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Photographs of the 1862 Sioux Revolt

FROM NATIONAL SENSATION TO ETHNOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION

HEATHER A. SHANNON

THE Sioux Revolt of 1862 in southwest Minnesota was one of the most gruesome conflicts in the history of the American West. Also called the Minnesota Revolt or the Sioux Massacre, it began on the morning of August 18 and ended six weeks later at the Battle of Wood Lake on September 23. The number of casualties was higher than the combined totals of the far better known Battle of Little Bighorn (1876) and the massacre at Wounded Knee (1890). The uprising resulted in the deaths of several hundred white men, women, and children, the displacement of more than 30,000 of Minnesota's 170,000 white inhabitants, the execution or imprisonment of more than 300 Sioux, and the expulsion of the Santee Sioux from the state. It also marked the beginning of a three-year war between the U.S. Army and the Sioux on the eastern Plains.¹

Local photographers eagerly supplied images of the event and its aftermath, and their photographs were distributed throughout the United States. The Western Americana collection of the Princeton University Library holds many of these photographs, along with contemporary books, newspapers, and magazines illustrated with wood engravings designed after them. Like the event itself, these images are largely forgotten and little researched today. Examined together and in sequence, however, they can elucidate nineteenth-century photographic publishing practices in the West and to some extent in the

I would like to thank Don C. Skemer for encouraging me to write about these photographs, and Mick Gidley and Joshua Waterman for their comments on early drafts. Paula Richardson Fleming deserves special thanks for her generous comments and willingness to permit reproduction of a photograph in her personal collection.

¹ See Micheal Clodfelter, *The Dakota War: The United States Army versus the Sioux, 1862–1865* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1998), and Robert Huhn Jones, *The Civil War in the Northwest: Nebraska, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960).

East. Moreover, certain photographs continued to be published over several decades. The changing meanings ascribed to them illuminate how white conceptions of Native Americans evolved in the most aggressive period of westward expansion.²



The Santee Sioux initiated the revolt out of frustration with the U.S. government.³ The Santee tribe belonged to the larger Sioux Nation and consisted of four smaller bands: the Wahpeton, Sisseton, Mde-wakanton, and Wahpekute Sioux. They had begun negotiating treaties with the federal government in the 1830s, ceding more than 24 million acres of land by 1858 in exchange for ration and annuity provisions and a small reservation (150 miles long by 10 miles wide) along the Minnesota River. The reservation had two administrative head-

²From the late 1850s through 1870, approximately thirty photographers were active in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and St. Anthony. This figure is tallied from the Minnesota section of Carl Mautz, *Biographies of Western Photographers: A Reference Guide to Photographers Working in the 19th-Century American West* (Nevada City, Calif.: Carl Mautz Publishing, 1997), 265–78.

The Sioux Revolt images have not been completely ignored, but no in-depth study has been done. See Paula Richardson Fleming, “‘A Portion of the Promises Made to Us Have Not Been Fulfilled’: Little Crow and the Sioux Revolt,” in *Native Nations: Journeys in American Photography*, ed. Jane Alison (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1998), 168–84; Alan R. Woolworth, “Adrian J. Ebell, Photographer and Journalist of the Dakota War of 1862,” *Minnesota History* 52, no. 2 (Summer 1994), 87–92; and Alan R. Woolworth and Mary H. Bakeman, *Camera and Sketchbook: Witness to the Sioux Uprising of 1862* (Roseville, Minn.: Prairie Echoes/Park Genealogical Books, 2004). A good number of images are reproduced in Alfred L. Bush and Lee Clark Mitchell, *The Photograph and the American Indian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); a few also appear in Kenneth Carley, *The Sioux Uprising of 1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1961), but Carley uses them only as illustrations, without analysis. Joel E. Whitney’s photograph of Medicine Bottle, taken just before the subject’s execution in 1865, is frequently reproduced in histories of the photography of the American West, but the image hardly makes an impression when compared, for example, with George Trager’s 1891 photograph of Big Foot’s frozen, lifeless body lying in the snow at Wounded Knee. The more shocking images of the Sioux Revolt offer evidence of the retaliatory violence perpetrated by whites against the Sioux. These photographs, which include grisly hangings and Indian scalps, are rarely reproduced. Princeton University Library owns two such images, both by Whitney: a carte-de-visite of the hanging of Little Six and Medicine Bottle, and a studio photograph of the scalp of Little Crow.

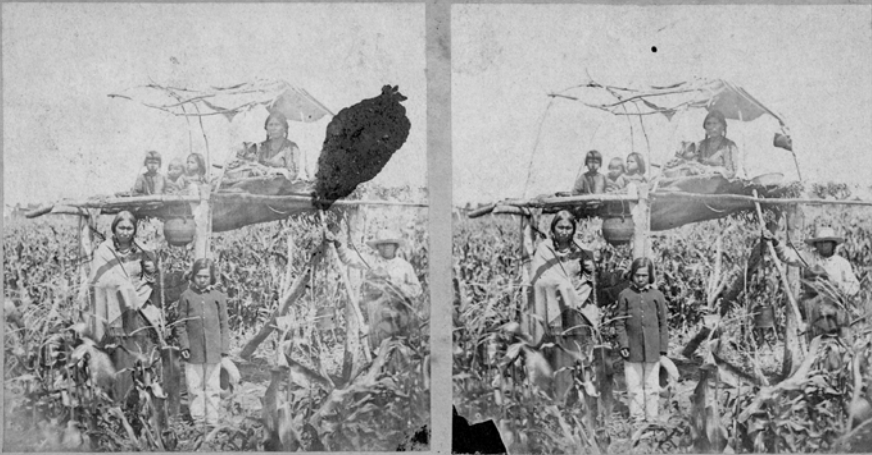
³See Clodfelter, *Dakota War*, and Jones, *Civil War in the Northwest*.

quarters, the Upper and Lower Agencies. More than six thousand Santee Sioux inhabited the reservation in 1862, with the Wahpeton and Sisseton bands near the Upper Agency by the junction of the Yellow Medicine and Minnesota Rivers, and the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute bands near the Lower Agency by the junction of the Red Wood and Minnesota Rivers.

