

Sitting Bull is a good controversial subject, for there will never be an end to the discussions of the rights and wrongs of the Indian, to the talk about Custer and his last fight, to the interest in the strange cult of the Ghost Dance, to the disputes about the character and actions of Sitting Bull himself. He has been represented as everything from a saint and a patriot to a fraud and a horse-thief. His life offers a sufficiently thorny problem to be real meat. Having done the foremost of white frontiersman, I think the most famous Indian should come next. And certainly no man- white or red- remains of the Old West about whom so much has been written. Yet there is no LIFE extant worthy of the name.

It is not my plan to write an apology for the man, nor to sentimentalise about poor Lo. As my recent article in the American Mercury- THE WOODEN INDIAN- will show, I insist upon regarding the Red man as a human, and neither a Red devil nor a sitter for calendar art. What I want to do is to give the facts objectively and to set down the fight the man made against hopeless odds so as to make the reader see the tragedy against its proper background.

In addition to the printed sources, I have access to the recollections of my wife's uncle, who was with a survey of the Indians in the sixties and camped next to Sitting Bull for a whole winter. This should give me some fresh materials. For years I was acquainted with Watan, an Arapaho priest of the ghost dance. After his death I came into possession of his Ghost Shirt.

OUTLINE OF SITTING BULL'S LIFE

- 1833. Born on Moreau River. Meteor Shower. Portent of year it rained fire.
- 1843. Killed first buffalo- at 10 yrs.
- 1847. Counted first coup on war path. 14 years.
- Made medicine first time and changed his name; at 23 years.
- Fought the Crow Indians until the wars with whites began.
- 1860-77- at war with whites.
- 1866. Led raid on Fort Buford. Age 32.
- 1876. Destroyed Custer. Age 42.
- 1877. Defeated by Miles. Fled to Canada.
- 1877-81. Relations with Northwest Mounted Police in Canada.
- 1881- No buffalo. Starvation compels return to States. Age 47.
- 1881-3 Prisoner of war. Age 50.
- Prevents sale of Indian reservation lands. Age 55. 1888.
- 1890. Seizes upon Ghost Dance cult, uses it against whites.
- 1890. Killed after his arrest by Indian police. Age 58.

He left two wives, and had nine children, of whom one was killed with him.

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All sorts of odd eggs from Europe have come over here, called themselves Americans, and written up their lives. It would appear that it is about time for the life of a bona fide American to be represented on the shelf. If an Indian isn't an American, who is?