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Fort McPherson and the Duke Alexis

On the first day of the New Year, a North Platte correspondent wrote telling of recent events at that place, much of it concerned with Indians hunting in the Republican country:

NORTH PLATTE
/Monday,/ Jan. 1, 1872.

To the Editor of the HERALD:

Owing to the uncommon bad weather experienced here up to within the past few days, there has not been much doing at this place. Improvements have been going on slowly. Our Masonic Hall is looming up, and when finished, will be an ornament to our town, and a credit to our enterprising Masonic brethren.

We learn that our citizens contemplate erecting a larger school house and a court house immdiately.

Settlers are coming in, and we bespeak for our county a large emigration in the spring.

Yesterday we had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Todd Randall, U.S. Sub-Agent for Spotted Tail and Whistler's band, Mr. Leon Palladen /Pallardie/, interpreter, Mr. Fitzsimmons and Mr. Downs, traders. These gentlemen are direct from the village which, at this writing, is located at the Big Timbers, on the Republican, some thirty miles above the mouth of the Red Willow. They are accompanied by "Two-Strike," and several other warriors.

Spotted Tail and Whistler's bands are meeting with great success in their hunting. Report buffalo, elk, deer and other game very plenty.

Two Strike, on the part of himself and Spotted Tail, expressed much disappointment on learning that Gen. Sheridan was not coming out to visit them.

Your correspondent, who has just returned from a visit to the section of the country where the Indians are located, made it a point to inquire of the many settlers scattered along the Medicine and Republican valleys whether the Indians had committed any depredations, and he could not learn of one single instance where they had overstepped the limits of their treaty. We know of cattle belonging to parties in this vicinity that have been running in the neighborhood of the Infians for the past weeks, and the owners report that the Indians have not killed a single one.

Both Spotted Tail and Whistler are much pleased with their agent, Mr. Todd Randall, and their interpreter, Mr. Leon Palladen, Fitzsimmons, Downs and Dubois, and while in the charge of the former, whose sterling qualities are well known, with his efficient and honest assistants, we prophecy for these Indians unparalleled prosperity, peace and a friendly disposition to our frontier settlers.

Yours, OX BOW.

/Omaha Weekly Herald, Wednesday, 10 January 1872./

Word that been received in late December that the buffalo hunt of the Grand Duke Alexis had been canceled, due to his sailing date. An editorial in the Chicago Tribune commented upon this change in plans:

> It is to be regretted that the buffalo hunt suggested by General Sheridan is, in sporting parlance, "off." To judge fairly of us as a nation, Alexis ought surely to have been permitted to see the two extremes our civilization... the culture and fashion of the Eastern metropolis, and the other by the red men of the plains.
>
> The Cheyennes /sic,/ had heard of the proposed hunt, and through the celebrated Chiefs Spotted Tail and Whistler, requested to participate. The bands of these two copper hued warriors assembled on this occasion could not have been less than 600, which number would have been considerably increased by the accession of women and children.
>
> All these savage accessories wold have been something for His Imperial Highness long to remember. But it was not to be. General Sheridan, some weeks ago, sent the invitation to Mr. Stoddard, Chairman of the Reception Committee at New York. The invitation was referred to the authorities having the matter in hand, and on December 21st the General received a dispatch from Adjutant General E. D. Townsend, stating that the Secretary of War had been informed, through the State Department, that the "time for the departure of the Grand Duke having been fixed by His Majesty the Emperor, and his route arranged accordingly, he has not the time at his disposition which the proposed buffalo hunt would require.

Which, of course, endedthe thoughts of pleasure which a Muscovite would have most surely enjoyed.--Chicago Tribune. /Omaha Weekly Herald, Wednesday, 3 January 1872./

The plans, however, were changed again, and Alexis, on a special train, arrived in Omaha on Friday, January 12th, where he was entertained at dinner by former territorial governor, Alvin Saunders. Prior to this he had been given a tour of the city, including the bridge across the Missouri, which was still under construction. At the time of his visit, the Grand Duke was two days short of his twenty-second birthday, and noted for his eye for the ladies. He had been treated royally since his arrival in the United States, with numerous balls and fetes given in his honor in the various cities. Shortly before his arrival in Nebraska, he had been entertained in Chicago, even though that young city was still mainly miles of blackened ruins, still in the process of rebuilding after its great fire.

After the dinner at the home of Governor Saunders (an all male affair), the ladies of Omaha entertained with a musicale, after which they were all introduced to the guest of honor. It was said that the presence of General Sheridan created as much a stir as did the presence of Alexis. Other noted military personel were also in attendance:

> Among the prominent military gentlemen present was General Custer, who arrived late, escorting the beautiful and fascinating Miss Bates. Many ladies and gentlemen sought and obtained an introduction to the General....
>
> From Governor Saunders' house the company came directly to the cars. Their leaving was enlivened by some fine music from the [Union Pacific?] Mechanics' Band, and by the attendance

of a large assembly of citizens. At the cars a growd gathered again and called for "Sheridan." At first he made no response, but finally, in answer to repeated cheers, he came out and laughingly waved his hat. The Grand Duke also appeared on the platform, and when the people shouted to him "Good-bye, Alexis," he too, laughed and raised his hat.

