

# The Utes in South Dakota, 1906-1908

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During the years following the Custer battle, many of the plains tribes made futile attempts to resist the white man. The White River band of the Utes, whom this paper is primarily about, made two noteworthy efforts to register contempt for the reservation life and the reduction of their lands.

In 1879, a group of White River Utes, located in northern Colorado, rose in rebellion, killing their agent Nathan Meeker. The Indians were subdued by the army and the White River band, as well as the Uncomahgre band, was transferred to another reservation located in the Uintah Valley of northwestern Utah. The White Rivers who had led the rebellion tried throughout the 1880s to return to Colorado, but the army was able to enforce their exile.<sup>1</sup>

The Utes attempted a second major act of defiance some twenty-odd years after the Meeker affair. This time, there was to be no massacre, but instead, an exodus of a large number of Utes to South Dakota. The story of their journey to our state and of their stay here is interesting from a purely historical viewpoint, but the questions arising from their trip justify to an even greater extent our study of these events. For, whether they understood it or not, the Utes raised the current issues of civil rights, jurisdiction, and self determination by their actions.

1. Floyd A. O'Neil, "The Reluctant Suzerainty: The Uintah and Ouray Reservation," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39 (Spring 1971): 134-37.

Contemporary accounts by the press imply uncertainty as to the reasons for the Utes' departure. For this reason, a look at the sequence of events leading to their journey is necessary to fill in the background. In 1886, Fort Duchesne was established at mid-point on the Utah reservation between the existing agencies at Uintah and Ouray. This action consolidated three bands of the Ute nation into one agency at Fort Duchesne. This consolidation, together with constant talk about opening their reservation to white settlers, made the Utes uneasy, to say the least.<sup>2</sup> Their fears were realized in 1897, when Congress acted to allot the lands of the Uncompahgre Ute Reservation. The substance of that act was as follows:

The Secretary of the Interior is hereby directed to allot agricultural lands in severalty to the Uncompahgre Ute Indians now located upon or belonging to the Uncompahgre Indian Reservation in the State of Utah, said allotments to be upon the Uncompahgre and Uintah reservations or elsewhere in said State. And all the lands of said Uncompahgre Reservation not theretofore allotted in severalty to said Uncompahgre Utes shall, on and after the first day of April, eighteen hundred and ninety-eight, be open for location and entry under all the land laws of the United States.<sup>3</sup>

The government followed this action by having the United States Geological Survey assess the agricultural prospects of the remaining Ute lands. This work, begun in 1899, was completed by 1902.

From the very beginning, the Utes were opposed to opening any of their land to allotment; but by 1902, Congress was ready to act. Utah's congressional delegation had made an all out effort to secure the opening of the reservation,<sup>4</sup> and on 27 May 1902, Congress passed a law providing:

That the Secretary of the Interior, with the consent thereto of the majority of the adult male Indians of the Uintah and the White River tribes of Ute Indians, to be ascertained as soon as practicable by an inspector, shall cause to be allotted to each head of a family eighty acres of agricultural land which can be irrigated and forty acres of such land to each other member of said tribes, said allotments to be made prior to October first, nineteen hundred and three, on which date all the unallotted lands within said reservation shall be restored to the public domain: *Provided*, That persons entering any of said land under the homestead law shall pay therefor at the rate of one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre.<sup>5</sup>

2. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

3. Charles J. Kappler, comp. and ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 2nd ed., 5 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904-1941), 1:621.

4. O'Neil, "Reluctant Suzerainty," p. 138.

5. Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 1:753.

In short, the Utes had failed to stop the movement to allot their reservation.

