

August 21, 1933

Dr. C. W. Griffith  
La Porte, Texas

Dear Dr. Griffith:

Thanks for your kind letter of August 7. I am very happy that you enjoyed reading my life of Sitting Bull. I put a great deal of time and money into that job.

You ask several questions. I will try to answer them. First: Did Sitting Bull attend West Point? There are several legends like this which attempt to account for Sitting Bull's success in defeating General Custer by claiming for him an education in some white man's school. One legend is that he went to West Point, another to the University of Missouri, and the third to St. Omer in France. I have thoroughly investigated these stories and you may rest assured that there is nothing in them. It is unnecessary to explain Sitting Bull's victories by any such story. The fact is that the Sioux warrior was more than a match for the white soldier, man to man, and consistently defeated the whites whenever they met upon equal terms. The Indian knew his country, was an excellent horseman and made a living shooting from the saddle. The soldier was fighting at a great disadvantage in strange country, and, as a rule, as General Sheridan has borne witness, "could hit nothing from the saddle." The weakness of the Indian warrior lay, of course, in his inability to organize and lack of discipline and in a failure to follow up a victory. It was precisely that because the Indian did not fight according to the art of war as taught at West Point, that he was able to defeat the West Pointers.

Second: Was he a Mason? I am not a Mason but many of those who have investigated Indian life have been. I do not believe that any of the standard authorities on American Ethnology believe that any American Indians were Masons. Masonry, I understand, began with Solomon's Temple, and its symbolism has to do with building. The Indian religion is far older than the art of architecture, and therefore could not afford identical symbols or passwords. There were, of course, Indian secret societies, and I know that Sitting Bull belonged to some of these, but so far as I can learn, they had nothing to do with Masonry. Of course all the systems of society use the same symbols, such as the cross, the swastika, the circle, and so on. But they generally mean quite different things. My father was a Knight Templar and a Thirty-Second Degree Mason, and a great student of Indian life. He did not find any evidence that any Indians in their natural state, had any knowledge of Masonry.