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Article Summary: In 1855 Colonel William S Harney, a veteran of Indian campaigns, was given the rank of brevet brigadier general and ordered to conduct a campaign against hostile Sioux. Harney was determined to complete his orders to punish the hostile western Sioux and protect the overland trail. On September 3, 1855, Harney's 600-man command attacked and destroyed a Lakota village located three miles north on Blue Creek, near present-day Lewellen, Nebraska. The fight became known as the Battle of Blue Water, sometimes the Battle of Ash Hollow after the nearby landmark, or the Harney Massacre.

Cataloging Information:

Names: John L Grattan, Albert Culbertson, Franklin Pierce, Jefferson Davis; Henry W Wessells, George L Miller, K Warren, Philip St George Cooke, George Manypenny, Henry Heth, John B S Todd, Conquering Bear, Little Thunder, Pierre Louis Vasquez, Richard C Drum, Albemarle Cady, Henry W Warton, Marshall S Howe, George T Balch, Big Head, "Mad Bear", Thomas Twiss, Spotted Tail, Red Leaf, Long Chin, Alfred Vaughan, Thomas W Sweeny, Daniel Randall

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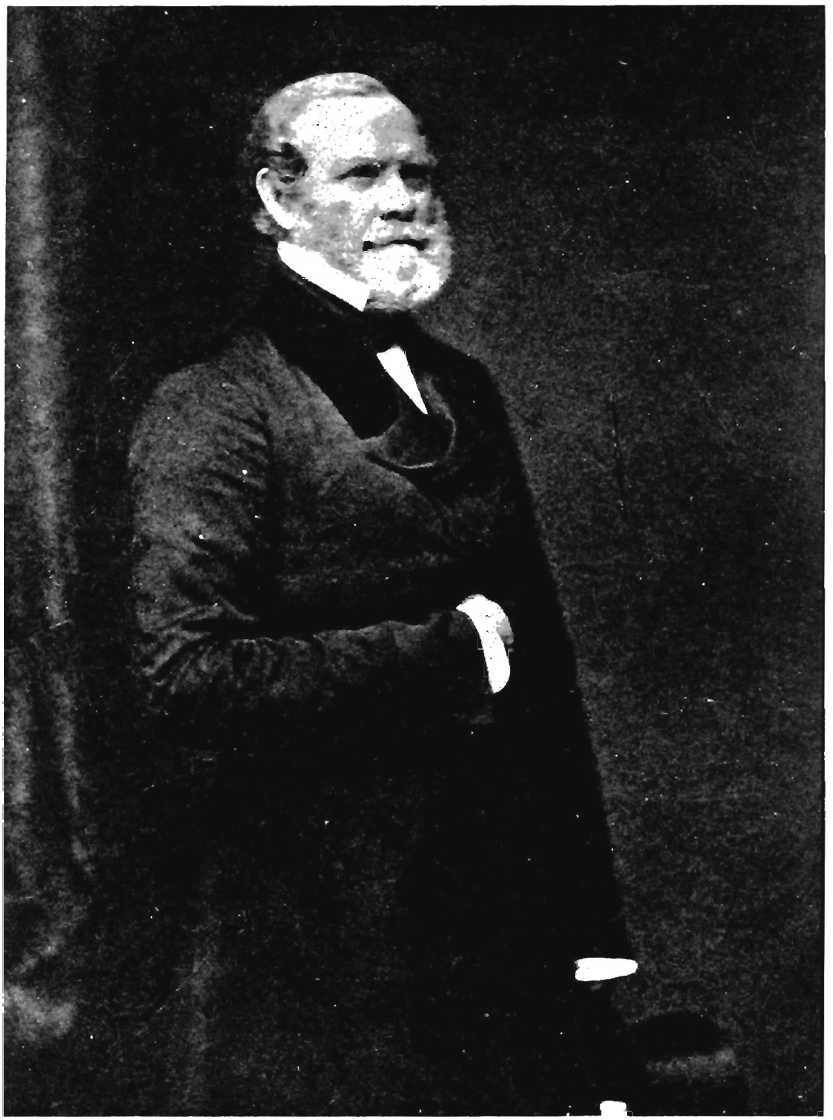
Photographs / Images: William S Harney portrait; William S Harney, in military uniform; map of Ash Hollow; drawing of Fort Pierre, 1857



William S. Harney (1800-1889). Date and painter of portrait unknown. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

MAD BEAR: WILLIAM S. HARNEY AND THE SIOUX EXPEDITION OF 1885-1856

By Richmond L. Clow

In the fall of 1854 Upper Brule warriors were restless. The source of their excitement occurred east of Fort Laramie on August 19, when Lieutenant John L. Grattan went to an Upper Brule village and attempted to arrest several Sioux who had recently killed a Mormon's abandoned cow. Instead of taking the guilty Indians, Grattan himself was killed and his immediate command destroyed.[1] Expecting retaliation, Sioux warriors collected arms and ammunition and urged other Lakota bands to provide support.[2] Later that winter severe weather subdued the Brules' war temper[3] but by spring fur trader Albert Culbertson visited hostile Brule camps, and he found they had regained their desire to fight.[4]

Sioux hostility to white encroachment was not new. For several years after the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, the government tolerated Sioux depredations along the overland emigrant route. Following the Grattan Massacre, Brule warriors attacked the Salt Lake stage; finally federal authorities acted. President Franklin Pierce, after corresponding with Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, asked Congress to increase the military force in the territory of the Sioux because the "public mind of the country has been recently shocked by the savage atrocities."[5] In response, Congress appropriated funds to establish a military post in Nebraska Territory and to create two additional infantry and two cavalry companies.[6]

