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Article Summary: Led by determined chiefs like Red Cloud, Gall, and Crazy Horse, the Lakota Sioux resisted federal control during the first years of transition to the reservation system. Only after the Battle of Wounded Knee and the Sioux Bill of 1889 did the federal government gain the upper hand.

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Photographs / Images: Red Cloud; Dr John J Saville, agent at Red Cloud Agency, 1873-1875; Red Cloud Agency notables: He Dog, Little Wound, American Horse, Little Big Man, Young Man Afraid of His Horses, Hunts the Enemy (later known as Sword), Yellow Bear, José Merivale, William Garnett, Leon Pallardie, Three Bears; Spotted Tail; Crow Dog (1894 photograph by John A Anderson); Agent James McLaughlin and Sitting Bull at the dedication of the "Standing Rock" at the Standing Rock Agency; Gall, Kicking Bear; Short Bull; Two Strike, W T Selwyn, and Young Man Afraid of His Horses

LAKOTA LEADERS AND GOVERNMENT AGENTS

A Story of Changing Relationships

By Robert W. Larson

On the morning of November 4, 1868, Red Cloud, still a muscular six-footer even though approaching fifty, arrived at Fort Laramie with a large delegation of seasoned warriors. They included his major rival within the Oglala Sioux tribe, the more accommodating Oglala peace chief Old-Man-Afraid-of-His-Horses, plus a number of other chiefs and headmen not only from Red Cloud's tribe, but from the Hunkpapa, Brulé, Blackfeet Sioux, and San Arc tribes as well. Maj. William Dye, the commandant at the fort who had recently replaced hard-nosed Lt. Col. A. J. Slemmer, was both delighted and apprehensive to see this great warrior-chief, who in the last few months had probably become the country's best known Native American leader.¹

Fifteen months earlier, on July 30, 1867, two days before the Wagon Box and Hayfield fights would dramatically aggravate the bitter conflict between the Lakota Sioux and the U.S. Army caused by the opening of the Bozeman Trail, President Andrew Johnson signed a landmark piece of legislation creating an Indian Peace Commission to deal with the increasingly serious Indian problems of the West. This Indian commission, which included such tough army officers as Lt. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman and retired Maj. Gen. William S. Harney and such sympathetic civilian members as Nathaniel G. Taylor and Samuel F. Tappan, met with northern

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Red Cloud. NSHS-RG2845:3-4

Plains tribes at Fort Laramie in early November 1867 to offer generous terms to those tribes willing to settle their differences with the federal government.²

These terms, as they applied to the seven tribes of the Lakota Sioux, would grant this powerful Indian confederation a reservation incorporating much of western Dakota, including the Black Hills that were sacred to both Lakota

Sioux and Northern Cheyennes. Moreover, they would leave the Powder River country of Wyoming as unceded Indian territory without the active traffic of argonauts plying their way northward on the Bozeman Trail to the goldfields of Montana Territory. In addition to generous annuities, the terms of the treaty even allowed the Lakota Sioux to hunt in the Platte River Valley until the arrival of the nation's first transcontinental railroad, the Union Pacific.³

Unfortunately, that fateful November 1867 meeting was not entirely fulfilling to these hopeful peace commissioners because Red Cloud was not there. During the following year, the government made strenuous efforts to win the stubborn Sioux leader's approval for this new and still controversial treaty. Believing that any treaty would be worthless without Red Cloud's full participation, the government, in late July 1868, evacuated forts Phil Kearny and C. F. Smith along the Bozeman Trail, both of which were promptly set aflame by jubilant Lakota Sioux and Northern Cheyenne warriors. To the great disappointment of most federal officials, however, Red Cloud and many of his followers remained in their wilderness strongholds; the feverishly-courted leader sent word that he would not come to Fort Laramie to negotiate the treaty until after the fall buffalo hunts, when his people had gathered enough meat for the coming winter. Consequently, when Red Cloud finally did arrive at the fort on November 4, 1868, Major Dye sensed a real opportunity to win the Oglala leader's crucial approval of the Fort Laramie treaty after many months of frustration.

But Fort Laramie's discerning new commandant soon found that dealing with Red Cloud would be his greatest challenge. The resourceful major, sensing the chief's negative attitude, opened the grueling three-day meeting by hosting a grand feast to relax all participants. Red Cloud did not make Dye's patient strategy any easier, however. While most leaders of the 125-member Indian delegation rose to extend their hands in friendship when introduced, Red Cloud remained seated, reluctantly offering his fingertips to those who insisted on a handshake. Red Cloud even challenged Dye's authority to negotiate the treaty's ratification because no member of the Peace Commission was present; indeed, at a stormy meeting in Chicago during the previous month, the angry and divided commission abruptly disbanded.

Red Cloud, a *blotahunka* or a war chief who could boast of eighty coups, also made outrageous demands as his price for cooperation. He insisted that the government supply his people with lead and powder so the Sioux could better hunt scarce game, a not unprecedented request as federal authorities had already done so for the more trustworthy Crows. He kept Dye and the other negotiators off balance by bringing up legitimate, but often peripheral issues, a strategy he would employ frequently during the next two decades as federal authorities continued to regard him as the major spokesman for all the Lakota tribes.

