

Indian Police

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Revised

November 26, 1956

Mr. William T. Hagan
Department of History
North Texas State College
Denton, Texas

Dear Mr. Hagan:

I have your inquiry about the origin of the Indian police who served on the reservations around the turn of the century. I am afraid I have no copy of my paper on that subject, which was never published. Such police were in service on Sioux reservations and, I assume, elsewhere.

Probably your best source of information would be the National Archives, Washington, D. C. I believe they have most of the old Indian Bureau records.

However, a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Interior Department, might serve your purpose. Why not try both?

The purpose of using a force of Indian police was partly to build up a faction of younger men and "progressives" to break down the authority of the older chiefs and warriors. Theoretically, the Indian police were supposed to make for better relations between the Indians and the bureaucracy. Actually, it often worked to the contrary. Indians would submit to white domination, but commonly resented being shoved around by their own people, particularly by a younger man, some of whom were very arrogant. On reservations where several tribes were resident, it sometimes happened that the police force was made up of predominantly men of one tribe, and this increased the probabilities of friction. A tribe of Sioux, for example, bitterly resented Indians of another tribe making arrests in their camp. A feeling of this sort had much to do with the killing of Sitting Bull and other leading men of the conservative type.

The Bureau found the Indian police very loyal, just as the Army had found the Indian scouts.

I am sorry I cannot give you a firm date for the origin of the Indian police.

Cordially yours,

W.S. CAMPBELL
(Stanley Vestal)

WSC:vh