With congressional funds and the President's approval, an expedition was organized to protect the overland route and to punish the Sioux involved in the Grattan affair.[7] In 1855 Colonel William S. Harney, a veteran of Indian campaigns, was given the rank of brevet brigadier general and ordered to conduct a campaign against hostile Sioux.[8] Harney had fought in the Black Hawk War, the Seminole campaigns, and the 1847 war with Mexico. He was an ideal dragoon officer, straight,

erect, and over six feet tall. He was a blunt, rough man, proud of his honors and military distinctions.[9] Harney disliked military details, but he was a dashing soldier.[10] He was compassionate, even to the extent "that a wronged army mule could arouse in him the most practical sympathy."[11] In his earlier service career as commander at Fort Winnebago, Wisconsin Territory, Harney's hobby was growing vegetables and flowers.[12]

A soldier and officer first, Harney was determined to complete his orders: punish the hostile western Sioux and protect the overland trail. With such an immense area of land to cover, he expressed concern that his force would not be large enough. Harney was confident that, if provided with an adequate organization, he would not hesitate to engage the Sioux in battle. Harney cautioned that a victory based upon the technical military definition was insufficient. Harney wrote that the Indian would accept defeat only if "we destroy more of them than they do of us. This is a fact well known to those experienced in Indian warfare. Savages must be crushed before they can be completely conquered."[13]

In 1855 he went to St. Louis and began preparations for the Sioux campaign. His superiors had provided a general offensive plan, but they allowed Harney latitude to make changes. The expedition consisted of two military movements. In June, 1855, mounted soldiers began escort duty on the overland routes. Later troops joined an expedition force going west to punish the Sioux. Another group of soldiers traveled to the former American Fur Company post, Fort Pierre, on the upper Missouri River.[14]

Fort Pierre was designated the central point for the Sioux expedition. To strengthen the site several companies of the 2d Infantry from Fort Riley, Kansas Territory, and other companies of the 2d Infantry at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, were ordered to Fort Pierre under Major Henry W. Wessells. Soldiers departed from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas Territory, by way of the Missouri River. Steamships transported troops and supplies to Fort Pierre. Problems plagued these troops. The *Australia,* a steamer transporting part of the 2d Infantry from Carlisle Barracks, hit a snag and sank outside of Alton, Illinois, and nearly lost all supplies and men.[15]

Harney wanted the 2d Infantry to be moving toward Fort Pierre by June 1, but he experienced delays. The Missouri River

was exceptionally low in the spring of 1855, and steamer captains waited for the June rise. Even Harney became pessimistic, hoping a short campaign could begin by fall if only to raise troop morale.[16]

By mid-June river boats were finally moving slowly upstream. The *William S. Baird,* a stern wheeler, reached Omaha, Nebraska Territory, on June 17. At Omaha the Army obtained the services of civilian surgeon Dr. George L. Miller to treat soldiers suffering from cholera.[17] On July 12 some soldiers bound for Fort Pierre actually reached the post. Throughout the upstream voyage the river remained low and boats continually hit snags. With water low, river boats supplying the Army were forced to unload downstream from Fort Pierre. In this situation only 100 men could be stationed at Fort Pierre. The remaining soldiers guarded supplies downstream or transported goods overland to the post.[18]

When the soldiers reached the upper Missouri outpost, Fort Pierre was a crude wooden structure surrounded by a stockade, and there were insufficient buildings to quarter Harney's troops. With the river low and the 2d Infantry transporting supplies overland, it became difficult for the soldiers to construct barracks for additional soldiers before winter.[19] The warm weather over, troops were still living in Army tents.[20] When the 2d Infantry was assigned to Fort Pierre, Lieutenant Gouverneur K. Warren from the Topographical Engineers Corps accompanied soldiers to the Missouri River post. With Fort Pierre as his base he surveyed a military land reserve for the former American Fur Company post. Warren was also ordered to collect information concerning the location of the hostile Sioux. Early in August, 1855, after completing his assignment, Warren traveled overland through the Nebraska Sandhills and rejoined Harney on the Platte River.[21]

As soldiers prepared for their steamer voyage to Fort Pierre, a land force was also assembled. Four companies of the 6th Infantry, stationed at Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis, and the Light Battery Company G of the 4th Artillery reinforced troops at Fort Kearny and Fort Laramie, both on the Oregon Trail. To protect emigrants on the overland route, Lieutenant Colonel Philip St. George Cooke commanded four companies of the 2d Dragoons, who performed escort duty. By early June, Cooke and his troops began traveling the trail between Fort Kearny and

Fort Laramie. Harney ordered Cooke to concentrate his activities near Ash Hollow, a declivity well known to Oregon Trail travelers, between the two military posts. A large Indian village had been sighted near the hollow.[22]

Cooke encountered difficulties getting into the field. The recruits recently sent to the cavalry were the worst soldiers Cooke had ever commanded. As for the infantry, also part of the land group, its ranks suffered from cholera and smallpox.[23]

In addition to problems associated with soldiers, Commissioner of Indian Affairs George Manypenny expressed hostility toward the Sioux expedition. Harney and Manypenny were part of the continual conflict that occurred between the Indian Office and the War Department over which agency should control Indian affairs. Harney favored turning Indian operations over to the Army. He noted that the Indian Bureau continued to supply the western Sioux with ammunition even in time of war. Harney also stated that the trading post caused two-thirds of the current Sioux problem. Because Indian agents did not control the traders' activities but indirectly encouraged trouble by receiving spoils from the Indian trade, Harney felt the military should control the situation. He wanted all trading restricted to military posts, where officers supervised the trade. According to Harney post commanders already performed tasks of drudgery; therefore the transfer of power would be convenient.[24]

