

**MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY. VOL.
X. HISTORY OF FORT RIPLEY, 1849-1859,
BASED ON THE DIARY OF REV. SOLON
W. MANNEY, D.D., CHAPLAIN OF THIS
POST FROM 1851 TO 1859, PP. 179-202**

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REV. GEORGE C. TANNER

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*John W. Hamney
Chaplain U.S.A.*

HISTORY OF FORT RIPLEY, 1849 TO 1859, BASED
ON THE DIARY OF REV. SOLON W. MANNEY, D. D.,
CHAPLAIN OF THIS POST FROM 1851 TO 1859.*

BY REV. GEORGE C. TANNER.

On the 15th of October, 1851, the Rev. Solon W. Manney, rector of St. James' Episcopal Church, Milwaukee, received a letter from Capt. J. B. S. Todd, at that time in command at Fort Ripley, informing him that the Council of Administration at that post had nominated him to the Secretary of War as their chaplain. The official notice of his appointment at Washington reached him on the 29th, and a few days later, having resigned his parish, he set out for his new field of labor.

JOURNEY FROM MILWAUKEE TO FORT RIPLEY.

In 1851 the journey from Milwaukee to the Mississippi was by stage. At Galena he was met by Captain (now General) N. J. T. Dana. The day following his arrival he took passage with his family on the steamboat "Uncle Toby," bound for St. Peter's, as Mendota at the mouth of the Minnesota river was then designated.

Leaving Galena on the 15th of November, he notes as settlements along the Mississippi, Dubuque, Buena Vista, Cassville, Prairie La Porte, Clayton City, McGregor, Prairie du Chien, Columbus, Lansing, and La Crosse. The first settlement above La Crosse in 1851, unless we except a trading house or two, was Point Douglas, where he arrived late in the afternoon of November 18th, "Here the boat left us," he writes, "refus-

*Read at the monthly meeting of the Executive Council, March 12, 1900. A copy of this Diary, made from the original by permission of Rev. Dr. Manney's daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Tenney, has been presented by the author of this paper to the Historical Society's Library.

ing to proceed farther. . . . We secured a lumber wagon to take us to St. Paul. Arrived at St. Paul at 5 p.m. Called at the Mission; took tea with the brethren" [Rev. James Lloyd Breck and his associates].

Stopping as a guest at the Central House, he was delayed in St. Paul for several days, on account of the danger in crossing the river. It was not till the 3rd of December that he was able to resume his journey up the river. At length, on the afternoon of the 7th, he reached the Fort, where he was cordially received by Captain Todd, who came to meet him a few miles from the post, and invited him and his family to his own quarters.

EARLY LIFE OF DR. MANNEY.

As the first Chaplain at Fort Ripley was one of the Territorial Pioneers of Minnesota and passed the rest of his days in this new Commonwealth, a short account of his early life will not be out of place.

Solon W. Manney was born at Hyde Park, N. Y., near Poughkeepsie, in the year 1813. His early life was passed at the latter place amid influences savoring of an ancestry which has given us not a few eminent names. His ancestors were of the Huguenot faith. His father was a member of the Dutch Reformed Church, and his mother was of Quaker descent. Through the influence of his young associates, he was drawn towards the Episcopal Church, and was baptized into this faith by Dr. Whittingham, afterwards the learned Bishop of Maryland.

Through his influence young Manney was led to prepare for the sacred ministry and became his pupil in the General Theological Seminary in New York City. He graduated with honor in 1837, in a class which gave us several well known clergy. His commencement thesis was a criticism on "Edwards on the Will;" but his propositions were so far in advance of the thought of that day, that the professor in charge of that department, while commending the production, would not allow it to be delivered.

He was ordained by Bishop B. T. Onderdonk, and for two years was rector of the Church of the Nativity in New York City. Fired with zeal for work in the new West, enkindled by Bishop Kemper at his visits to the East, he came out to Indiana

and for seven years labored at La Porte and Michigan City. He was one of the pioneer clergy who organized the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Indiana.

