

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

Let us order some special Fenn's ice cream for the Thanksgiving dinner. Rex's.—adv.

Miss Dorothy Coan of Lead who has been visiting at the home of her parents here for the past week returned to Lead the early part of the week. She returned with Mr. Larry Pelland of Lead, who spent the week-end here visiting friends.

Facts On Sitting Bull Are Cited

By DOANE ROBINSON
Former State Historian

Pierre, Sept. 27—For more than a half century the birthplace of Sitting Bull has been ascribed to Willow creek northern affluent to Teton or Bad river in Stanley county. Only recently an itinerant iconoclast has disputed this proposition, and though he did not see fit to publish his thesis in his much exploited Life of Sitting Bull but to discredit history by a whispering campaign, his conduct had led a number of localities to set up a claim to the somewhat doubtful honor. Yet in the estimation of the American people there is a fixed belief that Sitting Bull ranks among, perhaps first, of Indian warriors. His fame is such that it is deemed no small honor to any community to lay claim to his land of birth. In view of this wide fame, it may be worth while to devote a bit of study to an effort to establish the fact. W. Fletcher Johnson, then superintendent of the Minnesota State Historical society in 1871 published the first extended life of Sitting Bull. He interviewed Sitting Bull as he was exhibiting his widely known pictographic autobiography. At page 25 he quotes the old chief as saying:

"I was born near Old Fort George on Willow Creek below the mouth of the Cheyenne, in 1837."

In 1886 I was visiting with Father Robert W. Haire, in the Sherman House at Aberdeen, when someone came in and announced that Sitting Bull was down at the Milwaukee depot. With more curiosity to see him, than from any other motive, we sauntered down to the depot to learn that with his party of two Indians and a white interpreter, the old chief had taken quarters at Park hotel nearby, and we found him there and enjoyed a half hour visit with him. Father Haire led in the conversation and sought biographical information. To the direct question Sitting Bull replied:

"I was born, as I was informed, at Willow creek, back of Old Fort George."

In 1906, Norman B. Wood published a creditable volume entitled: "Lives of Famous Indian Chiefs." At page 443 he asserts, without giving his authority for the conclusion:

"Sitting Bull was born on Willow Creek, Dakota in 1837." At page 673 in an interview with the chief he was made to say:

"I was born on the Missouri river, at least I recollect that some one told me so."

In 1918, General O. O. Howard published a fat volume entitled, "Famous Indian Chiefs I have known." At page 443, he says without quoting authority:

"Sitting Bull was born near an old army post, Fort George, on Willow creek."

Edward H. Allison was a military scout, and useful in securing the return of Sitting Bull from Canada in 1880. He gave to the State Historical Society, a statement, published at page 271 of Volume VI, South Dakota Historical Collections, which is here

reproduced:
"When I was engaged in negotiating the surrender of Sitting Bull and his Indians I was domiciled for about two weeks in the lodge of Sitting Bull. Previous to this, however, upon my second visit to Sitting Bull I had slept in his lodge two nights, and that was the first time I had met him personally. During this stay of two weeks after we had retired at night I persuaded Sitting Bull to tell me the story of his life. At that time he had no idea whatever of returning and becoming again a citizen of the United States. He was, therefore, free to make any statement he pleased, without fear or favor. I asked him the direct question: "Where were you born, Sitting Bull?" He answered, "On Willow creek, a branch of Bad river west of Old Fort Pierre trading post." Afterwards I asked his Uncle Four Horns where Sitting Bull was born. He told me the same story Sitting Bull had told me, that he was born on Willow creek, a branch of Bad river. Later I asked his own mother where her son was born and she told me the same tale, so that in my mind there is no question of doubt in regard to the matter. He was born on Willow creek."

It will be observed that all of these testimonies connote a birth near old Fort George. This is the weak link in the chain. Fort George was not built until 1842, five years after Sitting Bull's birth. There was no trading in that vicinity earlier than 1841. Allison says Sitting Bull told him the point was on Willow creek, a branch of Bad river, west of old Fort Pierre trading post. In any event the historical fact eliminates old Fort George from consideration.

Mrs. Ethel Jacobsen, public librarian at Pierre, was in her younger years a teacher under her aunt, Miss Mary Collins, a missionary of wide fame, whose mission was located quite close to the home of Sitting Bull on Grand river. He had adopted Miss Collins as

his sister. Mrs. Jacobsen has given me this note:

"Pierre, August 31, 1939. I do remember quite well Miss Collins telling me that Sitting Bull was born on Willow creek west of the Missouri, and I think she said the statement was corroborated by his relatives. A point is made by those who oppose the Willow creek view that Sitting Bull, while a prisoner at Fort Randall, asked to go to the land where he was born. Meaning I take it that he simply meant to the land of the Sioux in Dakota."

It will be observed that Fort George was located 19 miles from the point where Willow creek empties into the Bad river, and that point in a direct line is but 4 miles from Fort Pierre.

In disputing the Willow creek theory several have referred to statements made by One Bull, nephew and adopted son of Sitting Bull, who is reported to have said that Sitting Bull was born near the home where he died on Grand river. Early in July of this year, I met Oscar One Bull, now 94 and active, where he was a member of the Sioux band on exhibit by the Duhamels, near Rapid City. Oscar has visited

me a number of times at Pierre. I asked him if his Uncle, Sitting Bull, had ever told him where he was born? He replied that he had many times. "Where?" I asked. "Down near your place," meaning Pierre.

Having carefully weighed all I can find on the subject I am sure the weight of evidence is favorable to the Willow creek location and the truth of the hypothesis is quite well supported.

CARD OF THANKS

I wish to thank everyone who voted for me and made it possible for me to win the popularity contest.

—Billie Clark Fackel

CARD OF THANKS

I wish to thank those who have supported me splendidly in my behavior and Belles of 1960 who wish to thank the members of the organization for their work.

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