

University of Oklahoma College of Law

## University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons

---

American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899

---

1-7-1869

### Letter of the Secretary of War, transmitting a copy of the report of Brevet Major General Harney upon the Sioux Indians on the upper Missouri

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/indianserialset>



Part of the [Indigenous, Indian, and Aboriginal Law Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

S. Exec. Doc. No. 11, 40th Cong., 3rd Sess. (1869)

This Senate Executive Document is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899 by an authorized administrator of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu](mailto:Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu).

LETTER  
OF  
THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

*A copy of the report of Brevet Major General Harney upon the Sioux Indians on the Upper Missouri.*

JANUARY 7, 1869.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *January 6, 1869.*

The Secretary of War has the honor to submit to the Senate of the United States a copy of the report of Brevet Major General Harney, United States army, dated November 23, 1868, upon the Sioux Indians on the upper Missouri, and to invite attention to the remarks of Lieutenant General Sherman upon the same.

J. M. SCHOFIELD,  
*Secretary of War.*

HEADQUARTERS SIOUX INDIAN DISTRICT,  
PEORIA, NEAR FORT SULLY, DAKOTA TERRITORY,  
*November 23, 1868.*

GENERAL: I have the honor to transmit the following report of my operations under the organization of the Sioux Indian district:

I have to observe that, in consequence of moving about so much in a remote country, I have not been able to make a report to you as early as I desired.

During last year the unsatisfactory state of our relations with the various Indian tribes inhabiting the States and Territories of the west, the enormous amount of money required to keep up our military establishment for the protection of life and property on the frontiers, to guard and keep open the great overland lines of travel to the Pacific and the free navigation of the Missouri, impressed upon Congress the importance of adopting some definite line of policy which looked to a full and speedy settlement of these difficulties.

To this end an act was passed by Congress, July 20, 1867, authorizing the appointment of commissioners, whose duty it was to visit the different Indian tribes of the country, ascertain, if possible, the cause of their grievances, if any existed, and adopt such a line of policy as promised to restore peaceful relations between these tribes and the white population of the frontiers.

The commissioners having discharged the duties assigned them by Congress, concluded a treaty of peace between the United States and most of the Indian tribes east of the Rocky mountains.

As my duties are now limited to the Sioux bands with whom a treaty has been concluded by the commissioners, I shall confine my report to the present condition of the Indians who by the terms of their treaty are to become permanently located within the Sioux district.

The treaty with the Sioux nation was not fully concluded with all of the Sioux bands until July, 1868, a period too late for the treaty to receive the attention of Congress at its last session.

By the terms of this treaty it is agreed that from and after the date of its signature by the chiefs and head-men of the several bands, all war between these people and the United States shall forever cease.

The United States, through the commissioners, has bound itself to set apart a district of country for the exclusive use of the Sioux bands, sufficiently large for their occupation, and provide them with the necessary means of subsistence, and such other assistance as may be necessary to enable them to abandon their wild nomadic habits, and adopt those of civilized life. The good faith with which the Indians intend to adhere to their treaty obligations with the government may be inferred from the success which has attended my efforts in locating them upon their new reservations during the last three months.

On the 10th of August, means were placed at my disposal to enable me to enter upon the discharge of the duties to which I had been assigned.

Ten bands of Sioux Indians, numbering about 28,000 souls, most of whom have for years past been hostile to the whites, had entered into a treaty with the United States, by the terms of which they were to abandon their established habits of life, settle down upon a definitely fixed reservation, and look to the government for support and instruction; locations for the several bands were to be selected, agency buildings, warehouses and mills erected, clothing and subsistence purchased and transported to the country assigned them by the government, and these in quantities sufficient to supply their absolute wants until the opening of navigation in the spring of 1869.

As soon as these means were placed at my disposal, I proceeded to purchase such articles of food, agricultural implements, building materials, &c., as were necessary for the establishment of the agencies.

These supplies have been purchased and shipped to the different points of their destination; the greater portion of them have been received on the reservations; the early closing of navigation found some on their way, which are now being brought up by land.

The half-breeds from the vicinity of Fort Laramie, and the Brulés of the Platte, have been removed to the Sioux reservation on the Missouri river and located at the mouth of Whetstone creek, a point about 30 miles above Fort Randall.

At this point I have established an agency, erected warehouses, a steam saw-mill, &c., agency buildings, &c., and provided for the Indians sufficient supplies to support them until the opening of navigation in the spring, together with cattle, horses and agricultural implements, to enable them, under the direction of their farmer, to commence agricultural operations in the spring.

Upon this reservation about 100 houses have already been constructed, and it contains, including Spotted Tail's band, which is at the forks of the White river, a population of 2,500 Indians and half-breeds. A church and school-house are in process of erection at this point.

