

# The Story of Mrs. Picotte-

by John S. Gray

The story of Mrs. Picotte-Galpin is one of courage and wisdom and of a Sioux woman's determination to raise two families on the trans-Mississippi frontier during years of great misunderstanding and racial conflict between her people and the United States government. Using her uncommon intelligence and considerable diplomatic talents, she gained the respect of whites with her steadfast defense of her own rights and those of the Sioux. Despite the mendacious and often brutal treatment of her people by whites, Mrs. Galpin turned her back on the bitterness that racial conflict often generates and spent most of her adult life seeking a just accommodation for both Indians and whites living on the frontier.

Born in 1820 in a lodge on the east bank of the Big Bend of the Missouri River, Wambdi Autepewin—"Eagle Woman That All Look At"—was a member of the western or Teton division of the Sioux Nation. The daughter of Two Lance, a chief of the Two Kettle band, and Rosy Light of Dawn, a Hunkpapa, Eagle Woman grew up on the plains west of the Missouri in present-day South Dakota, where she lived with the roaming Sioux bands, far from the influence of alien white ways.

After the death of her parents, she married Honoré Picotte, General Agent for the American Fur Company at Fort Pierre. In 1850, Eagle Woman married a second time, taking trader Charles Galpin as her husband. Living at the fur posts, she learned about white ways from both of her husbands, and she taught them the customs of her people. While she retained her knowledge and respect for the characteristics and traditions of Sioux life, she realized that change was coming to the Dakotas and that whites and Indians must learn to live together.

With her good friend Father Pierre Jean De Smet, Eagle Woman applied her considerable diplomatic talents to finding nonviolent solutions to the racial conflict that erupted along the Missouri River during the 1860s. For these and her subsequent diplomatic efforts during the 1870s, Mrs. Galpin was known throughout the Dakotas as a woman of honor and peace and a chief of the Sioux.

# Galpin, a Sioux Heroine



From F. C. Holley, *Once Their Home*, 1892

Matilda Galpin, ca. 1880

## Eagle Woman Becomes a Trader and Counsels for Peace, 1868-1888

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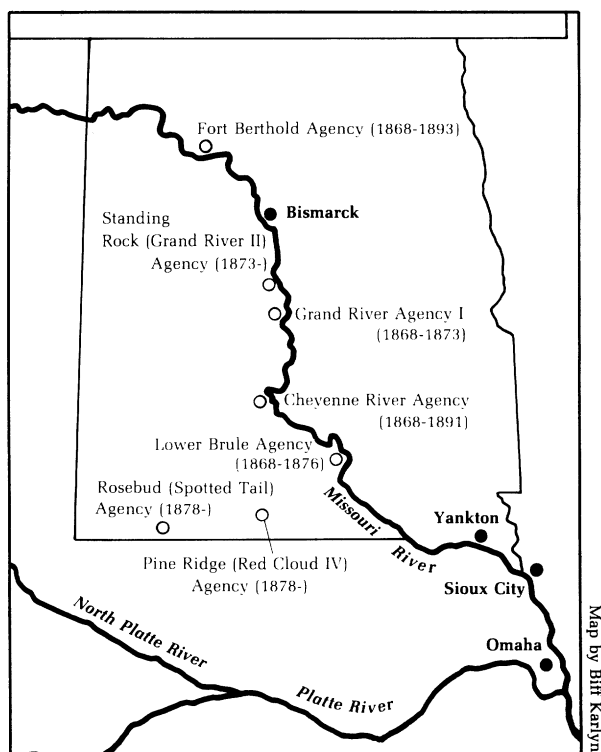
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**R**emoval of the Sioux to their new reservation in present-day South Dakota in 1868 posed a problem for Eagle Woman and her husband, Charles Galpin, for the reservation did not extend as far north as Fort Rice on the Missouri River, where their home and his trading store were located. Eagle Woman was committed to helping her people make the difficult transition to a new way of life on the reservation, as was her husband. Eagle Woman and Galpin, who had been appointed an interpreter for the reservation, decided to move with their two younger daughters downriver to the reservation, which required him to resign from employment with the Northwestern Fur Company and strike out on his own as an independent trader. As he would need to purchase a new stock of trade goods in St. Louis, he seized the opportunity to take Mrs. Galpin and the girls along so they could visit their older daughter Lulu and bring her home from school.

Leaving on July 30 aboard the *Miner*, they made their last free trip on a company boat. During the first week of August, Lulu greeted them in St. Louis and Father De Smet promptly called at their hotel. While Mrs. Galpin and the girls spent their time visiting and shopping, Father De Smet introduced Galpin to General William T. Sherman, commander of the Division of the Missouri with headquarters in St. Louis.

Both in content and timing, this was a significant meeting. Apparently to speed implementation of the Sioux treaty, Congress had departed from its standard practice of appropriating funds to the Indian Office and appropriated them to General Sherman and the army. Having returned at the end of July from a western trip, Sherman was in the throes of planning for this extra assignment when he met Galpin. Galpin and Sherman discussed the problems facing the Sioux. Galpin also held discussions with General William S. Harney, whom Sherman would assign to oversee the Sioux Indian Reservation. Meeting with Harney at the Southern Hotel, Galpin undoubtedly told him that the treaty's provision for one agency to serve the extensive reservation was a monumental absurdity. Even at the outset, there had to be more than one agency to serve the Sioux. When the time came, Harney would establish a supply depot and three agencies along the Missouri.

