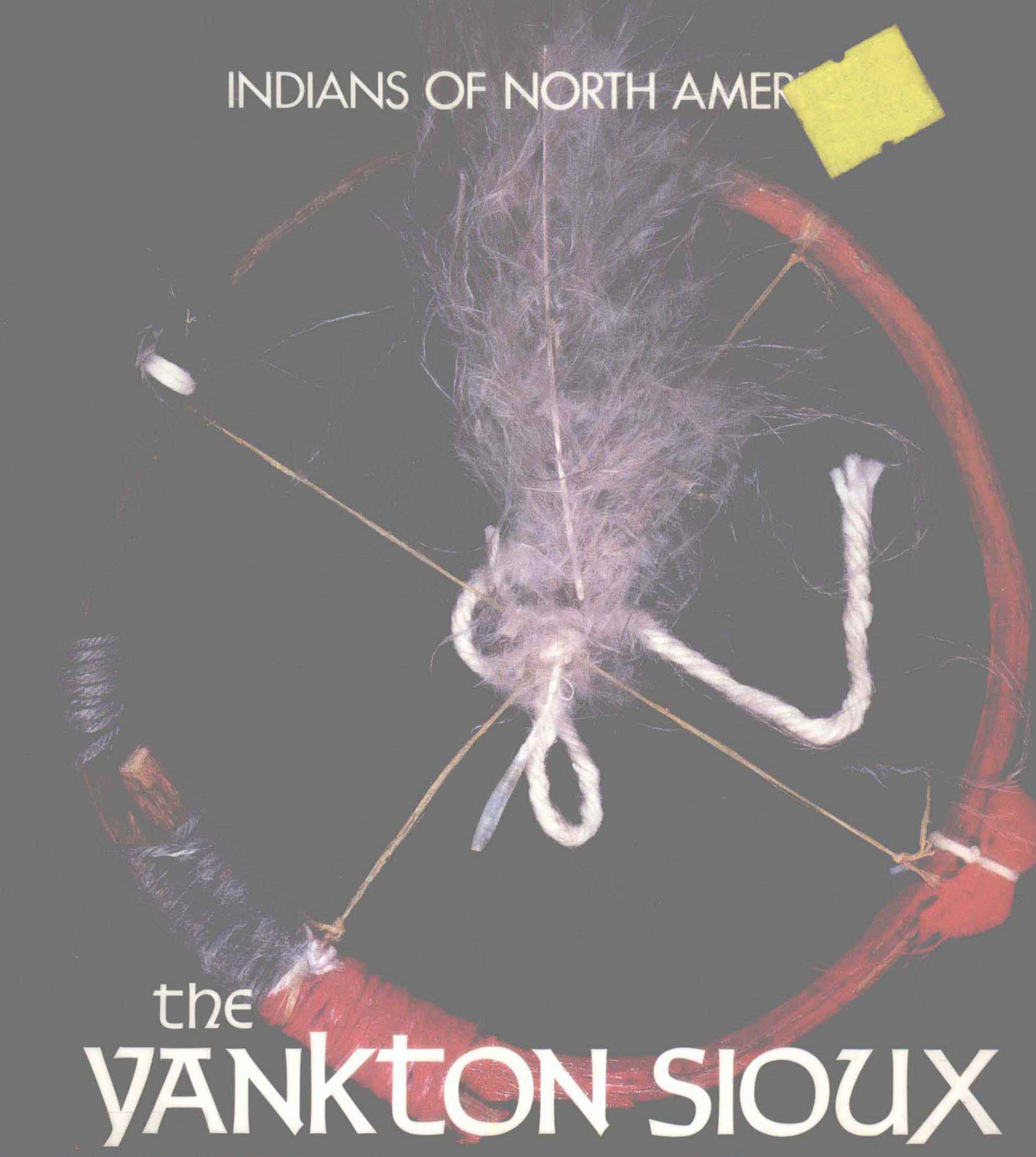
INDIANS OF NORTH AMER

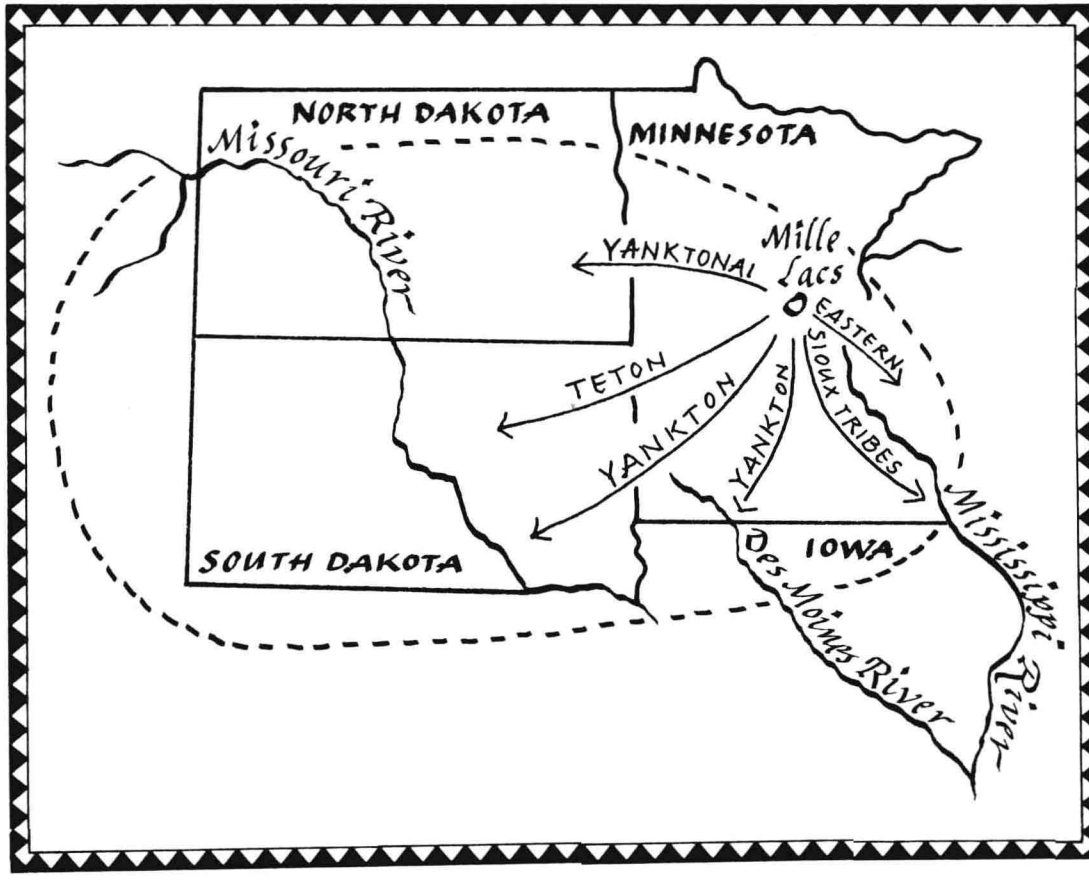


the YANKTON SIOUX

HERBERT T. HOOVER

Frank W. Porter III, General Editor

THE YANKTON SIOUX


NORTH DAKOTA
MINNESOTA
Missouri River
YANKTONAI
Mille Lacs
EASTERN
SIOUX TRIBES
TETON
YANKTON
YANKTON
SOUTH DAKOTA
IOWA
Des Moines River
Mississippi River

INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA

THE YANKTON SIOUX

Herbert T. Hoover
University of South Dakota

in collaboration with
Leonard R. Bruguier

Frank W. Porter III
General Editor

CHELSEA HOUSE PUBLISHERS
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On the cover A Yankton Sioux medicine circle of willow, yarn, feathers

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INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA: CONFLICT AND SURVIVAL

Frank W. Porter III

The Indians survived our open intention of wiping them out, and since the tide turned they have even weathered our good intentions toward them, which can be much more deadly.

