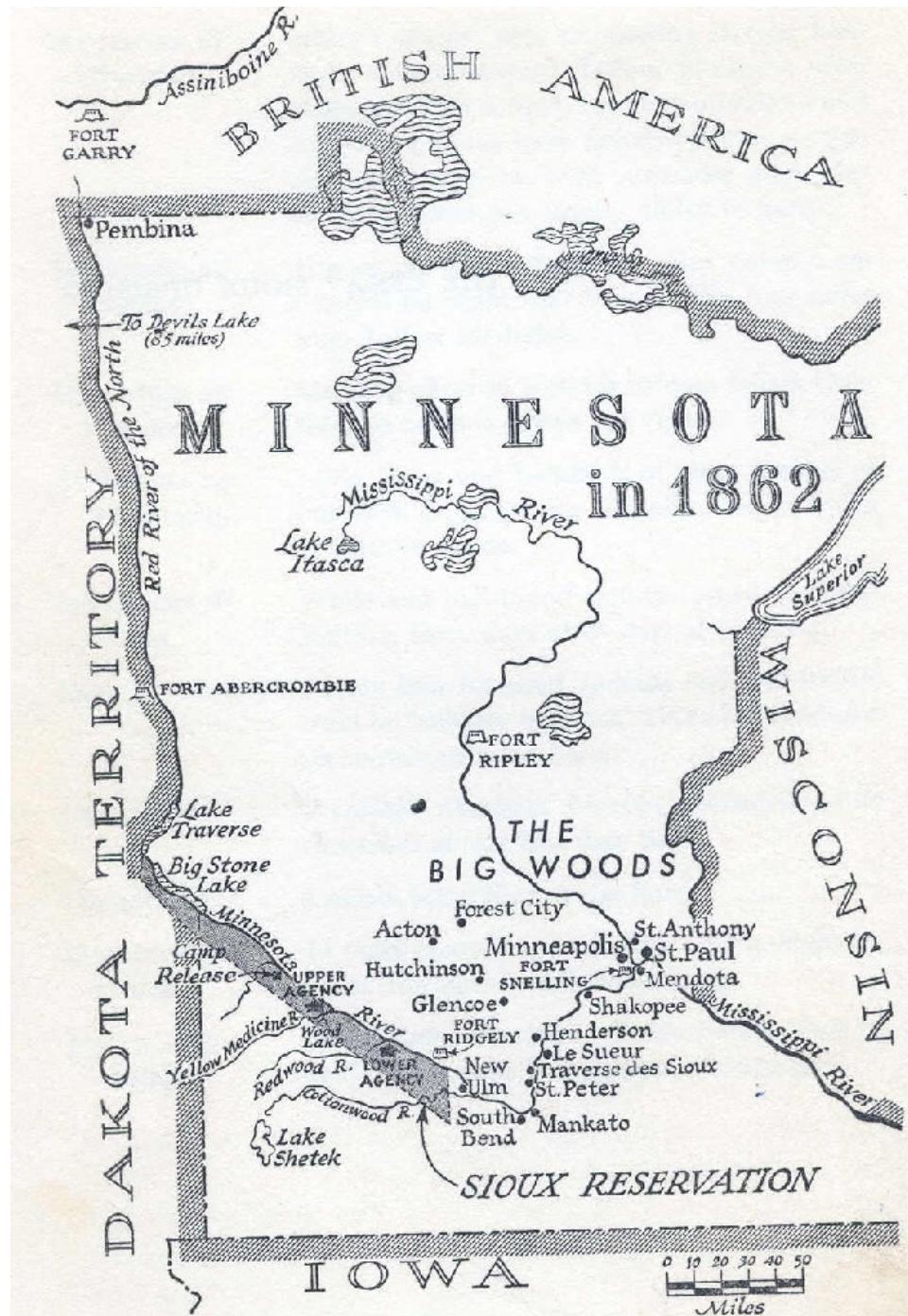


Dakota (Sioux) War: Background

- Point of clarification: the Dakota are part of the Sioux
 - Before Minnesota became a territory, racial divisions were not binary; many mixed race people
- Balance between Native peoples and white settlers changed quickly and dramatically over a decade
 - 1849: Minnesota Territory created (larger than what became the state)
 - About 5k settlers and 31k Native Americans
 - But overhunting had already placed many Dakota in a dire situation
 - 1851: Two treaties signed with the US government
 - Ceded 24 million acres of land, in exchange for guaranteed annual annuities
 - Essentially tricked; believed they would get the money upfront
 - Much of the money went to paying debts
 - Confined the Dakota to a narrow strip of land on the Minnesota River