1. Hiram M. Chittenden and Alfred T. Richardson, *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre Jean De Smet, S.J.* (1905; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Company, 1969), 1220-1222 (letter to "Col." was Colonel Otis, Fort Rice).



**Indian Agencies on the Upper Missouri, Dakota Territory, 1865-1895**

One month later, Father De Smet wrote about these meetings to Fort Rice commander Colonel Elwell S. Otis on September 7, adding:

I recommended the Major [Galpin] in strong terms to both generals. His long experience among the Indians might make him a very efficient man, and with the cooperation of his good wife, he might render great service to the Indians, particularly the hostiles. . . . He may be employed to good purpose by the commissioners and the commanding officers at the various posts on the Missouri.<sup>1</sup>

On August 10, 1868, Sherman issued General Order No. 4 to implement the 1868 treaties, including that with the Sioux.<sup>2</sup> It called Harney to active duty as commander of a Sioux Military District (covering the Sioux Indian Reservation) and assigned him \$100,000 to gather and begin "civilizing" the Sioux. Because autumn was close at hand, this would entail the prompt herding of the western bands eastward to the river

2. *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1868* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1868), 85.

3. *Ibid.*, 84; Sherman to Secretary Browning, August 22, 1868, *Letters Received [LR] from Upper Platte Agency*, Micro. 234, Roll 893, National Archives, Washington, D.C.[NA]; "Lt. Geo. M. Templeton's Diary," typescript, Newberry Library, Chicago, p. 107 (September 2 and 4 mention Harney and Sherman at North Platte).

they detested and the procurement of agency personnel, building materials, farm implements, and mountains of rations before the river froze.

On August 11, Sherman left on a business trip, expecting to meet with Harney in Omaha. On August 22, Sherman requested Washington to notify Harney "here at Omaha" the moment his treaty funds were deposited. At the same time, Harney wired Galpin, who was still in St. Louis, to come upriver and assist him. As De Smet wrote in his letter of September 7, "before I knew it" Galpin was "hurried off to Sioux City by a telegram from Harney." Both generals then traveled west by railroad on separate and mutual business. Harney was about to return from North Platte, Nebraska Territory, on September 2, having urged the reluctant Brule Sioux, under Spotted Tail, to move to the Missouri.<sup>3</sup>

In the meantime, Galpin had come upriver to Sioux City in response to Harney's call. On August 26, the *Miner* steamed from Sioux City downriver to Omaha to load some of Harney's supplies.<sup>4</sup> Galpin was probably aboard when he addressed his final letter to Lulu from Omaha on August 30:

I leave here today for Sioux City and will go on from there to Fort Randall with Gen. Harney and will there wait for you. You must all come up. I will make arrangements to have your mother's things taken up from Louise's house [a few miles above Sioux City], when the boat passes up. I send you one bbl. of apples from here, which will be put on the boat here.<sup>5</sup>

Harney passed through Yankton on September 5 and overtook the *Miner* at Fort Randall on the 7th. The Galpin family, having sped up by rail and stagecoach, joined him at Fort Randall. With all aboard, the boat started upriver the next day, which enabled Harney to establish his Sioux agencies at Whetstone Creek, Cheyenne River, and Grand River, the last about a hundred river-miles below Fort Rice. Harney reached Fort Rice on September 19, when he undoubtedly delivered the Galpins home, while he secured a detail of soldiers under Lieutenant Lewis D. Adair to guard the supplies he had landed at Grand River. Galpin promptly moved downriver

to Grand River, where he set up his independent trading post and Harney engaged him as agency interpreter in November.<sup>6</sup>

Harney had acted in haste. The threat of winter had compelled him to direct his prodigious energies with little regard for efficiency. He grossly overspent his budget, with resultant chaos.<sup>7</sup> The Sioux, facing a distasteful new way of supporting themselves on a crowded reservation instead of the boundless plains, were bewildered, frightened, irritable, and starving. At the Grand River agency, Mrs. Galpin prevailed upon her husband to ameliorate the Indians' situation by sharing provisions with the needy, a generosity the Indians could not repay but would never forget.

Lieutenant Adair's troops remained only a month and then left the agency under the weak supervision of an army contract surgeon, Dr. Chris D. Owens. A letter of February 2, 1869, for example, disparaged the doctor's regime at Grand River, and a traveler who passed the agency in early March reported that the Indians were saucy and dissatisfied and had killed some cattle belonging to agency farmer John Dillon. The doctor secured a leave in May and Joseph Johnson, a civilian, took over as acting agent.<sup>8</sup>

**A**fter Harney completed his term as commander of the Sioux District on June 30, 1869, Governor John A. Burbank, ex officio Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Dakota Territory, abruptly inherited the burden, but under the divided control of the army and the Indian Office. Army officers that were left unassigned by a consolidation of regiments, replaced the former agents. They were assisted by officers appointed as acting commissaries of subsistence, for the military retained control of procurement. On an upriver tour of inspection aboard the *Emilie LaBarge*, Governor Burbank reached Grand River on July 16, bringing Brevet Major James A. Hearn as agent and 1st Lieutenant William Harmon as commissary officer. Two days later Hearn retained Galpin as agency interpreter at \$150 per

4. (Helena) *Montana Post*, September 11, 1868.

