American Indians

Spanish

French and “New France”

Hudson Bay fur traders

Rupert’s Land

Lewis and Clark

Nicollet and Fremont 1839

Stevens 1853

Fisk 1862 and 1863

Sibley 1863

Sully Expedition

Capt. William Twining 1866

Fort Totten 1867

General Alfred Terry a few years after Sibley

Omund Nelson Opheim 1879

Cooper 1880

**Spanish**

**Early Fisk Expeditions Escort Gold Seekers**

Expeditions that were not entirely of military character also used Fort Abercrombie as the base for their operations into the western frontier.

Notable among these were the Fisk Expeditions of 1862 and 1863 which were traveling in search of gold which had been discovered in Idaho and Montana. Fisk's companies were made up of Minnesotans who wished to join the general gold-rush westward.

These two early expeditions of Captain James L. Fisk passed through Fort Abercrombie. Later trips in 1864 and the two succeeding years took a route somewhat south of the fort. Captain Fisk's own report of his first journey, in 1862, is reprinted here, as published in the collections of the North Dakota State Historical Society, Volume 2.

"Sir: Under instructions of the Secretary of War, I was dispatched from this place, on the 3rd day of June last, to proceed at once to organize, equip, and conduct an escort to emigrant wagon train from Fort Abercrombie, across the plains of the north, to Fort Benton, Dakota Territory, thence across the mountains, via Captain Mullan's government road, to Wall Walla -- there dispose of the expedition property, and return via Oregon and San Francisco.

"The fact that most of the route designated for my trip was entirely (except as surveyed by the late lamented General Stevens in 1853) and that the season was so far advanced before orders reached me at my regiment in Central Tennessee, together with the limited means placed at my disposal, led me to doubt much whether I could accomplish the objects of my commission. Having entered upon the work, however, and done the best in my power under the circumstances, I am pleased to be able to report at this date the experience and general results of the expedition.

"Samuel R. Bond, Esq, who accompanied me as a clerk and journalist, respectfully submits a summary of his notes, and which is a fair statement of principal incidents of trip, topography of country, etc.

"In the proper place will be found the brief report of Dr. Dibb, physician and surgeon of party; and I likewise offer for your consideration, as supplementary to the general report required, an itinerary of each day's travel, with accompanying chart of route from Fort Abercrombie to Fort Benton.

"I need hardly assure you, in this connection, of my personal regards and esteem for those gentlemen, one and all, who accompanied me as assistants -- of them the entire journey. Always true, and never found wanting in the discharge of duty, I can but commend them for those good qualities which fit men for public service.

"The importance at present attached to this route, and which will very much increase as the new gold fields are opened up by it come to note, constrains me to believe it justifiable in extending my report so as to cover all the chief points of interest, and to believe that the itinerary and map furnished will prove of great utility if published.

"That our little expedition, being wholly an experiment, succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectations is attributable to several facts, viz: Nearly if not quite all of the men of the escort and emigrants had seen more or less of frontier life, were not afraid of hardships, and know how to surmount impediments in whatever shape occurring. The season was most wonderfully favorable, plenty of grazing and water for our purpose, and not yet sufficient rain at any time to swell the streams or soften the basins of the prairie country.

"Our organization was complete, not only of the fifty (50) men of the escort, but of the emigrants also, in case of an emergency. No violation of rules occurred from first to last; every order was promptly and cheerfully obeyed. We moved, halted, camped, corralled on the march, rallied, mounted guard, etc., by bugle calls.

"We had no serious difficulty with the Indians, though we met numerous bands and tribes, and were not aware, until we were met in the mountains by an express from Walla-Walla, giving news how narrowly we had escaped the terrible raid of the Sioux on the border of Minnesota, even laying siege to the very post which we had shortly previous started from (Fort Abercrombie).

"The Assineboines were 'saucy' which with them is preliminary to mischief. Their conduct convinced me that they were knowing to the raid of the Sioux Indians, and that they themselves were becoming infected with a desire for plunder.

"It required more nerve to refrain from punishing them for their insolence than to have done it. The traders along the Missouri besought me to urge upon the department the necessity of establishing one or more military posts along that river, between Forts Berthold and Benton. From what I could see and learn, I do not hesitate to say that the presence of troops is absolutely necessary to insure the safe occupancy and transit of that upper country by the whites.

"The severe chastisement of the hostile Sioux the coming season would intimidate the Missouri river and mountain tribes; and distribution of an infantry or cavalry regiment along the Missouri, from Fort Berthold to Benton, with headquarters in the mountain district at the head of that river, where there are most people scattered about, mining, would insure safety in travel, exploration and development of a rich mineral country.

"Pierre Chouteau, Jr. and Co. take occasion to inform me by letter that they will most cheerfully give all the accommodations necessary for quartering troops and storing supplies in either or all of their posts on the Upper Missouri. These forts, as they are called, are not undeserving the name, for they are most admirably adapted as quarters for troops, militaire in appearance, and entirely defensible.

"After merging from the Coteau du Missouri on the west side, opposite to the nearest point to the river Des Lacs, I was desirous of heading straight for Fort Benton coming down to Milk river at last crossing, instead of making that circuitous route by Fort Union. But not finding any of my party ready to try the experiment, I moved southward to a camp on the Missouri fifteen (15) miles above Fort Union. On our journey to Fort Benton we were joined by two French half-bred voyageurs, from whom I learned that the line of travel from the Coteau to Fort Benton, which I proposed trying, was in every way practical for a wagon road, and ten days shorter.

"My loss of stock between Abercrombie and Benton were two oxen and one (1) mule. Between Benton and Walla-Walla, one (1) team horse and one (1) saddle horse. In the wilderness of St. Regis de Borgia at the eastern base of the Coeur d'Alene mountains, I found Major Hutchins, Indian Agent, in distress from having lost part of his pack animals while on his journey to relieve Major Owen, agent of the Flathead Indians. In the emergency of his case I felt obliged to relieve him, so far as I could give him anything available for transporting his supplies, and fitted him out with a span of animals and a good wagon.

"From this point to Walla-Walla I hauled only the howitzer and flag wagon, and every animal I had was unmarketable, because so very thin in flesh. If I could have had the usual allowance of extra work animals upon the start, such would have been the condition of the whole as to bring, at public sale, at the close of the journey, all they would cost in fitting out.

"Captain Mullan's road, from Fort Benton to Walla-Walla is passable and there has been performed upon it an immense amount of labor, but it will have to be worked, materially improved in places, or it will soon be useless as a wagon road.

"On leaving St. Paul on the 16th (sixteenth) of June, I had unfurled from a staff lashed to the front of the express wagon which led the train, the national colors; and I am proud to say that it every day floated to the breezes from the Mississippi to the Columbia, and no man insulted it.

"At Portland, Oregon, I was glad to meet Captain Medorum Crawford, who had just closed his expedition on the central overland route. We spent a day together in comparing notes. Captain Crawford did not hesitate to congratulate me on having discovered a most desirable route, and one that must soon attract a large emigration over it. I am under obligations to this gentleman for the courtesies which he extended to me while there, and for pecuniary favor in my need.

