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Northwest Nebraska and the Pine Ridge Reservation before and after the Wounded Knee Massacre

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NORTHWEST NEBRASKA AND THE PINE RIDGE RESERVATION BEFORE AND AFTER THE WOUNDED KNEE MASSACRE

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ABSTRACT

Northwest Nebraska, from the 1870s to the early twentieth century, had a complex economic and social atmosphere that intertwined with the Pine Ridge Reservation. As the United States continued promoting settlement westward, non-native settlers and the US military became the main proponent in displacing the Lakota people from their land in Nebraska. Following the gold rush to the Black Hills, the additional free land opportunities in northwest Nebraska forced Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies out of Nebraska and into the southwest corner of Dakota Territory. Relocated to Pine Ridge Agency, the Oglala Lakota continued to struggle as a people. Nearly adjacent to Nebraska, businessmen from around the country and within the border town communities of Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Chadron sought the economic opportunities being so close to the Native reservation. At the same time, the aggressive assimilation policies and practices of American politicians and agency officials, defined by the Progressive era, were largely taken advantage of by individuals who sought to gain on Lakota poverty. As these federal officials and businessmen continued restraining Native culture and identity at Pine Ridge, Lakotas who longed for their way of life sought a new Native religion with Ghost Dancing during the late 1880s and early 1890s, peaking in North and South Dakota from August through December 1890. The Wounded Knee Massacre on December 29 led to a new era between Pine Ridge and northwest Nebraska. Locals in northwest Nebraska took on a much more prominent role in the reservation economy and in social life within the border towns near the Pine Ridge Reservation.

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INTRODUCTION

The members of a powerful Native nation, the Oglala Lakota, gradually saw their way of life change throughout the latter half of the 1800s. By the 1830s and 1840s, European traders and travelers found their way onto Lakota territory that encompassed most of present-day South Dakota and parts of Wyoming, Montana, and Nebraska. When the first non-native traders, explorers, pioneers and settlers came farther and farther west, violent situations and tense moments between nations that normally would not have been the source of any fighting quickly exasperated by military intervention. As the Lakota people defended their territory against westward expansion, or fled altogether, the US military leaders and legislators saw these acts of defense and refuge as misconstrued acts of defiance or uprisings. In order to move the Lakota people out of the way for westward expansion and to keep peace in the western territory of the United States, the solution was nothing new in American foreign policy: continue displacing Natives to significantly smaller reservations and segregating non-native settlers from Lakota peoples to extract natural resources from the land.

In analyzing Native peoples on the Great Plains, this thesis specifically discusses the relocation and removal of the Lakota in northwest Nebraska over the course of ninety years. Within this scope, the US military had a fundamental role in shaping the future of Nebraska northwest borders and the emerging relationship between non-native settlers and Lakota people. Between the various trails crossing through sovereign Native territory and the establishment of various US military posts, the emerging relationship between the Lakota and non-natives took on a much more tumultuous relationship. When non-native

emigrants started settling in northwest Nebraska between 1880 and 1890, the border towns of Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Chadron quickly formed and sought some of the benefits being so close to the Pine Ridge Reservation. At first, these bordering non-native communities grew independently of to the nearby Pine Ridge, but the federal government and businessmen in the east found that Nebraska's close proximity to Pine Ridge Agency as better outlet in disbursing contracted annuities and rations. As tensions between the federal government and the Lakotas continued to rise in response to the new Native religion, Ghost Dancing, and the "Indian Scares" of 1890, Nebraskans increasingly became more involved in the Pine Ridge affairs. By 1904, the northwest Nebraska border towns north of the Niobrara River became an economic and social resource for Lakota business and cultural expression.

While this thesis covers nearly one hundred years, this study is not an entire history of events that took place in northwest Nebraska or Pine Ridge. Such a work would require a several volume series and a much more comprehensive discussion than what is found here. Instead, this thesis more closely discusses the impact of certain events, people, and most importantly, the places through a borderland narrative that adds a new perspective on Nebraska's role in Pine Ridge Reservation affairs. The prominent communities within Dawes and Sheridan County, and north of the Niobrara River, are the focus because they are within twenty or thirty miles of Pine Ridge. Additionally, the defined prominent communities mostly include Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Chadron, because these four border towns are the main economic and social resources for the Pine Ridge Reservation and the other surrounding communities.

Even then, not all four of the communities studied here served in the same capacity. For example, Hay Springs is one such case where the information either leads to the community's lack of involvement with Pine Ridge or the lack of information available. We know Lakota people and business interests related to Pine Ridge affairs were present in Hay Springs, but it is just unclear how much of the community was intertwined with their Native neighbors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Chadron on the other hand had an immense social life that was intertwined with the Lakota during the summer celebrations. Between the Fourth of July and county fairs, the Oglala Lakota leader, Red Cloud, became an important part in the community affairs, and even received the key to the city of Chadron at one point. As for Gordon and Rushville, both communities were constantly in competition with one another for Lakota business and any other capacity. Between the two eastern Sheridan County communities, Rushville became the main benefactor of Native neighbor because of "Indian" Supply Depot and closer proximity to Pine Ridge Agency. Gordon maintained a similar market and Native atmosphere, but simply featured less of the federal oversight and prominent business compared to Rushville.

Other smaller communities within Dawes and Sheridan County are purposefully excluded because of their small size, lack of resources, little involvement with Pine Ridge affairs, or the fact that they are not on the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley rail line. For example, Crawford, in Dawes County, is an outlier community because the economic and social atmosphere catered more to the nearby Camp Robinson rather than Pine Ridge. For example, according to the Dawes County centennial, the original plat for

Crawford came later than the other communities in Sheridan and Dawes counties here because of the lack of population. As a relatively small tent community, the meager sixty-nine residents started needed a required population of two hundred to successfully incorporate. Significantly below the two hundred population requirement, residents in what became Crawford sought soldiers at the nearby Camp Robinson when they came to bootleg alcohol back to the military post. Gradually, Crawford continued relying heavily on Camp Robinson's establishment to maintain and grow the community. Additionally, with the incorporation of the primarily black Ninth Infantry, Buffalo Soldiers, Camp Robinson introduced far more diverse background than they other respective border town communities. Thus, making Crawford an anomaly when compared to Chadron, Hay Springs, Rushville, and Gordon.[1]

Lastly, I purposefully excluded two other Nebraska counties that did not directly border Pine Ridge, but surely did have an impact on the region. In Cherry County, Valentine was another key community for non-native settlers traveling west to northwest Nebraska. But again, Cherry County is excluded because it does not directly border Pine Ridge and its economy was more intertwined with that of the Sicangu at the Rosebud Reservation. Military operations from Fort Niobrara are also excluded because the post was not part of the initial Great Sioux Expedition and primarily focused its efforts at Rosebud. As for Sioux County, the large swath of territory, before 1885, extended from the Wyoming border to present day Holt County. Once both Dawes and Sheridan County

[1] Patricia M Pinney, *Dawes County: The First 100 Years* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corporation, 1985), 29 – 30.

organized, Sioux County no longer bordered Pine Ridge. And again, most of its economy and social life was tied to the military post of Fort Robinson, like Crawford, rather than the Pine Ridge Reservation.

In organizing this thesis into three chapters, the argument presented here is the distinct change that occurs as a result of the Wounded Knee Massacre. Starting in the summer 1890, the "Indian Scares" marked the first time when the local non-native residents in the Nebraska border towns collectively feared for their lives being near Pine Ridge Reservation. Specifically, Dawes and Sheridan County residents feared what was happening just north of the Nebraska border when the large military force deployed to the region and in South Dakota. In many instances throughout the year, any rumor of a Lakota a raid in northwest Nebraska sent the bordering communities into a fight or flight kind of mentality. Once gun shots rained down on Big Foot and his band at Wounded Knee Creek on December 29, settlers continued to fear an all-out war in northwest Nebraska the following months. As described by many of the locals through their children or grandchildren, many Nebraskans in both Sheridan and Dawes Counties fled to Camp Robinson or hunkered down in large groups in town. To northwest Nebraskans, the Lakota at Wounded Knee were vengeance seeking for all of the maltreatment by the US federal government in the last few decades.

In chapter 1, I focus on the US military and Lakota relations in the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s as a precursor to settlement in northwest Nebraska; specifically, within the borders of Dawes and Sheridan counties. Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies were established to maintain peaceful relations and to segregate the Lakota and the non-natives

moving west. In this process of westward expansion, most of the Native and non-native encounters ultimately ended with some sort of escalated violence. As a result of these hostile relations, the military mobilized through the Great Sioux Expedition in the 1870s, and established both Camps Sheridan and Robinson. The two military posts became the main police force in the region that dealt with any Native uprisings or quarrels with the US federal government. Furthermore, the discovery of the gold in the Black Hills and oncoming settlers created a difficult situation. The US military had to protect and enforce treaty lands of the Lakota or defend the Americans who illegally passed through treaty lands and faced the threat of violence by Natives in the region. As a result, Red Cloud and Spotted Tail grudgingly agreed to new treaties that continued to displace the Lakota from their traditional homelands in Nebraska by the 1880s.

In chapter 2, I analyze the beginnings of non-native Nebraska settlers that established communities in the 1880s. Among the first settlers to populate the region following the removal of Red Cloud and Spotted Tail, were ranchers and cattlemen. These first non-native ranchers and cattlemen were entrepreneurs who sought beef contracts for the nearby agencies and military posts. As the region quickly became more populated with other non-native squatters, merchants, and ranchers, groups of people following religious and prominent leaders from the east came to northwest Nebraska between 1883 and 1885 to re-settle the land. Additionally, the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad further populated the region that founded the communities of Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Chadron. As these towns continued to grow, so did their relationship with Lakota people at Pine Ridge. The federal government issued

rations and annuities through northwest Nebraska and started the beginnings of a relationship to Pine Ridge. Most of the Nebraska and Pine Ridge Reservation relations, prior to 1890, are based on US federal government contracts and other businessmen from the east. Primarily, Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows increasing presence in northwest Nebraska brought Lakota business interests and social life into the bordering communities in Dawes and Sheridan counties.

In chapter 3, I begin by discussing how the Wounded Knee Massacre had a profound ripple effect in northwest Nebraska. Leading up to the summer of 1890 and the "Indian Scares", most non-native residents in Dawes and Sheridan counties had a basic understanding of their Lakota neighbor either through limited interactions or local newspaper reports. When the Wounded Knee Massacre took place, the bordering communities to the Pine Ridge Reservation fled to churches, neighbors' houses, or other defensible positions. As newspaper and military reports made it back to Nebraska, the massacre at Wounded Knee Creek was told in a different light based around a "battle" narrative. As a result, local settlers viewed this "battle" as a failure of US-Native policy to assimilate the Lakota with American cultural values and traditions. The US military was put in control of Pine Ridge and increasingly sought northwest Nebraskan citizens as a leading influence in Pine Ridge affairs through business and society.

For the rest of this introduction, the discussion features the historiography and primary sources that are an influential role in this study. For example, a large portion of the sources for this paper comes from the Sheridan County Historical Society (SCHS) in Rushville. At SCHS, the small volunteer lead museum has a wealth of information that is

largely ignored by historians for larger archives. From the SCHS archives are government records to the Secretary of Interior, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and Congress from the 1860s through the early 1890s. Additionally, there are several records copied from the National Archives in Washington DC that are applicable to some of the earliest military actions and camps in northern Sheridan County due in part to past lay historians in the community like Sheridan County Judge Clarence Benschoter.

Additional small and local archives, including the Dawes County Historical Society (DCHS) and the Hay Springs Heritage Museum, have undervalued primary and secondary sources. For example, much of the discussion in this thesis around the White Clay Extension comes from a graduate student paper at University of Missouri. Written by Genrose McWilliams Welsh, a public historian employed by the National Archives in Kansas City, Welsh has a wealth of unpublished research that adds significantly to the historiography of northwest Nebraska and Pine Ridge Reservation. At the Hay Springs Heritage Museum, several written sources from locals in the Beaver Valley provides great geographic information that is hard to come by anywhere else. Also, an entire booklet of correspondence of military orders, surgeon reports, and commanding officer reports from Camp Sheridan is also a great resource for this thesis.[2]

[2] Genrose McWilliams Welsh, May 11, 1983, "The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the Executive Addition, 1882 – 1904" Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska. From Genrose McWilliams Welsh's obituary in the *Kansas City Star* on January 7, 1991. "Genrose McWilliams Welsh, 50, Kansas City in Platte County, died Jan. 5, 1991, at home. She was born in Greenville, Ohio, and lived in this area since 1974. Mrs. Welsh was a historical researcher and had worked for the Kansas City Museum, the Jackson County Historical Society, the Mid-Continent Public Library and the Kansas City branch of the National Archives. She received a bachelor's degree from Indiana University and a master's degree from the University of Missouri – Kansas City.

As for History Nebraska, in Lincoln, and the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, in Chadron, the large body of information from these two institutions also had a major factor in this study. For example, the History Nebraska has a wealth of information in the Dawes and Sheridan County newspaper collections. Between the *Dawes County Democrat*, *Chadron Record*, *Chadron Citizen*, *Rushville Standard*, *Hay Springs Enterprise*, and the *Gordon Journal*, the news related to Pine Ridge affairs and the Lakota who came to Nebraska was always of note. In many cases, the Lakota were rarely the headline, but sprinkled throughout the paper are clues to some of the local perspectives of their Native neighbor. The Eli Ricker and Everitt Pitt files proved valuable as they feature some of the earliest settlers to northwest Nebraska. At the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center in Chadron, the rich collection of notes and letters is a great resource. Through Mari Sandoz's incredibly detailed note taking and interpretations is an undervalued resource that Native and Western scholars should increasingly explore.

As for much of the secondary source materials, many works have directly influenced the wording and overall organization of this thesis. In referring to Natives or Lakota at Pine Ridge, this thesis follows the terminology in Akim Reinhardt's *Ruling Pine Ridge* and Peter Iverson's *When Indians Became Cowboys.* Reinhardt and Iverson offer a great explanation as to why such terms are improperly used about various Native

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She was a member of the Platte County Historical Society, the Heritage League of Greater Kansas City and the Kansas City Area Archivists."

peoples. For this thesis, "Native" and "Lakota" are the preferred terms wherever possible.[3]

To expand further on Reinhardt's and Iverson's labels of an "Indian," "Native American," or "Sioux", this thesis excludes these three terms unless utilized by another source or referencing to some legal name, like the Oglala "Sioux" Tribe. These three ascribed terms are problematic, then and today, when referring to anyone of Lakota, Nakota, or Dakota heritage. As noted by Reinhardt, and many other historians, when European settlers incorrectly used "Indian" to describe traditional North American people. In many cases, "Indian" is an offensive term within in the Native community. Unfortunately, many of the legal terms featuring "Indian" cannot be avoided entirely when discussing specific government agencies. "Indian" is only used in referencing to the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the Office of Indian Affairs or other people's quotes that are within the context of the time. The term "Native American" is also problematic because of the ascribed "American" title. At no point did the traditional Lakota, or other Natives in North America ever refer to themselves as "Native American," until the European settlers ascribed the term in association with their home continent. And finally, "Sioux" is too simple and loose of a term in describing Native peoples from Dakota, Nakota, or Lakota background. As Reinhardt described, "The word Sioux is popular English

[3] Akim D. Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge: Oglala Lakota Politics from The IRA to Wounded Knee* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2007), xxv – xxvi.; Peter Iverson, *When Indians Became Cowboys: Native Peoples and Cattle Ranching in the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), xiii – xiv.

Vernacular to describe a wide ranging, but related [Native] people… the central part of the northern Great Plains." I justify using "Lakota" for the people following Red Cloud and Spotted Tail as most were of Lakota heritage or adopted those values within the confines Pine Ridge Reservation.[4]

Two scholars lead the charge on a topic similar to this thesis. The first being two works published by Jeffrey Ostler. *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism* utilized a unique approach to analyzed U.S. – Native relations from a colonial perspective. According to Ostler, Native and non-native relations are grounded in three phases that started from Lewis and Clark and ended with the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890. In the first phase, Ostler characterized the 1860s and 70s as a time of US conquest on the Great Plains alongside Lakota struggle to retain their sovereignty as an independent people. Ostler's best example is the Battle of Little Big Horn, where a limited Native victory set the precedent of a revamped US militaristic approach later in the rest of the nineteenth century. Eventually, this highly publicized defeat at the Battle of Little Big Horn gave way to additional American troops and treaties that further stripped territory from the Lakota and many other Native peoples in the region. The next phase, according to Ostler, consisted of a colonial approach in American – Native policies. After the death of Crazy Horse in 1877, the beginnings of the reservation system for the Lakota people transformed from into malicious politicking and negotiations for the US to exercise

[4] Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge*, xxv – xxvi.; Iverson, *When Indians Became Cowboys*, xiii – xiv.

control of the Lakota. For example, government agents at Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies withheld food rations as compliance and negotiation tactic for any rebellious Natives. Furthermore, during these colonization efforts, Lakota leaders like Red Cloud led a multitude of political negotiations with the federal government to retain as much Native territory as possible. The third and final phase that Ostler described is the renewed assimilation tactics sought to end Lakota traditions and customs. According to Ostler, the new Native religion by Wovoka along with Ghost Dancing initially posed no immediate threat to surrounding non-native settlers. This new Native religion and Ghost Dance were problematic in that the movement completely upended the goals of the reservation agents to have the Lakota people adopt American customs and values. Seen as an act of militant defiance, the US military found a renewed role in re-conquering the rebellious Lakota. As a result, the Wounded Knee Massacre in December of 1890 was not different than many of the other military massacres that the US military participated in years prior. In the end, Ostler made a compelling argument in favor of a colonial lens that redefined how historians think about how the events in the 1860s and 70s help understand how and what happened on December 29, 1890 at Wounded Knee Creek.[5]

Building from *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism*, Ostler's 2010 book *Lakotas and the Black Hills* went into much more detail about the Lakota struggles to retain the Black Hills. Similar to the colonial model used in his previous book, Ostler explained that the colonial possession of the Black Hills by the US is a further example of

[5] Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Native displacement. Much of this information presented by Ostler is not new, however, the detail related to memory and changing times further explains the legal battle in the twentieth century. For the Lakota, the Black Hills is not only a physical territory ripped away from them, but also had significant spiritual importance. Despite the arguments by attorney Richard Case, the evidence of treaty infringements and violations fell on deaf ears. The courts upheld that the American government acted honorably or at the very least exhausted its own resources to try to uphold the agreement. By the 1960s and 70s, the civil rights era drastically changed public opinion about how America treated minorities in the past and ultimately influenced the course of the case. After failing several years before, the Lakota successfully repealed their case in 1980, however, would not take the allotted compensation. Instead, the money won in court was denied by Lakota leaders a new form of Native resistance that did not seek compensation, but rather a unifying message for the return of the Black Hills.[6] Despite Ostler's overwhelming report as a historian, he still fell short in providing additional struggles by the US military in Nebraska keeping gold miners off of Native territory. This additional history continues to prove how the lacking efforts and ineffective US government and military policies and operations were in upholding their end of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty.

David Christensen's dissertation at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas titled *"The Ground You Walk on Belongs to my People": Lakota Community Building, Activism, and Red Power in Western Nebraska 1917 – 2000,* described early twentieth

[6] Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010).

century Native civil rights era in western Nebraska. Focused more in the populous communities western Nebraska, this refreshing approach to the early twentieth century Native civil rights movement distinguishes a different grass roots movement taking place separate from the national campaigns. Specifically, Lakota people who either came or lived in western Nebraska sought to end many of the segregation practices in Alliance and Scottsbluff rather than "addressing [concerns] of tribal sovereignty." Christensen's dissertation is a great example of the research still necessary to more fully understand the Lakota at Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations in relation to their neighbors in western Nebraska. This thesis builds on Christensen's civil rights approach in twentieth century, especially his first chapter about Lakota identity in western Nebraska. More specific to this analysis in the late nineteenth century, I more closely describe the community foundations in the upper Niobrara territory of northwest Nebraska that Christensen quickly glosses over. In looking more closely before 1917 in northwest Nebraska, it is clear that this research is also rooted in many of his economic and social arguments as the basis for what is to come in the twentieth century.[7]

Wounded Knee: Party Politics and the Road to an American Massacre, by Heather Cox Richardson, provides an interesting take on the influences of Washington DC leading up to Wounded Knee Massacre. Richardson argues that while many of the key decisions made hours before the Wounded Knee Massacre are critical, however, the decisions leading up to the massacre go back as far as the political decisions made during

[7] David R. Christensen, ""The Ground You Walk on Belongs to my People": Lakota Community Building, Activism, and Red Power in Western Nebraska 1917 – 2000" (PhD diss., University of Nevada, 2016), 2.

the Civil War. More importantly, Richardson argued politicians in the east are squarely to blame for the manifestation of westward expansion, malicious intent of US policies with Native peoples, and buildup of arms leading up to the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890. For example, the changing geo-political culture in the US, the Republican Party wanted to retain their control in government as the county grew westerly. In order to maintain a Republican controlled government, public policy required a strong stance against Native traditional practices geared more toward assimilation policies. In the end, the final gun shots by the American soldiers may have been the final executioners, but it was the public policies created in the east that bares the most responsibility.[8]

Another important dynamic to this thesis is analyzing historical memory of non-natives in northwest Nebraska. *Surviving Wounded Knee: The Lakotas and the Politics of Memory*, by David W. Grua, reviews how the Wounded Knee Massacre became such an important event in Lakota and American collective memory. Quoting Ostler and Richardson throughout his work, Grua adds a different perspective in how Natives and non-natives differed in how they perception of what happened at Wounded Knee Creek. For non-native settlers, the Wounded Knee "battle" defined the continued conquest of the west. For Lakota leaders, like Joseph Horn Cloud, the "battle" at Wounded Knee was more of a massacre than anything else with as many dead women and children beyond the initial gunshots. This dividing point between Natives and non-native not only caused trouble for the courts and historians, but also American identity later on. As time

[8] Heather Cox Richardson, *Wounded Knee: Party Politics and the Road to an American Massacre* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

progressed into the 1960s, the United States had to redefine its policies with Native peoples as the actions and intentions were not as honorable as originally believed to be. But not all were as accepting. For many, especially in northwest Nebraska, the American patriotic ideas of manifest destiny, democracy, and education had a new undertone that is out right rejected or manipulated in way that detracts from the murder and genocide of thousands of Native men, women, and children.[9]

Stew Magnuson picked up in his own borderland analysis where Ostler and Richardson glossed over in their work. *The Death of Raymond Yellow Thunder and other True Histories from the Nebraska – Border Towns* primarily discusses the border towns in Sheridan County, Nebraska, and events building up to Yellow Thunder's death in 1972. Like Christensen, Magnuson focuses on the plethora of racial disparities and segregationist policies in northwest Nebraska that led to an all-too-common tragedy among many Natives in the area. Much of the book is well written and easy to follow with small blips referencing to the nineteenth and early twentieth century as it relates to the incident in Gordon, Nebraska. Where Magnuson comes up short is his historical analysis of Native and non-native relations beyond the incident that may have a larger role. As Magnuson argued at first that Yellow Thunder's death is one example of many, but then fails to further explain the other atrocities between Natives from Pine Ridge and non-natives in northwest Nebraska. Scholars should also question where and how Magnuson's primary source research came into play versus his own words and

[9] David Grua, *Surviving Wounded Knee: The Lakotas and the Politics of Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

experiences. Also, as a journalist, not trained in historical analysis, historians should also question some of his intentions in writing and appealing to a wide audience to sell copies of his book. In the end, Magnuson's work is a solid start and another example of the plethora of research still necessary in northwest Nebraska.[10]

While this thesis more strictly analyzes northwest Nebraska to Pine Ridge, not all Native and non-native interactions were just across the border in Nebraska. There were several non-native businesses and communities on and off the reservation in South Dakota that had business with both Pine Ridge and northwest Nebraska. In many cases, there were episodes of violence that would break out between conflicting interests over land and other resources. *From Wounded Knee to the Gallows: The Life and Trails of Lakota Chief Two Sticks*, by Philip S. Hall and Mary Solon Lewis, serves as a guide to understand how some of these conflicting interests and violent interactions between Natives and non-natives. Hall and Lewis analyze the trial of Lakota leader Two Sticks following the murder of several cowboys on the Pine Ridge Reservation as it related to the abuse and assimilation practices to eliminate Lakota culture. For example, the lingering frustration and discontent from No Water's Camp with that of the historical memories about the massacre at Wounded Knee Creek continued into the 1890s. Specifically, within the Broken Arrow band led by Two Sticks, the resentful feelings aligned with their current impoverished state created by non-natives on and around the reservation. By 1893, No Water's camp was starving and the cattle from a nearby rancher

[10] Stew Magnuson, *The Death of Raymond Yellow Thunder and Other True Stories from the Nebraska – Pine Ridge Border Towns* (Lubbock, TX; Texas Tech University Press, 2008).

grazing on the reservation became all too tempting for some Lakotas in the camp. As a result, several cowboys and a couple Nebraska boys were murdered in the night following the incident. Two Sticks and several others within the Broken Arrow band were put on trial, found guilty of murder, and hung for the crime.[11]

Additionally, *To Have This Land* by Philip Hall provided a great example how local South Dakotans viewed their Native neighbors leading up to the Wounded Knee Massacre. Hall squarely placed the blame on the new settlers to the area and the local political leaders as the main reason why the military came out in the first place. It may have been the Seventh Calvary that fired the shots in December 1890, but many locals pressured their government officials to open up the land for further settlement. The non-native settlers coming to the region did not see their Lakota neighbors as a sovereign people, but rather under the authority of the US federal government. Hence why many non-native settlers did not see the Native reservations belonging to the Lakota, but rather the government. When additional land did open for settlement, the new non-native population continued ramping up pressure on the federal government to eliminate Native territory entirely. With the new Native religion and Ghost Dancing making headlines in local newspapers, additional guns, munitions, and the US military were coveted by the settlers near the reservation for protection. Hall then describes how South Dakota locals believed the Wounded Knee "battle" as the last conquest of the Lakota and could now more fully exploit their Lakota neighbor without fear of retaliation. This important classic

[11] Philip S. Hall and Mary Solon Lewis, *From Wounded Knee to The Gallows: The Life and Trials of Lakota Chief Two Sticks* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020).

is a great guide to analyze how some of these interracial relations played out in South Dakota as a guide for some of those interactions in Nebraska.[12]

Paula Wagner's, *They Treated Us Like Indians*, also describes many of the social interactions between Natives and non-natives in Bennett County, South Dakota in the late twentieth century. Similar to the Magnuson's work, Wagner's sociological approach differed from historical approach. Wagner based her study around the sociological circumstances and public dilemmas within the 1990s in a South Dakota county surrounded by both Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations. In what was supposed to be a simple study ended up a much more complicated analysis where full descent, mixed descent, and non-native peoples clashed frequently. Additionally, Wagner's interesting perspectives related to race and the unusual circumstances of land ownership between the two reservations, state of South Dakota, and federal governments is a creative approach to unpack the complicated life in Bennett County. As a sociologist, Wagner's came up short in describing how some of these interracial interactions came to fruition. The historical analysis of years of conflict dating back to early non-native settlements could provide additional insight about the current sociological dynamic as it relates to this highly contested place in the larger picture of American colonialism on the Great Plains.[13]

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[12] Philip S. Hall, *To Have This Land: The Nature of Indian/White Relations: South Dakota: 1888-1891* (Vermillion, SD: University of South Dakota Press, 1991).
[13] Paula L. Wagner, *They Treated Us Like Indians: The Worlds of Bennett County, South Dakota* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

Much of the academic discussions related to Lakota and Western histories exclude a borderland perspective. For many scholars focused primarily on the late nineteenth century battles, and policies, the undervalued places and geography of the land is still undervalued in academia. Despite some efforts to highlight the impact of neighboring counties and communities, most of the scholarship related to the Lakota and any kind of borderland history is more focused on South Dakota rather than Nebraska. The Nebraska border towns of Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Chadron are far more accessible than many South Dakota communities and their omission warrants further investigation. As this thesis argues, Dawes and Sheridan Counties supplied to much of the resources to Pine Ridge Reservation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to be excluded in academic research.

Ruling Pine Ridge, by Akim Reinhardt, discusses the problematic political framework of the Office of Indian Services (OIS) and the Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST). The OIS and John Collier expressed the idea of Native peoples governing themselves through a local government council. When the OST was first created in 1934, the issues surrounding a western governing system promoting democracy did not immediately attract many enthusiastic Oglala in Pine Ridge. Additionally, the western ideas of a centralized government and democracy did not mesh well with many of the governing traditions in Lakota culture. Despite Collier's best intentions, the consequences of OST's establishment led to a sharp rejection of traditional Lakota culture at a state level. This drastic change came from internal leadership at the helm of mixed descent Natives on the council that instituted policies against traditional ways. In Reinhardt's final argument, the

establishment of the OST at the peak of this struggle came in the 1970s with Dick Wilson as president. Wilson and several other tribal council members were called out for their puppeteer government and lack of pro-Native legislation and transparency while in office. In the end, the 1973 occupation at Wounded Knee is not only a response to Wilson and his corrupt practices while in office, but also a response to the social and political environment created by the OIS and OST.[14]

Reinhardt focused most of his discussions around a top-down political analysis, but he only mentioned a few of the important social catalysts. More specifically in Nebraska, the murder of Raymond Yellow Thunder in Gordon, and the arrest of Russel Means in Scottsbluff that both sparked a grassroot political movement led by the American Indian Movement, but Reinhardt missed some of the other previous instances that made Thunder's murder and Mean's arrest far more controversial. Native peoples faced more than their fair share of struggles, especially in Nebraska. Other examples include the political and social movements related to the American Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, which is glossed over for other topics post 1930s. Plus, the many local Natives in the early twentieth century were far more reserved in the political process than given credit by Reinhardt. Nevertheless, Reinhardt's study of Lakota history is influential in this thesis.

Organizing the Lakota, by Thomas Biolsi, also addresses how the political system changed in the 1930s for the Lakota. Biolsi broke down his research as it related to the

[14] Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge*, 2007.

"New Deal" era under President Roosevelt. In summary, the OIA intended for the Lakota to become largely dependent on the US federal government for economic resources. When the reservation system first displaced the Lakota to Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations, the OIA relied heavily on a domination and colonial tactic that required Native dependency. The economic resources and Native resignations from Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations firmly placed the OIA in the driver seat for Native policy and decision making. Similarly to Reindhardt, Biolsi argued that by the 1930s the OIA Commissioner, John Collier, called for independent self-governance by Native peoples, but the key difference between Reinhardt and Biolsi is how they viewed the initial attempts to legitimize Native self-governance. Biolsi describes an uphill battle among distrusting Native peoples, however, the new tribal governments that were meant to take control ultimately failed because of previous bureaucratic and administrative tools that prevented traditional self-governance. In the end, the questionable tribal government system came to a peaking moment when Russel Means, Dennis Banks, and several other Natives in the 1973 occupation at Wound Knee. Biolsi, does an exceptional job providing evidence for an illegitimate local government, but he generally accepted more US federal documents than Native ones. As Reinhardt alluded to in his own book, *Ruling Pine Ridge*, most of the historical analysis before him generally focused on US produced documents rather than Native sources.[15]

[15] Thomas Biolosi, *Organizing the Lakota: The Political Economy of the New Deal on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1992).

Louis Warren's work in *Buffalo Bill's America*, has a major role in this thesis as a catalyst for Native and non-native interactions in northwest Nebraska. Warren loosely describes how much Buffalo Bill relied heavily on Lakota actors from Pine Ridge as a key part of the performance. Respected leaders like Red Shirt were fundamental to maintain order while traveling around the country and overseas, but in order to attain Lakota actors, Buffalo Bill came to northwest Nebraska to furnish his show. Between the Asay Mercantile Store in Rushville and Laust Fredrickson shoe store in Chadron, Buffalo Bill and other Native expositions increasingly relied upon locals in northwest Nebraska to supply Lakota actors with regalia and items for their shows. While this thesis looks to Warren's work for early interactions between Natives and non-natives in northwest Nebraska, I also argue against Warren about the treatment of Lakota during the Wild West shows and other Native expositions. Through a before and after Wounded Knee scope for overall health and wellness of Lakota actors coming back from Native expositions, we see the physical and emotional maltreatment of Native peoples during the Wild West shows. We also further understand how Nebraskans took on a much more prominent role in hiring Native actors for later expositions like the Miller 101 shows.[16]

As for Native influences and perspectives, many Lakota continued struggling to retain their culture and heritage. For many Lakota, they had to learn how to adapt and change through the times. Peter Iverson's book, *When Indians Became Cowboys*, described how cattle ranching in and around Pine Ridge Indian Reservation became such

[16] Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Vintage Books), 373.

a central socially and economically for natives. Especially in the 1890s, there is a significant shift where many Natives preferred ranching rather than farming that tied to some semblance of their traditional way of life with the North American Bison. By the 1910s, this shift in ranching rather than farming drastically changed due to Lakota inexperience, high cattle prices, and encroaching non-native land buyers that created a devastating and struggling economy Native reservations. While Iverson has an exceptional work in differentiating between varying successes across the Midwest and Southwest, there are possible distinctions that could be further explored through the impacts of the Wounded Knee Massacre in Americanizing the Lakota following the massacre.[17]

Native historical memory is widely studied among scholars. Beyond Grua, *Lakota America,* by Pekka Hämäläinen, discussed how the Lakota reinvented themselves with the times and situations they faced. The once proud hunting and gathering society continually transformed as western ideals slowly encroached on their traditions and territory. Hämäläinen offers an extensively researched account of the Lakota through these transitions from the sixteenth century through the first half of the 1900s. The second, *Our History is the Future* by Nick Estes, took an unconventional approach in describing how the environment shaped Lakota practices and traditions. Instead of approaching the land disputes between the United States as a property rights issue, Estes discusses the meaning of the land for Lakota people. According to oral histories, from this land, people formed their own culture and traditions as a result of their surroundings.

[17] Iverson, *When Indians Became Cowboys*, 1994.

And then from this deep cultural connection to the land, Estes delved into a more present discussion about the Dakota Access Pipe Line and Native rights disputes. While Estes did bring out some interesting points, he needed a stronger comparison to the current Native struggles to that of the Oglala and other Lakota to the previous generations. Additionally, Estes does not fully address Lakota history along the Pine Ridge-Nebraska border.[18]

The important classic *Black Elk Speaks*, by John Neihardt provides additional insight into late nineteenth century and early twentieth century life for the Lakota. Through several interviews with medicine man and elder, Black Elk, Neihardt describes and depicts how the Lakota people transitioned from traditional ways to early twentieth century life as he knew it. As a cousin to Crazy Horse, Black Elk lived through many integral parts of Lakota history. Not only did he fight in several well-known battles, he also had a key role in Lakota culture as a spiritual leader with visions predicting the future and fate of the Lakota people. In one of Black Elk's most prominent visions, the Dog Vision, Neihardt describes how Black Elk saw that the Lakota would endure an immense amount of suffering for many years to come. Overcome with extreme sadness, this vision did little to comfort him as he was simply a medicine man only able to heal people. Instead of healing people, Black Elk sought Neihardt to keep Lakota culture alive through a written account that encapsulated the Lakota elder's life. As many scholars before, much of the most quotable parts and context provided are indeed Neihardt's own

[18] Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019); Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2019).*

words and interpretations, this should not take away from Black Elk's efforts to share Lakota stories and traditions with the non-natives of the world.[19]

Philip Deloria's book, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, is a great compilation of essays that describes how Natives increasingly challenged "white" American society cultural views through modernization. For example, Deloria broke down his book into a series of essays that he either presented at a previous conference or published as an article arguing how Natives continually challenged traditional stereotypes. More specifically analyzing how many of the early twentieth century Great Plains peoples, such as the Lakota, Apache, and a few others, interacted with non-native technologies. This distinct cultural ideological Americanness of driving cars, appearing in cinema, playing sports, or simply going to a beauty shop were also utilized by Natives. Deloria magnificently tied together these questions of American ideals with that of Native stereotypes under one banner of a much more complicated view of Indigenous people. As it relates to this thesis, the first chapter of Deloria's discusses whether or not certain acts of violence by Natives following Wounded Knee constituted as war. Such examples, like the Battle of Lightning Creek, in 1903, is just one example that a changed American perception of an once war-driven Native community became a pacified people. Despite some of the jargon filled terminologies about cultural appropriation and assimilation, Deloria has a fine collection of works here. Though Deloria cited some of his sources related to Nebraska,

[19] John, Neiheardt, *Black Elk Speaks: The Complete Edition* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

he came up short, again like many other historians, to include much of this region's involvement in Native life.[20]

As for the military operations taking place, several works had an impact on this study. For example, *January Moon*, by Jerome A. Greene discussed how the US military established Camp Robinson with the intentions to control the Lakota at Red Cloud Agency. Greene's biggest contribution is the immense amount of research and description of Camp Robinson and the surrounding landscape in the bigger picture of the US military on the Great Plains. For example, Greene addresses the purpose of the Great Sioux Expedition and why the Pine Ridge, the land around Camp Robinson, was ideal for a military post. Nearly adjacent to the Red Cloud Agency, the military could monitor the nearby Agency if any quarrels were between the agent and Lakota. Additionally, the White River and additional resources from the Pine Ridge ensured the camps success. In addition to the camps location and landscape, Greene's description of the Northern Cheyenne's breakout is the most comprehensive analysis of the event. In context with the displacement of the Cheyenne from the Great Plain's region, their new home in the desolate and foreign Oklahoma territory was crammed with hundred of other Native nations from all around the country. Realizing the consequences of their relocation, leaders Dull Knife and Little Wolf set out against the will of the federal government for their homeland in present day Montana. After the group split in Nebraska, Dull Knife and company were captured by troops from Camp Robinson who ultimately held them

[20] Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

hostage until they agreed to return to Oklahoma. On one-night, late January 1879, the attempt to escape Camp Robinson was quickly shut down by American soldiers. Among the escapees, American soldiers continued pursuing unarmed men, women, and children and gunned them down without mercy.[21]

Outpost of the Sioux Wars: A History of Fort Robinson, by Frank N. Schubert, is also another example of the beginnings of US involvement in Lakota territory. As an established military camp from the Great Sioux Expedition, the US military at Camp Robinson had a violent relationship with their Lakota neighbors from the start. Between Schubert's book and William Harding Carter's own account, when both the Lakota and US military met, it usually exasperated the situation that further brought political negotiations to end the fighting. For example, when the gold miners and traders came through Lakota territory seeking the Black Hills, Camps Robinson and Sheridan were tasked in keeping the peace in the region between Natives and non-natives. When the US military was originally brought to western-Nebraska as a means to monitor the Lakota, however, the presence of illegal non-natives created a whole new situation for Camp Robinson. The US military instead had to play a balancing act between American interests in acquiring resources from the land while also policing the western-Nebraska region.[22]

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[21] Jerome A. Greene, *January Moon: The Northern Cheyenne Breakout from Fort Robinson: 1878 – 1879* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020).
[22] Frank S. Schubert, *Outpost of the Sioux Wars: A History of Fort Robinson* (Lincoln, NE: University Nebraska Press, 1993).

