E. W. Wynkoop and the Bluff Creek Council, 1866

TIMOTHY A. ZWINK

HISTORIANS of the Plains Indian wars have generally agreed that the Central Plains were peaceful during 1866, especially when compared with Indian-white conflicts both before and after that year. The U.S. army was held in check during the year in an attempt to give the peace treaties signed on the Little Arkansas river in 1865 a chance to become effective. But not all Central Plains Indians had accepted those treaties. In searching for an explanation beyond the 1865 treaties for the reduced Indian hostilities in 1866, an evaluation of the efforts of one man, E. W. Wynkoop, may shed some light.

It appears that Wynkoop’s diligent efforts in negotiating agreements with the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians after the Little Arkansas treaties in 1865 contributed significantly to the maintenance of peace in 1866. The Bluff creek council in early 1866 between Wynkoop and the nontreaty tribesmen paved the way for

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2. Edward Wanshear Wynkoop, 1836-1891, had come west in 1856 from Pennsylvania to carve a niche in the history of the Western frontier. He soon became involved in the development of the trans-Mississippi region when he was appointed sheriff of Arapahoe county, Kansas territory, in 1858 by Terr. Gov. James W. Denver who had organized administration for the new gold mining settlement at the junction of Cherry and South Platte rivers in the western reaches of the territory. As first sheriff of Arapahoe county, Wynkoop had jurisdiction extending into the Rocky mountain area. While sheriff, Wynkoop joined the Lecompton gold rush party which founded Denver during the year of his appointment, and his son claimed that he suggested naming the new settlement after territorial Governor Denver. After trying his hand at mining, Wynkoop ran for and was elected sheriff of Denver. Compounding his involvement in local affairs, Wynkoop joined Co. A of the First regiment of Colorado volunteers in 1861 at the beginning of the Civil War as a second lieutenant, soon being promoted to captain. After action at Glorieta Pass, N. Mex., in which the Colorado volunteers played a significant role in routing the advancing Confederates, commander John M. Chivington was promoted to colonel and Wynkoop advanced to the rank of major. His position with the military continued and overlapped with his activities as special Indian agent during 1865-1866 while on detached duty from the army.—See Stan Hoig, The Sand Creek Massacre (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), p. 82; Edward E. Wynkoop, “Edward Wanshear Wynkoop,” Kansas Historical Collections, v. 13 (1913-1914), pp. 71-73; E. W. Wynkoop to Thomas Murphy, December 9, 1866, “Letters Received,” Office of Indian Affairs, Microcopy 234, Roll 879, National Archives (hereafter cited “LR,” OIA, MS234, R879).
a détente with the dog soldiers and other nonsignatories of the Little Arkansas treaties. This ultimately culminated in the pacific nature of the perennially hostile warriors of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe bands during 1866.³

Indian-white relations on the Central Plains during the years immediately prior to 1866 had been marked by almost constant warfare as the contest for control of the region approached a final showdown. The Santee Sioux uprising in Minnesota during 1862 was followed by a general spread of uneasiness and mistrust of all Indians in the Central Plains region by frontier settlers. Tension also was increased due to the reduction of protective federal troops which were transferred to the East to fight in the ongoing Civil War. Indian resistance to the continued invasion of their lands increased measurably after 1862. Rumored and actual Indian depredations in the West brought forth demands from the settlers for more protection. Most frontiersmen considered all Indians hostile, but peaceful bands did exist. Unfortunately there was no way for whites to discriminate between friendly and hostile tribesmen and this contributed to the Central Plains Indian conflicts. In attempts to alleviate this condition, frontier governors raised state militia forces to protect citizens from hostile Indians. The Third Colorado volunteer cavalry was one such regiment organized to quell the threat of marauding Indians in Colorado territory. This regiment made its indelible mark in the annals of Western history when it participated in the Sand Creek affair in November of 1864.⁴

Following Sand creek, the surviving Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians fled north to the friendly sanctuaries among their kinsmen along the Smoky Hill and Republican rivers. Allying with the Cheyenne dog soldiers, Spotted Tail’s and Pawnee Killer’s

³ The dog soldiers were a hostile, warrior society of the Cheyenne tribe. They counted for about one half the men of the Cheyenne after 1830 when all the men of the Flexed Leg band of Cheyenne joined the society. Members of this fraternity policed their camps and were notorious as being the “most distinct, important, and aggressive of all the Cheyenne bands.”—See Lonnie J. White, “Indian Raids on the Kansas Frontier, 1865-1875” (unpublished Master’s thesis, Texas Technological College, 1955), p. 38; W. S. Campbell, “The Cheyenne Dog Soldiers,” Chronicles of Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, v. 1, no. 1 (January, 1921), pp. 90-97; Donald J. Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), p. 88, Timothy A. Zwink, “The Hancock-Custer Expedition of 1867” (unpublished Master’s thesis, Fort Hays Kansas State College, 1974), p. 6.

⁴ Utley, Frontier Regulars, pp. 45, 188. The Sand creek affair occurred in southeastern Colorado on November 29, 1864. Col. John M. Chivington led a force of Colorado and New Mexican volunteers which conducted a surprise attack upon the peaceful Cheyenne and Arapahoe villages of Black Kettle and White Antelope on Sand creek near Fort Lyon. The troops indiscriminately killed Indian men, women, and children during the ensuing fight. Wynkoop, who had participated in peaceful negotiations with these Indians to persuade them to peacefully encamp on Sand creek, had his efforts destroyed in the early morning raid. Having been temporarily relieved of his command at Fort Lyon so he could travel to Fort Leavenworth to justify his recent talks with the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians, Wynkoop was powerless to attempt to prevent the Chivington fiasco.—See “Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs,” 1865, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., House Ex. Doc. 1 (Serial 1248), p. 192, also, see Hoig, Sand Creek Massacre, for a comprehensive study of this tragic event.
Sioux, and the Northern Arapahoe, the incensed survivors passed the pipe for a war of revenge against the whites. Army officers estimated in late December, 1864, that 2,000 warriors were preparing for war. The soldier societies controlled Indian preparations for war and early in 1865 their retaliation began. The stage lines, travelers, and citizens of the Central Plains were mercilessly attacked and those escaping the Indians' revenge were instilled with fears of Indian reprisals. Julesburg and Fort Rankin in Colorado territory, stage stations, travelers, and transportation on the Platte route were raided in January and again in February. The Cheyenne and their allies moved farther north to the Tongue river country and planned future raids while the U. S. army planned further punitive expeditions against the hostile Indians.\(^5\)