"Under dates of December 14 and 27, I am in receipt of letters from very reliable men, who went out with me and are now mining at Grasshopper diggins, (the Grasshopper being a small tributary of the Jefferson fork of the Missouri, and at which place there are now about one thousand (1,000) persons, stating their general success beyond all expectations, and that claims are yielding from fifty dollars ($50) to one hundred and fifty dollars ($150) per day to the man.

"Reaching this city, on my return, about the 1st of the present month, (February 1863) I hastened to prepare this report, which I now have the honor to submit.

"With very great respect, I am, sir your most obedient servant, James L. Fisk, Captain A. Q. M., Commanding Expedition."

Thus ends Captain Fisk's own report of his first expedition from Fort Abercrombie westward with a troop of emigrants seeking gold. It illustrates the commercial as well as military importance of Fort Abercrombie as a base of operations into the west.

Also within the North Dakota State Historical Society collections, preserved with Captain Fisk's report is the diary of the secretary who traveled with him, and the part of the journey in the territory directly under the influence of Fort Abercrombie and the Red River Valley, is printed here because of the interesting tales, of early days in this district, as told by a man who traveled through here.

"The recent and continued discoveries of gold in Oregon and Washington Territories having incited an extensive emigration to those regions, congress, by act January 27, 1862, appropriated a sum of twenty-five thousand dollars for the purpose of affording, to such as should wish to make the overland trip, a safe escort through the various Indian tribes inhabiting the country along the route, as well as that efficient aid which an emigrant train cannot fail to derive from the organization and order which it becomes the chief duties of the commander of such an escort to secure and preserve.

"The usual route of emigration westward, across the plains and mountains has been the central one by way of Fort Laramie, Salt Lake, and the South Pass; at least the government had never sent an escort for the protection of emigrants by what may be called the extreme northern route, and it had never been tried by them. In 1853 Governor Stevens of Washington Territory, who had so recently and gloriously fallen in his country's cause, made his explorations for a route for a Pacific railroad, near the forty-seventh and forty-ninth parallels of north latitude, from St. Paul to the Puget Sound, starting from Fort Snelling, Minnesota, and passing over a country not before explored to Fort Union, on the Missouri River; thence to Fort Benton, and through the mountains into the valley of the Bitter Root, and onward to the Columbia. Since then a military road has been laid out and constructed under the supervision of Lieutenant Mullan, between Fort Benton and Fort Walla-Walla, but that portion of the route pursued by Governor Stevens, lying between the western boundary of Minnesota and Fort Union, had not been traveled since 1853. Many persons on the Upper Mississippi, especially in Minnesota, in the spring of last year, were desirous of crossing the plains by this route to the new El Doradoes beyond, but were diffident about starting without an escort, on account of the difficulty and uncertainty of finding the best and most direct course over the trackless plain to Fort Benton, as well as on account of their fears lest the Indians, and especially the Sioux, should prove hostile and troublesome to a private party, which they found traveling through their country, while they would feel comparatively safe if accompanied by a small protective force sent out under the auspices of the government.

"To afford guidance and protection to these emigrants, and at the same time test the practicability of this northern route for future emigration, the secretary of war, under whose direction the above appropriation was to be expended, set apart five thousand dollars, and Captain James L. Fisk, assistant quartermaster United States Volunteers, was appointed to command the expedition, with authority to employ assistants, who were at once to enlist fifty men as a protective corps, to be used as guards, sentries, scouting parties, and in such other ways as the best mean of affording protection to emigrants might require. Competent persons were also to be engaged as physician, guide, and interpreter, whose services were to be freely rendered for the advantage of the whole party. His instructions required Captain Fisk to make Fort Abercrombie the point of rendezvous, and to disband the guard upon his arrival at Fort Benton. Immediately upon the receipt of his instructions, Captain Fisk proceeded to make his preliminary arrangements at St. Paul, and appointed the following assistants, namely: First assistant, E. H. Burritt; second assistant, N. P. Langford; third assistant, (surveyor), David Charlton; secretary or journalist, S. R. Bond; physician, William D. Dibb, M.D.; wagon master, R. C. Knox; guide and Chippewa interpreter, Pierre Bottineau; Sioux interpreter, George Gere.

**Pierre Bottineau**

"In former years our guide had been a Red river hunter, and he was one of Governor Stevens' guides in 1853, so that was considered a stroke of good fortune to be able to secure his services which the progress of our journey, over a country where there was no sign of trail either of Indian or white man, proved to be invaluable and our Sioux interpreter had but recently come from a residence of many years among the Yanktons, Sissetons, and other tribes of that nation.

"Having been appointed secretary of this humble expedition, I have kept a full daily record of the marches made, camping places, the leading incidents on the route, and character of the country passed over, etc., from the departure of Captain Fisk from St. Paul to his arrival at Walla-Walla, and, indeed, until he reached New York on his homeward trip. . . this being too extensive, the following condensed part of my journal is herewith submitted.

**Departure From St. Paul -- Arrival at Ft. Abercrombie**

"A few days in St. Paul sufficed to complete the necessary preparations for starting, and on the 16th of June Captain Fisk, having received his instructions from Washington . . . our small supply and baggage train, consisting of three 4-ox teams, one 2-mule team, and one 2-horse team, set out from there for Fort Abercrombie, which is situated on the west bank of the Red river of the North, about two hundred and fifty-five (255) miles northwest from St. Paul. Meanwhile notice had been given for those wishing to join the train to rendezvous at that post by the first of July, and when we arrived there on the third of that month, we found quite a party of emigrants awaiting for us, while letters from others stated that they were on the way. We formed a camp near the fort to wait for those who had started to join us and to make the final preparations which the long journey before us rendered necessary; and for valuable assistance in this respect, as well as for every courtesy and kindness in their power to render, we are indebted to Captain Vander Horck, commander of the post, Dr. E. E. Braun, post surgeon, and Lieutenant Groetsch, quartermaster.

**Celebration of the Fourth of July**

"We here had the pleasure of joining the officers and soldiers of the fort and settlers of that neighborhood in an appropriate celebration of the anniversary of our national independence, before starting on our long journey, the greatest deprivation of which was to be the suspense under which we must remain for months as to the progress of our arms in crushing the rebellion that would undo the great act of ('76) seventy-six.

**Fears of Emigrants**

"A day or two before we got ready to depart the emigrants expressed fears of the dangers which we might encounter in taking the most direct route from Fort Abercrombie to Fort Union, on account of the absence of any trail, through a country about which so little was known, and more especially on account of anticipated hostility on the part of the Sioux, (which later culminated in the Breckenridge massacre and the siege of Fort Abercrombie), who range over a large part of the country through which our route would take us. A party of about eight emigrants had started from Minnesota about a month before (not knowing that an escort would be sent by the government) for the new gold regions, and to avoid these Indians they took a less direct route by Pembina and St. Josephs, which lie about two hundred and fifty (250) miles to the north of Fort Abercrombie. This route the emigrants of our party were desirous of taking, notwithstanding Captain Fisk's expressed determination not to make such a detour out of a direct course, and their apprehensions could not be allayed until he had obtained from the fort a 12 pound mountain howitzer, with ammunition and equipments, and organized an artillery squad to take charge of it. The belief that the Indians would be more awed by this by this than by an increase in number, reconciled them to the route proposed, and it was announced that the train would start on Monday July 7.

