LITTLE CROW'S SPEECH

The US-Dakota war began August 18, 1862 in south central Minnesota and ended near the town of Montevideo, Minnesota on September 23, 1862. The war was overshadowed by the Civil War but it ranks as a Native American conflict with white settlers with the largest number of casualties and it ended with the largest mass execution in United States history. The leader of the Dakota Indians was Little Crow who made an impassioned speech when he was asked to lead the Indians in their attacks on the settlers. This essay examines that speech and its historical basis.

In August 1862 there was confusion in the leadership of the Mdewakanton tribe. Little Crow had been replaced in a recent council because of his part in the signing away of the northern half of the reservation. He also had appeared to have become a farmer Indian; he was having a rather substantial house built for himself and he had land for farming.

The flashpoint itself for the 1862 war is generally considered to be the Acton incident on Sunday, August 17, 1862 (the day before the Lower Agency attack), when four Indians returning from a hunting trip north of the Minnesota River, attacked and killed five settlers in a small settlement near present-day Litchfield.

Most accounts of the "trivial egg-finding incident,"[1] say that four Dakota from the Red Middle Voice Rice Creek tribe, Brown Wing, Breaking Up, Killing Ghost, and Runs Against Something When Crawling, were returning from an unsuccessful hunt when they came to Robinson Jones' homestead in Acton Township. One of the Dakota took some hen eggs from one of Jones's chickens and, on a dare from one of his companions, he broke the eggs on the ground. They then went to Jones's house and demanded liquor but they were refused. A shooting contest was proposed and when both whites and Dakota had fired, the Dakota loaded their guns, but the whites didn't. The Dakota then turned their guns on the settlers. Robinson Jones was killed; as were Varinus Webster, a young man from Wisconsin visiting with his wife; Howard Baker and his wife, Ann, a relative of the Jones; and Clara Wilson, an adopted daughter of the Robinsons.

The four Rice Creek Dakota stole some horses and rode back to their village where they told Red Middle Voice what they had done. Red Middle Voice did not want to make a decision himself, so he and the members of the Rice Creek band went to Shakopee's village. The Rice Creek tribe had once been a part of Shakopee's tribe, so it wasn't unusual that they would seek his advice. Shakopee's camp was about a half mile south across the Minnesota River. The warriors of these two tribes, particularly the young braves, wanted a war. They believed that the killing of the white settlers in Acton would result in serious reprisals from the army and the only available option was to begin a general attack on the whites. But, again, Shakopee did not want to make that decision, so he and his braves and the Rice Creek tribe went to Little Crow's camp to consult with him. Little Crow's village, or the house that was being built for Little Crow, was another two miles down the Minnesota River, just east of the current Redwood Falls airport.

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[1] Carley, Kenneth. *The Dakota War of 1862*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1961, 1976, 7ff.

The events and discussion that were held at Little Crow's house are described differently, depending on the particular source. Up to about 1920, there were two different descriptions in the historical accounts of the US-Dakota War. One of the earliest versions was that the war had already been decided before the incident at Acton. Bryant and Murch[2] claimed that a council had been held two weeks previous and Little Crow and the Soldier's Lodge made plans for a war. Hughes also has this view in his history of the Welsh (1895, 67)[3]. In this version, on August 17th, late Sunday afternoon, a brief meeting of some of the Dakota, including Little Crow, decided to attack the Lower Agency the following day. The men who killed the settlers at Acton were not part of that meeting because they remained in Acton. Bishop, in the first edition of her book[4], also described a conspiracy to begin the war before the Acton incident. Even more recently, Waggoner in her account of the oral history of the Dakota[5] includes the presence of representatives from the Confederacy as part of that conspiracy to begin a war.

The other general version before 1920 was that a group of Dakota, including Red Middle Voice, Shakopee, and perhaps the four Dakota who had attacked the settlers at Acton, went to Little Crow's house at night, on the 17th-18th. They woke Little Crow and told him what happened and they asked him to lead them. Little Crow reacted to the news and their request with varying emotions, including anger for coming to him for leadership after they had voted him out of that leadership;[6] despite this, Little Crow accepted their request because he wanted to restore his position in the Mdewakanton tribe.[7] He said he feared for his own safety and he believed there was little chance for success[8] but he gave orders to attack the Lower Agency the following morning.[9] The motives and the descriptions of the feelings of Little Crow, however, did not require the testimony of someone at the meeting. Little Crow expressed those feelings during the war and in communications with Sibley. Little Crow's responses and motives were also assumed by some authors.

There was one account by someone who could have been present. In 1894 the first complete account of the war by a Dakota Indian was published. Big Eagle (Wamditanka) told his story to Return Holcombe who later wrote an account of the war which was published in Hubbard's history of Minnesota.[10] Big Eagle's account of the council at Little Crow's house was very brief. Big Eagle said that "a council was held and war was declared," and "Little Crow gave orders to attack the

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[2] Bryant, Charles and Abel Murch. *A History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians in Minnesota*. Cincinnati: Eickey & Carroll, 1864, 55-61.

[3] Hughes, Thomas E., David Edwards, Hugh Roberts and Thomas Hughes, ed. *History of the Welsh in Minnesota Foreston and Lime Springs, Ia.*, 1895, 67.

[4] McConkey, Harriet Bishop. *Dakota War Whoop*. Rev. St. Paul: Wm. J. Moses Press, 1864. 22-24.

