

Following up the valley the fourth day, we found a valley varying from one-fourth to three-fourths of a mile wide, with a goodly proportion of land adapted to cultivation, very fine grazing lands, but with very little timber; camped the fourth night about 30 miles, by the valley, above the mouth of the South Fork.

At this point the pine timber sets in, and continues on both sides of the South Fork for about 45 miles. The pine is found in all the ravines leading into the valley of the South Fork, and is in sufficient quantity to last a community of the size of Spotted Tail's band of Sioux for many years in the future. The pine is not of the best variety, and growing as it does in ravines and canons can be gotten out only by hard labor, but it will answer all purposes of building and fencing for the Indians. At a point below the middle of this stretch or belt of pine timber a strong creek of water, about 10 miles long, puts into the South Fork from the southeast. This creek, called the Rosebud, is where Spotted Tail said the Brules wanted their agency. The Rosebud has scarcely any valley, and its mouth the valley of South Fork is also very narrow; therefore the point selected by Spotted Tail was deemed unsuitable. But the commissioners saw the country sufficiently to convince them that at some point within 5 miles above or below the mouth of the Rosebud a good and superior site for an agency and a military post known as Spotted Tail's Indians, be established here, and that it be named the Rosebud Agency.

The road thence to the Missouri River, at a point below the mouth of the White Earth River, is over an easy country for wagons, and would be about 70 miles. The march of the commission westward from the Rosebud along the course of the South Fork for 80 miles. Thus it occurred that the South Fork was examined from its mouth to its source, a distance of 150 miles. The commissioners were agreeably surprised with the favorable character of the valley. It can best be described as first-class grazing country. For 20 miles above and below the mouth of the Rosebud timber is abundant, and settlements will at first be confined to this region, but rich pasture lands extend the entire length of the stream, and the bottoms, varying from 10 to 20 or 30 acres in each bend of the river, will raise the cereals or any of the vegetables of Minnesota.

The water coming from the sand-hills is remarkably pure, and the South Fork is peculiar in this feature, that 20 miles from its fountains it has as much volume of water as it carries to its mouth. The main fork and its branches containing living water would give valleys of 200 miles and upward, and in the course of time will all be occupied with prosperous ranches for cattle-raising, we hope in the hands of these Indians. Settlers would soon occupy this country if it were open to their enterprise.

From the last water-holes at the head of South Fork, a short march of 11 miles brought us to the Wounded Knee Creek, which, heading in the same line of sand-hills in which the South Fork has its origin, runs north 25 miles into the White Earth River. After a day's rest on this creek we marched 15 miles west to Big White Clay Creek, the chosen stream and country of Red Cloud. This creek is a bold-running stream of good, fresh water, rising in the pine ridge which runs parallel to the northern boundary of Nebraska, and nearly on the boundary line. The creek has a course nearly due north 25 miles into the main White Earth River. The bottom varies from one-fourth to a mile in width, and has arable land from its source to its mouth. The timber on the creek is sparse and only sufficient for winter cover for cattle. The fine timber on the head forks and lateral ravines is practically inexhaustible, but can only be utilized by hard labor, owing to the broken country where the timber grows.

The creek was thoroughly examined by the commission and found to be an excellent home for Red Cloud's band of Ogallala Sioux, and too limited in extent to accommodate so many people. The timber, the grass, the water, and the land, so far as it is capable of cultivation, are unexceptionable. The Big White Clay Creek was the farthest point westward examined by the commission, and in any case is as far west as the country could be colonized, being within 15 miles from Nebraska on the south, and the same distance from ceded land on the west. The country west of Big White Clay at the Wounded Knee Creek was examined and found to be a rough country of sharp ridges, the ravines filled with pine timber.