



The Military Frontier on the Upper Missouri

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Article Summary: Many military posts were built on the Upper Missouri at the beginning of the nineteenth century as the United States struggled to keep its frontier secure against various Indian tribes. The Army gradually abandoned the posts as the Indian frontier disappeared.

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Names: Manuel Lisa, Henry Atkinson, J L Grattan, William S Harney, G K Warren, John Pope, Henry H Sibley, Alfred H Sully, P H Sheridan, Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull

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Photographs / Images: interior of Fort Rice, Dakota Territory; Fort Abraham Lincoln, near Bismarck, North Dakota; Fort Hale, near Chamberlain, South Dakota; Battalion, Twenty-Fifth US Infantry, Fort Randall

THE MILITARY FRONTIER ON THE UPPER MISSOURI

BY RAY H. MATTISON

WHILE the purchase of Louisiana Territory in 1803 lessened the danger from foreign powers on the western border, the Nation still had the problem of keeping its frontier secure against the various Indian tribes. This vast empire acquired from France was held by a number of bands, several of which were powerful enough to hold back the Americans for many years. Along the northern borders the British wielded considerable influence among many of the tribes. It was not until some time after the conclusion of the War of 1812 that this situation was greatly improved.

The first years following the acquisition of the region were a period of uneasy peace. While the Lewis and Clark party, the first of a series of military expeditions sent out by the Federal Government to explore the Louisiana-Missouri Territory, was able to traverse the Upper Missouri country without encountering any serious difficulties, its successors in the area encountered Indian opposition. From

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1807 to 1811, Manuel Lisa, fur trader from St. Louis who organized the Missouri Company, established several posts on the Yellowstone and the Upper Missouri in present Montana, but was compelled to withdraw in the face of increasing Indian hostility. In the late winter of 1812-1813, the hostile bands forced him to abandon Fort Manuel, located on the Missouri near the present South and North Dakota line. During the War of 1812, the Americans operated no post above Council Bluffs.¹

The British continued to be a disturbing factor along much of the northern frontier. Although they had surrendered their military posts in the old Northwest Territory by the Jay Treaty, they still maintained their fur trading posts in the region.² From 1807 to 1811 David Thompson, of the British Northwest Company, was active in establishing posts in northwestern Montana among the Blackfeet and Flatheads.³ When the War of 1812 broke out, many of the tribes on the northern frontier readily joined the English. Along the Missouri, however, Lisa was partially able to keep the Indians from joining them. He withdrew his establishments on the upper river and concentrated his activities at Council Bluffs.⁴

Within several years after the termination of the war, the Government gave its attention to protecting the fur trade and counteracting foreign influence over the various tribes. Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, in 1818 and 1819, announced plans to establish military posts on the Upper Missouri. He originally intended to fortify the mouth of the Yellowstone, but he definitely decided by early 1819 that the principal post should be at the Mandan village, about sixty-five miles above present Bismarck. If the offi-

¹ Elliott Coues, (ed.), *The History of the Expedition Under the Command of Lewis and Clark* (New York, 1903), *passim*; Hiram M. Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* (New York, 1902), I, 125-149; Stella M. Drumm (ed.), *Journal of a Fur-Trading Expedition on the Upper Missouri 1812-1813 by John Luttig* (St. Louis, 1920), *passim*.

² Henry P. Beers, *The Western Military Frontier 1815-1846* (Philadelphia, 1935), pp. 4-19.

³ Merrill G. Burlingame, *The Montana Frontier* (Helena, 1942), pp. 14-16, 50-55.

⁴ Chittenden, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149; Burlingame, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.

cers found it impracticable to advance that far, on the other hand, they were to erect an intermediate post either at Big Bend or Council Bluffs, near the present town of Fort Calhoun, Nebraska. After much difficulty, the advanced contingent of the movement, known as the Missouri Expedition, reached Council Bluffs late in September 1819. Col. Henry Atkinson, the commander, selected a site for the fort on the river bottom about a mile above the bluffs and called it Camp Missouri.⁵ His men commenced work on the garrison at once. As the result of the failure of Congress to appropriate additional funds, the expedition could not proceed further up the river.⁶

Cantonment Missouri, as the completed garrison was called, was inundated by the Missouri River in the spring of 1820 and rebuilt as Fort Atkinson two miles southward on the bluffs. The Ft. Atkinson garrison maintained an average strength of 627 officers and men during its existence. To reduce the costs of its operations, the post operated a sawmill, raised large herds of cattle and hogs, and produced an abundance of corn.⁷ The Inspector General complained that too much emphasis at the fort was placed on farming operations.⁸ In the middle 1820's pressure was brought to bear on the Government to erect a fort on the western border of Missouri to protect the frontier settlements and the Santa Fe trade. Early in 1827 the Government began work on Fort Leavenworth near the mouth of the Little Platte. In the same year it abandoned Fort At-

⁵ This post should not be confused with Engineers' Cantonment established in 1819 by Maj. Stephen H. Long. Engineers' Cantonment was located about five miles below Camp Missouri. Long and his party in 1820 crossed most of Nebraska on the north side of the Platte to the forks, then followed the south fork to the Rocky Mountains and ascended Pikes Peak. They then traveled south to the Arkansas River and tried, without success, to find the headwaters of the Red. The party then went to Fort Smith. (Chittenden, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 562-587).

⁶ Edgar B. Wesley, *Guarding the Frontier; A Study of Frontier Defense from 1815 to 1825* (Minneapolis, 1935), pp. 144-156; Beers, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-45.

⁷ Edgar B. Wesley, "Life at Fort Atkinson," *Nebraska History*, XXX (December, 1949), 348-358.

⁸ Francis P. Prucha, *Broadax and Bayonet: The Role of the Army in the Northwest 1815-1860* (Madison, 1953), pp. 108-109.

kinson.⁹ During its existence Ft. Atkinson was the furthestmost post on the Missouri.

Following the War of 1812 the Americans again attempted to secure the fur trade of the Upper Missouri country. Although the Missouri and Rocky Mountain Fur Companies, organized in 1819 and 1822 respectively, attempted to gain a foothold in the upper portions of the river, it was not until the American Fur Company entered the field in the latter part of the 1820's that the Americans became firmly entrenched in the region.

