

Letter from Willis Gorman to James Ermatinger

Executive Office
Saint Paul
May 18, 1854

Mr. Jas. Ermatinger
Chippewa Falls, Wis.

Sir,

Your (letter)¹ dated at Chippewa Falls 15th April. My absence at Washington has prevented an earlier reply. If the Indians see fit to come and see me, I will pay you five dollars per day to furnish them a little provisions and to act as interpreter. They had best not come until the first of July as we will then have some arrangements on foot for a treaty at Fond Du Lac or some point more convenient.² The bill for a treaty has passed the House of Reps. in Congress and perhaps the Senate before this ()³. I have now confined in prison the Sioux who killed the Chippewas⁴ in your vicinity and shall punish them severely by law.⁵

Respectfully

Your Obt. Serv.⁶

Signed W.A. Gorman

¹ The word "letter" does not appear in the original text, but is added as an obvious oversight by Governor Gorman.

² Gorman is referring to the Treaty of 1854, which was negotiated at La Pointe by Commissioners Henry C. Gilbert and David B. Herriman on September 30, relinquishing

territory to the U.S. and moving the Ojibwa further west to an area typically known as the arrowhead region of Minnesota, above the north shore of Lake Superior (see Danziger, Maps).

³ Governor Gorman left this area blank. It was first assumed that he had planned to fill in an appropriate date later. Having recently left the House of Representatives to accept the post as Governor of the Minnesota Territory, one can conjecture that Gorman probably had plenty of contacts in Washington to keep him abreast with the developments of the treaty proposal being discussed. But more than likely, this simply indicates a new paragraph, as was the style in Gorman's time

⁴ Writers of Gorman's day commonly referred to the area tribes as the "Chippewa," and their enemies to the west as the "Sioux." Throughout this paper I have instead used the more modern terms of "Ojibwa" and "Dakota," respectively. Although many contemporary Native Americans prefer the reference of "Anishanabe" over "Ojibwa," I have employed the more commonly used term to avoid confusion.

⁵ It is believed that this last sentence is an addendum or post script, as Gorman wasn't informed of the prisoners until May 22.

⁶ "Obedient Servant;" a common closing in the standard letter format of the time.