It appears that Congress wanted some form of acceptance of the allotment by the Utes. For this reason, the secretary of the interior ordered Indian Inspector James McLaughlin to go to Whiterocks, Utah, and obtain consent from the Utes to the allotment. He arrived on 13 May 1903 and began a council with the Indians on 18 May. The Utes were almost unanimously opposed to the provisions set forth in the act. When McLaughlin finally asked for signatures to a document of acceptance, 82 of the 280 Indians eligible to sign, did.<sup>6</sup> McLaughlin's report to the secretary of the interior contained the following:

In conclusion, I desire to state that while the signatures of a majority of the male adult Indians of the reservation were not obtained, I feel that I accomplished all that could reasonably be expected, considering the attitude of the Indians in reference to the matter when I reached the agency, they being then unanimously opposed to the opening of their reservation under the provisions of the act; but through clear explanations of the law and painstaking arguments I succeeded in bringing them to understand that their reservation is going to be opened as provided in the act; that its survey will soon be commenced, and when completed allotments will be made to them, after which the residue will be opened to settlement, except the tract of 250,000 acres situated south of Strawberry River, which is to be reserved for their common use for grazing purposes. They held out strenuously against accepting this statement as a fact, but were finally brought to understand it fully and clearly, and now accept it, at least passively, with as good grace as is reasonable to expect.

Those of the Indians who signed the acceptance of the act did so, as heretofore stated, to show their good will, and many others would doubtless have signed had there been anything to be gained by their doing so. They fully understood that they were to have lands allotted to them whether they consented to the act or not, and having nothing to lose by refusing to assent to the provisions of the act, they declined to sign and thus became a party to that which was distasteful to them. There is not the slightest doubt, however, in my mind, judging from the courteous manner in which the Indians treated me, and the confidence they have in Captain Mercer, but that they will all acquiesce gracefully and meet the wishes of the Department in the premises.

They are now all diligently employed and appear much happier than when I arrived at their agency on this mission.<sup>7</sup>

McLaughlin would later realize how unsettled the issue really was in the eyes of the Utes.

During the next two years, the situation on the reservation became even more complicated. White settlers, wishing to obtain the choicest parcels of land, illegally entered the reservation and surveyed the lands they hoped to file on later. Other opportunists engaged in the illegal sale of alcohol to the Indians. These prob-

6. U.S., Congress, House, *House Document No. 33*, 58th Cong., 1st sess., 30 May 1903, Serial 4565, pp. 3-5.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

lems reached such proportions that the Indian agent at Fort Duchesne was forced to place restrictions on travel across the reservation.<sup>8</sup>

The Utes themselves still hadn't given up their attempts to stop the opening of the reservation. In a final appeal to the government, a delegation of Utes went to Washington, D.C., in March 1905 to argue their case. The delegation was unsuccessful, and the White River representatives walked out of the talks as a group. Thus, the reservation was opened by presidential proclamation on 28 August 1905.<sup>9</sup>

The White River Utes were only able to bear their frustrations until the summer of 1906. The winter of 1905-1906 was a hard one, and with the spring they hoped for something better. It appears that some of the Utes felt the Sioux would offer them a refuge in South Dakota. There was also talk of the Sioux as their ally in a war against the government.<sup>10</sup> With such purposes, the Utes headed for South Dakota.

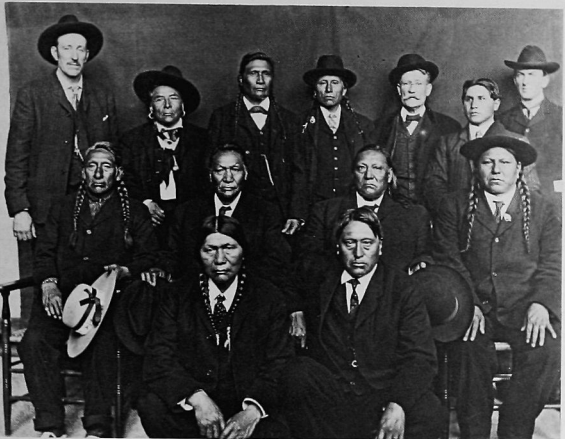
The exact date of their departure has been lost. We can safely say that the group began gathering for the trip in late May 1906. Furthermore, it should be noted that not all of the Utes left at the same time. Newspaper reports of their numbers vary greatly, and all the Utes did not follow the same route. A small group was reported to be at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, as early as 24 July, whereas others were still camped in Wyoming near Douglas as late as 20 August.<sup>11</sup> The Utes moved in typical Plains Indian fashion, by horse and travois. Their procession strung out for miles on the Wyoming plains. They were in no great hurry, making no more than fifteen to twenty miles per day. The travelers caused no actual damage outside of the fact that they trespassed on private lands and ignored the game laws of Wyoming. The Utes were well armed, and their mere presence was a threat to the peace in the eyes of many Wyoming residents. Governor Brooks of Wyoming, not wanting to initiate a confrontation, had wired the Department of the Interior as early as 25 August 1906, stating that he feared trouble might come of their continued presence in his state and asking for help in dealing with the Utes. The Department of the Interior was reluctant to act as the