The one author and historian who had the closest understanding of Native and non-native relations in these early Nebraska border towns was Mari Sandoz. As mentioned before, any discussion about life in northwest Nebraska during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries cannot exclude the homegrown and self-taught Nebraska historian. Through her two most well-known books, *Old Jules* and *Crazy Horse*, there is valuable insight about Natives and non-natives perspectives in the region. For example, in *Old Jules*, many of the characters and circumstances are real people and situations despite being a novel. The previous romanticized views of farming and pioneer life is quickly shattered when Sandoz described her own father, Jules Sandoz, as an abusive husband and father who struggled to make a living on the land. In her most import contribution, *Crazy Horse,* Sandoz describes a far different Lakota man than the flamboyant warrior character made out in American popular culture. Between Sandoz's own interviews and research at the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Denver Public Library, readers quickly understand Crazy Horse as a much more forward thinking, distant, and reserved person.[23]

Well ahead for her time, Sandoz not only dedicated her life to extensively writing works that were best sellers, but also the great amount of research in archives around the country that make her a world re-known historian in the twenty first century. What this thesis hopes to build upon in Sandoz's work is to honor her by expanding on the interracial relations between the Lakota and non-natives in the Nebraska border towns to

[23] Mari Sandoz, *Old Jules* (New York, NY: Hastings House, 1935).; Mari Sandoz, *Crazy Horse: The Strange Man of the Oglalas* (New York: Hastings House, 1942).

the Pine Ridge Reservation. Sandoz clearly understood and expressed this place and time that challenges both popular belief and academic scholarship around the Lakota and non-native settlers on the Great Plains. I similarly hope to bring my own connections and experiences being from a Lakota and non-native background in northwest Nebraska as Sandoz did in all of her writings.

As for the local non-native perspective, much of what Grua, Richardson, Ostler, and many others discussed in their books lack the grass roots of Native and non-native interactions, especially in northwest Nebraska. For most of the historiography about northwest Nebraska, it relates to non-academic articles and publications of the early settlement years. This thesis relies on many of the centennial and local recollection books from Sheridan and Dawes counties as a starting point for further investigation. These local accounts are valuable, especially when analyzing how non-natives view their Lakota neighbor. For the sake of this thesis, most of the family histories are considered for their interpretation rather than for historical facts. And when appropriate their stories offer new perspectives of historical accounts that help historians better understand life in northwest Nebraska in the late nineteenth century.

As for the local histories, most of the recollections are found in works like the *History of Gordon, Nebraska, "Recollections" of Sheridan County Nebraska*, *A Century of Progress: Sheridan County Nebraska*, and *History of Hay Springs, Nebraska, and Beaver Valley and It's People* start with a general history of the county, city, or local area. More often than not, many of these local history books are centennials and romanticizing local heritage that warrants a careful consideration of facts and details, but

in analyzing some of these stories and events through a historical memory scope, we may better understand how folks in northwest Nebraska understand their Lakota neighbor. For example, most of the histories include a synthesized version of early education, religion, business, and civic life related to many of the families in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The unique part of these centennials is the family histories section that includes details and stories about when and where relatives came from, where they farmed or ranched, and some sort of civic involvement if they participated in community affairs. Sprinkled throughout these family histories are the interracial relationships with their Native neighbors and the key events that define those relationships from their own time and parents or grandparents' time. [24]

Another important work that largely depended on recollections rather than traditional primary source materials include the *Western Story: The Recollections of Charley O'Kieffe, 1884 – 1898*. As the title alluded to, this brief work by the University of Nebraska Press illustrated the story of Charley O'Kieffe as he remembered his time in Sheridan County from 1884 to 1898. Many historians error on the side of caution when trusting a source beyond the scope of its years, however, the notes from editor A. B. Guthrie, Jr. helped dispel many of O'Kieffes inaccuracies. Guthrie described O'Kieffe's

[24] The Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Gordon Nebraska* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corporation, 1984).; The Hay Springs Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Hay Springs, Nebraska and the Surrounding Area: The First 100 Years 1885-1985* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corporation, 1985).; The Rushville Centennial Committee, *A Century of Progress: Sheridan County, Nebraska 1885-1985*, vol. 1 (Valentine, NE: LT Printing & Stationery, 1985).; The Rushville Centennial Committee, *A Century of Progress: Sheridan County, Nebraska 1885-1985*, vol. 2 (Valentine, NE: LT Printing & Stationery, 1985).; Beaver Valley Jolly Neighbors Club, *Beaver Valley and its People: 1870 – 1970* (Gordon, NE: Gordon Journal, 1970).

"memory extraordinarily in clear and exact." "Where [his memory] fails him, he says so – when he does not resolve his uncertainties by reference to accepted records." Several footnotes throughout the book either contextualized or blatantly told the reader what was wrong in O'Kieffe's words. For most of the book, O'Kieffe describes his time in Sheridan County in detail about the topography, vegetation, and many of the local folk whom O'Kieffes courted when in northwestern Nebraska. Despite some of his rich recollections of Native encounters and settle in some instances, O'Kieffe's perspective romanticizes and reminisces on his childhood. Nevertheless, Charley O'Kieffe's western story provides a unique perspective that is neither a historical narrative nor an autobiography of early Sheridan County life.[25]

Saddle Strings, by Olin B. Waddill, is another locally published work that relies on historical memory of the cowboy culture in northwest Nebraska. Published by the Gordon Tri State Old Time Cowboys Memorial Museum, this book compiles stories by a local cowboy Olin Waddill. Waddill, who lived in the Nebraska Sandhills most of his life as a rancher, epitomized what many believe to be a true Nebraska cattleman. In a joint effort between other cattlemen and the Gordon museum, it was deemed important to put together this bicentennial book in celebration and preservation of western history. Again, this work, like the centennials and O'Kieffe books, relies solely on historical memory of various people. More specifically related to the interracial relationship between the cowboy non-natives and Lakota, both met frequently in the early twentieth century. Non-

[25] Charley O'Kieffe, *Western Story: The Recollections of Charley O'Kieffe: 1884 – 1898*, ed. A. B. Guthrie, Jr. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1974).

natives often delivered cattle to Pine Ridge Reservation, while many Natives worked as ranch hands or married into a non-native family. As described in the text, much of the economic vitality of Pine Ridge and Native participation in western life is critical.[26]

While most of the recollections, family histories, and general histories largely excluded their Native neighbor's perspective in their account, these interpretations provide an important understanding about Native and non-native relations. Early on in all the centennials, Natives are mentioned as the early inhabitants of the land through notable leaders and events. Leaders like Red Cloud and Crazy Horse are briefly mentioned in conjunction with various "Indian Scares" of the 1880s and 1890s, but the topic quickly transitions into family or community histories as if Natives are not a crucial part of their history. Like previously mentioned, many of their northern neighbors, and local natives, are largely excluded, either intentionally or unintentionally, throughout most of text, but their economic value is vital for these border towns. Natives were neither the spectacle or the forgotten social group in many of these histories, but were more simply "present" in most recollections. Since this thesis analyzes interactions between Natives and non-natives, reading between the fine lines of what family members wrote down is critical to understand how northwest Nebraskans viewed their northern neighbor. Natives may not have much of a voice in these texts, but the lack of a voice is also telling. The important references to events, like the Wounded Knee "battle" is very much so revealing of non-native perceptions that Grua and Hall discuss; hence why these local Dawes and Sheridan County centennials and other local published recollections are important texts.

[26] O. B. Waddill, *Saddle Strings* (Pierre, SD: The State Publishing Co., 1975).

Despite all the great work already done on western Nebraska and Lakota history, the shortcomings by historians neglect the far more interactive community between Natives and early non-native immigrants in northwest Nebraska. As discussed, Ostler, Magnuson, Wagner, Reinhardt, and others, they make up important pieces to a much larger understanding of the early twentieth century social life, but fail to include how the Lakota and Nebraskans interacted with each other in the bordering communities of Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Chadron. It is also my hope through this research that both sides and stories are told here so that the Lakotas and northwest Nebraskans may understand that their histories are deeply intertwined with each other in the twenty-first century. The Lakota deserve their story told as a marginalized people who faced dispossession and genocide at the hands of their non-native invaders and US federal government. At the same time, the non-native immigrants who first came to re-settle the land also have a voice of their own perspectives and concerns on the land and struggles of everyday life.

CHAPTER 1: THE MILITARY PRECURSOR TO SETTLEMENT

Following the increasing presence of miners, immigrants, and early settlers on the Great Plains, the growing conflicts between the US military and the Lakota people came as a result of manifest destiny and national expansion westerly. Between violent episodes and rising tensions between American emigrants and Natives in the region, the US military was called upon to control and confine Natives separate from the rest of the non-native population. In this attempt to control the Lakota through military actions, Native warriors had early success in fighting against the US imperialist policies and armies established at posts or forts, but by the early 1870s, the sporadic fighting and wars on the Great Plains between Natives and the US military gave way to more political negotiations. Among leaders like Red Cloud and Spotted Tail, sought these non-militant negotiations to avoid war, while other Lakota leaders like Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull opposed the confines of reservation life. Thought fighting continued in the 1870s over the gold rush in the Black Hills, political negotiations pre-dominantly further disposed the Oglala and Sicangu Lakotas in and out of northwest Nebraska over the course of less than ten years.

Despite the pre-dominate political negotiations following the 1870s, the US military maintained a presence in northwest Nebraska. The initial US – Lakota negotiations failed to keep the peace between Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies as many Lakotas resented reservation life. After several quarrels between Agency Agents, two military posts were through the Great Sioux Expedition with the objective to monitor the Lakota. Additionally, the US military was to enforce Lakota sovereign lands as part

of the treaty agreements in 1851 and 1868. With the discovery of gold in the Blacks Hill, additional conflict between the US military, Agency officials, and the Lakota ensued. The influx of emigrants in 1875 seeking gold and business with miners illegally crossed and squatted on Native treaty lands that created a difficult situation for US military leaders at Camps Robinson and Sheridan and Agents at Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies. Between internal indecisiveness, conflicts, and outright refusal to enforce treaty obligations, the discovery of gold in the Black Hills brought an end to Lakota territory in northwest Nebraska. For the bulk of this chapter, the focus is on the role of the US military on the Great Plains and the agencies established in northwest Nebraska. Specifically, it addresses how the two military posts, Camp Robinson and Camp Sheridan, and the two agencies, Red Cloud Agency and Spotted Tail Agency, carried out Indian removal and relocation of the Lakota out of northwest Nebraska.

Of this large swath of territory in northwest Nebraska, most of the discussion pertains to the geographic boundaries of the future Dawes and Sheridan Counties. Encompassing nearly four thousand square miles, the topography of both counties is a diverse landscape within a concentrated landscape. To the north, the forested region, called the Pine Ridge extends west and east from the northwest corner of Nebraska and into the Dakota Territory. On the fringe of the Pine Ridge, the various cliffs suddenly give way to flat lands all around it. In what would become Dawes County, its borders merely touch the Pine Ridge Reservation in the most northeastern corner. Flat lands are found on the very south and north boundaries before entering either the Dakota territory or the lower Niobrara country. Compared to the surrounding flat lands, the Pine Ridge

has a warmer microclimate. Per the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Public Health Service in 1970, storms passing through the area may only provide a minimal amount of rainfall, or altogether move around the Pine Ridge. Typically, an arid area of the country, the weather in the region generally sees weather around 23 degrees in the winter months while summers bring about 75 degrees Fahrenheit. This does not mean that extreme weather never happens. At times, it is not unusual for temperatures to reach 25 below zero or exceed 100-degree mid-season. With extreme temperatures, the high winds are also a persistent characteristic. Winds easily reach 50 miles per hour or more in any given season.[1]

Just to the east of Dawes County is Sheridan County. Stretching out north and south for sixty miles, the Niobrara River is the main divider between the geographical landscape of the Nebraska Sandhills and the Upper Niobrara territory. In the Upper Niobrara territory, and along the northern border to Dakota Territory, Sheridan County borders Pine Ridge Indian Reservation entirely for nearly 40 miles.[2]

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[1] Don Huls and Chadron Narrative History Project Committee, *Chadron, Nebraska: Centennial History: 1885 – 1985* (Freeman, SD: Pine Hill Press, 1985), 1 – 2.; Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, Chadron, Nebraska. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Public Health Service: Health Services and Mental Health Administration Pine Ridge, South Dakota, *That These People May Live: Conditions Among the Oglala Sioux of the Pine Ridge Reservation*, by Eileen Maynard and Gayla Twiss, 1970, 9 – 11. "The" Pine Ridge, as mentioned above, should not be confused with the Pine Ridge Reservation. When "the" is in front of Pine Ridge, and does not include any references to the reservation, this is then a direct reference to this geographic and topographical region.

[2] Mae Manion and Sheridan County Historical Society, *"Recollections": of Sheridan County Nebraska* (Iron Man Industries, 1976), 7.

Maps of the region also pinpoint various creeks and rivers are of important geographical note. In one map published in the *Hay Springs, First 100 Years*, the Niobrara and White Rivers had the biggest influence in shaping events and communities in northwest Nebraska. The White River cuts through northern Dawes County and then across into the Dakota Territory. As for the Niobrara River, the stream continually flows through both Dawes and Sheridan Counties, until it pours into the Missouri River in the eastern part of Nebraska. Other small prominent creeks like Beaver Creek, Antelope Creek and White Clay Creek have an important role for the Lakota and non-natives alike regarding trade and settlement.[3]

Before Nebraska became a territory in 1854, the first non-native people to come to the region were fur traders and trappers. Among these earliest traders and trappers traveling west sought to avoid the 19,000 square mile rolling grasslands, mostly consisting of sand, called the Sandhills. Most followed the Platte River south of the Sandhills while others followed north along the along the Missouri River. One trader in particular, James Bordeaux, became frequently involved in fur trading expeditions much closer to the Sandhills in the Pine Ridge along the White River by the mid-1830s. Appointed by the American Fur Company as the manager of trading post, Bordeaux quickly became an acquainted trader with local Native peoples including the Crows, Cheyennes, and Lakota. By the late 1840s, Bordeaux established a solid relationship with the local Natives, but not all Natives in the region maintained positive trading relations.

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[3] The Hay Springs Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Hay Springs, Nebraska and the Surrounding Area: The First 100 Years 1885-1985* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corporation, 1985), 52.

Crow warriors, from Wyoming and Montana, set the trading post on fire in 1849 in an effort to prevent non-natives trading with their Lakota enemies. Bordeaux then quickly shifted his trading efforts more toward his allies, the Lakotas, as a means of maintain the trading posts presence.[4]

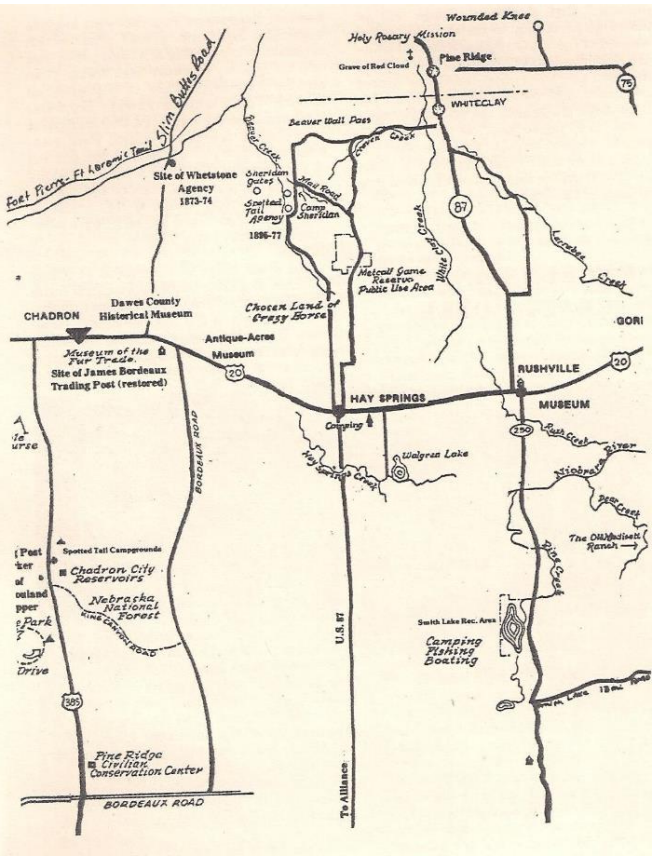

Figure 1. A partial map of Dawes and Sheridan Counties. Published in the *Hay Springs, Nebraska First 100 years*.

[4] David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West: A Geological Synthesis, 1807 – 1840* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 23.; Charles E. Hanson Jr, "Reconstruction of the Bordeaux Trading Post," *Nebraska History* 53 (1972): 137-65.; Chadron Narrative History Project Committee, *Chadron, Nebraska: Centennial History: 1885 – 1985*, 23.

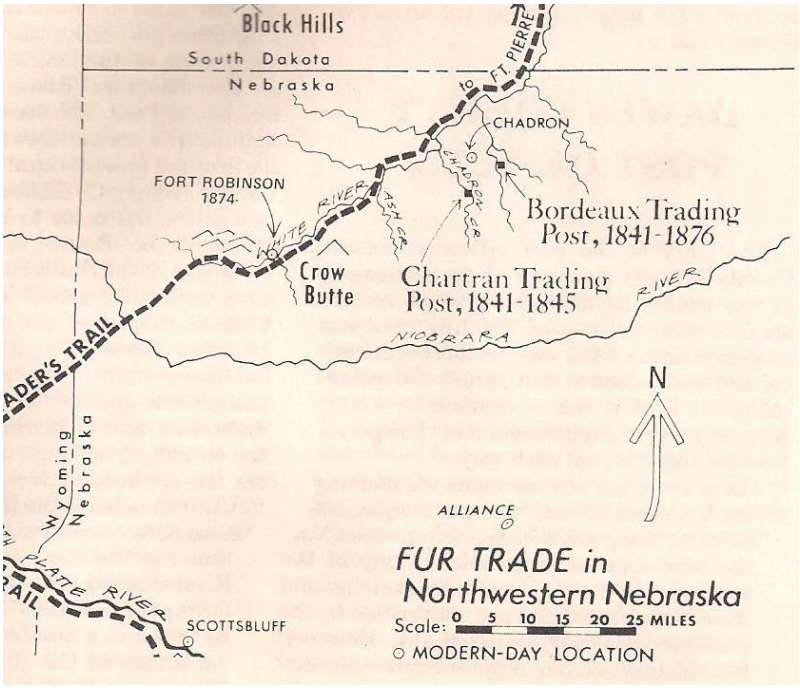

Figure 2. "Fur Trade in Northwestern Nebraska" first published in "Nebraskaland" March 1979. Also published in the *Hay Springs, First 100 Years*

Like many other fur trading posts, the Bordeaux post was seasonal and not a permanent settlement of non-native peoples. Traders from the east only came to the region to trade for furs, buffalo robes, and ponies with the Lakota during the warmer seasons of late spring or early summer. In return, Lakotas who came to trade at the Bordeaux Post received various beads, blankets, whisky, and guns. Following the mid-1860s, the US government suspected that the Bordeaux Post was trading guns and munitions to Lakota forces fighting the US military further west. As a result, the Bordeaux Trading Post was forced to cease trading arms to the Lakota enemies and opened the door for further military actions to police the region.[5]

[5] Hanson, "Reconstruction of the Bordeaux Trading Post," 137 – 65.

At the same time, another nearby trading, Chartarn Creek Post, offered similar goods further south in the Pine Ridge. In 1841, Lancaster Lupton employed Louis B. Chartarn to construct a post south of present-day Chadron in the Pine Ridge for the next four years. Chartarn managed to the post until Lupton later sold to a Sibille and Adams, but then quickly re-sold the property and goods to the Chouteau Company. Very little is known about the trading post and perhaps the fierce competition with Bordeaux, however, Chartarn Post abandoned the Pine Ridge by 1845. Despite what little is known one hundred years later, Chartarn's short time in the area remains a significant part of the local history and identity as the name Chadron is derived from its founder Louis.[6]

According to Mari Sandoz in *Crazy Horse*, as more travelers came across Nebraska on the Oregon Trail, the increasing presences of non-native emigrants marked the beginning for settlement on Cheyenne and Lakota lands. As the Cheyenne and Lakota first saw it in the region, the small influx of emigrants that started as "just a little stream of white men coming through… but soon the little stream of whites grew into a great river." From this large increase of travelers on the various trails, then came more permanent settlements and settlers that further challenged the boundaries of Lakota territory in Nebraska and on the Great Plains. As Jeffrey Ostler described in the *Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism*, these non-native settlers viewed the west as a wilderness without any regard to Native sovereignty. Lakota lands that once had a plethora of deer

[6] Patricia M Pinney and Nebraskaland (March 1979), *Dawes County: The First 100 Years* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corporation, 1985), 14 – 15. Chadron technically has origins in the French language. This is because of the French pronunciation of "Shatteron" and the various spellings associated with the early naming of the city mirror the current pronunciation and spelling.

and bison steadily became more scarce due to overhunting. Additionally, the introduction of cholera and other diseases contributed to high mortality rates among Lakotas in 1849 and early 1850s. In response to the problems brought by the increasing presence of non-native emigrants Native peoples sought any kind of retributions for the loss of game and people. In several instances, Lakota people forced Oregon Trail travelers to pay for what the Lakota relied upon to care for their own people as a fee to pass through. To many non-native emigrants, the Native people were extorting travelers when they did not see the land as part of any sovereign nation. Thus, many non-native travelers and settlers called for US military intervention.[7]

The first military presence and posts in the region were not exceptional by any means. Many early military posts along the Platte River and its branches, such as Fort Kearny and Fort Sedgewick, in northeast Colorado, became important re-supplying points for travelers and police forces in the west. As more and more people made their way west, the military camps became communities of their own. In fact, it was not uncommon to see civilians going out on a picnic, horseback riding, or searching for fossils and arrowheads around the fort. In many cases, the military posts on the Great Plains wee open to Native visitors for entertainment purposes as well as trade. However, by the 1850s, the military's role as a supply point took on a new purpose. Conditions in the region gradually evolved into more high tensions and violent encounters as thousands

[7] Ibid., Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 32 – 33.

of emigrants began traveling through the Plains on the Oregon, Mormon, and California Trails.[8]

At first, negotiations between the US and Native nations sought to keep peace in the region. In an effort to meet some of the demands of Lakota concerns and to protect American emigrants along the trail, the US sought to redirect the non-native presence in the region through a treaty. The Fort Laramie Treaty in 1851 for multiple reasons led to further misunderstandings and violence between the Lakota, non-native emigrants, and the US military. As Ostler described, the Fort Laramie Treaty did not account for the diverse and complex Lakota geo-political landscape. For example, "Of the Sioux leaders who signed the treaty, four were Brule, one Two Kettle, and the other Yankton. Although these men were probably authorized to speak for their own bands, they certainly did not represent other *oyate*" Oglala Lakotas present never signed the agreement. Others like Hunkpapa, Minneconjou, Yanktonai, may not have been consulted at all, thus the treaty lacked any real legitimacy among *all* Lakotas and Native people in the region.[9]

Because the Fort Laramie Treaty in 1851 failed to address concerns by the Lakota and non-native emigrants, the northern plains were on the brink of war. So much so that a simple cattle dispute between a Mormon rancher and a Minneconjou Lakota man named

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[8] Karen Barry, "The Role of the Military in Nebraska Frontier Society," [ca. April 1974], RG1004 Forts (Neb.) History Nebraska, 10.; Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism,* 40– 45.

[9] Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 224 – 26.; William Harding Carter, "Fort Robinson, Nebraska" ed. Irene Doolittle [October 1, 1929], Camp Robinson D.U.F. Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.; Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism,* 37.

High Forehead exasperated into an all-out war. In August 1854, when a large group of Lakota camped nearby Fort Laramie, a nearby Mormon rancher accused one of the nearby Natives of stealing and killing one his oxen. Ostler points to the fact that the Mormon traveler was in a desperate situation for shoes and probably falsified the report to reclaim his cow. The accused thief, High Forehead, was a Minneconjou and guest among Brave Bear's Sicangu band mourning the loss of a family member a year prior. When the report was first filed at Fort Laramie, Lakota chief Brave Bear immediately offered replacing the loss with any horse of the travelers choosing, however, military leadership at the post were not so inclined to accept the apology. The Mormon traveler turned his complaint directly to the commanding officer at Fort Laramie, Brevet Second Lieutenant John L. Grattan, who boasted about killing Natives for their scalp and regalia as war trophies. Instead of the horse, Grattan argued with Brave Bear that he wanted High Forehead in custody to teach him a lesson. In response, Brave Bear asserted that he could not turn over the Minneconjou because he was not from the Lakota band and had a responsibility for High Foreheads care. According to Brave Bear, if Grattan wanted to make the arrest, the US military would have to go to High Forehead's people himself and ask for his arrest. Frustrated with the chief's refusal, the lieutenant angrily ordered canons shot at and over the heads of Brave Bear and others with him as they left the fort. Still unsatisfied with the outcome of the of the negotiations, Grattan dispatched the Sixth Infantry and twenty-nine soldiers from Company G to forcibly take High Forehead into custody. Furthermore, the dispatched US soldiers relied on a drunk and disorderly camp

interpreter, Lucien Auguste, who also shared Grattan's views of Natives on the Great Plains.[10]

Upon arrival at Brave Bear's village, the interpreter advised the camp to hand over High Forehead or risk death for the entire the village. At the same time, several of the warriors in the village slowly encircled the small army of US soldiers. Between Grattan and Auguste, the threats and heated conversations quickly translated into battle preparations by the US military with single file lines and prepped canons for attack. Suddenly a single gunshot, from a US soldier, killed a Lakota warrior that immediately gave way to a volley of shots into the camp. Though out gunned, the Lakota soldiers outnumbered US soldiers leaving Grattan and his men dead and an all-out war for months to come. Through Grattan's arrogance and lack of political understanding of Lakota culture, this one completely avoidable encounter led to further retaliation by William Harney and US troops at Ash Hollow of 1855, when troops massacred a band of Sicangu lead by Little Thunder. Because of these two early incidents between the US military and Lakotas, the basis for future Native and non-native relations moving forward were through a viewed through episodes of violence rather than diplomacy.[11]

Americans continued to invade Native territory with the Montana Gold Rush of 1862 and the Bozeman Trail in Wyoming to Montana. Specifically with the route that

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[10] Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee*, 40 – 41.; Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 224 – 27.; Major General W. H. Carter. *The History of Fort Robinson: Fort Robinson, Nebraska*, Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.

[11] Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 224 – 25, 228 – 29.; Major General W. H. Carter. *The History of Fort Robinson: Fort Robinson, Nebraska*, Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.

miners took on their way to Montana, the US military instead pointed to another route that emigrants were to follow as a more westerly trail that did not cut directly across the Native territories. Despite the concerns of Lakota leadership that non-native travelers would not follow their own rules, US officials claimed that there would be no problems, and that emigrants would abide by the rule of law if the military was present. Unfortunately, with the fast-paced advertising of manifest destiny ideals and taking up the land and its untapped resources, being first on the scene was crucial. Therefore, many travelers elected to take a more direct and easterly path to the Big Horn Mountains through Indian country. The Powder River Route as it would be called was not the agreed upon trail between the United States and Lakota.[12]

In response to these perceived Native aggressions and to protect travelers and settlers to Montana, the army established Fort Phil Kearny, Fort Reno, Fort Smith, and Fort Fetterman on the Bozeman Trail to monitor the region. As a result of these new military posts, Lakota leader Red Cloud recognized this treaty violation of Lakota sovereignty spelled out in the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty. During the construction of Fort Phil Kearny, the fort came under attack more than fifty times and continued to see large numbers of Lakota, Cheyenne, and Crow warriors intimidating American forces in and around the post. This back-and-forth activity between Natives and US military continued throughout the 1860s, and gave way to more frequent Native raids, taunting back and

[12] John D. McDermott, *A Guide to Indian War of the West*, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 156.; William Harding Carter, "Fort Robinson, Nebraska" ed. Irene Doolittle [October 1, 1929], Camp Robinson D.U.F. Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.

forth, and small military skirmishes that made it difficult for negotiations to take place. Red Cloud and other leaders encouraged war with the United States, rather than peace negotiations, due to this failure of the US military to uphold the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851.[13]

With negotiations continually failing with the Lakota in the 1860s, all at war was the new reality. Under Lieutenant Colonel W. J. Fetterman, a detachment of soldiers looking for wood and establishing a camp site for a new military post became an all too easy target for Lakota warriors. To Red Cloud, the new camp illegally established a military presence in the middle of Lakota country. If politicians in Washington DC and US military leaders were not going to uphold their treaty obligations, Red Cloud justified a continued war in protecting Lakota territory. On Red Cloud's orders, hundreds of Lakota warriors had the full permission to slaughter Fetterman and his men on December 21, 1866.[14]

The 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty marked a shift toward diplomacy rather than through war. By the mid-1860s, the efforts to pacify the Lakota by brute force failed to conquer the Native peoples living on the Great Plains. Instead of continued military

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[13] John D. McDermott, *A Guide to Indian War of the West*, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 156.; William Harding Carter, "Fort Robinson, Nebraska" ed. Irene Doolittle [October 1, 1929], Camp Robinson D.U.F. Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.

[14] William Harding Carter, "Fort Robinson, Nebraska" ed. Irene Doolittle [October 1, 1929], Camp Robinson D.U.F. Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.; Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 224 – 27.; Message of the President of the United States and the accompanying documents to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the Second Session of the Fortieth Congress, H.R. Exec. Doc. No. 1, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1867), 268 – 70.; Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2010), 55 – 57.

operations, the general public in the east and politicians in Washington DC advocated for more diplomatic efforts to end the violence. Because of the overwhelming Native forces in north of the Platte River and the continued failures to take control of it, popular opinion slowly shifted toward minimizing the militaristic society that was predominate during the Civil War. Under the conditions of the Fort Laramie Treaty in 1868, the US military would cease operations in the region and abandon posts at Fort Phil Kearny, Fort Smith, Fort Reno, and Fort Fetterman. As for Red Cloud and his followers, they would agree to relocate east of Fort Laramie on the Upper Platte Agency. In addition, future annuities would be given to the Lakota for loss of territory and life. Wanting to avoid war, President Andrew Johnson sought these new negotiations as a total transformation of US – Native policy to exclude militant force wherever possible. Plus given the track record of the military, other politicians and businessmen involved with future plans across Nebraska wanted a more permanent peace in the more immediate future for the safety of a transcontinental railroad.[15]

At the same time, approaching the year 1867, federal and local officials bantered back and forth about bringing Nebraska territory into the union as a state. With statehood, there were general concerns from locals in the eastern part of the territory that additional taxes and federal overreach would intrude on the agrarian founding. Despite these local concerns, Nebraska became a state on March 1, 1867 and shaped its borders in line with other neighbor states and natural topographical boundaries. On the eastern edge, the

[15] Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee,* 45 – 58.

Missouri River defined the Nebraska borders. From the northeast, the Missouri River was a natural geographic boundary between Dakota Territory, Iowa, and then south by Missouri. Directly south, Kansas had been a state for over six years and was well surveyed. As for the present-day northwest panhandle of the state, there were no rivers or other topographical features that function as natural boundaries. Instead, the future northwest region was susceptible to the influences of warfare, Lakota claims to the land, and the political negotiations in Washington.[16]

Nathaniel Taylor, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1867, firmly believed that "two large reservations should be set aside for the Plains Indians, one north of Nebraska and the other south of Kansas." Taylor's predecessor, Robert J Stevens, and the Sully Commission and Doolittle Committee had similar beliefs. In doing so, the Great Plains Natives north of the Platte and south of Arkansas would "secure the principal emigrant throughfares, but most importantly it would open the way for completion of the Union Pacific and Kansas Pacific railroads." With that said, not all in Washington agreed. General Philip Sheridan, prominent military and political figure, firmly opposed relinquishing so much territory north. To Sheridan it "would invite the whole Sioux Nation down to the main Platte Road," leaving it vulnerable to raids and attacks if the country was still at war. At this point, the military had shown it was ineffective negotiators and vulnerable for attack. According to President Johnson, the peaceful

[16] Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846 – 1890*, 108 – 09, 118.; Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee*, 51, 54.; Jerome A. Greene, *January Moon: The Northern Cheyenne Breakout from Camp Robinson, 1878 – 1879*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020), 10.

solution was to put distance between the Lakota and the oncoming emigrants and railroads. Thus, Nebraska's northern and western borders needed a far enough boundary to keep the Lakota away from these business happenings. And to further ensure no surprise attacks were to come, this land for the state also included the densely forested region of the Pine Ridge.[17]

As for the various military posts in the state of Nebraska, Fort Sidney was the lone post in the panhandle from the start. Originally founded in 1867 as a sub fort to Fort Sedgwick in Colorado, Fort Sidney found itself an increasingly important epicenter for economic purposes. With Fort Laramie and North Platte over 100 miles away, supplies came through Fort Sidney first to then disburse to the greater western-Nebraska region for the US military and nearby agencies. Then when gold was discovered in the Black Hills in 1875, Fort Sidney quickly widened its influence further north as a shipping center to and from the Dakota territory and further introduced more soldiers, workers, and railroads to western-Nebraska.[18]

Just beyond Nebraska's western border, Fort Laramie developed a different role. Because of Fort Laramie's close proximity to the northwest Nebraska, the post was deeply intertwined with the Lakota at Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies and the surrounding region. For example, soldiers and officers from Fort Laramie were frequently ordered to monitor and protect Lakota lands from non-native travelers.

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[17] Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846 – 1890*, 107 – 10.
[18] William Harding Carter, "Fort Robinson, Nebraska" ed. Irene Doolittle [October 1, 1929], Camp Robinson D.U.F. Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.; Karen Barry, "The Role of the Military in Nebraska Frontier Society," [ca. April 1974], RG1004 Forts (Neb.) History Nebraska, 11 – 16.

Additionally, Fort Laramie served as the main communications for both Camps Robinson and Sheridan in how to handle day to day operations or quarrels with the nearby Agency. In essence, the military presence in western Nebraska in the 1870s developed two major responsibilities. On one hand these forts were to foster economic growth for the United States, but also had to act as a police force serving Native and non-natives alike in the region. In many cases, these ideals and policies often clashed with another and left commanding officers and other military leaders in limbo waiting for further orders because of the more complex situation bridging American settler and Lakota conflicts.[19]

RED CLOUD AGENCY AND CAMP ROBINSON

In late 1872, the US government decided to relocate over 6,000 Oglalas, 1,500 Cheyennes, and 1,300 Arapahoe's further northeast from the original Upper Platte Agency in present day Wyoming. Instead, Red Cloud and his followers were now based around the administration center in northwest Nebraska called Red Cloud Agency, after the Lakota leader. Agent J. W. Daniels at the helm, failure seemed to be eminent. Simply trying to take a proper census, was a challenge for both the agent and Daniel's. In completing a census, the US government could then dole out the proper annuities and rations contracted through Red Cloud Agency, but Native resistance through Lakota leaders fiercely opposed the construction of the agency for east and made a point of their disapproval at any opportunity possible, including at census. Specifically, the continued

[19] William Harding Carter, "Fort Robinson, Nebraska" ed. Irene Doolittle [October 1, 1929], Camp Robinson D.U.F. Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.; Karen Barry, "The Role of the Military in Nebraska Frontier Society," [ca. April 1974], RG1004 Forts (Neb.) History Nebraska, 11 – 16.

threats and intimidation tactics by Red Cloud's "Bad Faces" toward the government's attempt to collect a census were common and even went as far to try being counted more than once or outright refusal to be counted. According to Daniels, without the presence of the US military, there was little Red Cloud Agency administrators could do. By the winter months of 1873, tensions only worsened. Daniels failed to bring Red Cloud Agency under control and was replaced.[20]

With J. J. Saville as the new agent for Red Cloud Agency, Saville's reports captured the severity of the situation. When Agent Saville arrived, Agent Daniels and his clerk fled the scene almost immediately after the formal process of being relieved of his duty. Daniels left Saville without much instruction, paperwork, or the current happenings at the agency. Saville also noted that the construction materials for Agency buildings were piles of lumber up on the ground and that Daniels quarters was simply a tent. As winter quickly approached, more and more Lakota grievances became violent and rebellious. Specifically centered around the government desires to take a census, on February 1, 1874, Saville demanded Lakota leaders to adhere to the Agency's dealings or that the US military would be called. Reluctantly, Lakota leaders agreed and declared their favor to Saville's ultimatum.[21]

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[20] William Harding Carter, "Fort Robinson, Nebraska" ed. Irene Doolittle [October 1, 1929], Camp Robinson D.U.F. Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.; Secretary of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the year 1873: Red Cloud Agency*, by J.W. Daniels, 43rd Cong., 1t sess., (Washington, DC, 1873), 243 – 44, 5 – 6.

[21] Secretary of the Interior, *Report of the Secretary of the Interior; Being Part of the Message and Documents Communicated to the Two Houses of Congress at the Beginning of the Second Session of the Forty – Third Congress: Red Cloud Agency*, by J. J. Saville, 43rd, Cong., 2d sess., Vol. I, (Washington, DC, 1874), 559 - 60.

