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A HISTORY OF
SCOT PHIL KILBURN

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
University of Osnaha

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
John William Dennison

June 1957

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PREFACE

The establishment of Fort Phil Kearny was an outstanding example of what Ray A. Bullington in his book, Westward Expansion, described as "a cost of blood, wealth, and human decency which will forever stain the annals of the American frontier." This was a result of weakness on the part of the administration, plus a lack of co-operation between the War Department and the Department of Indian Affairs. The conflict between these two departments gave little guidance to any policy for the frontier. The administration changed policy from war with the Indian to peace and back again as easily as blowing grain. War factions and peace groups struggled for power over the administration. The immigrant, seeking gold or land, continually petitioned the government for protection from the Indian, whether he was deserving of it or not. The government, relenting to these pressures, sent the army in which the Civil War had instilled a spirit of fighting and restlessness.

The individuals at Fort Phil Kearny were misfitted for their positions. Carrington was sent to fight and did not, while Fetterman was ordered not to fight and did. It is interesting to contemplate what would have been the effect on History if these men had done as they were commended, or if Fort Phil Kearny had not been evacuated. But the fort was evacuated, and the administration, postponing a real solution to the Indian problem, left in Fort Phil Kearny a step-child

of its own corruption and indecision. The original purpose of Fort Phil Kearny was to protect the immigrant and Indian from one another, but it could not fulfill its mission when individuals in the East put personal interests first and would not try to understand nor reconcile their differences.

This thesis is far from being the product of one man. It is the outgrowth of a vast amount of patience, help, and encouragement by my wife, who also did the typing. Another whom I wish to acknowledge is Doctor Frederick W. Adrian of the History Department, University of Omaha. It was under his competent direction and leadership that this was written, at a sacrifice of his own personal time and effort.

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CHAPTER I

JOURNEY TO PINEY CREEK

In the late fall of 1866 the Army of the United States erected Fort Phil Kearny¹ in the middle of the last great game reserve of the northern plains.² Although the Indians could not retreat farther, the white man insisted upon gaining control of this region since it provided the most convenient route to the newly discovered gold fields of the Montana region.³ The fort was placed in what came to be one of the most continuous and bloody battle fields on the Indian frontier.⁴ During the brief period of its existence, 1866-1868, the fort suffered no less than one hundred eighty separate attacks.⁵ The inhospitable

¹Fort Phil Kearny was named in honor of the famous cavalry officer, Major General Philip Kearny. Fort Kearny, Nebraska, was named after Stephen W. Kearny. Fort Phil Kearny is found spelled both with and without the extra "e", but the original intended spelling, as found in official sources of that period, will be used here.

²United States Department of Interior, Papers Relative to Indian Operations on the Plains (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), p. 7.

³LeRoy R. Hafen and Francis Maxin Young, Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West, 1834-1890 (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1938), p. 350.

⁴Annual Report of the Commission of Indian Affairs, Doct. I 20, 1/a:372. United States Indian Affairs Office (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872.)

⁵Ibid.

elements, lack of men and equipment, incompetent leadership, and poor discipline demonstrated the requirements needed for the successful control of the plains. While the events which occurred in this vicinity did not present a solution to all the problems found on the plains, as attested by the Fetterman and Custer Massacres, the Wagon Box Fight which proved the efficiency of the repeating rifle, the reorganization of the Indian reservation system, and the evacuation of a string of forts did result in better relations with the Indians and was the inception of a new policy which eventually made peace a reality on the plains.

The deep seated mistrust of the Indian toward the actions of the white men was further intensified, not only by the treacherous Chivington Massacre⁶ in November, 1864, and the steady advancement of the white civilization in the West, but also from an event which transpired at Fort Laramie in 1865. At a time when the United States Government was expressing its concern over the welfare of the Indians and was in the process of signing a treaty of peace with them, the Indians were able to observe the armed might of the War Department that was heading up the Bozeman Trail.

The United States after the Civil War was ready for peace and

⁶Colonel J. M. Chivington surrounded and ruthlessly massacred four hundred and fifty sleeping, peaceful Indian families at Sand Creek, Colorado, on November 28, 1864.

tired of blood-letting. Some of the churches had been concerned for years over the welfare of the Indians and, when in the winter of 1864-1865 Congress began to delve into Indian affairs, the Indian Department entered into the discussion demanding that a change in the method of dealing with the Indians should be attempted and a more Christian policy incorporated. A new policy was instituted in Washington whereby the officials now decided to try peaceful measures with the Indians of the Wyoming region. Emissaries were sent to the tribes inviting them to attend a general peace council to be held at Fort Laramie in June, 1866.⁷

At this same time, however, the War Department was receiving petitions requesting soldiers to protect the trails and territory to insure safe passage for the wagon trains carrying thousands of people who were leaving Fort Laramie, the jumping off place for these expeditions, bound for the gold fields of what later came to be the Montana and Wyoming Territories.⁸

This general area was full of excitement. In 1861 gold had been found in what was to become the Idaho Territory and near Virginia City, Montana Territory, in 1862. During the next few years gold was found

⁷George E. Hyde, Red Cloud's Folk, A History of the Ogallala Sioux Indians (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), p. 134.

⁸LeRoy R. Hafen and Francis Maxin Young, op. cit., p. 350.

in other locations in Montana Territory. The first route to these mines was an indirect approach leading north from Fort Hall on the Oregon trail; the second led east from the Oregon country, while a third followed the Missouri River. In 1864 Jim Bridger and John K. Bosman led parties north from the upper North Platte, the former followed a route west of the Big Horn Mountains, while the latter proceeded along a trail east of that chain. Since the Bozeman route proved to be the most practicable, the white man was determined to use it.⁹

Thus in the month of May, 1865, an astonishing spectacle was presented with the military preparing strong cavalry columns to be dispatched against the Indians on Powder River, while at the same time a powerful group in Congress was declaring that the Indians were a friendly peace-loving people.

The group which was interested in peace with the Indians was led by Senator James Wood Doolittle from Wisconsin, while Major General S. R. Curtis was in command of the Department of the Northwest. It was the order of General Curtis to Colonel Chivington to chase the Cheyennes in April, 1864, that brought a renewal to the trouble on the plains.¹⁰

⁹United States War Department, File 355, 1866-1868, letter, April 26, 1866.

¹⁰George E. Hyde, op. cit., p. 155.

From the standpoint of the Indians, there were serious objections to any white extension into the region. It was the last really good hunting ground of the Sioux. The white man had previously destroyed important game areas by the establishment of the Oregon, Overland, and Santa Fe Trails. The one remaining great game reserve of the northern plains was now being invaded.

During March, 1866, a number of chiefs were contacted and the meeting of a peace council at Fort Laramie was arranged. The peace commission assembled at Fort Laramie on June 1, 1866. It consisted of E. B. Taylor, Superintendent of the Northern Superintendency, Colonel H. E. Maynadier, Colonel R. N. McLaren, and Thomas Wistar who came from a wealthy, prominent Philadelphia family. Charles E. Bowles of the Indian Department was secretary. The Brule and Ogallala Sioux were represented by their principal chiefs with about two thousand of their tribesmen in attendance. After a preliminary discussion it was decided to postpone further action until more of the sub-bands arrived. Superintendent Taylor wrote, "A group numbering perhaps three hundred warriors, headed by Red Cloud, a prominent chief of the Ogallalas, refused to come in. They are known as the Bad Faces and are composed of the most refractory and desperate characters of the tribe."¹¹

¹¹LeRoy R. Hafen and Francis Maxin Young, op. cit., p. 350.

In the meantime, unfortunately, the War Department had sent out instructions to open the Bozeman Trail through the Powder River country to the gold mines in the Montana Territory. Colonel Henry B. Carrington, Eighteenth U. S. Infantry, was assigned this task and instructed to proceed from Fort Kearny, Nebraska.¹²

Colonel Carrington's orders from the Mountain District, Department of the Platte, Omaha, Nebraska, was to establish the following forts: Fort Reno, formerly known as Fort Connor, but to be moved westward about forty miles on the new emigrant line toward Virginia City, Fort Ransom, to be built on or near the Big Horn River, and a third post upon the upper Yellowstone River, name not designated. The route to be controlled and protected, requiring supervision of the district commander, and, through which he had to communicate either west or east, was from North Platte (Bridger's Ferry) along a line that extended five hundred and forty-five miles to the northwest.

Pursuant to these orders, Colonel Carrington issued his General Order Number Two, which named the assignments of the units under his command. Old Fort Reno was to be temporarily garrisoned by a detachment of thirty men from Company B, Second Battalion, Eighteenth U. S. Infantry, under the command of Lieutenant T. S. Kirtland. New

¹²Department of Interior, Letter, Carrington to Cooke, April 26, 1866, microfilm, Nebraska State Historical Society.

Fort Reno was to be garrisoned by companies A, B, C, and H, Second Battalion, Eighteenth U. S. Infantry, under the command of T. Ten Eyck. Fort Ransom was to have companies D and G of the Second Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel N. C. Kinney, and the post on the Upper Yellowstone was to be garrisoned by companies E and F of the Second Battalion under the command of Captain Henry Raymond.¹³

Colonel Carrington then also sent another letter to the Department of the Platte requesting, innocently enough, permission to arrive at Fort Laramie in time for the meeting of the Indian tribes in the council; thereby he hoped to form the acquaintance, he stated, of a man with "whom I will have subsequent relations."¹⁴

Carrington did arrive in time to effect the council at Fort Laramie. He had with him a force of seven hundred men which included a band, but not a single cavalry-man in this original group. It must have been a grand sight, especially for the Indians who were suspicious of the white people even before the meetings began, to witness this show of force as Carrington's troops led by a thirty piece band marched by Doherty Town, which was on the outskirts of the fort. The expedition's

¹³United States Department of the Interior, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 55.

train of two hundred and twenty-six mule teams was loaded with equipment and supplies including a saw mill, mowing machines, shingle and brick machines, blacksmith and harness making equipment, axes, saws, and tools of all kinds. There were rocking chairs, churns, quantities of canned fruit, turkeys, chickens, pigs, and cows to equip and stock the new posts.¹⁵ Their appearance had a decidedly disquieting effect. "Great Father send us presents and wants new road," commented one chief, "but white chief goes with soldiers to steal road before Indian say yes or no."¹⁶ Red Cloud replied to this sign of force by saying, "Kill every white man who pass beyond Crazy Woman's fork of the Powder River."¹⁷ A large group led by Red Cloud and Man-afraid-of-his-horses withdrew in anger and opposition to all peace talk.¹⁸

Leaving this excitement behind him, Colonel Carrington marched

¹⁵Hafen and Young, op. cit., p. 346.

¹⁶National Park Service Historical Handbook Series #20, Fort Laramie National Monument (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1954), p. 19.

¹⁷Earl Alonzo Brininstool, Fighting Indian Warriors, True Tales of the Wild Frontiers (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Company, 1953), p. 46.

¹⁸Man-afraid-of-his-horses was named, not because of his fear of horses, but because of his concern for his horses. Once during an attack by other Indians, Man-afraid-of-his-horses left his family to protect his animals and thereafter received the name.

up the trail and garrisoned Camp Connor. His orders now read that the Second Battalion was to post two companies at Camp Connor and that Camp Connor was to be renamed Fort Reno. Then he was to move up the Bozeman Trail about eighty miles north of Fort Reno on the new route to Virginia City, Montana Territory, where on any of the creeks between the Powder River to Tongue River he was to establish another fort to be named Fort Phil Kearny. These orders were dated June 28, 1866. Under these orders the colonel for the regiment was to be stationed at Fort Phil Kearny from whence he was to command the Mountain District.¹⁹

The peace commission was still struggling along at Fort Laramie and, even though the Indians there were now representing only a small portion of the original group, the men had high hopes of securing peace among the Sioux. Years later one observer wrote:

The treaty of 1866, at which we were present, such as it was, having been concluded by the chiefs of the thousand Indians who remained, the coveted presents were distributed. In a few hours more the friendly camps were ablaze with mounted Indians decked in yellow, red, and other brilliantly colored cheap fabrics flying in the winds. To their simple tastes these tawdry stuffs were more attractive than diamonds. Gilded jewelry was received by them in exchange for articles of real value. We were informed that they received firearms and ammunition, which they greatly prized, but this statement is not made from my personal knowledge.²⁰

¹⁹Papers Relative to Indian Operations, Orders of June 28, 1866.

