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## **Ratified treaty no. 288, Documents relating to the negotiation of the treaty of February 27, 1855, with the Winnebago Indians. February 27, 1855**

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RATIFIED TREATY NO. 288  
DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE NEGOTIATION OF THE  
TREATY OF FEBRUARY 27, 1855, WITH THE WINNEBAGO INDIANS



Winnipeg, Interview,  
Friday, July 16, 1853



Interview between the Commissioner of Indian  
Affairs and the Winnebago Delegation.

On Friday morning, the 16<sup>th</sup> instant, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs had an interview with a delegation of Winnebagoes from Minnesota, consisting of eight chiefs and two braves, viz. Winiwisk, Little Hill, Little Thunder, Little D. Corn, Little Priest, Paptiste Lapallier, Penj. Pison & Watch-ho-ta-kaw, chiefs, and One-horn and Yellow Banks, braves. They were accompanied by their Agent, J. E. Fletcher, Esq., and Peter Managh, their Interpreter, and Gen. Lowry, their (who, on this occasion, acted as interpreter.)

Com<sup>r</sup> Manypenny, said he was glad to see his red brethren this morning, but regretted they were not more punctual in their attendance at the hour designated for the interview (10 o'clock.) His red-brethren should, like the whites, put a proper estimate upon the value of time, and the importance of fulfilling their engagements. Understanding that the Winnebagoes were desirous of visiting this City <sup>on business</sup>, he had gratified their wishes, and afforded them the present opportunity to make known their wants. He therefore desired to hear them, and hoped they would express themselves with freedom and frankness, — <sup>in other words,</sup> that they would make a clean breast of all they had to say.

Winiwisk, (who is the nominal head chief,) said: Father, we are glad to see you. We hope that the Great



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Spirit will enable us to act harmoniously together. Father, the Chiefs you see here are not all the Chiefs of the Winnebagoes; there are others at home; but those <sup>present</sup> ~~here~~ have been sent to act for them and their people. Father, you desire us to tell, freely, our wants. We are glad to hear you say so, for that is what we ~~want to do~~ <sup>came for</sup>. We have <sup>now</sup> no relations among our red brethren. We are living, as it were, between two fires, and are bleeding at every pore. We are surrounded by two powerful Indian tribes, and desire to exchange our country for one where we will not be disturbed and can live at peace. You must not think from this, father, that we are displeased with the country in which we live: It is a fine country; but what we want in regard to this will be told by another chief. I have merely risen for the purpose of expressing the pleasure we all feel at this meeting.

Little Bill, in a very animated manner, then addressed the Council. Father, you <sup>desire to</sup> ~~know~~ doubtless heard from the Winnebagoes the business upon which they <sup>want</sup> ~~desire~~ to see you. I will tell you. I will do so in a very few words, because, as you have sent for us, we presume you understand our wishes, and, <sup>consequently,</sup> ~~that~~ it will take no long speech to explain what we desire, and why we want to change our location. Our father understands the difficulties that surround us, and will have pity on us. Father, our Council fires are between two powerful



Indian tribes, who will not let us live in peace. We therefore wish to leave where we are, and ~~to~~ exchange it for ~~some~~ a residence more suitable to our interests. Father, the other chiefs, whom we left at home, and in fact all our people, believed, when we were sent for, that our Great Father understood the reasons which induced us to ~~wish~~ <sup>desire</sup> to change ~~our~~ location, and that his object was to give us one more <sup>suitable</sup> ~~pleasant~~ in its stead. Father, the country which we occupy, and <sup>which</sup> has been assigned to us by our Great Father, is a good one. Its climate is good, its soil is good, and it has good water; but, for the reasons stated, we want our Great Father to give us in exchange a reserve south of the Minnesota River, on Bear Lake. Father, <sup>ours</sup> ~~the~~ country ~~is~~ is a valuable country to us, and would be more so to you, but, for the reasons stated, we want to give it back, to our Great Father, and desire to know what boot you <sup>are willing to give</sup> ~~would give~~ between it and the reserve asked for ~~on~~ Bear Lake? We feel confident our Great Father will do what is right, and ~~will~~ act with liberality towards his old children.

