

# Prisoners in the Indian Camp

## *Kill Eagle's band at Little Big Horn*

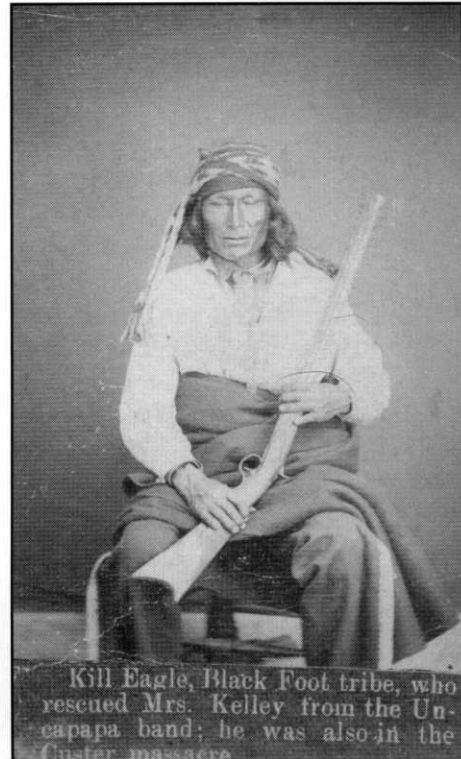
By Ephriam D. Dickson III

In April 1876, Kill Eagle, a friendly Lakota headman, and a portion of his band slipped away from Standing Rock Agency, D.T., on the Missouri River and headed out on an unauthorized buffalo hunt. They were soon unwittingly swept up in the events of the Great Sioux War of 1876-77. On the morning of June 25, Kill Eagle was encamped with other Lakota and Northern Cheyenne families on the banks of the Greasy Grass as the Battle of the Little Big Horn began.

Three months later, Kill Eagle and his band returned to Standing Rock Agency, surrendering their weapons and horses to the Army. His description of the Little Big Horn was soon widely published in the press as one of the first native perspectives on Custer's defeat. Less well known is Kill Eagle's map, probably drawn by an Army officer at the time of his interview. Kill Eagle's detailed narrative and his map provide an important insight into the events on that fateful June day in 1876.

Less than a decade earlier, in the sweltering heat of July 1868, large numbers of Hunkpapa, Sihasapa and Yanktonais gathered at Fort Rice, D.T., to meet with peace commissioners and to sign a new treaty with the U.S. government. The commissioners wanted to end Red Cloud's costly war along the Bozeman Trail in the Powder River country as well as calm the growing conflict on the upper Missouri. They had already met with the Oglala, Brule and Minnecoujou at Fort Laramie where a large majority of those tribal leaders had "touched the pen," indicating they agreed to have their names added to the treaty signatures. Now the paper had been brought to Fort Rice for discussion and a similar signing ceremony. One of the Lakota signees that day was a Sihasapa headman named Kill Eagle.<sup>1</sup>

Born about 1827, Kill Eagle (*Wanbli Kte*) had gained status through the *akicita*, or the soldier



Courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society

Kill Eagle, Black Foot tribe, who rescued Mrs. Kelley from the Uncapapa band; he was also in the Custer massacre.

Kill Eagle

Portrait by David F. Barry, ca. 1882.

societies, eventually becoming leader of a small band of Sihasapa known as the *Wazhazha*.<sup>2</sup> In 1864, Kill Eagle was among those who helped return the white captive Fannie Kelly to Fort Sully. The consensus of Kill Eagle's band to sign the Treaty of 1868 reflected their struggle to find some accommodation with the growing American presence in the region.

But not all Lakota leaders agreed to sign the treaty. While everyone expressed frustration and anger over the Americans' continued expansion into Lakota territory, they could not agree on a common response. The Treaty of 1868 deepened the political divide among the various bands. Some leaders saw the clause that established the



Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument

*The U.S. Peace Commissioners had already met in 1868 with the Oglala, Brule and Minnecoujou at Fort Laramie, as shown here, where a large majority of those tribal leaders had "touched the pen," indicating they agreed to have their names added to the treaty signatures. The commissioners moved on in July 1868 to Fort Rice for further discussion and a similar signing ceremony with the Hunkpapa, Sihasapa and Yanktonais. One of the Lakota signees that day was the Sihasapa headman, Kill Eagle.*

Great Sioux Reservation as perhaps their best alternative for the future, one that might preserve a portion of their traditional hunting grounds. But other Lakota leaders strongly disagreed, especially with treaty sections that detailed how the Lakota would settle at an agency to be fed while they were taught to become self-sufficient farmers. After all, many reasoned, they were already self-sufficient—hunting buffalo, raising their families and enjoying a good life in a rich land. Many of these bands refused to sign the treaty and chose to maintain their traditional lifestyle. A few militant leaders advocated war, inspired by Red Cloud's success that had forced the Army to abandon its three forts along the Bozeman Trail—Fort Phil Kearny, Fort Reno and Fort C.F. Smith.

