



The Indian Reservation System on the Upper Missouri, 1865-1890

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Article Summary: The Plains tribes held most of the territory north of the Platte and west of the Missouri to the Rocky Mountains. They lived principally by hunting and preying upon their sedentary neighbors. Forced onto reservations, these nomadic tribes failed to become successful farmers.

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Names: Red Cloud, Sitting Bull

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Photographs / Images: Pine Ridge Agency, Dakota Territory, 1880s; map of Indian agencies on the Upper Missouri, 1865-1895; Crow Creek Agency, Fort Thompson, Dakota Territory, early 1870s; Rosebud Agency, Dakota Territory, early 1880s

List: Indian Agencies on the Upper Missouri, 1865-1895, including years of establishment and discontinuance



Pine Ridge Agency, Dakota Territory, in the 1880's.

THE INDIAN RESERVATION SYSTEM ON THE UPPER MISSOURI, 1865-1890

BY RAY H. MATTISON

To the intelligent observer passing up the Missouri from Omaha to Fort Benton in the summer of 1865, the contrasts in the patterns of Indian life must have been very interesting. Between Omaha and Fort Randall were the reservations of the Omaha, Winnebago, Ponca, and the Yankton Sioux. These Indians were primarily agricultural and sedentary in character although they depended partly on game for their livelihood. They had reluctantly accepted the futility of opposing the advance of the whites and had reconciled themselves to reservation life. At Fort Thompson, some 110 miles above Fort Randall, was the concentration camp of the Santee Sioux. These people, now prisoners of war, had been rounded up following their uprising in Minnesota three years before and would soon be shipped to their new reservation in Nebraska below the Niobrara. Adjacent to the trading post of Fort Berthold at Like-a-Fishhook Village in present North Dakota were the Three Tribes. These semi-agricultural bands, greatly reduced in number from smallpox, had joined together to protect themselves against the Sioux. Otherwise, with the exception of the eastern half of Nebraska, the Plains tribes held most of the territory north of the Platte and west of the Missouri to the Rocky Mountains.¹

¹Charles C. Royce, comp., "Indian Land Cessions in the United States," *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (Washington, 1899), Part II, *passim*.

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By the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851 the Government assigned this vast territory to the Plains Sioux, the Cheyenne, Crow, Arapaho, Gros Ventre, Assiniboin, and Blackfeet. Each year under the terms of this treaty, it sent annuity goods by boat to some of these tribes by way of the Missouri River.² These groups lived principally by hunting and preying on their sedentary neighbors. Since they depended largely upon the roaming buffalo for their food supply, they were essentially nomadic. The Government in 1855 established an agency for the Blackfeet at Fort Benton. However, other than the traders along the Upper Missouri who supplied them with "firewater," blankets, guns, ammunition and other trade goods, the Indians' contacts with the white men had been very few.

Prior to the 1860's the whites had not seriously challenged their possession of this huge domain. Several events during the Civil War, however, greatly disturbed the Northern Plains tribes. The first of these was the invasion of Montana and Idaho following the discoveries of gold in those regions in 1862 and 1863. Thousands of emigrants rushed to Bannack, Virginia City, and other mining camps. These came by way of the Missouri River and by overland routes through territory guaranteed the Indians by treaty. The punitive expeditions of Generals Henry H. Sibley and Alfred H. Sully in the Dakotas during 1863 and 1864, following the uprising in Minnesota, made the Sioux deeply resentful. What made them even more bitter was the establishment of Forts Sully and Rice and the garrisoning of the trading posts of Forts Union and Berthold, all of which were on the Missouri. The end of the Civil War found most of the Northern Plains tribes unfriendly.³

In 1865 President Johnson appointed a commission to conciliate the Upper Missouri Sioux. In October of that year this commission met with the Minniconjou, Lower Brule, Two Kettle, Blackfeet, Sans Arc, Hunkpapa, Yank-

²Charles J. Kappler, comp. and ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington, 1904), II, *passim*.

³Merrill G. Burlingame, *The Montana Frontier* (Helena, 1942), pp. 78-94, 110-121, 128-141; LeRoy R. Hafen and Carl Coke Rister, *Western America* (New York, 1941), pp. 487-489; Charles Lowell Green, "The Indian Reservation System of the Dakotas to 1889," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, XIV, 364-365.

tonai, Upper Yanktonai, and Oglala Sioux at Fort Sully and concluded treaties with these groups. It made similar treaties in 1866 with the Three Tribes at Fort Berthold and the Assiniboin at Fort Union. By these treaties the Indians agreed to permit the establishment of routes of travel through their country.⁴

While the commission negotiated with the Missouri River bands at Fort Sully, troubles had begun in another quarter of the Sioux country. As the result of the Government's announcement in 1865 that it intended to fortify the Bozeman Trail, which ran through the choice hunting grounds in Wyoming of the Northern Plains tribes, Chief Red Cloud and his bands went on the warpath. After a temporary lull in hostilities while the Sioux negotiated at Fort Sully, the Army in 1866 took initial steps toward erecting Forts Philip Kearny and C. F. Smith, both of which were on the Trail. Red Cloud and his followers immediately renewed the war. They carried on a relentless campaign against woodcutters, haying parties, and small detachments sent out from these posts. By the summer of 1868 the Government was willing to treat with Red Cloud on his own terms.⁵

Meanwhile the Government had taken steps to improve its relations with the various Indian tribes. In 1865 Congress appointed a committee to investigate the condition of its long-neglected wards. The committee reported its findings early in 1867. In its report the committee recognized the nation's past errors in dealing with the red man and recommended changes in its machinery for administering Indian affairs.⁶ In the summer of the same year Congress authorized

⁴Kappler, *op. cit.*, II, 883-887, 896-906; George W. Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory* (Chicago, 1915), I, 747-750; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866*, pp. 5, 14, 168-176. Hereafter these reports will be cited CIA.

⁵Hafen and Rister, *op. cit.*, pp. 487-490; Leroy R. Hafen and Francis M. Young, *Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West* (Glendale, 1938), pp. 331-357; Paul I. Wellman, *Death on Horseback* (Philadelphia, 1947), pp. 43-67.

⁶*Senate Report No. 156, 39th Cong., 2d Sess.*; Loring Benson Priest, *Uncle Sam's Stepchildren: The Reformation of the Indian Policy, 1865-1887* (New Brunswick, 1942), pp. 3-8; Laurence M. Schmeckebier, *The Office of Indian Affairs* (Baltimore, 1927), pp. 12-52; Lucy Textor, *Official Relations Between the United States and the Sioux Indians* (Palo Alto, 1896), pp. 11-27.

the President to appoint a commission "to establish peace with certain Indian tribes." This group, known as the "Peace Commission," held councils in 1868 with the various Sioux bands. As a result, a treaty was signed with them⁷ which not only put an end to Red Cloud's War along the Bozeman Trail but deferred a general war with the Plains Sioux for eight years.⁸

The time was now ripe for much-needed reform in Indian administration and policy. The next few years were to witness drastic changes in both. Some of the changes to be effected were along the lines suggested by the Peace Commission. Others, however, were the result of agitation from philanthropic individuals and groups, largely from the East, who, although not always practical, were sincerely interested in the Indian's welfare.

When Gen. U. S. Grant became President in 1869, he inaugurated his "Peace Policy." The principal features of this program were: (1) the appointment of agents by various religious denominations; (2) the organization of the Board of Indian Commissioners; (3) the policy of placing the wilder tribes on reservations and feeding them to keep them peaceable.⁹

Another change which was to take place in this period was the discontinuance of the treaty system. Ever since the nation had achieved independence, it had followed the policy of treating the various Indian tribes as separate nations. In March 1871 this practice was discontinued. Henceforth all agreements with Indian tribes were approved by both houses of Congress.¹⁰

In accordance with the Grant Peace Policy the following Upper Missouri agencies were assigned within the next several years as follows:

⁷This treaty was signed with the Brule, Oglala, Minniconjou, Yanktonai, Hunkpapa, Blackfeet, Cuthead, Two Kettle, Sans Arc and Santee Sioux, and with the Arapaho.

⁸Hafen and Rister, *op. cit.*, pp. 480-490; *House Ex. Doc. No. 97*, 40th Cong., 2d Sess., 1-19; Kappler, *op. cit.*, II, 998-1007.

⁹Robert M. Utley, "The Celebrated Peace Policy of General Grant," *North Dakota History*, XX (July, 1953), 120-141; Textor, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-37. For reasons for the first two features, see *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior*, hereafter cited as SI, 1869, x-xi. For justification for the third, see CIA, 1872, 3-10.

¹⁰Schmeckebier, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-65; Priest, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-102.

