

Minnesota Historical Society Sites & Museums

Please call ahead or go to visitmnhistory.org for hours and admission.

Alexander Ramsey House (pages 12 & 13)
St. Paul • 651-296-8760
Birch Coulee Battlefield (pages 24 & 25)
Morton • 507-697-6321
Fort Ridgely (page 23)
Fairfax • 507-426-7888
Harkin Store (page 22)
New Ulm • 507-354-8666
Historic Fort Snelling (pages 8 & 9)
St. Paul • 612-726-1171
Lac qui Parle Mission (page 15)
Watson • 320-269-7636
Lower Sioux Agency (pages 18 & 19)
Morton • 507-697-6321
Minnesota History Center (pages 4 & 5)
St. Paul • 651-259-3000
Sibley House Historic Site (pages 10 & 11)
Mendota • 651-452-1596
Traverse des Sioux (page 16)
St. Peter • 507-934-2160
W. W. Mayo House (page 22)
Le Sueur • 507-665-3250

Charles A. Lindbergh Historic Site
Little Falls • 320-616-5421
Comstock House
Moorhead • 218-291-4211
Folsom House
Taylors Falls • 651-465-3125
Forest History Center
Grand Rapids • 218-327-4482
Historic Forestville
Preston • 507-765-2785
James J. Hill House
St. Paul • 651-297-2555
Jeffers Petroglyphs
Comfrey • 507-628-5591
Marine Mill
Marine on St. Croix • 507-697-6321
Mill City Museum
Minneapolis • 612-341-7555
Mille Lacs Indian Museum
Onamia • 320-532-3632
Minnehaha Depot
Minneapolis • 651-228-0263
Minnesota State Capitol
St. Paul • 651-296-2881
North West Company Fur Post
Pine City • 320-629-6356
Oliver H. Kelley Farm
Elk River • 763-441-6896
Split Rock Lighthouse
Beaver Bay • 218-226-6372

The Signing of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, by Francis Davis Millet, 1905. On view in the Governor's Reception Room at the Minnesota State Capitol.



Minnesota State Monuments

Since 1873, Minnesota has officially established State Monuments. The list below features monuments related to people or events connected to the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Many other local and county markers, monuments and statues are found across Minnesota.

Monument to the Living
Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul
Native American Monument
Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul
Ness Lutheran Cemetery State Monument
Ness Lutheran Cemetery in Meeker County
Acton State Monument
Near Grove City in Meeker County
Lundborg-Broberg State Monument
Lebanon Swedish Cemetery in New London
Guri Endreson Rosseland State Monument
Viktor Lutheran Cemetery, near Willmar
Traverse des Sioux State Monument
Traverse des Sioux Historic Site in Nicollet County
Jackson State Monument
Ashley Park in Jackson
Defenders' State Monument
Center Street in New Ulm
Milford State Monument
On County Road 4 near Essig
Captain John S. Marsh State Monument
Fort Ridgely Cemetery
Eliza Miller State Monument
Fort Ridgely Cemetery near Fairfax
Fort Ridgely State Monument
Fort Ridgely State Park near Fairfax
Chief Mouzoomaunee State Monument
Fort Ridgely Cemetery near Fairfax
Birch Coulee State Monument
Overlooking Highway 19 at Morton
Schwandt State Monument
On County Road 15 near North Redwood
Lake Shetek State Monument
Lake Shetek State Park, Murray County
Sioux Indians State Monument
Overlooking Highway 19 near Morton
Wood Lake State Monument
In Wood Lake State Wayside near Granite Falls
Camp Release State Monument
Camp Release Memorial State Wayside near Montevideo

 Minnesota
Historical Society
345 Kellogg Boulevard West, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102-1906



Explore the War that
Changed Minnesota.
Forever.