His original destination had been the Territory of Wisconsin. In 1850, in accordance with his first intention, he came to Milwaukee, where in November he took charge of the newly organized parish of St. James. While there he held several responsible positions in the Church. He was a member of the Standing Committee of the Diocese and the Missionary Board, and one of the examining chaplains. While thus actively engaged and useful in his new field, he received the appointment of chaplain at Fort Ripley, our most remote military post on our northwestern frontier.

LOCATION AND BUILDING OF FORT RIPLEY.

The occasion of building Fort Ripley is supplied in a letter by Gen. N. J. T. Dana, as follows:

Just after the close of the War with Mexico, the Government consummated a treaty with the Winnebago Indians, then residing within the limits of Iowa, by the terms of which they transferred to the United States all their lands in that state, receiving in return a beautiful tract in Minnesota, the eastern boundary of which extended from near the mouth of the Crow Wing river southward along the Mississippi to a little below Sauk Rapids.

Among the obligations assumed by the United States by that treaty was the location and construction of a cantonment, and the stationing of a garrison thereat within the limits of the new Indian grant, near the mouth of the Crow Wing river. This condition was the cause of the unfortunate location of Fort Ripley. Brigadier General George M. Brooke, a veteran of the War of 1812, was at the time the commander of the military department which embraced the new Winnebago reservation, with his headquarters at St. Louis. Having received instructions from the War Department as to the location of the new post; under the terms of the Winnebago treaty, he proceeded to Crow Wing in the month of November, 1848, with a squadron of dragoons and several staff-officers; and, after reconnoitering the country, finally decided that the terms of the Winnebago treaty and his instructions made it his duty to locate the new post on the western bank of the Mississippi nearly opposite to the mouth of the Nokasippi river.

Being on duty in Boston at this time I received orders to report to General Brooke, and did so accordingly, at the earliest possible moment, and found the Post already located, and the General about returning to St. Louis. I was an officer of the Quartermaster's Department, and he left me there to build the Fort. The country was already covered with snow. A portable saw-mill was put in operation, and the winter passed in getting out lumber and erecting temporary accommodations for a small gang of

carpenters and laborers. In the spring of 1849, Company A of the Sixth Infantry at Fort Snelling was moved up to the new site, the commander of which was Capt. John B. S. Todd, who was the first commanding officer of the Post, called Fort Gaines, in honor of Brigadier General Edmund P. Gaines, then stationed at New Orleans.

Subsequently his name was given to a new permanent fortification in process of construction at the entrance of Mobile bay; and the cantonment in the Winnebago country was named Fort Ripley by the War Department in honor of Gen. Eleazer W. Ripley, a distinguished officer of the War of 1812. This name was officially announced November 4th, 1850.

General Dana superintended the work for two years. The builder of the fort was Mr. Jesse H. Pomroy, of St. Paul, who also had charge of the construction of Fort Ridgely in 1853-4.

"Rev. Mr. Manney, the first chaplain at Fort Ripley, was commended to us," says General Dana, "by good Bishop Kemper, and was elected before I left there. Rev. Frederick Ayer, a Presbyterian minister, who had been a teacher among the Ojibways at Sandy Lake, had established himself near the lower end of the military reservation, on the east side of the river near Little Falls, and was most kind in officiating at one or two funerals for the families at Fort Ripley. In the winter of 1850 I carried the venerable chaplain of Fort Snelling, Father Gear, to Fort Ripley in a sleigh, and we both enjoyed the visit greatly. We also had subsequently a visit from Bishop Kemper and the Rev. J. Lloyd Breck. The latter relinquished his work at St. Paul to Dr. Van Ingen, and removed to Gull lake."

As the name of General Dana is thus associated with Fort Ripley, it may be interesting to note that a little later he became a resident of St. Paul. On the breaking out of the Civil War, he was appointed colonel of the First Minnesota, and was afterward promoted as a brigadier general.