5. From Richard Harmon Collection. Joseph Richard Harmon, one of Eagle Woman's grandsons, generously furnished the author with family information, documents, and photographs. The information consists of letters to the author, 1961-1963; family data, photos, and gravestone inscriptions; letters of C. E. Galpin to his stepdaughter, Lulu Picotte, 1866-1869; Harmon's "Reminiscences," written in 1959-1961.

6. (Yankton) *Union and Dakotian*, September 12, 1868; Ray H. Mattison, "Diary of Surgeon Washington Matthews, Ft. Rice," *North Dakota History* 21 (January-April 1954): 14.

7. "Harney's Report for Sioux Indian District," 40th Cong., 3d sess., November 23, 1868, S. Ex. Doc. 11 (Serial 1360).

8. *Union and Dakotian*, February 13, March 27, May 15, 1869.

month, an act wiser than he knew. Although new at their strange jobs, these two officers would prove competent and willing to learn under the tutelage of the Galpin family.<sup>9</sup>

Major Hearn quickly found that a few of Two Bear's friendly Yanktonais were willing to make a try at farming, and so he let a contract to John Dillon for plowing, even though it was late in the season. He soon discovered, however, that for each Indian man willing to work a plow a thousand were eager to balk. A letter written on August 9 from Fort Sully included a report that Indians at Grand River had recently "shot five or six arrows into John Dillon's door, threatening to kill all his men unless they decamped."<sup>10</sup> Another correspondent on August 18 from Fort Stevenson, just below Fort Berthold, charged that these same Indians had been killing beef cattle at pleasure. A significant paragraph read:

About August 1, the agent and all the white men connected with the agency were run into their buildings and kept cooped up for some time. Maj. Hearn, the agent, counseled with the chiefs while holed up. . . . A chief said, "We are willing to receive the product of the farm, provided the white men do the work, but we will never work ourselves."<sup>11</sup>

This event disturbed Mrs. Galpin. She later told the story of this conflict and her remarkable intervention to Mrs. Frances C. Holley, a local historian of Bismarck, North Dakota. Bad Hand, an Indian friendly to whites, severely wounded his brother for killing an agency cow. By a twisted sort of reasoning, one Indian injured another because of a white man's cow; and thereupon five thousand angry Indians gathered to attack the unarmed agency whites. Striped Cloud sped to warn the whites, with the blood-thirsty mob crowding his heels. Lacking time to seek safety with the Galpins, the men barricaded themselves in their office, with the Indians swarming around them that day and night, yelling, firing guns, and threatening to burn them out—and to kill a white man, should Bad Hand's brother die.

While young Bear's Rib kept the Galpins informed of these events that night, Eagle Woman grew more and more indignant at the behavior of her people. At daylight she marched into the milling throng, her eyes flashing fire, and tongue-lashed them:

Shame on you, cowards to come here, five thousand of you, to slaughter a half-dozen white men. And you come here for what reason? You have been killing their cattle right along, day after day, and not one of them has said anything to you about the loss—and then when you shoot one of your own people, you come here to kill a white man for it. . . . You are not brave, to come here to kill a half-dozen white men!<sup>12</sup>

As the solitary woman harangued the mob, it turned quiet and listened in shamed silence. She then asked them to allow her husband to go to his store, presumably to allow them to trade. To faithful Blue Thunder she gave a message to deliver to Major Hearn, asking for provisions to spread a feast of reconciliation. Although Blue Thunder was shot in the leg on his way, he delivered the message and Major Hearn's reply: "Give them anything they want."

Eagle Woman set huge kettles of coffee to boil and passed out strips of calico to enlist the aid of the women while the feast was readied. She also made gifts of horses to braves she knew felt most injured, not forgetting Bad Hand's brother. As full bellies cooled tempers, good feelings returned. One of the whites held prisoner in the office (probably Lieutenant William Harmon) told Mrs. Holley: "As Mrs. Galpin stood in the midst of that immense crowd of blood-thirsty Indians, and argued and pleaded for lives of the white men, regardless of her own perilous position, it was the grandest spectacle I ever saw, or ever expect to see taking all the circumstances into account."

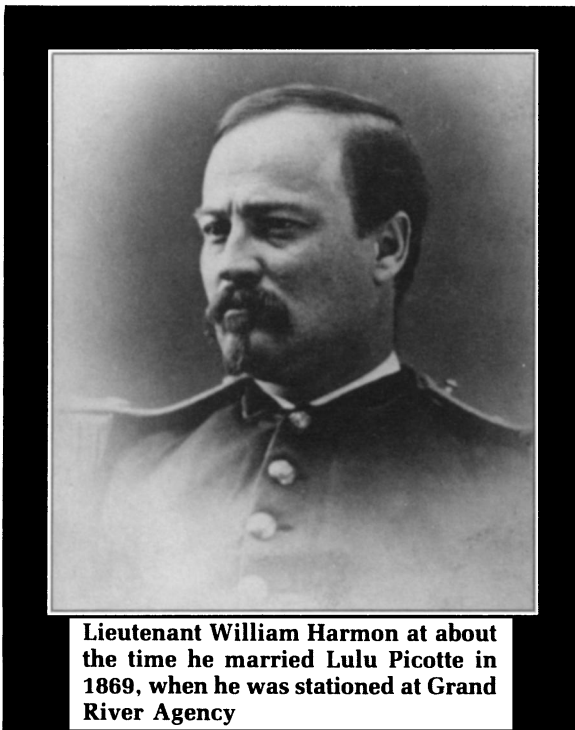
It took Lieutenant Harmon only two weeks to become an admirer of Mrs. Galpin and probably less time to be charmed by her talented daughter, Lulu Picotte. Born in Maine on June 28, 1835, Will Harmon had been brought to Minneapolis as a boy in 1850. By 1857, he owned and captained a steamboat on the Mississippi (the probable reason he was always called "Captain" on the frontier). Fort Sumter had scarcely been fired upon when he enlisted as sergeant of Com-

