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Article Summary: Pawnee scouts demonstrated eagerness, endurance, and tracking abilities valuable in wilderness warfare. Under the leadership of Frank North, they played an important role in the Indian Wars from 1865-1877 and contributed to the construction of the Union Pacific railroad.

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Photographs / Images: Major Frank J North (from a painting by Charles S Stobie), building the Union Pacific Railroad in Nebraska

THE NORTH BROTHERS AND THE PAWNEE SCOUTS

BY DONALD F. DANKER

THE Plains Indian Wars of the '60's and '70's left their mark on America's traditions and literature as well as its history. From them have emerged an array of fighting men around whose names legends have clustered from their day to our own. Not the least of these were the North brothers and their famous Scouts.

The use of white frontiersmen and of Indian scouts and auxiliaries by American military forces was not uncommon. From colonial times on they had figured in campaigns where their talents in wilderness warfare were useful. Thus the service of Frank North and the Pawnee Scouts was in keeping with American frontier tradition.

The Pawnee were one of the important Plains tribes. In a sense they were a transitional group between the agricultural and sedentary tribes along the Missouri and the nomadic hunters of the prairie. They lived in earth lodge

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villages along the Platte, Republican and Loup Rivers in Nebraska and were primarily engaged in agriculture. However, they took two extended buffalo hunts each year and were excellent horsemen and hunters. They had a tradition of friendship for the whites and when the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened Nebraska to white settlers the Pawnee did not resist the loss of their land. In 1857 they were assigned a fifteen by thirty mile reservation along the Loup River with the agency at Genoa.¹

Although they had a record of peaceful relationship with the whites, they had long waged almost constant warfare with the more nomadic tribes to the west. They were enemies of the Dakota and the Cheyenne with whom they competed for the buffalo and exchanged horse stealing raids. Service with the U. S. Army gave them a welcome opportunity to strike at their long-time foes with the aid and approval of the powerful whites.

The man most responsible for the success of the Pawnee Scouts was Frank North. He was a restless, intelligent person who had a great distaste for the humdrum of ordinary activity. He had come to Nebraska in 1856 as a boy of sixteen. The next year his father died in a spring blizzard, leaving the mother on the frontier with five children. Frank and an older brother, James, went west along the Platte to the new settlement of Columbus. There he farmed a little, trapped and hunted, and freighted to Fort Kearny and Denver. He became acquainted with the nearby Pawnee, learned their language and in 1861 was hired by the post trader as a clerk and interpreter. As a friend and associate of the Pawnee he came to share their hatred for

¹ Waldo Wedel, *An Introduction to Pawnee Archeology*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, Bulletin, 112 (Washington, D. C. 1936), pp. 7-25.

the Sioux who frequently raided the reservation, stealing horses and killing the women in the cornfields.²

Luther North was six years younger than Frank and the fatherless youth enjoyed a boyhood of hunting and riding. Among his companions were the Pawnee and his hero to the day of his death, at the age of eighty-nine, was his brother Frank.

In the summer of 1864 Sioux and Cheyenne raiders had reduced most of the stations and road ranches along the overland trail to ashes, travel had almost ceased and settlers were abandoning their homes. Gen. Samuel Curtis, commander of the Department of Kansas, requested that a company of Pawnee be hired to serve with the Army. Over two hundred volunteered but only seventy-six were accepted partially because the agent did not want the reservation left undefended.³

Joseph McFadden, an Army veteran and a clerk at the agency store, was hired as captain at five dollars a day. He had a Pawnee family and could speak the language. Frank North was second in command. This first group of Pawnee Scouts did no fighting. After a march to the Solomon River in Kansas the force split and Gen. Robert Mitchell returned to the Platte with McFadden and the main body of Pawnee, and Curtis proceeded to Fort Riley. Neither group encountered hostiles. Curtis, while favorably

² Alfred Sorenson, "A Quarter of a Century on the Frontier or the Adventures of Major Frank North, the 'White Chief of the Pawnees.'" The story of his life as told by himself and written by Alfred Sorenson. Manuscript. (circa 1880).

