Colorado Military Historians

Newsletter

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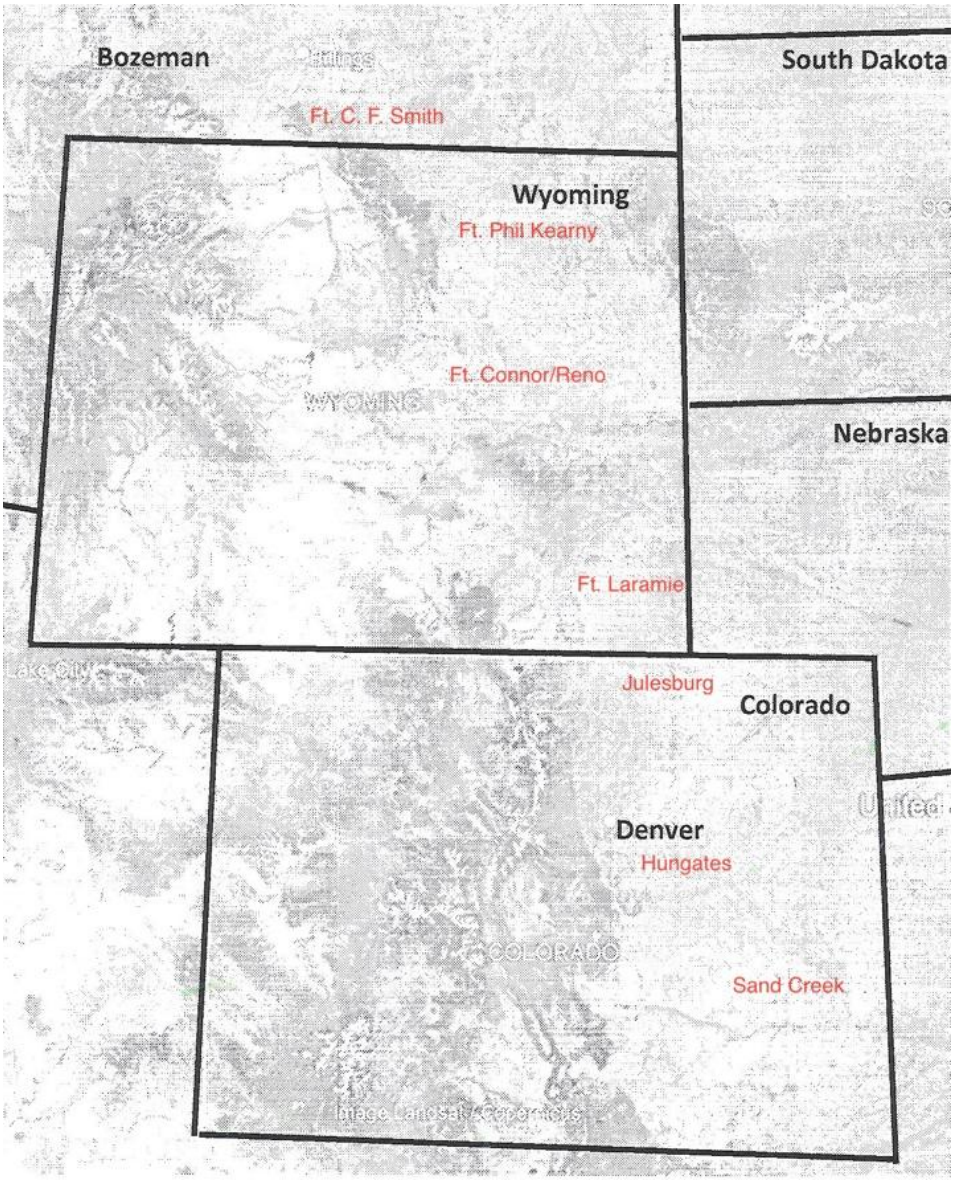
Red Cloud's War.

Treaties Made, Gold Discovered, Treaties Broken - War

By Professor James L. Rairdon, DM, FLMI

Red Cloud, 1880

The Big Picture



This story begins with the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, where lands were set aside for the Native Nations. The Colorado connection began with the discovery of gold in 1859, after which gold prospectors violated the 1861 treaty terms by invading the territory set aside for the Cheyenne and Arapaho nations. In 1862, gold was discovered in Montana, and to have a quicker route into the gold fields, John Bozeman, using a route used by the native tribes for generations, and one of their last hunting grounds, around the Big Horn Mountains, laid out the Bozeman Trail. In Colorado, there were many raids, culminating with the murder of the Hungate family 28 miles southeast of Denver in June of 1864. In response, Governor John Evans recruited the 3rd Colorado Regiment as a 100-day militia. In November of 1864, Colonel John Chivington took the 3rd Colorado Militia to Fort Lyons, and along with elements of the 1st Colorado Regiment, attacked the peaceful village at Sand Creek. As a result of this massacre, the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho united with the Sioux to wage war on the invaders. In going north to the Powder River, they raided Julesburg and soldiers along the way.

In 1865, Brigadier General Connor took an expedition into the Powder River territory. General Connor built a fort along the Bozeman Trail, Fort Connor. While the campaign was not successful, there was a battle on the Tongue River.

In 1866, treaty negotiations were held at Fort Laramie. Unfortunately, Colonel Carrington arrived at the same time and informed Red Cloud that he was taking troops up the Bozeman Trail to establish three forts. Fort Connor was rebuilt and renamed Fort Reno. Carrington established Fort Phil Kearny at Piney Creek near the Bighorn Mountains. In 1866, Colonel Carrington sent Jim Bridger to guide troops up the Bozeman Trail to establish a final fort. They built Fort C. F. Smith along the Big Horn River in Montana. There were constant raids along the Bozeman Trail during this year.

In December 1866, there were two significant engagements around Fort Phil Kearny. On December 6th, a wood-cutting party was attacked, and a relief force was sent out from Fort Phil Kearny. Lieutenants Binghamton and Grummond were led astray by a decoy party led by Crazy Horse. Binghamton was killed, and Grummond was rescued. Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman, who had said earlier that he could ride through the entire Sioux nation with 80 men, was part of the rescue force and learned that the natives were better fighters than he had originally thought. Unfortunately, Grummond did not learn that lesson. On December 19th, a similar action was fought, but Captain Powel, who was in charge of the relief force, did not let himself be led away by the decoys. On December 21, 1866, a wood-cutting party was attacked. Fetterman led a relief force of about 60 infantry soldiers supported by Grummond with about 20 cavalry troopers. They were both told to relieve the wood-cutting part, but under no circumstances were they to cross Lodge Trail Ridge. Since Grummond's troops were mounted, they caught up with Fetterman's infantry about one-half mile from the fort and then proceeded behind them. Grummond was led over Lodge Trail Ridge by the decoy force again led by Crazy Horse, and Fetterman was forced to follow in support. The entire force was massacred.

The citizens in the east were outraged by the Fetterman Fight. and negotiators were sent to Fort Laramie to negotiate a treaty in 1867. Red Cloud refused to take part in the negotiations as long as there were forts on the Bozeman Trail. In August of 1867, the native warriors were divided as to where they should attack next, so they divided their forces and on August 1 attacked Fort C. F. Smith, resulting in the Hayfield Fight, and on August 2nd at Fort Phil Kearny in the Wagon Box Fight. Since the army had received breech-loading Springfield rifles in January 1867, the results were very different from the Fetterman Fight. However, it was too late. In 1868, the forts were abandoned by the army, and the native warriors burned all three to the ground. Red Cloud signed the treaty at Fort Laramie in 1868, which resulted in almost a decade of peace.

The three takeaways from this were that. First, treaties were made with the native nations, and then gold was discovered, which caused prospectors to violate the treaty lands, and war resulted. The second is that in this period, the army in the West was always short of soldiers, ammunition, food, and forage. The latter meant that the army was always trying to chase down what was arguably the best light cavalry in the world with underfed horses. The final thing was that there were depredations on both sides; both sides sought revenge, but neither side tried very hard to find the guilty parties; they settled for the weakest party.[1]

[1] I have chosen to use endnotes instead of in-text cites. I was told by one of my reviewers that this makes the article more readable.

Opposing Leaders

Red Cloud[1]

Red Cloud, 1880
John K. Hillers (CC BY-NC-SA)

Red Cloud (*Mahpiya Luta*) stated he was born in May of 1821, on Blue Water Creek, a tributary of the North Platte River in Western Nebraska. While this has been questioned by historians, Red Cloud never wavered in his insistence that this was the place of his birth. Red Cloud was an Oglala Sioux. The name Red Cloud was given sometime after his birth. Sioux men and women were given many names. The name Red Cloud may have come from an incident when many warriors clothed in red blankets were told "to cover the hillsides like a red cloud" (Larson, 1997, p. 33). Red Cloud maintained that the name Red Cloud was given to him when he joined a war party at sixteen, but he also said that it was a family name. It was not uncommon for Lakota to have different names at different stages of their lives. His father died when he was young, so his mother took him to live with her people, the Saone, or northern Lakota. He lived a typical childhood, moving around the area between the Republican River and the Yellowstone River following the bison. Red Cloud's leadership as a warrior was solidified in the Crow wars of 1861-1862. After the fights in the Powder River country, he became a spokesman for peace. His later life was filled with controversy, as he was involved in the surrender of Crazy Horse. Red Cloud died on December 10, 1909[2].

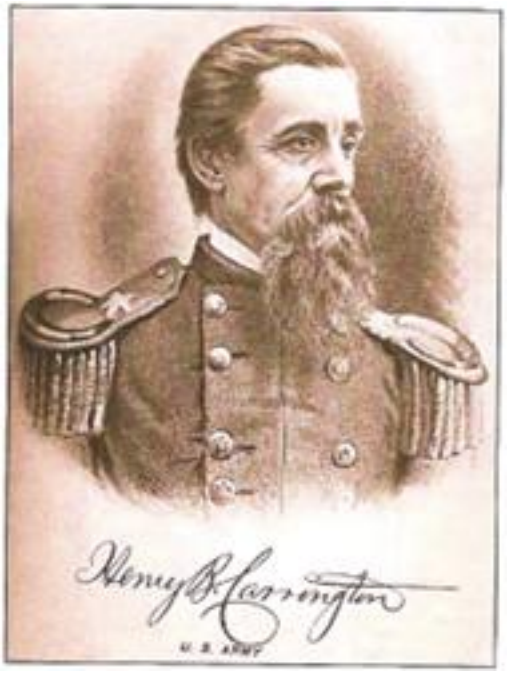
Crazy Horse[3]

There are no known photographs of Crazy Horse. This is the Crazy Horse Monument in South Dakota

Crazy Horse (*Ta-shunka-witco*) was probably born in 1840 near present-day Rapid City, South Dakota, and was a member of the Oglala tribe of the Lakota Nation[4]. In 1865, at the end of the Civil War, the Oglala revived a custom of Shirt-wearers. These were senior people in the tribe who would put aside selfishness and work for the good of the tribe; they provided moral leadership. Crazy Horse was one of these Shirt-wearers. He was not a chief, as is sometimes improperly asserted. He is largely a mystery to us, but he was also an enigma to his own people. An interesting fact about Crazy Horse is that he would only wear one feather. He had a dream in which he was told not to adorn himself. The only time that he was wounded, prior to his death, was on an occasion when he wore two feathers[5]. Crazy Horse was a natural guerrilla leader and was legendary among the Sioux[6].

Crazy Horse goes on to a bigger fight with the US Army at the Battle of the Greasy Grass (or "Little Big Horn") in 1876. He surrendered to US forces at Fort Robinson on May 7, 1877, and was subsequently bayonetted by Private William Gentles[7].

Colonel Henry B. Carrington[8]



Colonel Carrington was born in Wallingford, Connecticut, on March 2, 1824. His grandfather had been a business associate of Eli Whitney, and many of his relatives had been officers during the Revolutionary War, so he had an interest in military service. He became an ardent anti-slavery advocate when John Brown addressed his school in 1838. His health kept him from the Military Academy at West Point, so he attended Yale, graduating in 1845. He graduated from Yale Law School in 1848 and moved to Columbus, Ohio. In 1857, Ohio's governor, Solman P. Chase appointed him the Judge Advocate General of the Ohio Militia and then Adjutant-General in 1858. When the Civil War started, he was able to organize twenty-six regiments of volunteers. He never served with his regiment in the field. In recognition of his efforts, he was named the Colonel of the 18th U. S. Infantry Regiment. He went to Indiana and helped to raise regiments there. At the end of the war, he was promoted to Brevet Brigadier General. When the war ended, he was given permission to stay as the Colonel of the 18th U. S. Infantry. He resigned his commission in 1870 after his wife, Margaret, died. In 1871, he married Francis Grummond, the widow of Lieutenant Grummond. He also spent twenty years writing his classic study of the Revolutionary War, *Battles of the American Revolution,* and published *Washington the Soldier,* both of which continue to be studied today. He died on October 26, 1912, at his home in Hyde Park, Massachusetts[9].

Lieutenant Colonel (Brevet) William J. Fetterman[10]

Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman had been turned down by the Military Academy at West Point when he was 18 years old. He was working as a businessman when the Civil War broke out. He enlisted in Colonel Carrington's regiment at the age of 27. They had a close working relationship in the 18th Infantry Regiment. Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman served with distinction during the Civil War and rose to become the adjutant-general of nine regiments and was brevetted to Lieutenant Colonel for great gallantry and good conduct. Fetterman arrived at Fort Phil Kearny in November 1866 and was scheduled to assume command of the newly formed 27th Infantry Regiment when Colonel Carrington moved his 18th Infantry Regiment to the south along the trail[11].

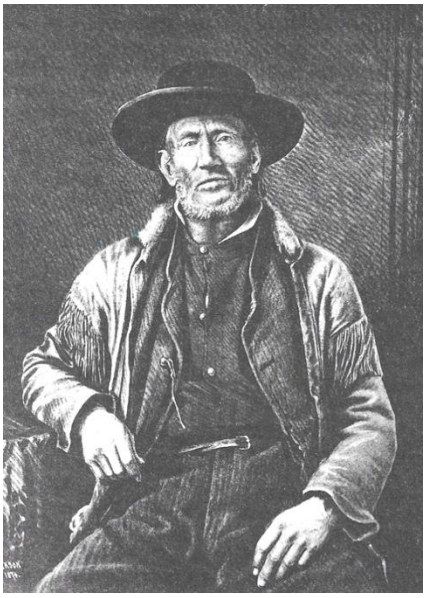
He was quickly a popular officer, due to his dashing character. He was impatient to punish the natives for the depredations they had committed. He also underestimated the fighting ability of the natives. Ironically, he had stated that "with eighty men he could ride through the Sioux nation" (Hebard et al., 2016, p. 181). On December 21, 1866, he took two other officers, seventy-eight men, and two civilians to their deaths against the natives[12].

Lieutenant George Washington Grummond[13]

George Washington Grummond was probably born in 1835 in St Clair County, Michigan. He enlisted on April 18, 1861, in the rank of First Sergeant of the 1st Infantry. He was promoted to the rank of Captain in August in the 1st Michigan Infantry. He was later promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in the 14th Michigan Infantry[14].

Lieutenant Grummond had served with distinction during the Civil War, rising to the brevet rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the 14th Michigan Infantry. His regiment took part in the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee in 1864. However, during the Civil War, he was relieved of his command after being accused of seeking to advance his career by racing into combat after being given orders to hold his position. This was a harbinger of things to come. At the war's end, he applied for a commission in the regular army and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant. He met his wife, Francis Courtney, in Tennessee in 1863 in Franklin, Tennessee, and married her after the Civil War. Apparently, Grummond was already married and was therefore a bigamist. His first wife divorced him shortly after his marriage to Francis. He and Francis arrived at Fort Phil Kearny in September 1866; he died on Massacre Ridge on December 21, 1866[15].