To keep Red Cloud on track, Major Dye, in addition to flattering his formidable adversary whenever necessary, also discussed the provisions of the treaty item by item, in order to clarify any misunderstanding on Red Cloud's part. When the atmosphere at the conference became too strained, he would promptly adjourn the proceedings in order to discuss the more emotional issues at a later time. But the persistent Dye eventually achieved his objective and that of the United States Government when Red Cloud reluctantly agreed to

the treaty by symbolically washing "his hands with the dust on the floor" and putting his mark upon the fateful document.⁴

Once he accepted the terms of the Fort Laramie treaty, Red Cloud, with surprising consistency, steadfastly labored to keep the peace, often using his enormous influence to persuade



Dr. John J. Saville was agent at Red Cloud Agency from 1873 to 1875. NSHS-RG4341-7

other chiefs or headmen from the sometimes fractious Lakota tribes to cooperate as best they could. In this way, he was able to launch a necessary, but shaky, relationship between Lakota leaders and often frustrated government agents. It would be a mistake, however, to characterize Red Cloud as a progressive, the term used to describe the most cooperative or amenable of the treaty Indians of the West. Nor can one accurately categorize him as a nonprogressive or traditional Lakota Sioux. Historian Robert M. Utley is probably correct in characterizing Red Cloud as one of those reservation leaders "who tried to walk both sides of the road."⁵

Notwithstanding his commitment to

the terms of the treaty, Red Cloud could be remarkably stubborn when it came to dealing with the federal agents appointed to administer the newly created Sioux reservation lands, especially if the agents had challenged his authority or threatened his prerogatives. In fact, his bitter power struggle with two strong-willed medical doctors allied with the Episcopal Church, Agent J. J. Saville at the second Red Cloud Agency during the 1870s and Agent Valentine T. McGillicuddy at the Pine Ridge Reservation during the 1880s, attracted widespread national attention.⁶ Indeed Red Cloud's conversion to Roman Catholicism may have been partly due to spite; he obviously resented that the Episcopal Church had been officially given the mission to spread Christianity among his people.⁷ Red Cloud also resisted governmental efforts to change the basic Sioux culture; he often opposed official pressure to make his people farmers rather than hunters, or have Lakota children educated according to the white man's way. And he was understandably persistent in opposing major changes in the basic provisions of the Treaty of Fort Laramie, even though many of the younger Lakotas today tend to blame him for the loss of the Black Hills in 1877 and the loss of half the Great Sioux Reservation through the implementation of the Dawes Act in 1889.

Moreover, despite Red Cloud's reputation among baffled federal negotiators of being devious, he could be surprisingly candid at times. At the 1868 Fort Laramie conference, for example, although he ended the prolonged proceedings with his customarily long oration — he always insisted on the last word — he did admit to Major Dye, in a most straightforward manner, that he was not certain he could convince all his Lakota warriors, especially the younger ones, to go along with the new treaty.⁸

One of the younger warriors Red Cloud had in mind was Crazy Horse. This mystic, exceptionally formidable leader, twenty years Red Cloud's junior, was from another Oglala band, the

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Hunkpatilas. Members of this band were not always of the same mind as Red Cloud's people, who were commonly called Bad Faces by other Lakota bands.⁹ But belonging to a different band was not the only reason for the sometimes bitter rivalry between Crazy Horse and the older, more established Red Cloud. Crazy Horse, for instance, had long resented Red Cloud's role in thwarting his ardent courtship of Red Cloud's niece, Black Buffalo Woman.¹⁰ Red Cloud, for his part, was undoubtedly jealous of Crazy Horse's growing renown as a warrior at a time when Red Cloud was past his prime. In fact, Crazy Horse's reputation soared after the Fetterman fight of 1866, when he led the decoy force that lured Capt. William J. Fetterman and his unfortunate eighty-man command into that bloody ambush, promptly labeled the Fetterman Massacre by most white contemporaries.¹¹

Rivalry with Red Cloud, however, was only a secondary concern compared to Crazy Horse's implacable opposition to the incoming white tide that threatened all he valued. Compromise was out of the question for this light-complexioned, fearless warrior, who was so determined to stem white settlement that he would have nothing to do with these aggressive newcomers; unlike most Lakota leaders, he even refused to be photographed by them. As a consequence, when the United States Government ordered all Lakota Sioux hunting on treaty-sanctioned lands west of the Great Sioux Reservation to return to their designated agencies by January 1, 1876, Crazy Horse and the great Hunkpapa medicine man Sitting Bull, who had never abided by the Fort Laramie treaty, led defiant bands of nontreaty Indians in that decisive battle along the Little Bighorn, which claimed the lives of the overwhelmed Custer and his immediate command in June. This stunning defeat, the worst ever suffered by the U.S. Army against the Indians of the West, shattered the admittedly uneasy relationship with the government that Red Cloud had established eight

years earlier. Indeed, Red Cloud and his peaceful band, encamped hundreds of miles from the Little Bighorn, were rounded up in October 1876 and brought back to Camp Robinson, thirty miles away, because Red Cloud was wrongly suspected of arming and supplying Crazy Horse's victorious warriors.¹²

After the Little Bighorn, Crazy Horse continued his resistance for almost a year against the now vengeful, even more determined military forces of the United States Government. Although sorely pressed by these troops, he probably surrendered only when the suffering and starvation of women, children, and old people among his followers made further resistance futile. Shortly after the two-mile-long column of Crazy Horse's exhausted Lakota and Cheyenne supporters started for their new reservation home at the Red Cloud Agency in northwest Nebraska near Camp Robinson, the stubborn warrior had his first encounter with officially designated agency representatives. On April 27, 1877, he met a friendly band of Oglala Sioux headed by Red Cloud, which had been sent as escorts for him and his followers. Despite their long history of mutual antipathy, Red Cloud graciously tutored his young rival in the steps necessary to surrender with dignity.¹³ After this meeting Crazy Horse, with apparent sincerity, settled down to reservation life at the Red Cloud Agency. But several weeks later, his new relationship with federal agents started to unravel.