²⁰Hafen and Young, op. cit., p. 350.

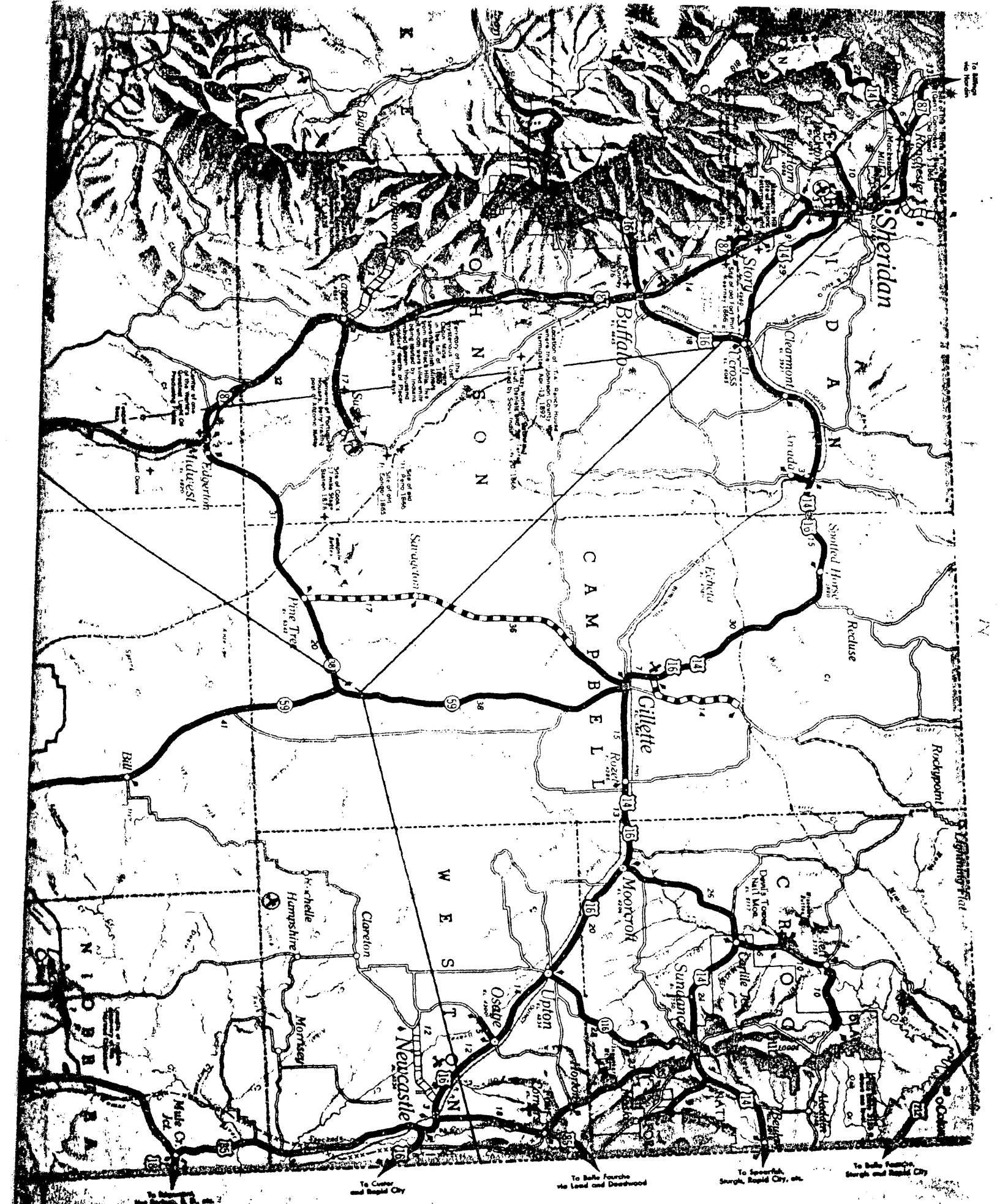
As E. B. Taylor, the head of the council for the Indian Affairs, was making the peace at Fort Laramie, not far away in his camp on June 16, Colonel Carrington was visited by Standing Elk, Chief of the Brule Sioux. Standing Elk said he was friendly, but said, after being told where Carrington was going, "There is a treaty being made at Laramie with the Sioux that are in the country where you are going. The fighting men in that country have not come to Laramie, and you will have to fight them. They will not give you the road unless you whip them."²¹ Carrington stated that he felt there would be no difficulties and so indicated in a letter to the Department of the Platte.

Colonel Carrington arrived at Fort Reno on June twenty-eighth and remained until July ninth. Five days later the expedition reached a point nearly one hundred miles north of Fort Reno which appealed to Colonel Carrington as the best location for the erection of the first fort. It was at the forks of the Big and Little Piney Creeks.²² The next day the site was selected and logging parties were detailed. The erection of Fort Phil Kearny was begun.²³

²¹Papers Relative to Indian Operations, Letter of June 16, 1866.

²²The site of Fort Phil Kearny, in the late eighteen-seventies, became a part of the ranch of Jacob Geier. The fort was situated about twenty-three miles southeast of the present city of Sheridan, Wyoming.

²³Brininstool, op. cit., p. 47. Sketch of Fort Phil Kearny on page 49 is taken from this text. The original, as well as the sketch on page 37 is deposited in the National Archives.



To Spearfish, Rapid City, etc.

To Center and Rapid City

To Belle Fourche via Lead and Deadwood

To Spearfish, Sargis, Rapid City, etc.

To Belle Fourche, Sargis and Rapid City

S O U T H D A K O T A

Colonel Carrington busied himself with the building of the new post. He also sent two companies to the Big Horn River to build another post, Fort C. F. Smith.²⁴ The troops for the Big Horn Expedition and the first lot of wagon trains seemed to have slipped past the Sioux on the Tongue River. Meanwhile, back at Fort Phil Kearny, Colonel Carrington drew up the plans for the post. He placed it on a plateau where the eye could see for miles. Below the fort, however, along the river bottoms the thickets were dense, and it was there that many soldiers were to lose their lives while escorting wood trains to and from the fort. Several hundred feet above this post on a nearby ridge were discovered the remains of an old Indian fort or ring which was thirty feet square and built of stones. This aged and forgotten spot was known as Fort Ridge by the soldiers of the frontier. Its defenses were remodeled by building a stockade of log around it.²⁵

Carrington put every effort into the new fort and its administration. He had eight companies of eighty men each, mostly

²⁴U. S. War Department, Film 355, General Order Number Two, signed by Colonel Carrington, dated June 28, 1866, Microfilm #155.

²⁵Robert Beebee David, Finn Burnett, Frontiersman, the Life and Adventures of an Indian Fighter, Mail Coach Driver, Miner, Pioneer, Cattleman, Participant in the Powder River Expedition, Survivor of the Hay Field Fight, Associate of Jim Bridger and Chief Washakie (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1937), p. 121.

new recruits, to garrison his long line. All the while they were building and protecting his stockades and fortifications. Carrington wrote to Omaha, "I am my own engineer, draughtsman, and visit my pickets and guards nightly, with scarcely a day or night without attempts to steal stock."²⁶ While this was written in late July before actual conflict with the Sioux began, it must be remembered, however, that Carrington's background had not particularly fitted him for this command.

He had been born in Wellingford, Connecticut, of wealthy parents. Because of a chance address by John Brown, he became an ardent abolitionist. From his early youth he had been interested in military affairs, but due to his weak constitution, instead of entering West Point, Carrington entered Yale and graduated in 1845. He taught school under Washington Irving and then became a professor in the New Haven Collegiate Institute. In 1848 Carrington moved to Columbus, Ohio, where he practiced law for twelve years. He was the personal friend and supporter of Governor Salmon P. Chase and in 1857, at the request of Chase, Carrington accepted a position on his staff to take charge of the re-organization of the militia of the state.

²⁶Quoted in Frederic Logan Paxson, The Last American Frontier (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1910), p. 276.

He did such a fine job that an appointment as Adjutant General for the state of Ohio followed. When Lincoln issued his first call for troops before the U. S. Volunteers could be organized and mustered, nine regiments of the Ohio Militia were hurried across the Ohio River to save western Virginia. Shortly afterward Carrington was commissioned Colonel of the Eighteenth U. S. Infantry and placed in command of the regular army camp near Columbus. Throughout the war "he was especially active in organizing and forwarding troops to the field."²⁷ In 1862 he was promoted to Brigadier General. At the end of the war when the army was reduced, he was mustered out of the service as a Brigadier General, but re-entered the Eighteenth Regiment as a Colonel. Then in 1865 Carrington was sent to Nebraska to serve in the Indian Service. Fort Phil Kearny was his first field assignment and Carrington was unprepared both physically and mentally for what followed.

In the command there were five hundred and sixty new recruits from the general depot.²⁸ His military equipment was inadequate. Only his band of thirty men, especially armed for the expedition, had Spencer

²⁷James Truslow Adams, Dictionary of American History, Vol. III (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), p. 520-521.

²⁸Grace R. Hebard and E. A. Brininstool, Bozeman Trail, Vol. I (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Company, 1922), p. 280.

carbines and enough ammunition. His main force, still armed with Springfield rifles, had under fifty rounds per man.

Colonel Carrington's reports, nevertheless, were full of optimism. He considered the situation good and gave the assurance that wagon trains would be safe if they were well organized and used precautions. As a matter of fact, the Sioux were not prepared for an all out attack, but with winter coming the threat to "kill every white man who pass beyond the Crazy Woman's fork of the Powder River" had to be attempted before time for the buffalo hunt.²⁹

²⁹Earl Alonzo Brininstool, op. cit., p. 46.

CHAPTER II

BEYOND CRAZY WOMAN CREEK

Colonel Carrington was not a fighting man. He was sent to build a defense system along the Bozeman Trail. This was his mission and other events were secondary. Nor did Carrington sense the increase in Indian activity. His reports to the Department of the Platte, although they mentioned the Indian activity, did not indicate the growing seriousness of the problem. The Department of the Platte sensed the true situation better than did Carrington and sent out an inspector to look over the situation, but the lack of apprehension on the part of Carrington seemed to allay the fears of the inspector.

The report of Colonel Carrington on August 29, 1866, stated that the situation was good, even though already thirty-three white men had been killed along the new road in the past five weeks. Carrington had arrived at the site of the fort on July 14, and what he had called relatively quiet was already disturbing Omaha. Brigadier General William B. Hazen was sent as an inspector to the Bozeman area only to report back on August 6, that the Indians promised some activity, but it was mostly apprehension on the part of the command. Again on August 12, he reported that "matters are much exaggerated." He stated that the mail went through and those men who had been killed were all stragglers or distant from their

posts.¹

As early as June 30, the Sioux Indians tried to run off some stock belonging to a sutler.² Carrington sent a small force to chase the Indians. The Indian chiefs, who were talking peace at Laramie with the Indian Commission, looked suspiciously at the chase and asked why the soldiers stated on one hand that they were there to protect the Indians, while on the other hand, soldiers were chasing the Indians who had stolen the sutler's horses.³

On July 16 the Cheyennes asked Carrington to return to Fort Reno and not to build another fort. The Cheyennes stated that they were weak, but Red Cloud was strong. They would be friendly, but they also feared the Sioux. The Cheyennes pleaded with Carrington to leave the road. He should return from where he came and not continue with his plans, as this was cheating the Indian. Carrington, instead, asked the Cheyennes to leave the Big Horn area. This the Cheyennes did, and occasionally as they moved through the area they gave the soldiers information as to the Sioux.⁴

¹U. S. War Department, Film 355, Letters dated August 6 and August 13, 1866, from Bvt. Brigadier General William B. Hazen to Major Litchfield, Department of the Platte.

