Wounded Knee: Centennial Voices

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Introduction

The death of at least 146 men, women, and children of the Sioux nation and 25 members of the Seventh United States Cavalry at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, on 29 December 1890 is a tragedy much remembered and mourned. On the one hundredth anniversary of this controversial happening, we still look for answers to the old question, How could it have happened? While one can never hope to explain fully the actions of men spurred by false hopes, entrapped by fear, or consumed by anger, it is important to confront the past so that some better understanding may emerge. Perhaps it is simply necessary to recognize the human's unpredictability under stress and the duality of human nature, at once compassionate and merciful, merciless and unforgiving.

During the past several decades, the story of Wounded Knee has become a symbol of the treatment of all Indian peoples by the white majority. Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, while methodologically flawed, created new awareness of what is essentially a sad chapter in American history: the loss of freedom and the near loss of identity by a proud people, whose skills did not fit it for life

^{1.} It has been estimated that in addition to the 146 interred in the mass grave, another twenty or thirty dead or mortally wounded were not recovered. See Robert M. Utley, The Last Days of the Sioux Nation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 228.

in an emerging industrial society.² As might be expected, however, in the heat of modern rhetoric, the story of Wounded Knee has begun to take slightly different shape. Details that do not fit various theses have been dropped, subtlety has disappeared in anger, and

balance has given way to polarity.

On the eve of the centennial of Wounded Knee, it is important to go back to the sources, to look at what those who participated in the events of the day had to say, to learn what they believed were the reasons for conflict, and to examine their judgments concerning one another. The purpose of this compilation is to bring seldomheard voices back from a century ago to speak for themselves and to create a resource from which future writers may draw and from which the reader may reach his own conclusions.3

Some of the material presented here is known to scholars, but much is new—in the sense that modern historians working in the field have not cited it. One of these "new" sources is the Army and Navy Register, a monthly newspaper that began publication in Washington, D.C., in 1879 and continued well into the twentieth century. Similar in format to the Army and Navy Journal, its much older competitor based in New York City, the Register relied upon letters written from the field and the reprinting of official documents to fill most of its pages. Perhaps the most interesting "new" material-Charles Allen's eyewitness account of what happened in the Indian camp when the firing started-comes from another source. An obscure newspaper, Publisher's Auxiliary, published it just after Allen's death. His reminiscence is the most detailed account yet discovered of those anxious and terrible moments at Wounded Knee. Rivaling the Allen account in importance is Capt. Edward S. Godfrey's statement concerning the involvement of his men in the killing of women and children. Discovered in Godfrey's personnel file in the

^{2.} Dee Brown, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970). In his introduction, Brown states that he had tried "to fashion a narrative of the conquest of the American West as the victims experienced it, using their own words whenever possible" (p. xvi). Although he cites white scholarship in his bibliography, he often chooses to ignore it when it contradicts or tempers Indian accounts. For example, while citing the Last Days of the Sioux Nation in the notes of his chapter on Wounded Knee, in his narrative Brown does not report Utley's reasoned findings concerning the killing of women and children.

^{3.} For more information about what others have written concerning Wounded Knee and what their conclusions are, see Michael A. Sievers, "The Historiography of 'the Bloody Field . . . That Kept the Secret of the Everlasting Word': Wounded Knee," South Dakota History 6 (Winter 1975): 33-54.

National Archives in Washington, D.C., the account reveals much about the reaction of the army to public criticism.

Other selections come from such contemporary periodicals and newspapers as the Nation, Harper's Weekly, the Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States, the New York Times, the Army and Navy Journal, and the Chevenne Daily Leader. The twentieth-century periodical Winners of the West contributed several reminiscences. Modern readers will find that these evewitness accounts occasionally used words that in contemporary contexts are considered racial slurs. In some cases, they appear to be simply a matter of common usage, while in others they indeed appear to be pointedly deprecating. In the interests of historical accuracy, the texts have not been changed. Space restraints have necessitated that parts of the story be abbreviated and sketched with a broad stroke. To aid readers in filling in gaps, a chronology of events follows the accounts.

Some Causes

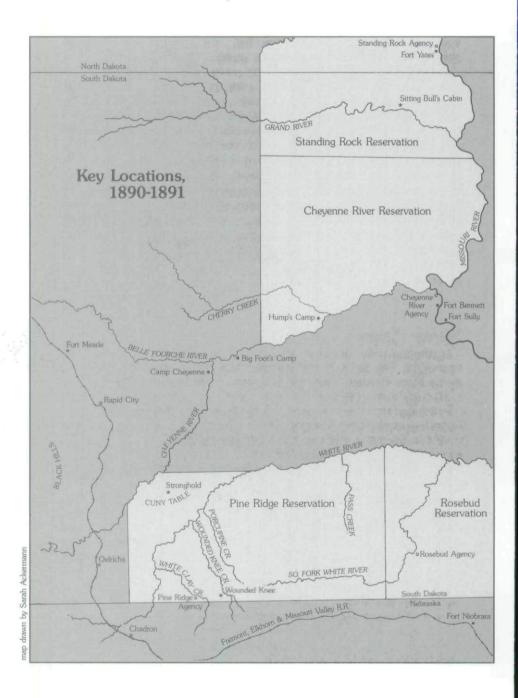
Historians are always looking for the causes of things and usually find many. The tragedy at Wounded Knee is no exception. Motives and actions can be attributed to certain underlying conditions. First, both Indian and white accounts agree that a major cause for unrest was the fact that the Sioux were starving, a circumstance precipitated by failure of the United States government to understand the gravity of the situation and supply the food needed. Part of the supply problem lay in the practice of fraud.

Captain James M. Burns, writing to the Army and Navy Register

three weeks after Wounded Knee, declared:

It is also to be deplored that we have to fight these poor, ignorant mortals, but it is brought about by a false and fraudulent system of dealing with them. The Government has made treaties with them, none of which have been kept. And when the Government makes an appropriation for them, they are fortunate if they receive one-half of the appropriation. While no Indian on this reservation has actually died from starvation, yet they are hungry all the time, and this is what caused the whole trouble.

I was talking to one intelligent gentleman at Oelrichs, S.D., a few days ago, who has considerable dealings with the Indians, and who has occasion to visit Pine Ridge Agency frequently, and he said that the Indians at that agency were in a starving condition, and that they have been for



the past three years, and it matters not what the agents of the Indian Department say, such is the fact.⁴

In April 1890, Indian Inspector Frank C. Armstrong had written the Interior Department that trouble was coming because of its policy of reducing the beef allotment on the Sioux reservations. The supply of beef for the Pine Ridge Agency had been cut from five million pounds to four million without previous warning. Armstrong continued:

The full allowance of beef should be given them. They complain, and with good grounds, that they were told by the Sioux Commissioners that their rations, etc., should not be reduced; that while this very talk was going on the Department in Washington was fixing to cut off one-fifth of their meat supply, but did not let them know it, nor did the agent know it until they had signed the Sioux Bill. They had a good start in cattle, but have had to kill over three times as many of their own cattle, old and young, as they did the year before; that they have been deceived in doing what they did by the Government, and that they don't get as much now as they did before.

I think cutting off this 1,000,000 pounds of beef, and thereby forcing them to kill their own young cattle, has put them back two years or more in raising stock, and has created a feeling of distrust, which, unless something is done to repair it, will lead to trouble and bad conduct. They have now killed many of their own cattle, and will next commence to kill range cattle. Already hides and other evidences of this are being found on the reservation borders.

Men will take desperate remedies sooner than suffer from hunger. Not much work can be expected with the present feeling. The Indians who advocated signing are now laughed at and blamed for being fooled. They don't get even their former rations, and ask where are all the promises that were made. The government must keep faith as well as the Indians.⁵

In an article published in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution* in 1896, Lt. Wilds P. Richardson clarified the reasons for lack of rations:

The year 1889 marked another change for the Sioux, and prepared the way for the climax 12 months later. In the first place the appropria-

^{4.} Capt. James M. Burns to Army and Navy Register, 17 Jan. 1891, p. 35.

^{5.} Armstrong, quoted in J. B. Bishop, "Cost of Our Latest Indian War," The Nation 52 (22 Jan. 1891): 63-64.

tions for the subsistence, etc., of the Sioux was reduced for this year, 1889-90, to the lowest point reached since the agreement of 1877, being \$100,000 less than the amount estimated for, and appropriated for the two preceding years. This caused a reduction in the beef ration of about 2,000,000 pounds at Pine Ridge Agency, and of 1,000,000 at Rosebud.

. . . Congress not only failed to take the necessary action to restore the deficiency in the ration, . . . but again appropriated for subsistence, etc., for the ensuing year 1890-91, \$50,000 less than the amount estimated for, and \$50,000 less than the sum appropriated for the years 1888 and $^{1}89$ 6

The Ghost Dance

Anthropologist Jack Goody has pointed out that in times of stress, when one civilization is hard pressed by another, a tendency exists "to seek comfort in ritual designed to bend time backward" or to accelerate it forward, to seek either an earlier Garden of Eden or the coming of the millennium. The late nineteenth century Sioux looked both ways in their search for the means to change the present.

The central figure in the Ghost Dance movement was the Paiute medicine man Wovoka, known to whites as Jack Wilson. The *New York Times* on 30 November 1890 published a letter by John S. Mayhugh, in which the recent special census agent of Indians for Nevada described Wovoka and his visions:

The prophet resides in Mason Valley, Esmeralda County, Nevada, close to the Walker River reservation. His name is not Johnson Sides at Reno, but Capt. Jack Wilson, known among all Indians by the Indian names of We-vo-Kar and Co-We-Jo. He is an intelligent, fine-looking Indian of about thirty-five years of age, who goes into trances, or seemingly so, for twelve to fourteen hours in presence of large numbers of Indians, who come upon invitation of the prophet. Upon his recovery he relates to them what he has seen. He tells them he has been to heaven and that the Mes-

6. Lt. W. P. Richardson, "Some Observations upon the Sioux Campaign of 1890-91," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States 18 (May 1896): 517, 519.
7. Jack Goody, "Time: Social Organization," in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. David L. Sills, vol. 16 (New York: Macmillan Co. & the Free Press, 1968), p. 41. For a lengthy discussion of this phenomenon, see Sylvia L. Thrupp, ed., Millennial Dreams in Action: Essays in Comparative Study, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Supplement 2 (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1962).

siah is coming to the earth again, and will put the Indians in possession of this country; that he has seen in heaven a heap of Indians, some of whom were dressed in the white man's clothes. He counsels the Indians not to disturb the white folks, saying that the blanket or rabbit skin that was put over the moon by the Indians long ago will soon fall off and then the moon, which is a-fire, will destroy the whites.