John Steinbeck
America and Americans

When Europeans first reached the North American continent, they found hundreds of tribes occupying a vast and rich country. The newcomers quickly recognized the wealth of natural resources. They were not, however, so quick or willing to recognize the spiritual, cultural, and intellectual riches of the people they called Indians.

The Indians of North America examines the problems that develop when people with different cultures come together. For American Indians, the consequences of their interaction with non-Indian people have been both productive and tragic. The Europeans believed they had "discovered" a "New World," but their religious bigotry, cultural bias, and materialistic world view kept them from appreciating and understanding the people who lived in it. All too often they attempted to change the way of life of the indigenous people. The Spanish conquistadores wanted the Indians as a source of labor. The Christian missionaries, many of whom were English, viewed them as potential converts. French traders and trappers used the Indians as a means to obtain pelts. As Francis Parkman, the 19th-century historian, stated, "Spanish civilization crushed the Indian; English civilization scorned and neglected him; French civilization embraced and cherished him."

Nearly 500 years later, many people think of American Indians as curious vestiges of a distant past, waging a futile war to survive in a Space Age society. Even today, our understanding of the history and culture of American Indians is too often derived from unsympathetic, culturally biased, and inaccurate reports. The American Indian, described and portrayed in thousands of movies, television programs, books, articles, and government studies, has either been raised to the status of the "noble savage" or disparaged as the "wild Indian" who resisted the westward expansion of the American frontier.

Where in this popular view are the real Indians, the human beings and communities whose ancestors can be traced back to ice-age hunters? Where are the creative and indomitable people whose sophisticated technologies used the natural resources to ensure their survival, whose military skill might even have prevented European settlement of North America if not for devastating epidemics and the disruption of the ecology? Where are the men and women who are today diligently struggling to assert their legal rights and express once again the value of their heritage?

The various Indian tribes of North America, like people everywhere, have a history that includes population expansion, adaptation to a range of regional environments, trade across wide networks, internal strife, and warfare. This was the reality. Europeans justified their conquests, however, by creating a mythical image of the New World and its native people. In this myth, the New World was a virgin land, waiting for the Europeans. The arrival of Christopher Columbus ended a timeless primitiveness for the original inhabitants.

Also part of this myth was the debate over the origins of the American Indians. Fantastic and diverse answers were proposed by the early explorers, missionaries, and settlers. Some thought that the Indians were descended from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, others that they were descended from inhabitants of the lost continent of Atlantis. One writer suggested that the Indians had reached North America in another Noah's ark.

A later myth, perpetrated by many historians, focused on the relentless persecution during the past five centuries until only a scattering of these "primitive" people remained to be herded onto reservations. This view fails to chronicle the overt and covert ways in which the Indians successfully coped with the intruders.

All of these myths presented one-sided interpretations that ignored the complexity of European and American events and policies. All left serious questions unanswered. What were the origins of the American Indians? Where did they come from? How and when did they get to the New World? What was their life—their culture—really like?

In the late 1800s, anthropologists and archaeologists in the Smithsonian Institution's newly created Bureau of American Ethnology in Washington, D. C., began to study scientifically the history and culture of the Indians of North America. They were motivated by an honest belief that the Indians were on the verge of extinction and that along with them would vanish their languages, religious beliefs, technology, myths, and legends. These men and women went out to visit, study, and record data from as many Indian communities as possible before this information was forever lost.

By this time there was a new myth in the national consciousness. American Indians existed as figures in the American past. They had performed a historical mission. They had challenged white settlers who trekked across the continent. Once conquered, however, they were supposed to accept graciously the way of life of their conquerors.

The reality again was different. American Indians resisted both actively and passively. They refused to lose their unique identity, to be assimilated into white society. Many whites viewed the Indians not only as members of a conquered nation but also as "inferior" and "unequal." The rights of the Indians could be expanded, contracted, or modified as the conquerors saw fit. In every generation, white society asked itself what to do with the American Indians. Their answers have resulted in the twists and turns of federal Indian policy.