One of Crazy Horse's most immediate problems was the intense jealousy of other Lakota leaders. Besides Red Cloud, his envious antagonists included Little Wound, American Horse, and even Crazy Horse's uncle, Spotted Tail, leader of the Brulé Sioux from the nearby Spotted Tail Agency. This envy was compounded by the admiration felt for him by many younger warriors, who deeply resented the capitulation of their people to federal rule. Questionable rumors began to circulate that Crazy Horse might bolt the reservation and

head north to join Sitting Bull in Canada. Crazy Horse's tribal adversaries even spread largely unfounded stories that he planned to kill Brig. Gen. George Crook, the officer ultimately responsible for peace and security at the Red Cloud Agency.¹⁴

These rumors had the desired effect of undercutting Crazy Horse's perilous status as a reservation leader. James Irwin, the capable agent at Red Cloud, was becoming increasingly concerned. Crazy Horse, for his part, contributed to the confusion. Neither understanding nor appreciating reservation life, he soon found his new role as *itancan*, or peace chief, unbearable. He became uncooperative, refusing even to put his mark on receipts for government rations his people urgently needed.¹⁵ Irwin, a respected agent although admittedly under the influence of older leaders such as Red Cloud, insisted that Crazy Horse was "silent, sullen, lordly, and dictatorial."¹⁶ The upshot of these growing tensions was Crazy Horse's death while being arrested at Camp Robinson on September 5, 1877, perhaps the most tragic death in nineteenth-century Lakota history.

Although historian Stephen E. Ambrose has insisted that Red Cloud was the "master politician" behind the unfortunate circumstances that resulted in Crazy Horse's death, other Lakota leaders must share in the blame.¹⁷ Even Spotted Tail, with whom Crazy Horse sought refuge before he was taken into custody, was reluctant to help his kinsman. He forcefully told Crazy Horse that, if he stayed at Spotted Tail Agency, he would have to accept Spotted Tail's authority on all important matters.

Despite this blemish on Red Cloud's otherwise commendable record, he probably enjoyed the support of most of the Oglalas in his dispute with Crazy Horse. Although many Lakotas at the Red Cloud Agency admired Crazy Horse for his courageous role at the Little Bighorn, most were exhausted by the months of fighting that marked the Great Sioux War. Moreover, a number



Red Cloud Agency notables: (standing, left to right), He Dog, Little Wound, American Horse, Little Big Man, Young Man Afraid of His Horses, and Hunts the Enemy (later known as Sword); (seated, left to right), Yellow Bear, José Merivale, William Garnett, Leon Pallardie, and Three Bears. NSHS-RG2095-7

believed that Red Cloud was the only Sioux leader experienced enough to keep his people from being relocated by the government on a game-scarce new reservation site on the Missouri River, where the Oglalas had not roamed for a generation. Their faith in him was justified in November 1877, when Red Cloud unilaterally ended a 250-mile migration for 8,000 of his followers some eighty miles from the proposed new reservation. The defiant chief simply refused to move his people one more mile toward the Missouri, notwithstanding the intimidating presence of a military escort and the angry reaction of General Sherman. Approximately a year later, Red Cloud's Oglalas were allowed to settle on the much preferred Pine Ridge Reservation many miles west of the Missouri.¹⁸

Although Red Cloud and Crazy Horse

both presented very serious problems for the federal government, there remained a strong and cooperative element at Pine Ridge, where most Oglalas live today. Young-Man-Afraid-of-His-Horses, who proudly bore his father's name, often sided with Agent McGillicuddy, who feuded with Red Cloud throughout the entire seven years of his tenure. Moreover, when McGillicuddy organized an Indian police force over Red Cloud's objections, Sword, formerly Hunts-the-Enemy, a once formidable warrior like Young-Man-Afraid, served as a captain in the new organization. Young-Man-Afraid, once a shirtwearer like Crazy Horse and Red Cloud, ran successfully against Red Cloud as head of the Indian council in 1883, supporting issues favored by McGillicuddy.¹⁹ American Horse, Red Cloud's son-in-law, who boasted of killing Fetterman himself, also backed

McGillicuddy on several occasions.²⁰

But the Lakota leader with whom federal authorities felt most comfortable did not number among the Oglalas. The Sioux chief they preferred was the Brulé leader Spotted Tail, who absolutely dominated this sister tribe of the Oglalas until his death in 1881. This commanding and handsome-looking Brulé was, in fact, much more flexible than Red Cloud in dealing with federal authorities, although he, too, could be most willful on occasion. For instance, in November 1854, he and another Brulé warrior named Red Leaf attacked a mail wagon in retaliation to the bloody Grattan affair, which had occurred four months earlier.²¹ Although some historians believe Spotted Tail's harsh imprisonment in Leavenworth, one result of this attack, moderated his views, it did not keep him from getting involved in uprisings on the

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central Plains stemming from the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864 and involving many of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Lakota bands that roamed the region.²²