The standard source of information on the Scouts is George Bird Grinnell, *Two Great Scouts and Their Pawnee Battalion* (Cleveland, 1928). Grinnell's account is based largely upon the Sorenson manuscript and the recollections of Luther North. Robert Bruce, *The Fighting Norths and the Pawnee Scouts* (Lincoln, 1932) is also a valuable source, compiled largely from the letters of Luther North. An extensive collection of Luther North letters and two diaries of Frank North, 1869 and 1876-77, are in the archives of the Nebraska State Historical Society. The records, reports and correspondence of the War Department are, of course, a prime source of information on the Pawnee Scouts and contain evaluations unclouded by the passage of time.

³ Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1864, Washington, 1865, p. 383.

impressed by North, did not believe that McFadden had proper control of the men.⁴

When the Scouts were discharged in October, Frank North, at the direction of General Curtis, organized a new company with himself as captain. He and his officers were commissioned by the territorial governor of Nebraska and the company was accepted as Nebraska Civil War Volunteers. This marked the real beginning of the services of the Pawnee Scouts. They were in the field in 1865, 1867, 1868, 1869, 1870, and finally in 1876-77.

The reputation of the Pawnee Scouts began on the Powder River Expedition in the summer of 1865. A three columned offensive under Gen. Patrick E. Connor moved against the aroused Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho in central and northern Wyoming. A force under Col. Nelson Cole was to march from Columbus, Nebraska, through the sand hills into Dakota and Wyoming. Col. Samuel Walker was to join him from Fort Laramie with about six hundred men and Connor himself commanded the third column which also started from Fort Laramie.⁵ Connor's orders to Cole and Walker, his column commanders, reflected his determination to break the Indians if possible: "You will not receive overtures of peace or submission from Indians but will attack and kill every male Indian over twelve years old."⁶ The Pawnee, numbering ninety-five in all, marched

⁴ Eugene F. Ware, *The Indian War of 1864*, (Revised edition, New York, 1960), p. 158-159 states that an earlier company of Pawnee under North accompanied General Mitchell west from Plum Creek in July 1864. He commented on the lack of discipline of the group. This is the only mention of a Pawnee Company previous to the group raised in August under the direction of Curtis. It seems probable that Ware was mistaken in this recollection and had telescoped events with the passage of years.

⁵ Nelson Cole (1833-1899) was colonel of the Second Missouri Artillery. He served as a brigadier general of Volunteers during the Civil War and again during the Spanish American War.

Samuel Walker (1822-1893) was Lieutenant Colonel of the Sixteenth Kansas Cavalry. Francis Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army*, vol. 1, (Washington, 1903), p. 997.

⁶ *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, XLVIII, pt. II, p. 1049 and p. 1131. The order was rescinded by Gen. John Pope, Department Commander.

Maj. Frank North. (Paní L. North) Chief of Dime Scouts -



Major Frank J. North

(From a painting by Charles S. Stobie. Courtesy Library, State Historical Society of Colorado)



Building the Union Pacific Railroad in Nebraska

with Connor's column. The several reports of the operations reveal that the Pawnee welcomed the chances for action more than did the war-weary, semi-mutinuous veterans who found themselves exposed to new dangers several months after Lee had surrendered at Appomattox. Connor's forces left Laramie about August 1 and proceeded to a point on the Powder River where they constructed Fort Connor, later known as Fort Reno.⁷ From there the Pawnee scouted the area and discovered the trail of a party of Cheyenne. North and forty-eight Pawnee followed the trail all night and at dawn came upon the Cheyenne. North, to avoid being a conspicuous target, painted his face like a Pawnee warrior. When the fight was over they had killed the whole party of twenty-four Cheyenne including one woman. The Pawnee were jubilant. This was their first big victory in many years and they credited North with their change of fortune. They had not lost a man and had captured twenty-nine horses and mules. In a triumphant return to camp they entered brandishing scalps and singing. Their war dance lasted two nights, interrupted only by speeches and a name-changing ceremony during which they christened North Pani Lasher (Pawnee Chief). The only casualty they suffered came when one of them, while demonstrating how bravely he had fought, accidentally shot and killed North's orderly.⁸

Four days later the Pawnee discovered another party of Cheyenne and North's career came near being ended. In the running fight he outdistanced his men and the Cheyenne turned and attacked him. He led his wounded horse, keeping it between him and the Indians, until he was rescued by his first lieutenant, Charles Small. The two men then retreated until they came upon the Pawnee Scouts who

⁷ Fred B. Rogers, *Soldiers of the Overland*, (San Francisco, 1938), p. 178.