James "Jim" Bridger[16]



James "Jim" Bridger was born in Virginia on March 17, 1804. His family moved to Illinois, across from St. Louis, in 1812. In 1816, his mother died while his father was away. Jim and his siblings had to deal with it alone. His brother died the same year, possibly from the same illness that killed his mother. The following year, Jim's father died, and an aunt came to take care of Jim and his sister. Jim worked on a riverboat and apprenticed to a gunsmith named Creamer. In February 1822, an advertisement was posted in the *Missouri Gazette* looking for enterprising men to go into the mountains and trap for beaver. Jim joined Henry and the Ashley Fur Company and later was a partner in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company[17].

He acted as a guide for many civilian and military operations. He discovered South Pass out of southwest Wyoming and is credited as the first American (white man) to see the Great Salt Lake. In 1841, he guided a party bound for Oregon on what became the Oregon Trail. In 1848, he advised Captain Howard Stansbury of the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers on a route for the transcontinental railroad, south of South Pass, that was quicker and of a lower elevation. Bridger was present at Fort Laramie in 1851 for the signing of the treaty and gave useful advice to the commissioners. Of particular interest to this article is his role in the 1865 Powder River Expedition and guiding the army along the Bozeman Trail[18]. According to Enzler (2021), Margaret Carrington, in her book *Absaraka,* described Jim Bridger as: "To us he was invariably straightforward, truthful, and reliable. His sagacity, knowledge of woodcraft, and knowledge of the Indian was wonderful, and his heart was warm and his feelings tender wherever he confided or made a friend" (p.274). Bridger died on July 17, 1881, at the age of 72 in Westport, Missouri.

The Background of the Native Tribal Groups

The Plains Indians consisted of as many as ninety-five tribes, or perhaps sub-tribes. Many of whom were nomadic peoples who hunted and lived off the bison. Horses, which were not native to America, became a vital part of their ability to hunt the bison[19]. There were some sedentary nations along the Missouri River, such as the Mandan and Hidatsa, but they were frequently victims of raids by nomadic nations[20].

Warfare on the Plains

Two forces combined to change the natives' way of life and warfare. In the 1620s, the horse was introduced to the Plains from the south by the Spanish. The British introduced firearms in the 1700s from the north and east. There were pressures that moved many natives from the east to the west, especially into the northern plains. The nature of warfare also changed. Prior to the horse and firearms, the traditional way to wage war was to have warriors line up facing one another and taunt one another from their battle lines, sometimes for a whole day. The

way to earn victory came from rushing forward and touching an opponent with a hand, club or lance, this was known as counting coup. This did not usually result in large numbers of deaths on either side. The horse gave mobility, and firearms made warfare more lethal. Because the number of young warriors who were essential to the tribes for food and protection was small; large numbers of casualties were not acceptable. Warfare changed to raiding other villages for horses, known as cutting horses, the main symbol of wealth. Additionally, women and children became more frequent targets. The intensity and range of the tribal warfare increased in the early 1800s with the increased access to firearms. Another factor in the warfare between nations, and later whites, was that the native warriors made no distinction between killing men, women, and children, and would indiscriminately kill enemies[21].

The natives did not feel obliged to live up to the terms of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851. Nations constantly raided the territory of other nations. Warfare between the nations was constant and did not abate with the coming of the white frontiersmen. For example, the Pawnee were the enemy of many nations, including the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho. After the Sioux Uprising in Minnesota in 1862 while the Sioux became more hostile to the whites, their feud with the Pawnee did not abate. As a result, many Pawnee were anxious to join the Pawnee Scouts unit formed in 1864. By 1865, the alliance between the Tetons, Yanktonais, Cheyenne, and Arapahos created a fighting force of about 5,000 warriors, which exceeded the total population of many of the smaller tribes.[22] The Pawnee scouts will be part of the 1865 Powder River Expedition.[2]

The Coming of the Americans

The original attraction for the white people was the fur trade industry. The British Hudson Bay Company traded from the north and east, and the Spanish traded from St. Louis. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 caused the Americans to take an interest in the West. The coming of the Americans also brought diseases to the nations for which they had no natural immunity. For example, the smallpox epidemic of 1780-1781 devastated many villages[23].

The main native actors in this story are the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Sioux, and Crow. These represent two language groups, the Algonquin and Siouan language groups. The Algonquin peoples are represented in this article by the Arapaho and Cheyenne; the Siouan peoples are represented by the Crow and Sioux[24].

The Arapaho

The Arapahos, whose name is derived from a Crow term for "Tattooed People" or a Pawnee word that meant "Trader". The Arapahoe called themselves *Hinono'ei'* (singular) and *Hinono'eino* (plural), which translates to “Our People,” “Cloud People,” or “Wrongrooters”[25]. In 1800, their population was between 3,000 and 5,000[26].

After crossing the frozen straits separating Siberia from America, the Algonquin peoples went to the Great Lakes, and their whereabouts were unknown. In the 1600s, they reappeared and reestablished their westward migration. They crossed the upper Missouri River between Big Dry Ford and the mouth of the Milk River. They walked into the plains, traveling as far as present-day northwestern Montana[27]. By the 19th century, they had moved to Wyoming and

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[2] The story of conflict between the nations is a very complex subject and is well beyond the scope of this article. However, if you are interested there is a great book *Counting Coup and Cutting Horses,* by Anthony McGinnis (1990) that covers the subject very well.

Eastern Colorado. They were typically aligned with the Sioux and the Northern Cheyenne and preyed upon the more sedentary nations, such as the Pawnee, Otoes, Omaha, and other small bands[28].

The Cheyenne

The Cheyenne people, who had been pastoral hunters in the Great Lakes region of Minnesota, were of Algonquin heritage. The word Cheyenne comes from the Siouan language *Shai ena*, which means "people who speak with a strange tongue." At the end of the ice age, the Algonquin people probably came north from the lower Mississippi Valley. By the 19th century, raids by Siouan nations forced them onto the plains. The Northern Cheyenne lived north of the Platte River, and the Southern Cheyenne roamed along the Arkansas River[29]. In the early 19th century, they lived from the Yellowstone River to the Upper Arkansas River. In the early 18th century, their population was about 3,500 people[30].

The Lakota (Sioux)

The Sioux are a branch of the Siouan language family. The name Sioux is from a French word meaning enemy. The Siouan linguistic family is second only to the Algonquin in size. They came north to Minnesota from the southeastern part of the United States. About the time of Columbus, the Iroquois pushed them north and west. The Iroquois were armed with European weapons that they had traded for with the French and British. These weapons allowed them to push many other tribes west. The seven Sioux nations are Mdewakanton, Sisseton, Wahpekute, Wahpeton, Yankton, Yanktonai, and Teton. The Tetons became the most numerous of the seven. Lakota is a term for Tetons, which they currently prefer. There were several tribes in the Lakota nation[31]. By the late 19th century, there were about 12,500 Lakota people[32].

The Crow

A final group was the Crow. The Crow was a very powerful nation because they had obtained horses earlier than most of the other nations on the Northern Plains[33]. The Crow referred to themselves as *Absaroke*, after the bird in the area. The Crow people were traditionally located south of Lake Winnipeg. By the 18th century, they had moved to southwestern Montana and northern Wyoming[34]. The Crow were in the upper Yellowstone River, and fought everyone around them, including the Blackfeet, Assiniboins, Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Pawnee, and Shoshoni nations[35]. By the late 18th century, the population was approximately 4,000 people[36].

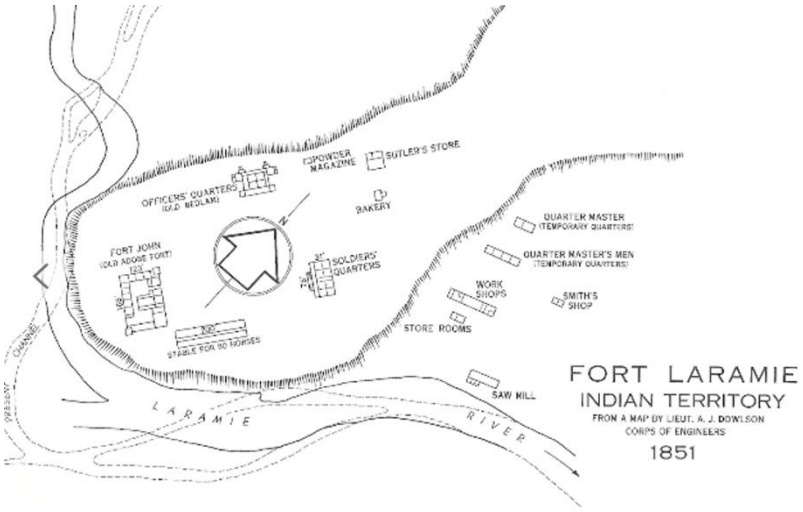
While the Powder River country has been called the land of the Sioux, it had been the land of the Crow ("Absaraka") for years. According to Hebard et al. (2016), when Colonel Carrington asked Black Kettle, a Cheyenne chief, why the Sioux and the Cheyenne claimed the land that belonged to the Crow, he answered:

> The Sioux helped us. We stole the hunting grounds of the Crows because they were the best. The white man is along the great waters, and we wanted more room. We fight the Crows because they will not take half and give us peace with the other half (p. 152)

Fort Laramie and the Treaty of 1851

The Fort

Fort Laramie 1851[37]



Fort Laramie was named for a French-Canadian fur trapper Jacques LaRamee. That a person with this name ever existed is doubted by some historians.[3] The name was modified to the current spelling Laramie, which was also the name for the river that ran near the fort[38].

Fort Laramie was the most substantial fort along the Oregon Trail. It was about 184 miles west of Julesburg, and many Indian conferences were held there. All the buildings were on the south side of the North Platte River at the confluence with the Laramie River. The original fort was constructed in 1843 by William Sublet as a fur trading post. It was later sold to Fontenelle, and the name was changed to Fort John. Occasionally, the fort was called Fort Laramie on the North Platte, but it was not commonly known by the name of Laramie until the American Fur Company built a new building on a nearby site. The original post was on the left Bank of the Laramie River about 1 mile above the junction with the North Platte. It was established on the final site and was renamed Fort Laramie, named for a French fur trapper, Jacques Laramie. The fort was sold to the government in 1849 and remained a government facility until it was sold to a private entity in 1890[39].

The Treaty of 1851

In early 1851, Congress authorized Commissioners D. D. Mitchell and Thomas Fitzpatrick to conduct treaty talks with the Plains Indians. They chose Fort Laramie as the meeting place, and various tribes were asked to come by September 1, 1851. The natives gathered around the fort for days, the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho mingled freely, but tensions mounted when their enemies, the Snakes and Crows, arrived. Jim Bridger came with the Shoshones and helped to keep the peace between them and the Sioux. His knowledge of the nations and their historical areas was invaluable in setting the areas in the treaty. Most of the difficulties in the area were grazing and the late arrival of the wagon train with gifts. The estimates are that there were approximately 10,000 natives who showed up for the treaty talks[40] .

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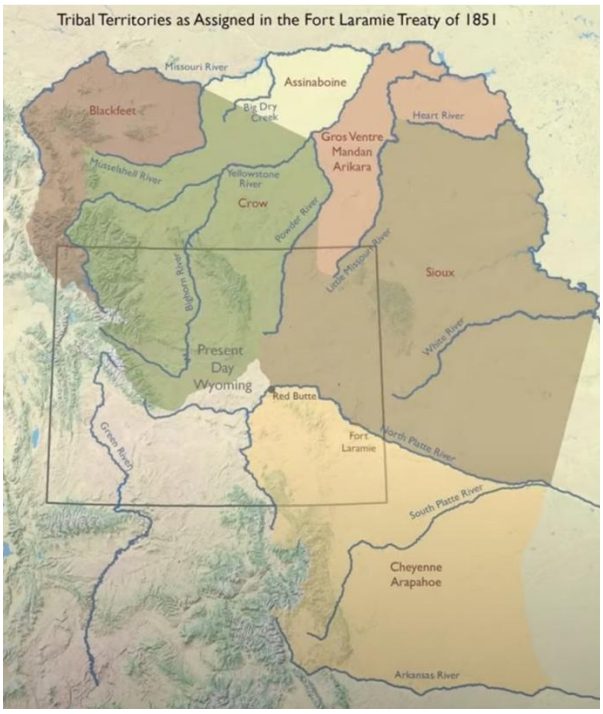
[3] On July 31, 2025, I visited Fort Laramie. I asked the rangers, and they said that descendants of Jacques LaRamee had visited the park These descendants maintained that they had valid documentation that he did exist. Jim Rairdon

The Tribal Territories of 1851[41]

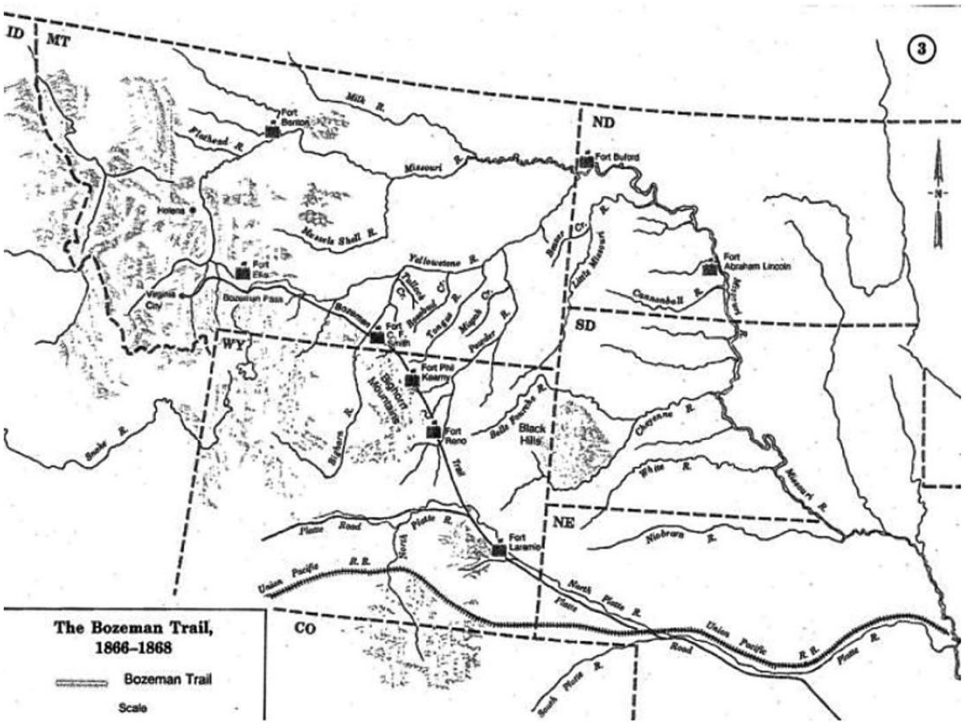


In 1851, the U.S. government signed a treaty with the Oglala Sioux, the Arapahos, and the Cheyenne, representing about 6,000 Indians. The figure shows the territories of the tribes in 1851, which largely reflected the nations' locations in 1800. The terms of the treaty donated to the nations $50,000 per year for 50 years, the amount to be distributed in supplies and goods. Added to this, they set aside a tract of land to preserve the native hunting grounds of 123,000 square miles. In return, the nations agreed not to fight the soldiers located at the stations along the Oregon Trail. Unfortunately, when ratifying the treaty, the U.S. Senate reduced the period from fifty years to fifteen years. Even though this treaty was made with the best intentions, its provisions would be ignored by whites and the natives, leading to years of war[42].

The Bozeman Trail

After the Civil War, the United States had an enormous debt. The country needed gold to back up the "greenbacks" that they were issuing[43]. The discovery of gold in Montana in 1862 led to calls for a quicker route to Virginia City, MT. There were three possible routes to the gold fields. In 1865, the army sent an expedition to the Powder River country to try to stop attacks on the stage stations. In 1866, the War Department sent Colonel Carrington into the Powder River country with orders to keep the Bozeman Trail to the gold fields in Montana open [44].