The Messiah is to appear on Mount Grant, which is a very large mountain, and is situated about sixteen miles south of the Walker River Agen-



Wovoka, a Nevada Paiute, prophesied the coming of a Messiah and the restoration of Indian lands.

cy buildings and on the west side of the lake. Here is where the first Indians appeared, according to their belief. I visited this mountain last September in performance of my duty as Special Census Agent of Indians. It is held as a sacred mountain to the Indians, and on top they allege they can see footprints of their first father, Numerna. If I may be permitted to suggest, I would recommend that all the Indians be allowed to visit this mountain, as I am satisfied they will only send delegations from each tribe for the purpose of ascertaining the truth of the prophecy. The Indians of Nevada expect delegations from most of the tribes North and Northeast, and Sit-



Short Bull, a Brulé Sioux, brought the Ghost Dance story to South Dakota's reservations in 1890.

ting Bull is expected. The only fear the Nevada Indians have is that the Government will interfere with troops. I think if the Indians are let alone at the various agencies the whole thing will die away.

All of the Indians here do not believe in the prophet, although Josephus, the chief at Walker Lake, thinks Co-We-Jo is a prophet for the reason that he went twice to this prophet to consult about water, as there was no rain and Walker River was nearly dried up. Upon each occasion the

prophet predicted rain, which really came, and saved their crops; hence, their belief in this prophet.8

One of those who brought the Ghost Dance story to the Sioux was Short Bull. In his late thirties, Short Bull was a Brulé medicine man in Lip's Wazhaza band on Pass Creek. He returned from the Walker River reservation in March 1890.9 Capt. C. A. Earnest, one of the officers at Rosebud Agency, recorded one of Short Bull's "sermons" for Maj. Gen. Nelson Miles, and a copy appeared in a Chicago newspaper on 22 November 1890. Short Bull had originally predicted that the events he described would come to pass in two seasons, but the whites were beginning to interfere, he said, and the time had been shortened:

Now, said he, there will be a tree sprout up and all the members of our tribes must gather there. But before this time we must dance the balance of this moon, at the end of which time the earth will shiver very hard. Whenever this occurs I will start the wind to blow. We will then see our fathers, brothers and everybody. We, the Indians, are the ones who are living a sacred life. Our Father in Heaven has placed a mark at each point of the four winds. A clay pipe lies at the setting of the sun, representing the Sioux. The holy arrow at the north represents the Cheyennes. At the rising of the sun lies hail, representing the Arapahoe tribe. At the south, there lies a pipe and feather, representing the Crow tribe. My Father has shown these things, therefore we must continue the dance. There may be soldiers surround you, but pay no attention to them, continue the dance. If the soldiers surround you four deep, three of you upon whom I have put holy shirts will sing the song I have taught you and some of the soldiers will drop dead. Then the rest will start to run, but their horses will sink into the earth. The riders will jump from their horses, but they will sink into the earth and you can do what you desire with them. Now you must know this, that all the soldiers and that race will be dead. There will be only 5,000 of them left living on the earth. My friends and relatives, this is straight and true. We must gather at Pass creek when the tree is sprouting; then we will go among our dead relations. You must not take any earthly things with you. Men and women must disrobe themselves. My Father above has told us to do this thing. Guns are the only things we are afraid of, but our Father will see that they do us no harm. Whatever the white men may say do not listen to them.10

^{8.} John S. Mayhugh, "The Messiah and His Prophet," New York Times, 30 Nov. 1890, p. 2.

^{9.} Utley, The Last Days of the Sioux Nation, pp. 61-62, 71.

^{10. &}quot;Short Bull's Sermon," Cheyenne Daily Leader, 22 Nov. 1890, p. 1.

In the 6 December 1890 issue of *Harper's Weekly,* Lt. Marion P. Maus reported his observation of a Ghost Dance at Pine Ridge Agency:

While accompanying Major-General Nelson A. Miles and the Northern Cheyenne Commission to the various agencies in the Northwest where the duties of the commission took them, Mr. Frederic Remington and I took occasion to visit the scene of the ghost dance on a plain near the White River, on the Pine Ridge Agency, in South Dakota. The Indians of this reservation are Sioux and Chevennes, Red Cloud being the principal chief. This sacred dance is probably in honor of the dead braves, who will soon return to life, and many undoubtedly believe they may appear at any moment. Arranged in a circle, about three hundred of them, alternately a man and a woman, they go round and round ever in the same direction, while the air is filled with a dirge-like chant of a graveyard significance. Now and then one falls down exhausted in a death-like swoon, and is rapidly carried away, while his place is filled. In this swoon, it is claimed, the Indian sees and communes with the Messiah, and learns his wishes, and what is to come to pass. Once seen, they claim, he is never forgotten, and again and again appears to the favored believer. . . .

. . . There is no doubt that most of these Indians are sincere in their belief in this new Messiah. It suits them exactly. It is not strange that there should be many versions of how the destruction of the white race and the restoration of the happy hunting-grounds will be accomplished. The manner in which this will be accomplished has been explained in various ways, but it seems generally believed that the Indians will all fall into a trance, and when they awake they will find the whites will have been buried, with all their civilization, many feet beneath the surface of the earth, never to rise again, and the Indians, with all the dead restored to life, will remain upon the earth—renewed and made many times more beautiful—alone to enjoy it. No more reservations, no more white men, no more soldiers, to disturb them; the prairies will be covered with grass waist-deep; the forest and mountains alike will abound in buffalo, elk, deer, and antelope, more abundant than ever.

Another version is that the Messiah will put all the Indians behind him and whites before him; will then roll a stratum of earth thirty feet deep over the earth, burying the white men and all their work beneath.¹¹

John G. Bourke, an army officer with a keen mind and a passionate interest in Indian culture, did not undervalue the influence of Sit-

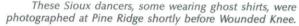
^{11.} Lt. Marion P. Maus, "The New Indian Messiah," Harper's Weekly, 6 Dec. 1890, p. 944.

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ting Bull and other medicine men. In a letter to the *Nation* a month before Wounded Knee, he recognized the power that these men held:

The medicine-man of the American tribes is not the fraud and charlatan many people affect to consider him; he is, indeed, the repository of all the lore of the savage, the possessor of knowledge, not of the present world alone, but of the world to come as well. At any moment he can commune with the spirits of the departed; he can turn himself into any animal at will; all diseases are subject to his incantations; to him the enemy must yield on the war-path; without the potent aid of his drum and rattle and song no hunt is undertaken; from the cradle to the grave the destinies of the tribe are subject to his whim.

I could fortify my own observations with the remarks of such men as Sahagun, Landa, Boscana, and others who passed their lives among the tribes to the south of us, and who recognized the fact that the life of the Indian rested upon his religion, and that the medicine-man was the one individual in the tribe whose actions and motives must be understood and frustrated. But nothing that I could say, nothing that any one could say, would change the national indifference to all that relates to the inner life of our interesting savages. Well did Francis Parkman say that Spanish civilization crushed the Indian, English civilization ignored and despised him, French civilization embraced him. We know very little, if any, more





about our Indians to-day than the Dutch did in New York when, on account of a senseless scare, they massacred a lot of peaceable Indians near Du Pauw's Ferry several centuries ago. . . . We must break down the power of the medicine-men. . . .

. . . At Carlisle and Hampton there should be introduced an elementary course which, if it did no more, should give an inkling of the advances



Made of muslin, this Sioux ghost shirt displays medallions and eagle feathers.

made in electricity, chemistry, the use of the solar spectrum, microscope, telescope, and other instruments, the power of steam, and other forces which the white man has harnessed to do his bidding. For the more capable scholars, there should be a supplementary course in rudimentary therapeutics, or household medicine, so as to render them independent of the medicine-men of their own tribe.¹²

12. John G. Bourke, "The Indian Messiah," 28 Nov. 1890, *The Nation* 51 (4 Dec. 1890): 439.

The one thing that changed the Ghost Dance from a spiritual revival into a potentially life-threatening movement was the ancillary view that those who wore the Ghost Dance shirt were immune from harm by bullets. Capt. James M. Burns of the Seventeenth Infantry described the belief as held by one of the survivors of Wounded Knee in the *Army and Navy Register* on 17 January 1891:

Two hundred and forty-six dead Indians were counted on the field and about 64 wounded. Out of a band of 320 10 only escaped. They had [put] on their ghost dance shirts before the fight, believing that these would protect them from the bullets of the whites, and for this reason I would say I believe the affair was deliberately planned by the Indians. One little girl who was wounded, and who is now in the hospital at Pine Ridge, says she had on her ghost shirt and that she was told that it would protect her from the bullets of the soldiers.\(^{13}\)

Dick Fool Bull, a child at the time of Wounded Knee, remembered years later about the making of ghost shirts and the tests performed to prove their impenetrability:

The government issue canvas them days and they cut them up and make them shirts. The fringe and they paint them moonshape like that. And a star over it on the back. Now that's bullet proof, he says. They can shoot you, but it won't go through the shirt. So they tried it, hung up one of these shirts, hung it up and took a shot at it with a 45-70, and the bullet dropped. Well that's trick, you know. I don't know how it worked. Anyway, they don't make too much of that. Instead of worshipping, why they did tricks like that?¹⁴

The Death of Sitting Bull

The death of Sitting Bull at the hands of Indian police on 15 December 1890 marked the beginning of a series of events that led to Wounded Knee. In a letter to the commissioner of Indian affairs in Washington on 17 November, Indian Agent James McLaughlin

^{13.} Burns to Army and Navy Register, 17 Jan. 1891, p. 35.

^{14.} Interview of Dick Fool Bull (ca. 83 years old), 6 July 1971, St. Francis, S.Dak., Tape 710, Reel 2, American Indian Research Project, University of South Dakota, Vermillion. By putting in less than the full amount of powder when loading the cartridge, this "trick" would be possible.

gave his impressions of the situation at Standing Rock Agency and told of a startling proposition made by Sitting Bull:

Having just returned from Grand River District, and referring to my former communication regarding to the ghost-dance craze among the Indians, I have the honor to report that on Saturday evening last I learned that such a dance was in progress in Sitting Bull's camp. . . . I got upon them unexpectedly and found a "ghost" dance in its height. There were about 45 men, 25 women, 25 boys, and 10 girls participating. A majority of the latter (boys and girls) were until a few weeks ago pupils of the day schools of the Grand River settlements. Approximately 200 persons were lookers-on, who had come to witness the ceremony either from curiosity or sympathy, most of whom had their families with them and encamped

in the neighborhood.

I did not attempt to stop the dance then going on, as, in their crazed condition under the excitement, it would have been useless to attempt it, but, after remaining some time talking with a number of the spectators, I went on to the house of Henry Bull Head, three miles distant, where I remained over night and returned to Sitting Bull's house next morning, where I had a long talk with Sitting Bull and a number of his followers. I spoke very plainly to them, pointing out what had been done by the Government for the Sioux people, and how this faction by their present conduct were abusing the confidence that had been reposed in them by the Government in its magnanimity in granting them full amnesty for all past offenses, when from destitution and imminent starvation they were compelled to surrender as prisoners of war in 1880 and 1881; and I dwelt at length upon what was being done in the way of education of their children and for their own industrial advancement, and assured them of what this absurd craze would lead to, and the chastisement that would certainly follow if these demoralizing dances and disregard of department orders were not soon discontinued. I spoke with feeling and earnestness, and my talk was well received, and I am convinced that it had a good effect.