By 1862, the Santee Sioux had transferred their land to the government, but had received only a scant portion of the promised rations and annuities in return. With many members of the tribe near starvation after a hard winter, they eagerly awaited the disbursement scheduled for early summer. Although the mounting costs of the Civil War tied up the annuity payments, sufficient food supplies were apparently available at the reservation for distribution. On June 25, the Santee living near the Upper Agency demanded their annuities but were sent away with only a few provisions and a promise that annuities would arrive around July 20. The Sioux returned to the agency in mid-July and were again placated with limited provisions. On August 4, they broke into the agency warehouse, but Minnesota infantry volunteers managed to restore order without incident. As the end of summer approached, protests of hunger began to mount, but the reservation agent still declined to distribute the remaining provisions.

On August 17, 1862, four men from the Mdewakanton band killed five white settlers while hunting for food outside the reservation boundary. That night, tribal leaders made the deliberate decision to initiate a full-scale revolt, although their most prominent leader, Little Crow (d. 1863), consented only reluctantly. The next day, the Santee launched a massacre of white civilians at the Lower Agency that quickly spread throughout southwestern Minnesota. Under the command of Colonel Henry Hastings Sibley (1811–1891), U.S. Army regiments recalled from the battlefields of the Civil War finally defeated the Sioux at Wood Lake on September 23.

In the following weeks, Sibley arrested more than 2,000 Santee Sioux and instituted a perfunctory court that found 307 of them guilty of heinous crimes and condemned 38 to death by hanging at Mankato, Minnesota, on December 26, 1862. The scene was the largest mass execution in U.S. history. More than 1,600 Santee Sioux detainees—men, women, and children—remained in Sibley's custody, quartered at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, until the U.S. government voided their reservation treaty and removed them to the Dakota Ter-



Squaws guarding Corn from Blackbirds.

1. Adrian J. Ebell, "Squaws Guarding Corn from Blackbirds," 1862. Albumen print on Joel E. Whitney stereocard. Princeton Collections of Western Americana, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Purchase, J. Monroe Thorington '15 Fund.

ritory in the spring of 1863. Several Sioux leaders escaped capture. Little Crow fled to Canada but later returned; on July 3, 1863, he was shot and killed west of Fort Snelling while picking raspberries. The next morning a military detachment recovered his body, scalped it, and carried the prize to Hutchinson, Minnesota, to use as a prop in Fourth of July celebrations.

The sole photographer present at the scene of the revolt was Yale University student Adrian J. Ebell (1840–1877), who had been living in Chicago. In the summer of 1862, Ebell decided to photograph Minnesota's Sioux Indians and hired University of Chicago law student Edwin R. Lawton to assist him.⁴ After renting camera equipment from prominent St. Paul photographer Joel E. Whitney (1822–1886), Ebell and Lawton ventured to the Upper Agency, where they hoped to photograph the Santee receiving government annuities. On Sunday, August 17, and the following morning, Ebell recorded several bucolic scenes at a mission near the agency (fig. 1). When news of the revolt reached the mission on the eighteenth, Ebell and Lawton

⁴Although the present-day University of Chicago was not founded until 1890, a predecessor institution of the same name existed in the city from 1857 to 1886.



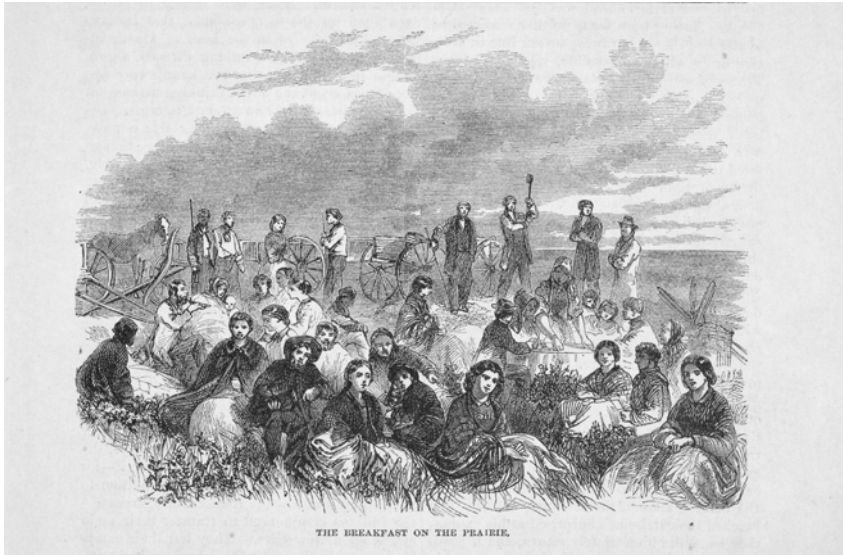
2. Adrian J. Ebell, "People Escaping from the Indian Massacre of 1862, in Minnesota, at Dinner on a Prairie. Photographed by One of the Party," 1862. Albumen print on Joel E. Whitney stereocard. Courtesy of Paula Richardson Fleming.

fled with other white refugees to safety. Ebell later processed his negatives at Whitney's studio in St. Paul, and Whitney published them on his studio cards without crediting Ebell, a common practice of the time.⁵

During his flight, Ebell captured the most widely published image related to the revolt, a scene of white refugees resting on the prairie (fig. 2). This photograph was distributed on Whitney's stereographs and cartes-de-visite, and was also reproduced as a wood engraving in books and popular magazines, including Isaac V. D. Heard's *History of the Sioux War and Massacres of 1862 and 1863* and Ebell's own account in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (fig. 3).⁶ Whereas Ebell's photograph surveys a beleaguered heap of refugees staring gravely at the camera, the wood engraving (identical in Heard's and Ebell's publications)

⁵ This account is taken from Woolworth, "Adrian J. Ebell," and Woolworth and Bakeman, *Camera and Sketchbook*.

