

Spinning Custer: A Pennsylvania Editor's Assessment of Little Bighorn

John M. Lawlor, Jr.

On July 7, 1876, the *Reading Eagle* daily newspaper in Reading, Pennsylvania, reported that a military force had been “cut to pieces” near the Little Big Horn River in Montana. The force, more than 200 strong and led by Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer, ran into “murderous fire” from “thousands of Indians.” None of the soldiers under Custer’s immediate command escaped death to tell what happened.¹ With the nation’s centennial celebration in progress, outrage over the massacre poured out of newspaper columnists’ pens in response to



Jesse Hawley, editor of the *Reading Eagle*

the news. However, not every editor agreed: Jesse Garrison Hawley, editor of the *Reading Eagle*, penned a scathing attack on failed government Indian policy that was based on what he deemed were broken promises and illegal behavior. He wrote that “the United States government had no more right to explore the Black Hills country than a man would have to search the home of his neighbor without a warrant, and it was as much the duty of the government to protect the Indians in their possession of that region as it is the duty of city government to protect people in their houses.” He forecast dismal outcomes of the then ongoing war with Native Americans.²

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¹ Jesse Garrison Hawley, ed. “An Indian Massacre,” *Reading Eagle*, July 7, 1876, 1.

² Jesse Garrison Hawley, ed. “Where the Blame Lies,” *Reading Eagle*, July 7, 1876, 4.

What events, actions, and national policies led him to these conclusions? This article explores what influenced Jesse Garrison Hawley to write such a powerful indictment of government policy and defense of Native American rights. By understanding the complex basis for his perspective we can gain a better understanding of positions held by a minority of Americans opposed to federal policies. In this way, Hawley can be regarded as an eloquent and informed critic who enunciated the opposing views.³

To examine the basis for Hawley's statements, we must investigate the underlying causes for his charges—the impact of white settlers, miners, the military, and federal policies on Native American societies, and the intent of those policies. Intruders on Indian lands and the U.S. Army often aimed to “exterminate” Native Americans. The term was widely used in newspapers, periodicals, and government documents in the middle to late 1800s. Initially, it literally meant to kill all Indians within a given tribe. In an 1872 article in *The Galaxy*, Custer reprinted an 1866 letter from Lt. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in which he stated, “We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux, even to their extermination, men, women, and children. Nothing less will reach the root of the case.”⁴ The term shifted over time to also mean elimination of nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles through forced reservation confinement. Both meanings were understood at the time. Although the use was prevalent during the period, the Fort Laramie Treaty (1868) did not bind Native Americans covered under it to Indian reservations.

Beyond treaty violations and intrusions on Indian lands, this article explores the overall strategy to exterminate Native Americans either directly through violence or indirectly through annihilation of the buffalo. Killing the herds had economic, social, and health ramifications for all of the Plains tribes: a nomadic lifestyle could no longer be sustained once the herds were destroyed. In addition, military, settler, and miner intrusions upon Native lands contaminated the area with diseases that a weakened people could not fend off. Sitting Bull's frustration and anger with treaty violations resulted from the aggregate impact of the grievances, but

³ Several interests merged in my study of Indian-white relations. The proximity of the *Reading Eagle* office to Reading Area Community College led me to discover Jesse Garrison Hawley's work as another fascinating aspect of the Little Big Horn story. His editorials, rare in their opposition to national policies, provided a way to merge biography, personal experience, and local history with the broader story of the oppression and extermination of Native Americans—a major goal of my research.

⁴ George Armstrong Custer, “My Life on the Plains,” *The Galaxy* 14, no. 3 (September 1872): 348, *Making of America*, Cornell University. <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/>.

his destruction of the Seventh Cavalry intensified demands for extermination as revenge by many Euro-Americans, including influential editors. Even as editorials demanding Indian extermination spiked following Little Bighorn, Hawley emphatically rejected the idea.

Hawley's editorial also made dire predictions that continued war would result in more loss of life and treasury funds. In an era characterized by individual greed, and corporate and government corruption, he concluded that war would result in enrichment of contractors. Hawley was not being cynical. Several congressional investigations found widespread corruption within the Grant administration, particularly in relation to executing treaty provisions such as rations and appointments to reservation management posts. Hawley was specifically critical of the fact that the "Indians have been cheated and plundered by white traders under the protection of United States officials—such men as the Orville Grants, the Belknaps and Babcocks, who throng and thrive around Washington and get their share of the plunder."⁵

Rampant corruption and intrusion on Indian lands were not the sole determinants of Hawley's opinions. This article examines a complex of personal, cultural, historical, and political influences that shaped his perspective. These influences include the historical nature of the community in which he lived, his Quaker faith, his training as a lawyer, and his affiliation with the Democratic Party.⁶ His social and educational background conditioned and informed his views on Indian affairs. Those experiences sensitized him to the humanity of Native Americans and the persecution and suffering they endured. Hawley's story, then, provides us with a deeper picture of the cultural and political roots of opposition to Indian policies. The origins and force of his oppositional views tell us much about the range of public opinion and divisions, and the contemporary debate on Indian policies. They also compel us to take a deeper, fact-based look at Indian-white relationships and federal policies.

Intrusion on Sioux Lands

Trespassing on Sioux lands has a U.S. government-related history dating to the Corps of Discovery Expedition under Lewis and Clark, 1804–1806. The "Discoverers" found lands of the Lakota, Teton, Brule, and many other Sioux

⁵ Hawley, "Where the Blame Lies," 4.