9. *Union and Dakotaian*, July 10, 1869; Hearn to Commissioner Parker, July 17, Captain Thomas A. Sullivan to Harmon, July 17, and Hearn's reports of agency employees and inventory (from former acting Agent Joseph Johnson), July 25, 1869, LR from Upper Platte Agency, 1869, Micro. 234, Roll 894, NA.

10. Hearn to Governor Burbank, July 20, 1869, LR from Upper Platte Agency, 1869, Micro. 234, Roll 894, NA; *Union and Dakotaian*, August 14, 1869.

11. *Union and Dakotaian*, September 18, 1869.

12. This account and quotes are from Frances C. Holley, *Once Their Home* (Chicago: Donahue & Henneberry, 1892), 294-298.



Lieutenant William Harmon at about the time he married Lulu Picotte in 1869, when he was stationed at Grand River Agency

Courtesy of the author

pany D, 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry on April 29, 1861. He fought three years in the Civil War and was 1st Lieutenant of Company E when he was wounded at the Battle of Gettysburg. After the war he was offered a commission in the 18th U.S. Infantry and was promoted to 1st Lieutenant, 36th Infantry, serving in Wyoming on escort duty with parties surveying for the Union Pacific Railroad.<sup>13</sup>

Agency turmoil, however, could not distract handsome Harmon from conducting a whirlwind courtship of Lulu. Within six weeks he had won her heart and her parents' blessings. About September 5, Galpin hustled his wife and happy Lulu aboard a boat to make a special shopping excursion. Arriving at Sioux City on the 14th, they took a train to Chicago, where they selected a trousseau for Lulu. Back in Sioux City by September 30, they boarded the *North Alabama*, which Captain Grant Marsh was taking upriver to Fort Buford with a belated load of supplies. The *North Alabama* landed Louise and her mother at Grand River on about October 13 but

was soon frozen in for ten days just short of Fort Buford. Of this trip, Captain Marsh told his biographer:

Interesting persons who occupied cabins were Mrs. Charles E. Galpin and her daughter, Miss Lou Galpin [sic], the former being the wife of Maj. Galpin, the famous trader. . . . Mrs. Galpin was a woman of unusual mental capacity, who was well known throughout the Dakota country, and her daughter had been well educated in St. Louis. They were just returning to Grand River Agency from Chicago, where they had been procuring a wedding trousseau for Miss Lou, who was soon to be married to Capt. Harmon.<sup>14</sup>

When Harmon welcomed Lulu and her mother home, he had to explain that Galpin had left for Yankton to protest to Governor Burbank about a new ruling that limited salaries of agency interpreters to \$400 per year. Galpin considered the pay a pittance and refused to serve. He cashed his pay vouchers, which the Indian Office honored after urgent pleas from Major Hearn and Governor Burbank. By that time it was October 20, and the trader had to return overland during the cold spell that froze in the *North Alabama*.<sup>15</sup>

If Lulu's wedding had been planned for the coming holidays, a family tragedy forced its postponement. Charles E. Galpin, active and tireless though he had always been, suddenly fell ill. Neither the skill of the newly arrived agency physician Dr. S. S. Turner nor the care of a devoted wife and children could stay the hand of death. The enterprising trader, who had proved to be so good a husband and father and so stalwart a friend to the Indians, deserved more than the simple lines that appeared in the Yankton paper:

Major C. E. Galpin died at Grand River on the 30th of November in the forty-eighth year of his life. Major Galpin had been long and favorably known in this section of the Northwest.<sup>16</sup>

A warmer tribute comes from Joseph H. Taylor, who arrived at Grand River in 1869 and would spend years as a woodhawk, trapper, and student of nature and the Indian before turning editor and author. He recorded that Galpin's death "was sudden, but attributed to natural

13. For biographical sketches about Harmon, see Michael A. Leeson, *History of Montana* (Chicago: Warner Beers & Company, 1885), 1039; Joaquin Miller, *Illustrated History of Montana* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1894), 694-695; Lewis F. Crawford, *History of North Dakota*, 2 vols. (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1931), 2:260.

14. *Sioux City Times*, November 17, 1869; Joseph M. Hanson, *Conquest of the Missouri* (New York: Murray Hill Books, 1946), 125-126.

15. Hearn to Burbank, October 11, Burbank to Parker, October 20, *LR from Upper Platte Agency*, 1869, Micro. 234, Roll 894, NA. Galpin registered at Sioux City Hotel on October 16-18.