⁶ Isaac V. D. Heard, *History of the Sioux War and Massacres of 1862 and 1863* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 87; Adrian J. Ebell, "The Indian Massacres and War of 1862," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 27, no. 157 (June 1863), 1–24, at 13.



3. Adrian J. Ebell, "The Breakfast on the Prairie." Wood engraving in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 27, no. 157 (June 1863), 13. Princeton University Library.

renders the subjects as a tranquil group of picnickers, some with discernible smiles.⁷

The transformation of Ebell's image was certainly no accident. In fact, the mood of the wood engraving corresponds with Ebell's first-hand escape narrative (published before Heard's account). Rather than describing scenes of bloody chaos and panic, Ebell stresses courage and poise:

Our provisions were all gone; a small piece of raw pork was all we had left. Throughout the entire night again it rained. Heroically did the women and children bear up under it; and, in fact, throughout the whole trip. It is easy for one to keep up courage when his blood is warm; but in half freezing, drizzling rain, trickling drop by drop through the clothes, and seemingly to the very bones, lying in a puddle of mud and water, courage, if it exist, is truly a genuine article.⁸

⁷Noticeably, the grim girl in the lower left corner of the photograph was omitted from the wood engraving; but this decision was likely made for compositional reasons, as her inclusion would have required a significant extension of the illustration's foreground.

⁸Ebell, "Indian Massacres," 12.

Ebell intended to underscore American resilience in the perilous and unsettled West, and the wood engraving, as altered from the original photograph, certainly illustrates his point.

Whitney was by far the most reputable photographer at work in Minnesota at the time of the revolt. Originally from Maine, he is listed as a daguerreotypist in St. Paul city directories as early as 1850.⁹ Just ten years later, his studio was already something of a local landmark, as noted by the *Minnesota Farmer and Gardener*: “Saint Paul has at least one venerable institution—something that reminds old settlers of other times and ‘Days o’ auld lang syne.’ Whitney’s Gallery . . . is known to all Minnesotians, a very large number of whom may be seen, done up in the best style, and in every part of his rooms one is sure to meet some familiar countenance.”¹⁰

Perhaps because Indians were an everyday presence in Minnesota, local notices make no mention of Whitney’s Indian photographs. It is clear, however, that Whitney had been taking studio portraits of Minnesota’s Santee Sioux prior to the outbreak of the revolt.¹¹ By April 1862, he had sent at least two examples of Indian portraiture to New York’s *American Journal of Photography*. The April 15, 1862, issue of the *Journal* includes a nod to Whitney “for some very fine card-photographs”:

As specimens of work the pictures would be a credit to our best city [New York] operators; we are surprised to learn that in the far west our art is so ably represented. Two of the photographs are portraits of Red Skins: ‘Old Bet,’ a Sioux squaw, and a ‘Dacotah Dandy.’ The ‘Dandy’ is evidently ‘got up’ at great expense, with eagle’s plume, earrings, braided hair, beads, skins of animals, &c.; the Dandy is quite in contrast to ‘Old Bet’ who is not at all ornamental.¹²

By the time the revolt began in August, Whitney had already discovered a potential market for portraits of local Indians. As a suc-

⁹Alan R. Woolworth, “Minnesota Indians: A Photographic Album,” *Minnesota History* 47, no. 7 (Fall 1981), 292–95, at 294.

¹⁰“Whitney’s Picture Gallery” *The Minnesota Farmer and Gardener* (December 1861), 375–76, at 375.

¹¹Whitney and others also photographed the Ojibwe Indians of Minnesota, some of whom were involved or implicated in the 1862 revolt. Like the Santee portraits, these photographs have been little studied, and their history of production is equally complicated.

¹²Charles A. Seely, “Editorial Miscellany,” *American Journal of Photography* 4, no. 22 (April 15, 1862), 528.



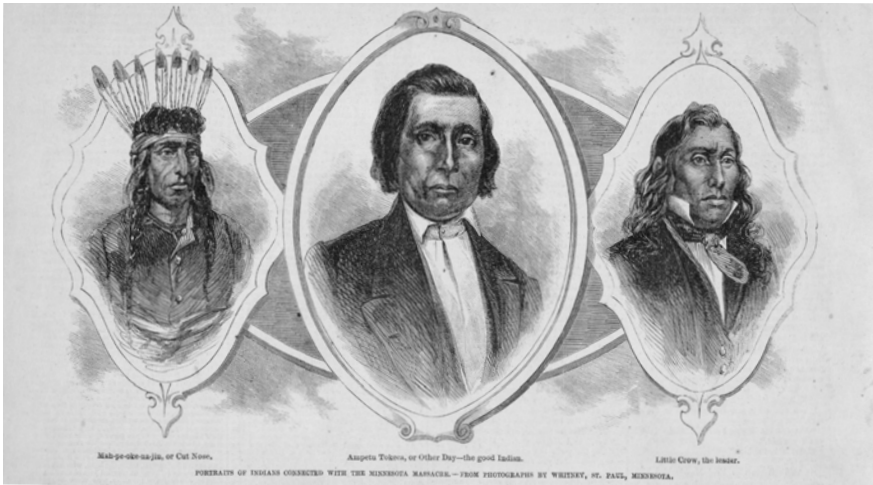
4. Joel E. Whitney, "Cut Nose, Who in the Massacre of 1862, in Minnesota, Murdered 18 Women and Children and 5 Men," 1862. Albumen print on Whitney carte-de-visite.