THE US-DAKOTA WAR OF 1862



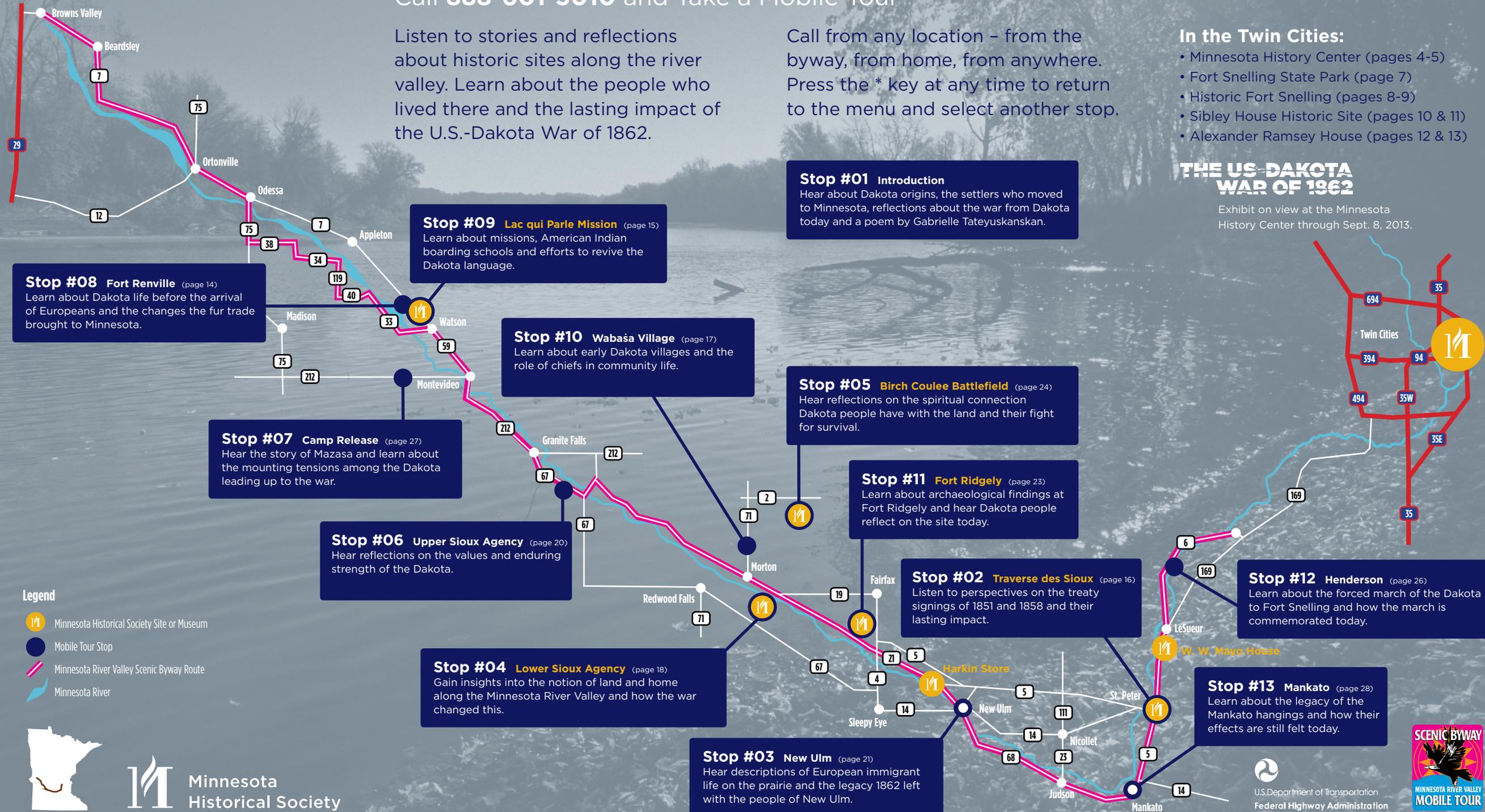
 Minnesota
Historical Society

Table of Contents

- 2 U.S.-Dakota War of 1862: A Brief History
- 4 Minnesota History Center
- 6 *Bdote*: Dakota Birthplace
- 7 Fort Snelling State Park
- 8 Fort Snelling: U.S. Outpost and Military Launching Point
- 10 Henry H. Sibley's Role in the War
- 12 Alexander Ramsey's Role in the War
- 14 Fort Renville
- 15 Lac qui Parle Mission
- 16 Traverse des Sioux
- 17 Wabaša Village
- 18 The First Attack: Lower Sioux Agency
- 20 Upper Sioux Agency
- 21 Attacks on New Ulm
- 22 W. W. Mayo House
- 22 Harkin Store
- 23 Attacks on Fort Ridgely
- 24 Birch Coulee Battlefield
- 26 Wood Lake Battlefield and Monument
- 26 Henderson
- 27 Camp Release
- 28 Execution in Mankato
- 30 The War's Aftermath
- 32 Learn More

Foldout

Map of Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway and Mobile Tour



Tour the Minnesota River Valley

Call **888-601-3010** and Take a Mobile Tour

Listen to stories and reflections about historic sites along the river valley. Learn about the people who lived there and the lasting impact of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862.

Call from any location – from the byway, from home, from anywhere. Press the * key at any time to return to the menu and select another stop.

In the Twin Cities:

- Minnesota History Center (pages 4-5)
- Fort Snelling State Park (page 7)
- Historic Fort Snelling (pages 8-9)
- Sibley House Historic Site (pages 10 & 11)
- Alexander Ramsey House (pages 12 & 13)

THE US-DAKOTA WAR OF 1862

Exhibit on view at the Minnesota History Center through Sept. 8, 2013.

Stop #08 Fort Renville (page 14)
Learn about Dakota life before the arrival of Europeans and the changes the fur trade brought to Minnesota.

Stop #09 Lac qui Parle Mission (page 15)
Learn about missions, American Indian boarding schools and efforts to revive the Dakota language.

Stop #10 Wabaša Village (page 17)
Learn about early Dakota villages and the role of chiefs in community life.

Stop #07 Camp Release (page 27)
Hear the story of Mazasa and learn about the mounting tensions among the Dakota leading up to the war.

Stop #06 Upper Sioux Agency (page 20)
Hear reflections on the values and enduring strength of the Dakota.

Stop #04 Lower Sioux Agency (page 18)
Gain insights into the notion of land and home along the Minnesota River Valley and how the war changed this.

Stop #05 Birch Coulee Battlefield (page 24)
Hear reflections on the spiritual connection Dakota people have with the land and their fight for survival.

Stop #11 Fort Ridgely (page 23)
Learn about archaeological findings at Fort Ridgely and hear Dakota people reflect on the site today.

Stop #02 Traverse des Sioux (page 16)
Listen to perspectives on the treaty signings of 1851 and 1858 and their lasting impact.

Stop #03 New Ulm (page 21)
Hear descriptions of European immigrant life on the prairie and the legacy 1862 left with the people of New Ulm.

Stop #12 Henderson (page 26)
Learn about the forced march of the Dakota to Fort Snelling and how the march is commemorated today.

Stop #13 Mankato (page 28)
Learn about the legacy of the Mankato hangings and how their effects are still felt today.

- Legend**
- Minnesota Historical Society Site or Museum
 - Mobile Tour Stop
 - Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Route
 - Minnesota River



The Minnesota Historical Society invites you to learn about the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, a profoundly important chapter in state and U.S. history. Use this guide to discover related historic sites and travel the Minnesota



River Valley Scenic Byway while listening to a mobile tour.

Visit www.usdakotawar.org for an overview of the war, links to resources, oral histories and a listing of events statewide.

Thank You

The Minnesota Historical Society is grateful to the many people who are helping to share the history of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Special thanks to all those who provided advice and input into the creation of an exhibition about the war and to the dozens of people throughout Minnesota, the Midwest and Canada who shared their stories through the Oral History Project. The audio interviews are available at www.usdakotawar.org and are included, in part, in the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byways Mobile Tour.

U.S.-Dakota War of 1862: A Brief History

While the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 lasted just six weeks, the issues surrounding its cause began years earlier and its aftermath still affects Minnesota and the nation to this day.