The Train, which was moving off to take our guests to their great hunt, was a remarkable one. We were shown through it by the courtesy of L. M. Bennett, Esq., the Superintendent of the Pullman Palace Car Co., and of Mr. Frank Bennett, who had the Pullman cars in charge. First is the parlor car for day riding, the Adiarondack. It is furnished with sofas and arm chairs, beautifully arranged, with neat little tables, splendid mirrors, chandiliers, and all, it would seem, that taste or luxury could suggest.

There were five cars in the train, one dining car, furnished with every appliance, and two sleeping cars, built after the latest and most approved patterns. They appear to us to be perfect models of beauty and invention. The whole was in charge of Mr. Frank Thompson, of the Pennsylvania Central, Master of Transportation.

Mr. T. E. Sickles, General Supt. of the U. P., J. H. H. Clarke, Asst. Supt. T. L. Kimball, Gen. Ticket Agent, A. J. Dickey, Supt. of the U. P. Telegraph, and Mr. L. M. Bennett, went out with the party. /Omaha Weekly Herald, Wednesday, 17 January 1872./

Though the visit was not mentioned in the monthly reports of Fort McPherson, many preparations had been made for the visitors. This included locating a camping grounds for the hunt, providing a military escort, even though the post was under-manned, and finding suitable gifts for the Sious. The newspaper reporters provided their eastern readers with regular accounts of the visit, along with stories of local color.

FIRST DISPATCH.

North Platte, Neb.,
/Saturday,/ January 13.

The train conveying the Grand Duke, General Sheridan and party, leaving Omaha yesterday p. m. by the U. P. railroad, reached this station this forenoon. The party are in splendid spirits and ready for the grand buffalo hunt, which has been prepared for them by Gen. Sheridan. The hunting party consists of the Grand Duke Alexis and the members of his suite; Lieut. Gen. P. H. Sheridan, James W. Forsyth, Lieut. Col. and A.D.C.; S. A. Forsyth, Lieut. Col. and Military Secretary; M. V. Sheridan, Lieut. Col. and A.D.C.; M. I. Asch, Assistant Surgeon, U.S.A.; N. B. Sweitzer, Major Second Cavalry; Gen. E. O. C. Ord, I. N. Palmer, Colonel Second Cavalry, Geo. A. Custer, Lieut. Col. Seventh Cavalry, and E. M. Hayes, First Lieut. Fifty Cavalry.

The military were the guests of the Grand Duke while on the train. Assistant General Superintendent Clarke, General Ticket Agent Kimball, J. J. Dickey, Superintendent of the U.P. Telegraph, and L. M. Bennett, Superintendent of the Pullman Palace Car Company, accompanied the party to

this place. The ducal party expressed themselves highly delighted with their ride over the plains. The weather is beautiful and everything seems favorable for the hunt.

At 8 o'clock the party left the train and took seats in ambulances. The Grand Duke, accompanied by Gen. Sheridan, rode in an open carriage, called a drag, drawn by four spirited horses. The Duke arrayed himself in an appropriate hunting suit, with a short sword at his side. which costume sat of his gigantic figure admirably. After entering the carriages, Buffalo Bill, in a buckskin suit, made his appearance on horseback and was presented to Alexis, and then in the capacity of guide to the hunting camp, led off, followed by the party, General Sheridan and the Grand Duke taking the advance position. They were met at the Platte river, two miles south of this place, by an escort of cavalry under command of General Palmer, who has charge of all troops with the expedition. A company of cavalry left here last Monday to establish the hunting camp. They took two hospital tents and six wall tents for the guests, together with thirty A tents for the soldiers and servants; three wagons for the use of the party, and twenty-five wagon loads of provisions, to be distributed to the Indians after the hunt. The camp is fifty miles southwest of here, on Red Willow creek. There is a relay of horses for the ambulances at Medicine creek, which is about half way. They expect to reach the camp in eight hours' drive. The horses

to be used in the hunt have been led to the camp. Spotted Tail, Two Strike, Cut Leg, White Bear, Little Eagle, and other Sioux Chiefs, with about 1,300 warriors, accompanied by their squaws and papooses, are now assembled on the Red Willow, waiting the arrival of the pale faces. The party will spend to-morrow (Sunday) in camp, resting. The programme for the hunt is not definitely arranged but it is expected that the first day will be devoted to the Royal Hunt. His Imperial Highness will be joined in the chase by General Sheridan, General Custer, General Forsyth and Buffalo Bill. On the second day the hunt will be joined in by the other members of the party, and will close with a grand "surround" by the Indians closing up in a circle around a large herd of buffalo and slaughtering them in true original style. The third day of the hunt will close with a grand Indian pow-wow and war dance and the distribution of provisions. This programme may be changed somewhat, as circumstances may make it necessary.