New projects called for new commanders. Early in 1865 Maj. Gen. John Pope became commander of the Division of the Missouri, and Gen. Grenville M. Dodge was assigned to command the Department of the Missouri.\(^6\) They were charged with the protection of the Plains, especially the Arkansas and Platte roads. In futile efforts, they dispatched expeditions to locate and chastise the recalcitrant warriors who had fled north of the Platte river, leaving a trail of destruction. Brig. Gen. Robert B. Mitchell searched the Republican valley, Col. James H. Ford patrolled the area between the Arkansas and Platte rivers, and Brig. Gen. P. E. Connor led the fruitless Powder river expedition, all of which resulted in vain efforts to capture an enemy described by local sages as being "everywhere without being anywhere."\(^7\)

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6. At the end of the Civil War Western military commands were reorganized. The departments of the Northwest, Missouri, and Kansas were unified into the new Division of the Missouri. Gen. John Pope, described by Utley as "a controversialist and never used one word where ten would do, but he proved to be a capable administrator as commander of the Department of the Missouri ...," was in early 1865 the chief officer of the new Division of the Missouri until his demotion to head the smaller Department of the Missouri, much to his dismay. He remained in command of that department until August, 1866, when he was replaced by Gen. W. S. Hancock. However, Pope returned to command the Department of the Missouri from 1870 to 1883. The Division of the Missouri, Pope's original command in 1865, and the Department of the Missouri, Pope's second command of that year, were essentially the same unwieldy expanses. With the exception of Arkansas and Indian territory which had been removed during reorganization of the Division of the Missouri to the Division of the Mississippi, the department's boundaries ranged from Canada to Indian territory and from Wisconsin to Montana territory. During the summer, however, Utah, New Mexico, and Colorado territories were added. Upon Pope's replacement by Lt. Gen. W. T. Sherman as division commander, Pope took Gen. G. M. Dodge's position as department commander. Civil war hero, politician, farmer, Indian trader, and railroad entrepreneur, General Dodge remained active in his pursuits of Indians on the Central Plains during most of 1865. See Richard N. Ellis, *“General Pope's Report on the West, 1866”*, *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*, v. 35 (Winter, 1969), pp. 345-346; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, pp. 94, picture caption between pp. 142-143; Hirshson, *Grenville M. Dodge*, pp. 115-117, 122-127; Ellis, *General Pope*, pp. 66, 106-107.

During the Army’s forceful attempts to pacify the Indians, the Cheyenne, Sioux, and Northern Arapahoe continued to conduct raids along the North Platte and on the Northern Plains. Due to the concentration of these Indians in the north, few attacks were made on the Santa Fe trail and the Smoky Hill and Republican valley regions. During this activity, Indian Agent Jesse Leavenworth rushed to Washington to seek congressional aid in the form of protection from the military for the Indians of his Upper Arkansas agency. His previous pleas to the military to stop their forays against his charges had fallen on deaf ears, so Leavenworth gained the assistance of Sen. James R. Doolittle of Wisconsin and efforts for a peace with the Plains Indians were initiated. With continued personal efforts and the influence of Senator Doolittle, Leavenworth managed to delay and ultimately to terminate a proposed military expedition by General Dodge.  

Many congressmen realized that, since the Civil War had ended, westward migration would probably increase rapidly. Indian difficulties on the Central Plains along the major routes of travel would hamper the renewed westward rush. Also, the proposals for the Butterfield Overland Despatch stage line and the Union Pacific railroad, Eastern division, both planning to follow the Smoky Hill trail through the heart of the Central Plains buffalo range and favorite hunting grounds of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians, were gathering momentum. New settlers on the Kansas frontier were also expanding westward while clamoring for protection from real and imagined hostile Indians. 

With these factors brought to mind by frontier constituents, Indian agents, and influential members of congress, Pres. Andrew Johnson authorized Senator Doolittle’s committee to seek a treaty with the tribes of the Central Plains. Doolittle’s investigative subcommittee of the joint special committee of congress included Sens. L. S. Foster of Connecticut and Edmund G. Ross of Kansas, and its duty was to study Plains Indian affairs. But while the

8. Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes, pp. 294-256; Hoig, John Simpson Smith, pp. 167-168. In 1865, while General Dodge prepared for a summer campaign against the Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Comanche, and Kiowa Indians, Senator Doolittle wrote Secretary of the Interior James Harlan that such military activity would cost between $25,000,000 and $50,000,000. He believed presents and negotiation could be purchased more inexpensively. Historian Wilbur S. Nye claimed Doolittle’s figures were inflated and apparently “politically inspired” to influence congress and the press to concur with his views on Indian affairs. Other economy-minded congressmen who represented Eastern humanitarian advocating a “peace policy” exerted much pressure on national leaders and told Pres. Andrew Johnson that the army’s plan for a successful campaign against the Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Kiowa, Comanche, and Plains Apache would cost $40 million and necessitate nearly 10,000 troops.—White, “Indian Raids,” p. 71; Wilbur S. Nye, Plains Indian Raiders: The Final Phases of Warfare From the Arkansas to the Red River (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), p. 27; Hirshson, Grenville M. Dodge, p. 123.

committee was organizing, Indian raids continued along the Santa Fe road. This only inspired Doolittle and his colleagues to work harder for peace. His committee recommended that attempts be made to open negotiations with the Central Plains Indians, and Agent Leavenworth followed by arranging meetings with representatives of the Kiowa, Plains Apache, Comanche, Arapahoe, and Cheyenne Indians in August at which a truce was adopted.\[10\]

The truce provided for an immediate cessation of hostilities until a meeting could be held in October at the mouth of the Little Arkansas with authorized peace commissioners.\[11\]

Acting with its authority delegated by the President, the Doolittle commission authorized a federal peace commission comprised of Indian Agent Jesse Leavenworth; Maj. Gen. John B. Sanborn, president of the commission; Maj. Gen. William S. Harney; Thomas Murphy from the Central Superintendency at Atchison; veteran plainsmen William Bent and Kit Carson; and James Steele, representing the commissioner of Indian affairs. This distinguished group of men met with representatives of some bands of the Arapahoe, Cheyenne, Plains Apache, Kiowa, and Comanche. Talks began on October 12 and concluded six days later after treaties had been accepted by bands of the above mentioned tribes.\[12\]

Indians who signed the treaties agreed to accept new reservations south of the Arkansas river while enjoying specified hunting rights north of that river in Kansas. They were to receive annuities for 40 years in return for their agreement to live on the reserves and to avoid camping within 10 miles of

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10. Jesse Leavenworth had been appointed on June 20, 1865, by President Johnson to the position of "special commissioner, to make such treaties and arrangements, as may suspend hostilities and establish peace with the Indians and afford security to settlements and travelers on the frontier." In fulfilling these duties, the Kiowa and Comanche agent sent runners to the Central Plains tribes to try to persuade them to meet with peace commissioners later that year. After "encountering considerable difficulties," Leavenworth obtained the Indians' assent to his request. —White, "Indian Rides," pp. 71-72.

11. Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes, pp. 224-256; Nye, Plains Indian Raiders, p. 25. On August 15 and 18 at Leavenworth's camp at the mouth of the Little Arkansas, he and Maj. Gen. John B. Sanborn concluded "preliminary" treaties with the Kiowa, Plains Apache, Arapahoe, Comanche, and Cheyenne. These treaties, in the form of a truce, stipulated that the military and Indians refrain from warfare on the Central Plains. The truce also established a later council date at which the Indians could negotiate a formal treaty with authorized peace commissioners. Chosen as the proposed council date was October 4, with the site to be Bluff creek, a tributary of the Salt Fork of the Arkansas river and 40 miles south of the Little Arkansas. —See Samuel A. Kingman, "Diary of Samuel A. Kingman at Indian Treaty of 1865,"—The Kansas Historical Quarterly, v. 1, no. 5 (November, 1932), pp. 442-450; Oliva, Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail, p. 165; Nye, Plains Indian Raiders, pp. 36-37; Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes, pp. 239-242.

12. The originally proposed council location at Bluff creek (not to be confused with Wynkoop's Bluff creek council site of February, 1866) proved unsatisfactory for some reason and was altered north to the mouth of the Little Arkansas. A week's delay from the designated October 4 starting date was needed so the tribes that had assembled on Bluff creek could move to the new location. The conference began on October 12 and terminated on October 18. During the council, treaties were concluded with the Cheyenne and Arapahoe on October 14, the Plains Apache on October 17, and the Kiowa and Comanche on October 18. —See Kingman, "Diary of Samuel A. Kingman," pp. 442-450; Nye, Plains Indian Raiders, p. 38; Oliva, Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail, p. 166; Hyde, George Bent, pp. 247-249; Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes, pp. 239-242; Charles J. Kappler, ed., Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties, v. 2 (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1904), pp. 887-895.
white towns, military posts, or main routes of travel. The Cheyenne and Arapahoe were also promised indemnities for losses incurred at Sand creek. Perpetual peace and the arbitration of future disputes were also provided.\(^{13}\)

With only a small segment of the represented Indian nations in attendance at the Little Arkansas treaty council, the success of the agreement was in doubt. Nearly 200 lodges of the Arkansas river Cheyenne and dog soldiers had either refused to attend or did not know about the conference. For the treaty to be effective, the acceptance by these hostiles who had remained north of the Platte river was needed. Leading their resistance was the dog soldiers faction. They refused to accept the treaty stipulations since the agreement required the Cheyenne to relinquish their hunting grounds at the headwaters of the Smoky Hill river. This powerful fraternity of Cheyenne warriors influenced and controlled the actions of many of the bands of their nation.\(^{14}\)

In November, after Connor's Powder river expedition had left the field, some of the Arkansas river Cheyenne began to drift south from the North Platte area. On their trek they raided along the Smoky Hill trail, but these Indians claimed they had first been attacked by U. S. troops. They also pleaded ignorance of the Little Arkansas treaty which bound the Indian signers to perpetual peace.\(^{15}\)

In order to deal with the Cheyenne and Arapahoe who had not been present at the Little Arkansas council, Commissioner of Indian Affairs D. N. Cooley deemed it necessary that supplies be obtained in order to entice the Indians into meeting, and that trusted agents be found to meet with and attempt to persuade

\(^{13}\) Ibid., Campbell, "Dog Soldiers," pp. 90-97; Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes, pp. 239-243; Oliva, Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail, p. 166. Proposed boundaries for the new Cheyenne and Arapahoe reservation were designated by the commissioners to start at the mouth of the Cimarron river on the Arkansas river and go up that river to a point opposite Buffalo creek, then north to the Arkansas river, and down that river to the confluence of the Cimarron and Arkansas rivers. The Cheyenne would receive annuities valued at $20 per person before their occupation of the reservation for a period of time not to exceed 40 years and $40 per person when established on their reserve. This was to follow the extinguishment of the title to the land of the reservation held by other Indian tribes. Each Cheyenne signer on the reservation was to be granted one-half of 160 acres, titles to be fee simple. The treaty signers also promised to extend their utmost efforts to persuade those who had not attended the treaty council to accede to its terms.—Kappler, Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties, v. 2, pp. 887-890; Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes, pp. 239-242.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., pp. 224-236; Nye, Plains Indian Raiders, p. 39.

\(^{15}\) Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes, pp. 224-236. When the Cheyenne began to move south, George Bent, reported leader of a dog soldier band, claimed that after departing the Smoky Hill, those Indians he was with crossed the Arkansas in December near Fort Dodge and arrived near the Cimarron around Christmas. While these Cheyenne under Little Wolf were just north of the Smoky Hill, they met runners from Black Kettle's camp who informed them that their camp, Little Raven's Arapahoe, and Poon Bear's Plains Apache were all located on Bluff creek. Also, the runners said that there were three white trading outfits in their camps. Upon arriving at the Bluff creek camps, Bent found his father, William Bent, trading in the Cheyenne village. George Bent said that it was in these villages that he and his Indian companions first learned about the signing of the Little Arkansas treaties. George Hyde, Bent's biographer, wrote that this southern movement of the Cheyenne was not clear but apparently occurred in the middle of the 1865-1866 winter.—See Hyde, George Bent, pp. 243, 249-250.
them to accept the peace settlement. He made his suggestion to Secretary of the Interior James Harlan who gave his authorization to the proposal, provided money in the department’s contingency fund for such emergencies was available. If so, then the supplies could be purchased at regional points such as St. Louis or Leavenworth and then forwarded to designated distribution outlets.¹⁶

William Bent, veteran trapper and trader of the Central Plains, was called upon to give advice on the Indian problem. He stated his belief that the dog soldiers were coercing potentially friendly Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians to remain in the north to continue participating in hostilities, preventing their return to the peaceful influence of their relatives south of the Platte. The trader suggested that the government appoint some men to meet with the Indians who had moved south from the north, explaining the government policies of the Little Arkansas treaties. These appointed men should also attempt to induce other Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians to return peacefully from the north, Bent urged. A man was needed, the frontiersman concluded, who commanded the trust and confidence of the Indians.¹⁷ Also concurring with Bent’s opinion on the selection of an Indian agent was Gen. Pope. He reportedly “begged” Secretary Harlan and President Johnson to appoint Wynkoop, a man whom the Indians knew and trusted, pointing to the alternative of having a treaty “not worth the paper it was written on” if someone the Indians would not trust led the negotiations.¹⁸