The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 was the result of disastrous U.S. government Indian policies. Years of broken treaty promises to the Dakota, combined with an exploding settler population, created conditions ripe for conflict. Months before the war, George E. Day, a government official from Washington, D.C., visited Minnesota and wrote a report to President Abraham Lincoln documenting the rampant corruption associated with Indian Affairs, but no action was taken. In August 1862, when the Dakota were facing starvation after late annuity payments and the refusal by government agents and traders to release provisions, four young Dakota men killed five settlers near Acton. In the days that followed, tribal factions attacked the Lower Sioux Agency, Fort Ridgely and white settlements in south central and southwestern Minnesota.

Troops under the command of former Minnesota governor Henry Sibley were sent to support Fort Ridgely and the settlers, ultimately defeating the Dakota forces and bringing the war to a close by the end of September 1862. The fighting lasted six weeks. Between 400 and 600 white civilians and soldiers and an unknown number of Dakota were killed.

On December 26, 1862, 38 Dakota men were hanged in Mankato in the largest mass execution in U.S. history. More than 300 had initially been condemned to death, but President Lincoln commuted the sentences of 264 men to prison terms.



Taoyateduta's (Little Crow) wife and children at Fort Snelling, ca. 1863. Mdewakanton Chief Taoyateduta led Dakota forces during the war.

When the fighting ended, some Dakota fled west or into Canada. About 1,700 non-combatant Dakota and mixed-race people who surrendered—mostly women, children and the elderly—were held over the winter of 1862-63 in an internment camp at Fort Snelling, suffering severe hardship. As many as 300 died. In 1863, those who survived were forcibly moved to reservations in the Dakota Territory and what is now Nebraska. Punitive expeditions in 1863 and 1864 resulted in hundreds of Dakota being killed or forced further westward.

Visit www.usdakotawar.org for more information, a timeline of the war and related programs.



Settlers escaping from the fighting, Aug. 21, 1862.

Minnesota History Center

St. Paul • 651-259-3000

www.minnesotahistorycenter.org

THE U.S.-DAKOTA WAR OF 1862

On view through Sept. 8, 2013

“The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862” is an exhibit that recounts the Minnesota war that tore apart lives, families and the Dakota nation. Visitors can view

documents, images and artifacts related to the war, as well as hear heart-wrenching stories and learn about the broken treaties and promises that led to this disastrous chapter in Minnesota history. There are many, often conflicting, interpretations of events related to the war.

The exhibit includes multiple viewpoints, as well as historical and contemporary voices. Visitors are encouraged to review the evidence and determine for themselves what happened and why, to discuss the exhibit’s content and to share their comments.

A Meeting of the Grandfathers, by Lyle Miller. Painted for the Minnesota History Center's exhibit "The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862."





Bdote: Dakota Birthplace

In Dakota culture, a confluence of rivers is known as “Bdote.” The Mississippi and Minnesota River confluence near Fort Snelling is considered by many to be the center of Dakota spirituality.

In a series of treaties in the early- and mid-1800s, the U.S. government coerced the Dakota into ceding land—including this area—in exchange for promises of cash, goods, education and reservations. These promises were not always kept.

“This is our ancient homeland, the birthplace of the Dakota people.”

Dr. Clifford Canku, Sisseton-Wahpeton, Oral History Project Participant

Above: Fort Snelling as seen from the Minnesota River, by Henry Lewis, ca. 1850.

Fort Snelling State Park

St. Paul • 612-725-2389

www.dnr.state.mn.us/fortsnelling

Park is open year-round, 8 a.m.–10 p.m.

In 1962, the area surrounding the junction of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers was designated as Fort Snelling State Park. Located within the park’s boundaries are the sites of historic Dakota villages, a treaty location and the internment camp, called by some today a concentration camp, where Dakota survivors were held following the war. Information in the Thomas Savage Visitor Center and interpretive signs along the trail to Pike Island highlight this area’s importance to the Dakota.

“At that point it was starting to settle that their lives were going to be changed forever and there wasn’t a thing they could do about it.”

Dallas Ross, Upper Sioux, Oral History Project Participant



Historic Fort Snelling: U.S. Outpost and Military Launch Point

St Paul • 612-726-1171
www.historicfortsnelling.org

Once the farthest outpost of the United States, Fort Snelling was built in the 1820s to serve the fur trade. In the early 1800s, Europeans hunted and traded with the Dakota. In 1851, the settler population in Minnesota was about 7,000. By 1858, it had grown to 150,000. As Dakota were pushed onto smaller reservations of land, tensions mounted. When the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 broke out, Fort Snelling served as a launching point for U.S. soldiers.

Top: Internment camp at Fort Snelling, by photographer Benjamin H. Upton, ca. 1862. Right: Historic Fort Snelling today.

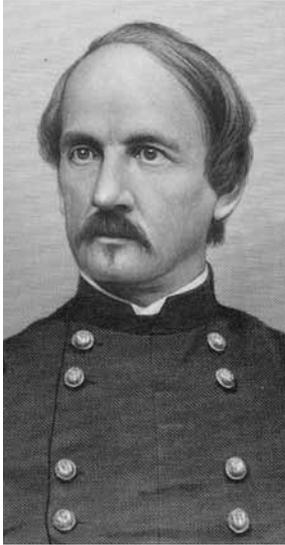
Fort Snelling Today

Today, the reconstructed fort is a National Historic Landmark and interprets stories throughout the fort's 120-year active history. Historic Fort Snelling offers visitors an orientation film with an overview of the war. Visitors may call 877-411-4123 from the fort's Round Tower and Half Moon Battery for recordings about the Indian Agency located near the fort in the 1800s and the internment camp, or concentration camp, where about 1,700 Dakota were held after the war.



Henry H. Sibley's Role in the War

Born in 1811, Henry Hastings Sibley came to Minnesota in 1834 as the regional manager of the American Fur Company. He established close ties with the Dakota community, fathered a daughter with Red Blanket Woman, and often hunted with Dakota men. Because of his connections, Sibley also played an important role in treaty negotiations.