There were two general approaches. One way was to raise the Indians to a "higher level" by "civilizing" them. Zealous missionaries considered it their Christian duty to elevate the Indian through conversion and scanty education. The other approach was to ignore the Indians until they disappeared under pressure from the ever-expanding white society. The myth of the "vanishing Indian" gave stronger support to the latter option, helping to justify the taking of the Indians' land.

Prior to the end of the 18th century, there was no national policy on Indians simply because the American nation had not yet come into existence. American Indians similarly did not possess a political or social unity with which to confront the various Europeans. They were not homogeneous. Rather, they were loosely formed bands and tribes, speaking nearly 300 languages and thousands of dialects. The collective identity felt by Indians today is a result of their common experiences of defeat and/or mistreatment at the hands of whites.

During the colonial period, the British crown did not have a coordinated policy toward the Indians of North America. Specific tribes (most notably the Iroquois and the Cherokee) became military and political pawns used by both the crown and the individual colonies. The success of the American Revolution brought no immediate change. When the United States acquired new territory from France and Mexico in the early 19th century, the federal government wanted to open this land to settlement by homesteaders. But the Indian tribes that lived on this land had signed treaties with European governments assuring their title to the land. Now the United States assumed legal responsibility for honoring these treaties.

At first, President Thomas Jefferson believed that the Louisiana Purchase contained sufficient land for both the Indians and the white population.

Within a generation, though, it became clear that the Indians would not be allowed to remain. In the 1830s the federal government began to coerce the eastern tribes to sign treaties agreeing to relinquish their ancestral land and move west of the Mississippi River. Whenever these negotiations failed, President Andrew Jackson used the military to remove the Indians. The southeastern tribes, promised food and transportation during their removal to the West, were instead forced to walk the "Trail of Tears." More than 4,000 men, women, and children died during this forced march. The "removal policy" was successful in opening the land to homesteaders, but it created enormous hardships for the Indians.

By 1871 most of the tribes in the United States had signed treaties ceding most or all of their ancestral land in exchange for reservations and welfare. The treaty terms were intended to bind both parties for all time. But in the General Allotment Act of 1887, the federal government changed its policy again. Now the goal was to make tribal members into individual landowners and farmers, encouraging their absorption into white society. This policy was advantageous to whites who were eager to acquire Indian land, but it proved disastrous for the Indians. One hundred thirty-eight million acres of reservation land were subdivided into tracts of 160, 80, or as little as 40 acres, and allotted to tribe members on an individual basis. Land owned in this way was said to have "trust status" and could not be sold. But the surplus land—all Indian land not allotted to individuals— was opened (for sale) to white settlers. Ultimately, more than 90 million acres of land were taken from the Indians by legal and illegal means.

The resulting loss of land was a catastrophe for the Indians. It was necessary to make it illegal for Indians to sell their land to non-Indians. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 officially ended the allotment period. Tribes that voted to accept the provisions of this act were reorganized, and an effort was made to purchase land within preexisting reservations to restore an adequate land base.

Ten years later, in 1944, federal Indian policy again shifted. Now the federal government wanted to get out of the "Indian business." In 1953 an act of Congress named specific tribes whose trust status was to be ended "at the earliest possible time." This new law enabled the United States to end unilaterally, whether the Indians wished it or not, the special status that protected the land in Indian tribal reservations. In the 1950s federal Indian policy was to transfer federal responsibility and jurisdiction to state governments, encourage the physical relocation of Indian peoples from reservations to urban areas, and hasten the termination, or extinction, of tribes.

Between 1954 and 1962 Congress passed specific laws authorizing the termination of more than 100 tribal groups. The stated purpose of the termination policy was to ensure the full and complete integration of Indians into American society. However, there is a less benign way to interpret this legislation. Even as termination was being discussed in Congress, 133 separate bills were introduced to permit the transfer of trust land ownership from Indians to non-Indians.