Wynkoop received a letter in late 1865 while in Philadelphia from Commissioner Cooley intimating that he might be assigned to gather the scattered bands of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe that had not signed the late treaty. When Wynkoop replied to Cooley’s communication, he conveyed his concern about the immediate needs of the Indians, some of the same he had previously attempted to aid while commanding Fort Lyon in 1864:

. . . . That in virtue of the destitute condition of these Indians caused by wholesale robbery at Sand Creek some measures be immediately had for the purpose of providing them with the necessary clothing and food rendered immediately necessary by the approach of winter without waiting for the action of Congress in the measures; their immediate wants calling for prompt action. . . . ¹⁹

¹⁷. William Bent to Thomas Murphy, November 21, 1865, ibid.
Wynkoop further recommended that supplies be immediately provided only for protection from weather and hunger, shipped without delay from Leavenworth, and subject to his orders.20

By December, 1865, it had been decided by President Johnson and Secretary Harlan that Wynkoop was the man to negotiate with the nonsignatory Indians of the Little Arkansas treaties. Assigned as special Indian agent to the Interior department and on detached duty from the army, Wynkoop was expected to gain the acceptance and signatures of the reluctant Indians to the treaty agreement. Agent Wynkoop was in Philadelphia on December 12, and from there he wrote Washington enclosing bond for his new position which also entailed accompanying, taking charge of, and distributing provisions to the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians of the Central Plains. These supplies had recently been purchased in New York City and Wynkoop anxiously awaited information about when he would receive the Indian provisions. On December 26, the Treasury department received and filed the bond of Wynkoop, making his position as special agent official.21

Interior Secretary Harlan directed Commissioner Cooley to provide Wynkoop with instructions concerning his new assignment and any military assistance the agent might need in fulfilling his duties:

Major E. W. Wynkoop having been directed by special order No. 628 War Department to report to me for special duty, and he having so reported, you will propose such instructions for his guidance as in your judgement are necessary in order to enable him to endeavor to bring about a union of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians who have been north of the Platte River during the past season, with that portion of said tribes on the Upper Arkansas river with whom tribes have been recently negotiated [sic].

A letter of this date [December 6, 1865] will be addressed Major General Pope requesting that such troops as may be necessary for an escort to said Indians may be placed under command of Major Wynkoop and that he may also be furnished with such supplies and transportation as will be required in the execution of the duties to which he has been assigned.22

The military assistance requested by Harlan for the transportation of supplies to the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians was granted when General Pope directed General Dodge at Fort

20. Ibid.
22. James Harlan to D. N. Cooley, December 6, 1865, ibid.
E. W. Wynkoop (1836-1891), left, whose negotiating efforts contributed to the relative peace on the Plains in 1866. He is shown here with "Capt. Jack" Crawford, scout, Indian fighter, and miner.

Leavenworth on December 12 to provide the necessary assistance needed by the agent of the Interior department. 23

By December 14 Wynkoop had learned of a contract with the Grand Trunk railroad company for the transportation of the Indian supplies and a bill of lading to St. Louis. The destination of the provisions had, for some reason, been altered from Leavenworth to Lawrence. These commodities had been purchased from the mercantile firm of Buckley, Sheldon and Company of New York, and the order consisted of cases of pants, coats, shoes, hats, agate buttons, and other Indian trade items.\(^{24}\) Persistently, Wynkoop again wrote Cooley on December 15, notifying the commissioner that he would be at the Lindell House in St. Louis on the 21st of that month and asking if anything had been done about medals he had requested for the Indians. The agent also complained that it was impossible to get speedy government transportation for the Indian supplies from Lawrence, so he forwarded a request for shipment by private freighter.\(^{25}\)

Special Agent Wynkoop arrived in St. Louis on December 23, only to find that the Indian provisions had been detained on the opposite side of the Missouri due to a blockade of ice on the river. Apparently on instruction from Thomas Murphy, superintendent of Indian affairs for the Central Superintendency, Wynkoop had been ordered to St. Louis to check on this delay. After conferring with a Mr. Sells to whose company the Indian supplies had been shipped from New York, the agent determined that contract obligations had been met and the shipping had been acceptable.\(^{26}\) Because of this delay, it was impossible to get the provisions across the river in time for Wynkoop to arrange for their shipment to the original destination of Leavenworth. However, during his layover, Wynkoop met with General Pope and gained his personal assurance that all facilities of his department would be at the agent's disposal to assist with the mission of peace.\(^{27}\)

After talking with Pope, Wynkoop journeyed to the District of Kansas headquarters at Fort Leavenworth where he obtained the promised military assistance. Arriving at the post on December 30, the agent found General Dodge absent, but the district commander returned on January 6 and furnished Wynkoop with transportation for the Indian supplies to Fort Zarah. While Wyn-

\(^{24}\) Wynkoop to D. N. Cooley(?), December 14, 1865, ibid.

\(^{25}\) Wynkoop to D. N. Cooley, December 15, 1865, ibid. Perhaps Wynkoop's hasty actions in the delivery of the Indian supplies could have been attributed to the dilatory action of Congress in approving the Little Arkansas treaties and the Senate resolution introduced on December 6, 1865, by Kansas senator and president of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroad Samuel Pomeroy which denounced the treaties by proclaiming that "Our mild and conciliatory policy is construed by savages as weakness and cowardice. . . ."—See William Errol Unruh, "The Role of the Indian Agent in the Settlement of the South-Central Plains, 1861-1868" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1963), p. 160.

\(^{26}\) Wynkoop to Thomas Murphy, January 12, 1866, "L.H." O1A, MC234, R879.