²A sutler was one who followed an army and sold to the troops provisions, liquors, and the like.

³Papers Relative to Indian Operations, Letter of July 17, 1866, from Carrington to Major Litchfield.

⁴Ibid., Letter, July 23, 1866, Carrington to Litchfield.

The next day the Sioux ran off another herd belonging to a sutler. They were in the region hunting for the Cheyennes, who they felt had betrayed them. Also, at five o'clock in the evening of that same day the wagon train of Brevet Major Haymond was attacked. The Indians had passed his picket, taking first the bell mule or mare and one hundred seventy-four head of stock. In the attack and chase that followed to regain the stock, two men were killed and three were wounded by arrows. At another place the Sioux killed Pierre Gasseau and five others. Gasseau was a settler who had married a Cheyenne Indian woman; in this way the Sioux had gained some revenge against the Cheyennes.⁵

Three days later a wagon train which had left Fort Reno under the command of Lieutenant Wands was attacked.⁶ This wagon train consisted of twenty-six individuals, including two women, five wagons, two ambulances and four riding horses. It was to give added re-enforcements to Fort Phil Kearny. With the group was Lieutenant Napoleon H. Daniels. The night before departing from Fort Reno it was noticed that many wolves and coyotes were hovering around the post. Already the soldiers were becoming aware of the fact that occasionally these wild animals were able to shoot arrows that

⁵Ibid., Letter, July 17, 1866, Carrington to Litchfield.

⁶See map on page twelve.

killed sentinels. Therefore the party got an early start and tried to get to Dry Creek where water was supposed to be good. The creek was dry, but right in the middle was the body of a naked white man who had been scalped and filled with arrows. He was evidently a courier from Fort Phil Kearny who had been waylaid and shot the night before. He had been trying to scoop out the sand in the little basin to find a drink of water. After they buried the man, the group moved on to the Crazy Woman Creek, depressed and short of water. At nine o'clock they reached the crest of the divide that led down into Crazy Woman Valley. The party noticed that near the creek there were numerous objects that resembled buffalo. Daniels and Lieutenant George H. Templeton went after the herd to get some fresh meat for the group.

Both men were lost from sight, and when the party reached a sandy bed near the creek, they heard shots and met arrows. The wagons were quickly corraled.

Templeton appeared with an arrow in his back. "My God, Indians!" he exclaimed. "They wasn't buffalo."⁷ The men dug rifle pits. Two men were able to get water by slipping down a ravine. The Indians charged a number of times without success, and, finally by afternoon slacked off enough so that two men were able to sneak

⁷Francis C. Carrington, My Army Life and the Fort Phil Kearny Massacre with an Account of the Celebration of "Wyoming Opened" (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1910), p. 74.

back to Fort Reno for help. The Indians pursued them over the hill and out of sight of the circled group.

They were scarcely gone when a cloud of dust was observed across the creek to the northwest. Jim Bridger arrived shortly, and told them that two hundred men under Captain Burrows were coming. Captain Burrows was sent by Carrington to get supplies for the fort. As they moved toward Fort Reno, Jim Bridger read signs made on the skulls of buffalo that a battle was to be fought at Crazy Woman Creek that day. So instead of making for camp at Clear Fork as planned, Captain Burrows had made a forced march to Crazy Woman Creek.

Lieutenant Daniels was found scalped and with a pole inserted through his body from underneath. Sergeant Terrel died in the fighting at the corral.

On the way back to Fort Reno, a detachment under Lieutenant H. F. Bingham met the survivors. The men who had ridden to Fort Reno had escaped the Indians in their chase.⁸

The Indians continued to attack the troops moving along the Bozeman Trail. On the twenty-second a fight near Fort Reno killed one and wounded another. Then on the next day Captain Burrows found himself under another attack by the Indians. A wagon train under

⁸Ibid., pp. 73-79.

the leadership of a Mr. Kirkendall was engaged. Captain Burrows, with sixty men and one howitzer, left his supply train to aid Kirkendall. The men were killed in the fight and, on his return, Burrows found the body of Terrance Callary, a private under his command, who had left without his knowledge to pursue buffalo.⁹

As time went on, the respect of the soldiers for the craftiness and method of warfare employed by the Indians increased. The manner used by the Sioux for taking scalps terrified them. The skin that was cut from the top of a victim's head was thick and about five inches in diameter and some scalps also had the ears attached. After fleshing the scalps down until they were thin and pliable, a hoop was made with a willow branch, and the scalp was fastened to the circlet. The inside, or flesh side, of the scalp was then painted red and all was then tied to what the Indians called a "coup" stick which staff they always carried in war dances and ceremonies.¹⁰

On July 28 the Indians attempted to surround Fort Reno to drive off the stock, but they were not successful. The following day a citizen train was attacked at Brown's Springs which was four and a half miles eastward of the south fork of the Cheyenne and north of

⁹Report of July 24, Lieutenant Wands to Litchfield, Microfilm, #355, War Department.

¹⁰David, op. cit., p. 75.

Fort Reno. Eight men were killed and two were wounded; one of them died later. The men were well armed with Henry rifles and other weapons. The force of Indians was less than eighty, and they claimed to be friendly. But one man was killed by an Indian who, just after shaking hands with him and accepting tobacco, shot him in the back. Some of the party were in pursuit of game and some in pursuit of Indians on the hill. Two were in advance and were shot while parleying a mile from the camp. On this date Carrington sent a letter to Omaha stating that aggressive operations had begun in his rear area and threatened his communications. He also advised the department of what he thought was the absolute failure of the Fort Laramie Treaty as far as it affected his command.¹¹ This resulted in the investigation by Brigadier General Hazen.

On August 3, 1866, the mail party of twenty men was attacked by three hundred Indians in the valley of the Tongue River. The party of Lieutenant Bradley, returning from Fort Smith, was also attacked and the guide, named Brennan, was killed and scalped while leading the wagon train. This kept up for several hours before the Indians left. On the ninth the wood train going to get lumber was attacked and four mules were driven off. One Indian was killed and another wounded.¹²

¹¹U. S. War Department, Film 355, Letter from Carrington to Litchfield, July 29, 1866.

¹²U. S. War Department, Film 355, Letter from Carrington to Litchfield, August 3, 1866.

September was especially busy for the Indians. On September 8 at six o'clock in the morning, a citizen train was fired on. Two days later government herders repulsed the Indians.¹³ On the thirteenth a citizen hay party was attacked and one was killed while two hundred nine cattle were driven off. Captain T. Ten Eyck, the post commander of Fort Phil Kearny, was sent to relieve the hay party.¹⁴ The next day Private Allardo Gilchrist was killed in a raid. Ridgeway Glover, a citizen artist, who was sent to draw pictures by a New York paper, went out in a geological tour without permission and was unarmed. He was found two miles from the fort: naked, scalped, and his back cleft with a tomahawk.¹⁵ On the fifteenth Private Peter Johnson was killed.¹⁶ Then the Indians stole forty-eight head of cattle on the seventeenth. September 20 the Indians attacked another citizen outfit, but relief from Fort Kearny saved them. On the following day the hay party from the fort was surrounded, but forty infantry men came and escorted the group without trouble.¹⁷ Two days later the Indians attacked and drove off twenty-four head of cattle belonging to a government

¹³U. S. War Department, Film 355, Report of September 12, 1866, Carrington to Litchfield.

¹⁴U. S. War Department, Film 355, Carrington to Litchfield, Sept. 13, 1866.

¹⁵Ibid., Sept. 14, Letter.

¹⁶Ibid., Sept. 16, Letter.

¹⁷Ibid., Sept. 20, Letter.

contractor. On the same day Captain Brown, with twenty-three men, stood off repeated Sioux charges and Lieutenant Matson in another area found three teamsters killed and scalped. They belonged to a group of fifty-seven men who had split up into small parties and were hunting in the area. These men had been under repeated Indian attacks for two days. Also on September 23 a citizen, Casper H. Walsh, was killed while protecting his cattle.¹⁸ Three days later, however, Colonel Carrington optimistically reported that he did not "think the Indian troubles (would) be permanent or general."¹⁹

The next day Private Patrick Smith was scalped alive and mortally wounded with arrows. Later that day the Indian party who killed Private Smith crossed the Piney. There were fifteen and they passed eastward through the bushes of the Little Piney just south of the fort and were first discovered when they tried to cut off the pickets on the picket hills east of the fort. The pickets dismounted and started their horses for the post, the horses receiving the arrows as the pickets dashed through the Indians. The pickets fell back toward the fort and were immediately supported by a mounted force of

¹⁸ Ibid., Letter, Sept. 23, 1866, Carrington to Cooke.

¹⁹ Ibid., Letter, Sept. 26, 1866, Carrington to Cooke.

twenty men. This was repeated as there were two other picket attacks later. Also on that day a mining party of forty men were attacked and two were killed.²⁰

The raids occurred almost daily either attacking wagon trains, sutlers, or wood trains until October; then the Indians went on their buffalo hunt. The Department of the Platte at Omaha sent some facts to Carrington that had been found up and down the Big Horn region. First, the Indians were well armed with revolvers and rifles. Red Cloud was in command and some of the Indians could speak very good English. The Sioux were determined to burn the country, cut off army supplies, and hamper every movement of the whites. Also when dead Indians were searched, something was always found that had been purchased at Fort Laramie.²¹

Winter was settling on the plains and, although no snow was on the post, four feet could be found within a mile of it. The hills were bare, but due to the wind, the ravines, valleys, and gulches were full of snow making travel difficult. The weather was cold and the temperatures hung around zero.

With the fort completed in October, winter at hand and final

²⁰ Ibid., Sept. 27, 1866, Letter from Carrington to Cooke.

²¹ Ibid., Nov. 5, 1866, Letter from Cooke to Carrington.

preparations for winter almost completed, the Department of the Platte sent instructions to Colonel Carrington for a winter campaign.

Carrington was instructed to strike the Sioux with a surprise attack against their winter camps. "An extraordinary effort in the winter, when the Indian horses are unserviceable, it is believed, should be followed by more success than can be accomplished by very large expeditions in the summer, when the Indians can so easily scatter into deserts and mountain hiding places almost beyond pursuit."²²

Colonel Carrington replied that an offensive operation at this time was impossible with his force.²³ Indian activity was very limited and, according to Carrington, the Indian problem was over. November 27, 1866, the Department of the Platte sent a telegram stating, "It is impossible to take the offensive this season, except you can manage to surprise Red Cloud in winter camp by infantry. Two or three hundred infantry, with suffering perhaps, might thus accomplish more than two thousand troops in summer. I have reason to believe there are whites with the Indians. Never spare them."²⁴

But Carrington's orders to his officers were only to relieve

²²Ibid., Nov. 12, 1866, Litchfield to Carrington.

²³Ibid., Nov. 17, 1866, Carrington to Cooke.

²⁴Ibid., Nov. 27, 1866, Telegram, Carrington to Cooke.

these parties attacked by Indians and under no circumstances to engage or pursue them. From the East, however, came a dashing officer who was looking for excitement. His name was William Judd Lettaman. This newcomer, plus another event, was to have a lasting effect upon Fort Phil Kearny.

While Colonel Carrington expected to have by December 21, the last of the winter's wood supply cut, the period of the buffalo hunt was likewise over. The Indians could now give their complete attention to the destruction of the hated fort at the forks of Piney Creek.