Kill Eagle's tribe, the Sihasapa or Blackfoot Lakota, was one of the smaller of the seven tribes of the Teton Lakota. Originally allied closely with their Hunkpapa relatives, the Sihasapa had diverged politically by the time of the Treaty of 1868 as pressure mounted to settle permanently on the reservation. While large numbers of Hunkpapa chose to remain out, the majority of Sihasapa bands settled at what eventually became known as Standing Rock Agency. Under the leadership of such influential headmen as Grass and Kill Eagle, the Sihasapa soon became part of a new reservation economy, supplementing their rations from the Office of Indian Affairs with hunting and trading. Only a small number of Sihasapa under the leadership of Crawler remained off the reservation with the non-treaty Hunkpapa bands.

The Grand River Agency had been established on the west bank of the Missouri River in 1869, the most northern of the agencies on the Great Sioux Reservation. Four years later, it was moved farther upriver near the mouth of the Cannonball and renamed Standing Rock Agency. Responsible for caring for the Yanktonais as well as the Hunkpapa and Sihasapa, the offices, warehouses and corrals at Standing Rock served as the central distribution point for the regular issue of cattle, flour and other food rations to the bands that settled nearby.

In December 1874, the Army established a small military post immediately adjacent to the agency. Known initially as "U.S. Military Station Standing Rock" and later renamed Fort Yates, this post was manned with three companies of infantry, numbering four officers and slightly more than 100 enlisted men. Capt. John S. Poland, 6th Infantry, served as post commander.

Indian Agent John Burke wrote, "*I regret very much that [the military camp] is located so near the agency, as the effect of daily contact between the Indians and soldiers is not calculated to promote the most desirable results in the line of civilization.*" Relations between the post commander and the Indian agent quickly became acrimonious as they argued over agency operations.<sup>3</sup>

### Launching the Great Sioux War

Mounting political pressure over the Black Hills, located within the Great Sioux Reservation with its rich mineral and timber resources, forced

President Ulysses S. Grant's administration to act. After attempts had failed in 1875 to procure the region through a treaty, Grant ordered the military to take action against the northern bands who had chosen to remain away from the agencies. On Dec. 22, 1875, Burke received a letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs instructing him to send runners out to find Sitting Bull. They were to carry an ultimatum, demanding that he and his followers come in to the agencies by Jan. 31, 1876, or they would "be deemed hostile and treated accordingly by the military force." Burke quickly sent out several friendly Indians to find the northern villages, but he requested the deadline be shifted, given the difficulty of winter travel in the region.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, Poland telegraphed Brig. Gen. Alfred H. Terry, commander of the Department of Dakota, expressing his concern about the Indian trader at Standing Rock, J.R. Casselberry. Following each beef issue, friendly Lakota swapped their cattle hides at the trading store for additional supplies. Poland was convinced they were stockpiling ammunition in anticipation of war.

"Many Indians here are closely related to Sitting Bull's band," he noted and recommended that the trade in ammunition be immediately stopped. The trader, however, explained to Poland that the officer was operating under the Indian agent's authority and Burke refused to stop ammunition sales, since it was an approved trade item and needed by the friendly bands for hunting.

Captain Poland decided to take action. On Jan. 1, 1876, he ordered Casselberry's trading store to be closed and he placed a detachment of armed soldiers at its entrance until he could obtain more detailed instructions from General Terry. Finally, on Jan. 13, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs telegraphed Agent Burke instructing him to cease the sale of ammunition, agreeing with the Army that it was a prudent decision. Four days later, a similar order was sent out to all Indian agencies in the region.<sup>5</sup>

Several Indian agents protested, noting that this new policy unfairly targeted the friendly bands who had come in to the reservation as asked. The army, however, believed the agencies had become recruiting depots for Sitting Bull's "hostiles," where they could obtain food, ammunition and reinforcements among the friendly bands. The new policy also added fuel to the ongoing feud between Agent Burke and Captain Poland at Standing Rock. By February 1876, Gen. Philip Sheridan had grown weary of their constant bickering.

