

Goals/Objectives/Students Outcomes:

Students will:

- Understand the conflict, known as the "Spirit Lake Massacre," in the context of the relationships between the Dakota nation and the newly arrived European-American settlers.
- Read about the so-called "massacre" and discuss why this was an unusual event in Iowa history and not the typical Native American response to settlers.
- Describe events leading to the conflict.
- Recognize the roles played by Inkpaduta and Abbie Gardner and see how both Inkpaduta and Abbie Gardner lived the remainder of their lives in the shadow of the uprising.

Materials:

1. Slides of Gardner Cabin
2. Paper and drawing materials

Background:

THE DAKOTA PEOPLE IN NORTHWEST IOWA

The Dakota, also known as the Sioux and nicknamed the Santee, were the main group of American Indians in the largely wetland and prairie terrain of northwest Iowa. In the 1850s they came to the area from eastern Minnesota. In Iowa they adopted a successful hunting-and-gathering way of life, which required cooperative community living. As was common in many Native American tribes, Dakota men and women shared equal work responsibilities. Men hunted, made tools, and repaired equipment; women processed game, made clothing, and gathered wild fruits and vegetables.

THE SETTLERS

Compared with the rest of the state, European-American settlement came late to northwest Iowa where settlers faced isolation, harsh frontier conditions, limited access to supplies, and long trips to the nearest neighboring settlements. Most of the area was not yet surveyed. Settlers secured their claims by marking them with stakes, rock piles, or burned trees, then filed their claims at the designated Sioux City claim office.

While the relationship between settlers and Native Americans was usually peaceful, there was little friendship. In addition to the cultural conflict, the Indians considered European-Americans to be trespassers on their land. To make matters worse, settlers often treated Indians like children or unintelligent adults.

THE CONFLICT

One of the few violent conflicts in Iowa between settlers and Native Americans occurred near Arnolds Park in what became known as the Spirit Lake Massacre. This event has spawned a body of historical research as well as folklore. Perhaps the most well known of these stories is that of Abbie Gardner and her family.

The Gardners came to Lake Okoboji in July 1856. The family consisted of Rowland Gardner, his wife (Francis), a son (Rowland Jr.), three daughters (Mary, Eliza, and Abbie) a son-in-law (Harvey Luce), and two grandchildren (Albert and Amanda). The family had moved frequently while Rowland worked sometimes as a railroad, sometimes as a farmer. When they arrived at the lake it was too late in the season to plant corn or other crops, but they had brought supplies intended to last until spring. By winter they had built one cabin, but the weather prevented them from finishing a second one, so the extended family shared the Gardner cabin at the time of the attack.

The winter of 1856-57 was particularly harsh, and tension was high as both American Indians and settlers ran out of supplies. Inkpaduta and his band arrived in the Great Lakes region on March 5 or 6. The Indians' unsuccessful attempts to gain food triggered a violent gun battle and subsequent bloodshed on March 8. Over several days 33 settlers were killed and four women, including Abbie, were taken captive. Abbie reported that one Native American was seriously wounded by Henry Lott. The Dakota band unsuccessfully attacked Springfield, Minnesota, then fled into the Dakotas.

Two of the captives—Elizabeth Thatcher and Lydia Noble—were killed. Margaret Ann Marble and 13-year-old Abbie Gardner, who had watched the deaths of her father, mother and four siblings, were eventually released for a ransom. Margaret was freed in April, Abbie on May 30. Abbie was in captivity for 84 days.

LIVING IN THE SHADOW OF THE UPRISING

Much is known about Inkpadata, the Dakota leader. Early on he became a scapegoat for some of the tensions between the settlers and the American Indians. Left out of the treaty negotiations in 1851 that transferred the land in northwestern Iowa to the United States, Inkpadata refused to recognize the treaty restrictions. Between 1853 and 1856 he had several altercations with settlers, including Henry Lott, who in 1854 killed Inkpadata's brother Sidominadotah near what is now Livermore in Humboldt County. Because government officials refrained from prosecuting Lott, Inkpadata thereafter treated the settlers as the enemy:

After the battles in Iowa and Minnesota, Inkpadata's reputation grew to mythic proportions, partly because he was never captured. His legend often connected him to events with which he had no involvement. He fled to the Dakotas and spent several years skirmishing with the U.S. Army. It was reported that Inkpadata was present at the Battle of the Little Big Horn, where his sons were fearless in battle. Inkpadata eventually moved to Canada; he died about 1880.