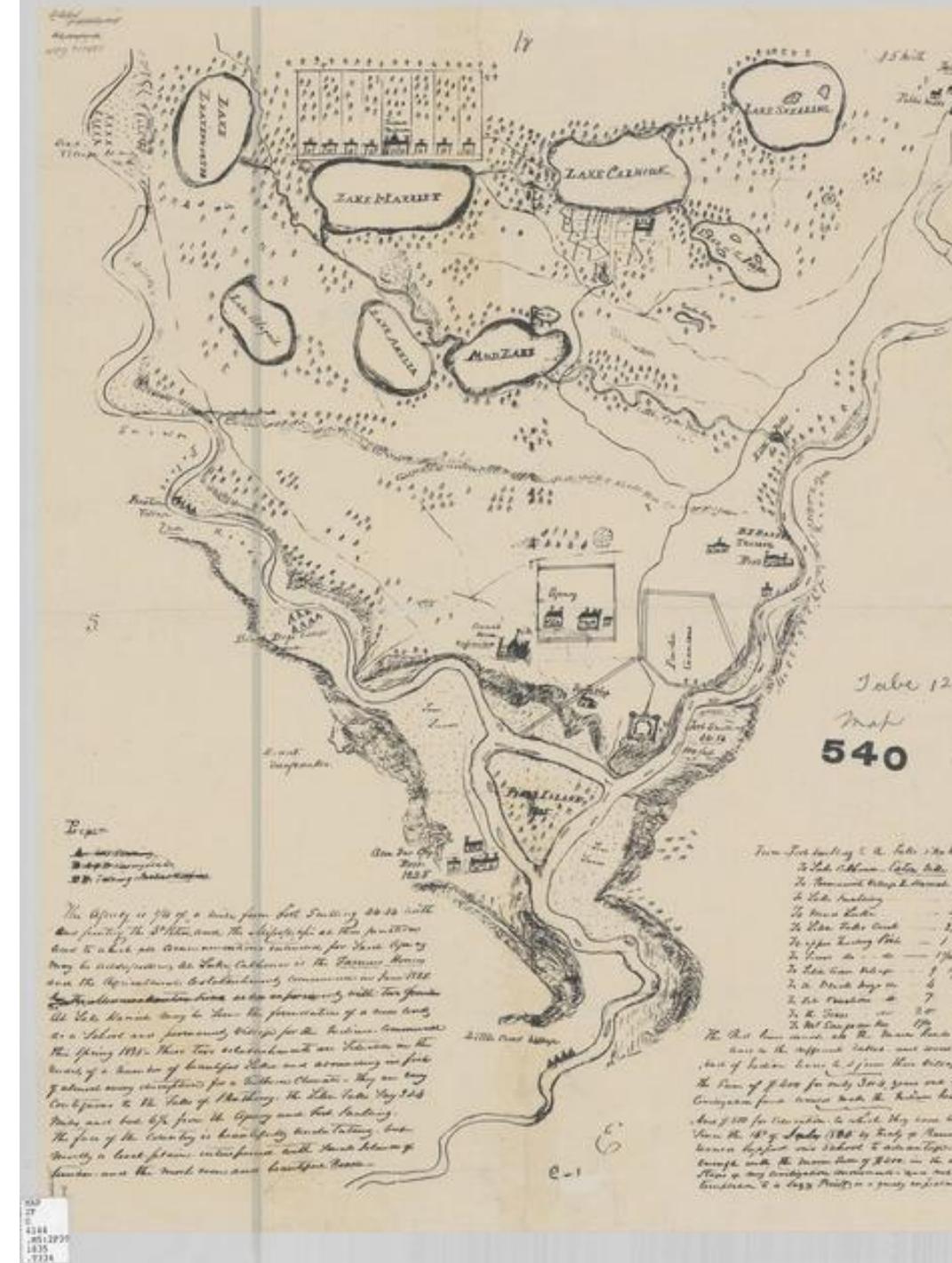
Background, cont.

- 1858: Minnesota became a state
- 1861: White settlers in the state outnumbered Indians five to one
- May 1862: Homestead Act
 - Paving the way for even more settlement
- By 1862, the Dakota were suffering from hunger
 - Settlers had further reduced the supply of game
 - There were crop failures
 - Corrupt Indian Bureau agents siphoned off resources
- Washington, D.C., distracted with the war
 - Not following through on promises of annuities



Fort Snelling

- Confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota River was an ancient and sacred place for the Dakota
- This is where the US had built Fort Snelling in 1819





Beginning of the uprising

- Situation dire; only a spark needed to ignite
- Acton incident (August 1862)
 - Group of young Dakota men murdered five settlers
 - Then confessed to Little Crow and chiefs
- Little Crow reluctantly decided to wage a preemptive war
 - He had been living in a house and farming; had cut his hair; was attending church
 - Very fatalistic about chances of military success
- The Dakota were divided; many groups want nothing to do with the uprising
- The white population entirely unprepared
 - And many white men off fighting in the Civil War, so communities were not well defended



