Unforgetting the Dakota 38:
Settler Colonialism, Indigenous Resurgence, and the Competing Narratives of the U.S.-Dakota War, 1862-2012

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Abstract:

"Unforgetting the Dakota 38" projects a nuanced light onto the history and memory of the mass hanging of thirty-eight Dakota men on December 26, 1862 following the U.S.-Dakota War in Southcentral Minnesota. This thesis investigates the competing narratives between Santee Dakota peoples (a mixture of Wahpeton and Mdewakanton Dakota) and white Minnesotan citizens in Mankato, Minnesota—the town of the hanging—between 1862 and 2012. By using settler colonialism as an analytical framework, I argue that the erasing of Dakotas by white historical memory has actively and routinely removed Dakotas from the mainstream historical narrative following the U.S.-Dakota War through today. This episodic history examines three phases of remembrance in which the rival interpretations of 1862 took different forms, and although the Dakota-centered interpretations were always present in some way, they became more visible to the non-Dakota society over time. Adopting a thematic approach, this thesis covers events that overlap in time, yet provide useful insights into the shaping and reshaping of memory that surrounds the mass hanging. White Minnesotans routinely wrote Dakota peoples out of their own history, a key element of settler colonial policies that set out to eradicate Indigenous peoples from the Minnesota landscape and replace them with white settlers. While this thesis demonstrates how white memories form, it also focuses on Dakota responses to the structures associated with settler colonialism. In so doing, this thesis argues that Dakota peoples actively participated in the memory-making process in Mankato between 1862 and 2012, even though most historical scholarship considered Mankato devoid of Dakota peoples and an Indigenous history.

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General Audience Abstract

The U.S.-Dakota War wracked the Minnesota River Valley region of Southcentral Minnesota. Following a bloody and destructive six weeks in late-Summer 1862, President Abraham Lincoln ordered the mass execution of thirty-eight Mdewakanton Dakota men as punishment for their participation. This controversial moment in American history produced unique and divergent memories of the Dakota War, the hanging, and the Mdewakanton Dakota place in white American society. This thesis examines the memories that formed between 1862 and 2012, highlighting Dakota perspective and memories to shed new light on the history of this deeply contested event. By doing so, we gain new understandings of Mankato, the U.S.-Dakota War, and the mass hanging, but also a realization that Dakota peoples were always active in the memory-making process even though many have considered their participation nonexistent.

To the 38, their families, and those who continue to preserve their stories.

Tipi-hdo-niche
Wyata-Tonwan
Taju-xa
Hinhan-shoon-koyag-mani
Maza-bomidy
Wapa-duta
Wahena, Sna-mani
Rda inyank
Dowan niya
Xunka Ska
Hepan
Tunkan icha ta mani
Ite duta
Amdacha
Hepidan
Maripiyan te najin
Henry Milord
Chaska dan
Baptiste Campbell
Tate kage
Hapinkpa
Hypolite Auge
Nape shuha
Wakan tanka
Tukan koyan I najin
Maka te najin
Pazi kuta mani
Tate hdo dan
Waxicun na, Aichaga
Ho tan inku, Cetan hunka
Had hin had
Chanka hdo
Oyate tonwan
Mehu we mea
Wakinyan na.

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The success of this thesis could not have been possible without the support of my thesis committee. Their guidance helped steer this project from its early conception in the Research Methods course through the defense. Drs. Edward Polanco and Sam Cook always offered helpful recommendations to keep my work on the right track. My advisor, Dr. Paul Quigley, often saw the strengths and weaknesses of my ideas before I conceived of them. His invaluable advice throughout this process, from my application to my Virginia Tech thesis defense, shaped my thinking and writing in ways that will help me move forward as a historian.

This work has grown through the support and motivation of several peers, scholars, and historians. Niels Eichhorn's constant (and still ongoing) support for my research and career goals pushed me forward. Since starting at Virginia Tech, Niels has continued to take me under his wing as I traverse the often-challenging landscape of graduate school.

This work has substantially grown since its conception in Dr. Matthew Jennings's Modern Native America course at Middle Georgia State University (MGA). His class opened my eyes to the importance of studying Indigenous history and culture. Dr. Jennings's recommendations always inspired me to keep working hard and "fighting the good fight" along

the way. Other historians and scholars at MGA, such as Carol Willcox Melton, Stephen Taylor, Don Brown, Chris Tsavatewa, Larry Israel, Andrew Manis, Matthew Zimmerman, Charlotte Miller, and Robert Burnham, among others, pushed me to my academic limits making me a better historian and writer. The support by peers, such as Micheal Williams, DeMarcus Beckham, Kris "Mitt Romney" Tressler, Joseph Hirsh, Patrick Layson, Chase Lundy, and several others, made the undergrad experience memorable.

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Support from the History Department at Virginia Tech, the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, and the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention helped make this thesis possible. Funds to support travel to Minnesota for research, and subsequent conferences where scholarly conversations continued, helped grow the importance of this thesis.

As much about Dakota culture is tied to the importance of kinship, my own family has provided a strong foundation for my work to grow. Many thanks to my parents for their unwavering support. Both sides of my family from Michigan and Georgia, also, gave many insights or an open ear as I tested new ideas in front of an audience. New friends at Virginia Tech, in the #Twitterstorian community, at Michigan State University, and at the Western History Association all encouraged me to keep pushing through the thesis writing process. I am grateful for my new family in Strongsville, Ohio for their hospitality and care during the final stage of this thesis-writing process. Above all, Jennifer Andrella deserves more thanks than I can ever give. She has listened to me, critiqued my writing, and offered new ways to think about the past. Her thoughts and care have made me a better person.

Notes on Language

Unlike most scholarship on the U.S.-Dakota War, this thesis intends to center the voices, perspectives, and history of one community from within the Dakota oyate (The People). The Mdewakanton band of Santee Dakota (Eastern Dakota) were the primary actors in the story of the Dakota War in Southcentral Minnesota, and those who were executed in Mankato in 1862. Due to this, I emphasize Mdewakanton as the primary agents in the memory-making process, though in cases I do refer to them as Dakota.

Many Americans refer to the Dakota as "Sioux." That term comes from how Algonquian peoples, such as the Ojibwe (Chippewa), often refer to the Dakotas as "Nadowe-siw-eg" – or in French as "Nadowessioux" – meaning "Snake-like" or "Demon-like" enemies.[1] This common misnomer shines the wrong light on the Dakota community as "Dakota" translates to "friends." Broadly speaking, the Dakota come from the much-larger Očhéthi Šakówiŋ – or "Seven Council Fires" – that encompasses Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota-speaking peoples.[2] To use "Sioux," rather than *Očhéthi Šakówiŋ,* or more community-focused names—like the Santee or the Mdewakanton—reverberates moments of colonialism, or as Edward H. Spicer calls "cycles of

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[1] Carrie A. Lyford, *Quill and Beadwork of the Western Sioux* (Washington D.C.: Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1940), 11; Harriet E. Bishop, *Floral Home; Or, First years of Minnesota: Early Sketches, Later Settlements, and Further Developments* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman and Company, 1857), 253.

[2] Nick Estes and Jaskiran Dhillon, eds., *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NODAPL Movement* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2019), 1; Mary K. Whelan, "Dakota Indian Economics and the Nineteenth-Century Fur Trade," *Ethnohistory,* Vol. 40, No. 2 (Spring, 1993): 247-248.

conquest," as it is conquest "and the processes it inaugurates" that propagates a "phase in the periodic expansion and withdrawal of nations."[3]

Rather than continuing the misnomer of Sioux, I will use Očhéthi Šakówiŋ in its place when referring to the larger group that include the Dakota. While I will use Dakota to refer to the Eastern Santee, I do not intend to assume all Dakota communities are equally in agreement with the outcome of the U.S.-Dakota War and hanging events in Mankato. With that said, throughout the thesis the reader will notice that I highlight Dakota words first with their English translation, placing emphasis that Minnesota was and continues to be a Dakota space.[4]

When referring to the conflict I use the term "war" rather than outbreak, uprising, or massacre, as it reinforces Dakota experience and recognizes their sovereignty. Throughout the thesis, you will see the use of "white Mankatoans" to acknowledge those who strongly embraced the ethos of American innocence, victimhood, and victory over Native Americans—something that I will define in the introduction. It is important to acknowledge that not all white Mankatoans defended this viewpoint, though that understanding of the U.S.-Dakota War, the hanging of the Dakota 38, and the memory thereafter was the broad, popular consensus favored in public discourse and by policy makers

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3 Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533*-1960 (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997), 568.

4 Laura L. Anderson, ed., *Being Dakota: Tales and Traditions of the Sisseton and* Wahpeton by Amos Oneroad and Alanson B. Skinner (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003), 60-61.

Introduction

Many believe the U.S.-Dakota War had little effect on the history of the United States. The murky truth of the conflict can be challenging to locate, even in textbooks and monographs devoted to the subject. In Mankato, Minnesota, more specifically, a place with deep resonance to that conflict's history, a scantly addressed history of the war reflected a misconstrued memory that excluded most Indigenous experience before, during, and after 1862. Following the mass hanging of thirty-eight Dakota men on December 26, 1862, white interpretations of that conflict dominated throughout the town and region. The Dakota War was a moment of transformation for many white Minnesotans, and attempted to destroy the Dakota way of life. Much of the scholarship ignores the Dakota experience during the Dakota War and their reinvention of memory throughout Minnesota and the Northern Great Plains decades later. City and regional historians actively "wrote out" Indigenous peoples from the town histories, just as historical societies wrongfully collected Indigenous culture and artifacts for the extraction of historical importance. The deployment of these violent tactics of controlling the memory supported non-Native feelings about the past. White Minnesotans viewed the Dakota War, colloquially called during the late nineteenth and the twentieth century the "Great Sioux Uprising" or simply "the Outbreak," as a defensive war fought by innocent white settlers, eventually reinforced by patriotic federal soldiers leaving the front lines of the Civil War to protect Minnesotans. On the contrary, a settler-colonial expedition that sought to eradicate, erase, and dispossess Dakota peoples from their homeland.

Throughout most of the Minnesota River Valley of Southcentral Minnesota, towns and open prairies became the breeding grounds of white victimhood. The aftermath of the Dakota

War pushed many different Dakota communities – some of whom did not even fight in the Dakota War – out of the state. As these state and federal governments extirpated these Dakota communities, white settlers deployed new memories that recentered their experiences as defining memories, a moment that sent Dakota experiences into the foggy haze of oblivion. Mankato's urban and commercial importance to the region formed an epicenter of settler memory reconstruction. The public memory today, however, shows a sweeping change in how Mankato interacts with Dakota War history. At what point did Mankato's historical consciousness shift from white-centered narratives to a more inclusive understanding that included both sides of the fight?

This thesis examines the ties that link Mdewakanton Dakota to the history and memory in Mankato, Minnesota, between 1862 and 2012. To answer the above question, "Unforgetting the Dakota 38" deploys the idea of "competing narratives" to better understand the relationship, whether fraught or supportive, between much of the Mankato population and Mdewakanton Dakota communities. Rather than using "counter memories," which denotes an idea that one side holds power over another, "competing narratives" places Dakotas and white Mankatoans on the same playing field. This thesis seeks to recenter Dakotas' perspectives within Mankato, which in turn, can be transplanted into other towns, regions, and spaces otherwise thought to be devoid of Dakota peoples. Competing narratives also challenge the often-flattening structure of settler colonialism, though I use that concept throughout this project to lay a sturdy foundation to construct white victimhood and domination of the historical memory.

White victimhood manipulated the memory of the U.S.-Dakota War and the hanging of the Dakota 38. Boyd Cothran's exploration of "American innocence" indicates how history and power are intricately entwined. American innocence formed by the historical realities of

westward expansion, which reinterpreted white moments of conquest as moments of rightful movement. Cothran's book examines how American innocence influenced the rise of the marketplace of remembering, a "mode of historical knowledge production in which individuals manipulate the narratives they tell to confirm to the markets in which they come to circulate."[5] To contribute to that conversation, this thesis uses white victimhood as a way to develop our understanding of white memories, past and present, which demonstrates how the "othering" of Dakota communities influenced silencing and erasure in contemporary remembering of the mass hanging.

The scholarship over the U.S.-Dakota War has routinely ignored much of the history of Mankato during the conflict. Mankato, during the war years, served as a place for white refugee to flock to and a place to punish Dakota prisoners. A majority of works published after the Dakota War, such as captive narratives, provided a platform for victimhood to grow.[6] Furthermore, works that mention Mankato regularly reduce the town's experience to the site of the mass hanging. I hope to contribute to this body of scholarship to better understand Mankato's

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[5] Boyd Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War: Redemptive Violence and the Making of American Innocence* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 19-21.

[6] Many captive narratives surfaced after the U.S.-Dakota War. For more information regarding these captive narratives please see, Mary Butler Renville, *A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity: Dispatches from the Dakota War* edited by Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and Carrie Reber Zeman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012); Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, *The War in Words: Reading the Dakota Conflict through the Captivity Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Urania S. White, *Captivity Among the Sioux: August 18 to September 26, 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1901); Alice Mendenhall George, *The Story of My Childhood Written for My Children* (Whittier, CA: William A. Smith, 1923); Minnie Bruce Carrigan, *Captured By The Indians: Reminiscences of Pioneer Life in Minnesota*, (Buffalo Lake, Minn.: The News Print, 1912); For more secondary source material on captive narratives see, Gary L. Ebersole, *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Postmodern Images of Indian Captivity* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995) and June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

place during and after the U.S.-Dakota War. Mankato is an epicenter of continuous memory making, not just a fleeting moment in history that starts and ends with the hanging. Rather than focusing only on the one-day hanging event on December 26, 1862, I expand on how Mankato was (and is) a center for Dakota history, resilience, and resurgence in a place otherwise thought to be devoid of Indigenous peoples.

This thesis follows two streams of scholarship that incorporate the U.S.-Dakota War and broader trends of memory, violence, and the American West. Scholarly conversations about Dakota responses, especially those of Mdewakanton descent, rarely occur. Examinations of the Dakota War mainly come from non-Dakota historians. Nevertheless, efforts with better intent started in earnest by the mid-twentieth century. Before 1959, scholars considered the Dakota War as an "outbreak," whereas C.M. Oehler's *The Great Sioux Uprising* revised the term and ushered in the use of "uprising" to describe the conflict best.[7] The book, while attempting to move in a more accurate direction, still had its issues. Historian William E. Lass observed that "Leaving virtually nothing to the imagination, [Oehler] repeated sensationalized pioneer stories of the war's gorier incidents."[8] In 1962, the 100th anniversary of the Dakota War, the historical staff at the Minnesota Historical Society published a special issue in the journal, *Minnesota History*. As a movement away from hostile and misunderstood historical writing over the U.S.-Dakota War, the 1962 watershed moment transcended new understandings to understand what Willoughby Babcock observed as "an episode that remains the state's greatest tragedy and has moral

[7] C.M. Oehler, *Great Sioux Uprising* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), viii.

[8] William E. Lass, "Histories of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, Minnesota History (Summer, 2012): 52.

implications for all Americans and all generations."[9] Willoughby, as well as the other contributors in the September issue, established new modes of incorporating Dakota peoples into the history through accounts from the 1862 war.

The nuance seen in the *Minnesota History* edition sparked a national conversation around the war and the meanings behind it. The narrative of the Dakota War needed revision, and Kenneth Carley's *The Sioux Uprising of 1862*, sought to "present an accurate, concise narrative in words and pictures." Carley, one of the editors of *Minnesota History,* tied together illustrations and narratives together to better tell the longevity of fighting and the more profound impacts of the Dakota War. The illustrations showed a visual aspect of the Dakota War, which had never been done before. A reprint in 1976 laid further bibliographic information, and it was ultimately renamed *The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862*. Just as Oehler switched terminology from outbreak to uprising, Carley's shift from uprising to war gave new historiographical insights into the meanings between outbreaks, uprisings, and wars, and the implications of using them when discussing interactions between the U.S. Army and Native peoples.

Dakota perspectives of the U.S.-Dakota War in Mankato remain a less exhibited field of historical inquiry. Recent efforts to be more inclusive of Dakotas' historical experiences, however, transform our understanding of the Dakota War and those who experienced it first-hand. Dee Brown's *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee* ushered in new ways to understand Indigenous history in the American West and subsequent scholars followed those trends,

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[9] For more information on the pre-1960s historiography, including more first-hand accounts and captive narratives, please consult Kellian Clink, "Historiography of the Dakota War," Northern Great Plains History Conference, October 2001, Minnesota State University, Last Accessed March 13, 2020; William E. Lass's "Histories of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862" also traverses the historiographical conversations between 1863 and 2009, *Minnesota History,* (Summer 2012): 44-57; Willoughby M. Babcock, "Minnesota's Indian War," *Minnesota History,* Vol. 38 (September, 1862): 93-98.

especially with a chapter dedicated to the Dakota War.[10] In the 1988 edited collection, *Through Dakota Eyes,* editors Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan Woolworth acknowledge that Dakota perspectives are scarce in the earlier legislative accounts of the U.S.-Dakota War. Their edited collection stands as the first body of scholarship with a methodology to bring Dakota voices together to tell a nuanced story of the Dakota War.[11] Works that followed until the twenty-first century, unfortunately, did not continue the tradition of keeping Dakota voices present in their analysis of the conflict. William E. Lass's "Histories of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862" describes the "reversion to the heavy use of atrocity stories."[12] The trend of focusing on settler suffering continued, though a reemergence of Dakota-centered scholarship came around the time of the 150th anniversary of the war. Gwen Westerman and Bruce White's *Mni Sota Makoce* set out to "produce a book with a much richer perspective on Dakota history before 1862 than has previously existed."[13] In many ways, Westerman and White's book succeeded as it redefines the "Dakota master story," a recentering of Dakota place in Minnesota.[14] More critical scholarship on the Dakota past and present, such as those by Waziyatawin Angela Carver Wilson, and others,

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[10] Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 2.

[11] Douglas Martin, "Dee Brown, 94, Author Who Revised Image of West," *New York Times*, December 14, 2002; Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan Woolworth, *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), 1-2

[12] Lass, "Histories of the U.S.-Dakota War," 53-56.

[13] Gwen Westerman and Bruce White, Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012, 10-11.

[14] Barbara W. Sommer, "Reviewed Work: Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota by Gwen Westerman and Bruce White," *The Oral History Review,* Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer/Fall, 2013): 464.

critiqued the change caused by settler colonialism as it affects the Dakota history and connection to their homeland.[15]

As a work that brings all of these historiographies together, "Unforgetting the Dakota 38" seeks to reinvent our understanding of Mankato and the U.S.-Dakota War by examining Indigenous responses to historical silencing and erasure. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot observes, "Historical narratives are premised on previous understandings, which are themselves premised on the distribution of archival power."[16] The formation of silencing comes through four stages: the moment of fact creation (making of sources), fact assembly (making of archives), fact retrieval (making of narratives), and retrospective significance (making of history).[17] The white establishment in Mankato practiced all four of these efforts as a way to reinforce their white victimhood attitudes about the Dakota War past. This work, instead, seeks to rethink the fundamentals of historical production. Its ethnohistoric methodology opens new doors for this topic as a way to analyze the idea that historical production is exclusively a western phenomenon.[18]

Ethnohistory, as a combination of historical and anthropological methodologies, seeks to focus on the past through the interpretation, study, and focus on Indigenous peoples. As James Axtell describes, "ethnohistory ensures that the history of the frontier will cease to be the short 'pathetic' story of the 'inevitable' triumph of a 'blooming' White 'civilization' over a 'fragile'

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[15] Waziyatawin, *Remember This!: Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 1-3, 136.

[16] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 55

[17] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 26.

[18] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 5.

'primitive' culture."[19] In responding to historical silencing and the rise of white victimization, ethnohistory provides new modes of thinking about the relationship between Indigenous culture, history, and memory. In order to fully understand the hanging in Mankato, processes that follow Raymond DeMallie's idea of merging two cultures to get a "fuller picture of the past" reinforces the necessity of using competing narratives to delineate Dakota responses that otherwise have been ignored.[20] In this sense, historical production no longer transpires through the experiences of Anglo-Americans and Westerners. By incorporating an ethnohistoric methodology, Dakota perspectives completely transform our understanding of Mankato and the U.S.-Dakota War.

"Unforgetting the Dakota 38" offers another contribution in the historiographical conversations of Native and settler violence in the American West. With the rise of the New Indian History and New Western History—social and cultural turns in the 1970s and 1980s that highlight Native perspective—historians have shifted gears to focus on broad themes of historical memory and Native place in American history. All of these works, this thesis included, are in direct response to Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis," a longstanding

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[19] Nancy Ostrich Lurie, "Ethnohistory: An Ethnological Point of View," *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter, 1961): 79; James Axtell, "Ethnohistory: An Historian's Viewpoint," *Ethnohistor*y, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Winter, 1979): 3; Donald L. Fixico, "Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History," *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Special Issue: Writing about American Indians (Winter, 1996): 31-32; Robert C. Euler, "Ethnohistory in the United States," *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Summer, 1972): 201.

[20] Raymond DeMallie, '" These Have No Ears': Narrative and the Ethnohistorical Method," *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Autumn, 1993): 516; Loretta Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings: Gros Ventre Culture and History, 1778-1984* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 233; Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9-10; Raymond D. Fogelson, "The Ethnohistory of Events and Nonevents," *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Spring, 1989): 134; Michael Harkin, "Ethnohistory's Ethnohistory: Creating a Discipline from the Ground Up," *Social Science History*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Summer 2010): 114.

interpretation that celebrates American expansion and progress.[21] Moreover, this work focuses on the varied and complex interactions between Indigenous and Anglo-Americans at places of borderland encounter.[22] Westward expansion was not a simple nor sweeping process, but one of complex interactions between different peoples.[23] Furthermore, this work delves into the realms of the memory of violence between settlers and Indigenous peoples. In building on the work by Boyd Cothran, Ari Kelman, David Grua, David Maher, and James Leiker and Ramon Powers, this thesis forwards an episodic history between the past and the present to demonstrate ongoing tensions between Dakotas and white settlers.[24]

The chronology of this thesis follows three episodes of remembrance and commemoration in which the memory of the hanging manifested in a variety of ways. Over time, Dakota interpretations became more visible, even though they had always been there. The thesis starts with the rise of white narratives, continues with the contestation and debates between white and Dakota peoples, and finishes with the *attempt* to bring both communities together. Two forms of memory flow throughout the thesis: conscious memories and physical/temporary

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[21] Murray Kane, "Some Considerations of the Frontier Concept of Frederick Jackson Turner," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1940): 380; William Cronon, "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner," Western Historical Quarterly, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1987): 157.

[22] Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 50. Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 5-6.

[23] Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 7.

[24] Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2013); Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*; David Grua, *Surviving Wounded Knee: The Lakotas and the Politics of Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); David Maher, *Mythic Frontiers: Remembering, Forgetting, and Profiting with Cultural Heritage Tourism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016); James N. Leiker and Ramon Powers, *The Northern Cheyenne Exodus in History and Memory* (Normal: Oklahoma University Press, 2011.

markers. The ways in which people in Mankato choose to remember could vary in their conscious memories of the event, though monuments play a role in how communities remember the past. They are not simply reminders of moments that communities commemorate. Rather, monuments—including those directed towards individuals, groups, or events—are socially constructed through the heritage of a specific community.

Historians have long debated the differences between history and heritage. History is what Susan Marsden defines as everything "which has happened…and the interpretation one makes of the past."[25] Heritage, then, is constructed; things, ideas, objects that survive the past and contribute to how communities and people add to their historical consciousness. David Lowenthal articulated heritage best by stating, "in fabricating the past we tell ourselves who we are, where we came from, and to what we belong."[26] Monuments to the past glorify certain aspects of the past that specific communities choose to acknowledge. These stories are often deeply engrained into the public and private spaces of a community. However, that process is

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[25] Susan Marsden, "Is Heritage History? History and the Built Environment," *Professional Historians of Australia*, last accessed on November 22, 2019, www.sahistorians.org.au/is-heritage-history/.

[26] Michael Kammen, *Mystics Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 626; David Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Industry and the Spoils of History* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 120-121. Ludmila Isurin, *Collective Remembering: Memory in the World and in the Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 15; Michael Greenhalgh, *Destruction of Cultural Heritage in 19th-century France: Old Stones versus Modern Identities* (Boston; Brill Publishing, 2015), 12; Rudy Perpich, "Minnesota History and Heritage: Understanding Our Present By Understanding Our Past," *Minnesota History*, Vol. 45, No. 6 (Summer 1977): 245-246; Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 3; Sidney Hyman, "Empire for Liberty," in Albert Raines and Laurance G. Henderson, eds., *With Heritage So Rich* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Books, 1999), 23; David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* – Revisited (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 2; David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xvii; Amos Funkenstein, "Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness," *History and Memory*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1989): 5.

selective. Reconciled stories generally are not the types of narratives that communities seek to commemorate. Communities rely on moments that define their place, whether they see that event as good or bad. The choosing of narratives often elides others, silenced or forgotten from the public record and understanding of the past.[27]

Chapter One examines the construction of white victimhood ideas, formed through the devastation of the U.S.-Dakota War. It principally argues that temporary memories formed through settlers' misunderstandings of the very events they lived through. While this chapter does incorporate Dakota voice and perspective, the primary goal of Chapter One seeks to surface how and why white narratives formed, spread, and stuck within Mankato's historical consciousness.

Chapter two highlights the transformation and restructuring of white memories in Mankato during the twentieth century. As veterans and citizens started to die off, there was a swift transformation of temporary modes of remembering the mass hanging to more permanent structures. This chapter starts with the construction of a problematic granite monument, which grew to be a centerpiece of white innocence and domination over Dakota peoples in the town. Moments of Dakota resurgence questioned and contested the Hanging Monument and broader implications for Dakota people. The active Dakota voices participated in non-violent protests, in conjunction with the broader American Indian Movement, to raise awareness of inequality and a search for recognition. Even though Dakota presence challenged white power structures, Mankatoans actively attempted to transcend historical questions and debates into new directions. Rather than fix issues between their community and with the Dakota people, the town devoted efforts to focus on the national image of Mankato on a national scale. Dakota experiences were,

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[27] Funkenstein, "Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness," 6-7.

again, written out of the historical narrative as they made white Mankatoans feel guilty for the past.

The final chapter focuses on healing attempts by Dakota people and superficial attempts by white Mankatoans to reconcile the history with the Dakota community. Chapter three focuses on expressions of Dakota power that directly challenged the settler state. Reconciliation plays a significant role in Chapter three's chronology, 1987-2012, as both communities—including the state and city governments—attempted to reconcile the fraught past. Non-Native governments often dictated these modes of commemoration, which raised questions of the possibility of reconciliation in Mankato. The chapter ends with a theoretical discussion on the differences between healing and reconciliation. I argue that Dakotas actively embraced healing as a method to mend wounds, historical trauma, and the memory to serve their community better. The reconciliation that many non-Natives strived for ultimately failed as their efforts lacked any real action or any real recognition of Dakota peoples. While settler colonialism dictated the imbalance and unreachable realities of reconciliation, a focus on Dakota healing practice through resurgence explained cultural survival and Dakota resilience.[28]

Settler Colonialism as a Foundation

The continuity of white-dominated memories of the U.S.-Dakota War ultimately flourished throughout the nineteenth century and onwards until the twenty-first century. Memories formed a constructed innocence that by no means represented both sides of the war's story. Competing narratives of this memory, though, showed that Dakota peoples were quite

[28] For more on healing and justice, please consult David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 3.

active in the memory-making process. In the periods in which Dakotas were thought to be erased, their voices and experiences challenge the assumption that Mankato, Minnesota, was devoid of Indigenous peoples.

Ultimately, this thesis benefits from two schools of thought. First, I base the theoretical groundwork on the concept of settler colonialism. As argued by Patrick Wolfe, settler colonialism is a process separate from colonialism, where overpowering governments seek to dispossess Indigenous populations from their lands and replace them with white settlement. Settler colonialism "is an ongoing process," as analyzed by Jean M. O'Brien, "rather than something accomplished at a single moment."[29] Similarly, Lorenzo Veracini's work on settler colonialism, through a broader perspective, demonstrates how [add]. Other historians have relied on the concept of settler colonialism, especially as a means to explain its structure and how it is an ongoing phenomenon. Dakotas in the nineteenth century, for example, faced settler-colonial policies when white settlers broke treaty promises, failed to pay annuity payments, and at the expense at Dakota communities, bolstered white settlement and capitalist ventures throughout *Mni Sota Makoce*, the Dakota homeland. I use settler colonialism strategically to discuss two structural situations.[30]

First, the centrality of land offers insights into the contestation between Dakotas and white Minnesotans. Settler colonialism, as a method to dispossess and replace, provided a framework and structure during the nineteenth century to push Dakotas from their homelands through treaties, governmental policies, and the domination by what many scholars have called an exogenous force. The remnants of that force leaked into subsequent centuries. A colony—

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[29] Jean M. O'Brien, "Tracing Settler Colonialism's Eliminatory Logic in *Traces of History*," *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (June, 2017): 249.

[30] Westerman and White, *Mni Sota Makoce*, 9-11.

which in this case can be considered the Minnesota Territory and eventual state—can be viewed as "both a political body," as observed by Lorenzo Veracini, "that is dominated by an exogenous agency, and an exogenous entity that reproduces itself in a given environment."[31] In most settler colonial situations, contestation between Indigenous communities and exogenous peoples shows the fight over land, control, and change. The second point adds in *terra nullius* as a method for how settlers viewed the Minnesota landscape, and how those ideas were reinforced over time. Terra nullius, the treatment of Indigenous lands as open and unused, erased Indigenous communities and cultural significance in many places. In the context of Minnesota, in particular, the various bands of Dakota had "exchanged their nomadic habits…and be taught the arts of civilization." White policymakers believed Dakotas did not live in the respectable manner, and even though treaties supposedly protected Indigenous lands, a probationary period kept them from having any sense of freedom.[32]

One key component in this thesis argues that the writing out of Dakotas from their history was another form of settler-colonial policies.[33] That same structure bleeds through the twentieth, into the twenty-first, century and onwards into the future, as Dakotas continued/continue to face environmental declension of their traditional homelands, under control by governmental policies

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[31] Uditi Sen, "Developing Terra Nullius: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Indigeneity in the Andaman Islands," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (2017): 946; Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3.

[32] Thomas Hughes, "The treaty of Traverse des Sioux in 1852: under Governor Alexander Ramsey, with notes of the former treaty there, in 1841, under Governor James D. Doty, of Wisconsin," in *Collections of the Minnesota Historical* Society, Vol. 1, Pt. 1 (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1905), 101-102, Library of Congress.

[33] Boyd Cothran, Interview by Author, February 4, 2020; Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting, Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xxiii, 55-57, 93-94; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 116; Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 76-77.

that regulate their lives and culture, and face a historical consciousness destined to keep their side out of the history books. As Veracini perceptively noted, "settlers do not discover: they carry their sovereignty and lifestyles with them," which in turn fuels the engine of erasure to reinvent and rewrite narratives that exclude Indigenous peoples.[34] As colonization practices moved forward, narrative formation through settler colonial efforts erased Indigenous chapters in the newly printed colonizer textbook. As a primary mode of analysis, this thesis must address some of the criticisms of settler colonialism. Whereas some historians use settler colonialism, others believe it has a flattening effect—e.g., not giving enough information to explain how and why things happened the way that they did.

In addressing the implications of settler colonialism, Jean M. O'Brien observed that "embedded in the logic of elimination is the possibility of slippage between in the *intent* of settler colonialism and its tangible outcomes, which carry the *implication* of extinction."[35] Rather than being a driving force to explain how European genocide affected Indigenous populations, these critics seek to ask how Indigenous peoples responded to or reacted against that structure. In addressing these criticisms, my second school of thought focuses on Indigenous resilience and response to settler-colonial pressures. Using that structural concept allows laying a sturdy foundation on which the analysis can rest; however, the more significant point of the thesis argues that Dakotas survived the nineteenth century, and they are still present in contemporary Mankato. By merging settler colonialism thought with Indigenous resilience offers two sides of a

[34] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 98.
[35] Jean M. O'Brien, "Tracing Settler Colonialism," 251.

coin that can explain and indulge into the contested nature of the U.S.-Dakota War, yet highlighting the survival of Dakota peoples.[36]

Settler colonialism and historical silence go hand-in-hand as a method to successfully transform a newly obtained landscape, especially in Mankato. The fluidity between settler-colonial goals and the active forgetting of the Dakota 38 challenged how Minnesotans chose to remember the U.S.-Dakota War in that region. Dakota resilience, moreover, ushered in new avenues to understand the past. These new avenues formed intricate moments in Mankato's history that better recognize Indigenous survival and participation despite ardent efforts to forget their very existence.

