

SMITHSONIAN MISCELLANEOUS COLLECTIONS  
VOLUME 87, NUMBER 3

SETH EASTMAN: THE MASTER  
PAINTER OF THE NORTH  
AMERICAN INDIAN

(WITH 15 PLATES)

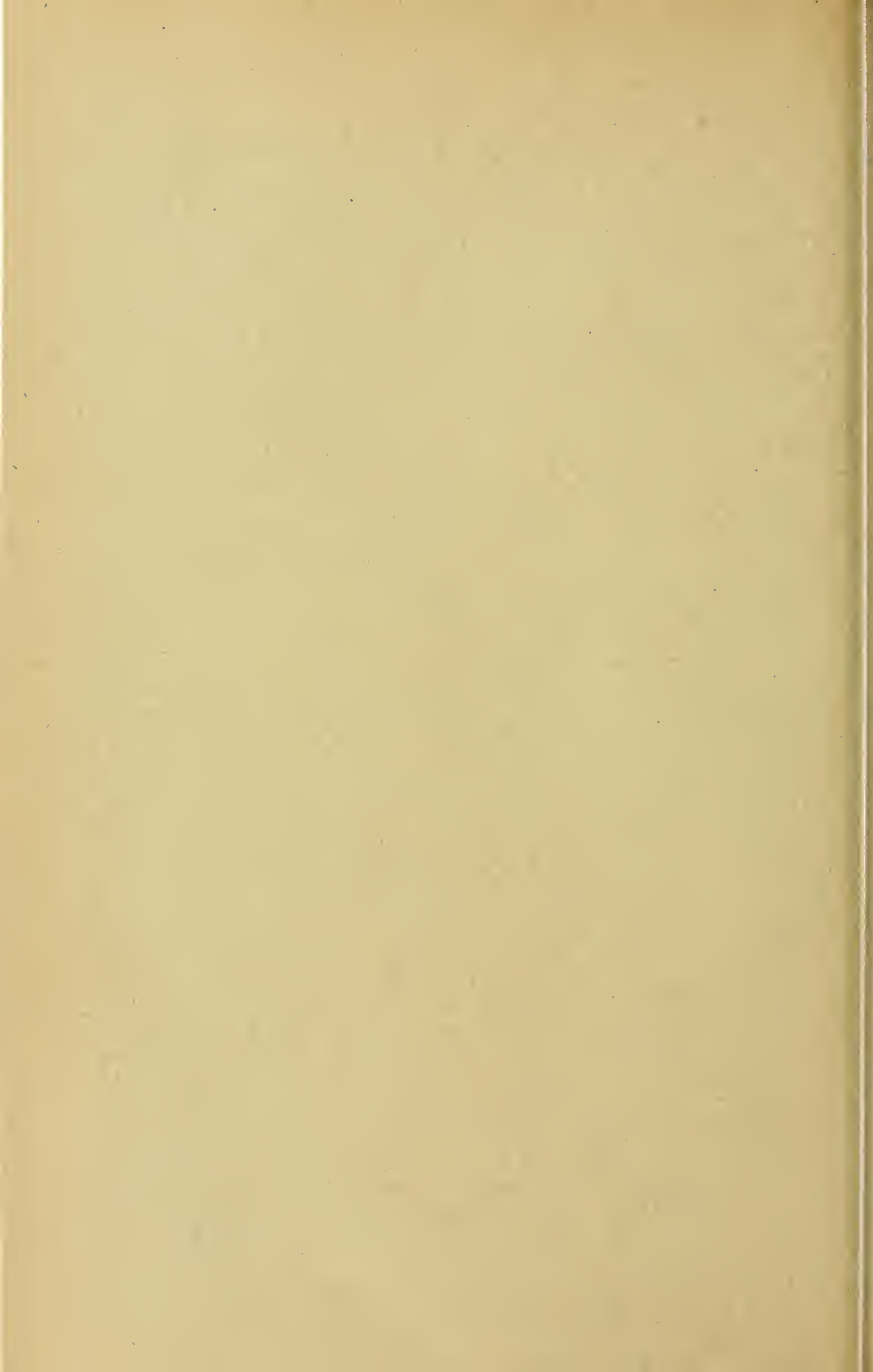
BY  
DAVID I. BUSHNELL, JR.

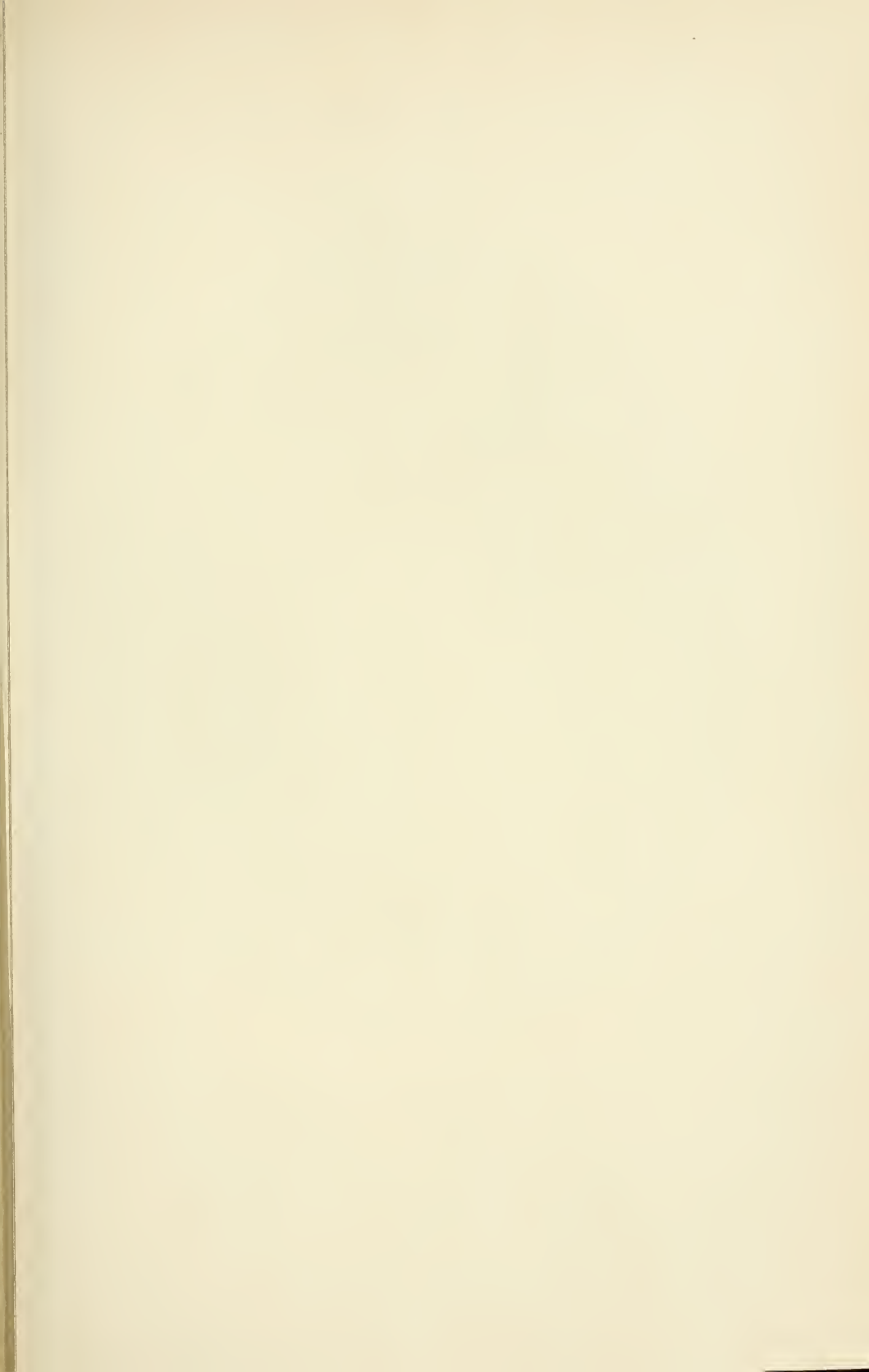
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**SETH EASTMAN, 1808-1875**