8. C. F. Larrabee to Secretary of the Interior, 22 June 1905, Uintah Reservation File, Utah State Archives and Records, Salt Lake City, Utah.

9. Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 3:606.

10. Floyd A. O'Neil, "An Anguished Odyssey: The Flight of the Utes, 1906-1908," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 36 (Fall 1968): 319.

11. *Wyoming Tribune*, 20 Aug. 1906.



*The Ute delegation to Washington included, left to right, (front row) Appoh and Arrike; (center row) Ungacochoop, Kochootch, Charlie Shavaroux, and Witchito; (back row) unidentified white man, Siats (interpreter), Ungatowinorokant, Soccioff, unidentified white man, Boco White (interpreter), and another unidentified white man.*

secretary of the interior doubted the legality of using federal troops to return the Utes. Apparently, the allotment of their lands, in essence, had also given the Utes United States citizenship, and thus, the problem was one for the local authorities. The situation hinged on legal interpretation of whether citizenship had actually been granted or whether it lacked confirmation by issuance of actual allotments.<sup>12</sup> The Department of the Interior finally decided to send Indian Inspector James McLaughlin to Wyoming. McLaughlin made contact with a large number of Utes about one hundred miles northwest of New Castle, Wyoming. The

12. U.S., Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended 30 June 1907* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), p. 123 (hereafter cited as *Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1907*); James McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1910), p. 379.

Utes were not happy to see him. He identified Soccioff, Red Cap, and Appah as their leaders. McLaughlin held a council; the majority of the Utes refused to consider returning to Utah. McLaughlin, fearing violence might result in continued discussions, left the encampment on 7 October with a group of forty-six Utes, who returned to Uintah Reservation.<sup>13</sup>

The situation was still unresolved, and on 17 October, Governor Brooks requested federal troops in this somewhat dramatic message to the secretary of the interior:

Band of renegade Ute Indians near Gillette, are committing depredations, defy arrest, and beyond control of state authorities; serious results apprehended and assistance of Federal troops deemed necessary. I hereby request that the Government send United States' troops to that locality to preserve order, arrest and remove those Indians; If more formal request necessary, will furnish it. Kindly advise action taken.<sup>14</sup>

This time, Washington viewed the matter differently. President Theodore Roosevelt directed the Department of the Interior to turn the matter over to the War Department. On 18 October 1906, Captain S. A. Cloman of the army's general staff received a memorandum informing him of the situation in Wyoming. The memorandum directed Major General Greely, commander of the northern division, to order a force of cavalry to proceed to Wyoming and command the Utes to return to their reservation: "It is the President's desire that they be firmly but tactfully dealt with and that a violent course be avoided unless their defiance of the authority of the United States continues and it becomes necessary, for that reason, to compel them to desist from their unlawful conduct and return to the lands which have been allotted to their use in the Uintah Reservation, Utah."<sup>15</sup>

Captains Johnson and Pacton, with two troops of the Tenth Cavalry from Fort Robinson, caught up with the Utes on 22 October, finding them camped on Spring Creek and the Little Powder, about forty miles north of Gillette, Wyoming. They held council with Chief Appah's band the next morning. They found him with about 300 followers, 150 of them men fully armed. The Utes stated that they had harmed no one, and it appeared that the only law they had broken was killing game. At noon, the band moved down the Powder, announcing they were headed for the Black Hills and had no intention of waiting to hold further coun-

13. McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian*, pp. 383-86.

14. Governor B. B. Brooks to E. A. Hitchcock, 17 Oct. 1906, Governor B. B. Brooks Papers, Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