⁶ William S. Flippin, "Jesse G. Hawley (1839–1903)—Part 1," *Historical Review of Berks County*, (Summer 1975), 88–91.

people. It is erroneous, of course, to consider occupied lands as being “discovered” by a group other than the original discoverers. In fact, Daniel Richter posited that “America is discovering Europe rather than Europeans discovering America.”⁷ The Dakota Access Pipe Line (DAPL) construction, sanctioned on and off by U.S. judicial rulings and executive orders, is the most recent violation of Sioux rights.⁸

The Fort Laramie (Wyoming) Treaty of 1868 assured the Sioux that their possession of the land was protected and, according to Article XI, that they retained hunting rights “so long as the buffalo may range thereon in sufficient numbers as to justify the chase.” Under Article XVI, the United States government guaranteed Sioux lands from settler intrusion.⁹ Less than a year after ratification, the government attempted to renegotiate the treaty with Chief Red Cloud. Red Cloud and a Sioux delegation went to Washington, DC, in June 1870. Refusing to be intimidated by U.S. military power on a tour at the Navy Yard, Chief Red Cloud rejected any revisions to the Fort Laramie Treaty by the Grant administration.¹⁰ In his closing speech, Red Cloud declared “All of you seem against us. The men you send out to my country always make war and all they want is to make money by destroying us.”¹¹ In 1875 the government again attempted to pressure a Sioux delegation to sell the Black Hills and Nebraska hunting rights, and once again it failed.¹² The *New York Herald* reported that Sioux chiefs were disappointed that Grant was unable or unwilling to meet with them personally. After a series of discussions with Commissioner of Indian Affairs Edward Smith, the delegates promised to take the proposition home for discussion. Dakota Territorial Governor John L. Pennington, after threatening military action to subdue the Sioux and to promote a massive influx of miners into the Black Hills, saw sinister influences impeding the negotiations. The *New York Herald* wrote that “the Governor is satisfied that the Indians have been improperly influenced by the white men who accompany them, some of who [*sic*] have married Indian women.”¹³

⁷ Daniel K. Richter, “Ethnohistorical Research on Native American History, and Relationships with Europe and U.S.,” Session presentation at “On Native Ground: Studies of Native American Histories and the Land,” NEH Summer Institute (Wash., DC, June 24, 2015).

⁸ Jacob Devaney, ed. and comp. *Pray with Standing Rock: Birth of a Global Movement*, 1 (Standing Rock ND: Unify, 2017), EBOOK. <http://www.risewithstandingrock.com>.

⁹ “Fort Laramie Treaty, 1868.” <http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/resources/archives/four/flaram.htm>.

¹⁰ “Red Cloud on General Grant, Accuses Him of Lying, Breach of Promise Case,” *Evening Telegraph* (Philadelphia, PA) XIV (Nov. 1, 1870): 1. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

¹¹ “A Final Grand Pow-Wow,” *Evening Telegraph*, June 13, 1870, 10.

¹² Commissioner of Indian Affairs, “Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs with Reports from Eighty-Two Agents” (Wash., DC: Government Printing Office [GPO], 1875), 507, Digital, ProQuest Congressional, <http://www.proquest.com>

¹³ “The Sioux Chieftains,” *New York Herald*, June 5, 1875, 10.

In accordance with the concept of Manifest Destiny, U.S. policy with respect to the Native People involved a process of destruction of the Indians through decimation of buffalo herds, engagement of young and healthy warriors in combat, forced internment on reservations that was often accompanied by removal to distant lands, and the spread of diseases through contact with settlers, a known and expected consequence of contact. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman, according to his biographer Michael Fellman, certainly held this view, but with railroads, not disease, delivering the final blow. Railroads were environmentally disruptive, and troop mobility enabled conquest with fewer soldiers.¹⁴ In effect, the scenes in John Gast's 1872 "American Progress" artwork were unfolding as painted. Native people and buffalo were being driven into the darkness as Lady Liberty introduced the light of civilization, settlers, technology, and railroads to the plains. Gast missed the most damning element: military force.

Despite the obligation to uphold treaty provisions, U.S. military leadership was ill-prepared for peacetime duties. Despite sympathetic rhetoric for American Indians, President Ulysses S. Grant's actions proved the opposite. Indeed, he seems to have had minimal interest in Indian affairs. A review of Grant's Annual Messages from 1869 to 1876 contained, on average, only 205 words specifically related to Native Americans' issues. Custer's defeat was not directly mentioned in Grant's Annual Message of December 1876. The president did, however, issue a separate report to the Senate regarding Little Bighorn in July. In the Annual Message, he admitted that "hostilities" in the Black Hills were caused by "the avarice of the white man, who has violated our Treaty stipulations in his search for gold." However, having made this observation, Grant conceded that he was helpless to enforce the Fort Laramie Treaty.¹⁵

Secretary of War William W. Belknap turned out to be the military's weakest link. He was under constant attack for corruption. Even his loyalty to the Republican Party was in doubt because he was a "convert" from the Democratic Party.¹⁶ In 1876 the House Committee on the Judiciary was led by Representative Hiester Clymer from Berks County, who was a fellow Democratic partisan with Jesse Hawley.

¹⁴ Michael Fellman, *Citizen Sherman: A Life of William Tecumseh Sherman* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1995), 274–75.

¹⁵ Ulysses S. Grant, "Annual Report for 1876," in *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, of the United States, Transmitted to Congress with the Annual Message of the President* (Wash., DC: GPO, 1876), IV–V, PDF, ProQuest Congressional.

¹⁶ "Gen. Belknap's Republicanism is a Recent Date," box 2, fldr 3, Papers of William W. Belknap (Princeton University: Firestone Library, Rare Books and Special Collections) (Hereinafter PWB), 1.

Clymer's committee held hearings and originated Articles of Impeachment against Belknap. Clymer, Belknap's college roommate at Princeton, moved the process forward.¹⁷ Despite this relationship, orders were issued to keep Belknap under guard to prevent his escape from Washington.¹⁸ In the face of potential conviction in the Senate trial, Secretary Belknap resigned. In the midst of war with the Sioux, the War Department was in chaos. It made little difference. Sherman and Sheridan held tight reins on military activities in the Missouri Department.

