"We consider ourselves human beings"

The Education of Clarence Three Stars

Philip Burnham

The life of Lakota advocate Clarence Three Stars spanned a time of dramatic change, from the pre-reservation era through the Dawes Act of 1887 to just before the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Three Stars was a teacher, interpreter, catechist, lawyer, and politician who experienced the federal policy of American Indian assimilation in its many guises, including boarding school education, religious conversion, land allotment, and political reorganization. He used the fundamentals of his own boarding school education to advance the welfare of the Oglala Lakota people, even when his efforts were deemed subversive. His hard work informed a distinguished career of classroom excellence and political advocacy on his home reservation of Pine Ridge.

The boy who would become known as Clarence Three Stars was born in 1864 east of the Black Hills near Bear Butte, a sacred place in many Lakota stories. His father was Yellow Knife, a member of the Miniconjou subtribe, and his mother was Big Woman, a Brulé from Rosebud, said by some to be the daughter of Chief Smoke. His birth name, Packs the Dog, recalled the days when canines drew heavily loaded travois before the horse transformed Lakota life.[1]

Packs the Dog's uncle, Three Stars (Wicapi Yamni in Lakota), adopted the five-year-old after Yellow Knife's death. Three Stars was a band leader with a dozen or so family lodges that traveled in his wake. By the time Packs the Dog joined his family, he held a position prominent enough to

1. U.S., Congress, Senate, *Statements of a Delegation of Oglalla Sioux before the Chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs, United States Senate, April 29 and 30, 1897, Relative to Affairs at the Pine Ridge Agency, S.Dak.*, 55th Cong., 1st Sess., 1897, S. Doc. 61, Serial 3561, p. 15; Clarence Three Stars, South Dakota Certificate of Death, 139578, 19 Nov. 1931, Office of Vital Records, South Dakota Department of Health, Pierre; Clarence Three Stars (Packs the Dog) Student File, 1879, Carlisle Indian School, Penn., Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/sites/all/files/docs-ephemera/NARA_1327_b038_f1876_0.pdf.

have two wives, Bawling (also known as Voice) and Two Horses.[2] Three Stars's band followed Little Wound, one of the great Oglala chiefs of the period and a member of the Kiyuksa, or "Cut Off," Lakota group. Born in the mid-1840s, the elder Three Stars no doubt remembered how the Lakotas lived before the big wagon trains started rumbling west over the Oregon Trail, scattering the great herds of buffalo.[3]

The source of the name Three Stars is a mystery. Lakota names typically marked personal characteristics, achievements, or a memorable incident. While a celestial event may have inspired the name, it is unlikely that Three Stars was born close to the Leonid meteor shower of 1833, known in Lakota winter counts as the Year of Falling Stars. According to family tradition, he may have translated for one of the United States Army officers, such as George Crook or Nelson Miles, whom the Lakota people called "Three Stars" based on the row of stars stitched on their uniforms. While some Lakotas eventually came to respect Crook and Miles as formidable warriors, the tribe had little contact with any officers of their rank until Red Cloud's War of 1866–1868 or the Great Sioux War of 1876–1877, by which time Three Stars was already an established leader. Inexact Lakota-to-English translations and a general lack of reliable records make confirming the source of the name difficult.[4]

Packs the Dog was born during a lull in the multi-decade struggle between the Lakotas and the United States government. His family, however, had already played a crucial role in a series of events that would lead to the Powder River and Little Bighorn campaigns and, eventually,

2. Prosperous Lakota men often married siblings to keep domestic peace and support their extended family, a practice known as sororal polygyny. Marla N. Powers, *Oglala Women: Myth, Ritual, and Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 82.

3. Richard E. Jensen, ed., *Voices of the American West: The Settler and Soldier Interviews of Eli S. Ricker, 1903–1919*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 2:219; *Statements of a Delegation of Oglalla Sioux*, p. 28; Clarence Three Stars, census entry, Pine Ridge Agency, 1886, *Indian Census Rolls, 1885–1940*, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group (RG) 75, National Archives Microfilm Publication M595, roll 362, ancestry.com; Thomas R. Buecker and R. Eli Paul, eds., *The Crazy Horse Surrender Ledger* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1994), p. 80.

4. Joseph S. Karol, ed., *Red Horse Owner's Winter Count: The Oglala Sioux, 1786–1968* (Martin, S.Dak.: Angelique Fire Thunder and Lydia Fire Thunder Bluebird, 1969), p. 60; interview with Elton Three Stars, Sr., (great-grandson of Clarence Three Stars), Martin, S.Dak., 13 July 2017.

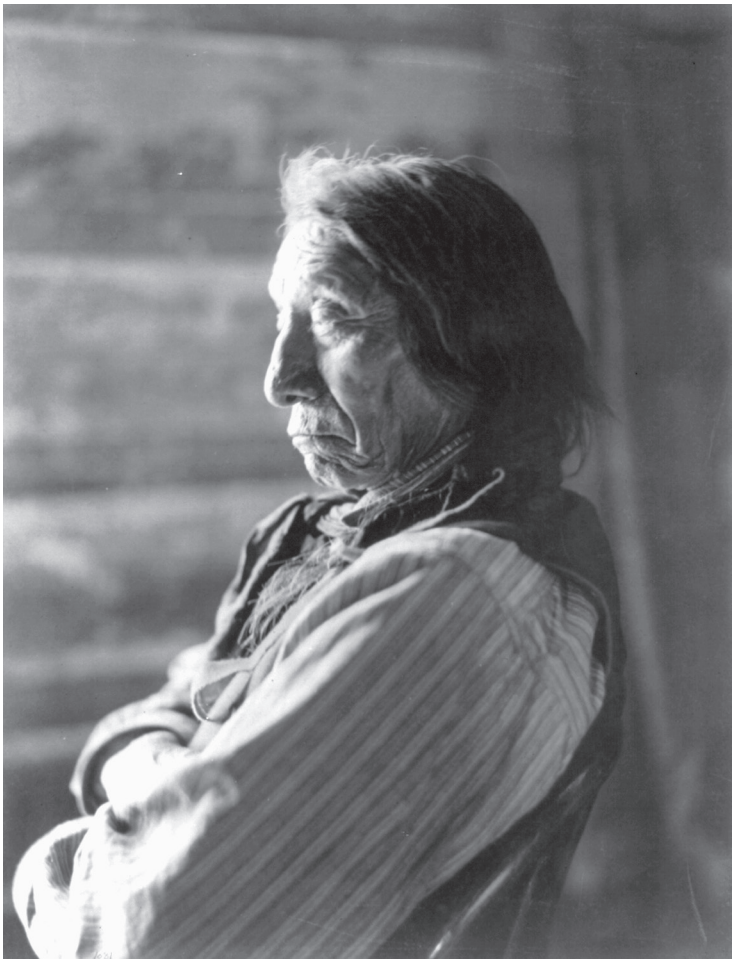
the Wounded Knee Massacre. Packs the Dog's grandfather, High Forehead, sparked the first major conflict between the tribe and the frontier army when he killed a Mormon cow on a summer day in 1854 near Fort Laramie in Wyoming Territory. Second Lieutenant John L. Grattan and twenty-nine soldiers arrived to arrest High Forehead on 19 August, but after the Lakota chief Conquering Bear refused to surrender him, the shooting started. The Lakotas killed the entire detachment in what became known as the "Grattan Massacre." An army detachment under Colonel William S. Harney took revenge on the Lakotas the next year at the Battle of Ash Hollow, deepening the enmity between the two sides. Packs the Dog's father, Yellow Knife, and later, the renowned warrior Red Cloud, often regaled him with the story of the Grattan fight.[5]

By late 1876, following the Battle of the Little Bighorn, Three Stars and his family were camped at the Red Cloud Agency in Nebraska. Whether they had left the agency to fight in the summer campaign against George Crook and Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer is unclear. There, and later at Pine Ridge, they were formally enrolled as members of the Oglala subtribe. Three Stars headed a family of eleven: three men, two women, and six children, one of them presumably Packs the Dog. They remained at the agency the following February and drew ration tickets for beeves slaughtered on the hoof. Packs the Dog belonged to a generation that experienced the tribe's transition from hunting and gathering to being hamstrung by the rules and conventions of agency life. By the age of twelve, he was eating government beef rather than learning to hunt buffalo or fight in battle.[6]

After spending his early years learning Lakota ways, Packs the Dog became part of a famous educational experiment in 1879. That year, Captain Richard Henry Pratt converted an abandoned cavalry barracks in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, into a government boarding school designed to instruct American Indian children in the ways of European American culture. Pratt, whose dictum "Kill the Indian in him but save the

5. Major O. F. Winship, "Report of Major Winship," in U.S., Congress, House, *Engagement between United States Troops and Sioux Indians. Letter from the Secretary of War, Transmitting Information Relating to an Engagement between the United States Troops and the Sioux Indians near Fort Laramie*, 33d Cong., 2d Sess.,1855, H. Ex. Doc. 63, Serial 788, pp. 5–7; Jensen, *Voices of the American West*, 1:347.