[5] Waggoner, Josephine. *Witness: A Hunkpapha Historian's Strong-Heart Song of the Lakotas*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013, 282ff.

[6] Chief Big Eagle. "A Sioux Story of the War." Minnesota Historical Society. *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*. Vol. 6. St. Paul: Pioneer Press (digital), 1894. 200..

[7] Folwell, William. *A History of Minnesota*. Vol. 2. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1961, 240-241; Meyer, Roy W. *History of the Santee Sioux*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967, 117.

[8] Heard, Isaac V, D, The History of the Sioux War and the Massacres of 1862 and 1863. New York: Harper & Brothers , 1865, 60-61.

[9] Buck, Daniel. *Indian Outbreaks*. reprint. Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, 1904, 90-91.

[10] Hubbard, Lucius and Return Holcombe. *Minnesota in Three Centuries*. Vol. 3. Mankato, MN: Free Press, 1908; see also Minnesota Historical Society. *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*. Vol. 6. St. Paul, MN: Pioneer Press, 1894.

agency early the next morning and to kill all the traders."[11] Big Eagle does not indicate that he was at the council, although he says he spoke to the four Dakota who attacked the whites at Acton. Big Eagle fought in the war and he was present at New Ulm, Birch Coulee, Ft. Ridgely, and Wood Lake, He was tried by the military commission, convicted, and sentenced to hang. His sentence was commuted and he was imprisoned at Davenport. When he was pardoned, he went to the Santee reservation in northeastern Nebraska. Later he moved to Birch Coulee; he died in Granite Falls in 1906.

Up to 1920 there was no published record of anything else or a speech by Little Crow at that council, with the exception described below. None of the other accounts included any reference to words, speeches, or accusations of cowardly behavior, or the metaphors that later were ascribed to Little Crow in the council.

Then in 1927 Thomas Hughes published his *Indian Chiefs of Southern Minnesota*[12] Hughes (1854-1934) was a practicing lawyer in Mankato, but he was also a historian of southern Minnesota. In 1901 he published his history of Blue Earth County[13] and in 1927 his history of the treaty of Traverse des Sioux.[14] Hughes was a meticulous researcher; he kept extensive notebooks of his interviews and discussions he had with pioneers who were still alive in the late 19th century. The book on the Indian chiefs had a small press run according to Hughes in his correspondence. The book apparently went out of print quite quickly and remained so until it was reprinted by his grandson in 1969.[15]

Hughes described his purpose in writing the book, "to record and preserve the careers and lives of those picturesque and prominent chieftains of a race that has practically disappeared from southern Minnesota."[16] In Hughes' sketch of Little Crow, Hughes includes, as part of the meeting at Little Crow's house on the night of 17th-18th, Little Crow's speech. In a footnote, Hughes wrote that the speech was obtained from H.L. Gordon who had received it from Wowinape or Thomas Wakeman, Little Crow's son, "who had an excellent memory."[17]

In 1959 Oehler included a paraphrase of Little Crow's speech.[18] Oehler's footnote gives the source as Little Crow's son as supplied by Hughes. Oehler's history of the war is a somewhat flexible and created account that includes considerable dialogue that Oehler invented. The basics of Little Crow's speech are there, but there are considerable elaborations and additions by Oehler.

In 1960 a compilation of essays on Minnesota history[19] included an account of the beginning of the US-Dakota War by Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lawrence. Their account was edited by Eugene T. Newhall, apparently a reporter for the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*. Mrs. Lawrence was the

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[11] Chief Big Eagle, op cit. 389-390.

[12] Hughes, Thomas. *Indian Chiefs of Southern Minnesota (reprint)*. Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1969

[13] History of Blue Earth County and Biographies of its Leading Citizens. Chicago: Middle West Publishing Company, 1901.

[14] *Old Traverse des Sioux*. St. Peter: Herald Publishing, 1929.

[15] The Hughes archive files including his correspondence and notebooks are the in Lass Center at Minnesota State University Mankato.

[16] Hughes, op cit. Preface to the original edition.

[17] Ibid. 55.

[18] Oehler, C.M. *The Great Sioux Uprising*. New York: Oxford, 1959, 34-35.

[19] Lawrence, Mr. and Mrs. Harry. "The Indian Nations of Minnesota: The Sioux Uprising." In Lawrence M. Brings, ed. *Minnesota Heritage, A Panorama Narrative of the Historical Development of the North Star State*. Minneapolis: T.S. Denison, 1960, pp. 80-82.

daughter of John Wakeman (White Spider), the half-brother of Little Crow. John Wakeman's wife, Esther (Red Cloud Woman), was born in 1845. John and Esther Wakeman later had a child, Morning Star or Elizabeth Wakeman (1877-1966); she married Harry Lawrence. Thus, Elizabeth was the niece of Little Crow and she heard the account of the August 18th meeting from her mother, who was 17 at the time and may have been present at the council meeting.[20] There is no indication that it was translated, but the preface to the Lawrence account notes that it was "tape-transcribed" in 1958. The Lawrence version is similar, but not exactly the same as, the account in Hughes. There is no attribution of the speech to Gordon or to Hughes who got his account from Gordon. The article indicates that it is an exact, transcribed account given by Elizabeth who learned it from her mother, who had memorized the speech as it was spoken by Little Crow in 1862.