⁸ Official Records, *op. cit.*, p. 1217; George Bird Grinnell, *Two Great Scouts and the Pawnee Battalion*, (New York, 1923), pp. 90-94; Captain E. H. Palmer, Company A, 11th Kansas Volunteer Infantry Cavalry, "History of the Powder River Indian Expedition 1865," *Transactions and Reports*, Nebraska State Historical Society, vol. 2 (Lincoln, 1887), p. 208.

had a wounded old Cheyenne trapped in a log corral. The Scouts were seeing how many times they could shoot him in the legs without killing him. North ordered, "Stop, don't fire another shot. Kill him with a sabre." A halfbreed scout, Nick Janis, identified the Indian as Red Bull, a Cheyenne chief.⁹

Eleven days later the Pawnee came upon a large village of Arapaho under Chief Black Bear on Tongue River. North sent word back to Connor who came up with the main body of troops. The Arapaho were routed and an undetermined number killed. Reports range from thirty-five to one hundred and sixty-three. More might have been killed had not the troops, Indian and white, stopped to plunder. Connor was infuriated and caused most of the booty to be destroyed, to the dismay of the Pawnee.

The column under Colonels Cole and Walker did not appear at the rendezvous point on the Tongue River. Connor sent North and twenty Pawnee to look for them. They found several hundred dead horses, many of them shot. North thought a battle had taken place and reported back to Connor. The whole force followed the trail of Cole for several days and then North was sent out again with several Pawnee. This time he came upon the combined Cole and Walker commands in a starved and destitute condition. They had shot their own starving mounts, been reduced to walking and, harassed by Indians, were close to disaster. Cole, in marching through the Nebraska Sandhills and the Black Hills, had run short of supplies and lost his way.¹⁰ The entire expedition returned to Fort Connor where General Connor found orders relieving him of the command, and the Powder River Expedition of 1865 ended with goals unachieved and the Indians undefeated. The Pawnee Scouts, however, had made a favorable impression and were destined for further service.

⁹ Sorenson, *op. cit.*, p. 91; *Official Records*, Series I, XLVIII, pt. 1, p. 366.

¹⁰ George B. Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyenne*, (Norman, Oklahoma, 1956), pp. 212-213; Colonel Cole's Report, *Official Records, op. cit.*, pp. 366-368.

The Union Pacific Railroad had been pushed west along the Platte River in 1866. The work season of 1867 would place the crews in an area exposed to Indian attack. Grenville Dodge, chief engineer, wrote to Gen. W. T. Sherman asking for protection for the workers. Campaigns against the hostiles were not enough; patrols along the road were needed. He stated: "I believe the moment you get into the Indian country with troops for the campaign the Indians will leave the Platte route . . . but what you and I may know it is hard to make a lot of Irishmen believe. They want to see occasionally a soldier to give them confidence and that is all we need to get the labor on the road." Sherman sent the letter on to General Grant with the endorsement that help should be given to Dodge because the road finished into Wyoming would be of great importance to the Army. Grant concurred that "Every protection practicable should be given by the military both to secure the rapid completion of the road and to avoid pretext on the part of the builders to get further assistance from the Government."¹¹

Gen. Christopher C. Augur, commander of the Department of the Platte, asked North to organize a battalion of four companies of Pawnee to help protect the road. North did not wish to give up his position of post trader at the agency and Augur secured a leave of absence for him from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.¹² North was major of the battalion and each company was led by a white captain and a first lieutenant. The officers, for the most part, were men drawn from North's acquaintances who were familiar to a degree with the Pawnee and the frontier. In 1867 the captains were E. W. Arnold, a friend of the North family; Charles Morse, who had married North's sister Alphon-

¹¹ Gen. Grenville Dodge to Gen. W. T. Sherman, Council Bluffs, January 14, 1867; General Grant to Gen. W. T. Sherman, Washington D. C., January 26, 1867. U.S. War Department Records. Selected Documents, Headquarters, Department of the Platte. (Microfilm). The citation of Correspondence and Reports in the remainder of the article are from this source unless otherwise indicated.