Map of the Bozeman Trail[45]



In 1866, Congressman James Ashley asked the Secretary of War which of three routes to Virginia City should be selected: the wagon road from the Missouri River: the Bridger Trail or the Bozeman Trail. Colonel Henry Maynadier asked Jim Bridger for his input. He described in detail the route from the Missouri River and explained that it was entirely practical. Colonel Henry Maynadier thought that the cost for miners for steamboat passage would be high, but it would be much less than the cost of a war in the Powder River country. Bridger thought that the trail he opened on the west side of the Bighorn Mountains (the Bridger Trail) would be the safest and the least expensive. Jim Bridger argued for the use of the Bridger Trail and warned of the hostilities if they insisted on using the Bozeman Trail. The Army selected the Bozeman Trail as the quickest route to the goldfields, despite the advice of the most knowledgeable person in the area, and the natives demonstrated willingness to fight over their hunting grounds. This was a decision that the Army was going to pay for in blood[46].

In the spring of 1862, John M. Bozeman came to Montana from Colorado along with eleven others to work the new gold fields. In the winter of 1862-1863, Bozeman and John M. Jacobs left Bannack to find an easier route to Wyoming. Along the way, they were attacked by Sioux on the Powder River. They took everything that Bozeman and Jacobs had. They were left afoot without any provisions. They finally made their way to the Missouri River. Bozeman was able to lead a group back up the trail on what became known as The Bozeman Trail; the Bozeman Pass and Bozeman City were also named for him[47].

The Bozeman Trail (see the figure above) goes north from Fort Sedgewick, North Platte to Fort Laramie on the North Platte, then northwest into the Powder River country on the east side of the Bighorn mountains. The trail continued west over Dubois Creek to Clark's Fork and the Stillwater on the Boulder to the Yellowstone, where, some few miles northwest of Bozeman Pass by ferry, the road continues through the pass to Bozeman City, hence to Virginia City. The difficulty in using this route was that it led into the heart of the Nation's territory. This invasion was forbidden by the treaty. The 1851 treaty was renewed and amended in 1865. Hebard & Brininstool (2016) wrote:

> The beginning of the contest for territorial possession was in the raids by the Indians; the results were the Platte Bridge fight, the Powder River Indian Expedition, the Fetterman

disaster, and the Wagon Box and Hayfield fights. The finale occurred at Custer's battle at the Little Big Horn (p. 57).

As the goldfields in Montana became more attractive, more people wanted to take the shortest route to them by way of the Bozeman Trail. The natives were particularly upset about this invasion of their precious territory, these traditional hunting grounds (Hebard et al., 2016).

The American Civil War caused garrisons in the West to be reduced in size, and the natives took advantage of this to make war. In 1862, the natives raided and burned many of the stage stations along the Platte route. The raids prompted the relocation of the people on stage routes south to the Overland Trail. In 1864, after an attempt to make peace failed, General R. B. Mitchell ordered the defenses along the road to South Pass strengthened. Continued efforts to make peace with the natives were made unattainable by the Sand Creek Massacre in November 1864[48].

In the spring of 1865, the Southern Cheyenne joined forces with a Northern Cheyenne camped near the Platte River Bridge. In that Spring, when food was plentiful for the ponies, the tribes banded together to move towards the immigrant trail. There were daily instances of natives trying to draw soldiers out into the open and chase them across the bridge. Hundreds of natives would suddenly appear from unexpected positions to sweep down on the unsuspecting soldiers. Notwithstanding these elaborate efforts to draw soldiers into an open conflict, no great depredations were committed. On July 26, Lieutenant Caspar Wever Collins[4] and his troops were killed in a raid[49].

By 1865, Montana's population was 120,000, who were fed and furnished with supplies that were not produced within the territory. Bozeman City was just west of Bozeman Pass. In 1867, Fort Ellis was built to guard the pass, which was within 160 miles of hostile natives to the east. In 1867, messengers brought word to the soldiers guarding the pass of the desperate conditions of the garrison at Fort C.F. Smith. The information started Bozeman and his companions on the trail, a journey that cost Bozeman his life[50].

The Sand Creek Massacre

The battles in the Powder River territory had a Colorado connection. In 1864, the Hungate family was murdered and mutilated about 28 miles southeast of Denver, in what is now the town of Elizabeth in northeast Elbert County. The bodies were displayed in Denver, and Governor Evan raised the 3rd Colorado Militia as a 100-day militia[51].

[4] Casper Wyoming was named for Lieutenant Collins. They did not name it Collins, because Fort Collins in Colorado, was already named after his father, already existed.

The Sand Creek Massacre Painting[52]

Prelude to the Massacre

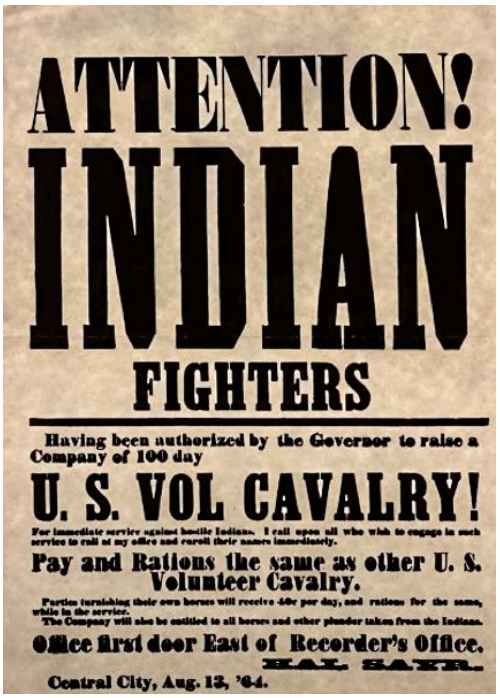
The discovery of gold in Colorado in the summer of 1859 had sparked incursions into the territory that had been ceded to the Cheyenne and Arapaho in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 (see the figure above). There were many encounters between natives and troops. In 1837-38 the Cheyenne Dog Men (aka Dog Soldiers) were considered an outlaw branch of the Southern Cheyenne. On April 12, 1864, north of the South Platte River, the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers encountered Second Lieutenant Clark Dunn (1st Colorado Cavalry) in a running engagement in which the Dog Soldiers, who were on the way to join the Northern Cheyenne in a raid on the Crow, were chased off. There is conflicting information about the casualties. It appears that there were three wounded, no deaths in the cavalry, and some unknown number of wounded on the Cheyenne side[53].

And there were engagements between Colorado troops and the Cheyenne in April and May 1864. On May 5, Colonel John Chivington, as Commander of the District of Colorado, ordered Major Edward Wynkoop to Fort Lyon; he arrived on May 8.[5] Fort Lyon was a sandstone garrison on the site of Bent's New Fort, a trading post built in 1853 on the Arkansas River, and sold to the Army in 1859. On May 9, Wynkoop had heard of a Southern Cheyenne encampment near Fort Lyon that was not attacking whites and assumed they were not a threat. Wynkoop was not the only one concerned about defending against the dangers of hostile natives. Governor John Evans realized that Indians posed a real threat to the white population, and he appointed

[5] Both Chivington and Wynkoop were heroes of the Union effort in March 1862 that turned back a brigade of Texans who were on a mission to capture Colorado's gold and silver mines for the Confederacy.

Major General Samuel Curtis, General of Volunteers; he was a victor over the Confederates at Pea Ridge in Arkansas, March 6-8, 1862[54], and at Westport, Missouri, October 23, 1864[55].

Recruiting Poster for 3rd CO Cavalry[56]


ATTENTION!
INDIAN
FIGHTERS
Having been authorized by the Governor to raise a Company of 100 day
U. S. VOL CAVALRY!
For immediate service against hostile Indians. I call upon all who wish to engage in such service to call at my office and enroll their names immediately.
Pay and Rations the same as other U. S. Volunteer Cavalry.
Parties furnishing their own horses will receive 40c per day, and rations for the same, while in the service.
The Company will also be entitled to all horses and other plunder taken from the Indians.
Office first door East of Recorder's Office.
Central City, Aug. 13, '64.

In the spring of 1864, as the weather improved, the incidents between settlers and natives increased. Attacks by the natives continued and happened closer to settled areas. A breaking point occurred on June 11, 1864, when Nathan Hungate, his wife, and two daughters were killed by an unknown band of natives[57]. Nathan Hungate and a ranch hand named Miller were away from the Van Worner Ranch when they saw smoke. Miller went for help and Hungate raced toward the ranch and was murdered. He was found about a mile from the house. The warriors had raped, murdered, and scalped his wife, Ellen, and nearly decapitated the two children, Laura (age two) and Florence (age five months). All were mutilated. When their mutilated bodies were displayed in Denver, the citizens were enraged. On June 28, 1864, Governor Evans issued a proclamation to "friendly Indians" to go to federal forts or be considered hostile. In August, Governor Evans called for men to volunteer for 100 days[58]. The figure at the left shows that they would be entitled to keep any plunder that they took.

Major Wynkoop was concerned about the threat from the Southern Cheyenne. He asked headquarters for specific instructions on how to deal with them. Colonel Chivington did not answer his concerns[59].

Prelude to Infamy

On September 4, 1864, Major Wynkoop received a letter from Black Kettle, a Southern Cheyenne chief, professing peace. There was a massive village 40 miles northeast of Fort Lyon. The letters also stated that the Indians held seven white captives. On September 7, 1864, Major Wynkoop, along with Captains Soule and Cramer and 127 troops and two howitzers, leaving a detachment of infantry that had recently arrived from the Department of New Mexico to guard Fort Lyon, went to meet with Black Kettle[60].

On September 10th, he met with the Cheyenne leaders Black Kettle, Black Wolf, White Antelope; Dogman called Bull Bear and Arapahoe, Left Hand (Niwot), Little Raven, Neva, and Big Mouth. Wynkoop told them to release the prisoners and come to Fort Lyon. Governor Evans could make peace. While Major Wynkoop was talking, 500 Indians surrounded the troops and forced them away from the howitzers. They raided the supply wagon. When informed, Black Kettle left his bivouac and ordered the Indians to leave. They did, but they set a grass fire, forcing the troops to relocate. Black Kettle defended the situation[61].

On September 12, 1864, Laura Roper was returned by Neva and several other Cheyenne. Daniel Marble was returned by Black Kettle, who was captured August 8, 1864, along with the pregnant Nancy Morton, who miscarried five days later because of her mistreatment. She was returned in January 1865 at Fort Laramie. Three-year-old Isabelle Ewbanks (aka Eubanks) was

brought to Wynkoop by a Cheyenne woman. Not returned were Lucinda and Willie Ewbanks, Isabelle's mother and infant brother. In June of 1865, six months after her release (and seven months after the massacre), Lucinda said that she was separated from her daughter, Isabelle, and had not seen her daughter during her captivity. Lucinda had been traded to a Sioux named Two Face[62].

On September 17, 1864, Wynkoop travelled to Denver City with seven Indian leaders to see Governor Evans, but Evans rebuffed the peace offers. Major Wynkoop realized that he was out of favor. On September 28, Major General Samuel R. Curtis, who at the time was the commander of the Department of Kansas, wrote to Colonel Chivington stating that he thought that "Left Hand" (Niwot) was a friendly chief, but no peace was to be made without his direction[63]. On September 29, 1864, Governor Evans wrote to Indian Agent Colley that he had listened to the chiefs and Wynkoop, but he had declined to make a treaty[64].

On October 7, 1864, Major General Curtis sent Major Scott Anthony to Fort Lyon to take command from Major Wynkoop. Major Anthony arrived on November 2, 1864, and replaced him on November 5, 1864. Major Anthony ordered the Arapaho and Cheyenne away from Fort Lyon. On November 10, 1864, Company D of the 3rd Colorado Cavalry skirmished with the possibly peaceful natives at White Butte Creek. Majors Wynkoop and Anthony told Black Kettle and Left Hand that they would be safe at the Sand Creek encampment[65].

On September 26, 1864, Major Anthony sent the American, Mr. James S. Smith, to the Sand Creek camp to determine their numbers and intentions. With Mr. Smith, in addition to his mixed-race son John, was a soldier, David Louderbach (Co D, 1st Colorado), and a man named Watson, who was an employee of Mr. D. D. Cooley, the father of the agent Major Cooley. Mr. Smith was in the camp on the morning of November 29, and when the natives saw the troops, they asked him to see what they wanted. Major Anthony employed One-Eye, a Cheyenne, to be a spy. One-Eye died during the attack[66]. There were other mixed-race men in the village, including George and Charles Bent, the sons of Colonel Bent, who built Bent's Old Fort[67].

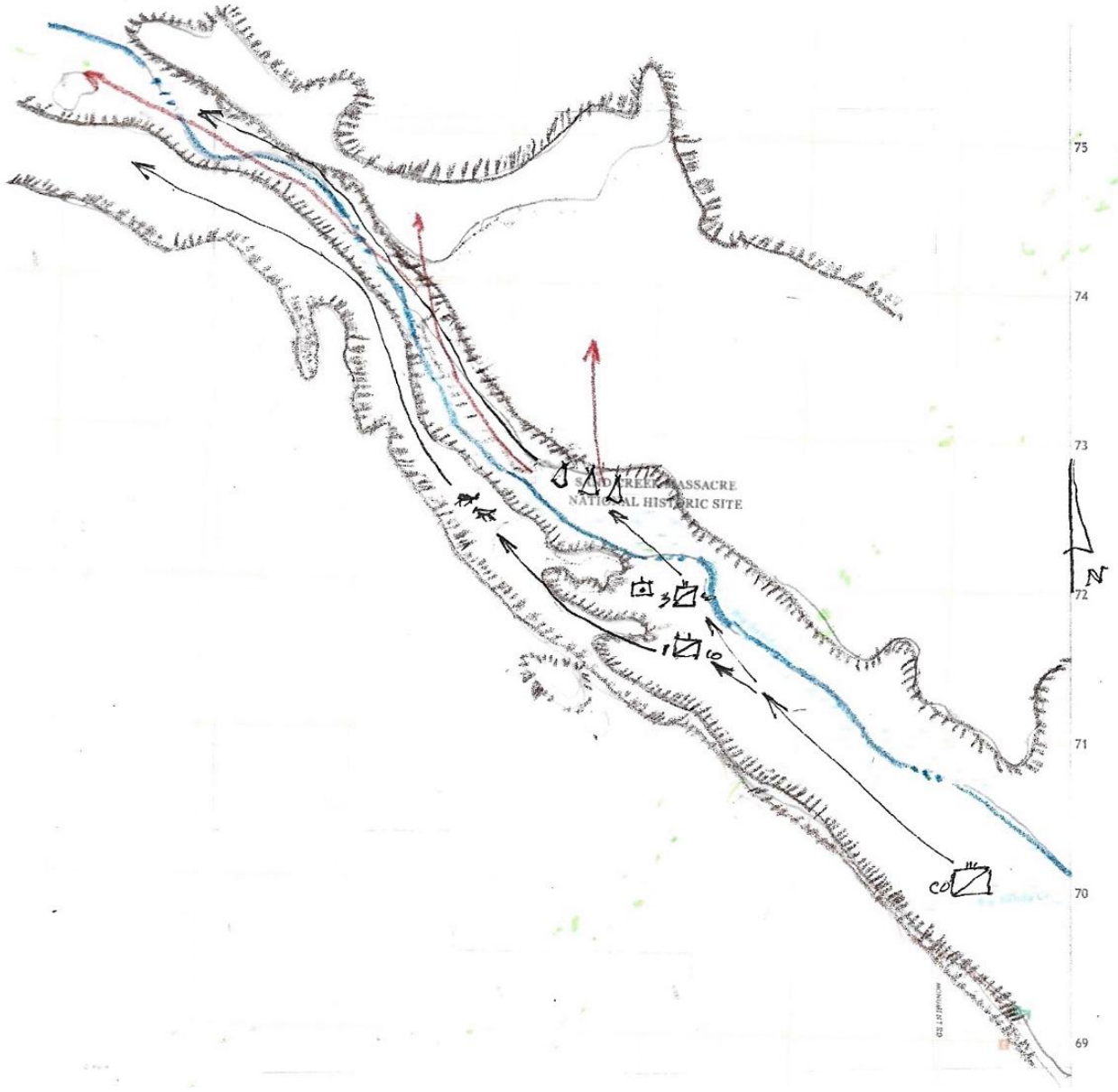
The Attack

Depiction of Black Kettle's tipi[68]

Colonel Chivington was anxious for a victory, and he knew that his 100-day volunteers' enlistments were expiring. In October 1864, the 3rd Colorado Cavalry finally received the saddles, horses, etc. that they needed so they could engage in offensive operations. Colonel Chivington departed Denver City and arrived at Fort Lyon on November 28. he closed the post and refused permission for anyone to leave. He briefed the officers of the 1st Colorado. Lieutenant Joseph Cramer objected to attacking the friendly natives, and Captain Silas Soule also opposed Colonel Chivington that night[69]. According to Major Anthony's testimony, the fact that there were between 2500 and 3000 hostile natives within 100 miles of Fort Lyon[70].