But not all those living around Red Cloud Agency accepted the forced terms and conditions. As Seville was away at the nearby Whetstone Agency, speaking with Agent Howard about how to go about bringing the US military to northwest Nebraska, a frustrated Minneconjou from the Lone Horn of the North Band took matters into his own hands. Acting alone, he waited for the watchman at Red Cloud Agency to fall asleep. With the element of surprise, the Minneconjou then called for the agency clerk, Frank Appleton, who took part in the census calls day prior. As soon as Appleton came to the door, the Minnceconjou shot the clerk and fled the scene. With the Red Cloud Agency clerk now dead, Agents Howard and Saville called for the US army to enforce a proper census and to get the situation under control. Following their plea to Washington to send troops, General Sheridan made for special orders of a large "Sioux Expedition" of troops near the agency. The units dispatched had the full capabilities to use military force if necessary to bring the resisters to order.[22] William Harding Carter, a soldier in the Sioux Expedition, recalled how "troops assembled at Fort D. A. Russel, near Cheyenne, Wyo, included B, C, F, H, and K Companies of the 8th Infantry. F and K Companies, 13th Infantry, F Company, 14th Infantry, Troops B and C of the Third Calvary and Troops C and M of the Second Calvary … [in route] to Fort Laramie."[23]

Once Generals Sheridan and Ord arrived, the "Sioux Expedition" made its way to Fort Laramie and then on to northwest Nebraska. Carter's Calvary reached the western

[22] Ibid, 559 – 60.; William Harding Carter, "Fort Robinson, Nebraska" ed. Irene Doolittle [October 1, 1929], Camp Robinson D.U.F. Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.
[23] Ibid.

fringe of Red Cloud Agency on March 7, nearly a month after Appleton's murder, and established a camp that was to have a permanent garrison of troops on detachment from Fort Laramie.[24]

This newly established military post, named in honor of Lieutenant H. Robinson, was in the heart of Oglala territory. Unlike the relatively flat and empty land following the Platte River, soldiers discovered the plethora of streams, creeks, timber, and game in the region that was believed to be more than enough for Natives and the non-native military alike. The long stretch of the Pine Ridge also provided a natural advantage in the region. Situated in the heart of the Pine Ridge and with the surrounding cliffs along to the north provided great cover for the camp. To the south and western edge of the military reservation, this rugged terrain made it difficult for any large armies to traverse. The only vulnerable side was to the east, but was also fortified in case of attack. The natural landscape surrounding Camp Robinson made for prime real estate to stay temporarily, or for the long haul if necessary.[25]

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.; Secretary of the Interior, *Report of the Secretary of the Interior; Being Part of the Message and Documents Communicated to the Two Houses of Congress at the Beginning of the Second Session of the Forty – Third Congress*, 43rd, Cong., 2d sess., Vol. I, (Washington, DC, 1874), 355 - 356.; Pinney and Vance E. Nelson, *Dawes County: The First 100 Years*, 26 – 27.; "Brief History of Camp Robinson," History Nebraska, accessed November 18, 2020, https://history.nebraska.gov/visit/brief-history-fort-robinson. Per Carter's recollection of Camp Robinson, this added note with the History Nebraska website is regarding the location of Camp Robinson. The permanent location was the second location per History Nebraska. The first location adjacent to the Red Cloud Agency was too close for comfort for safety reasons and health concerns per Carter.

By the fall of 1874, the continued Native resisters at Red Cloud Agency did not subside. According Carter, Saville reported that on August 31, "the dissatisfaction of the hostile Indians become greater as winter advances." Red Cloud objected to the military utilizing the resources in the Pine Ridge to construct the agency and camp. Lakota resources were already depleted and the US military was not welcome to what was left. Again, when the next census was taken, frustrated Lakotas resisted as the annuities promised were not always delivered, but this time, the US military was nearby. To further complicate relations, the memories of the Fetterman Massacre remained at the forefront of soldier's minds. Just as ten years before, the fear of being harassed while on duty prompted more heavily guarded wagon trains traveling to and from camp. Even when within the camp, Carter made sure to always keep his gun near in the case of an attack.[26]

In what may have been one of the most serious incidents that threatened a similar fate to that of Fetterman dealt with a mixed-descent escapee in 1874. Toussaint Kenssler, shot and killed a ranchman through a window at Fort Laramie a year or two prior. Upon knowing Kenssler's whereabouts in the Montana region, police were sent out to arrest the wanted man. Just as quickly as he was arrested, Kenssler was found guilty of murder and sentenced to hang in Cheyenne. Additional stories about Kenssler being the first to discover gold in the Black Hills, rather than Custer, is also part of his legacy, however, Kenssler's escape and capture to the nearby agencies in Nebraska is rarely told. As Carter

[26] William Harding Carter, "Fort Robinson, Nebraska" ed. Irene Doolittle [October 1, 1929], Camp Robinson D.U.F. Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.; Pinney and Nelson, *Dawes County: First 100 Years*, 26 – 27.; Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America*, 344.

understood the situation, rumor had it that several Natives from the nearby agencies in Nebraska put forth a collection to bribe the jailer to set Kenssler free. The jailer would then stage the scene as if Kenssler escaped. Following Kenssler's escape, military leaders believed he found refuge somewhere between Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies adamant to rejoin his Native family. To prove his loyalty, Kenssler vowed to kill Captain Egen and Lieutenant Allison in one of the many escorts between Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies. Dressed in Lakota regalia near a trader's store on Red Cloud Agency, Kenssler, waited for an opportune moment to carry out his deed from the bank of a river. Having been surprised by Lieutenants Crawford and Ray, Kenssler's attempted to flee across the river on a log, but Lieutenant Ray had shot Kenssler to prevent him from crossing. Both Crawford and Ray then proceeded to recover the fugitive, but when they tried loading Kenssler several Lakota men approached and threatened "to kill white men" to save the escapee. As the ambulance started toward Camp Robinson, Lieutenants Crawford and Ray ordered guns at the ready in case of any Native attacks. Before any more bloodshed was spilt, Red Cloud intervened and allowed the soldiers to flee back to camp.[27]

Later that evening, Carter recalled camp on high alert. When the ambulance returned, word quickly spread that many of the teepees were going down and many smoke signals had started. Soldiers, including Carter, firmly believed Red Cloud assembled a war party around the agency for an attack on the fort. On protection orders

[27] William Harding Carter, "Fort Robinson, Nebraska" ed. Irene Doolittle [October 1, 1929], Camp Robinson D.U.F. Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.

by the commanding officer, Kenssler was to be in handcuffs and heavily guarded in the hospital tent. Soldiers in the camp were also to be on high alert. From Carter's recollections, gunfire with an invading Lakota party came around midnight that evening. Carter quickly took command of the first company that was without an officer. After flailing to form a skirmish line, the approaching gun fire slowly stopped as more reinforcements from the camp came to the line. During the gun fight, several Lakotas destroyed part of the corral fence and scared off the camp's cattle. Lieutenant Crawford and troops sent off the next morning to reclaim the cattle, but as for the rest of the night, no more gun fire was exchanged.[28]

Even after Kenssler's capture, the heated tensions between US soldiers, federal government, and Lakota persisted. Of these leading causes of trouble between the US federal officials and Red Cloud Agency were the jurisdiction questions and the physical boundaries within Nebraska rather than Dakota Territory. In a report from Spotted Tail Agency on August 10, 1876, Agent Howard explained that because of the agency's location in northwest Nebraska there was always a "conflict of jurisdiction." In addition to this complicated jurisdiction question, Howard also had at "exceeding great trouble in the administration affairs here" within the Agency and just outside of it. Being so close to Dakota territory and with all the federal laws at the disposal of the agents, it did not make sense to Howard why the two agencies were in Nebraska. A report from the Secretary of the Interior to Congress suggests that the government may have located the agency in Nebraska by mistake. In a report about Red Cloud Agency, the Commissioner of Indian

[28] Ibid.

Affairs noted that "this agency is located on the White River, to which it was removed in August 1873 … but the survey of the line of the northern boundary of Nebraska, recently run, shows that it was located in Nebraska, instead upon the permanent reservation of the Sioux in Dakota."[29]

The lack of a strong survey and information about Nebraska's northwest border made it difficult to determine when and where Dakota Territory ended and the state of Nebraska began. With the knowledge of their residence in Nebraska, and not Dakota Territory, reports to and from the Secretary of the Interior reflected a consistent message: relocate the Lakota in Nebraska to Dakota territory. Agents Seville and Hastings recognized the error of Red Cloud Agency being located in Nebraska with the White River extending further south toward the Niobrara. Legally, it did not make sense. As the two agents continued arguing in their reports, the land in northwest Nebraska and southeastern Wyoming were not suitable for the Lakota people just learning to farm. Instead another idea was relocating the agency near the Missouri River in central Dakota territory that had far more promising prospects to cultivate the land, despite the failures of the former location of Whetstone Agency a few years prior. Lastly, agents also advocated that one day non-native settlers from the east were far more capable of making the Pine Ridge more hospitable for agricultural use, so this land should be reserved for them, not the Lakota. Despite these recommendations by the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail

[29] Secretary of the Interior, *Report of the Secretary of the Interior; Being Part of the Message and Documents Communicated to the Two Houses of Congress at the Beginning of the Second Session of the Forty – Third Congress*, 43rd, Cong., 2d sess., Vol. I, (Washington, DC, 1874), 355 – 56.

agents, and some support back in Washington, there was still enough opposition among Lakota leadership that prevented their move to Dakota Territory. [30]

Following the news of Custer's discovery of gold in the Black Hills, President Grant appointed the Allison Commission of 1875 to encourage Red Cloud and Spotted Tail to sell the Black Hills. In what would be the beginning of the end for the two agencies in northwest Nebraska, the discovery of gold became the last fight for both Lakota agencies to remain in the state. Red Cloud's response to the potential sale of the Black Hills was political and economic.[31]

Red Cloud exclaimed that "when the Great Father send his White chiefs to talk with us, we hear them. The Black Hills is our bank, and our money is in the ground; we want it to stay there for our children."[32]

As for Spotted Tails response, his agreement with Red Cloud came more through as a traditional standpoint of the land rather than through political or economic terms. "The land belongs to us and we have taken care of it. They must send some old men that know about the country and some young men who can hear….Red Cloud and me think

[30] Ibid, 355 – 56.; Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary to the Interior for the year 1876: Reports by Agent in Dakota, Red Cloud Agency, Nebraska*, by Jas. Hastings, (Washington, DC, 1876), 33.
[31] Rollin C. Curd and Kathleen Rau, "The 1875 Councils with the Plains Tribes", (2003 Dedication of the Grand Council Site and Indian Camps on Chadron Creek and presented to Dawes County Historical Society) Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska.
[32] Ibid.

Chadron Creek the best place for a big council … go back and tell Red Cloud and the old men that we will go [sic] Chadron Creek for the big council."[33]

At a special council on the Chatron Creek, twenty miles away from Camp Robinson, more than 5,000 Natives were present over several days of negotiations. Among many of the other Lakota leaders, there was discussion that the decision was already made and that the Black Hills would be stripped from them anyway. Instead of having land outright stolen from them, the presence of Lakota leaders pushed for Red Cloud to negotiate to get something out of the deal rather nothing at all. Thus, Spotted Tail suggested a number so astronomical that it would support Lakotas into the distant future. However, the Allison Commission's final price of only six million dollars did not even come close to the final compromise. Disagreements between the Commissioner and Lakota leaders flared. Rather than seek additional negotiations, the Allison Commission recommended a final sale as a courtesy and further restricted Lakota activities on and off the reservation by military force. Lakota warriors and leader, Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, who more strictly opposed the sale, had their own ideas of fighting back.[34]

Fighting again took place again across the Great Plains, just as years before. Examples like the Battle of Little Bighorn and other smaller scale skirmishes proved successful initially for Lakota warriors, however, this time the brute force of the US military was far more revamped for resource than in previous years. Per the Black Hills Cession in 1876 Red Cloud, Spotted Tail, and others were forced to sign over the Black

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 91 – 93.

Hills as they thought was going to happen all along with several stringent terms and conditions.[35]

Of those terms and conditions for the United States, Red Cloud Agency was to relocate out of Nebraska and move just west of the Missouri River in central Dakota Territory. Red Cloud strongly opposed the move and went to Washington to meet with President Rutherford B. Hayes, and Secretary of Interior Carl Schurz about the move. Red Cloud continued negotiations by saying that his people "desired to walk in the broad road, so that they may grow and prosper like the white people," but if they were to relocate by the Missouri River, this transition would be unsuccessful. "There is too much whisky there. If I go there, I will come to nothing at all," Red Cloud further explained. Spotted Tail, present in the discussions, was far more blunt about relocating in the Dakota territory. "You take away our lands from us … your people make roads and drive away the game, and thus make us poor and starve us." Spotted Tail then added "the country I live in is mine, he said, I love it. This is why I talk the way I do." This space in northwest Nebraska was significant to the Lakota, it was their home and a key part of their identity. If this land was to be taken from them, then the foundation of Lakota culture would be taken from underneath them. In the end, Red Cloud Agency would be relocated to central Dakota Territory for one winter. Red Cloud's persistence landed his people a new agency in southwest Dakota Territory, just north of the Nebraska state line.[36]

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[35] Ibid, 94 – 102.

[36] Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee*, 109, 113, 126.

As for the Cheyenne in Red Cloud's nation, led by Dull Knife and Little Wolf, their story had far more violent consequences. Per the 1876 treaty, the Cheyenne were to relocate further south in Oklahoma. In dire living conditions, both Dull Knife and Little Wolf rejected the terms of the treaty. Their new home in Oklahoma was crowded with other Native nations and most settled on inhospitable land that the Cheyenne were not accustomed. Instead, both Dull Knife and Little Wolf gathered their people and set out for the Kansas – Nebraska border to return to their territory. Along the way evading military excursions searching for them, disagreements between Dull Knife and Little Wolf split the Cheyenne party. Dull Knife wanted to cease evading the US military and sought Red Cloud Agency for protection, while Little Wolf pressed on in their mission back to traditional territory in Wyoming and Montana.[37]

While Little Wolf was more successful in evading the US military, Dull Knife's band was not so fortunate. In late October 1878, Captain J.B. Johnson led a patrol of soldiers from Camp Robinson in search of the Cheyenne traveling north. In what is widely discussed as a purely accidental discovery by Captain Johnson, Dull Knife's Cheyenne party were located near the densely forest region where the council had previously met near the Chatron Creek. Now found and captured, Dull Knife's band were taken back to Camp Robinson where they endured deplorable living conditions and abuse. For two months, Dull Knife was detained and forced to accept the negotiations of returning to the Oklahoma reservation land. Unwilling to do so, and finally, on January 9, 1879, many Cheyenne from Dull Knife's party attempted to escape. Escapees were

[37] Greene, *January Moon*, 11.

immediately met with a barrage of bullets from the US Calvary. As for the remaining thirty or so Cheyenne that successfully escaped, they took refuge at a nearby creek. In hot pursuit after the fleeing Cheyenne, a force of nearly one hundred fifty soldiers were sent out to capture the rest. But instead of capture, the overpowering American force ruthlessly fired upon and killed a loosely organized defense of men, women, and children.[38]

SPOTTED TAIL AGENCY AND CAMP SHERIDAN

As for Spotted Tail Agency and Camp Sheridan, near present day Hay Springs, the Sicangu Lakotas made northwest Nebraska home for a short time before being relocated out of state. From Camp Sheridan's establishment in 1874, the US military had a prominent role just like at Camp Robinsons and Red Cloud Agency. Prior to the Sicangu Lakotas' presence in northwest Nebraska, their initial Whetstone Agency in Dakota territory had problems from the start with oncoming settlers to the region. According to reports to and from Washington, the Whetstone Agency was inconveniently located along the Missouri River and the mouth of the Whetstone Creek, forty miles north of Fort Randall, where many non-native settlers were already present or nearby. Despite of Congress' approval, General Phillip Sheridan quickly spoke out about General William Harney's decision in locating the Lakota Agency. According to Sheridan, the Whetstone Agency was too far away from Fort Randall if soldiers were needed because of an "Indian uprising." In an effort to make the Agency work, Captain De Witt C. Poole

[38] Patricia M Pinney and "Nebraskaland," *Dawes County: The First 100 Years*, 26 – 27.

was brought into Dakota Territory to provide guidance in an already difficult situation. Upon arrival, Poole firmly believed that the land was unsuitable for farming, as the wheat crop had failed and equipment was in complete disrepair. On top of this immense crop failure, annuities were also fairly late, or never came in the case of one month in 1869. After the news broke that there was not going to be a beef issue, one frustrated Sicangu took it in his own hands and attempted to assassinate Captain Poole.[39]

In what may have been the final straw for Spotted Tail and the Sicangus at Whetstone Agency was the fact that a nearby community of Harney City became an endless supply of whiskey and other contraband. While the Great Sioux Reservation extended west of the Missouri River, Harney City was legally established on the farthest western edge of American territory on the east bank of the river. As a border community just across the river, the criminal opportunity for non-natives became too easy. Most of the criminal activity related to the illegal supply of liquor across the river and into Lakota territory. Despite any efforts made on behalf of Fort Randall, it was difficult to catch these non-native smugglers who went to great lengths to trade whiskey. In 1870, a board member of the Indian Commission, William Welsh, visited the Whetstone Agency and reported that the Sicangus were impoverished and ill-suited to face the elements around the land. Not only was liquor a problem, but Sicangu women who bore children from non-natives at Harney City were then left to fend for themselves. As a result of all these major failures at Whetstone Agency, Spotted Tail requested their agency to be located

[39] Richomn L. Crow, "The Whetstone Agency, 1868 – 1872," *South Dakota History*, vol. 7 No. 3, (1977).

further west in 1870, which was granted the following year. Ideally, Spotted Tail preferred Big White Clay Creek in the southwest corner of Dakota Territory, near Nebraska.[40]

Now on the Big White Clay in southwest Dakota territory, the US army had to come on the scene to enforce American rule among the defiant Sicangus and to keep non-native invaders off the land. Per the US government's agreements and treaty at Fort Laramie in 1868, the United States had to take an initiative to protect Lakota lands. And among the first military camp orders, near the Big White Clay Whetstone Agency, by Commanding Officer, Captain H.M. Lazelle on March 1, 1874, was to establish a camp. According to a set of General Orders issued, in part with the Great Sioux Expedition, the 8th and 13th Infantries were to establish a camp near Spotted Tail's camp in five days' time. Then on March 3, each soldier was to be equipped with the appropriate rations, two hundred rounds of ammunition, and forty rounds for the trip. General Orders also declared a set of home rules and regulations when on deployment near the hostile Sicangus. For example, General Order No. 3 issued that "no spirituous or other intoxicating liquors, except in the hands of Medical Officers, will be permitted to be taken into the Indian Country." Similarly, other orders described how soldiers must march in columns, not to fire at any game, and to only fire their weapons when fired upon first. Another important order detailed how the camp was to be manifested and guarded. "The Camp will be rectangular with the advance and rear guard [battalion], respectively, on the longest faces, and flanking companies in front and rear of the Camp, respectively.

[40] Ibid.

The cattle at night to be corralled within the wagon train… A guard of one noncommissioned officer and seven men will be designated for each face of the Camp daily; each will be supplied with a tent which will be pitched 100 yards in advance of the line of tents under the direction of the Senior Officer camped on that face."[41]

Additional orders sought to limit soldier contact with their new Lakota neighbors. On March 8, new orders exclaimed that "the Indians under no circumstances be allowed within the camp of this command." Furthermore, other details described soldiers were also prohibited from "visiting Indian camps and [tepees]." Even friendly Sicangus wishing to trade or extend peace were to be denied unless otherwise stated from a commanding officer.[42]

But not all orders were so strictly followed by the troops or Commanding Officer. Only a year later soldiers and Sicangus were openly and freely trading within the military camp. Previous orders from Fort Laramie stated that soldiers were not to trade with the Natives, but evidence from later reports by Captain Anson Mills of the Third Infantry declared otherwise. Captain Mills, who would later take charge of the camp, described how the Sicangus were all over the camp in May 1875. Apparently, it became a "habit" when rations were not on time or scarce on the agency, so the Sicangus became reliant on what soldiers brought with them. The economic value of Camp Sheridan, just next to the

[41] Orders by Capt. H. M. Lazelle, March 1, 1874, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Military Orders*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 1 – 4.
[42] Orders by Capt. H. M. Lazelle, March 1, 1874, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Military Orders*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 3 – 4.

Agency, played an integral role in supplying other goods when the government came up short on their end. When Captain Mills more strictly enforced Lazelle's previous orders, both Spotted Tail and No Flesh, a Minneconjou messenger, expressed sincere disappointment.[43]

Of the first priorities in establishing camp near the Whetstone Agency, construction plans took precedence. Just as quickly as they arrived, new orders handed down on March 16 that were the plans for a line of rifle pits toward the front of camp and specific instructions how to construct the trenches. Each company had to supply at least eight men for and one noncommissioned officer daily, except for Sundays, to dig the pits until their completion. Four men worked at all times, and rotated out with others who were either guarded or oversaw construction. Soldiers who dug the rifle pit began at eight in the morning, took an hour break to eat and rest, and then work until five that evening before retiring. After several months of hard work in building camp, an inspection of the camp by Captain Thomas D. Munn of the Eighth Infantry, and Captain Lazelle's report to General Ruggles in Omaha, on July 1, stated that the said camp was overall well-supplied and well-maintained. The only mention of improvement in either report was the terrible condition of the soldier's tents from high winds.[44]

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[43] Orders by Capt. H. M. Lazelle, March 1, 1874, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Military Orders*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 40 - 44.
[44] Orders by Capt. H. M. Lazelle, March 1, 1874, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Military Orders*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 3 – 4.

Despite this glowing report by two other military officials, Lieutenant Crawford disagreed with the assessment of camp. According to Crawford on August 3, 1874, the structures were too close together. This was a problem because it did not leave enough room for various drill activities necessary at all military installments. Plus, it was not in an ideal location as Crawford believed Spotted Tail's camp would be moved again in the near future. For Crawford, he had anticipated that the Sicangus at Whetstone Agency would have been relocated further north toward the Black Hills, rather further south into Nebraska. And if that were the case, the camp would have access to more resources. Crawford envisioned additional military coming to assist via train from North Platte and a much more advantageous way to control the agency if Spotted Tail resisted. In response, Captain F. B. Bummer ordered Captain Meinhold, with the Third Calvary, and Captain Monahan, with the Fifth Calvary, to be ready at a moment's notice. One hundred soldiers were to have thirty days rations, one wagon master, seven teamsters, one hundred three horses, and forty-two mules and additional transport ready when orders were passed down by the Indian commissioners. But instead of being relocated north as Crawford believed, Samuel D. Hinman, the Acting Chair of the Sioux Commission in Indian Affairs, recommended Nebraska.[45]

After a couple years in southwest Dakota Territory, Whetstone Agency would then be moved again further south. On July 24, 1874, the US military had orders to escort the Sicangu on a short trip ten miles south. Among this military escort, not only were the

[45] Orders by Capt. H. M. Lazelle, March 1, 1874, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Military Orders*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 16 – 20.

one hundred soldiers and ten camp employees to take rations for themselves, but also for the Sicangu making the journey. The plan was to complete the voyage in eight days' time with 163 animals under the command of Captain Meinhold. Troops were also to scope out the region for a new location for a camp to monitor the Lakota and prevent any non-native interference at the new Whetstone Agency. In August 1874, the orders of Captain T. Burrows, the Second Lieutenant and Third Calvary successfully escorted Spotted Tail south of the Big White Clay Creek with more plentiful resources.[46]

From the Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1874, James Wilbur reported that "this agency has been removed during the year twelve miles, to a location selected by a special commission, which, like that of Red Cloud, is found to be outside of the Sioux Reservation, ten miles south of the Nebraska state line." Wilbur continued with that it was the Acting Chair of the Sioux Commission's recommendation, Samuel Hinman, because of lacking timber and water for farming enterprises. The Sicangus had made no attempt at farming and the hopes of the new agency would spur more agricultural production. Just as with Red Cloud, Spotted Tail was not overly excited about the new move, per Captain F. B. Bummer's report to General John E. Smith at Fort Laramie. At the same time Spotted Tail complied with this new location as rumors also stated that they could be relocated back to Fort Randall if negotiations fell through. Within the same negotiations, Spotted Tail also agreed that the Sicangus would sell their

[46] Orders by Capt. H. M. Lazelle, March 1, 1874, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Military Orders*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 9 – 10.

rights to hunt around the Republican River for $13,000 and if they could remain relatively close to the Big White Clay region.[47]

After the successful move eight days later, the Whetstone Agency was formally established in August 1874 in the state of Nebraska. Now located near the Beaver Valley and north of present-day Hay Springs, the territory offered similar resources that of Red Cloud Agency and Camp Robinson had accessible. Named after the abundance of beavers in the region before being killed off for fur trading, there was still some game and resources to make a living off the land. Consisting of two creeks, Big Beaver and Little Beaver, the constant spring water flowed as a great fresh water resource. Pine tree were also plentiful for timber from the Pine Ridge extending across the north and west. Game like deer, antelope, bobcats, and other small animals, were often calculated as a regulated resource for both the Lakota and any kind of military camp established nearby. In many cases, game was primarily reserved for the Lakota while most of rations for the US military had come from Fort Sidney or Fort Laramie. In addition to the natural resources in the surrounding area, the narrow passage ways through the Beaver Valley,

[47] Orders by Capt. H. M. Lazelle, March 1, 1874, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Military Orders*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 9 – 10.; Secretary of the Interior, *Report of the Secretary of the Interior; Being Part of the Message and Documents Communicated to the Two Houses of Congress at the Beginning of the Second Session of the Forty – Third Congress*, 43rd, Cong., 2d sess., Vol. I, (Washington, DC, 1874), 356 – 57, 405 – 07.

Figure 3. "Camp Sheridan" *From Beaver Valley and Its People*

and natural landscape in itself also strategically benefited the military as a strong defense point against a Lakota attack.[48]

At the same time, the surrounding environment was a concern as well. While there is no known meteorological data prior to 1876, the valley in itself made it a target for some of the harsh natural elements in northwest Nebraska. Along with the valley's more resources, the various storms and blizzards came from every direction without much warning. Wind from the south, also caused many electrical disturbances through

[48] The Hay Springs Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Hay Springs, Nebraska and the Surrounding Area: The First 100 Years 1885-1985*, 47 – 54.; *Sheridan County: Diamond Jubilee – "Soddies to Satellites,"* (Rushville, NE August 1960), Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, Nebraska, 22 – 25.; Beaver Valley Jolly Neighbors Club, *Beaver Valley and its People: 1870 - 1970*, (Gordon, NE: Gordon Journal, 1970), Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, Nebraska, 2 – 4.; Secretary of the Interior, *Report of the Secretary of the Interior; Being Part of the Message and Documents Communicated to the Two Houses of Congress at the Beginning of the Second Session of the Forty – Third Congress*, 43rd, Cong., 2d sess., Vol. I, (Washington, DC, 1874), 405 – 07.

the telegraph wires between the later established Pine Ridge Agency and the Camp. As a very arid part of Nebraska, the Beaver Valley was also more susceptible to large grass fires. On October 6, 1879, Post Surgeon Wm. H. Corbusier reported "Large prairie fires are burning north and west." The next day, "The Post is completely encircled by fire. Tonight, a fire guard had been made around the Post by men of the garrison." The fact that there were few ways in and out of Camp Sheridan because of Beaver Valley and the environmental factors contributed to its eventual abandonment in 1881.[49]

With Whetstone now being relocated into Nebraska, the time came to establish a new campsite. By September 9, 1874, Major E. F. Townsend from the Ninth Infantry quickly amassed several infantry troops with one hundred forty three military men to reestablish what was to be called Camp Sheridan further south. Townsend made a significant effort to maintain close ties to the Agency, as Spotted Tail and the Sicangu continued to express their anger and frustration with the new location. Besides the meager sized barracks, and more comfortable officer quarters, Camp Sheridan had similar buildings to other forts that included a hospital, guard house, stables, blacksmith shop, and ice house.[50]

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[49] Wm. H. Corbusier, October, 1879, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Day to Day U.S. Army Surgeons Report*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 30.

[50] October, 1877, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Day to Day U.S. Army Surgeons Report*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 5.; Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary to the Interior for the year 1875: Reports by Agent in Dakota, Spotted Tail Agency, Nebraska*, by E. A. Howard, (Washington, DC, 1875), 253 – 55.

Even though most officer reports claim that the Sicangus were relatively peaceful, there was most definitely tension between the military and Spotted Tail. For example, after the new agency was established in Nebraska, Major Townsend reported a specific incident involving stolen cattle from Texas. A cattle drive, over seen by Mr. Cunny and Ecoffey, set out for Whetstone Agency, stampeded through the night on the September 18. Having only found forty-two of the cattle driven to the agency, Cunny and Ecoffey filed a complaint that the ten-missing head of cattle were killed by Lakotas. Their evidence was six hides traded with the traders with the brand of Cunny and Ecoffey contractors. Major Townsend was in fact so sure that he knew that a Sicangu participated in the theft the he even named the son-in-law, Owl Eagle, as one such culprit. In addition, Townsend sent a request for punishment to the Acting Agent at Spotted Tail Agency, Mr. E. Willard. After over a month of no reply from either Agent Willard or from Fort Laramie, Townsend was prepared to dispatch soldiers and forcibly take back what was stolen. According to Townsend, this punishment was to show strength and prevent any such further problems. Despite this black and white approach, Townsend's report on October 21, revealed a change in tone. Between Townsend and Lieutenant Leonard Hay of the Ninth Infantry, the plan was to meet with Spotted Tail in a couple days' time to discuss how the issue was to be resolved. Finally, on October 28, whether the Sicangu were responsible or not, Spotted Tail agreed to pay for damages from withholding ten cattle from their annuities. Agent Howard also made note of it in his 1875 report to the

Secretary of the Interior and how close the incident was to an unnecessary show of force by the US military and the major.[51]

Although Howard hoped to have opened the new year on a more positive note in 1875, the discovery of gold in the Black Hills continued problems between US and Lakota. Despite the fear and ills among soldiers at camp, their Native neighbors, at Spotted Tail Agency, were not always the main threat to the encampment. By 1875, there were far more in numbers of non-native criminals flocking to the region stealing whatever they could. In September 1877, two officers, forty-six soldiers, and several Indian scouts left Camp Sheridan to investigate and catch the culprits behind a train robbery along the Union Pacific Railroad on September 18. Reports never indicated that the non-native train robbers were ever found or arrested. As nearby Euro-American farmers and ranchers came to settle in the region during the 1870s, the ample opportunities for criminal activity quickly became a problem. The vast and empty terrain was prime real estate for criminals of all walks of life, including the notorious horse thief, Doc Middleton. The largely absent policing efforts outside of Camp Sheridan and the little resources available in catching criminals made for a constant headache. [52]

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[51] Wm. H. Corbusier, October, 1878 – May, 1879, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Day to Day U.S. Army Surgeons Report*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 21 – 27.; Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary to the Interior for the year 1875: Reports by Agent in Dakota, Spotted Tail Agency, Nebraska*, by E. A. Howard, (Washington, DC, 1875), 253 – 55.

[52] Order by Capt. Burke, Sept. 1, 1877, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Military Orders*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 28.; Order by Capt. Monahan, Sept. 22, 1878, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and*

Horse thefts was one of the major crimes perpetuated by non-natives. In July of 1877, the Post Surgeon, Wm. H. Corbusier, reported that "every four days three Indians and three soldiers are sent on scout after horse thieves" in the region. A month prior in June, Lieutenant Schatka, the Third Calvary, and ten Indian scouts left the Camp in pursuit of other horse thieves. According to the recent publication by Matthew S. Luckett, *Never Caught Twice: Horse Stealing in Western Nebraska, 1850 – 1890,* horse stealing in western Nebraska became one of the main sources of criminal activity. It was such an issue, that early "emigrants feared white horse thieves more than they did Indian raiders," largely because of the greater chances that non-native had to steal than the Oglala and Sicangu Lakotas. Per Captain Monahan's report on September 22, 1878, "that the country, is at the present time, literally swarming with horse thieves who are ready to depredate on White men or Indians as opportunity may offer." Even then, the soldiers who were dispatched to catch the thieves were often the problem. Especially early on, soldiers themselves often fled camp with horses and other animals. According to the commanding officer of Camp Sheridan on March 25, 1874, "four men deserted taking with their arms, three mules, and one horse." Occasionally a party of soldiers and friendly Natives would be dispatched to capture the fleeing men, but as time progressed, their capture proved difficult.[53]

Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter: *Military Orders*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 35 – 36.; Matthew S. Luckett, *Never Caught Twice: Horse Stealing in Western Nebraska, 1850 – 1890* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2020).; Harold Hutton, *Doc Middleton: Life and Legends of the Notorious Plains Outlaw*, (Athens, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1980).

[53] Wm. H. Corbusier, July, 1877, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Day to Day*

Other criminal activity included the illegal sale of various contraband like whiskey and guns. Per Lazelle's report on camp on April 17, 1874, there were some possible illegal arms sales between the Sicangus and traders. In correspondence with Agent Howard, Lazelle first raised questions related to whether or not this trader was legal. Then in a separate letter dated the same day, Lazelle raised further cautions about selling arms to enemy Natives as these guns would be getting in the wrong hands and trouble for the region.[54]

In Agent Howard's last annual report to the Secretary of the Interior in 1876, another cause of concern was the uncooperative nature of the post commander and the consistent drunken scene at Camp Sheridan. In one example, on December 26, 1875, an unidentified white man shot and killed another sleeping person at the post. After what Howard considered to be substantial evidence against the white man he had in custody, he contacted the sheriff in Holt County to be jailed there. After no reply, it was discovered that the man in custody for a little over two months had been released on March 27, 1875. Howard then took it upon himself to re-arrest the man and request that the Camp Sheridan Post Commander send him to Fort Sidney. Again denied by the Post

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U.S. Army Surgeons Report, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 3.; Matthew S. Luckett, *Never Caught Twice: Horse Stealing in Western Nebraska*, 51.; Order by Capt. Monahan, Sept. 22, 1878, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Military Orders*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 35.; Report by H. M. Lazelle, Mar. 25, 1874, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Reports of Commanding Officers*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 5.

[54] Report by H. M. Lazelle, Apr. 17 1874, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Reports of Commanding Officers*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 9 – 11.

Commander, the only option Howard had was going back to Holt County to hold the accused man. In the end, the Holt County sheriff had released the man as well based on the writ of *habeas corpus*.[55]

And then having the intoxicating liquor on hand continued add to the problems. According to agent Howard, the murder on December 26, "was as a result of a drunken spree," because of how much of the liquor was so widely available. The post-trader at the camp frequently brought the liquor to make a cheap and quick profit among soldiers at the Post Commander's discretion. Not only were soldiers buying and drinking the liquor at the camp, but also Howard's own employees could be found there at any given night. With Howard's hands tied in trying to get a handle on the situation, he requested that the army at Camp Sheridan limit that sale of liquor. With no direct response from Camp Sheridan, a response Howard received back was from Fort Laramie that stated "the reservations at Camp Robinson and [Camp Sheridan], are not 'Indian country' therefore recommends that no further arrests be made by civilians upon the sole ground of introducing liquors within these aforesaid limits."[56]

Not only was the failing relationship between Camp Sheridan and Spotted Tail Agency significant on its own, the discovery of gold in the Black Hills challenged the continued cooperation between the agency and post. In one of Major Townsend's last

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[55] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary to the Interior for the year 1876: Reports by Agent in Dakota, Spotted Tail Agency, Nebraska*, by E. A. Howard, (Washington, DC, 1876), 35.
[56] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary to the Interior for the year 1876: Reports by Agent in Dakota, Spotted Tail Agency, Nebraska*, by E. A. Howard, (Washington, DC, 1876), 35.

reports to Lieutenant Hay, most of his efforts to keep non-natives out of the region were failing. Per Willard's report at Spotted Tail Agency, that gold miners penetrated into the Black Hills. Having filed this complaint, Willard did not seem to have any inclination to police the region or make any kind of arrests despite the news. After what seemed to be an endless amount of treaty violations and relocations, the frustrations in this breach of contract with the United States proved far more dire. Spotted Tail and other nearby Native nations had already expressed no intentions of selling the Black Hills. And if it came down to it, Spotted Tail promised that had nothing been done, they would handle the situation themselves. While Willard's no action response prompted an insurrection among Lakota leadership, it was then left up to the military to handle the situation. But even then, Major Townsend was hesitant to dispatch troops. For he himself had not policed his own immediate region all that successfully and had other problems being replaced by new leadership.[57]

In April 1875, Captain Anson Mills of the Third Calvary took charge of the camp. Under orders from General Crook, relieving military leadership at the post was long overdue because of the current state of affairs with the nearby agency and lack of competence in dealing with the miners in the region. After arriving earlier in the month, Captain Mills was very disappointed in the conditions of camp. According to Mills "the surrounding country very beautiful and especially adapted for the location of a permanent

[57] Report by E. F. Townsend, Dec. 19 1874, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Reports of Commanding Officers*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 28 – 29.

post, but in [his] opinion the immediate site selected for the proposed buildings is so extraordinarily bad that no one will ever be satisfied with it."[58]

The failures and shortcomings under Townsend continued in several reports. Captain Mills then described that of the $15,000 allotted for camp construction under Major Townsend's oversight, only $2,500 had been expended, and managed poorly. As for the one permanent structure on the campsite, the flooring had given way and needed immediate repair. Captain Mills even went out on a limb to state that while Major Townsend had a plan, but that it was not enough and should have been considered a partial plan. Per Captain Mill's recommendation, Townsend would still be overseeing construction, however, a more permanent officer was needed to ensure Camp Sheridan's success.[59]

Additionally, Captain Mills described the troublesome relationship with the Agent at Spotted Tail Agency. In a conversation with Spotted Tail, the Sicangu leader told Mills that Howard had withheld rations this last winter. With the game largely absent in the region because of the heavy snowfall, many of his people suffered as a result. Believing Spotted Tail, Mills approached Howard about the accusation. According to Mills, Howard told him that he has dispersed all the rations he was given, and that if the Sicangu starved, it was their own fault.[60]

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[58] Anson Mills, *My Story* (Washington DC: Press of Byron S. Adams, 1918), 155 – 58.
[59] Report by Anson Mills, Dec. 19 1874, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Reports of Commanding Officers*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 37 – 38.
[60] Mills, *My Story*, 155 – 58.

In one of Major Townsend's last reports as Post Commander, he described that the miners had breached the Black Hills following the news of General Custer's gold discovery at Inyan Kara Mountain. However, once Captain Mills took command, his May 3 report to General Ruggles stated "that no wagons have yet penetrated the Hills from the south or east." Mills even went as far to describe how well guarded the east was and that there was no way that large bands from Sioux City could pass by without being seen going south. Ninety men from the First Infantry were dispatched to the South Fork of the White River to intercept any travelers, while a small scouting party were sent out to find any wagon trails near Wound Knee and Porcupine Creeks. Only a few "stragglers" made it through, but only had pack animals and did not seek the Black Hills.[61]

But Captain Mills continued struggling in preventing miners coming in 1875, just like Townsend. The situation that Mills inherited from his predecessor, was far beyond what the Captain could do in the immediate future. Instead, Mills attempted to severely downplay in his military reports of the number of people coming west and to allude to the fact that he had gained control of the situation. But in all reality, the few stragglers were far more frequent and were more like small bands or individual families that could more easily evade soldiers policing the area. Large groups on the other hand, such as the Gordon Party, had a much more difficult time hiding their operations.