As part of the conflict, Manypenny prevented Harney from obtaining Indian guides and hunters for the expedition. The commissioner told Indian agents, who informed their wards, that the Indians would lose land claims and annuities if they accompanied Harney. Captain Henry Heth, 10th Infantry, was given the task of hiring Indian auxiliaries, but the Sac and Fox, Shawnee, and Potawatomi all informed Heth that they could not accompany the military force unless the Indian Bureau consented.[25] Everything was working against Harney, and he felt that "little can be expected this year."[26]

On May 28, 1855, soldiers left Fort Leavenworth, marching northwest toward Fort Kearny. Spring rains were falling, the trail was wet, and several men died of cholera. Morale was low, and it sank even lower after Harney discussed the feasibility of military operations during the cold season. A winter march would prevent Sioux bands from gathering at convenient camping sites, but even Harney did not want to conduct a general

William S. Harney. Date and painter of portrait unknown. Courtesy of Missouri Historical Society.

winter campaign on the northern plains.[27] Harney's officers also feared late season expeditions, and several lost faith in their commander, citing the general's disregard for the rules of warfare, his lack of common sense, and his disregard for his men's health.[28]

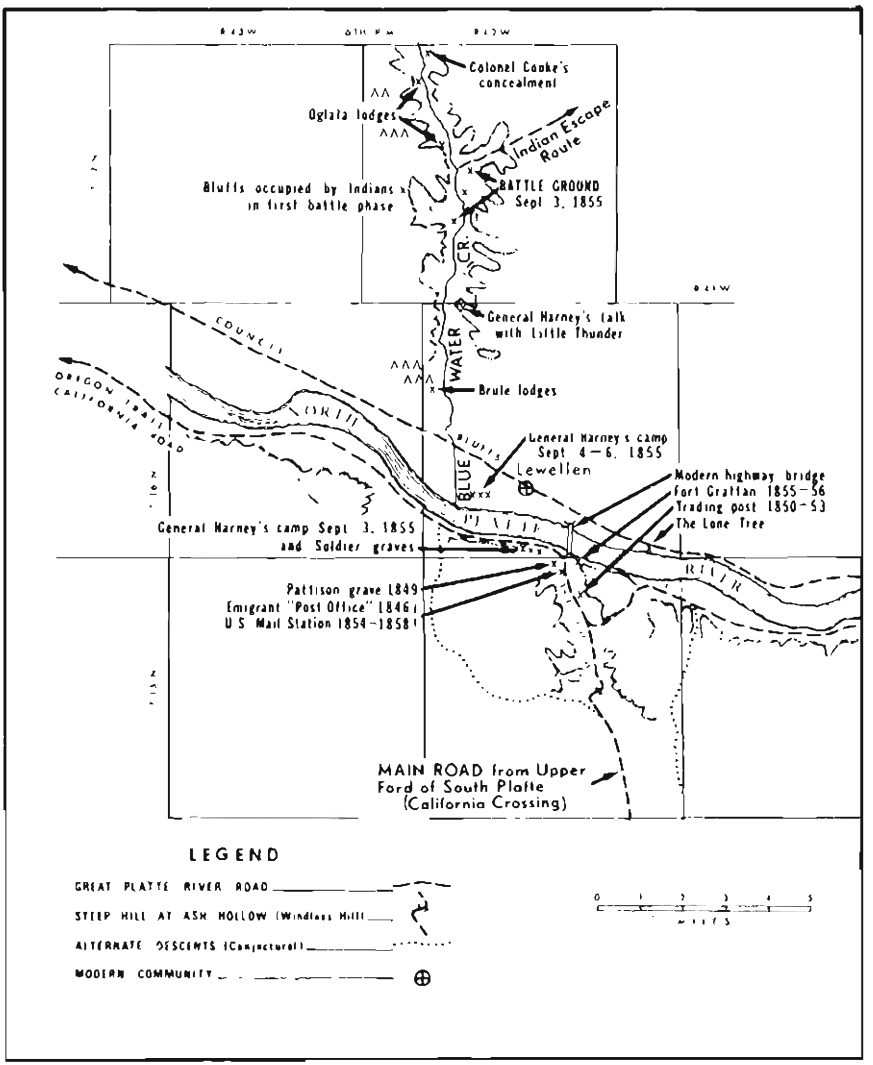
On August 4 after numerous delays and with the soldiers worrying about a possible winter campaign, Harney finally left Fort Leavenworth for Sioux country. One company of the 10th Infantry accompanied Harney, as did several men from the Ordnance Department. Rain fell and the rivers were swollen, making the journey miserable. The men suffered greatly, and some contracted typhoid fever or cholera.[29]

Despite the unpleasant march Harney and his troops reached Fort Kearny on August 20, where he finished assembling his force. The expeditionary group consisted of five companies of the 6th Infantry, one company of the 10th Infantry, two companies of mounted dragoons, and Light Company G of the 4th Artillery.[30] On August 22 as the soldiers prepared to march west to engage the Sioux, Lieutenant Warren reached Fort Kearny. In June, Warren had accompanied the 2d Infantry upstream to Fort Pierre and surveyed a military reserve. Upon finishing his work on August 7, Warren, his assistant, and six mixed-blood Sioux left Fort Pierre. The 300-mile journey was unauthorized and bold, but Harney believed the results justified Warren's actions, for he was able to give the general reliable information concerning the location and disposition of the hostile Sioux. The Brule, still unfriendly, were camping in the Sandhills of northwest Nebraska.[31] Hoping to catch these hostiles, Harney ordered troops at Fort Pierre to move in a southwesterly direction toward Fort Laramie.[32]