In exploring the history and memory of the mass hanging in Mankato, Minnesota, "Unforgetting the Dakota 38" reframes our understanding of one pivotal moment in Dakota history, Minnesota history, and United States history. It emphasizes both Dakota and white voices throughout, with hopes that the former will shine new light on the past or fill gaps in language that have been overlooked. Its purpose sets out to not only show the struggle over memory in Mankato, but also demonstrates how historical memory and narratives are often entwined in the ethos of settler colonialism.

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[36] J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, "'A Structure, Not an Event": Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity," *Lateral: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2016): 1.

Chapter 1

"I Saw the Thirty-Eight Hanging":
The Immediate Memories of the Mass Hanging of the Dakota 38 in Mankato[37]

In late August 1862, the *Weekly Pioneer and Democrat* reported of a "Terrible Indian Raid," that the "Frontier was desolated," the "inhabitants murdered," and was full of "shocking barbarities."[38] A few weeks before Minnesotans learned of the start of the U.S.-Dakota War, on August 17, 1862, a group of Santee Dakota men approached a small homestead near Acton, Minnesota (Meeker County) in search of food. Speculation in the historical record suggested that there was a bet made between the Dakota men that one could not steal an egg near the chicken pen at this home in Acton. Encounters with the residents led to a violent Dakota attack on the settlers, killing all of them, including a small child. Prior to this Acton incident, the leader of the Mdewakanton Band of Dakota, Taoyateduta (otherwise known as Little Crow) urged his Dakota compatriots that war could not be an option between white settlers and the federal army. However, once the Acton attack transpired, Little Crow determined that a conflict served as an opportunity to "make war after the manner of white men."[39] His rhetoric to wage a war against white men originated through the mistreatment of many white Indian agents and traders towards Dakota people following the 1851 treaties of *Traverse des Sioux* and *Mendota* where Dakota relinquished large areas of land and the government placed the Dakotas on two reservations

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[37] Marcia Drought Pike to Mary Evelyn Young, November 17, 1940, Dakota Conflict Manuscript Collection, Minnesota Historical Society (hereafter listed as MNHS).

[38] "Terrible Indian Raid," *Pioneer and Democrat* (St. Paul, Minn.), August 29, 1862, Chronicling America.

[39] Gary Clayton Anderson, *Little Crow: Spokesman for the Sioux* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1986), 2; "Taoyateduta (Little Crow)," US-Dakota War, Minnesota Historical Society, last accessed March 3, 2020, https://www.usdakotawar.org/history/taoyateduta-little-crow.

along the Minnesota River. Failed annuity payments, and sly workings by the white agents, led to periods of Dakota starvation. In the months leading up to the Dakota War, Little Crow asked the Indian Agents for help. “We have waited a long time. The money is ours, but we cannot get it. We have no food, but here are these stories, filled with food.” Andrew Myrick, a local trader, most famously responded to similar statements, “So far as I am concerned, if they [the Dakota] are that hungry, let them eat grass or their own dung.” Attitudes like Myrick’s lead to Dakotas search for food and survival. As the war ensued, white settlers found Myrick’s deceased body with grass stuffed in his mouth.[40]

For most of August and September 1862, the war engulfed the Minnesota River Valley, destroying homes and the environment, dispossessing communities, and leading to a hostile white sentiment towards the Dakota people. While obscure to many Americans now, the Dakota War was much more than a local conflict, but a “national war,” as Alexander Ramsey wrote to President Lincoln.[41] While tensions brewed for most of the 1850s and early 1860s, the 1862 conflict in Minnesota represented much more than a conflict over Dakota land. Rather, it reflected larger goals and aspirations of the federal government to extend its land holdings and control west. As the war raged, the federal government ushered sweeping legislation to move its citizens west. While the U.S.-Dakota War started after small-scale disputes by hungry Dakota

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[40] “Taoyateduta,” US-Dakota War, last accessed March 3, 2020; Susan Sleeper-Smith, et al, eds., *Why You Can’t Teach United States History without American Indians* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 139; Gary Clayton Anderson, “Myrick’s Insult: A Fresh Look at Myth and Reality,” in *The North Star State: A Minnesota History Reader*, Anne J. Aby, ed. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1997), 120, 128; Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1997), 262-263.

[41] Alexander Ramsey to Abraham Lincoln, September 6, 1862 (Telegram concerning affairs in Minnesota), Series 1. General Correspondence, 1833-1916, Lincoln Papers.

men, its impact followed the much-larger expansion of the federal government in search of new lands and to rival Confederate expansion westward.[42]

On September 23, 1862, the Battle of Wood Lake culminated as the last engagement of the U.S.-Dakota War. While more fighting continued between 1863 and 1865, Wood Lake represented a divisive moment for white Minnesotans. After Wood Lake, Little Crow and remaining warriors fled westward, escaping the grasp of control by the U.S. army. At the surrender site following Wood Lake, a place known as Camp Release, remaining Dakotas formally surrendered and released many hostages taken over the previous two months.[43] Following the surrender at Camp Release, 303 Dakotas were sentenced to death for their participation in the U.S.-Dakota War, primarily for reasons of murder, rape, and destruction of white property.[44] As this event transformed into national news, Abraham Lincoln determined the 303 to be excessive, and through deliberations between him and his cabinet, sentenced the thirty-nine men to death in Mankato, Minnesota. Before the hanging, one Dakota man's sentence was commuted from Lincoln, making the total thirty-eight executions.[45]

This chapter explores the mass hanging of the Dakota 38 on December 26, 1862 and how the immediate memories that provided temporary comfort for white Minnesotans healing from the

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[42] Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995),

[43] Ezra T. Champlin, "My Reccollections [sic] of the Battle of Wood Lake and the part taken in it by the 3rd Regt., Minn. Vol. Inf'ty, Sept. 23, 1862," Dakota Conflict of 1862 Manuscript Collection, MNHS; "Col. Sibley's Dispatches," *Pioneer and Democrat* (St. Paul, Minn.), October 10, 1862, Chronicling America.

[44] "Interesting Account of the Indian Trials," *Pioneer and Democrat* (St. Paul, Minn.), November 21, 1862, Chronicling America.

[45] Abraham Lincoln, "Message to the Senate Responding to the Resolution Regarding Indian Barbarities in the State of Minnesota, December 11, 1862, LOC; David Martínez, *Dakota Philosopher: Charles Eastman and American Indian Thought* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009), 144; Linda M. Clemmons, *Dakota In Exile: The Untold Stories of Captives in the Aftermath of the U.S.-Dakota* War (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2019), 36.

Dakota War.[46] Between November, 1862 and January, 1863, white settlers and U.S. soldiers formulated a collective memory that bolstered the suffering of their communities and loss of white Minnesotans. At the same time, the *active forgetting* of the Dakota experience sheds light on the settler colonial struggle to dominate the landscape and the historical narratives that inhabited those spaces. The formation of this memory parallels Cothran's idea of American innocence and the rise of white victimhood.[47] White settlers in Mankato often believed that their participation in the U.S.-Dakota War was merely through defensive measures, despite the historical myopia that lacks insight into the realities of the Dakota War's causation. The trope that white Mankatoans forwarded plagued the Dakota with a sort of hostile, vindictive "savage" or "demon-like" complex; a group of men who attacked innocent white settlements and forced the civilian population to raise their arms in order to defend their families.[48]

During the mid-nineteenth century, many interactions between Indigenous communities and American citizens paved a clear path for victimhood and innocence to spread. Captivity narratives, in particular, fueled the fire of anti-Indian sentiment. Interactions between white settlers and Indigenous communities, peaceful or violent, formed narratives that often demonized Native Americans as uncivilized or savage. Under the guise of Manifest Destiny, westward expansion pushed white Americans onto Indigenous lands. The Homestead Act, the Morrill Land Grant Act, and the Pacific Railroads Act utilized ideas of *terra nullius* as a means to profit off open unused Indigenous lands in the American West.[49] Especially as Reconstruction Acts (such as the 13th,

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[46] Throughout this thesis I will refer to the thirty-eight Dakota men as the "Dakota 38," a term which many use today.

[47] Boyd Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 19.

[48] "Letters from the Indian Expedition," *Pioneer and Democrat* (St. Paul, Minn.), November 7, 1862, Chronicling America.

[49] Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 142; Stuart Banner, "Why Terra

14th, and 15th Amendments) challenged who and who was not a United States citizen, Indigenous communities fell by the wayside as "non-citizens." As white experiences throughout the United States paralleled burgeoning federal policies, the white idea of who was a Native American was solidified. Resistance to change conjured collective ideas that Native peoples were violent, uncontrollable peoples who needed federal control. Many white Minnesotans held similar feelings to the Dakotas who resisted change on their homelands; a moment that would significantly alter how many considered Dakota place in American history.[50]

The ways in which white settlers envisioned the Dakota who attacked them sparked new modes of memory-making, an active forgetting of the Dakota perspective. That method contended that Dakotas were always at fault for the Dakota War; or as whites referred to the conflict, the Sioux Uprising or the Sioux Outbreak of 1862.[51] In the same light, I use the concept of victimhood to explain how white Minnesotans justified their actions and remembered the Dakota War. To Cothran, "nineteenth-century Americans further developed [American innocence] as they adopted a theory of the United States as an empire of innocence," as a means to place claim on being "victims of frontier violence" and to make "Indians…the irrational aggressors and violators of a civilized nation's just laws." Hostility toward the Dakota substantiated the innocent virtues that white Minnesotans believed they held. Bishop Henry Whipple, a missionary who regularly interacted with Dakotas, wrote to Senator Henry Rice that

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Nullius? Anthropology and Property Law in Early Australia," Law and History Review, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring, 2005): 95-96.

50 Michael L. Tate, *Indians and Emigrants: Encounters and the Overland Trails* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), xii; Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism: From Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 49-50.

51 Louis H. Roddis, *The Indian Wars of Minnesota* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1956), 8-10; Kass Fleisher, *The Bear River Massacre and the Making of History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 184.

the Dakotas are “an independent nation and such they are prisoners of war,” to which Rice responded, “I think you are in error in saying they are prisoners of war—in my opinion, they are murderers of the deepest dye.” This attitude towards Dakotas played a vital role in the memory-making process immediately following the mass hanging of the Dakota 38.[52]

White Minnesotans not only wanted to remember the hanging of the Dakota 38 as a justified act; they also wanted to use that event to bolster their memories of the entire Dakota War. During the heaviest fighting of the Dakota War, roughly 500 to 800 white settlers died by the hands of Dakota attackers with large numbers taken as hostages.[53] To revenge the Dakota for their losses, they all actively participated in the memory-making process in Mankato after the war, especially following the mass hanging. Following the mass hanging, Mankatoans wanted to immediately remember the hanging and their victory over this hostile, vindictive foe. Individual efforts to remember these events transformed into temporary reminders of the historic public events. This chapter will focus on the objects, narratives, and memories constructed around the hanging of the Dakota 38; from wooden canes to metal spoons, to artistic renditions of the hanging scene, white Mankatoans visualized their memories in multiple ways.

Memory-making, especially that of the white population, served as a mode to transform individual memories into a collective entity. By arguing that the collective memory in Mankato was a process and not a definite fact, I show that memory-making was socially constructed

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[52] John Haymond, *The Infamous Dakota War Trials of 1862: Revenge, Military Law and the Judgement of History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2016), 147.

[53] Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1980* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 16. Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century* America (New York: HarperCollins Books, 1992), 5-8. Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600*-1860 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 6-8, 564.

through a white Minnesotan performance. Individuals used the hanging as a means to bring the community together, to honor their white past, and to "fit in" to their communal understanding of the hanging, which helped white Minnesotan memories solidify into the general narrative in Mankato following the hanging. As a social construction, the hanging of the Dakota 38 further dispossessed Dakotas connection to the hanging—even though it was their community who faced the consequences of fighting in the Dakota War.[54]

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The Battle of Wood Lake signified an end of Dakota War fighting within the state of Minnesota. By that point of the war, most of the fighting had become skewed, favoring U.S. forces as Dakotas continued to run low on resources, manpower, and the will to fight. After the surrender at Camp Release, a small contingent of Mdewakanton fighting men, under command of Taoyateduta (known colloquially as Little Crow), escaped and remained the primary subject for two military expeditionary forces in 1863 and 1864. Those who remained in Minnesota hoped that their people would be treated with respect under standard military custom and practice. However, these Dakotas were destined to face backlash by angry white communities. As the idea of popular sovereignty ushered in new ideas of citizenship and rights, many white Mankatoans

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[54] Brady Wagoner, et al, *Remembering as a Cultural Process* (Cham: Springer Books, 2019), 61-62; Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective* Memory (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 31; Amy Corning and Howard Schuman, *Generations and Collective Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 1-2. Christine M. DeLucia, *Memory Lands: Kind Philip's War and the Place of Violence in the* Northeast (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 17; Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No 4 (Dec. 1988): 530.

felt defensive over the space that the government purchased in 1851 and believed those who defiled those spaces needed to be punished.[55] Mankato transformed into a place that devoted itself to defending white suffering and punishing Dakota participation. Throughout most of November 1862, white politicians and Minnesotans engaged in debates over the punishment for Dakotas who had surrendered at Camp release. Many Minnesotans sought vengeance and urged to punish the Dakotas by the hardest means—execution and banishment.

Planning his Thanksgiving Day proclamation, Alexander Ramsey, the state governor of Minnesota, interpreted the Dakota in the same manner as many of his constituents: Dakota savagery brought destruction and devastation to the Minnesota landscape and the only way to move forward was to punish and then elide Dakota stories and experiences in Minnesota from existence. "Especially let us recognize that He [God] has delivered our borders from the savage enemies," opined Ramsey, "who rose up against us, and cast them into the pit they have privily dug for us…our homes and household treasures are now safe from the violence of Indian robes and assassins.[56] His message reverberated well within Minnesotan's moment of anger in search to punish those who killed their friends and family. Many Minnesotans understood their role in the Dakota War primarily as a defensive measure, that they communities held no wrongdoing, and actively searched for ways to punish those who destroyed their communities.[57]

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[55] Michael Todd Landis, *Northern Men with Southern Loyalties: The Democratic Party and the Sectional Crisis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 103-104. Daniel McDonough and Kenneth W. Noe, eds., *Politics and Culture of the Civil War Era: Essays in Honor of Robert W. Johannsen* (Selinsgrove; Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 131; Christopher Childers, The Failure of Popular Sovereignty: Slavery, Manifest Destiny, and the Radicalization of Southern Politics (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 7.

[56] Alexander Ramsey, Thanksgiving Day Proclamation, St. Paul, Minnesota, November, 1862, Broadsides, Leaflets, and Pamphlets from America and Europe Collection, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

[57] George A. S. Crooker to Abraham Lincoln, October 7, 1862, Series 1. General Correspondence, 1833-1916, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

The memory-making process in Mankato started here, as Minnesota prepared for a hard, stern effort to punish the surrendered Dakota. The punishment proposed to the government would help the local community to feel safe after a period of unrest. But also, the punishment gave other Indigenous communities—who the government had worried about joining the Dakota fight—that the federal government is not to be messed with. At the confluence of popular sovereignty, in the sense that Minnesotans sought to punish Dakota on their own terms, and federal protection of its citizens, the hanging affair transcended into deeper debates that questioned the severity of punishment. As debates proliferated politicians in Minnesota and in Washington, President Abraham Lincoln's presence was needed in determining how to move forward. [58]

Some Minnesotans believed that because of the tactics used by Dakotas in battle against white settlers, those Dakota soldiers deserved to be punished in the most heinous way—a public execution backed by law. This moment signified an important history not only in Mankato but for the entire United States. Minnesotans needed a strategic mind to handle the executions, and President Abraham Lincoln knew the right man for the job. The loss of the Army of the Potomac (AoP), an anchor to the U.S. military during the Civil War, at Second Bull Run (Manassas, Virginia) led to the removal of that army's commander. Major General John Pope lost his field command of the Army after the 1862 battle, and a furious Lincoln eagerly wanted him gone. They moved Pope to the Department of the Northwest, an entity charged with providing order in

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(hereafter cited as Lincoln Papers); Christopher J. Pexa, "Transgressive Adoptions: Dakota Prisoners' Resistances to State Domination Following the 1862 U.S.-Dakota War," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 30; Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War,* 19.

[58] Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 261-262; John D. Bessler, *Legacy of Violence: Lynch Mobs and Executions in Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 49-51.

Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and the Nebraska and Dakota Territories. Earlier in 1862, his hard war tactics used against Virginian civilians were highly sought after to quell the Dakota War as Pope's methods against non-military populations could end the bloody frontier conflict.[59] Shortly after Pope's arrival in Minnesota the Dakota War quickly came to an end. At this time, Pope's new mission was to deal with those who surrendered. He knew of the necessity of executions to appease an angry and violent Minnesota population.[60]

Pope worked hand-in-hand with Henry Hastings Sibley, one of the generals under Pope's that had a field command on the front lines of the Dakota War, to appoint a five man military tribunal.[61] Their mission sought to decide the number of Dakotas to execute based on who had surrendered. The tribunal focused only on the men who had surrendered in November, and gave them no legal representation, let alone an English translator. The court wanted to punish as many Dakotas as possible to follow the two main points listed above: the reassurance of safety for Minnesotans and a way to warn other Indigenous communities to stay away. However, this moment also kept many Minnesotans at bay as several wanted to take vengeance into their own hands.[62]

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[59] John Pope to Abraham Lincoln, July 10, 1862, Lincoln Papers, LOC; John Pope to Henry W. Halleck, August 12, 1862, Lincoln Papers; John Pope to Henry W. Halleck, August 30, 1862; John Pope to Abraham Lincoln, September 5, 1862, Lincoln Papers; John J. Hennessy, *Return to Bull Run: The Campaign and Battle of Second Manassas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 469; Mark Grimsley, The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 85-87.

[60] John Pope to Abraham Lincoln, November 7, 1862, Lincoln Papers.

[61] Clemmons, Dakota in Exile, 34-37.

[62] J.W. Forney, Senate Resolution, December 5, 1862, Lincoln Papers; Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Civil War in the American West* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 132-133; Elizabeth R. Varon, *Armies of Deliverance: A New History of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 133; Chomsky, "The United States-Dakota War Trials," 42-43.

In mid-November, John Pope sent the trial records to Lincoln for his approval of the execution. One of the major issues that Lincoln faced was who could be determined guilty. Pope's letter addressed the "only distinction between the culprits is as to which of them murdered most people or violated most young girls," and that he worried that white settlers would start going on a violent rampage, killing "old men, women, and children" no matter whether they were innocent or guilty.[63] Written fifty years later, an article published the thoughts of spectating the court hearings, they believed that the court-martial was "composed of as able and human men as ever lived, who took the testimony and deliberated the same justly."[64] These Minnesotans were blinded by the realities of the court hearings. The court hearings lasted, on average, roughly two minutes.[65] The tribunal heard 393 cases and found 303 Dakota men guilty and needed to be execution for their actions.[66] John Pope and Henry Sibley, among other politicians, urged for the immediate execution of the 303. As reports reached Lincoln in

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[63] Bessler, *Legacy of Violence*, 49; Carley, The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, 70; Nichols, Lincoln and the Indians, 101; Chomsky, "United States-Dakota War Trials," 26-27.

[64] J.W. Forney, Senate Resolution, December 5, 1862, Lincoln Papers; "Instances of Bravery of Indians," *Mankato Daily Review*, December 27, 1912; Alexander Ramsey to Abraham Lincoln, November 28, 1862, Lincoln Papers.

[65] Paul Finkelman, "Lincoln the Lawyer, Humanitarian Concerns, and the Dakota Pardons," William Mitchell Law Review, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2013): 423-426.

[66] Charles E. McColley, Stories of Early Minnesota: An Indian Pentecost, Dakota Conflict of 1862 Manuscript Collection, MNHS; .J. Duley to Mr. Arnold, July 27, 1885, Dakota Conflict of 1862 Manuscript Collection, MNHS; George A.S. Crooker to Abraham Lincoln, October 7, 1862, Lincoln Papers; Alexander Ramsey to Abraham Lincoln, November 28, 1862, Lincoln Papers; John Pope to Abraham Lincoln, November 24, 1862, Lincoln Papers; William P. Dole to Caleb B. Smith, November 10, 1862, Lincoln Papers; Caleb B. Smith to Abraham Lincoln, November 11, 1862, Lincoln Papers; Carol Chomsky, "The United States-Dakota War Trials: A Study in Military Injustice," *Stanford Law Review* (Nov., 1990): 14-15; Michael A. Elliott, *Custerology: The Enduring Legacy of the Indian Wars and George Armstrong Custer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 29; Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical* Illustrations (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 21-22; Micheal Clodfelter, *The Dakota War: The United States Army Versus the Sioux, 1862-1865* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.), 58-59.

Washington, the President determined that 303 was too large a number to execute and "no executions be made without his sanction."[67] As Lincoln worried about neighboring Indigenous communities joining the fight, he swiftly interrogated reports from Minnesota to make a decision—especially the requests from Pope to find those guilty of defiling white women.[68] Those accused of rape, though, only numbered two. Lincoln, and eventually Alexander Ramsey, understood that the execution of two Dakota men would not satisfy the angered Minnesota population.[69] The official decisions not only brought justice to those who were deemed by the government to have committed a crime, but also a chance to appease angry white settlers.

In a proclamation sent to Minnesotan citizens, Alexander Ramsey attempted to quell discontent with President Lincoln's decision, "Our people indeed have had just reason to complain, of the tardiness of executive action in the premises, but they ought to find some reasons for forbearance in the absorbing cares which weight upon the President." Ramsey later added that "whatever may be the decision of the President, it cannot deprive the people of Minnesota their right to justice or exempt the guilty Indians from the doom they have incurred under local laws," a method of showing settlers had established laws that brought a sense of power over Indigenous peoples. Ramsey suggested that the citizens be patient, and even if the Dakotas are not all severely punished by the presidential order, that the State Legislature would assemble and try to handle the Dakota problem through state means. Ramsey appealed to his

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[67] Scott W. Berg, *38 Nooses: Lincoln, Little Crow, and the Beginning of the Frontier's End* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 189.

[68] For more information on female captive narratives, including tropes of rape, please see Emily Rankin Wardrop, '"All the Women…Were Violated in this Way:' Rhetoric, Rape, and Memory in the Dakota War," Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2015.

[69] Gregory F. Michno, *Dakota Dawn: The Decisive First Week of the Sioux Uprising, August 17-24, 1862* (New York: Savas Beatie, 2011), 396.

state to "await patiently and peacefully the due course of law."[70] While Ramsey himself was a Republican, his rhetoric to use states' rights to better serve the people of his state, to protect them Dakotas and punish those to the full extent of state authority, represented more contention over popular sovereignty. It seemed, at least to many white Minnesotans, that the state government could better suit their needs in punishing the Dakota. As Richard White has observed, Americans "usually regarded the federal government much as they would regard a particularly scratchy wool shirt in winter. It was all that was keeping them warm, but it still irritated them."[71] Ramsey urged citizens to practice patience. Even if the presidential order did not include all 303 Dakotas in the execution order, the state legislature would attempt to handle the Dakota problem through their own state means. Ramsey appeals to his state to "await patiently and peacefully the due course of law."[72]

John Pope, additionally, sent correspondences to President Lincoln urging him to execute all Dakota men sentenced to death by the military tribunal. Ultimately, after reading through the tribunal's decision, Lincoln determined thirty-nine out of the 303 would be executed for charges of documented rape and murder. As Paul Finkelman observes, "the decision to reprieve 265 men—seven out of every eight who were condemned—constituted the largest mass clemency of people sentenced to death in American history."[73] Six days before signing the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln ordered the death of the Dakota 38, to be completed in Mankato—a place

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[70] Alexander Ramsey Proclamation to Minnesota Citizens, December 6, 1862, Lincoln Papers.

[71] Richard White, "*It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American* West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 58.

[72] Alexander Ramsey Proclamation to Minnesota Citizens, December 6, 1862, Lincoln Papers.

[73] Finkelman, "Lincoln the Lawyer," 409.

forever marked by this historic event. In defending his decision, Lincoln told the U.S. Senate that "he had been anxious to not act with so much clemency as to encourage another outbreak, on the one hand, nor with so much severity as to be real cruelty, on the other."[74] He did not want to spark another outbreak, but knew that there was a fine line between military justice and retribution.[75]

In a letter to Lincoln, a Minnesota congressional delegation urged him to rescind the decision and order the full-scale execution of the "condemned Indians." As many white policy makers felt that the war had been waged against innocent settlers by hostile Dakotas, these men wrote that "the people of Minnesota have stood firmly by you. They have not violated any law. Our people have not risen to slaughter, because they believed that their President would deal justly with [the Dakota]."[76] In another letter to one Minnesota man, Caleb B. Smith, a Minnesota soldier, William P. Dole, penned that while "the Indians perpetuated the most horrible and atrocious crimes, and guilty of barbarities which stock every feeling of humanity, only known in

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[74] Chomsky, The United States-Dakota Trials, 32.

[75] Susanna Lee, "Civil War Era and Native Americans in the West" panel at Western History Association Annual Meeting, 4:33, October 19, 2018, *CSPAN*, https://www.c-span.org/video/?452570-3/civil-war-era-native-americans-west; Duane Schultz, *Over the Earth I Come: The Great Sioux Uprising of* 1862 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 2; Joseph L. Williams, Walter A. Burleigh, and William Jayne to Abraham Lincoln, December 24, 1862, Lincoln Papers; Henry Sibley to Abraham Lincoln, December 15, 1862, Lincoln Papers; Stephen R. Riggs to Abraham Lincoln, November 17, 1862, Lincoln Papers; Stephen R. Riggs to Abraham Lincoln, November 21, 1862, Lincoln Papers; Thaddeus Williams to Abraham Lincoln, November 22, 1862, Lincoln Papers; Joseph Holt to Abraham Lincoln, December 1, 1862, Lincoln Papers; John Pope to Abraham Lincoln, November 11, 1862, Lincoln Papers; John Pope to Abraham Lincoln, November 24, 1862, Lincoln Papers; John Pope to Abraham Lincoln, Telegram reporting names of 300 Sioux sentenced to death, November 11, 1862.

[76] McColley, An Indian Pentecost, MNHS; "Letter to the President By Our Congressional Delegation," *The Saint Paul Press*, December 9, 1862; "The Sioux Indians: A Voice from Blue Earth County," *The Saint Paul Press*, December 9, 1862; The Execution of the Indians," *The Saint Paul Daily Press*, December 16, 1862.

Indian warfare."[77] Even though many Minnesotans threatened to take up arms against the Dakota prisoners, the execution day in Mankato served as a public place for these same Minnesotans to express their frustrations and celebrate the impending death of their enemy.

Mankato's Execution

As a centralized hub for trade and commerce, Mankato served as a place for many different peoples during the nineteenth century; waterways made the town an agricultural hub for many Minnesotans and a place for settlers to pass through as they headed further west. When the Dakota War broke out, thousands of Minnesotans from more rural homesteads flocked to Mankato for refuge, as their homes were close to the various engagements.[78] He urged Lincoln to send U.S. troops to the Mankato area, as the Dakota War affected much more than the settler population living in the open prairies of Southcentral Minnesota. As officials deployed U.S. soldiers to Mankato, those white inhabitants felt a sense of safety even though they often were close to the front lines of combat.[79] The soldiers in Mankato not only provided a sense of security for Mankato citizens, they also actively participated in the construction of the hanging gallows. Their participation transformed the meaning of the hanging into an official military order.

As soldiers deployed to Mankato, military occupation played a vital role in keeping peace and "transforming the nature of everyday life," as explained by Gregory P. Downs. "Their arrival

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[77] William P. Dole letter to Caleb B. Smith, November 10, 1862, Lincoln Papers.

[78] Sarah Ann Purnell Montgomery, *Some Recollections of the Indian Outbreak of 1862*, Dakota Conflict of 1862 Manuscript Collection, MNHS; Minnesota Board of Commissioners, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861*-1865 (St. Paul: Pioneer Press Company, 1891), 319.

[79] Alexander Ramsey to Abraham Lincoln, September 6, 1862 (Telegram concerning affairs in Minnesota), Series 1. General Correspondence, 1833-1916, Lincoln Papers.

marked a new moment, a breakage in time" which allowed white Mankatoans to shift from hostilities to safety. Soldiers from the Sixth, Seventh, Ninth, and Tenth Minnesota Infantry Regiments – 1,419 men in total – found themselves stationed in Mankato for most of November and December 1862. Whereas the force calmed the public from the uneasy tensions conceived by the Dakota War, the occupying force – especially as martial law was declared – served as a swift arm of punishment. The U.S. soldiers constructed the large gallow structure, they served as guard over Dakota prisoners, and they kept order throughout the town. Soldiers found themselves at the center of the memory-making process at the time of the mass execution, and their performance paralleled efforts by Mankato citizens to transform the military hanging as a memorable public event.[80]

After Lincoln ordered the thirty-eight Dakota to be hanged, soldiers and citizens in Mankato prepared for the grand execution. The mass hanging served two purposes in the town: it followed the orders of the commander in chief and gave Minnesotans the opportunity to witness the demise of their enemies. Unlike most executions in the twenty-first century, events behind closed doors, the Dakota 38 hanging served as a spectacle—a performance—that served the interests of the white population in Mankato. White Minnesotans could see, first hand, the deaths of those who brought so much suffering to their communities. The U.S. Army declared martial law as they expected both soldiers and citizens to be overly excited and rambunctious at the hanging event. Four days before the execution, the Army prepared by issuing a direct order

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[80] Gregory P. Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupations and the Ends of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 28; William E. Lass, "Histories of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862," *Minnesota History*, Vol 63, No. 2 (Summer, 2012): 46; Edward Noyes, "Neighbors 'To the Rescue': Wisconsin and Iowa Troops Fight Boredom, Not Indians, in Minnesota in 1862, *Minnesota History*, Vol. 46, No. 8 (Winter, 1979): 318; Louis H. Roddis, *The Indian Wars of Minnesota* (Cedar Rapids, IA: The Torch Press, 1956), 166.

forbidding the sale of alcohol and liquor to federal soldiers; if found guilty—or if authorities held suspicion—the authorities could destroy all alcohol that the offender had in possession. The community that prepared for the hanging knew that it meant much more than a somber occasion, but a joyous time for all non-Natives to celebrate the end of the conflict and punishment of the Dakota people.[81]

In order for the execution to actually happen, the U.S. Army needed to construct a hanging gallow large enough to hang all thirty-eight men simultaneously. At the center of town, near the corner of Front and Main Streets and next to the Blue Earth River, army officers initiated the construction and planning of the large gallows. Army soldiers started cutting and felling wood from surrounding forests. They needed enough wood to accommodate the hanging of ten prisoners on each side of a large square. The scaffold served as a stage on which the hanged prisoners would satisfy the large crowd which watched from below.[82]

Typically, U.S. soldiers despised fatigue duty, especially when ordered to cut down trees and prepare wood for use. During the Civil War, the need for wood kept soldiers busy when on the move, in garrison, building battlefield defenses, or when constructing gallows for executions.[83] Soldiers often felt somber when constructing the gallows to kill their comrades

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[81] "General Order No. 18," *The Mankato Weekly Record*, December 26, 1862, Broadsides, leaflets, and pamphlets from American and Europe, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

[82] Richard Jackson Mott, *Rescue of white girl captives from Indians: An incident of the Minnesota Massacre in 1862*, letter addressed to R.M. Mott, October 10, 1903, Dakota Conflict Manuscript Collection, MNHS.