[61] Report by Anson Mills, May 16 1875, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Reports of Commanding Officers*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 42 – 44.

Then on May 16, Captain Mills walked back his May 3 report being a bit "misinformed" on the situation. Since May 3, Lieutenant Rogers came from the Black Hills to Camp Sheridan with five prisoners in custody who supposedly came through the region. But their story reflected a far different claim—that all five, including an A. C. Gay, were on orders from General Sheridan. Not knowing what do with the five men, Mills waited for additional orders and continued to detain the men under the suspicion that they were not telling the truth and were in fact bootleggers. Despite this one incident, Mills wanted to reassure General Ruggles that no other wagon trains have come through the area recently as the scouts would have surely found trails.[62]

While still awaiting orders, Lieutenant Rogers and Captain Mills released Gay and his party contingent on parole. Gay, under his parole, had permission to work on a Lakota farm some twenty miles away, but instead, decided to flee back to the Black Hills with the already present Gordon Party. Having been swindled into releasing a fugitive, Mills's troubles did not end here. As more and more miners continued to make their way across Lakota territory a Minneconjou messenger came to Spotted Tail Agency and spoke with No Flesh, the temporary leader in Spotted Tail's absence, about further depredations beyond the miners coming to the region. The mere presence of miners in the region exasperated the situation. Rations never came in a timely manner, and when rations did finally come, the cattle and other items were less than what was promised or in terrible

[62] Report by Anson Mills, May 16 1875, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Reports of Commanding Officers*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 42 – 44.

condition. With the added non-native invaders, No Flesh knew that "a few of his young warriors have gone on the warpath and he fears he cannot restrain other discontents."[63] With all the frustrations coming full circle around multiple Sicangu complaints, now the military was going to have intervene on behalf of the Lakota or the invading gold miners.

Having been duped by Gay, Mills still was relatively unsuccessful in preventing miners from getting to the Black Hills, and the discontent among the Lakota was building. In order to appease some of these complaints and to avoid continued embarrassment of additional miners in the region, Captain Mills and Major Fergus, of the First Infantry from Fort Randall, sent for Camp Sheridan a request for a Cooperative Detachment of soldiers to the newly established camp called Gordon City. Located on the Antelope Creek, further south, Gordon City was established sometime in the fall of 1874 after the news of gold in the Black Hills. Additionally, the trader's camp being established on a peninsula on Niobrara River and Antelope Creek made for an advantageous position for transporting the gold. Trading down the river was much quicker and it was relatively tucked away out of sight. In the case of an attack, all miners had to do was ford the river, a mile or two west of camp, and make their quick getaway. While the community may have been more than one hundred miles away from the Black Hills, John Gordon chose a northern Nebraska route for a strategic purpose. In following

[63] Report by Anson Mills, May 16 1875, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Reports of Commanding Officers*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 42 – 44.

this most northern part of the Nebraska border, the Gordon Party could avoid going directly through Indian country for several hundred miles legally.[64]

Keeping in mind what had happened at Whetstone Agency on the Missouri River, General Sheridan was not going to allow another community to spring up to cause further problems. Even then, this small community had already expressed no intentions of leaving. Instead, of trying to continue police the region as Townsend had unsuccessfully done before, Mills and Sheridan sought to put an end to the illegal community through more militant force. Soldiers from Fort Randall, Camp Robinson, and Camp Sheridan were to be dispatched to Gordon City and were to forcibly remove the illegal traders. If necessary, soldiers had permission to take them prisoner and burn their property. According to one soldier, Olive Thayer Ragsdale from Fort Randall, the destruction that took place was meant to send a message. "The soldiers proceeded to build a fire in a deep ravine, then proceeded to toss clothing, food stuff, and ammunition into the fire. It sounded like a Fourth of July celebration. The soldiers decided this was too slow, so they shoved the loaded wagons and harness over the bank. The miners were disarmed and the rifles were stacked, then broken over a tobacco caddy. The miners cursed, moaned and cried when they saw their valuables destroyed."[65]

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[64] John D. McDermott, "The Military Problems and the Black Hills," *South Dakota History*, vol. 31 No. 3 (2001).; The Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Gordon Nebraska* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corporation, 1984), 1 – 23.; Mills, *My Story*, 398 - 401. Report by Anson Mills, May 23 1875, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Reports of Commanding Officers*, Heritage Center Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 45 – 49.

[65] Report by Anson Mills, May 23 1875, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Reports of*

After successfully dispersing Gordon City, however, the forcible military actions taken at Gordon City were not seen positively around the country. Instead, the belongings set a fire at Gordon City was reported as an excessive use of militant force in the press and opened the door for a lawsuit. Once John Gordon was released from custody, he filed the damages that Mills believed to be upwards of $3,000 at the time.[66]

Unlike Camp Robinson, Camp Sheridan closed before the large wave of settlers chose to settle in northwest Nebraska. The Manypenny commission, led by George Manypenny, visited both Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies to officially cede the Blacks Hills over to the United States. Both Oglala and Sicangu leaders greatly opposed the forced sale of the Black Hills, however, Spotted Tail expressed far more dissatisfaction in blunt language. As a result, the Manypenny negotiations of 1876 drastically changed the landscape northwest Nebraska's role with the Lakotas. The plan now was to remove Spotted Tail Agency from Nebraska and further to the banks of the Missouri River. While the Sicangu ultimately ended up settling at Rosebud Creek in Dakota Territory, halfway to their designated location, maintaining a military post to continue overseeing Spotted Tail was still a need. The long trek of nearly one hundred miles from Camp Sheridan was hard to justify in maintaining American interests if they were threatened in a moment's notice. As for Camp Robinson, the military and federal officials were far more trusting and receptive to Red Cloud's negotiations than that of

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Commanding Officers, Heritage Center Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 45 – 49.; The Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Gordon Nebraska*, 23.; Jeffrey Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills: The Struggle for Sacred Ground*, 87.

[66] Mills, *My Story*, 155 – 58.; The Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Gordon Nebraska*, 1.

Spotted Tail. Plus, Camp Robinson was within fifty miles in case additional military personnel were needed beyond their presence at Pine Ridge Agency.[67]

In the coming years, Camp Sheridan personnel gradually transferred further east to establish a new camp at Fort Niobrara. From the Post Surgeon's report on August 10, 1878, two dozen soldiers from Camp Robinson came to Camp Sheridan to escort "56 wagons and 50 yoke of oxen on their way to the new Spotted Tail Agency."[68] Then on August 15, another oxen train of "51 yokes and 56 wagons arrived today." Within the next month, forces at Camp Sheridan were to assist in removing some of the old buildings at Spotted Tail Agency to be relocated. Over the course of another three or four years, the buildings at both the former Spotted Tail Agency and camp continued to dwindle until Camp Sheridan was officially abandoned in 1881.[69]

The US military in northwest Nebraska had a major role in shaping events and the geo-political landscape of northwest Nebraska. Initially fueled by the various non-native travelers to and from places further west, the US military became the main point of contact of Lakota – US relations between 1860 and 1878. Whether it was through disputes or grievances on land or resources, the US military was heavily involved in Lakota affairs. As Red Cloud and Spotted Tail were removed and relocated to Dakota Territory, north of the Nebraska state line, military operations were also greatly reduced.

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[67] Ostler, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills*, 98 – 102.
[68] Wm. H. Corbusier, July, 1877, *Camp Sheridan Correspondence: Copied from Microfilm, National Archives and Record Service by Clarence E. Benschoter*: *Day to Day U.S. Army Surgeons Report*, Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, NE, 19 – 20; The Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Gordon Nebraska*, 1.
[69] *Sheridan County: Diamond Jubilee – "Soddies to Satellites,"* (Rushville, NE August 1960), Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, Nebraska, 22.

Following 1879, most of the military operations were limited in and around Camp Robinson and Pine Ridge Agency and marked a new era on the Great Plains. For Red Cloud and the Oglalas, the place they left behind in northwest Nebraska was open for American settlement in the 1880s.

CHAPTER 2 – BEGINNINGS FOR RE-SETTLEMENT AND THE BORDERLAND TO PINE RIDGE

The US Military at Camp Sheridan and Fort Robinson failed to keep gold miners and traders off Lakota territory. Following the 1877 Black Hills Cession, both Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies were removed out of Nebraska and opened new opportunities for non-native settlers in the region. After a short stint further north on the White River in the heart of the Great Sioux Reservation, Red Cloud argued for an agency further south and west. Not only was this location where his people would be much less accessible to government officials, but it was also more near their previous agency and traditional territory. The US government reluctantly agreed in 1878 and reorganized an agency adjacent to the Nebraska border.

Renamed Pine Ridge Agency, the third and final location posed many new challenges. The arrival of non-native settlers to northwest Nebraska and taking up land nearly adjacent to Pine Ridge Agency created a complicated social and economic relationship between Nebraskans and the Lakota. Between these often-clashing cultures, the social and economic dynamic between Natives and non-natives in northwest Nebraska were in the foundational stages throughout the 1880s. Most interactions between Nebraskans and Lakota were limited at first, but quickly grew as economic opportunity presented itself.

Leading up to the 1880s, the US policy of Indian removal primarily sought to segregate Natives and non-native settlers and travelers. Whether this was through forced relocation by the US military or secluding Native peoples to reservations, this was no different for Red Cloud at Pine Ridge. At first, the northwest Nebraska border towns

south of Pine Ridge were established independent of the nearby reservation. As the community building years progressed, a new political and social climate formed where the Nebraska border towns to Pine Ridge increasingly took on more prominent roles for government officials and businessmen. Between Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Chadron, these Nebraska border towns started the beginnings of a foundational era for the Lakota and Nebraskans who settled in Dawes and Sheridan counties.

During the settlement years in northwest Nebraska, non-native settlers came in three phases. The first phase of non-native settlers came almost immediately once the land was opened and sought to take advantage of the nearby Lakota reservations. Among this first wave of settlers were cattlemen and ranchers that supplied beef issues to the military and Natives on the reservation. Other non-native settlers sought to illegally trade alcohol, guns, and other contraband. Before the second wave of settlers, efforts by Pine Ridge Agent Valentine McGillycuddy largely put an end to the illegal trading and further limited Lakota and Nebraska interactions. By 1884 and 1885, a second wave of settlers followed leaders like Reverend Scamahorn, Levi Sweat, and others that purposely sought to build a new community in the area. Then after 1885, the third wave of settlers came via the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad past Valentine. The introduction of the railroad in northwest Nebraska further populated the region in unprecedented numbers of non-native immigrants from other parts of the Midwest and Europe. As a

result of this increased population, Dawes and Sheridan Counties are formally established within the State of Nebraska.[1]

Prior to the formation of Dawes and Sheridan counties, the large swath of unorganized territory under in the northwest corner of the State Nebraska was referred to as Sioux County. Named after the Sicangu and Oglala Lakotas who predominately lived in the territory, Sioux County at its largest encompassed territory that stretched from the Wyoming border, across the entirety of the Sandhills, and up to the present-day Holt County line. In many maps, between 1867 and 1880, this large swath of land is inconsistently labeled, however, Sioux County was more commonly known through word of mouth by the first settlers. As settlers started coming to Sioux County, the unorganized territory's administrative duties, such as taxes or a judicial court system, was funneled through Cheyenne County just to the south. Between Cheyenne and Sioux Counties, administrators in Lincoln County, whose seat was North Platte, oversaw the entire territory.[2]

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[1] The Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Gordon Nebraska* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corporation, 1984).; Mrs. Fred (Betty E.) Evans and Sheridan County Historical Society, *"Recollections": of Sheridan County Nebraska: Communities* (Iron Man Industries, 1976).; Chadron Narrative History Project Committee, *Chadron, Nebraska: Centennial History: 1885 – 1985* (Freeman, SD: Pine Hill Press, 1985).

[2] Brian P. Croft, "Mapping Nebraska, 1866-1871: County Boundaries, Real and Imagined," *Nebraska History* 95, (2014): 230-245.; RG291, *Sioux County: Historical Note*, History Nebraska, accessed March 11, 2022, https://history.nebraska.gov/sites/history.nebraska.gov/files/doc/Sioux%20County%20%5BRG291%5D.pdf.; RG291 & Film, *Cheyenne County, Nebraska: Historical Note*, History Nebraska, Accessed March 11, 2022, https://history.nebraska.gov/sites/history.nebraska.gov/files/doc/Cheyenne%20County%20%5BRG259%5D.pdf.;
Sheridan County Historical Society, *"Recollections": of Sheridan County Nebraska: Communities*, 5 – 7.

The first non-native immigrants to Sioux County mostly consisted of ranchers in the late 1870s. With open land for miles in any direction, most of these ranchers chose to settle on territory north of the Niobrara River for two reasons. Free land opportunities in the upper Niobrara region were far more promising because of nearby year-round water source, but also the untapped business opportunity in supplying beef contracts to the military and Lakotas. Located at the very northern edge of Nebraska, these ranchers were easily within sixty or seventy miles from the Great Sioux Reservation border or a nearby military camp.[3]

Ranching south of the Niobrara did not take off as quickly. For many who heard of the Nebraska Sandhills, the extremely dry and arid climate prevented any kind of agriculture possibilities. Following his excursion in 1796, James Mackay exclaimed that the millions of acres of Sandhills were a barren desert of drifting sand, void of any trees or animals, and impractical for travel. Even the surrounding territory for miles around the Sandhills were difficult and improbable to utilize for agricultural purposes. Labeled as inhospitable and void of life by non-natives, only the Lakota had a working understanding of the land considered their home.[4]

The first ranch in Sioux County was founded at the mouth of the Antelope River, twelve miles southeast of the future sight of Gordon. E.S., Zeke, Newman and H.L. Newman, commonly called the Newman brothers, invested into the Nebraska cattle

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[3] *Sandhills – discovered from the north*. Newspaper Clippings, Sheridan County Historical Society, Rushville, NE.

[4] *Sandhills – discovered from the north*. Newspaper Clippings, Sheridan County Historical Society, Rushville, NE.; Aubrey Diller, "James Mackay's Journey in Nebraska in 1796," *Nebraska History* 36, (1955): 123 – 128.

industry by 1877. The Newman brothers sought to furnish beef contracts to Fort Robinson, Camp Sheridan, and nearby reservations roughly just north and west of the seven-mile-wide ranch. Both Newman brothers came from a freighting background in Kentucky and accumulated their wealth through an investment firm in St. Louis. When the Newman Ranch was first established, livestock was to remain north of Niobrara as the landscape quickly changed the further south into the Sandhills. Occasionally the working ranch hands would allow cattle to graze south of the river, but the risk of losing several hundred head to the south could have been disastrous for business.[5]

This idea of the inhospitable land for agriculture changed in 1878. During a hard blizzard in March, a substantial amount cattle had crossed the Niobrara heading south. Despite the line riders' best efforts to turn the cattle back around, the ranch hands had to seek shelter until the blizzard was over. Once the storm cleared, it was believed that thousands of cattle made their way into the Sandhills. With such a substantial loss of livestock to the ranch, the financial woes could have ruined business. Billy Irwin, the ranch foreman at the time, decided to take up an idea by his brother, Bennett, in corralling the lost livestock. Bennett led a party of a dozen cowboys south into the Sandhills with enough provisions to ride out several weeks. Just as the Newman's cowboys made their way into the Sandhills, they had run into another blizzard on April 17, that nearly forced the men to turn back north. Finally, after three days, to Bennett's

[5] *Sandhills – discovered from the north*. Newspaper Clippings, Sheridan County Historical Society, Rushville, NE.; *Sheridan County: Diamond Jubilee – "Soddies to Satellites,"* (Rushville, NE August 1960), Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, Nebraska, 3 – 7.

surprise, the lost cattle were openly grazing on tall and thick prairie grass. Not only did the cattle appear to be in good health, but also thrived and gained weight on their month-long journey. After five more weeks, the missing cattle were recovered and brought back to the Newman ranch with an additional 1,000 head of cattle without brands. Thus, proving the Sandhills of Nebraska were not only habitable, but also prosperous.[6]

What may have been seen as a large waste land for many, Zeke Newman saw the Sandhills differently from this one instance. One fact that stood out the most was the previous grazing habits of the North American Bison in the region. If North American Bison survived, so would cattle. After convincing his brother to further finance cattle operations, the ranch grew exponentially in 1879. From the mouth of the Antelope Creek and all along the Niobrara, the Newman ranch stretched 20 miles east to west and nearly 70 miles north and south into the heart of the Sandhills. With the large ranch, the number of cattle varied per the government contracts, but was a large enterprise. According to one Newman cowboy, Jim Dahlman, the ranch had nearly 10,000 – 15,000 head of cattle on hand. Other reports say there may have been upwards of 50,000 cattle. The Newman ranch sold most of their beef to Pine Ridge Reservation, with a few other contracts to Rosebud Reservation, Camp Sheridan, and Ft. Robinson.[7]

While the Newman Ranch is credited as the first ranch in the region, many more ranches and families followed around the same time. Another prominent ranch on

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[6] RG1063, MS 1063 s1f72, Wilson Everett Pitt Manuscripts – *History of Dawes County by Mary Knowles*, History Nebraska.; Robert H Burns, "The Newman Ranches: Pioneer Cattle Ranches of the West," *Nebraska History* 34, (1953): 21-32.
[7] *Sheridan County: Diamond Jubilee – "Soddies to Satellites"*, Rushville, NE, 3-7.; Burns, "The Newman Ranches," 21-32.

western the edge of Sioux County was the Bronson Ranch. Established on the Upper White River area in 1878, just south of Ft. Robinson, it rivaled the Newman brothers cattle enterprise. Founded by Edgar Beecher Bronson, a newspaperman from New York, at its peak, the ranch ran twenty miles along the White River and Niobrara and fifteen miles north and south. Bronson founded the cattle company before any title could be claimed on the land and offered no legal protection beside the nearby US military post. As new businessmen, ranchers, and homesteaders came in the early 1880s, the free land that Bronson and Newman squatted ended. Instead of acquiring a legal title to the land, both Newman and Bronson tried scaring away incoming settlers to keep the land. Proving too difficult of a task, Newman relocated his cattle business to Montana by 1885, while Bronson sold off his entire herd in 1883 to Bartlett Richards who later became sheriff for Dawes County. Richards practiced the same tactics to keep homesteaders and cattlemen off his land.[8]

Another early ranch was the Hunter & Evans Cattle Company. Located further west, but still north of the Niobrara in present-day Dawes County, Hunter & Evans followed a similar model first laid out by the Newman brothers Bronson cattle companies. The major difference was their middle man approach to business. For example, Hunter & Evans relied heavily on longhorn cattle trade with John Chisholm in Texas. Hunter & Evans then resold the cattle to the US government and local reservations at a profit. Soon, several cowboys under the Hunter & Evans name made seasonal cattle

[8] Joy Buckley, "Notes on Some Early Settlers of the Upper White River Area", *Old Timer's Tales* vol. I, (1970), Dawes County Historical Society.

drives from New Mexico and Texas themselves. After several cattle drives with Chisholm, John Riggs, remained in the area and became sheriff in Sheridan County. Like Riggs, other immigrants followed in suit during the 1880s to re-settle the land through ranching.[9]

Unlike some of these early and large ranches taking advantage of the beef contracts to the nearby reservations and military post, there was also a quickly growing black market. Almost immediately after the Pine Ridge Agency was established in 1878, near the Nebraska border, the same problems on and near other Native reservations across the Great Plains continued to plague Pine Ridge. During the summer of 1879, the first border community in Nebraska formed nearly adjacent to the Pine Ridge Reservation to sell various guns, ammunition, and whiskey. General stores were also scattered in the country side to remain discrete in practice. With the absence of law enforcement, besides the two military posts in Nebraska, the northwest corner of the state became a breeding ground for illegal activities near the reservation. Pine Ridge Agency officials were not even sure whether or not a large band of Oglala were living within the borders of the reservation or in Nebraska being so close to the state line.[10]

With such an undefined region, the newly appointed agent for Pine Ridge Agency, Valentine McGillycuddy, had a tall task. McGillycuddy described in his first annual report to the Secretary of the Interior that "this report is but general, and the lack

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[9] *Sheridan County: Diamond Jubilee – "Soddies to Satellites,"* Rushville, NE, 4.
[10] Genrose McWilliams Welsh, May 11, 1983, "The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the Executive Addition, 1882 – 1904" Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska, 7-9.; Jeff Tietz, "Whiteclay," New England Review vol 24, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 173-88. Accessed February 21, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/40244229'

of consciousness in detail must be excused when it is remembered that this is the largest Indian Agency under the government and is but just emerging from a state of chaos, in which it has existed for several years past, in which it has existed for several years." To McGillycuddy, the repeated removal of Red Cloud's people led to many of the rebellious feelings against the United States. McGillycuddy also reported that "Locality and love of home is as strongly marked, if not more so, in the American Savage as in the white man." Instead of being greeted with "civilization," the Lakota at Pine Ridge were distrustful of their new agent because of "his experience with the white man in the past being a sad teacher."[11]

In addition to many of his own concerns about imperfect record keeping, history of removal, and creation of agencies, and the overall federal government failures, the bordering state of Nebraska posed a great risk in keeping the peace among tribal leaders. In the fall of 1879, McGillycuddy surveyed the land south of Pine Ridge Agency and found that Nebraska "was only one and three quarters miles south of the agency's administration buildings." And being so close to the Nebraska border, meant that the Oglala generally congregated and lived within only a few miles around the agency. When Natives came to get their annuities and rations, they only had to trek a little over a mile to acquire and trade for contraband. According to the Police, Law and Order section of McGillycuddy's report, being so close to Nebraska, it was a necessity to quickly establish

[11] Secretary of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior on the Operations of the Department for the Year Ended June 30, 1879: Pine Ridge Agency,* vol. I, by VT McGillycuddy, (Washington DC, 1879) Sheridan County Historical Society, Rushville, NE, 143 – 146.

a police force. The first step in this direction was to appoint a US Commissioner and Marshal for Pine Ridge. From there, Doc Middleton and other horse stealing gangs had to be brought under control. Between 1878 and 1879, Middleton ran off 3,000 horses from the reservation to various points in Nebraska. Enforcing the rule of law outside of the boundaries of the reservation was outside of McGillycuddy's jurisdiction.[12]

While McGillycuddy had major concerns about the traffic of both Lakotas and settlers, his hands were tied and not able to enforce Indian laws off the reservation. Instead, Agent McGillycuddy proposed a neutral zone in Nebraska to prevent further illegal trades. Establishing a barrier on the northern edge of Nebraska between the Oglala and "white inhabitants who occupied the land just south of the border…," could slow down some of these problems. On July 29 1880, McGillycuddy advised the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Roland Trowbridge, that the "state of affairs will result sooner or later in serious trouble and as a protection to the Supt., the Indians, and the agent, I would suggest that the Dept. secure the zoning aside by Executive order of a strip of land in Nebraska immediately adjacent to the line five miles wide North & South & ten miles East & West, said piece of land to be settled up only under the supervision of the Dept."[13]

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[12] Welsh, "The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the Executive Addition, 1882 – 1904," 7-9.; Secretary of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior on the Operations of the Department for the Year Ended June 30, 1879: Pine Ridge Agency*, vol. I, by VT McGillycuddy, (Washington DC, 1879), Sheridan County Historical Society, Rushville, NE, 143 – 146.; Harold Hutton, *Doc Middleton: Life and Legends of the Notorious Plain Outlaw* (Ohio State University Press, Athens, Ohio, 1980), 50-51.
[13] Welsh, "The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the Executive Addition," 9-10.

The Office of Indian Affairs moved forward with McGillycuddy's request, but Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz, rejected the plan. Schurz claimed that a neutral zone would strictly favor licensed traders on Pine Ridge and deter traders going to Nebraska. As growing unpopularity gained traction among politicians and the public, McGillycuddy had to make a strong case with startling examples of illegal activity. Instead of admitting defeat, the Pine Ridge Agent exposed the illegal trading liquor that was literally taking place roughly 300 feet south of the Nebraska line. One such trading store commonly sold 'extract of ginger' as an intoxicating liquor, while another one owned by James Woods sold nearly 100 gallons of whiskey in a month during the month of December in 1880.[14]

Despite the overwhelming evidence, McGillycuddy made an effort to garner more political support by making a compromise. The recommended five by ten mile buffer zone in Nebraska was not to infringe on free trade, but rather to limit and restrict the illegal contraband coming on to the reservation by a simple request to the agency. By the end of his argument McGillycuddy stated here "merely desire(s) that the region which is unsurveyed and practically unsettled should be placed under some kind of a police protection and no longer be made a rendezvous and asylum for disreputable white mean, Mexicans, and whiskey traders and a source of constant and everlasting trouble and danger to this agency."[15]

Despite these best efforts again, Schurz firmly believed that the reservation system should dissolve and assimilate all Natives into mainstream American society.

[14] Ibid, 10-11.
[15] Ibid, 12.

While significant efforts on behalf of the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) were made for a third time, no new promising signs led to the desired buffer zone. Instead, the worsening situation continued as additional gold seekers and non-native settlers crossed the reservation in route to the Black Hills.

Not only were these same non-native travelers passing through Lakota territory, but they also utilized the unorganized northwest part of Nebraska as a strategy to trade contraband or to run off various Lakota horses off the reservation so that that they could be seized for their own purposes. Agency police and McGillycuddy did as much as they could to prevent the continued illegal activity, but the problems persisted. As long as the Nebraska border remained so close and without any kind of regulation, the situation on Pine Ridge was only going to get worse as more settlers came.[16]

By 1881, the trouble with illegal contraband continued to grow at an alarming rate. Several new whisky ranches formed, two miles from agency administrations buildings. Without any kind of law enforcement capabilities on the Nebraska border to limit the illegal trading, there was very little McGillycuddy or other federal officials could do besides catch the perpetrators in the act or on the reservation. Red Cloud even exclaimed to the relatively new agent that his distaste about the intoxicating liquor as one of the main reasons for the continued decline of his people. The strongest defense against the whisky trade happening across the border was the establishment of two temporary substations along the border with a regular patrol of reservation police along the southern boundary. McGillycuddy continued on with his report that in order "to thoroughly

[16] Ibid, 12-14.; Harold Hutton, *Doc Middleton*, 60 – 61.

prevent the introduction of liquor into the Sioux country is a difficult matter. It is true the severe laws enacted by the United States to prevent this traffic should apparently put a stop to it, but when we consider that the noble red man as a people evince a remarkably natural taste for the article, it is not to be wondered at that they should shield the person who may attempt to supply them."[17]

Finally, by 1882, the OIA had a new opportunity to get an Executive Order passed under a new presidential administration. With Chester Arthur now in office, the Secretary of Interior, Samuel Kirkwood, gave up his seat in the Senate to be in the president's cabinet. Only a few months in office, Kirkwood came across a letter on his desk early on that described the situation at Pine Ridge Agency and in Nebraska. With the recommendation by the OIA and McGillycuddy, Kirkwood recommended the president give his stamp of approval. The language in the Executive Order allowed for the withdrawal of the land from public settlement at the pleasure of the president. In the description, the Executive Order "provided that the said tract of land in the state of Nebraska shall be reserved, by Executive Order, only so long as it may be needed for the use and protection of the Indians receiving rations and annuities at Pine Ridge Agency." As a result of this buffer zone, the success was nearly instant. McGillycuddy's next annual report reflected that there was little to no trouble involving liquor and every year

[17] Secretary of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior on the Operations of the Department for the Year Ended June 30, 1879: Pine Ridge Agency*, vol. I, by VT McGillycuddy, (Washington DC, 1879), Sheridan County Historical Society, Rushville, NE, 143 – 146.; Welsh, "The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the Executive Addition," 9-10; Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the year 1881*: *Pine Ridge Agency, Dakota*, by V.T. McGillycuddy, (Washington DC, 1881), Sheridan County Historical Society, 45.

after that. In addition to the significant drop-in illegal activity, McGillycuddy could now effectively police and regulate Nebraska south of Pine Ridge Agency.[18]

With the extension now in place, the first White Clay Creek settlers were selected and closely monitored by Pine Ridge agency officials. Ben Tibbets, Frank Brown, Mel and Jacob Ganow, and many others replaced the whisky traders and started the foundation for the first community in the region. According to the Sheridan County *Diamond Jubilee* souvenir booklet in 1960, the School District One building near present-day White Clay was built in the summer of 1883 with the local timber and logs from the Pine Ridge. The school opened later that fall with twelve students who were under the guidance of the former Episcopal missionary at Pine Ridge, Mrs. Julia Draper

[18] Welsh, "The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the Executive Addition," 15.

as the teacher. Funding for District One came through whatever the families could muster out of their pockets and continued this way until tax dollars to support the school.[19]

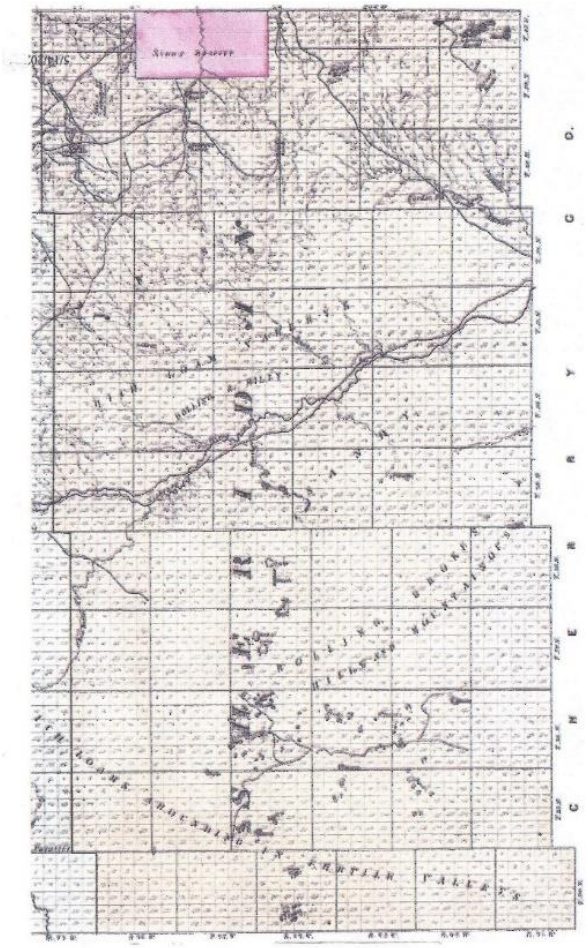

Figure 1. Map of Sheridan County from the Sheridan County Historical Society, ca late nineteenth century

By 1884, the second wave of non-native settlers came to the region. News reached the rest of the world that northwest Nebraska was open for settlement. The Great American Desert and the Nebraska Sandhills were not as much of a desert as it once assumed. Also, advertising in the east promised consistent rainfall for a relatively easy

[19] *Sheridan County: Diamond Jubilee – "Soddies to Satellites"*, Rushville, NE, 14.

get rich quick pitch to accumulate farmers and ranchers. Immigrants like Jules Sandoz, as described in Mari Sandoz's biography, *Old Jules*, came to northwest Nebraska in 1884. Sandoz came from Switzerland, as a well-educated man with a background in horticulture, but took a different approach in settling northwestern Nebraska territory. Instead of raising cattle, like many had done before him, Sandoz firmly believed that the upper Niobrara and Sandhills were ideal for farming. Throughout his time in Nebraska, from 1884 to his death in 1928, he wrote hundreds of letters back home encouraging people to come west and farm. Sandoz held firm in his belief, if not a prejudice against cattlemen, that northwest Nebraska was farming territory rather than ranching country. Mari then described her father, on his death bed, with that same attitude he had from the beginning to the end. With some success, he established many of his fruit orchards in the heart of the Sandhills, however, many of his counterparts that came because of him did not see the same kind of fruition.[20]

[20] Mari Sandoz, *Old Jules*, (New York, NY: Hastings House, 1935).; The Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Gordon Nebraska*, 4, 196.

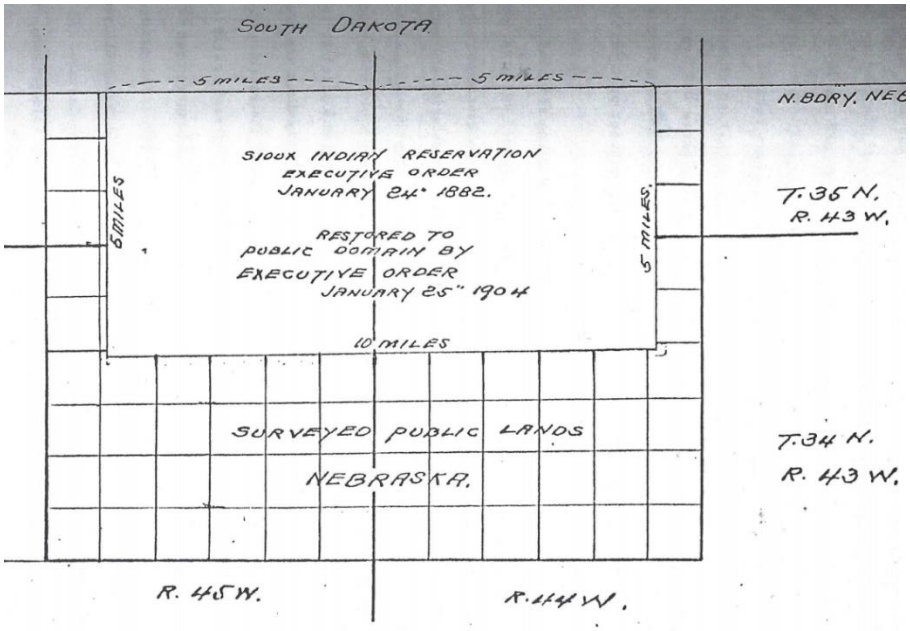

Figure 2. Map of White Clay Extension from the Dawes County Historical Society

As more and more news reached further east that this northwest Nebraska region was suitable for American life, larger droves of people came in the spring of 1884. The more sustaining communities of people came via the Scamahorn and Sweat parties. After receiving word of Valentine US Land Commissioners, Judge Tucker's glowing reports of land west of Valentine, the relatively unsettled land in Nebraska made for an attractive space for a colony rather than individual pioneers. Plus, rumor had it that the rail line that led to Valentine was possibly going to be expanded in the coming year or two. This mindset of being first in the region meant that those early settlers could benefit

financially and politically. It was these first colonists that bought and resold the land to immigrants, opened businesses, and made early community decisions for the future.[21]

Born in Hamilton County, Ohio, on September 25, 1831, John Scamahorn grew up in a predominately religious household where his father was a minister in a United Brethren Church. At some point, the Scamahorns relocated to Indiana where John continued to live with his parents into his early twenties. By 1853, Scamahorn married his first wife, Margaret Cullen. As John and Margaret became more involved with the church, John decided to carry out his Christian duties and enlisted in Company C, Forty Second Indiana Volunteers. Scamahorn quickly rose in the ranks to Major by the end of the Civil War and was also captured as a prisoner of war. Upon Scamahorn's return home in 1865, wounded and emotionally drained, he discovered his wife Margaret had passed away.[22]

While Scamahorn's military service left him battered emotionally and physically, his heroic story propelled him further into a public role over the next fifteen years. Scamahorn quickly remarried to Mary Radcliff in spring of 1866 and served a one-year term in the Indiana legislature later that fall. Following his time in the legislature, Scamahorn became a licensed Brethren minister in his church until 1870 when he joined the Methodist church. As the Reverend Scamahorn continued to gain favor among church officials in Indiana, his health declined. Stomach issues and other health complications

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[21] The Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Gordon Nebraska,* 27 – 28.; Chadron Narrative History Project Committee, *Chadron, Nebraska: Centennial History: 1885 – 1985: The Sweat Colony,* 10 – 11.

[22] Frank M. Hewett and Sheridan County Historical Society, *"Recollections": of Sheridan County Nebraska: Communities*, 575 – 580.

made it difficult to carry out his daily work and sought a doctor's opinion. The now ill-stricken reverend had been told by the doctor to relocate from his home Indiana to a more arid and drier climate to help with some of his health complications.[23]

Around the same time, the Scamahorns decided to attend the Louisville, Kentucky Exposition in 1883. Scamahorn with Mary, and several friends happened to have found themselves speaking with Judge Tucker of Valentine, Nebraska about the settling the new territory in northwest Nebraska. Not only did Tucker describe the openness and opportunities of settling in Nebraska, but he also convinced the Scamahorns and friends to visit the area a few months later. Having been persuaded by Judge Tucker, in spring of 1884, Scamahorn, led over a dozen families and 100 people to the Antelope Valley. In the following year, Scamahorn convinced another wave of settlers to come with James Crowder from Indiana to continue to bring more people. Despite the Antelope Valley's relatively open and attractive space for settlers, there was no well-established community until the Scamahorn party came in April 1884.[24]

While many of the original stories of the Reverend made him out to be nothing short of a religious and virtuous preacher, Scamahorn's economic and political interests may have been far more important than on face value. According to Raleigh Barker, in the *History of Gordon Nebraska*, the economic opportunities and political standing in northwest Nebraska significantly set Scamahorn apart from others within his newly established community. At the same time, this romanticized line of reasoning of poor

[23] Ibid, 575 – 580.
[24] The Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Gordon Nebraska*, 27 – 28.

health may have been a factor in the Reverend Scamahorn's decision to leave Indiana, however, we should not overlook his past in politics to better understand some of his other personal ambitions. Barker did not include any details about any prior business experience in Indiana, however, when the First National Bank in Gordon was established 1889, the first owners asked Scamahorn to be on the first Board of Directors. Whether Scamahorn had any stocks or stockholders that may have influenced First National Bank is unknown, although it is certain there was probably some sort of past business experience that propelled him as a financial leader in the community. Barker briefly alluded to some sort of background in business dealings that went along with Scamahorn's religious mission as a well-rounded minister. Overall, Revered intertwined politics, business, and ministry that made him a crucial part of whatever community he wanted to start in northwest Nebraska.[25]

While many who remembered Scamahorn for his wholesome image, it does not change the fact how influential the reverend was in the community. As a respected citizen and knowledgeable minister, Scamahorn had a powerful presence everywhere he went. Barker specifically recalled a time when a new and young minister was assigned to the Methodist Church. According to Barker, a new "minister had been here for a short time, I heard him say that he was in awe when he found himself in the pulpit with Rev. Scamahorn in the congregation. … He knew there was nothing he could include in a message which would be new or unique to this student of the Bible. But, he added, he had been here only a few weeks and delivered his first three or four sermons when Reverend

[25] Ibid, 27 – 28.