The account becomes more difficult when the March 12, 1962 the *St. Paul Dispatch* includes an interview with Mrs. Harry Lawrence. In that interview and account by Mrs. Lawrence there is no mention of the speech or the council held in Little Crow's house Sunday night (August 17, 1862). The Lawrences state that Little Crow was not the leader in the war and the Dakota who attacked the agencies and the settlers were Sisseton, not the Mdewakantons. The article also says that it was Big Thunder, not White Spider, who was the half-brother of Little Crow.

The Minnesota Historical Society appointed a committee referred to as the Sioux Uprising Committee of the Minnesota State Historical Society. The commission produced a 6-page pamphlet entitled "The Sioux Uprising." The publication date is not given, but it can be assumed that it was published around the anniversary of the US-Dakota war, perhaps in 1961. The account includes Little Crow's reluctance to lead the Dakota in the attacks on the white settlers, but it doesn't provide any details. The pamphlet has only one quote from the council: "Blood has been shed, the payments will be stopped and the whites will exact a terrible revenge because women have been killed, but I will lead you." If the words attributed to Little Crow in later publications had been widely known, and accepted, it would seem that the commission would have included something from that speech, rather than the sort of obvious words they included.[21]

At the time of the 100th observance of the US-Dakota War in 1962 there were a number of publications that included Little Crow's speech. A sort of "official version" was printed in the September 1962 issue of the *Minnesota Monthly*, the publication of the Minnesota Historical Society.[22] This became a standard and Anderson and Woolworth used it in their book (which also became a standard).

Although there are small variations in the various printings, there are two somewhat distinct versions. Version one has this statement: "…when you retreated from your enemies, he walked behind on your trail with his face to the Ojibways, and covered our backs as a she-bear covers her cubs." Version two reads "…when he ran away from his enemies, he walked behind on your trail with his face to the Ojibways, and covered your back as a she-bear covers her cubs." The "he" refers to Little Crow because he is talking about himself in the third person in this speech. This version says that the Dakota have retreated from their enemies and Little Crow walked behind and covered

[20] The genealogy of Little Crow is complicated. Diedrich has probably one of the more extensive descriptions: Diedrich, Mark. *Little Crow and the Dakota War*. Rochester: Coyote Books, 2006, 257-258.

[21] Sioux Uprising Committee of the Minnesota State Historical Society. The Sioux Uprising. s.l.: s.n, 1961?

[22] "Taoyateduta is not a Coward." *Minnesota History* 38:3 (September 1962), 115.

their retreat. Version two says that Little Crow ran from his enemies and walked behind the Dakota and covered their backs. The second version is in the original H. L. Gordon document and in the "official version." Version two is also in the Hughes book and in most of the other books that include the speech. The difference lies in identifying who retreated, Little Crow or the Dakota Indians. Nearly all the accounts have version one, including the Lawrence account, which is more favorable to Little Crow.

The second variation is an addition of text. Version one has these two sentences: "You are fools. You will die like rabbits." Version two has this expanded set of sentences: "You are fools. You cannot see the face of your chief, your eyes are full of smoke, your ears are full of roaring waters, Braves you are like little children—you are fools. You will die like the rabbits." Version two is in the original H.L. Gordon account, the official version, and Woolworth and Anderson, while version one is in most other books, including the Lawrence version and Hughes. The first variation could be a deliberate change in the wording to avoid indicating that Little Crow retreated. The second variation may be a simple transcription error, even though it is a rather large omission. This second variation is also strange because it occurs in Hughes' book and Hughes was careful historian. The first variation, if it is deliberate change, is even more unlike what Hughes would do, particularly as he says he copied it from the Gordon account. The archives of Hughes' letters and notes do not give any explanation why Hughes used a different version from what Gordon printed. Authors who followed Hughes and included Little Crow's speech may have preferred Hughes' account even if they had Gordon's original printing. Perhaps they wanted to give a more favorable view of Little Crow and thus used Hughes' version for the first variation and for the second variation they either used it or did not use it.

The speech of Little Crow was published first by H. L. Gordon in 1891. Because Gordon is not well known as a participant in the US-Dakota War, what follows is a biography compiled from various sources, including the archival material on Gordon at the Minnesota Historical Society. These archives include a typed autobiography of 54 single spaced pages with handwritten notes, dated September 4, 1915. The archives include copies of letters written to and by Gordon, a large scrapbook of newspaper clippings, copies of his poetry, and miscellaneous material. There are at least three published biographies.[23] A number of newspaper articles in Minnesota, and Pennsylvania newspapers provided information on his legal difficulties. Census reports and genealogical information provided locations for the Gordon family as it moved in Minnesota and California. Even "Find a Grave" included an obituary, which may or may not have come from a newspaper account. William Watts Folwell interviewed Gordon on July 9 and 19, 1910 and took notes of their conversation.[24]

[23] Phelps, Alonzo. Biographical History of the Northwest, Vol 4. Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1890; Arnold, W. J. The Poets and Poetry of Minnesota. Chicago: Rounds, Bock and Job Printer, 1864; Michell, N.H., Edward Neill, J. Fletcher Williams, Charles Bryant. History of the Upper Mississippi Valley, Explorers and Pioneers of Minnesota, Outlines of the History of Minnesota, State Education. Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society (digital), 1881. A history of Stearns County also includes a brief biography of Gordon (Mitchell, William Bell. *History of Stearns County Minnesota*. Vol. 1. Chicago: H.C. Cooper, (digital) 1915, 537-539)

[24] William Watts Folwell and family papers, "Notes on Minnesota History, Vol 87, Notebook 6, February 1910-July 1913.