[Here the Commissioners and Indian Agent examined the map with the view of identifying the country referred to by the Little Bell, and, after they



got through, I

Cour. Manypenny said he had no doubt the Country referred to was valuable, and, if the reasons assigned by his friend were likely to be of a permanent character, they would be sufficient to induce the Winnibago, to desire a change of location. He had, however, good reasons for believing that the red men of that region of Country were about exchanging their savage habits for those of civilization, and would therefore soon become good, instead of bad, neighbors. In reference to the ~~land~~ location which they seemed to prefer, it might not be in the power of this Great Father to indulge his Winnibago children in their preference. If, for instance, it should be within the limits of Iowa, it would be impossible for him to do it. He would, however, examine into the matter, and see how far he could go in indulging them in their preference of that particular location. His friend and brother (Little Hill) shows, by his remarks, that he is indeed with one of the characteristics of a white man. He praises, <sup>extravagantly</sup> the character of the country he wants to sell, and, (assuming its superior value,) asks what boot I am willing to give between that and the Country which he seeks in exchange! I am afraid the unsettled habits of the Winnibagoes have as much to do with their desire of change, as the evils



suffered from the proximity of two other Indian  
tribes. Although not aware of the fact,  
I am afraid something may have been said  
to his red friends by interested white parties  
upon this subject, and that the preference here  
indicated may have had its origin not with  
the Winnipeg, but others. This may not be  
so, however, I will examine into the subject  
of the <sup>relative</sup> value of the present reserve, and of that <sup>for</sup> which  
they indicate a preference; and, as soon as I  
have made up my mind, will apprise the  
delegation of the result of my enquiries. I  
will also state that, if there is any thing else  
which the delegates wish to talk about, I  
will be happy to hear ~~from~~ them. Time  
is precious, and should not be wasted, and  
he hopes his red-brothers would learn its  
value and importance.

[Here the Indians consulted, and after  
some by-talk among themselves,]

Winniship said: Father, we are glad to  
hear your words. It has made the hearts of  
your red children glad to listen to your talk.  
We understand you to say, that you will take  
the subject into consideration, and that, as soon  
as you have investigated it, and made up your



mind, we will hear from you again. We will  
therefore, not detain you any longer this morn-  
ing, but, when you are ready to see us again,  
and to come directly to the point, we will be  
happy to speak ~~with~~ more precision and speci-  
fically and in detail about the matters  
which have brought us together.

The Delegation then took their leave  
of the Commissioners.



Winnipeg

Monday evening

Feb 19<sup>1855</sup>

Do Nothing  
Speeches.



Indian Office, Monday evening, Feb 19, 7 o'clock.

The Winnebago delegation, according to appointment, waited upon the Com' of Indian Affairs to resume their negotiations.

The Old Chief, Big Canoe, being sick, Little Hill opened the talk by saying, he hoped the Commissioners would not be angry if they came a little later than the appointed hour. The delegates had no watch, although their Agent had, but he did not appear <sup>in</sup> at the time.

Commissioner. Not at all, although punctuality is very important. He reminded them of the talk which took place the other day about the exchange of country. Indians are a good deal like children, they assume a great deal from very slight premises. Little Hill's reasons for desiring a change of location on account of the Winnebagoes being situated between the Sioux and the Chippewas, would <sup>he said,</sup> be very good; if they were predicated upon causes likely to be permanent.

But the Chippewas and Sioux were about to change their predatory habits, and live like white men. When this is effected, which will be soon, they will be good neighbors. Why, then, cannot the Winnebagoes live at Long Prairie as well as at Clear Lake? Why leave where they have improvements to go where there are none? I should like, said the Commissioner, to have these questions



answered, and I want you to speak frankly and freely to-night. While I would like to have favourable answers, I do not want to be carried away by an appeal to feelings, without reason and good sense in it.