6. Buecker and Paul, *Crazy Horse Surrender Ledger*, pp. 80, 124.



The boy who would become known as Clarence Three Stars learned of his people's past from his father, Yellow Knife, and Red Cloud, pictured here.

man" became an ominous motto for the system, would become a father figure to the adolescent Packs the Dog.[7]

Though Pratt ultimately aspired to subvert tribal loyalties, the first cohort of Carlisle students consisted entirely of Lakota children from the Rosebud and Pine Ridge agencies. The superintendent recognized

7. David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), p. 52.

that one of his key objectives, the act of wearing down their solidarity, would take more time with this homogenous group, but he believed the fact that they all spoke Lakota would make interpretation easier. Pratt intended to turn Carlisle into a kind of cultural reformatory where Indian boys and girls would learn how to speak, read, and write English, as well as acquire useful vocational skills, in a setting permeated with military show and discipline. The young people were being sent off as "hostages," the Indian Office informed Pratt, to ensure their parents would not disobey the Great Father.[8]

Lakota families, some no doubt reluctantly, volunteered the young students. While some government officials may have coerced families into sending their children, many Lakotas recognized that the world their sons and daughters would inherit would bear little resemblance to that of their ancestors. Headmen and chiefs like Spotted Tail and American Horse sent their children off to become leaders of the future. Packs the Dog was among this distinguished group, being the nephew of both Three Stars and the notable leader Black Bear. Before the Lakota students, from small children to older teens, departed for Pennsylvania in 1879, physicians examined their eyesight, listened to their breathing, checked their pulses, and verified their fitness to undertake an odyssey to the East. Virtually none of these young recruits spoke or wrote English.[9]

Packs the Dog and the other pupils from Pine Ridge were loaded onto wagons and driven two hundred miles to Rosebud Landing on the Missouri River. After a trip on a paddlewheel steamboat downriver, they boarded railroad cars for the last, and most difficult, leg of the journey. While this train was likely the first that Packs the Dog had ever boarded, the Iron Road (Maza Canku) would one day become a familiar path eastward. In Sioux City, Iowa, the students stopped for food. Gawkers began throwing money at them after they lowered the windows. When policemen marched the children into a restaurant, a crowd mocked

8. Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield & Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867–1904* (1964; reprint ed., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), p. 220.

9. "Descriptive Statement of Indian Children Sent to Carlisle, Penn., from Pine Ridge Agency, Dakota," 25 Sept. 1879, Box 1149, Descriptive Statements of Children Sent to Schools Off the Reservation, 1879–1887, RG 75, National Archives and Records Administration, Kansas City, Mo. (hereafter NARA-KC); Pratt, *Battlefield & Classroom*, pp. 224–25.

Uniform dress, as seen in this 1884 photograph, was one of the methods educators at Carlisle used in attempting to transform Indian students.

them with war whoops. At the next stop in Chicago, the students performed an honor dance with a bass drum in a railroad waiting room while a throng of people gathered outside. With only three years having elapsed since the notorious "Custer Battle," the children reported that many of the onlookers appeared angry and scornful. When the young Lakotas stepped off the train at Carlisle on 6 October, they still wore their buckskin leggings, beads, and blankets. Though they arrived near midnight, local citizens turned out by the hundreds to greet them and marched with the new arrivals to the school gates.[10]

Once inside the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Pratt separated the eighty-two boys and girls. In the boys' dormitory, they found empty rooms without beds. For weeks, they slept on a freezing, hard floor, wrapping themselves tightly in their blankets. The older boys sang

10. Pratt, *Battlefield & Classroom*, pp. 226–27, 229; Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux* (1928; reprint ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), pp. 127–31.

"brave songs" to give them courage, but they often heard the girls crying from their quarters nearby. Packs the Dog and his class were the first of some eight thousand American Indian boys and girls who would walk through the Carlisle gates. More than two hundred students would die while enrolled there, victims of tuberculosis, pneumonia, and influenza. Some are buried at the edge of the old school beneath tombstones still visible today.[11]

The school gave the newcomers empty bags to stuff with straw for their mattresses. In the classroom, they received a pencil, slate, and an assigned desk. School officials forced them to trade their blankets for trousers and shirts. The administration also prohibited students from practicing traditional ways, including the speaking of Lakota. To complete the initiation process, the teachers gave the young people new English names, randomly assigned or chosen from a list. If his friend Luther Standing Bear's experience is any guide, Packs the Dog's new name, "Clarence," was written down on a piece of tape and sewn like a sign on the back of his shirt. He then took his uncle's name for a surname and learned how to recognize the new sounds as teachers called out the roll. One by one, the boys were called into a classroom and had their hair cut short, a final break with the culture of their birth.[12]

On 8 February 1880, Clarence Three Stars's new identity was formalized at Saint John's Episcopal Church in the center of the town of Carlisle, where he and a dozen other boys were baptized under a carved pine Norman arch. Two years later, together with Standing Bear, he was confirmed and took his first communion at Saint John's, a commitment to the Episcopal Church that he would honor for the rest of his life.[13]

11. Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, pp. 133–34; Jacqueline Fear-Segal and Susan D. Rose, "Introduction," in *Carlisle Indian Industrial School: Indigenous Histories, Memories and Reclamations* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), p. 5; Joseph Cress, "Indian School: New Research Puts Carlisle Indian School Enrollment Closer to 8,000 Students," 31 Aug. 2018, https://cumberlink.com/news/local/indian-school-new-research-puts-carlisle-indian-school-enrollment-closer-to-8-000-students/article_82f8fbdc-db62-5191-bc92-5fc379d661e.html; Frank Vitale IV, "Counting Carlisle's Casualties: Multiple Methods for Measuring Mortality at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, 1879–1918" (master's thesis, University of Oxford, 2018).

12. Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, pp. 135–37, 140–41.

13. St. John's Church Parish Register, 1793–1882, 8 Feb. 1880, and St. John's Church Parish Register, 1881–1886, 3 Jan., 9 Apr. 1882, St. John's Episcopal Church Records, RG 1, Hamilton Library, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Penn.

The fifteen-year-old formerly known as Packs the Dog enlisted for a three-year tour at Carlisle but stayed an additional two years for what Pratt described as "a supplemental course" that, he hoped, would allow the "seed sown" to "take deeper root."[14] Three Stars trained as a tailor during the half-day industrial schedule, and Pratt would soon boast that he was "the best tailor" at the school.[15] The environment was not an easy one, however; discipline was rigid and corporal punishment common. Though Three Stars never graduated from Carlisle, he developed a close but difficult relationship with Pratt. In his memoirs, Pratt claimed that before the end of Three Stars's first year, an unnamed superintendent—perhaps assistant superintendent Alfred Standing or Pratt himself—had severely reprimanded him for disturbing a classroom. According to Pratt, the superintendent, after receiving a letter from Three Stars's teacher detailing his disruptions, entered the classroom and, through an interpreter, ordered the young Lakota to stand at attention. He then asked Three Stars about his behavior in front of the class. While responding, Three Stars's voice quivered, causing another student to tease him. Such a public exchange would have been a shocking form of discipline in Lakota culture. Three Stars likely carried this embarrassing memory with him as long as Pratt did. Still, he had won enough favor to join a group of students who traveled to a rural camp in the summer of 1883, where they took part in fishing, eating huckleberry pie, and making and marketing bows and arrows for local children.[16]

Carlisle aimed to extend students' education far beyond the walls of the classroom. During summer months, they stayed with white families, often in rural areas, to gain experience in farm labor and improve their English speaking abilities. This practice, known as "outing" or "planting out," provided useful lessons in the cash economy of late nine-

14. U.S., Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1882* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1882), p. 29.