16. *Union and Dakotaian*, December 16, 1869.

causes by the agency physician who attended him." He also expressed his own "personal regard for . . . the old Indian trader of long service, of independent nature and fair character, and who ran a trading house on his own hook, independent of Durfee & Peck."<sup>17</sup>

The next spring, interpreter Gus Guelberth, then at Cheyenne River Agency, wrote to Father De Smet, telling how the Indians felt about Galpin's death: "The Log, an Indian who accompanied you and Major Galpin to the hostile camp in 1868, . . . tells me to write to you that the death of Major Galpin has left him an orphan; that the only hopes of the Indians were in Major Galpin and you."<sup>18</sup>

**M**rs. Galpin, an unexpected widow at age forty-nine, with two young girls, eight and thirteen, faced her problems with characteristic determination and courage. She accepted the obligation to continue the young ones on the educational path her husband had set for them. She took over the trading post, becoming the first woman merchant among the Sioux. Her people found Eagle Woman fair and generous and they greatly admired her accomplishment. During the first year after Galpin's death, she kept busy mastering her new business and planning her children's education.

Also in the aftermath of Galpin's death, Lulu and Will Harmon were considering how prospective changes in the military situation might affect their future together. The army had decided to assign troops to each of the Sioux agencies, and two companies of the 17th Infantry arrived at Grand River on May 20, 1870, for this purpose. Harmon foresaw that when the army appropriation year ended on June 30, the Indian Office might resume control of agency supplies, which would end his own agency service and leave him awaiting reassignment to regimental duty. This would facilitate a wedding leave, but what if he were assigned to a regiment campaigning against Lulu's people? He began thinking of resigning his commission and returning to civilian life.

On about June 1, Harmon's opportunity came when the *Emilie LaBarge*, carrying three com-

17. Joseph Henry Taylor, *Frontier and Indian Life and Kaleidoscopic Lives* (Valley City, North Dakota: E. P. Getchell, 1932), 319.

18. Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, 1589-1590.



Lulu Picotte Harmon at about thirty-eight years old, shortly after she and her family had moved to Miles City in 1884

Courtesy of the author

panies of the 7th Infantry to relieve the garrison at Fort Buford, paused at Grand River. As Harmon's old 36th Infantry had merged with the 7th, he enjoyed a reunion with his former comrades and undoubtedly he learned that Congress would outlaw all civil service by army officers, thus abolishing his job. Garrisons had often appointed a resigned officer as post sutler, and Harmon's friends may have urged him to apply at Fort Buford.<sup>20</sup> It was an opportunity the couple was considering when Father De Smet and his companion Jesuit Father Ignatius Panken landed from the *Far West* on about June 17.

The priests remained at Grand River for over three weeks, visiting the several tribes and seeking a location for a Catholic mission. At seventy years of age and in failing health, De Smet would make this his last appearance on the upper Missouri.<sup>21</sup> But the long visit gave him time to

19. *Sioux City Times*, May 25, 1870.

20. "Belknap Inquiry," 44th Cong., 1st sess., 1870, H. Report 799 (Serial 1715), 239.

21. Mary C. Duratschek, *Crusading Along Sioux Trails* (Yankton: Benedictine Convent, 1947), 52-54. Although nearly dateless, this reminiscent letter by Father Panken is the best available. It and De Smet's letter to F. F. Gerard, December 12, 1870 (Mss. File L/G31, St. Louis University Archives, St. Louis), agree that they stayed at Grand River three weeks or more. Numerous news items, however, permit dating the itinerary both coming and going.

console and encourage the widowed Eagle Woman, who arranged with him to send nearly fourteen-year-old Alma down to St. Louis in the fall to attend the same Sacred Heart Academy that Lulu had attended. In discussions with Lulu and her fiancé, De Smet apparently agreed to attend their wedding in Sioux City, and he may have helped solidify Harmon's plan to return to civilian life.

The priests left on about July 12 aboard the *Ida Stockdale* and stopped at the downriver agencies, which entailed much wagon travel in intense heat that exhausted the frail Father De Smet. Out of deep respect for Mrs. Galpin and fond pride in Lulu, he sped downriver to Sioux City on the *Peninah* to recuperate before attending Lulu's wedding on July 25, leaving Father Panken upriver to finish the Indian visits.

Lieutenant Harmon, having closed out his agency office, went downriver early to report his accounts at Sioux City, where he registered at the Northwestern Hotel on July 19. He chose for his best man 1st Lieutenant Ephraim Tillotson, commissary officer at Cheyenne River Agency. There is no record of the arrival of Lulu and her family, suggesting that local friends put them up. Lulu chose for her bridesmaid Susan Primeau, daughter of prominent fur trader Charles Primeau and his half-Sioux wife, née Mary Louise Cyres. Seven years older than Galpin, Primeau had traded even longer for Chouteau, opposition firms, and independently; he, too, had lawfully married the mother of his large family, and all had been baptized by Father De Smet. Susan, who was educated in a Catholic school, was undoubtedly Lulu's schoolmate in St. Louis.<sup>22</sup>

The wedding drew a throng of friends of the popular couple, one paper claiming two thousand guests.<sup>23</sup> Father McNulty, the local priest, performed the ceremony but Father De Smet gave away his goddaughter Lulu. The *Sioux City Times* on July 26, 1870, ran a lengthy story on the affair:

Last evening at the Northwestern Hotel, by the Rev. Father McMinoney [sic], Lt. William A. Harmon, acting commissary of

22. For a sketch of Charles Primeau, see Holley, *Once Their Home*, 179-183. I obtained his wife's name through an interview with his granddaughter, Margaret (Primeau) Peterson, at Rapid City, South Dakota, in 1967. Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, 1499.