Little Hill. I have come here tonight, father, to tell my trouble, and will tell it. Father, I have before told you my troubles. I am a man of few words, and have nothing else to tell you now. Our father took us to the country where we now live. Before we were there two years, our people were killed, and our horses were stolen by both Sioux and Cheppewais, and, if you want to know the reasons, I will tell you. We ~~had~~ lived by hunting. The animals we used to kill and subsist on are no longer to be found upon our lands. They lived on grass, the grass is gone, and that is the reason the animals are gone also. When we now go out to hunt on the prairies, we find the tracks of our animal, and, perhaps, ~~some~~ that animal is a wolf. The country to which our Agent takes us is a good country. We have houses, large fields in cultivation, horses, plenty of water, good water; but, for the reasons stated, our chiefs do not like it, and we <sup>you to give us</sup> want one better suited to our wants and condition. Father, our chiefs



who are behind, expect that, when we come into your house, you would give us another country, and will be disappointed if you dont. We want a place this side of Clear Lake, near a river. Father, we hope you will take pity on the whole Wimbago nation, men, women and children, and grant this request. Father, I ~~hope~~ have prayed to the Great Spirit above, and hope he will induce you to take pity on us. We want to get a country where no white man lives, where there is <sup>plenty of</sup> game, and no ~~other~~ <sup>Indian</sup> tribes to molest us.

Commissioner. Do you expect, Little Hill, in the present state of the country, to find a <sup>location</sup> ~~country~~ where there are no white men, or one in which the buffaloes and other game will be plenty again?

Little Hill. In the country we ask for, ~~there~~ we know that there is plenty of game.

Commissioner. But how long, Little Hill, will the game last? Do you not know that the white men are spreading all round you? You must not rely on hunting hereafter for a support. If you do, it will fail you. You must live like white men, and cultivate the earth. This is the only way you can save yourselves as a nation.

Little Hill. We Indians do not know how to work, and cannot and will not work. Our



women work - ~~plant~~ corn and cut wood. We hunt.

Commissioners. Then you will receive of any account as long as you make your women do your work. They should live at home, and attend to their families and household affairs. If I make a treaty with you, I will put a clause in it compelling you to work.

Little Hill. The reason we <sup>desire</sup> want to leave where we are is, that we do not know how, and don't want to work. Our father (the Agent,) has made farms for us where we live, but we do not know how to work them, and want to go where there is game. Father, I don't think we are able to work, and it is for that reason we want to exchange lands with you. Our country is a good country for you, but not for us. For that reason, we want to exchange it for a smaller country. What you see here, is not all. We left many behind. We have no horses or ploughs, and are not like the whites. They know how to work - we don't. Little Hill advancing to the Commissioners, and taking him by the hand, said, I Father, I mean nothing by speaking so loud. It is my habit. I mean no harm by it. I hope therefore you will excuse me for it, and that you will take pity on us, and give us what we work.



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Communism. I like very much, my friend, Little Bill's frankness, but don't agree with him that he cannot work. I would be very much mortified, indeed, if I thought he could not, and would be very inconsiderate friend if I did not attempt to disabuse ~~them~~ his mind of on that subject. The reason the white man has grown so rich and powerful, ~~while the red man has~~ is, that he works all the time. This is the reason why the whites have grown and multiplied like the leaves of the forest, while the red men have disappeared and melted away like snow before the sun. If the Womwobagoes do not work, they will melt away until there are none of them left. Now, Little Bill, there is no use of the Indians trying to ~~live on~~ expecting to live where you desire to be located by hunting. The buffalo is disappearing rapidly. Within the limits of a single Agency in Missouri, according to the Agents report, 400,000 of these animals have been killed in a single year. If I wanted to swap with you a piece of land, I know the Government has no other tract equal to that which you occupy. I would admonish you that, if we trade, and you go to Clear Lake you will have to work. There is no avoiding that. You can never be like white men, take care of your women, or



educate your children until you go to work).