Sitting Bull, while being very obstinate, and at first inclined to assume the role of "Big Chief" before his followers, finally admitted the truth of my reasoning and said that he believed me to be a friend to the Indians as a people, but that I did not like him personally, but that when in doubt in any matter in following my advice he had always found it well, and that now he had a proposition to make to me which if I agreed to and would carry out would allay all further excitement among the Sioux over this ghost-dance, or else convince me of the truth of the belief of the Indians in this new doctrine. He then stated his proposition, which was that I should accompany him on a journey from this agency to each of the other tribes of Indians through which the story of the Indian Messiah had

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When negotiations failed to end the Ghost Dance on the Standing Rock reservation, Agent James McLaughlin (to left of tree) ordered the arrest of Sitting Bull.

been brought, and when we reached the last tribe, or where it originated, if they could not produce the man who started the story, and we did not find the new Messiah, as described, upon the earth, together with the dead Indians returning to reinhabit this country, he would return convinced that they (the Indians) had been too credulous and imposed upon, which report from him would satisfy the Sioux, and all practices of the ghost societies would cease; but that, if found to be as professed by the Indians, they be permitted to continue their medicine practices, and organize as they are now endeavoring to do.

I told him that this proposition was a novel one, but that the attempt to carry it out would be similar to the attempt to catch up the wind that blew last year; that I wished him to come to my house, where I would give him a whole night or day and night, in which time I thought I would convince him of the absurdity of this foolish craze, and the fact of his making me the proposition that he did was a convincing proof that he

did not fully believe in what he was professing and endeavoring so hard to make others believe. He did not, however, promise fully to come into the agency to discuss the matter, but said he would consider my talk and decide after deliberation. . . .

Desiring to use every reasonable means to bring Sitting Bull and his followers to abandon this dance and to look upon its practice as detrimental to their individual interests and the welfare of their children, I made the trip herein reported to ascertain the extent of the disaffection and the best means of securing its discontinuance. From close observation I am convinced that the dance can be broken up, and after due reflection would respectfully suggest that in case my visit to Sitting Bull fails to bring him in to see me in regard to the matter, as invited to do, all Indians living on Grand River be notified that those wishing to be known as opposed to the ghost doctrine, friendly to the Government, and desiring the support provided in the treaty must report to the agency for such enrollment and be required to camp near the agency for a few weeks, and those selecting their medicine practices, in violation of department orders, to remain on Grand River, from whom subsistence will be withheld.

Something looking toward breaking up this craze must be done, and now, that cold weather is approaching, is the proper time. Such a step as here suggested would leave Sitting Bull with but few followers, as all, or nearly all, would report for enrollment, and thus he would be forced in himself 15

In late October, Short Bull, who had advanced the millennium to one month, encouraged dancers to congregate at Pass Creek. At the end of November, a large number of dancers from both Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations moved to the Stronghold in the Badlands, plundering agency herds and non-dancers' property en route. Talks between McLaughlin and Sitting Bull ended on 12 December, when the chief informed the agent that he was also leaving for Pine Ridge to learn about his religion. Since Sitting Bull stated that he was leaving with or without permission, McLaughlin decided it was time to act, ordering the Sioux leader's immediate arrest. Late on 15 December, the agent sent this terse dispatch to the commissioner of Indian affairs conveying the first news of the death of Sitting Bull:

Indian police arrested Sitting Bull at his camp, forty miles northwest of the agency, this morning at daylight. His followers attempted his rescue

^{15.} James McLaughlin to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas J. Morgan, 17 Nov. 1890, printed in "The Last of Sitting Bull," New York Times, 16 Dec. 1890, p. 1.



The death of Sitting Bull on 15 December 1890 sparked the series of events that led to Wounded Knee.

and fighting commenced. Four policemen were killed and three wounded. Eight Indians were killed, including Sitting Bull and his son, Crowfoot, and several others were wounded. The police were surrounded for some time, but maintained their ground until relieved by United States troops, who now have possession of Sitting Bull's camp, with all the women, children, and property. Sitting Bull's followers, probably 100 men, deserted

their families and fled West up the Grand River. The police behaved nobly, and great credit is due them. Particulars by mail.¹⁶

On 18 December, Sgt. George B. DuBois, Company F, Eighth Cavalry, wrote a letter to a soldier-friend with whom he had been an 1888 recruit at Jefferson Barracks in Missouri. The letter describes



Sitting Bull's wives, center, and daughters pose at the door of his Grand River cabin.

the killing of Sitting Bull, the rescue of the Indian police, and the events immediately following:

Fort Yates, North Dakota December 18th, 1890

Dear Friend Thomas:

I have enough to tell you to keep me writing for a week, but will condense as much as possible and give you the news.

You will know by this time that the fight was fought and Old Sitting Bull has gone to the Happy Hunting Grounds, together with eleven of his braves that I know about. Also five Indian Police have gone under.

The plan laid out was for the Forty Indian Police to go to the camp of Sitting Bull, (Thirty-eight miles from Yates) at daylight on Monday morn-

16. McLaughlin to Morgan, 15 Dec. 1890, ibid.

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ing. They were to arrest Sitting Bull, throw him in a wagon, then meet the two Troops on the road, and we were to keep off the hostiles.

We started from Fort Yates at twelve o'clock on Sunday night and by sun-up we were about three miles from Sitting Bull's camp.

It turned out, that of the forty Indian Police that were to be there with

a wagon, only eighteen showed up and they had no wagon.

But they were brave men and they went into the camp. They brought the old man out of his cabin, then they had a white elephant on their hands. Sitting Bull let out a cry for help. His followers came rallying around him. One Sioux Indian shot Bull Head, (The Chief of the Police) in the leg. As he did this, Bull Head turned and shot Sitting Bull in the head, and as Bull was falling, Red Tomahawk shot Sitting Bull twice, one of these shots going near or through the heart. The fighting became hand-to-hand. It must have been awful. The hostiles soon drove the Indian Police into Sitting Bull's cabin. The battle raged until the ammunition began to run short. The Police called for a volunteer to go and bring the Soldiers.

Hawk Man volunteered and made his way to the coral [sic], adjoining the cabin, where he found Sitting Bull's best pony with only a piece of rope around its neck. When he got to the bars of the coral, he found that

the bars were so tight that he could not lower them.

Red Tomahawk ran out of the cabin and let the bars down for him. Hawk Man began to whip the pony before he mounted, he was so excited, but he managed to crawl on in some way and dashed off to meet us.

If those two Indians were not brave, I don't know who was. The bullets

must have rained around them.

Hawk Man met us about two miles from the camp. When he met us there were exciting times. Captain Fetchet, who was in command of the two troops, would have turned back, but the other Officers insisted that we must go and rescue the Police and he agreed.

I then got a command to take my squad (No. 1) and move as skirmishers, five hundred yards in advance in front of the troops and ride at a gallop. It was a ticklish job and none of the Officers dared come up.

I moved off till I came to a bluff. It was about a thousand yards from the Indian camp and in full view. Then you should have heard the red Devils yell. It was awful.

I halted till the troops came up. "F" Troop was dismounted, thrown out on a skirmish line and commenced firing. The Hotchkiss, on the hill, was firing over our heads. The Sioux were soon driven from the brush and they disappeared like magic. The Indian Police ran up a white flag and while they came to us, the Sioux Indians made their escape. We went down to the creek on a skirmish line and hunted all around. We found only one buck in the brush and made short work of him.

The Indian Police had their blood up. One of them would have killed a kid about six years old. I knocked his pistol up and talked him out of it.

The scenes around the camp were awful. I saw one fellow go up to Old Bull and cut him across the face with an ax. One cut him with a knife till his own squaw wouldn't know him. The dead looked horribly cut and shot. The blood and brains lay around in all shapes. There were broken guns covered with blood.

The Commander ordered camp to be made so that the men and horses could be fed. I was ordered out with my squad, (Two Corporals and nine

privates) for picket duty. We had a hard time of it.

Corporal Ford was playing hide and seek with an Indian on a hill-top. Neither one was hurt. I had a hard time for myself. One buck came riding in toward camp. I thought he was an Indian Police as he had a white kerchief the same as the Police all wore. When he got to within four hundred yards of our camp, he stopped. It seemed as though the whole of our men started shooting at once, but the Indian spurred his pony and dashed in my direction. He did not see me until he got within five hundred yards of where I was. As he turned away, I let him have it. The first two shots were misses, but at the third shot, he threw up his hands and a riderless pony galloped over the plains.

The Indian Police went out with a wagon and brought in a dead Indian. While I was on picket duty, the troops cooked dinner and ate it all up. I had nothing to eat or drink, nor did any of my eleven men or horses. They were afraid to stay there any longer so we started back for Oak Creek. We got there just at dark. We had traveled seventy-five miles since midnight the night before, but the funny thing that was of the most interest to me was that I had nothing to eat. We had no wagons nor any bedding. Few of the boys slept at all as they had one blanket and a saddle blanket each.

At midnight that night two Companys of Infantry joined us. They had supplies and our buffalo coats. We managed to warm up a little, but not enough to sleep very much. The next morning we pulled into Fort Yates. You bet I was glad to hit the spring bunk a lick once more.

I haven't seen any account of it yet, but you will have the true story. I have not written the Soldier rumors. Just what I saw myself and what the Indian Police told me themselves. So I know what I am talking about.

Bull Head, the man who shot Sitting Bull, is in the hospital. He has a shattered arm and leg. . . .

George B. DuBois Sergeant "F" Troop 8th Cavalry¹⁷

17. DuBois to George Thomas, Co. I, 5th Cavalry, printed in "Three Remarkable Letters," Winners of the West (St. Joseph, Mo.), 30 Mar. 1935, p. 2.

Troops Sent to the Reservation

In mid-November, as Ghost Dance adherents began to congregate, military officials decided to send troops to control what they believed was a volatile situation. In his report of 5 January 1891 to the adjutant general of the army in Washington, General Miles outlined his strategy:

SIR: The condition of affairs is in brief as follows: The efforts that have been made for the last month to avoid an Indian war has been the placing of troops around the stronghold held by the hostiles in the Bad Lands. That was their rendezvous for the gathering of all the hostile elements from Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Chevenne River and Standing Rock Agencies.

The line of troops was from Oelrichs, S.D., thence northeast down the Cheyenne River to mouth of Rapid Creek, thence east to White River; this to keep the Indians on the reservation and out of the settlements. The troops gradually closed upon the hostiles, while every reasonable measure was made to draw out as many as possible from the hostile camp.



Maj. Gen. Nelson A. Miles commanded the thirty-five hundred troops deployed in South Dakota in the fall of 1890.

