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Article Title: "This Wild Region of the Far West": Lieutenant Sweeny's Letters from Fort Pierre, 1855-1856

Full Citation: Richard Joseph Coyer, "'This Wild Region of the Far West': Lieutenant Sweeny's Letters from Fort Pierre, 1855-1856," *Nebraska History* 63 (1982): 232-254

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1982Sweeny.pdf>

Date: 6/15/2012

Article Summary: Sweeny's letters to his wife report "Indian news" and describe weather conditions, outbreaks of illness, and relationships among the officers at the post. He frequently mentions his requests for transfers that would have permitted him to live nearer his family.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Thomas W Sweeny, John Lawrence Grattan, William S Harney, Little Thunder, Ellen Swain Clark Sweeny, Nathaniel Lyon

Place Names: Fort Pierre, South Dakota; Fort Laramie, Wyoming; Ash Hollow, Nebraska

Keywords: Fort Pierre, Sioux, Thomas W Sweeny, John Lawrence Grattan, William S Harney, Little Thunder, Battle of Ash Hollow

Photographs / Images: Matthew Brady photo of Captain Thomas W Sweeny about 1861; West Point Cadet Gouverneur Kemble Warren; Fort Pierre, Nebraska Territory, about 1856 (ink sketch by Captain Alfred Sully); General Nathaniel Lyon

“This Wild Region of the Far West”: Lieutenant Sweeny’s Letters From Fort Pierre, 1855-1856

BY RICHARD JOSEPH COYER*

INTRODUCTION

On the morning of June 2, 1855, six companies from the 2nd Infantry marched out of Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, and boarded trains on the first leg of a journey that would take them to the banks of the upper Missouri. These men had been ordered to take charge of an old fur-trading post, Fort Pierre (named after Pierre Chouteau), which was to be their garrison during a punitive expedition against the Sioux. The post had recently been purchased from the Chouteau Company by the War Department.¹

Among the officers of the contingent was 34-year old First Lieutenant Thomas W. Sweeny. A native of Ireland, Sweeny had already seen a great deal of action in his brief military career. In 1847 he joined the 2nd New York Volunteers as a second lieutenant and took part in General Winfield Scott’s drive to capture Mexico City. At the battle of Churubusco he received a serious wound in his right arm which necessitated its amputation. After the Mexican War Sweeny received a commission in the 2nd Infantry and from 1849 to 1853 the young Irishman served with his regiment in San Diego and Fort Yuma, California. He spent the next two years on recruiting service in New York and garrison duty at Carlisle Barracks.²

The purpose of this expedition was to punish the Sioux for the massacre of Lieutenant John L. Grattan³ and his men near Fort Laramie in August, 1854.⁴ But when they arrived at Pierre by steamboat in early July, 1855, the soldiers discovered their duties verged more into the area of house cleaning rather than fighting Indians. They found the trading post in decrepit condition; the few structures in the compound were

dilapidated, and the stockade wall was rotted and falling apart.

While the men of the 2nd Infantry tried to make Fort Pierre habitable, Brigadier General William S. Harney,⁵ commander of the expedition, left Fort Leavenworth with troops from the 2nd Dragoons, 6th and 10th Infantry, and 4th Artillery to search for the guilty Indians. On September 3 they cornered a small group of Brule across the Platte River from Ash Hollow in the valley of Blue Creek (Blue Water). Chief Little Thunder denied Harney's charge that they had killed Grattan and tried to resist. One half hour later 90 Sioux lay dead, and 70 had been taken prisoner in the Battle of Ash Hollow (or the Battle of the Blue Water—or "the Harney Massacre").⁶

Although flush from his victory, Harney lost his jubilant spirit when he saw Fort Pierre: "I have never visited a post where so little had been done for the comfort, convenience and necessities of the troops, as at this place."⁷ To make matters worse winter was approaching. The quartermaster felt it would be impossible to quarter and feed so many troops, and so he directed that several companies be sent out into cantonments and return to the fort in the spring. Sweeny was spared from this "exile" when Harney appointed him to the staff as post commissary.

In February, 1856, when the snow had melted and the troops returned to the post, the leaders of the Sioux nation also arrived to take part in a peace council. The meeting took place on March 1-5 with Harney putting on a great act, threatening and scolding the natives.⁸ The Sioux agreed to a treaty which called for them to turn over any braves guilty of crimes to government authorities, to return stolen property, and to stay away from the emigrant roads. In return the American government guaranteed to restore annuities and make sure white travelers did not trespass on Indian lands.⁹

With a peace council concluded and a treaty signed, the Army decided that Fort Pierre had served its usefulness and sent part of the garrison back to Fort Leavenworth.¹⁰ But the Army had something else in mind for Lieutenant Sweeny. He left Pierre on June 6, 1856, for six months of recruiting service in New York City, later returning to Nebraska Territory to serve at Fort Randall,¹¹ which had been constructed in part from materials salvaged from Fort Pierre. In 1858 he returned to



*Mathew Brady photo of Captain Thomas W. Sweeny, about 1861.
Courtesy National Archives.*

New York to spend another two years on recruiting duty.

Sweeny went on to have a distinguished military career during the Civil War. In 1861 he was stationed in Missouri, where he played an active part in keeping the state from joining the Confederacy. He fought in the engagements at Shiloh and Corinth and was wounded at both. His bravery in the latter battle earned him the rank of brigadier general. Sweeny also played a major role in turning back the Confederate offensive at the battle of Atlanta. After the war he received a brevet rank of colonel and served at Memphis, Tennessee. Sweeny was temporarily dismissed from the Army in 1866 because of his involvement with the Fenian Brotherhood, a political movement devoted to ending British rule in Ireland. After his reinstatement nine months later, Sweeny served in Georgia, commanding garrisons in Augusta and Atlanta. He retired with the rank of brigadier general on May 11, 1870, and spent the rest of his life in retirement. General Thomas W. Sweeny died in Astoria, New York, on April 10, 1892.¹²

During his stay at Fort Pierre, Sweeny wrote a steady stream of letters to his wife in New York. The former Ellen Swain Clark came from a distinguished family, being distantly related to Peter Folger, grandfather to Benjamin Franklin.¹³ She married Sweeny on May 15, 1848, and traveled with her husband to California. She lived on the west coast until 1852, when she returned to New York and never again joined her husband on frontier duty.

What follows are the texts of eight letters Lieutenant Sweeny wrote to his wife during his tour of duty at Fort Pierre. They are part of a large collection of Sweeny's private papers housed at the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California. Besides reporting on military information, Sweeny also detailed conditions at the post and the petty jealousies and rivalries among his fellow officers. He also told his wife about his attempts to be assigned to recruiting service, so he could be close to his family, rather than stationed in the middle of the prairie. When chances of this seemed remote, Sweeny spoke of the possibility of his wife and children joining him at Pierre.

The letters take a drastic change in tone after January, 1856. Apparently that month Sweeny learned from his sister-in-law that Ellen had been suffering from nervous fits, diagnosed as epilepsy (she would die from this disease on August 30,

1860¹⁴). For the next several months Sweeny's letters contain little or no information about life at Fort Pierre, but rather, his concern for his wife's well being. This explains why the letter published here describing the Indian council (March 10, 1856) is so short; Sweeny only gave one paragraph to this event. Not until April 18, 1856, does Sweeny once again give details of life on the frontier.