With the Johnson administration in the 1960s the federal government began to reject termination. In the 1970s yet another Indian policy emerged. Known as "self-determination," it favored keeping the protective role of the federal government while increasing tribal participation in, and control of, important areas of local government. In 1983 President Reagan, in a policy statement on Indian affairs, restated the unique "government to government" relationship of the United States with the Indians. However, federal programs since then have moved toward transferring Indian affairs to individual states, which have long desired to gain control of Indian land and resources.

As long as American Indians retain power, land, and resources that are coveted by the states and the federal government, there will continue to be a "clash of cultures," and the issues will be contested in the courts, Congress, the White House, and even in the international human rights community. To give all Americans a greater comprehension of the issues and conflicts involving American Indians today is a major goal of this series. These issues are not easily understood, nor can these conflicts be readily resolved. The study of North American Indian history and culture is a necessary and important step toward that comprehension. All Americans must learn the history of the relations between the Indians and the federal government, recognize the unique legal status of the Indians, and understand the heritage and cultures of the Indians of North America.

Sioux families photographed near Fort Laramie, Wyoming, in the 1860s.

THE SIOUX IN AMERICAN HISTORY

The Sioux have been as important as any group of Indians in the history of the United States. Through their early years of contact with Europeans and white Americans, they were active in the fur trade, influential in dealing with federal officials, and helpful to explorers, missionaries, and other intruders. In the 1850s, they took up arms in self-defense against a wave of immigrants that trespassed on their land and threatened their culture. Since then, the Sioux have been at least as instrumental as any other tribe or federation of Native Americans in the development of federal Indian policy. They have been featured in literature and art, visible in entertainment media, and prominent in the image of American Indians held by peoples around the world.

The word *Sioux* is an abbreviation of a French term that was based on a word used by Ojibwa Indians. It meant *rattlesnake* and was used by the Ojibwas to identify the Sioux as their enemies. It has long been used in documents and literature, because no other term was coined to include all the people in the Sioux federation.

For centuries the Sioux attracted attention because there were so many of them. Their large population was divided into many tribes with the capacity to control a great deal of land. In the 17th century there were 25,000 or more, according to records left by French colonists from Quebec, who dealt with them in the upper Mississippi River valley region. In other words, approximately 1 of every 250 Indians in what is now the contiguous United States was Sioux.

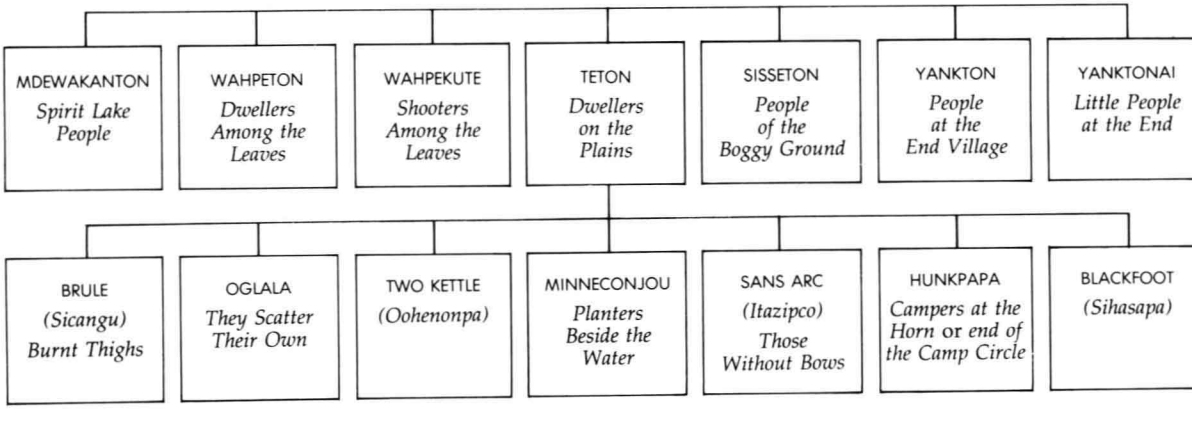
Traders and missionaries believed at the time that there were only seven tribes, but they later learned that an eighth tribe of Sioux had moved to the western Canadian prairie before the French arrived. The names of the first seven were later spelled phonetically in English as Mdewakanton, Wahpekute, Sisseton, Wahpeton, Yankton, Yanktonai, and Teton. The eighth was the

