

Ariel Article on Mankato Beam

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Through the kindness of Prof. C. W. Hall we are enabled to publish the following interesting item relating to one of our museum curiosities:

*During the past summer an interesting historical relic was presented to the general Museum of the University . It was a stick of oak timber 16 or 18 feet long which Hon. J. F. Meagher, of Mankato , took out of an old building on Front street in that city while removing the same to give place to an elegant business block. In his letter of presentation to professor Hall, Mr. Meagher wrote: "Agreeable to promise I have sent the last stick of the 'Indian Gallows' this p. m. to the St. Paul & Sioux City depot to be forwarded to the University of Minnesota. It is rather a hard looking 'relic' and you may be disappointed when you see it, but I can assure you it did the business and completely civilized ten Sioux Indians, who thought themselves the 'Big Indians' of this beautiful valley . ** The notches cut round on one side of this stick were cut to accommodate the ropes and keep them from slipping. ** The officer of the day and officer of the guard at the execution was Capt. W. H. Burt, of Washington county.*

When a new museum will give place for the exhibition of this rough but business-like looking stick , many will look at it and read its label with singular interest, for with its service the practice of hanging for murder died out in our state; other methods of punishment, less effective, perhaps, but more humane, have taken its place. But the stick will attract more attention for its historical associations. It marks the close of the brutal and bloody Sioux outbreak which swept through the Minnesota valley in 1862. This outbreak was begun with bread riots and murders in the midsummer of 1862, while the settlers in that part of the state were busy at their harvests, and continued with all the conceivable horrors attending an Indian war until the close of September. When the savages had been subdued, a military commission in which Col. Crooks, Lieut. Col. Marshall and Capt. Grant were conspicuous, had four hundred and twenty-five men arraigned before it for trial. Of this number three hundred and three were sentenced to be hung, twenty to imprisonment and the rest set free. But to the indignant surprise of the whole state, President Lincoln did not approve the work of this commission when it was laid before him. After a most energetic protest against his humanity by Senator Wilkinson and Representatives Aldrich and Windom, the President consented to the deaths of thirty-eight of the bloodiest culprits. Their execution occurred at Mankato, whither all the condemned had been taken after the trial in camp on the 26th of December.

The thanks of the University are due to Mr. Meagher for his kindly interest in the institution, which interest has been shown in many other ways than this.