15. Pratt to Paul Black Bear, 20 Aug. 1883, Box 10-7, Richard Henry Pratt Papers, WA MSS S-1174, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

16. Genevieve Bell, "Telling Stories Out of School: Remembering the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, 1879-1918" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1998), pp. 249–50; Pratt, *Battlefield & Classroom*, pp. 243–44; "Items from Camp," *Morning Star, Eadle Keatah Toh* 4 (Aug. 1883): p. 3.

Richard Henry Pratt established his boarding school in 1879 on the principles of military-style discipline.

teenth-century America as students were paid from one to fifteen dollars a month and exposed to the concepts of economy and thrift.[17] Some of the families took advantage of their hired hands. In 1882, for example, Three Stars fell into debt with Michael Schall, a summer employer in nearby York, and had to work off the balance under Pratt's watchful eye. When Three Stars finally paid the debt down, Pratt assured Schall, "The lesson has been valuable and will last during life."[18] The fact that Three Stars had spent the summer working alongside a German farmer had likely done little to improve his English skills, however. These early efforts at integrating students into white culture were often tentative and clumsy.[19]

17. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1881*, pp. 245–46, and (1882), p. 29.
18. Pratt to Schall, 25 Dec. 1882, Box 10-6, Pratt Papers.
19. Pratt to Schall, 25 June 1883, ibid.

In March 1884, Three Stars's horizons suddenly broadened when, in an unprecedented opportunity to advertise the accomplishments of Carlisle, Pratt negotiated an outing prospect for two Indian students at John Wanamaker's department store in downtown Philadelphia. His first choice was Luther Standing Bear, one of his personal favorites, and Pratt granted him the privilege of choosing a companion. Standing Bear settled on Three Stars, who, he wrote, had a "little trouble when he first came to the school, but was now trying hard to do his best."[20] The two young men soon joined one of the best-known commercial establishments in the United States.[21]

During their stay in Philadelphia, they attended a boarding school branch of the Lincoln Institute. Originally founded to care for Civil War

20. Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, p. 180.
21. Ibid., pp. 178–80.

John Wanamaker was an innovative retailer whose Philadelphia department store grew to become one of the largest in the country.

orphans, the establishment added American Indian education to its mission after Pratt brought a group of Carlisle students to celebrate the Philadelphia centennial in 1882. The boys who resided at the institute so impressed its directors that the organization opened a new school for fifty Indian girls, many of whom transferred from Carlisle, in 1883. The following year, it opened the Boys' Educational Home on a ten-acre plot in suburban Philadelphia. As at Carlisle, Three Stars was among the first recruits.[22]

The institute, it quickly turned out, was unprepared for directing a boarding school. In 1884, the year Three Stars left the school, an inspector for the Board of Commissioners of Public Charities for Pennsylvania found "the house was dirty and disorderly, the children rough and untrained, and the care-takers severe in manner and rude in speech." The kitchen was also dirty, and the servants "were a disgrace to a low-wharf hotel." Additionally, the inspector judged the instruction as poor. The boys spent much of their time fighting and, if that was not bad enough, there was not even a Bible in the large third-floor dormitory. The only positive the inspector found was the quality of the food.[23]

The Educational Home was, in many respects, a harsher version of Carlisle. A later report by the Indian Rights Association uncovered instances of flogging, beatings, the chaining of students, and forced isolation from the outside world. The discipline and training that enhanced the reputation of Pratt and Carlisle, at least in some eyes, had been turned entirely to punitive ends. Though it is unknown how long Three Stars boarded and studied there, he later described himself as an alumnus. When the school was denied federal funding in 1900 the students were transferred to Carlisle.[24]

22. U.S., Department of the Interior, Board of Indian Commissioners, *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners to the Secretary of the Interior, for Submission to the President, for the Year 1886* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1887), p. 84.

23. Penn., Board of Public Charities, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of Public Charities of the State of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Lane S. Hart, 1885), pp. 118–19.

24. Penn., Office of Indian Rights Association, *Seventeenth Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Indian Rights Association, no. 10–17, 1892–1899* (Philadelphia: Office of the Indian Rights Association, 1900), pp. 19–21; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1900*, p. 503; Clarence Three Stars, Industrial Survey, 1925, p. 28, Box 28, Industrial Surveys, 1925, Pass Creek District, Pine Ridge Agency, Entry 762, RG 75, National Archives and Record Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter NARA-DC).

Amid such turbulent circumstances, Three Stars had trouble adjusting to work at Wanamaker's. He was assigned to the shipping department, where he faced hostility for being an Indian. A few months later, Three Stars wrote Pratt that he wanted to leave the city and return to Pine Ridge. Pratt granted the request. It must have been a disappointment to the superintendent, who hoped Three Stars would direct the tailors at Carlisle as head cutter. Pratt mysteriously claimed, "Clarence's return was influenced by unrequited affection," though it is unclear who was involved or why.[25] Standing Bear had a different view of the situation. Three Stars was "determined to quit, regardless of the reputation of the school or the race we belonged to," he later grumbled. "I worked all the harder, just to let them know that not all Indians are quitters." Three Stars, now twenty years old, was a boarding school walkaway, if not a runaway. He had survived his foray into the white world but wanted out.[26]

Most of the students who returned to the reservation struggled to find jobs that matched the skills they had learned at eastern boarding schools. The need for tailors at Pine Ridge was no doubt small, and white bureaucrats already filled agency clerking positions. Three Stars probably considered himself lucky when, on his return home in October 1884, he was appointed an Indian teaching assistant. This minor position was not even noted on the payroll at the new Oglala Boarding School and did not augur well for his intellectual or economic advancement.[27]

The school, built from lumber hauled more than a hundred miles from the rail line in Nebraska, had opened the previous December. The campus consisted of two three-story dormitories, one for boys and the other for girls, connected by a smaller structure with a kitchen and various work rooms. The premises were mainly lighted with kerosene lamps, though tallow candles provided illumination when supplies ran short. Franklin stoves, which burned at a fever pitch during a typical Dakota winter, heated the rooms. These red-hot stoves, combined with

25. Pratt to Valentine T. McGillycuddy, 5 Dec. 1884, Box 10-9, Pratt Papers.

26. Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, pp. 182–83.

27. Clarence Three Stars, employment application, No. 27 Day School, 22 May 1911, Personal Record of Clarence Three Stars, Official Personnel Folders (hereafter OPF), National Personnel Records Center, National Archives and Records Administration, St. Louis, Mo.

the building's lack of fire escapes, created the possibility of disaster. Indeed, a decade after opening, the school went up in flames, apparently with no casualties.[28]

Only two years after starting as a teaching assistant, Three Stars found himself in a role similar to that of Pratt. As the school's disciplinarian beginning in 1886, he supervised activities similar to those he had practiced in the dorms and classrooms of Carlisle, ensuring that students stood at attention in both good and bad weather, marched to class in an orderly manner, filed quietly into the dining commons, and refrained from shoveling food. Three Stars returned home with knowledge many in the tribe, especially the parents of the two hundred or so children who had decided the white man's way was for the best, found useful. He reported back to Carlisle that he was learning English by teaching it to his students, an irony that nonetheless prepared him for a long and successful teaching career to come.[29]

Like Carlisle, the Oglala Boarding School sought to teach Indian children the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as the value of a half-day's hard work. After classes ended for the day, boys performed farm labor in the fields attached to the school, while girls sewed, washed, cooked, and cleaned the kitchen and dorms in an attempt to make the institution self-sufficient. The school revered discipline and thrift. Initially, one Pine Ridge agent noted, the children were "carniverous," but over time they became more eager to eat beans, flour, and vegetables.[30] Not wanting to waste any resources, the girls sewed discarded flour sacks into nightgowns. When new pupils arrived, older children took them by the hand and led them to the bathing room where they were doused in a mixture of hot water and kerosene, scrubbed with soap, had their hair brushed by their elders to remove prairie vermin, and then dressed in new garments as their old clothes were burned. The school uniforms included brogans that so pinched the children's feet that they had difficulty walking.[31]

28. Thisba Hutson Morgan, "Reminiscences of My Days in the Land of the Ogallala Sioux," *South Dakota Historical Collections* 29 (1958): 23–24, 61–62.