Col. Henry H. Sibley. Engraving by J. C. Buttre, ca 1862.

By the early 1840s the fur trade was dying. Treaties had reduced prime fur hunting territories for the Dakota, and the demand for furs declined due to changing fashion trends. In 1853, Sibley liquidated his holdings and began investing in land at Traverse des Sioux, Mendota, Hastings and Saint Anthony Falls.

From 1858-60, Sibley served as the first governor of Minnesota. Soon after the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 began, Sibley was given command of the state's military response. After the war, he led punitive expeditions against the Dakota who had left Minnesota for the western territories.

"They made promises in those treaties that they never intended to keep. They had browbeaten and coerced the Indians to the point where they didn't have much choice."

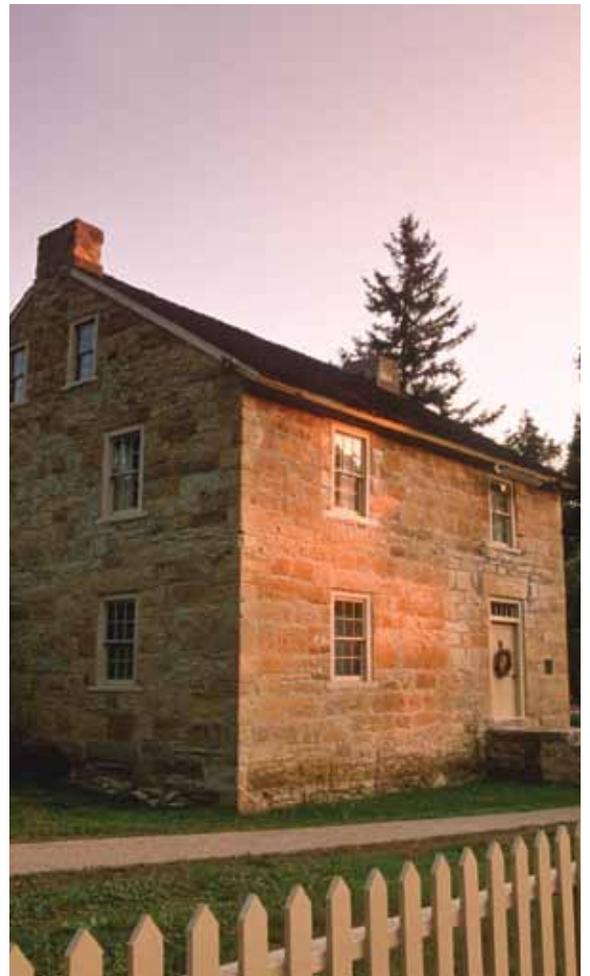
Dr. Elden Lawrence, Sisseton-Wahpeton, Oral History Project Participant

Sibley House Historic Site

Mendota • 651-452-1596
www.mnhs.org/sibleyhouse

The restored home of Henry H. Sibley and other historic buildings are located near Historic Fort Snelling, just east of Highway 55, on Sibley Memorial Highway/Highway 13. Visitors can learn about Sibley's interaction with the Dakota before, during and after the war.

The restored home of Henry H. Sibley.

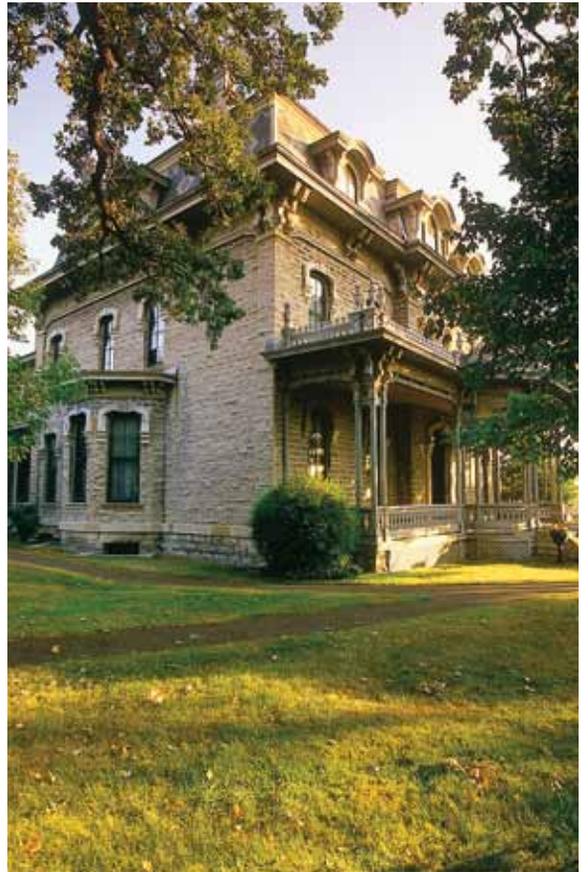


Alexander Ramsey's Role in the War

In 1851, as territorial governor and superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Minnesota Territory, Alexander Ramsey negotiated treaties on behalf of the U.S. government with the Dakota for the cession of large areas of Minnesota land for white settlement, most notably the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux in 1851.

Ramsey also served as governor during the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, the causes of which were directly related to the treaties and lack of compliance with them by the government and traders. He appointed his longtime friend and political rival Henry Sibley as commander of the forces raised to fight against the Dakota, and notoriously stated “the Sioux Indians of Minnesota must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the state.”

Alexander Ramsey and his granddaughter, Laura Furness, ca. 1901.