Fur traders' troubles with the Arikara brought on the first important military expedition on the Upper Missouri and west of the Mississippi. While attempting in 1823 to purchase horses from the two villages not far from present Mobridge, South Dakota, Gen. William Ashley and his men were treacherously attacked by these Indians and several were killed. Ashley at once sent word to Maj. Benjamin O'Fallon, Indian Agent at Council Bluffs, and Col. Henry Leavenworth, commanding officer at Fort Atkinson. The latter at once began to prepare for an expedition against the Arikara. The force assembled by Leavenworth consisted of 220 men. It was later joined by some 120 trappers and 400 to 500 Sioux allies. The expedition attacked the Arikara villages on August 9. In this battle thirteen Arikara and two Sioux were killed. In the peace negotiations which followed, the Arikara agreed to return a portion of Ashley's stolen goods and refrain from further attacks on the traders. After the Indians had restored a part of the goods, they abandoned their villages. When the troops withdrew, the villages were set on fire.¹⁰

To cope further with the hostile Indian tribes on the Upper Missouri, Congress in 1824 appropriated \$20,000. On May 16 of the following year, General Atkinson, accom-

⁹ Beers, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁰ *South Dakota Historical Collections*, hereafter cited SDHC, I, 179-234, contains the official correspondence relating to this expedition. For conflicting views regarding the results of this campaign, see Chittenden, *op. cit.*, II, 603-607, and Charles De Land, "The Aborigines of South Dakota," SDHC, III, 480-493; see also Wesley, *Guarding the Frontier*, pp. 162-165.

panied by Indian Agent O'Fallon, set out from Fort Atkinson with 8 keelboats, 435 infantrymen, and 40 mounted soldiers. On their way up the river, the commissioners met with the Ponca, the various Sioux bands, the Arikara, Hidatsa, Mandan, and Crow tribes. On August 17, the expedition reached the mouth of the Yellowstone where a post, known as Camp Barbour, was established. Here Atkinson and O'Fallon met General Ashley and his party who were returning from above with furs for St. Louis. Two of the boats and Ashley's party remained at Camp Barbour while the remainder ascended the Missouri as far as the mouth of Red Water Creek. Not finding any Indians in this vicinity, the expedition returned to the mouth of the Yellowstone. The entire party then descended the Missouri and reached Fort Atkinson on September 19. After arriving at that place, the commissioners concluded additional treaties with the Oto and Missouri, the Pawnee and the Omaha.¹¹

The expedition effectively used its military strength to influence the Indians. Prior to holding council, the commissioners paraded the troops in full uniform. To further impress the more hostile bands with the white man's superiority, shells were fired from the howitzers and rockets were exploded. This was usually followed by the giving of presents and the concluding of treaties. The general tenor of the twelve treaties concluded between the commissioners and the various tribes was substantially the same. In all cases the Indians agreed to acknowledge the supremacy of the United States and to protect the fur traders. The Government, on the other hand, promised friendship and protection to the Indians.¹²

It was not until thirty years later that another major military expedition entered the Upper Missouri region. The monopoly of the fur trade by the American Fur Company, meanwhile, although frequently challenged, continued down

¹¹ Beers, *op. cit.*, p. 51; Russell Reid and Clell G. Gannon (eds.), "Journal of the Atkinson-O'Fallon Expedition," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, IV (October 1929), 5-56.

¹² Reid and Gannon, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

through the 1850's. Many of the posts of the company were stockaded and equipped with bastions and cannon and were capable of holding off powerful Indian attacks. The relations between the Indians and traders during this period were generally friendly.

The year 1855 marked the beginning of the military occupation of the Upper Missouri which was to continue until after the close of the century. The killing of Lt. J. L. Grattan and his detachment near Fort Laramie in 1854 brought about a retaliatory expedition the following year under the command of Gen. William S. Harney. This expedition, which ascended the Platte River from Fort Kearny, after defeating the Brule Sioux in western Nebraska¹³ in September 1855, marched from Fort Laramie to Fort Pierre.¹⁴ The Army found the old American Fur Company trading post, which the Government had purchased for a military establishment, ill-suited for a garrison, so Harney stationed most of his nine hundred men at various points in the vicinity. Here they suffered many hardships, and a large number of the horses died.¹⁵

In 1856 Harney took steps to pacify the Indians and to establish a permanent military post in the vicinity. He

¹³ This fight, which occurred on September 3, 1855, near the mouth of Blue Water Creek not far from the town of Lewellen, was known as the Battle of Ash Hollow. Here the forces of Sioux under Little Thunder were defeated, with a loss of eighty-six killed, five wounded, and about seventy women and children captured. Harney's losses were four killed and seven wounded. (Letters, Gen. William S. Harney to Lt. Col. L. Thomas, September 3, 1855; S. Cooper to Harney, March 22, 1855; Cooper to Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott, March 22, 1855, National Archives).

¹⁴ Fort Pierre, located near present Pierre, South Dakota, was built in 1831-1832 by the American Fur Company. It was one of the leading posts of that firm on the Upper Missouri. Fort Pierre was occupied from 1855 to 1857 as a military station and dismantled in 1859. A map showing the respective locations of the military posts mentioned in this article may be found in "The Army Post on the Northern Plains, 1865-1885," *Nebraska History*, XXXV (March 1954), 20-21, by the writer.

¹⁵ SDHC, I, 381-440, contains copies of the official correspondence relating to the Harney Campaign and Fort Pierre. See also Ray H. Mattison, "Report on Historical Aspects of the Oahe Reservoir Area, Missouri River, South and North Dakota," SDHC, XXVII, 24-28; Augustus Meyers, *Ten Years in the U. S. Army* (New York, 1914), pp. 69-107.

held a general council with the Sioux in March and concluded a peace treaty with the representatives of nine tribes.¹⁶ In June he dispatched two companies about a hundred miles down the river where they established Fort Lookout.¹⁷ In the same month Harney sent another detachment to a point on the Missouri about a hundred miles below Lookout where another post, known as Fort Randall,¹⁸ was erected. This latter establishment was destined to have the longest existence of any garrison on the Upper Missouri above Omaha.

During the period between 1855 and 1860, the Army was busily engaged in exploring and mapping the Upper Missouri country to provide additional information on routes to the Pacific. In the summer of 1855 Lt. G. K. Warren, who had been assigned the task of mapping the Fort Pierre military reservation, was ordered to join Harney's expedition which was advancing toward Fort Laramie. He and his companions traveled overland from Fort Pierre to Fort Kearny, where he joined Harney. From here the expedition moved to Fort Laramie. From that place Warren traveled a new route to Fort Pierre by the White and Teton Rivers. After leaving Pierre, he explored present southeastern South Dakota. In the following year, Warren ascended the Yellowstone as far as the mouth of Powder River. From that point he examined the Yellowstone to its mouth and then descended the Missouri and

¹⁶ *House Ex. Doc. No. 130*, 34th Cong., 1st Sess.

¹⁷ Fort Lookout (1856-1857) was located on what is now the southern boundary of the Lower Brule Indian Reservation. It accommodated three companies of troops. The Army abandoned this post in 1857. The site of Fort Lookout will be inundated by Fort Randall Reservoir. (Merrill J. Mattes, "Report on Historic Sites in the Fort Randall Reservoir Area, Missouri River, South Dakota," SDHC, XXIV, 543-548).

