

Whiting-Ruggles Summary December 5, 1862

No. 22. DO-WAN-SA.—Convicted of the murder of a white woman, and of the design to ravish her daughter, who was wounded by him and killed by another Indian before he had carried his design into execution.¹

Trial Record September 1862

Proceedings of a Military Commission convened at Camp Release opposite the Mouth of Chippewa River by virtue of the following order

Order No. 55

viz:

Head Quarters Camp Release

September 28th 1862

A Military Commission composed of Colonel Wm Crooks of the 6th Reg., Lieut. Col. Marshall of the 7th Regiment, Captains Grant & Bailey of the 6th Reg. And Lieut. Olin of the 3rd Reg. Will convene at some convenient point in camp at 10 o'clock this morning to try summarily the Mulatto, and Indians, or mixed bloods, now prisoners, or who may be brought before them, by direction of the Col. Commanding and pass judgment upon them, if found guilty of murder or other outrages upon the Whites, during the present State of hostilities of the Indians, the proceedings of the Commission to be returned to these Head Quarters immediately after their conclusion, for the consideration of the Col. Commanding.

The Commission will be governed in their proceedings, by Military Law and usage.

(Signed) H. H. Sibley
Colonel Commanding
Camp Release opposite the
Mouth of Chippewa River, Minn.
Sept. 28 1862

The Military Commission met pursuant to the above order-

Present

Col. Crooks – 6th Reg. M. V.

Lt. Col. Marshall, 7th Regt. M.V. Members

Capt. Grant, 6th Regt. M.V.

Capt. Bailey, 6th Regt. M. V.

Lt. Olin – 3rd Regt. M. V., Judge Advocate

Adjutant Heard – McPhail's Mounted Rangers – Recorder

The Military Commission was then duly sworn and ~~Te-he-hdo-ne-cha~~ Dowan-sa, a Sioux Indian, was arraigned on the following charges and specifications:

Charge --Murder

Specification 1st In this that the said Dowan-sa, a Sioux Indian, did on or about the 23rd day of August 1862 kill or did aid and abet in killing three men and two women at or near Swan Lake, Minnesota –

Specification 2nd – In this that the said Dowan-sa, a Sioux Indian, did between the 18th day of August 1862 and the 28th day of September 1862 join with and participate in various murders and outrages committed by the Sioux Indians on the Minnesota Frontier.

[By order of, etc.]

Witness

Godfrey (Negro)

[Frame 179]

Prisoner being asked whether he pleads guilty or not guilty said nothing in response thereto.

Godfrey – Being sworn says the prisoner told me he went to Swan Lake. He saw teams going along & run after them and killed white men, that when he overtook them he killed three white women and two men, that he intended [?] to take one good looking young woman home and her mother interfered. That he was leading the young woman away and her mother ran after to take her away & the Indians told him to shoot the mother.

That he shot the mother & wounded the daughter, that he went away & one of the Indians she wasn't dead and he ran and pulled up her clothes and she jumped up and another Indian took his tomahawk and struck her in the head and killed her – I know him perfectly well. I heard these facts from him. He came to my lodge and told me of his doings. The prisoner told me that the party was made up of five besides himself.

The prisoner states when we got to Swan Lake we saw seven men on horseback coming this way and that when the seven men on horseback saw us they fired their guns at us and run away.

Hakah (Hay-chah-a-dah's son and Pawn-pais-kah (sp?) and Ah-oh-kah-hin (sp?) and three of the YellowMedicine band of Indians were of the party. What Gus says about the party is so. But I killed no one.

I got a horse belonging to one of the 7 men. Then our party started for Little Crow's Village. We met this party this side of Swan Lake.

[Frame 180]

I was with the party from the time they started from Crow's village until they turned back from the horse-men –The party divided: one party contained three and one four men.

We got together in Bushe's house in going down.

They were fighting at New Ulm and we were going there because all the other Indians were going there.

Was at the battle of New Ulm – at the Fort – at Birch Coolie and in the battle at Wood Lake.

There were three women killed: [seven men?] were there but they ran off. One of the men was killed. Oh-oh-kah-sin – (the man who looks over) was one of the Swan Lake [predators?] – I told Gus what he says only I didn't say I killed a white man – Oh-oh-kah-sin

hid himself because he was afraid [...] of three murders. He asked me to go and I didn't remember anything.

When we turned back from the horsemen we went to New Ulm.

The testimony being closed the commission was then cleared and proceeded to the finding and sentence –

The Military Commission after due deliberation on the testimony adduced find the prisoner as follows –

Guilty of the Specification.

Guilty of the Charge.

And do therefore sentence him the said Dowan-sa, a Sioux Indian, to be hanged by the neck until he is dead.

I.V.D. Heard

Recorder –²

Riggs Synopsis December 1862

11. Dowansa (*The Singer*) Says he was one of the six who was down in the Swan Lake neighborhood. He knows that they killed two men and two women, but it was done by the rest of the party, and not by himself.³

¹Whiting-Ruggles Report to Abraham Lincoln December 5, 1862.

² Dakota Trials Records. Microfilm and holograph records in Center for Legislative Archives, U.S. Senate Records, National Archives. Transcription by Walt Bachman. See corresponding digitizations of microfilm by John Isch.

³ *Mankato Independent* December 26, 1862, “Confessions of the Condemned” p. 2. Editorial introduction reads: “Rev. S. R. Riggs has kindly prepared for us the following synopsis of conversations held with each one of the condemned prisoners, wherein is contained much interesting information.”