With the possibility of a military encounter at hand, Harney left Fort Kearny on August 24, 1855. He moved west following the Platte River, finally crossing the South Platte River near its mouth. The soldiers on the Sioux expedition continued westward, following the south bank of the North Platte River. On September 22 the military force reached Ash Hollow, near present-day Lewellen, Nebraska. Captain John B. S. Todd described the location as a "noted point connecting the high table lands between the two rivers and the valley of the North Platte."[33] The soldiers descended Ash Hollow, while several miles north of the North Platte on Blue Water Creek, a tributary, the Brule Sioux had made camp.[34] Conquering Bear's band had been implicated in the Grattan massacre of the previous summer. Little Thunder was now leader of the Brule band because during the past winter Conquering Bear had died.[35] The Brule camp consisted of 41 lodges, and a short distance north there were 11 Oglala lodges.[36]

Members of Little Thunder's band had made several successful raids during the past summer, and their confidence was high. They were camped between Forts Laramie and Kearny, watching Cooke's dragoons perform escort duty, and no one had attempted to punish them for their past actions. They even sent word to Harney on the evening of September 2 by fur trader Pierre Louis Vasquez, stating "that if he wanted peace he could have it, or if he wanted war that he could have that."[37]

With a battle assured Harney called his battalion commanders into council. At 10 o'clock that night troops crossed to the north bank of the North Platte River, in what Lieutenant Richard C. Drum described as "most disagreeable night duty."[38] To prevent the Brule from escaping into the Sandhills, Harney ordered Cooke's mounted units to take a position at the rear of the Indian camp. At 2 o'clock in the morning Joseph Tesson, a non-Indian guide accompanying Harney, took Companies G and K of the 2d Dragoons, Light Company G of the 4th Artillery, and Company E, 10th Infantry, both mounted, to a station behind the Sioux. Cooke moved to the north, staying east of a ridge of hills that followed Blue Water Creek. After traveling over 10 miles, he found an opening in the hills north of the Sioux encampment. Cooke moved westward, downhill through the depression toward the stream, and stopped. Above the Brule camp soldiers dismounted and hid in the short grass.[39]



Map of Ash Hollow vicinity adapted from The Great Platte River Road *(Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1969) by Merrill J. Mattes.*

The general plan was to attack at daybreak on September 3 and keep the Sioux between two military units. Between 4 o'clock and 4:30 in the morning Major Albemarle Cady, in command of the foot soldiers which included Companies A, E, H, I, and K, 6th Infantry, ordered the men to march north toward the Brule village north of the North Platte River on Blue Water.[40] Following the stream north the soldiers walked until they were 3 miles south of the Sioux village. Several Indians were awakened and warned the sleeping Sioux that a military force had arrived.[41]

As the troops advanced toward the Brule, their desire to fight decreased. The Sioux did not demonstrate the zeal they had shown the evening before. Between the retreating Sioux and advancing soldiers, Little Thunder met General Harney. Little Thunder professed friendship; the general in turn listed several grievances, which included the Grattan massacre, the death of the men carrying mail on the Salt Lake stage, and numerous depredations committed on the emigrant highway during the previous summer. Little Thunder did not want a battle, having women, children, and the elderly to protect, but Harney wanted the chief to surrender the Indians guilty of any depredations. The general, aware that Little Thunder could not grant his request, later wrote: "The chief, not being able to deliver up all the butchers of our people, however willing he might have been, returned to his band to warn and prepare for the contest that must follow."[42]

The incident that followed Little Thunder's meeting with Harney was not a contest. Harney returned to the infantry column, commanded them to advance, and shortly afterwards ordered the foot soldiers to fire. The Sioux believed the troopers' rifles could not carry to them, but the infantry had new Sharps rifles with long-range firepower.[43] The soldiers' first volley sent the Brule retreating northward from their village, abandoning lodges, dried meat, and personal possessions. The Sioux withdrew from the advancing troops and crossed the stream to the east bank of Blue Water Creek; they remained in a compact group, permitting the infantrymen to shoot and continually hit their targets. To escape, the Brule retreated to the high bluffs that bordered the stream, but the new long-range weapons drove them off the bluffs, and they had to move farther east. At the sound of rifle fire, Cooke ordered his mounted

troops to advance, moving south onto the main body of Sioux and preventing their escape to the Sandhills. At the sight of the dragoons, the Sioux crossed to the west bank of Blue Water Creek, and the horse soldiers hit the Indians on their flank while the infantrymen continued firing. The Sioux broke and raced east; Cooke's men pursued the fleeing Brule relentlessly until their horses tired, some soldiers going as far as 15 miles.[44]

General Harney observed the 30 minute battle from a high hill.[45] Instead of resting after the battle soldiers were ordered to force Sioux women and children, along with some men, out of limestone formations near the top of the bluffs, where they had hidden when most of the warriors retreated from the Blue Water valley. There several women and children lay seriously wounded, and after they were removed an army surgeon tended their wounds.[46] Other soldiers gathered the Indians' possessions and destroyed several kegs of gunpowder in the Brule camp. In addition, the men found military items taken from Grattan's men the previous summer. At the end of the day, soldiers returned to the mouth of Blue Water Creek, where the Sioux women prisoners raised lodges, and the troops established a new camp.[47]

Harney was pleased with the outcome of the battle. The soldiers had taken nearly 70 Sioux prisoners, all women and children, and had killed 87 Indians and wounded five others. Four soldiers were killed, four wounded severely, three slightly injured, and one solder was missing in action. The general spoke proudly of his men's performance, claiming that he never saw a finer military operation.[48] Harney later wrote: "The cavalry was exceptional for they made a most spirited charge upon their opposite of left flank and rear, pursuing them for five or six miles over a very rugged country, killing a large number of them and completely dispersing the whole party."[49]

