

accusations made against them in many cases contained their own refutation. While nothing was more certain to destroy his hopes of success in trade than a state of active hostilities between the Indians he had dealings with and other bands of savages, he has been a thousand times accused of inciting war between them. Never hesitating a moment to save a captive from violence, at any peril to his own life, or at any sacrifice of his property, he has been denounced as void of all feelings in common with civilized man, and as a mere trafficker in human blood. With too much self respect to contradict charges so absurd and improbable, and with an undue contempt for public opinion, it is not surprising that scarcely a voice has been raised, or a pen wielded in his behalf.

There is an unwritten chapter yet to be contributed to the records of the Northwest, which will place the Indian trader in a proper light before the country, while it will not seek to extenuate either his defects or vices. This is neither the time nor the place for such a production, but it will doubtless be a grateful task, and peculiarly within the province of this Society, to cause the memory of the men, who, of all others, are most intimately identified with the ⁴⁶⁴ / early history of Minnesota, to be relieved from the weight of obloquy so unjustly heaped upon them.

They were a class of men eminently distinct from all others in their modes of thought and of life, and they cannot, therefore, be justly measured by the standard which obtains in civilized communities.

They were, for the most part, individuals of little or no education but remarkable for their energy and for fidelity to their engagements. In fact, the whole system of Indian trade was necessarily based upon the personal integrity of the employer and the employed. Generally