Scamahorn complimented him on his messages. The preacher appreciated those comments but could not refrain from revealing his feelings of inadequacy compared with this veteran of the pulpit."[26]

When the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad began construction west of Valentine, the rail line was going to miss the small community of nearly one hundred people by a mile. Whether Scamahorn knew of the general location of the railroad coming through the area through Judge Tucker, or through his other political connections, it was decided to move the small community "to accommodate the men who made towns." Scamahorn happened to have had the most logical plot of land that eventually became the eastern half of the officially incorporated community a year later in 1885. Once the move was decided, then came the official name of the town. Many citizens pushed to name the town *Scamahorn* after the reverend. Instead, *Gordon* became the town name, after the John Gordon party whose wagons were destroyed ten years earlier. Again, it is unknown of his true intentions, but the multiple circumstances that placed Scamahorn in the driver seat for the future of the community of Gordon and how he benefited from it early on should remain in question. [27]

At the same time, several other colonists sought the Bordeaux Valley. According to the *Chadron, Nebraska Centennial History*, the large swath of settlement in present-day Dawes County came when there was heightened interest in the land following the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad between 1884 and 1885. Prominent

[26] Ibid, 27 – 28.

[27] City of Gordon, *History*, 2021, https://www.gordon-ne.us/.; The Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Gordon Nebraska*, 27 – 28, 59.

ranches in and around Sioux County, including the Half Diamond E, Sioux City Cattle Company, and many others were already well established in supplying beef to the Pine Ridge Reservation. Despite these well-developed ranches, there were no formally established communities in Bordeaux Valley. Prior to 1884, there were still questions about whether or not the railroad would continue west toward Wyoming or more directly north to Rapid City.

Levi Sweat, from northwest Missouri, led a party of more than twenty individuals and families to Valentine on April 6, 1884. Among these early colonists, Ed Egan, an aspiring young journalist, took a more northern route "over a reservation road through Pine Ridge to avoid the trek through the Sandhills, further south." Egan also recalled how they gathered "around the campfires when wagons were packed for the night, eager and extensive plans were discussed for the development of the new Arcadia. Organization of society and government and probably the first slate was made … among prominent citizens of the colony. … But the fact remains that the sturdy integrity of the men of the Sweat Colony was a potent factor in shaping the affairs of the fast-settling country."[28]

As more rumors circulated about the continuation of the rail line in northwest Nebraska, many other immigrants from the east quickly settled in the region between the two colonies. As for Rushville and Hay Springs, no colonies are recorded to have brought people to form these communities. The railroad was again the main factor in their establishment and incorporation. In Rush Valley, one mile north of present-day

[28] Chadron Narrative History Project Committee, *Chadron, Nebraska: Centennial History: 1885 – 1985: The Sweat Colony*, 10 – 11.

Rushville, Henry Crow, James Loofborough, and John Baer attained their homestead and timber claims adjacent to one another. Between these three men and their families, they established the first store and post office in the Rush Valley region for settlers beginning to come this way in Nebraska. By July 3, 1884, there were many farmers and ranchers scattered all around the Rush Valley that relied on the established general store and post office. Then about 15 miles west of Rush Valley was the Pleasant Valley, named after the pleasant green grass that remained long after the rest of country turned brown. Hay was also abundant in the region that made for a great stopping point for livestock on various freighting and cattle drives around the region. When the railroad reached the very eastern edge of Pleasant Valley, the community of Hay Springs was established right along the rail and named after the resources in the region.[29]

Following the Scamahorn and Sweat parties, many other individual families and groups came as the communities started to take shape. In his biography, Charley O'Kieffe recalled how, as a young boy, his family made the journey from Johnson County, Nebraska out west. Born in 1879, Charley described a troublesome childhood in Johnson County and how difficult home life was in helping his mother raise eight other children. As a result of these poor living conditions, Mary and one of Charley's older brothers, Grant, decided to take up a homestead in Sioux County in hope for a fresh start. Initially, Grant and Mary set out to make their claim in the summer of 1884. Mary came

[29] *Sheridan County: Diamond Jubilee – "Soddies to Satellites"*, Rushville, NE, 7.

back to fetch the rest of the family and their possessions, while Grant stayed behind to build a soddy.[30]

On September 15, 1884, the O'Kieffe family started on the 500-mile quest back to Gordon via covered wagon. Most of the heavy household items, the sewing machine, furniture, and other things that did not fit in the wagon, were shipped by an immigrant car. Only the necessary items for the trip were taken and stored underneath the wagon. As the six-week journey progressed, Charley remembered most of the land they passed early on in their voyage that either was mostly settled farm ground or the various cities that illuminated the night. As they traveled north to O'Neill, the westward landscape significantly changed. Using the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley rail line to Valentine as their guide, the ground quickly became more loose with sand as they traversed north of the Sandhills. According to Charley, "the wooden ties and steel rails were to be our guide for most of the rest of our journey. As we moved on the sand grew deeper, looser, and more powdery. Our progress slowed to a crawl, and our livestock as well as the wagon began to need more attention every day." When the O'Kieffes continued west of Valentine, the sand and dry environment became worse. Water became scarce and the sand only deepened. Charley recalled how "our speed was that of a real slow snail pace … our wagon wheels sank down into the sand halfway to the hubs."[31]

As they crept closer and closer to their destination, Charley described his first interaction with a local Native. Not only was this an important milestone for Charley in

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[30] Charley O'Kieffe, *Western Story: The Recollections of Charley O'Kieffe: 1884 – 1898*, ed. A. B. Guthrie, Jr. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), 3 – 7.
[31] Ibid, 8 – 16, 19.

meeting a Native for the first time, but also dispelled many of his own prejudices about the people who lived here before the non-native settlers came. At the age of five, his head was filled with romanticized ideas and views about the Native warriors that fought American soldiers in the 1860s and 1870s. Instead, his first interaction was little more than of a man who could not drive a team of horses.[32]

As the O'Kieffes passed Valentine, "I saw my first real Indian. … I hardly knew just what to expect or what he might decide to do with us. … Instead of springing out of ambush and coming at us hell-for-leather and whooping, he was stuck with his wagon on the way up a steep sandhill. Much has been said about the Indian being a good horseman, a fearless hunter, and a straight shooter with the bow and arrow; but he sure was not a good teamster. There the old fellow sat on his wagon seat, and all he could think of to do was try to shoo the horses by shaking the lines, and plead with them in the Sioux tongue, which they did not understand or appreciate."[33]

Charley then further described how the family helped the Native man get his wagon unstuck despite the language barrier between the two. "Ira jumped down and unhitchted our team by pulling out the pin that held the double tree to the wagon tongue; then he hooked a short stay-chain into the loop at the end of the Indian's wagon tongue, and fastened the chain to our double tree with a clevis. After that, all that was left to do was say "Giddap" to Charley and Jim[34], and away they went with the Indian wagon."[35]

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[32] Ibid, 17 – 18.
[33] Ibid, 18.
[34] Charley and Jim were the name of the animals pulling the wagon. Charley O' Kieffe should not be confused here.
[35] Ibid, 18.

The last real trouble was getting to their new home. Once the small community of Gordon came into picture, they found their homestead on November 4, 1884. In what seemed to be a largely uneventful journey, the immigrant car that the O'Kieffe freight shipped caught fire and burned the entirety of their possessions.[36]

Once the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad was completed to Chadron in 1885, the second wave of non-native migrants came in more numbers from around the country and the world. People like Charlotte Evelyn Scofield, or better known as "Lottie," came via train in May 1886. The newly constructed railroad made the trip far less tedious for Scofield than it was for other settlers. Born in Kingsville, Ohio, on July 9, 1868, Lottie's father died when she was two. Raised by her mother and older sister, most of Lottie's life never amounted to much in Ohio. Like the O'Kieffes, the Scofield's moved west in hopes for a better life and the promise of opportunities. [37]

Lottie's journal began in January 1886 with a mixed bag of emotions and complications of the journey via train. As Lottie described life in Ohio, her family struggled with health and many other social ills. As months progressed and her family entertained the prospect of moving to Nebraska, she increasingly wrote more and more about moving west to start a new life. Between the January 4 – May 16, journal entries by Lottie expressed a keen interest in moving west to Nebraska every single entry. Often throughout the months of February, March, and April, she went back and forth about

[36] Ibid, 20 – 23.

[37] RG5012.AM, History Nebraska, *Journal of Charlotte Evelyn Scofield Cook*, 1-17.

whether or they could even make the journey. Weather, illness, and many other untimely circumstances in Ohio and Nebraska always seemed to delay their voyage.[38]

Finally in May, Lottie was granted her wish to move to Nebraska. After the four-day journey, Lottie and family made it to their new home in Chadron, Nebraska. On her journey west, she made notes in her journal about the changing landscapes and different encounters along the way. She distinctly remembered transferring over to the Northwestern Depot in Chicago and crossing the Mississippi River under a full moon. By the time they nearly reached Nebraska, one particular note she made seemed to make her question her initial excitement. In Missouri Valley, Iowa, where they stayed the night before reaching Chadron the next morning, Lottie considered this small Iowa town one of the "roughest towns" she had ever seen. In passing time with a stranger at the Missouri Valley depot, Lottie was told some even more startling news. According to the woman she spoke with, "Chadron was worse, but it's not M[issouri] V[alley], [and] is decidedly the roughest place on the road." By the next morning on May 23, Lottie got to see the rough town of Chadron, for herself.[39]

According to her journal entry on May 23, Lottie recounted how "Chadron is so full of gamblers and drunkards & bad people of every description, but I guess there are some nice ones here." Nevertheless, the following Sunday on May 30, she wrote in her diary how weird it was "to go riding through the country where there are no fences … I love this wild free west!" Just as she became comfortable with the wide-open spaces of

[38] Ibid, 1-17.
[39] Ibid, 17.

northwest Nebraska, the following Wednesday on June 2 brought her another reality check. Lottie described her angst in moving west as a "solitary life! Just the reverse of what I had anticipated. I thought to have gone into society and been acquainted with lots of people and I have been introduced but to 3 or 4 persons in town, and have been nowhere and rec'd no call." As Lottie continued to write in her journal the next several months, many of her topics of discussion featured her continuously ill family, primarily her mother, many unwarranted feelings of loneliness, and always being courted by the many single men in the area.[40]

By 1886, Chadron, the other border town communities, and the land was largely settled by non-native immigrants from the east and Midwest states. Although many non-native settlers were Americans moving from the city, there were still a handful immigrants from across the Atlantic. Many of these non-native immigrants came from Scandinavian countries, such as Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Laust Fredericksen was the epitome of the immigrants who "made it" in northwest Nebraska. While Laust and so many Dannish and other Scandinavian immigrants came for similar reasons, he is also an exception. Laust's talents as a shoemaker allowed him to more easily to acquire funds when he either grew bored or wanted to explore job opportunities elsewhere. Though Laust never wrote down his story himself, his daughter Marie Fredericksen-Rosseter extensively researched and described how her father came to Sheridan and Dawes County in the late nineteenth century.[41]

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[40] Ibid, 17 – 18.

[41] The Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Gordon Nebraska,* 275 – 277.

Born on a farm called the "Lille Taarup" just outside of Viborg, Denmark, on November 19, 1854, the Fredericksen's had a longstanding family farm that dated back to the 1660s. Laust the third son, had to find other means to grow his own family. Instead of taking up on the family farm, Laust decided to take up a cobbler's apprenticeship in Viborg. Shortly after starting his own shoe store in 1876, his father's sudden death, Frederick Sorenson, started Laust to consider new opportunities in America. Andrew Thomsen, a close friend to Laust, received a letter from a friend, who emigrated to the United States, about the discovery of gold in the Black Hills and free land all around it. The letter exclaimed that if Thomsen did not come quick, he might miss out.[42]

After mulling the idea of moving to America for four more years, Laust then decided to sell his shoe shop and board a small steam ship with his close friend Andrew in the spring of 1880. Once they arrived to New York, they trekked to Omaha, where Andrew had friends. Before moving to northwest Nebraska, Laust founded a new shoe store, learned English, and founded a small Danish community church in Elkhorn. Within a few years, a Reverend Jorgensen described the promising prospects of northwest Nebraska. In addition to wide open spaces, the other draw was the supposed similar topography to Denmark. Laust took the Revered up on his word, bought a train ticket to Valentine in 1884, and filed for a quarter section near the Antelope Valley. [43]

In June 1885, the rail line reached Gordon and brought more Danish immigrants to the area. As a result of his efforts to create a Danish cluster community, Reverend

[42] Ibid, 275 – 277.
[43] Ibid, 275 – 277.

Jorgenson officially founded the Danish Community Church of Gordon which included Laust. At first, Laust tried to farm, but homesteading became too much his existing health conditions. Relying on his craft as a shoemaker, Laust moved to Chadron to start another shoe store.[44]

By 1895, Laust started traveling the country. Among his travels to California and Washington, Laust decided to visit his family and friends back in Denmark for a short period of time. While visiting relatives, he found his future wife, Petrine Christiansen at a family function. Petrine worked on the family farm saving up to go to school, until Laust and Petrine married in February 1896. Instead of waiting for Petrine to attend school, Laust and his bride set out for the United States in the following spring, and arrived back on homestead quarter section by May 5, where they lived for the rest of their lives.[45]

FOUNDATIONS FOR INTERRACIAL RELATIONS WITH LAKOTA

By 1885, the stage was set for an increasing role between Natives and non-native settlers. Up to this point, the founding of many of the border town communities did not initially grow because of its proximity to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Instead, it was opportunities of free land, influential leaders, and the railroad that initially brought and kept drawing settlers to Dawes and Sheridan Counties. At first, there was very little interaction between settlers in Nebraska and Lakota from Pine Ridge. But all changed in less than a year as the coming railroad became the major supply point for Pine Ridge Agency. As fall and winter progressed, the foundations for Native and non-native

[44] Ibid, 275 – 277.
[45] Ibid, 275 – 277.

interactions and transactions in the newly established Nebraska border towns became a critical component for the rest of the nineteenth century.

Between 1885 and 1890, most Native and non-native encounters were mostly cordial and distant through trade or freighting. Within the first few months of incorporating in 1885, the Nebraska border town communities had very little business with Pine Ridge. The primary concern of residents in Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Chadron had more to do with community building rather than ties to the reservation. For example, the big question for residents in Sheridan County revolved around the future county seat. By November 1885, Rushville was decidedly the county seat in a very close vote against Gordon. Prior to the official vote, many Sheridan County residents bantered back in forth with one another about who should be the rightful seat. The debate was so hotly contested that as news circulated among the rest of county that Rushville was the county seat, Gordon residents immediately questioned the results of a fair and free election. Gordonites felt that since they were the first established community in the county, had the largest population, and more services to offer, Gordon should have been the county seat. Whether other voters from Hay Springs and the surround country other saw the troublesome geographical dynamic of Gordon being the county seat in the far east corner as a burden to get to or that Rushville was a happy medium community between two populated communities. Nevertheless, the beginnings of the Gordon –

Rushville rivalry, that still exists in the twentieth-first century, started within the first few months.[46]

While most Sheridan County residents squabbled over who won the county seat, most of the newspaper accounts of any kind on Pine Ridge or Native news was limited. Whether it was freighting news or a report about a few individuals who had business with the agency, the *Rushville Standard* had little interest in what was happening just twenty miles north. Despite the little interest by Nebraskans, big business was being conducted. In McGillycuddy's annual report in September 1885 paper, his notes on freighting exclaimed that over two million pounds of government freight had made its way to Pine Ridge this year. Most of the freight was brought by Lakota workers who then were paid nearly $30,000 to date. And while McGillycuddy preferred Lakota freighters, so that Natives could benefit financially through a job. An additional million pounds were brought by various non-native traders and freighters in Nebraska. Having depended on the freighting business to put money in the pockets of Lakota men; much of that money in the freighting business would come to an end with the coming Indian Supply Depot in Rushville and Gordon just to the south. With the coming railroad in Nebraska, the trip from the south was only twenty five to thirty miles at the most, thus the wages made by Lakota men were going to be severely cut because of the shorter route to the agency.[47]

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[46] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, August 20, 1885. As for the southern half of Sheridan County, the prominent communities of Ellsworth, Lakeside, and Bingham were not yet formed as the Burlington rail line were not yet established.

[47] Secretary of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior on the Operations of the Department for the Year 1885*, by V.T. McGillycuddy, (Washington, DC, 1885) 35.

According to the *Rushville Standard*, on November 19, the first mention of business with Natives on Pine Ridge came in at the bottom of the local brevities section exclaiming that "the Indians of Pine Ridge have learned that they can buys good of our merchants very much cheaper than they can at their trading posts or at Gordon. As a natural consequence they are beginning to avail themselves of the opportunity, and our merchants may look for an increased trade from that quarter."[48]

And then again on November 28, another opportunity presented itself coincidentally. The *Rushville Standard* reported that a large amount of coal heading toward the Gordon Indian Supply Depot was stalled in town. The coal was the winter supply at Pine Ridge Agency for the upcoming season needed sooner rather than later. As a result of this large quantity being side-tracked, freighters in and around Rushville took advantage of the business opportunity to transfer the coal themselves. Additionally, during the first summer, fall, and winter seasons, a few Lakotas began making the trek from Pine Ridge to Rushville or Gordon when they could afford extra goods.[49]

By the spring of 1886, rumors circulated around Sheridan County that the agency and military officials were thinking to move the Indian Depot from Gordon. Hay Springs, the other prominent Sheridan County community on the farthest western edge, was also directly south of Pine Ridge, however, the Beaver Walls made it difficult to traverse with freighting wagons. Chadron, in Dawes County is also adjacent to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation; however, the county merely touches the reservation in the far northeastern

[48] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, August 20, 1885.
[49] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, November 28, 1885.

corner to justify the northeasterly trail. Realistically, Gordon and Rushville were further north toward the reservation and had a much easier trail to Pine Ridge Agency.[50]

As a result of these rumored discussions, the already heated Rushville and Gordon rivalry was renewed in vying for the Indian Supply Depot. On April 3, a brief article titled "The Supply Depot" detailed how Rushville residents were receiving word through railroad reports that the Gordon Indian Supply Depot would be relocated to Rushville. A General Armstrong, from Washington DC, came to Rushville to examine "the route from this place to Pine Ridge Agency, and also from Gordon to that place." In deciding which community had the shortest distance and the most navigable route to the agency, General Armstrong measured by section lines as a precursor for "when the country becomes well settled and the farms fenced." In addition to these calculations, General Armstrong took into consideration various creeks and rivers to and from the future supply depot. Following his survey of the two distances, the Standard reported that Armstrong strongly favored the Rushville route over the Gordon one.[51]

From this news, Gordon and Rushville residents continued to banter back and forth. Gordon newspapers accused Rushville residents for interfering in the General's assessment. In Gordon's efforts to delegitimize the General's assessment, he was accused of fraudulent reports of the land and taking bribes from Rushville residents. In response, Rushville lashed back in publicly condemning Gordon for lying and all the dishonorable people for not seeing the facts. Despite much of the pitter patter between the two

[50] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, April 3, 1886.
[51] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, April 3, 1886.

communities, Rushville would claim the Indian Supply Depot by May 1886. Leaving Gordon feeling cheated from not only the depot, but also the county seat that it thought it rightfully deserved. Again, the *Standard* reiterated that even though Rushville was geographically more situated to be the logical choice in terms of distance and more easy topography to navigate, the newspaper downplayed how much was really conducted from the Indian Supply Depot. According to the *Standard*, the business never amounted to much for the community beside the traders and freighters.[52]

Despite the fact that the Indian Supply Depot moved to Rushville, northwest Nebraskans did not fully the realize the economic benefits being so near a Native reservation. It was not until several politicians and government officials outlining new Native policies and land opportunities to continue opening the territory for settlement. If the federal government were to continue teaching the Lakotas farming and mainstream American values, officials believed, Natives had to take up private ownership of the land rather than communal territory of reservation life. As early as November 1885, President Grover Cleveland and Secretary of the Interior Henry Teller, outlined publicly would become the Dawes Act that "what is now needed in regard to lands, he said is severalty and individuality, with the protection of law for persons and families. This would result in settlements, in home, and in land cultivation, and in that way make the Indian a self-supporting citizen, endowed with all the rights, privileges, and duties of citizenship."[53]

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[52] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard,* April 3, 1886.; R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, May 15, 1886.
[53] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, November 19, 1885.

The *Rushville Standard* continued citing that the president's administration wishes to treat the "Indian" "fairly and honestly as the ward of the government, and their education and civilization promoted with a view to their ultimate citizenship."[54] Cleveland's approach was "to give the Indians their lands in severalty. Wherever this is practical it will do away with the reservation system and add to the public domain several millions of acres of valuable land for the homesteader."[55]

Not only did the Cleveland administration express this view of dissolving the reservation system as a whole, but many Nebraska locals also agreed that the reservation system was a waste of land. Much of the land in Dawes and Sheridan Counties was largely settled, so in part, the recent Nebraska residents wanted the land thrown open for additional settlement to continue to populate the country side and city. The *Rushville Standard* expressed that "under the reservation system more land is tied up than Indians could ever take care of and cultivate," and "now that the game is nearly all gone and as they depend wholly up on the government for their support, they have no need of the vast extent of territory that is set apart for them."[56]

Then in 1886, the *Chadron Journal* reprinted an interview between the *Deadwood Times* and Pine Ridge Agency Agent Dr. Valentine McGillycuddy's thoughts on the possibility of dissolving the Reservation. In this interview, McGillycuddy felt that there was a strong push to dissolve the reservation system through the Dawes Act.[57] According

[54] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, November 19, 1885.
[55] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, December 5, 1885.
[56] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, December 5, 1885.
[57] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, April 3, 1886.

to this interview, McGillycuddy expressed how the "Indians are greatly excited over the Dawes bill, and the probability of soon being deprived of much of their reservation."

While the Dawes Act diminished the Great Sioux Reservation, it would not be until the summer of 1890 that more of Dakota Territory was opened for settlement for non-natives. In response to many of these local calls to open more land, the former military post, Camp Sheridan, became a stepping stone for Nebraskans to expand their agricultural enterprises. By January 1887, there were a few select settlers allowed to squat on the land. Located on the fringe of the White Clay Extension, the settlers on the former Camp Sheridan Reservation never had a definitive understanding of when or how they would gain ownership. Whether the territory was going to be made into public domain or become part of the extension, those who chose to settle on the former military reservation knowingly took a risk knowing they may never acquire a land title. The *Rushville Standard,* with a renewed interest on unsettled land, reported that this "injustice should have been corrected long ago" and "that some settlers who were allowed to file on land in the reservation and who made improvements on the same, have long since abandoned their claims" because of the possibility of never acquiring a title.[58]

As the 1880s came to a close, the opening of Pine Ridge Reservation land became more promising for non-native settlers. In 1889, the Great Sioux Reservation was formally split into the five reservations. Now located in the states of South Dakota and North Dakota, Lakota territory further diminished for American interests in settling the land. The excitement from 1889 peaked in January and February of 1890, when reports

[58] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard,* January 28, 1887.

from Chamberlain and Pierre, South Dakota, exclaimed how the towns east of the Missouri River were flooded with many "boomers and settlers." All they were waiting for was presidential proclamation to make their claims. The US military was specifically ordered to prevent anyone crossing the Missouri River before the presidential proclamation. In Pierre, Colonel Tassin had orders from an army headquarters to prevent people from going on to the reservation. Finally on February 13, the *Chadron Democrat* reported President Harrison's proclamation was made few days earlier so those settlers waiting in Pierre and Chamberlin could now claim land on the Great Sioux Reservation. The question still remained on what to do with some of the illegal non-native inhabitants that were allowed to settled around the Crow Creek under President Arthur's administration. In order to appease the present non-native squatters, new legislation allowed a ninety day window for those who were on the land since 1885 before the wave of settlers were allowed to make their own claim.[59]

Following this initial settlement excitement north in South Dakota, the years between 1886 and 1890 brought an increasingly optimistic perspective among the Nebraska locals about the economic prospects with their nearby Native neighbors. While the Nebraska border towns of Chadron, Hay Springs, Rushville, and Gordon quickly sprang up in 1885 mostly independent of the reservation, local leaders and business entrepreneurs gradually realized that their Native neighbors could be an economic

[59] C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *Chadron Democrat*, January 9, 1890.; C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *Chadron Democrat*, February 13, 1890.; C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *Chadron Democrat*, February 20, 1890.; C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *Chadron Democrat*, March 6, 1890.

pipeline for goods and services. It was then realized the economic value in catering goods and services to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation as a major part of the local economy. Leading up to 1890, most of the business was through contracted merchants, freighters, and large land-owning cattlemen *going to the reservation*. No one from northwest Nebraska, before 1890, gave any real thought to attract Lakota business off the reservation.

As alluded to earlier, most of the business between 1885 and 1890 mostly consisted of freighting to Pine Ridge from Sheridan County. When the Indian Supply Depot was relocated from Gordon to Rushville, it was then frequently reported on what and how many supplies came off the train headed north. On May 15, 1886 the *Rushville Standard*, reported the annuities to be distributed, out of Rushville, for Rosebud Agency starting July 1 would be as followed:

Bacon…….. 200,000 lbs

Beans……30,000 lbs

Beef……...6,500,000 lbs

Coffee……80,000 lbs

Flour……800,000 lbs

Sugar……160,000 lbs

As for other foods like bread, hominy, rice, and salt, they would be about 50,000 pounds.[60] In the same paper, there was also a bid to freight 200,000 feet of lumber from the local saw mill to Pine Ridge Agency. The *Rushville Standard* explained that "the

[60] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, May 15, 1886.

lumber will be used, we understand, in making additional houses and improvements for the benefits of the Indians, and the contract will no doubt promote the interests both of teamsters and mechanics in this part of the country." While there was an abundance of wood from the forested Pine Ridge on the reservation, however, processing the wood into lumber for building purposes was usually done in northwest Nebraska. The logs of cottonwood, pine, willow, and a variety of oak had to be transported to and from the sawmills for construction purposes.[61]

Then on February 25 1887, one load of eight cars was reported to ship off to the Pine Ridge Agency. Besides the contracted Nebraska residents, there were also several Natives and US soldier who escorted the large load north. The *Rushville Standard* reported that the "eight car-loads of Indian supplies were received at the depot… The goods consist of corn, flour, stoves etc. which will be transferred by Indian freighters at once." In addition to these Native freighters from Pine Ridge, Lieutenant McAnanly, from Ft. Robinson, was also in town inspecting the supplies. to ensure the condition and amount.[62]

With so much business being conducted between Rushville and Pine Ridge, the twenty four mile road was still not the easiest journey north. After a little over a calendar year of simply following various creeks and landmarks north of Rushville, Colonel Gallagher,

[61] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, May 15, 1886.; *That These People May Live: Conditions Among the Oglala Sioux of the Pine Ridge Reservation*, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Public Health Service: Health Services and Mental Health Administration Pine Ridge, South Dakota, 1970, 9 – 11.

[62] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, February 25, 1887.

the new agency agent, and J.L. Hurd inquired with the locals about establishing a road with a bridge over the White River between Rushville and the Pine Ridge Agency. This

Figure 3. "Sioux Indians gathering for the "Beef Issue" Pine Ridge Agency, S.D." from the Dawes County Historical Society

same query from the Colonel wanted to further add a telephone line so that the agency and community in Rushville could be "in closer communication." The *Rushville Standard* responded and reported that this road and "this line will certainly be a great benefit to the agency folks, and a source of considerable gratification to the Rushville people."[63]

Even though most of growing business between northwest Nebraska and Pine Ridge was still in its elementary stages, Lakota and non-native settlers near the reservation still frequented each every so often. For example, in an interview with Professor Everitt Pitt Wilson at Chadron State College, Edna Scribner described how her "Grandma Wadley" and an Oglala man named Shut-the-Door came to be good friends

[63] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, June 10, 1887.

through trade. In the spring of 1885, a Mr. and Mrs. Wadley reached their claim, on the northwestern edge of the Beaver Valley, and started a blacksmith shop. Being so close to the reservation, their Lakota neighbor occasionally came down for Mr. Wadley's expertise and services. Shut-the-Door, a frequent Lakota customer, came to visit to sharpen one of his hunting knives. From this initial transaction, Shut-the-Door and the Wadley's continued trading from their own home and the blacksmith shop that included coffee, foods, and other possessions in the household.[64]

Beyond just the freighting business from the Indian Supply Depot to the agency and loose trading around the border, there was also a growing interest outside of northwest Nebraska to hire Native actors. Early expositions in eastern Nebraska and the growing fascination with Native culture around the country also accelerated the economic and social connections between the northwest Nebraska border towns and Pine Ridge reservation.

Among some of these earliest fascinations with the Lakotas came through the beef issues at the agency. The first recorded beef issue that Rushville citizens, and residents from other nearby communities, went to observe was on November 5, 1885. The article in the *Rushville Standard* was brief, but it expressed that there was some kind of performance that made for an entertaining afternoon for folks who watched from afar. And then again in June of 1886 and March 1887, Pine Ridge Agency officials sent a special invitation to locals who wanted to see the spectacle of the large beef issue. Nearly

[64] RG 1063, s1f120, Wilson Everitt Pitt Manuscripts, by Edna Scribner, "Experiences of Grandma Wadley's Pioneer Life" History Nebraska.

fifty Rushville residents, both men and women, made the journey north to watch what was made out to be "performance."[65]

As this fascination continued to grow locally, invitations were given to Lakota dancers or religious leaders around special occasions. In April 1886, the retirement party for the Gordon postmaster invited Natives and non-natives alike for a brief celebration. Originally reported by the *Gordon Herald*, "A number of Sioux Indians came to Gordon a few days ago and procured two dogs and made necessary arrangements for a feast and dance." It was then reported that during this local Native exposition that "a rope was tied around the dog behind the fore legs, and another around the neck, the head drawn down by this cord to the one around the body, and blow on the dog's head kills it." In what may have been a grueling sight anywhere else and under any other context, the ceremony was considered a high honor for the outgoing postmaster. Following the feast, dancers performed a traditional Omaha dance to cap the evening. By the end of the evening, the large feast among Lakotas and the "finely executed dance" drew a large crowd of non-native Nebraskans that gave gifts in appreciation for the performance.[66]

One of the largest celebrations that invited Lakota dancers and performers was during the Chadron Fourth of July Celebrations in 1886 and 1887. In a reprinted article by the *Chadron Record,* the local newspaper commemorated the first Fourth of July as a spectacle and one of the communities' grandest celebrations. Originally published in the *Chadron Democrat*, Chadron's first Fourth of July included many Native performances

[65] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, November 19, 1885.
[66] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, May 1, 1886.

and prominent leaders. Chief Red Cloud arrived on the outskirts of town on July 2 by special invitation from the Fourth of July reception committee. Once given the all clear, "hundreds of mounted warriors, dressed in all the variegated costumes peculiar to Indians, and chanting their wild monotonous songs" came into the city limits followed by Chief Red Cloud, smoking a cigar, in an open carriage with his wife and small children. Following Red Cloud came several more wagons, pack ponies, and travoys that were to set up camp southeast of town. *The Chadron Democrat* then recorded that "after passing through the principal streets of the city … they immediately raised a city of their own, consisting of many tall white lodges." Then several Chadron citizens were appointed to load up various provisions of food while they were visiting.[67]

By the next morning, 5,000 people assembled for the grand procession starting on Second Street. The parade was a mile long and went all around town. First came the Grand Marshall, F. M. Dorington, Fourth of July organizers, and then the mayor D. Y. Mears. Then behind the mayor came Red Cloud in a carriage followed by Little Chief of the Cheyenne and Spotted Elk. Following the entrance of these prominent Native leaders, then came some of the Chadron Civic societies in town as well as several festive decorated cars. After the Chadron civic organizations, then came "a band of Sioux warriors, 100 strong riding six abreast, mounted on gayly caparisoned horses, and decked with all the gewgaws and trappings of savagery." And then later on, an additional 150 Native warriors were followed alongside by several cowboys who were mounted on

[67] Dawes County Historical Society, *Chadron Record*, July 3, 1972, Newspaper Clippings accessed March 10, 2020.

horses and "in full regimentals."[68] In Lottie's journal, she described how "Anne and I rode on the wagon and represented states, the Goddess of Liberty (Miss Hilbert) rode in the middle – after the procession the exercises were conducted in the grove. I shook hands with Red Cloud and Young Man Afraid."[69]

At the end of the grand procession, the parade of Lakotas and non-natives alike made their way to a set of grand stands to continue the Fourth of July celebration. The Grand Marshall, mayor, and Lakota leaders lined in front of the grand stands for a brief speech and presentation. The Reverend Scamahorn, from Gordon, opened with a prayer and then the reading of the Declaration of Independence by Birdie Monnette. After several other patriotic songs and exclaims, Chief Red Cloud made for a call unity in speech.[70]

"I am glad that my people came here to Chadron today to celebrate with you. We were both created by the same Great Spirit and draw our sustenance from the same mother, nature. We came here as two nations, with different hearts and different minds, but we must become one nation with but one heart and one mind. We will build our two houses into one. We have been traveling two different roads let us from now on travel even."[71]

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[68] Dawes County Historical Society, *Chadron Record*, July 3, 1972, Newspaper Clippings accessed March 10, 2020.
[69] RG5012.AM, History Nebraska, *Journal of Charlotte Evelyn Scofield Cook*, 20-22.
[70] Dawes County Historical Society, *Chadron Record*, July 3, 1972, Newspaper Clippings accessed March 10, 2020.
[71] Ibid.

After the speeches, the Chadron Glee Club and the city band played a song that gave way for the great Omaha dance performed by the Lakotas later that afternoon.[72]

Similarly in 1887, the Fourth of July festivities had similar events, however, Red Cloud's speech had a far different tone. Initially, Red Cloud's speech reflected a similar message of unity at the beginning, however, had a much more direct response to some of the current conditions on the reservation and the treatment of his people. Red Cloud proclaimed that "I will repeat my remarks of last Fourth. I want to be a friend to all, to all the ladies as I want to be the friend of my own people and my wife and children here … I have been reading letters and papers that I received, and I want to report to all who see me that I am still an Indian, and that I am poor as can be. I have not even an ox cart. The government has not given me the stock they promised me. Farming implements, a great many plows and moving machines I have not seen yet. … I want to say something about the agents Six of the eight agents the government has sent to us brought their own crews with them, and took away all they could and left me and my people poor, and did not give us anything to do. I intend my people to do all the work at the agency. I ask the assistance of all of my friends here to help me secure my rights from the government."[73]

In addition to these grievances against the federal government, Red Cloud also addressed the diminishing Native lands. Red Cloud continued proclaiming that "The government wants me and my people to live on still smaller pieces of land, and I and my people will have to starve when we give it all up. … I had eleven nations of people

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

assembled to make a sale of the Black Hills to the government, and I told the commissioners the Great Father might have the Black Hills alone, but I wanted my people to live as Indians on the territory all around the Hills. Eleven years have passed, and I have received no pay for the Black Hills. … The land where this town stands is not paid for. All the white spots on the hill to the south of town are graves of my ancestors. … The state line that divides Nebraska and the reservation should run several miles south of Chadron, and this is the line that I recognize as the state line."[74]

As news slowly spread about the Lakota performances in northwest Nebraska, the famous showman Buffalo Bill found himself a frequent visitor and recruiter in the area for his Wild West shows. When Buffalo Bill started his Wild West show in May 1884, they soon became popular and made for a spectacle for those in eastern Nebraska. As the Wild West shows garnered worldly recognition, Buffalo Bill wanted the larger performance. Buffalo Bill first came to northwest Nebraska to find Native actors. With the rail line directly south of the Pine Ridge Agency, it was relatively easy for Buffalo Bill to contract Lakotas just across the Nebraska border and send them on to Omaha via train in Rushville.[75]

Black Elk, in *Black Elk Speaks*, by John G. Neihardt, highlighted his brief journey south to Rushville to board the train. "Late in my twenty-third summer (1886), it seemed that there was a little hope. There came to us some Wasichus who wanted a band of

[74] Dawes County Historical Society, *Chadron Record*, July 3, 1972, Newspaper Clippings accessed March 10, 2020.
[75] Jeff Barnes, *The Great Plains Guide to Buffalo Bill: Forts, Fights, & Other Sites* (Mechanicsburg, PA; Stackpole Books, 2014), 158.

Ogalala's for a big show that the other Pahuska had. They told us this show would go across the big water to strange lands … The show people sent wagons from Rushville on the iron road to get us, and we were about a hundred men and women. Many of our people followed us half way to the iron road and there we camped and ate together. Afterward we left our people crying there, for we were going very far across the big water. That evening where the big wagons were waiting for us on the iron road, we had a dance. Then we got into the wagons."[76]

Another prominent Lakota actor in the show that shared his experiences was chief Red Shirt. A leader on the reservation, a frequent visitor to Rushville, and a friend to many non-natives at Pine Ridge Agency and the Nebraska border towns, Red Shirt wrote back to a friend about his travels in May 1887. His friend, a Mr. Robinson then shared the letter to the *Rushville Standard* for a brief report on the show across the Atlantic. Dated May 2 from London, England, Red Shirt described fifteen days of sea travel and sea sickness. Still resting from the journey, the Wild West Show participants had done no work and were getting ready for their first show on May 9. Two years later in 1889, Red Shirt and family rejoined the Wild West shows for another European tour. Despite the excitement of traveling around the world, life certainly did not stop for many Lakotas. Julia In Sight, Red Shirt's wife, gave birth to a child while on tour in Paris in 1889 and paraded the newborn as added spectacle for the world to see.[77]

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[76] John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks: The Complete Edition* (Lincoln, NE; University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 134 – 135.

[77] R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, May 20, 1887.; Charles Eldridge Griffin and Chris Dixon, *Four Years In Europe With Buffalo Bill* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 29.