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|--|--------------------------------|
| All Nebraska Agencies | Society of Friends (Quakers) |
| Ponca, Yankton, Whetstone, Lower Brule, Cheyenne River, and Crow Creek agencies | Protestant Episcopal Church |
| Grand River (Standing Rock) Agency | Catholic Church |
| Fort Berthold Agency | Congregational Church |
| All Montana agencies ex- cept Flathead | Methodist Church ¹¹ |

In the early 1880's the Government abandoned the policy of nomination of agents by religious societies.¹²

Many believed that the Treaty of 1868 furnished a permanent solution to the problem of the Plains Sioux. In line with its new policy, the Government provided for a permanent reservation for the roving bands, education for the Sioux children, rations for those who settled permanently on the reserve and cash equivalent annuities to the nomadic groups, encouragement and assistance for those who took up farming, and finally, for allotments in severalty.¹³ Unfortunately, the Peace Commission did not foresee the events which were to occur eight years after the signing of the treaty.

As a temporary expedient, Congress in 1868 took steps to put some of the treaties with the Indian tribes into effect. It authorized the expenditure of \$500,000 by Gen. W. T.

¹¹CIA, 1872, 73-74; CIA, 1877, 247-251.

¹²Peter J. Rahill, *The Catholic Missions and Grant's Peace Policy, 1870-1884* (Washington, 1953), pp. 320-324; Priest, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-41.

¹³Among the major provisions of this treaty were: (1) it guaranteed the Sioux all of the territory in present South Dakota west of the Missouri River; (2) all Indians were to be given cash equivalent and clothing rations. Additional rations were provided for a period of four years to those who settled permanently on the reservation; (3) it provided compulsory education for all children between six and sixteen years of age and an elementary school for every thirty children; (4) it provided for subsidizing and assisting those who might engage in farming; (5) the Republican River, the territory north of the Platte River, and the Powder River country were to be reserved for the Indians' hunting grounds; (6) the forts along the Bozeman Trail were to be abandoned; (7) it provided for allotments of lands in severalty; (8) none of the lands of the reservation might be ceded without the consent of three-fourths of the male Indians. (Kappler, *op. cit.*, II, 998-1003; Royce, *op. cit.*, Part II, 848-849, Plate CXVIII.)

Sherman "to carry out treaty stipulations." In August, Sherman established two administrative districts. One of these, comprising present South Dakota west of the Missouri River, was placed under Gen. William S. Harney. In the fall of that year, Harney established agencies near the mouths of Whetstone Creek,¹⁴ Cheyenne River, and Grand River. The Consolidated Crow Creek and Lower Brule Agency, set up earlier, shared in the governing of this newly-created reservation.¹⁵ The War Department records indicate that Harney's services were discontinued in the summer of 1869, so the administration of the area by the Army was apparently supplanted by the Indian Bureau at this time.¹⁶

The first wards at these agencies were, in many instances, wild and intractable. Some of the agents and their employees underwent some harrowing experiences. While crossing their beef on the Missouri, the Indians at the Lower Brule agency overturned their boat, and one brave was drowned. The Indians became excited and demanded the life of a white man. They then besieged the agency employees, who had taken refuge in a log house, and then proceeded to break open the storehouses.¹⁷ The conduct of the Indians at the Cheyenne River and Whetstone agencies was apparently little better.¹⁸ The agent at Grand River, on the other hand, wrote that the employees of his agency were "as safe when out in the Indian encampments as within the enclosures of the military."¹⁹ Nevertheless, the Grand River Agency, in common with Whetstone, Cheyenne River,

¹⁴The Whetstone Agency was moved to a point near White Clay Creek, 150 miles southwest, in 1872.

¹⁵George W. Manypenny, *Our Indian Wards* (Cincinnati, 1880), pp. 210-216, 255-263; Hafen and Rister, *op. cit.*, p. 481; *House Report* No. 29, 40th Cong., 2d Sess.

¹⁶File 701, AGO 1865, War Records Division, National Archives, letter, Commissioner E. S. Parker to Adj. Gen. Townsend, June 15, 1869 indicates that Harney was relieved from Indian duty in June of that year.

¹⁷SI, 1870, I, 682.

¹⁸SI, 1869, 756-757; 1870, I, 671-672, 683-684; Harry H. Anderson, "A History of the Cheyenne River Agency and its Military Post, Fort Bennett, 1868-1891," Ms. M. A. thesis (Vermillion, 1954), pp. 24-31; Captain D. C. Poole, *Among the Sioux of Dakota* (New York, 1881), pp. 90-92.

¹⁹SI, 1871, 941.

and Lower Brule agencies, was garrisoned with troops soon after its establishment.

One of the principal features of the reservation system was the subsisting of the Indians by the Government. This practice, which the Bureau followed for some time in the Nebraska and Dakota agencies along the Missouri, was extended to the Sioux by the Treaty of 1868. The Sioux agencies in 1869 gave the same amount of rations to each person without regard to age. The amount given was as follows:

One and one-half pounds of fresh beef, one-quarter of a pound of corn or meal, one-half of a pound of flour, four pounds of sugar to one hundred persons, two pounds of coffee to one hundred persons, and one pound of salt and one pound of soap when necessary. Four times each month three-quarters of a pound of bacon to each person was issued in lieu of beef.²⁰

The Government modified this ration somewhat in its agreement with the Sioux in 1876.²¹

The issuance of rations seems to have varied at the different agencies and even within the agency itself. In some instances the agent issued the rations to the chiefs who, in turn, made the subdivisions. At Whetstone both systems were practiced. With two bands, the chiefs received all the rations and subdivided them. With another band, the issue was made to the head of the family as follows:

. . . Rations were issued every five days. Before the issue, each head of a family was required to procure a ticket at the agency office, upon which was stated the number of persons in his family and the gross amount of each part of the ration due; and on its being received and taken to the storehouse, the amount called for could be obtained. . . .²²

To weaken the power of the chiefs and provide a more equitable distribution of subsistence goods, the agents of

²⁰Poole, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

²¹The agreement of 1876 provided for the following ration: ". . . for each individual . . . a pound and a half of beef, (or in lieu thereof one-half pound of bacon), one-half pound of flour, and one-half pound of corn; and for every one hundred rations, four pounds of coffee, eight pounds of sugar, and three pounds of beans, or in lieu of said articles the equivalent thereof, in the discretion of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs" (Kappler, *op. cit.*, I, 170.)

²²Poole, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-48.

the Yanktons, the Three Tribes, and the Poncas early discontinued the practice of issuing rations to the chiefs and issued them instead to the heads of families.²³ The agreement of the Sioux of 1876 provided that "Rations shall, in all cases be issued to the head of each separate family."²⁴

The Indian Bureau seems to have adopted no uniform method for the handling of the beef issue until 1890. To supply the large quantities of this product needed by the Indians, the Government contracted with companies and individuals to supply the various agencies with beef on hoof. Companies from Texas and other parts of the country drove thousands of head of cattle to the agencies throughout the West. In some cases, after reaching the agencies, the cattle were divided and given on hoof to the Indians.²⁵ The Indians then drove them to their camps where they rode among them on horses as they would among buffalo, and shot them with rifles or bows and arrows according to their fancy.²⁶ It was not until 1890 that the Indian Bureau condemned the issuing of live beeves to the Indians "as a relic of barbarism" and directed that "this great evil" be corrected.²⁷ In other cases, a professional butcher, employed by the agency, slaughtered the cattle²⁸ while the Indians served as interested spectators. The women carried home "such parts as were rejected by their civilized brother, but by them considered great delicacies."²⁹ At Crow Creek and Lower Brule, the agency slaughtered the cattle and froze the beef before it was issued to the Indians.³⁰

The uses made of the clothing issued the Indians by the Government must have been a disappointment to the proponents of the white man's civilization. The Treaty of 1868 guaranteed "each male person over fourteen years of age, a suit of good substantial woolen clothing." DeWitt C.

²³SI, 1871, 517; CIA, 1873, 240; 1874, 243.

²⁴Kappler, *op. cit.*, I, 170.

²⁵CIA, 1879, 48.

²⁶Poole, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

²⁷CIA, 1890, VIII, CLXVI.

²⁸SI, 1875, I, 759; 1879, I, 142.

²⁹Poole, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

³⁰Henry F. Livingston Diary, Ms, Coe Collection, Yale University Library, entry of December 22, 1874.