With 1876 being an election year and post-Civil War Reconstruction crumbling under pressure from the unreconstructed white population of the South, military strength was diffused.¹⁹ Reduced in size to 25,000 men and scattered about in nine departments nationally, the military's ability to execute simultaneous complex missions was strained to the breaking point.²⁰ Jacob Knabb, editor of the *Berks and Schuylkill Journal*, the Republican counterpart to Hawley's newspaper, blamed Custer's defeat on Democrats who had irresponsibly reduced the size of the military.²¹

The military had evolved during the recently concluded Civil War and was prepared for aggression. Lt. Gen. William T. Sherman, in overall command of the army, and Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, his commander for the Military Division of Missouri, were known for waging "total war" against the enemy. During the war, Sherman conducted his "march to the sea" while Sheridan led Union forces on a brutally destructive campaign down the Shenandoah Valley. Next were field officers in various commands. Maj. George Armstrong Custer, an experienced Civil War cavalry combat officer, was among them.²² Of these, biographer David Smit identified Sheridan as the originator of the overall plan to conquer the Plains Indians.²³

¹⁷ Hiester Clymer, "Letter to William W. Belknap, Secretary of War: An Invitation to Cross-Exam," Mar. 1, 1876, box 2, fldr 3, PWB.

¹⁸ Edward Pierrepont, "Letter to Mr. Washburn, Chief of the Secret Service, Regarding Secretary Belknap's House Arrest," Mar. 5, 1876, box 2, fldr 4, PWB.

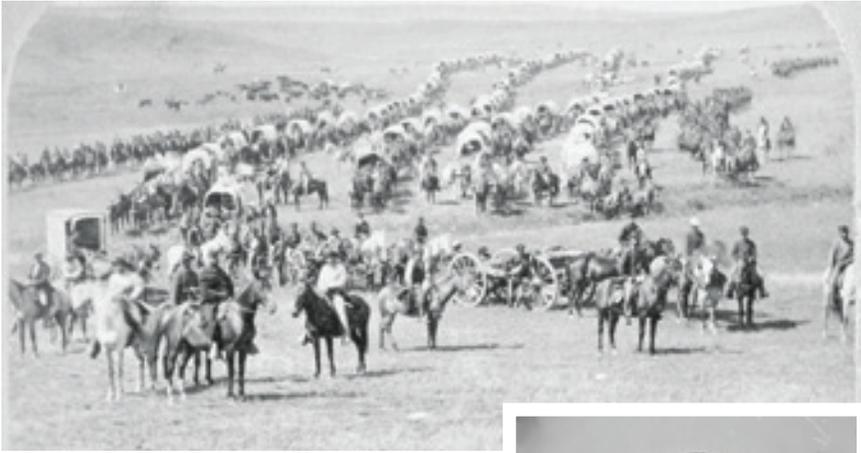
¹⁹ Grant, "Annual Report for 1876," IX–X.

²⁰ William T. Sherman, "Report of the General of the Army in the Annual Report of the Secretary of War," (Wash, DC: GPO, 1874), 3–20, PDF, ProQuest Congressional.

²¹ Jacob Knabb, ed. "The Custer Massacre," *Berks and Schuylkill Journal* 61, (July 18, 1876): 2, Berks History Center Janssen Library, Reading, PA. B&SJ Microfilm 230–20.

²² Note that Custer's rank fluctuated depending on the nature of his standing in the military at a specific point in time, such as on forced leave, or if given a brevet. He was brevet major general at Little Bighorn according to Maj. Marcus A. Reno's Official Report, July 5, 1876, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of War*, Vol. 1, 1876. 32. The National Park Service lists Custer as Lt. Col. at the battle. Little Bighorn National Monument, <https://www.nps.gov/libi/learn/historyculture/lt-col-george-armstrong-custer.htm>.

²³ David D. Smits, "The Frontier Army and the Destruction of the Buffalo: 1865–1883," *Western Historical Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1994): 314, PDF, JSTOR. <http://links.jstor.org/>.



Column of cavalry, artillery, and wagons of the Black Hills Expedition led by Gen. George A. Custer, 1874. Photograph by William H. Illingworth.

An expedition into the Black Hills was the brainchild of Sheridan. President Grant, despite awareness on February 24, 1874, that a military mission into the Black Hills would provide “the Sioux with justification for war,” approved a scientific exploration for the summer of 1874 to study the fauna, flora, and geology, as well as determine a location for another fort.²⁴ The fort would be the sixth, effectively penning in the Black Hills.²⁵ Sheridan claimed that the new fort would provide “better control of the Indians.”²⁶ In addition to scientists, soldiers, teamsters, and scouts, two professional miners accompanied the exploration. Hawley’s editorial specifically criticized the government for intrusion into the Black Hills.



Gen. George Armstrong Custer

Custer’s Black Hills mission spanned the period from July 2 to August 30, leaving from and returning to Fort Abraham Lincoln along the Missouri River. Having about 1,000 men, three Gatling guns, and an artillery piece, Custer felt prepared to meet any threat that might arise from the Sioux.²⁷ On their part, the Sioux must

²⁴ Ulysses S. Grant and John Y. Simons, ed. “Calendar for 14 February 1874,” in *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (Southern Illinois Press and Mississippi State University Libraries (electronic), 2003), 346, PDF.

²⁵ T. J. Stiles, *Custer’s Trials: A Life on the Frontier of a New Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 409.

²⁶ P. H. Sheridan, “Annual Report (1874) to Col. William D. Whipple, Assistant Adjutant General,” *Papers of General P. H. Sheridan* (Wash., DC: Library of Congress, 1874), 2, Microfilm.

