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Article Summary: Roosevelt visited reservations in Nebraska and South Dakota in 1892 to observe conditions there and to ascertain the degree to which Indians were being assimilated into white society. This article reproduces the *Roosevelt Report* published in the Indian Rights Association's periodical in 1893.

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Photographs / Images: Theodore Roosevelt as US Civil Service Commissioner about 1889; John A Anderson photo of grass dance (called the "Omaha dance" by Roosevelt)

# Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt Visits Indian Reservations, 1892

EDITED BY RICHARD E. JENSEN

## INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1892 Civil Service Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt toured the Omaha, Winnebago, and Santee reservations in Nebraska, Pine Ridge, Cheyenne River and Yankton in South Dakota, and Haskell Institute in Kansas. In an address to the Board of Indian Commissioners after the tour Roosevelt said he made the trip "to see whatever was crooked out there" and concluded that anyone would be convinced of "the need of civil service reform as applied to the Indian service."<sup>1</sup>

Roosevelt took the oath of office on May 13, 1889, and soon became one of the most active advocates of civil service reform in President Benjamin Harrison's powerful commission. His six year tenure on the commission would serve him well in later years when he became President, but in 1889 the post was a second choice. He had hoped to be chosen assistant secretary of state, but he did not have the necessary political credentials for this prestigious position.<sup>2</sup>

During Roosevelt's terms the Civil Service Commission conducted a vigorous program to enforce the letter as well as the spirit of the Pendleton Act of 1883, which called for competitive examinations as a test for an applicant's qualifications for service in many branches of government. Appointment to these jobs in payment for political favors or support had been a significant part of American party politics for generations. The spoils system was a useful expedient for repaying loyal party members, and the "spoilsmen" were not willing to relinquish this advantage. The Pendleton Act was circumvented, manipulated, and criminally abused.

Roosevelt and his fellow commissioners' primary activity was policing the employment practices of those agencies which were subject to civil service regulations. A second function of the

*Theodore Roosevelt as US Civil Service Commissioner, about 1889.*



commission was aimed at expanding civil service classification into other government departments. In his autobiography Roosevelt summarized the work of the commission: "Civil Service Reform had two sides. There was, first, the effort to secure a more efficient administration of the public service, and, second . . . to withdraw the Administrative offices of the Government from the domination of spoils politics."<sup>3</sup>

Among the many agencies under scrutiny by the commissioners was the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a small but highly visible division of the Department of Interior. The Indian service not only expended large amounts of tax money, but its policies directly affected the quality of life, and on occasion life itself, of a large number of people. Further, the bureau had been guilty of malfeasance which added to its public notoriety. Reforms of many kinds were being demanded for the Indian service.

Thomas Jefferson Morgan was named commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs by President Harrison on June 10, 1889. He was a Baptist minister who had served at Brownville, Nebraska, in 1871-1872 and then as superintendent of the Nebraska State Normal School at Peru for two years. Morgan was an unbending advocate of the Americanization of Indians. One of his first edicts was a ban on native dances of any kind. Although he favored civil service regulations, he was opposed to use of Army officers as agents. He resigned shortly before President Harrison left office to work for the Baptist Home Missionary Society.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most influential pro-Indian groups was the Indian Rights Association founded in 1882. A decade later the organization boasted a membership of 1,300 and a permanent head-

quarters in Philadelphia. The Association professed to be "Non-sectarian in its character, designed to protect the rights of Indians . . . to extend a knowledge of their present condition and needs throughout the country" and "to secure wise executive and legislative action by means of an aroused public sentiment."<sup>5</sup> The association was in support of Roosevelt's civil service reforms and published his *Report* on the reservation tour as Number 4, 2nd series of its periodical dated February 25, 1893. The *Report* is reproduced on the following pages of *Nebraska History*.

Civil service reformers cited the events on the Pine Ridge Reservation as an example of what can happen under the spoils system at its worst.<sup>6</sup> In 1890 the Ghost Dance was introduced to Indians on Nebraska and South Dakota reservations, and many followers were found, especially at Pine Ridge. Dancers believed in the imminent disappearance of all whites, the return of vast herds of buffalo, and a rebirth of the old Indian life style. Such a reactionary philosophy could not be tolerated by the Indian service and attempts were made to halt the Ghost Dance. Tensions grew on both sides through the summer of 1890 and at a time when experience and courage were most needed a new political appointee was installed as agent at Pine Ridge. Daniel L. Royer, a South Dakota banker and friend of US Senator Richard F. Pettigrew, of South Dakota, took office on October 9, 1890. The Indians' derisive nickname for him, Young-Man-Afraid-of-His-Indians, aptly described their feelings toward the new agent.<sup>7</sup> When the Ghost Dance culminated in the horror at Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890, the reformers claimed that an agent with proper credentials would not have allowed the tragedy to happen. From a historical perspective this is a questionable point, but in 1891 the argument was persuasive.

Pressure from reformers and the publicity provided them by Wounded Knee overcame most opposition to civil service classification in Indian service. Somewhat reluctantly President Benjamin Harrison ordered a partial classification of Indian service on April 13, 1891. The order covered agency physicians, school superintendents, and their staffs--a total of 626 positions.<sup>8</sup> The agents remained exempt for by law an agent was appointed by the President with the consent of the Senate. The position moved toward civil service classification a year later, when Army officers became eligible to serve as agents, as were school

superintendents in 1893. This marked the beginning of the elimination of politics from Indian service, but it would be another 15 years before the change was complete.<sup>9</sup>

Although Roosevelt's report was addressed to the Civil Service Commission, very little pertains directly to civil service matters. He was interested in writing about the conditions on the reservations and the progress of the Indians toward "civilization." To Roosevelt this meant eradicating all traces of Indian culture and replacing it with behavior appropriate to white Christian society. As inappropriate as this philosophy seems today, it was the official stance of the Indian service and such self-appointed Indian aid societies as the Indian Rights Association. They believed the only hope for the survival of the Indian was his assimilation into the dominant society.

## REPORT OF HON. THEODORE ROOSEVELT

MADE TO THE UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION, UPON  
A VISIT TO CERTAIN INDIAN RESERVATIONS AND  
INDIAN SCHOOLS IN SOUTH DAKOTA,  
NEBRASKA AND KANSAS.