Colonel Chivington took the 3rd Colorado with approximately 450 troops, the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Colorado with 100 to 125 troops, and Major Anthony's troops, for a total of 675 to 700 troops, along with four howitzers. After they had gone about 35 miles, they dropped their excess equipment and reached the target village of approximately 100 lodges and 500 people, two-thirds of whom were women and children. At dawn on the 29th, they attacked[71].

The Sand Creek Massacre Map (drawn by authhor)



Lieutenant Wilson of the 1st Colorado Cavalry (Companies C, E, and F) charged across what was called Sand Creek (or in some sources Big Sandy Creek) and captured the pony herd. Captain Soule of the 1st Colorado Cavalry refused to fire upon the women and children. The 3rd Colorado Cavalry attacked the village and killed indiscriminately. The Arapahoe and Cheyenne retreated north and took refuge in a series of three sand pits[72]. As depicted in the figure above, Black Kettle's tent had an American flag and a white flag[73].

The Native Experience

From the Cheyenne and Arapaho perspective, the first indication of the attack came when Edmund Guerrier was awakened by a Cheyenne woman telling him that "there were a lot of

soldiers coming" (Kraft, 2020, p. 208). He left his tipi and went towards John Smith's tent. At this point, soldiers were about three-quarters of a mile away from the village, and Smith had heard approaching horses and had already pulled on his pants. Black Kettle and White Antelope emerged from their lodges. An American flag and a white flag flew from the lodgepole of Black Kettle's tipi. Black Kettle believed that they were in the place that Major Wynkoop told them to go. Black Kettle called for the people not to run, that they were at peace, and they had been promised protection. Private Louderback started to talk to the attacking troops. The Cheyenne implored Smith to go to the troops and see what they wanted. R. W. Clark followed Smith, and when Clark realized what was happening, he grabbed a white skin and jumped in Smith's wagon, waving "the flag of truce." He thought they were artillery, and they wanted to shell the camp. At this point, there is no chance of avoiding bloodshed. Lieutenant Wilson's command fired at Smith[74].

One incident occurred when a 6-year-old girl came out with a white flag. She was shot down after taking a few steps. The 3rd Colorado participated in many mutilations and atrocities. The village was destroyed. While Major Anthony had originally supported the attack, he was horrified by what he saw during and after the fight[75].

Smith retreated to his lodge; when he saw soldiers shooting at his father, he ran for his life, and he had nothing to fight with. White Antelope walked towards the soldiers to talk to them. The soldiers shot him; he fell into the creek bed mortally wounded. Later his scalp nose and ears were cut off as well as his penis and testicles. Soldiers directed their fire to where Black Kettle stood near a lodge, talking to his wife Medicine Woman Later. A round, maybe more than one, hit her, and she fell, and he saw no signs of life; thinking her dead, he fled. About this time, One Eye and his wife circled towards the creek bed. Both tried to express their non-hostility, but the soldiers murdered them. George Bent, a half-Cheyenne son of William Bent (sometimes called Colonel) who built Bent's Old Fort, was living with his stepmother's people. He was alarmed by the shooting and woke up; after seeing White Antelope fall, he went into his tipi, grabbed his weapons. He chased older warriors away from the creek bed towards Sand Hill. Bent and others made a stand, and soldiers converged on them. They jumped back down into the creek bed, and almost immediately, soldiers began firing at them from another direction. Bent and some of the other warriors scrambled for a sandpit. Black Kettle dug-in, in perhaps, the third sandpit. He almost reached the protective ditch after he was shot and fell back but was able to crawl away. Major Scott Anthony later stated, "The banks upon the side of the creek were two to three feet high, in some places as high as 10 feet" (Kraft 2020, p. 211). Some people were still in their tipis when they heard the pounding of hoofs and the gunfire. A naked woman screamed and grabbed her children, wrapping them in a blanket. They ran for their lives; soldiers were to the west, to the east, and to the south. Cheyenne and Arapaho women and children who could, fled to the northwest and north. Soldiers cut off some of the escape routes[76].

A 15-year-old girl *Mo-nahs-e-tah*, the daughter of Little Rock and Skunk Woman, kept her head and grabbed the hand of her younger brother, Little Rock, and sister, Playing Crane, scrambled up the mostly dry creek bed as fast as possible. Behind them, perhaps 135 people were dead. They covered over a mile, but the soldier had reached the top of the bluffs, a bullet struck her in the back of her leg below the knee, forcing her to crawl up in pain with her brother and sister, not knowing if she would see another day[77].

At this time, Major Anthony's battalion (1st Colorado) pulled up behind Colonel Chivington and dismounted his troops. Colonel Chivington ordered them to remount and reminded his men that women and children had been raped by natives. Perhaps 100 warriors

made a stand against the troops. The 3rd Colorado who had an absolute minimum of training became an uncontrollable mob[78].

The soldiers failed to completely cut off the escape route to the north, and some natives found a gap. There were three escape routes: the first from the northwestern portion of the extended village; the second from roughly the center of the village and then turned north into the first sandpit that people had dug with their hands near the creek's waterflow; the third was near Left Hand and Sand Creek's camps on the eastern side of the encampment. Some of the people ran past the 3rd Colorado and followed Sand Creek upstream. The troopers followed them perhaps 10 miles, attempting to kill everyone[79].

Guerrier ran north and encountered White Antelope's daughter driving a herd of ponies. She gave him a horse to ride, so they rode to Smoky Hill. A wounded Charles Bent made his way to the sandpits and then encountered Lieutenant Mariano Autobee (Company H, 3rd Colorado), who took him to Captain Soule, who had ordered his men not to fire on the women and children. Many were not as lucky. After a few hours, the soldiers had control of the village and went about killing every native who had not escaped[80].

The bloodbath continued. Lieutenant James Olney (1st Colorado) watched as three women and five children were presented to Lieutenant Harry Richmond (3rd Colorado), who scalped the women and children while they were screaming for mercy. Somewhere, warriors held out in the sandpits dug in the creek bed. The night before the attack, Colonel Chivington told Major Anthony that he did not want any prisoners. Roughly 5 hours after the initial attack, Major Anthony received orders to move towards Fort Lyon[81].

Sometime after the meeting, at about 1400 hours, between Major Anthony and Colonel Chivington, Captain Soule, not knowing of Anthony's earlier interchange with Colonel Chivington, asked if he could take Colonel Bent's son, Charles, home. Colonel Chivington did not care about having him back. Colonel Chivington's reaction to Soule's request was strange since roughly an hour earlier, he told Anthony he did not want any captives taken. Jack Smith remained a prisoner in his tipi[82].

The Aftermath

Some of the warriors escaped and made it to Smoky Hill. There were hostile natives at Smoky Hill, and they brought food and clothing to the refugees from Sand Creek[83].

Colonel Chivington was well aware of a hostile village at Republican River and Smoky Hill River, but he chose instead to attack a peaceful village at Sand Creek instead of a hostile village. Colonel Chivington claimed that his horses were worn out, so he retreated to Fort Lyon. Many of the people in the east were outraged by the attack on Sand Creek, and the violence increased[84]. This led to some twenty years of violence.

On December 28, 1864, the 3rd Colorado was mustered out. After the first of the year, Colonel Thomas Moonlight replaced Colonel Chivington as the commander of the District of Colorado. Shortly afterwards, a Congressional investigation was launched[85]. In testimony before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, indicating his attitude at the time of the attack, according to Various Authors (2016), Colonel Chivington said:

> When a tribe of Indians is at war with the whites, it is impossible to determine what party or band of the tribe or the name of the Indian or Indians belonging to the tribe so at war are guilty of the acts of hostility (p. 108).

This statement is false. Given the proximity of the two different encampments, it would have been very easy to tell peaceful from hostile. The Army was prevented from charging Colonel

Chivington because he had been released from the service. The investigation came to the west on February 1, 1865, when Colonel Moonlight issued orders setting the investigation of the massacre. Many of the board members were veterans of the 1st Colorado Cavalry[86].

When Chivington returned to Denver, he bragged that he was now a greater Indian fighter than Kit Carson. According to Enzler (2021), Carson replied:

> To think of that dog Chivington, and his hounds, up thar at Sand Creek! Whoever heerd of sich doings among Christians! … I never yit drew a bead on a squaw or papoose and I loath and hate the man that would (p. 253).

While Colonel Chivington's attack at Sand Creek caused outrage in the eastern United States, the reaction from the Cheyenne and Arapaho was stronger. Any hope of peace was extinguished. Black Kettle retreated to a Cheyenne camp at the Smoky Hill River and sent a war pipe to other tribes, including the Sioux. By late December, some 800 lodges were encamped together, many of them were Oglala and Brule. Then came a 400-mile march north, which probably resulted in more white deaths than the number of natives killed at Sand Creek[87]. After Captain Soule testified against Colonel Chivington, he was murdered in the streets of Denver on April 23, 1865. Although his killers were known, none were ever prosecuted for the crime[88].

On January 7, 1865, about a thousand warriors attacked the small community of Julesburg, Colorado, and overwhelmed the soldiers of the 7th Iowa Cavalry that responded from Fort Rankin. The 7th lost fourteen men. On February 7th, the natives returned and burned the town to the ground as citizens and soldiers watched from the nearby fort. Attacks continued along the South Platte River. The warriors moved north, and the Powder River Indian Expedition of 1865 was conceived and launched. Colonel William Collins (see footnote 3 above) from Fort Laramie rushed troops to Mud Springs and Rush Creek to intercept the raiders. However, the raiders were so numerous, Collins could not pursue them[89].

The 1865 Powder River Expedition

The Powder River Expedition Painting[90]

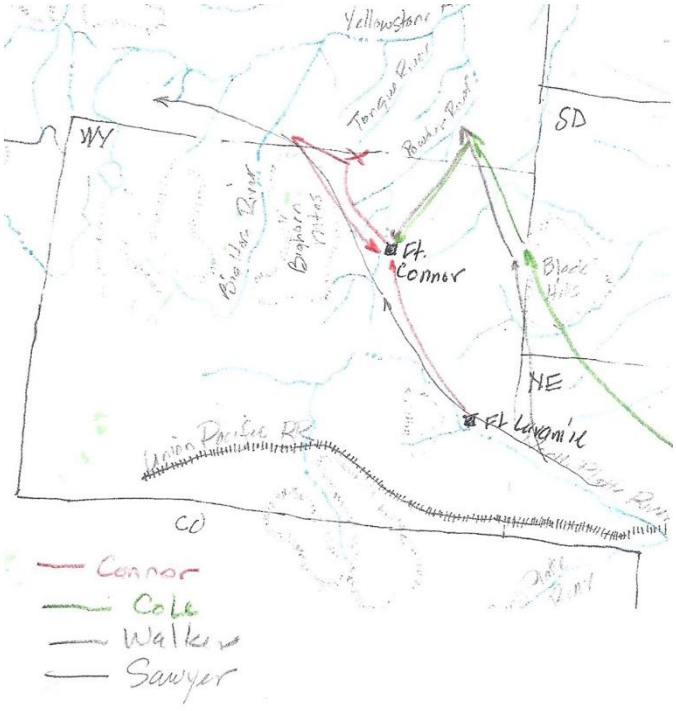
The campaign was originally designed to be a two-pronged attack into the Powder River country to secure the lines of communication. Brigadier General Alfred Sully, a very experienced fighter in the west, was to take the eastern column from Sioux City, Iowa to the Black Hills Mountains. Brigadier General Connor was to lead his western column from Fort Laramie along the Bozeman Trail and establish a fort. Supply problems hounded Brigadier General Connor from the start. He was short of forage to keep his horses fed. Three hundred ponies were sent to him from Canada, but they proved unserviceable for operations in the west. In early May, Brigadier General Connor established his headquarters in Julesburg[91].

When Jim Bridger arrived at Fort Laramie on April 29, 1865, he found the corpse of Cheyenne chief Big Crow hanging from a scaffold. Big Crow was arrested in February for his part in the Julesburg raids. Because a soldier was killed a mile and a half from the fort, Brigadier General Patrick Connor ordered that Big Crow be taken to that spot and hanged. His body was left hanging there. On May 3, 1865, Jim Bridger guided Colonel Thomas Moonlight and 500 cavalrymen to the Wind River and Bighorn country looking for a camp of 300 lodges of the Cheyenne raiders. When they returned to Fort Laramie, Jim Bridger found Oglala leaders Two Face and Black Crow in the stockade, who were accused of abusing Lucinda Ewbanks (aka Eubanks), who was captured in Colorado in 1864 and passed around and raped by various natives. The chiefs also bragged of killing Americans and voted to continue doing so if they were released. Colonel Moonlight had them hanged and left on the gallows. Jim Bridger warned that this type of display would have consequences for white settlers. Jim Bridger was hired as chief guide at $10.00 per day. The guides were invaluable because there were no detailed maps of the area[92].

The expedition got off to a rocky start when Major General Pope had to send Brigadier General Sully's troops to deal with a situation in Minnesota. The shortage of soldiers and supplies was also a problem. The Civil War ended in April, and on May 1, there were over one million soldiers in the Army. During the summer and fall, 800,963 of them were discharged. Therefore, Brigadier General Connor would be on his own in dealing with the natives in the Powder River country. His eastern forces consisted of the 12th Missouri Cavalry, the 2nd Missouri Light Artillery, which had just been converted to cavalry, and started from Omaha. Brigadier General Sully was dispatched elsewhere, so this column was commanded by Colonel Nelson Cole. Unfortunately, Omaha was not a good choice as a starting place, as it resulted in a march of about 500 miles through uncharted wilderness[93].

The western column, which included the 6th Michigan Cavalry Regiment, was dispatched to Brigadier General Connor from the Michigan Cavalry Brigade. The Michigan Cavalry Brigade was commanded by Colonel James H. Kidd. They had fought with Major General George A. Custer in the East Cavalry Battle on the third day at Gettysburg. The morale in the 6th Michigan was low. They thought that they should be discharged when the Civil War ended in April. In addition to the 6th Michigan, there were the 7th Iowa Cavalry and the 16th Kansas Cavalry[94].

Map of the 1865 Expedition (drawn by the authhor)



Brigadier General Connor divided his western command into three columns. The left column was the 6th Michigan Cavalry with elements of the 11th Ohio Cavalry, the 7th Iowa Cavalry, plus some Pawnee scouts with Colonel Kidd in command. The center column consisted of the 16th Kansas Cavalry with Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Walker. Another column had elements of the 2nd California Cavalry and Omaha scouts; it was commanded by Captain Albert Brown. The expedition included a train of 186 wagons and a sutler with four wagons[95].

In June, a surveying and exploring party left from the Nebraska Territory, led by James Sawyers and guided by frontiersmen. The goal was to plot a route to the gold fields in Montana. They travelled along the Niobara River, then northwest to Fort Connor[96]. On July 26, 1865, a large party attacked the Platte River Bridge Station. They killed twenty-six people, including Lieutenant Caspar Collins of the 11th Ohio Cavalry. The 6th Michigan marched out toward the Platte River Bridge Station. By the time they arrived, the natives had gone north. As mentioned earlier, on July 27, Brigadier General Connor and Jim Bridger left Fort Laramie with the left column taking 800 men and 185 wagons[97].