²⁷ William C. Patric, “Searching for Gold in ‘Them Thar Hills’: Custer’s Black Hills Expedition,” *American History* 38, no. 2 (June 2003): 2, 6, PDF, ProQuest.

have viewed the force with astonishment. They had been advised by agents that a mapping and scientific expedition would travel through the Black Hills. Custer's scouts warned him that smoke signals indicated an imminent Sioux attack. Trusting in his insurmountable force and firepower, Custer told his scouts that he had sent out messages of peace to "all the tribes *infesting* [emphasis added] the area."²⁸ He reported that if there was to be a fight, he had no intention of starting it.

Prospectors and Settlers

In addition to leading the expedition, Custer kept a fascinating journal entitled "Black Hills Expedition Order and Dispatch Book." He recorded his observations on the richness of the Black Hills in glowing terms. Within his commentary, he noted the discovery of gold "in paying quantities" but stipulated that the study was incomplete.²⁹ Further investigation, he felt, was needed. Gold discovery news in the press generated "gold fever" throughout the country. Bold headlines like "The Black Hills: Rich Discoveries of Gold Reported" and "The Black Hills: A New Eldorado Found" splashed across the front pages of American newspapers large and small. On August 26, the *Bismarck*, Dakota Territory, newspaper gushed that "Gold is in the grass roots and in every panful [*sic*] of dirt below" and "Anybody can find it—No experience required." The Black Hills became flooded with prospectors hoping to strike it rich. Rand McNally further stimulated the gold rush by producing a detailed map that was bordered with positive, if inaccurate, illustrations. A hunter, it showed, could hit two rabbits with a single shot. Settlers and Indians lived in friendship, according to the map. Prospectors from Jesse Hawley's community were noted in his newspaper. One in particular, Daniel Plank of Morgantown, Berks County, "accumulated quite a fortune" mining in California, Nevada, and the Black Hills.³⁰ On August 31, 1874, Hawley's paper charged that Sheridan prohibited prospectors from entering the Black Hills so that the "Black Hills Ring" could take the minerals for themselves despite the fact the expedition was funded by the taxpaying public.³¹ Sioux rights were rarely part of the discussion. The situation was out of control with respect to the Fort Laramie Treaty.

Intrusion into the Black Hills, then, came from two sources: military and civilian. To abide by the Fort Laramie Treaty, Hawley implied, required both removal

²⁸ G. A. Custer, Bvt. Major General, "Black Hills Expedition Order and Dispatch Book" (New Haven, CT: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, 1874), 31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

³⁰ "Black Hills Prospector," *Reading Eagle*, June 7, 1876, 2.

³¹ Jesse Garrison Hawley, ed. "Black Hills Ring," *Reading Eagle*, Aug. 31, 1874, 3.

of current intruders and prevention of future ones. As a lawyer, more than an editor, Hawley must have surmised that there were provisions in law to support upholding the treaty with force. There were. On September 20, 1868, at about the time the Fort Laramie Treaty was moving toward ratification, Attorney General Henry Stanbery wrote a “Memorandum on Intruders” to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton. Hawley would have found the memorandum directly on point.

Stanbery argued that the combination of three laws provided justification for intruder removal through the use of military power, even if called for by civilian Indian agents. Section 10 of the 1834 Trades and Intercourse Act “expressly enacted [that] ‘the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and Indian agents and sub agents, shall have authority to remove from the Indian country all persons found therein contrary to law, and the President of the United States is authorized to direct the military force to be involved in such removal’” (4 Stat. 736).³² But “Indian Country” was becoming a somewhat indefinite term by 1868. Indian Country could exist in a state or a territory, as either ceded or unceded land. Statehood did not extinguish Native American rights. In order to provide full justification for use of military force, an act of June 12, 1858 (11 Stat. 332), allowed the commissioner of Indian affairs with approval of the secretary of the interior to “remove from any tribal reservation any persons found therein without authority by law and to employ for the purpose *such force as may be necessary* [emphasis in the original] to effect removal of such persons.” Stanbery went on to point out that neither the 1832 nor the 1858 law alone was sufficient to cover all cases, but, he stressed, these laws are in *pari materia* (that in combination they covered all possible federal government responses to intrusions).³³ An 1807 law permitted the president to protect public lands from intrusion. With this and subsequent enactments, Stanbery was totally confident that “the President may lawfully, on the requisition of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, with the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, direct the military to cooperation with the proper Indian agent in effecting removal of intruders from tribal reservations in Kansas.”³⁴ Although specific to Kansas, it is reasonable to extend the same legal principles to the Black Hills.

³² Henry Stanbery, Attorney General, “Memorandum [on Intruders]” to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, Sept. 20, 1866. Papers relating to confinement of the Navajo Indians on the Bosque Redondo Reservation, *Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series), 1861–1870* (National Archives Microfilm Publication M619), p.1, roll 484, Records of the Adjutant General’s Office 1780s–1917, Record Group (RG) 94.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

The lengthy chain of command thwarted timely responses to grievances. For example, Sioux chiefs complained about miners to Agent H. W. Bingham at Cheyenne River Agency. On October 31, 1874, Bingham wrote that if the military did not remove the miners, the Sioux threatened to make war on them. The complaint did not complete the official circuit for almost three months. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Edward P. Smith, Bingham's supervisor, criticized the report as based on "Indian rumor." Secretary of Interior Columbus Delano, however, supported Bingham and requested military aid. Sometimes officers like Sherman or Sheridan denied that prospectors illegally intruded in the Black Hills. The miners were south of there, they claimed, and Indian agents simply did not know the area that comprised their agencies.³⁵

In other cases, troops rooted out prospectors at grave risk to themselves, only to have them return. Capt. Guy P. Henry's experience seeking intruding miners was harrowing. He, his men, and their horses suffered serious frostbite battling temperatures in the Black Hills as low as minus 45 degrees Fahrenheit.³⁶ After another patrol, soldiers expressed admiration for the miners who shared some gold with them. Capt. J. Mix reported that "as a class the miners bore the appearance of hardy, intellectual, and enterprising men." After searching 421 miles on horseback, Mix arrested a total of 15 miners, 1 woman, and a boy.³⁷ In his Annual Message of 1876, President Grant expressed fear that soldiers sent to evict the prospectors would desert and take up prospecting themselves.³⁸ A soldier's monthly pay for dismal and dangerous work was paltry. A sergeant major earned \$23–\$25 per month. A private in cavalry, artillery, or infantry service earned \$13 per month for his first enlistment and \$15 per month for reenlistments.³⁹ Still, that is quite an amazing observation from the commander-in-chief who prevented desertions in the face of horrendous cannon fire during the Civil War.