Wimmerick - Father, you see me. I am an Indian, a naked Indian. The Great Spirit has made me as I am. My flesh is as it will be, my <sup>hair</sup> eyes as ~~they~~ will be, ~~my hair and~~ my eyes as they will be. Father, you heard Little Hill say we will not work. I say the same, that we will not work. Father, if I go back to Long Pointe, I will not work, if I go to Clear Lake I will not work, or wear white man's clothes. We came here to ask you for a reservation at Clear Lake and nothing else. Father, perhaps our Agent told you something else. Our father knows what we came for, our traders know what we came for, and all the Indians here know the same, and that is all. Whenever you have asked our old men for any thing, they have given it to you. This is the first time we have asked a favor of our Great Father, and we hope we will get it. Father, may be you think different, but I have an idea that our Great Father sees all over the land, and knows what his children want. Father, your arms will reach all over the earth, and you can do whatever you chose. If I have to work, what will I have to eat when I get to my lodge? This, father, is



the fourth time <sup>the Wamabogay</sup> have <sup>these</sup> come to this city to see their Great Father, but nothing has been done for them yet. If we are successful this time in getting what we want, we will have something to talk about when we get home, and make our people glad. Father, you have sent us word to come here, have shown us your hand, and here we are in your house. We want a country and Char Lake, and hope to get it. With regard to work, we are not able and do not know how, and, if we could work, we have not the means to buy horses and stock, because the promises made to us have never been fulfilled. I ask nothing else.

Commissioner. I have had no conversation with your Agent or any one else upon the subject to which Mr. Mesheke refers. A good father sometimes refuses his children what they ask for, because he knows what is good for them better than they do themselves. I invited you to come to this City, because I understood such was your desire. The idea of giving away a good country, which you know, for another about which you know little or nothing, should be seriously considered by <sup>now</sup> ~~the Wamabogay~~. As to the idea that the Wamabogay can't work, it is ~~an~~ nonsense. Whether you lived at Long Prairie, or



Clear Lake, I again repeat, you must work. How can you know the buffalo and other game upon which you depend for food, are rapidly disappearing? As to my friend's idea, ~~in case~~ ~~some~~ of going to his lodge and finding nothing to eat, as the consequence of his working, it is perfectly absurd. It is then that his lodge would never be without plenty for himself and his family. If I give you a reserve near Clear Lake, I shall insist upon it, as one of the conditions, that your young men, at least, shall work. You tell me Wineschick, (said the Comanches, taking a stalwart young Indian by the arm,) that a young man like this can't work? Why did the Great Spirit give him those arms and limbs and that vigorous frame, if not that he might work, and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow? No way that you can make the proposed change of lands that, in my opinion, will be of advantage to you, and the only plausible reason I have heard advanced in the proximity of the Chippewas and Sioux. But when have any of you been killed by these tribes?

Little Bill. Last Summer.

Comanches. Was ~~you~~ <sup>he</sup> at home when ~~you~~ he got killed?

Little Bill. No, at ~~the~~ Clear Lake.

Comanches. Yes, the very place you want to go? Your white brethren some times get killed also, but they don't think of



Washington

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abandoning the  
Country where such things occur on that ac-  
count. If that man of yours had been at  
his own house, with his papoose and children  
around him, engaged in the peaceful pursuit of  
cultivating the soil, he would not, <sup>perhaps,</sup> in all human  
probability, have been killed.

Little Hill (in an animated manner) said: Fa-  
ther, if we had a hundred horses a piece, they would  
not last us long. We had plenty when we moved up  
to where we now reside, but those big-headed Chip-  
pewas, who you see here, killed them and eat  
~~them and eat~~ them up for us. Father, these  
Chippewas are the cause of all our troubles.  
They kill our horses, and then sell us the  
meat! Our father (Squint Ditcher) knows that  
the few horses they have not killed, they steal  
and sell to the whites. For this reason, we  
have no security but in exchanging our country  
for another. We have therefore come to ask you  
for an exchange of country, and for nothing else  
at present. Father, we do work. All the  
Chiefs here raise their own provisions. We work  
ourselves. In the Spring of the year, we work  
for our women in planting corn. We go out to  
work with our cloths on, but the way you want  
us to work, we are not able, and don't understand.  
If the Great Spirit wanted us to be like you,



he would have so made us, but he has made us red men and you white, and we cannot, for that reason, adopt your habits and customs. Father, wear your clothes, however suitable to you, we cannot wear. We don't know how to put them on. We came to ask you for an exchange of country, and hope you will grant what ~~you~~ we ask.