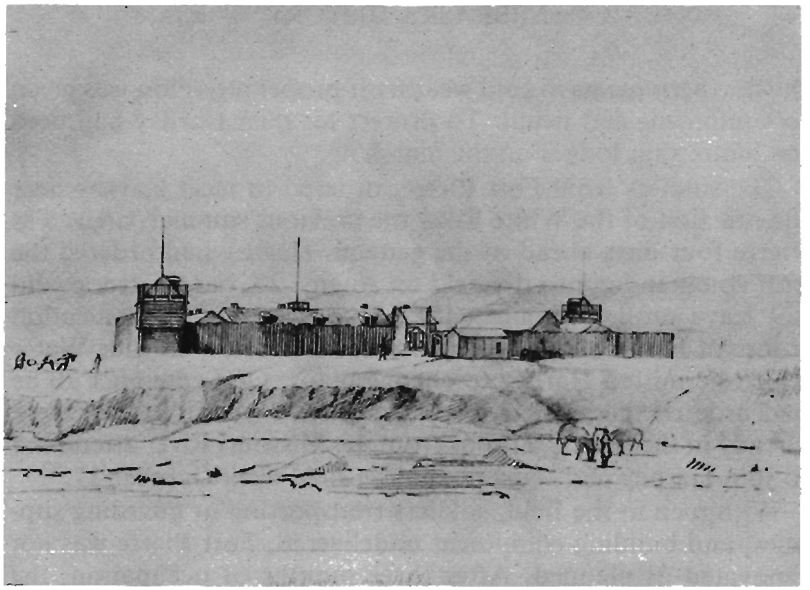
Before leaving the site of the Blue Water battle, Harney ordered a defensive structure built. Opposite Ash Hollow on the south bank of the river, a sod building was constructed and named Fort Grattan. This fieldwork provided a temporary shelter for wounded soldiers and Sioux prisoners as well as serving as a point of supply. Within a short time the prisoners were sent to Fort Kearny for confinement. Captain Henry W. Warton was appointed commander of Fort Grattan to provide military escorts for travelers on the overland trail.[50]

On September 9, 1855, the main body of troops left Fort Grattan and marched northwest toward Fort Laramie. The soldiers were on half rations but subsisted mainly on dried buffalo meat taken from the Sioux camp. As the men neared Fort Laramie, Harney informed his staff that he wanted to march northward to Fort Pierre. His officers became apprehensive about the uncertainty and suffering a winter campaign would create and condemned the idea as rash.[51]

Even Harney had misgivings about a late season march to Fort Pierre but believed he might lose prestige and the advantage he had gained over the Sioux at Ash Hollow if he did not march through their land. He concluded that the results of such an expedition outweighed predicted animal losses and his men's sufferings.[52] Because Sioux prisoners enroute to Fort Kearny did not need their tipis, Harney ordered Major Marshall S. Howe, and two mounted companies to retrieve the captured skin lodges at Fort Grattan. The tipis were to shelter soldiers enroute to Fort Pierre.[53]

As troops prepared for the march, Sioux warriors ran off 80 head of livestock from Fort Laramie.[54] As some Sioux sought revenge for their defeat at Blue Water, others came to sue for peace. Nearly 300 Brule and Oglala lodges were located 30 miles north of the post as the Sioux waited for Harney. Indian Agent Thomas Twiss from the North Platte Agency promised the Sioux protection from military action. After reaching the post Harney met with the Sioux and smoked the peace pipe as the Indians professed friendship. The general was not ready to accept peace offerings, unless specific requirements were fulfilled. Harney demanded the Sioux return all stolen property, surrender the Indians guilty of murder, and keep the emigrant road open.[55]

Because the Sioux at Fort Laramie were unable to immediately comply with his requests, Harney began his march through their land. On September 29 the temperature stood at 28 degrees above zero as Harney and 450 men left Fort Laramie, accompanied by 25 mountain men employed as guides and hunters. The Sioux by habit gathered nearly 100 miles north of Fort Laramie for the winter; Harney was determined to find them. The military force marched northeast to the headwaters of the White River. The soldiers stayed on a direct route, while the mountain men scouted between the Cheyenne and Platte Rivers.



Drawing of Fort Pierre, 1857, by Alfred Sully. Courtesy of South Dakota State Historical Society.

The Sioux were in small bands, moving toward the Black Hills. With no chance for another engagement, Harney ordered part of his force to return to Fort Laramie for the winter.[56]

The remaining soldiers continued toward Fort Pierre, following the White River through the Mauvaisses Terras (the Badlands), into the Cheyenne River valley, then overland to the Bad River, which flows into the Missouri. The march was hard on the men and horses as the weather worsened and the grass withered. On October 4 snow fell. The men were tired, especially the dragoons, many of whom had marched over 2,000 miles that summer and fall.[57]

On October 20 Harney's men reached Fort Pierre after a miserable march through a sleet storm on the last day. Lieutenant George T. Balch, Harney's ordnance officer, walked the last day, not to save his horse but to keep from freezing to death. Due to cold and exposure, one officer fainted and fell from his horse. Despite his safe arrival at Fort Pierre, Balch wrote that he did not want to take the field again under General Harney.[58] No soldiers perished, but several horses died and one wagon (later retrieved) was abandoned. Harney, however, had demonstrated that military campaigns could be conducted on

the northern plains in cold weather if proper attention was given to equipment and detail. To protect his men Harney had used the Sioux skin lodges on the march.[59]

The soldiers from Fort Pierre, ordered to meet Harney near the junction of the White River the previous summer, arrived at Pierre four days ahead of the general. Harney had ordered the post commander into the field on August 20, but the troops did not leave until September 15.[60] Due to slow communication troops at Fort Pierre were unaware of the victory at Blue Water which permitted Harney to change plans. On September 20 he had ordered the soldiers to return to their post; but they were already in the field.[61] Troops from the Missouri River attempted to join Harney and remained in the field until October 17.[62]