While this was being done the principal disturbing element of the hostile portion of Standing Rock Indians were removed in the arrest of Sitting Bull and capture of 300 of his following. Troops were subsequently ordered to capture the worst element of the Cheyenne River Reservation, and this was accomplished in the arrest of Big Foot, with 60 lodges of his Indians, 38 men of Sitting Bull's following, and 30 warriors of the Cheyenne River Reservation Indians.

These were arrested by Colonel Sumner and marched under the escort of his command, consisting of three troops cavalry and two Hotchkiss guns, and one company of infantry, up the Cheyenne River to Big Foot's village; but notwithstanding the fact that positive orders had been given from these headquarters to prevent the possible escape of any, they were allowed to escape, and moved south with the evident intention of joining the hostiles in the Bad Lands.

This was a serious embarrassment, and troops were sent to intercept them, but were only successful in preventing their joining the hostile element in the Bad Lands, until they were on the 28th finally captured 1½ miles west of Porcupine Creek, by Major Whitside, with battalion of the Seventh Cavalry with two Hotchkiss guns. The Indians, 118 men and 250 women and children, were surrounded and marched seven miles under escort of the troops to camp on Wounded Knee Creek. Colonel Forsyth, with another battalion of his regiment, was ordered by General Brooke to reinforce Major Whitside, and arrived at his camp at 8:30 that night and assumed command. The troops were then guarding the Indians in camp. Colonel Forsyth's command, with a battery of four light Hotchkiss guns, numbered 26 officers and 333 men, not including two medical officers and three men of Hospital Corps and 40 Indian scouts. Is

On the night of 28 December, soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry surrounded Big Foot's band. Many years later, Andrew Flynn of A Troop, Seventh Cavalry, told what he heard from the Indian camp:

That evening as I was lying down with a piece of a bale of hay for my pillow and the stars for my canopy, there was a great commotion among the Indians which lasted most of the night. We discovered that it was the old medicine [man] chanting over a death. One of our scouts asked me if I knew what he was saying. I replied that I did not. He then said to me, "Have you said your prayers yet?" And I said yes. "The medicine man is telling the Indians not to give up their guns because they were

^{18.} Miles to Adjutant General, U.S. Army, 5 Jan. 1891, printed in Army and Navy Register, 24 Jan. 1891, p. 52.

to be killed anyway." We were formed in a hollow square which was a bad thing for us because it took our men so long to get out of each other's way when the firing started. That was how so many of our men were killed or wounded before we had a chance to use our guns.¹⁹

Wounded Knee, 29 December 1890

The outside world first learned of the tragedy at Wounded Knee through a story sent over the wire by William Fitch Kelley, correspondent for the *Nebraska State Journal*. The reporters assembled on the spot had drawn lots to arrange for the priority use of the single wire for each day,²⁰ and Kelley had been the winner on the twenty-ninth:

The State Journal has from its special correspondent the following story of the fight between the troops and Big Foot's Indians at the camp at Wounded Knee.

At 8 o'clock this morning the troops were massed about the Indian village, the Hotchkiss guns overlooking the camp, not fifty yards away. Col. Forsythe ordered all the Indians to come forward away from the tents. They came and met in a half circle until counted. The dismounted troops were then thrown around them, company K, Capt. Wallace, and company B, Capt. Warrum. The order was then given to twenty of the Indians to go and get their guns. They returned with only two guns. A detachment of troops at once began to search the village, finding thirty-eight guns. As this task was completed the Indians surrounded by companies K and B began to move. All of a sudden they threw their blankets to the ground, whipping up the rifles and began firing rapidly at the troops, not twenty feet away. The troops were at great disadvantage, fearing the shooting of their own comrades. The Indian men, women and children then ran to the south battery, firing rapidly as they ran.

Soon mounted troops were after them, shooting them down on every hand. The engagement lasted fully an hour and a half. To the south many took refuge in a ravine, from which it was difficult to dislodge them. I should

^{19.} Andrew M. Flynn, "Looking Back over Forty-Nine Years," Winners of the West, Nov. 1939, p. 4.

^{20.} For more information about Kelley and the press corps, see Oliver Knight, Following the Indian Wars: The Story of the Newspaper Correspondents among the Indian Campaigners (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), pp. 313-15, and Elmo Scott Watson, "The Last Indian War, 1890-92—A Study of Newspaper Jingoism," Journalism Quarterly 20 (Sept. 1943): 205-19.



William Fitch Kelley of the Nebraska State Journal was the first to relay news of the tragedy at Wounded Knee.

estimate the killed and wounded, from what I saw on the field and vicinity at fifty. Just now it is impossible to state the exact number. The soldiers are shooting them down wherever found. The field was one of great confusion, the horses running in every direction, and the men for a few moments frantic, owing to the unfortunate way they were placed. Capt. Wallace of K troop was the only officer killed. In the first mad rush of the Indians, those of them who had not guns attacked the troopers with knives, clubs and tomahawks, and poor Capt. Wallace was struck down with a blow from a hatchet, on the head. Father Craft, a Catholic missionary, received a bullet wound which will probably result fatally.

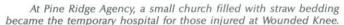
Lieut. Garlington, of Arctic exploration fame, received a serious wound in the arm. A number of non-commissioned officers and privates were wounded, probably twenty-five or thirty in all. Several of these are likely to die. I cannot, at this time, give the names of all the wounded. As the

dispatch is being written the troops are still pursuing the Indians in every direction.²¹

Hehakawanyakapi, a Sioux survivor of the 29 December encounter who was interviewed by Philip Wells and Rev. Charles Smith Cook as he lay wounded in the temporary hospital at Pine Ridge, stated:

I am thirty-eight years old. I am a Ghost Dancer and belong to Big Foot's band. I came along with the band by chance. We heard that Big Foot's band was invited to come and live with the Oglalas. Being an Oglala, I joined them. We met the soldiers the fifth day out. We were coming down the hills beyond Porcupine Tail creek, when we were met by four scouts. I saw only one, Highbackbone. The other scouts rode rapidly back to tell the soldiers of our coming. I asked the scout why he came to meet us.

21. The story appeared in South Dakota newspapers on 30 December. See Sioux Falls Argus-Leader, 30 Dec. 1890, p. 1. For more of Kelley's coverage of events on the Pine Ridge reservation, see William Fitch Kelley, Pine Ridge, 1890: An Eyewitness Account of the Events Surrounding the Fighting at Wounded Knee, ed. and comp. Alexander Kelley & Pierre Bovis (San Francisco, Calif.: Pierre Bovis, 1971). See also Kelley, "The Indian Troubles and the Battle of Wounded Knee," Transactions of and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society 4 (1892): 30-50.





He answered, "We heard you were coming and so we came to meet

you. Everything will be all right."

We got to Porcupine Tail creek and made coffee there. Then we came on preceded by our horsemen. Presently it was said, "Soldiers are coming." I looked and saw them coming, making much dust. They finally halted at a given place, not far from us. We still went toward them with our horsemen in the lead. On a little rise they placed two cannons covering us, having their guns in readiness for firing. We went right on towards them and finally reached them. Our people said, "They are only fooling us." We mingled and went on with them, some of the soldiers preceding us and others following in the rear. We reached the Wounded Knee, where we camped beside the soldiers. Of course we were guarded. It was a lonely trip. Rations were soon given us and everything appeared friendly. We had no bad intentions and we entertained no fear. There was no suspicion of the soldiers on our part. We were simply coming this way because of an invitation from Red Cloud, Young-Man-Afraid-Of-His-Horses, and other chiefs.

We did not ask for the usual passes, as we knew they would be refused. The men were not allowed to take their horses to water at the Wounded Knee. The boys had charge of that. Even then I did not think we were under suspicion. After breakfast that morning I went out and learned that all the men were wanted at a given place. I went to the place, which was near Big Foot's tent. His tent was near the soldiers. The soldiers said they wanted all our guns. Many of the cavalrymen arranged themselves in positions, while the infantrymen got between us and the women and children. All the men were thus separated from the women. I heard an officer say something. He must have given orders, because the soldiers began loading their guns and holding them in readiness for firing. I called out and said, "Let's give up every gun." I said it because I thought it was the best thing to do. Many were given up. I cannot say how many, but I thought all were given up. Every man among the Indians did not have a gun. I gave up my Winchester, which was all I had. A man named Hose-Yanka (a rascally fellow) was at this time making medicine, but I did not hear what he said. About this time a more rigid search of the Indians was instituted. When the soldiers came to me, I gave up my cartridge belt. A soldier took it and began taking off the cartridges, apparently to return the belt, so I stood by waiting for it. Just then I heard the report of a gun and saw a man throwing off his sheet-covering. Firing followed then from all sides. I threw myself on the ground. Then I jumped up to run towards the Indian camp, but I was then and there shot down. I was hit in the right leg and soon after was shot in the other leg.

When the general firing ceased I heard an interpreter call out, saying the wounded would be kindly treated. I opened my eyes and looked about

and saw the dead and wounded all around me. Five men and Mrs. Big Foot were near me and alive. My wife and younger child, I hear, were not killed, but my older girl is missing. Adams, the government herder here, is my brother.²²

One of the disputed points in the Wounded Knee story is who fired the first shots. Help Them, also wounded in the fighting, told this story to Philip Wells and Reverend Cook:

I am an Oglala. I had been on a visit to Big Foot's camp on Cheyenne river. As I was on my way home, I came along with Big Foot's people.

When we were taken by the soldiers, we were treated kindly by them and given provisions to eat. The only thing on the part of the soldiers that didn't look friendly was, they kept their guns in readiness for action, and when we came into camp they placed two cannons on a hill covering our camp. The men were not allowed to take the horses to water, so the little boys watered the horses. To the best of my knowledge, the Indians had no intention of fighting.

The disarming of the Indians started peaceably. I had given up my gun and left the circle and was going towards our camp, where all of the women and children were.

For some time before that, the medicine man had been going around doing the maneuvers of the Ghost Dance. He stopped and turned around and faced a crowd of young men standing together with their guns concealed under their blankets. He spoke to them, but I could not hear what he said. I heard all those he spoke to answer, "How!"

Shortly after, I heard a white man say something in excited tones, which I could not understand . . . I looked around and saw some of the Indians throw off their blankets and raise their guns. One of the Indians fired a shot, but I did not recognize him. As I turned to run, I heard a few more shots. The firing was so fast after that, I could not tell what was happening.

The medicine man had told the other Indians that the soldiers' bullets could not reach them no matter how the soldiers shot at them.²³

The most detailed account of what happened in the Indian camp that day comes from Charles W. Allen, editor of the Chadron

^{22.} Philip F. Wells, "Testimony of Wounded Indians," pp. 3-4, MS H75.134 Fd. 1 & 2, Philip F. Wells Manuscripts, South Dakota State Historical Society, Pierre. This manuscript was published in Philip F. Wells, "Ninety-Six Years among the Indians of the Northwest," North Dakota History 15 (Oct. 1948): 290-93.

^{23.} Wells, "Testimony of Wounded Indians," pp. 2-3, and "Ninety-Six Years among the Indians," pp. 291-92.