Hanford Lennox Gordon was born on December 30, 1826, in Andover, New York. His father, William Gordon, was of Scottish ancestry[25] and worked in the lumber industry in New York and later in Pennsylvania. Hanford Gordon attended the common school but he also read and studied copiously on his own; he mastered several languages, including Latin, and he read extensively in the literary classics. After his schooling, he read law with his uncle and was admitted to the bar in New York when he was 21. His mother died when he was 18 and two years later he was appointed to the military academy at West Point. He declined that appointment on the advice of his father. He was offered a second appointment several years later to the Annapolis Naval Academy, but he again declined, on the advice of his uncle. Hanford Gordon did not want to be constrained by the military and he accepted the advice of his father and uncle.

In 1857 he and his father moved to Clearwater, Minnesota. His father was looking for a quiet place where he could relax and fish. Hanford was looking for new challenges. He returned briefly to New York where he met and married Sylvia Smith in 1858. In 1859 his daughter was born and he took his family back to Clearwater. He returned to the practice of law and also engaged in land speculation.

In 1861 when Lincoln called for volunteers, Gordon joined the first Minnesota in May 1861. He fought at Bull Run; he was captured but he escaped. He became ill, however, and was granted a medical disability discharge as a corporeal in December 1861. In 1862 he raised troops for the Second Minnesota battery, but when he was offered the commission of 2nd Lieutenant in the battery, he angrily refused because he believed he had been promised the rank of senior first lieutenant. He told Governor Ramsey, "You can go to hell with your Second Lieutenant." In 1864 he was again offered a commission in the First Regiment of the Minnesota Heavy Artillery, but again he declined because the commission was below what he believed he deserved. There is no record of him ever fighting in any volunteer or militia group during the US-Dakota War.

In 1865, after the war, Governor Stephen Miller commissioned Gordon as a Major General of the 2nd Division Minnesota State Militia. This was a paper militia which was intended to man the forts in Minnesota against Indian attacks, but Gordon finally had a commission he could accept.

The years 1860 to 1865 were important in the story of Gordon and Little Crow's speech. Later accounts, particularly those after his death, continued to refer to him as General Gordon; the stories noted his valuable work in the US-Dakota War and spoke of his friendship with Little Crow before the war. Some accounts also asserted that Gordon was made an honorary member of the Dakota Indians because of his friendship and advocacy. Folwell interviewed Gordon and recorded that Gordon made two visits with Little Crow, one at Monticello and the other at Kaposia (St. Paul). In the 1891 edition of his poetry,[26] he has this comment in an endnote. "I knew Ta-d-ya-te-du-ta (Little Crow) and from his own lips, in 1859-60 and 61, obtained much interesting information in regard to the history, tradition, customs, superstition and habits of the Dakotas, of whom he was recognized as Head Chief." In the interview with Folwell, Gordon mentions the clothing, the teepee, the food, but not much more about Little Crow. He also told Folwell that he took notes on his

[25] Most of the biographies, particularly those written by Gordon himself, note that William Gordon was a near relative of Lord Byron's mother.

[26] Gordon, Hanford Lennox . *The Feast of the Virgins and Other Poems*. Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1891, 341.

conversations with Little Crow and that he would soon donate those notes to the Minnesota Historical Society; he never did.

As to his friendship with the Dakota, in his autobiography he states that he "favored the restriction of suffrage, instead of giving it to all the 'untamed animals' born in America or imported from Europe or elsewhere." In his first published book of poems in 1878, Gordon describes the Indians as, "And the lazy, lousy 'Indians' came a-loafing around the lake,/And a-begging for a bone or bit of bread;/And the sneaking thieves would steal whatever they could take-/From the very house where they were kindly fed."[27] These are hardly endorsements for honorary membership in the Dakota tribe.

Gordon's relationship with the Dakota people may be Gordon's imagination or wishful thinking. He did, however, have a strong grasp of Dakota culture and the Dakota language. He acknowledges his dependence on Samuel Pond, Stephen Riggs, Henry Sibley, Edward Neill, and Mary Eastman. The poems he wrote and published were about the Plains Indians and they contain many references to legends of the Sioux and include names and terms for objects in the Dakota language. Gordon's knowledge of poetry and his ability to tell a story in poetry are also impressive. Even today, his poems still have a small readership and are readily available on the internet.

After the Civil War, Gordon continued to practice law with offices in St. Cloud, Buffalo, and Clearwater. In 1866 he was elected to the Minnesota state senate. In 1870 he sold his house and, because his wife was ailing, they moved to California. That didn't work out and the family returned to Minnesota. In 1875 he got into an altercation with an Irish saloon keeper in Monticello and Gordon shot the man. Both men were arrested. The man he shot spent six months in jail, but Gordon successfully claimed self-defense despite his chasing the wounded man down the street and shooting at him two more times. Gordon was a good lawyer. In 1876 Gordon went to Florida because of a lung condition he had. He returned to Minnesota two days before his wife died in March 12, 1877. In 1878 he married again to a divorced woman, Mary Thompson, who brought three more children to the family.

He and his family moved to Minneapolis in 1877. He continued to practice law and he became involved in the lumber business, acquiring timber land. His nephew joined him in these speculations and purchases. In 1883 he and his nephew were indicted and arrested in a "pine lands fraud"; apparently he obtained government forest land in a questionable manner. The charges were dismissed and he again escaped without punishment; later, he vilified his prosecutor, William Marshal, the former governor of Minnesota. Newspapers in Pennsylvania followed his legal problems.