¹² Gen. C. C. Augur to S. V. Bogy, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Omaha, February 27, 1867; Col. H. G. Litchfield to Frank North, February 28, 1867.

sene; James Murie of Scotch ancestry who founded two families, one Pawnee and one white; and Luther North. The non-commissioned officers were Indian. There were four sergeants, four corporals, a bugler, a farrier and forty privates in each company.¹³ The officers were hired by the Quartermaster Corps as civilian employees and given rank and pay corresponding to their counterparts in regular army units. The men enlisted into the United States service with the same pay as white soldiers.

Horses were purchased in Columbus and vicinity at prices of from eighty to one hundred dollars and the Pawnee battalion entrained for Fort Kearny. Urgent requests were submitted to the Army for subsistence pay because the Pawnee chiefs made the Scouts leave all food on the reservation for use by the tribe.¹⁴

Dodge had been mistaken about the Indians leaving the Platte Valley when troops arrived and the Scouts had a busy summer. The Records of the Department of the Platte reveal that they were shuttled back and forth between Fort Kearny, Plum Creek, Fort McPherson and the ever more distant "End of Track." Their errands were varied. Gen. John Gibbon at Fort McPherson reported, "Brought up forty Pawnee who might be advantageously used here for a few days in unearthing certain red and white scoundrels who are engaged in horse stealing and murdering in the vicinity."¹⁵ Dodge wrote from the End of Track that three of his workers were killed and twenty-seven head of stock run off. The country between the Plattes was filled with hostiles. "They strike us at some point daily."¹⁶

The Pawnee battalion was distributed at different points along the road and could be moved quickly. The railroad itself was proving an important factor in the de-

¹³ Muster Rolls, War Department Records, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Lt. Col. D. L. Merrill to Augur, Columbus, Nebr., March 12, 1867; March 16, 1867.

¹⁵ Col. John Gibbon to Augur, Fort McPherson, May 20, 1867.

¹⁶ Gen. Grenville Dodge to Augur, May 25, 1867.

fense of the workers and in military operations. Augur reported it to be "essential to the interest of the Department in the way of moving troops and supplies at great saving of time and money . . . its completion to the Black Hills in its effect upon Indian affairs, is equivalent to a successful campaign."¹⁷ The Scouts were well armed with Spencer carbines and revolvers. When their officers had difficulty obtaining what they considered adequate equipment or treatment from the commanders of various posts, they did not hesitate to appeal directly to Augur who backed them up. It was apparent that the colorful Pawnee and their leader had the support of the commander of the Department of the Platte. He realized that the battalion of Pawnee Scouts differed from the regular army units and he did not treat it as such.

The telegraphic messages from the field convey a degree of urgency even after the passage of years. On August 12 the small detachment at Plum Creek appealed for help, "Indians are hovering around within 2,000 yards of us with evident intention of attacking the station."¹⁸ The appeal touched off a flurry of activity and help was being called from Fort Kearny and Fort McPherson when a second telegram arrived to the effect that the Pawnee Scouts had arrived and discovered that the threatening Indians were actually thousands of buffalo crossing the Platte.¹⁹

Several days later the Indians did arrive. A party of Cheyenne under Spotted Wolf derailed a freight train a few miles west of Plum Creek, killing several of the crew. The Cheyenne appeared across the Platte River from the station and Frank North received a message, "The operator at Plum Creek reports Indians now in sight of his office and the line out beyond that station. Please see what the

¹⁷ Report on the Operation of the Department of the Platte, January 1, 1867-September 30, 1867. General Augur referred to the Black Hills of southeastern Wyoming west of Fort Laramie, and not to the better known Black Hills of South Dakota.

¹⁸ Captain Miller to Augur, Plum Creek, August 12, 1867.

¹⁹ Edward Arnold to Augur, Plum Creek, August 12, 1867.

matter is."²⁰ North dispatched the nearest company of Scouts to the scene. The report of the officer in charge of the small garrison at Plum Creek indicates why General Augur supported the Pawnee.