During the years following the Civil War, however, Spotted Tail became the favorite Sioux chief of many U.S. government leaders. In 1871 Francis A. Walker, the prominent former superintendent of the ninth U.S. census, regarded Spotted Tail as the federal government's most reliable friend and guarantor of better relations. "He is not only the best Indian in this part of the country, but his power is manifestly on the increase while Red Cloud's influence is somewhat waning."²³ This favorable assessment of Spotted Tail, which did not endear him to many Lakota leaders, was based upon the Brulé chief's obvious willingness to negotiate differences with the government. When Red Cloud bolted the first Fort Laramie peace conference in May 1866, Spotted Tail stayed behind and later approved the first Fort Laramie treaty. Before the U.S. Peace Commission met with northern tribes at Fort Laramie in November 1867, the commissioners met with a gathering of Plains warriors headed by Spotted Tail to discuss the more generous terms they were prepared to offer Red Cloud. Spotted Tail was amenable to these changes and later affixed his mark on the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty many months before Red Cloud did.

Spotted Tail's moderation was due to several factors besides his traumatic imprisonment for the mail wagon raid. He was probably more realistic about the plight of his people than even Red Cloud. He certainly was more responsive to those civilian agents and army officers known to be fair and tactful, being especially grateful to Col. Henry E. Maynadier, who in 1866 arranged a touching sunset funeral at Fort Laramie for Spotted Tail's favorite daughter, who had succumbed to a disease.²⁴ But Spotted Tail could also be as pragmatic as Red Cloud. In 1866 he found it easier to sign the first Treaty of Fort Laramie, at a time when such U.S. Army forts as Phil Kearny and C. F.



Spotted Tail. NSHS-RG1227:10-6



Crow Dog, in an 1894 photograph by John A. Anderson. NSHS-A547:1-14

Smith were being built in the Powder River country, because the buffalo hunting grounds for most of his people were in the Republican River Valley many miles below the North Platte.

Although Spotted Tail was undoubtedly more progressive than Red Cloud, he too could be stubborn when the cultural values of his people were being threatened. When Spotted Tail and Red Cloud visited their offspring at the Carlisle Indian Training School in Pennsylvania in June 1880, they both abruptly removed the youngsters when they saw that they had to wear military uniforms and submit to short haircuts.²⁵ Moreover, both men demanded Catholic rather than Episcopal priests for their reservations, despite the legally sanctioned mission of the Episcopal Church to convert the Oglalas and Brulés at both Pine Ridge and Rosebud. In fact, Spotted Tail told President Rutherford B. Hayes during a Washington visit that he "would like to get Catholic priests. Those who wore black dresses."²⁶ He was no doubt responding to the good works of Father Pierre Jean DeSmet and his black-robed Jesuits and to the more liberal policies of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, which had given Native Americans a greater voice in their own affairs.

Even though Spotted Tail's influence with the tribes of the loosely organized Lakota Sioux confederation did not match Red Cloud's, he probably dominated his own people more effectively than any other Lakota leader. While Spotted Tail lived, his Brulés were among the least fractious of the seven Lakota tribes. Indeed, he was able to reach a happy accommodation with most of the Indian agents at Rosebud, and was able to frustrate the designs of such bitter tribal traditionalists or nonprogressives as Crow Dog and Two Strike, hard-liners who became deeply involved in the militant Ghost Dance movement of 1890.

Perhaps this charismatic leader's only serious vice was his reckless womanizing, which occurred with apparent

regularity despite his having two wives. This weakness eventually proved fatal; in 1881 a frustrated and envious Crow Dog, using Spotted Tail's liaison with another man's wife as a pretext, killed Spotted Tail with a rifle as the unsuspecting Brulé leader rode toward him on horseback. This cold-blooded murder resulted in a jurisdictional dispute between the legal systems of the United States and that of the Lakota Sioux, in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the latter by overturning Crow Dog's conviction in a federal court.²⁷ Crow Dog's fate in this controversial decision was relatively unimportant, however, compared to the prolonged chaos that Spotted Tail's death brought to his tribe. Nevertheless, Spotted Tail's stabilizing tenure may have helped make the Brulé one of the most stable and prosperous Sioux tribes of the modern era.

In contrast to Spotted Tail's successful accommodation with the federal government was the intransigence of the great Hunkpapa Sioux medicine man, Sitting Bull. Like Crazy Horse, he and such tribal lieutenants as Gall, Crow King, and John Grass had been actively involved in the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Unlike Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull fled to Canada rather than surrender to the U.S. Army during the Great Sioux War. Finally in 1881, after seeing much of his support erode during the four years of his exile north of the Canadian border, he reluctantly surrendered at Fort Buford in present-day North Dakota.²⁸

In some ways Sitting Bull was less flexible than Crazy Horse in his dealings with the United States Government. Part of the reason for his uncompromising attitude was the relative isolation of the Hunkpapas, who, along with the smaller Lakota tribes of the north, lived hundreds of miles above the busy traffic corridor along the North Platte, where fellow tribal members were often forced to exist with hordes of white newcomers in an uneasy truce. Largely because of this geographical isolation, many of Sitting Bull's Hunkpapas did not become treaty



Agent James McLaughlin and Sitting Bull at the dedication of the "Standing Rock" at the Standing Rock Agency. Courtesy The Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, D. F. Barry Photo, B-752

Indians, even after most southern Lakotas began living on such reserves as the Spotted Tail and the second Red Cloud Agency.