The following report by Mr. Roosevelt has a distinct interest and value, since it records the observation of one who approached the subject, not from the point of view of especial or professed friendship for the Indian—a point of view more or less exposed to the charge of partisanship—but from that of the Civil Service reformer, of the public man of wide acquaintance with men and things, and in this instance, we are amply justified in adding, of one who has achieved distinction in various fields of intellectual labor, in which the qualities of acute observation and sound deduction are essential to success.

UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION,  
WASHINGTON, D.C., OCTOBER 5, 1892,

THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION.

*Sirs:*—By direction of the Commission, I made a month's tour of certain Indian reservations and Indian schools in South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas, ending September 20th last. Before starting I went to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to inform him of my purpose. I wish here to acknowledge the great obligations I am under to Commissioner Morgan for having facilitated my work in every possible

way. Not only did he give me a circular letter requesting that every door of information should be thrown open to me at the different agencies, but he also particularly requested me, in his letter of July 22d, which I append together with the circular, to look into not only certain matters indicated, but into all others, and to report concerning anything that I found good or bad at the agency, without reference to whether it had to deal only with the work of the Civil Service Commission or not. It will be most convenient if I report for each agency that I visited in succession, as there is the widest difference in the Indians at the different agencies.

#### PINE RIDGE.<sup>10</sup>

I spent six days at the Pine Ridge Reservation, and was driven all around it by the agent, Captain Brown,<sup>11</sup> going some two hundred and fifty miles on horseback or in a wagon, around the reservation. Captain Brown is a man of wide experience in Indian affairs, evidently deeply and intelligently interested in the welfare of Indians under him, striving earnestly and with all his heart to advance them on the road toward civilization and to keep the wilder element under control. No one could be with him as long as I was, and see the Indians with him, without realizing that he is thoroughly devoted to his work and is laboring with an eye single to the public good. I cannot speak too highly in his praise; he is the exact type of Indian agent whom we most need.

Pine Ridge is a reservation of Indians who have only recently come out of the wild state. Most of the Indians upon it are Ogalalas, but there is a very dangerous element of refugee Brules, Minneconjous, Sans Arcs, and others, who always threaten a renewal of hostilities. When I left the reservation one of the ringleaders of the revolt of 1890 and '91, a very crafty looking Indian, named Short Bull, had just been returned to the reservation after having been in the military prison;<sup>12</sup> and there were continual rumors of renewed ghost dancing among these discontented Indians. There are about six thousand Indians and half-breeds on the reservation. There are three Indian judges, employed at ten dollars a month. I met only two of the judges,—Swords and Fast Horse,<sup>13</sup>—the former an especially fine looking fellow, who had fought gallantly against the hostile Indians in 1891. There were sixty-five Indian police, at ten dollars a month, including a captain, Thunder Bull, the first lieutenant, Thunder Bear, and a second lieutenant, who was a half-breed (a very hardworking man, with an excellent farm and a comfortable house, which his good-looking Indian wife kept clean), and a first sergeant; all at fifteen dollars a month. I inquired particularly what the work of the judges and Indian police was. There are not many crimes of violence on the reservation nowadays, but the Indian police are of invaluable service in checking the ghost dancers. The police

should be armed with carbines, not merely revolvers. The cases that come before the judges are usually for stealing women and horses.<sup>14</sup> When I was at the reservation there were but two people in the guard-house; one for having been drunk and disorderly in the presence of the agent, and the other, himself an Indian policeman, concerning whom I was informed that he "threw his wife away on the drum at the Omaha dance." I did not exactly know what this meant, but found out later that the Omaha dances, which are held in the circular, conical Omaha lodges, are clung to with great tenacity by the old heathen party, and that at them the dancers will sometimes "throw away" everything they have got, exactly as occasionally a rich man will make a "give away feast," giving away in one day the accumulations of years. This is a very bad custom and a great check to the progress of the Indians. Often when they get to dancing the Omaha dance, they not only give away their goods but they divorce their wives. The present agent has as far as possible minimized the number of these Omaha dances that could be given.<sup>15</sup>

I inspected all the shops, the issue house, and the other agency buildings. The agent earnestly desires that there should be some kind of competitive examination for farmers, so as to take them out of politics. I don't see, however, how we can well hold such a competitive examination; but I do think we could at least hold some kind of non-competitive examination of a practical character similar to that held in agricultural colleges in the West. The assistant farmers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, carpenters, etc., should be Indians, for whom there should be a low non-competitive examination, to act as a reward for and an incentive toward education. There should be a graded pay for these lower places. All of the agency employees were unanimous in the opinion that they could make the wagons, harness, tin ware, and clothing on the reservation itself. This would furnish occupation for many of the educated Indians, especially the educated girls, for whom there is most urgent need to in some manner provide; and the agency employees were unanimous in the belief that at less cost they could procure in this way an improved grade of goods. The educational influence of this upon the Indians would be immense; it would have a great effect upon both the parents and the children. The Indian Office, however, is firmly of the opinion that the change would be most unwise, involving a great outlay of money, and the erection of buildings which would have to be abandoned in a few years as the Indians receive their annuities in money. One great reform that has been worked under the administration of Commissioner Morgan has been that of the beef issues, a matter to which I attended carefully. Formerly beef was furnished by the contractors at a certain price per pound long before it was issued, and the animals shrank so that when the day of issue came,

the Indians might not get half the value to which they were entitled. Moreover, the Indians were allowed to do their own killing, the cattle being turned loose and butchered by them, often under circumstances of great cruelty. Under Commissioner Morgan and Captain Brown all this has been changed. The beeves are driven in by the contractors when wanted for issue and paid for at that time. They are then issued at several distinct stations throughout the reservation, a most beneficial change, as it prevents the Indians from spending their whole time coming into and going away from the issue points, to the utter breaking up of their home work. The steer is shot by the Indian police just as it leaves the chute. It is then issued to one Indian for the use of his mess, twenty-four Indians coming in for a steer of say a thousand pounds or over, which is expected to last them fourteen days. There are on this reservation no less than five issue points for rations and seven for beef. The contractor is now forced to deliver the steers monthly in winter.<sup>16</sup>