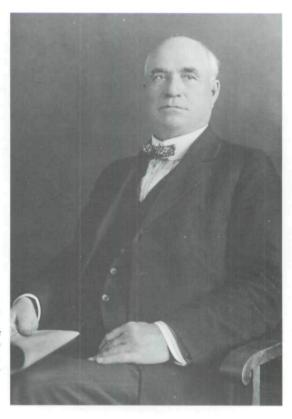
(Nebraska) *Democrat*. James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald* had hired Allen to cover the threatened Indian outbreak.²⁴ Years later, Allen shared his personal experiences:

For a long time after the distressful events at Wounded Knee, I would not permit my mind to dwell on the scenes enacted there, but felt inclined to and did sidestep inducement of my friends to become reminiscent of that conflict. And in this record of my varied experiences in the early West, I have felt something akin to ever-mounting dread as my pen drew nearer and nearer to the unavoidable subject. . . . Common sense requires us to concede that in all sudden and exciting events involving a mass of human beings, no two persons are apt to hold the same position long enough to enable them to view the swiftly moving action from the same angle and thus to receive like impressions of each action on the whole. Therefore, I shall state only what I saw, felt and heard during the melee, hoping for the minimum of error in my statement; and according to all others who were present at the time, a like privilege.

Leaving our friend, the cook, in a jolly humor, we sauntered down to the large brown headquarters tent, in front of which there seemed to be considerable activity. Here we found General Forsyth and Colonel White-sides, their chief interpreter, Philip Wells, and the brothers, William and John Shangreau, his assistants. Going and coming were a number of commissioned and non-commissioned officers. The scout Little Bat (Baptiste Garneau [Garnier]) was also present, and would act as interpreter if needed. Father Craft in his Jesuit robes, with a friend or two, was standing slightly in back and to the left of Interpreter Wells. We soon learned that preparations had just been completed to carry out a pacific program, and criers had harangued the village that all men were to assemble on the green where the commander would talk with them.

Now that the many interested spectators from the surrounding country had left their buggies parked in the open spaces among the tents of the soldiers' camp across the road to the north, they were standing at a respectful distance to the rear—east of the officers and interpreters.

24. Born in Noble County, Indiana, on 10 September 1851, Allen went west as a youth and had an adventurous career as "freighter on the Oregon Trail, soldier in a frontier regiment, cattleman, homesteader, manager of a blacksmith shop in a small frontier town, postmaster at the agency on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation, . . . and publisher of the *Chadron* (Neb.) *Democrat* from 1885 to 1891." Just before his death on 16 November 1942, he contributed the story of his Wounded Knee experiences to the *Publishers' Auxiliary*, saying that it was condensed from a chapter in his unpublished autobiography, "The West That Was." Allen died in the Soldiers and Sailors Home in Hot Springs, South Dakota, at the age of 91. *Publishers' Auxiliary*, 28 Nov. 1942, p. 1.



Charles W. Allen, working for the New York Herald, provided one of the most detailed eyewitness accounts of the events at Wounded Knee.

Presently all the Indian men began coming in bunches of from two to a dozen or more, stringing leisurely along and taking their seats in a circle on the grass before the commander and his staff. This continued until an inner and outer circle had been formed and the usual ceremony of filling and passing the pipe from one to another had begun.

Then General Forsyth addressed them in a firm but conciliatory manner, after a friendly greeting and expression of regret for the bad conditions under which they were meeting. The gist of his remarks were about as follows:

First he told them that for the time being they were prisoners, and as such they were to give up their arms peaceably. That a government train was on its way from the agency, and when it arrived all their tents, families and household goods would be placed therein and they would be taken to a camp of their own, given food, and would be well treated and cared

for. There were a few skeptical grunts of "How!" to this statement, but not many. He then told them to go back to their lodges, bring all their firearms, and turn them over to him.

The Indians departed for their camp in a reluctant, obviously sulky mood. Then followed a cessation of official business, a shifting of positions and somewhat subdued babble of conversation, during which I became separated from my companions and we met no more until the lull after the leaden storm.

Later developments justified the belief that during the protracted absence of the Indians, and in order to perfect an absolute control over their followers, some of the shrewder leaders among the Messiah-crazed band had started the rumor (utterly terrifying to them) that the government train was to take them and their possessions to Gordon, Neb. (the nearest railroad station south of Wounded Knee), and ship them in box and stock cars down to Oklahoma—the hot southern climate of which was anathema to Indians of the northern plains.

Now the general had spoken to the Indians in English, of course, and in my presence he made no mention of their destination. Interpreter Wells



also said that at no time did the general intimate any such move. Perhaps, had he stated clearly just where they were to be located, it might have altered the course of events.

After what seemed an unreasonable length of time, the Indians came strolling back, pretty much as they had come to the first meeting, except that they seemed purposely to adopt a more independent swagger in approaching the council field. Many of them were painted hideously and conspicuously grim of visage. Only a few resumed their seats on the grass but remained standing in a somewhat defiant attitude. Quite a number of their wives had accompanied the braves to this meeting, robed in long blankets reaching almost to the ground, and each took a position immediately behind her husband.

When all were assembled the picture was a weird one. Most of those Indians were ghost shirts grotesquely painted, fringed leggings, beaded moccasins, and daubs of varicolored paint around their hate-filled eyes. It was an aggregation of semi-maddened fanatics, determined to face any condition, relying with implicit confidence upon their ultimate rescue

In a scene reminiscent of the council that took place just before the fighting at Wounded Knee, these Sioux met with government officials in January 1891.



through the intervention of the mythical Messiah. Yet, in the picture of this grim group, a single stroke had painted one bright gleam of hope for civilization.

At the southeast edge of the group of standing Indians there was a fair-sized plat of grass where, in all the exuberance of early youth, were eight or ten Indian boys dressed in the gray school uniforms of that period. The fun they were having as they played "bucking horse," "leap-frog," and similar games, carried the mind for a fleeting moment back to the days of boyhood.

The scene here pictured was constantly changing, hence it may throw some light into the shadowed places to state here a fact of subsequent discovery. The women who stood close behind their men concealed, under each blanket, a repeating rifle and well-filled cartridge belt. Also, a number of the men were found to have had long strips of belting, likewise filled with ammunition, suspended from their waists and extending down the

inner side of their leggings.

This was the situation when General Forsyth asked them if they had brought their guns and was answered in the affirmative. He then designated a sergeant and three privates who had been stationed in the open, and instructed the captives to deliver them to those men. They then strode forward and handed over their guns, some carrying two or three. As fast as they did so, they were escorted to a point west of the main group (and south of where the guns were being piled at the edge of the east-and-west road) and were seated on the ground.

During this proceeding, two of its most important features must have been noticed by all present. First, those bringing the arms seemed to be of the poorer class—lax, spiritless, shabbily dressed. Their ghost shirts were either plain or daubed with inartistic characters; the arms they delivered were of ancient vintage. There were Springfield rifles, muzzle-loading hunting rifles, old-style needle guns, first-model Henry and Winchester

rifles, and old Spencer carbines.

When this fake delivery was ended, the general began lecturing them on their duplicity and their faithless disregard of promises. But while he was entertaining them with these verbal charges, an aide had detailed five soldiers with two interpreters to search their camp for hidden arms. Chief Big Foot had been escorted from his tent, and urged his followers to maintain peace and comply with the general's orders.

When I saw Little Bat and William Shangreau accompanying the searching detail, I decided to join them. Leaving the general and interpreter Wells preaching to their sullen audience, we soon reached the east end of the row of dilapidated tepees. One of the soldiers carried a sack and was unarmed, as were the interpreters and myself; the others had their guns.

After explaining the purpose of the visit to the women and children present, the search began. Not knowing what instructions the men had

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received, I was surprised to note that every package, small handbag, par-fle[sche] (the Indian valise), and all like receptacles were shaken—and investigated, if any metallic sound was heard. All possible weapons, such as scissors, long awls, knives of any kind, cartridges and shells were taken. The cooking outfits were deprived of butcher and case knives and axes. Not many large sharp instruments were found: the most dangerous were small articles. Nothing else was taken away, but the tents were left disarranged.

I watched this proceeding until about half of the tepees had been examined. During this time the loud voices of the speakers could be heard continuously, but only a glimpse of the excited throng in front of head-quarters could be had. Leaving the detail for a closeup view of the center of excitement, I saw at once that a cordon of troops had been thrown about the assembled Indians and that the military staff seemed to be quietly awaiting the result of an argument. Stepping up between two troopers, I saw the speaker—a large man of middle age, splendidly proportioned and viciously painted. Even my imperfect knowledge of the language told me that he was a malcontent of extreme type and arguing against General Forsyth's advice. He was an orator of the first water. Every gesture and body movement flowed rhythmically, adding emphasis to his smoothly enunciated sentences. Suddenly, scooping up a handful of dirt, he tossed it scattering in the air, and with eyes turned toward heaven implored the Great Spirit to scatter the soldiers likewise.

Later I learned that this was the medicine man whom those disheartened Indians looked to as their leader, and that he was inciting them to resist the counsel of Big Foot and the general alike. Among other things, he told them that bullets could not harm them, and that the moment the soldiers opened fire the earth would open up and swallow them completely. It must be remembered that these long-suffering people, deceived, betrayed, and driven from pillar to post, had lost all hope save that which centered in the coming of their Messiah, and the impressive story of their leader found eager response. I remarked to the troopers near by that if that man were an ordained minister of some Christian church he would convert the world. Certainly his impassioned appeal proved to be the lighted fuse that burned slowly to the disastrous end.

Not being able to understand enough of the speaker's words to keep me interested, I started back to rejoin the searching party but paused now and then to note the changes in formation of the groups that had taken place during my absence. Most of the spectators were seated in or standing near their buggies. Mr. Asay, the post trader, was on horseback, near his own buggy, talking to the men therein. One of those was Captain McKenzie, on leave of absence and a guest of his brother officers of the military camp at the agency. They had all ridden out that morning to see the sights—and they saw them.

I also observed a Hotchkiss gun that had been placed in commanding position on a small knoll at the north edge of the camp, not far from the knoll on which the Catholic church now commemorates the tragedy. In various stories of the affair at Wounded Knee this Hotchkiss gun is referred to in the plural. I saw but the one in the whole field of action, and cannot recall having heard it fired more than three or four times. I had reason to know later that it was aimed at distant objects, for I was running like a scared wolf on a line parallel with the gun fire.



Cpl. Paul H. Weinert and the gunners of Battery E, First Artillery, inflicted heavy casualties among both the warriors and the women and children at Wounded Knee.

Continuing my walk, presently I joined the searchers at the Indian camp and found that but three or four tepees remained to be inspected. The last of these was a small standard pole lodge, entirely empty but for the form of a woman, her shawl clasped tightly about her, lying just inside on the grass. When accosted by an interpreter she made no move. He shook her gently—no response. Then he turned her over on her face and disclosed a new Winchester rifle that she had covered with her body while simulating the final swoon of an exhausted ghost dancer.