**Leave Abercrombie**

"On the morning of that day a party of men was sent out to throw a bridge across the Wild Rice river, a small stream flowing northeastwardly and emptying into the Red River below Fort Abercrombie. At the point selected for crossing it was some five (5) feet wide and four and a half (4 1/2)feet deep, with soft, muddy bottom. The timber on its banks afforded the means of bridging with ease, and before noon it was ready for our train to cross, when it should arrive, which it did in the afternoon, and camped near the opposite bank, with excellent food, water, and grazing. The morning of the 8th opened with heavy rain showers, which lasted until near noon. Our train however, started at an early hour, during a short intermission in the rain, and proceeded a distance of sixteen and a half miles, which brought us to a very fine camping place on the right bank of the Sheyenne river. The country between the Wild Rice and the Sheyenne is a level prairie with rich soil and tall grass, presenting a beautiful picture to the view as it stretched out in every direction as far as the eye could reach, unbroken except by the dark green lines of timber which mark the course of these two streams. The only water between the Wild Rice and the Sheyenne along our course is a lake over a mile in circumference, which we passed about three miles before reaching the latter stream, the waters of which are strongly alkaline. At this camp our stock luxuriated in the richest pasture and had it not been for the mosquitoes, there would have been no draw back to the pleasures of camp life, which are by no means few or inconsiderable. Some of our party opened a spring about half way down the bank of the river, which affords almost ice-cold water. The Sheyenne at this point, which was selected for crossing, is well-timbered with a thick growth of basswood, popular, and oak, flows northwestwardly into the Red river, has swift current, deep, steep banks, and is about seventy-five (75) feet wide and six (6) or eight (8) feet deep.

**First Crossing of Sheyenne River**

Wednesday, July 9 -- Early this morning escorts and emigrants were at work felling and hauling trees for the construction of a bridge. Many of them were Minnesota lumbermen and could not be more in their element than when it became necessary to swim the stream and float logs across. Some of them jumped in and stemmed the swift current with their clothes on, even to their hats and with their pipes in their mouths, as though it were but a pastime for them. Considerable digging was necessary to render the descent and ascent practicable for loaded wagons, but this was soon accomplished, for the axe and spade were both handled like playthings by such pioneers as our train was principally composed of. The members of the escort were of the same class as the emigrants, and were, indeed, almost entirely enlisted from among them, but such of them only were taken as had no families or wagons requiring their attention, in case they were needed for other duties.

"A bridge was constructed by two o'clock by throwing across the stream three heavy stringers, and then making a roadbed of logs, and all our train was safely over by four. For a mile and a half on the other side our route was through thick timber, among which we wound our way with as little felling of trees as possible. Beyond this timber opens a broad level prairie, on the edge of which we found a camping place equally as fine as that of last night, for the river bends so abruptly towards the west, just below our point of crossing, as to again flow close to our camp. Our train now consisted of one hundred and seventeen (117) men and thirteen (13) women, one hundred and sixty-eight (168) oxen, eight (8) mules, fourteen (14) team horses, thirteen (13) saddle horses, seventeen (17) cows, with the inevitable camp accompaniment of dogs too numerous to mention. At night we shut our cattle in a corral formed from wagons, picket our horses and mules close to camp, and have four men on guard, with two reliefs, the captain and his assistants acting in turn as sergeants of the guard. This precaution against surprise or horse stealing on the part of the Indians, who are liable to be in the vicinity at any time, and who, though they may profess ever so much friendship for the white man, will not allow an opportunity to steal our stock pass unimproved, cannot safely be relaxed until we reach Fort Benton, and will be increased should there be special reasons for it. The wagons of the emigrants as well as of the escort are all numbered, to regulate their proper places in the train, and have the letters U.S. conspicuously emblazoned on their sides; for the Indians well know their significance, and would hesitate to attack a government train, when they would feel much less fear or scruple to fall upon one of equal size belonging to private individuals."

Showing the readiness of the pioneer to adapt himself to his new environment and carry on community life are the stories related of the weekly church service, and interesting to those who can remember pioneer wedding ceremonies is this story of one which was solemnized on the prairies at the camp made by the expedition at the second crossing of the Sheyenne.

"At this camp occurred an incident which served to break the monotony of camp life, and to consecrate the spot in the memories of at least two of our party of emigrants. A couple had been observed, early in our journey, to evince a strong and growing affection for each other, and with the consent of the young lady's relatives, who were in the train, determined to celebrate their nuptials with all forms and solemnities that the absence of municipal organization would permit. So after the evening meal, with the moon shedding a bright, chaste light over the scene, the young couple, in the presence of all the members of our train, pledged their troth to live together as husband and wife until death should them part, and the forms of the Episcopal marriage service, which were read by one of our party, were, used upon the occasion. The congratulations and good wishes of friends followed, and then a dance upon the green sward to the music of violin closed the ceremony of this wedding on the plains."

The expedition of 1863 was nearly a repetition of the one in 1862, although the place of rendezvous was moved to St. Cloud, with the first stop being Fort Abercrombie, and the troops planned to avoid the Devils Lake region, following the Red from the Fort to Pembina and then traveling along the northern boundary of the state. This detour was meant to skirt hostile Indian tribes, but in a letter from Major Camp, then commandant at Fort Abercrombie, he states that Fisk took his route of the year previous on his way westward from the military post.

Dr. Dibbs, in a letter to his wife in St. Anthony from Ft. Abercrombie on July 14, 1863, tells her of the rejoining of their band by George Gere, the Sioux interpreter of the year previous. He told Mrs. Dibbs that Gere had just been with Little Crow, and that the Sioux were turning against their leader, whom they blamed for bringing all their trouble upon them. He reported that the chief had left for the Black Hills, and that Little Crow had said he would give himself up if he thought he would not be hung.

Fisk's train consisted of 55 men and 20 wagons. Twenty-five of the men were mounted, and one howitzer was taken by the expedition. They expected to over take Sibley's army approximately a week after leaving Fort Abercrombie.

These two early expeditions led by Captain Fisk did not result in the building of a national road across what is now North Dakota and Montana from Fort Abercrombie to Fort Benton, probably due to the Civil War, and partially to the development of the Missouri river steamboat traffic. Later expeditions from the years 1864-1866 were connected with the establishment of Fort Wadsworth, Fort Rice, and the Sully expedition, and are more closely connected with the history of western North Dakota than with the area surrounding Fort Abercrombie.