Another very important point has been the purchase of beef by the Indians and their employment as freighters, in freighting for the agency, of which there is much, Captain Brown wisely allowing it to be done by those Indians with the best records. For this they receive pay from the Government. He also purchases beef from them. The reservation is most admirably adapted to cattle growing, and the Indians are rapidly increasing their herds. They already own some ten thousand head of horned cattle, as well as twelve thousand horses; and last year they supplied eight hundred thousand pounds of beef to the Government. This year Captain Brown expects them to supply two million pounds. All over the reservation I was struck by seeing herds of cattle guarded by Indians, often boys. They locate their herds right around their own neighborhoods and watch over them carefully. About eighty per cent of the Indians, moreover, try to do more or less farming, usually, of course, of a very irregular and patchy sort, but quite a number have really good fields of wheat and potatoes, protected by wire fences. Of course, every stage of progress is to be seen. The average Indian will, perhaps, have a small hut, which the agent sees that he builds by not issuing him cows unless he does, with a scanty, weed-grown patch of vegetables, enclosed by a defective wire fence, and two or three head of cattle, besides horses. From this the rest vary up and down. I saw many Indian families that were still living purely in tepees, in squalid filth. If they had huts at all, they had been abandoned, and the articles that had been issued to them, from a bureau to a handsaw, were lying about in all stages of neglect and ill-usage; the children had rarely been sent to school, and the whole family was a mere encumbrance on the earth's surface. On the other hand, I saw plenty of Indian farms where the fences were in good repair, the ground well tilled, the crops abundant, and the houses well kept. It is a great mistake to think



that the reservation is only fit for cattle raising. It is, indeed, a remarkably fine cattle country, but there is ample arable land upon it, especially in the really beautiful valleys of the different streams, to give every Indian family a good farm. There is not any land extra, however, and the entire reservation should be kept in perpetuity for the use of the Indians until each individual of them has received his full allotment in severalty. After that any surplus will, of course, be sold.

The condition of many of the farms was very encouraging, indeed. I was especially pleased with those where the Indians had purchased farm implements, domestic utensils, and the like, with their own money, received either as payment for freighting or from the Government for beef. I saw some very clean houses or cabins of two or three rooms each, where the Indian women had bought wash-tubs, rocking-chairs, good bedsteads, and the like, and the farms around these cabins were sure to have the fences in good repair, while the owner might have as many as twenty or thirty head of stock. The half-breeds' houses were usually very much more comfortable and cleaner than those of the Indians, and their farms were likewise far superior. There is a great deal of complaint made against the half-breeds, and of course, against the squaw-men, on this and on every reservation, but I became thoroughly satisfied that on the whole the half-breeds are very much further advanced than the Indians proper, and that in a great number of cases they are on a complete level with the whites; while the squaw-men, in a large number of instances, are a great benefit to the Indians, serving as connecting links between them and civilization, and rendering the road upward very much easier for them. Indeed, I became satisfied that the attacks on the half-breeds and squaw-men as classes were entirely unjustifiable. When they are bad they are worse than the Indians, because they are better educated and more capable; but this is simply to say that they have advanced farther on the road of capacity, whether for good or for evil. Many of the missionaries and school teachers complained to me bitterly that the children of the educated Indians and of the half-breeds were worse than the little wild Indians, and would occasionally, as a climax, say that they were as bad as white children. What the teacher or missionary really objected to, was the fact that the Indian was becoming more and more like the white man, and was therefore less docile. Of course, the very fact that a man becomes capable of doing good work as a citizen means that he is always capable of doing bad work as a citizen. We are trying to turn the Indian from a child into a man, and we are perfectly well aware that in cases where he turns from a bad child into a bad man the change will necessarily be for the worse; but this has nothing to do with the matter, for the change has to come anyhow, and our duty is to see that it takes place under the best possible auspices.

While at Pine Ridge I visited the [Holy Rosary] Catholic boarding school, where I was most courteously received by Father Jutz. There are about one hundred and fifty pupils at this school, over a half being half-breeds. I was much pleased with what I saw there as to the comfort in which the children were kept and as to the kind of education they were given. The sisters and brothers of the denomination teach, the lessons all being taught in English. The boys are taught farming and the girls housewifery. Father Jutz very kindly gave me samples of all the books, including the readers, etc., used by him, and they seemed to me very good.

I was much pleased to see two stores on the reservation owned and managed by Indians. They were much like ordinary frontier stores, with similar classes of goods. The storekeepers told me that the Indians had not yet begun eating many canned goods excepting tomatoes, of which they were very fond. These Indians got all their goods shipped to them from Omaha or Chicago, driving down to the railway towns to meet them when they came up.

I was struck, among other things, by the fact that the half-breed families were more numerous than those of either the pure whites or the pure Indians. The reason for their superiority in numbers to the families of the Indians lay, I believe, in their greater regard to hygienic laws. The mortality among the Indian children is very great, whereas among the half-breeds it is much less. Of course a certain proportion of the half-breeds inherit from their Indian ancestors scrofulous troubles or lung complaints, which are the curse, not only of the Sioux, but of all the other tribes. There are a great many squaw-men on the reservation, and I was much impressed by the fact that even when a white man was a pretty worthless fellow, it was of the utmost possible advantage to an educated or partially educated Indian woman to marry him rather than to marry a good blanket Indian of her own race. In but few cases did I see instances where graduates of the best schools had gone back after marrying a white man, whereas, they find it wholly impossible to retain the ways of civilization if they marry a blanket Indian and live with him in a tepee. The white man is sure to have a house with two or three rooms, and is always pleased to have his wife keep the house and herself and children decent and tidy. He thus gives her a chance to keep to the standard she has reached, and to have her children educated in white ways, whereas she has no chance at all if she goes back to the Indian tepee. Of course, if she marries a half-breed or an educated Indian, who is himself trying to follow the white man's road and support himself in decency, she is just as well off. The mixed bloods, who are part Indian and part white, have an enormous advantage over the mixed bloods of negro and white ancestry in that they have comparatively little race prejudice to combat. Throughout the West there are many leading