³⁵ Ulysses S. Grant, "Message of the President of the United States: In Answer to the Senate Resolution of March 15, 1875 in Relation to the Black Hills Country in the Sioux Indian Reservation" (Wash., DC: GPO, 1875), Digital, ProQuest Congressional.

³⁶ Guy B. Henry, Captain, "Report, Department of the Platte," Report of military search for miners, Correspondence relating to reports that miners had been working in the Black Hills Country of the Sioux Indian Reservation, 1874–75, *Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General 1871–1880 (Main Series)* (National Archives Microfilm Publication M666), roll 181, RG 94.

³⁷ J. Mix, Captain, "Report: March 23 to April 18—Miners Found," Day to day report of search of Capt. Mix, Correspondence relating to reports that miners had been working in the Black Hills Country of the Sioux Indian Reservation, 1874–75, in *ibid.*

³⁸ Grant, "Annual Report for 1876," V.

³⁹ "Rates of Pay Under Act of 15 May 1872," Table of military pay rates, Correspondence relating to reports that miners had been working in the Black Hills Country of the Sioux Indian Reservation, 1874–75, in *ibid.*



Mining crew at Deadwood, Dakota Territory, ca. 1876

In the wake of publicity about the gold discovery, opportunists sought to make money by outfitting mining expeditions. They held public meetings to fan “gold fever” and answer prospective prospectors’ questions. One such session in Boston featured William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody. By 1875 he already was famous for his exploits hunting buffalo and fighting Indians. His presence at the meeting lent credibility to the advice being given by the leaders. Miners, it was argued, did not violate any treaty provisions regarding hunting grounds. This was because miners worked underground where hunting did not take place. Photographic evidence, however,

refutes the noninterference claim.⁴⁰ Miners had a profoundly destructive impact upon the land. Expedition organizers encouraged miners to travel in groups of 200 or more and be well armed. Only those who struck out on their own ran perilous risks. Cody provided detailed preparation instructions for potential miners. “An outfit would cost \$50 or \$55. Transportation, including baggage, to the Black Hills would involve an expense of between \$50 and \$60.” Preparing for potential violence, Dr. William Wright, a speaker at the meeting, advised that “every member of the company should have a good rifle and revolver, and should carry 300 rounds of ammunition.”⁴¹ Still reeling from the Panic of 1873, and with gold valued at \$109¾ an ounce, people in the crowded hall did not need much encouragement to join the expedition, even if it might be dangerous.

In addition, official pressure mounted to discard the Fort Laramie Treaty. Legislatures wrote petitions to Congress demanding dissolution of the Fort Laramie Treaty to allow emigration. The Minnesota legislature filed a formal joint resolution that sought renegotiation of the Fort Laramie Treaty. Indians, the petitioners claimed, were occupying the Black Hills and they wanted the area

⁴⁰ “Mining Crew Drifting for Gold Below Discovery Point, Deadwood, Dak. Terr. Bystanders Pose for Photographer,” S. J. Morrow, photographer. National Archives and Records Administration, Still Pictures Branch, 165-FF-2F-10.

⁴¹ “Black Hills Expedition,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, no. 79 (April 2, 1875): 1, Digital, Gale: document GT3006524625.

“opened to settlement and occupation.”⁴² The Dakota Territorial petition was much more detailed. Five of the six articles in its petition stressed the wealth, particularly gold, that existed in abundance. The area was beautiful and rich in resources. The sixth noted that the Sioux “violated the treaty numberless times [preventing] white men from acquiring homesteads, pre-emptions, and mining rights within the Great Sioux Reservation.”⁴³ There is no indication in either petition of why confiscation of Sioux land and wealth was justified, other than the undocumented and vague claim of Sioux violations. Likely, signers simply did not feel the need for justification.

Certainly, the government was either unwilling or unable to comply with the treaty. Frustrated with treaty constraints and under pressure to permit emigration into the Black Hills, the Grant administration unilaterally imposed new conditions upon the Sioux. The aim was break the nomadic lifestyle of the Plains Indians and “civilize” them by forcing upon them a reservation system that emphasized Christianization, individual homesteads for farming via land allotment, and mandatory education for children. R. H. Milroy, a government Indian agent, wrote that “such a method of extermination of the Indian tribes of our country would much better become the character and dignity of our Government than to leave them to be exterminated by the bullets of her soldiers and by whiskey, and the poisonous diseases which are bought among them by the lowest stratum of our civilization.”⁴⁴

The Commission on Indian Affairs developed three classifications of Native Americans: “Civilized,” as described above; “semi-civilized,” or those who conform to some aspects of the above; and “wild Indians,” who retained their native ways. According to Lakota historian Joseph M. Marshall III, “Sitting Bull, like many of his generation, watched the influx of whites into Lakota territory turn into an encroachment on everyday life. It soon became an outright invasion that had killed off most of the buffalo herds on the northern plains by 1875, and more and more miners *infested* [emphasis added] the Black Hills

⁴² Legislature of Minnesota, “Joint Resolution: That Treaty Be Made with the Indians Occupying the Country Known as the Black Hills, So That the Same May Be Opened to Settlement and Occupation at an Early Day” (Wash., DC: GPO, 1876), Digital, ProQuest Congressional.