Self-portrait about 1829, now owned by his granddaughter,  
Miss A. H. Eastman, Washington, D. C.

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# SETH EASTMAN: THE MASTER PAINTER OF THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN

By DAVID I. BUSHNELL, JR.

(WITH 15 PLATES)

Seth Eastman was born in Brunswick, Me., January 24, 1808, and died in Washington, D. C., August 31, 1875. He was appointed to the Military Academy, West Point, from Maine and entered as a cadet July 1, 1824. He was graduated and became a second lieutenant in the First Infantry July 1, 1829.

Eastman appears to have possessed much natural talent for drawing and painting, but there are neither records nor family traditions of his having received instruction in sketching or portrait painting before he entered the Academy. A small self portrait in oil, reproduced as Plate I, was made at about the time of his graduation and reveals his ability at that time. The approximate date of the picture may be determined by the fact that only one epaulet is shown, worn on the left shoulder. The army regulations of 1825 specified: "Captains of Engineers, one gold Epaulette on the right shoulder, and Subalterns one on the left." By the regulations of 1832 lieutenants, or subalterns, were required to wear two epaulets. Therefore the portrait was necessarily made between the date of his graduation, 1829, and the year 1832.

Eastman's career as an artist may be divided into two distinct periods. The first and more important extended from the time he left the Academy as a second lieutenant until the winter of 1849-1850, when he reached Washington; on February 27, 1850, he was instructed to prepare illustrations for Schoolcraft's great work. His military record during these 20 years, as preserved in the Adjutant General's Office, War Department, Washington, D. C., is as follows:

"On duty at Fort Crawford, Wisconsin, with regiment, 1829-1830, and at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, 1830-1831; on topographical duty 1831 to January 9, 1833; Assistant Teacher of Drawing, United States Military Academy, to January 22, 1840; in the Florida War 1840-1841; with regiment at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, from 1841 to 1846; on recruiting service in 1846; at Fort Snelling, with regiment, 1846 to 1848; on march through Texas to San Antonio, Fredericksburg, and the Neuces River, 1848-1849."

During these 20 years Eastman made innumerable paintings and sketches of the Indians with whom he came in contact, and scenes in the Indian country, including the games, ceremonies, and activities witnessed in and about the native villages and camps. Many of the pencil sketches, remarkable in themselves, served the artist in later years, when they were reproduced in oil on canvas. The sketches were prepared with the greatest care, dated, described, and often signed, thus proving the training for detail which he had received at the Academy.

The two army posts where the young lieutenant was destined to spend his first years of active service after leaving the Military Academy were frontier posts in the heart of the Indian country. Both were frequented by several tribes possessing different manners and customs. Such surroundings afforded a young and enthusiastic artist many opportunities to sketch and study the various ceremonies performed by the Indians who visited the posts, or whose camps and villages were nearby. Many details of their primitive ways of life were maintained, and these, fortunately, were often the subjects of the artist's sketches.

Fort Crawford was the first post to which Eastman was sent during the late summer or early autumn of 1829. It stood a few miles above the mouth of the Wisconsin River, near the left bank of the Mississippi, on the low ground, Prairie du Chien, which had been a gathering place for the native tribes for many generations—long before it was traversed by Europeans. A pencil drawing of the fort, an early example of the artist's work, is reproduced in Plate 2. This bears the legend "Fort Crawford, Prairie du Chien, 537 miles above St. Louis, Oct. 1829." The houses of the village of Prairie du Chien appear on the right.

Father Marquette reached the Mississippi by descending the Wisconsin River, June 17, 1673, and evidently the region soon became well known to the French traders and trappers. Here, about the middle of October, 1766, came an English army officer, and in his narrative printed a few years later he mentioned a large Indian village<sup>1</sup> on the bank of the Mississippi, near the mouth of the Ouisconsin, at a place called by the French La Prairies les Chien, which signifies the Dog Plains; is a large town, and contains about three hundred families; the houses are well built after the Indian manner. . . . This town is a great mart, where all the adjacent tribes, and even those who inhabit the most remote branches of the Mississippi, annually assemble about the latter end of May, bringing with them their furs to dispose of to the traders."

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<sup>1</sup> Carver, J., *Travels through the interior parts of North America, in the years 1766, 1767, and 1768*, p. 50. London, 1770.





PENCIL DRAWING. "FORT CRAWFORD—PRAIRIE DU CHIEN, 537 MILES ABOVE ST. LOUIS, OCT. 1829."

David I. Bashnell, Jr.



Size 25 by 35 inches

"SQUAWS PLAYING BALL ON THE PRAIRIE."

David L. Bushnell, Jr.

Soon after Carver's visit a group of French, coming from Canada, established the village of Prairie du Chien. A garrison was maintained in the vicinity for many years, but not until the year 1816 was the construction of a fort begun. A year later, on July 25, 1817, Maj. Stephen H. Long was at the post when returning from the Falls of Saint Anthony, and that day entered in his journal: <sup>1</sup> "Spent the day in measuring and planning Fort Crawford and its buildings. The work is a square of 340 feet upon each side; and is constructed entirely of wood, as are all its buildings, except the magazine, which is of stone, it will accommodate five companies of soldiers."