citizens who have Indian blood in their veins, and when half-breeds or quarter-breeds live among whites and adopt white manners and customs there is very little prejudice, indeed, against them, in most cases none at all. The half-breed cowboys on my ranch, for instance, are always treated exactly like whites, whereas a sharp line of distinction is invariably drawn against mulattoes or negroes. Very many of the mixed bloods show to the full as much ability as the pure whites, and they rise to high positions in our Government. A member of the present House is married to an Indian woman, and his children have risen to high social and even political position in his own State. One of the Republican candidates for Congress in Kansas is a half-breed, and there are a number of mixed bloods in the army, one of the infantry captains being the hereditary Grand Chief of the Tuscaroras. At this Pine Ridge Reservation I at one place met a half-breed married to a Bohemian, a Mrs. Cocer, who impressed me as being one of the most intelligent, capable, and genuinely philanthropic women I have ever met. She has shown herself a most capable business woman in managing her store. She is educating her children, having a white governess for them, who stays with her in her clean, comfortable log-house in the middle of the reservation, and is doing all in her power to elevate the Indians round about devoting herself especially to the women, striving to raise their home life. It would be impossible to get a woman better qualified for the duties of field matron among these Indians. It was a great pleasure to listen to her conversation. She was the most sincere and devoted friend of the Indians, and yet, unlike too many half-breeds and educated Indians who champion the cause of the redskin people, she had not become a mere silly enthusiast about them, and made no effort to extenuate their faults or to think of them as being already on the same plane with the whites.

I visited the Government boarding-school at the Agency, where I was hospitably received by the Superintendent, Mr. Meter, <sup>17</sup> and his wife, the Matron. The school had not begun when I was there, but scholars were coming in, and it was a pleasure to see the pride the mothers took in returning their children to school in a clean condition. Among them were a number of intelligent young Indian girls dressed in white fashion.

While at this agency I made particular inquiries, as, indeed, I did elsewhere, in reference to the returned students from Carlisle [Pennsylvania], Hampton [Virginia], and other non-reservation schools. When I went to the agency I was prejudiced against these schools and expected to find their graduates doing poorly. To my surprise and pleasure my prejudice proved to be unfounded, and I speedily became convinced of the fact that as a rule the returned graduates of the non-reservation schools were doing much better than

the average Indian who had not had such advantages. I myself either saw or obtained at first hand information concerning about ninety of these returned scholars at Pine Ridge, and I found that in some two-thirds of the cases they were doing from fairly to excellently, while in the remaining third they had sunk back to the level of the ordinary Indians. It is a very great thing that two-thirds of the returned scholars should be the better off for their sojourn at the non-reservation schools. It would still be a great thing even if only a much smaller proportion of them were benefited. I became convinced, however, that it was a mistake to give the Indians outside too high an education, save in certain exceptional cases. The average Indian when he comes back must farm, and he should be trained with this in view. It is, of course, impossible to give him better training than he gets, for instance, at Carlisle, under the outing system,<sup>18</sup> by which he actually works on farms. In some respects the Western schools, notably Haskell [Lawrence, Kansas], are at an advantage compared with the Eastern schools like Hampton and Carlisle, as the Indians in these Western schools learn the exact kind of farming to which they must get accustomed afterward. Some of the Indians who have been taught trades also do very well when they get back on the reservations, but no more of them should be taught these trades than there are places to fill on the reservation, excepting a very limited number whose capacity is such that they can be trained to compete with whites and not to go back to the reservation at all. To train the average Indian as a lawyer or a doctor is in most cases simply to spoil him, although there are, of course, a few exceptional instances where there are opportunities open for such; and while the non-reservation schools fill such an important position, in one way the reservation schools are even more important in that they reach a greater number of pupils, and every effort should be made to educate not a few picked members of the tribe, but as far as possible all the members.

It is a cruel thing to educate a boy to do something which he cannot find to do on the reservation, then turn him back to work out his own fate in a tepee. The Indian under such circumstances often cannot stand upright. He must when he graduates from school still have a little fostering before being able to compete as a white man could. But the case is in some ways much harder for the girls. If a girl is educated at Carlisle or elsewhere and is then put back in her old life of the tepee, the transaction can only be regarded as a piece of deliberate cruelty. She is given a capacity for suffering and is then put back where it is only too probable that she will fall. Only those girls should be educated for whom places of some sort can be provided, whether as teachers, as workers around the agency, or otherwise. Of course, the best thing for them to do is to marry advanced Indians, half-breeds, or whites. There is a good deal of complaint on the agencies that these returned Indian

school girls, although not educated to the degree that would make them competent to fill the positions of teachers, the positions which they are especially anxious to fill, have been educated so much as to make them discontented with doing housework; and, indeed, the feeling was general that they were not trained to do good housework, as it has to be done under the limitations of life on a reservation. The feeling seemed to be that in the big schools they were taught to work in a mass and with exceptional facilities, and that they became discouraged at once as soon as they tried to work alone with very few facilities. Care should be taken not to perfect the appliances in the schools to the point of making the Indians unfit to grapple with the ruder and homelier ways to which they must descend when they are sent away. At Pine Ridge there were a number of girls, returned students, who were discontented and wanted some kind of employment, and yet there were a number of homes in which house servants were really needed, the Agent's, for instance, Mrs. Cook's,<sup>19</sup> and Mrs. Coker's, and one or two other half-breeds, in all of which Indian girls had been tried and found wanting.

Another fact of which I became convinced at this agency, and which all my further experience served only to convince me of more deeply, was that the present system has a very evil tendency toward pauperizing the Indians. All the Indians are now issued Government supplies in some form. This is absolutely necessary for the wilder ones. The Pine Ridge Sioux, for instance, could not get along at present at all without beef, flour, and other supplies being given them. They are still, taken as a whole, unfit to support themselves except by war or hunting, and as there is no hunting they would be driven to war if they were not fed; but even the Pine Ridge Indians are rapidly leaving this condition, and many of the other Indians, those at Yankton and Santee, for instance, have very nearly left it. Every effort should be made to hasten the day when they will be self-supporting. With this end in view nothing should be given to them, even among the wildest tribes, except upon performance of work on their part. Captain Brown has kept this admirably in view. When he issues cows to the Indians, for instance, he gives them only upon condition of the Indians themselves having built a house and put up hay and corrals; and the Indians earn money by freighting. In every way it is sought to make the Indian understand that to live he must work. The moment that the tribe becomes a little more advanced than the Indians at Pine Ridge now are, the issues should be given to him not in provisions but in money: and as soon as he begins to be self-supporting, or as soon as he begins to be in a position where he could be self-supporting if he chose, the amount issued to him should be rapidly cut down and finally extinguished. Where it is impossible, because of the treaties, to extinguish it entirely it should be compounded for by giving a lump sum outright instead of an annuity. To give the Indians too much is simply to pauperize them and destroy them.