In August 1865, Brigadier General Connor moved west along the North Platte River, then north along the dry Sage Creek. By August 8, the mules had given out and were given a rest. The expedition conducted a bison hunt. While scouting, Jim Bridger came upon the trail of perhaps as many as one thousand warriors, presumably those who had attacked the Platte River Bridge in July. Brigadier General Collins was under orders to build a fort on the Powder River. Bridger selected a mesa 100 feet above the river and about five miles from the bluffs. In August, Colonel Kidd was detached from the command of his column so that he and four of his companies could construct and garrison Fort Connors. On August 17, 1865, the Pawnee scouts attacked and eliminated a party of Cheyenne warriors, who had come down from the Tongue River. Among the effects of the raiders, they found clothing from white women and children, as well as infantry clothing and mail written to soldiers. After supplies arrived, Brigadier General Connor continued north from Fort Connor towards the planned rendezvous with the other columns at Pander Mountain. The Sawyer Expedition rested at Fort Connor, then travelled on to join Brigadier General Connor. Connor travelled up what would become the Bozeman Trail. They continued to the future site of Fort Phil Kearny and crossed Lodge Trail Ridge, which became infamous a year later in the Fetterman Fight. The Sawyer Expedition continued along the Bozeman Trail, while Connor's forces followed Peno Creek and Wolf Creek to the Tongue River[98].

The united Connor force continued north along Wolf Creek to the Tongue River. On August 27, Arapaho village was found on the Tongue River, but Brigadier General Connor did not know how many people were there. Brigadier General Connor took 215 men from the 2nd California, 7th Iowa, and 11th Ohio cavalry units, including some scouts. They rode through the night and arrived at Black Bear's Arapaho village but did not arrive at the village by day break (at about 0400 to 0500 hours). The village was finally sighted at about 0800 hours. The command was divided, with one column going to the left of the village and one going right. The attack on the village came from the east, and the majority of the natives escaped to the south. Brigadier General Connor pursued the natives for about ten miles in a running fight. When Brigadier General Connor, because his horses were exhausted, turned back at a canyon, the natives began to pursue his forces back to the village. Brigadier General Connor claimed to have killed 35 natives, with the loss of about eight men. He also claimed to capture five hundred horses, mules, and ponies. Before they left, they destroyed the village[99]. The attack on the village lasted two hours, but then they defended themselves from counterattacks for the next 12 hours[100].

Sawyer's wagon train was also attacked by the Arapaho. They were shot at from afar, and some of their livestock was stolen during a river crossing. An artillery piece was brought up and fired several shells at the natives who had stopped to cook some of the beef. The natives reengaged and fired at the train, so they formed into a corral. Since it was still too close to the source of the fire, they relocated the corral[101]. On August 15, Cheyenne leaders Bull Bear and Dull Knife and the Oglala leader Red Cloud attacked Cole near Pumpkin Buttes and demanded that they change the route to the Bridger Trail[102].

Meanwhile, the two other columns were near each other on the Powder River, and they joined to form one combined column. Rations for the men and forage for the horses were running out. These eastern column's horses were suffering for want of good grazing. The eastern column consisted of 1,400 cavalrymen and 140 wagons under the command of Colonel Cole, and the western column was made up of 600 mounted men and a mule pack train under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Walker. They had not heard from Brigadier General Connor since July. Brigadier General Connor needed these men to carry out his ambitious planned campaign. While Brigadier General Connor, on the Tongue River, had the smallest force, it had the supply wagons that the other two columns desperately needed. Sawyer's column was still besieged on the Tongue River[103].

On September 2, a winter storm caused the death of many animals. On September 3, the "missing" commands of Colonel Cole and Lieutenant Colonel Walker decided to head south toward Fort Laramie. Brigadier General Connor, still unaware of Sawyer's predicament, headed north. On September 6, Brigadier General Connor sent a relief column to Sawyer and a scouting party to find the Cole/Walker "missing" commands. Major General Grenville Dodge came to Fort Laramie in late August and proceeded to Fort Connor, arriving on September 8. That same day, the "missing" commands had a running battle with as many as 2000 Sioux and Cheyenne warriors. They lost about 500 horses in an overnight winter storm. As a result, 100 wagons were burned. The scouting party sent by Brigadier General Connor on September 6 came upon the sight of the camp where the livestock was lost, but turned around, even though they were only a few miles north of the Cole/Walker command. Corporal Charles Thomas and a small party rode 135 miles in 39 hours without stopping through hostile country from Brigadier General Connor's command to the Cole/Walker command. He received the Medal of Honor for his exploits. By September 15, the Connor and Cole/Walker commands were on the road south back to Fort

Connor. The former arrived on September 24, and the latter on September 20. The Sawyer command continued north to the Yellowstone River. On September 22, Brigadier General Connor received a dispatch from Fort Connor that he had been relieved of command and reassigned to the District of Utah[104].

The failure of the separate columns to combine led to the ultimately disappointing outcome for the campaign. Shortages of food, forage, and ammunition were a common theme in the West during this period of the Plains Indian Wars. It led to the poor condition of the horses, which were essential to carrying out a campaign against what was arguably the finest light cavalry in the world. It was certainly true for Colonel Carrnigton and his forces during Red Cloud's War, which began in 1866[105].

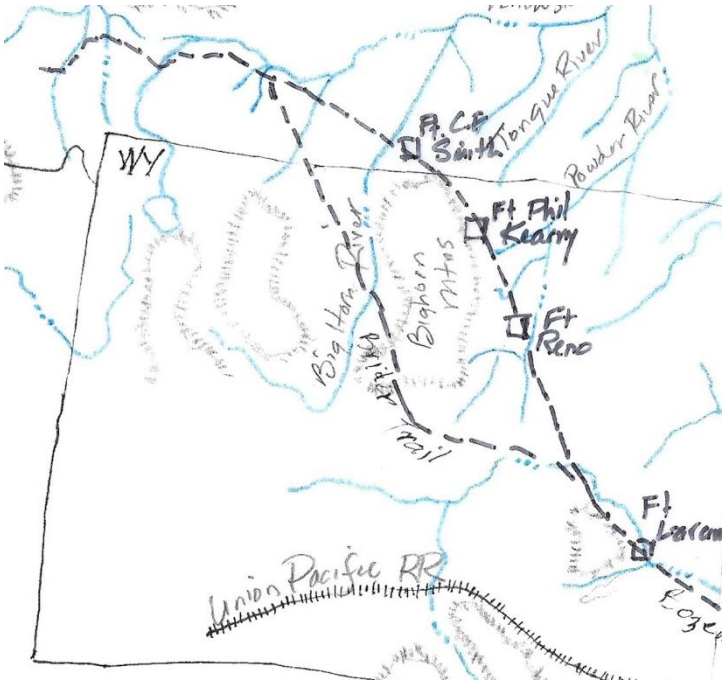
After Brigadier General Connor's removal from command, the natives renewed their raids on the overland roads and the Bozeman Trail. Red Cloud had gained a formidable reputation by this time. **Red Cloud knew that peace was not possible because the Americans would never accept the abandonment of the Powder River country**[106].

The Garrisons on the Bozeman Trail

After the Civil War, the Army was reduced from over 1,000,000 to 57,000 troops. The regiments were released but not replaced very quickly with new Regular Army troops. The result was a constant shortage of men for garrison work in the west[107]. Colonel Carrington was sent to the Powder River country in the early summer of 1866 after Major General Connor's expedition had gone into the area in 1865. After Major General Connor's withdrawal from the Powder River country, the attacks by the natives increased along the overland trails. On May 4, 1866, Jim Bridger arrived at Fort Laramie as the chief guide for the Mountain District. Colonel Carrington, of the 18th Infantry, led an expedition from Fort Kearney, Nebraska, on May 19, 1866. He took along officers and soldiers of the infantry and cavalry, surgeons, one physician, and some guides, including Jim Bridger[108].

After Red Cloud's departure from Fort Laramie, when the Oglala agency moved 100 miles west in 1857, it was a peaceful time for the Sioux. They could hunt in the Powder River country in peace because most of the travel west by the whites was to the south along the Oregon Trail[109]. The discovery of gold in southwestern Montana at the end of 1862 caused another gold rush. The city of Bannock's population swelled to two to three thousand. The center of the gold activity moved to Virginia City, Montana, whose population grew to about 10,000 by 1864[110]. Guide Jim Bridger, aware of the natives' determination to keep the white man out of their sacred Powder River country, blazed a trail west of the Big Horn Mountains. John Bozeman, seeking an even more direct route, ran his wagons east of the Big Horn straight through the heart of the hunting grounds. Except for Indian resistance, the Bozeman Trail was far easier to travel[111].

The Bridger Trail (drawn by the author)



Colonel Carrington was the Colonel of the 18th US Infantry Regiment at Fort McPherson, Nebraska. The Mountain Division was organized under the direction of Major General Pope. The April 13, 1866, order called for the establishment of posts along the Bozeman Trail. Colonel Carrington issued an order assuming command and making requisitions from the quartermaster and commissary. His orders were to march without delay and to take the 2nd Battalion, 18th US Infantry. At that time, he had only 220 men present. As a guide, he had the famous mountain man James Bridger[112].

Jim Bridger was asked to build a ferry across the North Platte at LaBonte's crossing. This was a place where Brigadier General Connor had trouble crossing in 1865. He designed the ferry using adjustable cables and pulleys, so that the river could be crossed in either direction using the river's flow. The ferry buildings were on the north side of the river, and the telegraph line was on the south side. The round trip took 11 minutes[113].

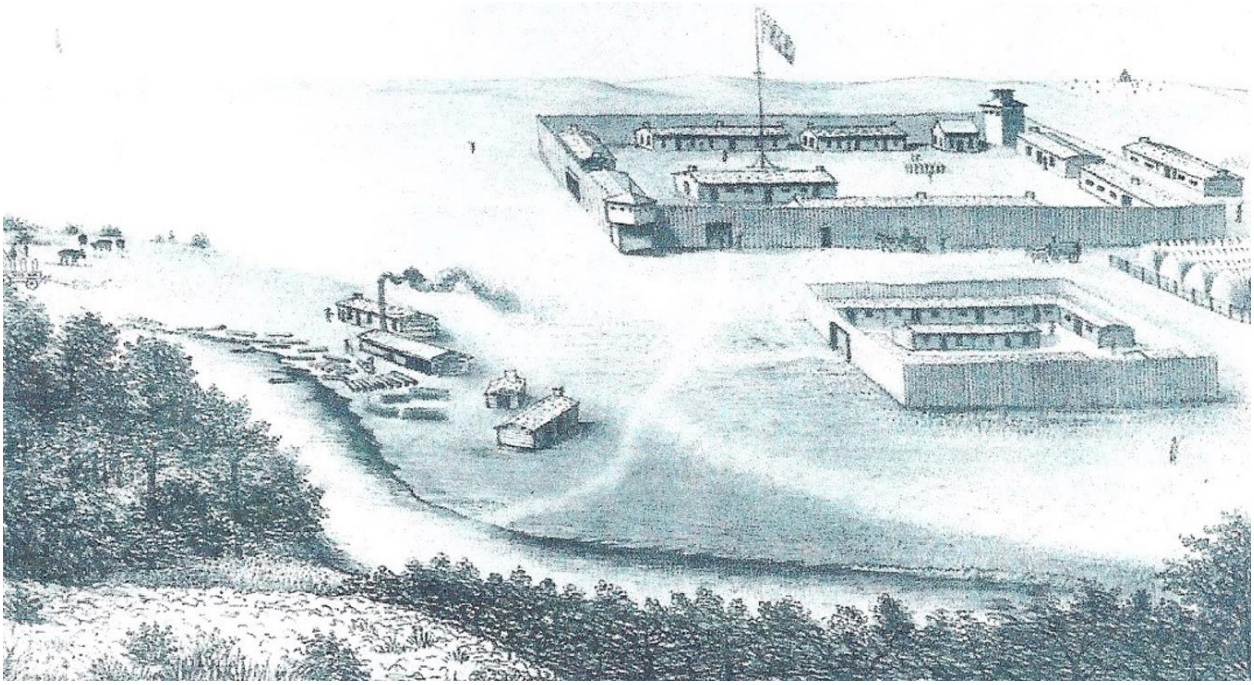
The War Department advised Colonel Carrington that they had directed nearly 1000 recruits to be forwarded from the general Depot to the regiment. However, only 500 reached Fort Leavenworth. On May 19, recruits arrived, and Carrington marched out, reaching the vicinity of Fort Laramie by June 14th. The troops were advised in Special Order 7, "The pending treaty between the United States and the Sioux Indians at Ford Laramie renders it the duty of every soldier to treat all Indians with kindness" (Fort Phil Kearney/Bozeman Trail Association, 2024, p. 46).

Colonel Carrington was visited on June 16 by Standing Elk, a Brule, who claimed to be friendly. He asked where Colonel Carrington was going, and he told him that there was a treaty at Fort Laramie with the Sioux, and he was going to take fighting men along the Bozeman Trail[114]. In June 1866, Colonel Carrington informed Red Cloud that he was taking his soldiers to establish forts along the Bozeman Trail. **Red Cloud retorted: "The Great Father sends us presents and wants us to sell him the road, but White Chief goes with soldiers to steal the road before the Indians say Yes or No"** (Carrington, 2004, p. 46-47).

As Colonel Carrington prepared to leave, he found his supplies of ammunition were wholly inadequate, and there were no utensils for baking bread. He requested 100,000 rounds of ammunition from the Quartermaster at Fort Laramie but was given only 1,000. He expected to find more ammunition at Fort Reno, but supplies would still be insufficient for the needs of a long campaign. On June 17, Jim Bridger led Colonel Carrington's command from Fort Laramie. He reached Fort Connor on June 28, 1866; the fort was expanded and renamed Fort Reno (see

the figure below). He found that 200 mounted men of the 7th Iowa Cavalry and the 1st Nebraska Cavalry were mustering out. He determined that the fort should be garrisoned and left two companies of 80 men each. Until its abandonment in August 1868, there were almost daily attacks by the natives. He moved on with four companies[115].

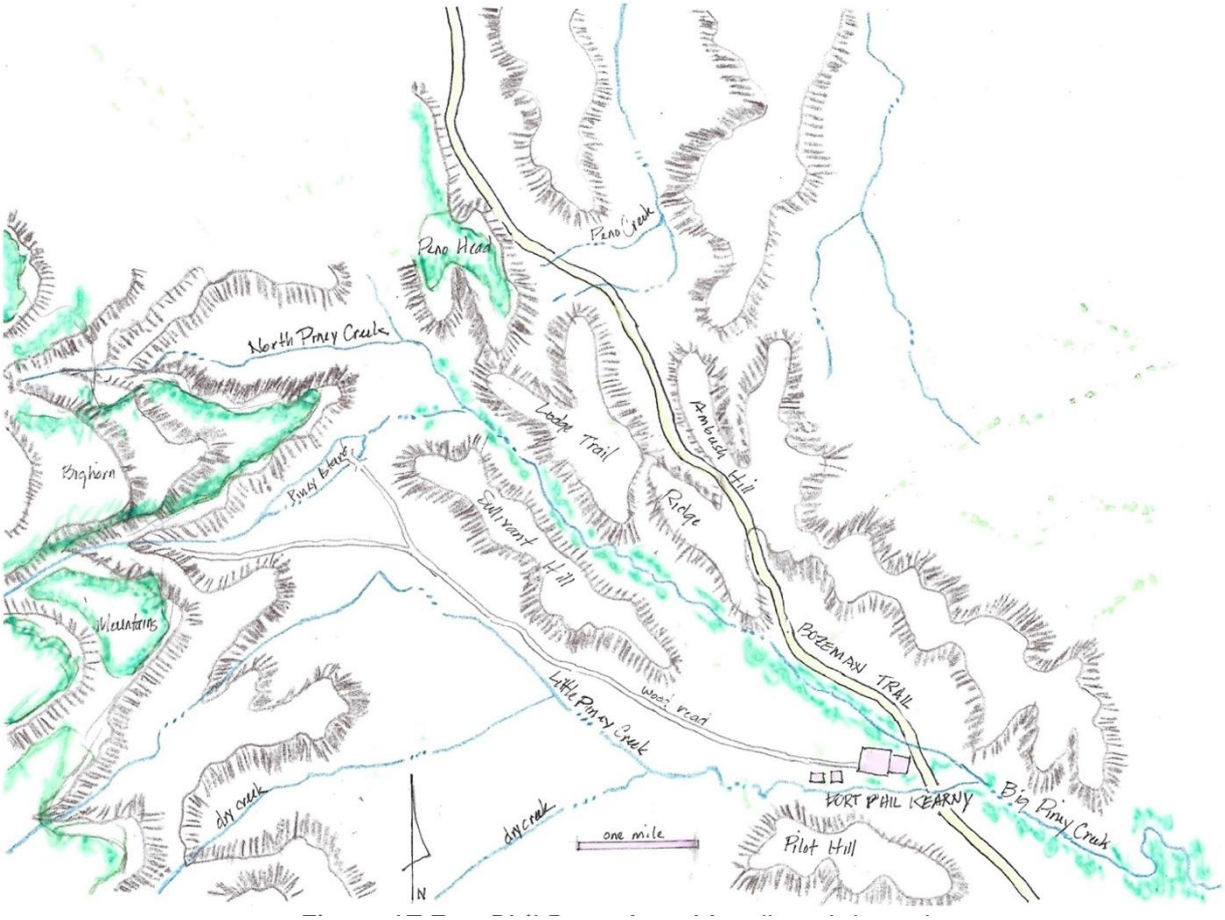
Fort Reno Drawing[116]



Upon reaching Fort Reno, he learned that a local sutler's horses had been taken, and he pursued with 90 mounted men, but was unable to recapture the stock. He decided that this was an indicator of the hostility that he would find in his future work[117].