[83] Jesse L. Henderson, Diary Entry, January, 1864, University of Mississippi Civil War Digital Collection, Starkville, Miss.; John D. Billings, *Hardtack and Coffee: The Unwritten Story of Army* Life (Boston: George M. Smith and Co., 1887), 178, 180; For secondary scholarship see also, Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2012), 137-139; Lisa M. Brady, *War Upon the Land: Military Strategy and the Transformation of Southern Landscapes During the American Civil War* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2012), 42; Joan E. Cashin, *War Stuff: The Struggle for*

who, as Megan Kate Nelson observed, had "breached the code of conduct so egregiously." In the case of constructing hanging devices to execute enemies, however, a different emotional valence showed in the army ranks.[84]

As much wood was needed for the hanging device, many Minnesotan soldiers found great enjoyment in preparing the wood for the gallows. In one account, the Minnesotan soldiers were described as preparing the wood "bravely [with a] hearty good will."[85] The aura of victory flowed within the ranks of the U.S. soldiers preparing for the public end of their most hated enemies. Expressed in letters, their joy could be seen as revenge, excited to finally punish the Dakota fighters for the horrendous actions they committed against innocent and peaceful settlers.[86] As the scaffold reached final construction, it filled the open space near the Blue Earth River, making the hanging affair a large, grand spectacle for all to see. [87]

Human and Environmental Resources in the American Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 83.

[84] Megan Kate Nelson, email correspondence, December 21, 2019; "The Execution at Franklin," *The Abington Virginian,* June 26, 1863, Chronicling America.

[85] Richard Jackson Mott, *Rescue of white girl captives from Indians: An incident of the Minnesota Massacre in 1862*, letter addressed to R.M. Mott, October 10, 1903, Dakota Conflict Manuscript Collection, MNHS.

[86] Mott, *Rescue of a white girl*, MNHS.

[87] Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 19; Julius Owes, *The Hanging of the Thirty Eight Sioux Indians at Mankato, 1933,* Dakota Conflict of 1862 Manuscript Collection, MNHS.

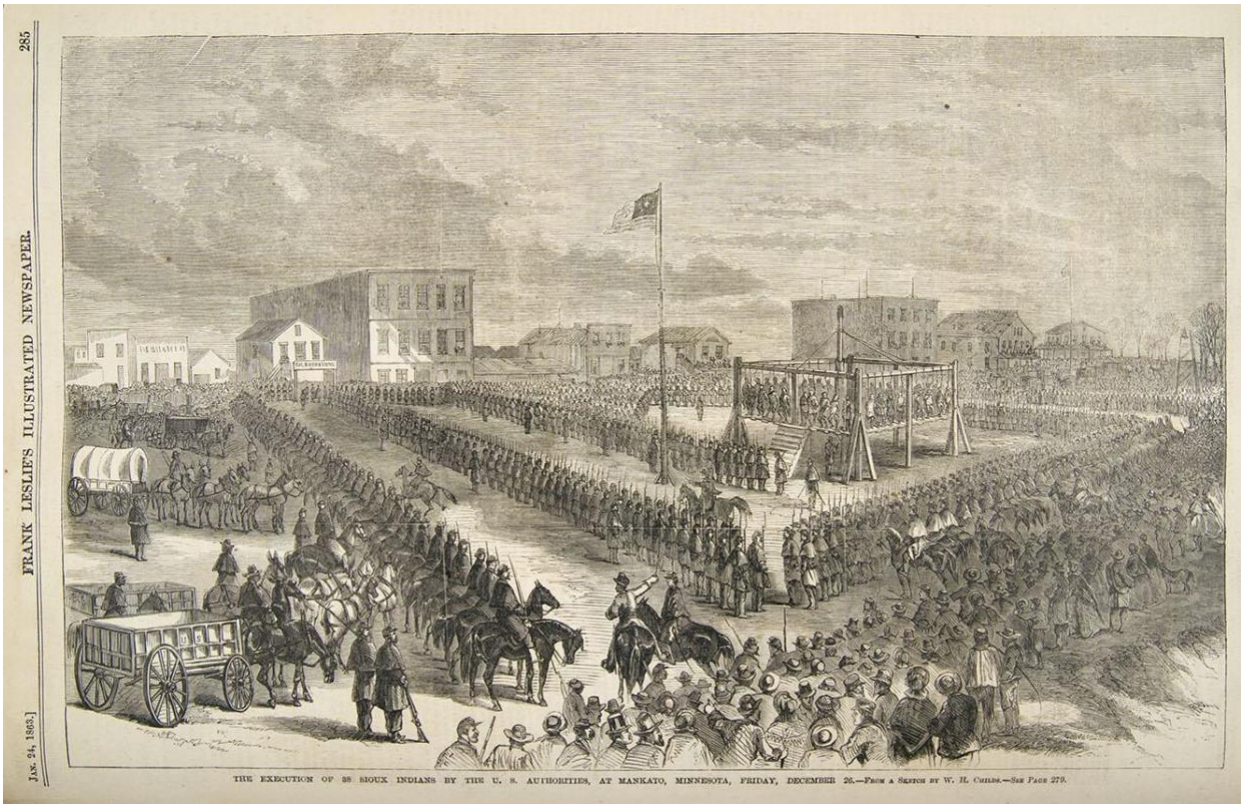

Figure 1

"Execution of the 38 Sioux Indians,"
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, January 1, 1863.

The scaffold served many purposes. Not only did the structure execute the Dakota prisoners when the executioner's ax struck the rope, but it symbolized U.S. victory over Dakota peoples. As a performance, the white sentiment against Dakota peoples solidified through the public nature of the execution. Before the hanging event, many white soldiers reflected on the construction of the gallow structure itself. They believed that the sturdy nature of the structure would serve the punishment needed. In describing the construction of the gallows, one Minnesota soldier, Julius Owens, observed:

> The scaffold was made in the shape of a square with a platform to be raised and lowered on the outside of it. A large pole stood upright in the center of the square,

> a pulley at the top, with a large cable running through it, which was brought down to connect the guy ropes all around the platform. This arrangement made it possible for the platform when raised, to be held in that position by fastening the large cable rope at the bottom of the large center pole. At the time of the execution, the platform was raised and fastened. The Indians were brought out accompanied by a catholic priest, and in utilizing a step-ladder ascended the platform. Some of the Indians were singing, while others were smoking cigars as they walked up the steps and around the platform to their places. Ropes were placed around their necks, caps were pulled down over their faces, their elbows tied behind their backs and their wrists fastened in front of them.[88]

The descriptive nature in Owens's letter demonstrated the great pride that those in the city took in the punishment of the Dakota. The collective nature of memory-making played its hand during the process by which the scaffold was constructed. Citizens wanted to participate, even though martial law was in effect and orders separated many from the Dakota prisoners. The execution offered the opportunity for individuals to reflect, remember, and believe whatever they wanted in regards to the death of the thirty-eight Dakota men.[89]

Even though the U.S. Army constructed the gallows, officers appointed one civilian, William Duley, to serve as hangman. Duley did not serve in the military, nor was he hired by the military due to his profession. In fact, Duley's ties to the community and the public knowledge of his wife and children's death at Lake Shetek during the Dakota War's heaviest fighting. The government and army realized that the public eagerly wanted to participate in any form or fashion. Since Duley had lost so much, they asked him to serve as executioner and cut the main rope that would send the Dakotas to their deaths. For Duley's personal experience in serving as

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88 Julius Owes, *The Hanging of the Thirty Eight Sioux Indians at Mankato, 1933*, Dakota Conflict of 1862 Manuscript Collection, MNHS.

89 "The Gallows," *The Mankato Daily Review*, December 26, 1862; Minnesota Board of Commissioners, *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861*-1865 (St. Paul: Pioneer Press Company, 1891), 748-749.

the hangman allowed him to feel satisfied and fulfilled as he brought vengeance to the Dakota population. Allowing a civilian to serve as hangman bolstered the sweeping victimhood and vengeance sentiment that rushed through most of the state and town. Duley's participation was a symbolic gesture that made the military hanging a grand public event which represented the forceful end of Dakota presence in the state.[90] By Duley's swing of the ax, the thirty-eight Dakota men fell through the scaffold's trap door—the largest mass execution recorded—forever changing Mankato's place in American history.

The Hanging and the Dakota Death Song

On December 26, 1862, a Dakota man shouted to his fellow Mdewakanton Dakota compatriots, all of whom were incarcerated at Camp Lincoln in Mankato, Minnesota pending their death. "Mitakuyapi, namahon po! (Hear me, my people) Today is not a day of defeat, it is a day of victory. For we have made our peace with our Creator and now go to be with Him forever. Remember this day! Tell our children so they can tell their children, that we are honorable men who die for a noble cause."[91] Soon after, the thirty-eight Dakota men prepared for their death. The standard white narrative of the hanging followed the general narrative addressed above. Dakota peoples faced their defeat, marched to the scaffold, and died honorably for their hostile actions. To what extent did the Dakota peoples address their voice and culture during the

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[90] W.J. Duley to Mr. Arnold, July 27, 1885, Dakota Conflict Manuscript Collection, MNHS; Solon J. Buck, ed., *Minnesota History Bulletin* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1915), 469;"Minnesotians Released," *The Weekly Pioneer and Democrat* (Saint Paul, MN), January 10, 1862; "Soldiers of the First Minnesota in Rebel Hands," *The Weekly Pioneer and Democrat* (Saint Paul, MN), January 24, 1862; *Federal Writers' Project*, "The WPA Guide to Minnesota: The North Star State," 1938. Reprint. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002).

[91] Sydney H. Byrd, Letter addressing the Dakota Odowan 141, November 7, 1986, Rick Lybeck Collection, Mankato, Minnesota.

hanging, and how does that alter the historical memory of the hanging? As Mankatoans waited by the gallow in Mankato, the thirty-eight Dakota prisoners were marched from a prison cell at Camp Lincoln, a prison camp in open green space near the confluence of the Blue Earth and Minnesota River.[92] The Dakota prisoners marched, chained by their wrists and ankles, through a crowd of roughly 4,000 white spectators, jumping and screaming behind 1,419 U.S. soldiers keeping order. As the Dakotas marched through the crowd, they performed their death song, smoking tobacco, and reported as accepting their ultimate defeat.[93] In one newspaper report, the

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[92] William E. Lass, "Rediscovering Camp Lincoln," Minnesota's Heritage, Vol. 20, No. 6 (2012): 22-23; Mary Butler Renville, *Dispatches from the Dakota War: A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 95.

[93] According to the U.S. Census of 1860, Blue Earth County, Minnesota—the county where Mankato resides—population lists 4,803 white citizens. The 1870 census marks the white population in Blue Earth County at 17,302. At the time of the mass hanging on December 26, 1862, reports contend that over 4,000 white citizens were in attendance. There is some speculation with the numbers, assuming that Mankato was not as big of a town as was reported. By examining the average increase of population per year the calculations number a rise in population 1,250 non-Dakota citizens per year. By this average, we can assume that in 1862 there was a population in Blue Earth County of 7,303. Based on an average incremental increase of 1,250 white people, by the time of the hanging the county potentially could have had a population of 7,303 making the reports that suggest the crowd size of several thousands in attendance quite possible. In addition to the citizen population, at the time of the hanging an estimated 1,419 U.S soldiers from the 6th, 7th, 9th, 10th Minnesota Infantry Regiments, as well as two cavalry units, were in attendance. In Mankato, specifically, the population in 1860 had reached 900 and by 1865 the town's total reached 1,974; W.M.B. Griswold, *Mankato and Blue Earth County: A Brief Overview of the Past, Present, and Future of the City* (Mankato, MN: Griswold & Neff, 1867), 4-5, Thomas Hughes Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota; Louis H. Roddis, *The Indian Wars of Minnesota* (Cedar Rapids, IA: The Torch Press, 1956), 166. For more primary source materials about the hanging crowd size, please see "Execution of the Indians in Minnesota," *The Manitowoc Pilot* (Manitowoc, Wisc.), January 9, 1963; "Execution of Minnesota Indians," *Cedar Falls* Gazette (Cedar Falls, Iowa), January 2, 1863; Richard Jackson Mott, Rescue of white girl captives from Indians: An incident of the Minnesota massacre in 1862, letter addressed to R.M. Mott, October 10, 1903, Dakota Conflict Manuscript Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota; Amos B. Watson, Reminiscences of the Sioux Outbreak, undated, Dakota Conflict Manuscript Collection, MNHS, St. Paul, Minnesota. For visualization on the size of Mankato in 1870, please see Albert Ruger *A View of Mankato, Blue Earth County, M.N., 1870* (Hudson, Wisc.: Ruger & Stoner, Merchants Lithographing Co.); Wallace Merritt, Sioux Massacre of 1862, 1933, Dakota Conflict Manuscript Collection, MNHS.

Dakota men continued to sing their death song as the ropes were placed and tightened around their necks. This sort of thinking bolstered a sense of American victory that many white Minnesotans strongly believed. "In their defeat by the whites," wrote Minnesota soldier Charles E. McColley, "the Indians seemed to regard their gods as being defeated; and all of their superstitions overthrown. Their pride was broken and their confidence in themselves was gone."[94] On face value, the interpretation by many white Mankatoans of the death song meant the men understood the wrongs they committed. The white Minnesotans that witnessed the hanging saw an opportunity to control and reinterpret a culturally-significant ceremony that, as we shall see below, is prevalent in many Native cultures, especially those in the Northern Great Plains. These white communities used the death ceremony to further solidify their own understandings and victimhood; they weaponized the narrative to take control and remove any hint of Dakota humanity or agency. On the other hand, the Dakota performance challenged these white misunderstandings and reinforced Dakota participation in the memory-making process.[95]

As seen in many Plains Indian societies, death rituals, ceremonies, dances, and songs all played a significant role in the final moments of many Natives' lives. These performance, more self-centered and not meant for public viewing, signified as "disdain for fear and the acceptance of the possibility—almost the embracing—of death," especially in Dakota communities. The ethnographic accounts from the pre-1960s show us that the Dakota death song was prevalent in

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[94] The Order of Execution," *The Mankato Daily Review*, December 26, 1862; McColley, "An Indian Pentecost," Dakota Conflict of 1862 Manuscript Collection, MNHS; Marcia Drought Pike to Mary Evelyn Young, November 17, 1940, Dakota Conflict Manuscript Collection, MNHS.

[95] Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1-3; Philip J. Deloria, email correspondence, January 19, 2020; Gregory O. Gagnon, *Culture and Customs of the Sioux* Indians (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2011), 31.

their society. As seen in Amos E. Oneroad and Alanson B. Skinner's anthropologic study, the acceptance of death could be associated with understanding the "hereafter in Dakota culture," and " Eastern Dakota claimed they have learned of the hereafter from people who have died and come back again. A regeneration takes place when one dies, they take a path to the milky way—a place of warriors."[96] As they accepted death and impending transformation, many Dakotas performed the death song before their death. Through reading against the grain of testimonial records from the hanging, clearly death can be culturally defined. The hanging of the thirty-eight Dakota signaled two cultural responses: white Minnesotans believed it was an acceptance of defeat and Dakota performed a ritual they had known; they prepared for death as it faced them.

The Dakota death song was a cultural response to a colonial situation just as the white interpretation reinforced colonial power and racist stereotypes. The Dakota performance quite possibly could have been an act of resistance, a moment to leave the earth performing a cultural ritual that white Minnesotans could not take from them—but, we may never know. What the Dakotas did, however, supported their desolate situation—steps and moments before the hangman's ax cut the rope—with what they knew best. Dakota cultural ceremonies that exerted their agency in dealing with the situation at hand. Moreover, there should be an

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[96] William C. Meadows, *Kiowa Military Societies: Ethnohistory and Ritual* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 117; Laura L. Anderson, ed., *Being Dakota: Tales and Traditions of the Sisseton and* Wahpeton by Amos E. Oneroad and Alanson B. Skinner (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003), 101-102; For more information on the Dakota death song, please consult ethnographic records in Edward Duffield Neill's "Gospel of Minnesota," specifically the poem "An-pe-tu-sa-pa-win, a Legend of the Dakotas" in "St. Paul and its Environs," *Graham's Magazine*, Vol. XLVI (January, 1855); 219; Samuel W. Pond, *The Dakotas or Sioux in Minnesota as they were in 1834* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1908), 496; Also consult Ella Deloria's *Dakota* Texts, reprint, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), xxxi, 129 and Lame Deer, *Seeker of* Visions (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), 262.

acknowledgement that Dakotas culturally performed the song as they saw fit. While this moment had been glossed over, passively ignored by scholarship over the hanging, Dakotas cemented this cultural expression into the historical record.[97]

Many white Minnesotans weaponized their version of the death song as they incorporated their own meaning of the performance, ignoring any understanding of Dakota culture. They used the song to strengthen their victimhood case as they envisioned the song to represent white success in winning over the lands of Indigenous peoples. Whites used the death song to reinforce their settler colonial power, as ideas of their victory transformed a savage space into civilized (and safe) society for American citizens.[98] In many cases, this idea came down to the fact that Dakotas accepted their defeat. J.G. Merical, a soldier from Company B of the 10th Minnesota Infantry, penned, "the savages came out of the prison singing their death song and when they got on the platform some of them put ropes on their own necks." A young boy who worked as a cook for the 7th Minnesota reflected after the hanging that as he "watched the condemned Indians file out across the street and mount the gallows without flinching in the least, [he] could not but admire their bravery." Dakota bravery was then associated with surrender and defeat, an opposite reality to Dakotas accepting their death and preparing themselves for the hereafter.[99]

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[97] Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Special Issue (Autumn, 2003): 118-119; Loretta Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings: Gros Ventre Culture and History, 1779-1984* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 3-4; Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 9.

[98] Waziyatawin, *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors: Dakota Commemorative Marches of the 21st Century* (St. Paul: Living Justice Press), 47.

[99] "The Hanging as Told by Eye Witness," *Mankato Daily Review*, December 27, 1912; "Saw Hanging From Window," *Mankato Daily Review*, December 27, 1911; Frank George O'Brien, *Minnesota Pioneer Sketches, From the Personal Recollections and Observations of a Pioneer Resident* (Minneapolis, Minn.: The Housekeeper Press, 1904), 94; "The Hour Called," *The Weekly Pioneer and Democrat*, January 2, 1863, LOC.

Stephen R. Riggs, a missionary and Dakota translator, noted in a *Mankato Weekly Review* editorial that the Dakota song prepared the men for death, a noteworthy message that complicated the typical white understanding of the song. Riggs observed:

> On Tuesday evening they extemporized a dance with a wild Indian song. It was feared that this was only a cover for something else which might be attempted, and their chains were thereafter fastened to the floor. It seems, however, rather probably, that they were only singing their death song. Their friends from the other prisoners have been in to bid them farewell, and they are now ready to die.[100]

Through the Dakota's perspective, Rda-In-Yan-Kna, colloquially known as Wabasha, penned that "my wife and children are dear to me. Let them not grieve for me. Let them remember that the brave should be prepared for death; and I will do so to become as Dacotah." Mankato newspapers ultimately discredited Wabasha's statement as his cultural understanding of death truly was an excuse or an attempt to get himself out of his hanging punishment. The *Mankato Weekly Review* claimed that the untruthfulness in Wabasha's letter did not match up to the realities of his actions, the murder, plunder, and violence for which his execution was based on.[101]

White narratives dominated how many understood the Dakota War in real-time, often forming a skewed truth to make white efforts and understandings seem necessary. Months earlier as the Dakota War raged, many white Minnesotans called the Dakotas "cowards," without the number of men to muster a "real" fight. In one account by George A. S. Crooker, a U.S. soldier who believed that a small military force, with around 2,000 infantry and 500 cavalry, could

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[100] "Confessions of the Condemned," *The Mankato Weekly Review*, December 26, 1862.

[101] "Letter from one of the Condemned Indians," *The Mankato Weekly Review*, December 26, 1862.

"exterminate the whole next of these outlaws in thirty days."[102] Yet, as the Dakotas performed their death song on December 26, many soldiers considered the Dakotas brave men for accepting their defeat and dying on the gallows. As the Dakota War fighting persisted, one key form of white morality and victory sough to belittle and dehumanize the Dakota community. As they called Dakotas cowards in battle, it gave way to white soldiers feeling superior over their enemies as they defeated them on and off the battlefield. They believed that their civilized army were defeating a savage, uncivilized group of people. By the time of the Mankato hanging, moreover, the same white soldiers offered a sense of humanity towards the thirty-eight Dakota prisoners as they faced their death. Their bravery that came from the realization of defeat. Furthermore, the Dakota death song signified something different. The performance of the song forwarded new notions of Dakota agency, a moment that rejected white understandings of Dakota defeat.

There is a deep resonance with the Dakota's death song; it places Dakotas in a moment in time that has actively erased and silenced them from the historical record. A moment that has once thought that the Dakotas were inexistent, mere pawns in the federal government's chess match. Deep emotions surfaced from the death song, on both sides, and should not be overlooked. However, in most scholarship which has written extensively on the Mankato hanging, scholars passively ignore the death song. In most cases, the song is broken down into one part of a short sentence. In Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, the death song only surfaced when Brown wrote, "They sang the Sioux death song until soldiers pulled white caps over their heads." In Scott Berg's *38 Nooses*, the song is not mentioned more than three

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[102] George A. S. Crooker to Abraham Lincoln, October 7, 1862, Series 1, General Correspondence, 1833-1916, Lincoln Papers; Anderson, *Little Crow*, 154.

times in the entire text, only used to describe the acceptance of defeat—just as seen in John A. Haymond's *The Infamous War Trials of 1862* and Thom Hatch's *The Blue, The Grey, and the Red.* In Duane Schultz's *Over the Earth I Come*, the death song comes up twice, yet it is not clear whether the death song was a moment of pride or a moment of somber acceptance. "They begin to chant now, the slow, rhythmic "Hi-Yi-Yi" of the Sioux death song," wrote Schultz, "the lament of their religion, not that of the white man." When the Dakotas marched onto the gallows, white hoods were placed over their heads, whereas Schultz wrote that the Dakotas "wait their mournful discordant death song again…their singing grows louder, and some call out their names and the names of their friends who will die with them."[103]

While most scholarship routinely neglected the Dakota Death Song, local communities performed the song as a way to remember the past. Though, one small church in Flandreau, South Dakota often recited, what believed was the Dakota death song, into the twentieth century. The reverend of the First Presbyterian Church in Flandreau, Abraham Crawford, used the Christianized version of the Dakota death song to remember those who died in Mankato. At the end of his regular sermon on the hanging's anniversary, Crawford concluded "and one of those

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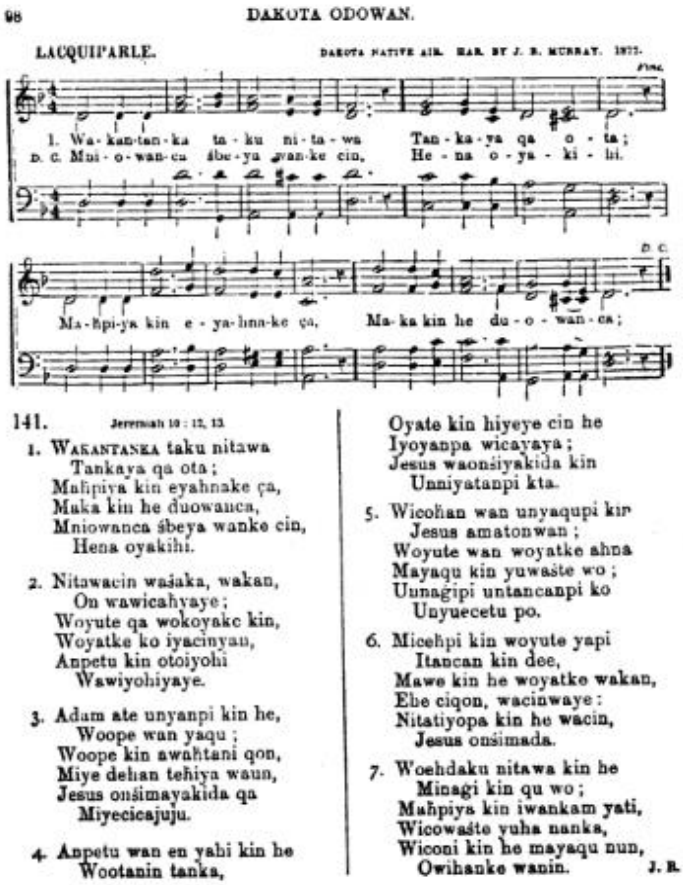
103 Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1979), 60; Scott Berg, *38 Nooses: Lincoln, Little Crow, and the Beginning of the Frontier's End* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), 308, 457-458; Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan R. Woolworth, *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), 244; Duane Schultz, *Over the Earth I Come: The Great Sioux Uprising of 1862* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 3; John A. Hammond, *The Infamous Dakota War Trials of 1862: Revenge, Military Law and the Judgement of History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Press, 2016), 121; Thom Hatch, *The Blue, the Grey, and the Red: Indian Campaigns of the Civil War* (Nashville, TN: Turner Publishing Company), 46.

who went to be with his Creator was my grandfather!" The church felt a personal connection to the Dakota 38 and the Christian song they supposedly sang.[104]

White memories of the mass hanging have continually ignored the Dakota experience, rather placing their own understandings of the death song as a way to support their ideas of American innocence. While they acknowledge that the Dakotas performed the death song, these accounts – both primary and secondary – neglect any context about what the song meant and



98 DAKOTA ODOWAN.

LACQUIPARLE. DAKOTA NATIVE AIR. HAR. BY J. B. MURRAY. 1837.

1. Wa-kan-tan-ka ta-ku ni-ta-wa Tan-ka-ya qa o-ta;
D. C. Mni-o-wan-ca śbe-ya wan-ke cin, He-na o-ya-ki-hi.

Ma-hpi-ya kin e-ya-hna-ke ça, Ma-ka kin he du-o-wan-ca;

141. Jeremiah 10 : 12, 13.

1. WAKANTANKA taku nitawa
Tankaya qa ota;
Maȟpiya kin eyahnake ça,
Maka kin he duowanca,
Mniowanca śbeya wanke cin,
Hena oyakihi.

2. Nitawacin waśaka, wakan,
On wawicahyaye;
Woyute qa wokoyake kin,
Woyatke ko iyacinyan,
Anpetu kin otoiyohi
Wawiyohiyaye.

3. Adam ate unyanpi kin he,
Woope wan yaqu;
Woope kin awaȟtani qon,
Miye dehan tehiya waun,
Jesus onśimayakida qa
Miyecicajuju.

4. Anpetu wan en yahi kin he
Wootanin tanka,
Oyate kin hiyeye cin he
Iyoyanpa wicayaya;
Jesus waonśiyakida kin
Unniyatanpi kta.

5. Wicoȟan wan unyaqupi kin
Jesus amatonwan;
Woyute wan woyatke ahna
Mayaqu kin yuwaśte wo;
Uunagipi untancanpi ko
Unyuecetu po.

6. Micehpi kin woyute yapi
Itancan kin dee,
Mawe kin he woyatke wakan,
Ehe ciqon, wacinwaye:
Nitatiyopa kin he wacin,
Jesus onśimada.

7. Woehdaku nitawa kin he
Minagi kin qu wo;
Maȟpiya kin iwankam yati,
Wicowaśte yuha nanka,
Wiconi kin he mayaqu nun,
Owihanke wanin. J. B.

Figure 2

"Dakota Odowan" From the Dakota mission of American Missionary Association and the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, with permission from the Rick Lybeck Collection.

104 Sydney H. Byrd, Letter addressing the Dakota Odowan 141, November 7, 1986, Rick Lybeck Collection, Mankato, Minnesota.

why the Dakotas chose to perform. The Dakota death song helps us reframe the Dakota presence during the hanging. Whereas traditional understandings of the event assume that Dakota prisoners marched to the gallows and died, the focus of their response to death allows us to rethink their place in that historical moment. As seen in the Dakota Odowan music, Dakota peoples regularly used the song to remember the thirty-eight men who died in Mankato, another aspect of early forms of memory-making that struggle over Dakota resurgence, moments which kept their community's memory alive.[105]

White Minnesotans Take Control of the Memory

Following the mass hanging, Dakota peoples were swiftly removed from the state in many different directions; some went to Fort Snelling, others went to Camp McClellan in Iowa, and others chose to leave Minnesota for more western reaches of Mni Sota Makoce, mostly in Dakota Territory and Manitoba.[106] As the Minnesotan government pushed Dakotas from the state, white memories took over. Many white communities believed the war had ended as the hanging formed a demarcation between their own personal interactions with Dakota peoples and safety. As the war continued in Dakota Territory, white Minnesotans moved on and started to

[105] Per Gwen Westerman, a scholar of Dakota culture and history at Minnesota State University, there were two songs performed by the Dakota prior to the mass hanging. One was a traditional Dakota death song and another was a Christianized version of the death song. Because this song has important cultural significance and implication, and the author is unsure if that knowledge should be shared, this section focused on the Dakota death song portion seen in primary materials that are open and accessible to the public.

[106] For more information, please consult Linda M. Clemmon's *Dakota in Exile: The Untold Stories of Captives in the Aftermath of the U.S.-Dakota War* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2019). For a list of names of Dakota peoples held at Fort Snelling's concentration camp, please see "Fort Snelling Concentration Camp Dakota Prisoners, 1862-1863," *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 1/2, Special Issue: Empowerment Through Literature (Winter-Spring 2004): 170-174.

form their own memories of the 1862 fighting and hanging. Despite the continued conflict west in Dakota Territory, those in Minnesota viewed the hanging as a clear end to the Dakota War and a way to punish those who caused much havoc in Minnesota, especially near Mankato.[107] The sense of security changed as they knew that Dakotas were pushed from the state and the U.S. Army actively hunted them down hundreds of miles away.[108] After the hanging, Mankatoans felt safe and victorious. As the sense of security changed, many Minnesotans—federal soldiers included—wanted to physically remember their place in the hanging event. Every white Minnesotan experienced and reflected on the hanging in their own individual ways, but their memories transformed into a larger collective phenomenon.

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[107] "More Indian Troubles in Minnesota," Muscatine Weekly Journal (Muscatine, Iowa), April 24, 1863, Chronicling America;

[108] Act of March 3, 1863, Ch. 119, Session III, Thirty-Seventh Congress, 819-820, Library of Congress; Jack Shuler, The Thirteenth Turn: A History of the Noose (New York: Perseus Books, 2014), 147-148; Christopher J. Pexa, "Transgressive Adoptions," 36-39; Martínez, "Remembering the Thirty-Eight," 12.