[HOME](http://www.ftabercrombie.org/Historymenu.html)


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| [**https://mylocalgov.com/wellscountynd/WebSubsection.asp?key=109**](https://mylocalgov.com/wellscountynd/WebSubsection.asp?key=109)**Early Explorations**Bottom of Form |
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| **EARLY EXPLORATIONS**We know not who the first white man was to view or explore the confines of Wells county. Pierre Rondell, a French squaw-man is said by tradition to have been the first white man to explore the upper regions of the James River, and later to have gone nearly to the headwaters of that stream. He left no written records.Rev. Father George A. Belcourt first visited the Butte de Morale vicinity in October, 1845, when accompanying the Pembina half-breeds on a buffalo hunt of Dogden Butte.The Governor I.I. Stevens’ expedition of 1853 was the first to pass through the county, the route of which is now nearly paralleled by the great Northern railway.Traveling in a N. 80 degrees W. direction on July 13, they entered Wells county, and the next day some of the party ate dinner on top of Black Hammer Hill and killed three buffalo cows a half mile southwest of there.*Excerpts for Gov. Stevens’ report, 1853.*“July 13th. Dropped back from the prairie five and one-half miles to camp on the James River. Good grass; good water; no wood.”“July 14th . Marched twenty-one and one-half miles, over a hilly and marshy prairie, with many small ponds; camped by a small lake or pond, water tolerable; grass good; no wood.”“July 15th. Marched two and one-half miles; marshy prairie; abounding with ponds; camp near a small pond; sufficient grazing; no wood. At this camp were joined by a large band of Red River buffalo hunters from Pembina under command of Governor Wilkie. The mosquitoes continued exceedingly annoying, flying against the tent sides with a noise like the pattering of rain while the inside of the tents were perfectly black with them and drove the men outside into the open air. The buffalo are very plentiful and the “Bois de Vache” has without inconvenience been substituted for wood at the camp fires. Alexis LeBombard, a guide, then visiting with the half-breed hunters was engaged to pilot the expedition to the mouth of the Yellowstone. Sugar, pemmican and other provisions were bought from the Gov. Wilkie party. The medium of exchange was Hudson Bay script in denominations of five shillings, payable at York Factory and bearing the signature of Sir George Simpson, head of that company.”(These were the first business transactions to take place in Wells County.)“July 16th. Same camp.”“July 17th. Marched nine and one-half miles and camped at night near a small rivulet affording water and grass. But little change of country; undulating prairie with a thin soil and except in marshy spots, a thin and short grass.”“July 18th. Marched one and one-half miles and crossed the Sheyenne River, south fork, 40 feet wide, two feet deep, with gravelly bottom and easily crossed. River flows deep below the prairie with high banks and without wood. Five miles further on, passed Butte de Morale, on right, 282 feet high. Rolling, hilly prairie. Passed a long narrow lake on the right, some four and one-half miles long (Goose Lake, now Lake Stevens). Marched thirteen and one-half miles and camped for the night in the Bois Blanc or White Wood Hills.”A detached party of the Governor Stevens Expedition, consisting of twenty-one picked men under command of Lieut. Cuvier Grover, 4th Artillery U.S.A. with two wagons and 33 animals, including several mules and an ox traveled in a north- westerly direction from the LaMoure vicinity of Pony Gulch. They reached the Stutsman-Wells county line, just east of the Kidder county line on the afternoon of July 12, 1853. They emerged from the Coteaus and camped that night on the Pipestem a few miles southeast of Bowdon. On July 13th they continued on, skirting the first bench of the Coteaus all day. They ate their dinner on top of Butte Cuvier Grover and a few miles farther on pitched camp for the night in the valley east of Pony Gulch. On July 14th they explored and examined Pony Gulch and Sheyenne Lake and passed on toward Fort Union.Gov. Stevens’ camps through Wells county were No. 27 on July 13, No. 28 on July 14, No. 29 on July 15 and 16, No. 30 on July 17.Measuring the distances on an old time map and comparing with a modern map and by personally traveling over the same vicinity, it appears that these campsites were located No. 27 on the north bank of the James River in Bremen township, just west of the Wells-Eddy county line; No. 28 on Sec. 2 and No. 29 on Sec. 5 in Heimdal township, and No. 30 on Sec. 23 in Fram township.This expedition was one of five and the most northerly one sent out by the U.S. War Department in that year to locate a route for a rail road to the Pacific coast.Lieut. Cuvier Grover’s campsites thru Wells county were July 12, on the banks of the Pipestem, on Sec. 30 Speedwell township, and July 13, on the west side of Sec. 29, in Pony Gulch township.It is said that more members of the Stevens Expedition reached fame and distinction during the Civil War, than has any other expedition ever sent out by the United States.**The Buffalo Hunters**The large band of half-breed buffalo hunters, which Gov. Stevens met in Heimdal township July 15, 1853, consisted of 824 carts, 1200 animals and 104 lodges with some 1,390 people, including men, women and children. They were a virtuous and pious people. Gov. Stevens said of them, “They are a simple mannered, honest and industrious people. They are of the Roman Catholic faith, and are attended by their priests and make it a practice to rest on the Sabbath. Their attention to their religious duties on these plains, is one of the most striking characteristics of the primitive people.Gov. Wilkie, who was in command of this party, was some sixty years of age, tall, of fine appearance and pleasant manner and well informed.Their municipal government is of parochial character, being divided into five parishes, each one being presided over by an officer, called the Captain of the parish. These Captains of the parish retained their authority while in the settlement.On departing for the hunt, they selected a man from the whole number who was styled governor of the hunt. He took charge of the party, regulated its movements, acted as referee in all cases where any differences arose of other matters appeared and took command in case of difficulty with the Indians.Gov. Stevens says of their dress: “The men dress usually in woolens of various colors. The coat generally worn is the Hudson Bay coat with a capot attached. The belts are finely knit of different colored wool or worsted yarns and are worn after the manner of sashes. Their powder horns and shot bags are attached to bands finely embroidered with beads or worked with porcupine quills and worn across each shoulder making an X before and behind. Many have a tobacco pouch strung to their sashes, also a fire steel, punk and several flints, and carry a gun.The women dress in gaudy calicoes and are very fond of trinkets and bright colored beads.”This is the picture of Governor Wilkie’s band of Red River Buffalo Hunters from Pembina, camped near Butte de Morale, late in July, 1853. It was photographed from an old lithograph, originally drawn by Artist J. M. Stanley of the Governor Stevens Expedition, and is found with descriptive matter on pages 64-65 of Governor Stevens’ Final Narrative and Reports of his U.S. Pacific R.R. Explorations and Surveys made in 1853, between the 47th and 49th Parallels.These hunters killed 250 buffalo in one day near this camp and over 1100 on this trip. The Red River Buffalo Hunters began coming to hunt in the Butte de Morale vicinity as early as 1840, or before. They were preceded by the Hudson Bay Company’s Hunters.Two hunts were made each year. The June hunt was made for the purpose of preparing pemmican which was their principal food. This they did by drying the meat and packing it in the sewed up hides and the pouring the melted fat and tallow over it. A special kind was made with berries pressed into it. The hides were later used for lodge skins and moccasins. The fall hunt took place late in October and buffalo robes were then their main quest as the animals had taken on their winter coats of long thick hair. The Indian names for the buffalo are Dakotas, “Tatanka”; Mandans, “Beroke”; Chippewas, “Mashkodi Pajiki.”These hunters came out via Devils Lake and were accompanied by their entire families, and a French Roman Catholic priest, who ministered to the spiritual welfare of the party. Prayers at sunrise and vespers at sunset was the routine custom. The first religious worship ever held in Wells county was conducted by these priests on these hunting trips.These trips were called “going to the prairies.”Pierre Bottineau, the noted guide piloted the Stevens Expedition of 1853, and the Capt. Fisk Expeditions of 1862 and 1863.