As a soldier seized the gun she jumped up, and with eyes blazing began berating the interpreters in their own language. The boys merely jollied her, and at last, somewhat mollified, she turned to go.

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At this moment an extra loud and emphatic utterance floated up from the oratorical medicine man. I had just emptied my pipe and started to place it in the right hand pocket of my light overcoat when Little Bat, who had stiffened at the last words of the speaker, yelled, "Look out, Charley!" and we all started to run.

Little Bat, who was a noted foot racer, had but given his warning when a shot was heard from the direction of headquarters. Scarcely had the echo of this lone shot died away when, for a few minutes, volleys were heard that sounded much like the activity of good dry popcorn in a hot pan. He was fleeing up the valley of the ravine to where Captain Taylor with his company of Indian scouts wisely kept them away from the main trouble by maneuvering among the rolling hills southwest of the ravine, just as a company of Gray Horse cavalry was doing among the hills to the northwest. The object was to check any possible reinforcement of malcontents who might chance to come from the west.

I found myself running with three of the soldier searchers who were making directly for their camp across the west side of the assembly ground, where the fighting had started, but now shifted to smaller groups scattered about nearby.

As we turned to run, the first scene that had met our view showed the spectators, some in their buggies and others clambering in pell-mell, whipping their teams into a stampede down the quarter-stretch to the old traders' store that was now used as citizens' headquarters. Stray bullets were whizzing among them, although no one was shooting at them and no one was injured except the visiting Captain McKenzie, who received a slight flesh wound above the ankle and the carriage in which he was riding lost a spoke or two, as did a number of the other rigs.

The next glance that registered mentally as we ran along in front of the old tents west of the assembly plat was that the ground at our right, where the fighting started, was covered with dead, and we could hear the firing of scattered groups in various directions. As the three soldiers who were leading in the race passed the last tent, I saw one jerk up his gun and fire at the front of a wagon between the tent and the road. When I reached that point I saw two large, fleshy women, each holding a separate bridle bit, struggling with a harnessed and plunging pony team that they had started to hitch to the wagon, the tongue of which still lay on the ground. The shot must have gone between the ponies and thrown splinters from the wagon tongue. I have never heard any explanation of the episode, and the place was vacant when next I saw it.

The trio kept right on running, nor glanced to see what damage the shot might have caused. But the incident gave me pause and a conclusion that I would not chance crossing the road and open space that separated us from their camp, in company with those armed blue-coats. So

I whirled around the wagon and into the road and ran west up the valley. Little Bat could be seen raising the dust far ahead, but I surmised his objective and had no idea of following him. I knew that somewhere in the hills, not far north of Captain Taylor and his scouts, was the company of Gray Horse cavalry which I might hope to contact.

Reaching a position of relative safety among some troopers, Allen watched from afar before returning to the main camp, where soldiers were guarding a munitions tent. After watching from this vantage point for a time, Allen attempted to walk about the camp but quickly retreated because firing was still going on. He continued:

Turning back, I filled my pipe and was about to find a seat on one of the boxes, when I saw Big Foot rise to a sitting posture from the ground where he had been lying with his face to the glaring sun, feigning death as long as he could endure such suffering. This was unfortunate, for just at that moment there was another spasm of promiscuous flying bullets and he dropped back to the earth lifeless. And his daughter, who had come running from their tent to help him rise, shared a like fate, falling at his side.

Stunned by the death of these two unfortunate noncombatants, and feeling faint and ill, I drew out my old pipe—a never-failing friend in such emergencies—and concluded that those boys of the Seventh cavalry were too excited to think of anything but vengeance.

The noise and hubbub of the field did not disturb me, even though I still heard an occasional shot, and I was beginning to feel fine and very fortunate when presently there was a rush of feet and loud voices. Hurrying out, I saw a sergeant and eight or ten men running toward an old Sibley-model tent on the corner near which I stood. Presently I heard one say:

"I saw him run into Little Bat's tent, but I didn't see him come out."

They surrounded the tent, calling on him to surrender, but there was no response. Then the sergeant stepped up to the tent and with his pocketknife cut a long slit in the old canvas. As he spread it apart to look inside, "bang-bang" came an explosion from within. The sergeant drew back cursing as two comrades grabbed him, but he shook them off, saying he was not hurt, and the order was given to fire.

The volleys that then swept the tent were equal to a Gatling gun in effectiveness. Someone suggested that they burn it. Soon a spiral of flame shot skyward, and in a moment the ground beneath was covered with an inch or so of light ash. On a couch improvised from loose hay and two or three army blankets, the Indian lay dead. As the patrol were viewing the body, one stooped and picked up an old bone-handled Derringer.



Along with more than 150 members of his band, Big Foot died of wounds received during the fight on Wounded Knee Creek.

It was a bullet from this that had struck the sergeant, yet fired upward at so acute an angle that it had only plowed through the upper breast and shoulder.

These shots at Little Bat's tent were the last ones heard on that momentous day of death and destruction. The patrol had moved on, and I had been sitting on my box but a short time, when the welcome words "Cease firing!" were being echoed throughout the camp. Stepping again into the open, I saw General Forsyth, his aides and interpreter, moving among the scattered bodies as I had started to do. Philip Wells, the interpreter, had a bandage about his face. The party paused beside a body and he bent over it with a slight movement of his hands that showed he was speaking. Then an officer, whom I took to be a doctor, laid a hand on the prostrate Indian for a moment. It was evident that they were discussing a badly wounded man. Later Philip Wells told me that the man was mortally wounded, but had moved and made a strange request as they approached



Seated with Lt. Charles W. Taylor, left, and his Indian scouts is interpreter Philip Wells, who nearly lost his nose in the fighting on 29 December.

him. He had asked for a knife. When Wells inquired what he wanted with a knife, he replied:

"I want to crawl over to that Medicine Man before I die and stab him through the heart. He caused all this!"

While the officers moved among the bodies, feeling that it might not be in order for a civilian to join them, I walked around east of the grounds viewing the sad spectacle. On reaching the corner of the green where the school boys had been so happy in their sports but a short time before, there was spread before me the saddest picture I had seen or was to see thereafter, for on that spot of their playful choice were scattered the prostrate bodies of all those fine little Indian boys, cold in death.

That they had not been slain purposely was evidenced by their position, which was such that avoidance of the first death-dealing volleys was impossible. The gun-fire blazed across their playground in a way that permitted no escape. They must have fallen like grass before the sickle.

The shooting now over, officers and others were surveying the scene. Allen met Will Cressey of the *Omaha Daily Bee*, and the two reporters began gathering and tabulating information as troopers began moving the dead and wounded:

Presently the stretchers with their gruesome burdens began to pass. After instructing the bearers, the sergeant very courteously gave to the representative of the press the name and company of each occupant. Some two yards east of where we stood, there were constantly passing groups of two to five or more wounded Indian women and children, moaning, crying, or weeping silently. Adults who were least wounded supported others who were helpless, while two or more soldiers or teamsters assisted the most seriously wounded as they hobbled along in excruciating pain—often with heart-rending cries. Frequently a young girl could be seen hopping on one foot, supported on one side by a woman less disabled and on the other by a trooper. In cases where the shot had passed between the knee and ankle, a protruding bone was disclosed at every step.

No Indians but these who were living and wounded were moved at this time. They proved to be women and children exclusively—no boys. This fact indicates that those slain at the first volley were the only ones home from school on leave of absence at the time the bands stole away from their reservation. The smaller children were carried in arms—some of them wounded, but most of them not. Those whose wounds were all but mortal were brought in on stretchers to the improvised hospital, where doctors coming back from the beds of wounded soldiers made hurried visits, furnishing supplies and instructions for first-aid treatment by those who were able to give it and thus relieving much pain.

It soon became evident that this attention, the best that could be given under the circumstances, was lessening the shrieks and groans of the afflicted Indians and making more endurable a pain that must have been hard indeed to endure. These were the remnants of a band of once proud people who for centuries had been monarchs of the plains, but now broken and subdued. They were weeping for other than physical wounds—wounds that no physician's art could heal.²⁵

25. "Maj. C. W. Allen, Last of Reporters Who Covered Indian Wars, Dies," *Publishers' Auxiliary*, 28 Nov. and 5 Dec. 1942. Allen's story also ran in the *Black Hills Chief* (Rapid City, S.Dak.) in three installments on 9, 16, and 23 Dec. 1942.

The Killing of Women and Children

The killing of women and children by United States troopers at Wounded Knee made the incident a national issue. Several contemporaries suggested reasons for the indiscriminate killing. One of these was Lt. Wilds P. Richardson, writing in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution* in 1896:

I can understand the sudden rage of the soldiers at the action of the Indians on this occasion, and I am not inclined to withhold some justification to the 7th Cavalry, who still carried the memory of Custer and the Little Big Horn, especially as they had orders to destroy the Indians in case they resisted, yet the destruction of Indian life was carried to a most distressing length.²⁶

In the Army and Navy Register of 17 January 1891, Capt. James M. Burns offered another reason:

It is to be deplored that women and children were killed and wounded, but if the Indians had been successful these same women would have been the first to scalp our dead and dying soldiers.²⁷

During the fighting, Major Whitside sent Capt. Edward S. Godfrey with fifteen or twenty of his company to follow the Sioux who fled from the ravine. Later, Godfrey defended the actions of his men in a statement intended for the record:

I was unable to see anything of the Indians in the open so I started to scout down the valley which was pretty well covered with underbrush. We were then about five miles from the battleground. I followed a wagon road, having my troop deployed as advance guard. After traveling between two and three miles, the men called out, "There are some Indians in front Captain." The valley here was closed by low steep bluffs on either side, the creek bed was dry. I dismounted half my men and deployed them as skirmishers, the flankers remaining on higher ground. I cautioned the men that they must not fire on women or children. I then called "How! Cola! Squaw, Papoose Cola! How Cola!" and after a short interval I repeated this or something to the same effect but at no time did I get a response. 1st Sgt. Herman Gunther said he could see them moving a little but he could not tell where they were.

^{26.} Richardson, "Some Observations upon the Sioux Campaign," p. 526.

^{27.} Burns to Army and Navy Register, 17 Jan. 1891, p. 35.

The valley was covered with bushes on which were dead leaves. The bushes were not very thick but enough with the dead leaves to make sight uncertain. "But" he said "if we don't open they could get the drop on us." I told the men I wanted if possible to make sure there were not women and children. I told them to get ready and called out "How Cola, Squaw, Papoose, Cola," and getting no response and seeing the men were getting nervous gave the order commence firing. At the first volley there were screams as from women and children, and no firing coming from the Indians, I at once ordered Cease Firing. I don't think more than half a dozen shots in all were fired by my men. I said "Oh my, Oh, my." Sergt. Gunther dropped his gun and to an order, hung his head and said, "It's too bad Captain, but we couldn't tell where they were," or to that effect.

