

From Our Special Correspondent: Dispatches
from the 1875 Black Hills Council at Red Cloud
Agency, Nebraska/Last Days of Red Cloud
Agency: Peter T. Buckley's Photograph Collection,
1876-1877

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From Our Special Correspondent: Dispatches from the 1875 Black Hills Council at Red Cloud Agency, Nebraska, edited by James E. Potter. Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2016. 334 pp. Map, illustrations, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 paperback.

Last Days of Red Cloud Agency: Peter T. Buckley's Photograph Collection, 1876-1877, by Thomas R. Buecker. Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 2016. xiii, 253 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Randy Kane is a retired National Park Service history interpreter.

Red Cloud Agency, located on the White River in northwest Nebraska from summer 1873 to fall 1877, brackets the time of the climax of contention and conflict for control of the Northern Plains between the Lakota Sioux and their allies and the whites moving in on them. Each of the volumes identified above relays an element of that story.

James E. Potter's *Dispatches* narrates, through the eyes of newspaper correspondents, the attempt by the federal government's Allison Commission (led by Senator William B. Allison of Iowa) in the fall of 1875 to purchase the Black Hills from the Lakota. The attempted purchase was brought on by white gold seekers' invasion of the Black Hills, an area allotted to the Sioux by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. Most of the argonauts accessed the Black Hills from Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Sidney, Nebraska, jump-off points from the transcontinental railroad, but others came overland from staging areas such as Sioux City, Iowa.

The attempted purchase, which was intended to avoid an Indian war, was national news covered by reporters from New York and Chicago as well as scribes out of Omaha and Cheyenne. Charles Collins, editor of the *Sioux City Times* and long a promoter of opening the Black Hills to mining, wrote dispatches for the *Omaha Bee*. Their stories reflect white cultural and ethnic bias but also show admiration and respect for the sagacity of Lakota leaders such as Spotted Tail and Young Man Afraid of His Horses. As many as 20,000 Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe people gathered within a 50-mile radius for the conference.

The attempt at negotiation to buy the Black Hills was a struggle from the start. The Indians were not united in their desire to sell; northerners led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse refused to attend the conference. The non-agency warriors who did attend, led by Little Big Man, were intent on disrupting the conference. The agency leaders such as Spotted Tail who did consider sale of the Black Hills did so only with the realization that they would lose the area to the whites anyway.

Senator Allison started the formal part of the conference with the preposterous suggestion that the government "lease" the Black Hills for a price until all the gold had been extracted, when the area would be returned to the Indians. This proposal brought immediate universal laughter among the Indian leaders. Spotted Tail subsequently jokingly asked the newspaper correspondents if they would lend him their team of mules under the same conditions.

Spotted Tail, Red Cloud, and other agency leaders were willing to sell the Black Hills for a price, but their insistence on subsistence security for several future generations of their people was more than the commissioners would accept. Even had the commission met the agency leaders' demands, the non-agency bands would not have recognized the sale of the Black Hills, and subsequent military action would have been required to gain their submission.

Potter's *Dispatches* provides an essential primary source in readable format for understanding the white-Indian contention and ultimate conflict for control of the Northern Plains. The editor has also provided helpful endnotes at the end of each chapter that flesh out names and incidents identified in the newspaper correspondence.

Thomas Buecker's book consists of stereocard photographs collected by Peter T. Buckley, who worked as a civilian employee for post trader William F. Kimmel at Camp (later Fort) Robinson, 1876-1877. Buckley's collection came from a number of photographers who focused on the white-Indian frontier surrounding Red Cloud Agency and its attendant "police station," Camp Robinson. Between 1874 and 1877 at least nine photographers visited the Red Cloud Agency and Camp Robinson. James H. Hamilton, a resident of Sioux City, Iowa, is believed to have been one of those photographers.

Of principal interest are a series of six images of Red Cloud Agency published for the first time in this volume. A "Birdseye Drawing of Red Cloud Agency, April 1874" shows in detail the layout of the buildings at the agency minus only the agent's residence and the fence between the agency proper and the corral. The agency collection of photos includes an exterior view of "Issuing Rations" and one of the butchering process titled "Issuing Beef." The Red Cloud Agency photos include three interior shots: one of the "Ware House," the storage facility for the annuities given to the Indians; and one of the "Offices," which include the agent's office, a meeting room, and a doctor's office as well as housing for agency employees. The real gem of the agency collection is the photo of the two-story "Agent's Residence, Fall 1875." Included in this image is agent John J. Saville (at a distance). Saville, agent of Red Cloud Agency from August 1873 until December 1875,

was a former physician from Sioux City, Iowa, before he took the position as agent at Red Cloud, a position selected and administered by the Episcopal church.

Buckley's photo collection includes a number of images of Camp Robinson, natural features of the surrounding area, and Arapahoe and Lakota (Teton Sioux) camps and people. Of special interest are two images of the Brule Chief Spotted Tail, his wife, and one of his daughters at the residence of Camp Robinson trader J. W. Paddock. One image shows the chief and members of his family seated at the table taking breakfast in Paddock's home. Noticeable is the absence of an image of Red Cloud, the agency's Oglala Lakota namesake. Another image of considerable interest is one of the "Grave of Crazy Horse." The grave consists of a low scaffold with a blanket covering a wooden box surrounded by a crude wooden fence. This photograph was taken by soldier-photographer Pvt. Charles Howard overlooking Camp Sheridan, the military camp guarding the Brule Lakota Spotted Tail Agency located 40 miles northwest of Red Cloud Agency. This image was one of two probably taken less than a month after Crazy Horse's death.

The images in the Buckley collection vary greatly in quality from excellent to poor. What is consistent, however, is Buecker's exacting guide and identification of each image, including details difficult to distinguish without his aid. This visual source is another piece presented here, much of it for the first time, that is important for understanding the white-Indian cultural interaction surrounding the agencies and their attendant military posts in northwestern Nebraska.

Twenty-five Years among the Indians and Buffalo: A Frontier Memoir, by William D. Street, edited by Warren R. Street with an introduction by Richard W. Etulain. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016. xxxi, 525 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer J. T. Murphy is professor of history at Indiana University South Bend. His research and writing have focused on frontier settlement, the Oregon Trail, and the military history of the nineteenth-century U.S. West, among other topics.

In April 1870, William D. Street remembered, "A party from Iowa came out onto the frontier in search of homesteads" (161). They were greenhorns on the Kansas plains and sought out Street, an experienced pioneer though only 19 years old. Born in Ohio, Street grew up in Kansas, went to work as a teamster in 1867, and, as a member of the Nineteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, participated in the winter campaign of 1868–69 against the Cheyenne. After his military service, he filed a homestead claim in Jewell County and later added land in De-