¹⁸ Fort Randall, located on the right bank of the Missouri below the present dam by the same name, was one of the most important military posts on the Upper Missouri. It was rebuilt in 1870-1872 and had quarters for five companies. From 1868 to 1891 the number of officers and men stationed at this post varied from 485 in 1875 to 60 in 1891, the average being 181. The Army abandoned this post in 1892. (Carleton Kenyon, "History of Fort Randall" [Master's thesis, University of South Dakota, 1947], *passim*; Merrill J. Mattes, "Revival at Old Fort Randall," *The Military Engineer*, March-April 1952, 87-93; *Annual Reports of the Secretary of War*, hereafter cited SW, 1868-1892).

carefully mapped that stream as far as Fort Pierre. In 1857 Warren crossed the region from Sioux City to the mouth of the Loup River and ascended that stream to within fifty miles of its source, then traveled over the sandhills to the Niobrara and followed the course of that river to near its headwaters and thence to Fort Laramie. From that place, Warren and his men advanced to the Black Hills where they were intercepted by a group of Indians. Warren and his party then turned south to the Niobrara and followed it to Fort Randall. After reaching the latter place Warren surveyed a route to Sioux City. During 1859 and 1860 Capt. W. F. Reynolds and Lt. H. A. Maynadier explored much of the region between the Yellowstone, the Platte, and the Missouri Rivers.¹⁹

Indian unrest during the Civil War resulted in further military intervention in the region. Some of the Indian dissatisfaction was attributed to the fur companies, many of whose employees were openly sympathetic to the Confederate cause. The British in Canada were erroneously believed to be partially responsible for the Sioux uprising in Minnesota during 1862 and some of the Indian resentment further west. To meet the growing Indian threat the Army in that year organized the Division of the Northwest, with headquarters in Milwaukee, and placed Gen. John Pope in charge of it.²⁰

Early in 1863, General Pope took steps to chastise the Indians. He dispatched Gen. Henry H. Sibley on an expedition from the upper Minnesota to the upper James River south of Devils Lake. From here Sibley crowded the Indians toward the Missouri near Bismarck where he defeated them at Big Mound, Dead Buffalo, and Stony Lake and then returned to Fort Abercrombie. While Sibley was advancing across Dakota, Gen. Alfred H. Sully with another expedition moved up the river from Fort Randall.

¹⁹ *Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 76, 34th Cong., 1st Sess., 1-79; House Ex. Doc. No. 2, 35th Cong., 2nd Sess., 620-670; W. F. Reynolds, Report on the Exploration of the Yellowstone River* (Washington, 1868); W. Turrentine Jackson, *Wagon Roads West* (Berkeley, 1952), pp. 135-139, 266-268.

²⁰ Burlingame, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-112.

Because of the slowness of his progress on account of the low water in the Missouri, Sully was unable to prevent the Indians from crossing the river after their defeat at Stony Lake. Learning that they had recrossed the river and had reoccupied their old hunting grounds, he turned his course southeastward across present North Dakota. Near present day Ellendale, he defeated the hostiles at Whitestone Hills. Sully and his troops then turned their course southwest and reached the mouth of the Little Cheyenne where they found a supply boat awaiting them. From here they returned to Fort Pierre. During the fall and winter this expedition built Fort Sully, located on the east bank of the Missouri about four miles east of present Pierre, as its winter quarters.²¹ The Indian prisoners-of-war, whom Sully had captured at Whitestone Hills, were removed to Crow Creek where the remnants of the Santee and Winnebago who had surrendered during the Minnesota uprising had been brought. A reservation had been established here and Fort Thompson built for their protection.²²

The Indians along the Missouri continued to be troublesome. In July 1863, near Tobacco Garden in present North Dakota, a party of Sioux attacked a yawl belonging to the steamer *Robert Campbell, Jr.* and killed several members of the crew.²³ In August of the same year the Indians killed a boatload of miners from Montana above Bismarck.²⁴ During the winter of 1863-1864 large numbers of hostiles, survivors from Whitestone Hills, wintered among the Teton

²¹ Steven Hoekman, "A History of Fort Sully," SDHC, XXVI, 221-231. The first Fort Sully proved to be in an unsatisfactory location, so in 1866 it was removed about thirty miles above to a new site on the east bank of the Missouri. The new post was built to accommodate four infantry companies and a regimental band. From 1868 to 1894, the aggregate strength of this post varied from 268 in 1872 to 45 in 1878, the average being 183. The Army discontinued Fort Sully in 1894. (*Ibid.*; SW, 1868-1894).

²² Doane Robinson, "A History of the Dakota or Sioux Indians," SDHC, II, 328-329.

²³ Hiram M. Chittenden, *History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River; Life and Adventures of Joseph LaBarge* (New York, 1903), II, 304-314.

²⁴ Joseph H. Taylor, *Frontier and Indian Life and Kaleidoscopic Lives* (Washburn, 1932), pp. 142-147; Ethel A. Collins, "Pioneer Experiences of Horatio H. Larned," *North Dakota Historical Collections*, VII, 48-53.

along the river. These committed depredations along the Dakota and Nebraska borders the following summer.²⁵

Meanwhile, recent gold discoveries in Idaho and Montana were, for several years, to have an increasing influence on Indian relations on the Upper Missouri. As the result of the rich gold strikes in these two territories there was a rush of miners and emigrants to Fort Benton and thence to the gold fields. The Missouri was to become, for some time, one of the leading routes from the East to Montana. In both 1862 and 1863 Capt. James L. Fisk, under the auspices of the War Department, led expeditions overland from Fort Abercrombie, on the Red River, to Fort Benton.²⁶

To keep open the roads to Montana and Idaho, General Pope early in 1864 ordered the construction of four new posts. These were to be located at Devils Lake in present North Dakota, on the James River west of Coteau des Prairies, one for four companies of infantry and four companies of cavalry on Long Lake near the Missouri, and another on the Yellowstone River near the trading post of Alexander.²⁷

In the same year General Sully began his campaign against the Sioux west of the Missouri and north of the Cannonball. He set out with his troops early in May from Sioux City. Not finding a suitable site for a fort near Long Lake, he proceeded to a point about eight miles north of the Cannonball River where he, on July 7, established Fort Rice.²⁸ Leaving several companies there to build the post, Sully and his troops then proceeded north and west toward

²⁵ Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 328-331.

²⁶ Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-275.

²⁷ War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereafter cited as *Official Records*), Series I, XXXIV, Part II, 622.

²⁸ *Official Records*, Series I, XLI, Part II, 80-81; George W. Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory* (Chicago, 1916), I, 353-354. Fort Rice, rebuilt in 1868, was a four company post. From 1868 to 1878, when it was abandoned, the average aggregate strength of this post ranged from 625 in 1872 to 61 in 1878, the average being 233. (Ray H. Mattison, "Fort Rice—North Dakota's First Missouri River Military Post," *North Dakota History*, XX, No. 2 [April 1953], *passim*; SW, 1868-1878).

the Yellowstone River. In the Killdeer Mountains they defeated a force of five thousand Indians. They then retraced their steps to the Heart River and proceeded up that stream to its source and thence into the Little Missouri Badlands. Here the troops again encountered large numbers of Indians who contested their advance. After emerging from the Badlands, Sully and his men advanced to the Yellowstone. They descended this river to the American Fur Company post, Fort Union.²⁹ After selecting a site for Fort Buford,³⁰ also near the mouth of the Yellowstone, Sully left a company of troops at Union and then marched down the Missouri to Fort Berthold.³¹ He also left a company of troops at Berthold and resumed his march down the river. The expedition reached Fort Rice on September 9.³²

Through the next several years the Missouri River was to play an important role in the development of the Northwest. Emigrants and miners by the thousands continued to seek the gold fields of Montana and Idaho. Many passed up the Missouri by steamboats to the mines while others sought to reach them by one of the several overland routes. One of the leading routes from the East was by the Oregon Trail across Nebraska to Fort Laramie and thence by the Bozeman Trail to Virginia City. Several other roads were laid out over the Plains from various points on the Missouri to Montana but none of these proved practicable, and the numerous attacks which Red Cloud and his warriors

²⁹ Fort Union was constructed in 1828 by the American Fur Company. It became the leading fur trading post of that company on the Upper Missouri. Two years after the withdrawal of the garrison in 1865, the buildings were dismantled and moved to Fort Buford.