LETTERS

Fort Pierre, N[ebraska]. T[erritory].
July 20, 1855

My own dear, dear Ell.;

What a long, long time it is since I have received a letter from you! It is almost *two months!* I almost fear that I'll never get a letter again; but I know, dear Ell., it ain't [*sic*] your fault, but some difficulty in the postal arrangements, and the delay and uncertainty always incident to a change of stations.

We arrived here on the 12th,¹⁵ after a long and tedious trip of 35 days from Alton, Ill., which place we left on the 7th of June,¹⁶ in the U. S. Steamer "Wm. Baird." The other companies were in other steamers: —Wessells¹⁷ Co. "G" in the "Arabia" (Hd. Qrs.), Lovell's¹⁸ Co. "A" in the "Grey Cloud," and "D" Co. in the "Australia," which was sunk, by running on a snag between Alton and Fort Leavenworth, and nearly everything lost: (I think I told you in a former letter that everything was saved,¹⁹ but it was a mistake[]) Gardner,²⁰ I believe, saved all his company and personal property and so did O'Connell,²¹ who belongs to the same company ("D")[] We had to leave "D" Co. at Fort Leavenworth: we expected them up in the "Clara" or "Kate Sweeny," but the former had "B" & "C" Companies, Bvt. Lt. Col. Montgomery²²[]; Major Gaines,²³ Paymaster[]; Lt. Warren,²⁴ Topographical Engineers[]; the sutler and his wife and one or two clerks;—and the latter had Lt. Hunter²⁵ and one hundred recruits to fill up B & C Companies.²⁶ There are two other boats to come up, the "Genoa" and "Golden State," one of which will bring Capt. Gardner, Lt. O'Connell, and "D" Co. The five boats which got up here had all to unload part of their cargo down the river, on account of the river being so low,²⁷ some as far as 300 miles, and others not more than 120 [miles] from here: they are now all below, after what they left, except the "Arabia," which has brought up her cargo, and gone up to the Yellowstone river, about 600 miles further up, with merchandize for the American Fur Company. The Steamer "St. Mary," which has just arrived here this

morning from the Yellowstone river, leaves tomorrow morning for St. Louis; and as it is the first opportunity we have had since our arrival here, and will probably be the only one for some time to come, we are all very busy at present making up our mails. I would write you a longer letter, dear Ell., were it not that I have my Commissary papers to send by this mail. . . . We have been very busy since our arrival, unloading the boats and getting the property inside the *Fort*,—a rude picketing from 12 to 15 feet high, and about 300 feet square. There were rumors floating round that there was a large force of Indians within two or three days march of here (about 5000) and that it was more than probable they would make an attack on the *Fort* in order to capture or destroy the supplies, which, if they succeeded in doing, they certainly would break up this Expedition for this year by all events. There are only two Companies here at present, "A & I," and only two officers with them, Davidson,²⁸ who is in command of "I," and myself, who has command of "A." The rest of the officers and troops have been left down the river, guarding the property left there, except Col. Montgomery (comd'g. officer)[,] Major Gaines (Paymaster)[,] Dr. Madison²⁹ (Asst. Surg.)[,] Capt. Turnley³⁰ (Quartermaster)[,] Capt. Simpson³¹ (A[ssistant]. C[ommissary]. [of] S[ubsistence].) who is going back to St. Louis shortly; Lt. McLean³² (Adj't.) and Lt. Curtiss,³³ acting Post Commissary, who are all in the "*Fort*,"—together with the sutler & his wife, women, children, clerks, &c. &c. *We*, Davidson and myself, are encamped with our Companies outside the *Fort*, and taking into consideration the halt, lame & blind, with those we had to leave behind for the protection of our property, we could raise about one hundred fighting men to repel any attack the Indians might make upon us. Wessell's [*sic*] Company was sent to Fort George, about 25 miles down the river, to bring up some property purchased from the A[merican]. F[ur]. C[ompany]. there: Lovell was sent down in charge of the U. S. Steamer "Wm. Baird" & "Grey Cloud" to bring up the troops & property left by them below: the "Clara" had to go back to the Running Water river (about 300 [miles]) to bring up "B" & "C" Cos. & property left there: and the ["i] Kate Sweeny" had to return as far as White Earth river for her property, &c.; we expect them all back in a week or ten days. We had much sickness coming up the river, "G" Co. alone lost 14 from cholera, although they had Dr. Madison with them, and every attention that he could procure. — I wrote two letters to you dear Ell. since I left Alton, one from Fort Leavenworth, and one from the Big Sioux river, which I hope you have received.³⁴ I think, my dear Ell., that you had better direct your letters in future to "*Fort Pierre, N. T., via Council Bluffs & Sioux City.*" We will soon establish an express between here & Sioux

City, which is about 300 miles by land, & 500 by water, and from which place a regular mail was established to Council Bluffs (about 100 miles by land & 200 by water) on the 1st of July. . . .

Fort Pierre, N. T.
Aug. 7, 1855.

My own dearest Ell.,

I avail myself of the opportunity presented by the departure of the U. S. Steamer "Grey Cloud," today for St. Louis, to write you a few lines, in order that you may know how we are getting along, and what we are about in this wild region of the far West, where the Prairie dog's howl is answered by the savage war-whoop of the wild Indian, and the elk and buffalo roam in solitary freedom over the trackless plains that extend to the very base of the Rocky Mountains. We are still in camp, and worked almost to death, trying to get our quarters up, and everything comfortably fixed ere winter sets in. I forget whether I told you that the quartermaster brought up cottages for ten companies,³⁵ which he expected to be able to put up immediately after arriving here, having brought mechanics along for that purpose, but we had so much other duty to attend to, that the quarters had to be neglected for the time being. Companies "B & C" arrived here a few days ago,³⁶ with Capt. Lyon³⁷ and Lieuts. Wright³⁸ and Long;³⁹—Lyon, who is in command of "B" Company, is out of arrest at present, but the "charges" still hang over him, and he is liable to be tried at any time on them.⁴⁰ He has now an opportunity of tasting some of the bitter waters of persecution that he at one time helped to force down my throat.⁴¹ But, thank God! I can return him good for evil: and instead of exulting in his misfortunes, I have done everything in my power to make him forget what has passed, and to prove my sincere friendship, for which he seems to be truly grateful. Lieut. Wright has been made Post Commissary, and I have been put in command of "C" Company.⁴² Company "D," with Gardner and O'Connell, are yet below, but are expected up this week.⁴³ Wessells & Lovell, with their companies, are ordered on detached service, to cut hay for the use of the animals at the post during the winter; they are to go down in the "Grey Cloud" and be landed about 10 miles below for that purpose; they will probably return in about a month.⁴⁴ I can't give you any Indian news, as we are in complete ignorance of their movements, and only suppose they are in the "Black Hills" at present. The Capt. of "C" Company, that I am in command of, is Davis,⁴⁵ who is on General Recruiting

Service in Boston, and whose tour of service will expire on the 31st of July next;⁴⁶ so that I will, in all probability, remain in command until then, when I may be ordered to relieve him on Genl. Recruiting Service. That would be a very good arrangement don't you think so, dear Ell.? I have only received one letter from my wife since I left Carlisle, now going on three months. But I don't blame you, dear Ell., I don't believe it is your fault. The winters here, they say, are very cold; the mercury falls as low as 20° below zero. I expect we will all be frozen to death here next winter; at least those of us who have been stationed at Fort Yuma. . . .

Fort Pierre, Upper Missouri, Neb. Terr.,
September 13th, 1855.