23. "Obituary of Lulu Harmon," *The Record* 1 (June 1895): 31 ("Lulu married by Father McNulta [sic] with her godfather Father De Smet assisting, at Sioux City August 25, 1869 [sic]"); *Sioux City Register*, July 30, 1870.

24. *Congressional Globe*, 41st Cong., 2nd sess., 1870, pt. 7: 722.

subsistence at Grand River Agency, married Miss Z. L. Picotte, of St. Louis.

A large number of friends were present while the beautiful and impressive marriage service of the Catholic Church was being performed. The bride's maid was Miss Susan Primeau, and the groom's man was Lt. E. Tillotson.

After the ceremonies, the party retired to the spacious dining room of the hotel. Father De Smet sat at the head of the table. After partaking of the sumptuous repast, the following [six] toasts were proposed and responded to by the gentlemen named [one local reporter, the others army officers]. . . .

The festivities continued until ten o'clock, enlivened by the stirring music of the Sioux City Band, when the party separated. All of the numerous friends of the united pair wish them a happy journey through life.

**T**he newlyweds left for Omaha on July 29, but they must have cut their honeymoon short, for Harmon received news at Sioux City that prompted him to make a trip to Washington, D.C. Congress had approved a law on July 15 that not only changed the name "sutler" to "post trader" but also moved the power of appointment from the local post Council of Administration to the Secretary of War. Secretary William W. Belknap proceeded to establish a patronage racket for these traderships that later led to a national scandal.<sup>24</sup> Harmon had never met Belknap, but in late August 1868 he had met General William T. Sherman at Fort Sanders on the Union Pacific Railroad. Sherman was now in Washington, D.C., as head of the U.S. Army.

Harmon had a good talk with Sherman, who remembered him (perhaps Harmon had aided Sherman's daughter, who had suffered a bad fall from her horse at Fort Sanders).<sup>25</sup> The general accepted his reasons for resigning his commission, effective December 31, 1870, and promptly took him to Secretary Belknap when Harmon indicated his interest in a post tradership at Fort Buford. Although Sherman recommended him as an officer with an unblemished record in the

25. *Cheyenne Leader*, August 25, 1868.

Civil War volunteers and in the regulars, Belknap was cold and evasive. Sherman suggested that Harmon prepare a written application, with the general's personal endorsement. Harmon complied and the next morning in person submitted it to Belknap, who turned extremely rude. Still in uniform, Harmon could only depart, seething and convinced his case was hopeless.<sup>26</sup>

He was right. Belknap announced his first set of appointments on October 6, awarding Fort Buford to Alvin C. Leighton, and Fort Sully, Fort Rice, and Fort Stevenson to Durfee & Peck, the dominant trading firm on the upper Missouri, with headquarters at Leavenworth, Kansas. Harmon returned from Washington, D.C., by way of Sioux City on August 31.<sup>27</sup>

On September 20, "Lt. William Harmon and wife" registered at the Clifton House in Sioux City, probably on their return from taking Alma to school in St. Louis. This must have been when Harmon landed a job with Durfee & Peck. On September 17, the firm had renewed its trading license at Grand River, naming but two employees, A. D. Rodifer and interpreter Louis Agard. On January 2, two days after Harmon's resignation took effect, Durfee & Peck asked permission under its license to hire Harmon as its agent in charge of the trading post at Grand River.<sup>28</sup>

Durfee & Peck addressed its successful request to Dr. William F. Cady, a former Indian Office clerk who in November had relieved Major Hearn as Grand River agent. Intolerant of Indians, superiors, and subordinates, Cady resigned on January 30, 1871. Gloom lifted from the agency when the vastly superior and energetic J. C. O'Connor, former private secretary to General Harney as Peace Commissioner and Commander of the Sioux District, arrived on about April 1. Writing on April 25, a local correspondent expressed optimism that at last there would be support for Indian efforts to raise crops at the agency. Agent O'Connor hired Sammy Galpin as assistant farmer during the plowing season, from May 12 to May 31.<sup>29</sup>

During May 1871, when the agency supply system was still flowing like iced molasses and O'Connor found himself short of supplies, trader Harmon came to the rescue. Harmon offered im-

mediate delivery on all that was needed at no advance in price or for payment-in-kind from future delivery of agency goods. During June, Harmon replaced all his employees, choosing Gustave Guelberth as interpreter and his younger brother from Minneapolis, Charles T. Harmon, as chief clerk.<sup>30</sup>

For Harmon and the Galpin family, the developments that summer at Grand River were welcome. Post commander Captain Clarence E. Bennett, Agent O'Connor, and trader Harmon had a smooth relationship. Although Bennett had no official sutler, he could rely on Harmon to serve the soldiers as efficiently as he served the Indians. Bennett also hired Sammy Galpin as post interpreter, probably until July 12, when half-Sioux Johnnie "Big Leggings" Bruguier, son of Galpin's old partner, Theophile, took over the job and Sammy returned to woodhawking. The Harmon and Mrs. Galpin made downriver trips, one of which brought up Susan Primeau and probably Alma Galpin for the summer vacation.<sup>31</sup>

One feature of the season, however, which must have deeply disappointed Mrs. Galpin, was an abortive attempt to fulfill Father De Smet's dream of a flourishing Catholic mission at Grand River. For this service the hierarchy sent Father Francis X. Kuppens and Father Peter De Meester, who were clearly inexperienced and uninformed. The pair boarded the *May Lowrie* in Sioux City on May 31, 1871, for the upriver journey. The *May Lowrie* must have stranded the priests at the boat's destination, Fort Sully, on about May 16, leaving them to cover the remaining eighty miles to Grand River on their own. When they pulled up at the shack of Louis Agard, he led them to the lodge of Two Bears, both on the east side of the river. The chief took them to a sun dance, the Indians' most soul-renewing religious ceremony, and the sight alienated the horrified priests.<sup>32</sup>

