

Jan 2-69

A short time after this I was put on the mail line from Fort Hall to Fort Peck, at the mouth of Milk river. Fort Hall is one hundred and forty miles from Fort Peck, up the river. I had to take care of the mail. Over to Milk river it was forty miles, and down the river it was one hundred and forty-five miles. I carried mail up one week and down the next. They could not get anybody to carry this mail because the Sioux were committing depredations down at the mouth of Milk river; so I took the two routes. That was in the spring. I carried all that summer and next fall, till the first of January. It was about the second of January, and I was making my last trip. It took me two days to go from the bend of Milk River to the station, and generally two days down. This station was run by a Frenchman; a trapper and hunter. I don't remember his name.

76 I went from Fort Hall to the bend of Milk river. Between that point and Fort Peck there is a big open flat. Through the center of this flat there is a gulch. In the rainy season the water comes through there. * There are large trees in the center of it, and right straight down and up again, this gulch is twenty or twenty-five feet deep. Anyhow it could not be seen for any distance. It was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon when I reached the gulch. The snow was coming from the south right in my face. I had on a big buffalo overcoat, a handkerchief tied around my throat, and had big buffalo mitts on my hand that were tied on at the elbows, and had on buffalo leggins and moccasins. I was riding one horse and leading another. There had been no indication of Indians at all, and I was not looking for any. When I was in the gulch—just as my horse started up the other side—the animal I was on jumped, and the next thing I knew somebody hit me over the back. That was the first indication I had of Indians.

77 They had waited for me to come into the gulch and catch me when I was crossing. Before I realized what was going on, they had secured my horses and pulled me to the ground and were trying to take my coat off. They already had my gun. I never thought of having a gun. I was rattled or something. They were using me pretty hard. I had not come in contact with the Sioux before, and could not understand a word they said. One Indian was trying to get my coat off, and another one was trying to shoot me. I was keeping the Indian who was trying to get my coat off between me and the fellow who carried the gun. I don't know how long the struggle lasted. It was but a short time, when an Indian rode up to the top of the gulch on horseback. We were * on top of the gulch by this time, and this Indian came up on horseback and said something to the Indian I was trying to keep out of the way of—the one with the gun. I couldn't understand what he said. The first thing I knew, the Indian who was on horseback dismounted, went up to the one who had the gun, and knocked him down with a heavy bow he carried in his hand. The Indian who had hold of me, as quick as the other Indian was knocked down, left me alone and went off to one side. There were fourteen Indians in the party, I think. I saw it was a change for the better with me. They talked among themselves for some time. The fellow who was doing the talking seemed to be the head man. The one with the gun went off towards the river. After he went away, the leader pulled out his pipe and sat down, and motioned for me to be seated. I obeyed, and after he had got through smoking, he made a motion to me that he was going. I could understand his signs first rate. He made a motion for me to get on a horse, and we