Poole, Whetstone agent, wrote that when his Indians received their first issue of hats, overcoats and men's suits, which were originally intended for the Army and colored a dark blue, they at once proceeded to alter them to suit their tastes and fancies. "The experiment," he wrote, "cost more than twenty-five thousand dollars, and was for the time perhaps a misdirected expenditure."³¹

In the earlier reservation period the agency made all issues of rations and annuities directly. One of the chief objections to this system was that the Indians spent a great deal of time going to and from their camps to the agency.³² It was not until the 1890's that the Indian Bureau began to remedy this situation by establishing subissue stations in various parts of the reservations.³³

The cost of feeding the Indians soon proved exorbitant. The Nebraska Winnebagoes, an agricultural tribe which numbered 1,335 souls in 1869, received from the Government seven thousand pounds of beef and the same amount of wheat each week.³⁴ Poole estimated that the value of the rations and supplies issued the Indians at Whetstone Agency amounted to \$30,000 a month.³⁵ The cost for supporting the Sioux Nation from 1870 to 1876 amounted to over \$2,000,000 a year.³⁶

The ration system was designed to be only a stopgap until the Indians could be taught to earn their own livelihood and be given allotments. In the Nebraska agencies, where the Indians had had considerable white contacts and had been placed on lands suitable for agriculture, the agents were able to report considerable progress. The Omahas, who had been placed on their reservation by treaty in 1854,³⁷ were by 1876 living on their own allotments and producing crops surplus to their needs. They had not received rations

³¹Poole, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

³²CIA, 1877; 54; 1890, VIII; Poole, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48; SI, 1886, I, 311.

³³CIA, 1890, VIII.

³⁴James L. Sellers, ed., "Diary of Joseph A. Paxson, Physician to the Winnebago Indians," *Nebraska History*, XXVII (July-September, 1946), 151.

³⁵Poole, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

³⁶CIA, 1875, 191; see also Schmeckebier, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

³⁷Kappler, *op. cit.*, II, 611-614.

for three years.³⁸ The Winnebagoes, who had been given a portion of the Omaha reservation in 1865,³⁹ likewise were living on their own allotments and had made much advancement in farming. Both of these tribes had schools and evinced considerable interest in educating their children.⁴⁰

The Santee Sioux had also made great progress since removal to their reservation below the mouth of the Niobrara in 1866. Most of this tribe was by 1877 living on their own allotments. These Indians had adopted white man's dress; most of them attended church regularly and sent their children to school. The reservation boasted a Government manual labor boarding school and two mission boarding schools.⁴¹

The lot of the Poncas and Three Tribes, in common with that of many of the weaker tribes, was unfortunate. Both were continually preyed upon by their Sioux neighbors.⁴² By carelessness, the Government by the Treaty of 1868 ceded to the Sioux the lands which it had guaranteed the Poncas by treaty in 1865.⁴³ Although grasshoppers and drouth frequently destroyed their crops, this tribe had made some progress in agriculture by 1876. When the Poncas were removed to Indian Territory in the following year, they had made but little progress in education.⁴⁴

Like many others, the Fort Berthold Reservation was ill-suited for agriculture. The agent wrote in 1872 that the Three Tribes were able to raise only about one good crop every three years.⁴⁵ He reported in 1876 that he had issued wagons, carts, harnesses, etc., to them for labor and good conduct. They had cut five hundred cords of wood for sale to steamboats and had put up two hundred tons of hay.⁴⁶ It

³⁸CIA, 1876, 97.

³⁹Kappler, *op. cit.*, II, 874-876.

⁴⁰CIA, 1876, 97, 101-102.

⁴¹CIA, 1876, 100-101; 1877, 147-148.

⁴²CIA, 1869, 312; 1870, 223-225; 1871, 517-518, 520-524; 1872, 266-267; 1873, 230-241; 1874, 218-220; 1875, 241-242, 249; 1876, 28-31, 32-33.

⁴³Kappler, *op. cit.*, II, 875-876; *Sen. Report No. 670*, 46th Cong., 2d Sess., v-xix; CIA, 1877, 21-23.

⁴⁴CIA, 1866, 186-187; 1867, 236; 1868, 188-189; 1871, 517-518; 1873, 239-241; 1874, 218-220; 1875, 248-250.

⁴⁵CIA, 1872, 264.

⁴⁶CIA, 1876, 29.

was not until after the Sioux wars that the Three Tribes acquired enough courage to leave their earthlodges at Like-a-Fishhook Village and went out and took up allotments on their reservation.

The Yankton Sioux were described in 1876 as being in a "transition state," "neither civilized nor yet barbarous." By the Treaty of April 19, 1858, the Government guaranteed this tribe some 430,000 acres on the east bank of the Missouri in present South Dakota.⁴⁷ Their reservation was fairly well suited for agriculture. The agent reported in 1876 that a large number of Yanktons had adopted white man's dress and dwelling. They had made considerable progress in farming and in the raising of sheep. The agency employed Indians in its shops and mills. They were described as being "good workmen in all departments." The Protestant Episcopal Church had five schools and four churches in operation, while the Presbyterians had two churches and two schools on the reservation.⁴⁸

The advancement of the Plains Sioux, whom the Government attempted to settle on the Missouri River reservations under the Treaty of 1868, was relatively slow during the early years. It became increasingly evident that these large reserves were poorly suited for agriculture. The agent at Cheyenne River reported in 1876 that "repeated and persistent attempts [at farming] only meet with an equal number of lamentable failures."⁴⁹ At Standing Rock the agent described the condition of his wards as "one of utter helplessness," as it was and probably would continue to be "impossible for these Indians to become self-sustaining here."⁵⁰ The agent at Crow Creek echoed similar sentiments and recommended that his charges turn to stock raising for a livelihood.⁵¹

Another obstacle which the Bureau encountered was the indifference of the Indians toward becoming self-supporting farmers. "A strong inclination exists among them to live

⁴⁷Kappler, *op. cit.*, II, 776-780.

⁴⁸CIA, 1876, 40-42; see also CIA, 1866, 185-186; 1871, 517-518; 1873, 238; 1874, 257-259; 1875, 255-258.

⁴⁹CIA, 1876, 23.

⁵⁰CIA, 1876, 38.

⁵¹CIA, 1876, 24.

like whites," wrote the agent at Cheyenne River, "but the work whereby such subsistence is obtained is distasteful to the majority of them."⁵² At Lower Brule the Indians were described as "idle, careless, listless and improvident, seeming to have no thought of the future."⁵³ At Crow Creek, on the other hand, the agent reported that his charges were evincing considerable interest in becoming self-sufficient.⁵⁴

The progress of the Plains Sioux in education at the four Missouri River agencies was also slow. In 1876 there were no schools whatever on the Lower Brule and only one on the Standing Rock Reservation.⁵⁵ There were no missions in either. The Protestant Episcopal Church operated two boarding day schools, and the Presbyterian Church maintained two day and industrial schools on the Cheyenne River Reserve. The agent reported the schools there "had been well attended and the results highly satisfactory."⁵⁶ At Crow Creek, the Protestant Episcopal Church had three, one boarding and two day schools. The average attendance for these was only thirty-eight.⁵⁷

The Indians at the Fort Peck Agency, which was established in 1873 for the Assiniboin, Gros Ventres, and various roving bands of the Sioux, had been little affected by the white man's civilization by 1876. Here the Government had made some attempts to interest the Indians in farming. Day schools were being started in that year on the reservation, and a few log houses were being constructed for the Indians.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, the Government's relations with the Sioux Nation had been steadily deteriorating. By the summer of 1876 the nation faced a serious Indian war. The first two years following the signing of the Treaty of 1868 were peaceful. Unfortunately, this period of tranquility was short-lived. The surveying expeditions, sent out by the Northern Pacific Railroad under strong military escorts in 1871, 1872

⁵²CIA, 1876, 23.

⁵³CIA, 1876, 31.

⁵⁴CIA, 1876, 24.

⁵⁵CIA, 1876, 31-32, 40.

⁵⁶CIA, 1876, 23.

⁵⁷CIA, 1876, 31.

⁵⁸CIA, 1876, 91-93.

and 1873, greatly disturbed the Sioux. However, the bankruptcy of that company in 1873 deferred the threatened invasion of their country by the railroad. The expedition of Gen. George A. Custer into the Black Hills in 1874, together with the invasion of that region by miners which followed, were gross violations of the Treaty of 1868. By early 1876 the Indians were convinced that they would lose their reservation. Sitting Bull, who had never signed the treaty and who had refused to become a reservation Indian, rallied around him in the unceded territory of Montana the dissatisfied elements among the Sioux. As the result of complaints that he and his followers were making raids on whites and friendly Indians, the Army in the fall of 1875 decided to take action. Unfortunately, in its subsequent proceedings, it made no distinction between the friendly and hostile groups.⁵⁹

By the middle of the following year the Government found a full-scale Indian war on its hands in which both the innocent and guilty Sioux suffered. Owing to the shortage of rations, many of the agency Indians had gone out, with the consent of their agents, in the fall and winter of 1875-76 to hunt buffalo in the unceded territory. They found it impossible to comply with the Commissioner's ultimatum to return to their reservations by January 31, 1876, so they were labeled as "hostile" and made subject to punishment by the military. Although in the war which followed, the Indians won the Battle of the Little Bighorn, they were largely reduced by the end of the winter of 1876-1877. The hostiles under Sitting Bull fled into Canada.⁶⁰

The Government, in the meantime, had taken steps to place most of the agency Sioux under military control. At the request of General Sheridan, the Interior Department on July 26, 1876 conceded the supervision of the Lower Brule, Cheyenne River and Standing Rock agencies to the Army.⁶¹ This action was probably the result of the prevailing belief

⁵⁹Doane Robinson, "History of the Sioux Indians," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, II (1904), 394-402; *Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 9*, 44th Cong., 2d Sess., 12-13; CIA, 1876, XIV-XV.