The Dawes Bill<sup>20</sup> is undoubtedly working well. It is not advisable that it should be put too rapidly into practice and the Indians given their land in severalty too quickly, but just as soon as it can be done, they should be given their land and the remainder of each reservation thrown open to settlement, so as to get the whites and Indians intermixed. In other words, the Indian should be thrown loose to shift for himself, as a citizen amongst other citizens, as soon as he can be prepared for the ordeal. It must not be done too quickly, for he will then be helpless and perish, nor must it be delayed too long, for he will then become accustomed to being petted and cared for and will be too weak to stand when finally left alone. When it is done, we must be prepared to see a great many of the Indians sink under the strain. It will be lucky if half of any given tribe survives the shock, and after the inevitable period of decay and disintegration begins to grow again, not as a tribe, but as an aggregation of individual American citizens mixed up with other American citizens.

We must beware of becoming discouraged even by the reports of some excellent missionaries and agents. Not a few very good men, who have grown accustomed to regarding the Indians solely as wards, and who are very kind to them, feel utterly disheartened when these wards are taken away from them and turned loose, at the general sliding down the scale, which at times becomes visible. These men will often say that the children of the half-breeds, or of the educated Indians, are worse than the others; but all that this means is that in each case the Indian is preparing to stand for himself, and that of necessity a certain number of those thus preparing slip and fall, and a certain number of the others, being less docile and tractable than when they were more helpless, are less agreeable to get on with. Exactly in the same way, a lot of schoolboys, carefully protected and isolated under the guardianship of a clergyman, would at once, in his eye, seem to slip back if liberated from his control, and yet would really merely be taking the inevitable plunge to learn whether they could sink or swim in the troublous sea of life. So it is with the Indians. We must protect and guard them up to a certain point; but all the while we must be fitting them as we best can for rough contact with the world; and, finally, when all, humanly speaking, is done that can be done, we must turn them loose, hardening our hearts to the fact that many will sink, exactly as many will swim.

Most of the half-breeds and squaw-men were around the different issue centres, where there were stores, usually a church, and a schoolhouse, etc. Each of these little embryonic towns, where there is a store or a little church, with a native clergyman or catechist (perhaps himself married to a half-breed or educated full-blood who teaches the school), and two or three families of half-breeds, and squaw-men in neat cabins roundabout, is a small centre of civilizing influence.

Undoubtedly, the Indian, when semi-civilized, seems to some observers to be spoiled; but he is not, really; he is merely going through the indispensable stage toward betterment. Some of the Indian school-teachers, clergymen, and judges whom I saw were good fellows in every way; nearly as good as whites; and plenty of the half-breeds had houses and farms as nice as those of any outsiders.

Unfortunately, in many cases, the health of the returned students seems poor. I was informed at Pine Ridge, for instance, that about a half of them were in poor health when they came back, and about a third died after returning. The mortality is also great among those remaining, the fact seeming to be that the change from savage to civilized life puts a very severe strain upon the Indian's health, owing chiefly to his total disregard of the laws of hygiene. It is to be noticed, too, that among the wild Indians the mortality of the children is very great indeed. The different tribes vary greatly in health, the Winnebagoes being perhaps the worst; but all suffer greatly from those twin scourges of their race, scrofula and consumption.

#### CHEYENNE RIVER AGENCY.<sup>21</sup>

When I reached the Cheyenne River Agency the great Indian Episcopal Convocation was in session. The sight was exceedingly interesting and imposing, some two thousand Indians having gathered for the convocation. There were present a large number of native preachers and catechists, and very many lay delegates from the different tribes. Doubtless, many of the Indians came to the convocation with no particular religious feeling, a good deal as white men go to a county fair; but with many the religious sentiment was evidently very strong, and I was greatly pleased at the intelligence and fine feeling shown by many, both among the laymen and among the preachers. The women's meetings were also very interesting, and it was remarkable to see them contribute literally thousands of dollars for various missionary and church purposes.

The agency itself was in a state of utter confusion, there having been four acting agents during the past year. The present incumbent<sup>22</sup> had only been a couple of months on the Agency and had never been even two miles away from the Agency buildings, so that he knew nothing about the condition of affairs. There were also a number of representatives of different non-reservation schools present engaged in vigorous touting for their own schools. Occasionally there were signs of hostility between the reservation and non-reservation schools, and between the Government and the religious or contract schools. Not more than half of the children at Cheyenne ever receive any schooling. Often it appears that an agent is afraid to incur the enmity of the children's parents by

making the children go to school, and in some schools the boys are excused when insubordinate rather than incur the ill-will of the parents by giving the boys wholesome discipline. All of this should be corrected.

I met at this Agency several Government officers acquainted with the Flandreaus and Sissetons,<sup>23</sup> who own their lands in severalty, and are citizens in the eastern part of the State. The Sissetons are said to be now in the period of decay; which, however, may merely precede that of growth and be inevitable when the care of the Agent is first withdrawn. It is said that they get drunk very frequently, and that their farms, though able to support them, on the whole, are inferior to those of even very shiftless whites. (I cannot of my own knowledge testify as to this.) The Flandreaus are, however, doing very much better, representing the pick of the Sioux, who struck out to support themselves on their own accord. It is impossible to expect to get the Indians up to the white level in one generation. It will take two or three to get them into a position where they will have a fair chance of surviving, some sinking and some swimming. The Osage Indians offer object lessons as to the pauperizing effects of too great annuities. They are richer than any other people in the United States, per capita. Man, woman, and child, they are said to be probably worth in the neighborhood of fifteen thousand dollars a head, capitalizing their incomes. The Cherokees will be nearly as rich in the end. These reservations become refuges for people who get crippled outside. White families with hardly a dash of Indian blood in them come back, together with the white husbands of the girls, for the purpose of getting their share of the gratuities going.

The white employees of the Cheyenne River Agency had all been changed, to the great detriment of the service. As usual, it was perfectly evident that the one thing most needed was continuity of service. Work among the Indians is very difficult, and very hard to learn, and it is perfectly impossible to get the best work without such continuity. Among the employees around the agency there were three times as many half-breeds and full-blood Indians as there were whites; although, of course, the latter served in the superior positions. There were three Indian judges and twenty-seven Indian police.