"The party of soldiers in charge of the telegraph station at Plum Creek ran off shamefully at the approach of the Indians. They appeared here at about ten p.m., badly scared . . . The operator has not been heard from. They report he ran off before they did. The Indians destroyed a half mile of line cutting down the poles. They then encamped . . . On the approach of Captain Murie with the Pawnee Company the Indians advanced coolly to meet him thinking his command white men, as soon as they were near enough to recognize the Pawnee they broke in every direction with wild cries of Pawnee Pawnee. The fight was a complete success. Captain Murie and Lieutenant Davis and all the Scouts deserve the greatest credit."²¹

Murie brought back fifteen scalps and two prisoners, a woman and a boy. The boy was a nephew of the Cheyenne chief Turkey Leg. The Cheyenne offered an exchange of prisoners and the Pawnee's captives were traded at North Platte for two white girls and their twin brothers who had been captured near Grand Island on July 24, 1867.²²

Augur gave the Pawnee all the stock they had captured which was not branded "U.S.A." and expressed regret because he did not feel authorized to give them government property.²³ In his report on the activities of the Department of the Platte he praised the Scouts, "I have never seen more obedient and better behaved troops and they have done most excellent service . . . They are peculiarly qualified for service on the Plains. They are unequalled as riders, know the country thoroughly, are never

²⁰ Augur to North, Omaha, August 14, 1867.

²¹ Lt. Col. Richard Dodge to Augur, Plum Creek, August 19, 1867.

²² Recollections of Luther North. Ms., Nebraska State Historical Society.

²³ Augur to North, Omaha, August 19, 1867.

sick, never desert and are careful of their horses . . . I have never seen one under the influence of liquor . . . as the season for active operation closes they can be discharged to go home and look after their families for the winter. This they prefer." He asked permission to raise three more battalions for future service.²⁴

In September the Pawnee were scheduled to accompany Colonel Merrill on a tour of Fort Reno, Fort Phil Kearny and Fort C. F. Smith. G. P. Beauvais, special Indian Commissioner, protested that their presence would destroy all efforts of the Peace Commission to make peace with the Sioux. Sherman wrote to Augur, "I rather think it best not to send the Pawnee up there at present. Let us give these Indian men a fair chance to settle this matter. They have as many notions of propriety as an old maid."²⁵

Augur soon proved his friendship for North and his knowledge of Indians. The Scouts were sent to Fort Kearny to await muster out. They soon tired of inactivity. North attempted to discipline one of them and most of the Pawnee went home to the reservation without the formality of discharge. Messages were exchanged in which the word "mutiny" was used. Augur, however, instructed his adjutant, "Issue orders to this effect: 'The service of the Pawnee Scouts being no longer required, they will be sent to Fort Kearny to turn in their horses, arms, ammunition and equipment and then to their reservation to be paid and discharged.' Send a clerk with blank discharges and final statements and let him remain and make them out correctly . . . Have the Paymaster ready to pay them off.", and the affair ended.²⁶

The next spring the Union Pacific officials urged the Army to re-employ the Pawnee, even though the road had attempted to charge the government for transporting the

²⁴ Report of Operations, *op. cit.*

²⁵ Gen. W. T. Sherman to Augur, St. Louis, September 30, 1867.

²⁶ North to Litchfield, Fort Kearny, October 31, 1867; Litchfield to Augur, Omaha, October 31, 1867; Augur to Litchfield, St. Louis, November 2, 1867; *The Nebraska Herald*, Plattsmouth, November 7, 1867.

Scouts the previous year. North was instructed to raise two companies of fifty men each, though the railroad had requested twice that number.²⁷ The Pawnee were assigned to patrol the road from Wood River to North Platte.

Early in July a warning came up from Gen. Phil Sheridan in Kansas that a large body of Cheyenne and Arapaho was heading north after Pawnee and that if any of that tribe were out hunting they had better get out of the way.²⁸ It happened that most of the tribe was hunting on the Republican. North, apparently without direct orders, picked twenty men from each company, went down and joined the tribe on their hunt. Inquiries as to his whereabouts drew only rumors to the effect that North was going for the Cheyenne and the entire Pawnee nation was on the move.²⁹ North took with him four civilians in search of excitement. One of them, J. J. Aldrich, published an account of the trip when he returned which is the best record of the episode. North joined the large Pawnee hunting party and they had a successful hunt on the Republican in which North and the Scouts joined with gusto, North stating that he was going to bring some meat up to the railroad. Then they were attacked by a large party of Sioux who evidently did not know that the Scouts were present. In probably the most severe fight of his career Major North lost two men and almost lost his own life but succeeded in his apparent mission: to protect the bulk of the tribe from an attack.³⁰ North simply reported when he returned, "Arrived here last night. Lost two of my men on the Republican in skirmish with Sioux while out hunting."³¹

²⁷ Sherman to Augur, April 29, 1868; Augur to North, March 30, 1868; W. Snyder, Superintendent, U.P.R.R. to Augur, April 30, 1868.