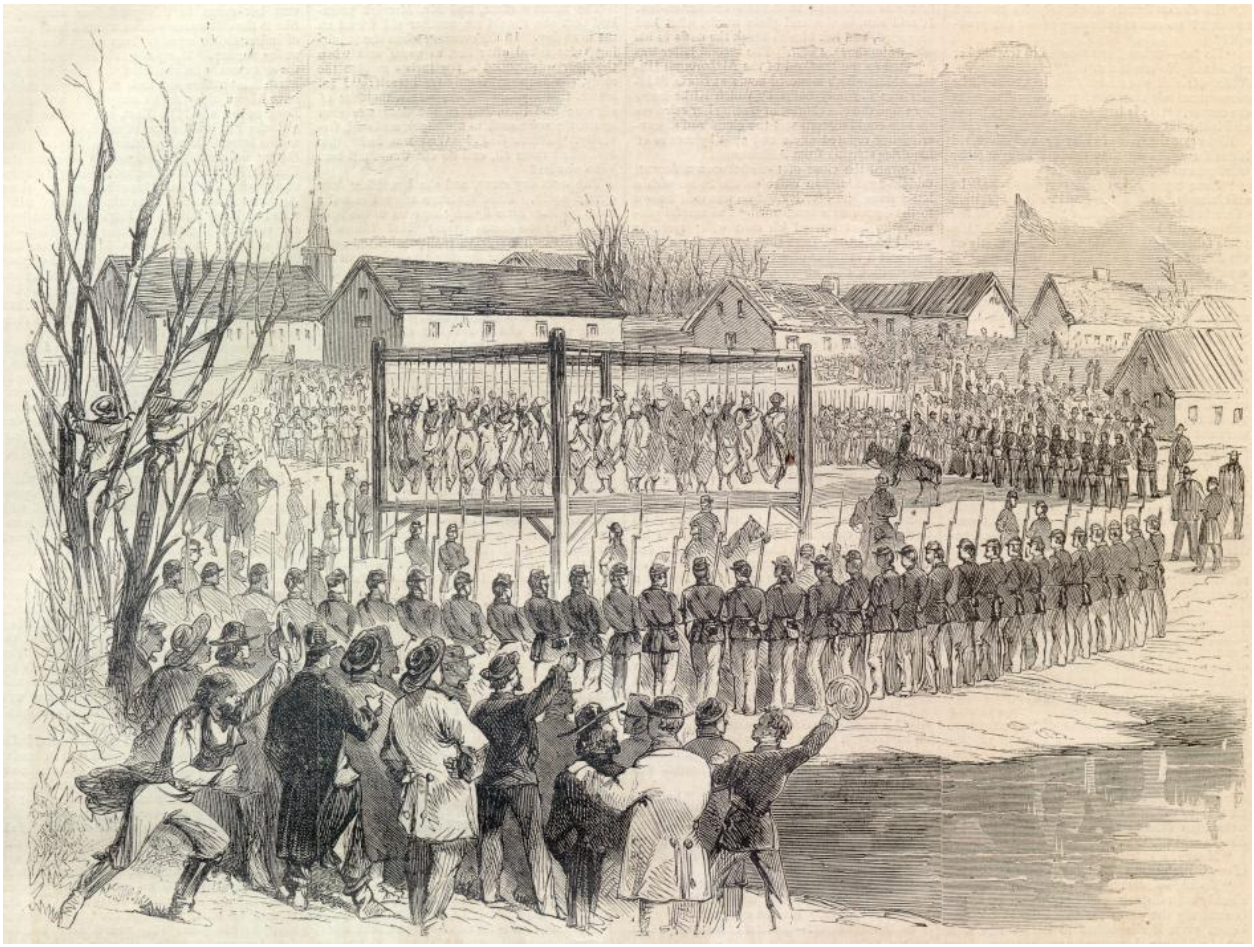

Figure 3

"Execution of Thirty-Eight Indian Murderers at Mankato, Minnesota,"
Harper's Weekly, January 17, 1863.

At 10 o'clock in the morning on December 26, William Duley, the man who was elected to serve as hangman, swung his ax. The swift swing cut the rope which sent the thirty-eight Dakotas into eternity. Julius Owens, the soldier who witnessed Duley's swing, gave detail of the hanging moment:

> When everything was read, a man whose family had all been killed by the Indians, stood with an ax in his hand to cut the big cable at the sounding of three taps of the drum. The signal was given, the waiting man severed the rope and all

> the Indians fell at once, one, however, broke his rope but was immediately raised again.[109]

The way in which Minnesotans reflected on the hanging gave way to the experiential moment during the execution. Not only was it a performance, where an audience watched from afar as the execution transpire. Rather, it was a moment for all to grow a collective identity around that moment. Crowds gathered to watch the hanging and to grow closer, in turn their memories further strengthened their idea of innocence and victimhood.[110]

Visualizations of the hanging spread throughout national newspapers, such as *Harper's Weekly* which illustrated thousands of citizens separated from federal soldiers. This was a moment of civic unrest, as the federal soldiers separated the unruly crowd from the Dakota prisoners. Throughout the Minnesota River Valley, white settlers wanted to punish the Dakota people after they surrendered. One of the famous cases came from New Ulm, a town west of Mankato, when white citizens of the town threw cans, bottles, and even dumped scalding water onto the Dakota prisoners. In one instance, settlers ripped a baby out of the arms of a Dakota women and the baby eventually died. As they marched through the town, soldiers bayoneted a Dakota woman who stopped to use the bathroom. Just like in Mankato, the soldiers' duties were to protect the Dakota prisoners from the vengeful Minnesotan population. Though, in many cases like in New Ulm, the U.S. soldiers participated in the mayhem.[111]

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[109] Capt. W.J. Duley letter to Mr. Arnold, July 27, 1885, Dakota Conflict of 1862, MNHS; Adam Arenson and Andrew R. Graybill, eds, *Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United* States (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 247; Owens, "The Hanging of Thirty-Eight Sioux Indians at Mankato," 2-3, Dakota Conflict Manuscript Collection, MNHS; Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1997), 277-278.

[110] Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 19.

[111] Waziyatawin, *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors*, 36, 51-52; Chris Mato Nunpa, "Dakota Commemorative March: Thoughts and Reflections," American Indian Quarterly, Vol.

The hanging in Mankato also served as a moment of white frustration, but also as a moment of holistic vengeance against the Dakota prisoners. Mankato's execution seemed similar to many of the lynchings of African American and Jewish people through the American South, as flocks of crowds spectated the outright murder of individuals deemed different to society. Amy Wood observes that "lynching assumed [a] tremendous symbolic power precisely because it was extraordinary and, by its very nature, public and visually sensational," as it "carried a cultural force of racial terror through its most sensational manifestations."[112] The community within Mankato, though in search of order formulated through popular sovereignty, still eagerly wanted to participate in the mass hanging. Bruce E. Baker writes that "Lynching plays to the interests of localism, of weakness of institutional structures, of a legal system that is partial and winks at actions which challenge its write," for which provides an exceptional way to think about Mankato and many white Minnesotans upset over federal control and decision making by President Abraham Lincoln.[113] Even though the full 303 were not set to die on December 26, the community and soldiers gathered to watch and, in some cases, participate in the execution.

The federal army transformed the meaning of the hanging when they allowed William Duley to cut the hanging rope. When he swung the ax, all thirty-eight men fell through the floor of the scaffold. Though, the rope that held one Dakota man, called Chaska, broke on his body's descent. Chaska laid on the ground, unable to move due to his broken neck. The angry citizens

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28, No. ½, Special Issue Empowerment Through Literature (Winter-Spring, 2004): 231-232; Chris Mato Nunpa, "Genocide in Minnesota: The Dakota Death March," *Twin Cities Daily Planet*, December 6, 2010, https://www.tcdailyplanet.net/genocide-minnesota-dakota-death-march/.

[112] Amy S. Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1-2.

[113] Bruce E. Baker, *This Mob Will Surely Take My Life: Lynchings in the Carolinas, 1871-1947* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 95.

demanded his body to be re-hanged on the gallows. To make things more personal, a few soldiers, Julius Owens included, rushed to Chaska's body and restrung his body on the scaffold. Rather than going through the same motions of everyone else, the soldiers held onto the rope until Chaska died. The experiential moment for the soldiers showcased the public's urgency to rip the life away from the Dakota prisoners.[114]

As officials pronounced the Dakota men dead, Mankatoans and federal soldiers rushed to the gallow structure as the other soldiers transported the bodies to wagons and prepared them for a mass burial next to the Blue Earth River. They lunged for the bodies, grabbing and ripping anything they could touch. Shirts, objects, and even hair were highly sought after by the white crowd. These people wanted physical objects from the Dakota bodies to remember that time and space. They lived through the Dakota War and execution, but wanted to have something to remember that moment for the rest of their lives. Others climbed the wooden scaffold to rip wood and cut section of the hanging rope. These temporary objects of remembrance gave Minnesotans a personal connection and investment into the hanging forming a collective identity and memory in Mankato. How these citizens chose to remember the hanging ultimately served as the official vessel to remember the Dakota War and hanging on their own terms.[115]

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[114] "The Hanging as Told by Eye Witness," *Mankato Daily Review*, December 27, 1912; N. D. White, "Captivity Among the Sioux; August 18 to September 26, 1862," *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1901), 426; Joseph Hazen Letter, December 28, 1862, Dakota Conflict of 1862 collection, MNHS.

[115] Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Phillip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 174-175; Joseph Hazen Letter, December 28, 1862, Dakota Conflict of 1862 collection, MNHS; Owens, "The Hanging of Thirty-Eight Sioux Indians at Mankato," 2-3, Dakota Conflict Manuscript Collection, MNHS.

Monopolizing White Memory

Among the 1,419 soldiers stationed at Mankato, Private William Kunselman of the 9th Minnesota Infantry Regiment, watched as the Dakota 38 hanged from the Mankato scaffold. Kunselman was a three-year man, enlisting into the 9th Minnesota after the Battle of Antietam with a contract to serve three years of the duration of the Civil War. On the day of the mass execution, the officers of the 9th ordered Kunselman to guard a series of wooden carts, wagons, and mules near the large scaffold. These carts were to be used to transport the dead Dakota bodies immediately after the hanging. The U.S. Army expected a rambunctious crowd, and Kunselman had to separate the Dakota bodies from hostile and excited Minnesotan citizens. After the execution, Kunselman escorted the bodies to the mass grave where he watched them fall in. He returned to the scaffold and realized the importance of that moment—an end of a frontier war and the end to hostilities with a vindictive Indigenous community. He pushed through the souvenir-hungry crowd and ripped a plank of wood from the scaffold. From that wood, he carved a walking cane, which he carried throughout his subsequent military duty in Dakota Territory and the remainder of his life. The lacquered wood cane was carefully fitted with polished brass and silver, and it housed an 8.5-inch dagger in the handle. Kunselman engraved a message in the cane which read, "A piece of the gallows upon which 38 Indians were hanged at Mankato, Minn, Decbr 26th, 1862." The cane was a testament of time and space, a physical object to forever remember Kunselman's experiences watching the execution of his enemies, but also dehumanized the Dakotas with no mention of their ethnic identity or any context to the history of the Dakota War.[116] Canes were an important object that many

[116] There is no available image of the cane, as Dakotas have determined the object to be culturally sensitive materials. Because of this, the description of the Kunselman Cane was given by Benjamin Gessner, Associate Curator of Native American Collections at the Minnesota

Minnesotans formed. Just like the Mankato hanging, citizens in Meeker County formed a cane from wood that came from the home where the first white settlers died during the Dakota War.[117]

Just like Kunselman, many white Minnesotans used physical souvenirs from the execution to remember the trauma they had faced throughout the previous three months of the Dakota War. Settler narratives, in conjunction with physical objects from the hanging were used as a way to separate white experiences from the Dakotas, forever retaining power over the Dakota peoples. In the aftermath of the hanging, various objects were made from the scraps of wood from the scaffold, or intricately produced to create physical objects for citizens to remember. In some cases, citizens took sections of the rope from the nooses and hair from the dead. Others took the actual chains that were locked around the ankles and wrists of the Dakota prisoners. Jack Shuler's book, *The Thirteenth Turn: A History of the Noose*, speaks of a watchband constructed from Chaska's hair, an even more daunting vessel of remembering white victory over Dakota peoples.[118]

The white memory of the Dakota War and hanging was also remembered through more physical, longer-lasting objects—a grotesque souvenir-ism that bolstered the white cause and

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Historical Society, email correspondence, January 23, 2020. "Civil War Service Index – Union – Minnesota," digital image, *fold3.com*, William Kunselman general index card, National Archives and Records Administration, last accessed December 8, 2019; U.S. Congress, "Chap. 934: William Kunselman," in *The Statutes At Large of the United States of America from December, 1901, to March, 1903, Concurrent Resolutions of the Two Houses of Congress, and Recent Treaties, Conventions, and Executive* Proclamations (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 1417; "Cane from Mankato," *8658.A,B, Minnesota Historical Society Collections*, last accessed December 8, 2019; "Kunselman, William," Hughes County 1885 Census, South Dakota Historical Society, last accessed December 8, 2019.

117 "Cane," Minnesota Historical Society, Last accessed January 23, 2020,

118 John F. Meagher to J. Fletcher Williams, December 26, 1887, Dakota Conflict of 1862 Manuscript Collection, MNHS; Jack Shuler, *The Thirteenth Turn: A History of the Noose* (New York: Perseus Books, 2014), 46.

their feelings of victory. Paintings of the mass hanging circulated among many homes, newspapers, parlors, and public venues. When talking about a painting of the mass hanging, C.S. Marston noted that:

> I have heard stories so much in my boyhood that there seemed almost as though they were my own observations. That framed picture of the hanging of thirty eight Indians hanging in the sitting room of my Uncle's home; conversations with friends of the older generation who were among the soldier band who drove off the Indians and squelled the uprising; the passing of the spot where the Indians paid the penalty of their crimes, these as well as father's recital of his experiences have all helped to make one of a succeeding generation feel as though he were part and parallel of it all.[119]

Not just seen in *Harper's Weekly*, but images produced on more day-to-day objects, circulated amongst the Mankato community. These objects signified not only as a means to remember the conflict first-hand but for future generations to learn the history and feel a sense of pride and connection to those events that meant so much to the past generations.

By the 1890s, the Standard Brewing Company manufactured a serving tray which read, "The Execution of 38 Sioux Indians at Mankato, Dec. 26th, 1862." Silver spoons were also forged to commemorate the hanging, with a very similar image to that seen in the January 1863 *Harper's Weekly* image.[120] Additionally, the editor of the Mankato Weekly Recordd, John Wise, profited off of the sale of lithographs of the hanging.[121] These physical objects visualized how white Mankatoans and other Minnesotans wanted to remember the U.S.-Dakota War. In that vein, Boyd Cothran observes that "patterns of circulation and commodification transformed horrific objects from suitable souvenirs to trophies for display and finally to historical artifacts of

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[119] C.S. Marston to Minnesota Tourist Bureau, August 24, 1933, Dakota Conflict of 1862 Manuscript Collection, MNHS.

[120] "U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 Commemorative Souvenir Spoon in Case," *MNHS*, Last accessed January 25, 2020.

[121] Clemmons, *Dakota in Exile*, 37.

considerable cultural and material value."[122] By doing so, the individual objects grew into a larger collective memory in how the city remembered the Dakota hanging. These physical and metaphorical memories translated as varied moments to celebrate the end of the Dakota War. Whether or not they understood that the war continued into 1863, 1864, and even 1865, Minnesotans in Mankato saw this as the defining moment which ended hostilities in Minnesota.[123]

As this chapter has shown, white Minnesotan memories of the hanging of the Dakota 38 were self-serving, erasing Dakotas from an event they still consider pivotal in their culture. White Minnesotans, then, vigorously deployed an "active forgetting" which is a strategic way to ignore the Dakota side of the narrative. This strategy succeeds in two different ways, by building up a strong sense of victimization that helped white Minnesotans control, transform, and remember history on their own terms; and, secondly, it succeeds in erasing, silencing, and replacing Dakotas from their traditional homelands, *the* prime motive of settler colonialism which has both real and historical consequences for the Dakota people.

The active forgetting that many white Minnesotans practiced in Mankato demonstrates how historical memory is part of the process of elimination and replacement. Unlike Jürgen Osterhammel's interpretation of colonialism as a process defined by the "relationship…in which an entire society is robbed of its historical line of development, externally manipulated and transformed according ot the needs and interests of the colonial rulers," settler colonialism devotes its structure to replacement and elimination of the Native.[124] Though, as seen in works

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[122] Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 14.
[123] Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 14-15.
[124] Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism a Theoretical Overview* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005), 15.

by Lorenzo Veracini and Patrick Wolfe, elimination is the primary method of construction and expansion of a new settler society.[125] Furthermore, in order to complete the process of Dakota erasure from their homelands, white Minnesotans needed to write them out of their history. The memories and narratives, as well as the objects, formed around the hanging of the Dakota 38 did just that. As white Minnesotans bolstered their ideas of victimhood, the feelings of innocence after the U.S.-Dakota War, they were in tandem writing Dakotas out of the history that made that place in Minnesota unique and multi-cultural. Through settler colonialism, the hanging story remained a narrative of white victory over defeated Dakotas as a method to rid the Indigenous population from the land destined to be settled by other white Americans.[126]

This chapter sheds light on the temporary nature of the memory-making process in Mankato. Individuals wanted to remember the hanging in many different ways; from wooden canes to strands of Dakota hair, to using the wood itself for building construction in Mankato, these objects were temporary, but the memories reigned in loud and clear. Mankatoans wanted physical reminders of this historic event. As these men and women grew older and the wood began to rot, the community sought more permanent means to remember the hanging of the Dakota 38. As they convened to choose ways to permanently remember this incident, their ideas of innocence and victory over the Dakotas flooded into the twentieth century.

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[125] Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 75; Jeffery Ostler and Nancy Shoemaker, "Locating Settler Colonialism in Early American History," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 3 (July 2019): 361-363. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2006): 388; Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (New York: Cassell, 1999), 27, 66.

[126] Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 17, 20; Penelope Edmonds, *Settler Colonialism and (Re)conciliation: Frontier Violence, Affective Performances, and Imaginative Refoundings (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016),* 74.

Chapter 2

The Ghost of Mankato's Past:
The "Hanging Monument" and the Pendulum of Memory, 1912-1976

"There is a refining influence from the arts of Design on a prepared mind, which is as positive as that of music, and not to be supplied from any source. But pictures, engravings, statues, and casts, beside their first cost, entail expenses, as of galleries and keepers for an exhibition; and the use which any man can make of them is rare, and their value, too, is much enhances by the numbers of men who can share their enjoyment."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life* (1871)[127]

The ghostly presence of the Dakota 38 lingered well into the twentieth century. 1912 drastically changed the commemorative landscape of the town. White veterans of the Dakota War who lived in Mankato were growing old, and they wanted a physical reminder of the mass hanging to cement a historical event in time and space. The monument read "Here Were Hanged 38 Sioux Indians, Dec. 26th, 1862," and that historical marker would offer future generations, thought the Mankato men, a fruitful opportunity to learn about the town's past.[128] With the bloody aftermath of the U.S.-Dakota War on the minds of the settlers and their descendants, the community wanted to glorify and honor the deeds of the men who fought against the Dakota.[129] After several meetings, the group raised funds to construct a memorial with one sole mission—to ostensibly honor a historical fact and to glorify their victory over the Dakotas.[130]

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[127] Rolph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1860), 85.

[128] Throughout this chapter I will refer to Mankato's monument dedicated to the execution of the Dakota 38 as the "Hanging Monument."

[129] The U.S.-Dakota War did not officially end at the hanging of the Dakota 38 on December 26, 1862. For two years following the execution Dakotas and U.S. unites engaged in combat throughout Minnesota and Dakota Territory. Mankato was pressured by raiding Dakota parties well into 1865, yet white settlers denoted the hanging as the official end of the fighting.

[130] Herman Czeikowitz to sister Tillie, October 26, 1940, SMHC Manuscript Collection 160, Southern Minnesota Historical Center, Memorial Library, Minnesota State University,

This chapter argues that the struggles over Mankato's hanging monument—from its construction to its necessary demise—illuminate the competing nature of the memory of the Dakota War and the mass hanging of the Dakota thirty-eight. The stone's contested nature demonstrated how white Mankatoans were more concerned with their own self-image than appeasing the region's Native population. The perception of the monument in Mankato changed over time, demonstrating that interpretations of the past are fluid and contested from multiple angles.

With the construction of monumentation comes the formation of a historical consciousness as a means to remember and forget chosen aspects of the past. This is where "active forgetting" comes into play; a process by which people intentionally leave out certain aspects of a story to bolster another. Thomas Brown observes that "the militarization of American memory was thoroughly entwined with white supremacists," when writing on the memory and monumentation of the Civil War. These monuments reinforced three distinct categories: recognition to citizens, public leaders, and U.S. victory, which Brown concludes "gave way to more violent, hierarchical, self-aggrandizing representations of social and political order."[131] In the South, argues Adam H. Domby, a continued legacy of the institution of slavery "as benevolent and beneficial" helped that region remain devoted "to the cause of white supremacy" and defended "white hegemonic southern politics."[132] Monuments served the

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Mankato; Letter to Folwell, August 6, 1922, Thomas Lowe Hughes Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

[131] Thomas Brown, *Civil War Monuments and the Militarization of America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 7.

[132] Adam H. Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020), 16-18.

purpose of celebrating a historical moment while also strengthening local interpretations of that past.

, Monuments to the American Civil War generally demonstrate that Americans struggled over not only the memory of violence, but also the meaning of identity, race, belonging, and citizenship. Monuments of the Civil War era served as a way to preserve and promote a white past. The permanence that accompanies monuments suggests, metaphorically, a sense of white authority and ownership over history and memory. As a result these monuments further displaced the historical experiences and memories of marginalized communities to the periphery.[133]

Similar to other Civil War era monuments, the Hanging Monument in Mankato reinforced white interpretations of the mass execution while silencing those of the Dakota. Similar terminology, such as "silencing," play a role in this active forgetting. However, the manipulation of memory in Mankato did not simply silence Indigenous perspectives; the complete erasure and neglect of Native participation suggests that white Minnesotans did not recognize Dakota presence at all. Gregory Schroeder's article, "Remembering Our Past," adds that "when we remember something, we are both structuring the story of the past and leaving out or forgetting something else." Those white citizens who felt they held a stake in the memory of the hanging and war actively forgot the Dakota story as a means to centralize their suffering and reinforce their settler colonial power over Indigenous peoples.[134]

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[133] Brown, *Civil War Monuments and the Militarization of America, 68, 295*; Anne Elizabeth Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 163-164.

[134] Gregory Schroeder, "Remembering Our Past," in *The State We're In: Reflections on Minnesota History* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010), 36-37; Ashis Nandy, "History's Forgotten Doubles," *History and Theory*, Vol. 34, No. 2, Theme Issue 34: World Historians and Their Critics (May 1994): 47; Rodney Harrison, "Forgetting to Remember,

This chapter draws on memory studies to contribute to scholarship on the infamous Hanging Monument in Mankato, Minnesota. Primarily, this chapter's contribution moves beyond the scholarship that tells the standard narrative of the Hanging Monument's rise and fall. Rather, the lingering aura of the hanging reverberated long after the mysterious disappearance of the monument following its removal. Two works, in particular, address the ways in which the Hanging Monument's legacy has troubled Mankato's collective identity. Historian Melodie Andrew's essay, "The U.S.-Dakota War in Public Memory and Public Space: Mankato's Journey Towards Reconciliation," traces the construction and removal of the Hanging Monument. She argues that Dakota and white Mankatoans came together in the mid-twentieth century to deal with the fraught legacy of the Dakota War in their community. That community actively seeks reconciliation and the history around the Hanging Monument sparked those hopes.[135] Rick Lybeck's article, "The Rise and Fall of the U.S.-Dakota War Hanging Monument," demonstrates how settlers and their descendants used the Hanging Monument as a place to meditate on the history and determine if any change in the historical memory needed to be made. This work shows how Mankatoans used the monument for specific purposes, which in turn neglects Native theories and perspectives on the problems behind that monument. Both works end their studies

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Remembering to Forget: Late Modern Heritage Practices, Sustainability and the 'Crisis' of Accumulation of the Past*," International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 6 (2013): 580; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 50; Lisa Blee and Jean M. O'Brien, *Monumental Mobility: The Memory Work of Massasoit* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 13; Stephanie Wood and Amos Megged, eds., *Mesoamerican Memory: Enduring Systems of Remembrance* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 144-145.

135 Melodie Andrews, "The U.S.-Dakota War in Public Memory and Public Space: Mankato's Journey Towards Reconciliation," in Atkins and Miller, eds., *The State We're In*, 50-58.

with the monument's removal and subsequent disappearance.[136] Yet, this chapter seeks to reveal a new dimension of the story by suggesting that Mankatoans had different motives for the monument's removal. The Hanging Monument shed a negative light on Mankato, and white Minnesotans subsequently removed it not to appease Native protesters, not to participate in historical revisionism, but to improve Mankato's reputation. This process continued to sideline Dakota voices and resume settler-colonial power over their narratives.

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Building

A few days after the mass hanging of the Dakota 38 on December 26, 1862, doctors and scientists rushed to Mankato, Minnesota.[137] They heard that the U.S. Army had buried the bodies of the Dakota 38 next to the Blue Earth River, and wanted to use untouched bodies for medical research. Of these scientists, Dr. William Mayo arrived in town and immediately started exhuming the mass grave. Mayo's team collected the body of Maripiya Okinawjin, or "He Who Stands in the Clouds"—most popularly known as Cut Nose. The body was taken to Rochester for

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[136] Rick Lybeck, "The Rise and Fall of the U.S.-Dakota War Hanging Monument: Mediating Old-Settler Identity Through Two Expansive Cycles of Social Change," *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2015): 38.

[137] I refer to the thirty-eight Dakota men executed in Mankato as the "Dakota 38," a name which Dakotas and white Minnesotans in Mankato regularly use in conversation when talking about the hanging event.

experimentation, dissection, and mutilation.[138] The removal of Dakota bodies from the hanging site signified the role of settler power over the historical memory in Mankato.[139]

The active forgetting of the Dakota 38 began with the removal of the bodies from the banks of the Blue Earth River. The dead Dakota bodies were dehumanized, their experiences forgotten as a means to restore order and power through Mankato and the surrounding region. The mass hanging of the Dakota 38 reassured Mankatoans that their town was safe, and the removal of the dead bodies contributed to that deep sense of security. Mankato was the town where the U.S.-Dakota War ended, according to its citizens. Even though the hanging event now remained in the past, the continuation of systemic violence reinforced nineteenth century structures of erasure and continued into twentieth century. The removal of Dakota bodies signified the process by which white Mankatoans blatantly disregarded the Native presence and

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[138] The story of the Cut Nose desecration has been visualized by Dakota peoples in multiple ways. For example, Julie Buffalohead's "You Eat Grass Dr. Mayo" (2012) is a prime example of Dakota reactions to this fraught history. Buffalohead also connects the Cut Nose story with the larger Dakota War theme of power over Indigenous peoples. "Let them eat grass or their own dung" is a popularized quote by a Minnesota trader that refused to supply Dakotas during times of starvation before the Dakota War. Dakota response to the Mayo story demonstrates how pivotal this event in their history truly meant to their communities. Julie Buffalohead, "You Eat Grass Dr. Mayo," *Minnesota Historical Society*, 2012, last accessed November 15, 2019, https://collections.mnhs.org/cms/display?irn=11124901; Jeffrey L. Kirchmeier, *Imprisoned by the Past: Warren McCleskey and the American Death Penalty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 54-55; Hamilton Bailey and William John Bishop, *Notable Names in Medicine and Surgery: Short Biographies of Some of Those Whose Discoveries (not Necessarily the Greatest Medical Discoveries) Have Become Eponymous in the Medical and Allied Professions* (London: H. K. Lewis and Company, 1946), 169.

[139] Samuel J. Redman, *Bone Rooms: From Scientific Racism to Human Prehistory in Museums* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 1-5; "Military Force at Mankato," The Weekly Pioneer and Democrat (St. Paul, Minn.), January 16, 1863, Chronicling America.

experience. The site was not sacred to these Mankatoans, even though some believed the hanging location held spiritual/haunting significance or represented a "relic of barbarism."[140]

On December 26, 1912, the fiftieth anniversary of the mass hanging, a committee of prominent Mankato men gathered near the banks of the Blue Earth River. The group congregated at the spot where the Dakota 38 had been executed fifty years prior. For most of the late nineteenth century, no one could precisely pinpoint where the hanging took place. The group of men, however, relied upon the recollections of John McGarry. At the time of the hanging, McGarry served as a carriage driver who escorted the dead Dakota bodies to the mass grave along the Blue Earth river. As he waited for the execution to conclude, he noted the details of the hanging location, for example the scaffold rested on a relatively flat ground at the intersection of Front and Main Streets. As the Dakota men were marched to the gallows, the group marched by several downtown buildings owned by prominent Mankato men. These details helped determine the location of the Hanging Monument in 1912.[141]

Judge Lorin Cray, a district judge in Mankato, served as a leading voice in choosing materials for the monument's construction.[142] In planning the monument's unveiling ceremony, Cray traveled over 100 miles from Mankato to hand-pick stone, a special granite, from the St. Cloud quarry. The popularity of the Hanging Monument allowed Cray to receive special treatment by various freight company workers while moving it to Mankato. Cray convinced the general freight agent of the Northern Pacific railway Company to ship the monument to St. Paul.

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[140] "Symposia of Ghosts: War Dance Executed by the Spooks of the Mankato Indians," *The Saint Paul Daily* Globe (St. Paul, MN), January 19, 1890, 2; D.E. Danby, "Capital Punishment," *The Student* (Mankato Normal School), Vol. II, No. 7 (April, 1890), 8.

[141] "Mr. M'Garry's Claim," The *Mankato Review*, May 3, 1902, 2.

[142] Letter to Dr. W.W. Folwell, August 6, 1922, Thomas Lowe Hughes Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota; "The Lincoln Centennial," *The Mankatonian* (Mankato State College) Vol. XXI, No. 6 (February, 1909): 6.

By the monument's arrival, Cray persuaded the fright traffic manager of the Omaha Rail Company to ship from St. Paul to Mankato. Both companies shipped the 8,500 granite slab for no cost, as a means to support the effort to glorify the hanging's legacy. Judge Cray played a significant role in the construction of the Hanging Monument. Not only was he deeply entrenched in civic affairs, but he, as a veteran of the U.S.-Dakota War, eagerly wanted to stamp the Mankato landscape with a reminder of white victory over Dakota peoples. [143]

The monument arrived in Mankato and the citizens cheered. Mankatoans felt connected to the granite slab, and commended Clay for the job well done in choosing such a remarkable stone. An editorial in the *Mankato Review* reflected that "all can see that the stone is a very fine piece of granite and the cutting is of the best." Only the best stone would be used to tell the popular history of the hanging, a means to celebrate what white Minnesotans had done in 1862. The fiftieth anniversary event formally welcomed the new monument to Mankato, physically stamping its powerful grasp on the history at the spot where removed the Dakotas had been removed.[144]

Festive occasions in Mankato celebrated the Hanging Monument's construction and unveiling. The event started at 7:30 that evening when the planning committee formally turned over the monument to the City of Mankato. Performances by Lamm's Orchestra preluded a brief history of the U.S.-Dakota War given by H.B. Perrin. A crowd of a few hundred Mankatoans

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[143] "Will Present Marker to City," *The Mankato Review*, October 29, 1912; Judge Lorin Cray, "Experiences in Southwestern Minnesota, 1859-1867 MEMOIR (1908)," *Minnesota Legal History Project*, *15-16*, http://minnesotalegalhistoryproject.org/assets/Lorin%20Cray%20Memoir%20(1908).pdf; "Lorin Cray," *Minnesota Historical Society Notes*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1927): 429-430.

[144] "Will Present Marker to City," *The Mankato Review*, October 29, 1912; Thomas Lowe Hughes to William W. Folwell, August 4 1862, Thomas Lowe Hughes Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

participated in the singing of patriotic tunes. The messages given at the commemoration, especially by Lorin Cray, told great tales of the U.S.-Dakota War, especially of Mankato's involvement—from being a site of refuge for rural frontier homes to the site of the mass hanging. The celebration celebrated the execution of the Dakota 38 and the power that white Minnesotans held over Dakotas. Community members were said to have had their faces "light up as the pages of memory flashed through" their eyes. This was an important event in the town's history, and finally the monument allowed citizens to reflect on their town's involvement.[145]

The *Bismarck Tribune* posted that the Hanging Monument "mark[ed] the spot where thirty-eight Sioux Indians were hanged fifty years ago." The focus on that memory constructed a platform for "old settlers and old soldiers [to] reminisce on the Indian Outbreak."[146] The McGarry statement proceeded to spark conversations about how the monument was funded and the reasons why Mankato needed the marker. To many citizens, the monument was not intended to celebrate the killing of the Dakota men, but rather to "record accurately an event in history so that many people [who] come to Mankato [can] see the spot where the Indians hung. It can now be pointed out to them accurately."[147] The focus on this historical fact continued to remove and silence any sort of Dakota perspective or telling of the hanging narrative. Language used by the *Tribune* bolstered stereotypes of Dakota peoples, while explaining the true meaning of the monument. The monument was not created to "gloat over the death of the redmen, for they met

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145 "Monument on Site of Hanging," *The Duluth New Tribune* (Duluth, Minnesota), December 27, 1912; "Indian Monument is Formally Turned Over to the City of 'Kato*,'' The Mankato Daily Free Press*, December 27, 1912.

146 "Spot where 38 Died Marked," *The Bismarck Tribune* (Bismarck, ND), December 28, 1912, 2.