The location of the post was on the west bank of the Mississippi about twenty miles above the mouth of Swan river, and seven miles south of Crow Wing, at a point where the channel runs southwest. The distance by wagon road from St. Paul was one hundred and fifty miles. The road lay along the east bank of the Mississippi, with no approach to the fort except by ferry. The Post Reserve was a mile square and was surrounded by a dense forest. The fort was situated on a plateau elevated a little above the river, and consisted of several story and a half buildings constructed of wood, forming three sides of a

square, with the open side facing the stream. On the right, looking towards the quadrangle, were the quarters of the officers, the chaplain's residence, and the sutler's store; on the left, also quarters for officers, a room set apart for a chapel, and a hospital; while the third side was filled by the barracks for the soldiers. The northwest and southwest corners were flanked by block-houses of logs, with port-holes commanding the sides of the fort. The houses stood some fifteen to twenty feet apart, so that there was a free entrance between, excepting on the east side where there was a stockade built of logs set on end.

THE VICINITY NORTHWARD TO GULL LAKE.

On the opposite side of the Mississippi was the Government farm, where Mr. S. Baldwin Oimstead had built a house and was engaged in farming and furnishing supplies. Seven miles above, near the mouth of the Crow Wing (so named from the shape of an island at its mouth, fancifully likened to the wing of a crow), was the village bearing the same name, a mere hamlet, or trading post, on the verge of civilization. This was the terminus of the wagon road.

About a mile above this village was the house of Hole-in-the-Day, head chief of the Ojibways (Chippeways), a crafty and subtle man, who ultimately came to his end by the hand of some unknown assassin. Three miles above Crow Wing, on the left bank of the Crow Wing river near the mouth of Gull river, was the Chippeway Agency. Eleven miles farther north, in the wilds up the Gull river, a rapid, rippling stream, flowing out of Gull lake, was the Ojibway Mission planted by the Rev. J. Lloyd Breck in the early summer of 1852, located at the north-east corner of the lake.

Between Gull lake and Round lake, eastward, was the residence of Enmegahbowh, an educated Canadian Indian, who had been identified with missionary work among the Ojibways of Minnesota, but who had now become an interpreter for Mr. Breck and ultimately entered the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church. As the career of this remarkable man is closely connected with the history of this immediate locality, a brief account of his early life, derived from a narrative given by himself, will not be foreign to our subject.

EARLY LIFE OF ENMEGAHBOWH.

The Indian missionary, Enmegahbowh, or, as he is also known, the Rev. John Johnson, was born near Peterborough, in Upper Canada, of Christian Indians, who led a wandering life, subsisting by hunting and fishing. While he was yet a lad, the Rev. Mr. Armour, of the Church of England, visited the Indian camp and asked the parents to give him the child. At first the mother refused. A second visit was more successful, and the boy became a member of Mr. Armour's family and school. After some weeks the boy returned to the wigwam of his parents, carrying with him his books. Often long into the night watches, by the light of the fire he coured his lessons while the family were asleep.

After some time a Methodist minister, seeing that he was a promising child, asked the mother to give him her son. The mother at last yielded, on condition that he should be allowed to return at the end of a year. The day of parting came and the fond parents watched their boy as he embarked on the canoe journey to lake Superior. A twelvemonth he was at the Sault Ste. Marie. Then he went from place to place as an interpreter. For a while he was at the La Pointe Mission. At different times he lived with the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Unitarian, and Roman Catholic missionaries, and was a member of the missions at Red lake, Leech lake, Sandy lake, and Cass lake. But after years of faithful labor among the Ojibways, the Protestant missionaries withdrew from the field.

"As I stood and saw these good men going down the river in their canoes," says Enmegahbowh, "and the last hope of my people passing from my sight, I wept. . . . Then I thought I would go back to my own people and home and get an education, that I might tell my people the right way; but my friends here said, 'We will send you to school.'"

Seven years were spent in study at an academy near Jacksonville, Ill., whence he returned to what is now Minnesota. Then there was not a white man in St. Paul. Leaving his trunk at Fort Snelling, and taking with him only his Ojibway Testament, he went northward into the wilderness and became an interpreter for the Methodists. When these also gave up their mission, he resolved to return to Canada, and set out on his