"The War and Interior Departments have too much to do," Sheridan wrote, "to be annoyed by the petty quarrels of these two persons."<sup>6</sup>

Kill Eagle was one of the friendly headmen at Standing Rock who expressed dissatisfaction with the ammunition embargo. He had long been friendly to the Americans and had been living peacefully at the agency for several years. Since the rations issued at the agency were not always sufficient to feed his band, he and many other Lakota depended on hunting to supplement their diet. In addition, agency cattle were issued on foot, requiring ammunition to kill them before they could be



Sandy Barnard Collection

#### "The Source of Our Indian Problem"

*In many Eastern circles, the Indians' plight in seeking to retain their lands and their freedoms received much support, as this 1873 N.Y. Daily Graphic illustration depicts.*



butchered. Frustrated, Kill Eagle decided to take a portion of his band out on a buffalo hunt.

"I thought I would go out and starve anyway," he later explained.

Falling back on older technology, they planned to kill game using bows and arrows. The respected headman slipped away from Standing Rock in April 1876 with 26 lodges, including 12 from his own band.<sup>7</sup>

## Battle of the Little Big Horn

After traveling for nearly two weeks, Kill Eagle's group came upon a buffalo herd and paused to hunt, cure meat and prepare the hides. Now that they had found the additional meat they wanted, Kill Eagle advocated returning to Standing Rock. However, his brother-in-law succeeded in convincing the group to continue, eventually joining Sitting Bull's camp on the Tongue River. Over the next several weeks in June, this large village moved on to Rosebud Creek. Initially, Kill Eagle and his people were enticed to remain with the large village by the promise of robes and meat, but they soon realized that they would not be allowed to leave. On one occasion, his band and he attempted to stay behind as the village began to move to a new camp site, "but the Indian soldiers surrounded my camp and made me move with them, the Indian soldiers marching behind and

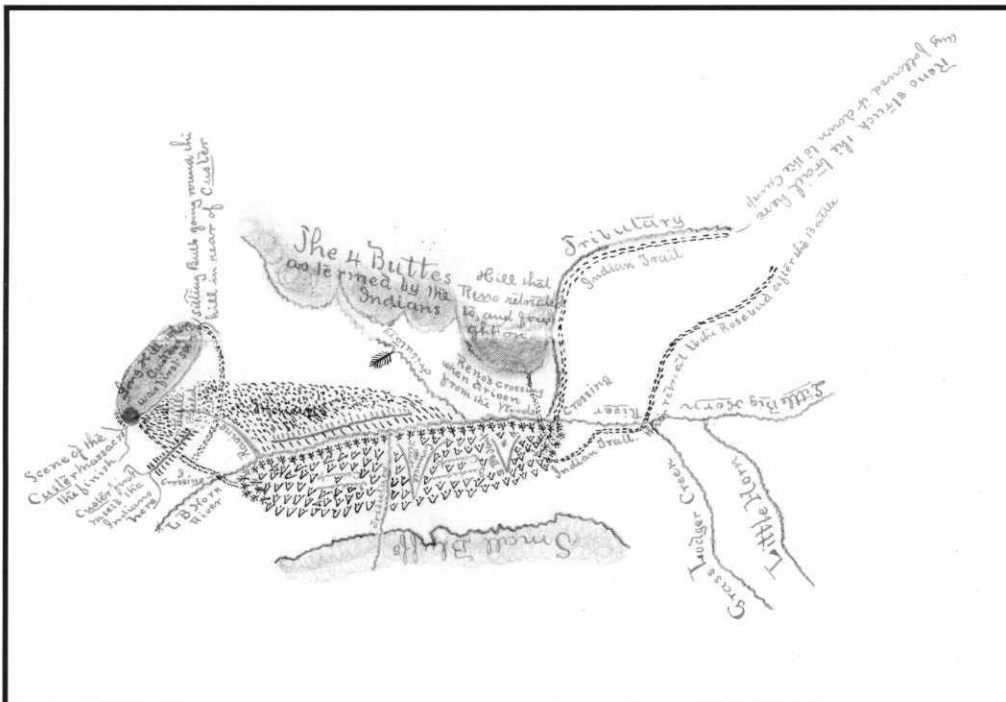
on both sides of us, so that it was impossible for us to get away."

As men from the main village prepared to ride out to engage Brig. Gen. George Crook's approaching troops at the Battle of the Rosebud, Kill Eagle attempted to persuade them to not fight. "*When the Indians returned from the battle,*" he recalled, "*they denounced me as a traitor because I did not go on to the fight.*"

He and his men were abused. A Cheyenne named Black Moccasin returned with the severed arm of a white man and went about striking Kill Eagle's men with it, saying "*Here is your husband's hand.*" Others hit them with scalps of Crows killed in the battle. The Indian soldiers took their dogs so that they would have nothing to eat.