My own darling wife,

I not only received your last letter, dated the 13th of August, (just one month ago,) but *three* others with it, during the last ten days . . . I received none dated between July 8 & Augt. 13:—I am sure you have written in that time, and the letters are, doubtless, on their way now. . . .

Sept. 14. Col. Montgomery has turned over the command of this post to Maj. Wessells, and is ordered to attend a General Court Martial which is to convene at Fort Leavenworth on the 24th inst. for the trial of *himself*, and such other persons as may be brought before it.⁴⁷ He leaves here on the 17th: one of my sergeants . . . goes with him, being summoned as witness to attend the court. Capt. Lyon, who has been summoned by the Adjt. Genl. as a witness on the court, left here for Fort Leavenworth by land three or four days ago:⁴⁸ he was in arrest when the order arrived. I shouldn't wonder if Lyon would be tried too, by the same court, on the charges brought against him by Col. Montgomery: I don't think it will amount to anything, however.⁴⁹ Davidson, Lyon and myself were messing together before he went away; and Maj. Wessells belongs to our mess, but was on Detached service at the time, cutting hay and wood about 10 miles down the river, for the use of the Post during winter. A mail arrived here from Fort Laramie a few days ago, with very important news to us: it left Fort Kearney [*sic*] on the 21st, and touched at Laramie on its way to this place. Genl. Harney has taken the field at the head of 500 men, and is determined to carry fire and sword into the heart of the enemy's country. He has ordered five of the six companies stationed here to take the field immediately and meet him at a place called the *Mauvais Terre* (bad lands) about 170 miles from here, in a south westernly direction, the other company, Capt. Lovell's, to remain and take charge of the Post until our

return. We will be absent about two months. Wessells issued the order today in relation to this Expedition:⁵⁰ he is to take command himself in the field; "G" "I" "D" "B" & "C" Companies are to be commanded, respectively, by Lt. O'Connell, Capt. Davidson, Capt. Gardner, Lt. Curtiss & myself: I am appointed Quartermaster and Commissary for the trip, & O'Connell adjutant while in the field. There is great excitement here at present. We leave on the 16th. I am very busy, making out the necessary requisitions for transportation and supplies of all kinds, besides having the duties of my company to attend to. I have been stealing a little time now and then during the last two days to write this letter: I expect to finish it before I leave. It will be impossible for me, dear Ell.[,] to write you while we are in the field (next two months) but, as Indian Express (we will have friendly Indians along) will, no doubt, be sent into the Post occasionally from our command, Lt. McLean has promised me, that he will write you a few lines on all such occasions, to let you know how I am, & how the Expedition is progressing. I will leave him your address for that purpose. You must not believe all the reports you see in the papers.

Sept. 15th. We leave in the morning at 7 o'clock: the train has just been ordered up by me to be loaded: I take 20,000 rations: our force will be about 300 men. I expect we will have a pretty hard time of it, as it will soon be *very* cold. . . .

Fort Pierre, N. T.,
Oct. 17, 1855.

My own dearest Ell.,

I have just returned to this place from the "Grand Expedition" we started on about a month ago, against the Sioux Indians. After the great battle, between "Little Thunder" and about three hundred of his warriors, and our troops, commanded by Genl. Harney, we were ordered to return to Fort Pierre, and complete our arrangements for the winter.⁵¹ I suppose, of course, you have read all the particulars of that battle. There will be, no doubt, many conflicting accounts published, but the truth of the matter is, the fight didn't last over half an hour before the Indians broke and ran, where they were pursued for about 15 miles by our Dragoons, or as long as the horses held out, leaving some 80 warriors dead on the field, and 70 prisoners in our hands. We lost 4 killed, and 7 wounded.⁵² A new military post was established at a place called Ash Hollow, between Forts Laramie and Kearney [*sic*], a favorite rendezvous of the Brules, or Sioux of the Platte, and called "Fort Gratten" [*sic*], in memory of the young officer, who was massacred with his command of about 30 men, about a year ago near Fort Laramie. Genl. Harney

West Point Cadet Gouverneur Kemble Warren. Courtesy of Historical Division, Office of Chief Engineers.



was to have called a great Council of the Ogillalahs [*sic*], Brules of the Platte, Uagages, &c., the result of which will be a lasting peace, or a general Indian war, which will probably be a second edition of the Florida war.

Dear Ell., in my last letter, dated September 15th, I think . . . I said, that Lt. McLean would write to you as often as an opportunity offered, during my absence, giving you all the information he possessed in relation to myself and the expedition, &c., &c., but our unexpected return prevented his doing so, for we expected to be at least *two months* absent when we started. Indeed, I'm not at all sorry that the duty devolves upon myself of writing my dear wife; are you Ell.? . . .

We are in a state of much uncertainty here at present. There are prospects of a winter campaign ahead, which, taking into consideration the severity of this climate, will be terrible. It may be destruction to the Indians, but will be the death of us likewise. The mercury falls as low as 20 or 30 degrees below zero here in the winter. All depends on the issue of the council, which Harney was to hold with the Ogillalahs [*sic*] and other tribes. The Dacotahs [*sic*], or Sioux Indians number about 3000 Lodges, 30,000 souls, and from 800 to 10,000 warriors: the nation is divided into *nine* tribes, and these again subdivided into smaller bands: the names of the different *tribes*, are the Yanktons, Yanktonais, Brules, Ogillalahs [*sic*], Miniconges [*sic*], San-Arc, One-papa [*sic*], Blackfeet, and Two Kettle Band;—they occupy a country extending from the mouth of the Big Sioux river to the Yellowstone river, north and south, and from the sources of the St. Peter's river to the base of the Rocky Mountains, from east to west. The most hostile of those tribes are the Brules, Ogillalahs [*sic*], Minniconges [*sic*], Sans-Arc, One-papa [*sic*], and Black-feet, and generally infest the head-waters of the Platte and Cheyenne rivers for the purpose of carrying on their depredations against the whites, the great Emigrant routes being in that vicinity, when threatened, they take refuge in the Black Hills, where it is difficult to get at them.

The mail has just arrived, bringing everybody lots of letters and papers;—I have received *six letters*, all from you dear Ell. . . . There is a steamer (the St. Mary) at the mouth of White River (150 miles below) with supplies for this post: she could get up no further on account of the low stage of water, she has potatoes & onions on board, and we are anticipating a great feast when they arrive here. We will be employed all Fall in bringing the supplies here. . . .

Fort Pierre, Neb. Terr.,
Nov. 1855.⁵³

My own dearest Ell.,

There is quite a large party leaving here tomorrow for *home*! Oh, how much life, and hope, and happiness there is in that little word! but,—

“Courage, boys, the time will come;
When we shall see our friends and home;
And swarthy marked by a prairie sun,
We’ll spin long yarns of the deeds we’ve done.”