It is my intention to consolidate the two bands of Brulé Sioux, and locate them upon a permanent reservation by themselves.

I have established a reservation for the Two-Kettle, Sans Arc, and Minneconjou bands, near the mouth of the Big Cheyenne river, a point within the Sioux reserve, about 12 miles above Fort Sully.

At this reservation I have erected commodious warehouses, a steam saw-mill, &c., agency buildings, and provided the necessary means of subsistence throughout the winter and until the Missouri opens next spring.

A sufficient supply of work oxen and agricultural implements have been purchased and delivered for the use of this agency.

About 2,000 Indians have already arrived, and I have received messages from the remainder of the bands, saying that they are doing well amongst the buffalo, and assuring me of their peaceful intentions. They also state that they will all come in early next spring and locate upon the reservations assigned to them. I did not make any effort to get them in this winter; their frequent arrival plainly indicates that they will be on the reservation in full force quite as soon as the government can be ready for their support, as provided for in their treaty.

These three bands, when located upon the reservation, will number 6,300 persons.

At the mouth of Grand river, a point about 100 miles below Fort Rice, I have established a reservation for the location of the Unkpapas and Catheads, and also for the temporary location of the Yanctonais and Blackfeet Sioux. I intend next season to locate the Yanctonais upon a permanent reservation by themselves, at a point about 15 miles above Grand river, and the Blackfeet Sioux at Moreau river, a point about 40 miles below Grand river.

At Grand river I have at present the most important and extensive agency within the Sioux reservation. A steam saw-mill, &c., have been erected here; also several large warehouses and six agency buildings have been constructed. The necessary supplies have been purchased for the support of the Indians at this upper agency until the opening of navigation in the spring. The number of Indians already on this reserve is 4,500.

The Indians for which this agency was located did not begin to come in any considerable numbers until they became perfectly satisfied that the government was in earnest in promising to care for them. After the arrival of several steamboats loaded with goods for their subsistence, word was brought in to me that the whole of these bands would be in next spring and locate upon their reservations and avail themselves of the benefits of their treaty.

I have supplied this agency with work cattle and farming implements sufficient to enable the Indians to commence the cultivation of the soil early next season under the directions of their farmers. I have made no effort to induce the bands to come in, knowing that I could not feed and clothe the 11,000 Indians belonging to these bands through the winter.

The prime object of the government in the pacific policy pursued by its commissioners has been to secure and preserve peaceful relations with our Indian tribes, put an end to sanguinary strife between them and our people, and extend to them the blessings of civilization and Christianity.

Our past experience has dearly taught us that when persecuted and oppressed they are capable of becoming a foe not to be despised. Where one dollar has been spent for their support and civilization, thousands have been expended in warring against them, and where have we gained any great victories? As relentless as death in their hatred and thirst for revenge, kindness secures their confidence. This once acquired, they can be controlled as easily as children. I am quite confident that the pacific plan which has been adopted by the government through its commissioners is wise, humane, and perfectly practical, and will, if fully sup-

ported by Congress, effectually settle our difficulties with the Sioux bands of Indians for all time to come.

The ratification of the treaty with the Sioux and its faithful observance by the government will secure lasting peace between these people and our own, and save millions of dollars to the treasury of the nation, besides thousands of lives; while a failure to ratify this treaty will renew hostilities which can only be terminated by the utter extermination of these tribes of human beings.

I have been compelled to enter into a considerable amount of indebtedness, but it was absolutely necessary to do so in order to get up sufficient supplies to last until the opening of the Missouri river next season, and the parties who undertook to furnish the goods, relying on Congress to make provision for payment, have performed their part honestly and faithfully. No clothing whatever has been purchased. The purchases consisted mainly of provisions, viz: flour, corn, bacon, coffee, sugar, and beef cattle, besides agricultural implements, wagons, horses, work oxen, building materials, steam saw-mills, &c. The lateness of the season at which I was enabled to commence operations made transportation very costly, and is a considerable item in the indebtedness incurred. Two boat loads of provisions were sunk, but were insured, and I have made up for the want of these goods by purchasing largely of beef cattle, which have just been brought up at this late season.

I am perfectly satisfied with the success which has attended the commencement of this work, and can unhesitatingly declare that to secure perpetual peace with the Sioux Indians it is only necessary to fulfil the terms of the treaty made by the peace commission.

I herewith submit an estimate of the amounts already owing in excess of the \$200,000 placed by you under my control. Returns of the receipts and issues on the various reservations are being made up by the superintendents of the reservations, and as soon as finished at my headquarters at this place will be forwarded henceforth regularly to the headquarters of your division by my acting commissary agent, whom I appointed on the decease of my quartermaster, and to the latter event is attributable the delay in sending returns forward. I enclose a statement showing the number of employés at present in the Sioux district, and the class of workmen, mechanics, &c., on each reservation.

