

Old Simon Rescues Mrs. Newman

Fifty miles away at Yellow Medicine, another man was also planning a trip, but unlike Lieutenant Sheehan he was not anticipating much pleasure from it. His name was Simon Anawangmani, He Who Goes Galloping Along, also called Old Simon by many. He was a village chief of the Christian farmer Wahpeton, and a former president of the Hazelwood Republic. He had spent almost all day in council with the other Christian chiefs and had just listened to Tom Robertson's report on his trip to Fort Ridgley. Ever since the heated council on the sixth, he had been toying with the idea of spiriting away the three white captives that were in his care. He understood why Little Paul was against the idea, but when Robertson reported seeing Lorenzo Lawrence at the fort, and later when criers had passed through the camp announcing the move set for the next day, he felt that the time was ripe to make his move. He reasoned that once they made the move up to the Chippewa River, because of the greater distance, such an action would be much less likely to succeed and the danger to the captives even greater. During the confusion of moving the camps he would have his best opportunity, so as he walked back to his lodge, he began formulating a plan for escape. The risks would be great, but he could not bear the thought of Mrs. Jane Newman and her two children falling into the hands of the warriors.

Tuesday September 9, 1862

An hour before sunrise Simon Anawangmani and his close friend James Two Horses escorted Jane Newman and her two young daughters to a wagon hidden in a thicket of young cottonwood trees. The wagon contained various household goods that Simon's wife, Mary, had deemed no longer of necessity, covered by a large tarpaulin. Mrs. Newman and her girls were instructed to climb under the tarp and remain silent. They were given a chamber pot and a jug of water and told to stay in the wagon until Simon returned, and even then, they were not to move about or speak until he let them know it was all right to do so. Fortunately the girls were old enough, eight and ten years of age, to understand the danger of being discovered. That at least was Simon's hope.

The only person who knew of Simon's plan outside of his immediate family was his companion, James, who also happened to be John

Otherday's cousin. James Two Horses, known like his cousin as an independent thinker, had helped Otherday escape with the Upper Agency whites on the second day of the war. Simon went to James with his plan because he knew that James would enjoy fooling the war faction as well as the people in his own Peace Party, and also because he knew that James had an extra wagon. James was elated when he learned from Robertson that his cousin John had made it to the fort, and he wanted in a small way at least to help duplicate what Otherday had accomplished. He would have liked to accompany Simon, but understood that it was safer for only one of them to go, and the Peace Party would need every man in the camp if they had to fight the war faction.

"You will say hello to my cousin for me when you reach the soldier's house?" asked James as the two men walked back to the camp.

"Yes, I will let him know you helped me. Do you remember what you must do this day?" replied Simon.

"Yes, when we reach a spot nearest the wagon, I will act as though my wagon is broken and send my son to find you."

"Good. The Lord be with you, brother. We will see each other again on the trail."

[While the retreating Dakota were stopped by Red Iron and his warriors,] Simon Anawangmani decided that it was now safe for him move with his wagon full of captives. The ruse he had concocted with James Two Horses had worked perfectly. The captives and their wagon had remained hidden among the cottonwood trees as the procession began that morning. When James' own wagon reached a spot on the trail nearest to the hidden wagon, he pulled out of line and pretended to have a breakdown. He sent his son to find Simon who was riding about fifty yards ahead, and Simon came immediately with a box of tools. Both men then acted as if they were working on the wagon until there were no more Soldier's Lodge members about. Then Simon simply walked away. To anyone observing them, it looked like Simon was going off to find a private place to relieve himself. After about fifteen minutes, James got back in his wagon and drove off. That was the easy part.

The biggest challenge, Simon knew, was to pick the right time to leave their hiding place. It would have to be after all of the braves who were keeping an eye on the Peace Party members had left. Even after the last wagon was well out of sight, Simon waited for the few braves who

might still be lurking about to show themselves. Certain there would be some, he waited, keeping an eye on the trail from the cottonwood thicket. His patience was rewarded a few minutes later when a lone wagon came rolling up the trail, escorted by a half-dozen braves on horseback. He could not make out who was driving the wagon, but it appeared that two of the passengers were white women. Someone had had the same idea as he but had been caught. At least from the behavior of the braves that's how it seemed. At any rate, he was glad that he had waited. A few minutes more and three other mounted warriors came trotting up the trail in the same direction. "I hope they are the last ones," Simon said to himself as he watched them move off to the west. They probably were, he thought, but still he waited another half hour before he returned to the wagon and informed Mrs. Newman and the girls that they were leaving. Warning them to remain under cover, Simon drove the wagon out of the thicket and turned east on the trail.

They continued east, past the now empty camps, the abandoned and burned-out Upper Agency, and finally across the Yellow Medicine. After emerging from the river bottom, Simon turned the wagon to the south out onto the open prairie. He wanted to avoid running into any scouts coming and going from the east who would surely be using the trail. He intended to swing wide to the south, perhaps all the way around the Lower Agency. There was still some danger of running into one of the raiding parties that continued to go out to the Cottonwood Valley. He hoped to avoid them, but if he did run into one, he thought he might be able to bluff his way out. Or they might all be brought back as captives. There was no way of knowing, and no plan was perfect, Simon felt. Their fate was now in God's hands.

