



## After the Indian Wars: People, Places, and Episodes (Introduction)

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Full Citation: David L Bristow, "After the Indian Wars: People, Places, and Episodes (Introduction)," *Nebraska History* 95 (2014): 2-3

Article Summary: Brief description of the articles in this special issue. All were originally presented as papers on the theme "After the Indian Wars" at the Ninth Fort Robinson History Conference (2013), cosponsored by the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission.

Cataloging Information:

Photographs / Images: view to the southeast from the hill where the Indian dead were interred at Wounded Knee



# Introduction

DAVID L. BRISTOW, EDITOR

On a hilltop overlooking the site of the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre, historian Jerome Greene described the tragic event to the attendees of the Ninth Fort Robinson History Conference. As he spoke, the audience mentally erased the highway below and imagined an encampment of Lakota men, women, and children surrounded by U. S. soldiers. The mass grave near where we stood became an emplacement of Hotchkiss guns firing down into the valley.

While this issue of *Nebraska History* can't recreate the experience of standing on historical ground with Greene at Wounded Knee, or with Paul Hedren at Warbonnet Creek, or with Tom Powers at the Fort Robinson guardhouse, it presents six of the papers delivered at the conference, which was held April 25-27, 2013, and was cosponsored by the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission.

These papers don't adhere strictly to the "After the Indian Wars" theme, but taken together they emphasize the transition from war on the plains to its aftermath and consequences. In the opening essay, Paul Hedren takes a broad view of northern plains history, considering several ways in which the 1876 Great Sioux war shaped subsequent events. Tom Buecker corrects a common misconception about enclosed army forts on the plains (it turns out that Hollywood wasn't entirely wrong), and shows how fort construction adapted first to plains warfare and then to the reservation era.

A tenth of the post-Civil War frontier army was comprised of African American soldiers commanded (with a few notable exceptions) by white officers. Brian Shellum looks at some of the specific issues faced by "Buffalo Soldiers" in a segregated army and the challenges encountered by one of the first black officers, Lt. Charles Young. Jerome



Greene, in a paper adapted from his forthcoming book *American Carnage: Wounded Knee 1890*, examines the military buildup in the weeks leading up to the Indian wars' bloody epilogue.

Nothing illustrates the change in attitudes toward Native Americans and the Indian wars as succinctly as the shifting reputation of George Armstrong Custer, the much-celebrated and much-derided army commander who perished with his men at the Little Bighorn in 1876. Brian Dippie traces the evolving interpretation of Custer in American history and popular culture.

The issue concludes with an essay that differs significantly from the author's conference presentation. Rather than reproduce his two conference talks, both of which were adapted from his book *The Killing of Crazy Horse*, Tom Powers instead expands upon a story he told briefly in the book's afterword. In a rich and moving narrative he tells of the Crazy Horse medicine bundle and of his own attempts to track down the Lakota oral tradition pertaining to it, a story that "marks a divide between the things that have been lost and the things that survive." 📖

**View to the southeast from the hill where the Indian dead were interred at Wounded Knee. The tipi poles on the right mark the location of the Indian camp. The army camp was at the extreme left. At the center, where men are loading the frozen bodies into a wagon, was the council circle where Colonel Forsyth ordered the Indians to surrender their arms. A second photographer stands to the left, with his camera. NSHS RG 2845-119-33**