Buffalo Bill came to Rushville to find Native actors, but also wanted extravagant Native outfits and regalia. To catch the audience's attention, Native regalia had to have the most vibrant colors and beaded outfits. Red Shirt mentioned in his letter that when he was home, he wore a red shirt, but now "I wear a bright red shirt [and] that … all [of England] know(s) my name." By 1887, Buffalo Bill was contracted for nearly 300 shows across the United States and Europe. This same success continued through 1888 and 1889, however, acquiring Native actors and regalia from Pine Ridge ended by fall 1890.[78]

Historical interpretations of Buffalo Bill have long been credited him in treating Natives more than fairly. For example, Louis Warren in *Buffalo Bill's America*, describes the above average pay and extra care by Buffalo Bill. According to Warren, he went as far as to exclaim how "Buffalo Bills relationship with the Indians, absent the aura of show business, seem above average in the positive human qualities of justice and fair play."[79]

While Warren credits Buffalo Bill as a man who may have been so kind and understanding of his Lakota actors, it is also imperative not to overlook some of the early grievances by other Native leaders and how Native actors were exploited for the show. Prior to 1890, there are several instances where federal officials and local Nebraskans witnessed the hard life on the road. Warren briskly touches on the federal accusations between 1889 and 1890 through newspaper and government reports. Firsthand accounts

[78] Jeff Barnes, *The Great Plains Guide to Buffalo Bill: Forts, Fights, & Other Sites*, 158.
[79] Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 196.

of malnourished and badly bruised Natives while on tour made for a bad look for the show. Among the most fervent and outspoken critics were the Lakota themselves. Red Cloud staunchly opposed the shows and sought any means necessary in putting an end to Native actors for hire. Red Cloud was so much so against the shows that he sought a payment of 25 cents per month from participating Natives as a deterrent to show work.[80] To some degree, Buffalo Bill had to treat his actors and employees well; with even more attention to his Native participants. Scholars greatly undervalued the outspoken and respected leaders at Pine Ridge who see firsthand some of the harsh treatment during the tour.[81]

According to Pine Ridge Agency Agent, H. D. Gallagher, if not for the fact that the Wild West shows, and other smaller outfitters went more exclusively to Pine Ridge for actors and regalia, the negative impact would not have been as bad. In the 1889 annual report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Gallagher exclaimed that more than two hundred young Lakota men left their homes to take up jobs in the show. And not all of these actors had permission to leave the reservation according to the federal government. As a consequence, the agricultural production on the reservation was severely neglected. As for the money made from the show, Lakota families back home never saw a dollar while performers were abroad.[82]

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[80] Ibid, 373.
[81] Ibid, 196.
[82] Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Fifty-Eighth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior 1889: Report of Pine Ridge Agency*, By H.D. Gallagher, (Washington, DC, 1889), 153.

Gallagher included his observations of the negative impact that the traveling shows had on the Lakota. “A great deal of complaint has been made by the Indians, and justly so, on account of so many of their young men being taken away each year by show companies to figure as attractions for the circus, Wild West exhibitions, quack-medicine business, and every conceivable scheme to make money out of them. The evil as grown to such proportions as to deserve particular attention.”[83]

There was also a noticeable difference in overall physique among the men that came back from the shows. Upon their arrival home, these same young Lakota men were “perfect wrecks, physically, morally, and financially.” In the 1890 report by Gallagher, the situation was no different. According to Gallagher, five Lakota men died while touring the world on the Wild West show, and for those that survived the experience, “seven others have been sent home owing to their shattered health rendering them unfit for further service.” Among the others who finished the tour, they spoke very little of their time, but no words were need to make a general observation of the hardships on the road.[84]

The Lakota were also utilized as political tools for the Wild West shows. For example, In Buffalo Bill’s autobiography, *The Wild West in England*, he mentions how

[83] Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Fifty-Eighth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior 1889: Report of Pine Ridge Agency*, By H.D. Gallagher, (Washington, DC, 1889), 153.
[84] Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Fifty-Eighth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior 1889: Report of Pine Ridge Agency*, By H.D. Gallagher, (Washington, DC, 1889), 153.; Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Fifty-Ninth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior 1890: Report of Pine Ridge Agency*, by H.D. Gallagher, (Washington, DC, 1890), 50 – 51.

Red Shirt was a fundamental leader while on the 1887 London tour. As a respected leader among Native actors from all across the Great Plains region, Red Shirt proved to be a calming voice in times of uncertainty or quarrels. In one instance right before their voyage across the Atlantic, many of the Native actors were fearful of crossing the big water. According to Red Shirt, many of the Native actors held a religious belief that as soon as they would start their voyage across the ocean, they would become so ill that their own flesh would slowly fall off their bodies and die a gruesome death. As nervous as Red Shirt was himself, the Lakota leader's voice of reason and leadership qualities calmed the situation aboard the ship to keep the Native actors from abandoning the show before they ever performed for an audience.[85]

Natives in fact were so crucial that Buffalo Bill utilized his more prominent actors as an important political ally. Unlike many of his fellow Native colleagues, Red Shirt frequently met with major political leaders for the Wild West show because of his increasing notoriety among European royals and leaders. For example, in an exclusive performance for the Queen's Jubilee, made by the arrangement of the Prince and Princess of Wales, the chief was not only admired for his performance, but was also requested for a special meeting with the royal family. Beyond Buffalo Bill's own account of a relatively loose meeting where both Red Shirt and the royalty expressed an appreciation for each other's presence. It would be because of the chief's world-renowned status that propelled Buffalo Bill into a political atmosphere where he could continue to be a

[85] William F. Cody and Frank Christianson, *The Wild West in England* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, NE), 2012, 16 – 17, 20 – 21.

showman for a more prominent audience where he so desperately wished to fit in.[86] Perhaps it is too much to assume of Buffalo Bill's character as an either or, but rather a showman of his time that sought political and economic fame like the other B.T. Barnums and Pawnee Bills of the world.

It was not just the Wild West show that solicited Native actors in northwest Nebraska. Other Native shows and expositions around the country sought Lakota actors for hire. The Kickapoo Medicine Company, famous for its traveling Native-inspired medicine shows, sold natural remedies purportedly utilized by Natives all across the continental United States throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For most of their medicine and shows, Kickapoo Medicine looked toward Pine Ridge as a basis for their business. In 1889 and 1890, it was reported that on a year-round basis Kickapoo Medicine had nearly 100 Lakota men away at one time. Once Lakota contracts expired or simply refused to continue working, Lakota men were left stranded all across the country. In one instance at the Rushville Depot, one unnamed Lakota man who found his way back via a rail car was discovered "in dying conditions" when he tried getting off the train to head home to Pine Ridge. His overall health and financial situation prompted "the authorities of the town asked what should be done with him, as he had not a cent of money and could not be taken to the agency until his condition improved." After several days, the dying Lakota man "begged" to be brought back to his home so that he could die in peace. Arrangements by Gallagher, the Lakota man's family, and Nebraska officials

[86] William F. Cody and Frank Christianson, *The Wild West in England*, 59 – 64.; Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America*, 287.

were made to bring the man home. However, between Pine Ridge and Rushville, the Lakota man died before arriving back on the reservation.[87]

By August of 1890, it was decided that more restrictive measures had to be taken. Gallagher pled with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that "if the government is charged with the physical and welfare of these people it does seem to me there should be some means of protecting them from unprincipled persons." For the entertainment of thousands around the globe, the trade-off for their health and retention of their traditional ways hindered all that agency officials sought to end through assimilation policies and practices. To make the Lakota an independent with American cultural values, they could no longer travel with shows or exhibitions.[88]

On October 1, 1890, Commissioner R. V. Belt, from the Office of Indian Affairs, sent out instructions to all Indian agents to refuse any applications to join the "Wild West Shows" in Europe. And if any attempts are made by "any persons seeking …to engage Indians for exhibition purposes… [that agents were] to thwart [these efforts]." To a greater extent, additional measures were looked into to make those who abandoned

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[87] Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Fifty-Ninth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior 1890: Report of Pine Ridge Agency*, by H.D. Gallagher, (Washington, DC, 1890), 50 – 51.

[88] Brooks McNamara, "The Indian Medicine Show," *Educational Theatre Journal*, no. 4 (Dec. 1971): 431-45.; Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Fifty-Eighth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior 1889: Report of Pine Ridge Agency*, By H.D. Gallagher, (Washington, DC, 1889), 153.; Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Fifty-Ninth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior 1890: Report of Pine Ridge Agency*, by H.D. Gallagher, (Washington, DC, 1890), 50 – 51, lvii – lvii.

Indians while on tour or refused to pay their contracted salaries.[89] For now, Native shows were prevented from hiring actors from Indian reservations. To enforce the new rule of law, the US military was to be a leading entity to get the situation back in their control.

Leading up to 1890, northwest Nebraska was increasingly flooded with non-native settlers taking advantage of the newly opened territory just south of Pine Ridge. Located in the far southwestern part of Dakota territory, the newly established Pine Ridge Agency, in 1879, was nearly on the Nebraska border. As a result of the agency's geographic proximity to the state of Nebraska, the economic opportunities slowly started take shape. In the early years of the 1880s, cattle ranchers, cowboys, and other eastern businessmen purposely sought land in the upper Niobrara region to fulfill beef contracts. While other non-native squatters sought to trade liquor and other contraband to the reservation. By 1885, most non-native settlers, like Charlotte Evelyn Scofield or the Laust Fredericksen, came via rail along the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad when it was extended west beyond Valentine, Nebraska.

While these non-native settlers more exclusively sought the free land opportunities rather than anything with nearby reservation, the growing communities in northwest Nebraska began to realize the economic benefits being so near Pine Ridge Reservation. Between Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Chadron, the journey to Pine Ridge was only a little over twenty miles. Therefore, it made sense that the federal government established the Indian Supply Depot first in Gordon, and then Rushville to

[89] Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Fifty-Ninth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior 1890: Report of Pine Ridge Agency*, by H.D. Gallagher, (Washington, DC, 1890), lvii – lviii, clxv – clxvi.

provide Native annuities rather than continuing to freight them as in previous years. In doing so, the business opportunities in trading with the Lakota became more and more relevant as the increasing interests in Native culture continued to grow locally and around the world. Specifically, Buffalo Bill with his Wild West shows, became the major force in this emerging market from Pine Ridge. In utilizing Lakota regalia and actors for his national and international shows, Buffalo Bill heavily relied on northwest Nebraska's proximity to the Pine Ridge Reservation in acquiring Lakota actors and regalia.

CHAPTER 3 – THE SUMMER OF 1890 AND AFTER

In 1893, Fredrick Jackson Turner presented his "Frontier Thesis" in front of the American Historical Association at the Chicago Columbian Exposition. Among Turner's many arguments, the one that largely set the tone for his speech was that the American West not only influenced by the ideals of the democratic institution in the east, but the American West itself defined these concepts of individuality and freedom. Additionally, the West was an open territory for pioneers and farmers to harvest the land. Also known as the American Frontier, the fringe of American civilization was this new opportunity for farmers, ranchers, miners, and traders alike. And over the course of one hundred years in American society, white American men and their families could go live off the land make a life on their own. As Americans continued to settle westward throughout the nineteenth century, Turner then argued that the American West and Frontier was settled and closed by 1890.[1]

In respect to northwest Nebraska, Turner failed to include in his well-known Frontier Thesis the complex dynamic between Native Americans and non-native inhabitants. In northwest Nebraska, Native peoples simply did not disappear as Turner suggested. As Hämäläinen discussed in *Lakota America*, the Lakota at Pine Ridge were low in numbers and struggled to retain their sovereignty by the end of the nineteenth century, but they did not simply disappear. The Lakota instead had to accept "a new era

[1] Stephen Aron, *American History Now: Frontiers, Borderlands, Wests*, ed. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2011), 261–84.; Fredrick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (London, United Kingdom: Penguin Books Limited, 2008).

of enormous complexity" and had to find ways to retain traditional ways of life amidst American pressures to farm or earn a living wage. For example, the events around the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890 were an effort to remain an independent people of the United States. Receiving less than promised annuities, and experiencing near death living conditions, many Lakotas remembered when life was not as difficult. In expressing these malfeasances through Ghost Dancing and Wovoka's new religion, the massacre of Big Foot's band at Wounded Knee Creek on December 29, 1890, further cemented Lakota reliance on the US federal government. Whether it was through continued annuities or the renewed military presence at Pine Ridge, life after Wounded Knee for the Lakota meant that "they had to accept a larger "non-native" presence in their lives." This including the role of the non-native Nebraska border towns south of Pine Ridge.[2]

As for who is to blame for the massacre, historians continue to debate who exactly is at fault. According to Heather Cox Richardson in, *Wounded Knee: Party Politics and the Road to an American Massacre,* most of the blame for the Wounded Knee Massacre falls squarely on the eastern politicians in the federal government. As Richardson argued, Colonel Forsyth, General Nelson Miles, and the Seventh Calvary are most definitely the final actors in the final massacre, however, their actions are not unique to prior military excursions with Native Americans. Simply, the US military was at fault for last forty years of Indian affairs through federal policies and political climate that preceded the event. The Manifest Destiny ideals, the expansion of the Republican

[2] Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven, NY: Yale University Press, 2019), 382.

Party in the West, and assimilating Native peoples all greatly contributed to the massacre at Wounded Knee Creek on December 29, 1890. According to Richardson, it was Washington DC that had the lion's share of the blame.[3]

Jeffrey Ostler in *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee,* argued that the US military at Wounded Knee Creek was a leading factor. According to Ostler, "too much weight has been placed on the first shot." Despite the fact that a single gun shot could have just as easily started the barrage of bullets from the US military, there were other motivations among soldiers and military leaders present. For example, the Seventh Calvary, deployed to Pine Ridge and present at Wounded Knee reportedly was eager to avenge their fallen comrades at the Battle of Little Bighorn. Not only were troops from the Seventh ambitious to settle the score with the Lakota, Ostler contemplates that military Generals Miles and Brooke may have fueled some of those angsts in the soldiers and Captain Forsyth. While Miles and Brooke could not have anticipated when or how the situation was to unfold, a supposed meeting between the generals contemplated what opportunities could allow the Seventh Calvary to avenge Custer's death. Despite the overarching colonial and imperial policies and history by the US federal government, the decisions made by the army greatly contributed to how the Wounded Knee Massacre happened on December 29, 1890, according to Ostler.[4]

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[3] Heather Cox Richardson, *Wounded Knee: Party Politics and the Road to an American Massacre* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 18.
[4] Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 350 - 53.

Between Ostler and Richardson's interpretation of what happened at Wounded Knee Creek, another prominent Nebraska author has her own interpretation of events. Mari Sandoz, a world-renowned Nebraska writer and researcher, was born and raised in Sheridan County and far ahead of her time in researching and knowledge of Western and Native cultures. In works like *Old Jules*, *Crazy Horse*, *Miss Morissa*, *Capital City*, and many others, Sandoz's work serves as an important secondary source undervalued by historians across the country. Regarding Wounded Knee, Sandoz offers an insightful perspective that asserts the military's actions, US political influence, and local non-native presence all contributing to the event.

Sandoz agrees with Richardson, Washington was a major culprit in the making of Wounded Knee. Sandoz specifically cite President Harrison as one of the main actors in her letter to University of Nebraska – Lincoln professor, Louise Pound, in August 26, 1952. According to Sandoz, most of the trouble started when President Harrison continued making cuts in annuities and appropriations for Indian agencies. Sandoz continues in explaining that Pine Ridge Agency was just one of those selected agencies to see some of these significant cuts. Among those cuts were orders from Washington and President Harrison to make a new treaty with the Lakota to break up the Great Sioux Reservation for non-native settlers. Relying on General George Crook, the Crook Commission set out for the Dakota Territory to gain the necessary three-fourths signature to acquire the land. Despite Native leaders best efforts to delegitimize the Crook Commissions intentions, the Dakota Territory was split into five Indian reservations by February 1890. In addition to this continued loss in land, Harrison's approved to

additional cuts on contracted annuities and rations as a means of punishing unruly Lakota leaders and rebels. As Sandoz put in her letter to Pound, "for the new president was apparently eager to live up to the reputation of his grandfather who became president on the strength of his Indian victory at Tippecanoe."[5]

Where Sandoz differed in her perspective was her view of the settlers' contributions. Sandoz also expressed to Pound that the settlers coming west had a lion's share of the blame as well. For example, the wave of immigrants and locals demanding more land to open in Dakota Territory created immense pressure on legislators to open additional territory through any means necessary. In Chamberlain, South Dakota, the continued presence of "boomers and settlers who are awaiting presidential permission to go upon the Sioux reservation and select claims" during the winter of 1889 and 1890 was ready at the moment the land was open. In Pierre, South Dakota, "people at Ft. Pierre have orders not to leave the mile square, except to cross over into" the city. The same was true for those south in Nebraska waiting for their opportunity at free or cheap land. For Sandoz, it was also the farmers, cattlemen, contractors, rail roaders, and many more on the eastern half of the United States who were wanting to take advantage of new land opening on the Great Sioux Reservation.[6]

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[5] Mari Sandoz Letter to Louise Pound August 26, 1952, Sandoz Letters. Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, Chadron, Nebraska.; Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee*, 230 - 39.

[6] Mari Sandoz Letter to Louise Pound August 26, 1952, Sandoz Letters. Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, Chadron, Nebraska.; C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *The Chadron Democrat*, February 13, 1890.

Between 1880 and 1890, this increasing trade and social networks between Pine Ridge Reservation and the northwest Nebraska border towns took on a new and prominent role following the Wounded Knee Massacre. The intertwined economic and social society was fragile and malleable by the federal government and a few individuals who had business with the reservation. Despite the growing business between Pine Ridge and northwest Nebraska, the Wounded Knee Massacre drastically changed this emerging relationship. The failures to assimilate the Lakota into mainstream American culture, translated into a revamped military presence in the region.

THE INDIAN SCARES

As described in *God's Red Son*, by Louis Warren, the beginnings of the new Native religion and Ghost Dancing resulted from the US cuts in annuities and lands. According to Warren, the new Native religion started through the prophet Wovoka, (also known as Jack Wilson) as early as 1888. By 1889, the new religion took shape in western Nevada and then spread to the West and Great Plains. On the Lakota reservations, the new religion flourished because it was a new outlet to resist American colonialism. As the new religion continued to evolve, Ghost Dancing became an important expression and as a spiritual tool. Ghost Dancing flourished in places like Pine Ridge because it was "an intense spiritual and emotional experience that facilitated their accommodation to American dominance" while also retaining some of the "health and prosperity" traditions of Lakota life. As a means of "embracing defeat," the new religion held on to these traditional elements of Lakota culture. According to Warren, the new Native religion and Ghost Dancing was not a brief episode that died after Wounded Knee. This new religion

was “a forward-looking, pragmatic religion that had a long life after the notorious atrocity in South Dakota.”[7]

Sandoz, like Warren, believed Ghost Dancing was then a religious outlet for the Lakota grasping on to their traditional ways of life which was shaped by their new life created by the US government. In Sandoz’s parting comments to Pound, she described a visit to Pine Ridge by General Miles. In route to the agency, Miles stopped briefly in Rushville and expressed to Johnny Jones, Jules Sandoz, and others “that the center of the Sioux world was plainly not on Pine Ridge, but at Chadron, Nebraska.” Meaning that despite the relocation of the Oglala and Red Cloud to Pine Ridge, Lakota identity was still firmly attached to the land in northwest Nebraska.[8]

As Jeffrey Ostler discusses the new religion and Ghost Dance was in response to the colonization efforts by the US federal government. Ostler convincingly described the year 1889 – 1890 as an anticolonial movement as a result of the assimilation policies throughout the 1870s and 1880s, much of which came through the United States militaristic approach. For example, General Miles publicly advocated for the military to take control of the Native reservations across the United States. According to Miles, the agents and people who were appointed to positions at a Native agency lacked any real knowledge of the “wild and nomadic” peoples. Knowing the character of Native peoples,

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[7] Louis S. Warren, *God’s Red Son: The Ghost Dance Religion and The Making of Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 7, 145 - 46.
[8] Mari Sandoz Letter to Louise Pound August 26, 1952, Sandoz Letters. Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, Chadron, Nebraska.; C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *The Chadron Democrat*, February 13, 1890.

according to Miles, at the time was through the military officials who encountered and fought them. Agent Royer was no different.[9]

As the new Native religion continued to spread among Native nations, the US federal government took notice of their defiance. At first, there was limited press interested in the events unfolding with Ghost Dancing or the new religion. Plus, there was no evidence of any militaristic Lakota outlook. Instead, it was the Agency Agents who first reported the defiant acts of Ghost Dancing as a romanticized Native "craze." In response to this act of defiance, the new Pine Ridge Agent, Daniel Royer, and the Indian Bureau called on Washington for possible military intervention. General Miles, appointed to investigate the situation, made his way to Pine Ridge on October 12, 1890, and reported in an "amused tone for the sensational claims, and an angry one for the use that was being made of the Indian's desperation." Despite Miles opinions of the inexperienced Agent and his attempt to ease the situation, Agent Royer still sought soldiers as a means of regaining control. As news quickly spread around Pine Ridge, and the rest of the country, that soldiers were more than likely going to be dispatched from Fort Robinson, Red Cloud sent in a letter to the editor at the *Chadron Democrat* calling for peace. Dated November 19, 1890, Red Cloud expressed that his friends in Chadron, Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and all along the reservation border in Nebraska that he had "been a friend to the whites that are living near the reserve, and … want peace all around." Additionally, Red Cloud also plead with Chadron residents to "write the great

[9] Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee,* 290 – 91.

father in Washington" about the negative effects the US military when being deployed to Pine Ridge. To Red Cloud, it was very obvious what would happen if the military came marching into Pine Ridge Agency. Just as the Sheridan Expedition nearly twenty years, many Lakota men, women, and children who feared military slaughter by US troops would flee and appear defiant. As Red Cloud expressed in his letter that the presence of the military would exasperate the situation.[10]

In ignoring these more recent historical failures, President Harrison made orders to the Secretary of War and General Miles "to regain control of the situation at all costs." Following Harrison's decision to dispatch troops to Pine Ridge, Miles quickly retuned his reports to reflect more war-like news as an opportunity for himself. On November 28, Miles concluded his report to the President stating that "there never as been a time when the Indians were as well armed and equipped for war as the present." Despite the fact that no other previous reports described any kind of arms buildup, a pending war created a need for the military presence.[11]

Other motivations for military action included Miles's personal ambitions. As Ghost Dancing continued making headlines in newspapers, the aspiring military general utilized what was happening across the Great Plains as an opportunity for the US military to become more involved in Native affairs. The exaggerated reports of extreme violence

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[10] Ibid, 300 – 05.; Mari Sandoz Letter to Louise Pound August 26, 1952, Sandoz Letters. Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, Chadron, Nebraska.; C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *Chadron Democrat*, November 20, 1890.

[11] Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee*, 300 – 5.; Mari Sandoz Letter to Louise Pound August 26, 1952, Sandoz Letters. Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, Chadron, Nebraska.; R89s, reel 000AA, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, November 21, 1890.

and threat to nearby settlers was starkly different based on several conversations between Red Cloud and Miles. Early on Miles's reports, both he and Red Cloud believed Ghost Dancing and the new religion would die out naturally come summer. But as yellow journalism increasingly called on the federal government to act, Miles changed his reports to Washington DC with that of the general public as a means of gaining favor among higher ranking military officials and politicians.[12]

In an article titled "Arrival of Troops: Uncle Sam Promptly Heeds the Call for Aid," in the *Rushville Standard*, federal troops were long overdue because of the messiah craze happening all across reservations in the Dakotas and Wyoming. According to the *Standard*, the Lakota Ghost Dancers and followers to Wovoka had increased rapidly over the last ten days and causing more trouble. Earlier in the month, Royer had ordered the arrest of an Oglala man named Little who illegally killed a cow at a beef issue. At once, Indian police officers attempted to arrest Little, but instead met an overwhelming number of Lakota protestors. As officer Thunder Bear was making the arrest, Jack Red Cloud started waving a pistol in the air and in the face of American Horse, who attempted to help the arresting officer. The *Rushville Standard* went ever further with the story in describing that after Lakota policemen escaped to Nebraska, it was decided among Thunder Bear and 40 other Lakota policemen that they "voluntarily tor[e] off their badges of office, and joined the ghost dancers…" Based on the reports from the

[12] Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee*, 300 – 5.; Mari Sandoz Letter to Louise Pound August 26, 1952, Sandoz Letters. Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, Chadron, Nebraska.; R89s, reel 000AA, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, November 21, 1890.

Standard, the Lakota at Pine Ridge were out of control with no regard to the US authorities. As a result, non-natives officials, including Agent Royer, fled south to a hotel in Rushville, Nebraska for refuge. Now that the situation shifted off the reservation and south into Nebraska, the front line of defense was still at the Nebraska-Pine Ridge border, but northwest Nebraska became an important epicenter for military operations.[13]

Between 1890 and 1891, the locals adopted the term "Indian Scares" in describing the uncertainty of the situation at Pine Ridge. For many northwest Nebraskans, it was not until after the military mobilized that locals became more concerned about their safety. Many residents, who moved to northwest Nebraska after 1885, had not seen the large military presence like it was before when Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies were in the region. Now with the large military presence in a more populated region, any rumors or speculations of a war party on the reservation created a panic among locals and towns. In many of the newspaper accounts and local recollections, the main focus around the Lakota Ghost Dancers and Wovoka was through a military scope; thus, locals in Nebraska perceived what had happened at Wounded Knee Creek as a "battle" rather than a massacre.[14]

With the US military mobilizing to southwestern South Dakota, northwest Nebraska communities quickly amassed war supplies. Late in the afternoon hours of

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[13] R89s, reel 000AA, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, November 21, 1890.; Greene, *American Carnage: Wounded Knee, 1890* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 97 – 98, 134.

[14] Greene, *American Carnage*, 83 – 93.; B. J. Peterson, *The Battle of Wounded Knee*, (Gordon, Nebraska; News Publishing, 1941). Petersen was the president of the Sheridan County Historical Society at the time of publication and exhibits how and why locals perceived Wounded Knee as a "battle" rather than a massacre.

November 19, General Brooke and 500 soldiers of the Second Infantry reached Rushville, Nebraska, via train. As soon as all the ammunitions and supplies were unloaded, General Brooke and the Second Infantry were to were head north toward Pine Ridge Agency in the night and reach their destination before morning. As the US military reached Pine Ridge in the early morning hours, stalled by several broken wagons, children from the nearby boarding school pointed out the cloud of dust created by the marching soldiers to their teachers. On Pine Ridge, the Lakota were fearful of an attack by the US military. Out of fear, as many as 600 Lakota fled north away from the oncoming soldiers. To Brooke, this escape north toward the Badlands was itself an act of defiance.[15]

Additional soldiers continued pouring into town from all over the Midwest. Troops were reported to have come from as far as Forts Omaha, Riley, Logan, and McKinney alongside soldiers from the nearby Camp Robinson. Of these soldiers, many were either in a drunken state or beyond enthusiastic at their chance to fight. Nevertheless, Colonel Henry, of the Ninth Regiment from Camp McKinney, as well as additional regiments from Companies A, B, C, D, E, G, I, and K from Fort Omaha a few days later. Of the Omaha troops, the famous Seventh Calvary, which was the regiment in the Battle of Little Big Horn, formed Company K. The First Regiment, from Company E, unloaded artillery along with four Hotchkiss guns to be transported to the Agency. From

[15] Greene, *American Carnage*, 133 – 34.

Ft. Riley, nearly eighty rail cars of additional ammunition, artillery, horses, and a month rations all were brought and unloaded at Rushville.[16]

With the large military force in the region, political and military leaders touted more of a precaution than an actual sign of another war with the Lakota. For example, in the *Standard's* "Latest Indian News," General Brooke reported that all things were peaceful at the moment. In fact, Brooke was so confident that no fighting was to take place that the excess amounts of ammunition for the Hotchkiss guns were ordered back to Camp Robinson for the time being. Nebraska governor John Thayer was also following the military presence in northwest Nebraska closely. Thayer agreed with Brooke's decisions and believed that it was unlikely any fighting would take place between soldiers and the Lakota. Even if there was fighting, Thayer expressed that the federal troops at Pine Ridge Agency would have enough supplies and resources to protect the Nebraska border. To further relieve worrisome Nebraska residents, Thayer approved Dawes County Sheriff, James Dahlman's request for additional arms, ammunitions, and military support from the state. Nebraska troops stationed in Fremont, Central City, Ord, and Tekamah along with any additional guns and ammunitions were sent to the bordering Nebraska towns to Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations. And if need be, the Iowa National Guard even prepared to mobilize to Pine Ridge to help Nebraska secure its border.[17]

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[16] R89s, reel 000AA, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, November 21, 1890.; R89s, reel 000AA, *Rushville Standard*, November 28, 1890.; R89s, reel 000AA, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, December 5, 1890.

[17] R89s, reel 000AA, *Rushville Standard*, November 28, 1890.; Chadron Narrative History Project Committee, *Chadron, Nebraska: Centennial History 1885-1985: From*

Additional war plans were made by Brigadier General Leonard W. Colby if Nebraska needed to defend itself following Wounded Knee. On January 5, seven days after Wounded Knee, Governor Thayer sent out a special request to Colby, headquartered in Rushville, to develop a plan monitoring territory south of Pine Ridge. In Colby's plan, the territory south of Pine Ridge encompassed fifty miles into the Sandhills and one hundred fifty miles wide, from the Wyoming state line past Valentine in Cherry County, was to be closely monitored with Nebraska National Guard units in every community along the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad. In one instance, the Nebraska National Guard were closely monitoring the movement of a large group of Lakota on the White Clay Extension who were eventually turned back to the Agency. Besides this one non-violent encounter between Natives and military in Nebraska, only one accidental death took place in Gordon on January 12.[18]

Even with the large military presence and optimistic public messages, there were still many residents in Sheridan and Dawes County fearful of all-out war with the Lakota. In many cases, families and neighbors living in the countryside fortified their homes as if there was a Native "uprising," or "outbreak." As described by Jerome Greene in *American Carnage*, "the ethnocentrically loaded term, [outbreak or uprising], casually repeated by whites" was referring to Lakota "savage" ways that sought to fight the US military in retaliation of their stolen land and poor living condition. Sometimes, an

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Hell on Wheels to That Splendid Little War (Freeman, SD: Pine Hill Press, 1985), 26 – 31.; Philip S. Hall and Mary Solon Lewis, *From Wounded Knee to the Gallows: The Life and Trials of Lakota Chief Two Sticks* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020), 41.

[18] Greene, *American Carnage*, 317 – 18.

"uprising" or "outbreak" could be days or even hours before a supposed attack. Most of the time, these rumors of a Lakota insurrection were the result of confusion and misunderstandings of the events unfolding at Pine Ridge. This still did not stop locals from jumping to conclusions about the worst case scenario of a Lakota war path into Nebraska. And if that was the case, northwest Nebraskans had to have a plan.[19]

Most Nebraskans could not afford to flee or leave the region entirely. Instead, many chose to congregate in numbers or at strategic points to defend themselves. For example, roughly ten miles south of the Pine Ridge border, homesteaders and settlers around the Mission Ranch constructed a sod fort in the case of attack. The plan was for women and children to stay in the cellar of the sod structure while the men kept in the upper part to fire at the oncoming enemy. Another safe house for nearby neighbors was the Christian Perreten home. In defending their lives, this loosely formed neighborhood regiment was terrified of what was to come from the Lakotas. On one foggy evening, several horses trotting their way back to the Perreten home, one of which had a bell wrapped around his neck, nearly sent guns blazing. After a few more anxious moments of waiting to see what was to follow the stampeding horses, it was soon realized that a horse with a bell caused the scare. No Lakota attackers followed.[20]

Another more well-known fortified home in Sheridan County, commonly called Fort Carstens, had a similar experience with an "Indian scare." According to the *Sheridan*

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[19] Greene, *American Carnage*, 94.

[20] *Sheridan County: Diamond Jubilee – "Soddies to Satellites,"* (Rushville, NE August 1960), Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, Nebraska, 43.; Chadron Narrative History Project Committee, *Chadron, Nebraska: Centennial History 1885*-1985: *From Hell on Wheels to That Splendid Little War*, 26 – 31.

County Diamond Jubilee, courtesy of the *Hay Springs News*, one December evening in 1890, the family of H. W. Carstens was having breakfast in their newly built sod home when an unidentified man came screaming to the property that the Natives were coming. As news continued to break between nearby neighbors, the Carsten's homestead was thought to be the best defensible position in the nearby countryside. Carsten's house and land were at the highest point of the land and it was also centrally located so other families could flee at moment's notice. Plus, the new house had such thick sod walls that it was thought to be bullet proof.[21]

To guard the loosely fortified home from attack was a local neighbor, Captain Shepard, who had prior military experience. Shepard had successfully organized the civilian homesteaders into a company of citizen soldiers ready to defend the fort, families, and themselves. All men with guns enlisted into the neighborhood regiment. If a male did not have a gun, they could stand guard or take a shift on patrol duty. As for the women and children, they quickly grabbed any food, bedding, and belongings from their homes for the long haul. Women and children were to stay in the basement, while the men stayed in a nearby barn. All such preparations were made by the evening and everyone was where they needed to be in case of an attack. Guards were to change in the night and dispatch riders came and went to the nearby town of Hay Springs for any additional news. The Carstens defense plan was tested one evening late evening in the late fall 1890, and executed nearly to perfection. As the night passed, no new news came

[21] *Sheridan County: Diamond Jubilee – "Soddies to Satellites,"* (Rushville, NE August 1960), Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, Nebraska, 60.

from dispatch riders and there were no signs of an Indian attack or military excursion in the vicinity. By morning, the ground was covered with snow and the skies were clear. Families made their way back home still weary, but grateful for the uneventful night.[22]

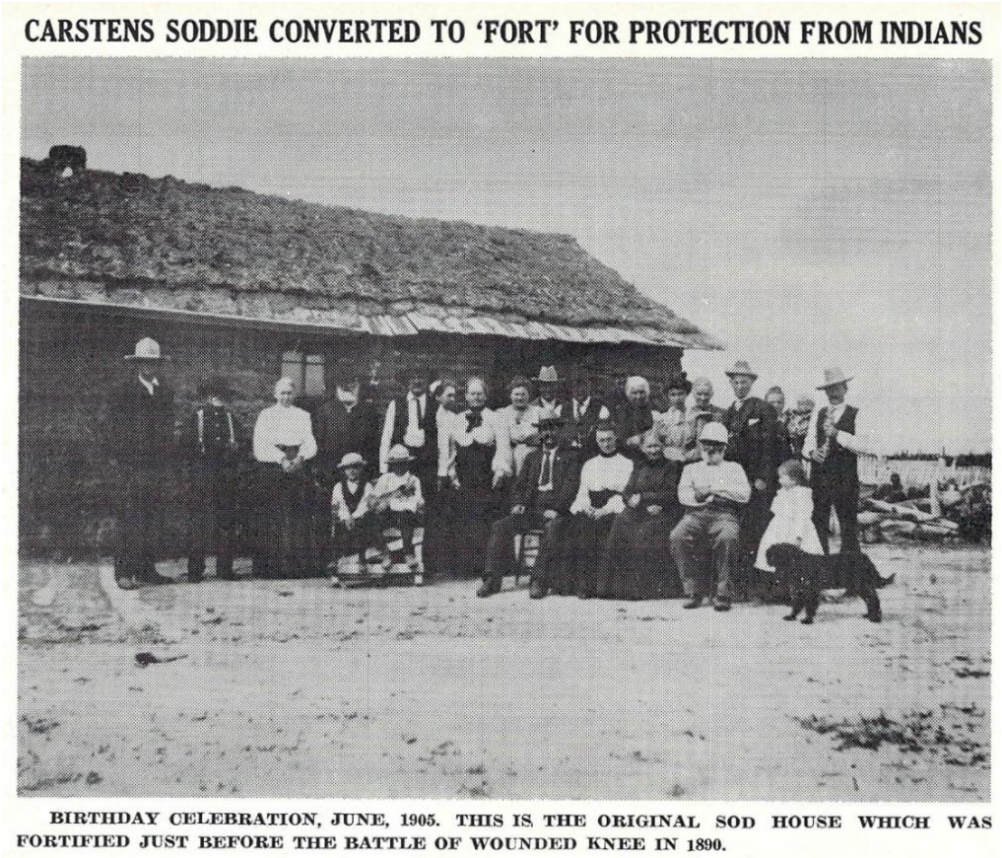


Figure 1 – Carsten's Sodhouse north and east of Hay Springs. Courtesy of Sheridan County Diamond Jubilee and the Hay Springs Heritage Museum Center

Again, near Hay Springs, Gertrude Brickner recalled the event through her parent's perspective to Everitt Pitt Wilson. Her father, came to Hay Springs via rail car in April 1885, and took up his claim just seven miles south of town. As the territory became more and more settled, neighbors quickly found each other to get through some of the hardships of pioneer life. For example, Gertrude wrote that "the neighbors would all meet

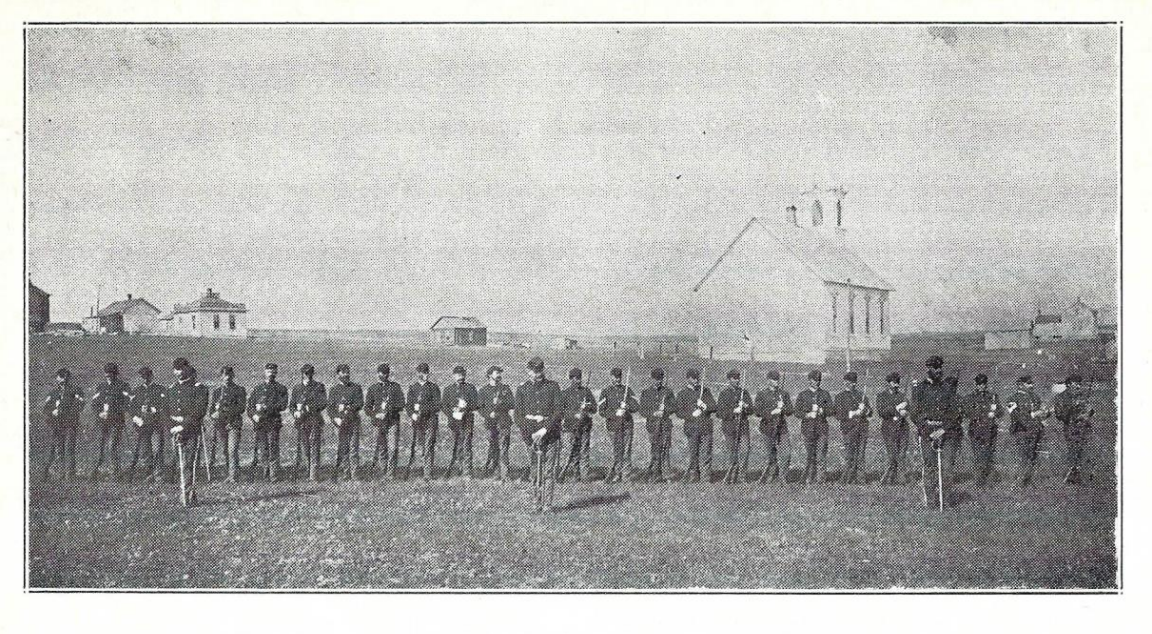
[22] Ibid, 60.

at another neighbor's house and hold what we would term 'an old-fashioned dance.' Gertrude's father was a fiddler and made about every dance he could when farming life allowed. Neighbors would come from all miles around to share these good times, but this established relationship would be key come 1890.[23]

As Gertrude put it to Everitt, "it was some years later during the time when there was a great deal of unrest among the Sioux Indians that word came that the Indians had left the reservation and that they were on the warpath and headed southward." From these rumors, the news was passed between farmers, many families, including Gertrude's, who scurried to Hay Springs with whatever they could take with them. The same families who congregated for social dances at a nearby neighbor's home all were cramped inside various Hay Springs churches or other large public buildings. Gertrude's father enlisted in the loose militia that kept a watchful eye for any kind of Lakota attacks, while her mother stayed with the other frantic women and children. Gertrude recalled that her "mother said it was a terrible night for her. The babies cried and the women talked of the horrible things the Indians would do to them."[24]

[23] RG1063, MS 1063 s1f72, History Nebraska, Wilson Everett Pitt Manuscripts – *Finding a Home*.
[24] Ibid.