I met on this reservation Inspector O.H. Parker,<sup>24</sup> who strongly urged that our districts for eligibles should be the same as the present supervisor's districts; and, also, that we should not have too difficult questions in the examination for teachers, restricting them to such as would take place in the sixth and seventh grade examinations in the high school system of South Dakota. Bishop Hare<sup>25</sup> spoke to me very strongly in favor of small reservation and non-reservation schools, saying that in this way much more individual care could be given to the Indian pupil, and that its relations with the head of the school would be



far closer. Supervisor Parker, on the contrary, said that he emphatically believed in the large schools, and that the best Government boarding-school, that at Fort Peck, and the best contract boarding-school, the Catholic academy at Flathead Agency, were the two largest of their kind.<sup>26</sup> All, however, were agreed that small boarding-schools, scattered through the reservations, would be greatly preferable to day-schools,—none of them to have a less number than thirty pupils.

#### YANKTON AGENCY.<sup>27</sup>

The Yanktons were very much further advanced than the Indians I had hitherto seen. There are few cattle around the reservation. The Indians are mostly farming. Their land is nearly all divided in severalty, and the balance is ready to be thrown open to settlement by the whites. This will bring the whites and Indians into close contact; and while, of course, in the ensuing struggle and competition many of the Indians will go to the wall, the survivors will come out American citizens. We will have to make up our minds, however, that a period of seeming decay, possibly of real decay, lasting for several years, will intervene between the exposure of the Indians to the new conditions and their adaptation to them. This period is almost inevitable.

At this Agency there were many complaints of misconduct made to me in reference to various residents thereon, but there was nothing of which I was able to get hold. Six of the Indian young men, at the time I was there, were out working among the neighboring whites as harvesters and getting ordinary wages; they had been thus placed owing to the exertions of the Agent himself. All of the farmers sell their grain in the surrounding towns, and buy their machinery, etc., with the proceeds; and practically all of the children are in school, either at the Government or the contract schools. Fortunately the Indians here receive very little money indeed. This is a great grievance to them. They held a council as soon as they heard I had arrived, and made long complaints to me. I answered them that I was glad that they did not get any money, and that they would never amount to anything until they worked and struggled for themselves. It is a great pity that many friends of the Indian try to coddle him entirely unnecessarily and sympathize with him and make him feel that he is wronged. As a matter of fact these Yanktons are not wronged now, though one of their agents grossly defrauded them many years ago. It is nonsense to talk about our having driven most of these Indians out of their lands. They did not own the land at all, in the white sense; they merely occupied it as the white buffalo hunters did, and they were not any more entitled to claim it as exclusively their own than those white buffalo hunters were. The United States Government in purchasing the lands from the Indians has treated them, on the whole, (though with some marked exceptions)

with great justice and fairness. It has paid to the different Indian tribes a hundred-fold as much for their lands as it paid Spain, France, and Russia for the land acquired from these great European powers. Of course, when Indians have settled down on their reservations and begun to build houses, to attempt to drive them out is a gross and foul outrage. This was done with the Cherokees in Georgia, and has been done ever since, now and then; both the Santees and Lower Brules have been threatened with removal of late years, and the Lower Brules are even now threatened with it.<sup>28</sup> Any such case should be exposed and vigorously denounced; but it is a mistake to treat all the Indians as if they had suffered in that manner.

The one thing to be impressed upon the average Indian is that he is not being wronged now, and that he has done just as much wrong as he has received in the past, and that he ought not to look back at that at all, and that above all things he must work, just as a white man does. One of the most pernicious things that can be done is to pet too much the Indians that make good progress, and this is the thing that Eastern sentimentalists are very apt to do.

At this Agency likewise I was told that the Sisseton Indians were farming less than before the whites came around them. However, Indians have to be put on their feet some time; to put them on their feet too late is as bad as to do so too early.

#### SANTEE AGENCY.<sup>29</sup>

Here, likewise, the Indians were all farming, and most of the children were in school. The land has been parceled out in severalty and the Indians have begun to vote, many whites, although generally of a low class, coming among them. They have nearly adopted the white man's dress, but they all talk Indian at home, and in the home cling to the Indian speech and customs. Many of the best men from this agency have been trained as missionaries to others. Although the farms around this agency are well advanced, and the Indians in very many instances entirely self-supporting, many of them, like members of other tribes, are addicted to begging from the Government. They should be taught not to beg. The annuities should be given to them in money. Many of the Indian farms and houses I visited were to the full as good and clean as those of many immigrants, better than those of most of the neighboring Bohemians, for instance. The whites are intermixed with them in groups and strips of families, not in single ones. They get along pretty well together, although the worst whites cheat some of the Indians. Very much is still done by the Government; houses are built, machinery given them, etc. They still need supervision, and are venal, ignorant voters, and the agent can still throw them pretty much as he wishes. I was told here, as elsewhere, that the Flandreaus were the

farthest advanced of all the Indians, that many of their farms were quite as good as those of whites. They are voters, and are beginning to speak English much, even at home and among themselves.