15. Indian Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1907, p. 124.

cils or of returning to Utah. Major General Greely, after receiving word of this first confrontation, ordered Colonel Rogers, stationed at Fort Meade, to take six troops of the Sixth Cavalry and move into the field, establishing a base camp near Belle Fourche. He was to compel the Utes to return with him to Fort Meade. The Indians were to be held as prisoners, waiting further instructions from the War Department. Major Grierson, with two troops of cavalry, was to follow the Utes, avoiding battle as his force was considered inferior to the strength of Appah's band. In addition, troops at other posts were directed to prevent the Utes from escaping into Montana. Two troops of the Sixth Cavalry from Fort Keogh, near Miles City, Montana, acted as escort for the supply train. Fort Mackenzie in Wyoming provided two companies of infantry. The authorities hoped that the sheer numbers of soldiers would persuade the Indians to return to Utah without a fight.<sup>16</sup>

On 2 November 1906, the Indians were in the extreme southeastern corner of Montana. The cavalry and the Utes met and held a council, which decided that the Utes would have a chance to air their grievances. A delegation of chiefs would be allowed to go to Washington and present their case to the president, the secretary of the interior, and the commissioner of Indian Affairs. This promise given by the army convinced the Utes to proceed to Fort Meade. They broke camp on 6 November. The group moved slowly because of its size and the condition of the horses, and there were groups of stragglers. They camped at Belle Fourche on 19 November and finally reached Fort Meade on the twentieth.<sup>17</sup>

The Utes were taken to a site on the United States military reservation about two miles south of Fort Meade, where they set up their tepees along Alkali Creek. The creek provided water, and the wooded area along the creek provided fuel. The army considered the Utes prisoners and kept them under surveillance, allowing them limited freedom of movement. The Utes visited Sturgis, South Dakota, on occasion and took short hunting trips into the Black Hills. During their stay on Alkali Creek, they celebrated the Bear Dance.<sup>18</sup> The exact date for the dance is

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-26; *Belle Fourche Bee*, 1, 8, and 22 Nov. 1906.

17. *Belle Fourche Bee*, 1, 8, and 22 Nov. 1906.

18. Interview with Earl Matz, Sturgis, South Dakota, 19 Mar. 1977. The Ute camp on Alkali Creek was located one-half mile from Matz's grandparents' farm. Matz helped the author locate this campsite in Meade County.



*Four Ute chiefs, Apona, Chuponis, Rainbow, and Pompy, two women, and Tabbichoats of the Indian police at the Alkali Creek encampment, January 1907.*



unknown, but since the Bear Dance is a festival of spring, it is logical to assume it was celebrated in the spring of 1907 because the Utes were moved from Alkali Creek that summer. Early reports of their arrival at Fort Meade indicate they were low on supplies. The army moved quickly to correct this problem, furnishing the wanderers with both food and clothing.<sup>19</sup>

In January of 1907, the government kept its promise, and a delegation of Utes visited the nation's capital, with Captain Carter P. Johnson accompanying the group.<sup>20</sup> President Roosevelt granted the Utes an audience. The group raised the same issues the Utes had spoken of in 1905 and restated their opposition to returning to Utah. President Roosevelt asked them how they intended to support themselves in South Dakota. They answered, "Our father, the Government, is good, we trust the Government to take care of us." Roosevelt stressed the point that they would have to do something to support themselves, but he was willing to show consideration and kindness. This conference ended on the note that the Utes could negotiate an agreement with the Cheyenne River Sioux for a place to live in South Dakota.<sup>21</sup> The important part of this meeting, however, was not the permission to negotiate with the Sioux, but Roosevelt's position that the Utes were to work.

Captain Johnson made several other trips to Washington, trying to work out an acceptable solution. The Utes remained firm in their conviction that they would rather fight than return to their reservation. Finally, in March 1907, Johnson negotiated an agreement that would allow the Utes to remain in South Dakota. The plan provided for the leasing of four townships of land from the Cheyenne River Sioux. The Utes would pay the Sioux four and one-half cents an acre for the land annually. The land was to be leased for five years, beginning on 1 July 1907. The cost would be deducted from the Utes' annual annuity funds. All parties consented to this arrangement; so by 11 June 1907, the last of the Utes were enroute from Fort Meade to the Thunder Butte country.<sup>22</sup> The Utes actually relocated at the juncture of the Moreau River and Thunder Butte Creek.

