

# O'Neill Uneasy Over Indian Uprising

Boyd County Part of Sioux Reservation and Excitable Minds Envisioned Scalping Parties

By ROMAINE SAUNDERS  
Editor-in-Chief, Diamond Jubilee Edition

Headquarters, Dept. of Dakota, St. Paul, Minn., Dec. 12, 1890.  
—To Commanding Officer, Ft. Yates, N. D.: The division commander has directed that you make it your special duty to secure the person of Sitting Bull. Call an Indian Agent to cooperate and render such assistance as will best promote the purpose in view. Acknowledge receipt and if not perfectly clear, repeat back.—M. Barber, Asst. Adj. General. By Command of Gen. Guger.

"Sittin' Bull is dead." On a grey December morning I met Billy Hough on a street in O'Neill and he thus accosted me. The above military order, which I find in records at the Nebraska State Historical Society, had been complied with. Colonel Drum was in command at Ft. Yates and he called to his aid the Indian agent, James McLaughlin.

Before proceeding with the story of the taking of Sitting Bull and the battle—some call it a massacre—that followed, I wish to speak of the local color. When news broke of Indian trouble there was unrest in this community. Boyd county at that time was a part of the Sioux reservation. With a considerable population of red skins our near neighbors, excitable minds envisioned scalping parties swooping down upon us. This was lightened when Bill Pettus, living out 15 miles Northeast, drove into town one morning early with his family in the wagon and horses on the run, announce-



Chief Sitting Bull . . . promoter and leader of the Ghost Dance that led to the Battle of Wounded Knee.

ing a band of Indians passed his place during the night. This proved to be a false alarm when it was learned two cowboys had taken a herd down the trail that night.

Denny Cronin and myself were employed at that time by Jim Riggs in The Frontier plant. There had been talk of organizing home guards and a meeting was to be held at Brennan's hardware to see what could be done to effect such an organization. That night following the morning appearance of Pettus, Denny and I went to the shop and by the light of kerosene lamps set the type for and printed handbills for this meeting.

It was the humiliation of two young printers when Otto Mutz, an educated cigar-maker who had lately come to town looking the field over for a location, pointed out on our handbill the word until spell with two "l's". The meeting, at Brennan's, however, was well attended and the ultimate result was the military organization mustered in by Governor Crouse, which story appears elsewhere.

A portion of the Pine Ridge reservation lapped over into Nebraska just North of Gordon. Troops and military equipment were moved up what is now the North Western railroad, known then as the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley line. From Gordon North to Ft. Yates in North Dakota it was pretty much in-

dian country. Chief Sitting Bull, of the Sioux, then an old man as he had been engaged in the Custer battle many years before, was something of a medicine man, religious fanatic and ghost dance performer. This dance had significance with him and his followers in connection with the looked-for Indian Messiah.

The war department deemed it necessary to take a hand, so the order printed above was promulgated. Colonel Drum had received word that Sitting Bull and a band of his followers were preparing to leave their hang-out on the Grand river so a detachment of Indian police were sent out to arrest him, followed by a considerable body of soldiers. Eighteen of the Indian police, under command of Lt. Henry Bullhead, rode into the Sitting Bull camp at dawn December 15, 1890. There were two log hovels that housed the Sitting Bull household. Into one of these went 10 of the police and eight into the other. The chief was informed of their mission and replied, "Alright, I'll go with you to the reservation." He then asked one of his wives to get his clothes from another cabin and directed that his choice of a horse be made ready for him. Others of the Indian police had arrived, making 39 in all.

When the arresting party stepped out with their prisoner 150 of his followers had assembled at the cabin. Sitting Bull's demeanor changed. "I will not go, I want to die and I want to fight." Lieutenant Bullhead stood on one side of him. Sergeant Shavehead on the other side and Sgt. Red Tomahawka at his back. Grunts were heard among the assembled Indians, excitement arose.

Then Catch the Bear and Strike the Kettle, two of the chief's most ardent followers, broke through the crowd. Catch the Bear fired a shot that mortally wounded Lieutenant Bullhead, then shot Shavehead but one of them put a bullet through Sitting Bull and the three fell together. A general free for all followed, 36 Indian police that remained standing against 150 of the chief's band. Catch the Bear, the instigator, was shot down by Private Police Alone Man. Four volunteers had joined the original force of 39 Indian police. Of the 14 that were shot down at the Grand river camp all were killed or died in a few hours but three who recovered. These were Alex. Middle, Brave Thunder and Strike the Kettle.