CHAPTER III

AFTER THE BUFFALO HUNT

December was not three days old when President Andrew Johnson in his message to Congress stated that "treaties have been concluded with the Indians, who have unconditionally submitted to our authority and manifested an earnest desire for a renewal of friendly relations."¹ In the meantime the Indians on the plains had finished their buffalo hunt and had made ready for the winter. Already the snow was so deep as to allow only an occasional trip to the pinery from Fort Phil Kearny.² While Carrington noticed an increase in Indian activity, he still was not particularly alarmed and did not grasp the seriousness of the situation. Problems inside the fort were of more concern. One dealt with an officer by the name of William Judd Fetterman who was looking for an Indian fight.

Fetterman had been reared in army life. When the Civil War started, he had joined the army. During the war he was twice brevetted for gallant and meritorious service, once at the battle of Murfreesboro and again at the battle of Jonesboro. After the war Fetterman was transferred, September 21, 1866, to the 27th Infantry with the rank

¹Hebard, Bozeman Trail, Vol. I, p. 295.

²A pinery is a grove of pine trees.

of Captain and sent out to Fort Phil Kearny to report to Colonel Carrington. He was a genial and dashing personality and at once became popular socially. He was also well liked by his subordinate officers and men. He was not familiar with frontier conditions or with Indian warfare. He also held a rather contemptuous view of the conservatism of Carrington. Before December 21, Fetterman on one occasion declared he could ride safely through the Indian country with eighty men.³

Another young officer, who was to take part in the massacre on December 21, was Lieutenant George W. Grummond. He had passed through the Civil War with honor as a Captain in the First Michigan Volunteers, then as a Major, and later as a Lieutenant Colonel of the Fourteenth Michigan Volunteers. Finally he was brevetted a Brigadier General of the United States Volunteers.⁴

Also in the group was Captain Frederick H. Brown who was a very good friend of Captain Fetterman. Brown was to return to the East soon, but he wanted to have one more good fight with the Indians before he left. Carrington personally believed that Brown influenced Fetterman to disobey orders. Captain Brown had entered the Eighteenth

³U. S. War Department Film 355, General Orders I, January 1, 1867.

⁴Ibid.

United States Infantry in 1861 among some of the first recruits.⁵ He was very daring both in the Civil War and around the post. This attitude toward action appealed to Fetterman so when he left the post on December 21, although Brown was not one of those selected to go, his body was found among the dead.

On December 6, there occurred an incident which revealed the danger that threatened the command of Colonel Carrington and set up the dress rehearsal for future attempts at annihilation. At one o'clock in the afternoon, a messenger reported to the garrison that the wood train was under attack by Indians about four miles away. Carrington immediately had every horse at the post mounted. For the main relief he sent out a column of forty men under Fetterman. He led in person a flanking party to cut off the retreat of the Indians. The mercury was below zero. Carrington, unfortunately, was thrown into the water of Peno Creek when his horse stumbled, breaking through the ice and thus delayed his arrival.

Fetterman found the wood train in the corral standing off the attack with success. Carrington had developed a system for building a corral under Indian attack which was generally successful, if completed. The wagon train, varying from twenty-five to forty wagons,

⁵Ibid.

went in two parallel lines about three hundred feet apart. After the wagons left the post until they reached the pinery, there were mounted pickets on either flank. One especially dangerous place was on the crest of the Sullivant Hills. As soon as an Indian alarm was given, the front wagons were to move on the trot or run forming a circle with the mules being halted so the wagon would act as protection in front of them. With this method a corral could be quickly made with the most possible defense.⁶

These attacking Indians retreated as the relief party approached and were pursued for about five miles when they turned and started to fight again. Just as the fighting began most of the cavalry, under the command of Lieutenant Bingham, broke away leaving Fetterman and some fourteen others surrounded on three sides by the Indians. He held them off until Carrington came in sight and the Indians fled. Carrington was also able to save Lieutenant George Grummond and three others who had been cut off. Seven Indians were holding down Grummond with fire until Carrington, moving from higher ground, was able to drive the attackers off. Why Lieutenant Bingham retreated with his cavalry and left Fetterman was never explained since the Indians killed him and his first sergeant, while several others in his command

⁶Ibid.

were wounded. The Indians, once the fight was over, disappeared over the hills, and Carrington had no force with which to follow.⁷

Colonel Carrington wrote on December 8, his report of the fight to the Department of the Platte stating that the Indian force consisted of over three hundred braves. He gave great credit to Fetterman, Captain Brown, and Lieutenant Wands for their actions during the fight and mentioned the actions of Lieutenant Bingham as impossible. Carrington did include, however, a statement from a sergeant which said that the horse of Lieutenant Bingham had run away with him. In this letter Carrington said Fetterman followed orders completely.⁸ Carrington also repeated his request for more men and officers and stated he was unable to take the offensive because of the defenses which constantly had to be maintained.

The Indians did not again cause trouble until December 19, when a wood train was once more attacked.⁹ Captain James Powell went to its rescue with orders not to pursue the Indians, but only to drive them off. On December 20, Carrington escorted the wood train with eighty men without incident. His report of the twentieth gave three hundred and fifty men as strength at the fort which included soldiers,

⁷U. S. War Department Film 355, Report of Carrington to Litchfield, December 8, 1866.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., Letter, Carrington to Litchfield, December 20, 1866.

civilians, employees, teamsters, and prisoners in the guardhouse. For the once-a-week mail parties, which were required, an escort of twelve men was needed to provide protection. Several of these were cut off, but orders from Omaha insisted upon a weekly report and mail party.¹⁰

The morning of December 21, was bright and clear. While the hillsides were covered with heavy snow, the ground between the timber and the fort was bare. The temperature was below zero. The last wood train of the year was to go to the forest for lumber and return with its final load. Fort Phil Kearny was ready to hibernate for the winter.¹¹

Then the pickets on Sullivant Hills at eleven o'clock in the morning signaled the fort that the wood train was again under attack. Since the alarm was sounded almost daily, Carrington quickly mobilized and prepared forty-nine men from his own Eighteenth Regiment and twenty-seven men from the Ninth Cavalry to go to the relief of the wood train. He first gave the command to Captain James Powell, with Lieutenant Grummond in command of the cavalry, but Captain Fetterman begged to be given the command and claimed the right on account of

¹⁰Department of the Platte Film 355, October, 1866, Message, Litchfield to Carrington.

¹¹Hebard, op. cit., p. 305.

seniority. Carrington granted the request, but warned Fetterman not to follow the Indians beyond Lodge Trail Ridge, an elevation a short distance southwest of the fort. Carrington's orders to Fetterman were to "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, (Lodge Trail Ridge) as per map in your possession." Then Carrington gave the same orders to Lieutenant Grummond and included within these orders that Grummond should not leave Fetterman. Then, as Fetterman left the post, Colonel Carrington called him and repeated the orders.¹²

A similar incident happened nearly ten years later when General Gibbons called, "Now, Custer, don't be greedy, but wait for us."¹³ And with the same effect, for both men met their fate within seventy-five miles of one another.

As the command left the fort, five Indians appeared and watched the force. Captain Fetterman was eager for a fight, and with him, almost to the number, was the force of men that he had earlier claimed could be used to ride safely through the Indian country. He relieved the wood train and rushed on by. Just why he ignored the explicit

¹²Brininstool, Fighting Indian Warriors, p. 32.

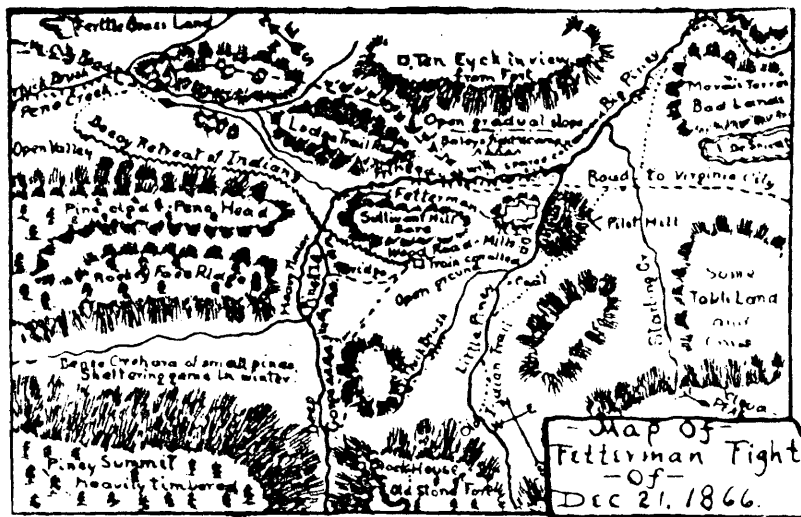
¹³I. S. Bartlett, History of Wyoming (Chicago: S. S. Clarke Publishing Company, 1918), p. 287.

orders from Colonel Carrington will never be known, but Fetterman moved back of the Sullivant Hills, probably with the intention of cutting off the attacking party from the main body of the Sioux. Crazy Horse, who was leading the raiding party, skillfully led the troops on up to Lodge Trail Ridge along its entire length and down to the lower ground beyond. The trap of the decoy party worked perfectly. There were none of the usual mistakes; no little groups of warriors rushed out ahead of time to warn the troops of the danger. The decoy party actually finished its work and gave the signal before any of the warriors charged.

As the Indians suddenly appeared from their places of concealment and rushed forward, the mounted troops hastily retired to the ridge, the infantry taking a position part way up the slope among the rocks. Here they fought until most of the men were down. Then the survivors ran to join the mounted troops who retired along the ridge, but they were presently surrounded near the point where a monument was later erected. The troops released their horses and took cover among the rocks. Then they fought until the last man was killed.¹⁴

When the firing started, Carrington, on the other side of

¹⁴ Bartlett, op. cit., p. 287, and Hebard, op. cit., p. 313.



Map of Fetterman fight of December 21, 1866.

Lodge Trail Ridge, ordered Captain Ten Eyck to reinforce Fetterman. Fetterman reached Lodge Trail Ridge a little before noon, and Captain Ten Eyck with seventy-six men arrived about an hour later. He heard firing, and, on reaching the ridge, found the valley below full of Indians who challenged him to come down and fight. When the relief party looked down from the top of Lodge Trail Ridge, no soldiers could be seen, but all over the valley and above, all along the ridge running down to Clear Creek, were Indians riding about and shouting their war cries, celebrating a triumph. They made no movement in the direction of Ten Eyck. Ten Eyck sent a messenger to report to Carrington, then moved off the ridge to the battle scene. The Indians gradually withdrew.