In conclusion, I have to say that the importance of purchasing the supplies may be inferred from the fact that if I had not done so the whole object of the commission would have been defeated, as the Indians would assuredly have left the reservations if there were not means for their support. I found it absolutely necessary to bring up the amount of provisions which I purchased. I took upon myself the responsibility of doing it, only getting just sufficient to feed the Indians during the winter, and I felt confident that Congress would approve of my action.

I have the honor to be, general, your obedient servant,

WM. S. HARNEY,

*Brevet Major General U. S. A., commanding Sioux Indian District.*

Lieutenant General W. T. SHERMAN,

*Headquarters Division of the Missouri, St. Louis, Mo.*

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION MISSOURI,

*St. Louis, Missouri, December 21, 1868.*

Official copy:

W. A. NICHOLS,  
*Assistant Adjutant General.*

*Estimate of indebtedness contracted over and above the sum appropriated for the Sioux Indian district, under General Orders No. 4, dated August 10, 1868.*

Vouchers approved.....	\$62,142 85
Smith and Peck, for provisions.....	204,994 87
Smith and Peck, for freight.....	112,646 49
Booge & Co., cattle now being delivered.....	55,000 00
John Finn, cattle now being delivered.....	40,000 00
Pay due employes, January 1, 1869, about.....	11,000 00
	485,784 21

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION MISSOURI,  
St. Louis, Missouri, December 21, 1868.

Official copy :

W. A. NICHOLS,  
Assistant Adjutant General.

*Statement of civilians employed in the Sioux Indian district, November 15, 1868, under General Orders No. 4, Headquarters Military Division of the Missouri, dated St. Louis, Missouri, August 10, 1868.*

Class.	At headquarters, Sioux Indian district, Peoria, D. T.	At Wheatstone reservation, D. T., half-breeds.	At Cheyenne reservation, D. T.	At Grand River reservation, D. T.	Total employed of each class.
Commissary agent.....	1				1
Interpreters.....	1		1	1	3
Clerks.....	1		1		4
Superintendents.....		1		1	2
Foremen.....	1			1	2
Engineers.....			1	1	3
Carpenters.....	2	1	1	2	6
Blacksmiths.....	1			1	2
Farmers.....	1		2	2	6
Laborers.....	4	11	19	19	53
Herders.....	2	1	6	5	14
Teamsters.....		1			1
Butchers.....	1		1		2
Cooks.....	1			2	3
Ferryman.....			1		1
Total.....	16	18	33	36	103

Respectfully submitted :

JOSEPH JOHNSON, *Commissary Agent.*

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION MISSOURI,  
St. Louis, Mo., December 21, 1868.

Official copy :

W. A. NICHOLS, *Assistant Adjutant General.*

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,  
St. Louis, Missouri, December 22, 1868.

GENERAL: I now have the honor to submit copies of the formal report of General W. S. Harney, to whom was committed the charge of the large district of the Sioux on the upper Missouri, with copies of his lists



of men employed, and of debts contracted over and above the \$200,000 placed in his hands by me out of the appropriation of July last.

I have no doubt that General Harney has laid the foundation for a system which, if persevered in, will in time domesticate the larger part of this powerful nation of Indians and withdraw them from the railroads that have been built across the continent.

His expenditures have been large, larger than I authorized, but he has done it knowingly and in the full belief that it was absolutely necessary, relying on the Congress to make good his expenditures. Unless you order otherwise, I will permit General Harney to go to Washington to advocate the justice of his course, and to procure an appropriation of money to cover his past outlays, and to carry into full effect his plan of putting to work in the spring every band of these Indians.

I know that General Harney has more influence over the Sioux than any man living, and if he cannot reduce them to subjection by peaceful measures no man can. His expenses this year have been excessive because he could not get to work till September, by which time the Missouri river was very low, and the cost of freight at least double of what it was in June, July and August. Therefore I would urge, most respectfully that hereafter Congress should make its appropriations for the Sioux as early as February, so that advantage may be taken of the favorable stage of water.

Please telegraph me if you object to General Harney coming to Washington, as he wants to go soon after the holidays. He is now here, having left all things working well at the several reservations from Fort Randall up to Rice.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. T. SHERMAN,

*Lieutenant General, Commanding.*

General J. M. SCHOFIELD,

*Secretary of War, Washington, D. C.*

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,

*Washington, January 4, 1869.*

A true copy:

E. D. TOWNSEND,

*Assistant Adjutant General.*