When the federally-subsidized Northern Pacific began laying tracks through their hunting grounds in the early 1870s, several years after the Treaty of Fort Laramie had been ratified, Sitting Bull and his followers resisted this incursion. His angry warriors even defied seasoned army troops under the command of Col. David S. Stanley and later the flamboyant Custer.²⁹ Sitting Bull's muscular lieutenant Gall, whom Custer's wife "Libbie," upon viewing his photograph, dubbed the finest "specimen of a warrior" she had ever seen, demonstrated how determined the Hunkpapas were to stop the Northern Pacific's unwelcome advance.³⁰ In 1872 Gall and his warriors captured two lieutenants, along with Colonel Stanley's mulatto servant, near Fort Rice in Dakota Territory. Then the audacious Gall made a chillingly ominous point by displaying the grisly scalps of all three victims from a nearby hillock.³¹

Even though war leaders like Gall,

Crow King, and John Grass remained staunch supporters of Sitting Bull throughout the Great Sioux War, their ardor in his behalf began to cool during the reservation years. In 1880 the once close relationship of Gall and Sitting Bull was shattered when Gall allowed followers from twenty of his lodges to surrender and leave the Hunkpapas' unhappy Canadian exile for the United States. Sitting Bull bitterly criticized Gall's action and Gall in retaliation led his four hundred followers out of exile, leaving the proud and stubborn medicine man with only two hundred loyalists.

But the person most responsible for the irreconcilable break in relations between Sitting Bull and his top lieutenants was the Indian agent at the Standing Rock Agency, James McLaughlin, who would clash bitterly with Sitting Bull after he was sent there a couple of years after his surrender. Sitting Bull's feud with McLaughlin even exceeded Red Cloud's with McGillycuddy. The crafty McLaughlin, buffered by the support of the Catholic Church and aided by the Sioux wife he had taken

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as a mate, soon lured Gall, Crow King, and John Grass into the progressive camp by granting them favors and cherished perks in exchange for an alliance against Sitting Bull.³²

McLaughlin's strategy was especially successful with Gall, whose reputation as "the fighting cock of the Sioux" put him in the same class as Crazy Horse and Red Cloud as far as his renown as a warrior was concerned.³³ Largely because of McLaughlin's support, Gall rose to special prominence at Standing Rock. He served as a judge on the Court of Indian Offenses, a sure sign of favor on the part of the federal government. Forsaking the Lakotas' nomadic way of life more than most accommodationists at Standing Rock, Gall became an especially industrious farmer, raising corn, hoeing potatoes, and pitching hay.³⁴ Unlike Red Cloud and Spotted Tail, whose concern over issues of cultural identity led them to remove their offspring from the Indian school at Carlisle, Gall willingly sent his two daughters to the Standing Rock Missionary School. In the mid-1880s Gall became an Episcopalian and was often photographed with a conspicuously large crucifix hanging from his neck. A tireless worker for the faith, he donated before his death in 1894, 160 acres of his land for the establishment of an Episcopal mission and church named in honor of St. Elizabeth.³⁵ As McLaughlin was a Roman Catholic, Gall's religious choice was one area where he showed his independence; the government had assigned Standing Rock to the Catholic Church for missionary work among the Lakota Sioux.³⁶

As the first two decades of Lakota life following the ratification of the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868 came to an end, it was evident that, although some progress had been made toward the assimilation of the Lakota Sioux into the reservation system, there was still a long way to go. The six agencies on the Great Sioux Reservation continued to be divided between progressives and nonprogressives, and the Battle of the Little Bighorn was a tragic reminder of

how deep these divisions had been. Despite the independence of these proud Lakotas, whose warrior culture convincingly dominated the northern Plains for years, the United States Government was not inclined to slacken its



Gall. NSHS-RG3730-10

efforts to make them conform to reservation life. Moreover, with the Lake Mohonk movement of the mid-1880s, an influential group of reform-minded, upper-middle-class Americans made an effort to push Native Americans beyond the reservation system; their goal was to immerse them into American society as small farmers, who had broken almost all ties with their nomadic past.³⁷ The climax of this powerful movement was the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887, by which the federal government was authorized to break up tribally-held reservation lands by dividing them into small homesteads tilled by independent farmers. The new law became highly

controversial because those reservation lands not allotted were opened to white settlers. Thus, in the Sioux bill of 1889, the application of the Dawes Act meant the loss of about half of the Great Sioux Reservation's vast acreage; indeed those lands not allotted were divided into six significantly smaller reservations.³⁸

The efforts of federal authorities to persuade the Lakota Sioux to accept this loss of land would, therefore, meet with stiff opposition. Sitting Bull, for one, was completely unyielding, but his influence, even among the divided Hunkpapas, was small; in truth, his vocal opposition and irreconcilable attitude no longer made him an effective advocate. Even the cooperative Gall expressed strong misgivings about the Sioux bill, although he eventually went along with it.³⁹ Few progressives campaigned enthusiastically on its behalf; when the opportunistic but unquestionably eloquent Oglala leader American Horse did so, it was with a certain amount of discomfort.

