

various tribes of Indians at Prairie du Chien. The commissioners were Gen. John McNeil, an officer of the United States army, Pierre Ménard, ex lieut.-governor of Illinois, and Caleb Atwater, a weak and inoffensive old man from Ohio, Charles S. Hempstead, for many years my law partner at Galena, was the secretary of the commission. The country purchased was of vast importance, embracing the region from Rock Island to the Wisconsin River on the north, and to Lake Michigan on the east, and taking in all that is now in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin, and, in fact, making the United States the possessor of all the Indian country from the Gulf of Mexico to the mouth of the Wisconsin River.

The first person in civil life to whom the attention of the commissioners and others interested in making a treaty was directed was Col. Gratiot, as a man having more influence with the Indians than any other in securing the object sought for. The high estimation in which he was held by the Winnebagoes, brought to him the confidence of the other tribes, who eagerly sought his advice and suggestions. Of such value were the services of Col. Gratiot in negotiating the treaty, the secretary of the commission wrote: "Col. Gratiot is very busy, and if a treaty be made with the Winnebagoes, the government may mainly thank him for it."

From the friendly relations existing between the Indians and Col. Gratiot, he had been enabled to exercise a great influence in arranging the Indian troubles of 1827-28; but it was not till the Black Hawk War broke out in 1832 (which drew the Winnebagoes into its vortex), that his full influence was felt. In the annals of those times, few names more frequently appear than that of Col. Gratiot, and no man throughout the whole trouble accomplished more than he. The position he held as agent for the Winnebagoes, and the friendly relations that had existed between him and the principal chiefs of the tribe, was evidenced by the fact that I have stated, that the chiefs had come to his house at Gratiot's Grove to advise him that war was to be declared, and to remove the women and children.