On July 10, 1866, they reached Crazy Woman Fork. The temperature was 112°F. They moved out on July 13 and encamped at Piney Fork of the Clear Fork of the Powder River on July 14. Colonel Carrington conducted a reconnaissance of the area and found this to be a suitable place to establish Fort Phil Kearny[118].

Fort Phil Reno Area Map (drawn by the author)



Upon returning to the encampment, Carrington learned that the messenger from Black Horse had arrived and was in the guardhouse. That evening, he sent a messenger to the chief inviting him in. According to Fort Phil Kearney/Bozeman Trail Association (2024), he sent the following letter to Black Horse:

> The GREAT CHIEF OF THE CHEYENNES:
> FRIEND: A young white man tells me that you wish to come and have a talk with I shall be happy to have you come and tell me what you wish. the Great Father in Washington wishes to be your friend, and so do I and all my soldiers me (sic).
> I tell all the white men that go on the road that if they hurt Indians or steal their ponies I will follow and catch them and punish them. I will not let white men do hurt to the Indians who wish peace.
> I wish the Indians would also find who stole mules and horses on Powder River and who stole mules and horses at Rock Creek two nights past.
> You may come and see me with two other chiefs and two of your big fighting man, when the sun is overhead after two sleeps.
> You may come and talk and no one shall hurt you, and when you wish to go you may go in peace and no one shall hurt you.

I will tell my chiefs and soldiers that you are my friends and they will obey.
Your white friend,
HENRY B. CARRINGTON,
Colonel; Eighteenth U. S. Infantry, Commanding Mountain District (p. 51).

On Monday, Colonel Carrington reported that he had a meeting with principal chiefs Black Horse, Pretty Bear, Dull Knife, Red Arm, Little Moon, and Man-That-Stands-Alone-on-the-Ground. Wolf-that-lies-down, Rabbit-that-jumps, Bobtail and Dead White Leg, and The Brave Soldier were Cheyenne chiefs purporting to represent 176 lodges. The Sioux under Red Cloud numbered 500 warriors[119].

From the beginning, Colonel Carrington knew that his force was inadequate to man the three forts and patrol the Bozeman Trail. Included in the complement at Fort Phil Kearny were wives and children, which caused Colonel Carrington to be conservative in his dealings with the natives. He was concerned as to what would happen to them if the fort was overrun. Colonel Carrington had planned to go over to the offensive when he received reinforcements. Unfortunately, they never arrived[120].

There were numerous small incidents against Fort Phil Kearny in July 1866. Colonel Carrington also noted that aggressive operations had gone on in his rear. He found that his infantry made poor riders and could only find natives successfully on foot, as his horses suffered in the pursuit. He was equal to any attack they could make, but he still had to build quarters and prepare for the winter, which reduced his ability to conduct offensive operations[121].

Colonel Carrington described the location of Fort Phil Kearny as where the two Piney creeks leave deep gorges in the Big Horn Mountains. About 5 miles from the post, they made their exit before they united. The plateau was surrounded by fine grass with a gradual slope about 900’ x 600' with natural slopes on each side falling off about 60 feet at an angle of about 45°. Fort Phil Kearny is centrally located in the native hunting grounds. It was nominally neutral ground for Crow, Snake, Cheyenne, Sioux, and Arapaho, and was a natural place for supply and recuperation. He reported that the stockade was in place by July 30, 1866[122].

In July 1866, as construction of the fort was nearing completion, Colonel Carrington sent Jim Bridger and Captain Nathaniel Kinney to build the final fort further west. His forces were now spread very thin, and 560 of the 640 troops were inexperienced recruits. Jim Bridger led Captain Kinney to the Big Horn River and sited Fort C. F. Smith two miles northwest of the mouth of the Big Horn Canyon about 281 miles from Virginia City[123].

As mentioned above, Colonel Carrington considered his forces and supplies to be inadequate to the mission he had been assigned. In November, he reported that he needed an additional five companies of infantry and four companies of cavalry. At this time, most of his men were armed with muzzle-loaded Springfield rifles, which he deemed a hindrance to mounted men. He requested repeating rifles and carbines, which did not arrive until January[124].

Military Actions Around Fort Phil Kearny

There were numerous skirmishes leading up to the Fetterman Fight. The raids by the natives were almost constant in the fighting season, almost disappearing in the winter. The fatal flaw in the fort’s location was the distance from Fort Phil Kearny to the wooded areas; wood was needed to build the fort and sustain operations. The parties sent out to cut wood or hay were attacked, and relief forces had to be dispatched from the fort[125]. An example is given by Frances

Carrington (nee Grummond) from her time on the Montana Road (aka The Bozeman Trail) in July 1866. She related a story of an incident that had happened ten days previously. On July 10, 1866, a small party left Fort Reno towards Fort Phil Kearny. They had been advised to get water along the way, but when they reached the Crazy Woman, they found that the stream of dried up. While in the defile, they were attacked by natives. They had to organize the wagons to get out of the defile, and they fought throughout the day with several casualties. In the evening, Jim Bridger came to them from Fort Phil Kearny and let them know that a relief column was on its way. They also learned that another relief column had been dispatched from Fort Reno. Jim Bridger had found signs along the trail advising the natives that they were going to attack, and that everybody in the area should come[126]. While at Fort C. F. Smith, he learned from the Crow that as many as 1,500 Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho were on the Powder River country. He informed Colonel Carrington of this fact. On November 16, Jim Bridger was ordered to Fort C. F. Smith to keep the Crow in line. Between July and November, there had been 51 separate attacks along the Bozeman Trail. This resulted in the loss of 91 soldiers, 58 civilians, and 750 animals[127].

The December 6th Engagement

On December 6th, there was an engagement when about 300 natives attacked a wood-cutting party. Red Cloud was seen on a hill overlooking the battle. Lieutenant Colonel (Brevet) Fetterman commanded the relief force with his infantry, and Lieutenant Bingham commanded a company of cavalry. They were assigned to go directly to the relief of the woodcutters. Colonel Carrington, in what may be his only offensive action of his army career, took Lieutenant Grummond between Sullivant Hill and Lodge Trail Ridge. Lieutenant Bingham inexplicitly disappeared during the battle. He went off with 15 troopers and Lieutenant Grummond toward the mountains. Lieutenant Bingham and Sergeant Bowers were killed, and four others were wounded, but the natives were driven off. Colonel Carrington and several soldiers found Lieutenant Grummond and three soldiers and saved them as they were about to be killed. **Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman learned a valuable lesson that day, in that fighting Indians required the utmost caution. However, Red Cloud learned that some overeager soldiers could be drawn into an ambush**[128].

Major Powell's December 19th Engagement

On December 19, the picket on Pilot Hill reported that a wood-cutting party was corralled and under attack. Major (Brevet) Powell was sent to relieve the party that was under attack. He chased the natives to Lodge Trail Ridge, but had orders not to cross it, so he did not pursue them further. The now-standard tactic of a decoy force to lead the soldiers into an ambush was employed. However, Major Powell obeyed orders and did not follow the decoys[129].

Since Autumn Red Cloud had been assembling a large force at his camp on the Tongue River. It is estimated that by December, they numbered almost 4,000. By this time, Red Cloud's leadership was being challenged by others, such as Roman Nose and Medicine Man of the Cheyenne and Sorrel Horse of the Arapaho, had joined Red Cloud as allies, not subordinates[130].

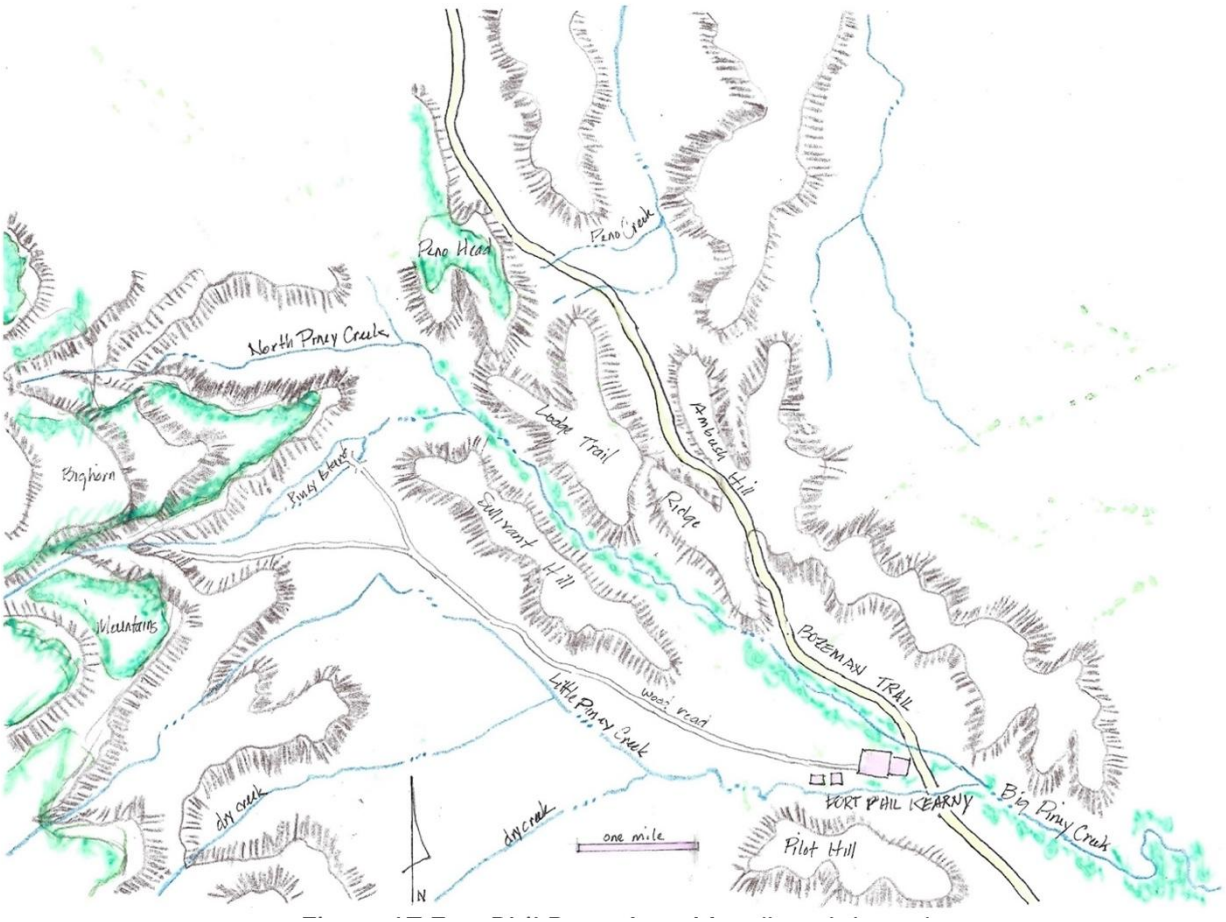
The Fetterman Fight (“Hundred in Hand”)

The Fetterman Fight Painting by J. K. Ralston[131]

A spirit person, *Hee-man-eh,* related a message from the spirit world. He told the people that he had one hundred of the enemy in hand. The Sioux and Cheyenne thought that that was a good omen, so the battle was called the “Hundred-in-Hand” by them[132].

In his report to the Assistant Adjutant-General, Department of the Platte of January 3, 1867, Colonel Carrington stated that on December 21, 1866, the sentries on Pilot Hill reported that a wood party was under attack. Even though Major Powell had been drilling the men of Company C, 2nd Cavalry, Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman demanded to lead the relief force due to his rank. He was sent out with his 49 soldiers from his own company of the 18th U.S. Infantry; Lieutenant Grummond followed with a cavalry detachment of 26 troopers[133]. The opposing force included a Decoy force of six Lakota, two Cheyenne, and two Arapahoe, led by Crazy Horse. The main force was led by Miniconjou High-Back-Bone (“Hump”) and the Northern Cheyenne leader Two Moons. The involvement of Red Cloud is contested, but he maintained to his dying day that he was there; many Miniconjou denied this, and researchers have placed him at the Tongue River encampment at the time. Ten Eyck estimated that there were 2000 warriors when he looked down from Lodge Trail Ridge after the fight[134].

The Fetterman Fight Map (drawn by the author)



The infantry was armed with the muzzle-loading Springfield rifles (See the figure below), and the cavalry was armed with seven-shot Spencer carbines[135]. The muzzle-loading had a slow rate of fire. An experienced soldier could fire about three rounds per minute. Colonel Carrington reported that he issued orders to Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman: "Support the wood train, relieve it, and report to me. Do not engage or pursue Indians at its expense. Under no circumstances pursue over the ridge, viz Lodge Trail Ridge, as per map in your possession" (Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association, 2024, p. 82). Because of Lieutenant Grummond's rashness on December 6, Colonel Carrington repeated these orders to Lieutenant Grummond and told him not to leave Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman. The orders were repeated to Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman at the gate[136]. At some point, unbeknownst to Colonel Carrington, Captain F. H. Brown joined Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman and marched out with the infantry. Two civilians, James Wheatly and Issac Fisher, volunteered to go along. They were experienced frontiersmen and were armed with sixteen-shot Henry repeating rifles. This made the total force 81, almost matching his earlier prediction of being able to march through the Sioux nation with eighty men[137].

The Muzzle-loading Springfield Rifle[138]

The 1861 muzzle-loading rifle, with slow rate of fire

Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman left first and was about one-half mile from the fort when Lieutenant Grummond and the cavalry caught up with him. LTC Fetterman went northwest directly toward the southern end of Lodge Trail Ridge apparently to cut off the natives' retreat. However, Lieutenant Grummond passed the infantry and proceeded ahead of Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman[139]. The Sioux and Cheyenne were waiting in large numbers. Crazy Horse led a decoy party using an "Old Indian Trick," which is the wounded bird trick. Crazy Horse would lead the soldiers further and further away from where they were supposed to be. He dismounted several times, pretending that this horse was lame. At one point, he even built a fire. At about 1145 hours, Lieutenant Grummond, having learned nothing from his mistakes of December 6, followed him over Lodge Trail Ridge, and in order to support him, LTC Fetterman was forced to follow him[140].