²⁸ Gen. Phil Sheridan to Litchfield, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, July 8, 1868.

²⁹ Litchfield to Augur, Fort McPherson, August 3, 1868.

³⁰ J. J. Aldrich "Diary of Twenty Days Sport Buffalo Hunting in the Plains with the Pawnee accompanied by Major North U.S.A. and an escort of forty U. S. Pawnee Soldiers, Captain Morris and Mathews and Four Private Gentlemen." *Omaha Weekly Herald*, August 19, 26, September 2, 1868. Five years later, without North's leadership, the tribe, while on a hunt in the same general locality, was terribly mauled by the Sioux and never fully recovered.

³¹ North to Ruggles, Wood River, August 8, 1868.

In February 1869 Luther North led one company on Maj. Henry Noyes' winter campaign on the Republican. The expedition was caught in a severe ice storm. The men's breath froze on their whiskers and their eyes froze shut and the column seemed in danger of disaster. Noyes reported that the Pawnee cut a ford across the Frenchman River and "were of material assistance to us." It is revealing that of the eighty-three men reported suffering from frost bite the only members included from the Pawnee Scouts were the two white officers.³²

The summer of 1869 saw the Republican River Expedition, under command of Gen. E. A. Carr, organized for the purpose of driving the Indians out of the Republican River Country, their favorite buffalo hunting grounds. Carr's command consisted of eight troops of the Fifth Cavalry and three companies of Pawnee Scouts. They left Fort McPherson on June 9 and on June 15 hostiles made a raid and ran off some mules. Luther North and his Pawnee pursued the Indians and recovered the mules only to be reprimanded by Carr for leaving camp without orders.³³ Frank North with Company C of the Scouts joined Carr on June 17. He found the General in a depressed state of mind. The expedition seemed to have gotten off to an unfortunate start in hot, dry weather. Carr wrote to General Ruggles that the troops should be provided with some comforts or "it will be more than human nature can or will stand. We now find it almost impossible to get colored servants to go with us on account of the hardship." He had never before had Indians under his command and was not impressed by the Pawnee. He found them poorly mounted, shiftless and lazy and while he hoped he could make their Indian qualities useful he reported that he would like to trade all but thirty for good cavalry soldiers.³⁴

As the campaign progressed he became better pleased and noted that they were improving. Perhaps the arrival

³² Report of Maj. Henry Noyes, March 11, 1869.

³³ Luther North to J. C. North, Columbus, November 28, 1874.

³⁴ Gen. E. G. Carr to General Ruggles, June 17, 1869.

of Frank North had helped the situation. Carr recommended one Scout, Traveling Bear, for a Congressional Medal of Honor for action in a skirmish with the Cheyenne, though he still believed the Scouts prone to rush to the attack without proper orders and feared that their attack on a small party of hostiles had alerted the whole tribe. However, on June 11 the village of Tall Bull, a Cheyenne chief, was discovered and destroyed in the Battle of Summit Springs. Tall Bull was killed by Frank North, a captive white woman rescued, one thousand five hundred dollars in gold and bank notes found, fifty-two Indians killed, seventeen captured and an immense quantity of equipment destroyed. The campaign was a success. Carr's report indicated the considerable part the Pawnee played in locating the village and in the subsequent battle and he concluded, "The Pawnee under Major Frank North were of the greatest service to us throughout the campaign. This has been the first time since coming west that we have been supplied with Indian Scouts and the results have shown their value."³⁵

The Battle of Summit Springs was the climax of the Expedition. However, Scouts took part in a fruitless pursuit of the fleeing survivors of the fight through the sandhills of Nebraska to the Niobrara River.³⁶

In September, Companies A and B went out again to the Republican, this time attached to a force of Fifth and Second Cavalry under the command of Gen. Thomas Duncan. It was on this expedition that North and his friend Buffalo Bill Cody, who was along as a scout, were attacked by Sioux while hunting ahead of the column. Much has been written about this episode and the rescue of the two men by Lt. George F. Price and William J. Volkmar. North's diary contains the laconic entry "Today we marched 24 miles and I and Cody came ahead to the Creek and 6 Indians got after us and gave us a lively chase you bet.

