

Dakota Images

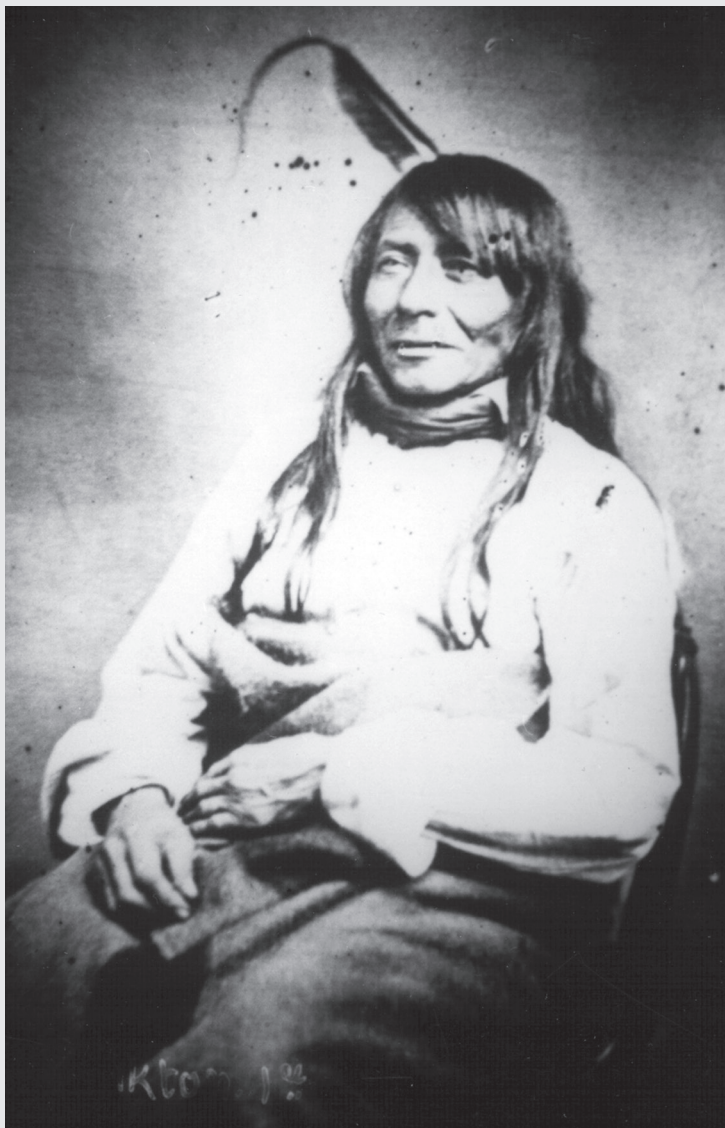
A story repeated over the decades tells of the birth of a baby boy in a Yankton Sioux village and his presentation to a visiting stranger from far away. The stranger, Captain Meriwether Lewis, wrapped the child in the American flag and predicted that he would become a great friend to the captain's countrymen. The young boy grew up to become Padaniapapi, or Struck-by-the-Ree, a Yankton chief well known for his efforts to keep peace with the whites.

According to his gravesite monument at Greenwood, South Dakota, Struck-by-the-Ree was born on 29 August 1804 and died on 28 July 1888. If the marker is accurate, Lewis and Clark were indeed visiting the Yankton Sioux at the time. Although it is not known precisely when Padaniapapi acquired his name, some sources say an Arikara warrior partially scalped him, which could explain both his name and his habit of wearing a fur hat. Struck-by-the-Ree was also known as Strike-the-Ree or, in his later years, Old Strike.

Struck-by-the-Ree was a prominent Yankton leader when he attended a council called by Brigadier General William S. Harney at Fort Pierre in 1856. Harney designated the Yankton as chief of all the Sioux, a common practice among white officials who desired to streamline the treaty-making process. In 1858, Struck-by-the-Ree signed the treaty by which the Yanktons ceded much of what is now southeastern South Dakota and agreed to live on a reservation in present-day Charles Mix County. His efforts to persuade other Yankton leaders (notably Smutty Bear) to accept the treaty and to protect settlers during the United States-Dakota War of 1862 further cemented his reputation as a friend of the whites.

It is too simplistic to regard Padaniapapi solely as a wise old advocate of peace and friendship. By one report, he accepted the 1858 treaty not because he thought it was just, but because he believed that armed resistance to the demands of the whites was futile. In 1865, a government official visiting the Yankton reservation recorded that Struck-by-the-Ree regretted signing the treaty and complained bitterly about the corruption of Indian Office personnel, a common and often justified charge.

—Stephen S. Witte



Struck-by-the-Ree