At noon, firing was heard coming from the other side of Lodge Trail Ridge. As Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman and Lieutenant Grummond were surrounded by about 2000 natives. Lieutenant Grummond, being faster than Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman with the infantry, proceeded to the end of Massacre Ridge. The cavalry dismounted and used their Spencer rifles to good effect, killing as many as 60 warriors. However, they were ultimately overrun[141].

The bodies of all but two of the soldiers were mutilated. Probably in retaliation for the depredations committed at Sand Creek. The two exceptions were Private Frank P. Sullivan, and the other was Corporal Adolph Metzger, the bugler, is one of the only men not mutilated by the natives. When he ran out of ammunition, he used his bugle as a weapon. He was covered with a bison robe to honor his bravery. His horse, Dapple Dave, is the only non-native survivor of the battle. He ran off but was pierced by so many bullets and arrows that he was put down when he was found[142]. This points out the fact that there are orders, and the importance of following those orders.

Captain Tenodor Ten Eyek was dispatched at about 1230 hours with infantry, the remaining cavalry, two wagons, an ambulance, and two doctors to relieve Fetterman's detachment. By the time Captain Ten Eyek arrived at Lodge Trail Ridge at about 1245 hours, the firing had stopped. A messenger was sent back to the fort telling them that they could neither see nor hear anything from Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman's party. The natives, who were in overwhelming numbers, taunted Captain Ten Eyek to come down, but he refused. After they left, Captain Ten Eyek was able to recover the bodies of 49 infantrymen (including Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman and Captain F. H. Brown) that he brought back to the fort in the wagons he had with him. They returned after dark. The wood-cutting party reached the fort, never having seen LTC Fetterman or heard any firing. He reported that Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman and Captain Brown each had a revolver wound to their left temple. He speculated that they killed each other to avoid torture. This report was disputed by a native participant in the battle who claimed that he struck Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman with a war club and cut his throat. Colonel

Carrington reported that most of the bodies had been mutilated. On December 21, 1866, Colonel Carrington reported that he had 119 troops present for duty at the fort[143].

On December 21, Colonel Carrington asked for volunteers to take the word of the disaster to Fort Laramie. John "Portugee" Phillips and Daniel Dixon stepped forward. Their first stop was Fort Reno on December 23. The pair rode during the night and hid during the day. From there, they went to Fort Caspar. They reached Horseshoe Station on December 25 and sent a telegraph message to Fort Laramie. Since Phillips was uncertain that the telegraph message would be complete, he continued to Fort Laramie, arriving at about 2300 hours on Christmas Day[144].

On December 22, 1867, Colonel Carrington took Captain Ten Eyck, Lieutenant Matson. Dr. Gould and eighty men to retrieve the bodies of the slain. The situation at the fort was so desperate that, according to Carrington (2004) when he left, he had the powder magazine rigged with explosives and ordered:

> **If in my absence, Indians in overwhelming numbers attack, put the women and children in the magazine with supplies of water, bread, crackers, and other supplies that seem best, in the event of a last desperate struggle, destroy all together, rather than have any captured alive** (p.153-154).

In January 1867, Colonel Carrington was relieved of command when fresh troops arrived. He was sent to Fort Caspar on the North Platte River. Public sentiment in the East was that the natives were mistreated and that the war was a war of extermination. The country needed a scapegoat, and Colonel Carrington filled the role. Many "eyewitnesses" came forward with false testimony against Colonel Carrington, and newspapers were filled with false stories. The battle took place outside the sight of the fort, and the only witnesses left alive were natives. It took twenty years before Colonel Carrington was finally vindicated. On January 1, 1867, the 1st Battalion of the 18th Infantry retained its name, the 2nd Battalion became the 27th Infantry, and the 3rd became the 36th Infantry. Brevet Brigadier General Wessells succeeded Carrington as Commander[145].

Colonel Carrington was held by uninformed journalists to be solely responsible for the Fetterman disaster. A commission investigated the incident. Colonel Carrington departed Fort Phil Kearney in January 1867. Winter conditions caused the cessation of further operations. As soon as the weather permitted, the Quartermaster sent teams out to cut green cottonwood branches for forage. The garrison at Fort Phil Kearny was rife with sickness, with the highest level in May. In June 1867, the attacks on the fort continued[146].

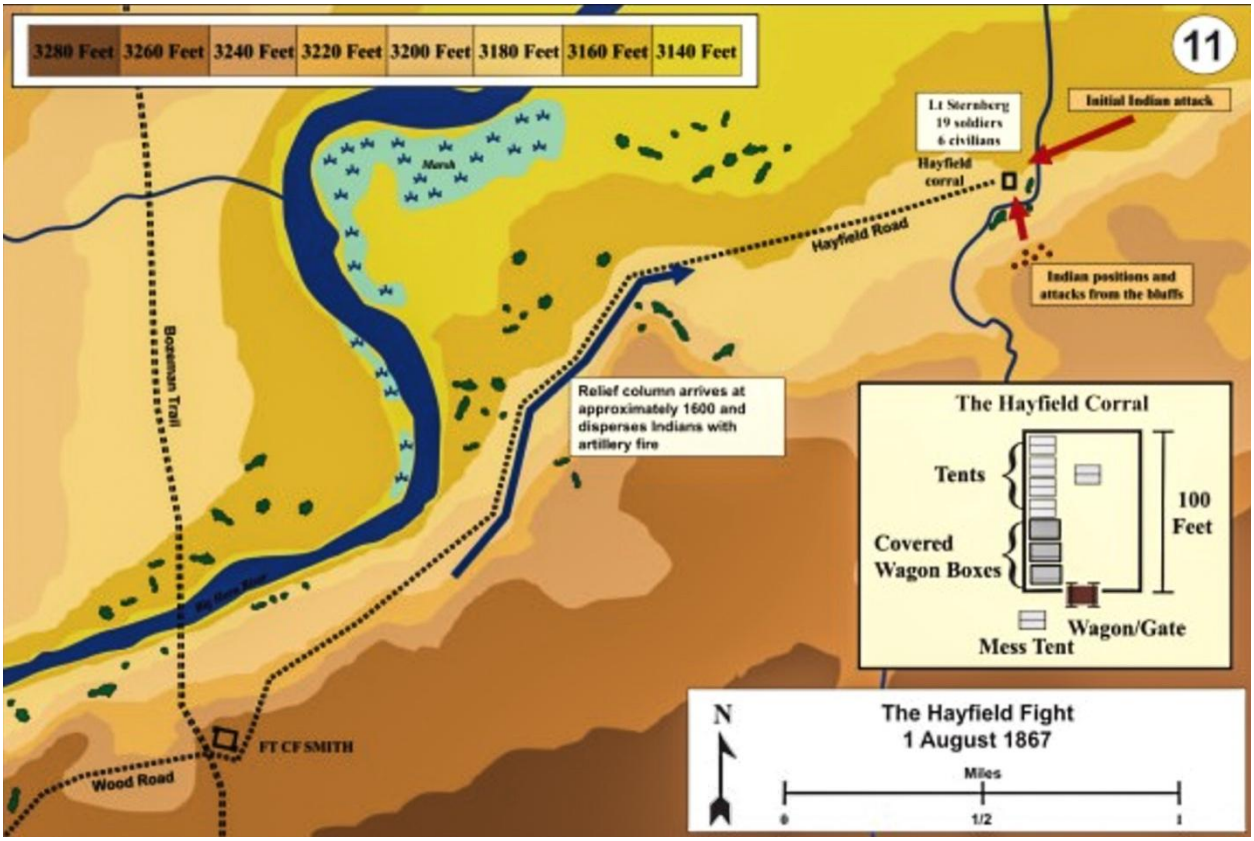
The Hayfield Fight

The Hayfield Fight by O. C. Seltzer[147]

The natives were divided as to where they wanted to renew their attacks after their Sun Dance activities in July. One group of Sioux and Cheyenne favored attacking Fort C. F. Smith, while another group favored attacking Fort Phil Kearny. They decided to make two, almost simultaneous attacks. One was the Hayfield Fight on August 1 at Fort C. F. Smith, and the other was the Wagon Box Fight at Fort Phil Kearny on August 2, 1867[148].

Fort C. F. Smith was built about 90 miles from Fort Phil Kearny along Montana's Big Horn River by Captain Nathaniel C. Kinney and two companies of the 18th Infantry. Jim Bridger guided them to the location. The fort was constructed of log and adobe. During the severe winter of 1866-1867, the actions around the fort were so frequent and supplies failed to get through that the post's ammunition supply was reduced to 10 rounds per man[149].

The Hayfield Fight Map[150]



On July 12, Crow scouts warned Captain Burrowes that the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho were planning to attack the fort. On July 17, 1867, Jim Bridger led Lieutenant Colonel Luther F. Bradley and two companies of the 27th Infantry to the fort. Bradley assumed command of the fort. The column also included food, and several crates of .50-70 Allin-modified breech-loading Springfield rifles. The garrison now consisted of 350 officers and men[151].

The Springfield Breech-loading Rifle[152]

The breech-loading rifle, which had a quicker rate of fire than the muzzle-loading rifles

The stock at Fort C. F. Smith needed forage, so Lieutenant Colonel Bradley sent a party of hay cutters to gather forage about three miles to the east. To protect the hay cutters, the troops built a corral with a palisade. The corral was 100 feet square, with two layers of log, one on top of the other, layered two high. Above was a lattice of willows that did not provide cover. There were tents inside and a door to the south. Outside at the corners were three rifle pits of about ten yards in length; the entrance was blocked by a wagon[153].

On August 1st, near Fort C. F. Smith, the party consisted of six civilian hay cutters and 19 soldiers with Lieutenant Sternberg in command. The opposing force was approximately 1,500 Cheyenne and Arapaho, probably led by Old Little Wolf, Plenty Camps, and Rolling Bull. The corral provided an excellent defensive position against the mounted warriors encircling them. The natives set fire to the grass and attacked through the smoke. The wind changed and the natives removed their casualties under the smokescreen. The natives kept their distance and rode around the corral firing. That attack was also beaten off, and the natives withdrew at about noon allowing the troops to get much needed water and to improve their positions. The natives renewed their attacks in the afternoon, but each attack was repulsed. After several hours, the warriors withdrew[154].

Initially, Lieutenant Colonel Bradley refused to send a relief force to the hay cutters and even closed the gate, denying permission to a junior officer who wanted to go to their aid. Finally, after Private Charles Bradley rode through the warriors to let Lieutenant Colonel Bradley know that Lieutenant Sternberg was dead. A relief force with a howitzer was sent out, but was soon under fire. They ultimately returned to the fort. Earlier, Lieutenant Palmer had taken a party into the mountains to collect wood. From his vantage point, he could see that the corral was surrounded by what he estimated was 800-1000 warriors. Lieutenant Palmer received a message from Lieutenant Colonel Bradley to return to the post. Although he was harassed by natives, he was able to make it back by about 1300 hours. He reported this to Lieutenant Colonel Bradley, but he maintained that the force was smaller and that Lieutenant Sternberg could handle the situation. Lieutenant Colonel Bradley closed the gate[155].

At about 1600 hours, Lieutenant Colonel Bradley sent Lieutenant Shurly out with twenty men and a howitzer; they soon came under fire. At this point, Lieutenant Colonel Bradley sent Company G under the command of Captain Burrowes to relieve Lieutenant Shurly; they also came under fire, but after linking up with Lieutenant Shurly they began to withdraw. When Lieutenant Fenton arrived with a howitzer, they halted, and the natives withdrew. They then moved to relieve the corral and arrived at sundown. There were two dead, three soldiers, and one civilian wounded at the corral. The casualties among the warriors are unknown. Captain Burrowes' command reached the fort at about 2030 hours. The hay cutting activities resumed the next day. However, the fortifications at the corral were improved, and a company of soldiers and one howitzer guarded the area[156].

The soldiers were behind the barricades and were using the new breech-loading rifles, which negated the native's tactic to feign an attack and then attack in earnest while the soldiers were reloading[157]. They created a very different outcome from the Fetterman Fight, where the troops were armed with muzzle-loading Springfields[158].

The Wagon Box Fight

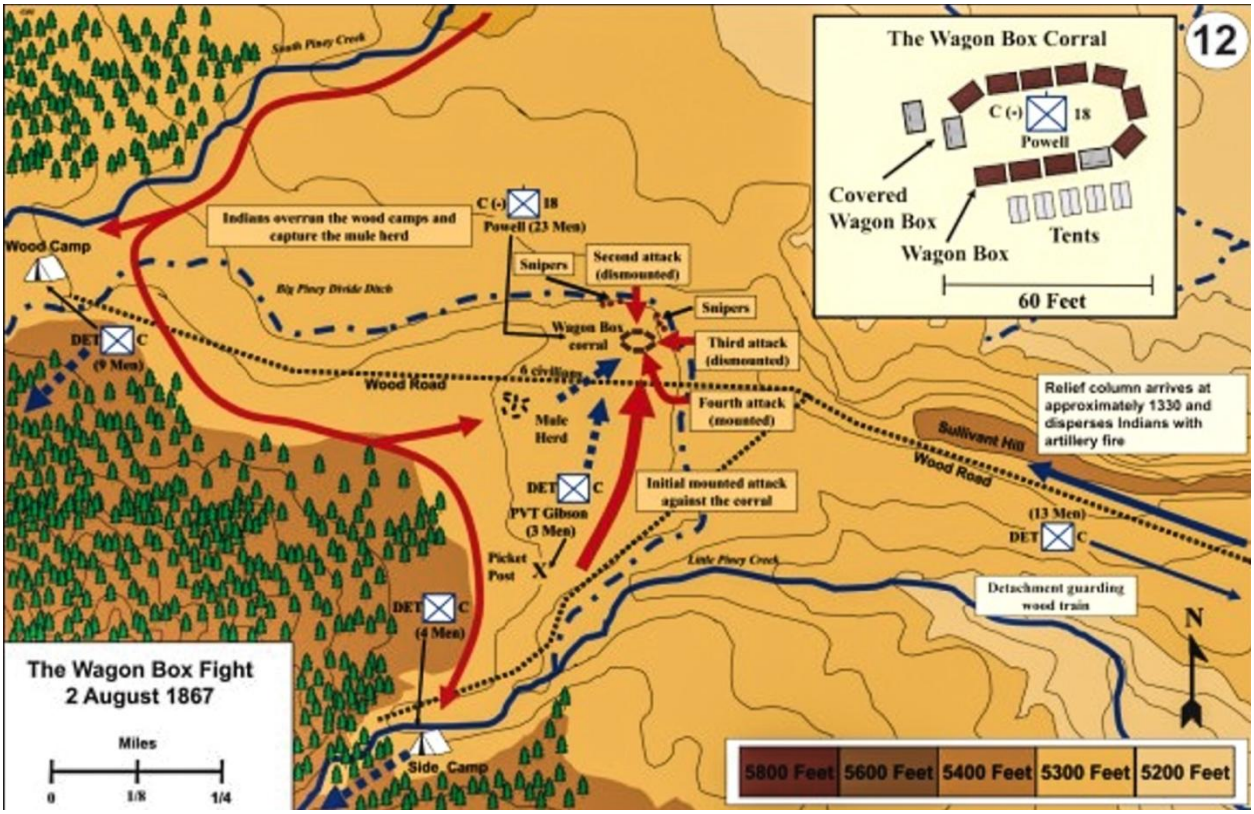
The Wagon Box Fight Painting[159]

By July, it became dangerous enough for the wood-cutting teams that the troops built an enclosure corral using removed wagon boxes. Early on the morning of August 2, 1867, several hundred mounted natives attacked the corral. The natives attacked, and expecting the soldier to take time to reload, they reinitiated the attack. However, the troops were armed with breech-loading Springfield rifles. Additionally, they had boxes of ammunition stored inside the corral. Many natives were killed and wounded as close as to within a few yards of the corral. The horses were sent to the rear, and the natives resumed the attack on foot. The corral was not overrun. There were three soldiers killed and four were wounded. The losses for the natives were much more significant. Red Cloud said that he lost the cream of his fighting force at this fight[160].