*"If ever one of these men comes into the agency,"* Kill Eagle later stated angrily, recalling the humiliation of these actions, *"I vow to kill him."*

After the Battle of the Rosebud, the village moved into camp on Greasy Grass Creek. Months later, Kill Eagle related what he saw of the Battle of the Little Big Horn, scratching out a map on the ground as he talked to Army officers. Capt. Robert E. Johnston later redrew the map on paper to accompany his transcription of Kill Eagle's interview. The original map possesses two different scales. At a larger scale, the general course of the Yellowstone, Big Horn and Rosebud rivers are shown, copied



*Detail of Kill Eagle's map, showing the Little Big Horn battlefield. The map was scratched out on the ground by Kill Eagle and later copied onto paper by Capt. Robert E. Johnston. A color version of this map appears on the magazine's back cover.*

Courtesy National Archives

from the Army's general map of the region. This identifies the location of the battlefield. Then, at a more detailed scale, the map shows the general geography of the Indian village and battlefield as recalled by Kill Eagle.

Kill Eagle explained that after the Battle of the Rosebud, the Indians moved down a tributary of the Greasy Grass. *"We crossed the Greasy Grass Creek, went down and camped on it."* Kill Eagle's map shows the "Indian Trail" following along on the south side of a "Tributary" (Reno Creek) and ending at a "crossing" of the Little Big Horn River.

Kill Eagle also described the local geography as illustrated on his map. West of the Indian village, he mentioned "small bluffs" and on the east side across the river are "The 4 Buttes as termed by the Indians." North of the Little Big Horn ford is another tributary identified with a single tree, presumably Medicine Tail Coulee. Further north is another landmark marked "Ravine," most likely what is today known as Deep Ravine.

Asked about the size of the Indian village, Kill Eagle described it as perhaps six miles long and one mile wide. The village is shown on the map as one large encampment extending from Reno Creek to the Deep Ravine (a later version of this map extends the village beyond Deep Ravine).<sup>8</sup> Asked if the lodges were put up close together, he said yes, *"Just as thick as they could be put up."*

He also noted that Sitting Bull was located in the upper village where Reno's men first attacked, living in "a very large skin lodge." This is recorded on the map as "S.B.'s Tent." He mentioned the presence of a council tent near the center of the village: *"It was painted yellow, and holds a great many when they crowd in."* The "Council Tent" is shown on the map in the center of the Indian village just south of a ravine running through the camp. Kill Eagle added that he and his band were located in *"about the middle of the camp."*

Kill Eagle explained that the troops followed their trail down the tributary, crossed the river *"and struck the camp at the upper end, where there was a clump of timber and opened the fight. When the firing commenced the Indians rushed to the scene of action.... The Indians drove the soldiers back out of the timber, and they recrossed the Greasy Grass Creek below the mouth of the tributary, taking their position on the hill, bare without any grass."*

On the Kill Eagle map, Johnston wrote *"Reno struck the trail here and followed it down to the*

*camp."* While Reno's skirmish line is not marked on the map, it does show "Reno crossing when driven from the woods" and the "Hill that Reno retreated to, and fought on."

Kill Eagle then commented that *"Another party [of soldiers] appeared on top of a long hill moving toward the south."* This is marked on the map: "Long Hill where Custer was first seen." A trail is clearly shown from the edge of this long hill to the lower end of the village, fording the river at what is marked "1. crossing" (lower crossing). This seems to imply that Custer's column crossed the river here to reach the lower end of the Indian village, though Kill Eagle specifically stated that none had crossed.

The appearance of additional soldiers created *"great excitement in the camp, [and] the Indian warriors rushed to the left to meet the troops. The Indians crossed the creek and then the firing commenced."* The map shows a large number of short lines and dots crossing the river and heading towards the hill, marked in the center as "Indians." The map also includes a long red line with red ticks on the east side of the river. While its significance is not recorded on the original map, the map's later revision notes that *"The line drawn with red dots on the opposite side from the camp denotes a reserve line of Indian soldiers."*

Kill Eagle claimed he remained behind in the village and did not participate in the battle. But he was able to describe the sound of the firing weapons. *"It was very fast at times and then slower until it died away."* He added:

*"He claps the palms of his hands together very fast for several minutes, stopping suddenly, which denotes the sound of the firing when they (Custer) first began. After a few seconds elapses he repeats the same as above and continues but all the time lessens the quickness of the patting and sound until it suddenly dies out."*

Kill Eagle later learned from Sitting Bull that the Indians had met the soldiers about 600 yards east of the river and succeeded in driving them back up the hill. Sitting Bull *"then made a circuit to the right around the hill and drove off and captured most of the horses."* The map shows a dotted line looping east, labeled "Sitting Bull going round the hill in rear of Custer." According to what Sitting Bull told Kill Eagle, *"The troops made a stand at the lower end of the hill, and there they were all killed."*

The Kill Eagle map records “Custer first meets the Indians here” and then shows where they were pushed back to “Scene of the Custer Massacre the finish.” The “Battlefield” is also marked, with some black dots and some red dots. On a later version of the map, someone wrote “red dots denote killed and wounded.”