⁶⁰*Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 9*, 44th Cong., 2d Sess., 12-13; Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 423-438.

⁶¹SI, 1877, 410-411.

that many of the agency Indians had joined the hostiles while others were supplying the latter with arms, ammunition, ponies, and provisions. In the late summer the commanding officer at the military post at Standing Rock removed Agent John Burke for giving assistance to the hostiles and replaced him with a military officer.⁶² In October strong military detachments arrived at the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River agencies and proceeded to confiscate the ponies and mules, numbering about 2,200 to 2,300 in all, and the arms of the Indians.⁶³ Many of the Indians on both reservations fled to other agencies.⁶⁴

In the midst of the Army's campaigns in the summer and fall of 1876, the Government took advantage of the situation to wrest new concessions from the Sioux. In accordance with an Act of Congress of August 15, 1876, the President appointed a new commission to negotiate with the Sioux tribes and obtain the Black Hills. During September and October the commission secured the signatures of the leading chiefs of the Spotted Tail, Red Cloud, Crow Creek, Lower Brule, Standing Rock, Cheyenne River and Santee Bands.⁶⁵ The Indians were at the mercy of the Army so they had no alternative but to accept the dictates of a superior power. By the agreement signed, the Sioux relinquished the Black Hills, their hunting grounds in Nebraska, and the unceded lands east of the Powder River in Wyoming and Montana. The Indians, in return, were promised rations until they should become self-supporting.⁶⁶

A factor which greatly affected the Government's relations with the Plains Indians at this time was the disappearance of the bison. Before the coming of the white man, this animal was the main source of food supply for the nomadic tribes. By the early 1870's the buffalo had almost

⁶²Standing Rock Superintendency, Records of the Office of Indian Affairs, National Archives, Capt. R. E. Johnson to Col. W. P. Carlin, Dec. 20, 1876.

⁶³*Ibid.*; Gen. P. H. Sheridan to Gen. W. T. Sherman, Oct. 26, 1876; SI, 1877, 448-449; Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-108.

⁶⁴CIA, 1877, 51-54, 71-75.

⁶⁵*Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 9, 44th Cong., 2d Sess.*; Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 439-447.

⁶⁶Kappler, *op. cit.*, I, 168-172; Royce, *op. cit.*, pp. 888-889, Plates CXVIII and CLXXIII.

entirely disappeared from the region along the west bank of the Missouri.⁶⁷ During the late 1870's professional buffalo hunters slaughtered these animals by the thousands, and by the middle 1880's they were nearing extinction. The Indians held their last buffalo hunt on the Cheyenne River Reservation in 1880; on the Standing Rock Reserve in October 1883.⁶⁸ The agent at Fort Peck reported in 1882 that there were few buffalo remaining in that vicinity.⁶⁹ With the disappearance of the bison on the Northern Plains, the Indians were left almost entirely dependent on the gratuity of the Great White Father for their livelihood.

During the late 1870's and early 1880's the Army continued its grim task of rounding up the roving Plains tribes and placing them on reservations. In 1881, Chief Gall, Sitting Bull, and large bands of hostiles, numbering over 1,300, who had fled into Canada, gave themselves up to American authorities.⁷⁰ These, together with others who had surrendered, eventually settled on the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Reservations.⁷¹

At the same time the Government continued to reduce the Indian lands. In the fall and winter of 1877-1878 the Indian Bureau moved the Spotted Tail and Red Cloud bands from Nebraska, where they had lost their lands by the agreement of 1876,⁷² to new agencies on the Missouri. A commission in the following summer selected the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations respectively for these groups.⁷³ By executive order the President in August 1879 restored a large strip of Sioux lands on the east bank of the Missouri River in South Dakota to the public domain.⁷⁴ In July of the following year the Fort Peck bands lost a large strip of

⁶⁷Ray H. Mattison, ed., "The Diary of Surgeon Washington Matthews, Fort Rice, D. T.,," *North Dakota History*, XXI (Jan.-April, 1954), 65; CIA, 1871, 526.

⁶⁸E. Douglas Branch, *The Hunting of the Buffalo* (New York, 1929), pp. 211-214; 219; Mari Sandoz, *The Buffalo Hunters* (New York, 1954), pp. 333-358.

⁶⁹CIA, 1882, 170-172.

⁷⁰*Report of the Secretary of War, 1881-1882*, 88-106.

⁷¹CIA, 1881, 115-118; 1882, 78-80; 103-107.

⁷²Kappler, *op. cit.*, I, 169.

⁷³SI, 1878, 532-533, 652-657.

⁷⁴Kappler, *op. cit.*, I, 899; Royce, *op. cit.*, pp. 896-897, Plate CXIX.

their best hunting ground in eastern Montana south of the Missouri.⁷⁵

With the ending of the Indian wars and the placing of the various tribes on reservations, the role of the military in controlling the red man decreased. For many years the Army had pointed out the numerous frauds and instances of mismanagement of the Indians by the Interior Department to which they had been transferred in 1849. Through its friends in Congress, the military continued its pressure through the late 1860's and throughout the 1870's to have the Indian Bureau again placed under the War Department. Proponents of this change introduced bill after bill in Congress to achieve this end.⁷⁶ The friends of civilian control were able to build up an equally strong case for their cause, so all the measures proposing transfer met defeat.⁷⁷ After 1879 this pressure subsided, and the friends of the Indians sought more fundamental reforms.⁷⁸

Public opinion, on the other hand, was to play an increasing part in shaping the Nation's policies toward its charges. Prior to 1865 the West was openly hostile to the red man, while the East was indifferent to him.⁷⁹ From 1865 to 1880, a number of public-spirited individuals, such as William Welsh, Bishop H. B. Whipple, and George Manypenny, who were sincerely sympathetic toward the Indians, were particularly active in promoting the interests of the Upper Missouri River tribes.⁸⁰ Numerous frauds, the invasion of the Black Hills by the whites, and the Ponca Removal from Nebraska in 1877 and its aftermath all stimulated public opinion in favor of the red man.⁸¹ The period from 1879 to 1885 was to see the formation of several groups,

⁷⁵Kappler, *op. cit.*, I, 856-857; Royce, *op. cit.*, pp. 902-903, Plate CXIX.

⁷⁶*House Report* No. 240, 44th Cong., 1st Sess.; *House Report* No. 354, 44th Cong., 1st Sess.; *House Report* No. 241, 45th Cong., 3d Sess.; *House Report* No. 1393, 40th Cong., 2d Sess.; Elwell S. Otis, *The Indian Question* (New York, 1878), pp. 198-220.

⁷⁷*Sen. Ex. Doc.* No. 9, 44th Cong., 2d Sess., 14-15; *Sen. Report* No. 693, 45th Cong., 3d Sess.; Manypenny, *op. cit.*; Priest, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-23.

⁷⁸Priest, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-23.

⁷⁹Schmeckebier, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁸⁰Priest, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-65.