147 "Monument Made Gift to City," *The New Ulm Review* (New Ulm, MN), January 1, 1913.

their death bravely."[148] Many other accounts imply similar interpretations, such as that Dakotas faced their fate upon the scaffold. In some cases, Dakotas requested that their chains be removed so they can "march single file, Indian fashion, to the gallows" and to die with honor.[149] Suggesting that Dakotas bravely accepted their death implies that white Minnesotans were not guilty of starting the Dakota War and participating in the largest mass hanging in United States history. Settlers diluted their involvement to make themselves seem guiltless. White victimhood maintained an effort to tell the hanging narrative a specific way, which contributed to the construction of the Hanging Monument.[150]

The focus on the American Innocence style of remembering the Dakota 38 led to a period of Dakota neglect and erasure. The silencing of Dakota voices in Mankato during the fiftieth anniversary demonstrated how most white people viewed Indigenous people in the region. As the Dakotas were displaced from the Minnesota River Valley, the memories of the war went with

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[148] "Monument Made Gift to City," *The New Ulm Review*, January 1, 1913.

[149] "Hanging of Thirty-Eight Still Sets High Record, Mankato Free Press, March 2, 1927; Language used against Dakotas was quite common during this era. As a continuation of settler power over Indigenous peoples, hostile stereotypes worked in two ways: to dominate the narrative or to forward an interpretation of Native peoples being an antiquated story of American history. In many cases white settlers in Mankato around the turn of the twentieth century penned that the executed Dakotas "marched bravely" to the gallows. Others wrote that the Dakotas "chanted a death song" before the gallows dropped. The Dakotas, to their understanding of the history, accepted their death with no protest. Yet, there is a disparity, as seen in Carol Chomsky's article, that argues that the trials used against the Dakota 38 were flawed. Please see Carol Chomsky, "The United States-Dakota War Trials: A Study in Military Justice," *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (November, 1990): 13-15; David Martínez, "Remembering the Thirty-Eight: Abraham Lincoln, the Dakota, and the U.S. War on Barbarism," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Fall 2013): 15.

[150] Boyd Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War: Redemptive Violence and the Making of American Innocence* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 19-20; Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 36-37; see "Victory Song," n.d., Thomas Lowe Hughes Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota; "This beautiful country," n.d., Thomas Lowe Hughes Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

them. Before and after the mass hanging in 1862, a diaspora emerged when Dakotas were either taken into federal custody or Dakotas fled westward into Dakota Territory. By 1912, very few Dakotas remained in the region as their people were ostracized by state legislation initiated fifty years earlier.[151] On September, 9, 1862, three months prior to the executions, Governor Alexander Ramsey began to prepare for Dakota removals from the state. "The Sioux Indians of Minnesota," stated Ramsey, "must be exterminated or driven beyond the borders of Minnesota." When Mankatoans dedicated the monument, the memory of the Dakota had been forgotten and silenced from the town's collective memory.[152]

The Hanging Monument signified a devotion to power by white Minnesotans over Indigenous peoples. Reading between the lines of the newspaper editorials clearly revealed how white Minnesotans venerated the monument, pushed back against criticism, and constructed excuses to defend the victory in 1862. The Hanging Monument's place in the town clearly signified the prevailing worldview of Mankato in 1912.[153] By the mid-twentieth century, debates transformed the historical consciousness of Mankato. The principles of 1912 morphed by the 1950s, and citizens questions the monument's place in their town.

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[151] Letter to William W. Folwell, August 4, 1922, St. Paul, Minnesota, Minnesota Historical Society Folder, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota; Christopher J. Pexa, "Transgressive Adoptions: Dakota Prisoners' Resistances to State Domination Following the 1862 U.S.-Dakota War," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 30; Martínez, "Remembering the Thirty-Eight," 16-18; Chomsky, "The United States- Dakota War Trials," 38.

[152] "Message of Governor Ramsey to the Legislature of Minnesota, delivered at the extra session, September 9, 1862," *U.S.-Dakota War (Minnesota Historical Society)*, last accessed November 24, 2019, http://www.usdakotawar.org/history/multimedia/message-governor-ramsey-legislature-minnesota-delivered-extra-session-september-9.

[153] Blee and O'Brien, *Monumental Mobility*, 17.

Debating

Efforts to remove the monument did not seriously begin until the mid-twentieth century. The contentious conversation around the Hanging Monument demonstrates a white Mankato community urge to dismantle the negative memory which surrounded it. Between the 1950s and 1970s interpretations of the monument began to change from a preservation of settler victory and innocence to a realization of how the monument gave Mankato an "unwholesome reputation."[154] Community members, primarily non-Dakota, urged for the removal of the Hanging Monument. Many viewed the relic as an eyesore to their community, and they wanted the marker gone. While few Native voices were evident, near the 1970s their voices emerged as a main group that voiced discontent towards the monument. Prior to this though, the standard practice of thinking that Dakotas were missing from Mankato played a vital role in how community members debated the fraught public memory. Many whites believed the Dakotas remained out of the spotlight and chose not to return to Mankato in the twentieth century. The reminder of the hangings reverberated traumatic memories and moments of violence.[155] Rather than focusing on issues related to Native silence, they focused their debates on interpretations based on political leanings. Some believed Mankato ought to produce more monuments for the U.S.-Dakota War. Not just the mass hanging, but Mankato's involvement in sending men into the conflict, its place as a refugee hub for fleeing settlers from the rural regions of the Minnesota River Valley, and the survival of the town through the traumatic and destructive Dakota War.

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154 Dave Kenney, "Mankato, 1971: Minnesota's Own Monument-Removal Experience," *Minnpost,* August 35, 2018, Accessed October 26, 2019, https://www.minnpost.com/commuity-voices/2017/08/mankato-1971-minnesotas-own-monnument-removal-experience/.

155 Gwen Westerman, interview by author, July 18, 2019.

Some Mankatoans advocated for the monument's removal, and wanted it replaced with a more acceptable piece that honored the hanging and the "Indians place in the city's history."[156] Recognition of Dakota presence in the past concerned the citizens. They wondered what they should do with the monument. A group of citizens issues an appeal to the Minnesota Centennial Commission—a commission set to honor the 100th anniversary of Minnesota's statehood—about removing the monument. They hoped the Mankato commission could reach into its large pot for funds to help remove the Hanging Monument. One newspaper article wrote that "there is no river deep enough in these parts" to hide a piece of granite that large.[157] The tensions continued to mount as the hanging was considered an *accomplishment* and the belief that a "monument would not have been erected had 38 white men been hanged."[158] As the Centennial celebration began to approach in 1958, Mankatoans eagerly wanted to rid the city of the hanging's legacy and to dedicated a new monument that told truth about Dakotas in that place.[159]

By the 1960s, a local Mankato Pharmacist, Allen Mollison, led the charge to remove the Hanging Monument. Mollison's efforts failed time and time again, which led to him building an important relationship with the Minnesota Governor's Human Right's Commission (HRC) in 1960. As the Civil Rights Movement progressed into the 1960s, Minneapolis legislators and the Governor sought a better plan of action against discrimination. Agencies such as the State Commission Against Discrimination and the Governor's Human Rights Commission sought "to stimulate educational activities to develop respect for human rights and to direct government and public attention to racial injustices that might result in serious social disorder.," and Native

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156 Rogers, "New thoughts on Indian Hanging," November 14, 1957.
157 Rogers, "New thoughts on Indian Hanging," November 14, 1957.
158 "Pot Pourri," *Austin Herald* (Austin, MN), November 18, 1957.
159 "Pot Pourri," *Austin Herald*, November 18, 1957.

peoples were among the list who "remained [in] the commission's core groups of interest."[160] Mollison's goal sought to make the Hanging Monument's perception an issue at the state level. The glorification of violence and settler colonial power over Dakotas constituted a human rights issue in the mind of Mollison.

The joint effort by Mollison and the HRC attempted to discuss the removal of the Hanging Monument with the Minnesota Historical Society. The HRC's executive director, Clifford E. Rucker, commented that,

> Our commission has long felt that this monument should be removed. Sometimes ago we took this matter up with the Minnesota Historical Society which has authority over the matters. We were unable to get the historical society to remove the monument, as they contended it was a mark of historical importance and part of Minnesota's history. We are pleased to learn that other groups agree with us that this is an objectionable and uncomplimentary eye-sore which ought to be removed. Our commission will be glad to join with other groups [for] a renewal of efforts…and it is our feeling that if enough pressure is exerted it can be done.[161]

The Minnesota Historical Society's statements bolstered the general anti-removal sentiment seen in Mankato. Many white Minnesotans continued the victor-oriented sentiment that helped construct the monument. As seen in scholarship by Karen L. Cox, sentiment that surrounded monuments often had political connotations in which communities ardently debated those who sought removal.[162] Politicization of language stemmed from the attempts to "revise history."

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160 "Governor's Human Rights Commission," *Minnesota Legislative Reference Library*, last accessed November 24, 2019, https://www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/agencies/detail?AgencyID=2027.

161 "The Battle Goes On," Mankato Free Press, October 10, 1960, 15.

162 Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003), 163.

Historical revisionism and what contemporary Neo-Confederates have coined "cultural Marxism," were seen as a means to "wreck American culture and morality."[163]

Many white Minnesotans advocated this sort of sentiment, as they felt they were being cornered and forced to change the understanding of the past. The problem, though, is that their conception of the past is flawed. The Hanging Monument denoted a narrative of domination over Indigenous peoples. Also, it participated in American erasure of ethnic peoples who did not fit well into their culture. This point brings up Patrick Wolfe's idea of settler colonialism, particularly his point that the structure of settler colonialism is not only taking land and resources from Indigenous peoples, but deliberately replacing that population. In Mankato, the Hanging Monument signifies that erasure of Dakotas. Based on white supremacy, the monument dictates how Mankato conveys the hanging's memory and story.[164]

The *Mankato Free Press* published an editorial that covered the HRC and Minnesota Historical Society's conversations about the removal of the Hanging Monument. The editorial contended that the removal of the Hanging Monument did not constitute an elimination of Dakota War history, but, rather, the removal would rid the community of a physical reminder that boasted the white dominated narrative about the mass execution. "When we have a marker prominently marking the hanging," stated the *Free Press* editor, "it sounds too much like we're proud of what was done in the heat of anger." At this moment Mankato struggled over the memory of the Hanging Monument. Two competing sides, mainly white Mankatoans, contended that the monument held some significance in the city. A positive and negative connotation of the

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[163] Bill Berkowitz, "'Cultural Marxism' Catching On," Southern Poverty Law Center's *Intelligence Report*, August 15, 2003.

[164] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2006): 388.

monument lingered in the town, and it would not be until Native voices began to debate the monument would things change.[165]

As this decade continued, tensions among white community members continued to brew and eventually boiled over. To outsiders, it often seemed that the Hanging Monument shed a negative light on the town. Mankatoans were not concerned about Indigenous perspectives; but rather, the perception of how outsiders viewed their town.[166] White community members advocated for seeing in the monument a story of courage, sacrifice, and victory over uncivilized peoples. They resisted removal, and in some cases, were angered at the idea of townsfolk dismantling the monument. One citizen mentioned that "he'd like to be on hand when [those removing the monument] strode bravely forth with [their] little hatchet and tried to chop the thing down." Those in the anti-removal camp thought the reality of removal would never come true.[167] Other citizens agreed that the monument should stay as a true testament to learning from the past, whether the hanging was a mistake or not. "We did not live during those days and have no knowledge of the torments of the early settlers," snarked an anonymous Mankatoan. He assumed that presentism fogged the decisions of those who disagreed with the hanging.[168]

Unlike the monument's interpretation, the physical structure remained relatively unscathed until the 1970s. Protesters, on several occasions, attempted to destroy the monument. On one occasion, protesters dumped gasoline on the granite. They hoped that the burn would deface the hanging message. On another occasion, protesters poured bright red paint all over the

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165 "The Battle Goes On," *Mankato Free Press*, October 10, 1960.

166 Rogers, "New Thoughts on Indian Hanging," *Mankato Free Press*, November 14, 1957, 14.

167 Franklin Rogers. "New Thoughts on Indian Hanging," *Mankato Free Press*, November 14, 1957.

168 "Views on the Monument," *Mankato Free Press*, October 17, 1960, 13.

monument to symbolize blood. Radicalization took over the protests throughout Mankato, following larger activist movements, such as the Red Power Movement, around the United States.[169]

The period of the late-1960s and early-1970s, tumultuous in militarized activism spread throughout the United States. In the context of Minnesota, the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Red Power Movement challenged white society by seeking recognition of Indigenous sovereignty. As Kent Blansett shows us, the Red Power Movement was a culmination of what he coins Native Nationalism, which "covers a long history of efforts to promote and protect the explicit rights of Indigenous land, law, and peoples," and "Red Power called for the restoration of treaty lands, lifeways." Many have considered the Red Power Movement to be closely associated with other Civil Rights movements. Yet instead of equality, Native peoples simply wanted their land back and their sovereignty recognized.[170] AIM leaders followed a similar path in pushing for Native self-determination and sovereignty recognition.

Mankato and the Hanging Monument came under direct question when AIM leaders arrived in Mankato. In February, 1971, Mankato State College hosted a social studies conference in which Native American students and teachers, AIM leaders, and Bureau of Indian Affairs employees gathered to talk about the current plight of the American Indian. The four AIM leaders, Edward Benton, Clyde Bellecourt, Dennis Banks, and George Mitchell, spoke on the larger issues of Indian self-determination and sovereignty. During their presentations, all four leaders questioned Mankato's commemoration of the hanging of the Dakota 38. The social

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169 Marion Sturzyk, "Indians Brings Guilt Home," *MSC Daily Reporter*, Mankato, Minnesota, June 2, 1971; Kenneth R Philip, ed., *Indian Self Rule: First-hand Accounts of Indian-White Relations from Roosevelt to* Reagan (Logan: Utah State University, 1995), 238.

170 Kent Blansett, *Journey to Freedom: Richard Oakes, Alcatraz, and the Red Power Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 4, 151.

studies conference respected the broader trajectory of activism and giving Native peoples a voice. During the introductory remarks, one of the planners of the conference from the Sociology Department mentioned that this "was the first time since the hanging of the thirty-eight Dakota, that Indians in this area have had the opportunity to present their own story."[171] As most Dakotas lived away from Mankato State College, the conference provided a place for community members to come together with Native studies and address critical issues in Native American communities.

The AIM presentations focused on the hanging of the Dakota 38 to analyze larger issues in Native communities, and how those events were interconnected between the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries. Around ten years earlier, Mankatoans believed that the monument would not affect modern Native peoples; now, in contrast, AIM leaders used the hanging and monument as a way to critique federal power over Indigenous peoples. Moreover, these presentations demonstrated how lasting challenges with Indigenous peoples in the Mankato area persist. In the case of the AIM leaders in Mankato, they addressed a wide slew of issues with Native peoples in urban settings, in reservation life, and beyond.

Clyde Bellecourt opened the AIM presentations with a long-winded prayer, giving the audience a clear idea of AIM's interpretation on the mass hanging. The prayer was quite satirical in nature, poking at white Christianity and the realities of the hangings' legacy in 1971:

> Today, we are here in hopes of opening the eyes and ears of this university. We also want your great spirit to forgive the white people for the hanging of thirty-eight innocent Sioux in 1862. I say innocent because they were never given a trial or proven guilty. And even though they blew in democracy, we know that the great Government Sibley with full endorsement of President Lincoln, went ahead with the extermination policy of hanging the Sioux. We ask you to forgive these people Great Spirit Chief, and we ask they open their eyes today. We have sat you

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[171] Sandy Gregor, "Modern Indians Seek Fair Deal," *Mankato State Reporter*, February 11, 1971.

> with them this morning, we have heard our Indian brothers speak. They have spoken the truth. Yet, very few of them have asked any questions. When we get through our presentations today, we hope that their eyes are open, their ears are open, so that they can see what is around them. So that they can hear the cries of people who live in poverty, discrimination, who are still suffering from diseases brought here and the genocide which continues practice in all areas of health, education, and welfare. Please forgive them Great Spirit Chief, amen.[172]

Bellecourt's remarks spoke to the power held by white Minnesotans over Dakota peoples. To Bellecourt, university officials had no reckoning of any of these issues, and it was AIM's duty to enlighten the minds of those in the audience; to realize the ongoing issues and ways that things can be fixed. Bellecourt's speech also spoke to ongoing contemporary issues in 1971, such as the Vietnam War and U.S. soldiers in Cambodia. In these examples, Bellecourt related the overreaching power by the U.S. Army with past events that troubled and destroyed Native communities; events like the Sand Creek Massacre, Wounded Knee, and even the hanging of the Dakota 38. AIM's mission and message forced the Mankato conference audience to face the fact that the past informs the present—and the U.S. government had exercised power and control from the nineteenth century through that moment in 1971.[173]

While AIM's broader mission was to address significant issues within Native communities—urban and on reservations—the Hanging Monument was brought up again and

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[172] Clyde Bellecourt, MNSU American Indian Social Studies Conference; American Indian Movement February, 1971, transcript, Minnesota State University, Mankato; Southern Minnesota Historical Center, SMHC 219; In regards to the section that speaks to the hope for Native students to listen and ask questions, another statement was made during this presentation that Native students must be "weary of red apples"—that is Native Americans that are "red on the outside, white on the inside." The AIM presentations not only spoke to the white audience to listen and realize the plight of American Indians, but also open the eyes of Native students who may have "lost their cultural ways," so to speak. Consult MNSU American Indian Social Studies Conference; American Indian Movement; Feb. 1971; SMHC 219 IV 31 Min. 28 Sec.; Minnesota State University, Mankato- Southern Minnesota Historical Center, SMHC 219.

[173] Bellecourt, MNSU American Indian Social Studies Conference, February, 1971.

again. During Edward Benton's keynote address, the most important message heard at the social studies conference, the monument came under direct attack. Benton had known about the monument, and wanted to assure the crowd that their organization had wanted it removed. There needed to be a revision to Mankato's landscape, Benton argued, with the monument and the ways the history is told. Rather than "Here Were Hanged 38 Sioux Indians," Benton's recommended that it read "Here Were Hanged 38 Innocent Freedom Fighters." Benton added that "those people who died in the sake of freedom, they died because they believed that the land" belonged to the Dakota peoples. These Natives believed that the United States must honor past treaties. Benton snarked, "but there it still stand, [and i] cannot guarantee that it will be there tomorrow."[174] As Benton announced this threat towards the Mankato Hanging Monument, there was a change in who debated the monument. No longer was it only white Minnesotans. Native peoples had a strong voice and their opinions were included in the debates.

The AIM received hard criticism for its efforts, primarily against statements which denounced federal power against Indigenous peoples.[175] Mankato newspapers considered the AIM presentations, as well as the rest of the conference, to be a direct stab at the United States government. One report added that "Whites heard what might be called the 'liberal' and 'more liberal' elements of the Indian Movement, [and] both factions were sharply critical of the federal

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[174] Edward Benton, MNSU American Indian Social Studies Conference; American Indian Movement, February, 1971, transcript, Minnesota State University, Mankato; Southern Minnesota Historical Center, SMHC 219.

[175] Bruce D'Arcus, "The Urban Geography of Red Power: The American Indian Movement in Minneapolis-Saint Paul, 1968-1970," *Urban Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 6 (2010): 1245-46; Erich Steinman, "Settler Colonial Power and the American Indian Sovereignty Movement: Forms of Domination Strategies of Transformation," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 117, No. 4 (2012): 1087-88; Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "Twentieth-Century American Indian Political Dissent and Russell Means," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 29, No. 1, Special Issue: A Tribute to Russell Means (2014): 17.

government and the white establishment." The Native spokesmen were loosening the knot which kept Native peoples bound to a history controlled and dictated by non-Natives. The movement to dismantle the Hanging Monument was hastily debated by community members. The Mankato Free Press provided a regular column, labeled "Monument Should Stay," for white Minnesotans to reflect on the pressures brought by activist and AIM demonstrations.[176]

Many white Mankatoans penned disgust towards protesters and threats to their monument. On February 16, 1971, Roy Close, a town citizen, alluded that the monument's main goal was to be a "reminder of an historical event; an unfortunate event [and] removing it will not change the fact—it happened." Thomas A. Simonson, a few days later, wrote that "the arguments of removing the marker is needless and completely pointless. By the presence of the monument, I see no deliberate intention of degrading or abasing the American Indian." A common theme in these newspapers contended that the monument as simply denoting a noteworthy historical fact. Simonson continued, "I wonder if perhaps the Indians and other peoples who are presently voicing their opinions that the monument is offensive and tasteless aren't attaching an additional meaning to the marker which was never intended."[177] Using the tone of reconciliation, Roy

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[176] David Paul Nord's work [*Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 2-5, 111, 128.] provides apt analysis on the role of American newspapers between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. In particular he speaks to how "in static communities the most potent forms of communication are traditions, myths, rituals, and habit." In the case of Mankato, white Minnesotans utilized the newspaper columns to reinforce the silence of Native peoples. IN particular the Mankato Free Press offers very little testimony of Native peoples discussing the conferences, AIM, or their engagement in the debates over monument removal. On the other hand, white Minnesotans strengthened their cause for American Innocence and victimhood by writing about their disgust of the conference, the monument anti-protesters, and the threat to their history.

[177] Roy Close, "Councilman Wants Indian Monument Removed," *Mankato Free Press*, February 16, 1971;Thomas A. Simonson, "Marker Should Stay," *Mankato Free Press*, February 18, 1971.

Closes article ends by recommending the City of Mankato add a banner "Lest We Forget" above the monument. Both of these citizens embody the continuation of settler colonial power over Native peoples in Mankato. They assumed that Dakotas would not respond and would not care because they physically did not live in Mankato.[178] Again, citizens defending the monument's place in Mankato denoted the simple fact that threatened any hope for Dakota peoples to reconcile a past within the Mankato community. By adding "Lest We Forget" above the monument, Mankato would reinforce the structures and systems which dominated Dakotas in the first place.[179] Other opinions belittled the monuments' opponents, connecting it to better known moments in American history, like the attack on Pearl Harbor or Custer's Last Stand, to how problems in the past resonate in the future. Lloyd Vollmer, another Mankato citizen, indicated that if the monument was removed, another should be put in its place. In Vollmer's mind, that monument should read: "Here stood a monument to history, not liked by all but destroyed by those who thought they could change history by destroying the past."[180] The mocking of the Dakota past reinforced the structure by which Mankatoans enforced power over Indigenous narratives.

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[178] "Lest We forget," generally known from the remembrance of the British and Canadian soldiers after World War I, actually came about decades before. Pulled directly from Rudyard Kipling's "Recessional," the phrase was used to connect British imperial rule and a thanks to Go for English success. If white Minnesotans wanted to attach this phrase to the Hanging Monument, that message would clearly address the imperial and settler-colonial power over Dakotas. Michael A. Minton, "Less We Forget: Rudyard Kipling's Recessional as Prophetic Poetry for our Own Day," Michael Minton, January 6, 2014, last accessed on November 10, 2019, https://michaelminton.org/2014/01/06/lest-we-forget-rudyard-kiplings-recessional-as-prophetic-poetry-or-our-own-day/; Mary Hamer, "Recessional," Kipling Society, January 24, 2008, last accessed November 10, 2019, http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/rg_recess1.htm.

[179] Roy Close, "Councilman Wants Indian Monument Removed," *Mankato Free Press*, February 16, 1971; Thomas A. Simonson, "Marker Should Stay," *Mankato Free Press*, February 18, 1971.

[180] Lloyd Vollmer, "Leave Marker in Place," *Mankato Free Press*, February 20, 1970.

The controversy around the monument intensified as time went onwards. David Cummiskey, a Mankato City Councilman, started a movement to question the Hanging Monument in Mankato. He added a mission to add a contextual plaque next to, or across the street from, the Hanging Monument at the Blue Earth County memorial library. Legal battles ensued as Cummiskey, and his partner City Attorney K.M. Krost, to determine if the Hanging Monument rested on public or private land. These reports would reveal whether Lorin Cray headed the movement to construct the monument in 1912,and whether the City of Mankato agreed to the monument's original placement. In some reports, Cummiskey hoped to open a new parkette for the monument to sit at the center of the Dakota War commemorative landscape.[181] This would allow future citizens to learn both sides of the history. One report in the *Mankato State Reporter* alluded that the new park would allow the plaque to "reflect the history as we see it today."[182] The plan sought to shift focus from Mankato's eyesore to a newly configured history of the U.S.-Dakota War. Community members wanted to hear the full story of the Dakota War including the Indigenous side.

While the efforts by Cummiskey set out to revise the physical space where the monument sat, his efforts ultimately failed. The City of Mankato relocated the Hanging Monument several times during the 1950s and 1960s. Generally, they said that the monument was moved for urban development and construction projects. In reality, the town moved the monument further and further out of the center of attention. By October, 1971, just a few months after Benton's claim to remove the monument, it was finally taken down and removed. A new plaque was placed at the

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[181] "Move Indian Handing Monument," *Mankato Free Press*, May 26, 1965; Close, "Councilman Wants Indian Monument Removed," *Mankato Free Press*, February 16, 1971.

[182] Cheryl Bartkoske, "History, Controversy Surrounds Indian Marker," *Mankato State Reporter*, April 19, 1971.

Blue Earth County Memorial Library, and told the history of the Dakota War. Finally there was some sort of context given to the hanging, however the legacy of the execution continued to linger throughout Mankato.[183]

Removing

The City of Mankato removed the Hanging Monument in October, 1971, ostensibly as a means to make more space for construction projects. The committee who planned the removal asked the Blue Earth County Historical Society (BECHS) if they would accept the monument and preserve it as a historical artifact. When the BECHS declined the preserve the Hanging Monument, the City of Mankato moved the monument to a municipal city garage. The granite monument that once stood prominently at the intersection of Front and Main streets now sat under a pile of sand and gravel, hidden from the public. For the next twenty years, roughly until 1990, the Hanging Monument laid dormant in the Mankato parking lot. Even though the city had removed the monument from public view, many Dakota visited the monument to pray and honor the Dakota 38. Melodie Andrew's article, "U.S.-Dakota War in Public Memory and Public Space," shows the trajectory of the monument. Two years after the Dakotas visit in 1994 the monument disappeared, "becoming something of an urban legend, shrouded in a cloud of contradictory stories, myths, and enduring mystery."[184]

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183 Andrews, "The U.S.-Dakota War in Public Memory, 54; Dave Kenney, "Mankato, 1971: Minnesota's Own Monument-Removal Experience," Minnpost, August 25, 2017; Rick Lybeck, "The Rise and Fall," 51; Stephen M. Schaefer, *Building Great Working Relationships at Work and at Home* (St. Paul: No Limits Publishing, 2005), 96.

184 Andrews, "U.S.-Dakota War in Public Memory," 55; "Monument Moved," *Mankato Free Press*, October 18, 1971; "Monument Moved," *Mankato Free Press*, November 9, 1974; "Students Search for Missing Monument," *Mankato Free Press*, May 14, 2006, "Former Mayor May Know Monument's Whereabouts," *Mankato Free Press*, May 31, 2006.

Four years after the Hanging Monument's removal, its ghostly presence lingered in Mankato. Community efforts to revise and actively forget the contention which surrounded the monumented started with the American Bicentennial extravaganza. On July 14, 1975, Mankato's City Council passed a resolution for a cooperative application submission to the National Bicentennial Commission commemorations of 1976—an event celebrating the 200th anniversary of the United States. Mankatoans wanted to take part in this national movement. By applying to participate in the nationally recognized celebration, Mankato's community and historical legacy would come under question. The goals of the resolution, and subsequent application, emerged from Mankato's rich history. To white Mankatoans, the Bicentennial offered the opportunity to transform Mankato into an "All American Town." In order to do this, the city's history would come under question.[185]

Americans prepared for the bicentennial celebration. Four years prior to the bicentennial, at Richard Nixon's State of the Union on January 20, 1972, he honed in on the "Spirit of 1776" as a means to rally Americans. In response to the statements that the "spirit of '76 is dead," President Nixon stated that "we will make [the bicentennial] celebration both a fitting commemoration of our revolutionary origins and a bold further step to fulfill their promise."[186] Nixon's national goal was to bring the nation together through "American spirituality" to the founders and tenants of the newly formed nation. American Indians played a central role to this initiative. The bicentennial would "serve no higher purpose than to marshal an active

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[185] American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, Bicentennial Community Application, July, 1975, Mankato Area Bicentennial Commission Activity Report, 1975-1976, SMHC Manuscript Collection 159, Southern Minnesota Historical Center, Memorial Library, Minnesota State University, Mankato.

[186] Richard Nixon, state of the Union Message, January 20, 1971, Annual Report of the American Bicentennial Commission, 1972, iv.

commitment on the part of this country, including the Indians themselves, to come to grips with these problems."[187] America's bicentennial was a moment for Americans to not only come together and deal with, what Tammy S. Gordon states, "and lead the way…in the struggle of people against systems of exploitation and oppression." The bicentennial celebration was the first time for Native Americans to voice their opinions and demand recognition.[188] Nationally, this bicentennial movement was thought to be more inclusive of America's past. In Mankato, however, the townspeople attempted to hide their past rather than embrace it.

Many white Minnesotans looked forward to the Bicentennial celebration, as "it was a good way to bring the country back together" following the Vietnam War and Watergate scandals. It was a personal effort," to help American's have a sense of what life was like at an early age, stated Judge J. Thomas Mott. Minnesotans believed that the Bicentennial celebration would help Americans understand the true virtues of the Revolution. These virtues of "1776" would push many Minnesotans, especially in Mankato, to re-shift their historical consciousness. To focus on things deemed worthy of remembering. For them to feel proud of their history.[189]

The 1970s were a tumultuous time for the people in Mankato, Native and non-Native alike. The memory of the hanging lingered in their hearts and minds. In some cases, like the Bicentennial celebration, the fraught memory of the Hanging Monument played a central role in

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[187] "Call for Indian Participation," *Bicentennial Era: American Revolution Bicentennial Commission Newsletter,* Vol. 1, No. 6 (June 1970): 2-3.

[188] Tammy S. Gordon, The Spirit of 1976: *Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration (*Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 2-3.

[189] Judge J. Thomas Mott, Documenting Minnesota: The 1970s Oral History Program, No. 5, Department of History, Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota, November, 2010; Sybil Smith, Documenting Minnesota: The 1970s Oral History Program, No. 9, Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota, November, 2010.

Mankato's national image. Mankatoans wanted outsiders to focus on other aspects of their town's history, ignoring the hanging and the contention around the monument.

On January 14, 1976, Vi Panzaram, a former Mankato resident, penned a letter basking in all of Mankato's literary glory. Even though he lived in Iowa, he considered Mankato his "second home." He fell in love with Mankato's many authors and poets. One of those writers was Maud Hart Lovelace, author of the well-known Betsy-Tracy series, and who called Mankato home for most of her life.[190] Panzaram hoped that Mankato's legacy would focus on the good, and move away from the lingering shadow of the Dakota War. Lovelace's writing, in particular, stood out as a means to better tell Mankato's social and cultural history—a major movement of the Bicentennial commemorative movement.[191] Especially related to material culture, "her books," says Panzaram, "are filled with information on food, clothing, schools, recreation, and family life in the late-1890s and early 1900s in Mankato." He writes, "For years I have hoped that Mankato would be known as the Maud Hart Lovelace city rather than "Here Were Hanged 38 Sioux Indians." Panzaram was not the only Mankatoan to urge for the focus to shift to Lovelace. Twenty-three students from the Franklin School in Mankato urged the BECHS, City of Mankato City Council and Chamber of Commerce, as well as the *Free Press* to focus on Lovelace's writing and "enhance [their] town."[192] One student wrote, "Maud Hart Lovelace should be remembered in Mankato. We should have a place build that we could remember her." Another student said "Maud Hart Lovelace should be remembered by everybody in Mankato."

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190 Lydia Lucas and Rhoda R. Gilman, "Living with Writing: MNHS Acquires Maud Hart Lovelace and Delos Lovelace Papers," *Minnesota History,* Vol. 66, No. 4 (Winter 2018-2019): 157.

191 Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976,* 3.

192 Fourth Grade Teacher, Franklin School, to Blue Earth County Historical Society, December 12, 1975, Minnesota State University, SMHC, Mankato, Minnesota.