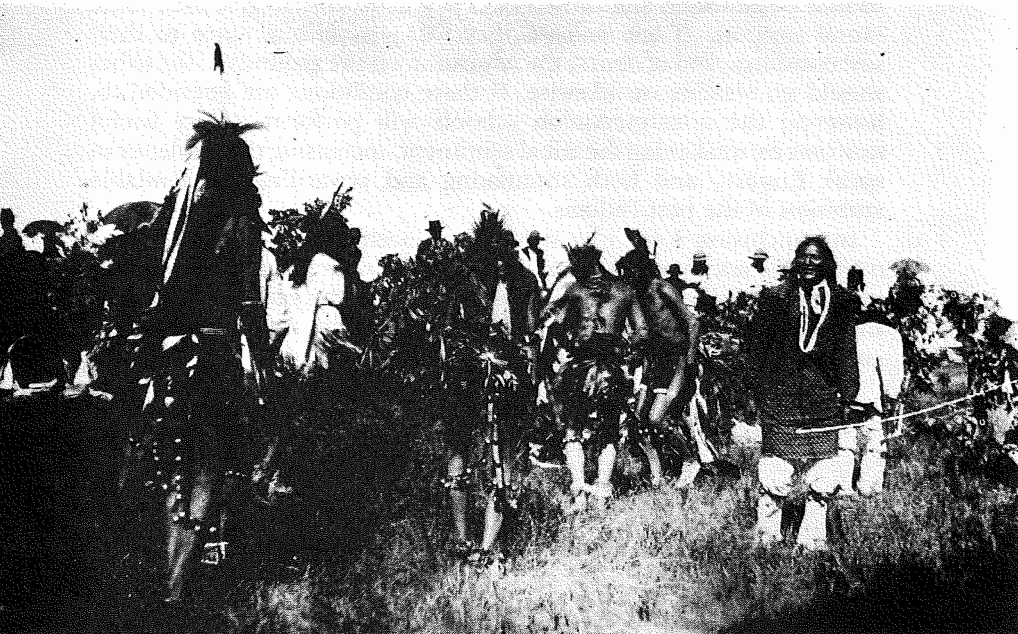
I saw not only the good Government boarding school at this Agency, but also the Presbyterian mission school.<sup>30</sup> This seemed a very good school; but it is said that many Indians are taught Dakota in it. This is all wrong. It is an outrage to employ a dollar of the public money in teaching any language but English, and I personally believe no Government money should be employed in teaching Indians to be missionaries, or used for any sectarian purpose.

#### OMAHA AND WINNEBAGO AGENCY.<sup>31</sup>

These Indians all own their lands in severalty and are voters, the Omahas being practically entirely independent of the agent, having had their lands in severalty for eight years. The agent, Mr. Ashley,<sup>32</sup> is evidently a very good man, intelligent, zealous, and devoted to the interests of the Indians, and grieving greatly at the retrogression of the Omahas. He informed me that these Indians cultivate less land and have gone back in almost every respect during the eight years they have been allowed to shift for themselves, one of the greatest of the troubles being the drinking trouble, almost all of them now drinking heavily. He also said that they are pauperized by the issue of money. This is undoubtedly true. No money should be issued to them except when they perform work as a condition for receiving it. Moreover, they should not be allowed to lease their lands, save as provided by law. The present lessees, who are white men, should be dispossessed at once, if necessary by the military. When an Indian leases his land, even for a good sum, he lives in idleness and drunkenness on his income and becomes absolutely unable to take care of himself. This is, in my opinion, a great evil. My inspection of the reservation, however, did not make me think that the condition of affairs was quite as bad as the agent, Mr. Ashley, thought. On the whole, I thought the Indians better off than any I had seen yet, and better able to take care of themselves. The two tribes have entirely different characteristics. The Winnebago women are very immoral, and the Omaha women are almost all entirely virtuous; most of the Winnebago Indians are heathens, the Omahas are not. On the other hand the Winnebagoes work much harder and are willing to work for wages. In their homes and home life they are still mainly Indians. More English is spoken among these Indians than among any I had yet come across, and the houses of the Omahas, instead of being built for them by the Government, have been built by themselves out of the money they have made from their farms; and very many of their farms that I visited were in first-class condition. I think that even a very good agent who takes a fatherly interest in his charges is unable to see that they must in the end shift for themselves,

and that when first turned loose a period of decay is sure to set in as the precursor of a period of healthy growth. It is just what would happen in any Eastern school where boys were kept under the paternal guidance of a good clergyman and then turned loose to shift for themselves. Many would fall, and there would be a period of change during which the results would appear disheartening, and yet it would be absolutely necessary to go through this period in order that those who survived might stand as men on their own feet. Of course, however, it is all wrong to try to force the time when the Indian can stand alone, exactly as it would be all wrong to try to force the boy to make his own way when he was eight or nine years old, because he ought to be made to make his own way when he was twenty-one. It was among these Winnebagoes and Omahas that I heard the greatest complaints of the graduates, or rather the returned scholars, from the non-reservation schools. Their health here is said to be very bad indeed, and even when it is not, four-fifths of them sink utterly under the change back to the dirt and discomfort and low mental activity of the reservation; very few do well. There was an Indian cook at the Agent's house, a girl who had been married against her will and went with her husband to Hampton. When they returned he instantly took another wife, and she got a divorce for bigamy. She could not stand the dirt and degradation of life with her mother, and she came as cook to Mrs. Ashley, making a most excellent cook. Cases like this are of very frequent occurrence. I was told here, as elsewhere, that the Indian did not get full justice in the white courts, the curious feature of it being that the whites were very reluctant to punish one Indian for committing a crime against another Indian, because the

*John A. Anderson photo of grass dance, called by Roosevelt the Omaha dance.*



Indians pay no taxes on their land, and they are therefore unwilling to allow them to be any expense to the county. This feeling in reference to the Indians' non-payment of land tax was very strong elsewhere. I wish the Government would pay the taxes for them, out of the proceeds from their lands.

#### HASKELL INSTITUTE.

After stopping at St. Joe to investigate a case of political assessments, I went on to Haskell Institute, where I was received with the utmost courtesy by the Superintendent, Mr. Meserve.<sup>33</sup> This institute is admirably managed. The boys are clean and contented; they are being well taught and healthfully disciplined. I was much interested in their base-ball nine, which was engaged with the nine of the Lawrence High School when I went there. The Indians won by a score of 15 to 8. The captain was a Seneca, the third-baseman a Pawnee; and there were Ottawas, Shawnees, Cherokees and Pottawatomies among the players. The orders were all given in English. The institute has also an exceedingly good brass band. In wandering about in the evening I was pleased, in coming into the different rooms unexpectedly, to see the amusements of the Indian boys. Some were playing checkers, one or two reading. In one room four or five were singing hymns; in another room several were practicing on the violin.

These schools are of very great assistance to the half-breeds and to the full-bloods of exceptional capacity who wish much to get a good education, and they also do good in a great number of cases to the other Indians by sending them back to act as missionaries among their brethren. However, I very firmly believe that to take only one or two from a large tribe and educate them is of little use. A great number should be educated and turned back in a tribe so as to give each some moral support. If left isolated they will succumb at once to their surroundings; and of course the education on the grounds of the tribes should go steadily on likewise. If these conditions are attended to, however, the non-reservation schools will perform a very useful function by weakening the tribal sentiment, increasing the tendency to speak English, and both stimulating and rewarding the laudable ambition of the best Indians.