⁴³ Legislature of Dakota, “Petition: That the Black Hills of Dakota Be Opened for Settlement, and Indian Title to the Same Extinguished” (Wash., DC: GPO, 1875), Digital, ProQuest Congressional.

⁴⁴ R. H. Milroy, Olympia, Washington Territory Agency Report in Commissioner of Indian Affairs, “Annual Report” (Wash., DC: GPO, 1876), 541, Digital, ProQuest Congressional.

because of the discovery of gold there.”⁴⁵ With the future of his people turning bleaker over time, Sitting Bull and others rejected the reservation system and stockpiled weapons.

Destruction of Buffalo Herds

In this context, forced extinction of the buffalo makes disturbing sense. Buffalo provided food, clothing, shelter, tools, and fuel. John Wesley Powell wrote “that the plains Indians depended largely on the buffalo for subsistence, as well as for clothing and shelter when first seen by white men. Thus their industries, which like all those primitive peoples, were adjusted directly for their condition, were controlled largely by the presence of the buffalo.”⁴⁶ Elimination of the buffalo, then, was central to the process of exterminating the Indians. Economic justification for slaughtering the herds related to railroad expansion across the plains. Herds could take days to cross the tracks. Further, buffalo destroyed telegraph poles by rubbing against them. With the lines down, commerce ceased. In effect, one economic system depended on the elimination of the buffalo while the other depended on the propagation of them. Only one system could prevail.

The Fort Laramie Treaty protected Sioux hunting rights. Killing buffalo before, during, or after passing through Sioux hunting grounds undermined this article of the treaty. Historic photographs show massive piles of buffalo hides and mountains of buffalo skulls. According to David A. Smits, the biggest incentive to kill buffalo came in 1870 when a Pennsylvania tannery found a way to convert buffalo hides to commercial leather for harnesses and industrial belts. After this, buffalo hides sold for between \$1 and \$3.⁴⁷ The 1887 *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution* included William T. Hornaday’s report “The Extermination of the American Buffalo with a sketch of its discovery and life history.” Hornaday mapped the decreasing range and number of buffaloes over time. Once traversing nearly the entire country, by 1887 buffalo were limited to only three small areas in the western United States.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Joseph M. Marshall III, *The Day the World Ended at Little Bighorn: A Lakota History* (London: Viking, 2007), 68.

⁴⁶ J. W. Powell, Director, *13th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology of the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1891–1892* (Wash., DC: GPO, 1896), LV. ProQuest Congressional.

⁴⁷ Smits, “The Frontier Army,” 326.

⁴⁸ William T. Hornaday, “The Extermination of the American Bison, with a Sketch of Its Discovery and Life History.” In *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution Board of Regent for the Year Ending June 30, 1887* (Wash., DC: GPO, 1889) 367–548, ProQuest Congressional.



Chief Sitting Bull of the Lakota Sioux

Pressure on herds effectively dissolved Article XI of the Fort Laramie Treaty. E. A. Johnson observed that Cody, while working to supply buffalo meat to the Kansas Pacific Railroad in 1867, “shot and killed 4280 bison.”⁴⁹ Curiously, Cody’s Wild West exhibitions are credited with raising public consciousness about the buffalo and actually contributed to their survival.⁵⁰ Popular periodicals of the time, from religious to scientific, criticized this wanton destruction but did not connect it to an overall strategy of Native American subjugation and destruction.

Editor Jesse Hawley was likely familiar with Haworth’s “Indian Department” essay on buffalo destruction in the *Friends’ Review*,⁵¹ if not the journal *Popular Science Monthly*.⁵² When hunters requested permission to enter an area near Fort Dodge to hunt buffalo, Lt. Col. Richard Dodge advised them to “kill every buffalo you can! Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone.”⁵³

William F. Cody included the topic of Indian extermination in his 1872 play *Life on the Border: A Border Drama in Five Acts*. Cody played himself as one of the characters in the play. After an assertion from the character Sloat, a military officer, about Custer’s exceptional ability to fight Indians and Custer’s “wiping out the whole Dog Indian race,” Broadbrim (a Quaker) asked: “Friend

⁴⁹ E. A. Johnson, “William F. Cody, Alias ‘Buffalo Bill,’” *Annals of Iowa* (July 1, 1953), 60.

⁵⁰ David Nesheim, “How William F. Cody Helped Save the Buffalo Without Really Trying,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 163–75. <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/>.

⁵¹ J. M. Haworth, “Indian Department,” *Friends’ Review: A Religious, Literary, and Miscellaneous Journal* 27, no. 49 (July 25, 1874): 781, ProQuest American Periodicals Series.

⁵² “Miscellany: Destruction of the Buffalo,” *The Popular Science Monthly* 9 (July 1, 1876): 777, ProQuest American Periodicals Series.

⁵³ Smits, “The Frontier Army,” 328.

William [Cody], dost thou believe in the extermination of the red man?" "Friend William" did not respond.⁵⁴ The soldier and Quaker represented the opposites of the extermination argument, whereas "Friend William" represented the deep apathy of most citizens towards the survival of Native Americans. His lack of response spoke volumes.

Despite the violence at Little Bighorn, contemporary images created distorted or reinforced romantic views of the Battle of Little Bighorn (Battle of Greasy Grass to the Native Americans). Popular images portray a fantastical image of the era. Ledger book drawings by Tall Bull, for example, offer a glimpse of Sioux battle perspectives.⁵⁵ The artistry of these images collides with the deadly reality depicted in grisly photographs of the battle's aftermath and expressed in Hawley's editorial. Discussions of the battle typically consider what happened, where, when, and by whom. Another frequent approach involves evaluation of Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer's or Chief Sitting Bull's personalities, leadership, and actions. Rarely, even in the participants' accounts, such as those provided through interviews with Sioux and Cheyenne warriors, is there any statement of why the battle took place. Joseph M. Marshall III, in his book *The Day the World Ended at Little Bighorn*, provides an insightful study from the Lakota perspective and discusses Sitting Bull's leadership.⁵⁶ Oddly, in most accounts, Chief Sitting Bull, victor of the battle, receives secondary treatment. Even the title of the battle's location, until recently, carried the name of the loser.