The Franklin School teacher alluded in her introductory letter, "Let's show a real pride in being the home of Maud Hart Lovelace—for our children, our visitors, and ourselves!"[193] Panzaram, as well as the students and teacher from Franklin, hoped that the Bicentennial celebration would shift focus.[194] A celebration of all the town's history, before and after the hanging. Dakotas, rather, required something different.

As the Bicentennial celebration loomed, Native community members wanted to hold a vigil at the hanging site. Next to where the Hanging Monument once stood, Dakotas and their allies challenged the national narrative of American independence. Their goal at this event both honored the thirty-eight Dakotas specifically, but also addressed the larger trends of difference "between Native Americans and whites, [as] it is time [to] get together and move forward for social change and equality."[195] Native peoples felt alienated from that American ethos. On November 5, 1975—the anniversary of when the Dakota men were condemned to death in 1862— the community experienced the mass vigil.

Native organizations promoted the vigil in multiple ways, mainly through printed pamphlets and fliers posted around town. The AIM national office and the Native Peoples

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193 Franklin School Student to Blue Earth County Historical Society, December 12, 1975, Minnesota State University, SMHC Collection, Mankato, Minnesota; Franklin School Student to Blue Earth County Historical Society, December 12, 1975, Minnesota State University, SMHC Collection, Mankato, Minnesota. Fourth Grade Teacher, Franklin School, to Blue Earth County Historical Society, December 12, 1975, Minnesota State University, SMHC, Mankato, Minnesota.

194 Vi Panzaram Letter, January 14, 1976, Mankato Area Bicentennial Commission Activity Report, 1975-1976, SMHC Manuscript Collection 159, Southern Minnesota Historical Center, Memorial Library, Minnesota State University, Mankato.

195 "Mankato, Minnesota 1862," St. Paul: Native People's Bicentennial Commission, November 5, 1975, U.S.-Dakota War Folder, Blue Earth County Historical Society, Mankato, Minnesota; "Mankato, Minnesota 1862," St. Paul: American Indian Movement National Office, November 5, 1975, U.S.-Dakota War Folder, Blue Earth County Historical Society, Mankato, Minnesota.

Bicentennial Commission (NPBC) were two identical organizations that served Mankato. Identical in the fact that both organizations held the same addresses, phone numbers, comparably designed posters, and similar messages. Their posters promoted a 1975 event which told the story of the mass hanging of the Dakota 38. Two separate documents from Mankato represents AIM's initiative to both honor the Dakota 38 and send a strong message against colonization in speaking to the injustice and oppression that American Indians face. These events set out to "honor these historic dead."[196] The AIM and NPBC flyers exemplified the overall mission to discuss and debate the rights of Native peoples. NPBC's document covered the mass hanging's legacy and how movements bring in a "new era of understanding and mutual respect between Native American people and white people."[197] The AIM documents contended that as the United States aged towards the 200th Anniversary, Indigenous peoples were "still colonized."[198] If the "Spirit of 1776" truly spoke to the individualism of American people, the first national observance of national anniversary that included people from disenfranchised communities, then AIM address the discrepancy in what this "spirit" actually alluded to.

The AIM organizational flyers stated that "we also wish to memorialize some history white Americans prefer to forget while celebrating its conquest with self-congratulations on its stolen riches. *Some history."* AIM attacked the fraught memory of the U.S.-Dakota War, too, but saying that "White histories refer to this as the "Great Sioux Uprising," and teach their children of the evil savages and the nice farmers." Yet, again the narrative's language demonstrated the

196 "Mankato, Minnesota 1862," NPBC; "Mankato, Minnesota 1862," AIM.
197 "Mankato, Minnesota 1862, AIM; "Mankato, Minnesota 1862," NPBC.
198 "Mankato, Minnesota 1862, AIM.

competing nature of this story and the exclusion of Dakotas from Mankato's Bicentennial celebration.[199]

On July 4, 1976, the Fourth of July pageant that Mankato Bicentennial Commission (MBC) had been planning for months never happened. The MBC abandoned the pageant due to lack of adequate space and the costs associated with the event, though AIM's pushback against the generic American ethos ma have assisted in its demise.[200] Even though the event never took place, the Mankato commission made an ardent effort to obtain funds for the new Dakota parkette. Their message said,

> If there are any funds still unallocated we would like to request a grant for erection of a new memorial at the site of the mass hanging of 38 Sioux Indians on December 26, 1862, which marked the end of the Indian Wars in the Minnesota Valley. The original granite marker, long the object of white and Indian protest, was of necessity removed by Mankato's urban renewal and street relocation project. The new memorial, of Mankato Stone, approved by the Minnesota State Historical Society and all involved local bodies, will be placed on the grounds of the new Minnesota Valley Regional Library now under construction. The new

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[199] "Mankato, Minnesota 1862," AIM; "Mankato, Minnesota 1862," NPBC; The debate over the "U.S.-Dakota War" or the "Great Sioux Uprising" has been a long-time debate within Dakota War historiography. Many white historians utilize the term "Sioux" when describing the Dakota peoples. During the nineteenth century, Dakotas disavowed the term "Sioux" as it was a name given to them by their French and Algonquian enemies. Sioux originates from the Great Sioux Nation, also commonly known as the *Očhéthi Šakówiŋ* – "the Seven Council Fires." However, in the nineteenth century, Sioux, to the Dakota, translated to "demon-like" or "snake-like" enemy. Long since the Dakota War, white communities continued to use "Sioux Uprising" as a generalized term to refer to the Dakota War. That continues today as many non-Dakota historians simply do not understand the translation and meaning behind the name "Sioux." Many antiquated historical works on the Dakota War utilize the term "Sioux," however by seeing its use so close to the present continues the structures which control the Dakota's history of the War. By using "Sioux" rather than Dakota forcibly places Dakotas on the periphery of their history. Kenneth Carley, *The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press).

[200] Minnesota Bicentennial Commission to American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, Bicentennial Community Application, September 20, 1976, Mankato Area Bicentennial Commission Activity Report, 1975-1976, SMHC Manuscript Collection 159, Southern Minnesota Historical Center, Memorial Library, Minnesota State University, Mankato.

> memorial will be on the exact site of the 1862 execution so far as can be determined.[201]

These motives, though, focused on controlling the monument's history and the reasons why the 1912 monument was removed. The Bicentennial Commission actively sought to describe the monument's removal as a process for urban redevelopment and progress. The monument's legacy remained hidden and Mankatoans wanted the fraught past to leave their city for good.

As America celebrated the Bicentennial, Mankato sought to actively forget the eyesore that caused much contention over the last decade. Even though many Mankatoans ardently believed that the monument's sole purpose was to acknowledge an important historical event, the city administrators in charge determined that both the monument and its ghostly legacy must be removed from the city.

Between 1912 and 1976, Mankato struggled over the memory of the Hanging Monument. The story between those years tell us why the construction of the monument had different implications than the motives for its removal. The Hanging Monument represented an idea that many white Mankatoans could participate in and benefit from. The contest over the Hanging Monument represented the uneven struggle over the memory of the hanging. Those white Mankatoans who embraced the official memory of the hanging also actively ignored other interpretations of that historical moment.[202] The removal of the monument, then, was not merely to address the issues of American Indian Movement leaders or other Native Americans that held the monument in low regard. Rather, it was to make Mankato seem to be less controversial and

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[201] Minnesota Bicentennial Commission to American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, September 20, 1976.

[202] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-15.

less responsible for the genocide of Dakotas in Minnesota. The Bicentennial Celebration demonstrates that "Spirit of 1776" urged Mankatoans to embrace the ideals and ethos of American Independence. That is, freedom from government intervention and a sense of equality and sovereignty.

These Mankatoans, however, superficially embraced that revolutionary ethos. As historians like Edmund Morgan and Tiya Miles have argued in their works on slavery, there is a paradox in how Americans selectively embrace that true revolutionary ethos. Morgan writes of the challenge "to explain how a people could have developed the dedication to human liberty and dignity exhibited by the leaders of the American Revolution and at the same time have developed and maintained a system of labor that denied human liberty and dignity every hour of the day."[203] Not only does this paradox implicate the relationship between the American ethos and the legacy of slavery, it also enmeshes a problematic relationship in other moments of United States history. This is where selective memory grasps a hold on the understanding of the American Revolution and its Bicentennial. The Bicentennial was a strategic moment for all Americans to personally embrace the American Revolutionary ethos. As Tammy Gordon stated, the Bicentennial was a moment for disenfranchised peoples to finally have a voice in seeking rights, recognition, and sovereignty. Similarly, to the relationship to African Americans and the American Revolution, Morgan's paradox weaves together in the fabric of Mankato's efforts to celebrate the Bicentennial.

If we think of the American Revolution Bicentennial through the lens of Morgan's paradox, we see that Mankatoans struggled with embracing Dakotas into their ethos. Their story

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[203] Edmund S. Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (June 1972): 6.

of freedom originated from the survival of the Dakota War to the execution and erasure of Dakotas from their town. Mankatoans formulated their "All American Town" through the dispossession and erasure of Dakota peoples and Mankatoans could not fully embrace that ethos of the "Spirit of 1776."[204] The dark shadow casted by the Hanging Monument pushed the town to try to move past the hanging, and the American Revolution Bicentennial provided a moment to replace a sad history with one of celebration. Yet again, the ongoing structure of settler colonialism provided a hand at replacing the presence of the Dakota with a more Anglo-American centered historical narrative.[205] The active forgetting of Dakotas from Mankato, through their absence in the narrative to the physical reminders of their deaths, demonstrated that the twentieth century was geared towards changing the public perception of Mankato rather than honoring the Dakota population. As Mankatoans and Dakotas started a path towards reconciliation, this contested legacy would ultimately serve as a road block to stop any hope of unity between the two groups.

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As we will see in Chapter three, reconciliation was on the minds of many Mankatoans, Native and non-Native alike. All did not accept the Year of Reconciliation, however. Competing narratives among Dakotas demonstrate a divergence in how they wanted to heal or continue to critically address the issues surrounding the hanging and war. In a 1987 *Mankato Free Press*

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[204] Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W.W. and Norton, 1976), 6; Tiya Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits* (New York: The New Press, 2017), 97.

[205] Allan Greer, "Settler Colonialism and Empire in Early America," The William and Mary Quarterly, Vol. 76, No. 3 (July, 2019): 383.

article, Roger Jourdain, leader of the Red Lake Reservation Band, and Eli Taylor, related to a Dakota who fled from Canada after 1862, spoke out against the idea of reconciliation and unity. "This year's celebration," state Taylor, "marks a new awareness of the wrongs that gave rise to the 1862 hangings." Other Dakotas, like Amos Owens, disagreed and sought the journey towards reconciliation in Mankato. [206] The next chapter will examine the years between 1987 and 2012, which saw an attempted reconciliation between Dakotas and white Minnesotans. By looking at the story of the Hanging Monument, we see there a continued trajectory of actively forgetting the worst parts of the Dakota War to superficially accept the Dakotas place in Mankato. In fact, the 2009-2010 Historic Context Study by the City of Mankato ignores the Hanging Monument all together. Other walking tours by the Blue Earth County Historical Society neglect the hanging and the monument, as well. While there is a modern stamp on the sidewalk in Mankato that states "We are trying very hard not to forget," these moments of active forgetting by Mankatoans demonstrates that they wanted to not only bury the physical Hanging Monument, but also bury the legacy, which loomed over their city.

[206] "Indians Still Upset over Hangings, *Mankato Free Press,* September 21, 1987; Andrews, "U.S.-Dakota War in Public Memory," 59.

Chapter 3

"Coming Back to the Old Country":
Dakota Resurgence and Mankato's Reconciliatory Reckoning, 1987-2012[207]

"Mahpiyatakiya ho yewayedo. Wakantanka onsiunda miye qa ounkiayapo"
(I pray to Mother Earth to help us in this time of reconciliation)

- Wiyohpeyata Hoksina / Amos Owen[208]

By the mid-twentieth century, attempts at reconciliation between Dakota communities and white Mankatoans flourished. As chapter two described, the first half of the twentieth century transformed Mankato's outlook on the mass hanging of the Dakota 38. Even though many white Mankatoans sought to continue remembering the event in the same manner that their ancestors formulated, Dakota resurgence back into Mankato challenged those white-dominated narratives. As time moved forward from the 125th Anniversary in 1987, notions of Dakota survival, resistance, and resilience directly challenged communal understandings that believed the Dakotas had been long removed from the area.[209] As the competing narratives surrounding the American Bicentennial Commission commenced, other efforts started to honor the thirty-eight Dakota men and created a space for Dakota peoples to celebrate their past. The late-twentieth century then created new opportunities to reconceptualize the memory of Dakota

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[207] "History of Reconciliation Efforts Between Mdewakaton Dakota and Mankato Communities (1862-1995), 6, Bud Lawrence Box, Minnesota State University Archives and Southern Minnesota Historical Center (hereafter listed as MSU-A), Mankato, Minn.

[208] "Water In The Rain featuring Amos Owen," The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, 2012, last accessed on February 8, 2020, https://www.usdakotawar.org/stories/share-your-story/2214.

[209] Sandee Geshick, Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project, June 10, 2011, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

people in Mankato's community, and Dakota peoples were front and center in these moments of healing.[210]

This new shift began in Mankato when three men joined forces to bring Dakota culture to the attention of the Mankato public. In 1965, these men formed the *Mahkato Wacipi* (Wah-Chee-Pee), a powwow and Dakota phrase which translates to "we dance." The driving force of the group, Amos Owen, a spiritual leader, pipe maker, and elder from the Prairie Island Mdewakanton community (ninety-five miles east of Mankato), became the public face of the Mahkato Wacipi.[211] Two other men, Louis "Bud" Lawrence—a white man invested in the study of Dakota history since he was a child—and Jim Buckley—the director of the Mankato Y.M.C.A.—joined forces with Owen to alter Mankato's perception of Native Americans and to mend wounds from 1862 that still lingered in the twentieth century.

Contestation over public space complicated the memory of both the U.S.-Dakota War and the mass hanging of the Dakota 38. Other social and cultural transformations of the 1960s and 1970s across the United States produced the right conditions for many white Mankatoans to embrace a new inclusive understanding of Dakota history in the town and the memory of the mass hanging.[212] The nuanced and more inclusive view of Dakota perspective around the hanging was not that new at all. In this context, the Mahkato Wacipi sought to exhume this

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[210] Rose Kahnke, "A Culturally Responsible Lesson: Reconciliation of the Dakota and Mankato Communities in the Seventh Generation," Ph.D. Diss., University of St. Thomas, ProQuest, 101.

[211] "Pow Wow Credits," Pow Wow Manuscript Collection, Box 2/4, Accession #2017-23, MSU-A; Thomas Meagher Miller, Phone Interview by Author, February 29, 2020; Anderson, "Reconciling Memory," 202; Kahnke, "A Culturally Responsible Lesson," 92; Waziyatawin, *Remember This!: Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 239.

[212] Van Gosse and Richard Moser, eds., *The World the 60s Made: Politics and Culture in Recent* America (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 46-47.

previously unknown history and to highlight Dakota cultural connections to the Mankato area. Over the next few years, the trio of powwow organizers planned the first Wacipi, which was held in 1972 at West Sibley Park. This moment signified, most importantly, a movement "to create brotherhood among Mankatoans and Indians." Dakota history had never left Mankato. Yet Owen, Lawrence, and Buckley's work promised to reshape and reconfigure this important part of Mankato's past.[213] This bilateral support between both Dakota and non-Dakota demonstrated the attempt to bring the entire community together. As the Mahkato Wacipi formed, competing narratives between Dakotas and white Minnesotans continued, and irregular support of Dakota activities demonstrated that the communities that both sides could never reconcile their fraught past.[214]

This chapter focuses on the comparative history of Dakota healing and white reconciliation in Mankato between 1987 and 2012, the 125th and 150th anniversaries of the mass hanging. It emphasizes Dakota perspectives, the resurgence that attempted to heal Dakota communities, and attempts to change how the town memorialized the execution. In the first two chapters of this thesis, white victimhood memories dictated how the hanging narratives were publicly conveyed. While Chapter Two showcases Dakota direct action, such as the AIM movements of 1971, attempts to silence, erase, and hide the Dakota story transpired at relatively

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[213] Anne M. Dunn, "Reconciliation Park in Mankato dedicated to the 38 brave Dakota warriors who died," *The Native American Press*, October 31, 1997, Minnesota Historical Society Newspaper Hub; Melodie Andrews, "The U.S.-Dakota War in Public Memory and Public Space," in *The State We're In: Reflections on Minnesota History* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010), 50-52; Mark M. Sivanich, Community Services Department, Mankato Area Recreation Council, to Chief Alexander, September 13, 1977, Box 22, Folder 42, MSU-A; Request Form for Community Service Assistance, Mdewakanton Monthly Budgets and Correspondents, 1978-1980 folder, MSU-A; "History of Reconciliation Efforts Between Mdewakanton Dakota and Mankato Communities (1862-1995)," 1, Bud Lawrence Box, MSU-A.

[214] Clifford Canku, Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

the same time. In Chapter Three, I argue that Dakota efforts to heal added another layer of recognition to the Mankato collective and public memory of the mass hanging, a moment where many were in search for reconciliation.

As Dakota voices resurfaced near the end of the twentieth century and onwards into the twenty-first, their participation in the making and revising of memory showed Dakota presence in the town's history. This moment showed a direct challenge to those who believed they had been erased from the community. This chapter questions the role of white settler descendants who continue to prosper in Mankato, delineating how memory is told and in what ways. In the process, Dakota healing efforts faced the continuity of settler colonial structures, violence, and systems of oppression. Reconciliation, a white construction, never truly offered a chance to unite white Mankatoans and Dakota communities together. Each side had their own understandings of healing and peace, and ultimately were at odds during the period covered in this chapter. Even though this shows the competing nature of healing in Mankato, many white Mankatoans continued to believe their efforts superseded that of the Dakota.

Reconciliation is a process that unites people who previously were once unified.[215] When looking at the relationships between white Minnesotans and Dakota peoples through the history of the state's existence, coexistence rarely happened. From before the signing of the 1851 Treaties of *Traverse des Sioux* and *Mendota* (and onwards into 2020), Dakotas have continually been challenged by power structures and settler domination. Scholars often consider reconciliation to be the "end state of some kind: a contract, agreement, legal recognition, return

[215] "Reconciliation Park Pamphlet," September 21, 1997, MSU-A.

of stolen land, reparations, compensation, closing the gap, or self-determination."[216] The top-down nature of reconciliation seems to benefit those with power. On the other hand, to best understand Dakota responses to the structures imposed by governing powers, resilience and resurgence are concepts that demonstrate survival and self-determination—vis-à-vis an idea of healing rather than unity—within Dakota communities. To understand cultural survival in Mankato, using the concept of resurgence demonstrates Dakota persistence. Resurgence, as defined by Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully, is "often used to refer to Indigenous peoples exercising powers of self-determination outside state structures and paradigms." Moreover, resurgence "is deployed by communities as a force for reclaiming and reconnecting with traditional territories by means of Indigenous ways of knowing and being."[217] Resurgence can encompass decolonization, an effort to return a colonized space to a pre-colonized state. However, through resurgence, Dakotas actively challenged the settler state in Mankato by honoring their ancestors, bringing their culture to the community, and attempting to heal their community.[218]

Scholarship on Dakota and white reconciliation efforts has attempted to show the competing narratives between the two communities, though most studies are limited in their scope and temporal analysis. In Melodie Andrews's article, "The U.S.-Dakota War in Public Memory and Public Space," she describes the "ongoing process of reconciliation in Mankato" and how the process is "complicated by the fact that members of the Indian and non-Indian

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[216] Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully, eds., *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth* Teachings (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 22.

[217] Asch, et al, *Resurgence and Reconciliation*, 23.

[218] Maxine Oland, Siobhan M. Hart, and Liam Frink, eds., *Decolonizing Indigenous Histories: Exploring Prehistorical/Colonial Transitions in Archaeology* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2012), 4.

communities do not view their shared past in the same ways." Moreover, Andrews's work primarily touches on the Hanging Monument (as addressed in Chapter Two). It is true that competing narratives diverged over the shared memory, yet those moments go beyond the physical remnants of the white past.[219] On the other hand, Waziyatawin (Angela Carver Wilson), Dakota scholar and activist, critiqued how Minnesotans interacted with Dakota history. Her book, *What Does Justice Look Like?*, claims that white Minnesotans hypocritically became more attached to external Indigenous issues elsewhere, while turning a cold shoulder to those more localized situations in their own state and communities. Waziyatawin focuses on an intricate declension of the Dakota homeland by the hands and policies of white settlers as a means to challenge reconciliation. The Dakota homeland can never be returned to its original state, Waziyatawin argues, as settlers have ultimately destroyed and altered that sacred space.[220] Chapter Three combines both of these historiographical contributions and adds in historical memory as a means to move beyond the physical monuments or eroding landscapes and incorporate an ideological understanding of Indigenous experience in a white-dominated space. Historical memory in Mankato cannot be reconciled as Dakota lands continually face an ongoing threat and the continuity of white action—through the guise of settler colonialism—will never truly embrace or acknowledge the Dakota experience.[221]

While silencing and erasure played a crucial role in the fraught relationship between Dakotas and white Minnesotans, this chapter seeks to reframe how reconciliation has been

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[219] Andrews, "The U.S.-Dakota War," 52.

[220] Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like?* (St. Paul: Living Justice Press, 2008), 6, 9; Waziyatawin, "The Paradox of Indigenous Resurgence at the End of Empire," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2012): 69.

[221] Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019) 50, 82.

addressed in Mankato. In speaking to the critiques of settler colonialism, Dakota resurgence and resilience ultimately play the crucial role in determining how healing, not reconciliation, will transform the Mankato community.

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In 1977, Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich published an article in *Minnesota History*, a publication of the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS). In his article, "Minnesota History and Heritage: Understanding our Present by Understanding our Past," Perpich laid out all of the ways in which the continuity of history had played a significant role in Minnesota's culture and society. "History is not only a classroom or archives exercise or a subject taught by the coach," observed Perpich, "it is not the sole possession of the superpatriot or of the intellectual. We are all part of history, and history is a part of us."[222] Governor Perpich recognized how Minnesotans "pride [themselves] on [their] quality of life" and that Minnesotans are not "a homogenized people, unaware of the widely varied cultures from which [they] have come. The sweat and sorrows and dreams of our grandparents and great-grandparents as they struggled to turn the prairies and forests of this tough, beautiful land of ours into farms and towns."[223] Perpich's address to the public garnered much attention for the Bicentennial celebrations that transpired a year earlier; yet, his remarks neglected the histories of the U.S.-Dakota War, the mass hanging in Mankato, and the Dakota peoples. The governor's primary goal wanted Minnesotans to embrace both their state's history and the implications of their shared past. "We may see Indians driven

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[222] Governor Rudy Perpich, "Minnesota History and Heritage: Understanding our Present by Understanding our past," *Minnesota History* (1977): 245.

[223] Perpich, "Minnesota History and Heritage," 246.

from their homes," noted Perpich, "told by a chorus of well-meaning voices that nowhere in the future is there a place for their holy beliefs and cherished customs—that to survive they must deny their identity and become white men." Perpich asked, "What have we now, and is it worth the cost? If history is to have meaning from the present and future, the questions must be honestly faced."[224]

In 1987, Perpich finally confronted the question he asked a decade earlier. The recognition of Dakota history and culture was at the center of the governor's "Year of Reconciliation" proclamation.[225] The purpose of this proclamation was to unite Dakota and white Minnesotans; to mend the deep wounds that still lingered 125 years after the U.S.-Dakota War. The 1977 *Minnesota History* article and the Year of Reconciliation proclamation contradicted each other, as one highlighted the exceptional white history of Minnesota's past and the other sought to form a unique bond between Dakota peoples and white Minnesotans. If the continuity of history informs the present, then Perpich's initiatives were not well informed or initiated. Though the state of Minnesota ignored other Indigenous communities removed and dispossessed from their lands following the U.S.-Dakota War, like the Ho-Chunk peoples who lived on the Blue Earth reservation near Mankato and expelled from the state in an effort to make Minnesota a non-Native space, attempts to bridge the gap between Dakotas and whites proliferated in 1987.[226] Yet, what did this reconciliation mean? Whom did reconciliation help, and was it a success?

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[224] Perpich, "Minnesota History and Heritage," 247.

[225] Glomstad, "The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862," 120-121; Jennifer Elaine McKinney, "Breaking the Frame: How Photographers of the Dakota-U.S. War of 1862 Influence Historical Memory," Ph.D. Diss., Oklahoma State University, May, 2019, 199.

[226] Stephen Kantrowitz, "'Not Quite Constitutionalized": The Meanings of "Civilization" and the Limits of Native American Citizenship," in Gregory P. Downs and Kate Masur, eds., *The World the Civil War* Made (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 80;

During the Year of Reconciliation, the State of Minnesota offered many different symposia, events, and opportunities to think critically about the history of the U.S.-Dakota War and better connect with Dakota culture and communities.[227] A commemorative run led to the Year of Reconciliation on December 26, 1986, the anniversary of the mass hanging in Mankato. Prior to the run, the organizer Willard Malebear had a dream that consisted of an unknown man chasing him as he ran down a dark and dusty road. After talking with a Dakota spiritual leader, they agreed that the dream had some connotations closely associated with the U.S.-Dakota War. This dream sparked an idea to honor the Dakotas who had been lost in 1862 and a way for communities to connect with Dakota history. Malebear planned a commemorative run from Bdote, the center of the Dakota *Mni Sota Makoce*—where Fort Snelling rests—to Mankato to honor the anniversary of the hanging of the Dakota 38.

Some Dakotas and some whites participated in the events, though Malebear had a deep personal connection to the history, as his great-great-great uncle was one of the 38 Dakotas hanged in Mankato. The run from Bdote to Mankato not only signified the fraught experiences of the mass hanging, but also represented a traditional cultural phenomenon. "Simple things, like running, are an important part of [Dakota] heritage," observed Malebear, and, "hundreds of years ago, before horses came, Indian runners had to go many miles to carry news and information back and forth between Indian people." Malebear continued that "the run to Mankato, in a way,

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Linda M. Waggoner, "Sibley's Winnebago Prisoners: Deconstructing Race and Recovering Kinship in the Dakota War of 1862," *Great Plains Quarterly,* Vol. 33, No. 1 (Winter 2013): 25-26; William E. Lass, "The Removal from Minnesota of the Sioux and Winnebago Indians," Minnesota History, Vo. 38, No. 8 (Dec., 1963): 353-354; David A. Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and* Politics (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1978), 121-123.

[227] Glomstad, "The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862," 120-121; Jennifer Elaine McKinney, "Breaking the Frame: How Photographers of the Dakota-U.S. War of 1862 Influence Historical Memory," Ph.D. Diss., Oklahoma State University, May, 2019, 199.

links us to our past and is a reminder of that history."[228] Even though both Dakotas and white Minnesotans participated in the commemorative run, the dual meanings of the run signified a moment of Dakota reclamation of their past. The very act of running not only honored the Dakota 38, but brought back an important Dakota tradition to the Minnesota landscape.

Other events attempted to bring the two communities together. In early June, 1987, the Department of Natural Resources, led by Lieutenant Governor Marlene Johnson, offered the fifth annual "Family Canoe Day." While past events were simply intended to connect Minnesotans with nature, the 1987 event held different meanings. Both white and Dakota peoples traveled twelve-miles down the Mnisóta Wakpá (Minnesota River), one of the major waterways associated with the U.S.-Dakota War, and a space culturally significant to the Dakota peoples.[229] Other events transpired throughout the state that brought community members together. In Mankato, more specifically, the construction of a new monument signified an attempt to bring Dakotas and white Minnesotans together.[230] The *Winter Warrior* monument was a physical manifestation of Dakota/white healing on the site, or nearby, the site of the mass hanging.

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[228] Jim Parsons, "Run of Reconciliation will honor Indians hanged in Sioux Uprising," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, Minn.), December 26, 1986.

[229] Teresa Peterson and Walter LaBatte, Jr., "The Land, Water, and Language of the Dakota: Minnesota's First Peoples," *Mnopedia*, January 30, 2014, accessed February 22, 2020, https://www.mnopedia.org/land-water-and-language-dakota-minnesota-s-first-people.

[230] Bob Schranck, "Canoe Trip to help mark Dakota Conflict anniversary," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, Minn.), June 10, 1987.

“Reconciliation—Better late than never”:
The Winter Warrior Monument and a Search for Healing[231]

On October 2, 1987, The Mankato *Free Press* published a photo of eleven school children rubbing their hands over a unique granite structure. Their mouths were wide open, eyes curious at the site of this massive commemorative piece. They seem to have gained some deep connection to the monument, an important part of Mankato’s past. “How much does it weigh,” asked one student. The artist, Thomas Meagher Miller, responded, “seven and a half tons to start…now it’s down to 3 ½ to 4 tons. I figure I’ve got another ton to go.” The students asked Miller with other questions over the monument’s detail. Another pupil asked, “Can we touch it?” Miller responded, “Sure, Feel its face.”

Figure 4

“Students and *Winter Warrior*,”
Photo in Mankato *Free Press*.
Use of image granted by Publisher of Mankato *Free Press*[232]

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231 Erik Ugland, “Reconciliation for Dakota Indians: Sculptor Creates Statue as Tribute,” *MSU Reporter* (Mankato State College), November 11, 1987, Dakota War Collection, Blue Earth County Historical Society, Mankato, Minn. (hereafter listed as BECHS).

232 “Students and Winter Warrior,” *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), October 2, 1987, MSU-A; Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020.

Winter Warrior's design visualized a determined Dakota male, stern, brave, and resilient. The monument's design was based on crude ideas that Miller visualized while looking at himself through a mirror. "I imagined myself as a Dakota man, and that's how I designed and visualized *Winter Warrior*," mentioned Miller.[233] The monument rests on top of a pedestal, roughly six to seven feet off the ground. A tall monument had two points that reinforced the meanings of the height. First, with the sculpture of six to seven feet off the ground, vandals would have a much more difficult time to deface the monument. Second, the monument could then be seen from a further distance.[234] The tall monument resembled a direct challenge to the past Hanging Monument.[235] Rather than the city hiding a monument that reinforced white guilt, the community hoisted a monument that symbolized Dakota survival and resilience. *Winter Warrior* represented a new mode of remembering the Dakota 38.

What was this monument and why was Miller creating it? *The Winter Warrior* symbolized a commemorative piece that paralleled larger hopes of reconciliation in Minnesota between Dakota peoples and white settler descendants. "Miller told the students that he decided to return to his grandfather's Lake Washington farm from Colorado to create a lasting monument to the Indian people," reported Sue Menton of the *Free Press.* "It's good to talk about peace and reconciliation," opined Miller, "but we need something visual to remind us."[236]

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[233] Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020.

[234] "Proposed Sculpture Display," Bud Lawrence Collection, MSU-A.

[235] Grant Moos, "Sculpture to memorialize hanged Indians," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), April 17, 1987, BECHS.

[236] Sue Menton, "Youths Captivated by Artist, Sculpture," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), October 2, 1987, MSU-A; Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020.

The Year of Reconciliation in Mankato ignited new moments for Dakotas and white citizens to form new bonds over nineteenth century history. Sparked by the local artist, Thomas Meagher Miller, *Winter Warrior* hoped to bring the two communities together—to heal and to mend the wounds that the community continually separated Dakotas and whites. Chiseling and chipping pieces of Kasota limestone every day, Miller's *The Winter Warrior* stood as a commemorative piece to honor the thirty-eight Dakota men hanged in 1862.[237] Miller, born and raised in Mankato, grew up surrounded by the misunderstandings of the U.S.-Dakota War and the misinterpreted realities of the mass hanging at Front and Main Streets. He felt a sense of duty and pride in producing a memorial piece for all to recognize Dakota peoples from the area and to reflect on that hanging event. "I never really saw anything done," observed Miller, "because of the magnitude of the event, we needed something big to commemorate it…to do something for Indian people."[238] After a short time away from Minnesota, he returned in 1986 to participate in this new movement to "promote Indian awareness and improve white-Indian relations."[239] In supporting the need to better understand the Dakota experience, Miller wrote "They worked as a tribe for each other…they were survivors they are put out as savages, but who were the real savages? I think (Indians) were the civilized ones."[240] Growing up in Mankato, knowing the state of Dakota War history and memory, Miller felt it was his duty to force a change in perspectives regarding Dakota memory.