29. Three Stars, employment application, No. 27 Day School; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1884*, p. 83; "What I See and Hear," *Indian Helper* 1 (27 Nov. 1885): 3.

30. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1884*, p. 84.

31. Morgan, "Reminiscences," pp. 24, 26, 30.

Upon returning to Pine Ridge, Clarence Three Stars worked as a teaching assistant at Oglala Boarding School. John C. H. Grabill photographed the imposing structure in 1891.

In such a bleak environment, Three Stars hoped to climb the ladder of promotion at the school. As disciplinarian, a job he filled until at least 1889, he would have supervised sports and work details. Smaller tasks likely included ringing bells, seeing that children went to bed on time, making sure their clothing was fit to wear and they bathed properly, and recording and reporting absentees. Three Stars was a kind of master sergeant working below the matron, who supervised the dorms. Years later, he expressed no desire ever to do such work again.[32]

Prospects for boarding-school educated Indians in the teaching profession were slim, however. "To date I have failed to find an educated Indian or half breed possessing the requisite degree of backbone, discipline and judgment in his composition to fit him to fill successfully the position of teacher in charge of a day-school remote from the agen-

32. Three Stars, employment application, No. 27 Day School; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1890*, p. cl.

cy," Agent Valentine T. McGillycuddy complained in 1884. "And I have tried several of them. These Indian graduates do well in subordinate positions in boarding schools, in shops, and in outdoor industrial work instructing their people."[33] In 1889, Three Stars was appointed as a temporary teacher at Oglala Boarding School, another modest advancement and one that put him in a position to prove McGillycuddy wrong about the capacity and independence of Indian educators.[34]

Even as Three Stars began his career as a teacher, he honed his skills on a different front. In 1891, he went to Washington, D.C., as an interpreter for a contingent of Lakotas in the aftermath of the Wounded

33. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1884*, p. 83.

34. Morgan, "Reminiscences," p. 23; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1888*, p. 51.

Three Stars stands second from left in the third row in this photograph of the delegation that traveled to Washington, D.C., in 1891.

Knee Massacre. Labeled as "progressive" Indians by the press, the group entered the capital in a luxurious Pullman railcar, a far cry from the tumultuous journey young Packs the Dog had taken to Carlisle a dozen years earlier. With Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas Jefferson Morgan, they toured both Washington and Philadelphia in what must have seemed to Three Stars like a victory lap. They went to Carlisle and the Lincoln Institute and even visited Wanamaker's, where police had to restrain curious onlookers. Three Stars, whom the newspapers described as an Indian who had put his education to good use, was reportedly the first full-blood Lakota to visit Washington as an interpreter.[35]

The next year, Three Stars began teaching in the non-residential Pine Ridge day schools, which were scattered across the reservation. For many federal officials, the ideal arc of Indian education had children learning basic English in the day schools, transferring to a reservation boarding school for seasoning, and ultimately learning a trade or vocation at an off-reservation industrial school like Carlisle. Three Stars's journey, however, was just the opposite, having begun as a student at Carlisle before moving to employment at the reservation boarding school and then gravitating to teaching at schools along the rural edges of Pine Ridge in the decades to come. In early 1892, Pratt proudly reported to his students that Three Stars had been assigned as a teacher to Pine Ridge Day School No. 11.[36]

Later that year, Three Stars married Jennie Dubray, a woman of mixed French and Lakota heritage from the Rosebud reservation. Born in 1870, Dubray attended Carlisle from 1883 to 1891, leaving at the age of twenty, and may have met her future husband during his final year there. She was in the seventh grade when she left Carlisle the year before they married. Though her trade at Carlisle was listed as sewing and laundry, she impressed in her schoolwork and appears to have been a model student throughout her tenure. She was an honor roll student in 1886. In 1890, she gave a debate speech in favor of land allotment and

35. "The Coming Indians," *Washington* (D.C.) *Evening Star*, 3 Feb. 1891; "'Friendlies' Going to Washington," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 Feb. 1891; "Great Chiefs in Town," *Philadelphia Times*, 6 Feb. 1891; "More Indians Arrive from the Reservations," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 6 Feb. 1891.

36. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, p. 62; "Capt. Pratt at Pine Ridge," *Red Man* 11 (Nov./Dec. 1892): 1.

the Dawes Act, saying, "I for one shall be glad when we shall have no more talk about wards of the Government. This bill makes us 'come of age.'"[37] At a later public assembly, she recited John Greenleaf Whittier's "The Common Question" with uncommon aplomb. Most important, she enrolled in the teaching, also known as the normal, department and served as a pupil teacher. As with her husband, education would be the guiding principle of her future.[38]

The couple's relationship with the Indian Office soured, however, in 1896. That year, the bureau recommended their transfer to a school on the Colville Indian Reservation in Washington State due to a new policy that prevented Indian teachers from instructing students of their own tribe. Three Stars refused the "promotion," despite the accompanying pay raise, and claimed that such long-distance transfers represented a thinly disguised attempt to remove Indians from the teaching ranks. Pine Ridge Agent W. H. Clapp, captain of the Sixteenth United States Infantry Regiment, did not take a sanguine view of Three Stars, whom he described as "troublesome, like his father before him." Clapp alleged that Three Stars, after resigning his position, made trouble for his successor and stirred up discontent among his former students. "His influence among the people is bad and is expected to so continue. He is essentially a man with a grievance, and what he says should be taken 'cum grano salis.'"[39] Exactly how Three Stars aggravated his successor is not known. While the resignation interrupted his teaching career, it soon provided an opportunity for articulating his grievances in more specific terms.[40]

Clapp watched reluctantly as Three Stars made another official visit

37. "Jennie Dubray, Sioux, on the Affirmative," ibid. 10 (Mar. 1890): 8.

38. Jennie Dubray Student File, 1883, Carlisle Indian School, Penn., Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/sites/all/files/docs-ephemera/NARA_1327_b062_3150.pdf; "Roll of Honor for November," *Indian Helper* 2 (31 Dec. 1886): 4; "The Last Exhibition and Some of Its Faults," ibid. 4 (1 Mar. 1889): 2; no title, ibid. 5 (4 Oct. 1889): 3; "Captain Pratt Interviewed after His Return from Pine Ridge Agency," ibid. 8 (18 Nov. 1892): 1, 4.

39. Clapp to Indian Commissioner, 24 Apr. 1897, Pine Ridge Agency, 30 Mar. 1897–1 Mar. 1898, Letters Sent to the Office of Indian Affairs by the Pine Ridge Agency, 1875–1914, M1282, roll 27.

40. U.S., Congress, Senate, *Memorial of the Sioux Indians, in Council Assembled on the Pine Ridge Reservation, in South Dakota, Relative to Indians Employed and Taken from the Reservation to Accompany Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show*, 55th Cong., 1st Sess., 1897, S. Doc. 90, pp. 2–3.