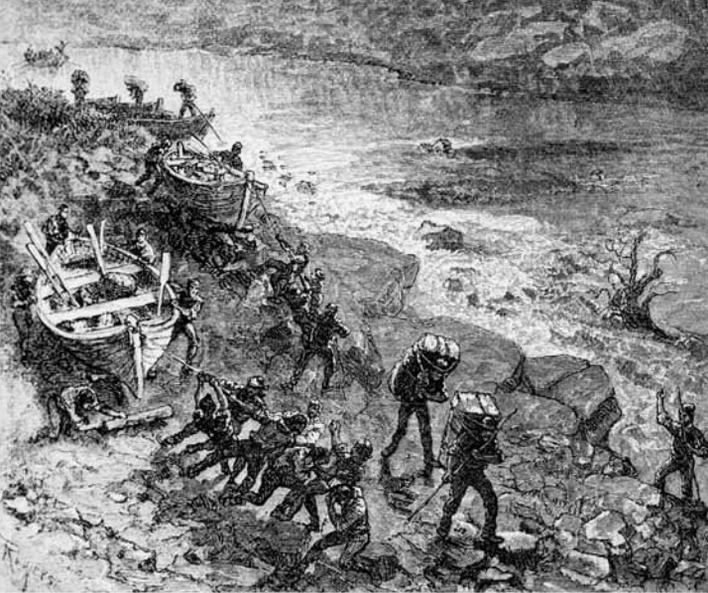


Alexander Ramsey House

St. Paul • 651-296-8760
www.mnhs.org/ramseyhouse

The Alexander Ramsey House was home to Minnesota's first territorial governor during his retirement. Ramsey's granddaughters willed the home and all of its contents to the Minnesota Historical Society in 1964. Periodically, programs are presented that explore Alexander Ramsey's political career and interactions with the Dakota. Open for special events and programs only.

Above: The restored home of Alexander Ramsey.



Fort Renville

Near Montevideo

Although Fort Renville no longer exists, at one time the site boasted a large fur-trading post built in 1826 by French-Dakota trader Joseph Renville. The fur trade existed in Minnesota for 200 years and marked the beginning of Dakota and European contact. Renville was influential in Dakota-European relations and in 1835 he invited missionaries to start the Lac qui Parle Mission nearby.

“The Dakota people were here long before the European contact...we lived off the land, we were nomadic.... There was life that went on here.”

Grace Goldtooth, Lower Sioux

Above: Making a Portage, from Harper's New Monthly Magazine, June 1879.

Lac qui Parle Mission

Near Montevideo • 320-269-7636

www.mnhs.org/lacquiparole

Established in 1835, the Lac qui Parle Mission was one of the first churches and schools in Minnesota. It was built by missionaries at a trading post founded by explorer and fur trader Joseph Renville. The missionaries also completed the first Dakota dictionary, grammar and gospel at this location. The site features artifacts and exhibits related to Dakota people and the missionaries who worked with them.

Learn More

- See what life was like at a pre-territorial mission.
- Learn the role of missionaries in developing the written Dakota language.
- View exhibits that share more about the Dakota people and the impact of the war.

The Minnesota Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the Chippewa County Historical Society, which manages this site.

SCENIC BYWAY
MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY MOBILE TOUR

Call: 888-601-3010 Stop #08
Learn about Dakota life before the arrival of Europeans and the changes the fur trade brought to Minnesota.

SCENIC BYWAY
MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY MOBILE TOUR

Call: 888-601-3010 Stop #09
Learn about missions, American Indian boarding schools and efforts to revive the Dakota language.



Traverse des Sioux

Near St. Peter • 507-934-2160
www.mnhs.org/traversedessioux

A shallow river crossing, Traverse des Sioux was a gathering place for thousands of years. When European settlers first came to Minnesota, they traded information and ideas here with Dakota hunters. It was also the site of the 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux where the upper bands of the Dakota nation ceded about half of present-day Minnesota to the U.S. government in exchange for promises of cash, goods, education and a reservation. Today, visitors can walk trails along the 10,000-year-old Minnesota River Valley and learn about Dakota culture. The nearby Treaty Site History Center provides information about treaties, the fur trade and Dakota culture.

The Minnesota Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the Nicollet County Historical Society, which manages this site.

“The Indians wanted to live as they did before the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux—go where they pleased...hunt game wherever they could find it, sell their furs to the traders and live as they could.”

Wanbditanka (Big Eagle), Mdwakanton, 1894

Wabaša Village

Near Morton

Chief Wabaša (Wabasha) was a leader of the Mdwakanton band of Dakota. His community originally lived along the lower Mississippi River around Winona, but moved seasonally as far north as Fort Snelling.

After the Treaty of 1851, Chief Wabaša moved his people to the newly formed reservation and lived in small villages along the Minnesota River. A marker near Morton identifies where Wabaša's band moved in 1853 after ceding millions of acres to the U.S. government. Wabaša and his people were expelled from Minnesota, even though he had opposed the war.

“You have said you are sorry to see my young men engaged still in their foolish dances. I am sorry... It is because their hearts are sick. They don't know whether these lands are to be their home or not.”

Chief Wabasa to Bishop Henry Whipple

Above: Wabaša, ca. 1858.



Call: 888-601-3010 Stop #02
Listen to perspectives on the treaty signings of 1851 and 1858 and their lasting impact.



Call: 888-601-3010 Stop #10
Learn about early Dakota villages and the role of chiefs in community life.



The First Attack: Lower Sioux Agency

Near Redwood Falls • 507-697-6321
www.mnhs.org/lowersioux

The scene of the first attack of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, this site was a U.S. government administrative center for the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute bands of Dakota. In the months leading up to the war, the U.S. government failed to make annuity payments owed to the Dakota and refused to provide food and supplies. These actions contributed to the growing resentment that led to the war in the summer of 1862. As tensions mounted, a reluctant Taoyateduta (Little Crow) led an attack on the Lower Sioux Agency on August 18, 1862, killing 18 traders and government employees. The Dakota then attacked settlements along the Minnesota River Valley, in a strategic effort to reclaim their homeland, killing white settlers and compelling thousands to flee.

Above: The Lower Sioux Agency warehouse where, in 1862, government officials refused to release food and supplies to the Dakota.

Today, the visitor center features exhibits on Dakota history, life and culture. Self-guided interpretive trails allow visitors to explore the landscape and the warehouse building and to walk along the Minnesota River.

The Minnesota Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the Lower Sioux Indian Community, which manages this site.

Learn More

- Learn about reservation life and causes of the war.
- Walk interpretive trails along the Minnesota River.