Commissioner. Do you ~~think~~ suppose, if we swap — ~~if~~ to use your own language, I take pity (I wish my Indian friends would quit using that word,) you will be then satisfied at Chas Lake?

Delegates. Yes, we will be satisfied ~~as long as~~ ~~we live as I live~~ forever.

Little Hill — I will be satisfied as long as I live.

Commissioner. Were you never satisfied at Long Prairie\*?

Little Hill. Father, if I had, I would not have started from home to come here. I have not been at Long Prairie for two years. I ~~before~~ used to raise corn and grain, and had seven horses, with plenty to feed them, but the Chippewas came and stole them, and now I have none. Father, if you doubt my word, ask the Agent, and he will confirm the truth of what I say. When we went up to Long Prairie, we had plenty of horses, but we are now poor, and have none. Had we been



pleased where we are, we would not have expressed a wish to move

Commissioner (addressing himself to Agent Fletcher,) asked how the Clear Lake country was situated, as to protection, as compared with the country where they now are.

Agent Fletcher explained, and said every word uttered by Little Hill was true liberally true. The Winnemagoes are an extremely liberal people, and have given the Chippewas, within a few years, \$30,000 worth of property. The Pillager bands, especially, live off of them - by begging.

Commissioner. Little Hill which beat, the Chippewas or Winnemagoes, in the recent moccasim game between them.

Little Hill. - Father, the Winnemagoes are very smart in all the games common among the Indian tribes, and far beat the Chippewas.

Commissioner. I saw a pack of cards with some of the young men yesterday at their lodgings. If I treat, I will have a provision to keep their portion of the ammittis from those who play. Will that be right, Little Hill?

Little Hill. We never lose much money at play, for we haont it to lose. The Indians play for feathers, beads, ornaments, &c.

Commissioner. Dont these things cost money?



Little Bill. No, for when we see a bird flying in the air, we shoot ~~at~~ it and get the feathers. Father, I don't lose money by play. When I want money, I sell such skins as that [pointing to his Otter-skin cap.]

Companion. Now, <sup>you should sell the skin</sup> ~~when you sell such~~ ~~and~~ ~~articles,~~ you should invest ~~it~~ it in a plough.

Little Bill. If I wanted a plough, you would not sell it to me for an otter-skin.

Companion. No, but I would for several.

Little Bill. Father, I am an old man, and we will quit gambling and quit talking about it.

Companion. Do you drink any firewater?

Little Bill. We all drink, even our women. The whites have brought it amongst us.

Companion. Will you quit drinking?

Little Bill. As you ask, father, I will tell you. We came here to ask for the country on Clear Lake; and, if you will, <sup>give it to us, and</sup> keep the whites out, as we don't know how to make firewater, we will not drink any.

Companion. Your father will have to sleep on that to-night. If we exchange countries, you will have to quit gambling, quit drinking, and get your women to live in houses like white people, while the men do the work. I will insist upon this be



ing a part of our bargain.

Baptiste Lafallies (A half breed) said, Father, what chiefs you see here to-night, are principally young men. We have one old Chief who is sick this evening. Our old chiefs are generally home. We have come to ask for an exchange of country, and I begin to think you have a notion to give it to us. You seem to think that your red children should be as dear to you as your white children, and when you sleep on it, you will accede to our request. We will sleep on it too.

Little Bill. As we left families home, we fear they may suffer from hunger in our absence, and we are therefore anxious to get through our business, so as to get back as soon as possible.

At 9 o'clock, the conference ended, and the delegates took their leave.