³⁵ Report of Operations, Republican River Expedition, June 30 to July 20, 1869.

³⁶ Frank North diary, August 7-19, 1869.

I got my men out and they killed one Indian and got poines a mule and lots of trash.”³⁷ General Duncan reported that the Sioux abandoned a village of fifty-six lodges and lost material including nine thousand pounds of meat. He especially commended a private, Clay Burford, of the Fifth Cavalry who kept up with the Pawnee in pursuing the hostiles several miles after the other soldiers had halted.³⁸ An old woman, the mother of the Sioux leader, Pawnee Killer, was captured six days later and was questioned by a Ponca who was with the Scouts. He could translate her Sioux into Pawnee and then North translated the Pawnee into English.³⁹ The expedition ended without a decisive action. The Battle of Summit Springs had cleared the area of any substantial group of hostiles. Duncan reported that he wished especially to commend the Pawnee and Major North and noted that “no portion of the command has manifested more willingness to come into contact with hostile Indians.”⁴⁰

The Scouts were mustered out at the end of the expedition. In August 1870 two companies were raised for patrol duty along the railroad. The duty was uneventful and they were discharged in December.⁴¹ Frank North served as scout and interpreter at Fort Russell and Fort Sidney and also maintained a home in Columbus. He and Luther served as guides for scientific parties and for the Army.⁴² The Pawnee tribe was moved from Nebraska to the Indian Territory in 1875.

The summer of 1876 saw the Plains Indian Wars reach a climax. The Sioux in defending the Black Hills had fought Crook to a standstill on the Rosebud River and had

³⁷ *Ibid.* September 26, 1869.

³⁸ Report of Gen. Thomas Duncan. Republican River Expedition, August 18 to October 7, 1869.

³⁹ Journal of the March, October 3, 1869.

⁴⁰ Report of Operations, October 28, 1869.

⁴¹ North to Augur, August 2, 1870; Report of Operations of Department of Platte, October 25, 1870. *Memorial Leaves Inscribed to the Memory of Major Frank North.* [Columbus, 1885].

⁴² *Memorial Leaves Inscribed to the Memory of Major Frank North* [Columbus, Nebr., 1885].

annihilated Custer's command. The hostile bands then separated and the Army set into motion the operations which in effect crushed the Indian resistance. The Pawnee Scouts played a part in this effort. Gen. Phil Sheridan believed that the hostiles would never fight a decisive battle. To be thoroughly defeated they would have to be fought in their own manner and surprised.⁴³ To help achieve this end an unprecedented number of Indian scouts was raised, almost four hundred, including, Sioux, Arapho, Shoshone, Bannocks, a few Cheyenne and a final two companies of Pawnee. North, in the excitement following the news of the Custer massacre, had offered to raise a regiment of Pawnee and frontiersmen to fight the Sioux. The offer was refused. However, in August he was authorized to proceed to the Pawnee reservation in Indian Territory and enlist one hundred scouts.⁴⁴ Frank and Luther North found the Pawnee more than willing to serve and had to post guards on the train to prevent more than the regularly enlisted one hundred from boarding. The Pawnee furnished their own horses for which the government paid them forty cents a day and they received regular army pay. North got one hundred and fifty dollars per month, his first lieutenant one hundred and thirty dollars, and his second lieutenant one hundred and twenty dollars, and all were furnished horses and equipment. The company was armed at Fort Sidney.⁴⁵

On October 22, while on their way to Fort Robinson, the Scouts received word to join Gen. Ranald MacKenzie in a march on the village of Red Cloud and Red Leaf who were off the Red Cloud Agency against orders. Both villages were captured without bloodshed and the captives marched back to the Red Cloud Agency. To the joy of the Pawnee seven hundred and twenty-two horses were taken and the Pawnee were each given one. The horses caused a good deal of controversy and in 1889 Congress passed a

⁴³ Sheridan to Sherman, August 10, 1876.