In August 1857, still only 13, Abbie Gardner married Cassville Sharp. They had three children (Allen, Albert and Minnie), two surviving to adulthood. Abbie and Cassville separated sometime in the 1880s.

Abbie Gardner Sharp returned to Arnolds Park 34 years after the uprising. She purchased the cabin and operated it as one of Iowa's earliest tourist attractions. One of Iowa's first business women, Abbie sold souvenirs and copies of her book, *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*. In her later years Abbie made peace with American Indians, becoming fascinated with their culture and filling her museum with Indian artifacts. She died in Colfax, Iowa, in 1921 at the age of 77.

Vocabulary

Annuity payment: Yearly payments to Indians for lands obtained through a treaty.

Culture: Behavior, belief, thought and products characteristic of a community or population.

Dakota: Preferred name for a North American Woodlands nation also known as Eastern Sioux, nicknamed Santee.

Massacre: To kill a large number of people.

Survey: To determine on paper maps the boundaries of an area.

Treaty: An agreement between the United States and another government, in this case the Dakota nation, who traded land to the U.S. in exchange for money and goods.

Uprising: Organized rebellion intended to change or overthrow existing authority.

Procedure:

1. Visit the site or show slides (these can be checked out through the State Historical Society's Iowa History Resource Center).

2. Talk about museums and collections. Explain that a collection is a group of items assembled in logical order and gathered because they have some kind of significance. Museums have collections that they study and exhibit to the public. The collections are used to explain the past, present, and future.

A historic site is one type of museum. A site is related to a specific place, event, or person. The Gardner Cabin Historic Site is related to the Spirit Lake Massacre and the early tourist industry. Have students consider whether any places in their own town or country would make good historic sites. Make a list of these sites and describe what aspects of history they represent.

Explain that museums use both two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials (called artifacts) to illustrate history or natural history. An artifact can tell us much about the people, the time, and the region from which it came. It reveals what materials it is made from, when and where it was made, and how it was used. Sometimes its color and style can tell us about popular trends. All of this helps us determine its relative value within the "material culture."

3. One of the reasons the Gardners settled here was to be near the lake. Although the area surrounding the lake is now developed, walk down to the lake through Pillsbury Point State Park (or view the slide) to get an idea of how the area might have looked in the 1850s. Have students discuss the changes to the environment. Consider changes in wildlife, native grasses, and geology.

4. Look at the contents of the cabin. Where did the children sleep? Would students like to live in one cabin shared by nine people?

5. Have students discuss where the American Indians of northwest Iowa live today. How might the area look today if they still lived there?

Assessment of Outcomes:

Students will be able to discuss the following questions:

The Spirit Lake Massacre was the result of a variety of extraordinary circumstances. If circumstances had been different, the outcome might also have been different. What might have changed, and how might the outcome have been different? Consider the following: if the winter hadn't been so harsh; if the Lott family had not started the disagreements years before; if the settlers had shared supplies with the Native Americans.

Following the massacre, Inkpadata's character took on mythic proportions. He was said to have been involved in every major conflict between settlers and Indians on the northern plains. People were afraid of him and his band. Name some other famous people of that time whose deeds have become legendary. Consider the following: Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse; also, name some famous people in our own time.

When cultures come into conflict, often it's because the people involved are very different from each other. However, sometimes similarities can cause conflict, too. Make a list of the differences and similarities between the Dakota and the settlers at Okoboji. Which ones might cause disagreements between the two groups? Discuss how conflicts between cultures can be resolved.

Abbie Gardner returned to Okoboji and lived there many years. Do you think you would return to the area following a tragedy like this? Why or why not?

Extensions and Adaptations:

Here are suggested themes for student research. Their results might be presented in both written and oral reports.

The Gardner family and its neighbors constructed log houses when

they reached Okoboji. Log houses have distinct designs and characteristics, often representing the native region of the settler. Research log house designs. How do houses differ by regions within Iowa or across the country?

Iowa was opened for settlement through a series of treaties with the Sauk, Mesquakie, Winnebago, and Dakota Indians. When were these treaties enacted? Find the language of each treaty. How are these treaties alike and different? How did both sides compromise to create the treaty?

The Spirit Lake Massacre is often considered one of the first events in a series of conflicts between the U.S. government and the Dakota Indians. Other events include the Sioux Uprising in Minnesota in 1862, the Sand Creek Massacre in Colorado in 1864, the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876, and, finally, the massacre at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1890. Pick one of these events or another from your reading. Find out more about it. Who was involved, how did it start, what was the end result? How does the Spirit Lake Massacre relate to the event?