5. Joel E. Whitney, "Paha Uza-Tanka. The Great Scalp Taker (Sioux.)," 1862. Albumen print on Whitney carte-de-visite.

Princeton Collections of Western Americana, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Purchase, J. Monroe Thorington '15 Fund.

cessful entrepreneur, he was undoubtedly aware of the possibility of achieving a national reputation by publishing portraits of quintessential western subjects.

After the revolt, Whitney applied himself in earnest to making portraits of the Sioux. He photographed incarcerated individuals, such as Cut Nose and Paha Uza-Tanka, who would hang in Mankato on December 26 (figs. 4 and 5). Under their portraits on cartes-de-visite, printed texts summarize their evil deeds. Whitney also published card photographs of a few of the Santee "heroes" of the Sioux Revolt, including John Other Day, who had condemned the uprising and helped sixty-two white settlers (including Ebell and Lawton)



6. Joel E. Whitney, "Portraits of Indians Connected with the Minnesota Massacre." Wood engraving in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 15, no. 383 (January 31, 1863), 300. Princeton University Library.

escape across the prairie. Old Bet, too, had aided refugees, and Whitney made more portraits of her.

Three of Whitney's portraits appear as wood engravings in the January 31, 1863, issue of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (fig. 6).¹³ Flanked by portraits of Cut Nose and Little Crow, John Other Day, "the good Indian," is most prominent; in his neatly tailored suit and short hair he appears to be fully assimilated. The portrait of Little Crow must have been taken before the revolt, probably at the Sioux leader's request, and was likely dusted off for widespread distribution afterward. These and other wood-engraved images after Whitney's portraits also appeared in several books on the revolt, including Heard's *History* and Charles S. Bryant's *A History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians in Minnesota*.¹⁴

Whitney may have found a new use for yet another portrait taken before the revolt, this one of Te-Na-Se-Pa (fig. 7).¹⁵ The above-cited

¹³ "Prison of the Sioux Indian Murderers at Mankato, Minn.," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 15, no. 383 (January 31, 1863), 300.

¹⁴ Heard, *History of the Sioux War*, 60, 75, 160, 182, 204, 292; Charles S. Bryant, *A History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians in Minnesota* (Cincinnati: Rickey & Carroll, 1864), frontispiece and leaves facing pages 104, 120, and 449.

¹⁵ See Joel E. Whitney: *Minnesota's Leading Pioneer Photographer* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Photo Collectors Group, 2001) for a comprehensive listing of Whitney's Sioux cartes-de-visite.



7. Joel E. Whitney, "Te-Na-Se-Pa, (A Sioux Dandy.)," 1862. Albumen print on Whitney carte-de-visite.

8. Joel E. Whitney, "One of the Executed Indians." Wood engraving in Isaac V. Heard, *History of the Sioux War of 1862 and 1863* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 292.

Princeton Collections of Western Americana, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Purchase, J. Monroe Thorington '15 Fund, and purchase, Class of 1901 Book Fund.

description of Whitney's "Dacotah Dandy" ("with eagle's plume, earrings, braided hair, beads, skins of animals, &c.") corresponds with the half-length portrait of Te-Na-Se-Pa, who is identified by name and also parenthetically referred to as "A Sioux Dandy" on Whitney's carte-de-visite. A full-length photograph by Whitney of "A Sioux Dandy" is known to exist and also fits the description in the *American Journal of Photography*.¹⁶ The full-length portrait is probably earlier than the half-length, but the subject of each appears to be the same

¹⁶ See Joel E. Whitney, 11–12.

person. On the carte-de-visite bearing the full-length portrait, Whitney identifies the Indian only as "A Sioux Dandy." On the later carte-de-visite, Whitney also supplied Te-Na-Se-Pa's name, now of interest because of his involvement in the revolt.

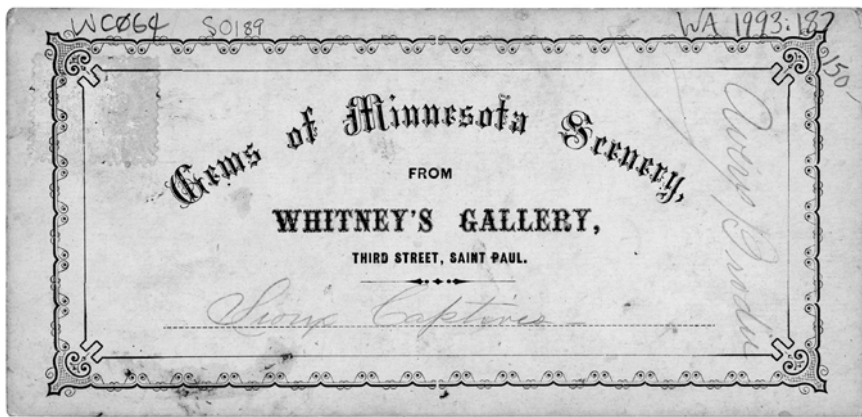
A wood engraving after Whitney's half-length portrait of Te-Na-Se-Pa illustrates Heard's history of the revolt (fig. 8). The caption does not give his name or even describe him as a "Sioux Dandy," but simply reads, "One of the executed Indians."¹⁷ Te-Na-Se-Pa was in fact among those executed at Mankato; but for Heard's purposes his identity was of little importance: any image of an Indian would have sufficed. Whitney's portrait was surely ideal, however, because it included those details of dress that an American audience would have expected from an Indian.

Like Whitney, Benjamin Franklin Upton (1818–after 1901) was born in Maine and began his photography career as a daguerreotypist.¹⁸ In 1856, he started working in St. Anthony, Minnesota, where he established a reputation as a photographer of the Sioux and Ojibwe Indians. His photographs of the Sioux detainees held at Fort Snelling are especially compelling. Upton worked out of a wagon and did not make studio portraits. For a time, Whitney published Upton's photographs on his own studio cards.