³⁰ Fort Buford was established as a one company post in 1866 and was subsequently enlarged. The average strength of the garrison from 1867 until its abandonment in 1895 was 274. (SW, 1867-1895).

³¹ Fort Berthold, located about 105 miles above Bismarck, was also an American Fur Company trading post. The original Fort Berthold was erected in 1845. In 1862 it was abandoned, and the company occupied Fort Atkinson nearby which was renamed Fort Berthold. The fur trading post was used as a garrison until 1867 when the troops were moved to Fort Stevenson. (Henry A. Boller, *Among the Indians: Eight Years in the Far West* [Philadelphia, 1866], *passim*; Washington Matthews, *Ethnography and Ethnology of the Hidatsa Indians* [Washington, 1877], p. 40).

³² *Official Records*, XLI, Series I, Part I, 140-152; Kingsbury, *op. cit.*, I, 353-362.

made against the emigrant trains on the Bozeman Trail resulted in the closing of that road entirely in 1868. This left the Missouri River-Fort Benton route the leading avenue from the East to Montana and Idaho.³³

The Army, meanwhile, took new steps to strengthen its position in the West. In January 1865, it established the Military Division of the Missouri and placed General Pope in command. Although the division was merged with the Military Division of the Mississippi in June of the same year, the designation of the command was changed again in March 1866 to the Military Division of the Missouri. This included five departments: Dakota, Platte, Missouri, Texas, and the Gulf. In January 1867 the Department of Dakota, with headquarters at St. Paul, was divided into the District of Minnesota and the District of the Upper Missouri. With the exception of Fort Abercrombie on the Red River, the latter had jurisdiction of all the military establishments in Dakota and Montana. The Department of the Platte, with headquarters at Omaha, consisted of Nebraska, Iowa, Wyoming, Utah, and part of Idaho.³⁴

To keep the Missouri River route open to navigation, the Army in 1866 and 1867 constructed several additional military posts. In 1866 it established Fort Buford and Camp Cooke,³⁵ near the junction of the Judith and Missouri

³³ Jackson, *op. cit.*, 281-311; Burlingame, *op. cit.*, 115-119; Harold L. McElroy, "Mercurial Mercury: A Study of the Central Montana Frontier Army Policy," *Montana Magazine of History*, IV (Autumn, 1954), 9-12; *House Ex. Doc. No. 76*, 39th Cong., 1st Sess.; Raymond L. Welty, "The Frontier Army on the Missouri River," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, II (January 1928), 85-87.

³⁴ Headquarters, Military Division of the Missouri, *Outline Descriptions of Posts in the Military Division of the Missouri Commanded by Lieutenant General P. H. Sheridan* (Chicago, 1876); SW, 1867, 49-53.

³⁵ Maj. William Clinton, 13th U. S. Infantry, established Camp Cooke on July 11, 1866. During 1867-1868, four companies, comprising an average of 428 officers and men, were stationed there. The post was in a very isolated spot and served no useful purpose. The Army abandoned it in 1870 and moved the stores to Fort Benton. (Surgeon General's Office, *Circular No. 4, Report on Barracks and Hospitals with Descriptions of Military Posts* [Washington, 1870], 408-410; McElroy, *op. cit.*, 13-15).

Rivers. In the following year it built Fort Stevenson,³⁶ above present Bismarck, and Fort Shaw,³⁷ on the Sun River about twenty miles above its junction with the Missouri. Fort Omaha,³⁸ which served as a base for operations along the Union Pacific Railroad and became in 1878 the Headquarters for the Department of the Platte, was established in 1868. In the following year the Army placed a garrison at Fort Benton³⁹ and in 1870 abandoned Camp Cooke.

Although some of the Indians had agreed in 1865 and 1866 to withdraw from overland routes "already established or hereafter to be established through their country," many of them resisted the construction of these forts. Buford, in particular, was offensive to the Sioux, and their assaults upon the herds and upon parties going out from the post

³⁶ Fort Stevenson, located about ten miles above present Garrison Dam, was established June 12, 1867, by Col. I. D. V. Reeve, 13th U. S. Infantry. In the same month the garrison and stores were removed to the new site from Fort Berthold. Fort Stevenson was a two-company post. From 1867 to 1882, the number of troops at this post varied from 308 in 1868 to 42 in 1877, the average being 132. The post was abandoned in 1883. The site of Fort Stevenson has been inundated by Garrison Reservoir. (Ray H. Mattison, "Old Fort Stevenson—A Typical Missouri River Military Post," *North Dakota History*, XVIII [April-July 1951], 53-91; SW, 1867-1883).

³⁷ Maj. William Clinton established Camp Reynolds, later named Fort Shaw, on June 20, 1867. Although some distance from the Missouri, this post was erected to protect traffic along the Missouri from Indian attacks. Fort Shaw was built to accommodate 400 men and a band. From 1867 to 1890, the strength of this post varied from 448 in 1873 to 114 in 1869, the average being 231. This establishment, which was abandoned in 1891, served for many years as Headquarters, Military District of Montana. (*Circular No. 4*, 408-409; *Outline Descriptions of Posts in the Military Division of the Missouri*, 23-24; SW, 1867-1891).

³⁸ This post was established on August 19, 1863, as the "Post of Omaha." During the Civil War it was used for the training of volunteer troops. On September 8, 1868, a site four miles from Omaha was purchased for what was to be known as Sherman Barracks. It was named instead "Omaha Barracks" and in 1878 was renamed Fort Omaha. Between 1869 and 1895 the number of troops stationed at this post varied from 944 in 1869 to 88 in 1876, the average being 406. The troops were moved from Fort Omaha in 1896 to Fort Crook, located about ten miles south of Omaha. In 1905 Fort Omaha was reactivated and during World War I it was a balloon school. It was transferred to the Department of the Navy in 1947. (RG 98, Records of the U. S. Army Commands, National Archives; SW, 1896, 171).

³⁹ This garrison, which was abandoned in 1881, maintained an average strength of fifty-one between 1870 and 1880. Fort Benton was only a one company post. (*Outline Descriptions of Posts in the Military Division of the Missouri*, 25-26; SW, 1869-1881).

itself were so frequent that it was considered to be constantly in a stage of siege. In August 1867 a large Sioux war party appeared at Fort Stevenson and killed a teamster. During the winters of 1867-1868 and 1868-1869 the Indians attacked several mail carriers operating between the posts. The forts farther down the river were likewise subjected to attacks on their stock herds, and persons traveling in the vicinity were never safe.⁴⁰