Once across the Missouri River, the priests must have enlisted Harmon's aid to construct two small log buildings, a church and a school, on the bluffs overlooking the flood bottom, where the agency and military post were perilously located. Remaining but a few weeks,

28. *Sioux City Times*, September 21, 1870; "Register of Indian Trading Licenses," RG 75, NA; Durfee & Peck to Agent W. F. Cady, January 2, 1871, LR from Grand River Agency, 1871, Micro. 234, Roll 305, Frame 0099, NA.

29. Cady to Indian Commissioner, January 30, 1871, and J. C. O'Connor to Indian Commissioner, April 6, 1871, LR from Grand River Agency, 1871, Micro. 234, Roll 305, Frames 0031, 0099, NA; "Ironica" letters from Grand River in *Yankton Press*, April 12, April 25, 1871; "Register of Agency Employees," RG 75, NA.

26. "Belknap Inquiry," 239-240.

27. "Belknap Inquiry," 272. For more on Leighton, see John S. Gray, "Frontier Fortunes of John W. Smith," *Annals of Wyoming* 51 (Fall 1979): 37-52; *Sioux City Times*, September 1, 1869.

the priests were back in St. Louis by August; and that fall the two buildings were offered for sale to the Indian Office.<sup>33</sup>

Other events of that season were both joyful and sorrowful to the Galpins. Lulu gladdened her mother's heart by giving birth to the first of her sons, Leo C. Harmon, on October 31, 1871. Within a few months, however, Mrs. Galpin would be mourning the last of her own four sons. Sammy Galpin, at age twenty-two, died of tuberculosis on February 18, 1872.

**I**n the absurd expectation that Sioux hunters could quickly become self-supporting farmers on land still shunned by white farmers, the 1868 treaty had promised to provide rations to the Sioux for only four years. This period ended in 1872, even though the promise to teach them farming had been largely ignored. Crowded onto a reduced reservation, from which game was fast disappearing, and held close to the agencies to simplify the delivery of rations, the Sioux could no longer feed themselves. Although these agency Indians were growing more tractable and friendly, they had become nearly helpless dependents. Fortunately, the government decided to continue feeding them, at least for a time.

Mrs. Galpin was a striking exception to this pattern. For years, she had been selectively adopting the best of white ways under the guidance of her husband, whom she had taught to respect the best of Indian virtues. During the few years after her husband's death, she proved that she could support herself and children and even help those less fortunate than herself. She encouraged her people, and by her own example and those of her children she tried to show them the way. And she remained a peacekeeper, for she perceived that in the long run this was the only road to survival for the Sioux.

Not all the Sioux, however, were even attempting to adopt new ways. A minority of the

tribe—all relatives of the agency Indians—retained their independence by shunning the agencies and roaming their unceded territory, supporting themselves by the chase. In 1872, army escorts and engineers, who were sent to survey a route for the advancing Northern Pacific Railroad, invaded the Indians' Yellowstone country hunting grounds. Whites called these Sioux bands "hostiles," but they were doing nothing more than defending their homeland and heritage. A more accurate and less pejorative term for them is "roamers."

During the summer of 1872 a special commission went out to Fort Peck, Montana Territory, to propitiate these roamers and to bring a delegation of their chiefs to Washington, D.C., to impress them with the might of the whites. Agent O'Connor was ordered to add a delegation of friendly Grand River chiefs to temper any hostility among the roamers. This group included Mrs. Galpin, who helped select the fifteen delegates, and interpreter Johnnie Bruguier. When the Grand River delegation boarded the *Esperanza*, about September 5, 1872, they joined eighteen chiefs from Fort Peck, one of whose interpreters was Mrs. Galpin's old trader friend, Alexander Culbertson. When they landed at Sioux City on September 9, a news dispatch reported that "an Indian woman, named Mrs. Galpin, is also with the party; she has been a great friend of the whites and has more influence with the hostile Indians than most of the chiefs."<sup>34</sup>

Already a seasoned traveler, Mrs. Galpin instructed and reassured the nervous chiefs as their train snorted, clattered, and careened its way across Iowa and Illinois to the vast city of Chicago. At the Tremont House, all but Mrs. Galpin chose to bed down on the floor of their rooms. The next morning Chicago's mayor received them at the city council chambers:

Mrs. Galpin, to whom the Indian agents say belongs most of the credit for bringing the Grand River Indians into the agency, sat with the chiefs during the conference. She is a pleasant appearing Indian woman, thirty-five or forty years of age [she was

30. O'Connor to Indian Commissioner, May 11 (Frame 0173), Harmon to O'Connor, June 6 (Frame 0190), Harmon to O'Connor, June 30 (Frame 0205), *LR from Grand River Agency*, 1871, Micro. 234, Roll 305, NA.

31. "Reports of Persons Hired by Captain C. E. Bennett, QM, Grand River, Post, 1871," RG 92, NA; *Sioux City Times*, July 25, 1871. Sammy Galpin was recorded by the censustaker in June 1870 as working as a woodhawk on the Missouri River.