Ten Eyck found the bodies of Fetterman and sixty-five others lying in a space not quite forty feet square. That evening, wagons brought in the bodies of forty-nine men and the others were recovered the next day. Fetterman and his entire command of eighty-one officers and men had been destroyed. Not one man lived, nor did those who came upon the battleground afterward forget the terrible destruction of human life their eyes beheld. All the bodies were naked and those who had been taken alive were tortured to death. Eyes had been torn out and placed on rocks, noses and ears were cut off, chins severed, teeth torn out, fingers chopped off, brains removed, hands and feet cut off, bodies penetrated with spearheads, sticks, and arrows,

muscles slashed from calves, thighs, stomachs, backs, and arms; ribs separated by means of knives, and skulls crushed, and hacked from trunks of the body were private parts severed and indecently placed on the person; entrails taken out and exposed. It taught a lesson which the men at the Wagon Box Fight were to remember.¹⁵

As no one lived to tell what actually did happen, the only conjecture that could be made was by reading the positions of the corpses. Fetterman must have tried to catch the Indians from behind as they left the corraled wood train. He apparently moved down the trail with little resistance. Then, at the ridge of Reno Creek, he left a part of his force as a rear guard and continued. In the trap prepared for Fetterman, he fought a delaying manuever in order to return to the rear guard. While he was retreating, a large force of Indians circled behind the group on the ridge and surprised them. Ammunition became exhausted and this time with Wheatley, Fischer, and five or six of the older and better shots acting as a covering detail, another retreat was tried. These were overwhelmed. Next the others were completely surrounded. The ammunition must have been low as the count of cartridges and shells was small. The Indians, taking

¹⁵Hebner, op. cit., p. 313.

advantage of this lack of fire power, closed fast and fought hand to hand with the remaining troops. It was over quickly, with Fetterman and Brown apparently shooting each other, as told by the powder burns on their foreheads. Only six of the soldiers were killed by bullets. All were scalped and mutilated.¹⁶

Lieutenant Grummond had died about a quarter of a mile away from Fetterman. The six who stayed behind were killed in a group. The two civilians, Wheatley and Fischer, were close by with fifty empty shells around them, ten dead ponies, and sixty-five big blots of blood. As was the custom of the Sioux, they had recovered most of their dead and wounded, so casualties were difficult to surmise.¹⁷

There are varying reports as to the number of Indians killed during this encounter, but the loss seems to be enough so that Ten Eyck was not attacked, nor were the wagons returning with the dead. The fort was safe from Indian raids of any force until after the Sun Dance.¹⁸

Through the efforts of Frank Mondell, a member of Congress from Wyoming, the site where Fetterman suffered his defeat was marked by a

¹⁶Barlett, op. cit., p. 283.

¹⁷U. S. War Department Film 355, December 21, 26, and 31, 1866, Letters, Carrington to Litchfield.

¹⁸Hyde in Red Cloud's Folk claimed the Sioux lost fourteen warriors. Red Cloud admitted the loss of one hundred eighty Sioux Indians years later.

monument erected by the U. S. government on Massacre Hill about five miles from the site of Fort Phil Kearny. The monument, built of boulders, was dedicated on July 4, 1908. Among those present at the dedication were General Carrington and a few of the survivors of his command. Fastened to the monument is a bronze shield, which bears the following inscription: "On this field on the 21st day of December, 1866, three commissioned officers and seventy-six privates of the Eighteenth United States Infantry and the Ninth United States Cavalry, and four civilians under the command of Captain and Brevet Lieutenant Colonel William J. Fetterman, were killed by an overwhelming force of Sioux under command of Red Cloud. There were no survivors."¹⁹

The night of this bloody massacre a frightful blizzard broke loose; the thermometer dropped to more than twenty-five degrees below zero. The snow piled so rapidly against the stockade that forces of men worked in fifteen minute shifts shoveling it away to prevent drifts from reaching a height where the Indians could climb over the stockade. But the severity of the weather kept the Indians in their own shelters. Guards and snow-shovelers were changed every fifteen minutes. Even at that, many of them were badly frostbitten. Lights burned in all the quarters. Everybody expected an attack to be made upon the post after

¹⁹Bartlett, op. cit., p. 284.

this first great bloody victory by Red Cloud and his warriors.²⁰

The entire post was very shaken and the widow of Lieutenant George Grummond, who had been in command of the cavalry, was prostrate with grief. Colonel Carrington prepared a message for the courier to send to General P. St. George Cooke in Omaha which also showed his lack of restraint:

Do send me reinforcements forthwith. Expedition now with my force impossible. I risk everything but the post and its stores. I venture as much as any one can but I have had today a fight unexampled in Indian warfare. My loss is ninety-four (94) killed.

I have recovered forty-nine bodies and thirty-five more are to be brought in in the morning.

I need prompt reinforcements and repeating arms. I am sure to have an active winter and must have men and arms. Promptness is the vital thing.

Give me officers and give me men.²¹

The tone of the letter and the two different numbers given in one letter as to casualties were also to have a disturbing effect upon General Cooke in Omaha. Before the letter could be delivered, however, someone had to volunteer to ride through more than two hundred thirty-six miles of unmarked, Indian infested country with a blizzard raging and the thermometer near twenty-five degrees below

²⁰Brininstool, Fighting Indian Warriors, p. 26.

²¹U. S. War Department Film 355, Message sent by courier, December 21, 1866, Carrington to the Department of the Platte.

zero. It appeared to be almost certain death. But John Phillips volunteered and rode into history performing, in the eyes of the people of Wyoming, a far greater feat than the one accomplished by Paul Revere.

John Phillips came to the Rocky Mountains with prospectors and was at Fort Phil Kearny as a civilian employee when the massacre occurred. He was nicknamed "Portugee" because he was born on Fayal, one of the Azores Islands, of Portuguese parents.²² As Phillips prepared for the trip, Carrington gave him his own horse, the best on the post. Phillips took a few crackers and a hatful of feed for his horse. Just before he left, Phillips went to Mrs. Grummond and gave her his wolf robe for comfort and remembrance.

As he left the post, everyone expected to hear shots or screams, meaning the end of their hope, but none was heard. Phillips slipped out into the night, going through drifts that hid the trail from three to five feet deep. The trip to Fort Laramie required five days. Phillips rode at night and hid during the day. At one place he was pursued by Indians, but after he first out-distanced them, he gained a high hill where the Indians did not attempt to get him. At Horse Station Phillips stopped long enough to send a wire to Omaha. Then Phillips rode on again, arriving at Fort Laramie on Christmas

²² Agnes Wright Spring, Cheyenne-Black Hills Stage Routes (The Arthur H. Clark Company: Glendale, California, 1949), p. 104.

Eve. The officers at the post were having a gay ball in the officers' quarters. The appearance of Phillips, plus the news he carried, had a dampening effect on the party and on the post. The horse Phillips rode was dead from exhaustion on the parade ground and, after he had given his message, Phillips fainted on the floor at the party, due to over-exposure and the ordeal that he had undergone. A wire was immediately sent to the Department of the Platte at Omaha, and arrangements were made to send Fort Phil Kearny a relief party.²³

Ostrander, in his auto-biography, An Army Boy of the Sixties, recalled hearing Phillips state that at times he was as much as ten miles off the trail.²⁴ Phillips still, at times, had to contend with Indians while off the trail. The trail was so well patrolled by Indians, however, that any messenger who had followed the trail would have certainly been killed.

The Indians never forgot that Phillips was the hero who saved the fort. He was continually hunted and harrassed by the Sioux. At one time he was lassoed by them in an attempt to capture him, but Phillips escaped.²⁵ At other times his cattle were shot down and when he was hauling wood for the U. S. government at Fort Fetterman, a band of Indians drove off and killed a considerable amount of his

²⁴Olson Bowles Ostrander, An Army Boy of the Sixties (World Book Company: New York, New York, 1924), p. 271.

²⁵House Report, No. 1912.

stock.²⁶ In 1916 Congress gave to his widow five thousand dollars as payment on livestock stolen by the Indians in 1872 and in recognition of the ride he made. House Report Number 1912 said, "In all the annals of heroism in the face of unusual dangers and difficulties on the American frontier, or in the world there are few that can excel in gallantry, in heroism, in devotion, in self-sacrifice, and patriotism the ride by Phillips."²⁷

As soon as the telegram concerning the massacre was received in Omaha, General Cooke took action. He sent four infantry and two cavalry companies to the threatened post from Fort Laramie. They were commanded by General Henry W. Wessells, who was given additional instructions to relieve Carrington instantly. General Cooke felt that Carrington was badly shaken by his fear of a sudden attack and that Carrington would not act appropriately. Cooke also felt that Carrington did not maintain proper discipline and that his officers had no confidence in him.²⁸ General Cooke, in turn, was relieved by General Sherman because of the massacre. General Cooke regarded this as one of the low points of his army career. He had generally agreed

²⁶
Ibid.

²⁷
Ibid.

²⁸ Otis E. Young, The West of Philip St. George Cooke, 1809-1895, (The Arthur H. Clark Company : Glendale, California, 1955), p. 355.

with Carrington on the matter of equipment and men, but the army was being demobilized after the Civil War and men were not available. From his reports, he also realized that the Indians were better armed than the soldiers, as some had the new repeater rifle. Guns were being sold to the Indians at Fort Laramie and other places, because policy at that time stated that the Indians needed better weapons to hunt with and would, therefore, not be as upset with the change that was taking place in their hunting ground. The Indians agreed when they purchased the new rifles that they were going to use them for hunting, but, of course, they also had other uses for them.²⁹

On the frontier, Carrington wrote his reports concerning the massacre and the condition of the fort. His reports of the fight contained the general facts of the massacre, plus a condemnation of Captain Fetterman. The report stated that Fetterman had been reprimanded for his actions on December 6, and that Fetterman had insisted on leading the command to regain Carrington's favor. Fetterman had disobeyed orders. The report written January 4, 1867, gave the following description of the condition of the fort:

The garrison of Fort Phil Kearny was as follows: including

²⁹Ibid., p. 349.

myself, district, regimental, battalion, and post staff, seven officers; and for duty, including those on extra or daily duty as clerks or otherwise, 308 officers and men.

The nominal aggregate present was 339, and the aggregate proper of the command, including ten commissioned officers absent and soldiers absent, the sick, and those in arrest was 398 men.

The number of serviceable horses at the post was 37, and unserviceable, 13.

Fort Phil Kearny was established amid hostilities. Fifty-one skirmishes have occurred. No disaster, other than the usual incidents to border warfare occurred, until gross disobedience of orders sacrificed nearly 80 of the choice men of my command.³⁰

Fort Phil Kearny was living in fear. Colonel Carrington gave orders to place the women and children in the magazine in case the Indians came over the walls of the fort, and then instructions were to blow up the magazine.³¹

Outside one of the worst winters in the history of Wyoming enshrouded the region. Inside the fort life was cold, fearful, and hard. Fort Phil Kearny was established amid hostilities, hardship, and apprehension, and it was never to know the friendly relations with the Indians which President Johnson had made reference only a little more than a month before.

³⁰U. S. War Department Film 355, Letter, January 4, 1867, Carrington to Cooke.

³¹Young, The West of Philip St. George Cooke, p. 380.

CHAPTER IV

LIFE INSIDE THE FORT

During the brief period Fort Phil Kearny was in existence, life around the fort was always dangerous and hard. The temperature varied from forty degrees below zero in the winter to one hundred and ten degrees in the summer. Indians, or the lack of them, were always of great importance and had to be taken into consideration before any decision could be made. Survival was a struggle.

The fort was laid out according to the plans drawn up by Colonel Carrington and it was constructed under his direction. The fort was completed on October 30, 1866, and in celebration of the event, a holiday was given to raise the flag on a newly built flag pole. Carrington called the day "Preparation Day" and gave a short speech dedicating the fort as a guardian to the traveler and a forerunner to civilization, while the band played a few songs to commemorate the occasion.¹

The fort was built along conventional lines (see sketch on page 49). On the north side of the fort were about eight buildings which were from left to right: the hospital, sutler's store, adjutant's office, guard house, quartermaster department, teamster's quarters,

¹Speech presented by Colonel Carrington, October 30, 1866, Carrington, My Army Life.



Sketch of Fort Phil Kearny made by Bugler Nicholi in 1867.

and stables. The stables also ran the length of the east side of the fort. Between the fort and the Bozeman Trail were the houses of John Phillips, who rode to Fort Laramie the day after Fetterman and his men were killed, and Jim Wheatley, a good friend of Phillips, who was killed with Fetterman. On the west side of the fort were three buildings occupied by Company A, Company H, and Company B of the Twenty-seventh Infantry. Along the south of the fort were a number of smaller buildings which included the theater, officers' quarters, sawmill, laundry, commissary, as well as some civilian housing. The entire post was encircled by a wall that varied in height from four to ten feet, and in the wall there were four gates. Two gates were on the north side; the main gate which opened onto the Bozeman Trail, and the other a smaller gate that opened from the stables. On the south side were the other two gates. One was on the Little Piney Creek. This was called the water gate and was the one from which John Phillips rode with the news of the massacre. The mill gate opened onto a wagon trail; this was the gate Fetterman used the day he rode out to the wood train and to his death. There were sentry boxes at the gates where block houses, occupied day and night, guarded the northeast and northwest corners.