Red Cloud, the chief most responsible for the favorable Treaty of Fort Laramie, resolutely opposed the legislation. Not only did he regard the Sioux bill as a violation of the terms of the treaty, but he bemoaned the significant loss of treaty lands he had worked so vigorously to guarantee. Red Cloud, in fact, was the only Lakota leader who successfully prevented the Sioux bill from being ratified on his reservation. Pine Ridge, unlike the other five, held out against the bill, preventing the three persuasive government negotiators that constituted the Crook Commission from winning the necessary approval of three-quarters of the adult males as required by the Fort Laramie treaty.⁴⁰ But Red Cloud paid a price for his courage; at the behest of the angry and frustrated Secretary of the Interior, John W. Noble, Red Cloud was not invited to Washington to discuss the issue nor was he ever again regarded as the spokesman for all Lakota Sioux tribes.⁴¹

But the Sioux bill was not the only development of the late 1880s to com-

plicate the changing relations of Lakota leaders with government agents. Exceptionally dry weather, along with a trend toward more niggardly funding on the part of Congress, aggravated the problems already faced by both sides. It was into this tense environment that the disruptive Ghost Dance was introduced to compound these crises.

The Ghost Dance movement, which influenced numerous tribes throughout the West, was started by a Paiute medicine man from Nevada named Wovoka. During the 1880s Wovoka, regarded by many as an Indian messiah, persuaded an alarming number of disenchanted tribal members to do a mournful dance that nervous white detractors dubbed the Ghost Dance. Persistent performance of the ritual, Wovoka prophesied, would bring the return of the buffalo and the disappearance of the whites.⁴² The controversial dance spread to the six newly created Lakota Sioux reservations in 1890, terrifying white settlers who lived near or adjacent to them. Eventually the U.S. Army intervened, accompanied by war correspondents who focused almost unprecedented national attention on the tireless Ghost Dancers. Most of the troops were dispatched to Pine Ridge, where the movement was unquestionably the strongest. The arrest and death of the new religion's most famous supporter, Sitting Bull, at the hands of Indian Police sent by McLaughlin in mid-December, led to the last major Indian battle in the West, the Battle of Wounded Knee Creek.⁴³

A number of Lakota leaders, besides Sitting Bull, were responsible for the religious frenzy that led to the bloody struggle at Wounded Knee. The three chief apostles of the new faith, Kicking Bear, Good Thunder, and Short Bull, after meeting with Wovoka, returned to Sioux country to teach their unhappy brethren this provocative but increasingly sacred new dance. There was the aging and bitter Brulé leader Two Strike, who symbolized the instability that had emerged at Rosebud since the death of Spotted Tail; a surprising number of



Kicking Bear. NSHS-RG1227:17-2

Brulés came to Pine Ridge to participate in the Ghost Dance. There was the Miniconjou chief Big Foot, from the Cheyenne River Reservation south of Standing Rock, who became one of the more reluctant Ghost Dance leaders. There was the influential Oglala Little Wound, who compelled even the influential nonbeliever Red Cloud to scrutinize this new faith.⁴⁴

There were, of course, a number of skeptics; only about a third of the Lakota Sioux embraced the Ghost Dance with any enthusiasm.⁴⁵ Many of the progressives, such as Gall, ardently tried to persuade their people to question the new faith and consider the dire ramifications it might have on Lakota relations with the federal government. Red Cloud, hoping to cool things off, finally intervened, along with such peacemakers at Pine Ridge as Young-Man-Afraid-of-His-Horses, Calico, No Water, and Big Road. They urged Big Foot to bring his Miniconjou followers, along with a number of Hunkpapa loyalists of the slain Sitting Bull, to Pine Ridge and discuss the growing crisis. Big Foot and his people were even offered one hundred horses as bait.⁴⁶ But the U.S. Army, under the overall command of Maj. Gen. Nelson A. Miles, completely misinterpreted Big Foot's mission, intercepting the Miniconjou leader and his allegedly hostile band on the rolling terrain near Wounded Knee. On the following day, December 29, in a tragic miscalculation on the part of both sides, members of the Seventh Cavalry and Big Foot's band fired on each other, resulting in the death of Big Foot and more than two hundred of his followers. Twenty-five soldiers were also killed, while a host of soldiers and Lakota Sioux were wounded in the crossfire.⁴⁷

The fighting at Wounded Knee Creek, the tragic climax of the Ghost Dance movement, was in many ways a watershed in the history of Lakota-government relations. Prior to this conflict, there had been defiant nontreaty Indians who, during the 1870s, refused to acknowledge even the immense

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Short Bull. NSHS-RG2063:34-1



Two Strike (left), W. T. Selwyn, and Young Man Afraid of His Horses. NSHS-RG0798:2-3

Great Sioux Reservation as the major prize of their surprisingly favorable Treaty of Fort Laramie. There were also strong-willed Lakota leaders, who, although accepting the reservation system, clashed frequently with Indian agents over a variety of issues. There were the bloody conflicts, too, including the most famous Indian battle of all, the decisive encounter at the Little Bighorn.

But after Wounded Knee, the shift in power that had been accelerated by the Sioux bill of 1889 had given the federal government an enormous edge in the two decades of interaction with the powerful Lakota Sioux Nation. In the

years following Wounded Knee, it became less frustrating to deal with Lakota leaders; presumably time had caused many either to mellow or die. Although Red Cloud lived until 1909, Gall in 1894 would join in death such once influential leaders as Crazy Horse, Spotted Tail, and Sitting Bull. With the passage of time, federal authorities found it easier to play progressives against nonprogressives, primarily working through the progressives, who could better attract the younger Lakotas for whom the old ways were becoming part of the past.