During this time, he published five books, four of them contained his poems: *Pauline and Other Poems* (1878), *Legends of the Northwest* (1881), *Feast of the Virgins and Other Poems* (1891), *Indian Legends and Other Poems* (1910), *Laconics* (1910, 1912, 1913, 1914). Around 1887 he moved to San Jose, California, permanently this time. He purchased four ranches and planted fruit on three of them. He also apparently divorced his second wife and married again and this marriage also ended in a divorce. He got into another gun fight in California leaving a man wounded. Gordon was tried and this time he was convicted but he was freed after paying a fine. There were also charges at that

[27] Gordon, Hanford Lennox . *Pauline and Other Poems.* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1878, 124.

trial that he had raped a woman, but that charge was not proven. He moved to Los Angeles in 1894 and in 1910 he was living with one of his grandchildren, complaining that his divorced wife took all his assets. He spent the last years of his life railing against various national and local issues. He objected to the bronze lions on the new state capitol in St. Paul and suffrage to persons who were mentally unfit because they came from southern Europe or Asia. He did not approve of the annexation of the Philippines and Hawaii or the need for a statue of Alexander Ramsey in front of the Minnesota Capitol, and he disliked particularly the corrupt Democrats. Hanford Gordon died in Los Angeles on November 11, 1920.

Gordon left two stipulations in his will. The first stipulation made the newspapers across the country. He directed that his funeral cost no more than $100 and he was to be buried with his cheapest and poorest set of clothes in his possession in a plain redwood box free of sapwood, that there should be no funeral director, there should be no clergy in attendance, and he should be buried facing north.

The second stipulation was that none of his ex-wives or his in-laws should be buried in his plot.

Harford Gordon was an interesting character, similar to others that have graced the state of Minnesota. His autobiography is self-serving. He attributes his difficulties, legal, social, and personal, to other persons, such as politicians, over-zealous attorneys, ungrateful relatives, and anyone who didn't recognize his abilities. His tombstone in Los Angeles Rosedale Cemetery appears to have cost more than $100 and it states that Gordon was a poet.

Hanford Gordon also began part of the legend of Little Crow. In 1881 he published a book of his poems*, Legends of the Northwest*, which included a poem, "The Feast of the Virgins." The poem was based on a Dakota legend first recorded in Mary Eastman's 1849 book.[28] The legend has the title, "Wenona or the Virgin's Feast." The legend is the familiar story of a young and beautiful Dakota girl, Wenona, who is pledged by her brother, the chief, to be married to a man, Red Cloud, she did not love. Wenona tells her pledged husband that she does not love him and will not marry him. He retaliates by leading her out of the Virgin's Feast, a special gathering and dance for women before they are married. When Red Cloud does this, he falsely accused her before the tribe of not being a virgin. In her shame, Wenona kills herself (or in the alternate version in Gordon's poem, she kills Red Cloud and marries her true love). In this legend, Wenona is part of Little Crow's (the grandfather of the Little Crow of the war) village.

In this book of poetry, Gordon includes endnotes for words and names in the poem. The endnotes explain the meaning of a Dakota word or activity and an explanation of the name of a person in the poem. There are 86 endnotes for the poem, "The Feast of the Virgins." For example, one of the endnotes explains a Dakota name, "Wa-zi-ya," giving the pronunciation and identifying the name as a god of the north. The third stanza of the poem includes the name of Little Crow when he describes the preparation for a ball (Lacross) game (endnote numbers are indicated): "The leaders are chosen and swiftly divide/The opposing parties on either side./Wiwaste[5] is chief of a nimble band,/The star-eyed daughter of Little Crow,[6]/And the leader chosen to hold command/of

[28] Eastman, Mary. *Dahcotah Life and Legends of the Sioux Around Fort Snelling*. sl: sn, 1849. Mary Eastman was the legal wife of Seth Eastman, an artist and soldier at Ft. Snelling. Eastman also had a daughter with a Dakota wife. This daughter was the grandmother of Charles Eastman.

the band adverse is a haughty foe--/The dusky, impetuous Harptina,[7]/The queenly cousin of Wapasa.[8]"

The endnotes are a testimony to Gordon's understanding of the Dakota language and culture. In endnote #6 Gordon identifies Little Crow as the grandfather of Ta-o-ya-te-duta, the Little Crow that led the Dakota in the US-Dakota War. Gordon explains how Little Crow's grandfather was killed by the Ojibwa, how his father was killed by an accidental discharge of his gun, and how Little Crow was killed by the Lamsons near Hutchinson in July 1863. Gordon also acknowledges Sibley, Heard, and Neill for this information. That is the extent of the information provided in endnote #6 in this 1881 book.

