

January 9, 1957

years, and my stepfather did research among his people before I was born. I also had the corroboration of such notable authorities as John Homer Seger, author of Early Days Among the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians (University of Oklahoma Press, 1924), and George Bent, son of Colonel William Bent, the ablest of southern Cheyenne historians. In my studies on the Sioux, I contacted every tribe which had had anything to do with Sitting Bull's Indians, his friends or enemies in this country and Canada.

I never paid one cent for information, and it is elementary that in live research one never asks a leading question, or gives the informant any hint of what answer one expects. I always insisted that I wanted no heresay, only what my informants had seen and known in person. I never worked with second generations with Indians. All my informants were eye-witnesses and participants of the events described. I have endeavored to tell the truth about the tactics, strategy and motives of the Indians in their warfare, and to present these matters as they knew them. The Indians cooperated, because they knew that I was not a propagandist and had no axe to grind, but was solely interested in the facts and the truth as they saw it. Heretofore, our history has been written by the white men, usually white men who had no comprehension of, much less liking for, the Indians. I think most well-informed people have long felt that it is high time the Indians, now our fellow citizens, had their day in court.

Insofar as any emotion gets into my writing about the Indians, it is rather a shame of what my own people did to the Indian and the way in which they did it, rather than any hero worship of the Indians. Perhaps you are the one who is guilty of hero worship. Do not confuse the General Dodge who wrote Our White Indians and a poem, about whom Grinnell says "He was a man who had lived all his life among Indians and knew nothing about them," with General Grenville Dodge, who fathered the disastrous Powder River expedition and wrote an accurate account of Plains Indians tactics and qualifications of warriors. Grenville gained much of his information from his old friend, the famous scout and Indian fighter, Jim Bridger. Grinnell is specific in pointing out the errors in Brady.

The weapons used by the soldiers at the Wagon Box fight were breach loaders, not repeaters. They had been issued only a short time before the fight, and the soldiers were not accustomed to their use. You can read the account of this matter in The Bosman Trail by Hebard and Brininstool. These authors are not very critical, but they do record verbatim some statements of surviving soldiers which support my findings.

I hope you are sufficiently interested to investigate thoroughly into these matters, as I think them very fascinating.

Cordially yours,

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(Stanley Vestal)

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