Yes, dear Ell., I hope the time will not be long in coming either, when, sitting side by side, with your hand clasped in mine, and our darling children sitting on our laps, I will pour into your listening ear, the “dangers I have run by flood and field, the hairbreadth ‘scapes i’ the imminent deadly breach,” and all the strange, romantic Legends connected with the wild, fierce tribes by which I am now surrounded. But, to return to the party,—the happy party, who are to leave tomorrow for home: it consists of Maj. Gaines,⁵⁴ Maj. Woods,⁵⁵ (whose wife & children perished last summer at Fort Riley) Captains Davidson,⁵⁶ Lovell,⁵⁷ Todd,⁵⁸ (brother to Dr. Todd who married Maj. [?] Lovell’s sister-in-law,) and probably Maj. Graham:⁵⁹ I might have got off, too, if Harney hadn’t taken it into his head to appoint me on his staff, by making me Depot Commissary⁶⁰ in place of Lt. Wright, who was appointed Post Commissary by Montgomery; I never knew of it till the thing was done; the General then sent for me and said, “I have made you Depot Commissary without consulting you, if you have any objection to serve on my staff, let me know, and I’ll have you relieved at once.”] I’ve been told by more than [one] officer who happened to be present when the appointment was made, that he complimented me very highly, and said it was a d--d shame to compel an officer circumstanced as I was, to do Company duty so many years, and the greater part of that time in the field: that, as far as he was concerned, there was nothing in his power he would not do for an officer who had lost an arm in defence of his country. This looks like

egotism, Ell., but I wouldn't repeat it to any one else but you, from whom I have no secrets.

There will be no campaign this winter. Delegations from all the tribes in the Sioux Nation assembled here on the 8th in a Grand Council (except the Brules and Black-feet Sioux,) and promised to send in *ten* of their most influential men, including their principal chiefs, from each tribe, in a hundred days from that time, which will be on or about the 1st of March: these ten men are to represent each tribe, & are to be instructed by their people what to say & do in the Council, & the tribes shall abide by whatever arrangements General Harney may make with the representatives of the respective Bands. This message was also sent to the Brules and Black-Feet, by chiefs of the Bands. . . . The troops have all been sent into cantonments for the winter; or, in other words, the Qr. Master said it would be impossible to supply fuel for the whole command if they remained in garrison this winter, so they have been sent off in different directions except two Co's. of the 2nd Inf.[,] "A" & "G[,]" Lovell's & Wessells'.⁶¹ A squadron of Drag's., under Maj. Howe,⁶² have been sent down to the mouth of the "Running Water," about 300 miles from here, where a steamer, the "Grey Cloud," is now laying [lying] with potatoes & onions for the Commissary, & corn for the Qr. Master, but can get up no higher, on account of the low stage of the water;⁶³ another squadron under Maj. Graham's command are about 18 miles above this place;⁶⁴ four Co's. of the 2d Inf. are in huts about 6 miles up the river, on the other side,⁶⁵ and the four Co's. of the 6th Inf. are about 12 miles up the river, on the other side.⁶⁶ . . . Genl. H. has told me, that he appointed me on his staff, not merely to last for the Sioux Expedition, but for several years; so, now, dear Ell. I wish to know if you would be willing to come here next summer with our children, and live here with me as long as I remain. . . I merely propose this to you, dear Ell., and leave it entirely to yourself to decide whether you'll come or not . . .

P.S. Expecting this to reach you about the 25th of Dec. I wish you all a Merry Christmas & a happy New Year, & "many happy returns of the season," as they say. I'm collecting the materials for an eggnog on Christmas; precisely at 12M. on that day, I'll drink first to my wife & children, & then to friends.

Hd. Qrs. Sioux Expedition,
Fort Pierre, N.T.,
March 10th, 1856.

My own darling Ell.,

The great Indian council has taken place; it commenced on the 1st. and ended on the 6th.⁶⁷ There were about 125 chiefs and war-

rriors present, who represented Eight Tribes of the Sioux Nation, leaving but *one* to be represented, the Ogillalah [*sic*], whose absence was caused by some misunderstanding between them and the Indian Agent at Fort Laramie.⁶⁸ It was rumored that the *Brules* and *Ogillalahs* [*sic*] refused to come in, and made up their minds to fight. On the 26th, however, an Express reached here from Laramie with the news that Little Thunder, with between 30 and 40 of his Band, were on their way to this place to attend the Council, with one chief of the Ogillalahs [*sic*]: he halted his party about 8 miles from here and encamped, and marched in on the 27th at the head of his braves, and reported himself and delegation to Genl. Harney. You recollect [']twas Little Thunder who commanded the Brules at the battle fought in September last at the Big Blue [often called the Battle of Ash Hollow], he says his loss on that occasion was much greater than we have reported it. The Treaty negotiated is a very important one, if strictly observed[,] and will have a tendency to preserve peace and quietness in the country for the future. General Harney deserves much praise for the manner in which he has conducted the whole affair. Col. Vaughn,⁶⁹ our Indian Agent, was present, and says it is the best Treaty ever made with the Sioux Nation. He left here on the 8th. . . .

Head Qrs. Sioux Expedition,
Fort Pierre, N. T.
April 18, 1856

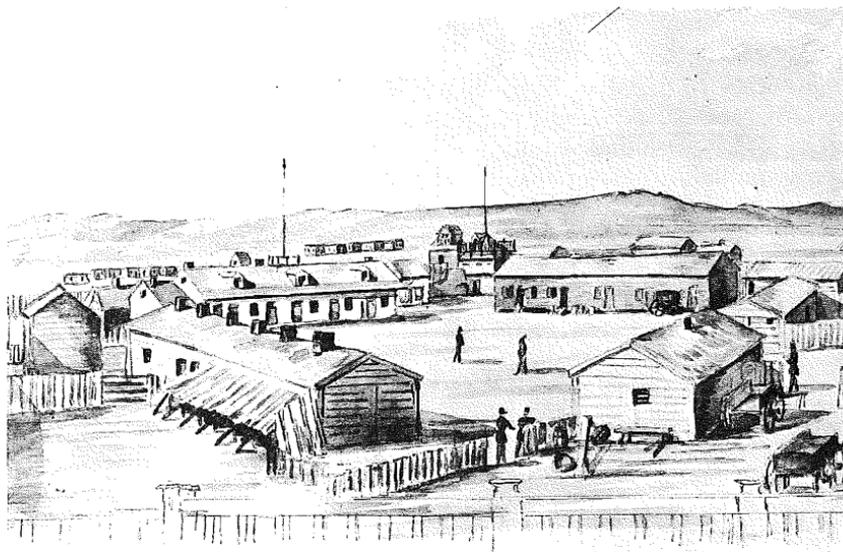
My own dearest Ell.,

I avail myself of the departure from this place of one of the American Fur Company in a day or two for New York, to send you a few lines, to let you know how we are getting along here, and what our prospects and hopes are for the future. This is the season when the Mackinaw boats belonging to the Am. Fur Co. commence going down to St. Louis from their posts on the upper Missouri and the Yellow Stone, with buffalo robes and other furs. Mr. Galpin,⁷⁰ the gentleman above referred to, has kindly offered to take charge of anything I wished to send to New York, and deliver them in person, as he intended to stay there for some time. I have taken advantage of his kind offer and send a couple of dozen *dried buffalo tongues* . . . Mr. G. is a nephew of Gov. Price⁷¹ of New Jersey: he will get to N. Y., he thinks, in fifteen or sixteen days; he will travel in a "Mackinaw" to St. Joseph's, Mo., over a thousand miles below this [place], in about eight days; [t]here he will take the first steamer that leaves for St. Louis, where he expects to arrive in five days, more, and from thence to N. Y. will not take more than three days at furthest, much quicker than our mail can get there. I would send