Fort Crawford, with the nearby French village of Prairie du Chien, soon became an important center, a gathering place where several tribes received their annuities and conducted their trade with the Fur Company. The tribes who visited the post were the Menominee, Winnebago, and Fox, then occupying lands east of the Mississippi, as well as some of the Siouan tribes from farther up the Mississippi. A small Menominee settlement stood near Fort Crawford in 1831 which was the scene of a serious attack by some of the tribal enemies. About this time Schoolcraft visited the fort and wrote: <sup>2</sup>

"While at Prairie du Chien, the murder of 26 Monomonee men, women, and children, by a war party of the Sacs and Foxes, which had transpired a few days previous, was the subject of exciting interest. It was narrated with all its atrocious circumstances. A flag waved over the common grave of the slain, and several of the wounded Monomonees, who has escaped the massacre, were examined and conversed with. This affray, unparalled for its boldness and turpitude, having occurred in the village of Prairie du Chien, in the hearing of its inhabitants, and in sight of the fort, was made the subject of demand by the government for surrendry of the murderers, and produced the concentration of troops on that frontier, which eventuated the Indian war of 1832."

It is believed the picture of "Squaws Playing Ball on the Prairie," a photograph of which is reproduced in Plate 3, represents a group of Menominee, and possibly members of another tribe, in the vicinity of Fort Crawford, and that it was sketched while Eastman was stationed at that post, 1829-1830. This would have been during the year preceding the massacre mentioned by Schoolcraft. The level prairie is clearly shown, with the river in the distance and the hills beyond. The

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<sup>1</sup> Long, Maj. Stephen H., *Voyage in a six-oared skiff to the Falls of Saint Anthony in 1817*. Coll. Minnesota Hist. Soc., vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 56, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> Schoolcraft, Henry R., *Narrative of an expedition through the Upper Mississippi to Itasca Lake*, p. 13. New York, 1834.

smoky atmosphere and browned grass proves that it was a scene witnessed late in the autumn, and suggests Indian summer, that most delightful season of the year in the northern valley. This painting was one of six purchased from the artist by the American Art Union in 1849. It bore the number 169 in the catalogue that year and was distributed with others December 21, 1849. It is a work of great beauty and interest, and is believed to be one of Eastman's earliest Indian pictures.

Others had witnessed and mentioned the game being played at, or rather on, Prairie du Chien. Pike reached the village April 18, 1806, and two days later, Sunday, April 20, held a council with Winnebago chiefs, and that same afternoon, so he wrote in his journal:<sup>1</sup> "they had a great game of the cross on the prairie, between the Sioux on the one side, and the Puants and Reynards on the other. The ball is made of some hard substance and covered with leather, the cross sticks are round and net work, with handles of three feet long. . . . In the game which I witnessed, the Sioux were victorious, more I believe, from the superiority of their skill in throwing the ball than by their swiftness, for I thought the Puants and Reynards the swiftest runners." The great chief Wabasha was present at the gathering and consequently the Sioux who that day played against the Winnebago and Fox were probably of his band, who had come down the Mississippi from their village on Wabasha Prairie, mentioned by many who passed up and down the river during succeeding years. But it remained for Catlin to leave the most interesting account of a game of ball played by women on the level ground at Prairie du Chien. This was witnessed during the summer of 1835, about five years after Eastman was stationed at Fort Crawford. Catlin was at the post when, so he wrote:<sup>2</sup> "Wa-be-sha's band of the Sioux came there, and remained several weeks to get their annuities." A day came when the men "wanted a little more amusement, and felt disposed to indulge the weaker sex in a little recreation also; it was announced amongst them, and through the village, that the women were going to have a ball-play!

"For this purpose the men, in their very liberal trades they were making, and filling their canoes with goods delivered to them on a year's credit, laid out a great quantity of ribbons and calicoes with other presents well adapted to the wants and desires of the women; which were hung on a pole resting on crotches, and guarded by an old

<sup>1</sup> Pike, Maj. Z. M., *An account of expeditions to the sources of the Mississippi, and through the western parts of Louisiana*, p. 100. Philadelphia, 1810.

<sup>2</sup> Catlin, George, *Letters and notes on the manners, customs, and condition of the North American Indians*. London, 1841.

man, who was to judge and umpire the play which was to take place among the women, who were divided into two equal parties, and were to play a desperate game of ball, for the valuable stakes that were hanging before them."

Catlin's original painting of the game witnessed by him and described in the preceding quotation, is now in the collection of the United States National Museum, Washington. It reveals many details similar to those shown in Eastman's painting believed to have been sketched at the same place a few years before. Both represent the level area bordered by the river with hills beyond, groups of Indians gathered to witness the play, and the stakes "which were hung on a pole resting on crotches," to be awarded to the winners of the game.

In 1835 Catlin wrote: "Praires du Chien is the concentrating place of the Winnebagoes and Menomonies, who inhabit the waters of the Ouisconsin and Fox rivers, and the chief part of the country lying east of the Mississippi and west of Green Bay."

#### FORT SNELLING

Fort Snelling or, as it was originally named, Fort Saint Anthony, was the second army post to which Lieutenant Eastman was assigned with the First Infantry. This was in 1830 and it is evident he went direct from Fort Crawford, up the Mississippi to the mouth of the Saint Peters. Several sketches in one of his sketch books, showing views along the river, are believed to have been made at that time.

Fort Snelling occupies the summit of a high cliff at the junction of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, the latter formerly known as the Saint Peters. This prominent point is on the left bank of the Minnesota and right bank of the Mississippi, and was visited and described by Pike in 1806. Eleven years later, in 1817, Major Long recommended the establishment of an army post at the confluence of the streams. Lieutenant Colonel Leavenworth, with a detachment of the Fifth Infantry, arrived at the mouth of the Saint Peters River September 17, 1819, and "on the 10th of September, 1820, the cornerstone of Fort St. Anthony was laid. The barracks were at first log structures."<sup>1</sup> Col. Josiah Snelling arrived at the post and relieved Leavenworth about the beginning of September, 1820. Later the name of the new commander was applied to the fort.

The young lieutenant did not remain long at Fort Snelling at this time and from 1831 to January 9, 1833, was "on topographical duty."