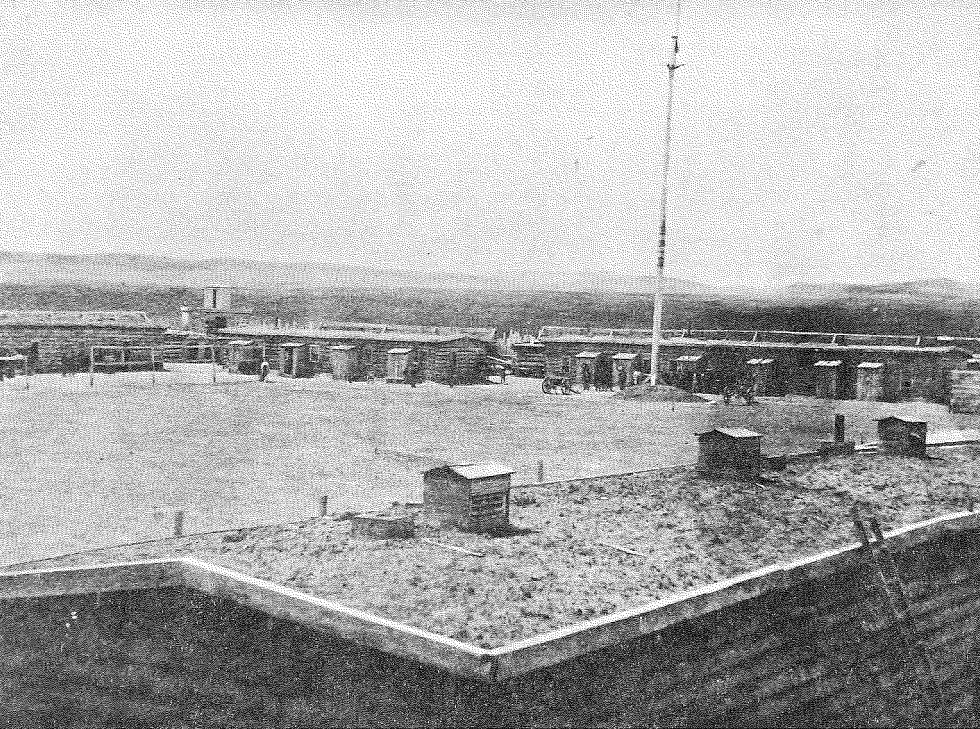
Conditions in Montana were little better. Acting Governor Thomas F. Meagher in 1867 organized a volunteer militia to protect the frontier settlements. In April 1868 a band of Sioux ran off thirty-four horses and mules at Camp Cooke. During the following month, a war party, reported to number 2,500, attacked the fort itself but was repulsed. Another band several days later killed two herders at Camp Reeve, located near the mouth of the Musselshell. The Indians committed similar depredations in other parts of the Territory throughout the period from 1868 to 1870.⁴¹

The new Indian policy, inaugurated following the Civil War, resulted in new demands upon the military. In accordance with this policy, the various nomadic Plains tribes were to be placed upon reservations and fed on Government rations until they should become self-supporting farmers. The Indian Bureau, at several of the agencies, found it necessary to call upon the Army to protect Government property and agency employees from its unruly charges.⁴²

⁴⁰ Charles J. Kappler, (comp. and ed.), *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington, 1904), II, 885-887, 896-908; James P. Kimball, "Fort Buford," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly*, IV, No. 2 (January 1930), 75-77; Robert G. Athearn, "The Fort Buford 'Massacre,'" *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLVI, No. 4 (March 1955), 678-680; Joseph M. Hanson, *The Conquest of the Missouri* (New York, 1946), 82-84; Lucile M. Kane (ed.), *Military Life in Dakota: The Journal of Philippe Regis de Trobriand* (Minneapolis, 1951), 60-61, 131-135, 171-172, 331, 333, 340; SW, 1867, 51-52, and 1869, 58.

⁴¹ SW, 1868-1869, 35; Burlingame, *op. cit.*, 121-126, 219-226; Ray H. Mattison (ed.), "An Army Wife on the Upper Missouri; The Diary of Sarah E. Canfield, 1866-1868," *North Dakota History*, XX (October 1953), 216-218, 219.

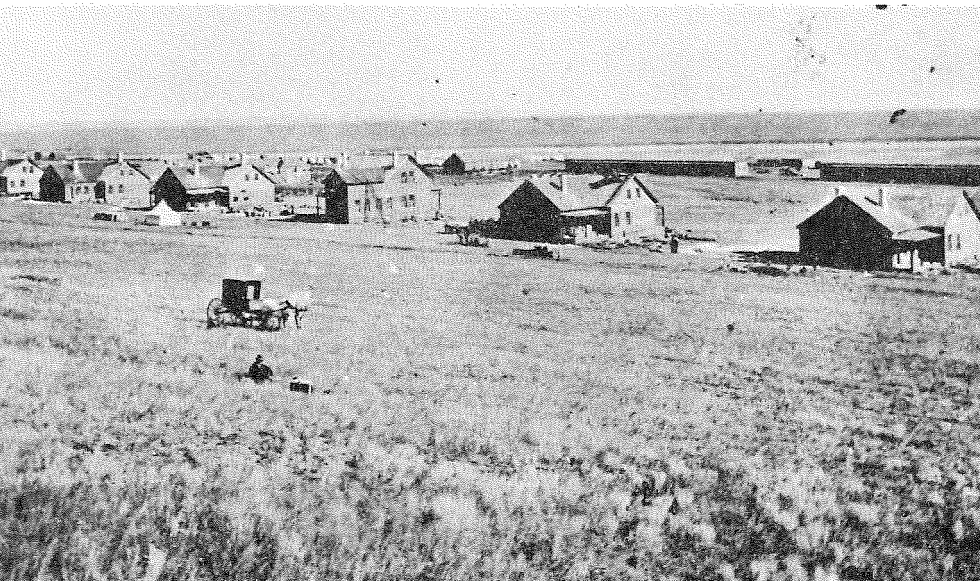
⁴² Ray H. Mattison, "The Indian Reservation System on the Upper Missouri, 1865-1890," *Nebraska History*, XXXVI (September, 1955), 146-147.



Above—Interior of Fort Rice, Dakota Territory, in 1864

Below—Fort Abraham Lincoln (1872-1891), near Bismarck,
North Dakota

(Photos courtesy the Minnesota Historical Society)



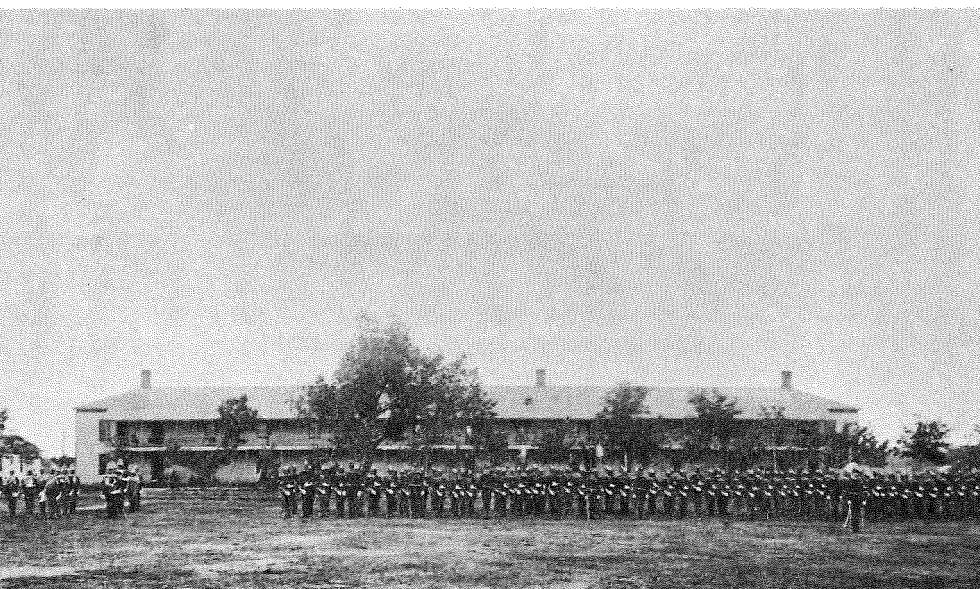


Above—Fort Hale (1870-1884), near present-day Chamberlain,
South Dakota

(Photo courtesy the Minnesota Historical Society)