Kill Eagle told Army officers that after the battle, the Lakota decided to remain encamped there for the night. *“They had just begun to fix their lodges that evening, when a report came that troops were coming from toward the mouth of the creek. When this report came, after dark, the lodges were all taken down and they started up the creek.”* The last note on the Kill Eagle map shows their route east and is marked “Indian Trail. Their retreat to the Rosebud after the Battle.”

Several days after the Battle of the Little Bighorn while the main village was encamped on Rosebud Creek, Kill Eagle and his band finally managed to slip away on a dark and rainy night. *“We struck our lodges and moved, traveling all the night and most of the following day.”*

When they learned that Indian soldiers had been sent to retrieve them, they ran even faster: *“Our flight [became] pell-mell, everybody for their own life.”* They finally reached Grand River where they set up their camp for several weeks to rest and eat. Kill Eagle sent several messengers to the Standing Rock Agency to inform authorities that they had been forced into the village on the Little Big Horn and that they wished to be allowed to return in peace. An Oglala passing through their camp warned they all would be hung, but Kill Eagle stated that he *“did not fear it.”*

## The Surrender of Kill Eagle

News of Custer’s defeat reached the Standing Rock Agency in early July, fueling the ongoing conflict between the Indian agent, John Burke, and the commanding officer of the troops stationed nearby, Captain Poland. Calling Burke a “notorious liar,” Poland accused the agent of purposely inflating the number of Indians present at Standing Rock so that he could sell the additional rations and pocket the proceeds.<sup>9</sup>

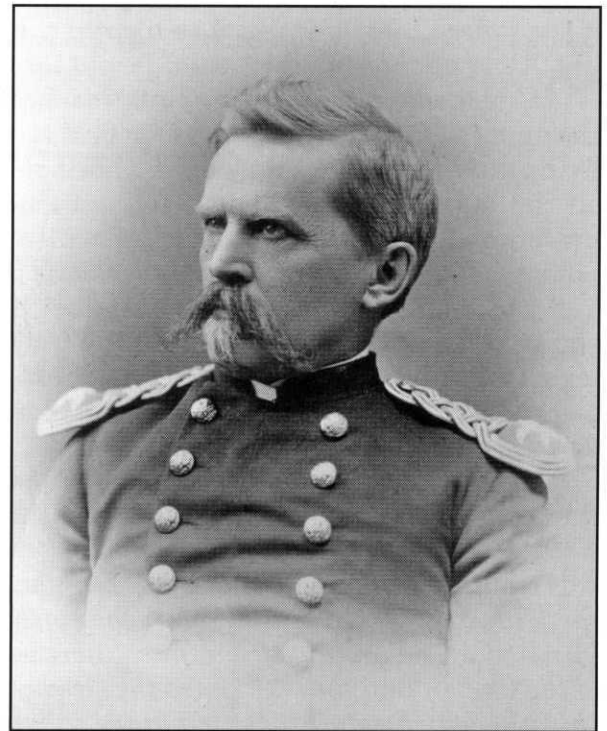
*“This Agency is in a fearfully bad condition,”* wrote Lt. Col. Fred Grant during his inspection tour in mid-August 1876. He noted that the Indian Bureau listed 1,046 lodges present, attributing seven persons to a family for a total of more than

7,000 Indians present. The official military count, however, was only 290 lodges, with no more than 1,500 people total. Enough beef was issued on Aug. 28, Grant complained, to give 35 pounds to every man, woman and child. Much of it, he believed, was being dried and taken out to Kill Eagle’s “hostile camp” perhaps only two days away.

*“All the Indians I saw at this Agency—and I saw a large proportion of them—were either old men, old women, or little children,”* he noted, implying that all the men of fighting age were out with Sitting Bull.<sup>10</sup>

On Aug. 16, 1876, Lt. Col. William Carlin assumed command of the small military garrison at Standing Rock, replacing the contentious Captain Poland. But relations between the Army and the Office of Indian affairs did not improve. Carlin agreed that the number of Indians at Standing Rock were being greatly exaggerated by the Indian agent. While all was quiet at the agency, Carlin understood that Kill Eagle’s band was slowly approaching from the hostile village and that they had sent word that they would come in, *“whatever be the consequences.”* The approach of Kill Eagle only exacerbated the tensions between the officer and the Indian agent.<sup>11</sup>

Courtesy National Archives



William Carlin, post commander at Fort Yates in 1876-77. Photo taken ca. 1885 following his promotion to colonel of the 4th Infantry.