In conclusion I wish to state that it seems to me it has been a misfortune not to have the Indian Commissioner given greater power and responsibility. He should be in all ways the real head; and he should be given the initiative in appointing agents, rather than have it go to the Secretary of the Interior or to outsiders.

Yours truly,

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

# NOTES

1. *25th Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1894), 128.

2. Adelbert Bower Sageser, *The First Two Decades of the Pendleton Act: A Study of Civil Service Reform* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Studies, 1935), 141.

3. Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt—An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1916), 132.

4. Francis Paul Prucha, "Thomas Jefferson Morgan," *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1824-1977*, Robert M. Kvasnicka and Herman J. Viola, editors (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

5. *10th Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Indian Rights Association for 1892* (Philadelphia, 1893), 3-4.

6. *9th Annual Report of the Executive Committee* (1892), 7.

7. Robert M. Utley, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 102-103.

8. Sageser, 160.

9. Laurence F. Schmeckebier, *The Office of Indian Affairs* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1927), 84.

10. The reservation covered about 5,000 square miles in southwestern South Dakota. According to the agent's census for 1889 it was home for 4,493 Oglala, 904 Brule, 120 Northern Cheyenne, and 620 mixed bloods, *61st Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1892), 453.

11. Captain George LeRoy Brown, 11th Infantry, US Army, was appointed agent at Pine Ridge on December 1, 1891. *24th Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners* (1893), 163.

12. Short Bull was one of a group who introduced the Ghost Dance to Pine Ridge and neighboring Rosebud. For a time he was regarded as a messiah and was arrested after Wounded Knee. The Ghost Dance leaders were to be confined at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, but Buffalo Bill Cody asked to take them on a European tour with his Wild West show. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morgan had publically denounced circus life as demoralizing, but Cody applied sufficient pressure to the secretary of Interior, and the Indians were allowed to go to Europe. Perhaps Roosevelt was unaware of the circus tour, but it is more likely he omitted this out of deference to Commissioner Morgan. Utley, 171-172.

13. The judges were George Swords, Frank Fast Horse, and John Grass, selected by Agent Brown. *61st Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1892), 454. These courts had no sanction in law; their power was with the influence of the agent and the consent of the community. Opposition to the courts was common especially from the more traditional Indians.

14. In 1892 the Indian court tried cases for wife-stealing, assault and battery, divorce, and property claims, *61st Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1892), 454.

15. The Omaha dance, a social event among the Sioux, was based upon the grass dance borrowed from the Omaha. Alice C. and Francis LaFlesche, *The Omaha Tribe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 461.

16. Formerly beef was slaughtered in a mock hunt reminiscent of the buffalo hunt. Since any activity recalling the earlier life style was considered "barbaric," agents were instructed to prohibit them. When a new agent arrived in 1893, the mock hunt was repeated for a time. *62nd Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1893), 288.

17. J. H. Meterer reported that 185 students attended the school the previous term. *61st Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1892), 458.

18. The outing system was initiated at Carlisle and copied at several other non-reservation schools. Students spent their summers working for neighboring white families to familiarize the Indians with the white world so they could be more easily assimilated into the dominant culture.

19. Wife of Charles S. Cook of the Protestant Episcopal Missionary Society. He died shortly before Roosevelt's visit. *24th Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners* (1893), 110.

20. The Dawes Bill, passed February 8, 1887, provided for allotments of 160 acres of land in severalty.

21. Cheyenne River, established in 1871, is along the west side of the Missouri River in central South Dakota. In 1890 it had a population of 2,565. *6th Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1891), 391.

22. Frank Lillibridge took charge of the agency on July 25, 1892. *61st Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1892), 426.

23. The Flandreau Colony was founded in 1869 by a group of Santee Sioux in southeastern South Dakota. They deserted their reservation and took land under the Homestead Act. They were frequently mentioned by government officials as exemplary examples of Indian advancement.

The Sisseton Reservation in extreme northeastern South Dakota was established in 1867 for the Sisseton and Wahpeton Sioux. Roy W. Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967).

24. Osmer H. Parker was Supervisor of Indian Education for all the reservations visited by Roosevelt. *24th Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners* (1893), 161.

25. William H. Hare, Episcopal bishop of South Dakota (Howe, M.A. DeWolfe. *Life and Labors of Bishop Hare*. (New York: Sturgis and Walton Co., 1911).

26. Fort Peck Boarding School was on the reservation for Yanktonais and Assiniboines in east central Montana. The average attendance in 1892 was 85. *61st Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, (1892), 300.

A Jesuit school at St. Ignatius Mission was on the Flathead Reservation in west central Montana. *Ibid.* (1891), 279.

27. The Yankton reservation was established in 1859 for the Yankton Sioux and had a population of 1,715 in 1889. *60th Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1891), 472. It was located on the eastern side of the Missouri River in southern South Dakota.

28. US Senator Richard F. Pettigrew had introduced a bill for the abandonment of the Lower Brule Reservation and the removal of the Brules to Rosebud. Utley, 284.

29. The reservation for the Santee Sioux in northeastern Nebraska was established in 1871 and at the time of Roosevelt's visit had jurisdiction over the Flandreau settlement. *60th Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1892), 313.

30. The American Missionary Association of the Congregational Church, not Presbyterian, operated the Santee Normal Training School under Albert L. Riggs. About 150 students were enrolled making it one of the largest Roosevelt visited. Classes in theology were taught and this may have angered Roosevelt. *61st Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1892), 313, 627.

31. The Omaha reservation was established in 1856 in northeastern Nebraska. In 1865 the northern half was purchased for the Winnebago, who were dissatisfied with the reservation in central South Dakota. In 1892 there were 1,186 Omaha and 1,198 Winnebago living there. *61st Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1892), 304.

32. Robert H. Ashley commenced his duties as agent on January 22, 1890. *24th Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners* (1893), 162.

33. C. F. Meserve became superintendent on October 1, 1889. This Lawrence, Kansas, school had an enrollment of 350 boys and 180 girls. In addition to farming, the boys were instructed in carpentry, wheelwrighting, shoemaking, and painting. The girls' studies were limited to housework and sewing. *24th Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners*, (1893), 20, 164.