With men in the field, soldiers transporting or guarding supplies, and building equipment undelivered, Fort Pierre was not renovated as planned. After three months of occupation, the post was still dilapidated. Harney's anger surfaced as he described Fort Pierre:

> At the time of my arrival here, there was no appearance of anything having been done, except the putting up of some of the portable cottages. None of the kitchens were finished, many had just been commenced, the proper sinks had not been made, one on each flank had been established about 250 yards from the nearest building, and they were in such a filthy state, that the men could not approach them at night, the surface of the earth was covered with human excrement and very offensive.
>
> Very little forage or wood had been provided for the winter, and no proper arrangements had been made for procuring more of either. The wood and hay in this vicinity is either on the other side of the river, or on the islands in the river, on this side, the nearest grass and wood is twenty-two miles off.[63]

The river was still low. Forage for horses and mules was at Council Bluffs, Iowa, well downstream from Fort Pierre. Stock was forced to eat cottonwood bark. Despite the scarcity of supplies and low morale, Harney claimed his men were in good spirits.[64]

With such adverse conditions at Pierre, Harney ordered his men into winter cantonments 6, 12, and 18 miles north of the post. Major Marshall Howe took several companies of the 2d Dragoons into winter camp near the month of the Niobrara River. In addition, troops going south would protect the *Grey Cloud,* a river steamer that was locked in ice near Ponca Island. The winter cantonments eased the soldiers' demand for fuel and animal forage at Fort Pierre.[65]

Even in temporary quarters hardships did not end during the severe winter of 1855-1856. Before ink could be used, the liquid

had to be warmed up on a wood-burning stove.[66] There were instances of amputation of frozen hands and feet of men quartered in tents. One soldier even lost his penis due to cold.[67] Conditions encouraged desertion, but Harney offered a $30 reward to any civilian or Indian for each Army deserter he captured.[68] Six soldiers deserted but four died of exposure. Two survivors lived off the bodies of their dead comrades until apprehended at their camp between Fort Pierre and the Niobrara River. The captives were happy to return to military service, even at Fort Pierre.[69]

Despite Harney's reputation as a hard, tactless man, he was concerned for his men's welfare at the temporary winter quarters. Because he had not heard from the southern camp for some time, the general and 10 enlisted men traveled to the Niobrara River. The mounted party left before Christmas with the temperature ranging near zero, horses walking through snow two to three feet deep at times. On arrival at the southern camp after an 18-day journey, Harney arrested Major Marshall Howe, accusing him of neglecting troops and animals. According to Harney, Howe was not fit to command. Troops and animals had been placed in the open prairie exposed to the wind. Men were in need of supplies and clothing. But Howe, instead of suffering, shared quarters with the captain of the steamer *Grey Cloud.*[70]

Harney stayed nearly two months at Niobrara, building a sheltered cantonment for his soldiers. As a result of the interruption, Harney was unable to mount an offensive against Yanktonai Chief Big Head.[71] In February, Harney returned to his winter headquarters at Fort Pierre and waited for a spring council with Sioux leaders.

Following their defeat at Blue Water, the Sioux, understanding Harney's temperament, had sued for peace. The general outlined his peace terms in September. In compliance with Harney's demands, Sioux leaders surrendered Red Leaf, Spotted Tail, and Long Chin, all three implicated in the stage robbery. The prisoners were sent from Fort Laramie to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The Sioux returned many stolen animals taken from Fort Laramie earlier in the fall.[72]

Throughout the fall and winter the Sioux continued to press for peace. As Harney marched to Fort Pierre, Minneconjou leaders met soldiers from the Missouri River on their way back

to the post. The Indians were under a white flag and stated they wanted nothing more to do with "Mad Bear"—Harney.[73] On November 2 after Harney arrived at Fort Pierre, the Minneconjou returned more horses stolen from Fort Laramie. Another Sioux group reached Fort Pierre on November 8 to sue for peace. Harney informed the Sioux that he would meet with them in 100 days. They were to tell their people he wanted 10 leaders from each band at the spring council. The general's terms were the same as they were at Fort Laramie. Harney wanted hostilities terminated, but only if the Army had the upper hand.[74]

Secretary of War Jefferson Davis wrote Harney that he should negotiate a peace convention between the Army and the Sioux.[75] Despite President Pierce's move toward negotiation, Indian Agent Thomas Twiss told Brule and Oglala leaders that they did not have to go to Harney's spring council. Harney retaliated, ordering the agent imprisoned at Fort Laramie and sending word to Little Thunder and other Sioux leaders that if they were not at the spring meeting, he would consider them still at war.[76]

Fearing Mad Bear and wanting peace, Little Thunder and other Brule representatives were present at Fort Pierre on March 1. Harney told the assembled Sioux that the buffalo were decreasing, and they would have to begin farming to survive. Harney wanted horse trading to stop; attacks on the Pawnee to cease; the surrender of the man who had killed the Morman's cow; the return of stolen goods; and pacification of the overland route.[77]

In return, the government promised to protect the Sioux from white intrusions, to restore their annuities, and to release all common prisoners of war captured at the battle of Blue Water. The Army would not release Spotted Tail, Red Leaf, or Long Chin, accused of killing the stagecoach operators.[78] Finally, Harney selected leaders from the different Sioux bands and assigned each of them 100 Indian men to help carry out their leaders' orders. As a final measure, the general began using Indians as couriers to deliver military messages.[79]

Harney believed the terms of his peace proposal were fair. Colonel Alfred Vaughan, Indian agent of the Upper Missouri Agency, supported the general, describing Harney's peace as the best ever made between the two groups.[80] Even the Oglala,

who were absent from the March council, came to Fort Pierre on May 20, 1856, when the Sioux returned to ratify the peace terms. The Oglala leaders asked to be a part of Harney's peace program.[81]