Ten years later, in 1891, Gordon published his second collection of poems, *Feast of the Virgins and Other Poems*. "The Feast of the Virgins" is again printed, unchanged from the 1881 printing. There are again 86 endnotes unchanged from the 1881 printing, with one important exception. Endnote #6, on Little Crow, is now expanded to 4½ pages and it includes a photograph of Little Crow. Gordon changes the name of the Lamson to Lampson and he adds four pages that describe the events at Little Crow's house on August 18, 1862, and the speech that Little Crow gave. This is what Gordon included in that endnote:

> The hot-headed young warriors immediately demanded of Little Crow that he put on the "war-paint" and lead them against the white men. The chief severely rebuked the "young men" who had committed the murders, blackened his face (a sign of mourning), retired to his teepee and covered his head in sorrow.
>
> His braves surrounded his tent and cut it into strips with their knives. They threatened to depose him from the chiefship unless he immediately put on the "war-paint" and led them against the whites. They knew that the Civil War was then in progress, that the white men were fighting among themselves, and they declared that now was the time to regain their lost hunting-grounds; that now was the time to avenge the thievery and insults of the Agents who had for years systematically cheated them out of the greater part of their promised annuities, for which they had been induced to part with their lands; that now was the time to avenge the debauchery of their wives and daughters by the dissolute hangers-on who, as employees of the Indian Agents and licensed traders, had for years hovered around them like buzzards around the carcasses of slaughtered buffaloes.
>
> But Little Crow was unmoved by the appeals and threats of his warriors. It is said that once for a moment he uncovered his head; that his face was haggard and great beads of sweat stood out on his forehead. But at last one of his enraged braves, bolder than the rest, cried out: "Ta-o-ya-te-du-ta is a coward!"
>
> Instantly Little Crow sprang from his teepee, snatched the eagle feathers from the head of his insulter and flung them on the ground. Then, stretching himself to his full height, his eyes flashing fire, and in a voice tremulous with rage, he exclaimed:
>
> > Ta-o-ya-te-du-ta is not a coward, and he is not a fool! When did he run away from his enemies? When did he leave his braves behind him on the war-path and turn back to his tepees? When he ran away from your enemies, he walked behind on your trail with his face to the Ojibways and covered your backs as a she-bear covers her cubs! Is Ta-o-ya-te-du-ta without scalps? Look at his warfeathers! Behold the scalp-locks of your

enemies hanging there on his lodge-poles![29] Do they call him a coward? Ta-o-ya-te-du-ta is not a coward, and he is not a fool. Braves, you are like little children; you know not what you are doing.

You are full of the white man's devil-water (rum). You are like dogs in the Hot Moon when they run mad and snap at their own shadows. We are only little herds of buffaloes left scattered; the great herds that once covered the prairies are no more. See!—the white men are like the locusts when they fly so thick that the whole sky is a snow-storm. You may kill one-two-ten; yes, as many as the leaves in the forest yonder, and their brothers will not miss them. Kill one-two-ten, and ten times ten will come to kill you. Count your fingers all day long and white men with guns in their hands will come faster than you can count.

Yes; they fight among themselves-away off. Do you hear the thunder of their big guns? No; it would take you two moons to run down to where they are fighting, and all the way your path would be among white soldiers as thick as tamaracks in the swamps of the Ojibways. Yes; they fight among themselves, but if you strike at them they will all turn on you and devour you and your women and little children just as the locusts in their time fall on the trees and devour all the leaves in one day. You are fools. You cannot see the face of your chief; your eyes are full of smoke. You cannot hear his voice; your ears are full of roaring waters. Braves, you are little children--you are fools. You will die like the rabbits when the hungry wolves hunt them in the Hard Moon (January). Ta-o-ya-te-du-ta is not a coward: he will die with you.[30]

In 1910 Gordon published his final anthology of his poems, *Indian Legends and Other Poems*. "The Feast of the Virgins" was included along with the expanded end-note, but this time the end-note had the following added paragraph.

> Little Crow's sixteen-year-old son, Wa-wi-na-pe (One who appears like the spirit of his forefather) was with him at the time he was killed; but escaped, and after much hardship and suffering, was at last captured at Devil's Lake, in North Dakota. From him personally I obtained much information in regard to Little Crow's participation in the "Sioux War," and minutely the speech that Little Crow made to his braves when he finally consented to lead them on the war-path against the whites. A literal translation of that speech will be found further on in this note.[31]
>
> W a-wi-na-pe stood by the side of his father when the speech was made; like his father he had a wonderful memory. At my request he repeated the speech to me (in Dakota) on three separate occasions, and each time in exactly the same words with the same emphasis. The

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[29] This speech indicates an experience of Little Crow in fighting and defeating the Objiwa to prove Little Crow's courage. But there are some contradictions. Big Thunder, Little Crow's father, did not want Little Crow to succeed him as the chief of the Kaposia tribe because he believed his son "had very little good sense and … was addicted to drinking and other vicious habits." (Sibley, Henry. "Memoir of Jean Baptiste Faribault." Minnesota Historical Society. *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*. Vol. 3. St. Paul: The Society, 1880. 168-179.) Only because his preferred son was dead did Big Thunder turn over the chiefship to Little Crow. Holcomb (Holcombe, Return. *Minnesota in Three Centuries*. Vol. 2. Mankato, MN: Free Press, 1908, 180-181) also characterizes Little Crow's morals and disposition and he questions Little Crow's account of his raids: "He (Little Crow) was lazy and did not like to hunt and never went out with but one war party against the Chippewas." More recently, based on his study of the documents, Lettermann concluded that "there seems to be no evidence that His Red Nation (Little Crow) led any war parties after he took over the Kaposia band and became Little Crow V." (Lettermann, Edward J. *From Whole Log to No Log*. Minneapolis. MN: Dillon Press, 1969. 182).

[30] Gordon 1891, 342-344.

