skilled orators. Among those who represented the Indians was Little Rock of Red Lake, who spoke with genuine eloquence and great astuteness. ‘The Master of Life,’ he said in one of his speeches, ‘gave us the river and the water thereof to drink, and the woods and the roads we depend on for subsistence . . . the Master of Life gave it to us for an inheritance, and gave us the animals for food and clothing.’ The conferences were protracted and seemingly futile and Ramsey finally records that on September 29 he gave a ‘severe dressing down’ to the Pembina half-breeds. He then began to hold meetings with the chiefs and head men alone, having abandoned the hope of action through councils. On October 1 he wrote in his diary, ‘Today it looked as if all hope of success was gone.’

“Other records indicate that Ramsey and his party packed up and started to leave. The chiefs and head men in a hurried meeting without Chief Medawagonin agreed to sign the treaty.”

Dean Blegen continued in his reference to Ramsey by saying, “His pessimism was unwarranted, however, for the treaty was signed on the next day, and Ramsey did not exaggerate when he jotted these words in his diary: ‘The Treaty under all circumstances and with the little help I had was a triumph.’ A final distribution of goods and provisions took place on October 3, and the next day Ramsey's party started on its homeward journey. A twenty-year annuity of $20,000 together with other expenditures set up a total of a little more than a half million dollars as the purchase price. The treaty provided for the transfer of an area of several million acres—an empire in the valley of fertility.

“Medawagonin refused to sign the treaty. Of this powerful Red Lake chief, Bishop Whipple, who knew him well, wrote, ‘He was a man six feet, four inches in height, straight as an arrow, with flashing eyes, frank open countenance, and as dignified in bearing as one of kingly race.’ Bishop Whipple had advised Medawagonin to demand houses, cattle, schools, and agricultural implements in the treaty council and when this demand was not satisfied Medawagonin refused to sign. During that winter Medawagonin walked 150 miles to visit the Bishop and to ask his help in obtaining better terms. A few weeks later the bishop went to Washington with the Red Lake chiefs, and on April 12, 1864, he finally secured a revised treaty that was the same in terms of land transfer as the treaty of 1863, but included some of the things the bishop demanded.”

The foregoing excerpts from the dedicatory address of Dean Blegen give an insight in the making of a treaty of great significance to Polk County and the Red River Valley.

The terms of the 1863 Treaty at the “Old Crossing” were listed under five articles—Article I quoted in full; summaries given for others:

ARTICLE I— The peace and friendship now existing between the United States and the Red Lake and Pembina bands of Chippewa Indians shall be perpetual.