With the possible exception of the

Apache, it would be difficult to find a Native American people who resisted federal control to the degree the Lakota Sioux did during the first two decades of their transition to the reservation system. Nevertheless, more comparative studies on the adjustment of other Western tribes to this system would be worthwhile. Even more helpful would be new studies of reservation life during the more than a century since Wounded Knee. In this connection, it is evident that at least some of the turbulence of the late nineteenth century continued through the twentieth. The armed clash in 1973 between the government and

the American Indian Movement that occurred, significantly enough, along Wounded Knee Creek at Pine Ridge, the nation's poorest reservation, would suggest such an assumption.⁴⁸ Consequently, additional historical research on the six Lakota Sioux reservations during the last century could achieve an even broader perspective of the tenuous relations between federal authorities and Lakota leaders.

Notes

¹ James C. Olson, *Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 79; Robert W. Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman of the Lakota Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 122–23. Because of Red Cloud's successes as a leader and shrewd diplomat, his reputation as one of the most formidable warriors of the Lakota Sioux is sometimes forgotten. For Red Cloud's own account of his warrior years, see R. Eli Paul, ed., *Autobiography of Red Cloud: War Leader of the Oglalas* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1997).

² Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 107–8; Douglas C. Jones, *The Tragedy of Medicine Lodge: The Story of the Great Treaty Council as Told by Eyewitnesses* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 17–18.

³ For a copy of the treaty, see the appendix in Olson's *Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem*, 341–49.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 79–82; Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 120, 122–24.

⁵ Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846–1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 236.

⁶ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 152–69, 224–48. The Red Cloud-Saville feud prompted a federal investigation and a long government report which, if it did not call for Saville's resignation, did publicize many of Red Cloud's alleged grievances against the Indian agent. See *Report of the Special Commissioner Appointed to Investigate the Affairs of the Red Cloud Indian Agency, July 1875* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1875). For McGillicuddy's side of the story in his feud with Red Cloud, see Julia B. McGillicuddy, *McGillicuddy Agent: A Biography of Dr. Valentine T. McGillicuddy* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1941). This biography was reprinted by the University of Nebraska Press in 1990 under the title *Blood on the Moon: Valentine McGillicuddy and the Sioux*.

⁷ As a result of President Grant's peace policy of 1869, the Episcopal Church was assigned the second Red Cloud Agency and later the Pine Ridge Reservation for missionary work. Also placed under the Church's auspices were the Cheyenne

River, Upper Missouri, and Whetstone/Spotted Tail (later Rosebud) agencies. Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks, eds., *Sioux Indian Religion: Tradition and Innovation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), introduction, 11.

⁸ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 124–25.

⁹ According to Red Cloud, the name Bad Face was given because his people tended to hang their heads low in a dejected fashion, causing their downcast faces to look "bad." Interview with Red Cloud by Judge Eli S. Ricker, November 24, 1906, Eli S. Ricker Collection, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln. He Dog, one of Red Cloud's nephews, claimed that the name came from the jealous wife of Chief Smoke's son, who insisted so often that her husband's philandering gave him a bad face that other Lakota bands and tribes began to use that name for Red Cloud's people. George E. Hyde, *Red Cloud's Folk: A History of the Oglala Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), 87.

¹⁰ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 77; Mari Sandoz, *Crazy Horse: The Strange Man of the Oglalas*, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 131–33, 156, 239–245, 264.

¹¹ There are discrepancies regarding the exact number of men killed in the Fetterman Fight. According to Red Cloud, Lakotas insisted that one hundred were killed. When Fetterman's "soldiers were coming they counted them alive and made out one hundred. They did not count them after they had fallen." Red Cloud interview, Nov. 24, 1906, Ricker Collection.

¹² Countless books and articles have been written about the Battle of the Little Bighorn, most of which were based upon military accounts and government records. For an especially provocative account because it is revisionist and gives the Indian side, see Gregory F. Michno, *Lakota Noon: The Indian Narrative of Custer's Defeat* (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1997). An account of the forcible roundup and removal of Red Cloud's band back to Camp Robinson is found in Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 205–9. See also Jerome A. Greene's article in this issue.

¹³ Hyde, *Red Cloud's Folk*, 290–92; Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 2, 10–11.

¹⁴ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 211–13.

¹⁵ Catherine Price, *The Oglala People, 1841–1879: A Political History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 160–61.

¹⁶ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 213.

¹⁷ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Crazy Horse and Custer: The Parallel Lives of Two American Warriors* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1975), 427. A recent and detailed account of Crazy Horse's arrest and death is found in Thomas R. Buecker, *Fort Robinson and the American West, 1874–1899* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1999), 103–18.

¹⁸ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 215–16, 221–24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 227, 234, 240, 244. For one of the most detailed accounts of the Red Cloud-McGillicuddy feud, obviously more objective than Julia McGillicuddy's biography of her husband, see Olson, *Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem*, 264–305.

²⁰ American Horse claimed he knocked Fetterman off his horse with a club and killed him with his knife. Interview with American Horse, Aug. 18, 1906, Ricker Collection. For a full account of this deed, see Elbert D. Belish, "American Horse (Wasechun-Tashunka): The Man Who Killed Fetterman," *Annals of Wyoming* 63 (Spring 1991): 42–53.

²¹ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 68. For an essential account of Spotted Tail's dominant role in Brulé affairs prior to his death in 1881, see George E. Hyde, *Spotted Tail's Folk: A History of the Brulé Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961).