Records of the war department commend the bravery of the Indian police, men who rarely have had their equal in their pride of a United States uniform or loyalty to the trust reposed in them.

Big Foot took over after Sitting Bull fell. The trouble on the Grand river brought on the battle to the South in the Pine Ridge district known as Wounded Knee. A former O'Neill citizen, that perfectly groomed and scholarly gent, John McDonough, was sent out from New York City to write the story of Wounded Knee for the Sun.

This engagement took place two weeks after the killings at Sitting Bull's camp and was largely in the hands of Col. J. W. Forsyth and his mounted men of the Seventh cavalry. A few soldiers lost their lives and the bodies of 168 Indians lay on



SITTING BULL'S CAMP . . . The Sioux Indian's buried their dead on stilts (above). Boyd county (Holt's Northern neighbor) once was part of the reservation.—Photos from the Sumner Downey (O'Neill Photo Co.) collection.



One hundred and sixty-eight Sioux were slain in the historic Battle of Wounded Knee.



Pawnee Bill (on white horse at left) led U. S. troops in subduing Sitting Bull.

## Combined Bank Assets 6 Million

By EDWARD M. GALLAGHER  
President, First National Bank

Apparently the first bank established in O'Neill, after the town was settled, was the Holt County bank. Word from the Department of Banking at Lincoln reports that records are very meager at that early date. Among the incorporators were W. E. Adams, M. P. Kinkaid and David Adams. The location of the bank building was the Southeast corner of the intersection of Fourth and Douglas Streets.

The First National bank of O'Neill was chartered in 1884. The bank was founded by W. G. Palmatier, who became president of the institution. Ed. S. Kelly, W. W. Stewart and M. Flannigan were other officers. In 1889, Ed. F. Gallagher and T. F. Birmingham, associated with others, purchased the bank, and since that time the bank has seen many changes in O'Neill and the surrounding territory. Others who have played a prominent part in the management of this bank are: J. F. Gallagher, J. P. Mann, H. J. Birmingham, F. H. Swingley, W. P. Dailey, M. R. Sullivan and Joseph A. Mann.

Officers and directors of the bank at present are: Edward M. Gallagher, president; Ed. T. Campbell, vice-president and Cashier; John C. Watson, assistant cashier; W. J. Froelich and Elizabeth Gallagher. Capital, surplus, undivided profits and reserves are \$210,000.00.

The Elkhorn Valley bank was one of the early banking institutions of the city. Again the state records are incomplete in regard to this bank. Owners of the bank were Patrick Haggerty, B. J. McGreevey, H. W. McClure and Chas. Gardner. The banking office was located on Douglas street at a position where the Royal theatre is now situated.

According to the Department of Banking, the State Bank of O'Neill obtained Charter No. 307 which was issued October 1, 1895. Incorporators were: W. D. Mathews, Bernard Mullen, M. D. Long, John McBride, G. C. Hazlett, S. J. Weekes, Edgar Adams, W. J. Canton, Neil Brennan, E. S. Kinch, A. V. Morris, John J.

McCafferty, R. R. Dickson, A. C. Charde, J. L. Hershiser, Arthur Mullen, E. J. Mack, H. C. McEvony and G. W. Wattles. John McHugh was the active manager of the bank. He later became president of the Chase National Bank of New York, the largest bank in the United States at that time. The State Bank of O'Neill voluntarily liquidated in 1897.

The O'Neill National bank was organized in 1901 by M. Dowling and T. B. Purcell. The bank opened for business in April, 1901 with J. F. O'Donnell as cashier and capital of \$25,000.00. In May, 1908, S. J. Weekes, Dr. J. P. Gilligan and O. Snyder purchased a part of the Dowling-Purcell interest in the bank and all were named to the board of directors. S. J. Weekes became the chief executive officer of the bank and retained that position until his death in November, 1941. In the Fall of 1946, the Dowling-Purcell families disposed of their entire interest in the bank to Julius D. Cronin, F. N. Cronin and Emma D. Weekes. The present capital accounts of the bank exceed \$185,000.00. Present officers and directors of the bank are: Francis N. Cronin, president; Emma Dickinson Weekes, vice-president; James B. Grady, cashier; O. D. French, assistant cashier; W. D. Melena, assistant cashier; Mary I. Cronin, E. F. Quinn and Julius D. Cronin.