**Capt. J.L. Fisk Expedition, 1862**Captain James L. Fisk; U.S.A. escorted a party of Gold Hunters from St. Paul to the Salmon River Gold Fields in 1862. They traveled via Fort Abercrombie and Fort Union over nearly the same route as Gov. Stevens covered in 1853. The trip required 19 weeks’ travel overland. He led a second expedition over the same route in 1863.On July 19, 1862, the expedition reached Wells county, traveling a few degrees north of west, and camped for the night on the James River just west of the Wells-Eddy county line in the same vicinity as Governor Stevens had camped nine years before. The next day being Sunday, they remained in camp all day. During the early Sabbath morning, a heavy rain storm, accompanied by high winds, fierce lightning, and terrible thunder, passed over their camp but did no damage. In the afternoon, they gathered for religious worship, which was the first protestant services ever held in the county. This service was Protestant Episcopal in form and lead by N.P. Langford, a layman of that denomination and an officer in the expedition.They reported the James River void of timber, but wood was not essential as long as buffalo chips (Bois de Vache) remained plentiful.“July21: Our route today had been over rolling prairies, thickly intersected by small ponds and sloughs. At noon we lunched and grazed our stock at a beautiful lake and soon after we started on for the afternoon journey, we encountered a herd of some 5,000 buffalo. Pierre Bottineau, riding his fleet horse “Major,” attempted to shoot one of the cows, but just as he took aim, his horse stepped into a badger hole with both front feet, throwing him to the ground, and the horse rolling onto, and severely injuring him. Bottineau had to be carried in the flag wagon the rest of the day, but was up and ready to guide the party the next morning.” They camped that night near the picnic grounds east of Wellsburg.“July 22: At noon today we arrived at the base of Butte de Moral, a high hill rising out of a comparatively level prairie, which is a well known land mark to Indians and Red River Hunters. Just as we approached the hill, we discovered tracks of a Red River Cart Train. There were four distinct tracks running parallel to each other and only a rod or two apart. These hunters make their excursions in very large parties and divide their trains into four lines in order to keep closer together and to form themselves more quickly for defense in case of Indians attacks.Each hunter had at least one good horse which he kept fresh for the hunt.” **The Red River Cart Trains**The Red River carts were rudely but solidly built and very often numbered several hundred in a train.The chorus of loud squawks and squeaks made by the carts, when in transit, was said to have been almost deafening and never equaled in sound by anything. “Whrr-ee-ee’ Whor-ee-ee’ Who-ee-ee’ ” they wailed and each in a different time and key, as they were drawn over the prairie by a lone ox or pony. They were built wide with very high wheels and made entirely of wood and raw-hide, without a nail or bolt or any particle of iron in their construction. They were never greased, which only helped to make the squeaks louder and stronger and which could be heard for miles.**Gen. H.H. Sibley’s Indian Campaign 1863**Gen. Henry H. Sibley, with his army of 2,500 picked Indian fighters reached the Wells county vicinity on July 22, 1863, and sent scouts ahead to examine the Hawksnest and secure wood for the camp fires. They camped that night in the Pipestem valley near the junction of the north and west forks of that stream. This camp they named “Camp Kimball,” after a member of the expedition. It was located in Foster county on the south edge of the NE ¼ , Sec. 16, Twp. 145 N., Range 67 W., some four miles northeast of the Hawksnest. On July 23, they entered Wells county, to the north of the Hawksnest, and after passing the butte, swung to the south, entered the Coteaus, and continued on thru the New Home valley and camped that night on Sec. 23, Twp. 143 N., Range 69 W. in Stutsman county. This camp they named “Camp Grant,” in honor of Gen. U.S. Grant, the site of which is on the Gerber farm in Gerber township.**Gen. Sully’s Army 1865**Late in July, 1865, Gen. A.H. Sully, U.S.A. led an army of 2,500 men from Fort Rice to Devils Lake. He entered Wells county near the southwest corner, and traveling slightly east of north, forded the Sheyenne in the Harvey vicinity and continued on past Butte de Morale.**Captain Twining’s Military Road**In 1869, Capt. W.J. Twining, U.S.A. selected the route for a military road from Fort Stevenson to Fort Totten. This old trail passed over the extreme northwest corner of Wells County, and wagon ruts hub deep remained in mute memory of the past, until the prairie was broken up by the early settlers.With the completion of these expeditions, Wells County was well explored.Wells County was included in the Boundless Grassland Prairies of the Great Plains. In the U.S. Biological Survey it is classified with much of North Dakota in the Humid Transition Life Zone. The zone is generally characterized by a heavy growth of prairie grasses, strips of timber along the streams and by thickets of brush in protected places.The Semi Arid Transition zone covers most of the western part of the state. The 100th Meridian of Longitude west from Greenwich is generally conceded as the dividing line between the two zones. It is in the second group of the production series of North Dakota, and in the Black Earth belt, which is the transition zone between the humid east and the arid west.The soils are black or brownish black loam, eight to thirty inches in depth, with a yellow clay subsoil and beds of sand and gravel and usually a hard pan of blue clay. There have been several ice invasions since the beginning of Pleistocine times. A glacier is formed by more snow falling in winter at high elevations that can melt during the following summer. An ice sheet is then formed which grows in thickness from year to year until its weight causes it to flow toward a lower level. The general movement of the last great ice sheet which covered most of North America was toward the south. Geologists say that this glacier was probably more than a mile in thickness and did not move more than a rod or so during a season. Accumulations of earth, boulders and lime stone were plowed up by the glacier and left as a residium or “drift” as the ice melted.What is lighter and more delicate than a snowflake; yet the mighty ice sheets of glacial times were nothing more or less than a great number of snowflakes that fell one upon another for centuries until a glacier was formed.The “drift” of the Glacial Period covers the old landscape of Wells county to a depth of many feet. We once found a piece of petrified cedar wood with a knot on one side, thirty-eight feet below the surface, when digging a well on our farm near Cathay. Silt, the essential element in soils for producing wheat and other small grains, is pulverized limestone mixed with the black earth of the “drift.” This limestone causes the hard water in the wells.There are many huge boulders near Cathay and in other localities, showing parallel lines or striations on their under surfaces, indicative of their long journeys during the Glacial Period. There are many Moraines or chains of ridges. One just south of Cathay, one northeast and another southwest of Fessenden, and several in the Harvey vicinity. A Moraine is an accumulation of earth and stones carried and deposited by a glacier. There are terminal, lateral, medial and ground moraines.In early days there was much alkali in the soil in some localities, which was caused by the salt water not having drained sufficiently after the Glacial Period. These spots were indicated on the surface by an irregular broken condition of grassless sod, and a chalky whitish soil. They were very deceiving when covered with water, and teams became easily mired. Wells of good and pure water are found at a depth of 40 feet. The lakes are fresh water and dry alkaline.Alkali lakes are formed by more water collecting than can evaporate, and when it drys up, the alkali minerals dissolve and leave a white crust on the lake beds.The alkali is derived from the shales or rocks, that were crushed and deposited as sediment in the sea water that once covered the land.There is much evidence of Lignite coal deposits. Lignite is a brownish coal, in which the alteration of vegetable material is produced farther than in peat, but not as far as in sub-bituminous coal.Many specimens of mica or isinglass were found on the ridges, some of them in quite large chunks. When a boy, I took much delight in finding the larger pieces and splitting them into sheets and using them for windows in sod play houses.The Big Slough is a long shallow marsh or meadow-land extending from near Bremen to the Heimdal vicinity. In pioneer days it was the usual nesting place for countless numbers of wild ducks and geese, and one of their greatest habitats in the territory. Central North Dakota is long included in the greatest wild duck flight in North America, which is second in the World. Russia has the greatest flight.  |