Second Disptach.

The Grand Duke and party arrived this morning at 7 o'clook. They took breakfast on the cars. Five ambulances and a light wagon for baggage; also a carriage for the Duke, met the party, and they started immediately for the camp. The permanent camp for the buffalo hunt is on Red Willow creek, about fifty miles southwest of this post. The camp consists of two hospital tents, four wall tents, and a tent for servants and soldiers. Three of the wall

tents are floored, and the Duke's carpeted. Box stoves and Sibley stoves are provided for the hospital and wall tents. The hospital tents are used as dining tents. An extensive culinary outfit is also taken along. Ten thousand rations each of flour, sugar and coffee, and one thousand pounds of tabacco for the Indians. Company K, 2nd Cavalry, under command of Captain /James/ Egan, are at the camp. They went out several days ago, and have everything in the best shape possible. Company E, 2nd Cavalry, under command of Lieut. Stover, acts as escort for the party to the camp. The whole is under command of General Palmer, of Omaha Barracks, and Lieutenant Hayes is Quartermaster of the expedition. Mr. Cody, alias Buffalo Bill, met the Duke and party here. A relay of horses is at Medicine creek, about half way. They expect to make the trip in eight hours. The buffalo are in great numbers within ten miles of the camp. A few days ago four hundred Indians were reported at the camp, with their family, and /others/ comingin rapidly. It is expected that the war parties of Spotted Tail, Whistler, War Bonnet, and Black Hat will be there with their respective chiefs.

Third Dispatch.

The Grand Duke arrived this morning at 7 o'clock, and was handsomely received by the citizens and military authorities. The latter fired a salute of twenty-six guns as the train entered the depot. Carriages were in waiting, and

the Ducal party immediately started for Red Willow, the hunting ground, which is fifty-five miles south of here. Spotted Tail has had runners out for the past ten days, and has two hundred and sixty-five lodges present. The party seemed well pleased with the programme, and a grand time is anticipated. Your correspondent will accompany the expedition.

North Platte, Neb.,
/Monday,/ January 15.

The Grand Duke's buffalo hunt has proved a grand success so far in every particular. After leaving the Union Pacific Railroad at this place, the party proceeded, without any incidents of note, until it reached the Medicine Valley, about twenty-five miles south of here. The ambulances were the scene of merriment and hilarity during the trip, and the Grand Duke seemed to be carried away with the grandeur of the country and the novelty of the trip, and the Russians were highly entertained by the yarns of their military escort about their perilous adventures on the frontier in the past. At Medicine the party was met by Lieut. Fowler, in command of Company K, Second Cavalry, at a present sabres, and escorted to the temporary camp at that point. All hands alighted and partook of a sumptuous lunch prepared by orders from General Sheridan for the occasion. After resting an hour, the party proceeded, apparently not fatigued in the least, from here to the permanent camp. There was little to vary the scene except an occasional single handed chase after a stray buffalo

that had not been notified of the impending slaughter. When the party reached the bluffs overlooking the permanent camp, called Camp Alexis, in honor of the Grand Duke, the magnificent Second Cavalry band greeted them with "Hail to the Chief." The camp is beautifully located, and gives splendid and extended view of the country in all directions. They reached camp at 4:30 p. m. on the 13th, having made the trip in eight hours. Here the evening was spent in great comfort by the guests, who were in right condition to enjoy the luxuries that Gen. Sheridan and his officers had prepared for them. The weather had been fine all day, and every prospect for a fine day to follow. Every one retired at an early hour, in order to be refreshed for the royal hunt which was arranged for the next day.

At 8 o'clock on the 14th, being the Duke's birthday, he mounted a gallant charger, properly armed and accoutred for the hunt, accompanied by Generals Sweitszer, Palmer, Forsyth and Custer, Lieutenants Hayes, Fowler, Clark, Stevens, Thomas and about twenty soldiers. They rode seventeen miles before finding game, but here came upon a fine herd on a splendid hunting ground. The Grand Duke was anxious for the onslaught, and was given the first shot, which, after a short chase, resulted in his bringing down his first buffalo in splendid style, and proved himself a masterly horseman. The hunt was continued for some two hours, Alexis being always prominent in the chase. The hunt resulted in killing between twenty and thirty buffalos. General Sheridan

did not join in the hunt yesterday, but will to-day. Generals Custer and Forsyth were both distinguished in the chase, as well as several others. On their return from the hunt the Duke's horse fell with him, but without injuring him except to cover His Royal Highness with mud from head to foot, all of which he took in the highest good humor. Upon their reaching camp they were received with rousing cheers from the whole party. The Duke was in splendid spirits, and expressed his great delight at the sport. Today, as yesterday, is a most glorious day for their purpose, being more like September than January. This fore-noon the general surround and war dance was to take place by the Indians, and the whole to wind up this afternoon with a final hunt, in which the gallant Phil. will take part. The Duke was serenaded in his quarters last night by the second cavalry band. Capt. James Egan is in command at Camp Alexis. The party will break camp tomorrow forenoon, and expect to reach here at 5 p.m., and they will proceed by the Union Pacific to Cheyenne.