<sup>1</sup> Neill, Rev. E. D., Occurrences in and around Fort Snelling from 1819 to 1840. Coll. Minnesota Hist. Soc., 1865.

but it is not known what part of the country he visited. From this latter date to January 22, 1840, he served as assistant teacher of drawing at the Military Academy, West Point. During these years he made many paintings and sketches, scenes in the vicinity of the Academy and many of the historic spots along the banks of the Hudson. He exhibited in the exhibitions of the National Academy of Design in 1836, 1837, 1838, 1839, and 1840. In 1838 he included two paintings of Fort Snelling, both then owned by Army officers, the original sketches for which had undoubtedly been made in 1830 or 1831, when he was first stationed at that post.

Eastman was elected an honorary member of the National Academy of Design in 1838, while still at West Point. He had one painting in the exhibition of 1848 which was described as "Indian Burial." There are no examples of Eastman's work at the Military Academy although he made many paintings and sketches during the years he was stationed there as teacher of drawing.

#### AMONG THE SEMINOLES IN FLORIDA

As already stated, Lieutenant Eastman's assignment as assistant teacher of drawing at the Academy terminated January 22, 1840, and from West Point he went south to join his regiment. According to the army records he was "in the Florida War, 1840-1841," but just where he was stationed is not known. A brief sketch of events in Florida shortly preceding Eastman's arrival on the peninsula will be of interest in connection with one of his water-color drawings which is now reproduced.

Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb, Commanding in Chief of the Army, left Washington March 22, 1839, "for Garey's Ferry, on Black Creek in Florida," where he arrived April 5. His endeavor was to make peace with the Seminoles. Runners were sent throughout the country to acquaint the scattered Indians with his arrival in their country and to request them to gather in council at Fort King, but not until after the middle of the following month did he meet with a degree of success. "Lieutenant Colonel Harney, accompanied by Chitto Tustanuggee, the great war chief of the tribes associated with Apiaka, attended by Ochi-Hajo, a brother of Blue Snake, arrived from Cape Florida the day before the council. . . . The next day (the 18th) the council was accordingly held."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Major General Commanding the Army. Ex. Doc. No. 2. House of Repr. 26th Cong., 1st Sess., Washington, 1839.

Later that same day, after the Indians had met the Army officers in council, General Maconb issued the following General Orders:

HEAD QUARTERS OF THE ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES

*Fort King, Florida, May 18, 1839.*

The Major General, commanding in chief, has the satisfaction of announcing to the army in Florida, to the authorities of the Territory, and to the citizens generally, that he has this day terminated the war with the Seminole Indians by an agreement entered into with Chitto-Tustenuggee, principal chief of the Seminoles and successor to Arpeika, commonly called Sam Jones, brought to this post by Lieutenant Colonel Harney, 2d Dragoons, from the southern parts of the peninsula. . . .

ALEXANDER MACOMB

*Major General Commanding.*<sup>1</sup>

The report of peace proved premature, and through treachery on the part of the Indians quiet was not restored for many months. But the document served to identify Sam Jones as the great chief of the Seminoles, Chitto Tustenuggee, whose name frequently occurs in reports and narratives connected with the war.

Fortunately, Captain Eastman visited the southern part of Florida and, as would be supposed, made sketches with pencil and water color. One of the latter is a view of "Sam Jones' Village," which reveals a group of shelters, for the most part roofs of palmetto thatch supported by upright posts set in the ground. These primitive structures are surrounded by semitropical vegetation, with open water in the distance. A large wooden mortar and pestle are shown in the extreme lower right corner of the sketch, with a very large snake on the left. The exact location is not known, but it was undoubtedly far south on the peninsula. This extremely interesting picture is reproduced in Plate 4.

AT FORT SNELLING

With the exception of a short period during the year 1846 when he was "on recruiting service," Captain Eastman was stationed at Fort Snelling with his regiment from 1841 to the autumn of 1848 when he went to Texas. During the years he served at the post he made innumerable sketches of the Indians who frequented the fort, then in the heart of the region dominated by the Mdewakanton, a tribe of the Dakota, the largest division of the Siouan linguistic family. The native villages stood on the banks of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, easily reached from the fort.

Maj. Lawrence Taliaferro had served as Indian Agent at Fort Snelling for many years and resigned at the close of 1839. His last

<sup>1</sup>Giddins, Joshua R., *The Florida exiles*. New York, 1863.

report was dated "Northwestern Agency, St. Peter's, Iowa Territory, September 30, 1839," and in it he gave a valuable account of the several tribes of the Dakota, with many of whom he was personally acquainted. Concerning the "Medawakantons," occupying the country surrounding Fort Snelling, he said in part: "This tribe numbers exactly 1,658 souls: 484 warriors, 406 women, and 768 children of all ages. These reside in seven detached villages, composed of bark houses; and in winter, buffalo, elk, or other skin lodges are resorted to during their migration or hunting expeditions." These were the people with whom Eastman came in contact and were the subjects frequently sketched and painted. But parties of the Ojibway, who claimed and occupied the country north and east of the Mississippi, likewise visited the post, and often members of the two groups, ever enemies, met in the vicinity of the fort and engaged in combat which usually resulted in the death or wounding of some.

Two important villages of the Mdewakanton, "mystery lake village," of the Santee or eastern division of the Dakota, were then standing a short distance from Fort Snelling. Kaposia, the more extensive and better known, was on the right bank of the Mississippi about 12 miles below the mouth of the Saint Peters, or Minnesota River, as the stream was later designated. Little Crow was chief and the village was visited and briefly described by many who ascended the river. Both the bark-covered lodge, in form not unlike that of a log cabin but having the entrance at the end instead of side, and conical skin tipi were to have been seen at the settlement, with an ancient burial ground and many scaffold burials on the summit of the cliff which bordered the low ground over which the habitations were scattered. It is believed that many of Eastman's pictures were sketched at Kaposia. The second of the native villages belonged to another band of the Mdewakanton and was usually known as "Shakopee's Village," from the name of the chief whose home it was. This settlement stood on the banks of the Minnesota River, some miles above its junction with the Mississippi, in the present Scott County, Minn.

Far down the Mississippi, about 140 miles below the mouth of the Minnesota River, was the important village of Wapasha, on the right bank of the river, occupying part of "Wabasha's Prairie," now within the bounds of Winona County, Minn. The name Wabasha, "the red leaf," was applied to a long line of chiefs of the Mdewakanton, long before they had been driven from the shores of Mille Lac and forced to seek a new home on the banks of the Mississippi, when they established the most southern village of their tribe, the first to be encountered when ascending the river.





Size 8 by 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches

1841

"SAM JONES' VILLAGE IN FLORIDA."

Mrs. M. M. Forrest



Size 15 by 11 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches

1844

ETA KEAZAH—SISSETON SIOUX AT FORT SNELLING

David I. Bushnell, Jr.