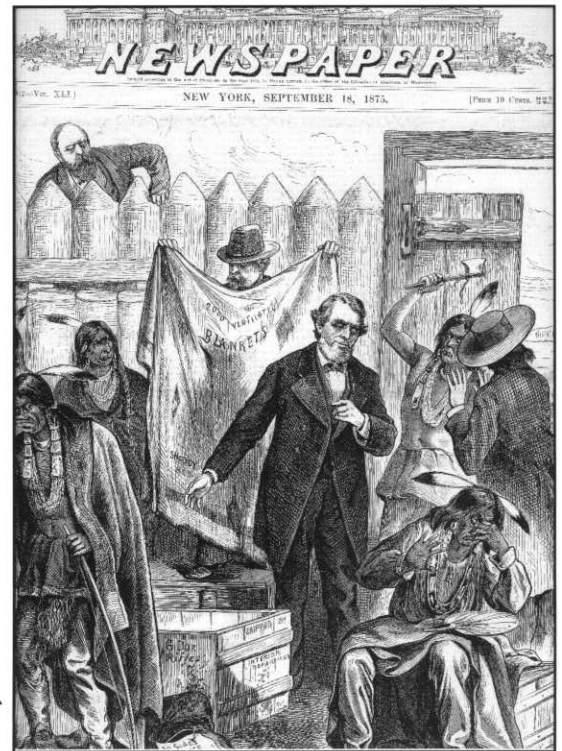
A week and a half after assuming command, Carlin learned that a runner had arrived with a message from Sitting Bull, attempting to persuade the friendly bands to join him in the conflict. According to his intelligence, this runner had been allowed to speak in a council at the village of John Grass about 10 miles below the post. Like Kill Eagle, John Grass was a leader of a band of Sihasapa Lakota. His father, Used As A Shield, had been a prominent headman for decades, signing most of the major treaties with the U.S. government during the nineteenth century. But with the death of his father two years earlier, 32-year-old John Grass was still consolidating his role as leader of his band.

Though not present at the meeting, Colonel Carlin understood that Grass spoke in support of the hostiles, urging that "the cause of the Indians might not yet be lost." Grass purportedly said that if there were any brave men among them, they could seize the firearms and supplies at the agency. Carlin presumed that such bravado was not from a belief that the Lakota could prevail in the war but a hope of prolonging the fighting to secure better terms with the U.S. government. While Agent Burke trusted John Grass, Carlin was convinced that he was "treacherous" and ordered his camp to be moved closer to the post.<sup>12</sup>

Near midnight on Aug. 28, the long-awaited Sihasapa headman Kill Eagle finally arrived at Standing Rock, accompanied by several men from his camp. Agent Burke later said that he refused to hold a council with the headman as it was too late at night and he instructed his interpreter to urge Kill Eagle to bring his band in the following day to surrender. Carlin, however, understood that the Indian agent had held a secret interview with Kill Eagle. Angry that he had not been notified of Kill Eagle's visit and that Burke had allowed a suspected hostile to leave the agency, Carlin ordered the Indian agent held under house arrest.

"While I claim no legal right to interfere with an Indian agent in the discharge of his duties and have no disposition to do so," Carlin wrote to his superiors in defense of his action, "I have not the slightest doubt of my right to treat Mr. Burke as I would a traitor or spy in time of war, who violated his duty and instructions while professing all the while the greatest desire to do his duty."<sup>13</sup>

Carlin placed Capt. Robert E. Johnston, 1st Infantry, in temporary charge of the agency and



Leslie's Illustrated view of the government's Indian policy in 1875.

telegraphed headquarters for further instructions. General Sheridan replied that same day, giving him authority to assume control of the agency. "*The necessity of preventing any food from going out to the hostile camps is so great,*" Sheridan wrote, "*that you are authorized to kill any Indian or Indians you may find engaged in doing so.*"<sup>14</sup>

On the night of Sept. 4, Carlin sent out his interpreter, E.H. Allison, to visit Kill Eagle's village. A short distance from the post, however, Allison ran into a line of mounted Indians who demanded to know his destination and was told that he could not proceed without first obtaining permission from the headmen at the agency. Both John Grass and the Hunkpapa leader Running Antelope expressed surprise that Carlin would send a messenger to Kill Eagle without prior approval of the agency chiefs "who owned this country."

"I believe it will be necessary to chastise these Indians," Carlin complained, "before they will ever understand that the Government, the white people, and the troops of the United States, are not their inferiors."