After the first sleepless night, Gertrude's father sent the family east to Iowa in case of attack. Plus with his family out of harms way in the case of an attack, he could focus on protecting the community rather fleeing to his wife and children. He discussed the next day that the news that set chaos in Hay Springs was misinformation and miscommunication between neighbors. In what may have been a sigh of relief to Hay Springs residents, the events that continued to unfolded at Wounded Knee would send the town again in a panic, fearful of an attack in Nebraska.[25]



During the famous "Indian Scare" this militia formed largely of Hay Springs men, was in reserve. The following are in the picture:

Figure 2 – Courtesy of Sheridan County Diamond Jubilee and the Hay Springs Heritage Museum Center

At the same time of the weary feelings about the potential for war, local businesses were far more prosperous than any other year. With the large military presence in northwest Nebraska the downtown districts in the Nebraska border towns

[25] Ibid.

noticed a major economic boost. On December 12, a few weeks before the Wounded Knee Massacre, so many soldiers, military leaders, and officials from the east came and went from Rushville that the *Standard* reported that "Rushville is about the busiest town on the F. E. and M. V. road that just now and if our hostilities at Pine Ridge just keep up their courage our town will continue lively all winter. … The Indian trouble at Pine Ridge is a God send to the farmers of this portion of Sheridan County."[26]

The *Rushville Standard* alluded to the fact that if the "Indian Scares" persisted, the business community would continue to thrive with the military presence. All the towns along the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad saw some sort of economic benefit with soldiers in their communities, however, Rushville was by far the most prosperous. In hoping for a cold cultural war between the US military and Lakota, the gun shots to be at Wounded Knee Creek on December 29, 1890, rang in a new year as well as a new era in Pine Ridge – Nebraska relations.

Following Sitting Bull's death earlier in December, the situation with Ghost Dancing and the new religion quickly spiraled out of control for Miles. The Ghost Dancers and followers of the new religion feared what the US military might do next. Seen as hostiles rather than refugees, the fleeing Hunkpapas and Minneconjou made their way to Big Foot's village to seek safety. As a respected leader by the US government, Red Cloud called upon Big Foot to continue negotiations with the US military leaders stationed at Pine Ridge to bring an end to the military intervention. At the same time, General Miles's frustration in Agent James McLaughlin's mishandling of Sitting Bull's

[26] R89s, reel 000AA, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, December 12, 1890.

arrest prompted additional military actions to end the problem Ghost Dancers traveling to Pine Ridge.[27]

En route to Pine Ridge, the ill-stricken Big Foot and approximately 350 men, women, and children were intercepted by Major Samuel Whitside just northeast of Pine Ridge on December 28, 1890. At once, Whitside reported back to General Brooke so that General Miles could decide the next best course of action to ensure Big Foot did not escape again. It was decided that additional troops from Colonel James Forsyth and the Seventh Calvary would assist in monitoring Big Foots band at Wounded Knee Creek and to disarm them the next morning. The next plan of action was to then to escort the troublesome Hunkpapas and Minneconjou in Big Foot's band to the nearby railroad town of Gordon, Nebraska to be shipped off to Omaha for further action. Miles also urged to "use force enough" in necessary. As Big Foots band settled in for the night at Wounded Knee Creek, an additional 470 soldiers with Colonel Forsyth and the Seventh Calvary surrounded the Native camp to assist in the next day's proceedings.[28]

On Monday, December 29, Colonel Forsyth was assigned to handle the disarmament of Big Foot's band. Forsyth, having celebrated the evening prior with whisky among his regiment, demanded all the weapons in the camp surrendered to him. Reluctantly, twenty Minneconjous offered a small arsenal of old and broken guns that they claimed was all they had. Unsatisfied with the lack of guns from camp, Forsyth ordered his own men to search and seize weapons. Having only found clubs, cooking

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[27] Richardson, *Wounded Knee: Party Politics and the Road to an American Massacre*, 247 – 57.
[28] Ibid, 258 – 61.

knives, and a few other valuable guns, Forsyth continued making orders that intimidated and humiliated Natives in the camp.[29]

As Richardson described, the disarmament by the soldiers created a tense and uneasy situation. With Forsyth's demands turning more and more derogatory, as the second search only turned up thirty eight more guns. Positive there were weapons hidden elsewhere, Forsyth ordered a personal search and seizure of each Native. As the searches continued, "the [Native] warriors muttered and protested, Good Thunder, a medicine man dressed in a Ghost Dance shirt, began to go through the motions of the Ghost Dance." Good Thunder then began to assure the young men in camp to comply with the orders of soldiers. According to Good Thunder, "I have received assurance that their bullets cannot penetrate you" and should not worry. But as blankets revealed more guns and ammunition from the younger men camp. Then finally, a young deaf man named Black Coyote fervently insisted to keep his gun. With his Winchester in hand, several soldiers jump Black Coyote and wrestled for the gun when it went off in the air.[30]

With the first shot fired, Colonel Forsyth ordered a volley of shots into the council area of unarmed of men, women, and children. After a brief struggle between soldiers and the men from the camp, Native warriors, men, women, and children all fled toward the nearby ravine for cover. Most of the Natives in Big Foots' camp were killed where negotiations were taking place. After forty minutes of constant gun fire on Big Foot's camp, the Seventh Calvary continued to hunt down any survivors and set the various

[29] Ibid, 263 – 66.
[30] Ibid, 266 – 68.

wagons and tepees on fire. It was later discovered that “an old man and two boys” were killed nearly three miles away from the initial Massacre sight and several soldiers had gunned down five Native women and scalped them as a prize. [31]

Revenge for soldiers of the Seventh Calvary became a disaster for Forsyth and Miles. The next day, the Drexel Mission fight left one American soldier dead along with several others wounded. The situation had gotten so out of hand while Miles was in the process of transferring his headquarters from Rapid City, South Dakota, to Pine Ridge Agency, the general received a telegram while passing through Chadron, Nebraska, on December 31 alerted him as to what had happened over the last few days. In his immediate reply, he knew the military operation was going to be under investigation and with intense scrutiny. To Miles, this failure was to be pinned on Forsyth and to save his own growing political and public image.[32]

Instead, the news of dying and dead Lakotas upon the frozen ground sent many nearby Natives in a fearful frenzy. In hearing what happened at Wounded Knee, sympathetic Ghost Dancing chiefs, No Water, Big Road, Little Wound, and three thousand of their followers fled from Pine Ridge to White Clay Creek, northwest of the Agency. En route, they shot at some of the Agency buildings and attempted to burn down others belonging to the government. Additionally, Red Cloud and his wife were “abducted” by Jack Red Cloud, as a means to protect the Lakota chief. By the time Miles arrived late on December 31, he took command of the situation certain of additional

[31] Ibid, 268 – 75.
[32] Ibid, 275 – 81.

retaliatory attacks. Pine Ridge Agency was fortified while American soldiers prepared for the worst.[33]

As military and Pine Ridge Agency reports about what happened at Wounded Knee Creek, northwest Nebraska panicked. In Dawes County, it was the same story as it was Gordon, Rushville, and Hay Springs. In preparation to defend Nebraska residents and borders, the Chadron Company of the Nebraska National Guard had drilled daily from November 1890, until after the massacre in December and January. When news reached Chadron, nearly 130 families found refugee somewhere else besides their own homes in churches, schools, and other businesses to defend themselves. Of these 130 families, many locals sought refuge in the county courthouse where prior plans were arranged to fight back. On the other end of the county, the Ninth Calvary, from Camp Robinson, moved to the reservation border in case they were needed to provide further assistance.[34]

Up to this point, all reports coming from the reservation were all war notes. Among the few newspaper reporters to have said witnessed the event, was C. W. Allen with the *Chadron Democrat*. Published in newspapers around the country, and locally, Allen's description was that of a romanticized *battle* between good and evil; civilization and the last of the uncivilized Lakota. Later on in the *Chadron Centennial,* Dr. Rolland Dewing wrote that Allen "was not at the precise scene of the confrontation, however, his reports demonstrated a great deal of artistic freedom of the facts." Despite Allen's

[33] Ibid, 281 – 84.
[34] Chadron Narrative History Project Committee, *Chadron, Nebraska: Centennial History 1885-1985: From Hell on Wheels to That Splendid Little War,* 29 – 31.

misguided account of the Wounded Knee Massacre, his news story shaped the local narrative of what happened at Wounded Knee. To further solidify his story and presence at the scene, Allen was also said to have returned to Chadron with clothing and items from the dead bodies of Big Foot's band as proof. The Bank of Chadron had the items and clothing on display in their front window on Main Street for hundreds who came by to see. By January 15, Allen described in his newspaper that "Peace has been declared," and that the "Indian Scares" were over.[35]

Among locals, Ghost Dancing and the new religion in 1890 were quickly equated to that of the romanticized conquest stories of the region fifteen to twenty years prior. Between wild newspaper accounts, rumors of Lakota attacks, and seeing the large military presence within their own communities, the situation at Pine Ridge genuinely frightened northwest Nebraskans. The "Indian Scares" of 1890 and 1891 were not only significant events, but also became pivotal points when the bordering communities of in Nebraska became more prominent in Pine Ridge affairs.

LIFE IN NORTHWEST NEBRASKA AFTER WOUNDED KNEE

Following the Wounded Knee Massacre and "Indian Scares," Nebraska border towns increasingly sought business and social connections with their Lakota neighbors. Being within thirty miles of Pine Ridge Reservation was a key part in Nebraska's newfound role, however, it was not until after the Wounded Knee Massacre that this new relationship took shape. As a result of the Wounded Knee Massacre, and the continued threats of a Lakota uprising, Nebraskans were asked and invited themselves to be an

[35] Ibid, 26 – 31.

increasing presence in Pine Ridge affairs. What was traditionally a spoils system appointment for government agents, these officials from the east were gradually replaced by local settlers on or near the reservation. Led by the locals who not only feared for their lives during the Indian scares, but also saw these historical failures by the US federal government to assimilate the Lakota. According to northwest Nebraskans, it was the eastern influences and political institutions that were the principal reasons for the reservation's problems. And instead of seeking people from Washington DC to further help the Lakota, it was the locals themselves that wanted to be the educators, doctors, and administrators to manage Pine Ridge.

After the initial excitement and "threat" of attack in Nebraska, there were many questions and local quarrels about how to avoid another Wounded Knee. In order to do so, the federal government needed to remove itself from the reservation, replace the easterners with the locals, and regain control of the illegal activity in the region. Similarly to that of Miles perspective of the incapable agents, the dominant view was that the federal government, and government in general, created more problems than they solved. Plus, their Native neighbor was not going anywhere anytime soon despite South Dakota Senator Richard Pettigrew's best efforts. So instead of federal officials, doctors, or teachers who came from Washington DC, were to be replaced by northwest Nebraskans according to the now commanding US military at Pine Ridge Agency.

Again, as result of Wounded Knee several efforts were made to get the situation back under control in the region. While the large military force was still in the region, the saloons from Chadron to Valentine were filled with drunken soldiers who were deferred

back to Nebraska following a two-month long deployment to Pine Ridge. In one instance, as described in Greene's book, *American Carnage*, a soldier who was dispatched from Fort Robinson recalled how the boys from the Ninth Calvary and Eighth Infantry "proceeded to decorate the town a bright… [and] never even noticed the 18 inches of snow that fell during the night." Living in such a state of drunkenness, when it came time for the soldier train to take units back to their respective post, they still could barely function. After one big party late January in Chadron, one of the soldiers from the Seventeenth Infantry stumbled so much that when he boarded the troop train through the window, he then fell on to the tracks and was cut in two by the steel wheels.[36]

The northwest Nebraska border towns were an already whiskey watering wells for non-native drinkers. With such a vibrant saloon culture, the opportunities to sell alcohol to the nearby reservation were all too tempting and not unique to Nebraska – Pine Ridge relations. Prior federal laws, dating back to the last updates to the Indian Trade and Intercourse Act of 1834, ultimately failed to clearly define how the sale of certain liquors were illegal between Natives and non-natives. In many cases, Natives could buy alcohol off the reservation and take it home with them. This derailed the intent of the loosely written legislation. In continuing to try to solve the problem, federal legislators created additional amendments in 1864 by adding jail time for any non-native offenders. Even the US Supreme Court overturned Minnesota's handling of 43 barrels of whiskey in the case between the *United States vs Forty-Three Gallons of Whisky* in 1883. While Justice David Davis' opinion declared that the United States federal government did indeed have

[36] Greene, *American Carnage*, 341.

jurisdiction in seizing the unlicensed barrels of whisky, however, Davis also acknowledged the shortcomings of Congress in this respect and even called on legislators to take on this problem within across Native reservations. According to Davis "surely the Federal government may, in the exercise of its acknowledged power to treat with Indians, make the provision in question, coming, as it fairly does, within the clause relating to the regulation of commerce." Despite all these efforts, the problem rested on the testimony of the individuals involved, the buyer, Native alcoholics seeking liquor, and the seller, who sometimes was an upstanding citizen or a key community member near the reservation. More often than not, convictions were rare.[37]

For individuals like Doc Middleton, the border being so close and the lack of law enforcement and clear-cut legislation in selling alcohol to Natives made for a new illegal business opportunity. As mentioned in chapter 2, Middleton's most well-known early illegal activities included running horses off the reservation and selling them further south in Kansas or Oklahoma. Eventually caught in 1879 for his crimes, Middleton knew how limited policing was and how few of people lived south of Pine Ridge Reservation. Despite his relatively short prison sentence, Middleton knew if he could somehow work within the bounds of the law, he would be at an advantage to continue his criminal activity. Instead of running as an outlaw from police, he became a sheriff's deputy and became far more calculated in his illegal activities. Additionally, Middleton came back to

[37] Jill E. Martin, ""The Greatest Evil" Interpretations Of Indian Prohibition Laws, 1832-1953," *Great Plains Quarterly*, (Winter 2002), accessed February 21, 2022, https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/2432; U.S. Reports: U. S. v. 43 Gallons of Whiskey, etc., 93 U.S. 188 (1876), accessed February 21, 2022, https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep093188/.

northwest Nebraska and established one of the first saloons in Gordon in 1885. Regarded as an upstanding citizen and a successful businessman among locals, Middleton utilized his legal business and deputy status to maintain his criminal anonymity on the reservation. In doing so, Middleton avoided trouble with agency officials and traveled on desolate wagon trails whenever he could. By 1890, Middleton became so well versed in the illegal trade that he disguised the pints of liquor as dressed chicken in plain sight on the wagon.[38]

Middleton was not the only one engaging in the illegal trade. Based on District Court records from the Sheridan County Courthouse, between 1893 and 1902, there were only ten cases that involved the illegal sale of intoxicating liquor to an Indian. Of those ten, half of those cases resulted in a conviction. And at first glance, it appears as if liquor to the reservation was only a minor problem that only occurred every so often in the 1890s. However, in analyzing one of the earliest successful district cases on record, the situation is far more different than what first meets the eye. First published in the *Rushville Standard* on June 19, 1891, Sheridan County Sheriff and County Judge personally seized a whiskey trader on a ranch at the White Clay Extension. The reported criminal was a "colored individual, ragged and red eyed," and had dealt with a white man to sell whiskey to the reservation a week earlier on June 10. When first being arrested, the unnamed Black man was taken into custody at Rushville while witnesses were still being

[38] Chadron Narrative History Project Committee, ed. Rolland Dewing, *Chadron, Nebraska: Centennial History 1885-1985: From Hell on Wheels to That Splendid Little War*, 33.; The Centennial Book Committee, *The History of Gordon Nebraska* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corporation, 1984), 9.

gathered to bring a case against the man. But there was going to be a major problem in getting a conviction. All the witnesses who were called to Rushville stated that the unnamed black man was not present and was sleeping in the house when the transaction took place. Therefore, the actions of an illegal sale to an Indian or to reservation could not be proven. He was released out of the Sheridan County jail shortly after, but ended up right back behind bars when Pine Ridge Agency officials caught the man with several pints of whiskey and other intoxicating liquors on the reservation. After this brief legal hiccup, it is apparent how difficult it was arresting and convicting these individuals. The only two ways to enforce liquor laws with the Lakota was either through eye witness testimony or catching the criminal in the act.[39]

Between trading contraband and the non-native presence on the reservation, conditions on Pine Ridge did not improve. Keeping in hindsight of what had happened just a couple of years ago with the poor living conditions of the Lakota, Nebraskans feared another outbreak or Wounded Knee. According to locals, one almost did on a cold evening in late January or early February of 1893, near No Water's Camp north of Pine Ridge Agency. In the *Beaver Valley and Its People*, several horses from a farm in the Beaver Valley of northwest Nebraska were said to have fled thirty miles north during a blizzard. Once the storm had passed, the horses were reported to have found their way onto the reservation at the Z-Bell Ranch. Whether this was truly the case, or the family was trying to take advantage of the freely roaming Indian horses near No Water's village, James Bacon and William Kelly, both 16, made the journey to reclaim their stray

[39] R89s, Reel 000B, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, June 19 1891.

animals. The ranch the boys traveled to was founded by Ike Humphrey and Ed Stenger in 1887, that exclusively sought beef contracts with the nearby Lakota reservation. Humphrey and Stenger initially came to the region prospecting for gold and building a saw mill in the Black Hills, but quickly amassed nine acres and several thousand of sheep and steers by 1890. Occasionally grazing on reservation land, near No Water's Village, the thousands of sheep and cattle were all too tempting to a starving and struggling people during the cold months of winter. [40]

Among No Water's village, chief Two Sticks, a prominent leader among Broken Arrow's band, still had strong feelings about what happened at Wounded Knee, Lakota living conditions, and the US government. Additionally, Two Sticks resented the plethora of non-natives near the reservation who frequently came for business taking advantage of Native poverty. For Two Sticks, it was these white men settling the country who were to blame for the troubles of his people. Not only did non-natives issue the beef contracts to starving Lakota men, women, and children, but to Two Sticks, it was their corrupt practices of grazing on reservation land near the starving village that continued to fuel the anger and frustration building in No Water's village.[41]

When cowboys from the Z – Bell Ranch discovered they were missing cattle, they rode into No Water's village with Pine Ridge police demanding repayment. Previous questions about missing cattle between No Water and the Z-Bell cowboys were usually

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[40] Beaver Valley Jolly Neighbors Club, *Beaver Valley and its People: 1870 - 1970*, (Gordon, NE: Gordon Journal, 1970), Heritage Museum, Hay Springs, Nebraska, 41-42.; Hall and Lewis, *From Wounded Knee to the Gallows*, 163 – 74.
[41] Ibid, 163 – 74.

resolved quickly, but this time was the exception. No Water chastised the Z-Bell cowboys and Pine Ridge police fo seeking repayment for a few cattle grazing on reservation. According to No Water, the malicious efforts to cheat Lakotas at poor beef issues and being so near the village was far more dubious than anything Natives have ever done. As the unsuccessful arrest party was turned away, No Water ordered guns fired above the heads of the cowboys and Pine Ridge police as they sought shelter at the nearby halfway house.[42]

Still frustrated by the day's events, Two Sticks was said to have been bad mouthing about the non-native invaders and that he "recklessly talked about getting revenge on the cowboys who tried to have one of their band arrested." This one largely insignificant moment between Natives and non-natives quickly spiraled into something else among Broken Arrow's band. Of all the things that Two Sticks had seen his lifetime the Black Hills being stolen, the massacre at Wounded Knee, and the continued struggle of his people to simply live, this one instance was the culmination of all those feelings that fueled a revenge seeking attack. Whether Two Sticks meant for what happened later that evening or not, everything that the disgruntled Lakota said was enough to rally a small agitated group of Natives to make their way to the halfway house where the Z – Bell cowboys rested.[43]

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[42] Hall and Lewis, *From Wounded Knee to the Gallows*, 163 – 74.

[43] Erin H. Turner, *Outlaw Tales of the Old West: Fifty True Stories of Desperados, Crooks, Criminals, and Bandits* (Guilford, CT: Twodot Book, 2016), 278 – 84.; Hall and Lewis, *From Wounded Knee to the Gallows*, 5.

As the Nebraska family recalled, both Bacon and Kelly chose to spend the night at the halfway house of the ranch located on the reservation. Trouble began when "it seems the men at this ranch and some Indians, had had some trouble in a card game." Even rumors flurried around northwest Nebraska that the cowboys were drunk and abusive to several Natives in the village. In all reality, the anger and frustration between No Water's village and the cowboys at the Z – Bell Ranch went beyond the simple card game; if the game really took place at all. According to the *Chadron Democrat* on February 9, 1893, "cowboys had found out that the Indians had stolen beef from the herd." Either way, gunshots rang in the halfway house leaving several of the cowboys dead and one wounded.[44]

Overall, the two boys from Nebraska were simply at the wrong place at the wrong time. The Nebraska boys, who were not recognized at the time, quickly became a topic of discussion in the *Omaha Bee*. James' father, Clark, on February 21 wrote to the *Omaha Bee* saying that "I would like to set you right in this. Upon hearing the report of the murder, I and James Kelly, older brother of William, went at once to the Pine Ridge … At ten o'clock, [the] morning [after the fighting] an Indian policemen found my son James still alive, and made a bed for him and built a fire."[45]

Apparently, James was offered assistance back to Nebraska, but he refused. James was not going to leave his deceased friend William behind, hence why the Pine Ridge

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[44] Beaver Valley Jolly Neighbors Club, *Beaver Valley and its People,* 41-42.; Hall and Lewis, *From Wounded Knee to the Gallows,* 163 – 74.; C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *Chadron Democrat*, February 9, 1893.
[45] Hall and Lewis, *From Wounded Knee to the Gallows,* 172.

police built a bed and fire for James. It was then reported to a Mr. Philip Wells, who made his way over to the halfway house the next day to collect the dead cowboys and lone survivor. But instead, he found all four men deceased. James appeared to have been shot three times in the head and once in the right arm. It was then assumed and publicized that the culprits came back to finish the job.[46]

Immediately following the news of an attack on the halfway house, Pine Ridge Indian police attempted to apprehend the suspects in No Water's village. Two Sticks and several armed men within the Broken Arrow band greeted the approaching policemen with a barrage of bullets. Because of the intensity of the gun fight, Pine Ridge police were forced to retreat back to Pine Ridge Agency with no success in capturing the suspected murderers. Following the gun fight, the leader of the Broken Arrow, Two Sticks, quickly became the main suspect the murders at the Z – Bell halfway house. Eventually taken into custody, Two Sticks stood trial and was prosecuted more fiercely than any of the other convicted perpetrators. His sons and nephew received relatively light sentences and were to get out of prison in due time, but the same was not the case for Two Sticks. Through eyewitness account of Whiteface Horse, Two Sticks was at the crime scene and the mastermind behind the plan. Despite Two Sticks plea that he was innocent of the overall act, nearly two years later on December 28, 1894, Two Sticks was hung for "his part" in the murder.[47]

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[46] Beaver Valley Jolly Neighbors Club, *Beaver Valley and its People*, 41 – 42..; Hall and Lewis, *From Wounded Knee to the Gallows*, 163 – 74.
[47] Hall and Lewis, *From Wounded Knee to the Gallows*, 163 – 74, 214 – 22.

In the overall scope of Nebraska – Pine Ridge relations, this incident is a continuation of local perspective that the US government was incapable and ineffective in policing or caring for the Lakota at Pine Ridge. At the same time, it was not good press as it kept people away from settling in the region. This widely publicized event showed how fragile the region was and that it was under a constant threat of attack. As the *Chadron Democrat* put it, "It is not the 'Indian outbreaks' that hurt this country. It is the talk of a few political hacks and white renegades that are continually trying to stir up trouble and magnify a murder into a uprising of the whole Sioux nation."[48]

Despite much of the criminal activity, violence, and fear of an outbreak, Nebraska increasingly became a resource to Pine Ridge. Rushville in particular quickly became the prominent Nebraska border town community that benefited the most from the plethora of business opportunities and population base as a labor force. In many of the local newspaper reports about their Native neighbor, it was frequently reported that Nebraskans could serve in a capacity that the federal government could not through its local economy and commerce. According to the *Gordon Journal*, "the government does not propose to take care of these wards of the nation, feed them, teach their children and use all means known to civilized people for their enlightenment." Instead, it was the government's "methods to neutralize these efforts and debauch the Indians" with the people they had before. Whether the editor believed the agent or other federal officials were corrupt or lacked any sense in dealing with Natives from Pine Ridge, the *Gordon Journal's* solution was to empower locals in leadership roles and as employees. Those

[48] C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *Chadron Democrat*, February 9, 1893.

locals who were sought after were in the bordering communities that were the educated, have had business with Pine Ridge, been around since the community's founding, and considered to be one of "the high types of American civilization." From the *Gordon Journal* to the *Chadron Democrat*, all the local newspapers firmly believed that it was up to the citizens in northwest Nebraska to take on this new role.[49]

As early as May 1891, locals were actively seeking Native business from Pine Ridge. Per the *Rushville Standard*, a reported $19,000 in reparations to Red Cloud as a result of the continued fighting following the Battle of Little Big Horn was of note in the paper. Rushville had a major interest in these recently disbursed funds because it was "surely going to see the hands of locals one way or another" as the *Standard* reported. Or in other words, the potential purchasing power by the Lakota was going to be a major role in the Nebraska local economy through trade and the exchange of goods.[50]

As Charley O'Kieffe's recalled in *Western Story*, the large Native presence in the 1890s, and the northern border, was substantial in every facet of daily life. For example, the brickyard O'Kieffe worked at for about a year, just south of the reservation, was not only a job, but also where he made lifelong Lakota friends and witnessed this increased Native presence in Nebraska. In one instance, O'Kieffe had several hired Native employees who were part of a job in making four million bricks for the construction of new school buildings on the reservation. One Lakota young man impressed O'Kieffe so much that they frequently met on Sunday afternoons to talk about a variety of different

[49] G65j, reel 002, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal*, July 20, 1900.
[50] R89s, 001, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, May 1, 1891.; G65j, reel 001, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal*, October 2, 1896.

topics that included the future of the Lakota. According to O'Kieffe, the young man never complained about his treatment among white people, his lone grievance was how the soldiers buried his friends at Wounded Knee. More than likely keeping in mind of his non-native friend, the young Lakota man carefully crafted his grievance to not raise any red flags.[51] In response to one of O'Kieffe's questions about the Native uprisings, the Lakota man had reiterated "I know my people were wrong to take part in the uprising but their very existence was threatened, and they felt they had to do something. Yet I cannot help but be shocked and saddened by the manner in which they buried our dead after the battle was over." The mass grave dug for Big Foot's band was one long trench into which that several layers of dead bodies could be stacked upon each other. According to O'Kieffe, his brother Ab knew of soldiers who were paid fifty cents per body buried in this fashion.[52]

After working north of Rushville for a time, O'Kieffe relocated into town for a new job. Owned by longtime Sheridan County resident and rancher, Frank Ecoffey, and another business partner by the name John Steele, O'Kieffe found a new position working in a general store that was more comfortable and not as labor intensive. Ecoffey, of Rushville, was considered an upstanding man in all aspects of business and life. As for Ecoffey's business partner, John Steele, was the name of a Lakota man named Yellow Bird. Born and raised at Pine Ridge, the *Rushville Standard* characterized Yellow Bird as

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[51] Charley O'Kieffe, *Western Story: The Recollections of Charley O'Kieffe: 1884 – 1898* ed. A. B. Guthrie, Jr. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), 144 – 145.
[52] Ibid, 144 – 145.

one of the brightest and efficient businessmen of the Lakota. And for obvious reasons, could not go by his given name because Natives could not own a business outside of the reservation. Despite this public praise, O'Kieffe saw his boss a little bit differently. Yellow Bird was a frequent visitor to the store and O'Kieffe recalled times when he and store manager, Frank Jennings, had warning that Yellow Bird was coming to town. Both Jennings and O'Kieffe quickly stashed away any form of alcohol out on the floor to prevent him from getting belligerently drunk as he often did when visiting the store. Despite their best efforts to hide the whiskey and other forms of alcohol, Yellow Bird still found enough vanilla and lemon extract in the store to get drunk.[53]

Among other Lakota customers coming to Rushville, there seemed to be a common and unwritten rule to charge Natives from Pine Ridge a higher price. According O'Kieffe, if a Lakota who did not speak English wanted "six yards of calico at fifteen cents a yard," it was then totally acceptable to round up to whole numbers, or this case, one dollar. This one example provided by O'Kieffe was an astronomical ten percent more that Natives had to pay than any other non-natives, or knowing Natives, had to pay. O'Kieffe then quickly referred back to a former explanation by his employer, Ecoffey, that the confusing nature of the Lakota language and numbers made it difficult to say back. Not to appear as deliberate as some other instances might have been in other establishments, however, O'Kieffe recognizes this as a common business practice, malicious or not. Furthermore, O'Kieffe continued on saying that even the minimal

[53] Ibid, 168 – 170.; R89s, reel 001, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, May 8, 1896.

amount of change given back would not have been utilized properly as money, but rather as a button or an ornament on a blanket or a shirt. From O'Kieffe's business dealings with Lakotas from Pine Ridge, it is clear that businesses in and around Rushville that there were enough Native customers to accommodate. But at the same time, Lakotas were inferior because of the complex language barrier O'Kieffe and others seen as a road block from business.[54]

In addition to O'Kieffe's recollections, Charles Edward Hagel, in his own memoir, described some of his own experiences with the Lakota at the turn of the nineteenth century. Charles's parents, Carl and Bertha Hagel, had moved to the United States from Germany in 1884 and eventually found their way to Rushville via the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad. When the Hagel's initially moved to northwest Nebraska, they homesteaded seven miles south of town, but shortly after they arrived, they would seek shelter in the nearby community as rumors were circulating about an Indian uprising. With Rushville as the established communication headquarters for the Army, all communication came down through Nebraska, which benefited the Hagels. Whenever the telegraph wires failed to transmit a signal, or the lines were cut, Carl was one of the messengers who rode horseback overnight to deliver the message between Rushville and Pine Ridge Agency. As Charles remembered, his father continued

[54] O'Kieffe, *Western Story*, 172. As O'Kieffe further described the confusing number system and counting back change, "If the purchase was six yards of calico at fifteen cents a yard, I was told simply to say "Wah-zee" or one dollar. The alternative would have been to say "Showkla – Yominy – goshpop – sem – okeese" – literally "three quarters, ten, and a half of ten." How much easier and simpler to say "Wah – zee" and let it go at that."

as a messenger until the Wounded Knee Battle. After that, most of the trouble happening on the reservation came to an end, and so did this brief job for Carl.[55]

While this one messenger job came to a close, Carl quickly found a new role in working on Pine Ridge. Following Wounded Knee, and when Carl felt comfortable enough to apply for a job on the reservation, he was hired through the federal government as a carpenter and stone mason for a few construction jobs on the reservation. Although he was mostly involved with the construction of small school houses and housing for teachers, Carl had helped rebuild a large boarding school on the reservation. One evening, when Charles was six years old, the original Pine Ridge boarding school caught fire and totally destroyed the entire structure. As Charles recalled from the fire, "there was a bright red sky north of Rushville, it was the boarding school at Pine Ridge burning."[56]

While the boarding school catching fire was a job opportunity for Carl, there were many mixed emotions about the reconstruction of the new school. Carl distinctly remembered that even though the fire completely destroyed the Pine Ridge boarding school "… it was a good thing for the Indians, because they built a much larger and nicer school building." Additionally, some of the attitudes toward the Lakota were resentful and jealous for all the annuities they were getting and for all the trouble in 1890 and 1891. According to Charles, it was the Lakota who started all the Indian scares and were not deserving of such kind treatment. In his memoir Charles believed that "the Indian was

[55] Charles Edward Hagel, "The Ancestors: Memoirs of Charles Edward Hagel," vol II, *Sheridan County Historical Society*, 2.
[56] Ibid, 2 - 3.

given all this for free, and is still getting it in bigger doses, of course they say the white man stole the Black Hills and all its gold from them, what would they have done if the white man hadn't taken them over? Just take a trip to the reservation some time and see the millions of dollars invested in buildings and equipment and this all had to come out of tax money…The Indian child has the best chance for a good education far better than most white children, after they finish high school they have the privilege to go to college if they can afford it like the white child does. … [Holy Rosary Mission School] one of the finest, where they can go for free."[57]

Charles continued his thoughts about not only the "advantages" Lakota families had in comparison to non-natives in Nebraska, but also where the blame falls for such a messy financial situation. It was not so much the fault of the locals, who were jealous of the contracted government annuities, but squarely on lawyers, politicians, and other eastern influences. According to Charles, "You hear a lot from sob sisters and shister lawyers about the poor Indian being taken, by the white man, I admit they are but white men are the white lawyers who keep egging them on for a good sized fee, who keep prolonging the case, and stirring up trouble against the white man, who is trying to help them."[58]

Despite Charles's attitude toward the federal government's handling of the reservation, and perhaps Carl's view as well, many others felt the same way. In an article published in the *Chadron Record* in 1955, sixty five years after the Wounded Knee

[57] Ibid, 3.
[58] Ibid, 3.

Massacre, Minnie Rhoads described how she perceived the "battle" as part of the continued failures of the US government. According to Rhoads, the Wounded Knee "battle" was the "final struggle the Indians put up to hold the land which was theirs by right." And by "battle", Rhoad's understanding of what happened at Wounded Knee Creek was through popular belief among her family other neighbors as she was only two at the time. Rhoads continued on where she recognized the territory that once belonged to the Lakota. She exclaimed how the Lakota were "victims of treaties broken by the white" and "were forced to subsist on rations allotted to them by the United States government." At the same time, Rhoads elaborated that while she understands the grievances of the Lakota, she did not believe the Lakota should have their land returned to them, or compensated at the time in 1955. What had happened in the past, was the past and there was nothing to do to make it right. The Rhoad's came to open territory and settled the land legally. Therefore, the Rhoad's should not be stripped of her husband's property or take on any responsibility in the displacement of the Lakota people in northwest Nebraska.[59]

Government annuities given out usually at the beginning of the month was also of great importance to the northwest Nebraska economy. In 1896, local newspapers reported that Lakotas were given four dollars per person a month as part of their annuities. Over the course of the next five years, the Lakota presence in town gradually became a significant part of the local economy selling goods catered to the reservation. In October

[59] Dawes County Historical Society, Newspaper Clippings. *Chadron Record*, October 13, 1955.

1896, over 500 Lakota visited Gordon over the course of the first ten days of the month of October and spent thousands of dollars in local businesses. The *Gordon Journal* described how "it is a noticeable fact that the Indians buy more judiciously than ever before," and that "no white man can drive better bargains without merchants than these Indians" in the mid-1890s. Most of what the Lakota bought while in Nebraska were mostly food and clothes while spending on various décor or other trinkets of interest if they had any extra spending money. Fred Mills, owner of an unnamed general store in Gordon, told the *Gordon Journal* about a Lakota coming into the store buy "a black Prince Albert and a pair of light check pants." Another general store in Gordon, Baumgardner's, hired Geo. H. Recroft as a clerk to actively "study the habits, disposition, dialect, and winsome ways of the Sioux maidens who are likely to be customers of his." In addition, the new clerk's duties, Recroft was also learning the Lakota language as he "sent for a Sioux dictionary" in order to better serve his Native customers in their own capacity.[60]

But not all was strictly business throughout the 1890s. Local newspapers reported regularly on "Indian life" at Pine Ridge and all the good that was still to be done. More often these reports were focused more on the potential agriculture opportunities by community leaders who frequented the reservation for business or took notes while visiting friends at the Agency. For example, in the *Dawes County Journal* on August 31,

[60] G65j, reel 001, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal*, August 21, 1896.; G65j, reel 001, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal*, October 2, 1896.; G65j, reel 001, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal*, April 30, 1897.; G65j, reel 001, *Gordon Journal*, March 11, 1898.

1894, Colonel Hayward's wife, Mary Smith Howard, was granted permission from Captain Penny to visit various parts of Pine Ridge Reservation to record her own account of Lakota life. On her trip, she noted how terrible the land in Dawes County was compared to the untapped territory of the Bordeaux and Beaver valleys. The land opportunities were even more fruitful the further north they went on the reservation. While scouring the country side of Pine Ridge Reservation, Mary and company made a special stop to Wounded Knee Massacre site to see how promising the land was there for future agricultural use.[61]

In addition to her observations of the largely untapped potential for agricultural use, Mary believed that Lakota life was still in a primitive state. While at the Wounded Knee Creek, they paid a special visit to the Episcopal Cemetery where the soldiers who were killed in the battle were buried. As they approached the well-kept and marked cemetery, she noticed in the distance a Lakota woman at the bottom of the hill. The "uncivilized" woman, according to Mary, pitched her tepee by herself from her wagon and set up two more trunks of supplies just outside of her lodge. Despite these observations at Wounded Knee, Mary made sure to jot down her encounter with another Lakota woman, Mollie Williams. Williams, according to Mary, was the standard for Lakota women on the reservation. Williams kept her one room house clean beyond what anyone had ever heard in Chadron. Additionally, Williams was widowed to an unnamed white man and was alone for the time being. She had sent her two kids to boarding schools in the east to better themselves in life and learn American ways. Being left alone

[61] C34, reel 001B, History Nebraska, *Dawes County Journal*, August 31, 1894.

to tend to the house, the only thing that seemed to comfort her during her long periods of loneliness, according to Mary, was her award-winning craft. Williams had apparently been awarded a prize for her embroidered bead work at the more recent world's fair.[62] Not only is Mary's views of Lakota life and how inferior it was compelling in how early Nebraska residents viewed their Native neighbor, but her notes on the land is also telling. To Mary, this unused territory had the potential for future non-native farming and settlements.