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[237] "A Time of Reconciliation," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), December 19, 1987, Dakota War folder, BECHS.

[238] Erik Ugland, "Reconciliation for Dakota Indians: Sculptor Statue as Tribute," *The MSU Reporter* (Mankato State College), November 17, 1987, MSU-A.

[239] Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020.

[240] Miller, Phone Interview by Author, February 29, 2020; Ugland, "Reconciliation for Dakota Indians," 1987; "History of Reconciliation Efforts Between Mdewakanton Dakota and Mankato Communities (1862-1995)," Bud Lawrence Collection, MSU-A; Bryce O. Stenzel, "Coming to Terms with the Past: The Dakota Conflict of 1862.

During the construction of *Winter Warrior*, Miller often invited school groups, interested citizens, and anyone else who wanted to come visit him while sculpting the monument. Between April and December, 1987, roughly 1,000 spectators visited to Miller's grandparents farm to see the monument.[241] From all over the state, Minnesotans came in flocks to visit the *Winter Warrior*. Dakota peoples also visited, mainly to offer advice on the construction of the public art piece. Amos Owen, and his son Arthur, visited the Miller farmstead often to watch over *Winter* Warrior's construction as it was destined to be a crucial memorial for both white and Dakota people. Miller recognized how deeply invested Amos Owen was to this process of attempted reconciliation.[242] In one recollection, Miller spoke about a time that Owen and his grandfather had a near-three hour talk. The meeting represented, to Miller, a bond between Dakota and white people near Mankato.[243] "This was such an important moment for me," Miller observed, "Seeing my grandfather and Amos discuss the importance of Dakota people demonstrated the power of healing and unity between both sides."[244]

The Mdewakanton Club funded the *Winter* Warrior monument through local means, primarily through donations from visitors at the Miller farm and from businesses all around Mankato. In the advertisements of Miller's work, the Mdewakanton Club noted any support would help Miller complete the monument before the anniversary commemoration on December 26, 1987. Miller's monument, as well as the community that supported his efforts, were part of the larger "Spirit of Reconciliation," and places the moment in a larger trajectory of the search of

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[241] Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020.
[242] Kahnke, "A Culturally Responsible Lesson," 93-94.
[243] Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020.
[244] Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020; Joan Pendleton, Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project, March 2, 2011, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

reconciliation that stretched back fifteen years.[245] The interactive experience of the monument's production showed a new way to bring people together. It was not always about ideas, but physical remnants for any person—white or Dakota—to grow attached to.[246]

On December 26, 1987, a grand unveiling ceremony took place near the spot of the mass hanging by the Minnesota Valley Regional Library (now the Blue Earth County Library), listed as the "Home of the Dakota Indian Statue."[247] Listed as a "special added attraction," one of the monument's sponsors donated a portrait of Amos Owen, as he played such a crucial role with the Mahkato Wacipi, the *Winter Warrior* construction, and broader unifying events. Owen's participation in these efforts in Mankato formed new opportunities for white Minnesotans and Dakota communities.[248] In addition to the ceremony at the *Winter Warrior* monument unveiling, Miller observed that a time capsule was placed underneath the monument's pedestal. The capsule forever entombed notes of reflection and wisdom by the local white population in Mankato. According to Miller, "Dakota peoples were not involved."[249] The implications of the lack of Dakota involvement shows the disingenuous nature of reconciliation in Mankato.

It seemed that the community ostensibly supported the unveiling of the *Winter Warrior*. Newspapers reported kindly to the event and the larger meanings to the commemorative piece. However, the language used in the news reports denoted a misinterpretation of the realities of reconciliation, a larger expectation of 1987.[250] In a *Free Press* article, "Ceremony Honors Hanged Indians," the emphasis of the Year of Reconciliation broadens out the ideas of that year.

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245 Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020.
246 Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020.
247 "The Winter Warrior," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn), December 23, 1987, MSU-A.
248 "Dakota Indian Statue," Mahkato Mdewakanton Club, December, 1987, MSU-A.
249 Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020.
250 Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020.

"Minnesota's Year of Reconciliation is over," opined the *Free Press* reporter, "but not the effort to bridge misunderstanding between whites and Indians."[251] The reporter's use of "misunderstanding" problematized the realities of reconciliation. To the reporter, the movement of the Year of Reconciliation sought to help those who misunderstood the past grasp the true meanings of the term. Though, "misunderstanding" can be interpreted as a wrong approach as it implied some sort of innocent amnesia or forgetting. In reality, the relationship between white settlers within this complicated web of history, in reality, played a role in *active forgetting* of the Dakota side of the story.[252] The history of the U.S.-Dakota War and the mass hanging, as well as the subsequent efforts to silence the Dakota experience, demonstrated that there was never a strong connection between the two communities.[253] The reporter's use of misunderstanding denoted that there is no accountability –e.g. admitting guilt—which placed no blame on the non-Native community. The unveiling of *Winter Warrior* provided a moment for Tom Miller to connect with the Dakota population, with the miniscule support of the white community that surrounded him.[254]

The misinterpretation of the Dakota War problematized how the white population interacted with those narratives. To Miller, "the public needed to better understand this history," and he believed white Mankatoans needed to admit that they "screwed up," that it was an "embarrassing moment in [their] town's history," and the Mankato could better acknowledge a history that "had been painted the wrong way."[255] Even though Miller attempted to bring the

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[251] "Ceremony Honors Hanged Indians," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), December 28, 1987, BECHS.

[252] Waziyatawin, *In the Footsteps*, 277.

[253] Waziyatawin, *In the Footsteps*, 277.

[254] Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020.

[255] Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020; Dean Blue, Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project, April 27, 2011, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota; John

truth out of the misunderstood localized history of the Dakota 38, his understandings also upheld misconstrued realities about reconciliation and healing in Mankato.

"It's amazing how he [Amos Owen] persuaded his people to reconcile with us," was a statement with broader implications repeated by Miller during his interview. The point of reconciliation meant Dakotas needed to accept the past in order to move forward. Through Miller's reflection of the 1987 movement, the Dakota War hanging event inextricably denoted Indigenous wrongdoing and placed white settler guilt on the periphery. In this sense, it was the Dakota's duty to reconcile with the white population; not the other way around. "My grandpa always said that 'the Indians got screwed," Miller reflected when talking about his family farm's connection to the monument's construction. Due to the supposed lack of effort to reconceptualize the memory of the Dakota 38, the artwork, thought Miller, served as a way to bring Dakotas back to town, as many "would bypass Mankato."[256] His assumption that Dakota peoples were nonexistent within Mankato, especially during the late-twentieth century, reinforce more serious implications supported through the settler colonial structure. Miller reflected, "even though many of the old timers [white Mankatoans] rejected the *Winter Warrior* monument, the piece sought to bring out the truth… and it did just that."[257] To what extent did the *truth* impact any hopes of *reconciliation*? Miller's testimony illustrates how the Year of Reconciliation was problematized

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LaBatte, Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project, April 27, 2011, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota; Dallas Ross, Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project, May 1, 2011, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

256 Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020; Some Dakota people did steer clear of Mankato, Minnesota. Others were not taught the history of Mankato from their relatives, mainly from western Dakota communities. For more information on this please consult Dean Blue, Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project, April 27, 2011, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, 11; Kahnke, "A Culturally Responsible Lesson," 79.

257 Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020; For more information on how to commemorate the 1862 events, but from a Dakota perspective, please consult Anywaush, Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project, 23.

by white settler guilt and attempted to reconstruct a skewed understanding of the Dakota presence in Mankato.

An Unsuccessful Year of Reconciliation

By the end of the Year of Reconciliation in 1987, many Dakotas believed that the hope of reconciliation was an ultimate failure. On December 29, 1987, the *Miami Herald* (Florida) observed the Dakotas' critiques of the Year of Reconciliation, a demonstration of the year's importance in broader American news. In the report, the Lower Sioux Reservation tribal chairman, David Larsen, spoke to the implications of the year-long commemorative decree: that he's glad "it's finally over." Vernell Wabasha, a manager of a Dakota reservation pottery shop, remarked that the Year of Reconciliation was "a farce."[258] As a descendant of Taoyateduta (Little Crow), Wabasha critically addressed the ways in which white Minnesotans handled the attempt at reconciliation. "As far as I'm concerned," noted Wabasha, "there wasn't any change (this year), except more white people coming in looking at us again…you can't change history and it's gonna be that way. The whole year should have been looking ahead at Indians' future, changing things." Larsen also added that "People are still making a buck off of our hard times. It's just so frustrating. What gets me is this could have been so much better if they had least got some of us involved."[259] Despite the generally notion of unity, it seemed that Dakotas were intentionally left out and the Year of Reconciliation primarily served to absolve the white population.

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[258] Julie A. Anderson, "Reconciling Memory: Landscapes, Commemorations, and Enduring Conflicts of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862," Ph.D. Diss., George State University, December 14, 2011, ScholarWorks, 228.

[259] Tom Krattenmaker, "Indians Bitter After 'Reconciliation' Mass Hanging Still Haunts Dakota Tribe," *Miami Herald* (Florida), December 29, 1987, MSU-A.

Perpich and the Minnesota government viewed the Year of Reconciliation as a success despite Dakota critiques.[260] Larsen's remarks, which visualized the writing out of Dakotas from their history, surfaced critical understandings of the Year of Reconciliation: the façade of reconciliation sought to make white Mankatoans believe things were getting better. In reality, not much changed at all. Amos Owen described the Year of Reconciliation as a "good one" for the Dakota, though "much remained to be done." To Owen, just as land mattered during the creation and continuation of the Mahkato Wacipi, Minnesotans needed to learn more about Dakota culture—something that the Year of Reconciliation lacked. "Minnesotans need to be taught more about the Dakota," observed Owen, "their place names that dominate Minnesota and the treaties that took their land."[261] When looking at a map, many Dakota names dominate the landscape: Minnesota derived from the Dakota term *Mni Sota Makoce*—the Land of Cloud Tinted Waters.[262]

The region around Mankato, too, celebrated Dakota names. Towns such as Chaska, Minnesota (translates to "male name for the firstborn child") or even Mankato, which derived from Chief Mahkato (translated as Blue Earth), a special name that represents the Blue Earth County and Blue Earth River. Owen's acknowledgement that many Minnesotans needed to learn this history shows that reconciliation did not successfully mend the wounds between whites and Dakotas.[263] Amos Owen transcended new ideas and visions for the future in Mankato. He was active in his own community at Prairie Island yet made Mankato his second home.

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[260] Krattenmaker, "Indians Bitter," December 29, 1987.

[261] Kahnke, "A Culturally Responsible Lesson, 89.

[262] Gwen Westerman and Bruce White, *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2011), 3-4.

[263] "Some Dakota Place Names in Minnesota," *Edina Public Schools*, Last accessed February 22, 2020,https://www.edinaschools.org/cms/lib07/MN01909547/Centricity/Domain/1011/Dakota%2

When Owen died in 1990, his legacy transcended new modes of memory and appreciation for the Dakota people. On April 23, Governor Rudy Perpich proclaimed that day to be Amos Owens Day. "He opened his home to thousands of people of all walks of life," Perpich said, "to share the belief that we are all brothers and sisters and can live in balance and respect for each other."[264] The legacy of Amos Owen highlighted the meaning of healing and building relationships with all in the community—both ideas that helped Dakota people heal. Despite other critiques, Owen actively sought to use the Year of Reconciliation as a teaching tool to move the community forward and a community space for all to learn. Debates over the memory of the Dakota experience paralleled moments of contestation over land recognition in Mankato. As Mark David Spence argues, "denials of Native claims on parks have served only to perpetuate the legacy of Native dispossession," and the method of replacing and erasing through settler colonialism challenged the hopes of making a space for Dakota peoples to commemorate their past and celebrate their culture. White ideas of domination of Indigenous perspectives transferred over the control, use, and vision of one of Mankato's newest parks: Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce.[265]

0Place%20Names.pdf; *Mankato: It's First Fifty Years* (Mankato, Minn.: Free Press Printing, 1903), 136; Thomas Hughes, *Indian Chiefs of Southern Minnesota: Containing Sketches of the Prominent Chieftains of the Dakota and Winnebago Tribes from 1825 to* 1865 (Mankato, Minn.: Free Press Company, 1927), 43-44.

[264] Kahnke, "A Culturally Responsible Lesson, 89.

[265] Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6; Travey Banivanua Mar and Penelope Edmonds, ed., *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2010), 86; Veracini, Settler Colonialism, 8-9.

Debates over the Land:
The Transformation of West Sibley Park to Land of Memories

The history of Sibley Park, Mankato's first public green space established in 1887, set forth a new range of questions regarding the memory of the mass hanging. How did Dakotas and whites envision the use of the public green space? Not only did Sibley Park play a role in the hanging itself, it also served as a catalyst for land disputes and the recognition of Dakota peoples into the late-twentieth century. Sibley Park has a long history that both Dakota peoples and white Mankatoans feel attached to and celebrate in different ways. The first settlers in Mankato settled near Sibley Mound, a large hill, "60 feet above the floodplain," that overlooked the region. Some people claimed that Henry H. Sibley had once camped on the hill during the 1840s and helped construct a fur trading post later in the 1850s.[266] During the U.S.-Dakota War and prior to the mass execution, of what would then be 303 Dakotas, federal officials constructed Camp Lincoln as a prison camp to separate Dakotas from white Minnesotans. Nevertheless, this did not dampen the tensions; white settlers attacked the camp and fired their weapons at the Dakota prisoners. The park rested on both banks of the Blue Earth River. By the late-twentieth century, however, Mankatoans and Dakota peoples chose to split the park in two.[267]

On the east bank of the Blue Earth, Sibley Park remained with a historic homestead, farm, and walking trail for all to use. On the west bank, the City Council, in conjunction with the

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[266] "Sibley Park at the heart of renaming debate; General's letter offers revelation," *The Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), June 17, 2019; William E. Lass, "Rediscovering Camp Lincoln," *Minnesota's Heritage*, Vol. 20, No. 6 (2012): 22-23.

[267] John Biewen, "Park 11: The Condemned end up in Mankato," MPR News, December 11, 2012, last accessed on February 25, 2020, https://www.mprnews.org/story/2012/12/11/dakota-war-part11; "Sibley Park" wayside marker, Blue Early County Historical Society, 2008; "Sibley Park at the heart of renaming debate; General's letter offers revelation," *The Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), June 17, 2019; Gary Clayton Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota: The Dakota War of 1862, the Most Violent Ethnic Conflict in American* History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), 231-232.

help from Dakota advisors, created "Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce," the Dakota phrase for Dakota Memorial Park, or, Land of Memories Park.[268] The main purpose of Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce served as grounds for the annual Mahkato Wacipi pow wow, though the park remained a sacred space throughout the year for Dakotas to reflect on their past and honor their ancestors. The recognition of Dakota space challenged white Mankatoans visions for the future on this space. Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce ushered in a resurgence of Dakota culture and life; a direct challenge to how white Minnesotans placed Dakotas on the periphery of their town's history.

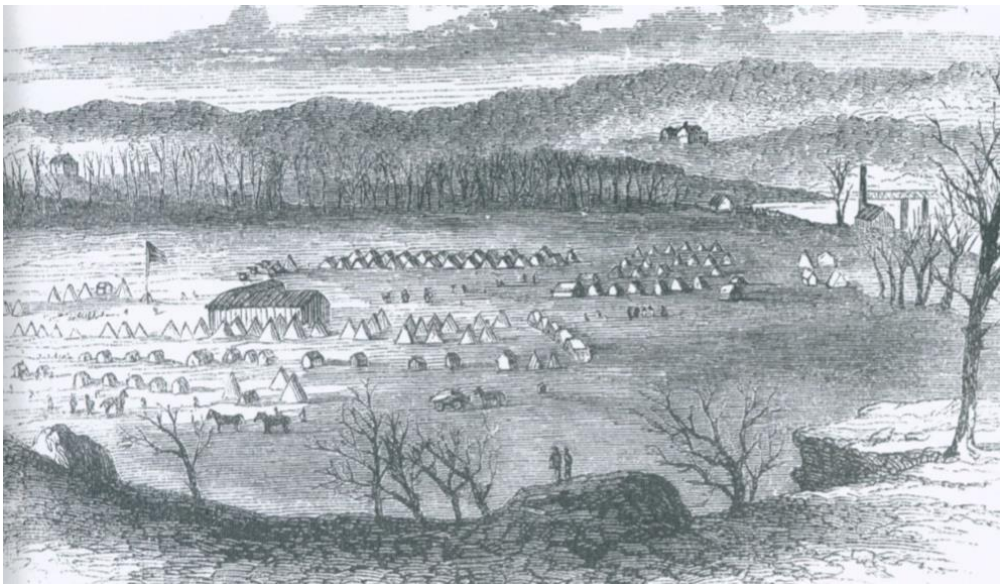

Figure 5

Camp Lincoln as visualized in Adrian J. Ebell's,
"The Indian Massacres and War Of 1862," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (June, 1863).

Even though the city government recognized Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce as Dakota space, white Mankatoans had different ideas for the grounds. The annual powwow attracted

[268] Kristin Golmstad, "The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862: Changing Interpretations Through Material Culture, Monuments, and Commemorative Activities," MA Thesis, Tufts University, ProQuest, 119.

many visitors to the special ceremonial weekend, in some cases seeing as many as 2,000 Indigenous peoples—which included 1,500 participants and 500-1000 spectators—and well as 500-1000 non-Native area spectators.[269] Yet, many whites questioned the parts of the year--as in any other time besides the Mahkato Wacipi-- that did not bring visitors and boost the town's economy? Many white Mankatoans proposed a public golf course on Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce as a means to use space for recreation on land that the city already owned.[270] By the 1990s, Mankatoans debated the proposition and those defending the course questioned the "sacredness" of the Dakota space.

The proposed golf course at Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce was envisioned as "a legitimate benefit to the city and public… [as] a public course [would] provide an added amenity to draw and keep people to a city, just like parks, libraries or public swimming pools."[271] The growth of Mankato during the late-1980s and early 1990s had its citizens wanting more options for recreation and leisure. Despite environmental issues, such as the threat to wildlife and a change to the Mankato water table, the golf course at Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce would "enhance the beauty of the area," wrote Lloyd Anderson, "with flowers being planted near the clubhouse, well-kept grass instead of weeds, etc. It would also provide recreation for those now camping

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[269] "2,000 Indians Attend Pow Wow," *The Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), n.d., Wacipi Flyers, Pamphlets, and Ads/Articles, 1972-1985 Folder, MSU-A; Request Form for Community Service Assistance, March 1, 1978," Mdewakanton Monthly Budgets and Correspondence, 1972-1978 folder, MSU-A; Phyllis Huber, Mdewakanton Club, to Chief Charles Alexander, Mankato City Police, September 12, 1978, Mdewakanton Monthly Budgets, MSU-A; Letter to Chief Alexander, September 13, 1977, Student Affairs Collection, 1916-Ongoing manuscript collection, INDIAN, Native American, 1990 box, MSU-A.

[270] "Mankato Needs New Golf Course," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), December 12, 1989.

[271] "Golf Course plan keeps getting better," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), December 5, 1989, MSU-A.

there and more than likely increase the use of the campgrounds."[272] Roxanne Johnson concluded that the golf course would keep citizens in Mankato, feeding in money to local businesses and the city government, as many travel to "St. Peter, Le Sueur, Waseca, New Ulm, and Madelia" to play golf.[273] To many though, the meaning of transforming the Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce landscape was much more than for the local economy. It questioned Dakota claims to those lands and denoted ideas of white settler power.

In a *Free Press* editorial, John Stevens of Mankato asked, "When did the land become 'sacred?'" Stevens later observed that "If this land was bought by the city to be set aside for use by the Indians exclusively for the Pow Wow and to be regarded as sacred land, and then let's forget about the golf course. If, on the other hand, it was bought by the city as a well field and the Indians were invited to hold their yearly Pow Wow on a small portion of the land, let's start thinking about land use, and what benefits most people."[274] This line of interpretation showed an ignorance of the meanings of the Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce landscape. The park is not only for the powwow, not only a place for Dakotas to honor their ancestors, but also an acknowledgement of Dakota land and sovereignty. By honoring what was once dominated by the settler narrative as a Dakota space, it reconfigured Dakota meaning to the town. In the same *Free Press* issue, Jen Bergcok reported, "I reiterate—that amplifying Land of Memories Park (West Sibley) into a public golf course would be a splendid testimonial to the harmony to which the largely unused acreage is dedicated. My oldest son and I were out there on Dec. 26 for the ritual of reunification

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[272] "Mankato Needs New Golf Course," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), December 12, 1989, MSU-A; "Don't Build Golf Course," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), December 4, 1989, MSU-A.

[273] "Go ahead with new golf course," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), December 15, 1989, MSU-A.

[274] "Land of Memories not Sacred Land," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), January 3, 1990, MSU-A.

with the spirits of the 38 Dakota hanged in 1862, and I was imbued by a feeling that the park deserves a better communal purpose."[275] Another Mankato citizen wrote of her fond memories of West Sibley Park; the memorable moments of seeing beautiful wildflowers, the wonderful picnics, and the picking of Native projectile points at the "burial mound." Fredora Schultz truly believed her memories are what made the Land of Memories Park special.[276] The Dakota story continued to lay on the periphery as white Minnesotans actively forged ideas to change the park or alter that space's meaning.

Notwithstanding the economic benefits of opening a new golf course, the fight over Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce showed how many Mankatoans felt about Dakota history. The space, as designated in the 1970s, sought to honor "the memory of the forefathers of the Minnesota Sioux who were the original inhabitants of this area," as announced by Mayor Herbert Mocol on August 13, 1979.[277] Whereas by the 1990s, white Mankatoans would not accept the Dakota claim to that space, even though there were other parks – including Sibley Park on the east side of the Blue Earth River – for recreation, leisure, and open space. The disregard of Dakota peoples as humans with histories and cultures problematizes any efforts to reconcile or unite the two communities together. White Minnesotans were too actively invested in making the landscape better for their own needs rather than supporting or recognizing those of the Dakota peoples.[278]

Other white Mankatoans debated the meaning of "desecrating sacred Indian lands," such as John Brady who wrote that the construction of the golf course is a "slap in the face to Native

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[275] "Park Memories," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), January 3, 1990, MSU-A.
[276] "Park Memories," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), January 3, 1990, MSU-A.
[277] Herbert Mocol Mayoral Address, August 13, 1979, MSU-A.
[278] Herbert Mocol Mayoral Address, August 13, 1979, MSU-A.

cultures, but clearly a patronizing gesture of pseudo-reconciliation for the 38 Dakota people who were hanged in this town in 1862."[279] Brady's editorial stated that the construction of the golf course was purely for economic reasons, and that "the community seems to be missing the point…this should not be considered an economic issue but one that demonstrates our commitment…to the concerns of the Native American community."[280] While most of the newspaper reports around this issue discussed both sides of the golf course argument, and grasped a strong sense of the broader debate—Dakota voices do not show up in the record.

The transformation of Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce raises multiple points of inquiry about the past. Through the internal discussions – as in non-Native debates – it seemed that both sides touch on Dakota history at a distance. The side that supported the golf course reinforced the myth of the vanishing Indian.[281] Their beliefs that the land was open, not in use, or not even cared for, follows the historical pattern of dictating the environment, wilderness, and Native use of land.[282] On the contrary, white Mankatoans who actively rejected the construction of the golf course sought to acknowledge Dakota presence at a distance. To them, the Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce space is sacred to the Dakota community, and it needed to stay that way—rather than acknowledging the continuity of Dakota use and resurgence of the Land of Memories space.

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[279] John Brady, "Don't Desecrate Sacred Indian Land," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), December 19, 1989, MSU-A.

[280] John Brady, "Don't Desecrate Sacred Indian Land," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), December 19, 1989, MSU-A.

[281] Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 30; Phillip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 187-188.

[282] Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness,* 4; Karl Jacoby, *Crimes against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American* Conservation (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 85.

The deepening structure of settler colonialism played a strong part in this story. That space designated as Dakota space was under threat by white Minnesotan economic initiatives.[283] Even though Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce continues to exist and thrive with the Mahkato Wacipi and other significant Dakota ceremonies, the issues that surfaced during the 1990s questioned the viability of reconciliation in Mankato. The silencing of Dakotas and the disregard for space deemed culturally important by the City of Mankato demonstrated that power structures routinely placed Dakota space and community on the periphery of Mankato's society.

Commemoration in Mankato:
Dakotas Public Efforts to Heal

Dakotas gathered outside of Mankato for the 140th anniversary in 2002 to commemorate the Dakota lives lost during the 1862 war. Not only were they honoring and remembering those hanged in Mankato, the group also commemorated *Manipi kin hena wicunkiksuyapi* (We remember those who walked); the traumatic experience that women, children, and elderly faced when forcibly removed from the Lower Sioux Reservation to Fort Snelling at Bdote. In November 1862, roughly 1,700 Dakota women, children, and elderly were forcibly marched nearly 100 miles to a concentration camp that rested on Bdote, the traditional homelands of the Dakota. The federal government repurposed Fort Snelling as a concentration camp to displace Dakotas away from white Minnesotans. However, the camp at Fort Snelling brought devastation to the Dakota prisoners, as upwards of 300 Dakotas died from disease and malnutrition.[284]

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[283] Veracini, Settler Colonialism, 8, 38 75.

[284] For more historical information on the forced march to Fort Snelling, please consult: Ed LaBelle Oral History Interview, Minnesota Historical Society, June 7, 2012, 12; Chris Mato Nunpa, "Dakota Commemorative March: Thoughts and Reactions," American Indian Quarterly, Vol. 28, No. 1/2 , Special Issue: Empowerment through Literature (Winter-Spring, 2004);

Between remembering the Fort Snelling events and the hanging in Mankato, one Roman Catholic priest asked planners of the march, "How would this promote healing and reconciliation? Would it not, instead, open up old wounds?" The questions asked by non-Dakota people reveals the ways in which they chose to remember these horrific incidents. Chris Mato Nunpa responded, "Apparently, in his mind, things were going along smoothly for him and his congregation, so why bring up something so ugly from the past? As long as things were going well…everything must be going well for other people, including the Dakota people of Minnesota."[285] The commemorative marches sought to reform and revise how Minnesotans interacted with Dakota history. Not only was it a direct action by those within the Dakota community, it was a performance that made white Minnesotans reflect on the horrors committed against Dakota peoples in 1862.[286]

Over seven days, the 2002 commemorative march stretched from the Lower Sioux agency to Bdote at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. The commemorative march represented an opportunity for healing within Dakota communities and offered white Minnesotans a chance to see that Dakotas were still there. While most of the trek took place outside of Mankato, the memory of the hanging transcended the broader meaning of the U.S.-Dakota War.[287] It served as an opportunity for the white public to visually witness Dakota

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Waziyatawin, "Decolonizing the 1862 Death Marches," American Indian Quarterly, Vol. 28, No. ½, Special Issue: Empowerment Through Literature (Winter-Spring, 2004); Waziyatawin, *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors*; Corinne L. Monjeau-Marz, *The Dakota Indian Interment at Fort Snelling, 1862-1864* (Dayton, Minn.: Prairie Smoke Press, 2005); Waziyatawin, *What does Justice Look Like*, 44; Mary Lethert Wingert, *North Country: The Making of Minnesota*, 100.

[285] Nunpa, "Dakota Commemorative March," 220.

[286] Waziyatawin, *In the Footsteps*, 90.

[287] Please see Nunpa, "Dakota Commemorative March" for a detailed account of the march, included daily visits to towns, public speeches, and Dakota reaction and experiences during and after the march.

resurgence throughout the Minnesota River Valley. Also, it gave Dakotas the opportunity to remember their lost ancestors and critique the treatment of their people by the federal government. During the 2002 march, Nunpa described an incident in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota. On their march, the group of Dakotas stopped for the night and the local Sleepy Eye Catholic Church opened their kitchen space for the Dakotas to heat up food before moving to the school cafeteria. When the Dakotas arrived, Nunpa explained that "the Catholic Church and some of its parishioners came and listened and gave us gifts of socks, gloves, caps, and scarves. That was very heartwarming."[288] The white Sleepy Eye residents accepted the Dakotas into their parish, helping them commemorate the past.[289]

Problems ensued during a speech as Nunpa spoke to the parish about the ramifications of federal power over Dakota peoples, comparing the experiences of the Dakotas with that of the Jewish during the Nazi Holocaust. After the marchers left Sleepy Eye, the Catholic priest, as well as the Sleepy Eye school principal, reached out to Nunpa in protest of his statements. "They felt that as people who had come out to welcome [the Dakotas] to Sleepy Eye," observed Nunpa, "they did not deserve anger for something that happened nearly 150 years ago. Furthermore, they felt that drawing a comparison between Hitler's atrocities and the treatment of Dakota people in Minnesota by whites was unwarranted and underserved."[290] Of course, Nunpa apologized for the offense, yet continued to question how Minnesotans acted to Dakota experiences.

Following the event in Sleepy Eye, Waziyatawin, Nunpa's daughter, played a crucial part in dealing with the upset parishioners and townspeople. She questioned the power structures in

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[288] Nunpa, "Dakota Commemorative March," 221.

[289] Waziyatawin, *In the Footsteps*, 124-125.

[290] Nunpa, "Dakota Commemorative March," 221; Waziyatawin, *In the Footsteps*, 124-125.

how expected behavior reinforced the white experience and not the Dakota's. Waziyatawin responded to the priest in a pointed letter:

It appears that these apparent acts of "peace" [giving the marchers socks, gloves, and other warming items] came with some strings, which is deeply offensive. You clearly had some idea about how we as Dakota people should be appropriately grateful to you…you seem to easily dismiss our right to feel and express whatever we feel is appropriate…you think your feelings are superior to ours. While you look at the events of 1862 as "a long time ago," from the Dakota perspective it is as though those events occurred last week, because no amends have been made in the last 140 years…So every day that you have lived there, you have done so at the expense of Dakota people. To suggest that you can benefit from our dispossession and extermination while not sharing in the responsibility for it is a privilege only colonizers can enjoy.[291]

The competing nature of this issue demonstrated that reconciliation could not be reached as white people could not justify a balanced approach to the white/Dakota shared past. The white population accepted the Dakota perspective so long as it did not interfere or threaten their own understanding of the past. In essence, it seemed okay for Dakotas to heal, yet, white people continued to hold anger against the Dakotas for the loss of life and destruction caused by the U.S.-Dakota War.

Every two years, the commemorative marches continued.[292] Dr. Gwen Westerman observed that the sixth annual march was "a ceremony…not a protest. It's not a reenactment. It's a spiritual ceremony for healing and for honoring those women and children we descend from.

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[291] Nunpa, "Dakota Commemorative March, 223; For more perspectives on Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, as well as other towns, like New Ulm, please consult Judith L. Anywaush, Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project, March 10, 2011, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, 19.

[292] Anywaush, Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project, 17.

We remember their strength and their determination."[293] Other moments resembled similar themes that Westerman described. More specifically in Mankato, Reconciliation Park specifically honored the Dakotas executed in Mankato.

Since the creation of Reconciliation Park on September 21, 1997, the space has served as a major commemorative area for Dakotas to reflect on their past, but also white peoples to recognize the Dakota experience. With initial plans to construct the park started in 1971, the park's completion in 1997 signified a space to "educate, stimulate and broaden local, regional and national interest and understanding about the events prior to and following the 38 Dakota warriors. The Park served as a memorial, meditation and reflective place for all people."[294] Tom Miller, the creator of *Winter Warrior*, constructed another monument, a large white the Bison carved from 138,000 pounds of local granite. It was "the focal point of the park" and designed to symbolize a major cultural shift within Mankato.[295] The space continued to grow over time, welcoming other monuments – such as a large scroll that listed the names of the thirty-eight Dakota men hanged in 1862. By the early 2000s, Dakotas utilized space in a number of ways.

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[293] "Dakota Commemorative Walk Remembers 1862 Force March to Fort Snelling," Pioneer Press (Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.), November 11, 2012, last accessed February 22, 2020, https://www.twincities.com/2012/11/11/dakota-commemorative-walk-remembers-1862-forced-march-to-fort-snelling/.