Such then was the Indian Country in the midst of which the artist remained some years. A region of lakes and streams, forests and prairies, and where wild game abounded. Amidst these primitive surroundings Eastman made many sketches, but very few belonging to the years before 1847 have been traced. One portrait, made at Fort Snelling in 1844, is reproduced in Plate 5. This is in oil, on a panel of wood, and is a likeness of a Sisseton Sioux named Eta Keazah. It shows the use of the beaded head covering worn by the northern Indians, both Sioux and Ojibway, during the winter season; however, caps of this sort were used extensively throughout the northern country as far east as the tribes of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Eastman shows them worn by Indians fishing through the ice, in one of his later paintings.

It is to be regretted that Eastman failed to keep a journal during his stay in the Indian country, for had he made notes of events that transpired at the army posts and of the gatherings of the Indians, and described the individuals and the native villages, his writings would have proved of value equal to that of his sketches and paintings.

The year 1848 may be regarded as the most interesting period of Eastman's career as an artist, and possibly he anticipated his early removal from the post and departure from the upper Mississippi, and therefore made many sketches in the vicinity of Fort Snelling which served him in the following years when he was preparing the illustrations for Schoolcraft's work.

While still on the upper Mississippi, during the month of July, 1848, he witnessed a stirring event on "Wahbasha's Prairie," about 150 miles below the Falls of Saint Anthony, below Lake Pepin, on the right bank of the Mississippi. This excitement was occasioned by a band of Winnebago at the time of their removal, and may best be explained by quoting from the official documents of the time:

ST. PETER'S (WINNEBAGO) AGENCY

*October 4, 1848*

Sir: Since my last annual report of the condition of the Winnebago Indians, the most important event connected with them is their removal from the neutral ground to the country they now occupy. When the tribe was notified last spring, by the government, that their new home was procured for them, they decided at once to remove, and such arrangements were made as would have enabled them to remove comfortably, and with a very moderate expense, but the interference of interested individuals created dissatisfaction and disturbance among the Indians, which caused much delay, and resulted in scattering one-half of the tribe. Some of those who turned back went to their old hunting ground in

Wisconsin, others went west into the interior and western part of Iowa. I have recently been informed that a party of about one hundred in number have joined the Ottos, southwest of the Missouri river. . . .

J. E. FLETCHER,  
*Indian Agent.*<sup>1</sup>

The report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs dated November 30, 1848, contains a brief reference to the removal of the Winnebago: "The experiment in the case of the Winnebagoes has also been successful; although their emigration from Iowa to their new country on the upper Mississippi was attended with some delay and difficulty; caused, however, by the unauthorized interference of interested white persons, and of a portion of the Sioux that were desirous to have them stop and remain in their country."

It was evidently Wabasha's band of Mdewakanton Sioux that desired the Winnebago to settle or remain with them, and the exciting scene witnessed by Captain Eastman was probably enacted at that time. The pencil drawing, described by the artist as: "Wahbasha's Prairie, Miss. River. Scene in July 1848. Difficulty with the Winnebagoes while removing them to their present country," now reproduced in Plate 6, is a beautiful example of his work and reveals his great skill in showing minute detail. The United States troops are drawn up on the left with a large number of mounted Indians, probably the Winnebago, in their front. The small group of armed Indians, crouching on the river bank in the immediate foreground, appear to be operating with the Americans.

In a letter written from "Fort Snelling, I. T., August 6, 1848" and signed "S. Eastman, *Captain 1st Infantry, Commanding Fort Snelling*" he discussed "means as will effectually stop the Indians from smuggling ardent spirits into the country." The letter was addressed to Maj. Thomas H. Harvey, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, but no means were ever effective. As Eastman was at that time in command at Fort Snelling he may have led the troops shown facing the Winnebago on "Wahbasha's Prairie."

Later in the year Captain Eastman again visited "Wahbasha's Prairie," and made an interesting sketch of a group of temporary shelters, probably a camp of a small number of Indians. This bears the legend: "Miss. River. Wahbasha's Prairie. 725 miles above St. Louis—looking South. Oct. 1848" (pl. 7).

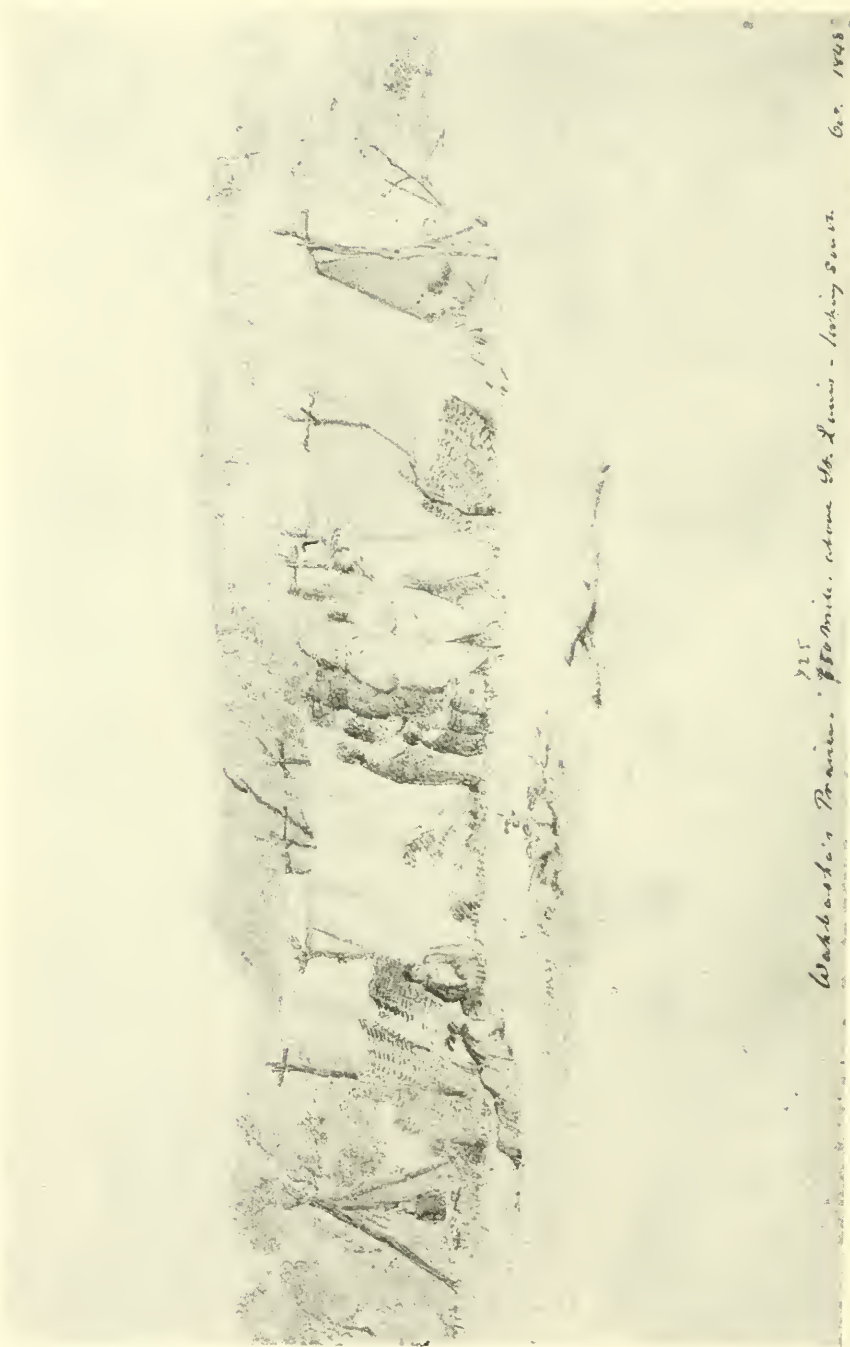
The Territory of Minnesota was created in 1849. On May 16 of that year one who was ascending the Mississippi entered in his narrative: "passed Wapasha's Prairie . . . a beautiful prairie in Min-