Second Dispatch.

Parties in from the hunting party, this afternoon, report their having a grand time. The weather is warm and pleasant, and buffalo in abundance. The Grand Duke has killed his first buffalo. To-night the Indians give their war dance. The party leave this place to-morrow night for Denver. /Omaha Weekly Herald, Wednesday, 17 January 1872./

The buffalo hunt of the Grand Duke Alexis was a great success, and it garnered the area more publicity than it had ever received. It also was an important step in creating the legend of Buffalo Bill and another push toward his eventual career in show business. His name was now familiar to readers throughout the nation as well as those in Nebraska. Articles, such as the following, would not be uncommon in the future:

> We congratulate our friend, Mr. CODY, otherwise and better known as "Buffalo Bill," upon his sporting experience and exploits with the Grand Duke ALEXIS. It will be to him a pleasant memory through all his future life. It was not the generous gift of a purse of gold, with which the Duke rewarded his companion in the chase, that will be most prized by Mr. CODY. We dare say that it will be the frank and genial manners of that young man which he will most cherish and best remember.
>
> When ALEXIS was in Omaha a friend reminded General SHERIDAN of the dangers of the buffalo chase to inexperienced enthusiasts, and knowing the solicitude of the General for the safety of his guest, asked to know how he would guard him against the peril of encountering a buffalo at bay. Said the General, "'Buffalo Bill' will take charge of the Duke. I can trust him. He is a true man." This compliment from such a source cannot fail to be in the highest degree gratifying to Mr. CODY and his numerous friends, and we publish it for that reason, and for the much better reason that it is so well deserved. /Omaha <u>Weekly Herald</u>, Wednesday, 24 January 1872./

Within a short time of the Grand Duke's departure for Colorado and another buffalo hunt, before sailing for home from New Orleans, bad winter storms moved into Nebraska. On the 17th of January, the day after Alexis left North Platte, three companies of Third Cavalry arrived at Fort McPherson, and three days later the company of Nineth Infantry left for Omaha, and, on the 31st, the last detachment of Fifth Cavalry went West. As Dr. Elbrey had forecast, many of the troops became ill with winter diseases, probably caused by the change in climate from Arizona Territory to a frigid Nebraska. At various time, trains on the Union Pacific were stalled because of snow drifts, not only in the mountains of Wyoming Territory, but on the flat lands of Nebraska. The Indians on the Frenchman and Republican rivers were in poor condition within a short time, in spite of the extra rations received for taking part in the grand hunt.

Which brings us back to Todd Randall. Even while the Alexis hunt was on, with Randall in attendance with Spotted Tail's Brule, Senator Hitchcock was again writing to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. General Francis A. Walker, who had interviewed Spotted Tail at Fort McPherson the preceeding summer, and who had reinstated Randall, was now the Commissioner of Indian Affairs:

Washington,
/Saturday,/ January 13, 1872

Sir

I learn from reliable authority that Mr Todd Randall Sub-agent for Spotted Tails band of Indians is allowing if not encouraging unlicensed trading with that band and I have to request that you call his attention to that subject at an early day and oblige

Your obdt Servt
P. W. Hitchcock

/"Whetstone Agency"./

It does not appear any action was taken in regard to the Senator's letter, which is not surprising. The military establishment at that time was in close contact with Randall and the Brule, and they were familiar with their conduct and conditions. It is likely that the sudden seige of winter storms might have had some effect. No expeditions left Fort McPherson, aside from those to the Alexis hunt, during January, February or March. The Third Cavalry, of course, was in the process of adjusting to their new post on the Plains, plus making repairs to the post and cleaning up the grounds, once the storms let up. Even so it continued to be an unseasonably bad winter. /"Post Returns", January-March 1872./

In the Indian camps to the southwest of the fort, times were also bad. Buffalo were scarse, at least in the vicinity of Spotted Tail's camp, though Pawnee Killer's Cut-offs and the Oglala from Fort Laramie were having a more successful season. Spotted Tail lost a number of horses in the storms and, for food, his people had to subsist as best they could. On the surface, all was well, however, as far as the military and the Indian bureau were concerned. This feeling would last well into spring.

