Seth Eastman was born on January 24, 1808 in Branford, Maine. The eldest of thirteen children, he became interested in joining the military at an early age. After graduating from what was then New London Military Academy at nineteen, he spent five years studying drawing and engraving. After graduating in 1833, the military transferred him to Fort Snelling in what is now Saint Paul, Minnesota. Fort Snelling was founded in 1819 after the War of 1812 to help control the fur trade between indigenous peoples and American traders, as well as to maintain a line of defense against the British troops in the Northwest. During his time there, Eastman became familiar with Dakota culture, studying the language as well as the traditional dress and daily life of the local people. Eastman spent a year at the presence of the Minnesota and Mississippi River regions. During this period, he and his fellow artists, who were a subspecies of the Great Sioux Nation, had been taken for

The Dakota people, with whom Eastman had a close relationship during his time at Fort Snelling, are known for their unique culture. In the upper Midwest, as the Sioux lived in that area around that time, they were known for their distinctive dress and customs. Although the location is ambiguous, it can be inferred that it was somewhere in the upper Midwest, as the Sioux lived in that area around that time.

Eastman returned to Fort Snelling in 1849–1855 for another term, at which time he worked as a military artist. He spent his time there sketching and painting scenes of Native American life, which he later compiled into the book, which Eastman illustrated, Dacotah, or Life and Legends of the Sioux Around Fort Snelling (1855).

In addition to settling disputes and regulating trade, the Agency played a large role in implementing U.S. government policies aimed at accommodating Native American cultures into European American society. For example, in the case of Fort Snelling, the primary goal was to encourage the Native population to abandon tradition, the government was effectively saving the Dakota and other Native peoples from their own destruction. This periodical artistic desire for a "national" people that conformed to the stereotype of "aboriginal" peoples further complicated the government's intention to hasten the end of Native culture and tradition. The government was interested in replacing traditional life with farming and other European practices.

Seth Eastman was awarded the rank of brevet brigadier general as an honor for his service in the military. In his final years, Eastman was stationed at Fort Snelling in Minnesota, where he worked as a military artist. During this time, Eastman continued to sketch and paint scenes of Native American life, which he later compiled into the book, which Eastman illustrated, Dacotah, or Life and Legends of the Sioux Around Fort Snelling (1855).

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In 1833, and shortly afterwards, in 1835, married Sarah Mary Henderson (1818–1873), the fifteen-year-old daughter of Mary Henderson and Alfred Jacob Miller (1810–1874). Eastman and his wife, Sarah, eventually had five children, including a daughter named Mary, who died in 1853.

During this time, Eastman began his work as a military artist. He spent his time there sketching and painting scenes of Native American life, which he later compiled into the book, which Eastman illustrated, Dacotah, or Life and Legends of the Sioux Around Fort Snelling (1855).

After three years at Fort Snelling, the Eastman family moved to Texas briefly before relocating to Washington, D.C. There, the artist worked on illustrating Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's six-volume study of Native American cultures, Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States, which was commissioned by Congress and was published between 1840 and 1857. Eastman's illustrations for this body of work included 85 compositional drawings and 22 engraved plates of Indian figures and landscapes. Around this time, the State of Minnesota was created, and Eastman served in the Minnesota legislature for two terms between 1851 and 1853. He served on the first board of trustees for the University of Minnesota.

Eastman returned to the Fort and spent the rest of his life there. He died in 1875, and is buried at Fort Snelling.
SETH EASTMAN
American, 1808–1875

SIOUX INDIANS
1850, oil on canvas, 32 7/8 X 44 7/8 in.

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