Expecting that other Indians were in the valley beyond, and again cautioning them about shooting Squaws and papooses, I gave the command to move forward at double time down the valley, my flankers being on the higher ground outside the valley. As I passed near where the women and children were I ran over to see if they were hurt for the screams had ceased as soon as the firing ceased. I then to my horror found a squaw and two small girls and it took but a glance to tell me that they were in their death struggles, near them was a boy lying flat and motionless on his belly, with his coat pulled over his head, his arms stretched out as if he had fallen and I supposed he too was dead and I was just leaving when a man named Carev who had followed me, yelled out, "The man ain't dead Captain," and turned around and he fired, shooting the boy in the head; he was so close that he was powder burned and the coat over his head if I remember rightly was burned. It was all over in an instant. I told him to get out of there and join the line at once as we would probably find a lot more Indians down the valley.

Carey was a young recruit who had just joined the regiment the same day I did, Dec. 7th. The tenseness of his voice when he called to me "This man ain't dead, Captain," and the pallor of his face was sufficient evidence to me that the man was thoroughly frightened and not a malicious or wanton act, the thought passed through my mind at the time was that he had heard of the desperation and cunning of the wounded Indian and that he did not propose to take any chances, and instantly on the spur of the moment, probably with that idea uppermost.

From where the skirmish line was, when I gave the command Commence Firing, to where the squaw and children were I should judge not less than 35 yards and was probably near 50 yards. I was some yards in the rear of the line and I at no time saw the Indians myself, only the skulking movement through the bushes and could not distinguish anything, only I knew they must be Indians.

These were at the point where the creek cracked and gutted against a shouldering embankment, perhaps 8 or 10 feet high. I was satisfied that not a man knew they were non combatants; that the boy was powder burned at the time is true, but that the squaw and girls were then powder burned is not true. It was impossible at that distance for it to be done. . . .

The cavalry left Pine Ridge about January 21. After we had been on the march for several miles, an orderly was sent to me saying General Miles wanted to see me. I reported at Pine Ridge and he (Miles) said the bodies of a squaw and children had been found and it was believed that they had been killed by my men. I related the circumstances and told him I had testified the whole matter to the Court of Inquiry. He went on to say how he thought they had been killed, etc., that my men had crawled



Before leaving Pine Ridge in January 1891, Maj. Gen. Nelson A. Miles, center, and William F. ("Buffalo Bill") Cody, left, viewed the camp of the hostile Sioux.

up over an embankment and behind them and shooting down had killed them as they were hiding under this bank; that my men were so close that the bodies were all powder burned. I said that I could not see them at all and that my men were between 35 and 50 yards away and could not distinguish what they were on account of the bushes with dead leaves, but could only get a glimpse of their positions. He said there were not enough bushes there to interfere and that my men were close enough to powder burn them. I replied that I was there and knew what I was talking about and if the woman and girls were powder burned it was done by somebody else and not my men—that I regretted it as much as anybody

could but it was a misfortune and not wanton. That when I hear the wail of those children I thought of those at my home.

The investigation then stopped. He asked after my personal affairs and the interview closed. I had not a thought when I quitted his presence that I had fully established the innocence of myself and my men from anything wanton or brutal. General Miles in his report of the campaign of the review of the action of my regiment charged to the effect that my men had been guilty of wanton cruelty in the killing of the woman and children but that I was not responsible. 28

The Days After

August Hettinger, an enlisted man in Company H, Eighth Infantry, detailed with a light artillery battery, reached the battlefield about three o'clock on 30 December. In a reminiscence, he described the scene as follows:

Between 2 and 3 o'clock in the afternoon we saw several of the Indian scouts galloping back to the command, and a few minutes later we were halted and the command given to corral the train. In the meantime Major Whitney advanced over the hill with the cavalry, but before we got the train in shape for defense an orderly came back and ordered us to advance again. About a half mile further on we crossed the brow of a small hill and beheld a small valley, about one-half mile wide, spread out in front of us, a small creek fringed with brush and cottonwoods, meandered down thru the center and finally disappeared to the northwest in some pine covered rough hills. This was our first sight of Wounded Knee creek. Between us and the creek there was a small egg-shaped hill, approximately fifty feet higher than the surrounding bottom land. This hill was occupied by the cavalry, whom we soon joined. We were told that a battle had taken place the day before, on December 29th, just across a creek from us, but with whom we had no way of knowing. We could see on the other side of the creek the ground strewn with the bodies of horses and even wagons and the remnants of a burned camp and what looked like the bodies of human beings could be seen over [an] area of 200 or 300 acres. The first thing the troops did was to start a trench large enough to hold all of the 120 men in the command. The job actually took several days, for the

^{28.} Edward S. Godfrey, Statement, 31 Dec. 1903, Fort Walla Walla, Wash., Godfrey 6626 Appointments, Commissions, and Personnel File 1876, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

ground was frozen as hard as flint. Before we got something to eat Major Whitney took the scouts, the doctor and the stretcher bearers and my ammunition wagon with hospital supplies and went over to the battlefield to take care of the wounded if there were any. I just got as far as the first dead pony and Indian, when the mules gave the place just one whiff and look and stampeded, as luck would have it, toward the creek, where they finally tangled themselves up in the woods and here I tied them, took my oun and went back to the battlefield. The dead Indians were laving around single and in bunches over about 200 acres, and the first sight of the mutilated bodies and the expressions of the faces had the effect of turning one sick. But, of course, you get used to it. Our first effort was to look for wounded in order to find out what regiment had been in the fight: we found after a careful search five live wounded Indians. We packed them to an old cabin and made them as comfortable as possible. They didn't. however, answer a single question of the scouts. The only word they ever uttered was "water." We never found out until the next evening that the fight had been between the 7th Cavalry and Big Foot's tribe. These wounded had been lying on the battlefield a little over 24 hours and we knew they could not live.

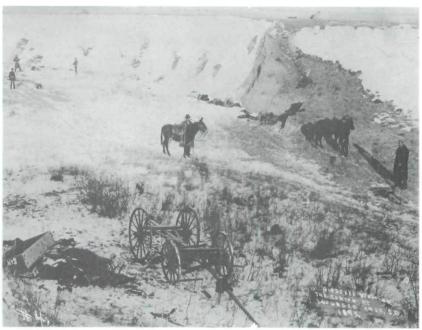
One squaw was shot five times through the body. But to the last they were defiant and our reward for making them comfortable were looks of the blackest hate. You could not help but admire such courage in the face of the dead. As I stated we made them as comfortable as possible for the night, but we found them all dead next morning. The battlefield was divided by a deep washout 30 to 40 feet wide and all of 15 feet deep; several cow trails crossed this dry gulch and near the lower end, toward the creek, a wagon road crossed also. In searching for the wounded I ran down this road and on coming out on the other bank I was confronted by a pile of dead Indians. On top of all, and in a sitting position, with his arm extended full length and the forefinger pointing straight up in the sky, was an Indian, painted green as grass from head to toe, and looking with wide open, clear eye straight at me. It startled me and the next second I had a bead on his forehead, but second thought made me hesitate about pulling the trigger, for while a soldier will kill in the line of duty, unnecessary shooting is murder nevertheless, and so, after looking at him for a minute over the sights of the gun, I noticed that he never batted his eyes and so I came to the conclusion that he was dead and so he was.29

^{29.} Comrade August Hettinger, "Personal Recollections of the Messiah Craze Campaign, 1890-91," Winners of the West, 30 Jan. 1935, p. 1. Born on 6 January 1867, in Baden, Germany, Hettinger retired from the United States Army after eight years and finished his career with the Forest Service. Hettinger, WPA Subject File 1162, Wyoming State Archives and Historical Department, Cheyenne, Wyo.

Charles Eastman, a full-blooded Sioux and recent graduate of the Boston University medical school, was the doctor at Pine Ridge when the fighting occurred. Based on talks with Sioux survivors, he tells the story of the killings and his treatment of the wounded in a 3 January 1891 letter to a friend that was first printed in the Boston newspapers:

Dear Mr. Wood—I will send you a short letter. Thursday morning I visited the field of battle, where all those Indians were killed on the Wounded Knee, last Monday. I went there to get the wounded, some who were left out. The soldiers brought with them about twenty-five, and I found eleven who were still living. Among them were two babies about 3 months old and an old woman, who is totally blind, who was left for dead. Four of them were found out in a field in the storm, which was very severe. They were half buried in the snow. It was a terrible and horrible sight to see women and children lying in groups, dead. I suppose they were of one







Charles A.
Eastman, a Sioux
doctor at Pine Ridge,
treated many of
the survivors of
Wounded Knee.

family. Some of the young girls wrapped their heads with shawls and buried their faces in their hands. I suppose they did that so they would not see the soldiers come up to shoot them. At one place there were two little children, one about 1 year old, the other about 3, lying on their faces, dead, and about thirty yards from them a woman lay on her face, dead. These were away from the camp about an eighth of a mile.

In front of the tents, which were in a semi-circle, lay dead most of the men. This was right by one of the soldiers' tents. Those who were still living told me that that was where the Indians were ordered to hold a council with the soldiers. The accounts of the battle by the Indians were simple and confirmed one another, that the soldiers ordered them to go into camp, for they were moving them, and told them that they would give them provisions. Having done this they (the Indians) were asked to give up their arms, which was complied with by most of them, in fact all the old men, but many of the younger men did not comply, because they either had no arms or concealed them in their blankets. Then a order was given to search their persons and their tents as well, and when a

search was made of a wretch of an Indian, who was known as Good-for-Nothing, he fired the first shot, and killed one of the soldiers. They fired upon the Indians instantaneously. Shells were thrown among the women and children, so that they mutilated them most horribly. I tried to go to the field the next day with some Indians, but I was not allowed to. I think it was a wise thing not to go so early. Even Thursday I thought I would be shot. Some of the Indians (friendly) found their relations lying dead. They waited and began to pull out their guns. My friend, Louis de Coteau, was with me, but left me when they acted in this manner. Before he left me the hostiles appeared. We did not take in all the wounded. Those we could not carry away we left in a log house and gave them food. I am busy in taking care of the wounded. I shall write in a day or so again. My love to all. Affectionately yours.

CHAS. A. EASTMAN.30

The End of the Campaign

Following the events at Wounded Knee, several encounters took place between the troops and the Sioux from both the Stronghold and the agency before the army gained control of the situation. In his report to his superiors, dated 18 January 1891, General Miles briefly described the whole affair:

During the engagements some 150 of the young warriors who were moving in to surrender went to the assistance of Big Foot's band and were engaged with the troops, and returning made a vigorous attack upon the agency, drawing the fire of the Indian police and scouts. This caused a general alarm, and upwards of 3,000 Indians fled from the agency to the canyons and broken ground adjacent to White Clay Creek, and assumed a hostile attitude. The troops that were following, however, checked their further movements.