⁴⁴ Col. W. F. Drum to North, August 18, 1876.

⁴⁵ Frank North diary, October 23, 1876.

law approving payment to Sioux who could prove they lost horses.⁴⁶

The Powder River expedition of 1876-77 was under the command of Gen. George Crook. It reached Fort Fetterman on November 12th and left on the 14th with the objective of moving against Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull but found these leaders wary and their bands scattered.⁴⁷ As a target of opportunity Crook decided to attack a Cheyenne village on Crazy Woman Creek which had been discovered by the Indian Scouts.⁴⁸ MacKenzie was placed in command of the attack and the village was struck. The North brothers and a portion of Pawnee took part in the attack, charging into the center of the village which consisted of one hundred and seventy-three lodges. Six soldiers were killed and twenty-five Cheyenne dead were positively accounted for. The bitterly cold weather probably killed more of the Indians, especially the children. Luther North, who shot the son of the chief, Dull Knife, wrote years later to a friend, "The thermometer never got higher than 25 below . . . Those poor Cheyennes were out in that weather with nothing to eat, no shelter, we had burned their village, and hardly any clothing. It was said many children died. It makes me sort of sick to think about it."⁴⁹

The Cheyenne had scattered in all directions. The fight had alerted the whole area and it was not probable that another engagement could be fought. After some fruitless scouting along the Belle Fourche River the expedition was ended. The Scouts were mustered out at Fort Sidney in May and moved home to Oklahoma with a herd of about two hundred and fifty horses, one hundred and twenty-five of which they had captured.⁵⁰ The North brothers went

⁴⁶ Memorandum regarding captured and surrendered ponies of the Sioux. January 20, 1896. War Department Records.

⁴⁷ Gen. George Crook to Sherman. January 8, 1877.

⁴⁸ Frank North recorded that the discoverers of the village were Sioux. Diary Nov. 24, 1876. Other sources indicate that they were Shoshone.

⁴⁹ Luther North to Dr. Richard Tanner. January 7, 1930. Ms., Richard Tanner papers. Nebraska State Historical Society.

⁵⁰ Crook to Sherman, January 8, 1877.

with them to shepherd them through the settled area of Nebraska and Kansas. While camped near Hays, Kansas, several of the Pawnee went into town and one of them was fatally wounded by a quick-triggered deputy after he had broken a store window. His angry comrades mounted their ponies and came into town stating that if the wounded boy died there would be trouble. The local newspaper reported the citizens turned out the lights and went for their side-arms, and added, "as to the necessity of shooting the Indian we shall not venture our opinion . . . but our citizens certainly owe Major North a debt of gratitude for holding the revengeful and bloodthirsty savages in check."⁵¹

A few days later the Pawnee and the North brothers parted for the last time and the Pawnee Scouts became a part of the history of the West. Their strong points had been their eagerness for action, their native ability as trailers and riders, their endurance and toughness. Their weak points were their tendency for impetuous action and their native obsession with plunder, especially the capture of horses; however, under the leadership of a man they respected and trusted, they had played a considerable role in the Indian Wars. Their contribution to the construction of the railroad was significant and they had won the ultimate praise of every commander under whom they served.

The colorful Pawnee, eager for action, and the restless and capable Frank North appealed to many of the officers who welcomed a break from the ordinary. The North brothers were always ready for a hunt, a horse race, or an Indian fight, and they and their Scouts lent some adventure to an essentially monotonous task. The critics of the Scouts were chiefly men such as Lt. Eugene Ware whose sense of racial superiority allowed no Indian, friendly or hostile, to be capable of any worthwhile service; or officers such as General Carr who initially found it hard to adjust to the Indian ways. Gen. C. C. Augur, perhaps, best recognized the strengths and limitations of the Pawnee. A dis-

⁵¹ *Ellis County Star*, Hays, Kansas, May 24, 1877 as quoted in a letter to the author from Robert W. Richmond, September 15, 1960.

patch which he sent to General Dodge at the climax of their service of guarding the railroad can serve as their valedictory, "North and his Pawnee Scouts have done well. Let them know that I think so. . ." ⁵²

⁵² Augur to Gen. Grenville Dodge, August 18, 1867.