[31] This paragraph is taken from Gordon 1891, 341 and the 1910 book.

translation of that speech is as near literal as it is possible to make it. I was assisted in making the translation by Rev. Stephen R. Riggs.[32]

I knew Ta-o-ya-te-du-ta, and from his own lips, in 1859-60 obtained much interesting information in regard to the history, traditions, customs, superstitions and habits of the Dakotas, of whom he was the recognized Head-Chief.[33]

There is one more person in this story. Gordon always said that he received the exact words of Little Crow from Wowinape, Little Crow's son, who "had a wonderful memory." Based on the published versions of the poem and endnote #6, Gordon would have received the speech between 1881 and 1891. If Gordon had the speech before 1881, he would have included it in the 1881 book. There is no other way to interpret the lack in 1881 and the complete speech in 1891; Gordon had to have acquired the speech between 1881 and 1891.

Wowinape, or The Appearing One, was born in August 1846 at the Mdewakanton village of Kaposia; his father was Little Crow and his mother was Iron Cluster Woman. He moved with the other Dakota after the Traverse des Sioux treaty in 1853 to the Lower Agency on the Minnesota River. After the battle of Wood Lake he went with his family to the Dakota Territory. In the summer of 1863 he returned to Minnesota with his father, who was killed by the Lamsons on July 3 near Hutchinson. Leaving his father's body, Wowinape fled to Devil's Lake. He describes his journey: "I carried both guns as far as the Sheyenne river, where I saw two men. I was scared and threw my gun and ammunition down. After that I traveled only in the night, and as I had no ammunition to kill anything to eat, I had not strength enough to travel fast. I went on until I arrived at Devil's Lake, when I staid in one place three days, being so weak and hungry that I could go further. I had picked up a cartridge near Big Stone Lake, which I still had with me, and loaded father's gun with it, cutting the ball into slugs; with this charge I shot a wolf, ate some of it, which gave me strength to travel, and I went on up [to] the Lake until the day I was captured which was twenty-six days from the day my father was killed."[34]

Wowinape or Wa-Wi-Nap-a was captured by scouts from the expedition of some 4000 troops under the command of General Sibley. On August 10, 1863 where Sibley learned "of the capture of a youth of sixteen, wan and slender, and gave his name as Wa-Wi-Nap-a, which he pronounced very musically."[35]

Wowinape was tried by a military commission, similar in its procedures and composition to the commission which tried the 393 Dakota prisoners after the Battle of Wood Lake. In September 1863 Wownape was convicted of murder and sentenced to be hung.[36]

After the trial, however, his sentence was commuted and Wowinape was sent to Camp McClellan, Davenport, Iowa, with the other convicted Dakota. There, like many of the Dakota prisoners, he converted to Christianity and was given a pardon in 1866 when President Johnson pardoned all the

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[32] This paragraph was added in the 1910 book, but was not in the 1891 book.

[33] Gordon 1891, 341.

[34] Wowinape's account can be found in Anderson, Gary Clayton and Alan R. Woodworth, Eds. *Through Dakota Eyes*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1988, 282. It was originally published in the *St. Paul Pioneer,* August 13, 1863. "Statement of Wo-win-nap-pa, translated by Joseph de Marias, Jr.

[35] Wall, Oscar Garrett. *Recollections of the Sioux Massacre*. Lake City: The Home Printery, 1908, 278.

[36] The complete transcript of the trial of Wowinape can be found in Isch, John. *The Dakota Trials: The 1862-1864 Military Commission Trials of the Dakota*. New Ulm, MN: Brown County Historical Society, 2012.

prisoners at Davenport. Now known as Thomas Wakeman he went to the Santee Reservation in Nebraska. He moved to Flandreau, Dakota Territory, in 1871 where he married Judith Minnetonka in 1874. A group of Dakota had settled in Flandreau to escape the reservation system and they built a school and farmed the land. Thomas Wakeman became active in the Presbyterian Church and founded a Dakota branch of the Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association). The 1880 and 1885 censuses show Wakeman in Flandreau with his family. In 1885 he and his family moved to Redwood Falls where died quite suddenly on January 13, 1886, at the age of 40. He is buried in the Redwood Falls Cemetery. His account of the death of his father is basically the story he told at his trial.[37]

In order for Gordon to get Little Crow's speech, he would have had to meet with Wakeman between 1881 and 1885, because Wakeman died in January 1886. Steven Riggs, the third person in this story, according to Gordon, translated the speech as Wakeman told it. Riggs, after a long career as a missionary to the Dakota was living in Beloit, Wisconsin, with the family members who were still at home. Riggs died in Beloit on August 24, 1883, shortening the time Gordon would have to get the speech and get it translated; Riggs had been seriously ill before his death. He would have had to meet with Gordon and Wowinape and translate the speech in either 1881 or 1882. In those two years, Wakeman was in Flandreau, D.T., Riggs, ill, was in Beloit, Wisconsin, and Gordon was in Minneapolis. In order for the translation and recording of the August 18, 1862 council and Little Crow's speech, Riggs, Wakeman, and Gordon would have had to be in the same place on three separate occasions. Gordon said Wakeman told the account three different times, each time presumably translated by Riggs, and written down by Gordon. Wakeman did move around with his work with the Y.M.C.A., Riggs may have gone back to the Dakota Territory occasionally, depending on his health, and Gordon may have traveled to California in either year, stopping in the Dakota Territory. But they would have had to do this three different times. These meetings could not have been a chance meeting, where the three found themselves sitting around a table talking about the war. The three men knew each other, but there is no indication they were close friends or had much in common, or met regularly; in fact, considering what each did or did not do during the war, there is a good chance they were not particularly comfortable with each other. All three men were troubled by illness, with Wakeman and Riggs dying a year or two later and Gordon planning a move to California which he hoped will help his lung problems. The three men would have had to contact each other, discover they had something to share, decide on a date and place to meet, and then travel several hundred miles to a convenient meeting place, and then do this three times. It does not seem credible that in the space of only two years, these men could have met and recorded the events of August 18, 1862, and Little Crow's speech three different times. And that is assuming that Wakeman had indeed memorized and recited a story and a speech that occurred 20 years before.