Little Crow,
1810-63

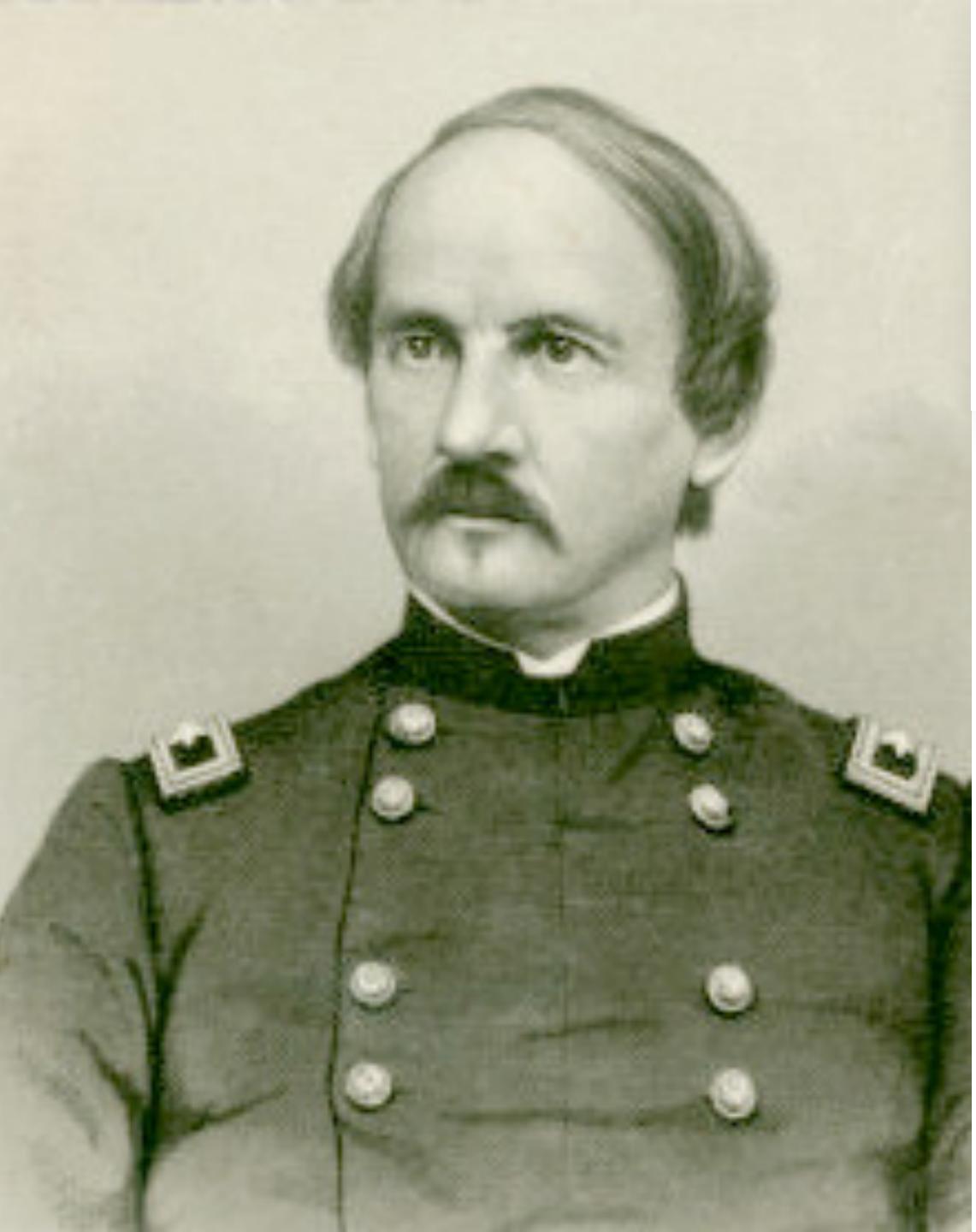


Andrew Myrick

- “Indian trader” married to a Dakota woman
- Operated several stores on Indian territory
- Refused to extend them further credit when the annuities did not arrive
- “Let them eat grass.”
- His body was found with his mouth stuffed full of grass