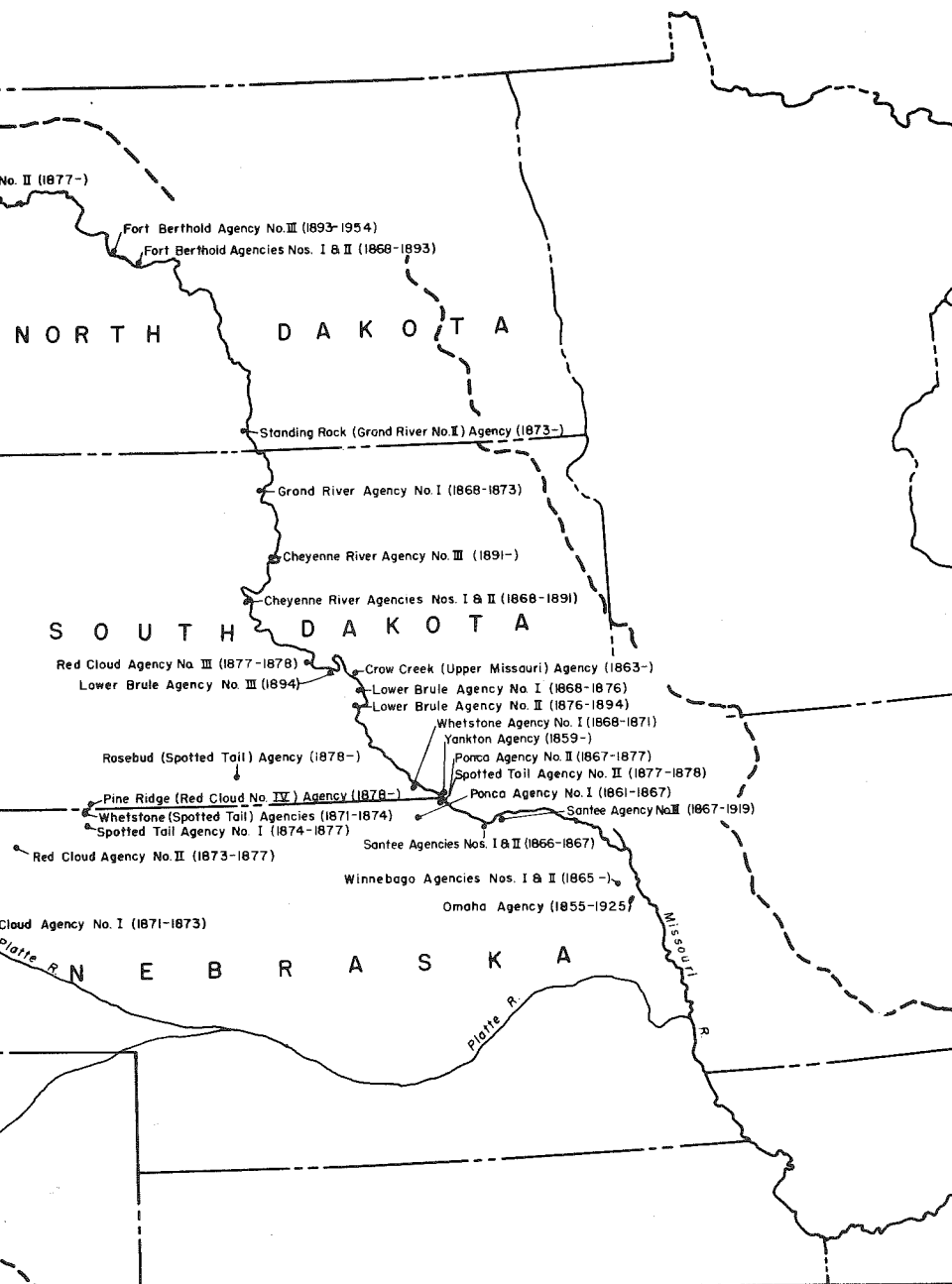
⁸¹*Ibid.*, pp. 76-80.

INDIAN AGENCIES ON THE U



Redrawn from base map supplied by the U.S. Department of the Interior, showing the limits of the Missouri River Basin.

UPPER MISSOURI, 1865-1895



of the Interior Geological Survey. Dashed line indicates the

such as the Women's National Indian Association, the Indian Rights Association, the Lake Mohonk conferences, the National Indian Defense Association, all of which were dedicated to the protection of the Indians' interests.⁸² These organizations were very active in propagandizing for Indian reforms.⁸³

By the late 1870's the Indian Bureau was in a position to compel all of its reluctant wards to conform to its policy or starve. With the aid of the Army, it had accomplished its first objective of placing them on reservations and making the Indians entirely dependent on the Government for subsistence. Its next main objective was to make them self-supporting like their white brothers so they could take a place among the latter as citizens. According to the Secretary of the Interior in 1879, this was to be accomplished as follows:

1. To set the Indians to work as agriculturists or herders, thus to break up their habits of savage life and to make them self-supporting.

2. To educate their youth of both sexes, so as to introduce to the growing generation civilized ideas, wants, and aspirations.

3. To allot parcels of land to Indians in severalty and to give them individual title to their farms in fee, inalienable for a certain period, thus to foster the pride of individual ownership of property instead of their formal dependence upon the tribe, with its territory held in common.

4. When settlement in severalty with individual title is accomplished, to dispose, with their consent, of those lands on their reservations which are not settled and used by them, the proceeds to form a fund for their benefit, which will gradually relieve the government of the expenses at present provided for by annual appropriations.

5. When this is accomplished, to treat the Indians like other inhabitants, under the laws of the land.⁸⁴

Although this program had been repeatedly announced for several years, it was not until the Plains tribes were reduced to a condition of helplessness in the late 1870's that the Bureau was able to put it into operation. The Government,

⁸²*Ibid.*, pp. 81-86.

⁸³*Ibid.*, pp. 88-92; Textor, *op. cit.*; pp. 39-40.

⁸⁴SI, 1879, I, 5.

meanwhile, was to continue its policy of feeding its charges until they could earn their livelihood.

The Bureau found many established habits and customs in the Indian's mode of living which were obstacles in its program for reforming him. His communistic concepts of property were alien to the whites. His marriage, divorce, and burial customs, his so-called "loose" morals, the practice of polygamy and plural marriages were particularly offensive. The red man's tribal village life, characterized by the dominance of chiefs and medicine men, was regarded as an obstacle to progress. His unsanitary habitations were breeding grounds for diseases. His native dances were regarded as relics of barbarism. The Indian's roving habits prevented him from settling down to agricultural pursuits. His native garb and language prevented him from being assimilated by white communities. The practice of women doing the more arduous and routine tasks, a holdover from the hunting stage economy, was repugnant to the whites. While some advancement had been made in remedying these alleged evils, the Indian still had to make a great deal of "progress" before he could take his place by the side of the white man.

The Indian agents were to find considerable opposition among both their charges and the whites in implementing the Bureau's program. The Indians, conservative by nature, were reluctant to make changes. Many of the old chiefs and medicine men, foreseeing loss of power and prestige, evinced considerable opposition. Traders, who exploited the Indians, did not care to see the Indians become self-supporting. Whiskey peddlers, squaw men, and others, who preyed upon the red man, did not wish to see his lot improved. These elements made the work of the agent a very difficult one.

The success of the program depended in a large measure on the quality of the personnel who administered it, particularly the Indian agent. Earlier he was assisted by interpreters, farmers, blacksmiths, and mechanics who were directly under his control.⁸⁵ The missionaries, although not under agency control, usually gave moral support to the agent, particularly if he were interested in the Indians'

⁸⁵Green, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

welfare. In case the agent wished to expel some obnoxious white from the reservation, he was authorized to call upon the military to assist him. However, as long as the Indian was not dependent upon the Government for his livelihood, the agent could not normally exercise more than nominal control over him.

The power of the agent grew as the Indians' dependence upon the Government increased. By the late 1870's it was practically absolute, particularly among the Plains tribes. He could and frequently did bend the Indians to his wishes by cutting off their rations.⁸⁶ About the only recourse the Indian had was to complain to the commanding officer of the nearest military post who might write a letter of complaint in his behalf or submit a petition for him to the Great White Father in Washington.⁸⁷

Too frequently the quality of the man selected for agent left much to be desired. The Indian Bureau repeatedly complained that it was difficult, if not impossible, to obtain qualified agents for a salary of \$1,500 a year and urged that the stipend be increased.⁸⁸ The agents also complained of their inadequate salaries. In resigning, the agent at Fort Berthold in 1875 wrote that his salary was "entirely too small a consideration for the responsibility and annoyance to which an agent is subjected."⁸⁹ At Standing Rock, the agent wrote in 1877, "I am becoming dissatisfied with my position and unless Congress provides an increase in Indian Agents' salaries I do not think I can in justice to my family and myself remain here."⁹⁰

⁸⁶Livingston Diary, entry of March 13, 1874; Standing Rock Superintendency, Carlin to Asst. Adj. Gen., Department of Dakota, Oct. 17, 1877; CIA, 1871, 935; 1879,, 142; 1882, 96; 1885, 287-289.

⁸⁷Fort Berthold Superintendency, petition from the Arickaree Tribe to the President through the commanding officer at Fort Stevenson, May 6, 1874; Petition from the chiefs and headmen of the Three Tribes to the President through the commanding officer of Fort Stevenson, June 15, 1875; Arickaree chiefs to the President, June 7, 1876; Wolf Chief to CIA, No. 15, 1889, Oct. 19, 1889; Standing Rock Superintendency, Carlin to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Dak., Oct. 17, 1877.

⁸⁸CIA, 1871, 5; 1882, 2-3; SI, 1876, 382-383; 1877, 402-403.

⁸⁹CIA, 1875, 242.

⁹⁰Standing Rock Superintendency, Hughes to CIA, June 27, 1877.