The area around the fort was as well selected and planned as was the internal construction. The Piney Rivers leave the mountains about five miles from the post, and about five miles from each other.

Between the two, shortly before they unite, was a plateau. It was covered with good grass and was a gradual slope. The plateau was five hundred by six hundred feet with some sides dropping in a forty-five degree angle. Carrington prided himself in the perfect field of fire it controlled. On the crest was a good growth of pine which Carrington figured was inexhaustable and near enough so that two loads of logs could be hauled to the fort in one day. One part of the post touched the creek and the water was clear, cold, and rapid. The rifles of the Indians could not reach the fort while Carrington had also brought artillery with which he could fire on the hills and slopes. A signal hill, a half mile distance, commanded a good view of the road eastward for eleven miles, and on this hill Carrington placed a picket during the day to sound the alarm of approaching Indians or wagon trains. About two miles from the post was found a vein of ¹⁴cannel coal that could be used for fuel.

Another advantage to the fort in this location was the wild game. It was the center of the hunting grounds for the Indians and abounded with bear, buffalo, elk, deer, antelope, rabbits, and sage hens. The Crow, Snake, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Sioux Indian tribes roamed this area which they considered a semi-neutral zone. The mountains about five miles from the fort were full of pine, hemlock, balsom, fir, and spruce.²

²U. S. Department of Interior, Papers Relative to Indian Operations, p. 14.

A description of every day life at the fort was recorded by the widow of Lieutenant George Grummond. When she first arrived, the families had to live in tents. Two tents were placed together and this arrangement lasted into the winter for some of them. The new quarters, when ready, were occupied, but they hardly lived up to the standards of modern living. The house of pine logs consisted of three rooms. Pieces of sheeting or old newspaper were used for window shades. The carpets, made from gunny sacks, covered a hard dirt floor. Every item in the house except those brought from the East were made out of rough lumber, but sturdily constructed. Only necessities were shipped into the fort. The cost was between twenty and twenty-five dollars per hundred pounds from the Missouri River to the mountains. Then damage or destruction of the merchandise was always a threat.

Food prices were high. Butter sold for seventy-five cents per pound in the sutler's store. Vegetables came dried in large cakes. The baker produced bread. The Indians kept reducing the cattle, turkeys, and chickens, that were brought in originally, at such a rate that even an occasional egg became a luxury. Canned peaches and other fruit which was brought into the sutler's store at Fort Phil Kearny sold for one dollar and seventy-five cents to two dollars per can. Meats and fowl cost from two dollars and seventy-five cents to three dollars per can.³ The bacon and flour were often spoiled. The

³Ostrander, An Army Boy of the Sixties, p. 201.

principal diet of the privates was bacon, coffee, beans, and flour. Needless to say, many were in the hospital with malnutrition while others suffered stiff joints and the loss of teeth.

The pay of the civilians and the soldiers was not commensurate to the cost of living on the frontier. The pay of a teamster was seventy-five dollars a month. This was considered good, but it was "difficult to save any money."⁴ The pay of the military in 1865 was sixteen dollars per month for a private, \$1249.50 a year for a Second Lieutenant, \$1800 per year for a Captain, and \$2544 a year for a Colonel.⁵

Entertainment on the post was limited. Violence from the outside disrupted the fort often. This violence did not create an air of excitement, but rather it made for depression and dreariness. The women, to break up this mood, rode occasionally with the mail wagon to Fort Laramie. A fine description of a sutler's store was written by Mrs. Carrington after one of her trips.

The long counter of Messrs. Bullock and Ward was a scene of seeming confusion not surpassed in any popular, overcrowded store of Omaha itself. Indians, dressed and half dressed and undressed; squaws, dressed to the same degree of completeness as their noble lords; papooses, absolutely nude, slightly not

⁴Ibid., p. 201.

⁵House Executive Document #12, Fortieth Congress, First Session.

nude or wrapped in calico, buckskin, or furs, mingled with soldiers of the garrison, teamsters, emigrants, speculators, half-breeds, and interpreters. Here, cups of rice, sugar, coffee, and flour were being emptied into looped-up skirts of a squaw; and there, some tall warrior was grimacing delightfully as he grasped and sucked his long sticks of peppermint candy. Bright shawls, red squaw cloth, brilliant calicoes, and flashing ribbons passed over the same counter with knives and tobacco, brass nails, and glass beads, and that endless catalogue of articles which belong to the legitimate border traffic. The room was redolent of cheese and herring, and "heap of smoke"; while the debris of munched crackers lying loose underfoot furnished both nutriment and employment for the little bit of Indians too big to ride on Mamma's back, but too little to reach the good things on the counter or shelves.⁶

Inside the fort the Sunday evening hymn sing at the headquarters was the high point of the social activity. Other events on the calender were the visits to the quarters of the five officers' wives on the post. The main topic of conversation dealt with comparing notes on cooking, sewing, various steps of advancement in different arts, prevailing fashions on dress, often an all around social dance, games of cards or the authors' game. A band recital at the headquarters was a big occasion.

The life of a soldier on the post was one of restrictions, danger, and boredom. The amusements were very limited. Fraternizing with the Indians, gambling, and drinking were absolutely forbidden.

⁶Carrington, Absaraka, Land of Massacre, pp. 35-36.

Carrington was an ardent abolitionist and dealt severely with any soldier found drunk or disorderly.⁷ One type of punishment was the "Bob-tail discharge." This was used on one occasion when a soldier who was to be discharged in a few days was found drunk. He was ordered to march around the post to the beat of the drum, then sent out of the fort.⁸ Both of his legs were as stiff as posts from the hips down, the result of malnutrition. Another man who had been found drunk had his head shaved. Then he was branded with a hot iron and drummed out of the army. At that time it was suicide to go a mile from the fort for the Indians watched the road constantly. Neither man was ever seen again. In this way eight men were sent out of the post. Another punishment was called the "spread eagle." A drunk soldier was stretched full length and tied to four tent stakes at the guard house. The sun was intense and the flies were thick. The man died the next day. At Fort Reno, when this punishment was imposed, such a riot was staged that it was not used again at that post.⁹

The number of men in an infantry company would compare to a large squad in the present army organization. A company of infantry soldiers would be approximately two hundred fifty, whereas the

⁷U. S. War Department Film 355, General Orders #3, Carrington to troops, June 28, 1866.

⁸This was referred to as being drummed out of the service.

⁹William Murphy, "The Forgotten Battalion," Annals of Wyoming, Vol. 7, #1, July, 1930, pp. 383-400.

morning report for December 21, 1866, read as follows for the six companies, mounted infantry and guards:

Company A, Second Battalion, Eighteenth Infantry	16 men
Company C, Second Battalion, Eighteenth Infantry	13 men
Company E, Second Battalion, Eighteenth Infantry	13 men
Company H, Second Battalion, Eighteenth Infantry	13 men
Company K, Second Battalion, Eighteenth Infantry	23 men
Company C, Second United States Cavalry	8 men
Mounted Infantry	11 men
Guards for the fort	32 men
Wood party guard	50 men

Company C had sixty men when it left for Fort Phil Kearny and Company K originally had forty-five.¹⁰

Thus, life at Fort Phil Kearny with almost no facilities for amusement, food without variety, and the ever present danger from the Indians, little resembled the fictional account of life around the frontier army posts.

¹⁰U. S. Department of the Interior, op. cit., Letter of December 21, 1866.

CHAPTER V

AFTER THE SUN DANCE

During the remainder of the winter and on into spring, Fort Phil Kearny awaited the renewal of Indian hostilities. The winter was one of the severest in Wyoming history. General H. W. Wessels, who replaced Colonel Carrington, arrived at Fort Phil Kearny on January 17, 1867, after wading through snowbanks up to four feet deep. Carrington was ordered to leave the fort as soon as he could be ready. Therefore, in January, with the temperatures nearly forty degrees below zero, Carrington left with his wife, the widow of Lieutenant George Grummond, the band, and a guard.¹

General Wessels attempted a winter campaign against the Indians but without results. The severity of the weather, plus the fact that the Indians could not be found, made the winter just a struggle for survival against the elements.²

Wessels, in his letters to the Department of the Platte, reported a complete disappearance of the Indians. On April 15 he requested information as to the whereabouts of Red Cloud after the Fetterman Massacre. Later in the month Wessels had a conference

¹The widow of Lieutenant George Grummond became the second wife of Colonel Carrington following the death of Mrs. Carrington.

²Hafen, Fort Laramie, p. 354.

with the Cheyenne chiefs in an effort to secure information as to the activities of the Sioux. In a letter, dated June 20, Wessels stated that he had been unsuccessful in his efforts to locate the Sioux.³

The big question all along the Bozeman Trail during the spring and summer concerned the whereabouts of the Sioux. What the men at Fort Phil Kearny did not know was that the Sioux were busy with plans to annihilate Fort Phil Kearny and Fort C. F. Smith in Montana. Red Cloud had the Sioux together for the ceremony during the summer solstice called the Sun Dance. He wanted to attack Fort Phil Kearny, but other chiefs in the tribe wished to attack Fort C. F. Smith. Since no agreement could be reached, the tribe split up after the Sun Dance. The Miniconjou Sioux started toward Fort C. F. Smith while Red Cloud, leading the rest, made ready for an attack upon Fort Phil Kearny. A fight was to follow at both forts, which in each instance was to be disastrous for the Sioux.

The battle to follow at Fort Phil Kearny was known as the Wagon Box Fight. It was fought on August 2, 1867. Military historians consider it one of the most important fights in United

³U. S. War Department Film 355, March 21, April 15, April 26, and June 20, 1867, Letters from Wessels to Litchfield.

States warfare, for it proved successfully the use of breech-loading rifles. The officer in charge of the soldiers protecting the wood-cutters was Captain James W. Powell.

Captain Powell had entered the army as a private at the opening of the Civil War. Soon he was raised to a sergeant of the First Dragoons, then he was promoted to second lieutenant in 1861, and finally to captain in 1863. He received the brevet of captain in 1863 for gallant and meritorious conduct during the Atlanta campaign and at the battle of Jonesboro, Georgia. He was brevetted a major on September 1, 1864, for gallant service at Chickamauga, and a lieutenant colonel on August 2, 1867, for gallant conduct in the Wagon Box Fight at Fort Phil Kearny. This last brevet was the reward for bravery and endurance.⁴ The following year he was placed on the retired list of the army, having been incapacitated for active service as a result of gunshot wounds received at the battle of Jonesboro. These wounds bothered him even at the time of the Wagon Box Fight and while he was providing protection for the wood-cutters.

The firm of Gilmore and Porter had a contract to supply Fort

⁴Hebard, op. cit., p. 72.

Phil Kearny with logs for the sawmill and firewood for the winter. John Phillips, the hero who carried the message to Fort Laramie, had a subcontract with Gilmore and Porter to deliver logs. In order to protect their stock from night attacks by the Indians and the fear of another major fight with the Indians, the contractors had built a corral out of wagons six miles west of the fort on a level plain. They had removed the boxes from their wagons, fourteen of them, and had formed them into an oval shaped enclosure into which the contractors' stock was driven every night. The pinery, where logs were being cut, was a short distance from the wagon box corral. Several tents were pitched just outside of the corral in which the woodchoppers and soldiers bunked. Seven thousand rounds of ammunition were inside the corral and everybody was instructed, in case of an Indian attack at the pinery, to retreat to the corral where a good defense could be made until relief arrived from the fort.⁵ Most of the woodchoppers were from Nebraska as Gilmore and Porter operated out of Plattsmouth.⁶

Red Cloud had about three thousand warriors with him to take the fort by force, but when his spies reported the workmen at the

⁵Brininstool, Fighting Indian Warriors, p. 51.