[294] "Chronology of Reconciliation Efforts in Southern Minnesota (Mankato & St. Peter), 1958-1996," Wacipi Flyers, Pamphlets, and Ads/Articles, 1987-1996, MSU-A. Reconciliation Park Pamphlet, September 21, 1997, Wacipi Flyers, Pamphlets, and Ads/Articles, 1987-1996, MSU-A; Barbara Anderson, Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project, May 4, 2011, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, 10-11; Anderson, "Reconciling Memory," 65.

[295] Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020; "Letting Eagles Soar," *Pioneer Press* (St. Paul, Minn.), September 19, 1987, MSU-A; Bud Lawrence letter to Glynn Crooks, December 5, 2001, MSU-A.

Commemorative marches annually arrived in town to celebrate Dakota culture and remember the Dakota 38.[296]

The 38+2 Memorial Ride started in the spring of 2005 when Jim Miller, a descendant of those forcibly removed in 1862, envisioned an event to honor the Dakota 38.[297] His vision sought to "bring the Dakota people together, raise awareness to the significant [sic] impact still with us from the mass hanging and the surrounding events, and to bring reconciliation among all people of the region so we may move forward and live in a good way."[298] The annual ride traveled (and continues to travel) over 330 miles from the Lower Brulé Indian Reservation in South Dakota to Reconciliation Park in Mankato, Minnesota. Every year, riders arrive at Reconciliation Park on December 26 to honor the anniversary of the hanging. Citizens watch experience Dakota culture when riders leave trinkets on the Scroll Monument, all of which stay attached until the following year's ride.[299]

To many Dakota, the importance did not stem from the physical monuments at Reconciliation Park that sparked moments of deep reflection. Rather, the physical site itself, the landscape of *Mni Sota Makoce*, and place of the Dakota 38 execution gave deep reverence to the past. "Just being in that area is really overwhelming," mentioned Seth Eastman, "I don't know if

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[296] Miller, Interview by author, February 29, 2020; "New Park Continues Reconciliation Process," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), September 19, 1997; "City Takes a Moment to Reconcile," *Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), September 22, 1997, MSU-A.

[297] The "+2" portion of the name derives from the two Dakotas execute under the presidential tenure of Andrew Johnson. To learn more of these two Dakota men, please consult: Curt Brown, "In 1865, Two Dakota Leaders Meet a Gruesome End," Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN), November 8, 2015, http://www.startribune.com/in-1865-two-dakota-leaders-meet-a-gruesome-end/342632632/ and Shuler, *The Thirteenth Turn*," 148; Anderson, "Reconciling Memory," 204.

[298] "Dakota 38 Ride," Sunktanka Wicayuhapi, last accessed February 22, 2020, http://sunktanka.weebly.com/dakota-38-plus-2-memorial-ride.html.

[299] Robert Smith, Interview by author, Mankato, Minnesota, July 15, 2019.

people really understand what we feel as descendants of Dakota people. A lot of us descent from people who were killed and trophy hunted, who were executed by hanging."[300] These various moments of Dakota resurgence did not come uncontested. Many white Mankatoans eagerly protected their understanding of the Dakota War past, rejecting any form of revision or movement forward.

Lincoln's Legacy in the 150th Anniversary

In 2012, a shift in memory practice emphasized other sides to the narrative in Mankato. As the 150th anniversary commenced, the memory of Abraham Lincoln continued to play a unique role in how white Mankatoans remembered the hanging events. The memory of the sixteenth president always played a unique role in the larger Dakota War narrative, most often as Mankatoans viewed Lincoln as a savior of those who were not executed in 1862. Another memory that embodied Lincoln's remembrance was one that that nation should be quite familiar with; the man who preserved the union and emancipated millions of enslaved peoples throughout the south.[301] Whereas this memory is important to understanding American history, the hanging of the Dakota 38 challenged Lincoln's participation in emancipating enslaved persons throughout the South. In most cases, Mankatoans wanted to celebrate a national pride of the Civil War era; that their president not only quelled one of the nation's largest wars between Native Americans and white settlers but also ended the Civil War and subsequently freed millions of enslaved peoples.

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[300] Seth Eastman as quoted in Sheila Regan, "In Minnesota, Listening to Native Perspectives on Memorializing the Dakota War," *Hyperallergic*, June 16, 2017, last accessed March 1, 2020, https://hyperallergic.com/385682/in-minnesota-listening-to-native-perspectives-on-memorializing-the-dakota-war/.

[301] Anywaush, Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Project, 20-21.

On May 19 and 20, 2012, local citizens watched a play by "Lincoln's Traveling Troupe" at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Directed by local independent historian, Bryce O. Stenzel, the play, "'We Cannot Escape History': Abraham Lincoln's Trials by Fire," enriched the community on the impact of Abraham Lincoln during the trying months of November and December 1862. In the program for "We Cannot Escape History," Stenzel wrote that 2012 represented the "U.S.-Dakota War's sesquicentennial year. Specifically, May 20 marks the 150th anniversary of the passage of the Homestead Act," where he hopes the audience "will come to the same realization that Lincoln did, that while individuals can change the future, their actions are still influenced, and sometimes are even controlled, by past events."[302] To Stenzel, the play hoped to raise awareness of Lincoln's decision making during the Civil War; how complex, misunderstood, and challenging the Dakota War made his Civil War goals.

[302] "We Cannot Escape History: Abraham Lincoln's Trials by Fire" program, May 19-20, 2012, *Lincoln's Traveling Troupe*, last accessed February 11, 2020.

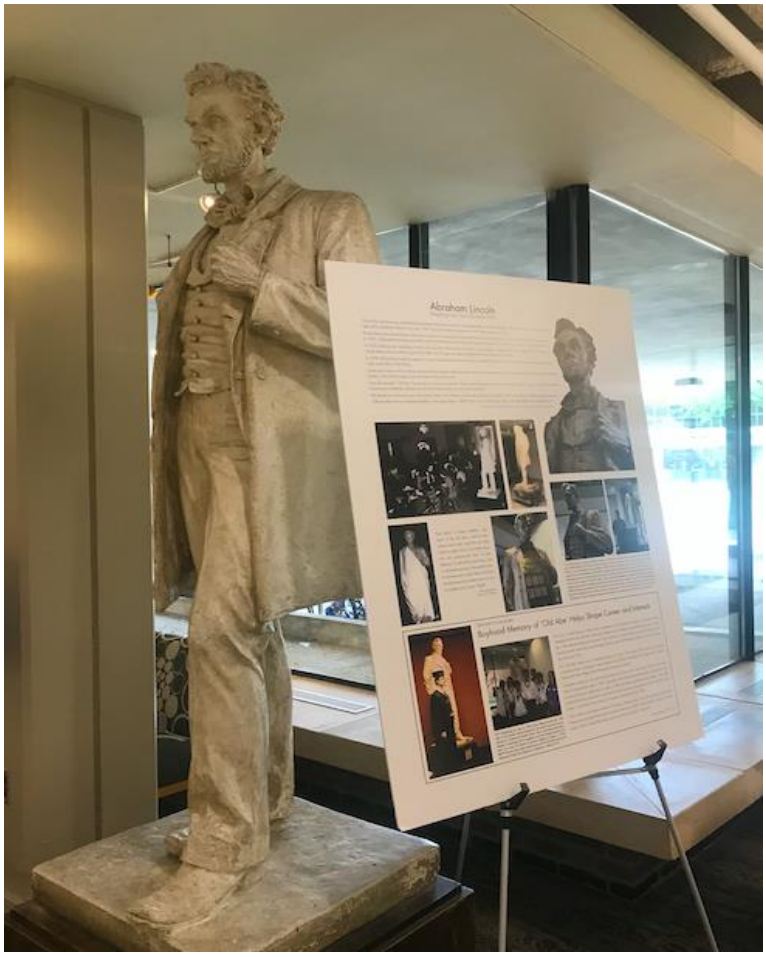

Figure 6

Lincoln Monument, Centennial Student Union, Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota, photo by author.

Lincoln's memory was not only encapsulated by Stenzel in the 2012 anniversary but was a common theme seen since the creation of Lincoln's Traveling Troupe in 2008. Many of Stenzel's plays were centered on the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln. By looking at most of Lincoln's life, including his childhood through the Civil War, Stenzel's plays challenged the backlash that Lincoln received within Mankato city limits over the last 150 or so years. Lincoln's memory showed up at other places and moments in Mankato, most notably a monument in Minnesota State University's Student Union, where—to this day—Lincoln's memory is

dominated by his aura as the "great emancipator" with little mention of his participation in the largest mass execution in United States history.

Though, one thing that Stenzel acknowledged was the fact that "their actions are still influenced, and sometimes are even controlled, by past events," which challenged a clear understanding of the Dakota sense of place, a fit, into Mankato historical narrative. The focus on Lincoln's legacy often further disconnected Dakotas from their place in Mankato. Stenzel's plays, especially the Dakota War performance, actively participated in the continuity of Dakota erasure from Mankato's collective memory. While "We Cannot Escape History" seemed to show moments of the hanging events that spoke to the Dakota experience, Stenzel's ultimate goal was to demonstrate that Mankato was the place where "the West was won by Euro-Americans, and lost by the Dakota Indians."[303] According to Rick Lybeck, Stenzel's play often recruited—along with separate play in Rochester, Minnesota—white children to play the Dakotas in the story of the hanging.[304] These two situations bolstered the ongoing structure of settler colonialism as white control over the historical narrative replaced a Dakota-centered story with one of victory by settlers.[305] By arguing that the "West was won by settlers," Stenzel and his play continued the vintage assumption that Indigenous peoples were wild, savage, and unable to use land in the

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[303] "We Cannot Escape History: Abraham Lincoln's Trials by Fire" program, May 19-20, 2012, *Lincoln's Traveling Troupe*, last accessed February 11, 2020; This is a general narrative seen throughout the expansion of federal power into the American West. Reinforced by Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis," in saying that the "frontier" was deemed closed and westward expansion exploited, assimilated, and transformed Indigenous peoples through progress and civilization. For on this, please consult, Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History, 1893," National Humanities Center, last accessed March 2, 2020, 9, http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/gilded/empire/text1/turner.pdf.

[304] Rick Lybeck, "Fear and Reconciliation: The U.S.-Dakota War in White Public Pedagogy," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2015, ProQuest, 10.

[305] O'Brien, Firsting and Lasting, 55-56; Blee and O'Brien, Monumental Mobility, 13.

right manner.[306] The other, as white children, portrayed Dakota in this play, translated to Dakotas not being good enough to represent their own culture—something seen more in the early twentieth century at place New Ulm, and replicated during the 150th anniversary. Stenzel claimed, according to Lybeck, that Dakota peoples had been consulted in the making of "We Cannot Escape History," yet, very little evidence proves Stenzel's intentions incorporated or reconciled with Dakota community members.

In Phillip J. Deloria's book, *Playing Indian*, he contends that "the indeterminacy of American identities stems, in part, from the nation's inability to deal with Indian people. Americans wanted to feel a natural affinity with the continent, and it was Indians who could teach them such aboriginal closeness."[307] For some reason, Stenzel cast white children to play Dakota roles. Possibly, there were no Dakota children in the area to play these roles, but that only reinforced the myth of the vanishing Indian and reinforced the fact that Dakotas were not part of the Mankato community. "Playing Indian," Deloria concluded, "cling[ed] tightly to the contours of power."[308] That power represented how Americans perceived their nation, and in Mankato, their town. That place, supposedly devoid of Dakotas following the hanging and war, had been dominated by the narratives of white Minnesotans eager to silence Dakota experiences and perspectives. It seemed that Stenzel wanted to highlight the benefits of the Dakota War; ending the uprising, quelling a hostile, savage population, and helping the community understand Lincoln's greatest achievements.

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[306] Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the* Frontier (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005), 21.

[307] Deloria, *Playing* Indian, 5.

[308] Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 7-8.

As shown in Stenzel's plays, Mankato's reconciliatory reckoning continued into the 150th anniversary of the mass hanging. Those whose views aligned with Stenzel used the idea of performance as a way to continue their interpretation on the past. Under the guise of community building many white Mankatoans overlooked the deeper implications of the play, all of which demonstrated how the contested memory still remained divergent from those in the community.[309] Between 1987 and 2012, attempts to unite whites and Dakotas continued to be unsuccessful. Power and settler-colonial ideals dominated—and continue to dominate—the city. Despite Dakota efforts to heal and bring community members together, Stenzel—as one example of many—forwarded observations of the Dakota War that compromised any hope of reconciliation.

White Reconciliation, Dakota Healing

In the book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire wrote, "Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral."[310] The elusive nature of Mankato's reconciliation between 1987 and 2012 demonstrated that a healthy bond between Dakota and white communities would struggle to truly manifest. As white Mankatoans felt that reconciling washed their hands of any guilt, in reality it signified a movement in the opposite direction, a contradiction of reconciliation. This final section sets out on a difficult task to define, analyze, and explain how and why reconciliation struggled to manifest and solidify in Mankato, Minnesota. Analyzed through the continuity of settler

309 Avery Cropp, "Bryce Stenzel play Commemorates 150th Anniversary of Civil War," *The Free Press* (Mankato, MN), May 13, 2011; Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 530.

310 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 122.

colonialism, Dakota peoples and white community members actively searched for different resolutions to the contested nature of memory making in Mankato. As the resurgence of Dakota culture and history flooded into the city limits, white efforts to reconcile ultimately failed for two major reasons. First, reconciliation failed as white citizens' efforts to reflect critically on the Dakota past neglected any recognition of settler wrongdoing or guilt. Second, despite efforts to unite the Dakotas and whites together, many citizens in Mankato retained devotion to a power over their Indigenous neighbors; one of which dictated land use and dominated the local historical consciousness. As this section analyzes the power structures that obstructed reconciliation in Mankato, it also emphasizes Dakota resurgence to white frameworks, which surfaced new ideas of Dakota survival, resilience, and persistence in the town that worked diligently to actively forget that part of Mankato's past.

In Mankato, rather than face the realities of the hanging, the white community attempted to change the public image of the town. As seen with the legacy of the Hanging Monument in the 1970s, public collective efforts lacked any positive recognition of the Dakota Oyate (people) and continued to support the irreconcilable realities of the town's hanging memory. As seen in Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel's work, empire molds and shapes their tactics to obtain new goals and power overtime. In the case of Mankato's white population, settler colonial power not only dictated Dakota land claims but attempted to control Dakota versions of the hanging event to determine who the collective memory of the hanging benefited.[311] It is because of this that there needs to be clarification in how this memory is traced and analyzed. White settler descendants and community members ostensibly embraced "reconciliation" as a means to try to

[311] Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, "Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Autumn, 2005): 601.

politically and culturally move past the fraught history of the Dakota 38 hanging. Their quest sought to move their community forward and erase any wrongdoing to those living in Mankato in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Dakota communities used two other frameworks to challenge the elusiveness of reconciliation: justice and healing.

In her book, *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors*, Waziyatawin observes that even if justice can be facilitated through the making of Wasicu allies (white people in Dakota), "reconciliation between the Dakota Oyate (people) and white Minnesotans is not a possibility."[312] To many Dakotas, the idea of "justice" served as an opportunity to fix the various injustices that Dakota communities faced (and continue to experience) throughout Minnesota. Decolonizing efforts to return land back to its pristine state, reforming the Dakota *Mni Sota Makoce* (The Land where the Waters Reflect the Skies), work in tandem with other Dakota initiatives to heal their communities. Through "reconciliation" this search for a return to *Mni Sota Makoce* ultimately is lost.

From within the Dakota community, reconciliation is oft-rejected as its realities and implications do not parallel Dakota search for healing and justice.[313] Chris Mato Nunpa, in responding to the use of reconciliation, spoke to how and why that concept can never be reached:

> I got crucified by many Dakotas, by many Indigenous people, back in 1987 when we used the term "reconciliation." I suggested that term because it was the 125th anniversary of what happened in 1862 and because I knew Wasicus really liked that term. It sounds good—reconciliation. I also know what it meant, but I was just doing it for the political purpose…You see, "reconciliation" means that people were together once, and then somehow they got estranged, and then they came back together. As far as our people can tell, there was never that unity with Wasicus, Strangers came to this land and they took it. I don't know of any point when there was oneness.[314]

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[312] Waziyatawin, *In the Footsteps*, 277.

[313] Janet R. Youngholm, "Abraham Lincoln's Indian Policy and the Dakota War of 1862," MA Thesis, University of Wyoming, ProQuest, May, 2012, 154.

[314] Waziyatawin, *In the Footsteps*, 277.

In an interview with a writer who has both Dakota and Lakota ancestry, Ruth Hopkins compared reconciliation to a famous quote by Malcom X, "The knife is still in our backs." She believes that "in order for true healing and reconciliation to take place, real history must be acknowledged, and the wrongs must be connected. There must be a change in behavior." As Dakota communities continue to face the wrath of settler colonial control over the historical narrative, "no true healing and reconciliation can take place."[315]

Others in Mankato disagreed with the Dakotas. Bryce Stenzel, the creator of Lincoln's Traveling Troupe, observed that the only way for Dakotas and whites to truly reconcile is when both sides of the story are contextualized; not hidden, not removed, or destroyed. In regards to the Hanging Monument from Chapter Two, Stenzel wrote, "Only when the desire to hide the marker has ended and it is allowed to be displayed in its proper historical context, along with proper explanation regarding its controversial inscription will the citizens of Mankato truly come to terms with the past." Through the success of this newly prioritized contextualization, as thought by Stenzel, the "Native Americans will finally reconcile their differences."[316] Can a truthful reconciliation between Dakotas and white Mankatoans happen when white community members expected "Native Americans to reconcile their differences?" To acknowledge that only the Dakota narratives needed to reconcile *their differences* suggested that the white side, still over a century after the Dakota War and hanging event, contended victimhood, innocence, and refused to admit guilt.[317]

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315 Ruth Hopkins, Dakota/Lakota Writer, Interview by Author, March 9, 2019; Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 95-97.

316 Bruce O. Stenzel, "Coming to Terms with the Past: The Dakota Conflict of 1862," *Mankato Memories*, Bud Lawrence Collection, MSU-A.

317 Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 19.

The story of Dakota survival and participation in the memory-making process in Mankato is one of actively seeking healing and justice, not of reconciliation. As this thesis has observed, Indigenous knowledge, participation, and critical/cultural response are all key components to better understanding resilience through the deepening structure of the settler state. As seen in most of this chapter, healing played a crucial role in how Dakotas responded to colonial powers and expectations. While reconciliation, as observed by Sheryl R. Lightfoot, contends to be about "improving relationships between Indigenous peoples and the governments that have cause harms, having spent hundreds of years dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their lands and resources," Dakota healing within Mankato garnered a more direct response to their own agency and response to colonial power on their own terms.[318]

The relationship between Mdewakanton Dakotas and white Mankatoans can be best described through the concept of a "society of control," which "pits settler and Indigenous societies against themselves and benefits government and corporate elites at the expense of individual and collective autonomy."[319] In the sense of Mankato, then, the use of reconciliation between 1987 and 2012, but also continuing onwards into the future, represented a sense of power and control over *Mni Sota Makoce*, Dakota ideas, and their communities. In this story, land played a vivid part of the Minnesota settler colonial project. The control over Indigenous spaces demonstrated the continuity of settler colonial power, the replacement of Indigenous peoples through eradication and assimilation. Reconciliation attempts to question and contend

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318 Sheryl R. Lightfoot, "Revealing, Reporting, and Reflecting: Indigenous Studies Research as Praxis in Reconciliation Projects," in Chris Andersen and Jean M. O'Brien, eds., *Sources and Methods in Indigenous* Studies (New York: Routledge Press, 2017), 297.

319 Adam J. Barker, "The Contemporary Reality of Canadian Imperialism: Settler Colonialism and the Hybrid Colonial State," *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Summer, 2009): 325-326.

with historical wrongs, injustices, and trauma. Yet, while it attempts to unit two groups together, it ultimately fails in Mankato, as many white descendants reject any truthful attempts at accepting what was done in the nineteenth century and how it affects other people in more contemporary times.

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The Dakota resurgence of culture and power into the Mankato landscape demonstrated that they played an active role to shape their communities and demonstrated survival 150 years after the execution of their ancestors. White narratives often contested their spaces and narratives well into the twentieth and twenty-first century. White reconciliation elided the Dakota experience, and ultimately served as a method to bolster their attempts at controlling the historical narrative. Dakota healing and resurgence, on the contrary, engaged as a competing narrative to white memories and continues to inform Dakota presence in Mankato to this day.

Conclusion

A Search for Recognition

On December 28, 2018, protestors gathered at Sibley Park in Mankato, Minnesota during the Kiwanis's Christmas Light Parade to publicly critique the town's glorification of Dakota War general, Henry H. Sibley. At a nearby overpass, members from the Anti-Colonial Land Defense (ACLD), a local Indigenous advocacy group, unfurled a large banner that read "Hangman's Park" and hanged an Abraham Lincoln effigy adjacent to the banner. The members of the ACLD blocked oncoming traffic as a way to critique and question the memorialization of Henry H. Sibley as the park's namesake. "We should not celebrate nor name parks after people who commit genocidal hate crimes against Indigenous people," observed one member of ACLD, "whose ancestral homelands we are on."[320] As the local police hurried to disperse the protest, the continuity of settler-colonial struggles in Mankato long after the 150th Anniversary commemoration were resoundingly apparent. When understood in this perspective, recent and ongoing protests in Mankato may best be interpreted as renewed, revitalized, and resurgent efforts in the historic quest for Indigenous recognition and protection of sovereignty.[321]

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[320] Brian Arola, "Protestors Call for Sibley Park renamed in Holiday Lights Disruption," *Mankato Free Press* (Mankato, Minn.), December 28, 2018.

[321] Many scholars have addressed the uses and misuses of recognition, such as the works by Audra Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Mark Rifkin, and Glen Coulthard. These scholars look to an alternative to colonialism and Indigenous resurgence of knowledge and power that demonstrates sovereignty and agency within their communities. Other works on reconciliation have generally come up short when addressing histories of violence and oppression, as well as histories of Indigenous survival and persistence. A much broader, comprehensive understanding of recognition beyond the political realms reveals a more transparent need for Indigenous acknowledgement within societies previously dictated by the settler consciousness. See, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 64-65; Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 6, 106, 148, 179; Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, 105; Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life*

The focus of this thesis differs substantially from most previous scholarship on the U.S.-Dakota War and the resultant hanging in Mankato. While many scholars focus on the war years, these studies have not described the realities and experiences of those who witnessed the war itself and the persistence of tribal history beyond this trauma.[322] Similarly, recent works by scholars of Dakota descent address topics like decolonization, land return, and revitalizing historical memory more broadly, yet Mankato remains a small part of those studies. "Unforgetting the Dakota 38" has sought to contribute to all of these historiographical fields. For the body of scholarship that focuses on the Dakota War proper, this work has moved from the traditional top-down nature of scholarship and has uncovered new voices and perspectives—Dakota and non-Dakota alike. For the works produced by scholars of Dakota and Indigenous descent, the middle years between 1900 and 1987 have relatively been left out of those studies.[323] The ongoing efforts to silence Dakotas in Mankato demonstrates the need to consult historical memory, not just historical facts. The ways in which local participants and

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Across the Borders of Settler States (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 8, 11, 189; Byrd, *The Transit of Empire,* 181.

[322] For works that emphasize white Minnesotan suffering, please see Alexander Berghold, *The Indians' Revent; or, Days of Horror. Some Appalling Events in the History of the Sioux* (San Francisco: P.J. Thomas, Printer, 1891); Clara Janvier Kinkead, "The Indian Outbreak in 1862," in *The Kinkeads of Delaware as Pioneers in Minnesota, 1856-1858: Contemporary Account of Experiences in the Sioux Uprising 1862* (Wilmington, Delaware: Hambleton Company, 1945), 28-45; W. J. Bordeaux, *Conquering the Mighty Sioux* (Sioux Falls, South Dakota, 1929); Frank Bennett Fiske, *The Taming of the Sioux* (Bismarck, North Dakota: The Bismarck Tribune, 1917); Kelly Fanny, *Narrative of my captivity among the Sioux Indians with a brief account of General Sully's Indian Expedition in 1864, bearing upon events occurring in my captivity* (Cincinnati: Wilstach, Baldwin & Co., Printers, 1871).

[323] For works produced by Dakota and/or Indigenous scholars on the U.S.-Dakota War and its memory see, Westerman and White, *Mni Sota Makoce*; Waziyatawin, *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors*; Waziyatawin, *What does Justice Look Like?*; Chris Mato Nunpa, "Dakota Commemorative March," Diane Wilson, *Beloved Child*; Clifford Canku and Michael Simon, *The Dakota Prisoner of War Letter* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013); and, Katherine E. Beane, "Woyakapi Kin Ahdipi "Bringing the Story Home": A History within the Wakpa Ipaksan Dakota Oyate," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, November, 2014.

communities remember a shared past offer new insights for the future while also reconceptualizing our understanding of United States history writ large. Mankato's role, as seen throughout the work, transformed from a place of justice for white Americans to a place of contest for Dakota peoples fighting for recognition.

As an urban center and space, Mankato allows for a new understanding of the Dakota War and communal participation in forming collective memory. A combination of Dakotas, U.S. citizens, newspaper publishers, and federal and state officials played significant roles since the earliest stages of memory-making in Mankato. Over the last 150 years, Mankato continued to evolve as a space for communities to gather, debate, and critique while also re-envisioning the assertion of Dakota agency and participation in the town's historical consciousness. The multiple perspectives of this history demonstrate the competing nature of memory-making between all periods covered in the thesis. Rather than focusing on these moments as memories and counter memories, with the implication that one holds more power than the other, this thesis shows that both Dakota and settler communities struggled over the memory of the hanging.[324]

Historian Susie Jie Young Kim writes that "telling and listening to stories are ways of managing collective traumas: no matter how painful they may be, survivor narratives are retold so that the horrors of a particular trauma will not have been experienced in vain."[325] Before the recent wave of scholarship on the Dakota War, most memories in Mankato focused on the trauma that white settlers faced during the Dakota War. Applying Kim's analysis demonstrates

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[324] David Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 4; Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 279; Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican* War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), xviii-xix; Grua, *Surviving Wounded Knee*, 182.

[325] Susie Jie Young Kim, "Remembering Trauma: History and Counter-Memories in Korean Fiction," *Māno*a, Vol. 11, No. 2, The Wounded Season: New Writing from Korea (Winter, 1999): 41.

that non-Natives in and around Mankato's urban center eagerly wanted the story of white victimhood and suffering to continue through the future. On the other hand, Dakota communities also wanted their stories not to be lost in vain. Their communities, too, faced violence, oppression, and brutal attacks, murders, executions, and displacement, in some cases far worse than any white settler faced during the Dakota War years. By using the competing narrative methodology, this thesis emphasizes that understanding the careful relationship between history and memory requires a space for multiple perspectives to be told.[326]

Historical memory often reveals buried truths about the past. Without using teleology, the idea where one places assumptions on the past, intentionally silenced histories could provide nuance for any historical study.[327] For example, white settlers chose what to remember that benefited themselves and their society during the nineteenth century. By examining those notions in 2020, we see new motivations behind the formation of those white memories (both actual and constructed). The concept of active forgetting as an analytical framework provides new methods to reassess the creation of historical narratives. Some may say that forgetting is different from silencing or erasing; one is unintentional and the other is intentional.[328] To use Ann L. Stoler's method of reading along the grain, active forgetting allowed for the intentional silencing and

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[326] Hilary Green, "The Persistence of Memory: African Americans and Transitional Justice Efforts in Franklin County, Pennsylvania," in Paul Quigley and James Hawdon, eds., *Reconciliation after Civil Wars: Global Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 131-134; Green, "Destination Navy Hill: Tourism, Memory and African American Education in Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1920, *Journal of North Carolina Association of Historians*, Vol. 26 (September 2018): 69; Nelson, *Ruin Nation*, 11; Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 8.

[327] Andrew Woodfield, *Teleology (New York: Cambridge* University *Press, 1976*), 2.

[328] Charles B. Stone, Alin Coman, Adam D. Brown, Jonathan Koppel, William Hirst, "Toward a Science of Silence: The Consequences of Leaving a Memory Unsaid*," Perspectives of Psychological Science*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2012); 39-53; Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Chana Teeger, "Unpacking the Unspoken: Silence in Collective Memory and Forgetting," *Social Forces*, Vol. 88, No. 3 (March 2010): 1103-1122.

erasure of Dakota peoples, experiences, and history in Mankato. Not only did historical actors write out Dakotas from their reflections on the past, the archival process that came after continued the same threatening erasure.[329] It better served those who wanted to victimize their remembering of the Dakota War. While the active forgetting served as a tool for many white Mankatoans to intentionally silence Dakota peoples, those Indigenous communities persisted and survived through the attempted erasure of their people from the town.

"Unforgetting the Dakota 38" seeks to recenter the significance of Dakota resurgence within historical and popular memory. Despite settler efforts to forget and erase Dakotas from the land and history, Dakotas remained active in the making and reinventing of memory in Mankato between 1862 and 2012. As their participation in the memory-making process elevates our understanding of the memory of the war and hanging, it also acknowledges the consequences of settler colonialism and the continuity of tensions since 1862.

Mankato's dark history has had a ripple effect across Minnesota and the northern Great Plains. Structures of violence and oppression happened not only in Mankato, but resembled other frequent and ongoing contestations throughout cities, states, regions, and the nation. The widespread legacies of community and pan-Indigenous activism can best be seen through the 2016 #NoDAPL (No Dakota Access Pipeline) movement that focused on observing treaty rights and the recognition of Očhéthi Šakówiŋ along Mníšoše (the Missouri River) and the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. Historian Nick Estes observes that "#NoDAPL showed us a future that becomes possible when everyday Native people take control of their own

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[329] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 53.

destinies and lands while drawing upon their traditions of resistance."[330] Indigenous resistance serves as a mode to question settler-colonial power and control over Indigenous lifeways and recognition. The #NoDAPL movement sparked national understandings of the threat to Indigenous treaty rights and sovereignty, but also morphed into other moments in Minnesota, more specifically. When taken in the context of #NoDAPL, the recent rise in activism in Mankato which may be seen in Sam Durant's *Scaffold* (2017) demonstrations, validated the ongoing search for Indigenous recognition and served as an ardent critique against the settler-colonial state.[331]

As seen in this conclusion's opening anecdote, the 2018 protests go beyond the periodization outlined in this thesis. A contemporary example of the structure of settler colonialism demonstrates that reconciliation in Mankato was not successful in 1987, nor 2012. In fact, it exemplifies that tensions between Indigenous peoples and the settler state remain unresolved today.[332] These events show that larger ongoing tensions are not just happening in Mankato, but other localities and other Native communities across the United States; more work needs to be done on the interconnectedness of history and memory. Since the nineteenth century, Dakota assertions of sovereignty—e.g. the fighting of the U.S-Dakota War—and the more recent protests which showcased Dakota resurgence all reinforce the necessity to assert Indigenous recognition and tribal sovereignty. The tensions in the more recent past demonstrate that the

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330 Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (New York: Verso Books, 2019), 20-22.

331 Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 108-109. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 204-205.

332 Heather Dorries, Robert Henry, David Hugill, Tyler McCreary, and Julie Tomiak, eds, *Settler City Limits: Indigenous Resurgence and Colonial Violence in the Urban Prairie West* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2019), 41.

Dakotas' search for healing was also a testament to what Mark Rifkin calls, a "pursuit of recognition."[333] Rather than reconciliation, Dakota communities actively searched for political and cultural recognition in Mankato as a better way to heal and for others to identify sovereignty, self-determination, and survival. Participation by Dakota peoples challenges that assumption and shows, while they are battling the lasting and ongoing effects of settler colonialism, their communities have not been destroyed nor erased from the historical record. The pursuit of recognition happened within moments of resistance against structures of oppression and violence that many Dakota peoples (as well as other Indigenous communities) continue to face in 2020.[334]

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[333] Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 6.

[334] Erasure in historical memory can also be viewed as cultural violence. For more on this please consult, Michelle Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014); Benjamin Claude Brower, *A Desert Named Peace: The Violence of France's Empire in the Algerian Sahara, 1844-1902* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); and, Martin Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, Workers and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918-1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

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