some other things, too, but I do not like to trespass too much on his good nature. I have a pair of mocassins [*sic*] I had worked expressly for you, Ell., which I would like to send, if I were not afraid of their being spoiled by being packed with the tongues: I will send them if it can be done with safety; they are cut gaiter fashion, and there being no soles to them, you can have them made to suit yourself, dear Ell. . . . [Davidson] says "the order for Rect'g. Service will be out in a few days," and thinks I'll be one of the *lucky ones*. Col. Lee⁷² (promoted to our Regt. by resignation of Genl. Hitchcock⁷³) is on his way here, also Maj. Burbank,⁷⁴ promoted in place of Montgomery, Capt. Lovell (and family)[,] Davidson, Lyon, and Davidson⁷⁵ of our Regt., besides several officers of the 6th Inf. and 2d Drag. The 1st Cavalry, one of the new Regiments, and the four companies of our Regt. now at Forts Ridgely and Ripley, are ordered here as soon as the weather permits. Those fellows on the Mississippi will be disgusted to give up their comfortable quarters for such a place as this: they will be relieved by the 10th Inf.[,] another of the new Regts. These new Regiments seem to be more highly favored than the *old* ones; or it may be the new ones are too raw to trust in such a place as this: they are afraid of showing them the *dark* side of the picture yet!! they'll see the elephant soon enough!! By the last mail we got news of a war with England, in a telegraphic dispatch received at Council Bluffs from Weston, Mo. on the 19th inst., but having received no special express, we are afraid the news is not true.⁷⁶ . . .

P.S. Should I receive the appointment on Rect'g. service, I will let you know immediately. Genl. Harney says, if I shouldn't get it, I can remain on his staff as Depot Commissary as long as I please. Our mail is expected here on the 25th, we will then know whether the *war news* is true or not. I believe these Indians will stand by the Treaty made here with them on the 1st March. If there is to be no war with England, our Regt. will probably be ordered to *Florida* next summer, to settle matters *there*, those Artillery fellows⁷⁷ have been stationed so long in the vicinity of our large *cities*, that they don't seem to understand the Indian mode of warfare. I see by the papers that *Fort Yuma* has been lately attacked by *my* old friends the Indians on the Colorado, and a great many killed, that place is also garrisoned by the Artillery.⁷⁸ Well I would rather be in Florida than here, on account of the climate; but we must obey orders, of course. . . .

April 21. The mail got in today, but there are no letters for me,—nothing but newspapers. The war rumor by the last mail turns out [to be] a hoax. I'll have to send *this* by *our* mail of the 25th, as the *Mackinaw* Mr. Galpin expected to go in was *sunk* on its way here from *Fort Clark*.



Fort Pierre, Nebraska Territory, about 1856. Ink sketch by Captain Alfred Sully. Courtesy Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.



General Nathaniel Lyon. Courtesy State Historical Society of Missouri.

Head Qrs. Sioux Expedition,
May 9th, 1856.

My own darling wife,

. . . In my last [letter] . . . I mentioned something about a small invoice of buffalo tongues I intended to send home by Mr. Galpin, who expected to leave here for New York about the 20th or 25th ultimo, but the Mackinaw boat he was to go in sunk between here and Fort Clark (one of the Am. Fur Co's. trading posts, 350 miles above this [place]), so he had to wait until he could send for another. He expects to be off now within a week, "if nothing happens," as the saying is.

We have just had one of the most violent and protracted storms here I ever remember to have seen anywhere. It commenced on the 22nd of April, and continued with unabated fury until the day before yesterday. I was never so disgusted in my life. It rained almost as much in doors [*sic*] as out. We had quite a variety while the storm lasted,—rain, hail, snow and thunder. It killed a great many cattle in this part of the country. I lost eight or ten out of my herd. Nearly half our patent cottages were blown down, and the others would have followed suit if we had not propped and braced them in every possible manner.⁷⁹ We have some prospect of being blessed with fine weather now for some time. A train started from here for Fort Laramie on the 24th of last month, and has got as far as "Sheep's-Eye Creek," about 20 miles from this place. The roads are so bad that it will probably have to stay where it is for four or five days more.

We are anxiously looking for the steamer "Genoa" it being the first, I believe, that was advertised to leave Saint Louis. It was to have left on the 15th of April, and ought to be here by the 15th of this month,⁸⁰ as the river has been higher than usual on account of the late severe storm. We expect several of our officers in her, as well as Mrs. Madison, Mrs. Wright, and Mrs. Lovell. Col. Lee, our new Col., is also expected in her. I hope he brings the order for Recruiting and appoints me on that duty for the next two years.⁸¹ I wrote to Davidson by a Mackinaw boat that left for Saint Louis eight or ten days ago, to put in a good word for me if he and the Col. should come up on the same boat, as 'tis more than probable they will. I expect my letter to reach him while on his way up: it can't possibly miss him; it might have done so, had it gone in the mail. Our regular mail has been due now four days, but we expected the storm would keep it back several days. Our last mail brought us nothing but newspapers,—not a single letter.

I have had a slight attack of pleurisy lately, but it has entirely

disappeared; it didn't amount to anything. I think it was produced by too sedentary habits incident to my staff appointment. I shan't be sorry to give it up for the Genl. Rect'g. Service! will you, Ell.? I'm sure you will not. . . .

NOTES

*The author expresses gratitude to the following for their help in the preparation of this paper: Mrs. Janet Murphy, James S. Copley Library, University of San Diego, for her work in obtaining material through inter-library loans; Mrs. Valerie Franco, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, for her aid in securing permission to publish these letters; and Dr. Richard J. Sommers and John J. Slonaker, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, for information concerning the court-martial of Colonel William R. Montgomery.

1. In 1855 soldiers of the 2nd Infantry Regiment found a dilapidated fur trading post, Fort Pierre Chouteau, on their hands—"a barren and exhausted place," according to Charles E. Galpin, who had lived in the area about 10 years as representative of the Chouteaus and who was instrumental in its sale to the War Department. The fort buildings were used only temporarily before they were dismantled and some of the building materials used in the erection of Fort Pierre II, constructed about 2 miles to the north. G. Hubert Smith, "Fort Pierre II, a Historic Trading Post in the Oahe Dam Area, South Dakota," in Smithsonian Institution Bureau of Ethnology *Bulletin No. 174*, River Basin Survey Paper, Frank H. H. Roberts, Editor (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960), 92-94.

2. William M. Sweeny, *A Biographical Memoir of Thomas William Sweeny, Brigadier-General United States Army, By his son, William M. Sweeny* (New York: privately printed, 1907).

3. Brevet Second Lieutenant John Lawrence Grattan graduated from West Point in 1853 and was assigned to the infantry at Fort Laramie. He was 24 when he died. George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N. Y., from its Establishment, March 16, 1802 to the Army Re-Organization of 1866-67*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1868), No. 1614. Citations will be by "Number" of the individual on the roster of graduates, rather than by volume and page, which differ in the various editions. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1903), 1:471.

4. The accounts of two traders, Obridge Allen and James Bordeaux, who witnessed the massacre, can be found in *House Ex. Doc. No. 63*, 33rd Congress, 2d Session, 8-13, 20-22, 24-26; Major W. Hoffman to S. Cooper, November 29, 1854, *House Ex. Doc. No. 36*, 33rd Congress, 2d session, 3-5; For an excellent reconstruction of the event, consult Lloyd E. McCann, "The Grattan Massacre," *Nebraska History*, 37 (March, 1956), 1-25.