⁶Ibid., p. 78.

pinery, Red Cloud changed his plans. The force at the pinery at that time had been reduced from fifty-one to thirty-two as some of Captain Powell's men had returned to the fort. The remaining men were scattered around the area protecting the livestock and performing other duties. Captain Powell was even busy taking a bath in the creek when the Indians attacked. Red Cloud decided to cut off the escort to the wood-cutters and, by so doing, lessen to that extent the fighting force of the garrison. Thus Red Cloud felt an opportunity to cut off two forces, the men returning to the fort and the others guarding the stock, had arrived. The decoy trick was attempted again, but the warriors could not be restrained and they rushed out of their hiding places before the plan could be enacted. About two hundred of them stampeded the horses and the rest, with Crazy Horse in command, attacked the camp of the wood-cutters, killing some men and setting the camp on fire. Some of the workmen fled to the fort while a few joined Powell. The force inside the wagon box, including Powell and one other officer, was twenty-six soldiers and four civilians, one being John Phillips.

The men were well armed and prepared for the attack. Most of them, in great fear of being captured alive by the Indians, took the shoe strings out of their shoes and fixed loops to fit over the right foot and then to the triggers of their rifles. In this way, if all hope was lost, they could kill themselves instead of being

subjected to torture as had happened to some of Fetterman's men.⁷

The wagon boxes were made of iron or were wood boxes shod with iron of sufficient thickness to resist an ordinary bullet.⁸

Although there was a certain amount of surprise and confusion, Powell ordered the men to keep a cool head and a steady aim.⁹ Next, he placed the poorer marksmen behind the better shots and had these men load the rifles. When the Indians rushed the small band of men, there was no attempt by the warriors to come close to the wagon boxes, as the Indians had planned to wait until the old single load rifle shell had been fired. After the men in the wagon box had fired, the Indians charged only to meet further disaster. The Indians recoiled and began to circle the soldiers, but the fire continued to take its toll. When Red Cloud saw the slaughter of his best warriors with no noticeable effect on the other force, he decided to change his plan. Dismounting his men, they started to crawl and slip forward through the grass and shrubbery, hoping to get near enough to rush the defenders and carry the wagon boxes by storm. The attempt was a failure for, everytime an Indian exposed himself, a bullet from "the

⁷Ibid., p. 62.

⁸This has been denied by some of the soldiers who took part in the affair, but Captain Powell's official report is the basis for this statement.

⁹Bartlett, History of Wyoming, p. 284.

rifle that was never empty" took its toll.¹⁰ The fire from the guns of the Indians flattened or bounced off the wagon boxes doing little harm.

Then the Indians fired from the high ground above the men in the wagon boxes, but again with little effect. For three hours the battle continued. The Indians used flaming arrows and every device at their disposal, but without success. Indians, who were watching the fort, gave Red Cloud a report of a large force of soldiers leaving Fort Phil Kearny and the fight was over. Red Cloud, after using every man, withdrew, leaving many dead and wounded on the field of battle.

The loss that Powell had suffered was very light. Besides Lieutenant Jenness, who died from a throat wound, only two other soldiers were killed. Privates Doyke and Haggerty were the casualties.¹¹ As for the loss suffered by the Indians, there have been many conflicting totals, and it depended on who reported the casualties. Captain Powell estimated in his report that over three hundred Indians were killed and wounded. General Grenville M. Dodge, thirty years later, after an interview with Red Cloud, estimated over eleven hundred. The men in the wagon box said they killed seven or eight hundred.¹²

¹⁰Ibid., p. 285.

¹¹Hyde, Red Cloud's Folk, p. 84.

¹²Brininstool, op. cit., p. 78.

Hyde in his book about Red Cloud stated:

The Sioux never regarded this fight as a defeat. They had captured a great many horses and mules, and although they had six killed and six wounded, they had inflicted a heavier loss on the whites, killing several workmen, one officer, and five men in Powell's force. Captain Fowell reported that he thought about sixty Indians had been killed. Colonel Richard I. Dodge¹³ in his stupid book, OUR WILD INDIANS, started the story of the huge losses suffered by the Sioux in the affair, and the tale has grown with years until today it is sometimes stated that 1500 warriors, twice the entire force of Indians engaged, were killed by Powell's thirty men.¹⁴

Regardless of the conflicting reports, the following statement by Red Cloud is interesting, "I went into the fight with three thousand braves and came out with but half of them. It was a big fight. The long swords fought as I had never seen them fight before. My warriors were as numerous as blades of grass. I went in with many. I lost more than half, the long swords shot true to the mark. My warriors never fought again."¹⁵ This was true, for the last major attack by the Indians in the Fort Phil Kearny region was over.

The results of the fight at Fort C. F. Smith also had an effect on the final decision concerning Fort Phil Kearny. The fight there was called the Hayfield Fight. It occurred on August 1, 1867, in a hay field about two and a half miles from the fort. The whites,

¹³Hyde probably was referring to General Grenville M. Dodge and his reports.

¹⁴Hyde, op. cit., pp. 159-160.

¹⁵Hebard, Bozeman Trail, Vol. II, p. 181.

protected by a corral, were attacked repeatedly throughout the day, but held out until relieved in the evening. The loss there was three killed and four wounded among the whites.

Thereafter the Sioux attacks were made primarily on the wagon trains and settlers' herds. J. Van Voast, the commanding officer at Fort Reno, reported one man killed and three wounded at Crazy Woman Creek on August 16. Eight days later he reported two hundred head of cattle were lost and two citizens were killed.¹⁶ This kind of activity continued but, although the forts lived in constant fear, they never again experienced an Indian attack.

¹⁶U. S. War Department Film, Letter, August 24, 1867.

CHAPTER VI

DYING EMBERS

Although the Wagon Box Fight occurred August 2, 1867, the nation did not learn of the event until August 22, 1867.¹ On that date the Omaha Weekly Herald gave a brief account of the incident and promised that details would follow. The next day a more complete account was given,² but details as to property loss, as well as numbers killed and wounded did not appear until August 29.³ As the nation gradually learned of the turn of events at Fort Phil Kearny, the pendulum began once more to swing back toward the Indian. A re-examination of the existing policy was hastened by this and by a number of other things.

The rails of the Union Pacific in 1866 reached a point two hundred miles west of Omaha and the government had not only invested heavily in it, but the War Department of the United States looked upon the building of the railroad as one of the most effective methods for subduing the Indians. While they attacked construction crews and wagon trains, as well as stage and telegraph stations,

¹Omaha Weekly Herald, August 22, 1867.

²Ibid., August 23, 1867.

³Ibid., August 29, 1867.

it was believed that in the railroad lay the answer to the Indian problem. The completion of the railroad and peace with the Indians were of the utmost importance in the eyes of the nation.

The Quakers and other peace advocates were strong and gaining strength. Needless to say, the sutlers, Indian agents, settlers, and emigrants longed for peace.

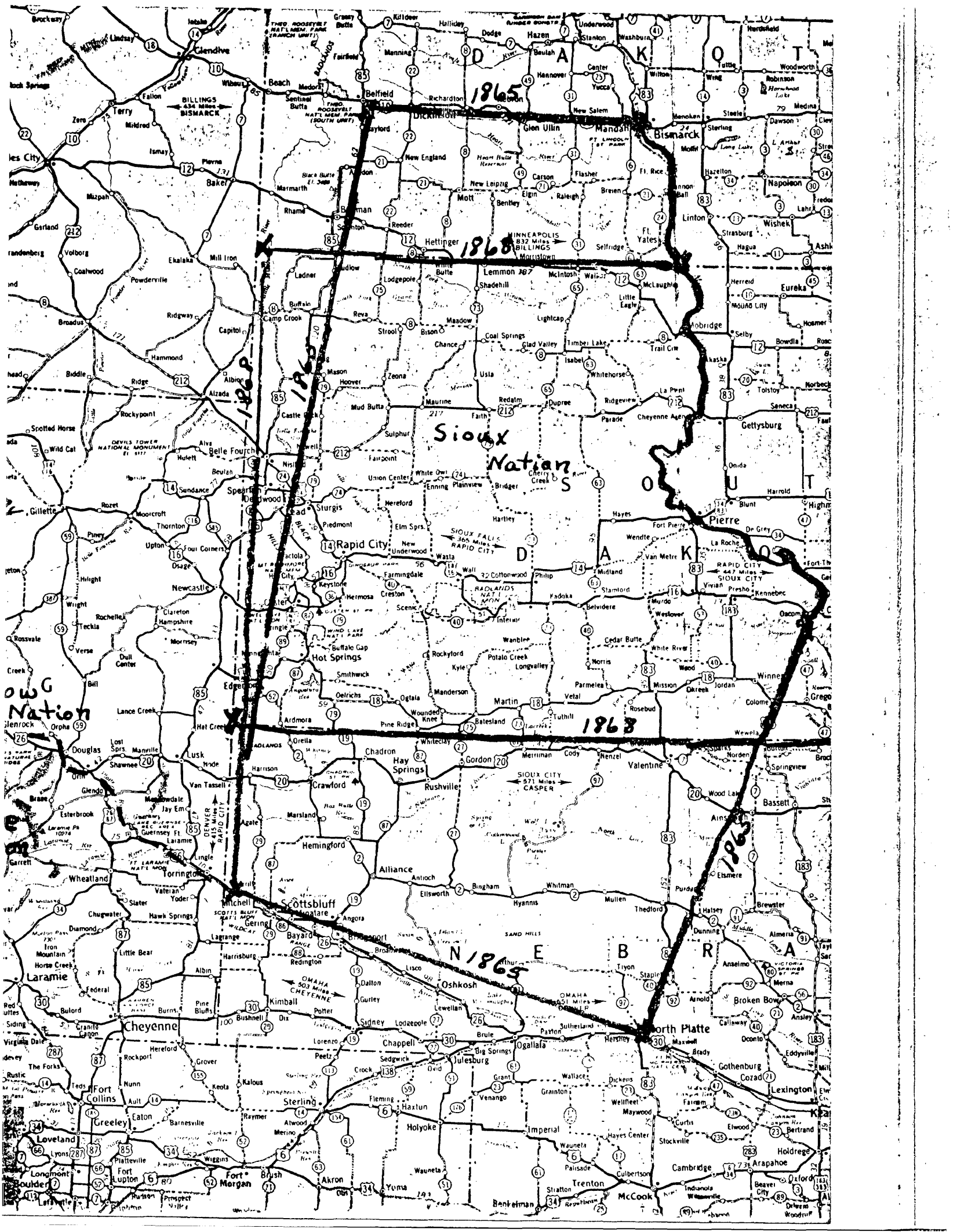
The Indians were beginning to be convinced that it was useless to oppose the railroad and the forts. The Wagon Box Fight had had a serious effect on the morale as well as the physical force of the Sioux.

Time for making another treaty was near at hand, but two treaties bore directly upon the history of Fort Phil Kearny. One was signed in 1865; the other was negotiated in 1868.

The Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1865 established, in a general way, the boundaries of the Sioux Nation. The territory assigned to the Cheyennes and the Arapahoes was also defined in the treaty. In fact, the area in which Fort Phil Kearny was located really belonged to the Cheyennes and Crows rather than to the Sioux. The limits to each nation as set forth by the treaty were as follows:⁴

The territory of the Sioux or Dahcotah Nation commencing

⁴See map on page 68.



1865

1868

1869

Sioux Nation

1863

1865

1863

Sioux Nation

Sioux Nation

Sioux Nation

the mouth of the White Earth River on the Missouri River; thence in a Southwesterly direction to the forks of the Platte River; thence up the North fork of the Platte River to a point known as the Red Butte or where the road leaves the river; thence along the range of mountains known as the Black Hills to the headwaters of the Heart River; thence down Heart River to its mouth; and thence down the Missouri River to the place of beginning.