Northwest Iowa was the last section of Iowa to be settled. What did the rest of the state look like during the late 1850s? Choose a county and research this. What towns were there, what jobs were available, what community functions existed? If you can find access to newspapers from the county through microfilm, see if they record the events of Spirit Lake.

Gardner Cabin was one of the first tourist sites in the state. What other places did people like to visit in Iowa before 1920? What did these sites have to offer? How did people learn about them?

The following activities may be used to further explore ideas presented at Gardner Cabin. You may want to adjust the activities to the students' interests and abilities:

Abbie's mother had to make quilts to keep the family warm. Quilt patterns were often named and copied from objects found in the settlers' natural or cultural environment. Find some patterns from your surroundings such as a school, yard, park, or highway. On a piece of paper, draw and color the patterns. Name them—for example, North Elementary Rose. How does the pattern represent its name? Display these on the bulletin board.

When settlers moved to an area, they had to file (or stake) their claims in order to legally own them. You can try this in your school yard. Divide the class into small groups to represent family units (most settlers came to Iowa in family units). The "families" have to choose their claim, mark it, and then "file" that claim with the teacher. They can set up areas for a house and a crop.

The Dakota and the settlers greatly depended on the buffalo as a source for many products, from food to clothing. They were able to use almost the entire animal. Find a drawing of a buffalo. Discuss the products Indians and settlers might have made from the buffalo.

Design a tourism brochure for Arnolds Park. Be sure to include Gardner Cabin, the amusement park, the lake, and restaurants and motels. You can also design postcards.

Gardner Cabin holds several paintings of the Spirit Lake Massacre. Make your own pictures of the way you think the lake area looked in 1857, and make another picture to show how it looks today. Imagine a trip to the lakes just before cars were available. Draw a picture of what you think the lake looked like then.

Resources:

The materials will help you learn more about the Spirit Lake Massacre, northwest Iowa, and the Sioux Indians. (SHSI stands for State Historical Society of Iowa; IHRC Iowa History Resource Center at the State Historical Building; AEA, Area Education Agency; Public Library, PL; School Library, SL).

Books, Articles, and Videotapes: 4th-8th Grade

"Forts in Iowa." *The Goldfinch* 8 (September 1986). (SHSI, SL)

"Indians of Iowa." *The Goldfinch* 13 (February 1992). (SHSI, SL)

"Lake Life." *The Goldfinch* 14 (Summer 1993). (SHSI, SL)

"Peace: The Iowa Link." *The Goldfinch* 13 (September 1991). (SHSI, SL)

"The Tall Grass Whispers." Video, Iowa Heritage Series, Iowa Public Television. (IHRC, State Library, AEA).

Books and Articles: 9th Grade-Adult

Miriam Hawthorne Baker. "Inkpaduta's Camp at Smithland." *Annals of Iowa* 39 (1967): 81-104. (SHSI, PL)

Gretchen M. Bataille. *The World Between Two Rivers: Perspective on American Indians in Iowa*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1978. (IHRC, PL, SL)

"Inkpaduta's Great White Friend." *Iowan* 9 (Dec. 1960-Jan 1961): 17-19, 48. (PL, SHSI)

Peggy Rodina Larson. "A New Look at the Elusive Inkpaduta." *Minnesota History* 48 (1982): 24-35. (Interlibrary loan, SHSI)

MacKinley Kantor. *Spirit Lake*. Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1961. (PL) [fiction]

Curtis Harnack. "Prelude to Massacre." *Iowan* 4 (Feb.-March 1956): 36-39. (PL, SHSI)

William J. Petersen. "The Spirit Lake Massacres." *The Palimpsest* 38 (1957): 206-64. (SHSI, PL, SL)

B.F. Reed. *History of Kossuth County, Iowa. Vol. 1*. Chicago: S.J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1913. (SHSI)

Duane Robinson. *A History of the Dakota or Sioux Indians*. Aberdeen: State of South Dakota, 1904. (SHSI)

Abigail Gardner Sharp. *History of the Dakota or Sioux Indians*. Aberdeen: State of South Dakota, 1904. (SHSI)

R.A. Smith. *A History of Dickinson County, Iowa*. Des Moines: Kenyon Printing, 1902. (SHSI)

William Williams. "Report of Major Williams." *The Palimpsest* 38 (1957): 266-72 (SHSI, PL)

Alan R. Woolworth and Gary Clayton Anderson. *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War 1862*. Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988.