There was still the problem, however, of getting the Brule and Oglala to settle on permanent reservations. Apparently neither sub-agent, Randall or Yates, felt any need to contact their superiors. Wham had been replaced by Dr. J. W. Daniels, who reported to Fort Laramie to find no Oglala. The majority had gone north with Red Cloud, while a few were with Yates on the Republican. General Walker was now the Commissioner of Indian Affairs--the same man who had met with Spotted Tail at North Platte in the fall and allowed Randall to continue

as sub-agent to the Brule, in spite of Wham's unspecified complaints. He had been appointed to his new position upon his return East.

Toward the end of January, he requested Colonel John E. Smith, commandant of Fort Laramie, to visit the Indians on the Republican and try to convince them to return to their respective agencies as soon as possible, so that the new agency sites could be approved. Why he selected Smith, who was much further from the Republican country than those at Fort McPherson, is not known. Perhaps Walker and Smith were old friends, perhaps he felt the commandant of Fort McPherson was too new to the area and unfamiliar with any of the Indian leaders, while Smith already knew them. Smith, in turn, asked Dr. Daniels to accompany him, even though there were few Oglala in the area. Smith and Daniels made their long trip, and the colonel wrote a detailed account of their expedition:

Headquarters Fort Laramie...
/Saturday,/ Mch. 9th 1872

Hon. Francis A. Walker
Commr of Indian Affairs,
Washington D. C.

Sir:

Your telegram of Jany. 24th and letter of instructions dated Jany. 25' 72, were duly received. Owing to the severity of the weather it was impracticable to comply with your request until Feby. 10, when I left this post accompanied by Dr. J. W. Daniels, (deeming it important that he should see the indians hunting on the Republican.) We arrived at Cheyenne on the 11' where we were detained until the 12" by reason of their being no trains from the West sooner. We arrived /Tuesday,/ the evening of the 13" at North Platte Station, U. P. R. Rd. when we learned that Todd Randall, Sub Agent, had left the day previous for Omaha where we telegraphed to him to return.

We found at North Platte, Swift Bear and three other Indians waiting to return with /William S./ Penniston and Donn's wagons. P. and F. are trading under the license granted C. E. Yost of Omaha. Being delayed in procurring the necessary transportation from the Q. M. Depot, we made careful inquiry at North Platte station and could not learn that Spotted Tails band had committed a single depredation or molested any one during their stay. A few indians had obtained whisky from time to time but we were unable to learn who furnished it. The Comdy. Officer, Captain Egan, 2d Cavly, at this post, a vigalint officer, has been using every effort to discover the offenders but without success. I deem it proper to here mention, that we are under obligations to Captain Egan for his kindness and courtesy, during our stay at his post.

Having completed our arrangements on the 14" we left North Platte on /Thursday,/ the 15" Feby, and arrived at Spotted Tails camp on the North side of Frenchmans Fork of the Republican river, twenty miles from the mouth of Stinking river--on the 18". Spotted Tail has one hundred and thirty six lodges, averaging seven to the lodge, and a large number of ponies. He claims to have lost a great many ponies, owing to the severity of the past winter. It is true that his stock is very poor, and that it will be difficult for him to return to White River except by making close camps, but I believe that he exagerates his loss. He asked

that his people be allowed to trade their robes for horses. Believing it to be for their interest as well as that of the government that they should be allowed to do so, I authorized Mr. Keith, landlord of the hotel at North Platte, who has a large number of horses and is desirous of trading them with the indians to do so, which action I trust will receive your approval.

Spotted Tail informed us that in view of the poor condition of their ponies, he had requested thro the Comdy. Officer at Fort McPherson, that two hundred ponies at that post now, be given him, also that supplies be sent to him on the U. P. R. Rd. to enable him to remain long enough to recruit his stock and to catch the wild horses that are in the angle of country formed by the North and South Plattes and a N. and S. line at Sidney, U. P. R. Rd., which means permission to remain so long as he feels inclined to.

As usual the tedious formalities of indian custom had to be complied with and we were compelled to wait until the next day, /Monday,/ 19", before we could have a formal talk. On the 19" we were informed by Spotted Tail that there would be a dance (the "Omaha") which we would have an opportunity to see hispeople and their condition, after which the usual Dog Feast, and then the "talk" which he desired should be in the presence of his chiefs and soldiers. The preparations consumed the whole morning. The dance commenced at two p. m., lasting about two hours--after which we repaired to the Council Lodge to partake of Boiled Dog--without salt pepper or

mustard--this was soon disposed of when I informed him that the Great Father at Washington had not heard from him since they came down to hunt on the Republican, and that he had sent us down to see him and to give him his words, that he desired him and his people to return to the White River very soon, and locate their Agency further down White River and that they could not have their Agency on the head-waters of that river. He replied by repeating substantially what he had said the day previous, and added that they desired to remain in the Republican country this Summer or be permitted to return to the head waters of the White River.

Referring to the location of their Agency, he said that they had selected the head waters of White River because it was the only place that suited them, that they had been told in Washington that they might have their Agency any where on White River they chose, and that they would not have it anywhere else, as there was no other point on White River suitable.