Jennie Dubray, who also attended Carlisle, married Clarence Three Stars in 1892.

to Washington, D.C., in 1897. That spring, the tribe chose four men of standing—Three Stars, Red Cloud, High Star, and American Horse—to press Lakota treaty claims and register a series of complaints before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. As an advocate, not simply an interpreter, Three Stars spoke sharply before Senator Richard F. Pettigrew of South Dakota about broken treaties and rampant government corruption on the reservation. Of the 1876 agreement that opened the Black Hills to white settlement, he said, "We only know the land was not sold to the Government by three-fourths of our nation," a violation of a key provision in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868.[41] He told the senator that he and many Oglalas opposed allotment because the parcels of land were not large enough to support sufficient livestock to earn a living. He urged the government to send money in place of the ill-fitting and threadbare annuity clothes that often ended up being sold to white

41. *Statements of a Delegation of the Oglalla Sioux*, p. 17.

store owners who retailed them at a profit. Similarly, the condition of annuity blankets had dropped off, making them practically useless. Three Stars also noted that beef rations were small, of poor quality, and often inedible, the result of scale-tipping and cursory inspection. Further, agency farmers did not teach the Lakotas how to use machinery, and outsiders who bought Indian cattle left them on the reservation for years to fatten up before taking them to market.[42]

"We are people the same as any other race," Three Stars scolded Pettigrew. "We consider ourselves human beings. We made a treaty with the Government and they promised to give us none but good things, woolen clothing and good beef, which they never fulfilled."[43] For all their vehemence, the Lakota delegates were disappointed on a number of counts: allotment on Pine Ridge began less than a decade later, trespass of cattle on the reservation remained a serious problem, and it took almost a century before the Supreme Court in 1980 upheld a ruling that awarded $106 million to the Lakotas to compensate them for the theft of the Black Hills.[44]

Three Stars may have found advocacy work satisfying, but it was not a good way to make a living. After refusing his teaching promotion, he went to work for trader Henry A. Dawson in a general merchandise store in Allen, South Dakota, in 1897. Several years earlier, Three Stars had temporarily replaced the agency trader, a Missouri politician suspected in a number of scandals, but his time in the post was short due to his teaching and ranching responsibilities. Three Stars would supplement his income as a storekeeper or clerk for years to come. While in Washington, D.C., he had criticized Dawson for getting rich off government contracts, but his employer later gave him a glowing recommendation for citizenship. The job at Dawson's no doubt flexed an entrepreneurial muscle that Three Stars first developed during the Carlisle outing at Wanamaker's.[45]

Three Stars returned to teaching in the Pine Ridge day schools in 1901. In addition to raising a large family, his wife Jennie was the "house-

42. Ibid., pp. 17–25.

43. Ibid., p. 20.

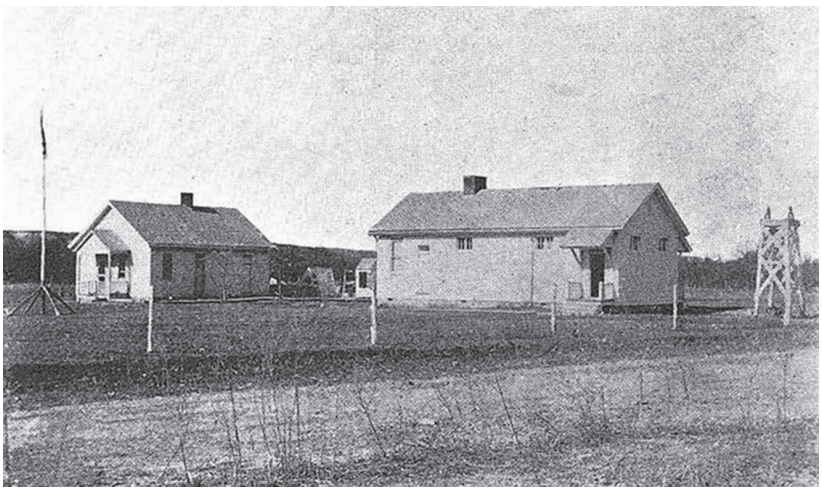
44. Ibid., pp. 15–27, 29–30; Edward Lazarus, *Black Hills, White Justice: The Sioux Nation versus the United States, 1775 to the Present* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), p. 431.

45. "Finley Fired," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 26 July 1891; *Statements of a Delegation of Oglalla Sioux*, p. 26.

keeper," or matron, at the same schools where her husband taught. She earned three hundred dollars per annum, half her husband's salary at the time. Over the next twelve years, they mainly worked at Day School No. 27, five miles north of the agency. Three Stars's students would arrive soon after sunrise by pony, foot, or buggy and devote themselves to studies and chores throughout the day. Ranging from the first to fourth grades and in age from six to fourteen years, the pupils were provided uniforms, books, tools, and a hot midday meal. As in the boarding schools, the girls, under the supervision of Jennie Three Stars, did the sewing, cleaning, laundry, and cooking. The boys worked in the garden, chopped wood, and cared for a small group of cows, pigs, chickens, and horses. The school was as self-contained as possible. The swings and teeter totter in the yard were homemade, and lunch often came from the garden.[46]

Three Stars combined traditional and innovative teaching methods. He taught in both English and Lakota, a choice the Indian Office discouraged and later banned as part of its mission to "civilize" children

46. George P. Phenix, "Day School 27," *Southern Workman*, Mar. 1907; "The Pine Ridge Day Schools," *Oglala Light* 2 (June 1901): 1–2; Jeanne Smith, "Teaching on the Reservation: Reflections on the Period between the Wars," 23 Feb. 1985, pp. 51–53, Jeanne Smith Collection, Oglala Lakota College Archives, Kyle, S.Dak.



Clarence and Jennie Three Stars worked together at Day School No. 27, where they instructed children in both academic and domestic pursuits.

by allowing the use of English only. No doubt remembering his own difficulty learning the language at Carlisle, Three Stars did not force his charges to read from a primer when he began teaching them English. Instead, he wrote words on the blackboard and had the students draw pictures representing them on their slates or took the class outside to point out and name the animals, buildings, and natural formations they saw. Three Stars also had the children act out word sequences. For instance, he would write out "horse," "walk," "trot," "run," and "stop" and then have a student use a stick to represent a horse and act out the written sequence. This exercise gave the children a chance to visualize what the words meant. He also brought a sand table filled with toys and miniature figures into the classroom so that children could touch and learn the names of everyday objects. Known for his fine singing voice, he believed that songs were a key way to learn language and kept an organ in the classroom to accompany the students. "Study your pupils as you would study a book," he advised other teachers. "Keep them busy with usable knowledge."[47] By employing art and storytelling, Three Stars drew on traditional Lakota methods of learning in what was truly a bicultural classroom. "They like any lesson that is original," he advised. "It is more interesting than a fable."[48] Thanks to this unique approach, students could speak of the assassination of President William McKinley or the Rough Rider days of Theodore Roosevelt.[49]

Three Stars gained a prominent reputation as a spirited and creative teacher. "Many of the teachers have better education," noted agency superintendent John Brennan, "but not better results. . . . He makes up for much of his lack of education, by energy and force in the schoolroom."[50] One inspector commended Three Stars for "doing better than many white teachers who say that they have been to Normal School or College."[51] Brennan also remarked that "no one plans his schoolroom

47. Clarence Three Stars, "Teaching Beginners to Talk English," *Oglala Light* 8 (Apr. 1907): 6.

48. Clarence Three Stars, "Teaching Indian Pupils to Speak English in the Day School Work," Essays and Reports on Indian Education, Day School Lesson Plans, Pine Ridge Agency, Box 1155, RG 75, NARA-KC.

49. "Report of the 10th Annual Institute of Pine Ridge Agency, Oct. 3–5, 1905," ibid.; Brennan, efficiency report for Three Stars, 2 May 1912, OPF; *Oglala Light* 7 (May 1906): 1.

50. Brennan, efficiency report for Three Stars, 2 May 1912, 23 Oct. 1911, OPF.

51. Ibid., 17 Dec. 1910.

Day School Employees, Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota.

Edward Truman.

Mrs. Truman.

Clarence Three Stars.

George Simeral.

Mrs. Simeral.