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac\_Stevens

**Isaac Ingalls Stevens** (March 25, 1818 – September 1, 1862) was the first [governor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governor) of [Washington Territory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Territory), a [United States Congressman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congressman), and a [major general](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_general_%28United_States%29) in the [Union Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_Army) during the [American Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_War) until his death at the [Battle of Chantilly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Chantilly).

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## [[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Isaac_Stevens&action=edit&section=1)] Early life

Stevens was born and raised in [Massachusetts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massachusetts), leaving his home state for the [United States Military Academy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Military_Academy) at [West Point](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Point%2C_New_York) in the late 1830s. He graduated in 1839, at the top of his class, and served for a number of years with the [Army Corps of Engineers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Army_Corps_of_Engineers).

He was the [adjutant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adjutant) of the Corps of Engineers during the Mexican-American War, seeing action at the siege of [Vera Cruz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Veracruz) and at [Cerro Gordo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Cerro_Gordo), [Contreras](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Contreras), and [Churubusco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Churubusco). In the latter fight, he caught the attention of his superiors, who rewarded him with the [brevet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brevet_%28military%29) rank of [captain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain_%28United_States%29). He was again cited and breveted for gallantry at the [Battle of Chapultepec](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Chapultepec), this time to the rank of [Major](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_%28United_States%29). He saw further combat at [Molino del Rey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Molino_del_Rey), and the [Battle for Mexico City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_for_Mexico_City), where he was severely wounded. He later wrote a book on his adventures, *Campaigns of the Rio Grande and Mexico, with Notices of the Recent Work of Major Ripley* (New York, 1851).

He superintended fortifications on the New England coast from 1841 until 1849, when he assumed command of the coast survey office in Washington, D. C., serving in that role until March 1853.

## [[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Isaac_Stevens&action=edit&section=2)] Governor





Isaac Stevens

Having been a firm supporter of [Franklin Pierce](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Pierce)'s candidacy for [President of the United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States) in 1852, Stevens was rewarded by President Pierce on March 2, 1853 by being named governor of the newly-created Washington Territory (a position which carried with it the title of [Superintendent of Indian Affairs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Bureau_of_Indian_Affairs) for that region). Stevens chose to add one more duty as he traveled west to the territory he would govern: the government was calling for a [surveyor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surveyor_%28surveying%29) to map an appropriate [railroad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Railroad) [route](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Railroad_survey) across the northern [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), and with Stevens' engineering experience (and likely the favor of Pierce yet again) he won the bid, and spent most of 1853 moving slowly across the prairie, surveying his way to Washington Territory, where he took up his post at [Olympia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olympia%2C_Washington) as governor in November that year.

As a result of his expedition, Stevens wrote a third book, *Report of Explorations for a Route for the Pacific Railroad near the 47th and 49th Parallels of North Latitude, from St. Paul, Minnesota, to Puget Sound*, (commissioned and published by the [United States Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress)) (2 vols., Washington, 1855–60).

Stevens was a controversial governor in his time, and has become more controversial in retrospect. He used a careful combination of intimidation and force to compel the [Native American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_in_the_United_States) tribes of Washington Territory to sign treaties that handed over most of their lands and rights to Stevens' government. These included the [Treaty of Medicine Creek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Medicine_Creek), [Treaty of Hellgate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Hellgate), [Treaty of Neah Bay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Makah_people#Treaty_of_Neah_Bay), [Treaty of Point Elliott](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Point_Elliott), [Point No Point Treaty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Point_No_Point_Treaty), and [Quinault Treaty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quinault_Treaty). When Stevens was met with resistance, he used the troops at his disposal to exact vengeance. His winter campaign against the [Yakama tribe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yakama), led by [Chief Kamiakin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamiakin), and his execution of the [Nisqually](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nisqually_%28tribe%29) chieftain [Leschi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Leschi) (for the crime of having killed Stevens' soldiers in open combat), among other deeds, led a number of powerful citizens in the territory to beg Pierce to remove Stevens. Territorial Judge [Edward Lander](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Edward_Lander&action=edit&redlink=1) and [Ezra Meeker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezra_Meeker) (an influential private citizen) were both vocal in opposing Stevens—Lander was arrested as a result, and Meeker was simply ignored. Pierce sent word to Stevens of his disapproval of Stevens' conduct, but refused to remove the governor. Those who opposed Stevens ultimately lost public support, as the majority of the citizens of Washington Territory saw Meeker as being on the side of the "Indians", and Stevens on the side of the white settlers.

As a result of this public perception, Stevens was popular enough to be elected the territory's delegate to the [United States Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress) in 1857 and 1858. The tensions between the whites and the Native Americans would be left for others to resolve—Stevens is often charged with responsibility for the later conflicts in eastern [Washington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_%28U.S._state%29) and [Idaho](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idaho), especially the war fought by the United States against [Chief Joseph](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_Joseph) and the [Nez Perce](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nez_Perce), but these events were decades away when Isaac Stevens left Washington for good in 1857.

## [[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Isaac_Stevens&action=edit&section=3)] Civil War

When the Civil War began in 1861, following the Union defeat at the [First Battle of Bull Run](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Battle_of_Bull_Run), Stevens was commissioned in the Army again. This time, he was [Colonel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonel_%28United_States%29) of the [79th New York Volunteers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/79th_New_York_Volunteer_Infantry), known as the "Cameron Highlanders." He became a [brigadier general](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigadier_general_%28United_States%29) on September 28, 1861, and fought at [Port Royal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Fort_Pulaski). He led the Second Brigade of the Expeditionary Forces sent to attack the [Sea Islands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_Islands) off the coast of [South Carolina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Carolina). He led a [division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Division_%28military%29) at the [Battle of Secessionville](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Secessionville), where he personally led an attack on Fort Lamar, losing 25% of his men.

Stevens was transferred with his [IX Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IX_Corps_%28ACW%29) division to [Virginia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia) to serve under Maj. Gen. [John Pope](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Pope_%28military_officer%29) in the [Northern Virginia Campaign](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Virginia_Campaign) and the [Second Battle of Bull Run](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Bull_Run). He was killed in action at the [Battle of Chantilly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Chantilly) after picking up the fallen regimental colors of his old regiment, shouting "Highlanders, my Highlanders, follow your general!" Charging with his troops while carrying the banner of [Saint Andrew's Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Andrew%27s_Cross), Stevens was struck in the head by a bullet and died instantly.

He was buried in [Newport, Rhode Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newport%2C_Rhode_Island) at [Island Cemetery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Burying_Ground_and_Island_Cemetery).[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Stevens#cite_note-0) In March 1863, he was posthumously promoted to [major general](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_general_%28United_States%29), backdated to July 18, 1862.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Stevens#cite_note-1)

[Hazard Stevens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hazard_Stevens), Isaac's son, was also injured in the Battle of Chantilly. He also became a general in the U.S. Army and an author, and along with [P. B. Van Trump](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P._B._Van_Trump) was the first to climb [Mount Rainier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Rainier).