\(^{27}\) Wynkoop to D. N. Cooley, January 13, 1866, ibid.
kooop was at Fort Leavenworth, Superintendent Murphy telegraphed the agent and requested him to come to Lawrence at once to meet him. Wynkooop arrived at Lawrence on the night of January 12, and on the 13th, the Indian provisions were released to him by Murphy who took his receipt. The military transportation secured by Agent Wynkooop at Fort Leavenworth consisted of 11 six-mule teams and wagons. The provisions had been detained at Lawrence until freight, storage, and charges had been paid, but Murphy had received no instructions to pay the bill. However, in order to expedite the shipment of the supplies, the superintendent paid the charges which amounted to $731.34 and came out of the $10,000 balance that Murphy had been allocated to pay expenses for making treaties with the Kiowa, Comanche, Plains Apache, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe. In justifying this expenditure, Murphy claimed the provisions released to Wynkooop were intended to carry out the stipulations of the recent Little Arkansas agreement.28

On January 14 the Indian annuities were loaded on the wagons which departed on the morning of January 16. Wynkooop had earlier learned from Commissioner Cooley that 221 packages of Indian provisions were already at Fort Zarah in charge of the post commander. To help defray any expenses incurred during his mission, the special agent received $600. This was authorized expense money from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.29

The meager sum allocated to Wynkooop did not begin to meet the expenses of the mission. After surveying his situation, the agent claimed that collecting the widely scattered Cheyenne and Arapahoe and relocating them with Black Kettle’s band which was then south of the Arkansas river on their proposed reservation would cost more than $600. His estimate for expenses for the next three months was forwarded, upon request, to Commissioner Cooley’s office, and Wynkooop, in return, asked that any appropriated funds be sent to him at Fort Zarah:

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For clerk hire</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreters</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scouts and runners</td>
<td>1,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incidental expenses</td>
<td>250</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,400</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Deduct $600 received from Thos. Murphy: $600

**$2,800**20

29. Wynkooop to D. N. Cooley, January 15, 1866, ibid.
30. Ibid.
In addition to the parsimony Wynkoop encountered with his expense account, the agent faced severe weather and an immense area of the Upper Arkansas agency. The numerous miles to be covered in the cold of winter would hamper Wynkoop’s operations, but he confidently reported that “I will be enabled to meet with speedy and ultimate success in the important mission entrusted to me.”

Meanwhile, General Pope and his staff were attempting to locate the dog soldiers, reportedly moving south across the Platte river and raiding along the Smoky Hill road in the vicinity of Downer’s station. Maj. Hiram Dryer, commander of Fort Larned, contacted William Bent in January, 1866, for any information he had concerning the location and numbers of these warriors. Dryer also asked Bent if he had been successful in determining the temper of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians toward the Little Arkansas agreements and the proposed distribution of provisions at Fort Zarah. Upon informing Bent that Wynkoop would be in charge of the distribution of the supplies, the major expressed his presumption that the news of Wynkoop’s coming to the area would please the Indians. Dryer also informed Bent of Wynkoop’s desire to meet and discuss Indian affairs with him.

In answering Dryer’s queries on January 19, Bent reported that the Cheyenne and Arapahoe from the north had not yet made their way to the Arkansas. Bent had been trading among the southern Indians of those tribes and he vouched for their peacefulness and maintenance of their Little Arkansas treaty agreements. While claiming to have done all in his power to get these Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians to move to Fort Zarah for their supplies, Bent explained that the Indians were reluctant because the treaty stipulation forbade them to travel the Santa Fe road, and since their northern relatives were still fighting the whites, they preferred to remain isolated from all warfare until peace was established. Bent verified Dryer’s prediction that the Indians would be happy to see Wynkoop, and the trader reported the Indians’ desire to meet with the agent to determine a distribution point for their provisions, their original choice of the Big Bend on the Arkansas near Fort Zarah having for some unexplained reason been designated unacceptable by agency officials.

Soon after the communication from Bent, Major Dryer received more definite information about the location of the Indians that

31. Ibid.
he was hunting, and he relayed that to Fort Riley. Dryer had learned that dog soldiers and their Arapahoe companions, numbering 100 lodges, had crossed and moved 75 miles south of the Arkansas river. These recently hostile warriors expressed a desire to negotiate peace with the whites. This caused Dryer to believe that if Wynkoop were then present, the agent would be able to conclude a treaty with the Indians since they seemed to have a “great deal of confidence in the man.”  

Part of the prior failure of negotiations with the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians was attributed to their agent, Dr. I. C. Taylor. Dryer criticized the habitually intoxicated Taylor for his inactivity at Forts Larned and Zarah for the previous two months “without doing anything towards looking after the interests of the Government or the Indians.” Indian provisions to be delivered to his charges remained at Fort Zarah, some rotting due to weather exposure and others stolen by whites.

When Major Dryer informed Wynkoop of the Indians’ location, the special agent decided to transport provisions and attempt to council with the volatile warriors south of the Arkansas to get their signatures to the treaty. To achieve his objective, Wynkoop enlisted the aid of a military escort commanded by Capt. G. A. Gordon of the Second cavalry. Gordon left Fort Dodge on February 15, 1866, with his Co. K, Second cavalry and proceeded to Fort Larned, arriving there the next day. On the 18th Co. L of the Second cavalry under command of Lieutenant Cahill reported to Gordon. At Larned the entourage was completed with the addition of the supply train of Indian provisions and the chief negotiators, Wynkoop, Dryer, and I. C. Taylor. With the two companies of cavalry numbering approximately 60 troopers under Captain Gordon and Lieutenants Cahill and Albert E. Bates, the expedition proceeded toward the proposed destination located at a village calculated to be about 40 miles southeast of Fort Dodge and 75 miles from Fort Larned.

Upon reaching the Arkansas river 15 miles east of Fort Dodge, the party was detained for three days at the river’s crossing due to ice and bad weather. Finally, in the afternoon of February 24, the river was forded and camp was made on the opposite side. The next day the march was resumed, and after an easy journey over 20 miles of good road, the Kiowa, Heap of Bears, led the com-

34. Maj. Hiram Dryer to adjutant general, District of Kansas, January 26, 1866, ibid.

35. Ibid. Due to his incompetence, Agent I. C. Taylor was replaced by Wynkoop as agent for the Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Plains Apache on September 20, 1866—See Wynkoop to Thomas Murphy, December 9, 1866, “LR,” OIA, MC234, R879.

36. Capt. G. A. Gordon to Headquarters, District of Kansas, March 5, 1866, ibid.
mand to the Indian village which was located on Bluff creek. Gordon camped his troopers close to the Indian village which was composed of a band under Black Kettle, Plains Apache under

Among the Cheyenne chiefs who met with Wynkoop at Bluff creek were Black Kettle, left, and Big Head, below right, who spoke for the Indians at the council. The sketch below is from Elizabeth Custer's *Following the Guidon*, which identifies the Indians, left to right, as Fat Bear, Dull Knife, and Big Head.
Poor Bear, and a party of dog soldiers and Kiowa. When Wynkoop and his escort arrived near the village, many of the Indians came out to greet them, "evincing signs of friendship." 37