In 1906, the Fidelity bank began business in O'Neill. Officers of the bank were: E. E. Halstead, president; David B. Grovener, cashier, and Will F. Mikesell, assistant cashier. The Director of Banking furnishes the information that the Fidelity bank was succeeded by the Nebraska State bank which continued until 1930. J. F. O'Donnell and Sherman Welpton were identified with the latter bank.

O'Neill finds itself today with two banks which have had a long experience in business in this community. Combined assets of the two banks are \$6,166,000.00. Total deposits are \$5,775,000.00 with capital structure of both banks amounting to \$395,000.00.

Messrs. Lange and McLain to Keya Paha —

Another 1880 item: Messrs. Geo. T. Lange and James M. McClain, of Wahoo, have taken claims on the Keya Paha, and will return soon to make their home with us. They called Monday and subscribed for The Frontier, as they all do who want to keep posted.

INK EXPENSIVE

Ink normally accounts for three to five per cent of total printing expenses of newspapers, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Mr. Campbell at that time was a member of the firm of Telber & Campbell, of Niobrara, but later was in business in O'Neill and at one time postmaster. Remaining with the genial Mr. Sparks for the night and visiting the next morning in O'Neill they drove West, stopped at the home of Judge Maloy, and refreshed themselves at the ranch of Morgan Hayes.

Toward evening they reached Aitkinson, and here, the community to the manner born, was a "Baseball game being played by a group of active young men." "We were taken in charge by the gentlemanly proprietors of the Aitkinson store, Messrs. Bittney & Dickerson."

Discouraged from visiting the domain of the Dutchers, Kid Wade and other fearsome gents to the Northwest, the gifted scribe and his lawyer companion started for Niobrara the following day. Night and a vio-

lent June storm overtook them on the prairie and they sat it out 'till daylight. It would seem such a wetting would have dampened the ardor expressed in the beginning of the writer's story, but he closed by saying, "Holt county's future looks very bright to us."

754 Thousand Acres Unappropriated Land —  
Statement showing vacant Government land in the O'Neill land district on July 1, 1899, and the counties in which it is located:

County	Acres Unappropriated
Antelope	419
Boone	9,858
Boyd	30,167
Brown	5,900
Garfield	187,135
Holt	136,652
Keya Paha	4,600
Knox	1,052
Loup	213,851
Rock	52,330
Wheeler	112,081
Total	754,035

### Loveliest Spot Ever Seen by Mortal

Under the heading, "A Trip Across Holt County," a gifted scribe over at Niobrara flavored his story with the fragrance of the June roses of 1879 in his opening paragraph:

"A week ago last Saturday morning, in company with our friend, Fred Fox, we left Niobrara for a trip through Holt county, that garden of the West, where the sun in all its splendor looks down upon one of the loveliest spots ever seen by mortals."

This trip brought them to the homes of the Lamonts and the Tenny family, then to the Webster ranch on their first day out. They were headed for O'Neill city, 52 miles away from their starting point, and mostly open prairie where antelope and wild-eyed cattle and still wilder horses were feeding.

Night overtook them before they reached O'Neill but eventually pulled up at the Johnson House, a pioneer hotel run by D. J. Sparks and located near where the Burlington roundhouse was built. "Here," the writer says, "I met up with my friend, Frank Campbell."



## ON THIS 75th ANNIVERSARY — OF THE — Founding of O'Neill

We Wish to Add Our Word of Tribute to the Memory of the Pioneers.

DEAN'S BARBER SHOP  
Dean Streeter

# Congratulations O'Neill and Community

ON YOUR 75th ANNIVERSARY



1923

TO

1949

FROM THE BEGINNING the people on the frontier have been wholly dependant upon livestock. First came the oxen, then the horses and the family cow.

TODAY, O'Neill stands at the gateway to the greatest cattle country in the world. Today, dairy products from this great region are shipped to distant points throughout the world.

AS DOCTORS of veterinary medicine and as guardians of the health of livestock of all types, we accept this trust with utmost diligence and care. We're proud that our firm is an integral and vital part of this wonderful community.

# Drs. Bennett & Cook

First Nat'l Bank Bldg.

O'Neill

## FOR A HALF CENTURY

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Fruits and Vegetables

. . . at . . .

LOW COST

Many Find It Saving to Get Their Supplies Here.

GALLAGHER STORE

— South Fourth Street —



the frozen field. It is to the credit of the military forces that strict orders were observed to harm none of the women and children. Between 300 and 400 Indian children in a school at Pine Ridge were badly frightened that they were to be killed until assured by their teachers that no harm would come to them.