Although it is widely believed that both Upton and Whitney were active at Fort Snelling during the winter of 1863, it is plausible that Upton alone photographed the Sioux detainees there and had Whitney publish his images. For example, Whitney published "Sioux Captives" and "Wowinape, Little Crow's Son" on his own studio cards, but both of these photographs are most often attributed to Upton and also appear on stereographs published later by Upton and then, after 1870, by F. R. Fearon (figs. 9 and 10). These two outdoor portraits are similar in composition to the photograph of a Sioux woman held captive at Fort Snelling, which appears on two different versions of Upton cards (fig. 11). In all three photographs the solemn subjects are shot in three-quarter profile and placed before teepees. Although questions of authorship would ultimately require technical investigation of the glass plate negatives, the photographs have more in common stylistically with Upton's work than with Whitney's.

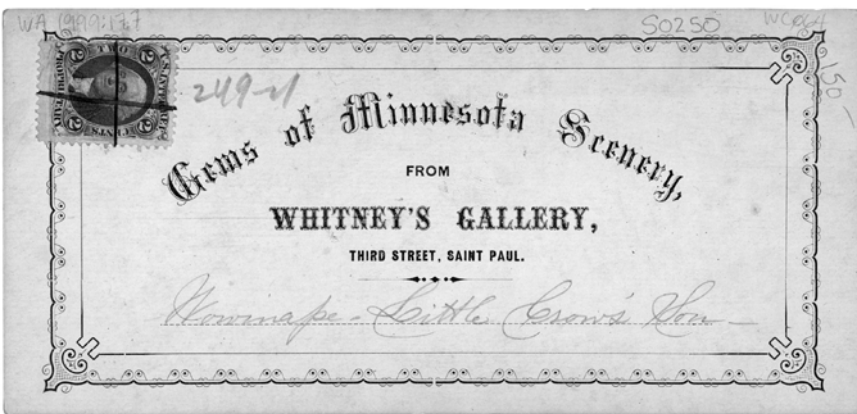
¹⁷ Heard, *History of the Sioux War*, 292.

¹⁸ For information on Upton, see Woolworth, "Minnesota Indians," 294, and Joel E. Whitney, 2.



9. Benjamin Franklin Upton, “Sioux Captives,” 1863. Albumen print on Joel E. Whitney stereocard. Princeton Collections of Western Americana, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Purchase, J. Monroe Thorington ’15 Fund.

The differing versions of Upton’s stereographs demonstrate how the dissemination of the Sioux Revolt photographs changed over time. Upton could have issued the variants at the same time to appeal to different audiences—those interested in event-related photographs and those in Minnesota Indian portraits—but it is more likely that one card preceded the other. Printed on the verso of the probable earlier version of the captive woman is a list of Minnesota places that appear in the series “Upton’s Minnesota and Northwestern Views”; among the names is Fort Snelling, and on the Princeton card “Sioux” is inscribed next to it. In this case, Upton did not provide a formal



10 (*above*). Benjamin Franklin Upton, "Wownape, Little Crow's Son," 1863. Albumen print on Joel E. Whitney stereocard. Princeton Collections of Western Americana, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Purchase, J. Monroe Thorigton '15 Fund.

(*facing page*)

11 (*top two cards*). Benjamin Franklin Upton, "Fort Snelling," 1863. Albumen print on Upton stereocard.

12 (*bottom card*). Benjamin Franklin Upton, verso of a later version of the stereograph carrying Upton's "Fort Snelling" image, 1863.

Princeton Collections of Western Americana, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Purchase, J. Monroe Thorigton '15 Fund.



UPTON'S
MINNESOTA AND NORTHWESTERN VIEWS.

FALLS OF ST. ANTHONY,
VERMILION FALLS, (near Hastings),
UNDINE'S BASIN.

(Columns of Sandstone, near
the mouth of the river, near
Hastings, Minn.)

CARVER'S CAVE,
(Near St. Paul. An old rallying place for Indians, on any important
occasion.)

FALLS OF SANDSTONE, (near Opa,
("Singing Waters where the Elk play.")

FOUNTAIN CITY,
TREMPEALEAU,

MINNEAPOLIS,
ST. PAUL, (from Park Place),

SUSPENSION BRIDGE,
(Between Minneapolis and St. Anthony),

CASTLE ROCK,
(Near St. Anthony),

(Sandstone, forty feet in height, standing isolated on the open prairie,
in Dakota County, Minn., about 20 miles from the Falls
of St. Anthony.)

DELTA OF THE ST. CROIX,
DEVILS CHAIR,

(Dells of the St. Croix; 150 feet perpendicular light from the
water's edge.)

NATURAL WELL,
Dells of St. Croix. Worn in the Trip Rock by the action of the
water.

SILVER CASCADE,
FAWN'S LEAP,

BRIDAL VEIL,
LAKE MINNETONKA,

SPIRIT KNOB - ON LAKE MINNETONKA,
(Here the Indians came to worship and invoke the aid of their
Great Spirit, and the "Maiden" (understanding)

MINNESOTA ICE VIEW,
PINE FORESTS.

(From series of Views showing the process of lumbering, and
"River driving," in Minnesota.)

FOUNTAIN CAVE, (Looking in),
APPROACH TO FOUNTAIN CAVE,
ICE - (Fall of St. Anthony),

MAIDEN ROCK,
RED RIVER CAFTS,

(On a trading trip from Pombina to St. Paul. Distance 600 miles.
One ox is harnessed to a cart. They travel the entire distance.
The ox is harnessed to a cart. They travel the entire distance.
The ox is harnessed to a cart. They travel the entire distance.)

DELTA OF THE VERMILION,
DELTA OF THE VERMILION.

(The subject published on this card is indicated by a mark under
the name.)