Clarence Three Stars, pictured here with other day-school employees, was recognized for his creative teaching methods.

work any more carefully, and probably no one puts in any more time trying to keep up with the demands."[52] In the words of scholar Thomas G. Andrews, Three Stars, being "an accommodationist rather than an assimilationist,"[53] used English as a "technology" to help his students survive in a world where English was necessary, but where Lakota values and traditions prevailed.[54]

By 1901, Pine Ridge had thirty-one day schools, most of which were built on creeks and river bottoms far removed from the agency. Some older Lakotas, resentful of government interference, tried to keep their children out of the schools. "I find the best way to break up this practice is to shut off the parents' rations for an issue or two," boasted Brennan.[55] To enforce attendance, policemen would round up truants as a last resort. Whatever defiance some parents displayed, the day schools, which were cheaper to maintain than boarding schools, were promoted as a place to educate entire families in Christianity and civics. Although boarding school students typically assimilated more quickly due to their separation from family, the day schools, being directly connected to reservation communities, gave the teachers access to pupils' homes, which they visited to proselytize to their parents. Ideally, teachers were the bearers of an educational and cultural gospel that was aimed at students, families, and the community at large.[56]

Three Stars made a good "missionary" because he had assimilated in matters of the spirit. Having converted while at Carlisle, he became a devoted Episcopalian. As early as 1886, foreshadowing his bilingual teaching career, he was catechizing children in both English and Lakota in the Episcopal church at Pine Ridge. Later, he fought cultural trends, both native and imported, that he viewed as irreligious. In 1914, he applied to be a special officer for the suppression of liquor traffic but was rejected. Two years later, he served on a committee that condemned the emerging practice of what they called "Mescal bean eating," often confused with the religious use of peyote that many Lakotas adapted

52. Ibid., 5 Apr. 1911.

53. Thomas G. Andrews, "Turning the Tables on Assimilation: Oglala Lakotas and the Pine Ridge Day Schools, 1889–1920s," *Western Historical Quarterly* 33 (Winter 2002): 422.

54. Ibid., p. 424.

55. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1901*, p. 365.

56. "The Pine Ridge Day Schools," *Oglala Light* 2 (June 1901): 1.

to religious ceremonies associated with the Native American Church. The committee also criticized more traditional practices, stating, "The younger people and returned students recognize the disgraceful and harmful character of the dances and cannot now be easily drawn to take part in them."[57] There is little doubt that Three Stars's years at Carlisle made him consider Lakota social and ceremonial dancing inappropriate and even scandalous. By 1884, the year he returned to Pine Ridge, the Sun Dance had been publicly banned at the agency, a prohibition that lasted well into the twentieth century.[58]

Lakota traditions interested another man with a passion for learning. In the winter of 1909, James R. Walker, who served as the physician at Pine Ridge for two decades, hired Three Stars to translate the work of George Sword. Born in 1847, Sword had lived the life of a Lakota warrior before enthusiastically assimilating and becoming an Episcopal deacon and captain of the Pine Ridge Indian police force in his later years. He imparted his knowledge of tribal beliefs and rituals, all written in Lakota, before his death in 1910. An amateur anthropologist, Walker hoped to offer this information to a wider circle when he hired Three Stars to translate the texts into English. Three Stars's interpretive skills, however, did not work well for precise ethnographic translation. Walker rejected his English work-ups because they interpreted the texts too freely, making unnecessary additions and converting Lakota spiritual concepts to Christian ones. Three Stars may have become more acculturated than he realized.[59]

Three Stars's formal education continued well into adulthood. Sometime before 1911, he enrolled in what was an early twentieth-century version of "lifelong learning"—a correspondence school.[60] He chose the Columbian Correspondence College, based in Washington, D.C., across the street from the new Beaux Arts Library of Congress building

57. *Journal of the Convocations, and Reports of the Officers and Committees* (Missionary District of South Dakota), 1916, p. 41.

58. *The Spirit of Missions Issued by the Board of Missions of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (New York, 1886), p. 112; Commissioner of Indian Affairs (CIA) to Clarence Three Stars, 14 July 1914, OPF; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1884*, p. 81.

59. Raymond J. DeMallie, "'George Sword Wrote These': Lakota Culture as Lakota Text," in *Theorizing the Americanist Tradition,* ed. Lisa Philips Valentine and Regna Darnell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 246–50.

60. Three Stars, employment application, No. 27 Day School.

on Capitol Hill. "A greater number and variety of subjects are taught by this College through its original correspondence methods," its advertisements boasted, "than are included in the curriculum of many resident universities favored by prodigal endowments and the prestige of long careers." The school offered expert instruction to the middle class as well as the "ambitious poor," to which Three Stars arguably belonged.[61] Its promise of self-paced learning by mail was no doubt as inviting then as on-line instruction would be a hundred years later.

The offerings from the correspondence college ranged from stenography, bookkeeping, and literature to journalism, civil service, and law. Three Stars chose the law program, headed by Charles Andrew Ray, former chief justice of the Indiana Supreme Court and the school's dean. It was a three-year program that students took at their own pace. At the end of each year, they sat for a proctored examination in their home area. Students received certificates at the conclusion of their second year, and those who successfully completed their final year received a Bachelor of Law degree. The annual tuition cost twenty-five dollars cash, and books were free the first year and rented for five dollars the next.[62]

Three Stars, a full-blood Lakota with strongly accented English, knew the sting of prejudice from personal experience. He recalled the humiliation that he had experienced in a classroom at Carlisle many years before. Correspondence students studying through the mail, however, could not be distinguished by skin color, accent, or general appearance. Learning the law by correspondence while teaching in the day schools seemed a significant opportunity for a man whose vocational training consisted of little more than wielding a tailor's scissors. Three Stars was rebelling against a system of Indian education that trained students for manual trades rather than white-collar professions—least of all, the law.

Whether Three Stars graduated from the Columbian Correspondence College is not known, but he probably used his coursework to take the next step in his career: passing the state bar examination. In 1912, he won appointment as the first state's attorney in the newly cre-

61. "Instruction by Mail," *The Columbian Views of Washington* (Washington, D.C.: Columbian Correspondence College, 1902), n.p.

62. "Department of Law," ibid., n.p.

ated Bennett County, a portion of the Pine Ridge reservation opened to white settlement in 1910. He worked in that capacity for a year before serving as a county judge and later as justice of the peace in 1915–1916.[63] The opening of Bennett County created new opportunities for entrepreneurial Lakotas like Three Stars to use their educations to escape the myriad constraints the Indian Office imposed. In 1913, he became an investor in the Pine Ridge Townsite Company. Two years later, he was a land agent for the Bates-Foster Investment Company, a group of Nebraska bankers who bought land and made loans in the heady days when the county was first opened to non-Indian settlement.[64]

Although he had argued against allotment, Three Stars received a trust patent for 640 acres near Martin in 1908. Trust patents for Lakotas issued under the Sioux Agreement of 1889—in conjunction with the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887—lasted twenty-five years, at which point the individual received a fee patent. In 1906, the Burke Act made it possible for "competent" Indians—those who lived away from the tribe and had adopted white American practices—to receive both their citizenship and their fee patent without waiting twenty-five years or getting special permission from the secretary of the interior. By 1912, both Three Stars and his wife Jennie had fee-patented their allotments, making them eligible for citizenship.[65] "All was struggle with me for an independent manhood," he wrote in his patent application. "I would not yield to barbarous activities but stick to the new life which was grafted into my soul."[66] Three Stars appears to have engaged in some form of land speculation through the Pine Ridge Townsite Company. He sold all of his allotment within a few years, while his wife retained hers. Sale of his allotment likely provided capital for the investment, not to mention a ready source of cash rarely seen on the reservation. Three

63. *Martin Messenger*, 3 Sept. 1931; *Inventory of the County Archives of South Dakota: No. 3, Bennett County (Martin)* (Mitchell: South Dakota Historical Records Survey, South Dakota Work Projects Administration, Oct. 1940), p. 79.

64. *Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader*, 16 May 1913; *Bennett County Booster*, 28 Apr. 1915.

65. Transmission of patent, n.d., and Clarence Three Stars to the Secretary of the Interior, 27 Aug. 1910, 93955-10-Pine Ridge–312, Central Classified Files, 1907–1939, RG 75, NARA-DC (hereafter cited CCF, NARA-DC); Herbert T. Hoover, "The Sioux Agreement of 1889 and Its Aftermath," *South Dakota History* 19 (Spring 1989): 64–66.