Wynkoop’s party remained in camp awaiting the arrival of Little Raven and Big Mouth, Arapahoe chiefs whose bands were 30 or 40 miles down the creek. Finally, on February 28, Wynkoop commenced talk with the chiefs then present and determined to deliver their provisions the next day. After this distribution of supplies on March 1, Wynkoop held a council with principal chiefs Black Kettle, Poor Bear, Medicine Arrows, and Big Head. The latter two were important leaders of the bands that had just come south and they had not been present at the Little Arkansas council, leading their dog soldiers in hostile rejection of the agreements. Also reported as present in the dog soldier village were leaders George Bent, Hairy Wolf, Bear Tongue, Red Iron, and other unnamed headmen. The total number of Indians at the council was estimated to be 4,000. 38

Agent Wynkoop addressed the chiefs and explained the advantages and disadvantages of peace and war with the United States. He then presented a written agreement for the signatures of the chiefs who had been absent from the Little Arkansas council in 1865. This agreement bound the chiefs to the same stipulations as their kinsmen who had signed the treaties. To add the voice of the military in the matter, Captain Gordon informed the Indians that he would “enforce and keep it in the same spirit.” The captain emphasized that white offenders of the treaty would also be punished. 39

Dog soldier leader Big Head then spoke, strongly objecting to the Smoky Hill road and to living south of the Arkansas river on land that was not his but belonged to the Plains Apache and Arapahoe. The road, the chief stated, ran through their best hunting ground and his tribe preferred to live north of the Arkansas “where they were born and bred.” Wynkoop replied to this strong statement by telling Big Head that until proper authorities could be conferred with about his request, he and his band should remain peaceful where they were. 40

While the council proceeded, amicable relations were maintained between the troopers and the Indians. During the meetings, Wynkoop requested the soldiers to go to Little Raven’s camp and take custody of a white girl who had been captured the

37. Ibid.
39. Capt. G. A. Gordon to Headquarters, District of Kansas, March 5, 1866, ibid.
40. Ibid.
previous August by Cheyenne near Fort Halleck on the Platte river. She had reportedly been captured while en route by wagon train from Illinois to Montana and said her father had escaped capture but her mother and sister were killed. Gordon dispatched Lieutenant Bates and Co. K to retrieve the girl and return her to Wynkoop. The girl was Amanda (sometimes listed as Mary) Fletcher, about 16 years old, from Minersville, Henry county, Illinois. The release of the captive had been managed by two traders, Morris and Hanger, who bought the girl from the Indians. The ransom they paid and later claimed from the government was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Bay Horse</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Mule</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 prs. Blankets</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 Braces Prints</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Braces Strouding</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Braces Stinett[?]</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Fancy Saddle</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Fancy Bridle</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Fancy Crooper[?]</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Fancy Martingale</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 lbs. Coffee</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212 lbs. Sugar</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 lbs. Flour</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 lbs. Brass Wire</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Butcher Knives</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$1,665

Wynkoop later certified the claim of Morris and Hanger and endorsed their actions, stating they were "governed entirely by motives of humanity in this trading for the said female and deserving credit for their philanthropy; and should be accommodated by the Government for the goods thus disposed." 41 Agent Taylor and Captain Gordon agreed with the agent on this matter of compensation. 42

An incident that could have jeopardized the council negotiations occurred on February 21 while Captain Gordon, com-

41. Ibid., Wynkoop to Interior Department, February 16, 1866, "LR," OIA, MC234, R879; Hyde, George Bent, p. 251; Records of the War Department, Fort Dodge, "Letters Sent," March 5, 1866, as cited in Hoig, John Simpson Smith, pp. 169-170.

42. Capt. G. A. Gordon to Headquarters, District of Kansas, March 5, 1866, "LR," OIA, MC234, R879; Wynkoop to Interior department, February 16, 1866, ibid. Later that year, Samuel F. Tappan, former lieutenant colonel of the First Colorado cavalry, wrote to William Windham, chairman of the Indian committee of the house of representatives, that Major Dyar and other army officers accused Agent Taylor of collusion with the two traders in the purchase of Amanda Fletcher, and instead of returning her to her relatives, they had been "subjecting her to prostitution until others interested, took the girl away from this Government agent and sent her to her friends in the States."—See Samuel F. Tappan to William Windham, May 22, 1866, ibid. George Bent recorded the incident and stated that the Fletcher girl had written him a letter claiming that John Smith, at the time trading for Morris & Hanger, purchased her.—Hyde, George Bent, p. 251.
manding officer of Fort Dodge, was at Bluff creek. The son of a Mr. Boggs was killed and scalped by four Cheyenne about six miles east of Fort Dodge on the Arkansas river, but after an investigation, military officials learned that the elder Boggs had gone to a Cheyenne camp and traded an Indian 11 one-dollar bills for 10 10-dollar bills. When the Cheyenne discovered the fraud, they went searching for Boggs to exact revenge. Not finding the swindler, they killed the man’s son instead. In assessing the matter, Gordon tersely stated, “I think this case needs no further comment.”

The military had played a part in the council at Bluff creek at the insistence of Wynkoop. He had deemed it important that officers Dryer and Gordon meet with the Indians, and in this instance, cooperation between representatives of the traditionally antagonistic Interior and War departments produced fruitful results. With the signatures of the Indians on the Little Arkansas provisions in hand, the empty annuity train and its escort departed the Indian camp on March 3 and returned to Fort Dodge on the next day.

After returning from the Bluff creek council site, Wynkoop began reporting on his diplomatic coup. To General Pope the agent wrote that he had recently met all the headmen of the “late” hostile bands of the Arapahoe and Cheyenne tribes. His gaining their signature to a written agreement to abide by the Little Arkansas treaties reflected their desire for peace. In explaining the continued hostilities of these Indians after the Little Arkansas council, Wynkoop recounted that they had been in the North and thus were unaware of the treaties. However, when notified of the agreements and starting to move south to be with their Southern relatives, these bands claimed to have been attacked by U. S. troops, causing them to believe they had been misinformed or that the treaties had “become null and void.” To Wynkoop, whether the Indian reasons were true or false, it did not matter. He was firmly convinced that these Indians now desired a lasting peace.