Below—Battalion, Twenty-fifth U. S. Infantry, Fort Randall

(Photo courtesy the National Archives)



Gen. P. H. Sheridan, Commander of the Military Division of the Missouri, reported late in 1869:

... The friendly Indians, and the agents and employees at Big Cheyenne, Grand River, and Whetstone agencies have been in jeopardy on several occasions, as the wild Indians have at times had their own way driving employees into the agency buildings taking possession of the annuity goods, and killing the cattle. Steps have been taken to remedy these evils, as far as we can, by the erection of blockhouses.⁴³

The agents' relations with their wards improved but little, so in 1870 the Army established temporary posts at Whetstone, Lower Brule, Cheyenne River, Grand River, and Crow Creek agencies, all of which were located on the Missouri.⁴⁴ The Lower Brule, Cheyenne River, and Grand River posts, renamed respectively in 1878 as Forts Hale,⁴⁵ Bennett,⁴⁶ and Yates,⁴⁷ became permanent military estab-

⁴³ SW, 1869, 37.

⁴⁴ SW, 1870, 24-26.

⁴⁵ Fort Hale was situated about fourteen miles above present Chamberlain, South Dakota. It was a one company post and from 1870 to 1883 an average of seventy-nine officers and men were stationed at that place. Fort Hale was abandoned in 1884. When the writer visited the site in 1951, most of the parade grounds and foundations of the buildings had been swept into the river. The remains have been flooded by the Fort Randall Reservoir. (*Outline Description of the Posts in the Military Division of the Missouri*, 28-29; SW, 1870-1884).

⁴⁶ Fort Bennett (Cheyenne River post), located on the west bank of the Missouri ten miles below the mouth of the Cheyenne River, was established in 1870 as a two company post. The encroachment of the Missouri in 1872 forced the Army to rebuild the garrison on higher ground. In 1876 this post was also swept into the river, and a fort, equipped to house ten companies of troops, was built. In 1880 Fort Bennett was converted into a one company post. From 1870 to 1891 the number of troops stationed at Bennett varied from 426 in 1876 to 37 in 1887, the average being 108. After the agency moved to its present location in 1891, the Army discontinued Fort Bennett. The site of this post will be inundated by the Oahe Reservoir. (Harry H. Anderson, "A History of the Cheyenne River Agency and Its Military Post, Fort Bennett," [Masters' thesis, University of South Dakota, 1954]; SW, 1870-1891).

⁴⁷ The Grand River post, a two company garrison, was built in 1870 near the mouth of Grand River and adjacent to the Indian agency by the same name. In 1874 the garrison moved to Standing Rock where the agency had removed the previous year. Until late in 1878 when its name was changed to Fort Yates, it was known as the Standing Rock post. From 1870 to 1897 the strength of the garrison varied from 458 in 1876 to 61 in 1872, the average for the period being 245. The post was abandoned in 1903 when Fort Lincoln (not to be confused with Fort Abraham Lincoln mentioned below) was constructed. (SW, 1870-1897). The site of the Grand River post will be flooded by the Oahe Reservoir.

lishments and played significant roles in the defense of the Upper Missouri.

The implementation of the Treaty of 1868, unfortunately, failed to solve the Sioux problem. By this treaty the various bands were guaranteed all of the territory in present South Dakota west of the Missouri River. The Government had also agreed to reserve the Powder River country in Wyoming, the Republican River, and the territory north of the Platte River in Nebraska as common hunting grounds for certain tribes. The first two years following the signing of the treaty were comparatively peaceful in the Dakotas and Nebraska. However, when the Indians learned of the intention of the Northern Pacific to build its line through their country, some of the chiefs, believing the construction of the railroad to be a violation of the treaty, announced their intention to resist this encroachment. The First Yellowstone Expedition, sent out in 1871 from Fort Rice under military escort to survey the line of the proposed railroad in western North Dakota and eastern Montana, had no difficulties with Indians. The Second and Third Expeditions, which were also dispatched from Fort Rice in 1872 and 1873 for the same purpose, had a number of skirmishes with hostiles and suffered some casualties.⁴⁸

While the Second and Third Yellowstone Expeditions were making their surveys, railroad workers were extending the line of the Northern Pacific westward from Fargo across present North Dakota. To protect the construction crews, the Army in 1872 established Fort McKeen, later named Fort Abraham Lincoln,⁴⁹ near present Bismarck. A cavalry post was built adjacent to this garrison in the

⁴⁸ Doane Robinson, "A History of the Sioux or Dakota Indians," SDHC, II, 394-404; Theo. F. Rodenbough and William L. Haskin (eds.), *The Army of the United States* (New York, 1896), 522, 639, 683-685; SW, 1872, 39.

⁴⁹ Fort Abraham Lincoln was an active military post from 1872 to 1880. However, after the Northern Pacific reached the western borders of present North Dakota, its importance declined. It accommodated six companies. From 1876 to 1890, the aggregate strength of Fort Abraham Lincoln varied from 363 in 1879 to 50 in 1886, the average being 163. This post was abandoned in 1891. (Arnold O. Goplen, "Fort Abraham Lincoln, A Typical Frontier Military Post," *North Dakota History*, XIII (October 1946), 176-214; SW, 1876-1891).

following year. At the same time, General Sheridan ordered the Seventh Cavalry to the Department of Dakota and stationed the companies of that regiment at Forts Abraham Lincoln and Rice. From 1872 to 1874 small war parties made a number of attacks on mail carriers, stock herds, and small detachments operating in the vicinity of the two posts. The Northern Pacific, however, went into bankruptcy after reaching Bismarck in 1873, and it was not until 1879, after the Sioux had been generally crushed, that construction work began west of the Missouri.⁵⁰

The year 1874 was to witness new treaty violations by the whites which were eventually to bring on a Sioux war. By the Treaty of 1868 the Government had agreed that white men should not enter the great Sioux reservation without the Indians' consent and had pledged to protect these lands against white intruders. In spite of this promise, the Army in 1874 sent Gen. George A. Custer with 1,200 men on a reconnaissance expedition to the Black Hills. Custer sent out glowing reports of gold and the wealth of the region in timber and other resources. To a country still suffering acutely from the Panic of 1873, the reports of the discovery of gold in paying quantities stimulated widespread interest. Within the next year, Sioux City and Yankton, Dakota, and various points in Nebraska served as outfitting points for illegal expeditions into the Black Hills. During 1875 the Seventh Cavalry, sent to Fort Randall, and the infantry of that post were busily engaged preventing gold-seekers from entering the Hills from the Nebraska side. Detachments from Fort Sully and the Lower Brule and Cheyenne River posts also guarded the line of the Missouri River for the same purpose.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Goplen, *loc. cit.*; Mattison, "Fort Rice—North Dakota's First Missouri River Military Post," *op. cit.*, 102-103; SW, 1873, 40; Robinson, *op. cit.*, 400-408.