The territory of the Cheyennes and the Arapahoes, commencing at the Red Butte or the place where the road leaves the north fork of the Platte River to its source; thence along the main range of the Rocky Mountains to the Headwaters of the Arkansas River; thence down the Arkansas River to the crossing of the Santa Fe road; thence in a northwesterly direction to the fork of the Platte River; and thence up the Platte River to the place of beginning.⁵

The boundary of the Sioux territory as defined in the Treaty of Fort Laramie placed the Sioux Nation almost entirely inside the present state of South Dakota. The Black Hills were the western limits of the Sioux. Fort Phil Kearny was located in the most northern extremity of the land assigned the Cheyennes. Actually the fort was situated in what more or less belonged to the Crow Nation, but they had moved farther into Montana. When the Sioux were in the region of the Big Horn Mountains, they were approximately one hundred and thirty miles west of their treaty boundary, but boundary lines had little meaning to the Indian. The Sioux were the

⁵Charles Kappler, Indian Affairs, Laws, and Treaties, Vol. II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), p. 594.

most respected and dangerous of the Indians in that region so no one questioned their activity. They were there to hunt and to control the Big Horn Mountains. Fort Phil Kearny threatened that control, hence, from the point of view of the Sioux, it had to be destroyed.

The treaty with the Sioux in 1868 was negotiated for the same reason as had been the Treaty of 1865. Peace with the Indians, safety for the whites, and property settlement were the main topics.

Article I stated that all war would cease between the military and the Indians and that the government of the United States would honor this agreement.

Article II defined the boundaries of the territory assigned to the Sioux Nation as follows:⁶

Commencing on the east bank of the Missouri River where the forty-sixth parallel of north latitude crosses the same, thence along the low-water mark down said east bank to a point opposite where the northern line of Nebraska to the one hundred and fourth degree of longitude west from Greenwich, thence north on said meridian to a point where forty-sixth parallel of north latitude intercepts the same, thence due east along said parallel to the place of beginning.⁷

This reduced the territory of the Sioux and placed them

⁶See map on page 63.

⁷Ibid., p. 998.

almost completely inside the states of North and South Dakota.

The treaty also provided that:

The territory set apart for the absolute and undisturbed use and occupation of the Indians and the United States now solemnly agrees that no persons except those herein designated and authorized so to do, and except such officers, agents, and employees of the government as may be authorized to enter upon Indian reservations in discharge of duties enjoined by law, shall ever be permitted to pass over, settle upon, or reside in the territory. The Indian could hunt buffalo north of North Platte and on the Republican fork of the Smoky Hill River.

The Indians for their part agreed as follows:

1. That they will withdraw all opposition to the construction of the railroads now being built on the plains.

2. That they will permit the peaceful construction of any railroad not passing over their reservation as herein destined.

3. That they will not attack any persons at home, or traveling, nor molest or disturb any wagon trains, coaches, mules, or cattle belonging to the people of the United States or to persons friendly therewith.

4. They will never capture or carry off from the settlements white women or children.

5. They will never kill or scalp white men, nor attempt to do them harm.

6. They withdraw all pretense of opposition to the construction of the railroad now being built along the Platte River and westward to the Pacific Ocean and they will not in the future object to the construction of the railroad, wagon roads, mail stations, or other works of utility or necessity or which may be ordered by the laws of the United States. But should such roads or other works be constructed on the lands of their reservations, the government will pay the tribe whatever the amount of damage may be assessed by three disinterested commissioners to be appointed by the President for that purpose, one of said commissioners to be a Chief or head man of the tribe.

7. They agree [the Sioux Indians] to withdraw all opposition to the military post or roads now established south of the North Platte River, or that may be established not in violation of treaties heretofore made or hereafter to be made with any of the Indian tribes.⁸

The Treaty of 1865 had already contained most of these provisions with the exception of the taking of women, children, and other acts of violence. Another important introduction to the Indians in this treaty had considered the railroads and the effect they would have on policy. Everything was to favor the success of the railroads. Anything which slowed operations or construction was to be removed from the path of the "Iron Horse."

The evacuation of the Big Horn area had to be added before the Sioux would even give the treaty consideration. The chiefs of other tribes would agree with the provisions of the treaty except for Red Cloud and the aggressors against the Bozeman Trail forts. They would sign only when Article XVI was added, and Red Cloud was assured that the United States meant to comply. Then he came to the peace council. Article XVI stated:

The United States hereby agrees and stipulates that the country north of the North Platte River and east of the summits of the Big Horn Mountains shall be held and considered to be unceded Indian territory, and also stipulates and agrees

⁸Ibid., p. 998.

that no white person or persons shall be permitted to settle upon or occupy any portion of the same; or without the consent of the Indians first, and obtained to pass through the same. It is further agreed by the United States that within ninety days after the conclusion of peace with all the bands of the Sioux Nation, the military post now established in the territory in this article named shall be abandoned, and that the road leading to them and by them to the settlements in the territory of Montana shall be closed.⁹

This article meant the end of Fort Phil Kearny.

The final operation for the completion of the treaty started July 20, 1867, when Congress decided to sue for peace with the Sioux. A commission of seven members, four civilians, and three generals of the army, were selected consisting of N. G. Taylor, the commissioner of Indian Affairs, J. E. Sanborn, S. F. Tappan, and Generals W. H. Sherman, W. S. Harney, and A. H. Terry. They met and organized at St. Louis, Missouri, on August 6, 1867. When the commission learned that the Sioux were busy waging war on the Fort Phil Kearny area, they postponed the meeting until November 1, 1867. Red Cloud refused to meet with them, and sent word that "his war against the whites was to save the valley of the Powder River, the only hunting ground left to his nation." The committee assured the commission that whenever the troops at Fort Phil Kearny and Fort C. F. Smith were withdrawn "the war on his [Red Cloud] part would cease."¹⁰

⁹Ibid., p. 909.

¹⁰Hafen, Fort Laramie, p. 357.

The commissioners came to Fort Laramie in April, 1868, prepared to give in to the demands of the Indians. The peace was signed by the Brule Sioux on April 29, and by part of the Ogallalas on May 25. Red Cloud still distrusted the word of the white man and would not sign until his demands were met. On March 2, 1868, the President had ordered the abandonment of the three forts on the Bozeman Trail, but not until transportation was supplied in August was the order executed.¹¹

When spring came to the plains in 1868, there was great activity in the forts along the Bozeman Trail. The soldiers in every fort were engaged in dismantling the buildings and loading the supplies. General John E. Smith replaced General Wessels in command of the posts.

Following the dismantling of the forts along the Bozeman Trail, the Indians started to demonstrate an arrogance and an intolerance for the white man, which had not been foreseen by the War Department. The first indication of trouble was found where the Fetterman Road entered the Oregon Trail at the ranch of "One Ann" Judd. Judd made a good living by wintering oxen trains in his pastures, but his ranch was found a smouldering ruin, as the Sioux took advantage of the withdrawing troops. Soon every ranch

¹¹ Ibid., p. 361.

from the Judd to the Bordeaux Ranch on the Chugwater had been burned to the ground. At Fort Phil Kearny there were two raids on the cattle herds; one which took six hundred head. Also in April of 1868, a man was killed and scalped near the fort.¹²

Thus, in 1868 the United States Government took a new position with regard to the Indian. Grant issued an order for the abandonment of all the forts along the Bozeman Trail and the withdrawal of all troops from the Indian country in Wyoming. On August 15, 1868, Fort Phil Kearny was evacuated. Before the troops had marched a mile from the post, the Indians swarmed out of the ravines and set the fort on fire. The soldiers from their position on a hill were able to watch the post disappear in flame and settle in dying embers.¹³

¹²David, Finn Burnett, Frontiersman, p. 213.

¹³Brininstool, Fighting Indian Warriors, p. 30.

CHAPTER VII

THE SANDS OF TIME

The fort was built during a period when two factions in Washington were advocating conflicting Indian policies. The pendulum would swing to the peace groups during a period of military domination, then back in favor of the military during periods of Indian uprisings. The abandonment of the fort after the Wagon Box Fight represented a victory for those favoring peace with the Indians. The Indian immediately attacked the civilians in the area, but the area soon was evacuated.

Red Cloud waited until November 6, 1868, to come in and sign the Treaty of 1868. He had refused to sign until the soldiers had left the Bozeman Trail area which included Fort Phil Kearny. The treaty was ratified by the United States Senate on February 16, 1868. This finished one hundred and eighty separate attacks from July, 1866, to August, 1868.¹ Neither the building nor the destruction of the post solved the problem on the plains during that period. The Indians continued to make raids on the settlers and emigrants. People continued to pass through the Indian territory and to settle on it. Appeals to the War Department did not stop. Certain religious

¹Ostrander, Army Boy of the Sixties, p. 255.

bodies still emphasized a more humane treatment for the Indians. Government agents, as ever, sold goods and arms to the Indian tribes. The army, with reduced strength, stayed in the Bozeman Trail region at Fort Laramie and Fort Fetterman.² The railroad, closer than before, offered a greater opportunity for those seeking the wealth in the ground. The railroads encouraged travel. Fort Phil Kearny had made very few immediate changes in the frontier, but lessons of great importance were there to be learned.

Fort Phil Kearny proved the worth of the Winchester rifle, Model 1866. With the repeating rifle, the army now had more fire power and did not need to fear, when in the act of reloading, the sudden advance of the enemy. The tribute given to those men at the Wagon Box Fight by the War Department reads:

Near Fort Phil Kearny, 2 August, 1867, the Wagon Box Fight is one of the great traditions of the Infantry in the West. A small force of thirty men of the Ninth Infantry led by Brevet Major James Powell was suddenly attacked in the early morning hours by some five thousand Sioux Indians. Choosing to stand and fight, these soldiers hastily erected a barricade of wagon boxes, and during the entire morning stood off charge after charge, the Sioux finally withdrew, leaving behind several hundred killed and wounded. The defending force suffered only three casualties. By their coolness, firmness, and confidence these infantry men showed what a

²Events along the Bozeman Trail also led to the ill fated expedition of its founder. John M. Bozeman and a companion left Virginia City on April 16, 1867. Four days later, at the crossing of the Yellowstone, Bozeman was killed in a fight with five Indians. Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. 11, p. 538.

few determined men can accomplish with good marksmanship and guts.³

The history of Fort Phil Kearny provided another strong argument in favor of small Indian reservations in place of the "concentration" system. As a result, the Sioux were placed on a smaller area in the Black Hills and given more protection from the whites. Unfortunately, this did not have time to be fairly tested as gold was soon discovered in the Black Hills and the Indian Territory was again the object of intrusion by the white man.

During the time from July 26, the day on which Lieutenant Wards' train was attacked, to the 21st day of December, on which Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman, with his command of eighty officers and men, was overpowered and massacred, they [the Sioux] killed ninety-one enlisted men and five officers of our army, and killed fifty-eight citizens and wounded twenty more, and captured and drove away three hundred and six oxen and cows, three hundred and four mules, and one hundred sixty-one horses. During this time they [the Indians] appeared in front of Fort Phil Kearny, making hostile demonstrations and committing hostile acts, fifty-one different times, and attacked nearly every train and person that attempted to pass over the Montana road.⁴

But the lesson that was relayed by the experiences at Fort Phil Kearny, the Fetterman Massacre, and the Wagon Box Fight.

³United States of America War Office, Good Marksmanship and Guts, United States Army in Action.

⁴United States Senate, Document, Number XIII, February 2, 1867.

was soon obliterated by the sands of time. The frontier, acting much in the same way as does a younger generation to its predecessor, faced again a similar situation, approximately seventy-five miles north and ten years later, when General George A. Custer hurried to his rendezvous with destiny on the Little Big Horn.

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