The ratification of Harney's convention was a grand affair. Over 5,000 Sioux camped near the Missouri River post and voiced their approval for peace. However, Lieutenant Thomas W. Sweeny was nervous as rumors of trouble swept the ratification site. He clutched the handle of his pistol throughout the entire day.[82]

At the May 20 council the Sioux surrendered to Harney the man who had killed the cow. The general in a grand display arrested the accused and locked him in the guardhouse. Harney also understood that the two groups had vastly different cultural conceptions of justice and he released the prisoner the following day. After the Sioux ratified the convention, Harney claimed that hostilities had officially ended.[83] Peace did come to the northern plains, but the peace was based upon fear. Vaughan appreciated Harney's work and described the close of fighting as the beginning of a new era in the government's relations with the western Sioux.[84]

With the Army abandoning Fort Pierre, Harney's remaining mission was to select a new military post. From his observations of the previous winter, Harney wanted to explore the Big Sioux River as a potential site. With the approach of spring Harney ordered the 2d Dragoons near the Niobrara River to cross to the east bank of the Missouri River and move downstream to the Big Sioux River. The dragoons established a summer camp eight miles above the mouth of the river. With water quality poor and the supply low, the Big Sioux site was rejected. Instead, Harney selected a location 30 miles above the mouth of the Niobrara River and asked that the fort be named for the deceased deputy paymaster, Colonel Daniel Randall. Following the site selection Harney returned to Fort Leavenworth and completed the paperwork for the Sioux campaign, which ended over one year after the expedition began. By early fall, 1856, Spotted Tail, Long Chin, and Red Leaf were released from federal prison.[85]

With military operations terminated Congress then had to appropriate funds to implement Harney's peace proposals. The general's plan passed from the War Department to the Interior Department, where Indian Agent Twiss estimated that Harney's

program—the purchase of uniforms, arms, provisions, seeds and farmers' salaries for the Sioux—would cost $72,000.[86] Congress did not appropriate funds until 1858, when money was provided to "enable the Secretary of Interior to perform engagements and stipulations of General Harney made with the Sioux Indians at Fort Pierre in eighteen hundred and fifty-six."[87]

Despite the Indian Bureau's protests, Harney's peace convention request was fully funded, but the outbreak of the Civil War forced federal appropriations for Indian programs to decrease. In spite of Twiss' dispute with Harney, both wanted to use peaceful means to settle the Sioux on farms. Their disagreement was part of the conflict between the Indian office and the military department: each bureau wanted priority. As Harney observed conditions on the plains, he became convinced that Army policing duties were necessary to control the Sioux, and Blue Water was justified because it made the Sioux fear the United States. Brule leaders remembered Harney's tactics at Blue Water and tried to avoid encounters with the Army. Harney's methods secured an uneasy peace, but it was only an interlude before hostilities resumed with other Sioux bands.

In addition, the Sioux campaign of 1855-1856 was a precursor to eventual white migration onto the northern plains. The Army constructed a military post, built bridges over the James and Vermillion Rivers, and put a ferry into operation at the mouth of the Big Sioux River. In addition, the expedition's reconnaissance reports added to the growing body of literature that related to the northern prairies.

As for Mad Bear, despite his junior officers' skepticism, he demonstrated that winter marches in the upper plains were feasible. Harney displayed a strong determination and personal valor during the winter, but his harsh manners and discourteous actions toward rivals and subordinates alienated his officers. Though unpopular with officers, Harney maintained a rapport with soldiers because his success depended upon their physical condition. As a result of Harney's caution, deaths from exposure in winter or from combat remained at a minimum. However, his success on the northern plains was not emulated by later military commanders in their relations with the Sioux.

NOTES

1. Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848-1865* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1967), 113-115.

2. Alfred Vaughan to Alfred Cummings, November 21, 1854, letters received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Upper Missouri Agency, NARS, RG 75.

3. Alfred Vaughan to Alfred Cummings, February 17, 1855, letters received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Upper Missouri Agency, NARS, RG 75.

4. Alfred Vaughan to Alfred Cummings, May 19, 1855, letters received, Upper Missouri Agency, NARS, RG 75.

5. James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1908* (Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1908), Vol. 5, 286.

6. Act of February 17, 1855, ch. 106, 10 Stat. 608; Act of March 3, 1855, ch. 169, 10 Stat. 639.

7. Samuel Cooper to William S. Harney, March 22, 1855, correspondence from the adjutant general's office, NARS, RG 94.

8. *Ibid.*

9. George Balch, May 12, 1855, Balch Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California.

10. George L. Miller, "The Military Camp on the Big Sioux River," *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1892), Vol. 3, 119. Miller later served as president of the Nebraska State Historical Society (1906-1910).

11. *Ibid.*

12. Hudson Strode, *Jefferson Davis, American, Patriot, 1808-1861* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1955), 56.

13. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, June 2, 1855, Department of the West, records of US continental commands, NARS, RG 393. (Hereafter cited as Department of the West).

14. *Ibid.;* Samuel Cooper to William S. Harney, March 22, 1855, Adjutant General's Office.

15. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, June 2, 1855, Department of the West; Oscar Winship to Gouverneur Warren, June 4, 1855, Department of the West; Thomas Sweeny, July 20, 1855, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

17. George L. Miller, "The Fort Pierre Expedition," *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society 1892), Vol. 3, 112-115.

18. Thomas Sweeny, July 20, 1855, Sweeny Papers.

19. George L. Miller, "The Fort Pierre Expedition," 117: Thomas Sweeny, July 20, 1855, Sweeny Papers; Huntington Library; Thomas Sweeny, August 7, 1855, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

20. Thomas Sweeny, August 16, 1855, Sweeny Papers.

21. Oscar Winship to Gouverneur Warren, June 4, 1855, Department of the West.

22. Oscar Winship to Philip St. George Cooke, June 2, 1855, Department of the West.

23. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, May 13, 1855, Department of the West; George Balch, August 15, 1855, Balch Papers, Bancroft Library.