19. Indian Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1907, p. 126.

20. McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian*, p. 386.

21. Commissioner of Indian Affairs F. E. Leupp to Secretary of the Interior, 2 Nov. 1907, Cheyenne River, 1907, File 71455, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, Record Group 48, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as RG 48, NA).

22. Walter Baker to F. E. Leupp, 31 Jan. 1908, Cheyenne River, 1908, File 9757, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as RG 75, NA).

Responsibility for the Utes passed from the army to the Department of the Interior with their settlement in July at Thunder Butte. Colonel Thomas Downs, agent in charge of the Cheyenne River Agency, became their overseer. Actually, the Utes became the responsibility of the Indian Service personnel stationed at Thunder Butte, who took their orders from Downs. The personnel stationed at Thunder Butte included Walter Baker, the Indian farmer, Sidney Corbin, the day school teacher, and Mrs. Corbin, the housekeeper of the school.<sup>23</sup>

The Utes were unhappy at Thunder Butte almost from the time of their arrival. Downs, the agent in charge, insisted on their compliance with the wishes of President Roosevelt that they work



*Utes at Fourth of July celebration in South Dakota, 1907.*

and have their children attend school. He informed the Utes from the beginning of their stay on the Cheyenne River Reservation that these requirements were to be met.

The Utes, on the other hand, remained adamant in their refusal to meet these requirements. Though they did permit some of their children to attend the day school at Thunder Butte Station, they feared sending them to a boarding school because they felt

23. *Ibid.*

they might die there. They said they had seen too many children die in boarding schools in Utah.<sup>24</sup>

Agent Downs was not satisfied with partial fulfillment of the requests. The problem was further complicated over a gross misunderstanding of the original agreement worked out between Captain Johnson and the Utes while they were still at Fort Meade. The Utes claimed they had been promised full rations for each day of the year, that they would not be required to work, and that the school and storehouse erected at Thunder Butte would be on the land they leased. Downs maintained that they were to receive rations equivalent to nine months of a year and would be required to work to pay for the additional three months rations. He also insisted that the buildings erected at Thunder Butte Station were to be on Sioux land and used jointly by the two tribes.<sup>25</sup> Downs's continued insistence on all three conditions brought on a showdown. He met in early October with a representative Ute council, headed by a chief called Yellowstone. The Yellowstone commission was informed that unless they chose to obey the rules set down, their rations would be cut.<sup>26</sup> Agent Downs, after conferring with his superiors in Washington, ordered the daily rations be cut in half. On 14 October 1907, Agent Downs held another council with the Utes at Thunder Butte Station. The agent brought with him Charles Dagenett, supervisor of Indian employment, who offered the Utes work on the railroad within twenty miles of Rapid City. Jesse House, superintendent of the Rapid City Indian School, also attended and offered the Utes schooling for their children and pasture for their ponies on the lands near the school. The Utes flatly declined all offers and restated their previous position. The crisis had reached the point of no return. The Indians were angered to the extent that they threatened to fight if forced to obey.

Downs returned to the Cheyenne River Agency and wrote the commissioner of Indian Affairs, requesting that the Utes be disarmed at once and returned to Utah because he feared their disobedience would spread to the Sioux. He also ordered a detail of fifteen policemen sent to the agency to maintain order.<sup>27</sup>

On 21 October 1907, the situation became critical. Red Cap, one

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. Unsigned letter [Captain Carter?] to Secretary of the Interior, 22 Oct. 1907, Cheyenne River, 1907, File 71455, RG 48, NA.