5. William Selby Harney was born in Haysboro, Tennessee, on August 27, 1800. He attended a local academy and in 1818 received a commission as a second lieutenant in the army. He fought against the Creeks and Seminoles and by 1836 was a lieutenant colonel in the Second Dragoons. Harney held the rank of full colonel when the Mexican War broke out and won a brevet rank of brigadier general at the battle of Cerro Gordo. Sweeny met Harney briefly in Mexico and served under him again in Missouri at the start of the Civil War. Harney retired from the Army in 1863 as major general. He died in Orlando, Florida, on May 9, 1889. *Dictionary of American Biography*, 20

vols., plus supplements (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923-), 4:280-281; Heitman, 1:518.

6. For General Harney's report on the Battle of Ash Hollow (Blue Water), dated September 5, 1855, see *Senate Ex. Doc. No. 1, Pt. 2*, 34th Congress, 1st Session, 49-51. The report of Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, who commanded the 2nd Dragoons at the engagement, appears in *Senate Ex. Doc. No. 58*, 34th Congress, 3rd Session. Two other battle accounts are written by participants: Richard C. Drum, "Reminiscences of the Indian Fight at Ash Hollow, 1855," *Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, 16 (1911), 143-151; and Ray H. Mattison, editor, "The Harney Expedition Against the Sioux: The Journal of Capt. John B. S. Todd," *Nebraska History*, 43:89-130; Robert Harvey, "The Battle Ground of Ash Hollow," *Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, 16 (1911), 152-164; Merrill Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1969), 312.

7. Harney to Colonel Lorenzo Thomas, December 14, 1855, "Official Correspondence Relating to Fort Pierre," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 1 (1902), 413-414. Hereafter cited as "Official Correspondence."

8. Harney's performance at the council is described in Hiram M. Chittenden, *History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River*, 2 vols. (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1903), 1:202; *New York Herald*, May 3, 1856, 2. The general's demeanor prompted the natives to call Harney "Mad Bear."

9. Congress never ratified this treaty. Indian Agent Thomas S. Twiss sabotaged Harney's agreement by telling Congress the proposed annuities would be too expensive. Robert G. Athearn, *Forts of the Upper Missouri* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 49.

10. Cooper to Harney, June 20, 1856, "Official Correspondence," 426-427.

11. Fort Randall was named in honor of Daniel Randall, paymaster for the 1st Infantry in 1818. He served three years as major paymaster, and on March 3, 1847, was promoted to deputy paymaster general. Randall died on December 17, 1951. Heitman, 1:814.

12. Sweeny, *A Biographical Memoir*; *New York Times*, April 12, 1892.

One of Sweeny's collaborators in the Fenian ventures was "General" John O'Neill, a non-commissioned officer in the Civil War. O'Neill, a native Irishman, brought Irish colonists to Holt County, north-central Nebraska, between 1874-1877. "Out-of-Old-Nebraska" newspaper feature articles written by the Nebraska State Historical Society (files at Lincoln, Nebraska), February 3, 1957.

13. A chart of Ellen Clark Sweeny's family can be found in the genealogy papers of the Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

14. The death of Ellen Sweeny is recorded on a genealogy chart in the Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

15. Lieutenant Sweeny was on the second steamboat to arrive at Fort Pierre; the *Arabia* arrived five days earlier, on July 7, 1855. Returns from U.S. Military Posts, 1800-1916. Fort Pierre, South Dakota: July 1855-May 1857. Microcopy No. 617, roll 920. National Archives and Record Service, Washington, DC. Hereafter cited as Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

16. After boarding a train at Carlisle Barracks, the troops rode through Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, Toledo, Chicago, to Alton, Illinois. Here the infantrymen spent three days quartered in barns and farmhouses, then boarded steamboats that took them up the Missouri to Fort Pierre. Augustus Meyers, *Ten Years in the Ranks [of the] U.S. Army* (New York: Stirling Press, 1914), 49-51.

17. Henry Walton Wessells (West Point, 1833, joined 2nd Infantry) served in the Mexican and Civil Wars, retiring in 1871. Cullum, No. 735; Heitman, 1:1019.

18. Christopher S. Lovell, commissioned a second lieutenant in the 2nd Infantry in 1838, served in the Mexican War. He retired a major in 1861. Heitman, 1:643-644.

19. "We met quite an accident on our way from Alton here, [Fort Leavenworth]

one of our boats, the 'Australia,' with 'D' Company on board, sunk; but no lives were lost, and the property, &c., was all saved, I believe." Sweeny to Ellen Sweeny, June 12, 1855, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

20. William Montgomery Gardner (West Point, 1846, joined 1st Infantry) fought in the Mexican War but resigned as captain in 1861. Cullum, No. 1326; Heitman, 1:4460.

21. John Dawes O'Connell (West Point, 1852, joined 2nd Infantry) served at Fort Randall before the Civil War. Following hostilities he was posted to Texas, where he died in 1867. Cullum, No. 1562; Heitman, 1:755.

22. William Reading Montgomery (West Point, 1825, joined 3rd Infantry) saw service in the Seminole and Mexican Wars; he was court martialed and cashiered in 1855. He reentered the Army as colonel of the 1st New Jersey Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. Before resigning in 1864, he had been promoted to brigadier general. Cullum, No. 419; Heitman, 1:720.

23. In 1846 Major Augustus W. Gaines became paymaster of volunteers; three years later he was paymaster in the Regular Army. Gaines died on February 19, 1860. Heitman, 1:442.

24. Gouverneur Kemble Warren graduated from West Point in 1850 with a commission in the Topographical Engineers. When the Civil War began he joined the 5th New York Volunteers as a colonel. His bravery at Gaines Mills, Virginia; Gettysburg; and Bristow Station, Virginia; won him the rank of brevet major general. He later rejoined the Topographical Engineers and was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1879. Warren died on August 8, 1882. Cullum, No. 1451; Heitman, 1:1003.

25. Robert Finley Hunter (West Point, 1853, joined 2nd Infantry) had been promoted to a first lieutenantcy before being cashiered for drunkenness in 1861. Cullum, No. 1624; Heitman, 1:558.

26. Actually there were 61 recruits in this contingent. Return for July, 1855, Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

27. General Harney had known of the low water level on the Missouri River several months before the expedition set out for Fort Pierre. Some veteran fur traders claimed the river was at its lowest in 20 years. Harney to Thomas, April 5, 1855, "Official Correspondence," 385-386.

28. Delozier Davidson's military career began in 1838, as a second lieutenant in the 2nd Infantry. He won a brevet captaincy in 1847 in the Mexican War. Like Sweeny he served in San Diego and Fort Yuma, California, from 1849 to 1853. A major, he resigned in 1863 to run a store in Washington, DC. He died on July 17, 1888. Heitman, 1:355.

29. Thomas C. Madison became a surgeon in 1840 and resigned in 1861 to join the Confederate Army. He died on November 7, 1866. Heitman, 1:683.

30. Parmenas Taylor Turnley (West Point, 1846, joined 2nd Infantry) served in the Quartermaster Corps until retirement in 1863. Cullum, No. 1311; Heitman, 1:975.

31. Marcus De Lafayette Simpson (West Point, 1846, joined 2nd Infantry), served in the Mexican and Civil Wars, rising to a brevet major generalcy. A colonel in the Quartermaster Corps, he retired in 1874. Cullum, No. 1293; Heitman, 1:888-889.

32. Nathaniel Henry McLean (West Point, 1849, joined 2nd Infantry) served in various adjutant generalcy posts until his retirement as a lieutenant colonel and assistant adjutant general in 1875. He died on June 28, 1884. Cullum, No. 1395; Heitman, 1:675.