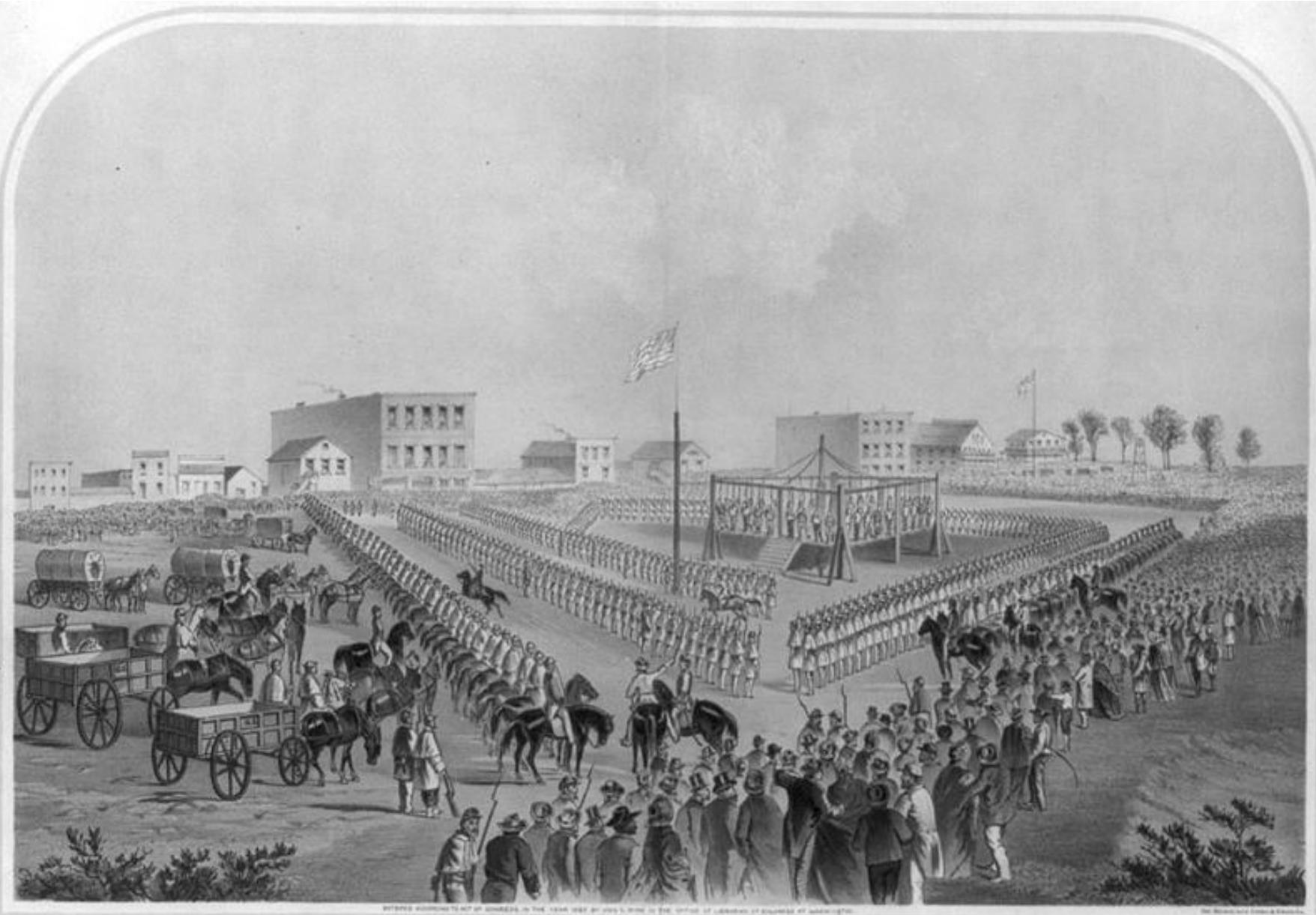
Fighting: August and September

- Among the first to be killed were white traders, government workers, newly enlisted soldiers
- Quickly followed by destruction of nearby settlements and homesteads
- White refugees fled to nearby towns
 - Between 400 and 1k settlers died
 - Majority were women and children
- Henry Hastings Sibley, former government, appointed to lead to volunteers
- Last battle on Sept. 23 at Wood Lake



Aftermath

- White retribution did not distinguish between those who supported/opposed uprising
- Gov. Alexander Ramsey: “the Sioux Indians of Minnesota must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the state.”
- Nov. 7-13, 1862: About 1600 Dakota women, children and older men were marched from the Lower Sioux Agency to Fort Snelling
- White settlers attacked them as they walked
- Women and children held at Fort Snelling in terrible conditions
 - Around a third of them died
- 303 men captured; Henry Sibley wanted permission to execute all
 - But Lincoln insisted on reviewing every case
 - In the end, allowed for the execution of 38
 - Largest mass execution in US history



EXECUTION OF THE THIRTY-EIGHT SIOUX INDIANS
AT MANICATO, MINNESOTA, DECEMBER, 26, 1862.

Lasting consequences

- Native people largely expelled from Minnesota and Iowa
 - Survivors went into Canada and the Dakotas
- Dehumanization
 - Fate of the bodies of executed men
 - Used for medical dissection
 - Including by founder of Mayo Clinic in Rochester
 - Parts of Little Crow's body display by the Minnesota Historical Society
 - Not returned to his descendants until 1971
- Politics of memory: episode was basically purged from history for a long time