## [[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Isaac_Stevens&action=edit&section=4)] Memorialization

* [Stevens County, Washington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevens_County%2C_Washington), and [Stevens County, Minnesota](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevens_County%2C_Minnesota), were both named in his honor.
* Two U.S. Army forts were also named for Stevens—[Fort Stevens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Stevens_%28Washington%2C_D.C.%29) in the Union defenses of Washington and [Fort Stevens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Stevens_%28Oregon%29) in Oregon, which was active from 1863 until 1947 to protect the mouth of the [Columbia River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbia_River).
* A small monument in [Ox Hill Battlefield Park](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ox_Hill_Battlefield_Park) commemorates the death of Stevens.
* The Isaac Stevens Camp #1, Washington State Camp of the [Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sons_of_Union_Veterans_of_the_Civil_War), was also named in honor of the fallen general.
* Stevens Hall on the campus of [Washington State University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_State_University) was named for Governor Stevens.
* The city of [Lake Stevens, Washington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Stevens%2C_Washington) and Lake Stevens (lake) is named for him.
* The town of [Stevensville, Montana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevensville%2C_Montana) is named after him although he carries little favor in the town for his treatment of the native [Bitterroot Salish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bitterroot_Salish) Indians and his deception in the [Treaty of Hellgate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Hellgate).
* Isaac Stevens Middle School in [Pasco, Washington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pasco%2C_Washington) and Isaac I. Stevens Elementary School in [Seattle, Washington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle%2C_Washington) are after him.
* Stevens Peak and Upper and Lower Stevens Lake in Northern Idaho (Just south of Mullan, Idaho) were named after him by [Capt. John Mullan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Mullan_%28road_builder%29).

## [[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Isaac_Stevens&action=edit&section=5)] See also

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| http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/d/d9/Acw_bs_7a.png/29px-Acw_bs_7a.png | [***American Civil War portal***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3AAmerican_Civil_War) |
| http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/f/fa/United_States_Department_of_the_Army_Seal.svg/28px-United_States_Department_of_the_Army_Seal.svg.png | [***United States Army portal***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3AUnited_States_Army) |

* [History of Olympia, Washington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Olympia%2C_Washington)
* [List of American Civil War generals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_American_Civil_War_generals#Union-S)
* [List of Massachusetts generals in the American Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Massachusetts_generals_in_the_American_Civil_War)

## [[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Isaac_Stevens&action=edit&section=6)] References

1. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Stevens#cite_ref-0) [Isaac Ingalls Stevens](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=21358) at [Find a Grave](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Find_a_Grave)
2. [**^**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Stevens#cite_ref-1) United States Senate (1887). ["Friday, March 6, 1863"](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(ej01338)):#0130208). [*Journal of the executive proceedings of the Senate of the United States of America 1862-1864*](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(ej01338)):#0130208). Government Printing Office. pp. 206. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(ej01338)):#0130208>.
* *This article incorporates text from the* [*public domain*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain)[*Appletons' Cyclopædia of American Biography*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appletons%27_Cyclop%C3%A6dia_of_American_Biography)*.*
* [Isaac Stevens](http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=S000881) at the [*Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biographical_Directory_of_the_United_States_Congress) Retrieved on 2008-11-05
* [Stevens biography](http://home.comcast.net/~suvcw1/people/stevens/stevens.html)

## [[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Isaac_Stevens&action=edit&section=7)] Further reading

* [Meany, Edmond S](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meany%2C_Edmond_S) (1915). *Governors of Washington : territorial and state*. University of Washington,. [Available online through the Washington State Library's Classics in Washington History collection](http://www.secstate.wa.gov/history/publications_detail.aspx?p=30)
* Stevens, Hazard (1900). [*The Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens*](http://books.google.com/books?id=H5TlmUR4rdYC&pg=PA1&dq=hazard+stevens#PPR1,M2). Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company. <http://books.google.com/books?id=H5TlmUR4rdYC&pg=PA1&dq=hazard+stevens#PPR1,M2>.
* Watson, C. L. (1862). *Isaac I. Stevens : "In memoriam," 1862*. [Available online through the Washington State Library's Classics in Washington History collection](http://www.secstate.wa.gov/history/publications_detail.aspx?p=9) A poem in 6 stanza. Holograph, signed. Discovered in Kate Stevens Bingham's Bible.

## [[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Isaac_Stevens&action=edit&section=8)] External links

* [Stevens Hall on the campus of WSU](http://www.wsu.edu/~stevens/about.html)

http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/jessie/index.html

Located west of the town of Jessie, Griggs County, Lake Jessie State Historic Site marks the July 25 camp of the Nicollet-Frémont expedition of 1839. Joseph Nicholas Nicollet, a French astronomer and cartographer, came to the United States to study the physical geography of North America. He wanted to explore the region between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers in the area that now makes up the states of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Nicollet was assisted by John Charles Frémont, a lieutenant in the Topographical Bureau of the Corps of Engineers. The lake was named for Jessie Ann Benton, daughter of Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, who later married Frémont. Nicollet’s 1843 “Hydrographic Basin” map is a masterpiece of nineteenth-century cartography.

A campsite on the lake was also used by Isaac I. Stevens and his party on July 10-11, 1853, during a survey of a proposed railroad route. This was also a stopping point on July 15-16, 1862, on July 20, 1863, and in 1866 by James L. Fisk and his wagon trains on their way to the Montana gold fields (see [**Fort Dilts**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/dilts/index.html)). Mail carriers who crossed through the area between 1867 and 1872 sought shelter on the east end of Lake Jessie.

Enclosed by a fence, the site is .29 acres of state land, located on top of a hill beside a farmyard. An aluminum cast marker on a fieldstone and concrete monument describe the events that took place there. A flagpole stands north of the marker.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=BQctAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=fisk+expedition&source=bl&ots=gUbFqCadIY&sig=cvJthXmv-WSjyBSH4aaZGCGKZT0&hl=en&ei=eyGQTPHIDJCqsAPylsGyDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6&ved=0CC0Q6AEwBQ#v=snippet&q=jessie&f=false>

Expedition of Captain Fisk to the Rocky Mountains

July 21 Road over rolling prairie to Lakes Lydia and Jessie, where we camped at noon and remained to rest stock, &c. The water of Lakes Lydia and Jessie (twin lakes) is slightly saline, soda and magnesia prevailing. There is, however, a good spring three-quarters of a. mile southwest of our camp, in a ravine on the shore of Lake Lydia, Shale crops out at the edge of the lakes, and one of our party discovered coal on Lake Jessie. Both of these lakes are very beautiful; they are surrounded by bold bluffs, well timbered. Our camping place was between the two lakes on a small eminence. In the wood at the back of camp we heard an incessant noise of birds, and we found the trees full of nests; it was a perfect rookery; there were cranes, crows, gulls, storks, shite- pokes, &a &c., with plenty of ducks and geese on the lakes beyond. Some of our boys were soon at work securing a meal. Our scouts reported that there was a large camp a mile or two to the south, which they supposed to be General Sibley's, and shortly afterwards several officers belonging to General Sibley's expedition visited our little camp. From them we learned that part of the general's forces were camped on Lake Atchison. We found abundance of wild cherries in the thickets round camp, and one of our party discovered an arrow, painted red, on the top of the highest hill near.. It was laid on a large flat stone, pointing south. Antoine Freniere described it to be a "medicine arrow" an offering to the God of the Rock. Some of the party had a very pleasant swim in. Lake Lydia; the water is delightful for bathing.

