

The village of Wabashaw, the site of the present town of Winona, was the lowest point on the river at which they expected to encounter the Dakotas. Having passed this point in safety, and a strong wind having sprung up, the boats parted company, and one of them, the "O. H. Perry," by the time it reached the mouth of the Bad Axe, was several miles in advance of the other.

In the meantime thirty-seven Winnebagoes, inspired by the same common feelings of vengeance, cruelty, and hate, which had led to the murder of Methode and his family; and which was, on that very day, instigating the invasion of the peaceful home of Gagnier, and the murder of its inmates by Red Bird, Wekau and Chichonsie, had, in pursuance doubtless of a common purpose to exterminate the whites, concealed themselves upon an island in the Mississippi near the mouth of the Bad Axe, between which and the left bank of the river, it was known that the two keel-boats would pass on their return from Fort Snelling.

These boats, in model and size, were similar to ordinary canal boats, and furnished considerable protection from exterior attacks with small arms, to those on board, who concealed themselves below its gunwales.

As the "Perry" approached the island where these hostile savages were concealed, and when within thirty yards of the bank, the air suddenly resounded with the blood-chilling and ear-piercing cries of the war-whoop, and a volley of rifle balls rained across the deck. Of the sixteen men on board, either from marvellous good luck, or because they were below deck, only one man fell at the first fire. He was a negro named Peter, his leg was dreadfully shattered, and he afterwards died of the wound.

The crew now concealed themselves in the boat below the water line, suffering it to float whithersoever the current and the high east wind might drive it. The second volley resulted in the instant death of one man, an American named Stewart, who had risen to return the first fire, and his musket protruding through a loop-hole, showed some Winnebago where to aim. The bullet passed directly through his heart, and he fell dead with his finger on the trigger of his undischarged gun.