Assiniboin (or Stony). Still later, the newcomers discovered that the Tetons consisted of seven tribes, whose names were written phonetically in English as Oglala, Brule, Minneconjou, Hunkpapa, Sans Arc, Two Kettle, and Blackfoot Sioux. Hence, the society known at first by non-Indians as a federation of 7 tribes was soon recognized as including 13 tribes in the United States and 1 in western Canada.

The French first found them camped in the summertime at permanent villages near Mille Lacs in east-central Minnesota. Here nearly all Sioux people (except the Assiniboin) lived in cabins made of poles and bark that had floor mats and porches added for comfort. Available around them were large beds of wild rice, lakes teeming with fish and birds, natural fruits and vegetables, woodlands containing small game, and plenty of room for gardening. The rest of the year they lived in portable tipis, which they carried with them when they scattered to glean natural bounty in the winter months, and when they went on long expeditions south or westward to hunt big game during spring and fall. They lived and traveled together as members of related families formed into bands. Their leaders provided government and offered guidance in religion and philosophy. By the standards of that period in history, the Sioux lived in relative comfort. They were protected by lodges of soldiers, whose collective military strength was at least as great as that of any neighboring tribe or federation.

Traders from eastern Canada, however, favored the Ojibwas when they distributed European firearms. This placed the Sioux in jeopardy of attack by a better-armed enemy. To avoid a war with these neighbors, and to find better gleaning and hunting lands as well as trade connections to meet the needs of their growing population, Sioux people abandoned the cluster of