I replied that I was informed that there was much better country for them lower down, at or about the South Fork and that the Great Father wanted them to go as near the Missouri river as they could find good country. I further told him that Dr. Daniels and myself would go with him and look at the country and see if we could not find a better place than he had selected, thatthey must select a place for a permanent Agency this Spring early, and that if they did not the Great Father would tell the Agent where to put their stores &c--that

they were like children--could not agree among themselves and that the Great Father was getting tired of it.

With reference to their remaining in the Republ'n country I informed him that the Great Father did not want them to come there any more, that it was not good to permit them to do so and that they were now worse off than before they came down (which he admitted) that if they remained any longer or came again the Great Father was afraid they would get into trouble, that the "whites" were coming into the country with cattle and horses and if they lost any the indians would be blamed and that there would be difficulty, that they must leave for White River as soon as possible and if they did not the Great Father would send his soldiers and drive them out. He then said that he would move North about the first of April, but that they would have to move very slowly as their horses were very poor and that it would take them some time to get to White River and that they would require some provisions to enable them to do so. He also desired that I should assist him to obtain what he had asked for of the Comdg. Officer at Fort McPherson. I presume that his request has already been submitted by the Hon. the Secretary of War.

With the above understanding the council terminated. Learning that the Ogalallahs or Red Clouds people under charge of Sub Agent F. D. Yates were camped some fifty or sixty miles above on the head waters of the Republican River, we concluded that we could save time by sending a runner to

Yates with directions for him to meet us at Julesburg, U. P. R. Rd with some of his principal chiefs on /Friday,/ the 23d Feby. Accordingly a runner was sent out, and we left Spotted Tails camp on the morning of /Tuesday,/ Feby. 2o". Arriving at North Platte on the evening of the 22d.-we left same night for Julesburg, where we arrived on the morning of the 23d at daylight. No Indians having reported we proceeded to Sidney Station, U. P. R. Rd. with the expectation of hearing from them there, in which however we were disappointed. At Sidney we made inquiries with references to whether the Indians had committed any dipredatons or molested any one in person or property. With the exception of a list handed us -- of some fifteen or sixteen head of horses and mules said to have been stolen by these Indians we could not learn that any one had been molested or that any Indians had crossed to the North of the Platte since they went down. On the 24" hearing nothing of the Indians we thought of going down there but found by reason of the water rising in the river and the ice breaking up that it was impracticable, so abandoned the project and leaving Sidney on the 25" arrived at this post on the 28" Feby.

Upon my arrival here the annexed copy of telegram /that by Frank D. Yates of the 28th, which follows/ was handed me. I deemed it important that these Indians should be seen. Dr. Daniels concurred with me, but as he had already been absent so long from his Agency (Red Cloud) where his presence was needed it was determined that he

he should proceed to his Agency and that I should beturn at once to Sidney.

Yates telegram to General Smith was as follows:

Sidney, Neb
/Wednesday,/ February 28" 1872

Had council with Indians before I left camp, about /their/ returning. They are opposed to it. Little Wound wants to roam and catch wild horses all summer. Pawnee Killer with twenty five Lodges /wants/ to go on the Arkansas /River/. They are bent on scattering when grass comes. Black Bear only, with forty Lodges talks of returning. I think if you could talk with them it would stop it.

Eight principal Chiefs at Sedgwick.

Please answer

F D Yates
Sub Agent

/"Whetstone Agency."/

General Smith's long report continues:

Having telegraphed Yates to await my arrival, I again left this post, /Thursday,/ the 29" Feby. and with Mr. Jules Ecoffy (to whom I am endebted for valuable assistance) accompanying me. We arrived at Cheyenne next day, March 1st--when by reason of their being no trains going East we were detained until 11 P. M. /Sunday,/ March 3d. We arrived at Julesburg next morning (4") where we found Yates and party in waiting. I told the Indians that I had been sent by the Great Father to see how they were doing and to tell them they must return at once to the Agency, that Red Cloud would be in soon, and that the Great Father wanted them to

locate their Agency early in the Spring--that it could not remain any longer on the Platte River. To this they replied substantially as reported by Yates in his telegram, but I told them positively that it would not be permitted, that if they did not go soon, the Great Father would send his soldiers and drive them out--upon which they said they would return and that they thought they would reach the Agency by the first of April.

I inquired if they had any strange horses or mules in their camps. They acknowledged that they had six or seven which they claim to have found some fifteen or twenty miles from the Platte River, and which they say they thought were lost, or had no owners, as there was no one near them. Upon inquiry at Sidney we learned that it was the habit of ranchmen to turn out their stock to graze, without any one to herd or look after it, and that stock frequently range from fifteen to twenty miles, and that the ranchmen were frequently for months without seeing their stock. It is not therefore surprising that they frequently lose stock, and if there are Indians in the vicinity, the owners cast the odium of their own negligence upon them.