Despite the glowing publicity about gold, events of the times shifted Americans' attention. The U.S. Centennial celebration in Philadelphia portrayed a progressive nation that rejoiced in technological advances, while displays by the Interior Department and the Smithsonian Institution presented Indian artifacts and relics.⁵⁷ President Grant included John Eaton's plan for the Centennial Exhibition by the Office of Indian Affairs in his report to Congress. Eaton calculated a cost between \$100,000 and \$150,000. His plan was for "an interesting and instructive exhibit of the ethnological [*sic*] characteristics of the different Indian tribes of the country."⁵⁸

⁵⁴ William F. Cody, *Life on the Border: A Border Drama in Five Acts* (Cody, WY: Pioneer Drama Service, 1872), 53.

⁵⁵ Louis Werner, "Captive Warriors Eloquent Sketches," *Americas* 50 (May/June 1998): 34.

⁵⁶ Marshall III, *The Day the World Ended at Little Bighorn*, 60–64.

⁵⁷ Charles Raw, curator, "Collection to Illustrate the Ethnology of the United States," in *Centennial Catalogue: Main Building, Part II* (Philadelphia: John R. Nagle, 1876), 4, PDF, <http://www.google.com/books>.

⁵⁸ Ulysses S. Grant, *Message of the President of the United States: International Exhibit of 1876* (Wash., DC: GPO, 1876), 5, PDF, ProQuest Congressional.

The Berks County Experience

For most easterners, the Native American displays were nostalgic. Native Americans had largely disappeared by 1778 in Jesse Hawley's community, except in memory.⁵⁹ Conrad Weiser, a highly regarded Colonial-era negotiator from Berks County who acted on behalf of the Pennsylvania provincial government, exerted a powerful influence on the memory of Native Americans in Hawley's community. Weiser followed three simple rules. He stated, "A European who wishing to stand well with them must practise [*sic*] well the following three virtues: They are: (1) Speak the truth; (2) Give the best that he has; (3) Show himself not a coward, but courageous in all cases."⁶⁰ Weiser's task as peacekeeper was difficult and complex. The Six Nations had long dominated the Delaware. The Tulpehocken (turtle) clan of the Lenni Lenape, a Delaware tribe, resided in Weiser's locale.

The Six Nations' control essentially removed Delaware input from land acquisitions and eventually resulted in them being removed from Pennsylvania.⁶¹ Lenni Lenape were "moved north of the Blue Mountains in 1732."⁶² When peacekeeping failed in 1756 with the outbreak of the French and Indian War, Weiser led county militia with the rank of colonel. Berks County took heavy losses during the war, with more than 150 settlers killed by Indian raids along the Blue Ridge Mountains in northern and northwestern areas. The details are gruesome, and terror dominated the region. Conditions deteriorated enough that the British diverted regular troops and established a barracks in Reading, the county seat, during part of the war.⁶³ Despite Weiser's sincere goodwill for the Six Nations, a pattern emerged in the Colonial era regarding land acquisitions. The trend was for Europeans to settle an area and then negotiate or force the sale.⁶⁴ Community memories can be selective. The image of the "Peaceable Kingdom" blots out the reality of hostility, violence, and deceitful colonial land policies.

⁵⁹ D. B. Brunner, *The Indians of Berks County, PA., Being a Summary of All the Tangible Records of the Aborigines of Berks County with Cuts and Descriptions of the Varieties of Relicks Found Within the County* (Reading, PA: Eagle Book Print, 1897), 104–5.

⁶⁰ Conrad Weiser, et al. "Conrad Weiser: Notes on the Iroquois and Delaware Indians: Communications from Conrad Weiser to Christopher Saur, 1746–1749," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 2, no. 4 (1878): 408, Digital <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20084363>.

⁶¹ Paul A. W. Wallace, "Conrad Weiser and the Delawares," *Pennsylvania History* 4, no. 3 (July 1937): 139–72, Digital, JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27788252>.

⁶² Morton L. Montgomery, "History of Berks County, Pennsylvania," in *History of Berks* (Philadelphia: Everett and Peck, 1886), 61, Digital, Accessible Archives, County Histories.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 61, 107, 133–36.

⁶⁴ Wallace, "Conrad Weiser and the Delawares," 145.

A centennial celebration in Reading included a speech in praise of Conrad Weiser. Mayor Charles F. Evans lauded Weiser's generosity toward a Native American woman and her children by allowing them to live rent free in a small home Weiser owned in Reading.⁶⁵ The 1870 census, however, lacks any indication of Native Americans living in the community. Quaint community memories may have influenced Hawley. It is more likely that his Quaker beliefs exerted a powerful influence over him. Quakers had and continue to maintain a strong respect for Native Americans.