<sup>1</sup> Ex. Doc. no. 1, 30th Cong., 2d Sess., Washington, 1848.



PENCIL DRAWING. "WABASHA'S PRAIRIE, MISS. RIVER. SCENE IN JULY 1848."

David I. Bushnell, Jr.



825  
Wahbasha's Prairie. 750 Miles. above St. Louis - Looking South. Oct. 1848.

PENCIL DRAWING. "WAHBASHA'S PRAIRIE, 725 MILES ABOVE ST. LOUIS, LOOKING SOUTH. OCT. 1848."

David J. Bushnell, Jr.

nesota, about nine miles long and three miles wide, occupied by the chief Wapasha (or Red-Leaf) and his band of Sioux, whose bark lodges are seen at the upper end of the prairie." And that same day, after leaving Lake Pepin, "an Indian village, called Red Wing, inhabited by a tribe of Sioux is seen on the Minnesota shore. It appears to contain about one dozen bark lodges, and half as many conical lodges, covered with buffalo skins; also, a log or frame house, occupied by a missionary. Indian children were seen running, in frolicsome mood, over the green prairie, and Indian females were paddling their canoes along the shore. This village is near the mouth of Cannon River."<sup>1</sup> The next day, May 17, he passed Kaposia, then consisting of some 40 skin lodges and having a population of about 300.

Such were the native villages along the banks of the Mississippi in Minnesota just before the organization of the State.

The small water color reproduced in Plate 8 is believed to have been made on the bank of the Minnesota River, above Fort Snelling, and may be a sketch of Shakopee's village. It is signed and dated 1848 and was probably made just before Eastman was detached from Fort Snelling. Some beautiful pencil drawings made about this time are also reproduced, one being entitled: "Sioux Indians Playing the Game of the Plum Stones" (pl. 9), which was later engraved, and "Buffalo Hunt of the Sioux Indians" (pl. 10), in which the artist recorded the use of the spear, bow and arrow, and gun, by the mounted hunters.

The report of the Indian Agent, dated "Saint Peters Indian Agency, Sept. 15, 1847," refers to the condition of the Sioux as "more favorable the past year. Buffalo, about the head of St. Peters River, have been much more abundant than usual, which is to be accounted for by the fact that prairies farther north were burned over, so that these animals were driven to seek subsistence in a more southern region." This may have enabled Captain Eastman to have witnessed the hunting of the buffalo by the Indians nearer Fort Snelling than formerly, and some of his sketches were possibly made at that time.

As already mentioned, many of the pencil sketches that Eastman made during the years he was stationed at Fort Snelling were copied and worked up in after years when he had returned to Washington. Two examples are shown in Plate 11, illustrating two phases of the process of dressing a deer skin, which he had undoubtedly witnessed

<sup>1</sup> Seymour, E. S., *Sketches of Minnesota*. New York, 1850.

in the vicinity of the post. The two pictures are entirely different. Figure 1, a water-color sketch, dated 1850 and consequently made in Washington, is copied from a small pencil drawing; Figure 2 is a photograph of a large oil painting, now hanging in a room of the House Committee on Indian Affairs in the Capitol Building, Washington, D. C. The latter was painted in 1868 or 1869 and will again be mentioned. The two pictures serve to illustrate a passage in one of the publications of the artist's wife:<sup>1</sup>

"When the animal is killed . . . the women take off the hair of the skin with a knife, after which they moisten the skin, and stretch it to upright poles . . . or on the ground, by means of pegs driven in the earth. When there are white people near to whom they can apply, they try to obtain a little soap to cleanse the skin; but if dependent on themselves, they use, in the place of soap, the brains of the animal. These they spread over the skin, scraping it with an iron or bone scraper. Thus they remove all the fat and greasy particles. They then rub the skin against a cord that is stretched to a couple of stakes, until it has become soft. The work is completed when the skin is smoked. To accomplish this, a hole is dug, and a small fire built at the bottom. Over the hole a few sticks are laid. Across these they place the skin. The hole is covered with leaves or turf, to confine the smoke as much as possible, and to smother the flame. After the skin is smoked from ten to twenty hours, it becomes of a dingy, yellowish color, and is ready for use."

Although the foregoing reference is to buffalo skin, it is believed that all skins were tanned in the same manner and that the description would apply equally well to deer skin.

Skins of the buffalo thus prepared served many purposes, and were most important in the life of the Indian, especially of the plains tribes. They were used in making moccasins and coarse garments such as shirts and leggings, and a number of them sewed together and properly shaped formed the covering for the tipi. The hide is very harsh, rough, and quite porous and could never be dressed so fine and soft as were the skins of deer and other animals.

#### CAPTAIN EASTMAN AND THE AMERICAN ART UNION

The American Art Union, known during the first five years of its existence as The Apollo Association, was organized in 1838 and continued until 1852. It was created for "the promotion of the Fine

<sup>1</sup> Eastman, Mrs. Mary H., *The American aboriginal port folio*. Philadelphia. [1853].





1848

SIoux ENCAMPMENT, PROBABLY SHAKOPEE'S VILLAGE

Size 5½ by 8½ inches

Miss A. H. Eastman



PENCIL DRAWING. "SIOUX INDIANS PLAYING THE GAME OF PLUM STONES."