“I’m standing in a place where my ancestors were...and I wonder what they were thinking when they were here...? It gives me comfort to know that they stood right here.”

Sandra Geshick, Lower Sioux, Oral History Project Participant



Call: 888-601-3010 Stop #04

Gain insights into the notion of land and home along the Minnesota River Valley and how the war changed this.



Upper Sioux Agency

Near Granite Falls

The Upper Sioux or Yellow Medicine Agency was established in 1854 as a U.S. government administrative center for the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands of Dakota. Most of the agency's buildings were destroyed in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. One structure, the agency house, has been reconstructed to its pre-1862 condition and the foundations of other buildings are marked.

Learn More

- Visit Upper Sioux Agency State Park, which is managed by the State of Minnesota and preserves the site of the Upper Sioux Agency.
- Walk the 18 miles of trails around the Yellow Medicine River Valley.
- Read interpretive signs that tell the history of this area and the Upper Sioux Agency.

"Families were torn apart. I just wonder how my relatives made it through all of that, how difficult a time that had to have been, to be able to survive."

Lavonne Swenson, Lower Sioux, Oral History Project Participant

Above: Upper Sioux Agency, photograph by Dale Bohlke.

Attacks on New Ulm

New Ulm was the site of two attacks by the Dakota—on August 19 and 23, 1862. Using outlying buildings for cover, the Dakota fired on the town's defenders and burned buildings near the river, leaving more than a third of the town in ruins.

With little food and ammunition left in New Ulm and fearful of another attack, about 2,000 residents fled to Mankato, St. Peter and St. Paul. New Ulm settlers began returning in early September. In December 1862, the town officially reorganized. Today, monuments and memorials commemorate the attacks.

Learn More

- Visit the Brown County Historical Museum, located at 2 N. Broadway St. See exhibits, many dealing with the war.
- See the Frederick W. Kiesling Haus. Located at 320 N. Minnesota St., it is one of few structures that survived the war.
- Visit the Harkin Store Historic Site. See page 22.

"New Ulm basically became a ghost town."

Robert Beussman, New Ulm Settler Descendant, Oral History Project Participant

Above: Attack on New Ulm, by Anton Gag, 1904.



Call: 888-601-3010 Stop #06
Hear reflections on the values and enduring strength of the Dakota.



Call: 888-601-3010 Stop #03
Hear descriptions of European immigrant life on the prairie and the legacy 1862 left with the people of New Ulm.



W. W. Mayo House

Le Sueur • 507-665-3250
www.mnhs.org/mayohouse

Dr. William Worrall Mayo and his family lived in a house in Le Sueur at the time of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. In August 1862, Mayo went to New Ulm to provide medical assistance to the town's defenders. In December 1862, after 38 Dakota men were hanged in Mankato and their bodies were buried in shallow graves nearby, doctors in the area, including Dr. Mayo, unearthed some of the bodies for medical study and demonstrations.

Today, visitors can tour the house, hand-built by W. W. Mayo, and learn about the Mayo family.

Harkin Store

New Ulm • 507-354-8666
www.mnhs.org/harkinstore

While the Harkin Store Historic Site does not interpret the events of 1862, it provides a glimpse of settler life after the war. Scottish-born Alexander Harkin opened his store ten years after the war. It served as the center of a bustling community in the early 1870s. A visit to the Harkin Store today allows visitors to see an authentic mid-19th century general store with period wares still on the shelves.

The Minnesota Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the Mayo House Interpretive Society, which manages the W. W. Mayo House, and the Nicollet County Historical Society, which manages the Harkin Store.



Attacks on Fort Ridgely

In Fort Ridgely State Park, near Fairfax
507-426-7888 • www.mnhs.org/fortridgely

Built in 1853, Fort Ridgely was originally designed as a law enforcement center to keep peace as settlers poured into the ceded Dakota lands. By 1862, it was a training base for Civil War volunteers.

Dakota forces attacked the fort twice—on August 20 and 22, 1862. The fort suddenly became one of the few military bases west of the Mississippi to withstand a direct assault. Fort Ridgely's 280 military and civilian defenders held out until U.S. Army reinforcements ended the siege.

Today, visitors to the Fort Ridgely Historic Site can wander through the ruins of this once thriving outpost and learn more about its role in the U.S.-Dakota War. A visit to the adjacent Fort Ridgely Cemetery offers more history.

The Minnesota Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the Nicollet County Historical Society, which manages this site.



Call: 888-601-3010 Stop #11

Learn about archaeological findings at Fort Ridgely and hear Dakota people reflect on the site today.



Birch Coulee Battlefield

Near Morton • 507-697-6321
www.mnhs.org/birchcoulee

One of the hardest-fought battles of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 took place in this now peaceful prairie field. On Sept. 2, 1862, Dakota soldiers attacked a burial party sent by Col. Henry Sibley. The Dakota kept U.S. soldiers under siege for 36 hours before a relief detachment arrived from Fort Ridgely.

Visitors can tour the self-guided site with markers explaining the battle from Dakota and U.S. soldiers' perspectives.

Learn More

- Stand where history happened.
- Read about the battle from the perspectives of an Army captain and a Mdewakanton leader.
- Walk a self-guided trail through restored prairie.
- See a soldier's sketches of vivid battle scenes.
- Find guideposts pinpointing U.S. and Dakota positions.

Above: The Battle of Birch Coulee, lithograph by Paul G. Biersach, 1912.



Call: 888-601-3010 Stop #05

Hear reflections on the spiritual connection Dakota people have with the land and their fight for survival.



Wood Lake Battlefield and Monument

Near Echo, between Redwood Falls and Granite Falls

In mid-September 1862, under considerable political pressure to defeat the Dakota quickly, Sibley and his troops moved up the Minnesota River, arriving at Lone Tree Lake (mistakenly identified as Wood Lake) where they camped on the night of September 22. Early the next morning, a group of U.S. soldiers searching for food stumbled upon a group of Dakota soldiers who had been preparing to attack Sibley's forces. The ensuing Battle of Wood Lake was the last major battle of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, resulting in a decisive defeat of the Dakota.

