

The Winnebago War

By Col. Thomas L. McKenney

At four o'clock on the afternoon, of September 1st, 1827, we arrived at the Portage of Wisconsin, and encamped on a high bluff which overlooks the country for a great distance to the south and west. We had not finished the business of encamping, before seven Winnebago warriors came along, on their way from Green Isle to the Four Lakes, fully armed and equipped. It was a direction in which we did not desire any of that sort of force to go, the enemy being at the Four Lakes in great numbers. Major Whistler* gave orders to disarm and detain them. They were told they should be well fed, and treated well, whilst they behaved themselves. They appeared to feel deeply when their arms were taken from them; nor did they appear to like the strength and appearance of the military. An express arrived from General Atkinson, announcing his approach, and directing Major Whistler to halt and fortify himself at the Portage, and wait his arrival, as the capture of the enemy could be made, with his additional force, with more ease and less sacrifice of life.

The object of the joint expedition of General Atkinson from Jefferson Barracks, below St. Louis, and of Major Whistler from Ft. Howard, on Green Bay, was, as has been intimated, to capture those who had committed the murders at Prairie Du Chien, and put a stop to any further aggressions of the sort. The Winnebagoes, it will be remembered, had been advised,

*WILLIAM WHISTLER, entered the army from the Northwestern Territory as a Second Lieutenant, in June, 1801; made First Lieutenant in 1807; distinguished himself in the battle of Maguago, 9th Aug., 1812; promoted to Captain in Dec., 1812; Major, in 1826; Lieutenant Colonel in 1834, and Colonel in 1845. He died, at an advanced age, near Cincinnati, Dec. 21, 1863; after sixty-two years continuous and faithful services rendered his country.