Working and living conditions at many of the agencies were deplorable. The Acting Agent at Fort Peck described the discouraging conditions at that time which many officials found when they took over their posts:

. . . They [the agents] arrive at their agency utterly ignorant of what their duties and responsibilities are to be. Ignorant of all the surroundings, they find themselves and families away from civilization, without society, and encompassed by discomforts. Instead of a comfortable, furnished house, as they have been led to believe they may expect, they find a *shack*, in many instances, which barely suffices to shelter them from the weather. They become disgusted; too poor to return from whence they came, they determine to make the best of a bad bargain; thrust their relatives and friends, to whom they have promised places, into every office under their control which pays, regardless of fitness, settle themselves down, and permit things to go to the ——. ⁹¹

The agent at Standing Rock in 1877 complained of the living conditions at that place. The winters were severe. In the summer he was "devoured by the day and night with Mosquitoes, Fleas and Bed Bugs." ⁹²

The combined factors of inadequate salary and unfavorable living conditions resulted in frequent change in agents. This, of course, was reflected in turn in poor administration of Indian affairs. The agent at Fort Berthold in 1879 attributed the lack of progress on the part of his wards to the fact that there had been five agents at that place in the preceding eight years. ⁹³ The special agent at Fort Peck wrote, "Four agents in four years is sufficient in itself to account for the disreputable conditions found to exist here." ⁹⁴

The period from 1876 to 1890 was to see a number of administrative changes which included the establishment of new machinery and new laws and regulations—most of which were designed to strengthen the position of the Indian agent. To assist him in enforcing regulations and with routine tasks, Congress in 1878 authorized the establishment of the Indian police. ⁹⁵ In 1883, the Secretary of the Interior authorized

⁹¹CIA, 1886, 184.

⁹²Standing Rock Superintendency, Hughes to CIA, June 27, 1877.

⁹³CIA, 1879, 29-32.

⁹⁴CIA, 1886, 183.

⁹⁵U. S. *Statutes at Large*, XX, 86.

the creation of the Court of Indian Offenses to try Indians for infractions of rules promulgated by the Bureau.⁹⁶ An act approved March 3, 1885 made the Indians on reservations answerable to the United States courts for certain crimes.⁹⁷

The Indian police system became a permanent feature on many of the reservations. The Bureau looked upon it as a self-disciplinary organization which would curtail the powers of the chiefs and lessen the influence of the squaw men.⁹⁸ Within a few years most of the Upper Missouri agencies established Indian police systems.⁹⁹ The police were generally accepted in good faith by the other Indians. Only at Lower Brule did the introduction of the system encounter strong opposition. Here in 1879 a party of about 150 young men under the leadership of one of the chiefs attacked the houses and property of the police force, broke the doors and windows, and shot their dogs, chickens, and hogs. They then put their guns to the breasts of the police and compelled them to renounce their promises to serve.¹⁰⁰

The police assisted the agent in many ways. Although their work was principally to preserve order, prohibit illegal traffic in liquor, and arrest offenders, they also served as guards at ration issues and annuity payments, protected government property, restored lost and stolen property to its rightful owners, drove out timber thieves and trespassers, returned truant pupils to schools, and made arrests for disorderly conduct and other offenses. They also relieved the agent in many instances of the necessity of calling on the military for assistance.¹⁰¹ The police, of course, were made up of "progressives," those sympathetic with the Bureau's program. The success of the Indian police was summarized by the Commissioner who reported in 1890, "The testimony of the various agents is almost universal that they [the police] are proving themselves worthy of confidence and that they render valuable service in maintaining order and suppressing crime."¹⁰²

⁹⁶Schmeckebier, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

⁹⁷Kappler, *op. cit.*, I, 32-33.

⁹⁸SI, 1880, I, 88-89.

⁹⁹CIA, 1879, 27, 28, 31; 1880, 38, 131; 1881, 49, 113.

¹⁰⁰SI, 1879, I, 142.

¹⁰¹CIA, 1881, 13; 1890, XC.

¹⁰²CIA, 1890, XC.

The Courts of Indian Offenses, likewise, were designed to give the Indians a measure of self-government. They were originally established to curb certain practices, such as "heathenish" dances, plural marriages, the works of the medicine men, and the custom of destroying or distributing property on the death of an individual, which the Bureau regarded as "a great hindrance to the civilization of the Indians."¹⁰³ The civil jurisdiction of the courts was the same as that of the justices of peace of the states or territories in which they were located.¹⁰⁴ The courts comprised three members,¹⁰⁵ and the agent could override their decisions. Within a few years after their authorization, most of the Upper Missouri agencies had these courts.¹⁰⁶ According to the Commissioner in 1889, "notwithstanding their imperfections and primitive character, these so-called courts have been of great benefit to the Indians and of material assistance to the agents."¹⁰⁷ Like the Indian police system, the Court of Indian Offenses became a permanent part of the reservation machinery.

The report of the Standing Rock agent in 1890 gave a picture of the work of the court on that reservation. The members were John Grass and Gall, former lieutenants of Sitting Bull who had become "progressives," and Standing Soldier. The court in that year tried ninety-one criminal cases as follows:

Adultery, 8; assault, 9; attempt at rape, 10; taking second wife, 3; taking second husband, 2; elopement with another man's wife, 3; desertion of wife and family by husband, 7; desertion of husband and family by wife, 3; seduction, 1; resisting arrest by police, 6; abusive language, 2; maiming cattle, 3; malicious lying, 1; evil speaking, 1;

¹⁰³CIA, 1888, xxix.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.* The offenses triable by the courts were the sun dance, scalp dance, war dance, plural marriages, the practices of the medicine man, the destruction or theft of property and the practice of buying wives. These were offenses punishable by withholding rations, fines, and hard work. Other cases under their jurisdiction were misdemeanors committed by Indians, civil suits in which Indians were parties thereto, cases of intoxication and violations of the liquor regulations.

¹⁰⁵CIA, 1890, LXXIII.

¹⁰⁶CIA, 1884, 117, 118, 124; 1885, 18, 56, 60.

¹⁰⁷CIA, 1889, 26.

wife beating, 1; offering insult to married woman, 4; selling rations, 2; drunkenness, 2; larceny, 4; family quarrels, incompatibility, etc., 19.¹⁰⁸

The punishment imposed by the court for the above offenses was principally imprisonment in the agency guardhouse, at hard labor during the day, for a period of from ten to ninety days. In eleven cases the offenders forfeited guns. In other instances they were required to make good property destroyed. The court also imposed cash fines amounting to eighty-seven dollars.¹⁰⁹

While the Indian Bureau was able to enforce its regulations among its charges, it frequently found itself helpless in coping with white offenders. Whiskey peddlers, living outside the reservations, continued to dispense with their "forty rod" to the red man without restraint.¹¹⁰ Steamboat employees sold liquor to the woodhawks who in turn traded it to the Indians with little fear of being caught. Squaw men, who claimed the rights of full-bloods by reason of marriage to Indian women, exercised a demoralizing influence.¹¹¹ Soldiers from military posts adjacent to the agencies but outside the agency jurisdiction continued to debase the Indians, particularly the women.¹¹² It was a common practice for white settlers to steal wood from the reservations. When apprehended and tried in white courts, they were usually acquitted.¹¹³

It was the objective of the Bureau to compel the Indians to settle down to farming. This could not be accomplished as long as they were permitted to travel at will from one reservation to another. To curtail their roving propensities the Bureau issued an order requiring that its wards be

¹⁰⁸CIA, 1890, 40-41; See also the reports of the agents of the Omahas and Winnebagoes and for the Lower Brule Indians, CIA, 1884, 124; 1890, 47.

¹⁰⁹CIA, 1890, 40-41.

¹¹⁰Poole, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79; CIA, 1874, 240; SI, 1881, II, 100-101; 1882, II, 10-11; 1884, II, 64-67; 1888, II, 34.

¹¹¹Richard I. Dodge, *Our Wild Indians* (Hartford, 1882), pp. 600-606; CIA, 71-75; SI, 1878, 539-542; 1879, I, 104; 1884, II, 64-67.

¹¹²CIA, 1875, 244-248; 1883, 162; SI, 1880, I, 173-180; Standing Rock Superintendency, Hughes to CIA, May 14, 1878; J. M. Green to Hughes, June 14, 1878.

¹¹³Everett N. Dick, *The Sod House Frontier, 1854-1890* (Lincoln, 1954), pp. 256-257; SI, 1885, II, 17-18; CIA, 1888, 34.

required to have passes, signed by their respective agents, authorizing them to visit other agencies. Although the issuance of such permits was discouraged,¹¹⁴ the Indians somehow obtained passes and continued their traveling. The Standing Rock agent in 1879 reported that 207 Fort Berthold Indians had recently visited his agency. They had spent five days with his Indians "dancing, feasting and exchanging presents," during which time the "corn-fields and hay, at the most critical time, were entirely neglected." When the Fort Berthold Indians had left, his own wards "were without shirts, hats and other necessary garments, having given them away."¹¹⁵ The Omaha and Winnebago agent also complained that the visiting custom had reduced his charges almost to a condition of pauperism.¹¹⁶

Following 1876 the Government intensified its educational efforts. The Treaty of 1868 provided compulsory education for children from six to sixteen years of age for all the Sioux bands which signed it.¹¹⁷ Prior to the Sioux War the Government had done little toward providing schools for the Indians in the Dakotas and Montana. Since the Bureau's program for the civilizing of the Indians, put in operation toward the close of the war, provided for universal education of their children, the Government pushed forward its program of supplying them with schools. At first the agents encountered some opposition from the parents. Some of the officials found it necessary to cut off the rations from entire families before the parents would co-operate in sending their children to school.¹¹⁸ By the end of the 1880's most of this opposition had ceased. The Cheyenne River agent reported in 1889 that most of the parents sent their children to school without any compulsion and that it was rarely necessary to use the police to compel attendance.¹¹⁹ They were, however, reluctant to send their children to schools away from the reservation.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴SI, 1878, 539-542.