66. Patent record, Clarence Three Stars, 22 Dec. 1910, Bennett County Courthouse, Martin, S.Dak.

Stars joined numerous Indian landowners on Pine Ridge who had sold their land to outsiders or lost it to foreclosure, often because they could not afford the taxes after the land was fee patented.[67]

Even though Three Stars no longer owned his allotment, his prominent role in Bennett County politics opened further opportunities after the Oglala tribal council on Pine Ridge elected him president in 1918. Although born to a Miniconjou father and a Brulé mother, Three Stars and his family—including his Brulé wife—were considered Oglalas because they were allotted on Pine Ridge. Since the 1880s, the Oglala council had consisted of several hundred male elders, most of them chiefs and their descendants, whom agency superintendents dismissed as factionalized, obstructionist, or useless. They had nothing more than a vague advisory authority.[68]

When new superintendent Henry Tidwell called an election for tribal council in 1918, it was to be the first Pine Ridge election performed by secret ballot. Tidwell conceived and organized the entire election by fiat, deciding that each of the reservation's seven districts would elect three representatives, who, in turn, would choose a president from among their ranks. When the new council elected Three Stars, he proved to be anything but a willing puppet of the superintendent. A power struggle ensued after Three Stars and the council wrote a new constitution and bylaws. This document would have secured the tribe's right to call its own meetings without the superintendent's approval, to pay council members for their service, to require members to be at least thirty years of age, and to allow meetings to be held in the various districts rather than only at the agency. Tidwell maintained a strong executive veto power over the council's actions and rejected the proposed constitution out of hand, even refusing to have it printed. That

67. Jennie Three Stars, Application for Patent in Fee, 10 July 1911, CCF, NARA-DC; Jennie Three Stars, Patent Record, 17 Jan. 1912, Bennett County Courthouse; Three Stars, Industrial Survey, p. 28; Western Cartographers, *Bennett County South Dakota*, platmap, Series 4170, Clerk's Office, Bennett County Courthouse; Lazarus, *Black Hills, White Justice*, p. 125.

68. Paul Robertson, *The Power of the Land: Identity, Ethnicity, and Class among the Oglala Lakota* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 92; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1882*, p. 95; U.S., Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Superintendents' Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports from Field Jurisdictions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1907–1938*, 1910, 1914, National Archives Microfilm Publication M1011, roll 106, frames 37, 138.

same year, Three Stars joined and was elected president of a council of Lakotas and Cheyennes who sought claims against the federal government for violating the Fort Laramie Treaty and opening the Black Hills to white settlement after the Black Hills Agreement of 1877. Starting with his criticism of the agreement during his Washington visit in 1897, Three Stars had become embroiled in the dispute and would serve as an interpreter for visiting officials and as an elector for an ad hoc treaty commission in the years to come.[69]

Shortly before the end of World War I, Three Stars, as council president, inserted himself into a contentious debate over military conscription. He and several county officials argued that American Indian men who had not patented their allotments were not yet citizens and thus were not subject to the draft. Though Three Stars supported citizenship for Indians, his effort to prohibit the drafting of non-citizen Indians was unpopular on Pine Ridge. Patriotism ran strong among the Oglalas, and their long warrior tradition, the possibility of expedited citizenship, the benefits and stability of regular military pay, and the enticement of foreign travel also motivated them to enlist. Their service came at a high cost, however. The casualty rate among soldiers from Pine Ridge was a staggering 12 percent, compared to 1 percent for the overall population.[70]

Some suspected that Three Stars was arguing, in effect, against the induction of his son, Paul. "I personally believe that [Three Stars's] efforts have not been patriotic or in the interest of his people," Tidwell noted, "so much as for his personal gain," adding that Three Stars should be watched closely and indicted if necessary, given his position on the draft.[71] Because the Espionage Act of 1917 and the related Sedition Act of 1918 made it a crime to disrupt the war effort or even to speak out against it, Three Stars's stance was a bold one. The government, in fact,

69. *Oglala Light* 19 (Feb./Mar. 1918): 29, (Apr. 1918): 30–31; Henry Tidwell to Citizens of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, 9 Mar. 1918, and Tidwell to Three Stars, 10 May 1918, Councils, Claims, etc., 1918–1922, NAID 285586, 064, and Additional Farmer to Clarence Three Stars, 16 Sept. 1920, Treaty of 1876, Black Hills Claims, 1920, NAID 285586, 062, all in Main Decimal Files, 1900–1965, Pine Ridge Agency, NARA-KC.

70. Thomas A. Britten, *American Indians in World War I: At War and at Home* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), pp. 14, 62–63; Russell Lawrence Barsh, "American Indians in the Great War," *Ethnohistory* 38 (Summer 1991): 278–79, 298n7.

71. Tidwell to CIA, 3 Oct. 1918, CCF, NARA-DC.

prosecuted more than two thousand Americans for protesting the war, convicting half of them. Though Paul Three Stars claimed an exemption, perhaps at the urging of his father who may have remembered too well the family story of High Forehead and the Grattan battle, an appeals board denied his claim. They argued that since he had adopted the ways of the majority culture, he should be subject to the draft that defended it, and he went on to serve in Company L of the 351st Infantry Regiment. The elder Three Stars, once considered a privileged student in a military-style boarding school, was now an "unpatriotic" radical in a time of national emergency.[72]

Exactly what Three Stars thought of his Carlisle years is hard to judge. The reservation agent wrote in 1897 that "he regrets ever having gone to school."[73] A few years earlier, however, Pratt had held him up as a returned student who was "faithful, steady, efficient; an influence for good, quiet, [and] everyone speaks highly of him."[74] In 1899, Three Stars gave one of the Carlisle commencement speeches and told the large gymnasium crowd, "I feel as I stand before you that this is the real home of mine," adding that the reservation was just a temporary stop.[75] Like many boarding school veterans, he was of two minds about the value of his education and unsure about how to reconcile them when he returned home.[76]

Three Stars also learned that not all Carlisle ties were binding. In 1911, he affirmed to the Indian Office that his old friend Luther Standing Bear owed a balance of some four hundred dollars to trader Henry Dawson dating to 1893. As a former, and perhaps current, employee of Dawson's, Three Stars noted that "the debt is still on the book unpaid up to this writing." Suspended as long as Standing Bear was a government ward, the debt became active once he acquired an allotment. Three Stars eventually swore out a complaint accusing his old friend of forgery and lying, but it is unclear whether the men ever resolved the matter. The break must have been painful, for Three Stars and Standing Bear were

72. Assistant Indian Commissioner to Tidwell, n.d., Tidwell to CIA, 8 Aug. 1918, ibid.; Jill Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2018), p. 395.

73. Clapp to Indian Commissioner, 24 Apr. 1897.

74. "Now We Have the Truth," *Indian Helper*, 27 Feb. 1891.

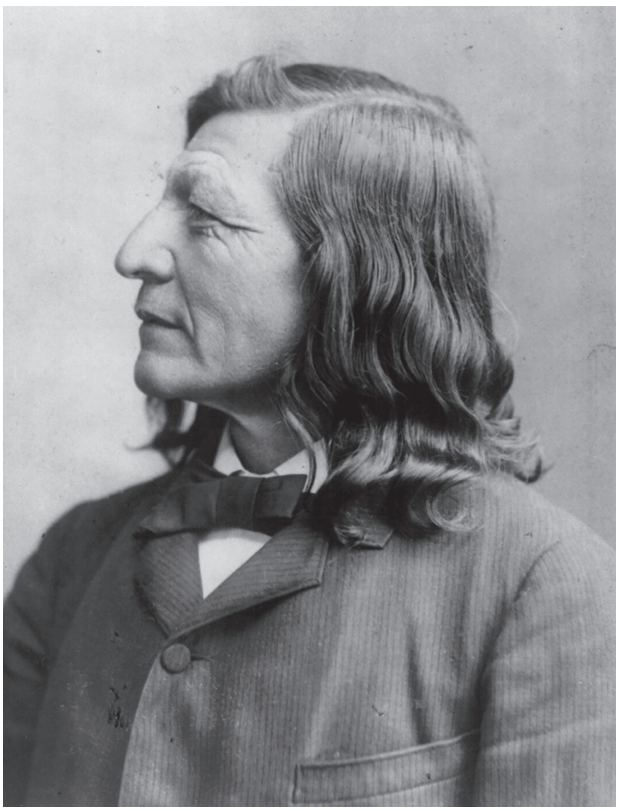
75. *Red Man* 15 (Feb./Mar. 1899): 8.