Quaker Influences

Jesse Garrison Hawley was born in 1839 to parents who were members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) and farmers in Chester County, Pennsylvania.⁶⁶ As a youth, he learned the primary lessons of Quaker philosophy and theology at home, at meeting, and at school. Quaker education stressed a number of rules that shaped students' ideas and behavior. These rules inculcated values that found expression in their dealings with Native Americans. Humility and respect for another's property were two such rules. Equality was not just preached but practiced in the schools.⁶⁷

Quakers enjoyed generally good relations with Native Americans reaching back to William Penn's "Holy Experiment" in Pennsylvania. In a letter dated February 10, 1791, Cornplanter, a Seneca Chief, asked the Quakers to provide education for three Seneca boys, one of whom was his own son. He was particularly interested that they be taught to read, write, and adapt to new modes of life. Hunting, principally for fur and hides rather than food, would not be sustainable very long. The future, Cornplanter felt, depended on education. The Philadelphia Quaker Annual Meeting complied with Cornplanter's request.⁶⁸

Given the above, Quakers were on the forefront of executing the "Indian Policy" widely known during the Grant administrations as the "Quaker" or "Peace" Policy. Based on their history, the Quakers were ideal for this role. Subsequent to the Fort Laramie Treaty in 1868, Quakers petitioned Congress to inform the legislators

⁶⁵ Charles Evans, "Centennial Celebration in Berks: Outburst of Patriotism at Lauer's Garden," *Reading Eagle*, July 5, 1876, 1. Google News Archive.

⁶⁶ Flippin, "Jesse G. Hawley (1839–1903)—Part 1," 89.

⁶⁷ Thomas Woody, *Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1920), 183–85.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 262–63.

that they had peaceful and productive experiences with Native Americans since the time of William Penn. They rejected the idea of administering Indian policy within the War Department. That approach had been tried and had failed. They supported, instead, a bill providing for the creation of “a department of Indian affairs, and to provide for the consolidation, civilization, and government of the Indian tribes.”⁶⁹

Quakers played a central role as agents under the Office of Indian Affairs within the Department of the Interior. In 1869 a delegation of Quakers from Philadelphia met with President Grant to recommend an “experiment” in reservation management. “We have no doubt,” they argued, “that our Quaker friends would be more successful in managing the Indians of the West upon a peaceful basis, if allowed full authority and power, than any Indian agency or bureau has yet been.” Further, they warned Grant that “the advancing tide of emigration beats too frequently and too strongly against the Indian reservations, and the demands of ‘civilization’ too urgent, sometimes, for more Indian lands, to permit the claims of right and justice to be always heard.”⁷⁰ Jesse Hawley, as a Quaker and editor, was well aware of the obstacles facing Native Americans in their battle for “rights and justice” and used his pen to expose them.

Frontier violence cast doubt on the effectiveness of the “Peace Policy.” Quakers rose to defend the policy, and Columbus Delano, secretary of the interior, pointed to successes that the critics overlooked. “During the three years of the present Administration,” he noted, “more than eighty thousand Indians have been brought to agencies and placed under the care and supervision of Indian agents” he stated in an 1872 speech.⁷¹

In addition to expansion of the nation westward, the resignation of Secretary of Interior Delano under a cloud of corruption charges, Belknap’s impeachment, and the centennial celebration, there was a very contentious presidential election playing out as reconstruction was unraveling throughout the South. The “Southern Redeemers” and the Ku Klux Klan verbally and physically threatened newly enfranchised freemen. Voter suppression included threats of legal actions against

⁶⁹ Society of Friends, “Memorial of Yearly Meetings of the Society of Friends Relative to the Treatment of the Indians,” Petition to the United States House of Representatives (Wash., DC: GPO, 1869), ProQuest Congressional.

⁷⁰ “The Quakers and Indian Affairs,” *The New England Farmer, and Horticultural Register* 48, no. 16 (Apr. 17, 1869): 2, Digital, ProQuest American Periodicals.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 580.

voters such as voiding contracts, employment threats, and physical intimidation that included outright violence. The attention of the United States was deeply divided during the summer of 1876.

Conclusions

Custer's defeat on June 25, 1876, at Little Bighorn rekindled latent hatred for Native Americans expressed through widespread demands for revenge through extermination. On July 9 Jesse Hawley once more rose to the defense of Native Americans. Recognizing that the loss of Custer was a national tragedy, he still maintained that the Sioux were justified in defending their property. In the East, there was some sympathy for the Sioux in light of the treaty violations, but in the West one is hard pressed to find any. War raged until 1878 when the ability of the Sioux to defend their interests was crushed by military force and the spiral of disaster precipitated by the destruction of the buffalo. Any possible chance for successful and sustained Native American resistance was destroyed in December 1890 at Wounded Knee, the infamous massacre of the First People.⁷²

Jesse Hawley's "Where the Blame Lies" editorial reveals the combined influences of his background, religion, education, community, legal training, political orientation, and editorial skills. It is impossible to determine the strength of each or what each contributed to his advocacy of fairness in dealing with Native Americans. His editorial manifested his outrage over failed policies but was not outrageous. Instead, he presented logical, understandable arguments that promoted empathy for Native Americans as they confronted obstacles in their fight for freedom and fairness.

The tragedy of the Battle of Little Bighorn and Hawley's editorial response to it reveal the full impact and dimension of Indian policies—the effect on Native Americans and the passionate response of individuals. The actual events that took place at Little Bighorn, or Greasy Grass, defy agreement. Conditions leading up to it are even more controversial, steeped in enduring frontier violence, charged terminology, and immoral behavior, especially in the presence of failed treaty compliance and overt corruption. A wide range of motivations and depredations in the West forged a powerful story. It was this compelling national conflict that Hawley sought to explain to readers in his editorial.

⁷² Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 540–41, 726–31.

Hawley, himself, was shaped by complex converging forces. Political, religious, community, educational, historical, and professional attributes uniquely combined to shape his piercing analytical skills. He brought these talents to bear in his work. His story of moral outrage provides a view of the personal impact of Indian-white relations, of the depth of emotion and commitment that those policies and events engendered in many. While he mourned the loss of Custer and his men, calling it tragic, he could still understand the despair of the Sioux in protecting their lands. Very few editors in the early summer of 1876 did.

Picture credits: Jesse Hawley, courtesy of William Flippin; Gen. George A. Custer, Library of Congress; Cavalry (77-HG-264-854), Miners (165-FF-2F-10), Chief Sitting Bull (111-SC-85728), National Archives and Records Administration

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