33. James Curtiss (West Point, 1851, joined 2nd Infantry) was immediately placed in charge of recruits in 1851 at Fort Hamilton, New York, as escort to Fort Yuma. He served in the West until after the Sioux Expedition of 1857, when he resigned to become a civil engineer. At the start of the Civil War he received a commission with the 15th US Infantry and became a major at its close. He died on January 19, 1878. Cullum, No. 1521; Heitman, 1:346.

34. Both of these letters—dated June 12 and 22, 1855—are in the Sweeny collection at the Huntington Library. They have not been reprinted here because some of the information is in error and the contents are aptly summarized in this letter.

35. These portable cottages were single-story structures designed to house half a company (approximately 30 men). Made of flimsy wood construction, the walls consisted of upright studding grooved on two sides so panels could slide through. Roofs were of thin boards covered with tar paper, and floor beams were often too light to carry live weight. Each cottage contained two wood-burning stoves for heat. All the quarters were painted red—inside and out. Meyers, *Ten Years in the Ranks*, 72-73.

36. Companies B and C arrived on August 2 aboard the *Clara*. "Record [of] Events: Fort Pierre," "Official Correspondence." 431.

37. Born in Ashford, Connecticut, on July 14, 1818, Nathaniel Lyon (West Point, 1841, joined 2nd Infantry) became one of the earliest heroes of the Civil War. He served in the Seminole and Mexican Wars, led the California expedition against the Clear Lake Indians in 1849, and was in "Bleeding Kansas" prior to the Civil War. Lyon was killed and Sweeny wounded in the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Missouri, in 1861. Cullum, No. 1069; Heitman, 1:650.

38. Thomas Jefferson Wright (West Point, 1854, joined 2nd Dragoons) served as regimental adjutant from 1855 to 1857. Cullum, No. 1642; Heitman, 1:1063.

39. John Osmond Long (West Point, 1854, joined 2nd Infantry) resigned in 1861 to join the Confederate Army. He rose to the position of assistant inspector general in the Confederacy. Cullum, No. 1661; Heitman, 1:640.

40. In 1855 the officers at Fort Riley had difficulty keeping laundresses because the women frequently married enlisted men. This situation forced Colonel William R. Montgomery to issue an order prohibiting further marriages. Captain Nathaniel Lyon nevertheless gave a soldier permission to marry and allowed the wedding party to use his quarters. Montgomery learned of the plan, broke into Lyon's quarters, stopped the ceremony, and arrested Lyon. Montgomery charged Lyon with willful disobedience of orders, disrespect of his commanding officer, and conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. In retaliation Lyon sued Montgomery for \$10,000, claiming that he (Lyon) had been assaulted in his own quarters, deprived of his sword and command, and imprisoned for 15 days without just cause. The charges and counter charges in this case can be found in File H378 1855, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780s-1917, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, DC.

41. On May 4, 1849, on the voyage to California, Sweeny got into an argument with Nathaniel Lyon and Captain Julius Hayden. The two officers wrote up charges against Sweeny and submitted them to their commanding officer, Major Samuel P. Heintzelman. The author has been unable to find these charges, although there are many references alluding to them. Heintzelman did not send the charges to headquarters until May 24, 20 days after the incident. Heintzelman to Major Edward R. S. Canby, May 24, 1849. Record of the Tenth Military Department, 1846-1851. Record Group 98. National Archives, Washington, DC.

When Sweeny tried to get transferred from San Diego, Lyon offered to drop the charges if the transfer came through. Lyon to Canby, June 4, 1849, *ibid*. Lyon was later transferred to northern California and Sweeny never stood trial.

42. Sweeny took command of Company C, on August 2. Return for August, 1855, Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

43. The steamboat *Genoa* picked up the members of Company D and brought them to Fort Pierre on August 19. Return for August, 1855, Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

44. Wessells found that the best sources for hay and fuel existed on the opposite (east) bank of the river. Nothing worthwhile grew in the vicinity of the post. Wessells to Turnley, November 1, 1855, "Official Correspondence," 407-408.

45. Nelson Henry Davis (West Point, 1846, joined 2nd Infantry) served in the Mexican and Civil Wars, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel. He later fought in Arizona

against the Apache. He gained the rank of brigadier general in the Inspector General Department in 1867 and retired six months later. He died on May 15, 1890. Cullum, No. 1320; Heitman, 1:359.

46. Davis' term expired earlier than this because he returned to Fort Pierre on May 25, 1856. Return for May, 1856, Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

47. According to the charges Montgomery, commanding officer of Fort Riley, Kansas Territory, "conspired" to exclude the town of Pawnee from the military reservation, hoping that Pawnee would become the state capital. With this end in mind, Montgomery and the other officers organized the "Pawnee Town Site Association" with the idea of profiting from real estate sales. The court had a distinguished list of officers: Robert E. Lee, Albert Sidney Johnston, and Joseph K. F. Mansfield, who presided over the trial. Montgomery was found guilty and dismissed from the service. A summarization of the charges, evidence, and trial are contained in General Orders, No. 20, December 10, 1855, Adjutant General's Office.

48. Lyon left Fort Pierre on September 11. Return for September, 1855, Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

49. Lyon attended the trial as a witness, not as a defendant. Apparently the charges against him were either dropped or forgotten after Montgomery's dismissal because Lyon never stood trial for them.

50. Order No. 113, September 14, 1855, cited in return for September, 1855, Post Returns: Fort Pierre. Sweeny is listed as both acting assistant commissary of subsistence and acting assistant quartermaster for the expedition.

51. The battalion returned to Fort Pierre on October 4, and Sweeny was relieved as AACS and AAQM 10 days later. Return for October, 1855, Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

In this letter Sweeny gives the impression that he and the troops from Pierre took part in the engagement at Ash Hollow. In fact, the order calling for their aid arrived about a week after the fight took place. All they did was travel across the prairie until they received a letter from Harney on September 26 ordering them to return to the fort. "Post Return for a Battalion of the Second Regiment of Infantry, Commanded by Capt. & Bvt. Major H. W. Wessells, 2nd Infantry," filed with Post Returns: Fort Pierre; Meyers, *Ten Years in the Ranks*, 74-75.

52. These are the same casualties given in Harney's and Cooke's official reports (see note 6).

53. Sweeny probably began his letter on October 31, since he refers to the officers as leaving "tomorrow" and Major Woods, the first of the party to leave Pierre, departed on November 1. "Return of a Battalion of the 6th Reg't. of Infantry, Commanded by Major Cady, 6th Inf'y.," filed with Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

The information about the cantonments, however, indicates that Sweeny probably finished this letter on or after November 1.

54. Major Gaines, who had been transferred to St. Louis, left on November 14. "Post Return of Fort Pierre, Nebraska Territory & temporary winter cantonment in its vicinity. Commanded by Capt. & Bvt. Major H. W. Wessells, 2nd Infantry," Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

55. Samuel Woods (West Point, 1837, joined 6th Infantry) served in the Mexican and Civil Wars, rising to the rank of colonel. He was assistant paymaster general when he retired in 1881. He died on September 22, 1887. Heitman, 1:1058.