He blamed Burke and the agency employees for fostering these attitudes among the agency bands and for prejudicing them against the mili-

tary. "They are insolent, defiant, and in reality, as hostile at heart as Sitting Bull," he wrote.<sup>15</sup>

On Sept. 10, Carlin ordered the arrest of John Grass, claiming the Sihasapa leader was influencing the hostiles not to come in and surrender. "His arrest has had a marked effect on the behavior of the Indians here," Carlin reported, "and for the better. Their conduct is now very respectful and friendly when they come about the post or agency."

Suspecting that Red Hawk had been harboring some members of Kill Eagle's band and sending out supplies to others, Captain Johnston refused to issue rations to this band during the regular distribution on Sept. 11.<sup>16</sup>

After two days in the guardhouse, John Grass requested permission to visit Kill Eagle in an effort to persuade him to surrender. On Sept. 14, Grass returned with Kill Eagle's band and the following day, they presented themselves to Carlin to formally surrender. These included 142 people, including Kill Eagle, Little Wound and 27 other men, plus another 113 women and children. They turned in their weapons as well as 107 Indian ponies and one mule. Carlin's appraisal of John Grass had now moderated, attributing his actions to the influence of whites around the agency.<sup>17</sup>

Kill Eagle represented the first official surrender of the Great Sioux War of 1876-77. General Terry authorized Carlin to send Kill Eagle's band to Fort Snelling, Minn., or another army post within the district to be held as prisoners of war. General Sheridan, however, recommended that the prisoners be kept at Standing Rock. "If they could be encamped and guarded near the post it would be best; but Carlin must use his own judgment."

Sheridan summarized the army's general policy toward any Indians surrendering at the agencies: "The hostiles can be notified that if they surrender unconditionally, delivering up their ponies, arms and ammunition, that they will be held as prisoners only until the government decides if any other punishment will be administered."

Other Lakota leaders advocated that Kill Eagle not be treated as a prisoner of war, given his long standing as a friendly headman. During negotiations over the Black Hills treaty at Standing Rock in October 1876, John Grass spoke up for Kill Eagle. He explained:

*"All last winter and all last summer we did not eat well; hence he went out and saw something with his eyes. When he returned he was made to*

*surrender, and I wish that while you are here you will see that he is released."*<sup>18</sup>

On Dec. 1, 1876, operation of the Standing Rock Agency was turned over to a new civilian agent, William T. Hughes. Despite the change in personnel, conflict between the Army and the Indian Bureau continued. Kill Eagle had initially been assigned to the camp of Goose, an Indian scout. Goose complained that the new agent was not issuing sufficient rations for his now expanded band. He also grumbled that the agency interpreter did not treat him with the respect deserving of a headman.<sup>19</sup>

In February 1877, Kill Eagle met with Agent Hughes to request that the Hunkpapa families who had been forced to remain in his band since they surrendered be allowed to rejoin their proper bands. He also requested that the families with Red Hawk be transferred back to Kill Eagle's band. Carlin had no objection to transferring the Hunkpapa families, but he noted that "Kill Eagle resigned his position of chief, or at least acquiesced in having the rank and position of chief transferred to 'The Goose,' at the request of his men. I therefore do not regard Kill Eagle as a chief. He is also still a prisoner on parole."<sup>20</sup>

As the Great Sioux War of 1876-77 drew to a close, restrictions on Kill Eagle's band finally loosened. By the summer of 1877, he was again recognized as headman of his band at the agency. Like other Lakota leaders, he found himself caught up in the ongoing conflict between the Army and the Indian agent. In 1878, Kill Eagle informed Colonel Carlin that he had seen Hughes remove swatches of cloth from the Lakota's annuity goods for his own use. Several months later, he signed an Army affidavit complaining that the agent had failed to issue rations to a family, resulting in a child's death. Agent Hughes retaliated by requesting an investigation of Kill Eagle for allegedly shooting an arrow into a cow belonging to a Hunkpapa.<sup>21</sup>

Kill Eagle's experience during the Great Sioux War highlights the challenge faced by many Lakota leaders during this volatile period of their history. When an embargo was placed on the sale of ammunition, Kill Eagle believed he had been forced into leaving the agency to hunt or face starvation. Once he arrived in the northern village, he was branded as a friend of the whites, abused by other Lakota and held as a prisoner. On his return to Standing Rock Agency, he was labeled as a hostile