David I. Bushnell, Jr.



Original view of the Great Sioux War

PENCIL DRAWING. "BUFFALO HUNT OF THE SIOUX INDIANS."

David I. Bushnell, Jr.



Size 8 by 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches

1850

1. INDIAN WOMAN PREPARING A SKIN

David I. Bushnell, Jr.



Size 39 by 29 inches

1868

2. INDIAN WOMAN DRESSING A DEER SKIN

House Committee on Indian Affairs, Capitol Building

Arts in the United States," and the money derived from the dues paid by the members was used to purchase the works of American artists which were then distributed to the members by lot each year at the time of the annual meeting. This manner of disposing of the many paintings, engravings, medals, and other objects, was declared by the New York Supreme Court on October 22, 1852, "illegal and unconstitutional," and led to the dissolution of the organization.

The American Art Union during its few years undoubtedly did a great deal to assist the young artists of the country, and the names of many who became well known in later years are to be found on the lists appearing in the publications of the Union. The first annual meeting was held December 16, 1839, at which time 63 paintings were distributed among the members, but the number steadily increased and on December 22, 1848, 454 paintings were won by the members; the number distributed on December 21, 1849, was 460.

The name of Seth Eastman first appeared in 1848, the last year he was stationed in the upper Mississippi valley. That year the Art Union purchased six of his paintings, all Indian subjects, but unfortunately neither description nor dimension is given in connection with the reference to the pictures which appeared in the Bulletin issued by the Union that year. The six paintings purchased during the year 1848 were:

- No. 288. Indian Burial.
- No. 333. Indian Scalp Dance.
- No. 334. Buffalo Hunt.
- No. 441. Moonlight—Sioux Landing.
- No. 448. Sioux Breaking up Camp.
- No. 449. Dog Dance—a Dance of the Braves.

The next year, 1849, the Art Union again purchased six pictures, likewise Indian subjects, all of which were briefly though interestingly described in the Bulletin as follows:

- 61. Sioux in Council. (25 by 35 inches.)  
"These figures are all painted from life, and are portraits. An old chief is lecturing a young warrior for cowardice."
- 71. O-ho-ka-pe, an Indian Hunter. (25 by 35 inches.)  
"This is a celebrated hunter of the Sioux nation. He is said to have killed thirteen deer in one day. During the last war with Great Britain he was captured by the English, and kept in prison several months, at which time he lost his intellect. This was taken from life by Capt. Eastman."
- 72. Sississiton Chief. (25 by 35 inches.)  
"This is also a portrait. The original is called 'The Burning Earth.' He resides near the headwaters of the St. Peters River, and is chief of a band of Dacotahs."

167. Medicine Dance. Dacotah or Sioux Indians. (25 by 35 inches.)  
 "A large party of Indians beside their wigwams, engaged in the mystic ceremonies of the medicine dance."  
 169. Squaws Playing Ball on the Prairie. (25 by 35 inches.)  
 "A large number are engaged in this exercise, running swiftly in opposing bands, while others in the foreground are looking on."  
 171. Buffalo Hunt. (25 by 35 inches.)  
 "A herd of buffaloes are attacked by Indians, one of whom has been dismounted by a furious bull, which his comrade dispatches with a lance."

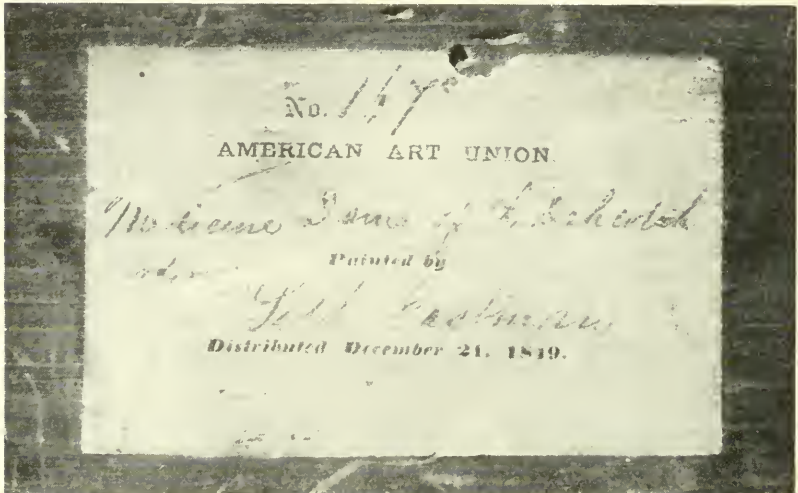


FIG. 1.—Label attached to the stretcher of the painting reproduced in Plate 12.

Again in 1850 Eastman disposed of the same number of pictures to the Art Union, but all were not Indian subjects, three being of a different nature. The three pictures of interest at this time were thus described in the Bulletin:

149. Indian Hunters. (30 by 25 inches.)  
 "Two Indians—one seated, and holding a tomahawk; the other standing beside him, wrapped in his blanket."  
 155. Indians Playing Draughts. (30 by 25 inches.)  
 "Two are engaged at this game, which a third overlooks."  
 167. Indian Ball-Play. (25 by 35 inches.)  
 "A large number of Indians are engaged in this amusement upon the ice, beside which, among the trees, are seen the wigwams."

In 1851, the last year the Art Union purchased paintings, Captain Eastman disposed of one small picture entitled "Moonlight," evidently not an Indian subject.



Size: 25 by 35 inches

..MEDICINE DANCE OF THE DAHCOTAH OR SIOUX..



Size 5½ by 8¾ inches

December 1848

1. ALAMO AT SAN ANTONIO

Mrs. M. M. Forrest



Size 4¾ by 7 inches

1849

2. OLD MEXICAN LOOKOUT OR WATCH TOWER AT SAN ANTONIO, TEX.  
TWO MILES FROM THE ALAMO

Miss A. H. Eastman



Could the 15 paintings of Indian subjects which were acquired by the Art Union during the years 1848, 1849, and 1850 be assembled, they would form a collection of the greatest interest and importance, one not surpassed by the works of any other artist. But they are widely scattered, some are lost, and some may have been destroyed during the many years that have elapsed since they were distributed to members of the old organization. However, two are described at this time which serve to indicate what the others may have been.

The two paintings to which the preceding statement refers were distributed by the Art Union in December, 1849, and bore the numbers 167 and 169. The latter has already been described and illustrated in Plate 3. The second, number 167 in the Bulletin of the Art Union, December, 1849, is shown in Plate 12, and a photograph of the label attached to the stretcher is reproduced in Figure 1. It portrays the Medicine Dance of the Sioux and is believed to have been a scene witnessed by the artist at one of the several native villages which then stood not far from Fort Snelling. It is a most interesting example of Eastman's earlier work and was probably made at the post.