56. Captain Davidson, with two months leave, left the fort on November 16. "Post Return of Fort Pierre, Nebraska Territory & temporary winter cantonment in its vicinity. Commanded by Capt. & Bvt. Major H. W. Wessells, 2nd Infantry," Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

57. Captain Lovell, also with two months leave, left Fort Pierre on November 12. *Ibid.*

58. John Blair Smith Todd (West Point, 1837, joined 6th Infantry) served in

Florida, and took part in the Mexican War. In 1856 he resigned to work at Fort Randall as an Indian trader. In 1861 Todd won a seat in Congress but reentered the Army as a brigadier general at the outset of the Civil War. He returned to Congress in 1863-1865. Todd held two political posts in Dakota Territory: speaker of the House (1867) and governor of the territory (1869-1871). Cullum, No. 929; Heitman, 1:964.

59. Lawrence Pike Graham left Fort Pierre on November 14, 1855, for a new assignment at Fort Leavenworth. "Post Return of a Squadron of the Second Regiment of U.S. Dragoons. Commanded by 1st Lieut. S. H. Starr, 2nd Dragoons," Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

Graham had been commissioned a lieutenant in the 2nd Dragoons in 1837. He served in the Mexican War and had risen to a brigadier generalcy early in the Civil War. Graham retired in 1870. Heitman, 1:468.

60. Harney appointed Sweeny to the post of depot commissary on October 23. Return for October, 1855, Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

61. Orders No. 19, November 1, 1855. "Official Correspondence," 404-405.

62. Marshall Saxe Howe attended West Point from 1823 to 1827. He was commissioned a lieutenant in the 2nd Dragoons in 1836. As a full colonel, Howe retired in 1866. He died on December 8, 1878. Heitman, 1:548.

63. Major Howe, with one company from the 2nd Dragoons and "a detachment of one non-commissioned officer and eight privates from each of the six companies of the 2d Infantry," situated themselves at a point between the White and L'eau-qui-court (Niobrara) Rivers to meet the steamer *Grey Cloud*. After securing her cargo Howe set up a cantonment in the vicinity. Orders No. 19, November 1, 1855, "Official Correspondence," 405.

64. This squadron of dragoons, joined by two companies from the 2nd Infantry, camped 18 miles north of the fort on the west side of the river. *Ibid.*; "Post Return of a Squadron of the Second Regiment of U.S. Dragoons. Commanded by 1st Lieut. S. H. Starr, 2nd Dragoons," Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

65. Soldiers in this cantonment probably fared better than the men in Fort Pierre. A musician attached to one of the companies wrote that troops sent across the river cut down trees and constructed cabins that were sturdier and warmer than the portable cottages at the fort. They also built fireplaces to heat the cabins. Meyers, *Ten Years in the Ranks*, 91-96.

66. "Return of a Battalion of the 6th Reg't. of Infantry. Commanded by Major Albermarle Cady, 6 Infy.," Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

67. The minutes of the council can be found in *House Ex. Doc. No. 130*, 34th Congress, 1st Session, 13-39.

68. A second council met at Fort Pierre on April 19-20 for chiefs who missed the first one. These leaders agreed to abide by the treaty drawn up at the earlier meeting. Jefferson Davis to Franklin Pierce, May 31, 1856, *ibid.*, 9-11; *New York Herald*, April 28, 1856, 8.

69. Sweeny is referring here to Alfred J. Vaughn, Indian agent for the Upper Missouri River tribes. He had his office at Fort Clarke. Harney to Cooper, February 22, 1856, "Official Correspondence," 419-422.

70. Charles E. Galpin, connected with the fur trade on the Upper Missouri since 1839, was the agent in charge of Fort Pierre before the Sioux Expedition. His favorable description of the fort probably influenced the Army's purchase of it. Frederick T. Wilson, "Old Fort Pierre and Its Neighbors," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 1 (1920), 364-365.

71. Rodman McCamley Price studied law, but his career was determined by his wife, the daughter of a naval captain and sister of a politician. Price received a commission in the Navy and supposedly prodded Commodore Sloat to occupy Monterey, California, in 1846. In 1850 he began a term in the New Jersey House of Representatives, but was defeated when he ran for reelection. He served a three-year term as

governor of New Jersey beginning in 1854. In 1861 Price caused a controversy when he declared that New Jersey should support the Confederacy. He remained a Copperhead throughout the Civil War. Price died on June 7, 1894. *DAB*, 8:214-215.

72. Francis Lee (West Point, 1822, joined 7th Infantry) served in the Mexican War and frontier posts, rising to the rank of colonel. He died in 1859. *Cullum*, No. 313; *Heitman*, 1:623-624.

73. Ethan Allan Hitchcock (West Point, 1817, joined Artillery Corps) had risen to the rank of colonel before his resignation in 1855. During the Civil War he was on staff duty with the rank of major general. He retired in 1867 and died in 1870. *Cullum*, No. 177; *Heitman*, 1:532.

74. Sidney Burbank (West Point, 1829, joined 1st Infantry) served in the Seminole War and on frontier duty. During the Civil War he rose to the rank of major general. He retired in 1870 and died in 1882. *Cullum*, No. 557; *Heitman*, 1:262.

75. Sweeny mentions "Davidson" twice in this sentence. The post return for May, 1856, only mentions the arrival of Captain Deloziar Davidson. There was no other Captain Davidson in the 2nd Infantry. Apparently this was a writing error by Sweeny.

76. A native of Ireland, Sweeny had a deep hatred for the English and probably looked forward to taking part in a war against Great Britain. In another letter written while stationed at Fort Pierre, Sweeny discussed with his wife the idea of resigning from the Army and moving his family to Ireland, where his military experience would be useful to the rebellion. Sweeny to Ellen Sweeny, February 26, 1856, *Sweeny Papers*, Huntington Library.

After the Civil War Sweeny joined the Fenian Brotherhood where, because of his rank during the war, the leadership gave him the office of secretary of war and commander-in-chief of the Irish Republican Army in America. The original intention of the Fenians was to send arms to the rebels in Ireland, but Sweeny joined a faction which wanted to invade Canada because of its governmental tie with Britain. In June, 1866, such an invasion took place under Sweeny's leadership. Although the affair was a fiasco, the Fenians managed to defeat the Canadians in one skirmish. William D'Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States: 1858-1886* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1947); John O'Mahony, "Fenianism—An Exposition," *Irish People* (January 25-July 18, 1868).

77. Sweeny is probably referring to the 1st and 4th Artillery. They had served in Florida since 1853. William A. Ganoe, *The History of the United States Army*, Revised Edition (Ashton, Maryland: Eric Lundberg, 1964), 235, 239.

78. In January, 1856, the commander of Fort Yuma, Colonel Martin Burke of the 3rd Artillery, received information that the Maricopa and Cocopa planned to attack the post. General John E. Wool, who commanded the Division of the Pacific, dispatched Colonel George Morgan, also of the 3rd Artillery, to investigate the matter. The attack never materialized. *San Diego Herald*, January 12, 1856, 2.

79. Augustus Meyers, 2nd Infantry musician at Fort Pierre, witnessed a storm similar to this one and wrote an account of it. He said soldiers were able to save some cottages by passing ropes over the roofs and securing them to the ground and bracing the walls with boards. There is one discrepancy in Meyers' story: He claims the storm struck sometime in November, 1855, but Sweeny does not mention storms in his letters during that time. Meyers could have his dates wrong, since he wrote his account almost 60 years later. Meyers, *Ten Years in the Ranks*, 90-91.

80. The steamboat *Genoa* arrived at Fort Pierre on May 25. Return for May, 1856, Post Returns: Fort Pierre.

81. Sweeny only received a six-month assignment of recruiting duty.