



Chauncey Yellow Robe with his father in 1896 or 1898.

Dakota Images

Chauncey Yellow Robe was born in what is now southern Montana in 1867. As a boy, he received the traditional upbringing of his people the *Lacota oyate* (the Sioux Nation) and did not see a white man until he was ten or eleven years old. He was a member of the Yellow Robe (*Tasinagi*) band of the Brule Sioux and a descendant of hereditary chiefs. In 1879, Yellow Robe went East with General Richard Henry Pratt, who was recruiting Indian youth from the Spotted Tail and Red Cloud agencies in Dakota Territory for his school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Arriving at Carlisle, Yellow Robe did not yet know English and was confused about the abrupt departure from his own culture. His braids were cut and his traditional clothing replaced with a white man's suit.

Notwithstanding his early homesickness and other difficulties at the school, Yellow Robe graduated from Carlisle in 1895 with honors. He joined the government school service and eventually worked at the United States Indian School in Rapid City for twenty-five years. In 1906, he married Lillie Sprenger, a nurse from Tacoma, Washington, who was working at the same school. Although employed at the Indian school, Yellow Robe was skeptical of its policies and insisted that his own daughters, Rosebud, Chauncina, and Evelyn, attend the nearby white school.

Chauncey Yellow Robe was outspokenly critical of movie versions of the American Indian. In 1928, he agreed to help with the filming of *The Silent Enemy*, a film sponsored by the American Museum of Natural History. He resigned from government service and spent thirty weeks researching, writing, and acting for the film. The movie was an attempt to capture on film the authentic life style of pre-Columbian Indians. It portrayed the Ojibway in Canada as they faced the silent enemy of hunger.

Yellow Robe was apparently planning to run for a United States Congress seat from South Dakota in the fall of 1930, but he caught pneumonia in the spring and died on 6 April 1930. He is buried in Rapid City, South Dakota.

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