27. Thomas Downs to Secretary of the Interior, 17 Oct. 1907, Cheyenne River, 1907, File 71455, RG 48, NA.

of the Ute chiefs, and two other Utes went to Baker's house and asked why the policemen were at the station. Baker told them that the policemen had come to build a barn. Red Cap rejected Baker's answer and said that "they had come to take their children to school, but if there were as many police as Utes, they could not take their children to school."<sup>28</sup> On this same day, a Sioux by the name of Iron Lightening came to the Thunder Butte Day School, which his daughter attended, and asked permission to take her to another station. He indicated that there was going to be trouble.<sup>29</sup> Iron Lightening later met a rancher on the way to Bear Creek Station and told him that the police at Thunder Butte were preparing to drive the Utes back to Utah.<sup>30</sup> Other ranchers grazing their herds along the Moreau saw Sioux families leaving the area. The ranchers interpreted this to mean that the Sioux had no desire to take part in the Ute uprising.<sup>31</sup>

Agent Downs returned to Thunder Butte Station on the afternoon of 21 October 1907. He was informed of the situation by Baker, the farmer, and by Corbin of the day school. Corbin told him that his wife had been warned by Iron Lightening that the Utes were about to destroy the government buildings at the station and that all whites at Thunder Butte were in great danger.<sup>32</sup> That afternoon, Downs met with the Utes again, but they again refused to obey the demands. Somehow, Downs averted violence and managed to slip away from the station on the twenty-third. He telephoned this message from White Horse Station on the morning of the twenty-fourth: "Send at once all the armed men that can be had at and near the agency, and also telegraph Fort Meade for three troops of cavalry."<sup>33</sup>

By the morning of the twenty-fifth, Downs had a force of seventy armed men at his disposal. The clerk Rastall, who had received Downs's request, relayed it to the commissioner of Indian Affairs.

28. Walter Baker to Summary Court, Camp Thunder Butte, S. Dak., Sworn Testimony, 1 Feb. 1908, Cheyenne River, 1908, File 9757, RG 75, NA.

29. J. M. Corbin to Summary Court, Camp Thunder Butte, S. Dak., Sworn Testimony, 2 Feb. 1908, Cheyenne River, 1908, File 9757, RG 75, NA.

30. Charles Roache to Summary Court, Camp Thunder Butte, S. Dak., Sworn Testimony, 2 Feb. 1908, Cheyenne River, 1908, File 9757, RG 75, NA.

31. George Case to Summary Court, Camp Thunder Butte, S. Dak., Sworn Testimony, 31 Jan. 1908, Cheyenne River, 1908, File 9757, RG 75, NA.

32. Walter Baker to F. E. Leupp, 31 Jan. 1908, Cheyenne River, 1908, File 9757, RG 75, NA.

33. C. W. Rastall to F. E. Leupp, 24 Oct. 1907, Cheyenne River, 1907, File 71455, RG 48, NA.

Rastall then organized a volunteer force. He was able to enlist the support of about fifty men from Forest City, South Dakota. A messenger sent by Downs halted this group about four miles east of Thunder Butte Station. Downs ordered the group to return to the agency, fearing that their appearance might trigger violence.<sup>34</sup>

A bend of the Moreau River was the entrance to the Station and provided a natural defensive position for the Utes. The high bluffs of the Moreau were on all sides, except one, and a passage way of about forty feet in width provided the only good access to the station. Apparently, the Utes had taken up positions in this area. Meanwhile, the army had been reviewing the agent's request for assistance. Troops were now dispatched to Thunder Butte from Fort Meade, Fort DesMoines, and Fort Robinson.<sup>35</sup>

Captain Johnson, hearing of the crisis, volunteered his services as a negotiator on 22 October and the army accepted his offer. Johnson rushed from Nebraska by rail to Gettysburg, South Dakota. He traveled from there by horse, arriving at Thunder Butte on the twenty-ninth. Johnson found that the situation had quieted down. The volunteer force had been withdrawn, and only nine agency police were on duty. He counseled with the Utes, who were delighted to see him, and found their grievances to be the reduction in rations and the threat of being separated from their children. They also told him they would obey all regulations prescribed. Johnson's reception by the Utes infuriated Downs, and he refused to consider their promise to comply with his orders. He wanted some sort of punishment given to the Utes because he feared the precedent set would cause problems for him among the Sioux.<sup>36</sup>

The commissioner of Indian Affairs supported Downs and went so far as to say: "If violence on the part of the Indians requires a counter display of violence on the part of troops, I trust that the collision may be short, sharp, and decisive."<sup>37</sup> Troops were now arriving on the scene, and the force grew to a strength of nearly

34. *Ibid.*; *Forest City Press*, 31 Oct. 1907. While the *Forest City Press* reported a force of twenty men from Forest City, the official communique reported a force of fifty.