²² Historian Ralph K. Andrist felt that Spotted Tail's year in prison convinced him of the futility of resisting the floodtide of white settlement. See his *The Long Death: The Last Days of the Plains Indians* (New York: Collier Books, 1969), 24–25. Spotted Tail may have become more moderate after his imprisonment, but he and his band of Brulés, joining Cheyenne and Arapaho bands and such Sioux bands as Pawnee Killer's, were especially active in the buffalo-rich Republican Valley and in eastern Colorado during the turbulent mid-1860s. A few months prior to Sand Creek, Spotted Tail, according to George Bent, responded to Gen. Robert B. Mitchell's demand that the Lakotas stay out of the Platte Valley by strongly asserting that the valley belonged to his people and that they would cross through it whenever they desired. George E. Hyde, *Life of George Bent: Written from His Letters*, Savoie Lottinville, ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 118–19, 137, 165, 168n, 194, 208n.

²³ As quoted in Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 145.

²⁴ Maynadier was delighted with the positive impact this funeral had on Spotted Tail. "I attach great importance to this ceremony as rendering beyond a doubt the success of the efforts I have made to restore peace." Olson, *Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem*, 24.

²⁵ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 227–28. For a good word portrait of Capt. Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlisle school, see Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 218–19.

²⁶ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 223.

²⁷ George E. Hyde, *A Sioux Chronicle*, foreword by Raymond J. DeMallie (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 58–64; Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 220.

²⁸ Robert M. Utley, *The Lance and the Shield: The*

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Life and Times of Sitting Bull (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 180–85, 230–33.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 91–97, 106–14.

³⁰ For the full quotation, see p.34 in Neil Mangum's "Gall: Sioux Gladiator or White Man's Pawn?" from the *Fifth Annual Symposium[.] Custer Battlefield Historical & Museum Assn., Inc. [H]eld at Hardin, Montana, on June 21, 1991*. An especially analytical and thoughtful account of Elizabeth B. Custer's life is found in Shirley A. Leckie's *Elizabeth Bacon Custer and the Making of a Myth* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

³¹ Mangum, "Gall: Sioux Gladiator or White Man's Pawn?" 31.

³² *Ibid.*, 33–34, 35–37. For McLaughlin's views on the growing controversy between Sitting Bull and the progressive leaders at Standing Rock, see James McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

³³ Entry on Gall by Keith A. Winsell in *Notable Native Americans*, Sharon Malinowski, ed. (New York: Gale Research, Inc., 1995), 155. Gall's allegedly crucial role in the Lakota charge up Deep Coulee towards Calhoun Hill at the Battle of the Little Bighorn has been challenged by Greg Michno in his "Revisionism at the Little Bighorn: The Fall of Gall," *Research Review: The Journal of the Little Big Horn Associates* 10 (June 1996):19–25.

³⁴ Entry on Gall by Herbert T. Hoover in the *Encyclopedia of the American West*, Charles Phillips

and Alan Axelrod, eds. (New York: Simon and Schuster and Prentice Hall International, 1996), 591.

³⁵ Mangum, "Gall: Sioux Gladiator or White Man's Pawn?" 34–35, 38.

³⁶ DeMallie and Parks, *Sioux Indian Religion*, 11.

³⁷ For a good discussion of the Lake Mohonk movement, see Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 203–7.

³⁸ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 251–56. A good account of the implementation of the Dawes Act throughout the West is D. S. Otis, *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973).

³⁹ Mangum, "Gall: Sioux Gladiator or White Man's Pawn?" 37.

⁴⁰ The three members of the Crook Commission were former Ohio Governor Charles Foster, Missouri Senator William Warner, who was national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, and Maj. Gen. George Crook who, despite his military role in the Great Sioux War, was trusted by many Lakota Sioux leaders, including Red Cloud. Olson, *Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem*, 313.

⁴¹ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 252–60.

⁴² Richard E. Jensen, R. Eli Paul, and John E. Carter, *Eyewitness at Wounded Knee* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 3–6. The classic account of the overall Ghost Dance movement and its impact on the Lakota Sioux remains the comprehensive James Mooney, *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, Four-

teenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1892–93 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1896). This government document has been reprinted by the University of Nebraska Press and JG Press.

⁴³ Robert M. Utley, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 146–66.

⁴⁴ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 265–69, 274–76, 280–82. During the Ghost Dance frenzy Red Cloud was kidnapped by hard-line leaders, such as Two Strike and Little Wound. Nevertheless, government authorities, such as the frightened Daniel F. Royer, Indian agent at Pine Ridge, probably provoked the growing crisis more than any of these Lakota leaders by calling for government troops. For a critical evaluation of Royer, see Interview with Robert O. Pugh, Aug. 21, 1907, Ricker Collection.

⁴⁵ Jensen, Paul, and Carter, *Eyewitness at Wounded Knee*, 12.

⁴⁶ Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman*, 277.

⁴⁷ Utley, *Last Days of the Sioux Nation*, 200–30. For the Indian side of this bloody climax in government-Lakota Sioux relations, see Donald F. Danker, ed., "The Wounded Knee interviews of Eli S. Ricker, *Nebraska History*, 62 (Summer 1981), 151–243.

⁴⁸ *Denver Post*, Mar. 5, 2000. For an extensive analysis of the 1973 Wounded Knee encounter, see "A Cry for Justice" in the *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), Feb. 27, 2000.