The attempts of some of the warriors to burn buildings near the agency the following day resulted in a skirmish with the 7th Cavalry under Col. Forsyth, promptly supported by Major Henry, 9th Cavalry. On Jan. 1, 1891, a spirited engagement occurred on White River between a body of warriors numbering upwards of 100 and Capt. Kerr's troops of the 6th Cavalry, in which the Indians were repulsed with loss, Major Tupper's battalion of Col. Carr's command of the 6th Cavalry moving to his support.

30. Eastman to Wood, printed as "A Veritable Slaughter," Cheyenne Daily Leader, 11 Jan. 1891, p. 1.

This was followed by several skirmishes. The Indian scouts under Lieut. Casey, while making a reconnaissance, sustained a serious loss in the death of that gallant officer. The troops under command of Brig.-Gen. Brooke gradually closed the Indian lines of retreat and forced the hostiles, by superior numbers, back to the agency, where they are now under the guns of the command and the control of the military.³¹

Summary

Lt. Wilds P. Richardson, who pinpointed the starving conditions of the Sioux as a cause of the events of 1890, also summed up the result of the tragedy at Wounded Knee:

It should be noted here that before the surrender the full amount of the ration claimed by the Indians was furnished, and a promise given for its continuance, and on January 20th, Congress appropriated the necessary money for carrying out the different agreements made by the Sioux commission of 1889. . . .

The operations lasted about two months and cost the Government something near a million dollars, besides the lives of several valuable officers and brave soldiers. The Indians have a reported loss of 331. The campaign ended in the Indians' receiving what should have been theirs at the beginning.³²

^{31. &}quot;General Miles's Congratulatory Order," *Army and Navy Journal*, 24 Jan. 1891, p. 366.
32. Richardson, "Some Observations upon the Sioux Campaign," pp. 527-28.

Chronology

- 10 April 1883—Secretary of Interior Henry M. Teller prohibits the Sun Dance and other "barbarous" customs and establishes courts of Indian offenses to try violators.
- 8 February 1887—The Dawes General Allotment Act becomes law. Designed to supplant communal landholding, the act divided reservation lands among individual Indians and made the leftover, or "surplus," lands available to white homesteaders.
- 2 March 1889—Congress passes the Sioux Act, which reduces the Great Sioux Reservation of western South Dakota to six smaller reservations and sets a price of \$1.25 an acre for surplus lands sold within the next three years. The act is subject to approval by three-fourths of Sioux men.
- July—A commission headed by Maj. Gen. George Crook leaves South Dakota, having obtained the approval of 4,463 of the 5,678 Sioux men eligible to sign the agreement.
- 10 February 1890—President Benjamin Harrison opens surplus lands for settlement under the Sioux Act without making Indian allotments or taking surveys to determine specific boundaries for the new reservations.

- March—Kicking Bear, his brotherin-law Short Bull, and nine others who traveled to Nevada to meet Wovoka return to the Cheyenne River, Rosebud, and Pine Ridge reservations with firsthand accounts of the Ghost Dance religion.
- 19 August—Congress passes the Indian Appropriation Act too late for annuities to reach the agencies before winter. The amount provided for fiscal year 1891, which is fifty thousand dollars short of the amount required for the full ration allowance, confirms Sioux fears that promises made during the signing of the Sioux Act of 1889 would not be kept.
- 9 October—Kicking Bear visits Sitting Bull on the Standing Rock reservation, where the Ghost Dance, already practiced on the Rosebud, Pine Ridge, and Cheyenne River reservations, soon begins.
- 17 October—Standing Rock Indian Agent James McLaughlin reiterates a request made in June that Sitting Bull and other "leaders of disaffection" be removed from the reservation and confined in a military prison. The commissioner of Indian affairs declines to act,

- 30 October—Newly appointed Indian Agent Daniel F. Royer, unable to control Ghost Dance participants on the Pine Ridge reservation, issues an urgent call for military help.
- 31 October—Short Bull advances the time for the millennium from two seasons to one month and calls Brulé and Oglala dancers to assemble at Pass Creek for a month-long dance. Responding to agents' reports and public outcry, President Harrison orders Secretary of War Redfield Proctor to direct an investigation of conditions in Sioux country.
- 13 November—At the request of Secretary of the Interior John W. Noble, the president directs the secretary of war to take all steps necessary to suppress any threatened outbreak.
- 16 November—Agent McLaughlin observes the Ghost Dance at Sitting Bull's settlement on the Grand River. The next day, McLaughlin meets with Sitting Bull in a last attempt to persuade the leader to quash the Ghost Dance movement on the Standing Rock reservation.
- 17 November—Maj. Gen. Nelson A. Miles, commander of the Division of the Missouri, orders troops to Pine Ridge and Rosebud.

- 20 November—Commanding three troops of Ninth Cavalry, four companies of Second Infantry, and one company of Eighth Infantry, Brig. Gen. John R. Brooke marches into Pine Ridge Agency. Lt. Col. A. T. Smith reaches Rosebud Agency with three companies of Eighth Infantry and two troops of Ninth Cavalry. Fearing trouble, many Sioux obey Brooke's order to move to Pine Ridge Agency. The most active Ghost Dancers, however, flee to camps on Wounded Knee Creek and on the White River at the mouth of White Clay Creek.
- 26 November—The entire Seventh Cavalry, commanded by Col. James W. Forsyth, reaches Pine Ridge from Fort Riley, Kansas, to supplement reinforcements that arrived throughout the week.
- 30 November—Ghost dancers under Two Strike leave Wounded Knee Creek, and those under Kicking Bear and Short Bull abandon their White Clay Creek camp. Plundering agency herds and the property of other Sioux along the way, they move to the Stronghold, a natural fortress on Cuny Table in the Badlands.

Early December—After thwarting an ill-conceived plan to have William F. ("Buffalo Bill") Cody bring Sitting Bull into custody, McLaughlin, with the assent of



The Seventh Cavalry, whose officers are pictured above, arrived at Pine Ridge in late November. Wearing the fur coat and seated at center is their commander, Col. James W. Forsyth, with Maj. Samuel M. Whitside to his immediate left. Capt. Edward S. Godfrey appears seated second from right. Below, Indian leaders and government officials gathered for a portrait shortly after the Sioux surrendered on 15 January 1891. Among those who figured prominently in the Ghost Dance were Two Strike (standing fifth from left), Crow Dog, High Hawk, and Short Bull (all standing at right), and Kicking Bear (holding the banner at right).



Lt. Col. William F. Drum at Fort Yates, makes arrangements for Sitting Bull's arrest by Indian police on ration day.

9 December—Hump, a leader of the Ghost Dance on the Cheyenne River reservation, surrenders with his followers at the agency.

10 December—Following negotiations with scout Louis Shangreau and a group of friendly Sioux, Two Strike, Crow Dog, and their followers agree to leave the Stronghold.

14 December—Believing that Sitting Bull is about to leave for the Stronghold, McLaughlin orders his immediate arrest, stating that he must not escape under any circumstances.

15 December—In the attempt to arrest Sitting Bull, Indian police kill him, his seventeen-year-old son, and six followers. Police casualties are four dead and two mortally wounded. Some of Sitting Bull's followers flee south to join Big Foot on the Cheyenne River reservation.

23 December—Big Foot and his band slip away from Col. E. V. Sumner, who had been assigned to watch the camp below the forks of the Cheyenne River, and head south to try to mediate peace among the Pine Ridge chiefs.

24 December—Sumner receives orders from General Miles to stop Big Foot and his band, disarm them, and take them to Fort Meade or Fort Bennett.

27 December—Following a council with five hundred friendly Sioux, Short Bull, Kicking Bear, and their followers leave the Stronghold to return to Pine Ridge Agency.

28 December—Maj. Samuel M. Whitside, with Troops A, B, I, and K of the Seventh Cavalry and a platoon of Battery E, Fourth Artillery, commanded by Lt. Harry L. Hawthorne, intercepts Big Foot and his band of 120 men and 230 women and children near Porcupine Creek. Near sunset, the group reaches Wounded Knee Creek, where two troops of cavalry and four Hotchkiss guns are stationed around the camp. Arriving to help disarm the band as ordered by General Brooke are the rest of the Seventh Cavalry (Troops C, D, E, and G) under Colonel Forsyth, along with a troop of Oglala scouts under Lts. Charles Taylor and Guy H. Preston and a platoon of Light Battery E, Fourth Artillery under Capt. Allyn Capron. Total troops present number 27 officers, 433 enlisted men, and about 30 Oglala scouts. Civilians present include newspaper reporters Charles W. Allen of the Chadron (Nebraska) Democrat, William F. Kelley of the Ne-



Lt. Charles W. Taylor and his Oglala scouts were part of the force that assembled at Wounded Knee Creek on the evening of 28 December 1890.

braska State Journal (Lincoln), and Will Cressey of the Omaha Daily Bee.

29 December—While soldiers search the members of Big Foot's band for weapons shortly after sunrise, a shot is fired, sparking several hours of fighting that leave 153 Sioux men, women, and children known dead. Army casualties include Capt. George D. Wallace and 24 enlisted men. Later that morning, Brulés and Oglalas arrive from Pine Ridge Agency to attack Troops C and part of D, rescuing a few members of Big Foot's group. That evening, the Brulés and Oglalas under Two Strike, carrying news of Wounded Knee, intercept the

followers of Short Bull and Kicking Bear, who are on their way to surrender at the Pine Ridge Agency. The entire group—about four thousand people—camps that night about fifteen miles north of the agency, vowing not to go back.

30 December—Near Drexel Mission, four miles north of Pine Ridge Agency, Colonel Forsyth and the Seventh Cavalry, reinforced by Maj. Guy V. Henry's Ninth Cavalry, skirmish with agency Sioux.

31 December—General Miles moves his headquarters from Rapid City to Pine Ridge Agency, from which he plans to pursue

the fugitive Brulés and Oglalas. Nearly half of the infantry and cavalry forces of the United States Army are present.

- 1 January 1891—Having surrounded the Sioux with a military cordon, General Miles begins diplomatic efforts to persuade them to surrender. After being delayed by a snowstorm, Dr. Charles Eastman searches the Wounded Knee site and finds five adults and two children living. Fifty Sioux attack the Sixth Cavalry regimental train, losing nine killed or wounded.
- 2 January—The 146 Sioux victims of Wounded Knee (84 men and boys, 44 women, and 18 children) are buried in a mass grave at the site.
- 4 January—General Miles orders a military court of inquiry to investigate Colonel Forsyth's

leadership and the killing of Indian noncombatants. Forsyth is eventually cleared of wrongdoing.

- **8** January—Seventy Oglalas who had defected from the Sioux camp reach Pine Ridge Agency; seventy-five more escape from the camp during the day.
- 10 January—The camp slowly begins moving closer to the agency, and General Miles tightens his military cordon.
- **15** January—The last of the Sioux surrender at Pine Ridge Agency.
- 21 January—General Miles holds a grand review of his thirty-five hundred soldiers, who have now been assigned to new stations.

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