35. *Forest City Press*, 31 Oct. 1907; Adjutant General Noyes to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 24 Oct. 1907, Cheyenne River, 1907, File 71455, RG 48, NA.

36. Captain Carter Johnson to Secretary of the Interior, 22 Oct. 1907, Cheyenne River, 1907, File 71455, RG 48, NA.

37. Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior, 2 Nov. 1907, Cheyenne River, 1907, File 71455, RG 48, NA.

one thousand, with an additional company of infantry stationed at Gettysburg. The troops were prepared for war. Some of the units were even furnished with machine guns. All indications were that the army was preparing for a winter campaign.<sup>38</sup>

Captain Johnson continued to argue in support of the Utes, but his words fell on deaf ears. The Utes' lease was now considered terminated, and their only recourse, in light of the odds, was to agree to the conditions set before them by Agent Downs. Red Cap, his family, and about one hundred of the Utes were transferred to the Rapid City area in late November, where the men worked under the supervision of Charles Dagenett. Some of the Ute children attended the boarding school in Rapid City.<sup>39</sup>

The remainder of the Indian encampment at Thunder Butte spent the winter on the banks of the Moreau. They were sadly in need of tents, clothing, and stoves. The stoves finally arrived on 30 January 1908. The rest never came. During the winter of 1907-1908, food supplies also were short at times.<sup>40</sup> The army stayed that winter at Thunder Butte, but in reduced numbers. They were quartered in about a dozen dugouts on the perimeter of the Ute encampment.<sup>41</sup> In the spring, the humbled Utes requested that they be allowed to return to their Uintah Valley Reservation. The commissioner of Indian Affairs concurred, and in late June 1908, Captain Johnson, the Utes' old friend, ten troopers of the Tenth Cavalry, and the Utes began the 1,100 mile return to their reservation in Utah.<sup>42</sup>

Their departure from Fort Meade in late June 1908 brought an end to the so-called Ute Uprising. The Utes' confrontation with the army was the last of its kind for the Plains Indians. The only victims of the uprising were the Utes themselves. Records vary as to the number of them who died while in South Dakota. I know of the existence of twenty graves, the cause of their losses being, for the most part, exposure and consumption.

38. *Forest City Press*, 7 Nov. 1907.

39. *Ibid.*, 21 and 28 Nov. 1907; Charles F. Dagenett to F. E. Leupp, 2 Nov. 1907, Cheyenne River, 1907, File 71455, RG 48, NA; U.S., Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior, 1908* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), pp. 119-20.

40. C. W. Rastall to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 4 Feb. 1908, Central Files of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1907-1939, File 9410, RG 75, NA.

41. Interview with Owen Slidesoff, Thunder Butte, S. Dak., 26 Mar. 1977. Slidesoff is a life-long resident of Thunder Butte, and he showed the author the remains of the pits the army dug in 1907.

42. See O'Neil, "Anguished Odyssey," pp. 325-26.



*Red Cap and his family, 1907.*

The epilogue to this story should fix the blame on someone; yet that is impossible. The Department of the Interior chose to blame Baker, the farmer, because of his lack of experience as a servant of the Indian Service, and the teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Corbin, for their exaggerated versions of the crisis. They, in turn, chose to blame their immediate superior Downs for his stubbornness in dealing with the Utes. Some blame has been given to Captain Johnson for being too sympathetic to the Utes' cause. The Utes have been blamed for the whole affair because they resisted the civilizing influences of the white world.<sup>43</sup> In short, everyone blamed someone else; yet no one was willing to accept the responsibility. Above all, no one, save the Utes themselves, questioned the allotment that started the whole affair.

43. C. W. Rastall to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 4 Feb. 1908, Cheyenne River, 1908, File 9757, RG 75, NA. See also McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian*, pp. 372-74.

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