Wynkoop gave Major Dryer a copy of the agreement signed at

44. Capt. G. A. Gordon to Headquarters, District of Kansas, March 5, 1866, ibid. George Bent stated that Big Head and Medicine Arrows refused to agree to the terms of the Little Arkansas treaty presented by Wynkoop. However, George Hyde, editor and compiler of Bent’s letters, noted that Bent was probably not aware that later these Indians assented to Wynkoop’s proposals on April 4 on Wood creek after their proposed raid for horses and mules belonging to the Butterfield Overland Despatch on the Smoky Hill in March was aborted when Little Robe and Edmond Guerrier came to their camp and asked them to travel south to talk with Wynkoop.—See Hyde, George Bent, p. 252.
Bluff creek by the Indians that was to be sent to General Pope. Because of this agreement, the agent believed no further trouble would surface if the pact were not violated. For the time being, Wynkoop viewed the Santa Fe road as perfectly safe for travel and contended it would remain so if the government did not abrogate the recent Bluff creek agreement and the earlier Little Arkansas treaties. The special agent had exerted himself to the extremes to bring about the existing peace and he beckoned the government to “assist me in maintaining the present favorable aspect of Indian affairs. . . .” The agent was laudatory of the courtesy and promptness of the military officers aiding him on his mission of peace. In return, General Dodge praised Wynkoop for his success, viewing the council as being very important since it was the first time that communications had been opened with some of the dog soldiers, especially those under George Bent.

The conclusion of the Bluff creek council was a significant step toward peace in 1866, but Wynkoop proceeded to solidify his February council agreement with the Indians. On April 4 he met with Little Robe who represented the only nonsignatory Cheyenne band that had been absent from Bluff creek. The Cheyenne chief had been with Edmond Guerrier on the Solomon river searching for dog soldier bands to attend the February council. The meeting site was on Wood creek, about 15 miles from Fort Larned. At that time, Little Robe’s band comprised a “large portion of the fighting element of the tribe,” and although many of their leaders had signed the Bluff creek agreement, Wynkoop believed it necessary to talk with these warriors and persuade them to move south of the Arkansas river.

During the council, Wynkoop perceived that these warriors exhibited a “fervent desire for peace,” while reluctantly yielding the Smoky Hill region, their favorite hunting ground and where “the bones of their fathers repose. . . .” Wynkoop could not overlook the attachment that the Indians had to the Smoky Hill country. “They refer to the subject with much feeling—and men of greater intelligence and more refined sentiment might perhaps be similarly influenced under like circumstances.” However,

46. Ibid.
48. Wynkoop to Gen. John Pope, April 5, 1866; ibid.; Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes, p. 259. Edmond Guerrier (sometimes spelled Guerier), half-breed son of a French trader and Cheyenne mother, spent much time living with the Indians while also acting as interpreter for government Indian agents and military commanders. He was considered reliable by authorities. At times he was called Ned Geary.—Nye, Plains Indian Raiders, p. 254.
these Indians gave up their cherished land for peace, following their kinsmen in acceding to the Little Arkansas agreements. Thus, Wynkoop proclaimed tranquility among the native peoples of the Central Plains. 49

With the conclusion of this council on Wood creek, Wynkoop assuredly declared that peace prevailed on the Plains and safe travel on the main routes across the prairies existed. To emphasize the impact of his negotiations, the agent pointed to mail traveling without escort, small parties of emigrants moving along roads in safety, and freighters pursuing their business without fear of Indian trouble. Wynkoop attributed this state of affairs to the recent agreements made with the Indians and claimed "They [the Indians] all agree in regarding this a 'strong peace,' as it has been consummated with the warriors in the field, rather than with the old men in council." 50 Wynkoop's method of involving the warriors in the treaty talks alleviated prior problems encountered by whites in negotiating with the Indians. The agent met with all the men of the bands whereas in earlier councils many agreements failed because tribesmen stated that they had not had representation.51

Wynkoop desperately wanted the peace with the Indians to continue and worked extremely hard to maintain amicable relations with the Plains warriors. While the Bluff creek council set the stage for peaceful Indian-white relations on the Central Plains, the newly established friendship met an early test. On March 10 Cheyenne dog soldiers, Sioux, and Arapahoe who had not heard of the Bluff creek meeting and numbering approximately 400, appeared on the Smoky Hill and prepared to raid the stock and property of the Butterfield Overland Despatch Company. Before any action commenced, Little Robe and Guerrier, being sent by Wynkoop, arrived and consulted with the restive Indians. The two couriers then accompanied the Indians south toward the Arkansas river where they agreed to meet Wynkoop and talk peace.52 These Indians met with the special agent at the

49. Wynkoop to Gen. John Pope, April 5, 1866, "LR," OIA, MC234, R879; Wynkoop to D. N. Cooley, April 8, 1866, ibid.; Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes, pp. 259-260. At the Wood creek council, Wynkoop dramatized the proceedings when he claimed that the Cheyenne "exhibited a fervent desire for peace, endorsing the actions of their chiefs at the mouth of the Little Arkansas and of the council held by myself on Bluff Creek. They it is true, yield the Smoky Hill Country with great reluctance; it is their favorite hunting ground and the bones of their fathers repose there."—See Wynkoop to Gen. John Pope, April 5, 1866, "LR," OIA, MC234, R879; Wynkoop to D. N. Cooley, April 8, 1866, ibid.; Berthrong, The Southern Cheyennes, pp. 259-260.

50. Wynkoop to Gen. John Pope, April 5, 1866, "LR," OIA, MC234, R879; Wynkoop to D. N. Cooley, April 8, 1866, ibid.

51. Utley, Frontier Regulars, p. 95.

previously mentioned Wood creek council in April and agreed to the Little Arkansas treaty provisions. Wynkoop had clearly established influence with the Central Plains warriors and the current tension on the Smoky Hill stage line subsided.

Another threat to the existing peace developed in May when Thomas Murphy received information from a man who had come in from the Santa Fe road. He reported to the superintendent that a trader who had just been with the Indians said Cheyenne dog soldiers and Arapahoe were claiming unwillingness to receive annuity goods. These Indians, while having no intention of molesting traffic on the Santa Fe or Platte road to Denver, were preparing to war on the Smoky Hill until it was abandoned. This report gave rise to questioning of the validity of Wynkoop’s treaties with the Indians, especially the Bluff creek agreement. Maj. William Davidson and fellow officers stated their skepticism and that they had “no confidence” in Wynkoop’s treaties.

Supporting the claims of “no confidence” of Wynkoop critics was a report on May 13 of Indians on the Solomon river who forcefully evicted claim-seekers S. A. Robbins and Joseph Fry from the region. The Indians, believed to be Cheyenne and numbering between 150 and 200, told the men that the country belonged to them. While escorting these men from the area, the warriors met Hiram Markham, James Jerod, and S. Williams who were proceeding up the Solomon river to hunt claims on the Limestone creek. These three men, upon meeting Robbins and Fry being escorted by nearly 25 Indians painted for war, also retreated from the area, claiming an Indian chief had said that they were “heap Cheyennes and led them to understand that they might kill them.” These white men believed that these Indians were heading down the river to drive the white settlers from the region, and they claimed that a white man had already been killed by the impetuous Indians.