Having parted with our friends with a perfect /!/ understanding that they would return with the least possible delay, I started back, arriving at this post the 7" inst.

Upon careful inquiry I find that the attitude of the Indians towards the whites is most friendly and that they have not caused any trouble to the inhabitants or settlers of any of the towns on the line of the railroad. There is particularly with Spotted Tails Band, undoubtedly, some influence used by interested parties, those desiring to get their trade, to get them to remain in the Republican country. There are however very strong objections upon the part of the settlers and inhabitants along the line of the R. Rd. to their being permitted to do so. We have reason to believe that the sub-Agent Todd Randall has managed well and kept his charge together.

Spotted Tails Band suffered from the scarcity of buffalo and the severity of the weather until he removed to his present camp about January 1st, since when they have had enough meat to suffice for their immediate wants--but no surplus. They were also well clothed.

I have no reason to believe that the influences referred to have been exerted with reference, to the Ogalalahs, under the charge of sub-Agent F D. Yates, to induce them to remain in the Republican country. Their desire to remain is to be attributed to the success they had in hunting. These Indians have been very fortunate in finding plenty of buffalo all winter on the head waters of the Republican. I learn that they have a great many robes, and I presume that they are also well clothed, as they all shared in the distribution at the Red Cloud Agency last Fall.

As heretofore remarked, there has been no complaint made against these Indians, save the reported loss of stock--which is being investigated. Mr. Yates has managed to control his Indians as well as could be expected. We have no reason to find any fault with either Yates or Randall....

I would submit for the consideration of the proper authorities whether some legislation is not practicable to enable Indian Agents and Post Commanders, to control a class of persons who are to be found on the borders of all military and Indian Reservations, to the great detriment of the public interests. I am concerned that our efforts to manage the Indians are very much complicated if not wholly neutralized by persons who come for no other purpose than to make what they can off the Indians. Acting solely by self interest they offer all sorts of inducements, trading whiskey &c. besides confusing the Indians by all sorts of stories, which their interest may prompt. No one should be permitted to trade with them except at their regularly established Agencies. There would (in my opinion) be no objection to the appointment of as many traders as would accept such appointments, provided they are restricted as above. As soon as the Agencies for these Indians are established I will prohibit all trade with them at this post, and would recommend that it be

prohibited at all military posts where there are no agencies.

I have the honor to remain,

Very respectfully, Your Obt. Servt.
John E. Smith
Colonel 14" Infty.
U.S.A.

/"Whetstone Agency". Smith's letter has been changed only in breaking it down in shorter paragraphs for easier reading. The portion dropped from the letter deals with the advisability of placing the Cheyenne and Arapahoe on the same reservations with the Sioux. He was against so doing./

The most interesting point of Smith's long letter, one which neither the populace, the military, or the Indian bureau ever came to grips with, was his comment that the ranchers allowed their stock to range free in Indian country, far from any whites and then complained when the Indians, not surprisingly, took them up. A more extreme case was soon to become public, which showed that all was not as well in Spotted Tail's camp as had appeared, and that Todd Randall might not have been doing a good a job as it appeared.

The day after Colonel Smith wrote his report to General Walker, Colonel John Joseph Reynolds, commandant at Fort McPherson, wrote to his superiors in Omaha:

Headqrs. Fort McPherson, Neb.
/Sunday,/ March 10th 1872

Assistant Adjutant General,
Department of the Platte
Omaha, Neb.

Sir:

About one month since the Indian Chief "Spotted Tail" with a few attendants visited this post and made certain requests.

The same party is here today and repeat the requests. They are as follows

Two hundred "[redacted] Leman guns" which they claim were promised to them by their Great Father in Washington some two years since. (they also claim that these arms intended for them were given to Red Cloud)

Thirty ponies they having lost many by the severe winter--the ponies are at this post and can be issued if authorized.

And, that rations be furnished to the entire camp, about six hundred persons, for forty days, at Big Springs by April 1st to enable them to return to their reservation at White Clay--

They also ask for a Physician resident at their Agency.

They also state in general terms, that, they are absent from their reservation by permission for a winter's hunt, that the winter having been unusually severe they have not been successful and have lost many ponies, in consequence of which some of their families are unable to move.

They desire to return to their reservation according to their promise

They are at present [redacted] encamped about sixty miles from this post, on White mans fork of the Republican.

I have promised to give an answer to the above requests at the expiration of fourteen days. If necessary, in the

absence of the Dept. Commander please forward this communication to Division Head Quarters without delay.

If necessary please reply by telegram in order that the courier leaving this post fourteen days hence may carry the decision in the case.

I have the honor to be, Sir

Your obedient servant
J. J. Reynolds,
Colonel 3rd Cavalry,
Bvt. Major General U.S.A.
Commanding.

