

M. JOHN S. WRIGHT
4411 Washington Boulevard
Indianapolis, Ind.

June 11, 1942

(5)

Professor Walter Stanley Campbell
University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma

Dear Professor Campbell:

In the obituary of Colonel Ahrens (American Forests, p. 276, June '42) it is stated that in 1882 he had an assignment as secretary to "Sitting Bull," then a government ward at Ft. Yates. The article says that Sitting Bull was highly educated and able to read French, German, and English and that his mail was so large as to require a secretary to handle it.

Having read with great interest your fine biography of Sitting Bull, I could recall nothing consistent with the above. Last night I went through the volume again and again failed to find any confirmation of the statement in American Forests.

Furthermore, in the summer of 1891 I served as an assistant in a botanical survey of North Dakota, making Fargo headquarters. There I met a young matron whose father had owned a store at Ft. Yates while Sitting Bull was prisoner there. This lady, then a school girl, said that she taught Sitting Bull to sign his name, of which accomplishment he was very proud. Soon he learned that his autograph had a commercial value and thereafter he charged 50 cents for it and so earned tobacco and other spending money in the tourist season. I looked over the diary kept that summer hoping to find a notation of the anecdote and the narrator's name, but I failed to set it down.

Now I am presuming to appeal to you as an authority of this famous aboriginal American to settle the question of Sitting Bull's literacy.

Permit me to say again how much I feel indebted to you for your study of "Sitting Bull" and other important Western American historical subjects.

As I do not wish to add any burden to a busy man's program, a brief reply will meet my expectations.

Very truly yours,

John S. Wright
John S. Wright
c/o Eli Lilly and Company
P.O. Box 618
Indianapolis, Indiana

Stamped env. enc.