Alongside these efforts to document and report the happenings at Pine Ridge, the US federal government and military leaders started shifting toward a different solution in handling the Lakota. This gradual change, largely by the Captain Brown, is first seen in a letter to the *Dawes County Journal* on April 27, 1893 looking for local northwest Nebraskans as employees at the Agency. While still managing the situation stemming from the murders at the Z – Bell halfway house, Brown was gradually shifting some of these positions that were once done by appointed or hired positions from outside the region to more local resources. Brown's new idea that the locals in northwest Nebraska and others around Pine Ridge Reservation understood the needs and habits of the Lakotas best and could prove a more effective tool in promoting American ideals. Among those sought in the first call for local employees to the reservation included "clerks, teachers, physicians, and matrons." Within the advertisement, Captain Brown exclaimed that "I am anxious to have all the people I can from the immediate neighborhood of the reservation for my employees, as they are better equipped for performing the work than persons sent

[62] C34, reel 001B, History Nebraska, *Dawes County Journal*, August 31, 1894.

from the far east who are unfamiliar with the ways of the country and customs and habits of the Indians."[63]

By June 1893, only two months after the initial advertisement in the *Chadron Citizen*, the *Dawes County Journal* reported that Capt. Brown from Pine Ridge would be in Rushville on June 8, 1893 for those interested in taking an examination for anyone "desiring to enter the Indian service." Additionally, Brown exclaimed in his letter that "it is desired that as many people as possible from this section of the country take this examination, for experience has taught that as a rule they are better acquainted with the habits of the Indians than those from the east." Prior to Wounded Knee, the only Nebraskans involved in Pine Ridge affairs were simply freighters and a few licensed traders, but now, the door for northwest Nebraskans to take a leading role in Pine Ridge affairs was wide open.[64]

Business was only taking place within the Nebraska – Pine Ridge scope. Arguably, the continuation of the Wild West shows and exhibitions around the world saw the most profitable years throughout the 1890s as a result of a renewed fascination of the Lakota, in which Buffalo Bill sought to capitalize on. In the early years, Buffalo Bill sought the warriors who defeated Cuter at the battle of Little Bighorn. As the world followed what was happening in Dakota Territory, Buffalo Bill utilized actors and participants in Ghost Dancing or at Wounded Knee.

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[63] C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *Chadron Citizen*, April 27, 1893.
[64] C34, reel 001B, *Dawes County Journal*, June 2, 1893.

As stated in chapter two, the observations by the Agent Gallagher at Pine Ridge, and others in Nebraska, reported on the dire conditions of many Oglala upon their return home. So much so, that it nearly left one man nearly dead at the Rushville Depot. Native abuses were so widely publicized in the press and accepted by federal officials prior to Wounded Knee that any kind of new efforts to hire Lakota by the Buffalo Bill Wild West shows were under a watchful eye after 1890. So much so that the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, T.J. Morgan, initially sent out a letter to agency agents stating that it was now illegal to hire Native peoples for the Wild West shows. The *Rushville Standard* on August 15, 1890, made note of the new order in an article titled "No More Indians for Shows." Aside from Morgan's examples abuse and maltreatment by the showmen in charge, the *Standard* went as far in requesting a letter from the acting superintendent of immigration in New York for comments. Not only did the acting superintendent comment about the condition of the Natives going abroad and coming home, but also who made the situation so terrible. Despite that the Lakota "were fairly well dressed," they came barging into his office and "ate hungrily from cans of preserved meat and some bread." Once the starving Natives were done eating, the superintendent described how the "Indians [described a] story of maltreatment by the white men who engaged them … [and] they have been treated barbarously and cruelly … by being brought without proper restraint into contact with the criminal class with whom they were permitted to indulge their evil passions." To the *Standard*, it was not the authority figures, like Buffalo Bill, who were purposely abusing the Lakota. Instead, the abuse came from individuals that were not in charge of the shows. It was because of the

absence of authority or lack of guidance from leaders in the shows to keep the influences of the lower-class white men in the east who would then put Lakota in an undesirable situation of immorality and maltreatment according to local perspectives in northwest Nebraska.[65]

Being such a central part of the show in previous years, and not having Natives in the Wild West shows, the new order could have ultimately ended Buffalo Bill's career in show business. The same was true a few of the other outfitters that had a presence in the region. But instead of ending the international entertainment business, the Wild West shows decidedly made extra efforts to protect Native peoples from the abuse they received in previous years.[66]

After some intense negotiations with the federal government, the Wild West shows and certain traveling shows could again hire Native actors by March of 1891; except this time there were now more stringent rules and regulations in place. Primarily focusing on *who* was managing the welfare of Natives while on exposition seemed to have been the ultimate compromising factor. In the *Secretary of the Interior's Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, Morgan expressed no change in his views of the consequences of the Wild West shows. With Belt's recommendation along with a petition by the Women's Indian Association and the Wisconsin Indian Association, Morgan still

[65] Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Fifty-Ninth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior 1890: Report of Pine Ridge Agency*, by H. D. Gallagher, (Washington, DC, 1890), 50 – 51, LVII – LVIII, CLXV – CLXVI.; R89s, reel 000A, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, August 15, 1890.
[66] Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2005), 359.

advised that "in a few cases, authority has been granted for Indians … [to] the responsible parties having the expositions in charge." [67]

Despite Morgan's unwavering negative view of the Wild West shows at the beginning of his report, by the end, he continued with his recommendation for special cases and not to rule out Native actors entirely. It was "because the office believes in the beneficial influences of such industrial expositions, fairs, etc. upon the Indians

Figure 3.3- 1889 Map Showing Indian Reservations within the Limits of the United States Compiled under the Direction of the Hon. T. J. Morgan

[67] Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Sixtieth - Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior 1891* (Washington, DC, 1891) 78 – 80,

themselves as an educative force." In addition to Morgan's conflicting feelings of Native actors, there was also growing public interest, following Wounded Knee, in the failures of the US government with various Native nations in the west. For Morgan, the Indian shows could provide an alternative presentation of what good things the government has done.[68]

In trying to balance between the opposing forces, Morgan's solution was through an industrial exposition rather than one of the traveling exhibitions. With special attention given to the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, planning for an "Exhibition of Indians" started immediately in 1891. In his 1891 *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, it was stated that "it is the desire of the office to set forth as graphically as practicable the progress made by the Indians in the various lines of civilizations, especially in industrial pursuits and in education." Or in other words, the display was to be about all the good work that had been done by the government. Rather than fixating on the more recent struggles of the Messiah Craze, the directed focus for the general public would be displays focused not only what Natives had done on the farm, in the kitchen, or at school, but also the willingness of Native people to participate if proper training was afforded to them. In order to do so, the exhibit would need to blend the current idealized Indian with aspects of previous traditional life, to show how far Natives have come.[69]

Between the World's Fair and other expositions seeking Native actors on new and monitored terms, the responsibility of Lakota care was passed on to locals in northwest

[68] Ibid, 78 – 80.
[69] Ibid, 78 – 80.

Nebraska. Among some of the early local merchants in Rushville that had the most involvement with the Wild West shows and Native expositions were the Asays. James and Margaret Asay first moved to the Pine Ridge Agency in 1889 to replace James's brother, Edward, at the trading post on the reservation. As a former lawyer in Chicago, James had the necessary negotiation skills and knowledge about the legalities of trading on and off the reservation. When the Asays came in the late 1880s, trading and commerce was slowly dwindling because of increasing grievances among the Lakota. Immediately following Wounded Knee, the Asays were a key proponent in finding a new home for a baby girl, Lost Bird, found at Wounded Knee Creek following the Massacre. Lost Bird, first discovered by a soldier, was brought to the Assay family residence before being raised by General Leonard Wright Colby.[70]

Following the Wounded Knee Massacre, the Asays decided to move down into Nebraska with their business by 1893. Having been well acquainted with Rushville residents before their arrival; it made sense that their trading business would relocate south, especially with the renewed interest in the Lakota at Pine Ridge around the country. Plus, Rushville was home to the Indian Supply Depot since 1886 and it was directly on the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley line that had a farther reach in global trading networks. In starting their business in Nebraska, their new store, the

[70] L. G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians: 1883-1933* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 170 – 73.; Sheridan County Historical Society, Newspaper Clippings, "Mrs. Assay Dies Mon.: Had Lived in This Section Over Half Century," *Rushville Standard*, 1943.; Sheridan County History Center, Rushville, *My Hometown: Family Histories of Rushville, Nebraska*, ed. Phyllis Krotz, 2022, "Margaret I Asay," Sheridan County Historical Society.

Farmer's Mercantile, traded a variety of different goods, food items, clothing and many Lakota regalia and relics. When it came to the various shows and exhibitions around the country, the Asay's primarily did business with the Wild West Shows in the beginning, but quickly expanded to include the Kickapoo Medicine Company that also had exhibitions about the healings of traditional Native medicines.[71]

The decision to change economic gears in Nebraska created a blossoming business throughout the 1890s and early 1900s. On April 26, 1901, the *Gordon Journal* reported that the past "Sunday, Monday and Tuesday were red letter days for the town of Rushville," meaning a large Native presence was in town. This time, the 1,200 Lakota camped on the northern edge of town as a final send off for the 200 hired actors for the Buffalo Exposition later in the year. In part of their contract, the Lakota actors were provided a month's salary ahead of time in order to purchase materials or equipment for the shows exclusively at the Asay's Mercantile store. Within the three days, the Asay Mercantile Store sold upwards of $5,000 of goods and Native regalia to take on the show. In many cases, the Asay Mercantile Store sold regalia and other items to Lakotas at outrageous prices to profit as much as possible. The *Gordon Journal* continued to report that this was probably one of the largest contracted numbers of Lakota actors for an exposition. Among the items purchased from the store were $100 or $200 brightly colored outfits that made quite the spectacle on Main Street. Finally, after three short

[71] Sheridan County Historical Society, Newspaper Clippings, "Mrs. Assay Dies Mon.: Had Lived in This Section Over Half Century," *Rushville Standard,* 1943.; Sheridan County History Center, Rushville, *My Hometown*, Sheridan County Historical Society.

days of purchasing necessary items and final goodbyes to family, Native families and local Rushville residents alike gathered at the Indian Supply Depot on that Tuesday to wish the actors a final farewell. At 5:30pm, the train had all the Lakota actors on four coaches with several baggage cars and two car ponies to make the Buffalo Exposition successful.[72]

With Lakota actors back on the market for shows and expositions, there were now more realized opportunities by locals and outfitters alike. In Gordon, E. C. Swigert also had his own store that specifically marketed to the reservations, locals, and the expositions' interests. At the beginning of Swigert's business, The *Gordon Journal* reported on December 14, 1900, that The Snap mercantile store, located on the corner of Third and Main Street, was adding an "Indian supply depot" to the back of his already present store. The new rebranded Swigert store was to have enough "ground and chopped feed, corn, oats, and baled hay to feed the entire equine reservation population . . . for sixty days at a time." Additionally, The Snap store will have the latest technology that "will put in a feed grinder that will be run by gasoline, steam, electric motor or wind power."[73]

Swigert's store quickly took off and found itself in a similar practice as the Asay's store in Rushville. Having learned from the Asay's, Swigert realized that in order to be successful, his store needed to offer a one stop shop experience to Lakotas coming to town. By April 1901, The Snap advertised as an honest and fair priced general store with

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[72] G65j, reel 002, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal*, April 26, 1901.; Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America*, 373.
[73] G65j, reel 002, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal*, December 14, 1900.

"a complete line of groceries" that included wheat, rye and Graham flour, bolted white and yellow corn meal, and corn oats. In addition, The Snap offered building stone, tanned elk and buckskins, robes, blankets, shawls, tents, camp stoves, clothing, shoes, beads, beadwork, "Indian" ponies, Waukapamany clothing, war clubs, pipes, moccasins, relics, curiosities, "Indian" trinkets, notions and traders supplies. Locals were also encouraged to take part in trading with the Lakota while in town as the Snap was willing to pay the "highest price … for dry bones and Indian relics."[74]

Swigert's business did not stop locally. Beyond Gordon, Swigert made special trips to his customers far and wide on the Pine Ridge Reservation. For example, business also included several trips of flour and other non-perishable goods directly to Lakota customers by the car load. In many cases upon his arrival back to Nebraska, Swigert came back to Gordon with hundreds of dollars' worth of Lakota relics and items from the reservation. In August 31, 1901, Swigert and an F. E. Joy were reported to have made a 150-mile round trip within 38 hours in one excursion. In doing so, they took six grocery orders, worth $1,500, and stopped in Manderson, South Dakota to fix a telephone line in the process. Additionally, the two bought $300 worth of Lakota relics before coming back to Gordon. Once he felt he had an outstanding collection of Native items for sale, would make special trips to Denver and Salt Lake City to sell at two or three weeks at a time.[75]

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[74] G65j, reel 002, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal,* April 19, 1901.
[75] G65j, reel 002, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal,* April 19, 1901.; G65j, reel 002, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal,* August 30, 1901. G65j, reel 002, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal,* September 12, 1902.

Another outfitter for Native expositions and Native shows included William Barten of Gordon. Born in North Boston, New York, on March 31, 1870, Barten came out to Pine Ridge Reservation to take advantage of the new opportunities near the reservation. Barten successfully completed one year of normal schooling to be a teacher and was assigned to Pine Ridge in 1891. At a Pine Ridge boarding school in Allen, he met his future wife, Angelique Cordier. They then quickly developed into a powerful duo on the reservation. During their ten years at the Agency, they found themselves running the boarding school by 1900 and were well-known in the neighboring border town communities. Just like the Asays, the Bartens came to Pine Ridge Reservation for one opportunity and found a far more lucrative deal in northwest Nebraska. [76]

By 1902, the Bartens relocated to Gordon to start their own general store that rivaled, and eventually surpassed Swigert's Snap. Bartens offered similar items to that of Swigert's and the Asays, but the Barten outfitter for Native shows and expositions misleadingly took advantage of the trading and contracts with Lakota actors. For example, most of Barten's business in the early 1900s came through Lakota contracts. Swigert Figure 3.4 – RG2063 Lakota Indians "W. H. Barten and Native Americans" Mostly with the 101 Ranch Miller Brothers out of Bliss, Oklahoma or the Shubert Anderson Company in New York, Barten enticed Lakota actors with a more than fair

[76] RG3883.AM, MS 406 S. 3, F. 1, History Nebraska, W. H. Barten manuscript Collection, Printed Matter: obituary for W. H. Barten.; Steve Friesen, *Lakota Performers in Europe: Their Culture and the Artifacts They Left Behind* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 83 – 84.

Swigert Figure 3.4 – RG2063 Lakota Indians "W. H. Barten and Native Americans"

wage along with a lease to purchase contract for all the Native regalia found in the Barten store for whatever exhibition or show. In doing so, Barten had complete control over the finances of the Lakota actors while they were on tour. For example, when Lakota actors were paid, all payments had to first come through Barten's, per the contracted agreement. Whatever was owed to Bartens for various regalia, was first paid before it reached the hands of the actors themselves. In many cases, Barten's made $4 out of the $5 weekly wage paid to the Lakota actors if they had an outstanding balance. If that balance could not be paid, like in the case of Jo. Paints Himself, William would write to the exposition leadership about the debt owed and was usually paid on behalf of the Native actor. More or less, Barten crafted a modern version of indentured servitude with Lakota men and women on tour with the 101 Ranch Miller Brothers and the Shubert

Anderson Company.[77] Overall, business with the Lakota was a fundamental part of the growing economy for Nebraska border towns to the Pine Ridge Reservation. Whether it was through the monthly government annuities or the exhibitions and road shows seeking Native actors, the Lakota had a special purchasing power that the business district in northwest Nebraska sought and took advantage of for profit.

ATHELTICS AND HOLIDAYS

Outside of the economic prosperity the Nebraska border towns gained following Wounded Knee, there were also growing social interests with Pine Ridge. In many cases, most locals were fascinated with their northern neighbor and wanted to engage with them in sport. For example, baseball games with the reservation offered just one more team to play in a largely sparsely populated region. In June 1902, the Gordon Colts versus "the Indians" from Pine Ridge played a home series against each other. Pine Ridge had already won the first game against Gordon, so if the Indians had won again, they would have taken the series in a sweep. According to the *Gordon Journal*, the second game in Nebraska turned out 500 spectators and was a hard fought match. Pine Ridge started strong with a quick and easy two run first inning, but as the game progressed, the neck and neck game gave way to Gordon with late scores in the eighth and ninth innings. Gordon would go on to win 11 – 3 against Pine Ridge, but the *Gordan Journal* was quick

[77] Friesen, *Lakota Performers in Europe*, 83 – 84.; Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 170 – 73.; RG3883.AM, MS 406 S. 3, F. 1, History Nebraska, W. H. Barten manuscript Collection, Printed Matter: obituary for W. H. Barten.

to summarize that the final blow out win was with a good team. "We like to play ball with a team like the Agency, who can make it interesting from the word go."[78]

With the series tied 1 – 1, the game in Pine Ridge was even more important. Among spectators, nearly 50 residents from Gordon made the journey north to watch. This time, the game was even closer and a harder fought effort by both teams. The *Gordon Journal*, published the news of the game that "it was the hardest fought game of the season, the Indians determining to hold their reputation, the Colts to gain one. Good plays, fine battery work and hard hitting made the battle interesting in every feature." By the end of the first two innings, the score was still tied at zero, but Gordon's five scores in the third inning greatly impacted the final score of 7 – 3 favoring the Colts.[79]

Beside sporting in the traditional sense, Natives and non-natives frequently interacted during a social celebration or holiday. Following 1890 and by 1900, Chadron, Gordon, and Rushville had consistent Fourth of July parades and county fair shows that featured Lakota performers one way or another. Most of what was provided as payment was simply a beef issue or non-perishable food items collected in the community. The exhibitions and Wild West shows taking place around the country were a source of pride in northwest Nebraska and that they had these Native entertainers just to north at Pine Ridge. Chadron in particular was the one Nebraska border town that attracted the largest number of spectators and participants alike. Unlike most of the national shows, most of these local Native performances after Wounded Knee, featured the civilizing of the

[78] G65j, reel 002, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal*, June 27, 1902.
[79] G65j, reel 002, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal*, June 27, 1902.

Lakota people. In June 1892, the *Chadron Citizen* reported that thirty young Lakota boys and girls from the Mission school near Pine Ridge put on quite a performance. According to the newspaper account, "Chadron people had the privilege of seeing a unique performance at the rink Monday night. We have had other shows in town which the Indians furnished the main attraction, but they portrayed the child of the prairie more in the uncivilized state than after his heart had been softened of Christianity." From there, the scene transitioned to a modern and civilized Indian with the boys playing brass instruments and the girls singing in a chorus. Both the boy's and girl's performances were highly regarded to be "first class" and at a level of expertise of that of older musicians.[80] Thus exhibiting the Lakota were fully capable of American ideals and civilization through education.

A few days later, the Fourth of July Celebration in Chadron in 1892 was just as exceptional as it was in previous years. No formal events were planned, but the traditional weekend for celebrations featured their favorite visitor, chief Red Cloud. Accompanied with 750 other Lakota from Pine Ridge, Red Cloud and company were welcomed into town by Colonel Hayward. Upon their arrival, the Colonel extended his warm welcomed to the greatly respected chief and presented Red Cloud the keys to the city. After the presentation of the keys to city, nearly 250 Lakota men mounted on their horses and paraded down the main streets of Chadron and later danced at the fairgrounds. A small firework display capped off the evening, though Red Cloud and his men were the main event. In payment for their performance, Chadron citizens garnered 6 beeves, 40

[80] C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *Chadron Citizen*, June 30, 1892.

boxed crackers, 100 pounds of coffee, and 300 pounds of sugar for the quick and short trip south into Nebraska.[81]

Again, in June 1900, Chadron hosted a battle re-enactment called the Big Sham. In part of the Fourth of July festivities, a committee in charge of organizing the events sought to re-create a fake battle featuring some of the "old-time riders, who used to ride the ranges in the early days of this country." Organized by the Colonel Hayward, the "attack" was to take place at day break with Lakota warriors armed with rifles and to shoot of blanks within the city limits. Colonel Jay Torrey, who was involved with Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders down in Cuba, came on invitation and was to take charge of the defense. He was also instructed to bring as many of his former command as possible to make the battle seem more real despite their blank shooters. On the day of the attack, 2,500 Lakota warriors, many of which were noted to be of mixed descent, who spoke English well, and were "quite friendly," mounted on their horses at Pine Ridge Agency and came riding into town to raid Chadron to where 2,000 "cowboys" awaited their sham victory. Again, for Nebraskan's entertainment, Lakota participants were paid through various non-perishable foods and provisions similarly to that of what the federal government supplied in annuities.[82]

The social and economic atmosphere between northwest Nebraska and Pine Ridge drastically changed by 1900. The prominent freighting business from the Indian Supply Depot in Rushville slowly dissipated over the years as Lakota men and women came to

[81] C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *Chadron Citizen*, July 7, 1892.
[82] G65j, reel 002, History Nebraska, *Gordon Journal*, June 29, 1900.

Nebraska for goods and services. Opportunities south in the northwest Nebraska border towns offered social and economic means of survival. Whether that meant performing around the globe or going to the general store to purchase additional food and clothing, northwest Nebraska offered resources and an expanding market mostly accessible to the Lakota at Pine Ridge.

THE END TO THE WHITE CLAY EXTENSION

As for the last bit of Lakota territory in Northwest Nebraska, the five by ten-mile buffer zone called the White Clay Extension remained, only in technical and legal terms, part of Pine Ridge Reservation. Agents following McGillycuddy did not fully grasp how to police a territory that was technically in Nebraska, but set aside by the federal government to keep bootleggers and other illegal activities further away from the Agency. From the beginning, the Extension was meant to be a *barrier* between Pine Ridge Agency and Nebraska, not part of the reservation. Beyond the early years of McGillycuddy's control, the region was plagued with illegal squatters, non-native farmers, and whiskey traders by the end of the nineteenth century. The Extension had not been an effective tool in keeping contraband off the reservation and had since run its course when the military started overseeing the Bureau of Indian Affairs.[83]

The beginning of the end for the White Clay Extension was the opening of additional land in northwest Nebraska and Dakota Territory. Stemming back to the breakup up of the Great Sioux Reservation in 1889, President Harrison continued

[83] Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the year 1901: Pine Ridge Agency Report*, by J. R. Brennan, (Washington, DC, 1901), 366.

working to open additional lands wherever possible. When Harrison prepared opening the Extension for settlement, the language of the executive order issued by Arthur created a problematic situation related to property rights. If the Extension was thrown open for settlement, the language in the executive order favored squatter's rights. Meaning that many of the Lakota who legally lived or moved around on the strip of land had the first rights. Thus, the law gave many Lakotas the right to the land first before many Sheridan County residents could claim ownership through the land office. The *Rushville Standard* in 1891, reported on such a land dispute. Following some grievances expressed by Red Cloud in Washington DC, residents living in the northwest part of Sheridan County were ordered off the land by the authorities from Pine Ridge. Since there was no military post being established, and some of the reported movements of illegal squatters, all settlers were to leave the Extension.[84]

But as several years passed by, renewed discussions about throwing open the territory found traction again. The tract of land that the was to be relinquished was the former Camp Sheridan reserve. By the mid-1890s, the abandoned post consisted of more than 18,000 acres of land that settlers and ranchers sought for additional water and land resources. The *Rushville Standard* exclaimed on April 24, 1896, that the Secretary of the Interior had approved an appraisal for the land consisting of the former reserve and that people who wanted to submit applications could do so in Alliance, Nebraska at the land

[84] C34c4, reel 003, History Nebraska, *Chadron Democrat*, February 13, 1890.; Complied by Janet Y. Hess, "The Extension of Sheridan County, Nebraska," (essay at Sheridan County Historical Society, 2020).

office. Except this time, if someone wanted a section of land, the federal government was going to charge full price instead of offering the land for free.[85]

George P. Comer, a long-time resident in Pine Ridge, understood the government's intentions. As a government contractor and builder, he exclaimed that "the United States never gave up the title to its public domain land and therefore the United States Government [could] well set it aside for the use of the Indians." Instead, the simplistic reason offered by Comer was that "business is a little dull on the railroad in Sheridan County just now, and a boom in the land business, and emigration to Sheridan County would not be amiss to the land-grabbers, and money chargers." In paying for the land, settlers had a few options. First a farmer or rancher could commute their new land after fourteen months by paying up front at the full appraised price. Or on an annual basis for five years, farmers or ranchers could make payments at the full appraised value in 1896. Either way, the vested business owner who had ties into the federal government were taking revenue on the abandoned Camp Sheridan.[86]

With the former Camp Sheridan reserve thrown up for settlement, the Extension also became a target for new settlement. Pine Ridge agents had not fully grasped how to execute the full capabilities of the White Clay Extension as a means of protecting the Lakota from alcohol and other contraband. Questions remained about whether or not it was Nebraska's or the federal government's jurisdiction in policing the Extension. In

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[85] Genrose McWilliams Welsh, May 11, 1983, "The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the Executive Addition, 1882 – 1904" Dawes County Historical Society, Chadron, Nebraska, 19; Hess, "The Extension of Sheridan County, Nebraska," (2020).
[86] R89s, reel 001, History Nebraska, *Rushville Standard*, April 24, 1896.; Welsh, "The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the Executive Addition," 18.

many cases, agents felt so uncomfortable that they either asked for assistance in each instance or ignored the problem. For example, in 1896, the relatively new and unexperienced Pine Ridge Agent W. H. Clapp requested assistance in deciding if he had the authority to take action in the Extension if there were a crime. Local authorities in Sheridan County outright told the Agent that he had no authority south in Nebraska.[87]

According to the federal government, the Agent Clapp certainly did for the time being. In the meantime, the White Clay Extension in Nebraska remained federal territory despite the wishes of the locals in Sheridan County seeking additional land. Again, four years later, Pine Ridge Agent John R. Brennan in 1900 continued asking the same questions to officials in Washington DC about his authority on the Nebraska Extension. Except this time, enough influence in the neighboring Sheridan County had prompted his careful handlings in each and every situation that dealt with the Extension. By 1904, the pressures continued to build until the Sheridan County, Nebraska District Judge, W. H. Westover, took on more legal terms for the State of Nebraska to acquire the five-by ten-mile buffer zone.[88]

Westover in his opinion letter to Agent Breanna dated January 15, 1904, "When Nebraska became a state the civil jurisdiction over the same granted by the Congress to the state of Nebraska. It has at all time beyond the power of the president of the United States, or of Congress to take away from Nebraska the right to exercise civil jurisdiction

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[87] Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the year 1896: Pine Ridge Agency Report,* by W. H. Clapp, (Washington, DC, 1896), 292.

[88] Welsh, "The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the Executive Addition," 17.

over this strip: and no amount executive orders or acts of Congress could change its status until the state showed by an act of its legislature assent thereto."[89]

Westover continued to threaten the Pine Ridge agent about his misconceptions of Nebraskans wishing to sell alcohol to the reservation. "If you continue to oppose the opening of the strip to settlement, as you have in the past . . . I do not believe that the disposition of the people is such that would be in favor of you aiding you in suppressing the liquor traffic."[90] According to Westover, he firmly believed that most Sheridan County residents had far better intentions than what the more recent past had to offer as guidance.

In response to Judge Westover's threatening letter, Agent Brennan immediately telegraphed Washington DC about the misguided residents of Sheridan County. To Brennan, he was not so easily willing to give up the Extension. Instead of facing the residents of Sheridan County with an absolute no to their call, Brennan recommended that a "five square mile in the center of the present strip" that it would be enough to serve as a barrier to Nebraska.[91]

But just as quickly as he sent for a response in Washington DC, President Theodore Roosevelt gave way to the advice of his advisors, and the OIA, and abolished the Extension. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs responded to Brennan's last request for guidance on the wave of new surveyors and non-natives on the land with a new executive order from President Roosevelt dated January 25, 1904 stating that "The

[89] Ibid, 17.
[90] Ibid, 17.
[91] Ibid, 17.

executive addition of Pine Ridge Reservation was restored to public domain. You have, therefore, no further jurisdiction or control there and should withdraw your police as once."[92]

South Dakota congressman, Eben W. Martin, Commissioner of Indian Affairs William Jones, Secretary of the Interior, Ethan Allan Hitchcock, and Nebraska congressman Moses Kinkaid all pushed the President to open the land for public domain. All four men also firmly believed "that this move [was] only a small step" in their assimilation practices to rid the country of reservations to better incorporate the Lakota into mainstream American culture.[93]

Approximately a month later, on February 20, President Roosevelt rescinded one square mile of the land given back to Nebraska. Agent Brennan, alarmed by the sudden loss of land quickly informed Commissioner Jones of the problematic relinquishment of all Nebraska land. The issue dealt with the boarding school on the southern edge of the reservation and its reliance on a 640-square-acre section that consisted of an irrigation ditch and the school's pasture. In communicating the new problem to President Roosevelt, the revised executive order stated that the section 24., T. 35N., R.45W. in Nebraska was now permanently set aside from any settlement and considered part of Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota, for the purposes of the Pine Ridge Boarding School. Specifically, the irrigation ditch and pasture mention in Brennan's report to Jones

[92] Ibid, 18.; Akim D. Reinhardt, *Welcome to the Oglala Nation: Documentary Reader in Oglala Lakota Political History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015) 30 – 31.; Thomas R. Poor Bear v. Nesbitt, 300 F.Supp.2d 904 (D. Neb. 2004).
[93] Welsh, "The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the Executive Addition," 18 – 19.

reflected the quick change before making the land officially public domain. Beyond Brennan's concern over one section of land, there was no other recorded protest by Lakotas or other agency officials. Native leaders were more focused on allotment and leased lands more in the heart of the reservation.[94]

On June 16, 1905, the *Pioneer Grip*, in Alliance, Nebraska, reported that the land office in Alliance had nearly one hundred settlers filing a claim on the former strip of land for Pine Ridge. Opened on Monday June 12, seventy-eight lined up at the land office in Alliance, many of whom arrived the Thursday before to ensure they would get first choice. Being one of the last unsettled parts in northwest Nebraska, the White Clay region was not going to disappoint. The *Pioneer Grip* described the newly opened land as "beautiful streams of pure water, fine timber, rich soil all combine to make it well worth the strenuous efforts put forth by settlers to acquire homestead." The advantageous region with plentiful resources was immediately sought after by locals so much so that applications for the same piece of land were filed more than once. At that point, the Alliance land office had no choice but to make a determination, based on the applications, of who was going to be best fit for the land. Furthermore, the *Pioneer Grip* recognized the efforts of District Judge Westover's efforts to secure the land for Nebraska settlers as the honorable and right thing do.[95]

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[94] Ibid, 17 – 20.; Herbert T. Hoover, "The Loss of the White Clay Executive Addition From The Pine Ridge Reservation in 1904: Historical Context, a Penultimate Draft," University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD, Dawes County Historical Society, (July 2000).

[95] Sheridan County Historical Society, Newspaper Clippings, *Pioneer Grip*, June 16, 1905.

As time continued to pass by into the twentieth century, life on Pine Ridge Reservation continued in its poverty-stricken state. Pine Ridge Agency Reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs between 1898 – 1905 touched on many of the same grievances of life on the reservation twenty years earlier. Often times glossed over by some recent successes, reports still recognize the lack of clothing, food, and resources for the necessity of life. Agriculture failed to take hold and no other economic driven business showed any promising signs to help the situation. But at the same time, being so close in proximity to the Pine Ridge Agency, the Nebraska border towns of Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Chadron had an increasing business district supplying goods and services to the Lakota. Whether it was funneling these necessities of life or whisky, the economic pipeline from the Nebraska border towns to Pine Ridge became an essential part of Lakota life that continued to grow. Natives from Pine Ridge continued to endure the same abuses as before, except this time, those abuses took a different shape where local Nebraskans took on a much larger role as the proprietors over Lakotas

CONCLUSION

Stemming back to the mid-nineteenth century, droves of miners, merchants, and emigrants seeking free land and gold opportunities often crossed or settled on Native territory in the process. Creating conflict between the United States and Natives on the Great Plains. As a result of several years of skirmishing between the US military and Native nations in the region, Lakota leaders Red Cloud and Spotted Tail ultimately agreed to their new home in northwest Nebraska. While tensions between federal officials at both agencies remained high, the US military maintained their strong presence through Camps Robinson and Sheridan. Acting more as a police force, the military camps were initially established to monitor the Lakota, however, as miners and emigrants in passage to the Black Hills breached Lakota lands in 1875, the US military took action that further displaced Red Cloud and Spotted Tail. In the end, the Lakotas were again relocated out of Nebraska and settled into southwest Dakota Territory.

With Red Cloud and the Lakotas relocated to Dakota Territory, the upper Niobrara region in northwest Nebraska, directly south of Pine Ridge Agency, was open for settlement. At first, large ranching enterprises sought to take advantage of the beef contracts to the nearby military camps and Native reservations in Dakota Territory. At the same, problems were evident about the location of Pine Ridge Agency. Nearly adjacent to the Nebraska border, whisky traders and other like-minded non-native criminals exploited the close proximity of the Agency. In an effort to curtail the illegal traders and contraband, Pine Ridge Agent Valentine McGillycuddy introduced the White Clay

Extension in 1882 as a response to the growing problems being so near the Nebraska border.

Following the construction of the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad in 1885, most non-native settlers that came to northwest Nebraska sought the same free land and resource opportunities of the other early emigrants in mid-nineteenth century. Of the local interests at first, most were focused on community building rather than the nearby reservation. As the first year progressed, the growing border towns of Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Chadron slowly realized the economic value being so close to Pine Ridge. As the rest of the 1880s continued, most of this early business and social interactions between Natives and non-natives in northwest Nebraska came through either freighting from the Indian Supply Depot or a few instances where large numbers of Lakota came to town. The biggest draw for Lakota interests in northwest Nebraska were emerging businesses and interests related to the various Native shows and expositions. Businessmen and showmen, like Buffalo Bill, utilized Nebraska's close proximity to Pine Ridge to hire Native actors, and furnish Lakota regalia for his Wild West shows. Buffalo Bill sought prominent Lakota leaders who were involved with the battle of Little Big Horn to sell to audiences around the globe and gain favor among some of the powerful leaders in Europe.

The "Indian Scares" of the 1890s and the Wounded Knee Massacre, as a result of US policies and military intervention, greatly disrupted this emerging relationship between Pine Ridge and northwest Nebraska. The aggressive assimilation policies and practices of the American government that sought to end traditional Lakota customs

continued restraining Lakota culture and identity. Natives who were starving and longing for their previous ways of life, gave way to a new religion and Ghost Dancing from 1889 through 1890. At the same time, the wild newspaper and military reports of the rebellious Lakota ghost dancing and the increasing military presence, the tensions in northwest Nebraska created a panic in the neighboring Dawes and Sheridan counties.

At the peak of Ghost Dancing in North and South Dakota from August to December of 1890, the Wounded Knee Massacre on December 29 led to a new era where northwest Nebraska had a leading role and interests in Pine Ridge affairs. The prior business and social engagements in the 1880s between Nebraskans and Lakota were considerably minimal compared to the quickly increasing interactions in the 1890s. Local businessmen and women that owned general stores increasingly catered to their poverty-stricken Native neighbors, while other Nebraskans became employees, educators, and physicians at the agency. With an increasing tie to the reservation, the last piece of reservation land in northwest Nebraska, the White Clay Extension, was returned to public domain in 1905 as a response to locals calling it an illegitimate territory that no longer served its purpose. By the early twentieth century, northwest Nebraska had fully taken on a much more prominent role in Pine Ridge affairs on and off the reservation.

The key argument presented here is that the Wounded Knee Massacre on December 29, 1890 was a fundamental event that changed the social and economic dynamic between northwest Nebraska and the Pine Ridge Reservation. By analyzing Wounded Knee through a before and after scope along with Nebraska's impact as a main focus, there is clear evidence that the first settlers in northwest Nebraska and the border

communities of Gordon, Rushville, Hay Springs, and Chadron had a major impact. Primarily serving as an economic resource, space for federal and military officials overseeing the reservation, and social atmosphere for Lakota expression, northwest Nebraska continued growing and evolving with ties to Pine Ridge.

While the Massacre at Wounded Knee Creek is extensively researched by historians, many have overlooked the impact of Nebraska communities being only twenty or thirty miles away. Mari Sandoz, partly addressed this borderland history in her own published works through *Crazy Horse* and *Old Jules*. Historians like Jeffrey Ostler, Pekka Hämäläinen, and Heater Cox Richardson have sound research and greatly investigated the impacts of American colonialism and US policy in shaping events on the Great Plains. But beyond some of the military excursions taking place in northwest Nebraska, Ostler, Hämäläinen, and Richardson do not fully discuss how important Nebraska was to Pine Ridge building up to and following the Wounded Knee Massacre. The most recent scholarship to date that is more inclusive of the impact of the Upper Niobrara region in northwest Nebraska is Jerome Green's book *American Carnage*. Greene incorporates Chadron and other Nebraska communities beyond a few sentences and footnotes, but still lacks some of the key details that this thesis advocates. In terms of understanding how non-native settlers, the US military, and this *space*, Pine Ridge and northwest Nebraska were far more connected and fundamental than previous thought before.

What this thesis does not explicitly state, but alludes to, is a *cultural cold war* beginning to form at the start of the twentieth century. The growing interests and

opportunities in Pine Ridge affairs were formed through the institutions of American government that pressured many northwest Nebraskans against their Lakota neighbor. As public opinion continued to evolve following Wounded Knee and into the 1900s, the reservation system, American – Indian affairs through public policies, and actions taken by the US military, all transitioned for northwest Nebraskans to take a leading role as the new wards of the Lakota for better or worse.

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