50213

W1064

WA 1993: 295

W0064

S0595

WA 1993: 291

FROM SERIES OF INDIAN PORTRAITS AND VIEWS,

MADE BY UPTON,

At different times while among the Sioux, Chippewa and Winnebago Nations.

MINNEAPOLIS AND ST. ANTHONY.

SOLD BY DEALERS THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

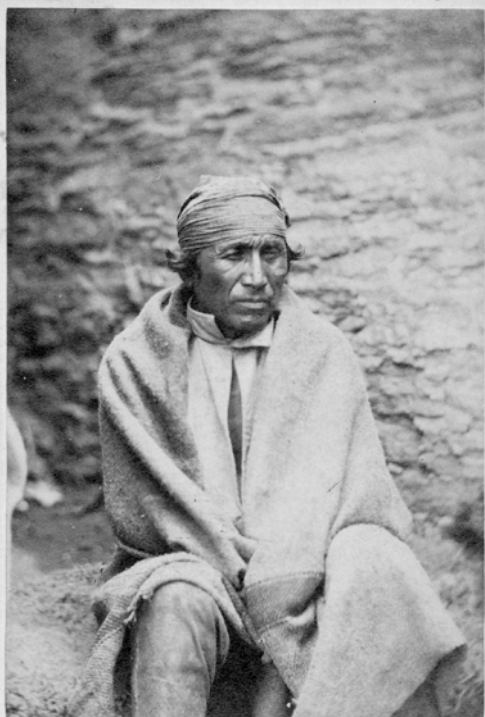
title or much descriptive information (the same is true of the stereographs published by Whitney) because the brief notes were sufficient cultural reference so soon after the revolt. Upton's audience would have instantly recognized the significance of cues like "Fort Snelling" and "Sioux." Moreover, Upton's modest photography business likely restricted circulation of photographs published on his own cards to Minnesota.

The second card with the same image was probably published some years after the 1862 revolt. The verso now simply reads, "From Series of Indian Portraits and Views, Made by Upton, At different times while among the Sioux, Chippewa and Winnebago Nations" (fig. 12). Here Upton simply presents a Minnesota Indian and omits any descriptive information that would have identified the subject's tribe or called attention to her circumstances. The shift from a specific to an imprecise caption between Upton's first and second cards could represent a change in audience demands. By the time Upton published the second card, the revolt may have lost much of its immediacy, and so a Fort Snelling detainee would have been of no more interest than any other Minnesota Indian.

On November 11, 1865, Medicine Bottle and Little Six were executed by hanging at Fort Snelling for their part in the revolt. They had been captured in Canada in December 1863 by two bounty hunters and placed in the custody of the U.S. Army. Whitney and Upton were both present at Fort Snelling on the day of the execution (figs. 13 and 14). Whitney immediately issued cartes-de-visite of Medicine Bottle and Little Six, with descriptive texts printed below the portraits. Probably recognizing an opportunity to profit once again from his images of the revolt, Whitney sent samples of his Indian portraiture to the journal *Philadelphia Photographer*. In the February 1866 issue, the editor notes a parcel from Whitney containing photographs of "noble savages," among them "those demons engaged in the terrible massacre of 1862," Cut Nose, Little Crow, Medicine Bottle, and Little Six.¹⁹

Like no other photographs of the Sioux Revolt, Whitney's images continued to be published long after he quit the business of photography. Arguably, his portraits were appealing because they adhered closely to popular modes of portraiture. That is, whether working in

¹⁹"Indian Photographs," *The Philadelphia Photographer* 3, no. 26 (February 1866), 64.



SHA-KPE, (Little Six.)

A PRISONER AT FORT SNELLING CONDEMNED TO DEATH.
*Engaged in Massacre of 1862, boasts of having killed
 thirteen Women and Children.*

13 (*left*). Joel E. Whitney, "Sha-Kpe, (Little Six)," 1865. Albumen print on Whitney carte-de-visite.

14 (*below*). Benjamin Franklin Upton, portrait of Little Six, 1865. Albumen print on Upton stereocard.

Princeton Collections of Western Americana, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Purchase, J. Monroe Thorington '15 Fund.



the field or in the studio, Whitney made half-length portraits comparable in appearance to those of notable persons, including politicians, actors, and royalty, made by prominent eastern (and European) studios and circulated on cartes-de-visite. By comparison, Upton's photographs are less formal and have none of the studied elegance discernible in Whitney's portraits.

Charles A. Zimmerman (1844–1909) became Whitney's partner in 1870 and one year later bought the studio and all of Whitney's negatives. As sole owner of the negatives, he republished many of Whitney's portraits, including that of Ta-Tanka-Nazin. Like his other Sioux Revolt portraits, Whitney's first published carte-de-visite of Ta-Tanka-Nazin (1862) included text explaining the subject's participation (fig. 15). When Zimmerman reissued the portrait after 1871, however, he stripped it of all textual description and tribal identification (fig. 16).

The format of Zimmerman's carte-de-visite had more in common with contemporary publishing practices than Whitney's. Cartes-de-visite of important figures usually identified the subject but included no biographical information on the card, likely because none was needed. Arguably, Zimmerman saw no need to identify the Sioux subject of Whitney's portrait as a participant in the 1862 revolt because he issued the card at least a decade later. By excluding textual identification and tribal affiliation, however, Zimmerman divorced the individual from the event. He essentially neutralized the image, rendering the subject a mere curiosity without name or connection to the Sioux Revolt. Likewise, St. Paul photographer D. D. Merrill (active in the 1870s) reissued Whitney's 1865 portrait of Medicine Bottle without any contextual or biographical information printed on the card (fig. 17). Viewers would have had no way of knowing that the

(facing page)

15 (*top left*). Joel E. Whitney, "Ta-Tanka-Nazin, (Standing Buffalo)," 1862. Albumen print on Whitney carte-de-visite.