After the victory over Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman, Fort Phil Kearney was still there, as were the two other forts, Fort Reno and Fort C.F. Smith. The Indians kept up the pressure throughout the winter of 1866 -67. Summer saw increased activity among the natives. On July 3, 1867, Fort Phil Kearny was resupplied, and a new commander, Colonel Jonathan E. Smith, arrived. In addition to a new commander and food, where700 breech-loading Springfield rifles and 100,000 rounds of cartridges. On August 2, 1867, Crazy Horse, along with Red Cloud and High-Back-Bone ("Hump") brought a force of between 800-1000, attacked a wood-cutting party about five miles north of the fort on the edge of the Bighorns. Major Powell was in command of about 40 men who took up positions in the wagons that had been pulled into a tight circle with boxes stacked in them. The corral of wagon boxes was located to provide good visibility and

fields of fire; they could also see the pickets on Pilot Hill. There was a wood camp and a side camp that were out of sight of Pilot Hill[161].

The Wagon Box Fight Map[162]



This action in 1867, in a small way, avenged Fetterman's Fight. In this case, as in the Hayfield Fight, the soldiers were armed with breech-loading Springfield Model 1866 .50-70 Allin modified breech-loading rifles. This was to provide a distinct advantage for the soldiers in the Wagon Box Fight[163].

The First Attack.

The first attack on the wood cutters was made up of Oglala under Crazy Horse and Miniconjou under High-Back-Bone ("Hump"), Little Wolf led a few Cheyenne. They consisted of some 1000 warriors. While some sources say that Red Cloud was here, it has not been confirmed. About 50 men of Company C of the 27th Infantry, commanded by Major Powell, were on duty guarding the wood cutters. Upon arriving at the area, Major Powell decided to divide his command. He sent Sergeant Gibson and 12 soldiers to guard the wood-cutting camp. He assigned another Non-Commissioned Officer and 13 soldiers to escort the wood-cutting train to the fort. This left Major Powell, Lieutenant John Jenness, and 24 soldiers to guard the corral[164].

August 2 started as a routine day. Major Powell went to Piney Creek to take a bath. Early in the morning, a pair of civilian teamsters decided to hunt for deer in the nearby hills. They noticed "a lot of Indian smoke signals in the hills." They decided to try to get back to the fort, but that route was blocked. Then they decided to try to get to the wood-cutting train that was headed towards the fort but were blocked from that route. Therefore, they decided to try for

the corral, and just made it to the safety of the corral. Meanwhile, near the side camp, Sergeant Gibson with the pickets noticed seven mounted natives galloping single file toward Little Piney Creek. He shot one of the horses and then sent a private to warn the wood cutters at the side camp[165].

The woodcutters in both camps were under attack at about 0700 hours. The natives burned the wagons and fired on the wood cutters. At one point, one of the natives grabbed a jug of whiskey and was promptly shot, which angered the other natives. Some of the woodcutters fled towards cover in the mountains; one of the soldiers who was unable to keep up was killed. Several cutters and a soldier managed to escape and took refuge in the rocks. The natives apparently lost interest in this small party and turned their attention to the wagon box corral. Realizing the desperate nature of the situation, Sergeant Gibson and his party headed towards the corral. Their progress was slow, but they eventually left behind the horse. Sergeant Gibson exchanged shots with an Indian whom he hit. By this time, they were running for their lives, it was obvious that speed was of the essence. Sergeant Gibson and his companions finally reached the corral. Major Powell and Lieutenant Jenness were organizing the defense and distributing ammunition. They instructed the men to take up positions around the corral and to fight for their lives[166].

Another party, the herders, was cut off from the corral. Major Powell led an attack from the corral against the natives who were threatening them. Some escaped to the fort, and others into the hills. By this time, Major Powell had his command in several different locations. His force consisted of himself, Lieutenant Jenness, 24 enlisted men, and six civilians. For once, for the Army, there was plenty of ammunition, and the breech-loading rifles were about to show their worth. The natives provided some respite as they organized their mounted charge. After perhaps 15 minutes, approximately 800 mounted natives attacked the corral. As with any battle, the reports of what happened are confusing. Major Powell reported the attack was a mounted attack from the south, but others reported an attack on foot from the north. Regardless of the confusion, it seems as though there were many natives who attacked on horseback, while others attacked on foot[167].

The methods of the two sides were different. The army fought with tight discipline, while the natives fought as individuals. In this fight, the natives rushed forward, and they expected that the soldiers would have to take time to reload after they fired. However, the breech-loading rifles allowed a much faster rate of firing. Additionally, Major Powell had placed boxes of ammunition around the corral. It also appears that Major Powell had the best marksmen do the firing while others reloaded weapons. There were two non-combatants in the corral. They were a horse and a mule; the horse was struck by multiple arrows and had to be shot. The mule was terrified by flaming arrows and had to be shot. The natives withdrew to reorganize[168].

The Second Attack.

The natives, after evaluating the situation, decided upon a second mounted attack on the 180° arc east to south to west around the corral. They continued to snipe along the north wall. Someone inside the corral realized that the tents were still blocking their line fire, so Sergeant Gibson, Private Grady, and others went out to drop the tents. Sergeant Gibson recalled that the barrels of the rifles were hot from continuous firing. During the second attack, natives were secreted behind the ridge along the north-west perimeter. Lieutenant Jenness and Privates Henry Haggerty and Tommy Doyle were killed[169].

Another attack came against the north wall. The soldiers met this attack as they had the others with continuous fire. It seems probable that the soldiers from the south wall reinforced the north wall defenses. The attack was led by a warrior in full bonnet, who was reported to be Red Cloud's nephew, and was wounded. During the fight, the water barrel in the corral had been hit by multiple bullets. So, Sam Gibson and John Grady volunteered to retrieve two kettles that were under a wagon about 100 feet away from the corral. While the kettle had also been hit, there was enough water to sustain the soldiers for the remainder of the fight[170].

Meanwhile, at the fort, Colonel Jonathan Smith became aware of the plight of the woodcutters. However, there had been demonstrations around the fort between 0730 hours and 1330 hours. He ordered Major Benjeman Smith to take about 100 soldiers of the 27th Infantry, a mountain howitzer, and several wagons to relieve the wood-cutting party. The relief force left the fort at about 1130 hours and travelled cautiously the 5 miles to the corral. The relief column arrived at about 1300 hours, and the warriors on the north side of the corral, after as many as eight charges, finally withdrew. Major Smith occupied a hill near the corral, and a large party of natives who were moving toward the relief party fled after Major Smith fired the howitzer at them. At this point, Major Powell knew that relief had arrived. When the relief party reached the corral, there was much rejoicing, and some of the woodcutters, who had been hiding nearby, came into the corral. So as not to give the natives a chance to renew their attack, Majors Powell and Smith returned to the fort after looking for other survivors. There were four surviving woodcutters who had been hiding who started toward the fort after dark, arriving foot sore at about 0500 hours the next day[171].

As a result of the fight, the casualties for the soldiers were relatively light with three killed and two wounded in the corral, and three others killed in the side camp nearby. As always, the native losses are very hard to determine; the estimates range from two to 1500, both of which are absurd assumptions. Major Powell estimated sixty natives killed, and 120 wounded. That may be a conservative estimate, because an Oglala Fire Thunder claimed that there were "dead warriors and horses piled up all around the boxes and scattered over the plains" (p. 45). It is clear that the breech-loading Springfield-Allin rifles prevented the Wagon Box Fight from repeating the outcome of the Fetterman Fight[172].

There are two outcomes of this fight. The first is that a well-armed, disciplined force of soldiers, in a good defensive position, can defeat a native force that is vastly superior numerically. The second is that this fight provided a morale lift to the Army that was perhaps as great as that given to the natives in the Fetterman Fight[173].

Peace Talks Concerning the Bozeman Trail, 1866-68

Early Negotiations

The end of the Civil War in April 1865 released many troops for duty in the West. In January 1866, a general peace council was held at Fort Laramie. The Natives represented by Spotted Tail, chief of the Brule Sioux, attended. By June, a good representation of the Brule and Ogallala Sioux were present. Commissioners began negotiating a treaty. Unfortunately, the War Department sent Colonel Carrington with an expedition to open the Bozeman Trail through the Powder River country to the Montana goldfields. These troops arrived at Fort Laramie during the negotiations, which caused serious unrest among the natives. A large faction, led by Red Cloud and Man-Afraid-of-His-Horse, withdrew from the talks. Troops under Colonel Carrington

marched up the trail, garrisoning Camp Connor. Later, Camp Connor was renamed Fort Reno. He built Fort Phil Kearny at the foot of the Bighorn Mountains, and Fort C. F. Smith further north in Montana. **Immediately, it became apparent that the peace treaty was meaningless. Fort Phil Kearny was the scene of almost daily attacks on traders, wagons, troops etc**.[174].

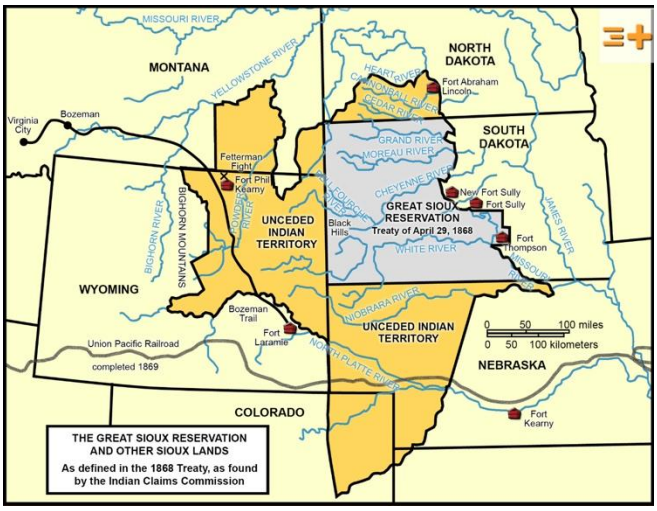
In July 1867, the government established a peace conference to meet with the natives. General William Tecumseh Sherman organized the Commission in 1867 to draft the terms of the treaty. Politicians and Christian reformers joined Sherman. The reformers hoped to assimilate the natives into Western society. There is some speculation that despite the presence of translators, the native did not really understand what they were signing. The treaty had four parts in seventeen articles; the first part was a pledge of peace between the U. S. government and the native nations, delineating the various parts of the Sioux Nation. The second part outlined districts reserved for the natives. The third part specified the government's plan to support the natives. Finally, the treaty proposed a specific section of land to be used only by the natives[175].

After successfully negotiating a treaty with the southern natives, the commission arrived at Fort Laramie in November to negotiate with the northern tribes. **However, while some came in, the hostiles led by Red Cloud sent word that no treaty was possible as long as the forts along the Bozeman Trail remained.** They agreed to come back to Fort Laramie in the spring[176]. The Army hired Jim Bridger from May 23 to July 21, 1868, to lead the troops who were closing the forts along the Bozeman Trail[177].

The Treaty of 1868

By the time of the negotiations, the Union Pacific Railroad's completion made the Bozeman Trail unnecessary[178]. The following spring, commissioners came to Fort Laramie prepared to grant the natives all they wanted, closing the Bozeman Trail and abandoning the forts. The Brule and Oglala signed the treaty, but Red Cloud refused until the troops left the Powder River country. The treaty gave the natives all of what is now South Dakota west of the Missouri River. They also gave them control of hunting rights on the Great Plains north of the North Platte River and east of the Big Horn Mountains[179]. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 established a Sioux nation stretching from the Black Hills to the Dakota Territory (See the figure below). It stretched from Montana to Nebraska. The treaty also established annual annuities of food and clothing delivered to those living on the reservation. The Treaty was ratified on February 16, 1869, by the Senate, and on February 24, President Andrew Johnson signed it. **President Grant decided to close the forts on March 2, 1868. The forts were burned in August 1868, ending Red Cloud's War**[180].

The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 Map[181]



The first part was contained in Article I. Article I was a pledge that professed peace. It did contain an interesting provision that punishment of the "bad men" on both sides. It indicated that if the natives did not turn over these bad men, the people who had been victims could get reparations from the annuities set aside for the natives[182].

The second part is contained in Articles II and III. They called for the natives to have the territory west of the Missouri River and east of the Rocky Mountains. That encompassed the western half of present-day South Dakota, and adjacent lands in North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and Nebraska (See the figure above). Article III set out that a survey was to be conducted to set aside 160 acres of tillable land for each person who was covered by the treaty. The presumption was that the natives would give up their nomadic ways of following the bison and become farmers[183].

The third part is contained in Articles IV – IX. Article IV says what the government will build on the reservation, including warehouses, agency headquarters, schools, and many other buildings. Article V calls out the duties of the agents and states that the agents shall report to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Articles VI – IX provide details about the buildings. Article X called for the natives to be issued clothing like that worn by the settlers. Article XI calls out seven forbidden acts by the natives, including killing Americans or capturing non-native women and children. Article XII states that three-fourths of the male population in the reservation must vote before any of the land can be ceded from the reservation. Article XVI – XV calls out the services to be provided by the US Government. The final two articles (XVI & XVII) cancel all previous treaties and prohibit white settlements in the ceded territories[184].

By the end of August 1868, the last soldiers had left Fort Phil Kearny, and the Montana Road (nee The Bozeman Trail) was closed. On November 6, Red Cloud arrived at Fort Laramie as a conquering hero and signed the treaty[185].

Fort C. F. Smith was abandoned on July 29, 1868. The next day, Red Cloud swept in and burned it to the ground. A few days later, Forts Phil Kearny and Reno were abandoned and were burned in due course[186]. Although Crazy Horse and other hostiles did not approve of the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868, it did bring some stability to the area until the Battle of the Little Big Horn ("Greasy Grass")[187]. As a summary of the outcome, Brown (1997) said,

> **For the first time in its history the United States Government had negotiated a peace which conceded everything demanded by the enemy and which extracted nothing in return. Through another stormy decade the Powder River country would belong to the Indians** (p. 225).

Conclusions

There were three repeating themes in the Plains Indian Wars of 1860 – 1878. They were the discovery of gold first in Colorado, then in Montana, and finally in South Dakota. This caused gold seekers to invade territories that had been set aside for the natives in treaties (i.e., The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851; The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1866; and the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, respectively). There were many instances of depredations on both sides, and neither side tried very hard to find the parties responsible; they just went after the nearest and often the weakest targets available. Finally, in the 1860s, the US Army suffered from poor supplies of arms, ammunition, food, and especially forage. This last shortage caused them to always have weak horses when trying to chase arguably the best light cavalry in the world.

Sand Creek was not a Civil War battle; it was an atrocity that never should have happened. It inflamed an already serious issue and extinguished any hope of peace. Unlike many accounts state, it was not the US Army that attacked the village. The only Army unit there, the 1st Colorado Cavalry, refused to enter the village and take part in the slaughter of women children and the mutilations of the dead. That was solely the work of the untrained, ill-disciplined 3rd Colorado Cavalry, a Colorado militia unit.

Red Cloud's War was a continuation of the hostilities between white settlers and gold seekers and the natives. The Powder River Expedition of 1865 resolved nothing and pointed out the results of poor planning and execution. The discovery of gold in Colorado and in Montana led to the incursion of gold seekers into regions that had been set aside for the natives by treaty. As the natives arrived at Fort Laramie to negotiate a treaty in 1866, Colonel Carrington arrived with soldiers and let the natives know that he intended to establish forts along the Bozeman Trail. Forts Reno, Phil Kearny, and C.F. Smith were under constant attack, and the Fetterman Fight finally showed the futility of the efforts to keep the Bozeman Trail open. Even though the Hayfield Fight and the Wagon Box Fight had different outcomes, it was too late for the Bozeman Trail. **Had the Army listened to Jim Bridger's warnings, recommending the Bridger Trail, instead of the Bozeman Trail, much of the bloodshed might have been avoided.**

The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 gave a period of respite from the violence. However, when gold was discovered in the Black Hills in 1874, the treaty was violated by the gold prospectors, which led to the Battle of the Little Bighorn (or Greasy Grass), but that is another story.

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Coming Soon:

The Great Sioux War 1876-1877

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