¹¹⁵SI, 1879, I, 152-156.

¹¹⁶CIA, 1883, 165.

¹¹⁷Kappler, *op. cit.*, II, 1,000.

¹¹⁸Green, *op. cit.*, 383-384; CIA, 1882, 89-90.

¹¹⁹CIA, 1889, 132.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*; CIA, 1890, 72.

The period from 1876 to 1890 was also one of great missionary activity in most of the Upper Missouri reservations. Owing to the greater interest evinced in Indian affairs by eastern philanthropic groups and individuals, various missionary and church groups supplemented the educational work of the Government. Prior to that time, the Presbyterians and Congregationalists had established mission schools among the Omahas, the Santee and Yankton Sioux and the Cheyenne River Indians. After 1876 these denominations continued to be active, and the Episcopalians, Catholics and Methodists built a number of mission schools. Some of these missions, known as contract schools, received subsidies from the Government.

During this period the Congregationalists and Presbyterians continued their work among the Omahas and extended it in the Santee, Yankton, Cheyenne River, Standing Rock, and Fort Berthold reservations. The labors of Rev. Stephen R. Riggs and Dr. T. S. Williamson among the Santees were carried on in the 1870's and in the following years by the former's son, Alfred. Under the latter's leadership, the Santee Normal Training School became an important institution for the training of teachers for the Sioux Nation. Rev. John P. Williamson was very active on the Yankton Reservation. Rev. Thomas L. Riggs, another son of Stephen Riggs, organized a number of missions and churches on the Cheyenne and Standing Rock reservations. On the Fort Berthold Reserve, Rev. C. W. Hall in 1876 organized a boarding school mission which functions to this day.¹²¹

The Protestant Episcopal Church was not behind the Congregationalists and Presbyterians in its missionary efforts. Under the leadership of Rev. William H. Hare, missionary bishop of South Dakota, the church in the 1870's established mission boarding schools and a number of churches in the Santee, Yankton, Cheyenne River, and Standing Rock Reservations. Two of the former, the Hope

¹²¹Winifred W. Barton, *John P. Williamson, A Brother to the Sioux* (New York, 1919); Stephen R. Riggs, *Mary and I, Forty Years With the Sioux* (Chicago, 1880).

Mission at Springfield, South Dakota, and the St. Elizabeth Mission on the Standing Rock Reservation, survive.¹²²

Although the Catholics entered the missionary field among the Sioux tribes somewhat later than the Protestant denominations mentioned above, they played a no less important role in the education and Christianization of the Indian. Of the Upper Missouri agencies, the Government, under the "peace policy," assigned only the Standing Rock Agency to that denomination. Under the leadership of Bishop Martin Marty the Catholics established a number of churches and several boarding schools in the various Sioux reservations on the Missouri. Two of the boarding schools in South Dakota, the Immaculate Conception Mission at Stephan and the St. Paul Mission at Marty, are still active in educational work among the Indians.¹²³

By the end of the 1880's most of the reservations on the Upper Missouri had provided educational facilities for the Indian youth. In 1889 the Commissioner reported that the Bureau was conducting eighteen day and eleven boarding schools there. In addition to these, religious denominations were operating six boarding schools under contract. Two boarding schools were maintained jointly by the Government and religious societies.¹²⁴ The agents of the Yanktons, Santees, Winnebagoes, and Omahas reported in 1890 that the educational facilities on those reservations were adequate for their existing needs.¹²⁵ The Winnebago agent, however, complained that the "frequent changes and unfit appointments" in the educational branch of the Indian Service, resulting from political influence, had undermined the morale and efficiency of the schools on that reservation. He commented, "This condition is hard on the Indian children. It may be better that they never learn such civilization."¹²⁶

¹²²M. A. DeWolfe Howe, *The Life and Labors of Bishop Hare* (New York, 1911); K. Brent Woodruff, "The Episcopal Mission to the Dakotas," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, XVII, 553-603; Frances Chamberlain Holley, *Once Their Home or Our Legacy from the Dakotahs* (Chicago, 1892), 190-195.

¹²³Sister Mary Claudia Duratchek, *Crusading Along Sioux Trails* (Yankton, 1946); Sister Mary Clement Fitzgerald, "Bishop Marty and His Sioux Missions," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, XX, 525-558.

¹²⁴CIA, 1889, 380-387.

¹²⁵CIA, 1890, 72, 138, 140, 143.

¹²⁶CIA, 1889, 239.

These schools provided both general and vocational training. The day schools offered only elementary courses to the Indian children. At the boarding schools the boys were given vocational training in addition to their regular courses, while the girls were instructed in household arts. The Government also operated nonreservation schools, such as Hampton Institute, Genoa School, Carlisle Institute, and Haskell Institute, where young Indian men and women were given advanced training.¹²⁷ Many of the more promising Upper Missouri Indian youths attended these nonreservation schools.

The Government also took an increased interest in the physical well-being of its wards. In addition to encouraging them to improve their housing, which was frequently a breeding ground for vermin and disease,¹²⁸ it provided each of the agencies with one or several physicians. At first these men met considerable competition with the native medicine man in whom most of the older generation had confidence. As time passed his influence decreased, and the Indians more and more utilized the services of the agency physicians.¹²⁹

A study of the agents' reports from 1880 to 1890 indicates that the birth and death rates among the Indians were about equal. Epidemics of whooping cough, influenza, and measles took heavy toll among them.¹³⁰ "Consumption and scrofula," wrote the Yankton agent in 1890, "which were unknown among the Indians in their wild state seem now to have obtained a permanent hold on them and cause more deaths than all other diseases combined." He attributed the high death rate to their "extreme poverty, an insufficiency of food, poorly constructed houses, and this rigorous climate."¹³¹ The general tenor of the other agents' reports was much the same.¹³² Pulmonary and respiratory diseases and consti-

¹²⁷Schmeckebier, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-220.

¹²⁸CIA, 1883, 86-88; SI, 1883, II, 105-110.

¹²⁹CIA Reports, 1880-1890.

¹³⁰CIA, 1888, 170; 1889, 137; 1890, 39, 41, 44, 72.

¹³¹CIA, 1890, 72.

¹³²CIA, 1887, 228; 1888, 25-29, 59-64; 1889, 170, 247; 1890, 30-36; 1891, 397; SI, 1881, II, 115-118; 1882, II, 103-107; 1885, II, 242-244; 1887, II, 130-135.

tutional diseases of a venereal character also killed many.¹³³ Vaccination apparently prevented the earlier heavy losses among the Indians from smallpox.¹³⁴ The high death rate on many of the reservations, resulting in many cases from inadequate diet and housing, was a very good index of the Indian's progress.

Perhaps with the view of impressing the Commissioner with their alleged efficiency, most of the agents in the late 1870's and during the 1880's painted glowing pictures of their charges' progress. The Indians, they wrote, were emerging from a condition of barbarism and dependence upon the Government. With the assistance of the schools and churches, the Indians would soon become, when the older generation passed away, self-supporting and able to fit into society as citizens. The following excerpt from the Crow Creek agent's report was quite typical:¹³⁵

The future of these Indians is full of promise, if kindly, firm and honest efforts can be made for them for a time, schools properly conducted, lands given in severalty, and a sufficient police force to enforce orders and punish crime. I feel confident that the people will steadily improve and eventually become fit for citizenship and self-maintenance.

Others, however, took a dim view of the red man's advancement. The agent of the Yanktons wrote in 1885 that after twenty-five years of efforts his Indians had "only poor houses, dirt roofs, earth floors" and "were but little more civilized in their mode of living than they were in savage life."¹³⁶ The acting agent at Fort Peck in 1886 could see that his charges, with the exception of the school children, "have made no progress in civilization in the past thirty years."¹³⁷

In spite of the optimistic reports of most of the agents, the Indians by 1890 were far from being self-supporting. It was becoming increasingly evident that the Dakota and Montana reservations were not suited for farming. Although the Indians' efforts to raise crops occasionally met with

¹³³SI, 1882, II, 103-107; 1885, II, 242-244; CIA, 1888, 165; 1889, 247; 1890, 32, 132, 139.

¹³⁴CIA, 1882, 171-172.

¹³⁵CIA, 1885, 24; see also CIA, 1886, 92; 1887, 38; 1888, 38.

¹³⁶CIA, 1885, 283.