[37] Thomas Wakeman or Wawinape had four sons and two daughters: Solomon (1871-1939), Ruth (1881-?), John (1880-?), Jesse (1882-1972), Ida (?-1980), and Alex (1878-?). John Wakeman was a Presbyterian preacher and Jesse succeeded his father at the YMCA. Alexander was an American Marine in France in WWI and later became a prominent practicing physician. Sometime around 1960, Thomas's daughter, Ida, learned that her grandfather's, Little Crow, bones were on display at the Minnesota Historical Society. After Little Crow had been killed in 1863, some of his remains were kept in private collections or at public museums. Around 1896 the remains, including the skull, the forearms, and the scalp lock, were put on display at the Minnesota Historical Society where Ida saw them. She returned home and told her brother, Jesse. Jesse went to the museum to see for himself, and then proceeded to demand the return of his grandfather's remains. In 1971 with the help of Alan Woolworth the Minnesota Historical Society returned the remains to the family and the remains were buried in Flandreau, South Dakota.

The only other account of the council and the speech comes from the Lawrences (see above). The date of when they acquired the story is not relevant because Mrs. Lawrence said it had been told to her by her mother who had been in the council meeting in 1862. It is not clear when Esther Wakeman, the mother, died. Census records after 1900 do not include her, so that may be an approximate date of her death. Except for the variations that Hughes also printed, her account is exactly the same as Gordon's account. Even granting that Wakeman and Mrs. Lawrence's mother had perfect memories, there is no way a translation by two different people will produce exactly the same text.

Although it is impossible to definitively establish or refute an event through a study of its absence, it is remarkable that none of the autobiographies of the principles—Gordon, Riggs—or books—Folwell—mention a meeting of the three of them or the discussion of the speech of Little Crow. In the extensive correspondence of Riggs, Gordon, and Folwell there is no indication of such a meeting or what would be an exciting discovery of a historical event such as the council that declared war on the white settlers in 1862. In an interview published in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* (October 24, 1897) the reporter included a rather lengthy biography of Little Crow and an interview with Little Crow's brother, John Wakeman. John Wakeman describes in some detail his activities during the US-Dakota War and discusses the events leading up to the war. In this interview and biography there is no mention of any meeting the night before the attack on the Lower Sioux Agency and nothing of the alleged speech by Little Crow.

There have been doubts about the provenance of Little Crow's speech. Goodman after reviewing the sources noted above, was skeptical about the speech and suggested "it might have been made up."[38] Meyer, who was sympathetic to the Dakota, also had doubts calling the account, "an imaginative construction."[39] Russo noted that Little Crow's words may not have been exactly as Wowinape remembered them.[40] Gordon published the speech after the Wakeman and Riggs were dead and they were the only two persons who could have confirmed or denied the existence of that speech. The Lawrence account could have been picked up from Hughes, who got his account from Gordon. Thus there is a reasonable, and strong, doubt that Little Crow ever spoke those words.

This does not suggest that Little Crow did not say anything when he was asked to lead the Dakota people in the war or that Wowinape was not present when his father made those comments. But like Chief Seattle's speech, Little Crow's speech may be apocryphal. The provenance of that speech lies in the inaccessible recesses of history.

Today, in the writings of Anderson, Diedrich[41], Swain, and others[42], Little Crow has become a mythical hero, leading his people in an impossible war with nobility and courage. The speech that

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[38]Goodman, Robert. "Reasonable Expectations." *Minnesota Heritage* 7 (2013), p. 9; see also footnote 13.

[39] Meyer, 1967, page 117, footnote, 14.

[40] Russo, Priscilla Ann. "The Time to Speak is Over: The Onset of the Sioux Uprising." *Minnesota History* (1976): 97-106.

[41] Diedrich in his extensive treatment of Little Crow (*Little Crow and the Dakota War* 2006) mentions Little Crow's speech but refers to another of his writings, *Dakota Oratory* (1989). Diedrich prints the speech and gives as his sources Antoine Campbell (*Mankato Weekly Record*, Feb. 21, 1863), Holcombe (Big Eagle), and Robertson, both of whom are referenced to the annual compilations of the Minnesota Historical Society. Diedrich also refers to Gordon's account. Other than Gordon, none of these references refer to or include any part of the alleged speech by Little Crow. Padding the sources and including references that do not reference the event is hardly a good process for documenting an event.

[42] Perhaps the final "authentication by frequent publishing" is that the quote is found in the *Dictionary of American History,* a standard text for research (Shafer, Leah R. "Speech of Little Crow on the Eve of the Great Sioux Uprising (18 August 1862)." *Dictionary of*

Little Crow allegedly spoke was filled with noble words and picturesque metaphors and it was meant to inspire his fellow tribesmen to engage in a noble war. When that war failed and the supposed author of those compelling words was gunned down while picking raspberries, the hagiologists of Little Crow had a great story. Anthony was wrong: Sometimes the good that men may do lives after them; the evil is often interred with their bones.

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American History. Ed. Stanley I. Kutler. 3rd ed. Vol. 9. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2003. 243-244. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 16 Feb. 2015.)