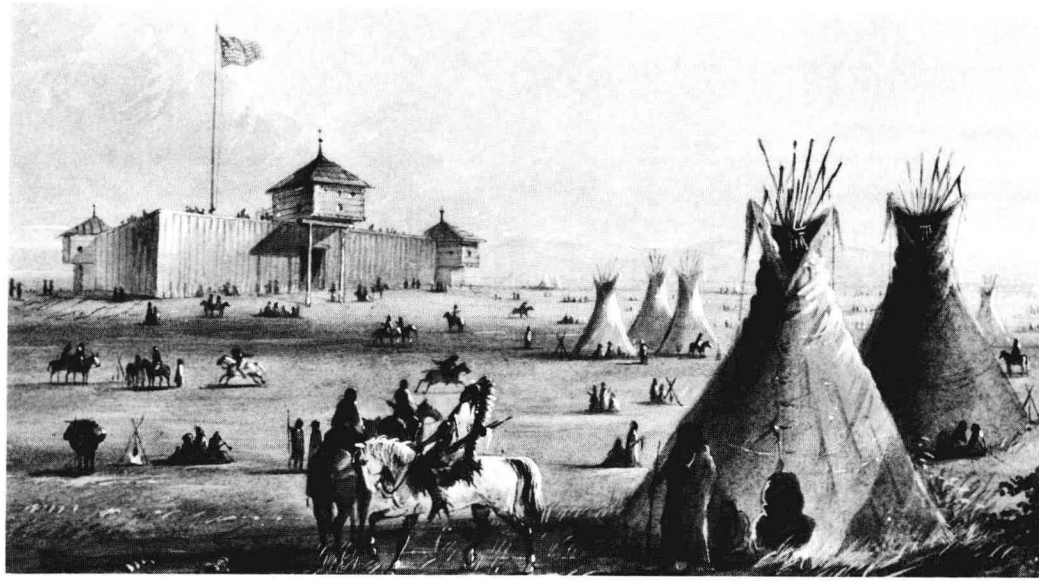
THE DIVISIONS OF THE SIOUX



villages at Mille Lacs. By 1750, their tipi camps were spread out on areas marked by natural boundaries for their respective tribes. Their new territory stretched from the upper Mississippi River valley to the Black Hills region of what is now western South Dakota. They began to travel less widely on food-acquiring trips and generally stayed close to trading posts. By 1850, 13 Sioux tribes in the United States claimed by use or residence more than 80 million acres—an average of more than 2,500 acres for every member of the federation. Tetons generally lived west and the remainder east of the Missouri River, but Yanktons and Yanktonais retained hunting privileges on the plains and highlands surrounding the Black Hills.

Their territory gave the Sioux plenty of natural resources plus easy access to trade for surplus corn and vegetables grown by the Arikara whose villages were in the upper Missouri River valley. Across Sioux Country, the great northern buffalo herd grazed much of the time. Fur-bearing animals were plentiful as well. Merchants from almost every fur company that was active in the center of North America showed up at their camps to trade for the pelts and robes brought in by tribal hunters. Nor'west Company traders came from Montreal, Hudson's Bay Company merchants came down from farther north in Canada, and American Fur Company trappers and traders along with others traveled up from St. Louis and St. Charles in Missouri. In return for hides and skins, the Sioux received trade goods that added comfort to life, and traps and guns that improved their efficiency in the chase for game. Bearing firearms on horseback, they became second to none on the hunt and awe-inspiring in defense of their territory. By 1850, the combined power of the Sioux soldiers' lodges was again easily a match for any other military force around them, including the army of the United States.

For 35 years and more, Sioux people used their power intermittently against non-Indians, as the smattering of welcome immigrants that provided trade goods grew into a hoard of land-hungry intruders that threatened their culture and invaded their land. Non-Indian habits and values began to replace Sioux traditions in the camps, as band members grew dependent on imported tobacco, coffee, sugar, salt, blankets, cloth goods, and manufactured articles of various kinds. Vice and crime undermined ancient moral standards where tribal members came in frequent contact with lawless adventurers, who lived in the settlements that sprang up to provide services needed for the increased steamboat transportation along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. Christianity challenged ancient tribal beliefs and philosophies where missionaries introduced the teachings of Jesus. A wave of immigrant Norwegians and Germans flocked to the prairie of southern Minnesota. Gold seekers entered the Black Hills. Great caravans of wagons violated important hunting



In 1837 a visiting artist painted Sioux camped at the Fort Laramie trading post. The first battle fought by the United States against Plains Indians took place nearby in 1854.

ranges as they moved up the Platte River basin of Nebraska en route to Oregon, Utah, and California.

When the Sioux threatened war against the newcomers, federal officials met tribal leaders in areas of greatest danger to negotiate. In treaties signed at Mendota and Traverse des Sioux in 1851, the eastern Sioux surrendered claim to approximately 10 million acres across southern Minnesota and northern Iowa. In return, they accepted confinement to a narrow strip of land along the upper Minnesota River valley, together with the promise of yearly future payments in cash and supplies known as treaty annuities. In the Treaty of Fort Laramie the same year, Tetons, Yanktonais, and Yanktons offered safe passage to non-Indians migrating up the Platte River basin for the promise of future payments.

Diplomats on both sides worked earnestly to prevent a battle over land, but they could not stave off war for long. In 1854 hostilities broke out near Fort Laramie. This was the Grattan Affair, in which some Brules wiped out a military unit sent to make them pay for taking a lame cow that belonged to a Mormon immigrant. Quickly, General William Harney led federal troops in retaliation at the Battle of Ash Hollow, then displayed the growing strength of the U.S. Army by founding Fort Randall deep in Sioux Country. In 1857, Wahpekute Sioux soldiers under band leader Inkpaduta boldly attacked pi-