instead, despite his long friendly relations with the U.S. government, and was held as a prisoner of war. Kill Eagle's story emphasizes how the war impacted all Lakota, regardless of their political views.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, Volume 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 1006
- <sup>2</sup> James Owen Dorsey, "Siouan Sociology," *Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* 15 (1897), 219. This band is not to be confused with a Brule-Oglala band by the same name. According to John Grass, the band was named after Kill Eagle's father who was a Wazhazha.
- <sup>3</sup> John Burke to Commissioner of Indian Affairs (CoIA), Sept. 1, 1875, published in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1875), 247
- <sup>4</sup> CoIA to Burke, Dec. 6, 1875, CoIA Letters Sent; Burke to CoIA, Dec. 22 and Dec. 31, 1875, CoIA Letters Received, Records of Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives and Records Administration
- <sup>5</sup> Capt. John S. Poland to Acting Adjutant General, Dec. 22 and Dec. 31, 1875, Department of Dakota, Letters Received, Record Group 393, NARA. CoIA to Burke, Jan. 13 and Jan. 14, 1876, CoIA, Letters Sent, NARA
- <sup>6</sup> Sheridan to Belknap, Feb. 1, 1876, Sheridan Papers, Library of Congress
- <sup>7</sup> The quotes by Kill Eagle throughout this article are from two interviews that he did with the Army in September 1876. Capt. Robert E. Johnston to CoIA, Sept. 17, 1876, Fort Yates, Letters Received; also found in Letters Received, Department of Dakota and Special Files, Division of Missouri (M1495 Roll 4 Index 321-327), NARA; published in *New York Herald*, Oct. 6, 1876, and W.A. Graham, *The Custer Myth: A Sourcebook of Custeriana* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1953) 48-56. Johnston to commanding officer, Standing Rock, Sept. 26, 1876, Fort Yates, Letters Received; also found in Department of Dakota, Letters Received, NARA
- <sup>8</sup> The later Kill Eagle map is presented in Michael N. Donahue, *Drawing Battle Lines: The Map Testimony of Custer's Last Fight* (El Segundo, CA: Upton & Sons, 2009), 138-143.
- <sup>9</sup> Poland to AAG, July 14, 1876, Department of Dakota, Letters Received. Harold Umber, "Interdepartmental Conflict Between Fort Yates and Standing Rock: Problems of Indian Administration, 1870-1881," *North Dakota History*, Vol. 39 No. 3 (Summer 1972), 4-13, 34

## About the Author

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- <sup>10</sup> Grant to Drum, Sept. 5, 1876, Division of Missouri, Special Files (M1495 R4:48-62), NARA
- <sup>11</sup> Carlin to Ruggles, Aug. 17, 1876, Department of Dakota, Letters Received; Carlin to Ruggles, Aug. 26, 1876, Division of Missouri, Special Files (M1495 R4:1-3), NARA
- <sup>12</sup> Carlin to Ruggles, Aug. 28, 1876, Department of Dakota, Letters Received; Division of Missouri, Special Files (M1495 R4:66-68), NARA
- <sup>13</sup> Carlin to Ruggles, Sept. 2, 1876; Carlin to Burke, Aug. 29, 1876; Burke to Carlin, Aug. 29, 1876; Johnston to Post Adjt., Sept. 1, 1876, Division of Missouri, Special Files (M1495 R4:186-196)
- <sup>14</sup> Sheridan to Carlin, Aug. 30, 1876, Department of Dakota, Letters Received, NARA
- <sup>15</sup> Carlin to Ruggles, Aug. 28, 1876, Department of Dakota, Letters Received, NARA
- <sup>16</sup> Johnston to commanding officer, Standing Rock, Sept. 13, 1876, Fort Yates, Letters Received, NARA. Red Hawk was recognized as leader of the portion of Kill Eagle's band that did not go out with him in the spring of 1876.
- <sup>17</sup> Carlin to Ruggles, Sept. 12 and Sept. 16, 1876; Ruggles to AAG, Div. Mo., Sept. 17, 1876, Division of Missouri, Special Files (M1495 R4:241, 258, 288-290), NARA. Roach to Post Adjutant, Sept. 20, 1876, Fort Yates, Letters Received, NARA
- <sup>18</sup> Message on Concessions from the Sioux, Dec. 26, 1876, Senate Exec. Doc. No. 9, 44th Congress, 2d Session, 48. Stanley Vestal, *Sitting Bull: Champion of the Sioux* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1932), 203
- <sup>19</sup> Carlin to Hughes, Nov. 7, 1876, Standing Rock Agency, General Correspondence, Box 24, NARA, Central Plains Region, Kansas City, Mo.
- <sup>20</sup> Hughes to Carlin, Feb. 6, 1877, Fort Yates, Letters Received. Carlin to Hughes, Feb. 6, 1877, NARA. Standing Rock Agency, General Correspondence, Box 23, NARA, Central Plains Region, Kansas City, Mo.
- <sup>21</sup> Hughes to Carlin, Aug. 17, 1878, Fort Yates, Letters Received, NARA. Kill Eagle disappeared from the records of the Standing Rock Agency in late 1885, suggesting that he died about this time.