The Medicine Dance was one of the more important ceremonies of the Sioux, a very complete description of which was given some years ago by one who had undoubtedly seen it enacted in the vicinity of Fort Snelling. A brief quotation from the account will tend to make clear certain details of the painting. The superstitious beliefs of the people are first mentioned, with the traditional origin of the ceremony, and then it continues to describe it as enacted:<sup>1</sup>

"Early in the morning the tent, in form like that which the god first erected for the purposes, is thrown open for the dance. The members assemble painted and ornamented, each bearing his medicine-sack.

"After a few preliminary ceremonies, appropriate to the occasion, including a row of kettles of large dimensions, well filled and arranged over a fire at the entrance of the court, guarded by sentries appointed for the occasion, the candidate takes his place on a pile of blankets which he and his friends have contributed."

No two ceremonies would have been exactly the same, and this brief description is sufficiently clear to explain the scene as recorded on the canvas. On the left is a member, "painted and ornamented," carrying his medicine sack; on the extreme right is visible "a row of kettles of large dimensions," and near the center, resting upon blankets, is one who may be "the candidate." The large skin tipi,

<sup>1</sup> Pond, G. H., Dakota superstitions. Coll. Minnesota Hist. Soc., 1867.

opened and revealing a group of Indians with a drum, may have been considered "in form like that which the god first erected for the purposes."

#### IN TEXAS

About the beginning of October, 1848, Captain Eastman left Fort Snelling, where he had served so many years, and passed down the Mississippi to New Orleans. By the latter part of November he had arrived at San Antonio, but it is not known what route he had followed from Louisiana. He remained but a short time in San Antonio, then went some 65 miles north to Camp Houston, which had been established by the American forces near the town of Fredericksburg, where he remained until March 10, 1849.

While in and about San Antonio Captain Eastman made some very beautiful pencil and water-color sketches several of which are now reproduced. One small pencil sketch of the Alamo, dated November 22, 1848, bears this legend: "Front view of the Chapel in the Alamo, at San Antonio, Texas. David Crocket and 167 Texians were slain in this building by the Mexicans during the Texian Revolution." A few days later Eastman made the small water-color drawing which is now reproduced in Plate 13. This is signed with his initials and bears the date "Dec. 1848." Likewise on November 22, 1848, he made a pencil sketch of a ruined tower on which he wrote: "Old Mexican lookout or watch tower at San Antonio, Texas, Two miles from the Alamo." A water-color drawing was later made of the ruin, a photograph of which is reproduced in Plate 13, Figure 2. This is signed "S. Eastman, 1849." He also made a very beautiful pencil sketch of the "Mission Chapel of the Conception at San Antonio, Texas. Nov. 28, 1848," signed "S. Eastman, U. S. Army." These are of the greatest historical interest.

Sketches made in the vicinity of Camp Houston, near Fredericksburg, show the quaint structures which had been reared by the German settlers, and scenes in and near the village. The live oaks which attain great size at Fredericksburg and in the surrounding country, attracted much attention and were often sketched but, unfortunately, the artist evinced little interest in the few Indians with whom he came in contact.

Captain Eastman reached Washington during the winter of 1849-1850, where he remained more than five years preparing the numerous illustrations for Schoolcraft's work, "History, Conditions and Future Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States." For this purpose he made a great number of small water-color pictures,



1852

Size 26 by 36 inches

THE INDIAN COUNCIL

Painted for Peter Force



Size 32 by 45 inches

1869

**1. INDIAN MODE OF TRAVELING**

House Committee on Indian Affairs, Capitol Building



Size 32 by 45 inches

1868

**2. SPEARING FISH IN WINTER**

House Committee on Indian Affairs, Capitol Building

many of which were copied from original sketches made during the preceding years spent in the Indian country, others were composed and drawn for reproduction by the engravers. But while engaged in making the illustrations for Schoolcraft's great work it is evident that Eastman painted other pictures of a more pretentious nature. One which he made in 1852 for his friend and neighbor, Peter Force, who then lived opposite the Eastman home on K Street, in Washington, is shown in Plate 14. This beautiful example of Eastman's work is now owned by descendants of the one for whom it was painted. It is called "The Indian Council," and although the grouping of the figures is quite similar to that of the painting made some years later for the Government, which is now hanging in the rooms of the House Committee on Indian Affairs, it differs in many details and is a more pleasing picture.

Having completed the Schoolcraft illustrations, Eastman served "with regiment at Forts Duncan and Chadbourne, Texas, 1855-1856." On October 31, 1856, he became a major and was attached to the Fifth Infantry; he was placed "on special duty in Quartermaster General's Office, Washington, D. C., 1857-1858."

Having returned to his home in Washington, he again became interested in his paintings and early sketches of scenes in the upper Mississippi valley, and in 1857 he painted the canvas entitled "Ball Play on the Prairies," which was purchased by W. W. Corcoran and now hangs in the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

Eastman became lieutenant colonel, 1st Infantry, September 9, 1861, and was retired December 3, 1863. He served in various capacities during the Civil War.

On March 26, 1867, Congress passed a joint resolution which enabled Eastman to paint the two groups of pictures which are owned by the government. This read in part: "It provides if the President shall deem it proper to assign Brevet Brigadier General Seth Eastman, of the United States Army, now on the retired list, to duty, so as to entitle him to full pay, emoluments, and allowances of his lineal rank. . . ." The purpose of this was to have him execute paintings for the rooms "of the Committees on Indian Affairs and on Military Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives," to be made from his own designs, the work to be done under the supervision of the architect of the Capitol. In addition to the picture of a woman dressing a deer skin, already mentioned (pl. 11), two other examples of his pictures painted for and now hanging in the rooms of the House Committee on Indian Affairs in the Capitol Building, are now reproduced (pl. 15, figs. 1 and 2).

The first is entitled "Indian Mode of Traveling," and shows a long line of Indians, some mounted, others on foot, crossing the prairie. The second is one of the most beautiful of his many paintings, and bears the title "Spearing Fish in Winter." This wintry scene was described by Mrs. Eastman in her book already mentioned, and to quote in part: "In the picture an Indian is about taking a fine fish from off his spear; the hatchet with which he broke the hole in the ice lies beside him.

"He is dressed in the warm dress worn by the Dacotas in the winter, his head protected from the cold by the cornered hood, which is only worn by the men. . . ."

These were the artist's last Indian pictures. A few years later, while engaged on the series of forts, he was stricken and died in Washington, D. C., August 31, 1875.