16 (*top right*). Joel E. Whitney, portrait Ta-Tanka-Nazin (Standing Buffalo), 1862, reissued after 1871. Albumen print on Charles A. Zimmerman carte-de-visite.

17 (*bottom*). Joel E. Whitney, portrait of Medicine Bottle, 1865, reissued 1870s. Albumen print on D. D. Merrill stereocard, "Sioux Indians."

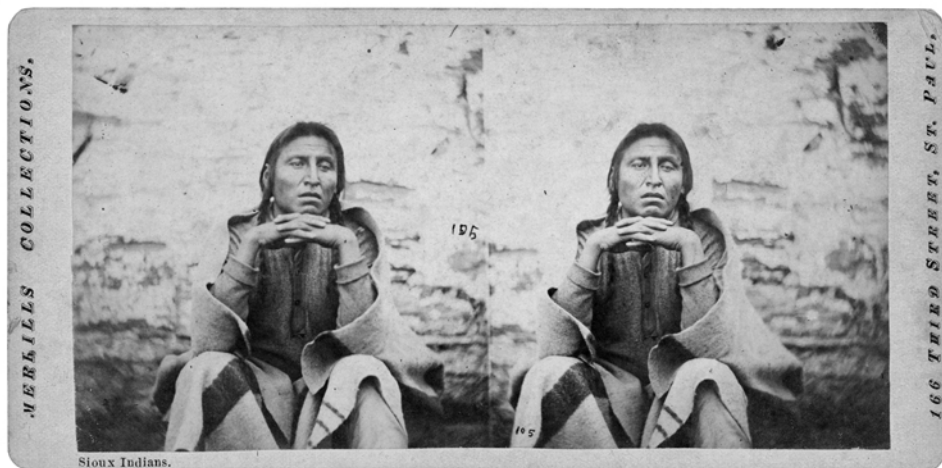
Princeton Collections of Western Americana, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Purchase, J. Monroe Thorington '15 Fund.



TA-TANKA-NAZIN,
 (STANDING BUFFALO.) A hereditary Chief of the Sioux, and a
 Participant in the Massacre of 1862, in Minnesota.
 Entered according to Act of Congress, by E. E. Whitney, in the year 1862,
 in the Clerk's Office of the U. S. District Court for Minnesota.
 WHITNEY'S GALLERY, SAINT PAUL.



Zimmerman
 ST. PAUL. MINN.



Sioux Indians.

NEBBEL'S COLLECTIONS.

166 THIRD STREET, ST. PAUL.

“Sioux Indian” represented was awaiting the gallows for crimes committed during the 1862 revolt.

Whitney’s photographs were eventually collected and published for their value as ethnographic resources. Ferdinand V. Hayden (1829–1887), leader of the U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, and William Blackmore (1827–1878), a British investor and amateur ethnologist, recognized the importance of gathering photographic documentation of American Indians.²⁰ In the mid-1860s, Blackmore began providing financial support for Hayden’s efforts to collect and catalog such images for the Smithsonian Institution. He also tirelessly purchased photographs and glass plate negatives, commissioned eastern photographers to make portraits of Indian delegates who traveled east to represent their tribes in negotiations, and hired other photographers working in the West to document various events involving Indians.

Hayden’s and Blackmore’s efforts on behalf of the Smithsonian eventually led to publication of the *Descriptive Catalogue of Photographs of North American Indians* (1877).²¹ Under Hayden’s supervision, his survey photographer, William Henry Jackson (1843–1942), cataloged the growing collection, compiling a list of more than one thousand Indian images taken in the West and East from the late 1840s to the late 1870s by many important American photographers, among them Charles Milton Bell (1849?–1893), Mathew Brady (1823?–1896), Thomas M. Easterly (1809–1882), John H. Fitzgibbon (1816?–1882), Alexander Gardner (1821–1882), J. Gurney & Son, James McClees Studio, Charles R. Savage (1832–1909), A. Zeno Shindler (1823–1899), the Ulke Brothers, and Jackson himself. It is probable that

²⁰ For a thorough account of these efforts, see Paula Richardson Fleming’s introduction to *Native American Photography at the Smithsonian: The Shindler Catalogue* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2003).

²¹ William Henry Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue of Photographs of North American Indians* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1877). Jackson’s was not the first catalog of the Smithsonian’s collection of Native American photographs. See *Photographic Portraits of North American Indians in the Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1867), William Henry Jackson, *A Catalogue of Photographic Illustrations* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1871), and Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Photographs of the United States Geological Survey of the Territories, for the Years 1869 to 1873, Inclusive* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1874). See Paula Richardson Fleming, *Native American Photography at the Smithsonian*, for a history of these publications.

Blackmore purchased Whitney's photographs and a few glass plate negatives of Sioux Revolt images, which Jackson then cataloged.

Around 1879, the Survey of the Territories issued albums of photographs compiled to correspond with Jackson's catalog. The circumstances surrounding the distribution of these albums are uncertain, and only a few copies are extant in the United States, England, France, and Germany. Princeton is fortunate to have two of the albums, which together contain more than one thousand albumen prints of a good number of the photographs described in Jackson's catalog, plus other ethnographic photographs.²² Although each of the extant albums varies in its contents, the Princeton albums represent one of the more complete sets known. They include nine of Whitney's portraits, at least six of which were taken after the revolt.