⁵¹ *Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 32*, 43rd Cong., 2d Sess.; Lawrence E. Olson, "The Mining Frontier of South Dakota, 1874-1877," (Master's thesis, State University of Iowa, 1931), 1-43; SW, 1874, 38-39, and 1875, 64-65; Robinson, *op. cit.*, 407-416; Kingsbury, *op. cit.*, I, 883-896; Kenyon, *op. cit.*, 71-77; Hoekman, *op. cit.*, 254-255; Anderson, *op. cit.*, 77-78; *Bismarck Tribune*, June 24, August 12, 19, 26, September 2, 1874. Files of this newspaper are in Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

While the Army endeavored to keep the gold-seekers out of the Hills, the Interior Department was attempting to negotiate for the region. A committee, appointed by the Secretary of the Interior in June 1875, met with the representatives of the various Sioux bands in September. As a result of this conference, the commission found itself unable to obtain a license to mine in the Hills or purchase the region outright. The Government thereupon withdrew all military opposition to the occupancy of the Hills by the whites, so miners went into the new Eldorado by the thousands. The Indians were convinced that they would lose their reservation unless they made a determined effort to fight for it.⁵²

In the meantime Sioux leaders in another portion of the Indian country were making preparations for a general war with the whites. Chiefs, such as Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Gall and others, who had never signed the Treaty of 1868 and had refused to become reservation Indians, had been living largely by hunting in the Powder River and Yellowstone Valleys and in present western North Dakota. Some of these bands had for some time been making raids on the Three Tribes at Fort Berthold and upon the Crows in Montana. Because many of the agency Indians were believed to be in these so-called "hostile" bands, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in December 1875 sent instructions to several Sioux agents to notify their Indians in the unceded territory to return to their respective agencies by January 31, 1876, or be considered hostile. It was impossible for many of these bands to comply with this ultimatum, so on February 1 the Secretary of Interior advised the Secretary of War that the time given for them had expired and for him to take appropriate action. Within

⁵² *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (hereafter cited CIA), 1875, 184-191; Robinson, *op. cit.*, 416-421; Kingsbury, *op. cit.*, I, 895-930.

a few months the Army found most of the Cheyenne and the warriors of the Sioux Nation aligned against it.⁵³

The Army at once proceeded to take initial steps to subjugate the hostiles. In compliance with orders received from General Sheridan, Gen. George Crook's forces in March struck the camp of Crazy Horse near the mouth of Lodge Pole Creek and destroyed it. During the spring Sheridan ordered three columns to move against the Indians to a common center in Montana. One from Fort Fetterman under the command of General Crook was to come from the south; another from Fort Ellis under Gen. John Gibbon was to come down from the northwest; a third commanded by Gen. Alfred H. Terry was to come from Fort Abraham Lincoln on the east. The stories of the subsequent defeat of Crook's forces at Rosebud and the destruction of General Custer and his command, both of which occurred in June 1876, are well known.⁵⁴

The so-called "Custer Massacre" was soon to be avenged. General Sheridan immediately rushed reinforcements to the Indian country. In September Crook defeated the Sioux under American Horse at Slim Buttes in present South Dakota, and the chief was killed. In October Col. Nelson A. Miles encountered a large force of hostiles south of the Yellowstone under Sitting Bull and forced most of them to surrender and return to their reservations. Late in the same month military detachments under General Terry arrived at the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River agencies and disarmed the Indians and confiscated their

⁵³ *Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 9*, 44th Cong., 2nd Sess., 10-17; *Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 52*, 44th Cong., 1st Sess.; Letter, Chief Clerk, Secretary of War, to the Secretary of the Interior, June 7, 1873; Letter, James Wright to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 11, 1874; Letter, Dexter A. Clapp to Commissioner, July 5, August 4, 31, 1875; Letter, Governor B. F. Potts to the Secretary of the Interior, March 27, July 8, August 6, 1875; Letter, Clapp to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, February 20, March 4, 10, 1876; Post Records, Fort Stevenson, Letters Sent, 1: 180-181, 198, 266, 275, 348-349; Fort Berthold Superintendency, Letters Received, May 23, November 21, 1871. The letters cited above are to be found in the National Archives. Robinson, *op. cit.*, 421-423.

⁵⁴ Martin F. Schmitt, (ed.), *General George Crook, His Autobiography* (Norman, 1946), 190-196; Col. W. A. Graham, *The Story of the Little Big Horn* (Harrisburg, 1926), *passim*.

ponies. Colonel Miles and his men pursued the Indians relentlessly during the winter. By the late spring of 1877, the backbone of the hostile Sioux and Cheyenne resistance had been broken. Crazy Horse and his followers and most of the Cheyenne surrendered. Sitting Bull and his followers fled into Canada.⁵⁵

Immediately following the Bighorn disaster, the Government took steps toward strengthening its defense system in Montana. In July 1876 Congress appropriated \$200,000 for the construction of two posts on the Yellowstone River recommended the previous year by General Sheridan. Work began the following September on a fort at the mouth of Tongue River. This garrison, later known as Fort Keogh,⁵⁶ served as headquarters for the operations of Colonel Miles and his command. In the following year, construction began on another post, known later as Fort Custer,⁵⁷ near the junction of the Bighorn and Little Bighorn Rivers. These two posts were formed into the District of the Yellowstone with Fort Keogh as headquarters. In the same year the Army established Fort Missoula in the Flathead country and in 1879 built Fort Assiniboine near the

⁵⁵ Paul I. Wellman, *Death on Horseback: Seventy Years of War for the American West* (Philadelphia, 1934), 152-166; Nelson A. Miles, *Personal Recollections of Nelson A. Miles* (Chicago, 1896), 212-256; George Bird Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes* (New York, 1915), 345-386; SW, 1876, 439-515, and 1877, 487-576, *passim*; Hanson, *op. cit.*, 316-367; Burlingame, *op. cit.*, 233-235; Robinson, *op. cit.*, 436-438, 442-444; *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior*, 1877, 410-411.

⁵⁶ Fort Keogh, first known as the Cantonment on the Tongue River and the Tongue River Barracks, was officially established September 11, 1876, by Col. Nelson A. Miles. It was equipped for five companies of infantry and six companies of cavalry. From 1877 to 1895, its aggregate strength varied from 807 in 1878 to 334 in 1895, the average being 492. Fort Keogh was abandoned in 1908. (Burlingame, *op. cit.*, 233-234, 238; SW, 1876-1897; RG 98. Records of the United States Army Commands, National Archives).