¹³⁷CIA, 1886, 401-403.

success, they were, for the most part, partial or complete failures. The following excerpt from the Cheyenne River agent in 1887 reflects the views of several of the agents:

Since about 1872 efforts have been put forth by every agent to make agriculturists of these Indians, but the soil and climate will not allow it. The amount of money that has been expended by the Government in this time for agricultural implements of all kinds, fence wire and seeds many times exceeds the value of all that has been raised. . . .¹³⁸

Continued crop failures caused the agents at Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, and Fort Berthold to recommend that the Indians abandon agriculture and turn to stock raising.¹³⁹

The failure of these Indians to become successful farmers forced them to continue to rely on rations. A study of the contracts made by the Bureau during the period from 1876 to 1885 inclusive indicates that an average of 14,000,000 pounds of beef was driven annually to the Upper Missouri agencies. In 1885 they received approximately 10,000,000 pounds.¹⁴⁰ In justification of the feeding policy the Commissioner argued that it was much cheaper to support the Indians than to fight them.¹⁴¹ At Crow Creek and at the Yankton Agency the agents attempted to make their wards more self-reliant by reducing rations.¹⁴² Their subsequent reports do not indicate whether their efforts met with success. However, by 1890 most of the Upper Missouri Indians were apparently relying largely on the Government for their livelihood.

During the 1880's white pressure for reducing the Indian lands on the Upper Missouri reservations steadily increased. In the Nebraska agencies, where the Indians were already living on their allotments and had made considerable prog-

¹³⁸CIA, 1887, 17; see also CIA, 1887, 21, 37-38, 48, 145; 1888, 43, 130, 183; 1889, 130, 147, 166, 233; 1890, 34, 37, 42, 47, 70.

¹³⁹CIA, 1887, 17; 1888, 43; 1889, 130, 147, 166; 1890, 34, 37, 42.

¹⁴⁰Contracts and Bonds—Beef Cattle, Volumes I to III, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Archives. Only the Omaha and Winnebago agencies did not receive beef from the Government during that period.

¹⁴¹CIA, 1884, 1-2.

¹⁴²CIA, 1887, 103; 1888, 70.

ress in farming, this pressure soon resulted in giving the Indians individual titles to lands and opening the remainder of their reservations to white settlement. In accordance with an act of Congress, approved August 7, 1882, the Government proceeded to allot lands to the Omahas and restored 50,000 acres to the public domain.¹⁴³ In 1885 the Santees received patents under the provisions of the Treaty of 1868 and surrendered the balance of their reserve.¹⁴⁴ Likewise an act of Congress, approved July 4, 1888, authorized, with the consent of the Indians, the disposal of a portion of the Winnebago Reservation.¹⁴⁵ In 1887 in accordance with the Dawes Act passed in that year, which provided general legislation for the allotment of Indian lands in severalty, the Government began the work of surveying the lands on the Yankton Reservation.¹⁴⁶

Meanwhile the process of restoring large portions of the huge reservations in the Dakotas and Montana to the public domain continued. In 1880 the Government, by executive order, substantially reduced the Fort Berthold Reservation.¹⁴⁷ By an agreement concluded in 1886 and ratified by Congress in 1891, the Three Tribes made additional relinquishments of their lands.¹⁴⁸ In 1888 the Indians agreed to the surrender of the vast Montana reservation, which had been set aside in 1874 for the Gros Ventre, Assiniboin, Blood, Piegan and River Crow bands, lying north of the Missouri and Marias Rivers in Montana.¹⁴⁹ After prolonged negotiations the Government in 1888 concluded an agreement, which was ratified in the following year, with the Plains Sioux in which the various bands consented to relinquish about half, comprising approximately 11,000,000 acres,

¹⁴³Kappler, *op. cit.*, I, 212-215; CIA, 1883, 59-60; 1884, 118; 1885, 135.

¹⁴⁴CIA, 1885, 136.

¹⁴⁵Kappler, *op. cit.*, I, 286-287.

¹⁴⁶CIA, 1887, 140-141.

¹⁴⁷Kappler, *op. cit.*, I, 883; Royce, *op. cit.*, pp. 900-901, Plate CXVII.

¹⁴⁸Kappler, *op. cit.*, I, 425-428; 948-949; Royce, *op. cit.*, pp. 942-943, Plate CXX.

¹⁴⁹Kappler, *op. cit.*, 261-266; Royce, *op. cit.*, pp. 924-925, Plate CXLVII.

of their great reservation west of the Missouri River.¹⁵⁰ These three agreements provided for allotment of lands in severalty and payments to the various tribes for the lands surrendered.

Only among the Plains Sioux did the Government encounter open resistance to its program. While the majority appeared to accept the dictates of the Indian Bureau without complaint, there was a strong and influential minority group of unprogressives or "irreconcilables" who resented the Government's efforts to force them to conform to white man's civilization. The causes of the Sioux outbreak of 1890-1891 were described as "complex," "obscure and remote."¹⁵¹ Among the more remote causes was the general feeling of insecurity among the Indians which resulted from the disappearance of game, the sudden attempts of the Bureau to compel them to settle down to farming on lands unsuited for agriculture, the long series of treaties, cessions, and removals and a widespread lack of confidence in the motives of the Government. Among the immediate causes were the unfulfilled promises made by the Sioux Commission in 1888, the large reduction of the reservation, and the cutting down of the rations. The leaders of the Messiah Craze such as Sitting Bull readily exploited the unrest to restore their lost prestige.¹⁵² The outbreak culminated in the killing of Sitting Bull and the Battle of Wounded Knee in December 1890. As in the Sioux War of 1876 both the innocent and guilty suffered from the consequences of this outbreak.

The next two decades which followed were to witness additional changes in the status of the Indians on the Upper Missouri, particularly in the Dakotas and Montana. The Bureau undertook the complex task of surveying and allotting the lands to individual Indians. With the completion of these allotments, some of the reservations were opened to white settlement. Many of the officials in the Indian Service were placed under classified civil service and removed

¹⁵⁰Kappler, *op. cit.*, I, 328-340; *Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 17*, 50th Cong., 2d Sess.; Green, *op. cit.*, 391-393; Royce, *op. cit.*, pp. 930-935, Plate CXX.

¹⁵¹CIA, 1891, 132.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, 132-135.

from political influence. The government schools largely replaced the earlier mission schools. However, many of the policies evolved and much of the administrative machinery developed from 1865 to 1890 for the governing of the Indians became permanent features of the reservation system.

INDIAN AGENCIES ON THE UPPER MISSOURI, 1865-1895

| | Year of Establish- ment | Year of Discon- tinuance |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Blackfeet Agency No. 1, Montana | 1855 | 1869 |
| Fort Peck Agency No. 1, Montana | 1873 | 1877 |
| Fort Peck Agency No. 2, Montana | 1877 | — |
| Fort Berthold Agency No. 3, North Dakota | 1893 | — |
| Fort Berthold Agencies Nos. 1 and 2, No. Dak... | 1868 | 1893 |
| Standing Rock (Grand River No. 2) Agency, North Dakota | 1873 | — |
| Grand River Agency No. 1, South Dakota | 1868 | 1873 |
| Cheyenne River Agency No. 3, South Dakota.. | 1891 | — |
| Cheyenne River Agencies Nos. 1 and 2, South Dakota | 1868 | 1891 |
| Red Cloud Agency No. 3, South Dakota | 1877 | 1878 |
| Lower Brule Agency No. 3, South Dakota | 1894 | ? |
| Crow Creek (Upper Missouri) Agency, South Dakota | 1863 | — |
| Lower Brule Agency No. 1, South Dakota | 1868 | 1876 |
| Lower Brule Agency No. 2, South Dakota | 1876 | 1894 |
| Rosebud (Spotted Tail) Agency, South Dakota | 1878 | — |
| Whetstone Agency No. 1, South Dakota | 1868 | 1871 |
| Pine Ridge (Red Cloud No. 4) Agency, South Dakota | 1878 | — |
| Whetstone Agencies, Nebraska | 1871 | 1874 |
| Spotted Tail No. 1 (Whetstone) Agency, Nebraska | 1874 | 1877 |
| Red Cloud Agency No. 1, Wyoming | 1871 | 1873 |
| Red Cloud Agency No. 2, Nebraska | 1873 | 1877 |
| Yankton Agency, South Dakota | 1859 | — |
| Ponca Agency No. 1, Nebraska | 1861 | 1867 |
| Ponca Agency No. 2, Nebraska | 1867 | 1877 |
| Spotted Tail Agency No. 2, Nebraska | 1877 | 1878 |
| Santee Agencies Nos. 1 and 2, Nebraska | 1866 | 1867 |
| Santee Agency No. 3, Nebraska | 1867 | 1919 |
| Winnebago Agencies Nos. 1 and 2, Nebraska.... | 1865 | — |
| Omaha Agency, Nebraska | 1855 | 1925 |



Crow Creek Agency, Fort Thompson, Dakota Territory, in the early 1870's. Note the old stockade which surrounds the agency buildings.



Rosebud Agency, Dakota Territory, in the early 1880's.