In his preface to the *Descriptive Catalogue*, Hayden explains that the listing is arranged according to "ten leading 'families' of Indians, besides seven independent tribes, the families being divisible into fifty-four 'tribes,' subdivision of which gives forty-three 'bands.'" ²³ Jackson, in his own introduction, goes on to explain: "All photographs are numbered upon their faces, and as these numbers do not occur in regular order in the text a Numerical Index is appended, by means of which the name of any picture, and the page on which the subject is treated, may be readily found." ²⁴ In other words, the catalog is arranged according to bands, including the Sisseton, Mdewakanton, Wahpeton, and Wahpekute (referred to as Santee) bands, and each entry bears a number corresponding to a glass plate negative (fig. 18). (The Jackson catalog numbers have since been removed from the negatives, which are still at the Smithsonian.) In the Princeton albums, the photographs are arranged in the same order as the entries in the descriptive catalog, with a few unlisted photographs inserted among them. Figure 18 shows four of Whitney's Santee portraits alongside Santee portraits by Shindler and by the McClees Studio, all arranged as the entries appear in the catalog.

Hayden makes clear that the catalog was conceived of as a scientific enterprise: "Now that the tribal relations of these Indians

²² The Library came into possession of the albums in April 1900, when Professor of Geology William A. Libbey transferred them from the University's natural history museum. See the Library's early accession records at the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library.

²³ Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, iv.

²⁴ Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, v.





18. Each image on leaf 57 of the first album of Princeton's set of *Photographs of North American Indians* (ca. 1879) carries a number corresponding to its entry in William Henry Jackson's *Descriptive Catalogue of Photographs of North American Indians* (1877). *Top row, left to right*: Joel E. Whitney, "Great Scalper, Santee" ([Paha Uza-Tanka] 1862; Jackson catalog number 249); Whitney, "Standing Buffalo, Santee" ([Ta-Tanka-Nazin] 1862; Jackson 250); A. Zeno Shindler, "The Sacred, Santee" (1867; Jackson 381). *Bottom row, left to right*: Whitney, "Santee brave" ([Te-Na-Se-Pa] 1862; Jackson 248); Whitney, "Old Betts, Santee" (not after 1865; Jackson 251); and James E. McClees Studio, "Little Short Horn, Sissiton Dakota" (1858; Jackson 192). Princeton Collections of Americana, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Transferred from the E. M. Museum of Natural History, Princeton University.

are fast being successively sundered by the process of removal to reservations ... there will remain no more trustworthy evidence of what the Indians have been than that afforded by these faithful sun-pictures [photographs], many of which represent the villages, dwellings, and modes of life of these most interesting people, and historical incidents of the respective tribes, as well as faces, dresses, and accoutrements of many prominent individuals.”²⁵ Although the catalog does include photographs of North American Indian “villages, dwellings, and modes of life,” the vast majority of the images are portraits of one form or another. Some of these were captured in the field, but many were studio portraits, taken in the West or by prominent eastern photographers. The style of Whitney’s portraits of the early 1860s is similar to that of the delegation portraits that Blackmore commissioned in the late 1860s and 1870s from photographers like Shindler and Gardner. Common among them is the half-length portrait of a sitter in three-quarters or frontal view, the standard composition for portrait photography of the period and ideal for the burgeoning interest in using photography as a tool of physical anthropology. Given their stylistic similarity to the work of other leading photographers hired by Blackmore, Whitney’s portraits were well suited to the Jackson catalog’s scientific objective.

Although the descriptive catalog provides extensive historical commentary on the tribes and biographical information for some individuals, Whitney’s Sioux Revolt portraits are for the most part listed without elaboration. The entries for Little Crow and Little Six include biographical information linking them to the 1862 revolt, but those for Old Bet, Cut Nose, Medicine Bottle, the Great Scalper, Standing Buffalo, Plenty, and Te-Na-Se-Pa (listed as a “Santee brave”) appear without ceremony on a single line in a long list of names and associated tribal bands. Such an omission is especially surprising for figures like Old Bet and Medicine Bottle, who were renowned for their actions during the revolt. Without accompanying commentary, the significance of these portraits remains unknown, leaving the subjects to be regarded as mere ethnographic curiosities or bits of scientific data.

The descriptive catalog was above all a practical inventory of the Smithsonian’s collection of Indian photographs and glass plate negatives. Jackson’s charge was to organize and describe them. The cost

²⁵Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, iii.

of publishing an illustrated catalog of photographs or wood-engraved images for wide distribution was surely prohibitive, but an illustrated publication was also not the point of the project. In this case, text and image were united only under the most deliberate of circumstances, as when an owner of the *Descriptive Catalogue* felt compelled to order a photographic print from the Smithsonian. So, even in the instances in which Jackson provides biographical information, the physical separation of image and text in self-contained volumes hampers subject identification and recognition of historical context.²⁶ Jackson's catalog was intended as an inventory of a collection, as a record of a vanishing race, or even as an ethnologist's checklist of objective data. In this context, Whitney's photographs served to document not an event but a racial type.



The photographs of the 1862 Sioux Revolt are more than examples of early western photography; they are among the first photographs to document a conflict between Indians and white settlers in the West. An examination of how the photographs were presented to the public as they were published in the decades after 1862 offers an opportunity to investigate shifts in contemporary attitudes toward Native Americans. The photographs discussed here were originally intended to illustrate a local event, but some eventually were recognized for their value as scientific documentation. The substantial visual record held in the Princeton Collections of Western Americana opens the way for many similar comparative discussions regarding photography of the American West.²⁷

²⁶ Admittedly, not all of the known albums are arranged like the Princeton examples. In a few, the entries were cut out of the *Descriptive Catalogue* and pasted on the album leaves beneath the corresponding photographs. For the most part, the photographs in the Princeton albums have no captions; where captions appear, they are always handwritten and are usually associated with photographs that are not included in Jackson's catalog.

²⁷ Few studies have explored the issue of the use and re-use of western images. One notable exception is Martha A. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); see especially her chapters "Photography and the American Indian" (207–273) and "Western Photography and the Illustrated Book" (275–324). See also Mick Gidley, "Manifest Destiny and Visual Culture: Photographing American Indians: Repression and Revision," in *American Visual Cultures*, ed. David Holloway and John Beck (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), 21–30.