Henderson

After the war, nearly 1,700 Dakota women, children and elders were forced to travel for six days to an internment camp at Fort Snelling. As they marched through Henderson and nearby towns, angry residents threatened and attacked the captive Dakota.

Above: A drawing of the Battle of Wood Lake, by A.P. Connolly, ca. 1896.

Camp Release

Near Montevideo

In late September, after the defeat of Little Crow's forces, a group of Dakota chiefs released white and mixed-race captives to Col. Henry Sibley. He then moved the captives to his own encampment near Montevideo, which came to be known as Camp Release.

Sibley also took into custody about 1,200 Dakota, a number that grew to nearly 2,000 as more surrendered or were captured.

The trials of the Dakota who took part in the war began at Sibley's Camp Release headquarters on September 28, 1862. Sibley later moved his troops and the prisoners to the Lower Sioux Agency, where the trials continued.

"I just try to imagine what it would have been like to be there.... The Indians [must have been] realizing: 'This is over. What's our next step?'"

Terry Sveine, New Ulm Settler Descendant, Oral History Project Participant

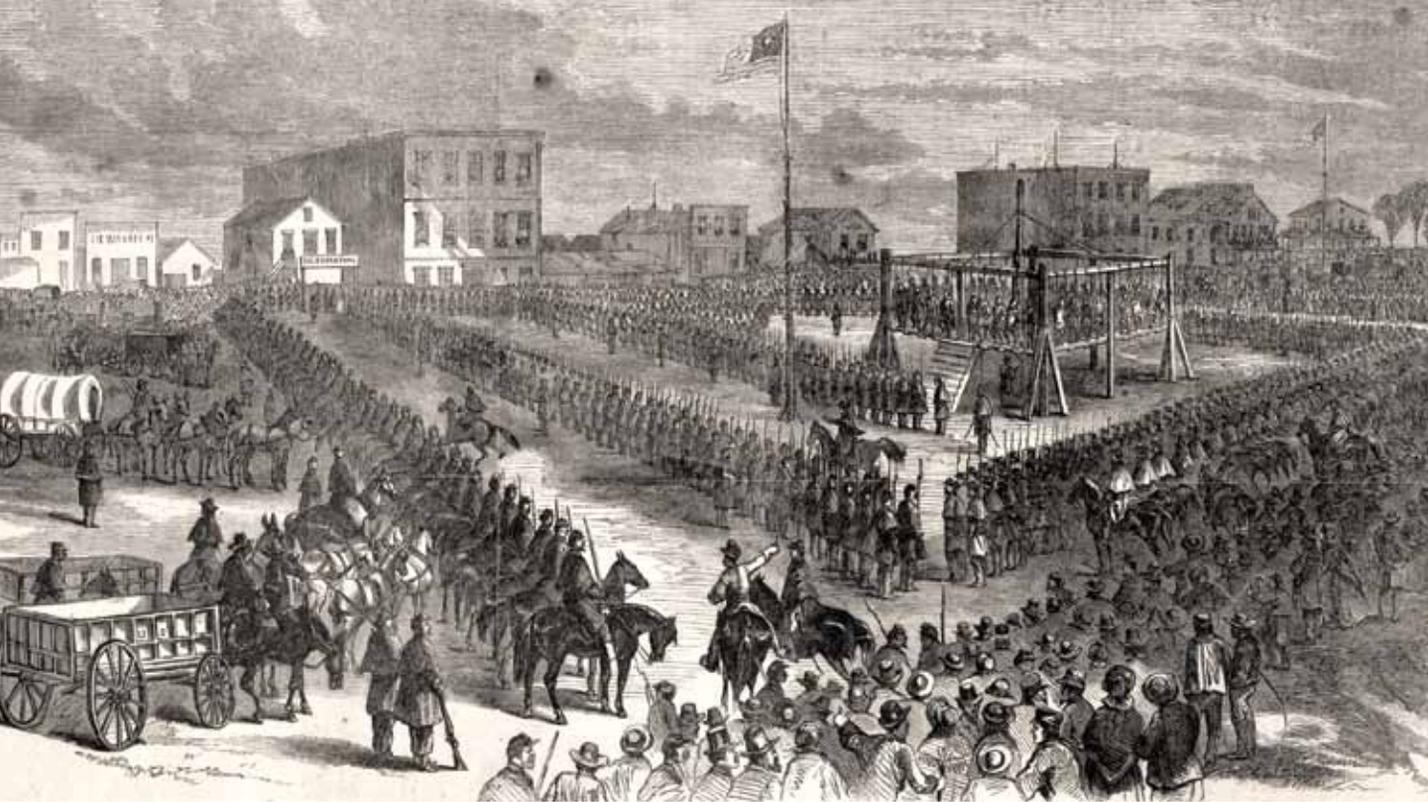
Above: Captives at Camp Release, by photographer Adrian John Ebell, ca. 1862.



Call: 888-601-3010 Stop #12
Learn about the forced march of the Dakota to Fort Snelling and how the march is commemorated today.



Call: 888-601-3010 Stop #07
Hear the story of Mazasa and learn about the mounting tensions among the Dakota leading up to the war.



Execution in Mankato

Of the hundreds of Dakota who surrendered or were captured during the U.S.-Dakota War, 303 men were convicted in a military court. At the urging of Bishop Henry Whipple, President Abraham Lincoln reviewed the convictions and commuted the sentences of 264 to prison terms. Lincoln then signed the order condemning 39 men to death by hanging.

“There are descendants there, still living in Mankato from 1862. I met a woman there who is the granddaughter of the man that cut that rope, and she met us there at the hanging site and we just held each other and cried. It was very healing for her, and for me also.”

Pamela Halverson, Lower Sioux, Oral History Project Participant

One prisoner was granted a reprieve just before the sentencing was carried out. The remaining 38 men were hanged at Mankato on December 26, 1862—the largest mass execution in U.S. history.