July 22.—Camp Lydia.--This camp we named in. honor of Mrs. Fisk. We laid over today to recruit stock, &c. In the afternoon, by invitation, the officers and others of' our expedition dined at General Sibley's camp. We received a most cordial welcome from the officers and men of th e expedition. We learned here that the general had gone south to the Coteau du Missouri,. with some 2,200 of his forces, leaving the remainder in this camp, which was strongly fortified. General Sibley was in pursuit of the Sissiton Sioux, who, it is said, wished to surrender to him.

http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/atchison.html

Camp Atchison, two and one-half miles south of Binford, Griggs County, served as a major base camp and landmark for the 1863 Sibley expedition. Prior to July 17, the principal thrust of the expedition had been toward Devils Lake where alleged Indian participants of the Dakota Conflict of 1862 were rumored to be living. On July 17, however, friendly Chippewa Indians visited General Sibley at Camp Pope and told him that the people he was pursuing had left the Devils Lake area and were fleeing for the Missouri River. Sibley decided that his army must move rapidly to catch them. To do so they needed to leave sick men, weak horses, the cattle, extra wagons, and other impediments behind.

On July 18 a nearly ideal base camp site was found on the northeastern shore of Lake Sibley. The site could be easily defended, had ample water, grass, and wood nearby, and was near known trails and landmarks, such as Lake Jessie and Devils Lake. The new camp was hurriedly established and was named for Captain Charles Atchison, the command’s Ordnance and Assistant Commissary Officer. Fortified with substantial trenches and earthen breastworks, the camp was garrisoned by two companies from each of the three full infantry regiments, one company of cavalry, two cannons, plus the sick and disabled men, in all, a force of about 1,000 men.

View [State Historic Sites of ND](http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&t=h&msa=0&msid=102964840396206639097.000453540dde81f56a313&source=embed&ll=47.555329,-98.340511&spn=0.034755,0.042744&z=13) in a larger map

The command suffered its first fatality that day when Private George E. Brent, a popular and respected veteran of Company D, 1st Regiment, Minnesota Mounted Rangers, was shot and killed by a second lieutenant from Company L of the same regiment. Some observers thought that the incident was accidental, but others thought it deliberate. The lieutenant was eventually arrested and held for court-martial.

On July 19 a courier from Fort Abercrombie brought mail for the troops. The spirits of the campaign were boosted with the announcement that Vicksburg, where some of these men had served only months before, had fallen to Union troops in a Mississippi campaign of the Civil War.

The following day, General Sibley and 1,450 infantry, 520 mounted rangers, 75 to 100 teamsters, pioneers and quartermaster’s employees, six artillery crews, a body of scouts, about fifty wagons, and 1,000 horses and mules marched off in pursuit of the suspected enemy. While they were gone, Captain Burt led a reconnaissance to Devils Lake, where he unexpectedly captured the teenage son of Little Crow, one of the Mdewakanton Santee Dakota leaders of the previous year’s conflict.

On August 10 General Sibley and his army returned to Camp Atchison. Stopping a few miles out, the men brushed and polished and broke out remaining uniform parts in order to make as impressive an entrance as possible for a command that had marched more than 300 miles on foot, fought three battles, and several skirmishes in twenty-one days. For their part, the garrison and the expedition’s drum corps welcomed the returning troops with flags and music. On the morning of August 12, the troops abandoned the camp and the graves of two of their comrades, Privates George E. Brent and Samuel Wanemaker.

Camp Atchison State Historic Site bears little resemblance to the large field camp of 1863. A fieldstone monument and an aluminum marker identify the site. Only a small portion of the camp is preserved, including a small segment of the original rifle pits. The largest part of the site, with the graves of two soldiers, lies on private land across Highway 1 to the west.

http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/history3.html

Sibley's forces reached Dakota Territory near Big Stone Lake on June 24, 1863. They entered present-day North Dakota on July 2 southeast of Lake Tewaukon and headed northwest towards Devils Lake (see [**Camp Buell**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/buell.html), [**Camp Weiser**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/weiser.html), [**Camp Sheardown**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/sheardown.html), and [**Camp Corning**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/corning.html)). By July 17 Sibley had learned that the fugitive Sioux had left the Devils Lake area and were moving toward the Missouri River. In order to increase his army's mobility, Sibley deposited unneeded baggage, surplus supplies, and disabled men and animals at Camp Atchison and continued the pursuit at a faster pace (see [**Camp Atchison**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/atchison.html), [**Camp Kimball**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/kimball.html), and [**Camp Grant**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/grant.html), and [**Lake Johnson**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/johnson.html)).

After battles on July 24 at Big Mound (see [**Big Mound Battlefield**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/bmb.html) and [**McPhail's Butte Overlook**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/mcphail.html) and [**Camp Whitney**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/whitney.html)), July 26 at Dead Buffalo Lake, and July 28 at Stony Lake, Sibley pursued the Sioux to the Missouri. He fought another engagement with the Indian warriors as their families escaped across the river on July 30. After waiting two more days in hopes of a rendezvous with General Sully's troops, Sibley, his command short of food and his men exhausted, returned to Camp Atchison. On August 12, 1863, they headed home to Minnesota (see [**Camp Arnold**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/arnold.html), [**Buffalo Creek**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/sibleysully/buffalo.html), and [**Maple Creek Crossing**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/maplecreek/index.html)).

While Sibley waited for Sully at the Missouri River, Sully waited for his steamboats at Fort Pierre (at present-day Pierre, South Dakota). Sully's arm of the campaign was plagued by a succession of delays. The first occurred when the expedition's original commander, General John Cook, was replaced by Sully during the campaign's critical planning phase. Cook, as commander of the Military District of Dakota, was accused of failing to decisively respond to the Dakota War of 1862 and was removed in response to public outcry. To make matters worse, the Second Nebraska Cavalry, a major component of the command, arrived late at the Sioux City, Iowa muster site.

Unquestionably, however, the biggest factor in the command's late departure was a prolonged drought that prevented the expedition's steamboats from moving on the uncommonly low water levels of the Missouri River. On the July 25 rendezvous date, Sully's troops had just arrived at Fort Pierre and were still three weeks ahead of the steamboats. In mid-August, Sully, desperate to advance, loaded the available supplies onto borrowed wagons and marched overland toward Devils Lake with rations adequate for a mere twenty-three days.

In late August, long after Sibley had departed for Minnesota, Sully's command reached Long Lake, southeast of present-day Bismarck. Realizing that he had missed Sibley, Sully still hoped to catch up with the Dakotas. Captured informants reported that the Dakotas had escaped Sibley's army by crossing the Missouri, but had returned after Sibley departed and had moved eastward to hunt buffalo for winter provisions. Sully turned his army eastward toward the James River.

On September 3, 1863, a scouting party discovered an Indian village near Whitestone Hill. The soldiers stalled the Indians' escape long enough for Sully to bring his main force into battle position. The confrontation at Whitestone Hill is considered to be the bloodiest fight between whites and Indians in eastern North Dakota. Twenty-three soldiers and an estimated two hundred Indians were killed, including many women and children. Another 158 Indians were captured and most of the Indians' food, shelter, tools, weapons, and transportation were destroyed, leaving the survivors destitute in the face of the coming winter (see [**Whitestone Hill**](http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/whitestone/index.html)). With his mission essentially accomplished and supplies dangerously low, Sully and his men returned to winter quarters, thus ending the 1863 field campaign.