76. Michael C. Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850–1930* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), pp. 85, 114–15, 121.

almost cultural twins. They attended Carlisle together, were confirmed and took first communion side by side, and did their school outings at Wanamaker's. After returning home to work as reservation teachers, both settled in Bennett County and became outspoken advocates for their people, fighting for respect throughout the assimilation years.[77]

Despite these similarities, their lives took different directions. Standing Bear had been, by many accounts, a successful example of assimilation. He had special privileges with Pratt and recruited students for Carlisle from the reservation; he earned John Wanamaker's praise during his work outing; and he traveled with William F. ("Buffalo Bill") Cody's Wild West show to England as a performer. After selling his allotment, he moved to Los Angeles and became a movie actor for the studio of pioneer filmmaker Thomas Ince. He also authored popular books

77. Three Stars to C. F. Hauke, 18 Nov. 1911, CCF, NARA-DC.



Luther Standing Bear, Three Stars's friend at Carlisle, never returned to the reservation to live and went on to a career that included performing and writing.

about Lakota traditions and penned a well-known autobiography, *My People the Sioux*.[78] Even his personal letterhead, stamped from Venice, California, named him the "True Authority on All Questions Concerning the Sioux Nation."[79] Standing Bear, like Three Stars, knew the hard truths of reservation wardship but considered Pine Ridge no place for a man of big ambitions. "As long as I was on the reservation I was only a helpless Indian," Standing Bear wrote. "If I tried to better the condition of my people, while on the reservation, I found it was an utter impossibility."[80]

Three Stars, by contrast, made the long trip home from Carlisle and stayed. Unlike Standing Bear, he appeared ambivalent about what he learned at Carlisle. He opposed allotment, even if he tried to profit from the land rush in Bennett County, and fought for compensation for the Black Hills. He tried to keep non-citizen Indians out of World War I; Standing Bear advocated instead that veterans be given citizenship. While Standing Bear was made a ceremonial chief, Three Stars ran for public office. Rather than sell his land and move off-reservation, Three Stars donated some of it in 1914 for what became the Bear Creek School near Martin. He devoted his life to politics and education and remained rooted in Bennett County.[81]

Over the years, Three Stars's personal life was marred by tragedy. He and Jennie had seven children between 1893 and 1911: Sophia, Paul, Clarence Jr., Guy, Thomas, Mary, and Louisa. Louisa died of tuberculosis in 1908 at the age of twelve after a boarding school stay in Pierre. Their eldest child, Sophia, survived the Spanish influenza in 1918 but never fully recovered. In 1922, she was admitted to the Hiawatha Indian Asylum in Canton, South Dakota, with "dementia praecox," a contemporary diagnosis for schizophrenia. Sophia was transferred to Saint Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C., in 1933 and was later joined there by her brother Thomas, who suffered from depression.[82]

78. Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, pp. 161–70, 184, 248–67, 284–85.

79. Standing Bear to Pratt, 1920, Box 8, Pratt Papers.

80. Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, p. 277.

81. Ibid., pp. xxii–xxiii, 285–86; *Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader*, 16 May 1913; *General Index of Deeds*, Bennett County, pp. 266, 269, Bennett County Courthouse.

82. Jennie Three Stars probate, CCF, NARA-DC; *Oglala Light* 9 (Mar. 1908): 25; Sophia Three Stars, admission summary, Canton Asylum, pt. 2, CCF, NARA-DC; S. A. Silk to W. O. Roberts, 23 June 1938, ibid.

Jennie died the year before Sophia was admitted to the asylum in Canton. Two years later, Clarence Three Stars married Mary Emery, a former mission school student from Rosebud. In 1925, he was living with Mary and two children from his first marriage in a log house with a dirt roof and a root cellar on Jennie's Bear Creek allotment. A farmer of some means, he raised thirteen cattle, sixty-five horses, and twenty-four chickens. He also owned a raft of plows, harrows, and mowers, with thirteen acres under cultivation. The census taker's final observation of Three Stars was a candid sentiment that many in the Indian Office would not have disputed: "He is an agitator."[83] Three Stars and his second wife divorced informally through Lakota custom not long afterward.[84]

At life's end, Three Stars was still immersed in the controversy over the tribal council. For years, the Oglalas had struggled over how best to constitute a representative body for the tribe. The council of chiefs and headmen was replaced in 1928 by a group called the Oglala Business Council that enfranchised a wider group under a set of constitutional bylaws. In 1931, however, a number of traditional leaders and their descendants, Three Stars among them, challenged the business council in what would prove to be a bitter battle. Calling themselves the Oglala Treaty Council, the group favored the provision of the Fort Laramie Treaty that required a three-quarter supermajority of all male voters for major decisions, voice or standing vote rather than secret ballot, and greater independence from Indian Office officials. One critic summarized the opposition's argument, calling the traditionals "ignorant and illiterate," and declaring that "the only emotion they seemed to have developed was a sense of self-importance and cheap ostentation."[85] Another observer added that their haphazard and unruly meetings were conducted "to the disgust and embarrassment of the civilized members of the tribe."[86] Three Stars's name was the first listed on one petition to reorganize the council in 1931, and in another he was de-

83. Three Stars, Industrial Survey, p. 28.

84. Jennie Three Stars probate; Clarence Three Stars probate, CCF, NARA-DC; personal communication with Harold Compton (former deputy superintendent, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation), Rosebud, S.Dak., 15 Mar. 2017.

85. James LaPointe to CIA, 8 Mar. 1931, CCF, NARA-DC.

86. Hermus Merrival to CIA, 6 Mar. 1931, ibid.

scribed, along with his fellow signers, as a "chief."[87] Three-fourths of Oglala men and women approved the former petition that advocated abolishing the business council and reconfirming the previous one. In a few short years, the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, with the Oglalas' approval, mandated a new constitution and the formation of a tribal council that answered to the Indian Office and not the elders and their descendants.[88]

In early September 1931, the *Martin Messenger* reported that Clarence Three Stars died after trying to start a fire with gasoline. His fate may have been the result of something as commonplace as lighting a stove. Though the burns were severe, a doctor later determined that they were secondary to the primary cause of death—blood poisoning, or septicemia. Confined to a hospital bed in his final days, Three Stars was sentient and able to speak. He dictated his will but could not sign it because of his trembling hand. The former law student and graduate of the Lincoln Institute settled on a method that unlettered Indians used when writing an X was no longer sufficient for signing official documents: he inked his thumb and pressed it down on the paper. He died four days later on 28 August.[89]

In many ways, Clarence Three Stars was ahead of his time. A member of the first class at Carlisle, he used innovative teaching methods, became a lawyer by correspondence, and was an early advocate of redressing the wrongs of the Black Hills Agreement. Then, too, he was a man of tradition at a time when tradition was under fire. He advocated for the old tribal council and acted as a keeper of the Lakota language. His life reflected the complex experiences of American Indians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like many of his contemporaries, Three Stars was both "progressive" and "traditional"—the main camps historians usually describe—and yet he was neither. While his family volunteered him for Carlisle, he later walked away

87. Confirmation of chiefs, 20 Feb. 1931, ibid.

88. Thomas Biolsi, *Organizing the Lakota: The Political Economy of the New Deal on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992), pp. 55–59; Petition, n.d., CCF, NARA-DC; Robertson, *Power of the Land*, p. 170; Akim D. Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge: Oglala Lakota Politics from the IRA to Wounded Knee* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007), p. 39.

89. *Martin Messenger*, 3 Sept. 1931; Clarence Three Stars Certificate of Death; Clarence Three Stars probate.

from it. Despite being humiliated as a boarding school pupil, he sat on stage with Pratt years later and called the school his "home." Although trained as a kind of student-soldier, Three Stars defied authority for much of his career. While he seems to have resented boarding school, he sent his own daughter to one. As others before and after, Three Stars chafed at the long hours of memorization, writing, and recital of his school lessons but transformed them into something he could use in the service of his people. For the grandson of High Forehead, the son of Yellow Knife, and the protégé of Richard Henry Pratt, education had been a long and difficult journey.