Learn More

- Visit Reconciliation Park. Located at 100 N. Riverfront Dr. On the site of the execution, this park was built through a collaboration of the Dakota and Mankato communities.
- Visit Blue Earth County Heritage Center. Operated by the Blue Earth County Historical Society in Mankato, the center preserves, displays and celebrates Dakota culture. www.bechshistory.com

Above: Execution of the Thirty-Eight Sioux Indians, lithograph by W. H. Childs, 1862.



Call: 888-601-3010 Stop #13

Learn about the legacy of the Mankato hangings and how their effects are still felt today.

The War's Aftermath

The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 tore apart thousands of Dakota and settler homes and families. The losses were great and the consequences were severe for all who were touched by the fighting.

Even after the war ended, the destitution, disease and displacement it caused continued for years. In 1863, thousands of Dakota were forced onto reservations in the Dakota Territory and what is now Nebraska. Punitive expeditions that followed resulted in hundreds of Dakota being killed or forced further westward. Today the majority of Dakota still live in communities outside of Minnesota. The war also forced around 20,000 settlers to flee their Minnesota homes, many never to return.

Meanwhile, the Treaties of 1851 and 1858 and a U.S. victory in the war opened up millions of acres for new settlement.

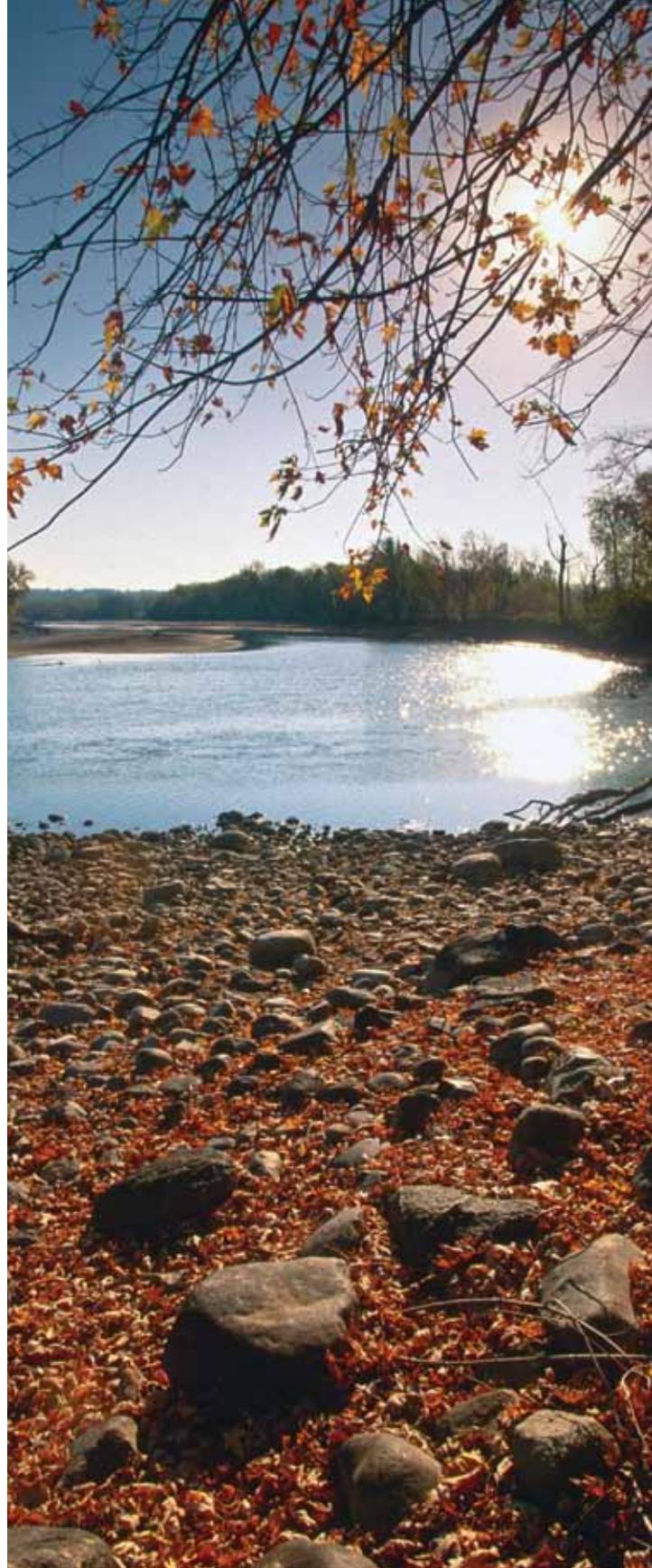
Minnesota had changed forever.

“They said 500 people were killed, and virtually a nation disappeared; land right along with it.”

Judith Anywaush, Sisseton-Wahpeton, Oral History Project Participant

“It impacted everyone in one way or another. That conflict molded a great deal of what we are. To forget that would be immoral and wrong.”

Fred Juni, New Ulm Settler Descendant, Oral History Project Participant



Traverse des Sioux, near St. Peter.

Learn More

Visit www.mnhs.org — a gateway to all Minnesota Historical Society services, information, museums and historic sites.

Check out www.usdakotawar.org for resources and information on the war, its causes and aftermath:

- Learn more history
- Experience online interactives
- Listen to oral histories (or interviews) with descendants of those touched by the war
- Discover your family history
- Share your story or leave a comment
- Link to informative websites:
 - Explore the Society's collections www.mnhs.org/searchcollections for art, photographs and historical artifacts
 - Find 1,000 artifacts related to the Dakota, Lakota and Nakota at collections.mnhs.org/sevencouncilfires
 - Visit the Gale Family Library www.mnhs.org/library for periodicals, newspapers, maps and atlases, moving images, sound recordings, manuscripts and government records
 - Research newspapers from 1862 at www.mnhs.org/newspapers
 - Plan to visit a historic site at www.visitmnhistory.org
 - Check out the Minnesota History Center at www.minnesotahistorycenter.org



www.facebook.com/USDakotaWar



[#USDakotaWar](https://twitter.com/USDakotaWar)