24. William S. Harney to Samuel Cooper, April 26, 1855, Department of the West; William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, July 24, 1855, Department of the West.

25. William S. Harney to Indian agent Colonel James, July 28, 1855, Department of the West; William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, July 30, 1855, Department of the West.

26. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, June 2, 1855, Department of the West.

27. *Ibid.*

28. George Balch, August 14, 1855, Balch Papers, Bancroft Library; George Balch, August 15, 1855, Balch Papers, Bancroft Library.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. William S. Harney to Post Commander, Fort Pierre, August 21, 1855, Department of the West.

33. Ray H. Mattison, ed., "The Harney Expedition Against the Sioux: The Journal of Capt. John B. S. Todd," *Nebraska History* 43 (June, 1962), 110.

34. Richard C. Drum, "Reminiscences of the Indian Fight at Ash Hollow, 1855," *Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1911) Vol. 16, 144.

35. Frederick W. Hodge, *Handbook of Indians North of Mexico* (Bulletin 30, Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, 1907-1910; reprinted, New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 1971), Vol. I, 771.

36. Richard C. Drum, "Reminiscences of the Indian Fight at Ash Hollow, 1855," 151.

37. Ray H. Mattison, ed., "The Harney Expedition Against the Sioux: The Journal of Capt. John B. S. Todd," 110.

38. Richard C. Drum, "Reminiscences of the Indian Fight at Ash Hollow, 1855," 144.

39. *Ibid.*, 145; William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, September 5, 1855, Department of the West.

40. Ray H. Mattison, ed., "The Harney Expedition Against the Sioux: The Journal of Capt. John B. S. Todd," 111.

41. Richard C. Drum, "Reminiscences of the Indian Fight at Ash Hollow, 1855," 145.

42. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, September 5, 1855, Department of the West.

43. *Ibid.*

44. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, September 5, 1855; Richard C. Drum, "Reminiscences of the Indian Fight at Ash Hollow, 1855," 144-146; Ray H. Mattison, ed., "The Harney Expedition Against the Sioux: The Journal of Capt. John B. S. Todd," 111-114; Thomas Sweeny, October 17, 1855; Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

45. Thomas Sweeny, October 15, 1855, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

46. Richard C. Drum, "Reminiscences of the Indian Fight at Ash Hollow, 1855," 146-149.

47. George Balch, September 18, 1855, Balch Papers, Bancroft Library.

48. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, September 5, 1855, Department of the West.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Oscar Winship to Albemarle Cady, September 8, 1855, Department of the West; Richard C. Drum, "Reminiscences of the Indian Fight at Ash Hollow, 1855," 147-148.

51. George Balch, September 17, 1855, Balch Papers, Bancroft Library.

52. William S. Harney to secretary of war, November 10, 1855, Correspondence from the adjutant general's office, NARS, RG 94.

53. Oscar Winship to Marshall Howe, September 17, 1855, Department of the West.

54. George Balch, September 17, 1855, Balch Papers, Bancroft Library.

55. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, September 26, 1855, Department of the West.

56. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, November 9, 1855, Department of the West; George Balch, September 26, 1855, Balch Papers, Bancroft Library.

57. *Ibid.*

58. George Balch, October 21, 1855, Balch Papers, Bancroft Library.

59. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, November 9, 1855, Department of the West.

60. Thomas Sweeny, September 13, 1855, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

61. William S. Harney to post commander, Fort Pierre, September 20, 1855, Department of the West.

62. Thomas Sweeny, October 17, 1855, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

63. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, December 14, 1855, Department of the West.

64. *Ibid.;* William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, November 9, 1855, Department of the West.

65. Thomas Sweeny, November, 1855, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library; William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, November 9, 1855, Department of the West.

66. Thomas Sweeny, February 10, 1856, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

67. William S. Harney to Samuel Cooper, February 21, 1856, Department of the West.

68. William S. Harney to Henry Goulet, January 10, 1856, Department of the West.

69. Thomas Sweeny, February 26, 1856, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

70. William S. Harney to Samuel Cooper, February 21, 1856, Department of the West.

71. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, January 11, 1856, Department of the West.

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73. Thomas Sweeny, December 10, 1855, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

74. William S. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, November 9, 1855, Department of the West; William S. Harney to secretary of war, November 10, 1855, correspondence from the adjutant general's office, NARS, RG 94.

75. William S. Harney to Samuel Cooper, February 22, 1856, Department of the West.

76. Alfred Pleasanton to William Hoffman, February 19, 1856, Department of the West.

77. Alfred Pleasanton to William Hoffman, March 5, 1856, Department of the West; Alfred Pleasanton to Henry Wharton, March 5, 1856, Department of the West; House Ex. Docs., 34th Cong., 1st sess., No. 130, 2-5.

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80. Thomas Sweeny, March 10, 1856, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library; Alfred Vaughan to Alfred Cummings, February 15, 1856, letters received by the Upper Missouri Agency.

81. William S. Harney to secretary of war, May 23, 1856, Department of the West; Thomas Sweeny, June 5, 1856, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

82. *Ibid.*

83. *Ibid.*

84. Thomas Sweeny, March 10, 1856, Sweeny Papers, Huntington Library.

85. William S. Harney to Samuel Cooper, June 30, 1856; Department of the West; William S. Harney to Samuel Cooper, July 22, 1856, Department of the West.

86. Memoranda, for the secretary of interior, undated, letters received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Upper Plate Agency, NARS, RG 75.

87. Act of June 12, 1858, ch. 155, 11, Stat. 329.