The foregoing reports of insolent Indian activity led to charges of impropriety by Wynkoop in dealing with the Indians. Chief accuser was W. H. Watson, an agent of the Interior department, who obtained much of his information from Superintendent Murphy which he then forwarded to Commissioner Cooley.

54. Affidavit, Maj. William Davidson, May 16, 1866, ibid.
55. Ibid., affidavit, S. A. Robbins and Joseph Fry, May 16, 1866, “LR,” OIA, MC234, R879; affidavit, Hiram Markham, James Jerod, and S. Williams, May 16, 1866, ibid. It was reported that these accounts of Cheyenne outrages on the Solomon river in May could not be directly attributed to the dog soldiers.—See “Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs,” 1866, 39th Cong., 2d Sess., House Ex. Doc. No. 1, pp. 346-347, as cited in Leckie, Military Conquest, p. 31; also, see M. Winsor and J. A. Scarbrough, “Jewell County,” Kansas Historical Collections, v. 17 (1906-1908), p. 391.
Murphy told Watson that “reliable sources” had informed him that when the dog soldiers agreed to the Bluff creek agreement, “it was with the express understanding that the whites were to keep away from the Smoky Hill route. . . .” Watson surmised that this was the reason the Indians were compelling whites to leave that area. Watson charged that if these reports were true then “Major Wynkoop was greatly to blame for not stating these facts in his report. Their concealment can only be ascribed to a great desire to magnify his share in pacifying the Indians.”

Continuing his scathing attack on Wynkoop in a July 5 letter to Cooley, Watson stated he had met with Agent Leavenworth who confirmed information concerning Wynkoop’s negligence in informing the Indians of the complete treaty stipulations, stating that he had heard similar reports of the Bluff creek council proceedings. Watson also reported statements of Fort Leavenworth officers Captain Scott and Colonel Potter who allegedly talked to participants of the Bluff creek council who said that the “Indians positively declared that they would only sign the paper under the distinct understanding that the whites were to keep away from the Smoky Hill route.” With evidence suggesting that the Cheyenne believed the Smoky Hill route was reserved to their people, Watson claimed that these warriors could not be blamed for depredations or treaty violations if the proceedings between the Indians and Wynkoop at Bluff creek were as reported. Considering these reports, Watson concluded “that the glowing report of Major Wynkoop as to the pacification of the Indians by the signatures of the outlying bands of Arapahoes and Cheyennes being obtained to the treaties of last fall, was without much foundation.”

Amid the controversy concerning Wynkoop’s role in the council at Bluff creek, a fragile peace still existed between the various participants at the agent’s meetings. Wynkoop’s reports only noted that he had obtained Indian signatures to an
agreement to fulfill the stipulations of the Little Arkansas treaties. No secret arrangement was intimated; no official investigation was initiated; and Wynkoop's accusers had relied on unofficial, second-hand reports. Wynkoop emerged from the fray with a clean slate. However, the reports of possible misunderstanding among the Indians of the treaty stipulations led to the recommendation and eventual conclusion of another council with the Indians that was designed to eliminate conflicts in treaty interpretation between representatives of the Indians and the government. Wynkoop, his influence not having suffered from previous allegations of misconduct in treaty affairs, was again called upon to arrange the conference with Special Agents W. R. Irwin and Charles Bogey.58

Through the duration of 1866, Wynkoop labored to keep the peace and maintain his influence with the Indians. Through meetings and conferences with them, Wynkoop developed a rapport and trust with the Indians. Also, the impact of his negotiations, especially at Bluff creek, was evidenced by the rarity of reports of depredations committed by the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians. Wynkoop continually maintained during 1866 that these Indians were existing in a peaceful state, benefiting red and white alike.59

Instances of reported depredations in 1866 were few, with one coming from the Holladay Overland Mail and Express Company. Indians, believed to be Cheyenne dog soldiers and numbering 250 to 300 "young bucks," burned the Chalk Bluff mail station on the Smoky Hill route in October. The same Indians under Bull Bear had reportedly killed two of the Holladay employees at the same station on October 1, about three weeks earlier.60 Another incident of Cheyenne hostility was the murder of a New Mexican stock tender in the employ of William Bent by Fox Tail, son of dog soldier chief Medicine Arrows, near Fort Zarah in December.61 Fort Wallace beef contractor H. P. Wyatt reported that Cheyennes Spotted Horse and Roman Nose were notifying the

58. Thomas Murphy to D. N. Cooley, July 6, 1866, "LR," OIA, MC234, R879; James Harlan to D. N. Cooley, July 25, 1866, ibid.; W. R. Irwin and Charles Bogey to Lewis V. Bogey, November 15, 1866, ibid.
61. Lt. James Thompson to assistant adjutant general, District of the Upper Arkansas, December 21, 1866, ibid. Fox Tail was drunk at the time of this outrage. Grinnell claimed that this young Cheyenne was the son of Rock Forehead, thus contradicting many available primary reports on the incident.—Grinnell, The Fighting Cheyennes, p. 246. However, George Bent clarified the matter when he explained that Rock Forehead was keeper of the Cheyenne Sacred Medicine Arrows and that was the reason that whites called him Medicine Arrows.—Hyde, George Bent, pp. 41-42.
whites of the region to abandon the area in 15 days or be scalped. This insolence, coupled with the relatively insignificant level of documented depredations, comprised the deviations of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians from treaty stipulations in 1866. This relative peace of 1866 could be further substantiated by a comparison of the 37 whites killed by Indians in Kansas in 1865 with only 16 fatalities reported in 1866.62

Thus, Wynkoop’s actions as treaty negotiator paved the way for a comparative, even though at times unstable, peace in 1866 on the Central Plains. The Santa Fe route, Platte river road, and to a certain extent the Smoky Hill trail were opened for unmolested travel by emigrants, freighters, and the mail services. New conflicts would develop the next year between white and Indian, with 1866 being only a brief cessation in a much longer war on the Plains. The U. S. government and its citizens did not keep the provisions of the treaties and neither did the Indians. The Plains Indian warriors would return to their hostile resistance to white advancement and loss of the Central Plains hunting grounds. Not until the Indians suffered military defeats and the loss of their buffalo commissary to white hunters would the warriors and their families leave their beloved land, being placed on government reservations. Yet the peaceful interlude in 1866 could be substantially attributed to the Little Arkansas treaties, the council at Bluff creek, and peace negotiator E. W. Wynkoop.


“Recent Additions to the Library” which usually appears in the summer issue of the Quarterly, has been discontinued to make more space for historical materials. The library continues to receive many new books about Kansas, genealogy, local history, and the West and its personnel will be happy to answer inquiries concerning recent acquisitions and holdings.