⁵⁷ Lt. Col. George P. Buell established Big Horn Post, later renamed Fort Custer, in compliance with Special Orders No. 57, Department of Dakota, May 10, 1877. It also was equipped for five infantry and six cavalry companies. From 1877 to 1897, its aggregate strength varied from 231 in 1877 to 521 in 1884, the average being 431. The Army discontinued Fort Custer in 1898. (RG 98. Records of the United States Army Commands; Burlingame, *op. cit.*, 238; SW, 1877-1897).

present town of Havre. All of these posts were permanent military establishments.⁵⁸

Although the Sioux and Cheyenne were generally subjugated by the summer of 1877, the Indians continued to keep the Army busy in Montana for several years. No sooner had these tribes been crushed than a war broke out with the Nez Perce. Chief Joseph led this tribe on a strategic eighteen hundred mile retreat eastward from Idaho through Lolo Canyon, Yellowstone Park, down Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone, across the Missouri River and into the Bearpaw Mountains. At the last place, located about sixteen miles from present Chinook, Montana, the forces of Colonel Miles caught up with the fleeing Indians late in September and, after a battle, forced the Nez Perce to surrender. Fort Buford served as a depot of supplies for many of the Army's operations and supplied escorts for wagon trains carrying freight up the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers. When the Northern Pacific extended its line westward from Bismarck from 1879 to 1883, Forts Abraham Lincoln and Buford supplied detachments to protect the construction workers.⁵⁹

Sitting Bull was to continue to be a menace. Although he escaped across the northern boundary into Canada in 1877, he remained a disturbing influence. For several years he was an unwelcome guest of the Canadian Government. Dissatisfied Indians from various agencies crossed the border and joined him. Lack of food, however, forced many of his followers to return into the United States to follow the buffalo. These hungry and ragged Indians became such a problem in 1880 at Fort Peck Agency at Poplar, Montana, that the agent became alarmed for the safety of Government property and his employees and asked for military

⁵⁸ RG 98. Records of the United States Army Commands; Burlingame, *op. cit.*, 238-240.

⁵⁹ L. V. McWhorter, *Hear Me, My Chiefs: Nez Perce History and Legend* (Caldwell, 1952), *passim*; SW, 1877, 5-15, 68-77, 500-576, *passim*; 1878, 65-73; 1879, 64; 1880, 60; 1881, 91; 1882, 92.

protection. The Army in October sent two companies there and established Camp Poplar.⁶⁰

This post, together with Fort Buford, was to play an important part in the final phase of the Sioux War. Early in 1881 a detachment of troops commanded by Maj. Guido Ilges defeated a party of Indians under Chief Gall two miles from the mouth of the Poplar, capturing 305 and killing 8 of them. During the winter and spring large numbers of Sioux, who had followed Sitting Bull into Canada, surrendered at Camp Poplar and were sent to Fort Buford. Finally, Sitting Bull himself and his immediate followers gave themselves up to the military. The Army shipped most of these Indians down the Missouri and turned them over to the agent at Standing Rock. Some were eventually transferred to the Cheyenne River Reservation. Sitting Bull was sent to Fort Randall where he remained as a prisoner of war until 1883 when he was sent to the Standing Rock Reservation.⁶¹

The placing of the tribes on reservations, together with the disappearance of the bison, greatly changed the Indian frontier during the late 1870's and the decade of the 1880's. By the early 1880's the Army had thoroughly crushed the Indian on the Upper Missouri. The disappearance of the buffalo and other game made him entirely dependent upon Government rations for his livelihood. The Indian police, organized in 1878 and in the following years, became increasingly effective in policing the reservations. They gradually took over much of the work previously performed by the military.⁶²

With the exception of Forts Abraham Lincoln and Buford, the roles which the Upper Missouri posts played in the Indian wars in 1876 and the following years were minor ones. The presence of large bodies of troops at Forts Yates

⁶⁰ Camp Poplar, located on the Missouri River near the mouth of Poplar River, was a two company establishment. From 1881 to 1893, when it was abandoned, Camp Poplar maintained an average strength of ninety-two officers and men. (SW, 1880-1893).

⁶¹ SW, 1881, 91-98; CIA, 1881, 115-118; 1882, 78-80; 1883, 105-110.

⁶² Mattison, "The Indian Reservation System on the Upper Missouri, 1865-1885," *Nebraska History*, XXXVI (September, 1955), 161.

and Bennett no doubt served to maintain peace on the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River agencies where so many Sioux prisoners of war had been brought from 1876 to 1883. Forts Randall, Hale, Sully, Rice, and Stevenson were little affected by the wars. Fort Omaha continued to serve as a base of operations for movements in Wyoming and western Nebraska.

Most of these posts assumed a peacetime character during the 1880's. Except for intermittent patrols, the soldiers devoted their time largely to routine duties. In 1890, however, the long period of tranquillity was broken by two events. Troops at Forts Sully and Randall were called out to prevent white intruders from settling on Indian lands prior to the opening of the great Sioux reservation to white settlement in February of that year. The Army also dispatched detachments from both these posts in April to protect settlers on the reservation from disaffected Indians. In December both Forts Bennett and Yates were active in suppressing the Ghost Dance Rebellion which culminated in the killing of Sitting Bull and the Battle of Wounded Knee.⁶³

Troubles continued along the Canadian border for several years following the surrender of Sitting Bull and his followers. Indians and half-breeds often crossed over the international boundary from Canada in pursuit of the rapidly disappearing game. These incursions frequently took the form of cattle and horse stealing expeditions. Various bands continued to raid reservations of other tribes. Detachments from Camp Poplar, Fort Buford, and other posts lying along the border were often called upon to suppress these predatory expeditions. In 1882 and 1883 troops from Camp Poplar removed a number of white intruders on the Fort Peck reservation. As the decade passed, Indian depredations decreased.⁶⁴

⁶³ Hoekman, *op. cit.*, 256; Kenyon, *op. cit.*, 105-106; Anderson, *op. cit.*, 155-162; SW, 1890, 187, and 1891, 132-155, 162-188.

⁶⁴ SW, 1882, 92; 1883, 110-120; 1884, 110-114; 1885, 140; 1886, 127-133; 1887, 137-147; 1888, 146; 1889, 159; 1890, 187.

The Indian frontier disappeared rapidly on the Upper Missouri in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. With the completion of the Northern Pacific in 1883 and the building of the Great Northern across the region, the steamboat passed from the scene on the Upper Missouri. The military posts were no longer needed to keep the river open to navigation. Settlers poured into the region. In 1889 Montana and both the Dakotas acquired statehood. By 1890 Nebraska's population had passed the million mark. It was very apparent that the Indian was no longer a barrier to the settlement of the region.

With the passing of the Indian frontier, the need for the military posts on the Upper Missouri was at an end. The Standing Rock post (Fort Yates) took over most of the functions of Fort Rice, so the Army in 1878 abandoned the latter garrison. During the first half of the 1880's Forts Benton, Stevenson, and Hale were discontinued. The next decade witnessed the abandonment of Forts Bennett, Shaw, Randall, Sully, Buford, and Camp Poplar. With the removal of troops from Fort Yates in 1903, the last of the frontier Upper Missouri River posts disappeared.⁶⁵ Fort Omaha, deactivated in 1896 when the troops stationed there were removed to the newly-constructed Fort Crook, was occupied intermittently by the Army until 1947.

⁶⁵ See Mattison, "The Army Post on the Northern Plains, 1865-1885," *op. cit.*, 42-43, for a list of the military posts on the Northern Plains together with the dates of their establishment and abandonment.