/Ibid./

Red tape, apparently, interferred with the Colonel's request that he received an answer by the 24th, the date he promised Spotted Tail he (Reynolds) would have an answer. On the 30th, William W. Belknap, the Secretary of War, wrote the Secretary of the Interior that in answer to his letter of the 23rd, Belknap had telegraphed instructions authorizing "the issue of thirty ponies and rations, not to exceed 12,000, to Spotted Tail's band of Indians...." /Ibid./

Colonel Reynolds wrote of the distribution to his superiors on /Monday,/ April 8th:

I have the honor to report that Captain /James/ Curtis, 3rd Cavalry and party have returned from Big Springs.

The ponies and rations--in compliance with telegram from Department Headquarters dated 27th March 1872, were distributed at Big Springs to Spotted Tail's band, and the Indians left for their reservation, White Clay, on the 4th inst.

The above named Indians are exclusive of Whistler's band. The latter are still south of the Platte about one

hundred miles West of this post in the vicinity of what is known as Dry Forks of the Republican.

A communication in reference to the last named Indians will be forwarded in a day or two. /J. J. Reynolds, 8 April 1872, letter to Department of the Platte, Ibid./

The following day, Reynolds wrote again, this time sorting out the various bands of Cut-off Oglala, who had split away from the main group of Oglala in the 1850s and spent most of their time on the Republican. During the 1860s, they had lived a good deal with the Southern Cheyenne, who frequented the same area. They had also been responsible for many of the attacks upon whites during that period. After the Republican River Expedition and the fight at Summit Springs, they had become among the most peaceful of the Sioux, desiring only to be left alone, to continue the old ways as long as possible. When they went to one of the reservations, however, they usually went to the Brule rather than the Oglala. Reynolds letter is one of the most detailed dealing with the Cut-offs, for they tended to be ignored by by the military and the Indian Bureau:

Fort McPherson, Nebraska.
/Tuesday,/ April 9th 1872

Assistant Adjutant General.
Department of the Platte,
Omaha, Nebraska.

Sir:

On /Saturday,/ the 30th March this post was visited by the Indian Chief "Whistler" and one attendant besides the Interpreter.

Spotted Tail and his bands were at the above date enroute to Big Springs which point, after receiving ponies and rations, that band left on the 4th inst. for their reservation. (White Clay)

"Whistler" desired me to state for the information of the President that the "Cut off" bands of Indians had not received that consideration at the hands of the Great Father that had been accorded to the other tribes of Sioux and to Spotted Tail's band. (the latter I understand to be a brulé)

The "Cut-off" bands of Ogalalla Sioux Indians, according to my information, consist of three bands headed respectively by "Black Bear," "Pawnee Killer" and "Whistler". The two former bands have gone to the reservation at White Clay, but "Whistler" declares, contrary to their wishes and that they will not remain there contentedly under present arrangements.

Whistler's has been classed as part of Spotted Tail's band, but this Wistler says is not correct, that they never have lived with Spotted Tail's band and further that in consequence of a quarrel a few months since resulting in the Killing of one of Spotted Tail's band by one of Whistler's band the latter are afraid to live near Spotted Tail's people.

Whistler is now south of the Platte about one hundred miles west of this post and has asked permission to hunt in that neighborhood until an answer can be received from this communication. His band has been where they are now for nearly two years and have committed no depredations, as far as I can learn. Their continuance there has been permitted, temporarily, as requested. I have promised to send a curior on the 1st of May to communicate with Whistler.

They prefer to remain South of the Platte. I assured him there was not the least probability that this request would be granted. He declares his willingness to conform to any decision but strongly insists that the Cut-offs shall be put together and have an agent. This last request he desired me to say was the most important of all to the Cut-off bands and he hoped the request would receive due consideration and an answer be promptly sent to him.

Whistler further states that ever since the Council at Fort Laramie in 1868 the Cut-off bands have been dissatisfied and have not well understood their status. This state of affairs can, according to him be remedied only by granting the above request.

This communication has been delayed several days in order that I might have a personal interview with Mr. Leon F. Pallardy who was Interpreter for the Council at Fort Laramie in 1868.

I have the honor to be

Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant
J. J. Reynolds
Colonel 3rd Cavalry....

/Ibid./

Reynolds letter was forwarded through military channels to Washington, where it was sent by the Department of the Army to the Department of the Interior. On April 16th, it received the following endorsement at the Headquarters of the Division of the Missouri:

> Whistler is a very good Indian, but Pawnee Killer is not, and never has been. I think it would be unwise to let these bands remain south of the Platte. The Republican Valley is now settling up so rapidly, that I fear a collision may take place if these Indians are allowed to remain there.
>
> P. H. Sheridan
> Lieut. General
> Commanding

/Ibid./

General Sheridan is considered to be the source of the statement that, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," and here he notes that "Whistler is a very good Indian...." Before 1872, ironically, Whistler would be "a godd Indian" as in Sheridan's famous quote. It was caused in part by his being allowed to remain in the Republican country, though the results were not as bad as General Sheridan might have expected.