32. *Sioux City Times*, May 4, 1871; Gilbert J. Garraghan, *Jesuits of the Middle United States*, 2 vols. (New York: America Press, 1938), 2:485-486.

33. O'Connor to Indian Commissioner, November 20, 1871, *LR from Grand River Agency*, 1871, Micro. 234, Roll 305, Frame 0234, NA.

34. "Report of Special Commission, October 15, 1872," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1872* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872); Holley, *Once Their Home*, 293-294; *Yankton Press*, September 11, 1872; *Sioux City* dispatch of September 9 in *Chicago Tribune*, September 10, 1872.

fifty-two], neatly dressed in modern style, and has two daughters at school in the East, whom she has supported by moccasin-making and beadwork [and trading] among the Sioux. The commissioners and agents agree that she wields a more powerful influence among the Grand River tribes than any of their chiefs.<sup>35</sup>

On September 15, they arrived in Washington, D.C., to spend two weeks sightseeing (especially the Navy Yard and Arsenal to impress them with the white's military power) and holding conferences with General Sherman, Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano, and President U. S. Grant. By October 3, the Sioux delegation stayed at the Grand Central Hotel in New York City and attended the Grand Opera:

With this party is Mrs. C. E. Galpin, a full-blood Uncpapa, who has powerful influence over them. Her husband was an Indian trader, who, by her desire, gave to them all he had acquired, and died leaving his family poor. She now supports herself, and her children at St. Louis, by making moccasins for the Indians, and so warm is their regard for her that they were anxious that \$10,000 of the [government's] appropriation for their benefit be given to her. It could not be done, however. . . .<sup>36</sup>

Because some of the delegates were ill and all were growing weary and homesick, they skipped going to Boston, but they did take a fast trip on a revenue cutter around Manhattan Island on the morning before their departure. Leaving New York on October 7, they reached home late in the month, sobered by the incredible numbers of whites and awed by their material achievements.

**D**evelopments on the upper Missouri in 1873 set the stage for future trouble. In May, Harmon became sutler at Fort Rice, with Durfee & Peck as partners; and he and Lulu moved upriver to that post, although he still managed the firm's store at Grand River. In July, when Edmund Palmer, the new Indian agent, moved the flood-threatened Grand River Agency to Standing Rock, both Mrs. Galpin and Harmon moved their

trading stores to that location, although the agency garrison was withdrawn. Thirty miles above Fort Rice on the Missouri, the Northern Pacific Railroad was transforming Bismarck into a boom town for the river trade. General George A. Custer's 7th Cavalry, having battled that summer with the Sioux in the Yellowstone country while escorting railroad surveyors, returned to garrison Fort Abraham Lincoln, opposite Bismarck.

Trouble came to the Galpin family in June 1874, when Secretary Belknap abruptly terminated all of Durfee & Peck's sutlerships, including Harmon's at Fort Rice. Investigating the cause, Harmon's congressman learned from Belknap that it was done on President Grant's order, but the president denied having anything to do with the sutlerships; Harmon's successor in the sutlership, it turned out, had as partner a brother-in-law of Belknap. Harmon ran the post on shares until May 1875, when his successor finally found the capital to buy him out.<sup>37</sup> But this was only the beginning, for by August 1874 Secretary of the Interior Delano also revoked, without specified cause, all of Durfee & Peck's Indian licenses, including Harmon's at Standing Rock. Delano later announced that he alone would approve licenses, although this violated an 1866 anti-monopoly statute that made any reputable citizen who posted the required bond eligible for a license. It was soon revealed that Delano had given the president's jobless brother, Orvil L. Grant, freedom to select licenses for the Durfee & Peck trading posts. For the Standing Rock licenses, Orvil made a deal with two Philadelphians. J. R. Casselberry was to receive the license and A. L. Bonnafon, Sr., was to loan all the capital; Casselberry was to share the profits with Orvil, who was to guarantee a monopoly by issuing no other licenses at Standing Rock.<sup>38</sup>

Orvil Grant and Bonnafon appeared in Bismarck on September 26, bringing word that Secretary Delano had revoked all Durfee & Peck's licenses and that Grant would issue new ones only to those who would share profits with him on his guarantee of a monopoly. Grant then left for Fort Peck to make a deal with Joseph Leighton rather than the Durfee & Peck agent, while Bonnafon went to Standing Rock, looked over the premises, and left for home without even seeing Harmon. An angry Harmon, needing sutler's goods for Fort Rice, went to St.

35. *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, September 13, 1872.

36. *New York Times*, October 7, 1872.

Paul, where he met Orvil Grant returning from Fort Peck. The two arranged terms for the sale of the Standing Rock property and then sped back to the agency, took inventory, and closed the sale, thus ending Harmon's Indian trade.<sup>39</sup>

Harmon had traded in perfectly amicable competition with Mrs. Galpin, but when Orvil Grant took over Harmon's trade, he marshaled Secretary Delano and Commissioner Smith to enforce his monopoly in order to extract maximum prices and profits from his captive customers. For nearly a year, the Grant-Delano-Smith combine applied every force at its command to put Eagle Woman out of business. Proving utterly unflappable, she stood her ground, aware of her rights and her tormentors' corruption.

As an ironic twist to this battle of wills, the man who triggered the first harassment of Eagle Woman was Henry S. Parkin, who was destined to become her next son-in-law. Parkin was a twenty-eight-year-old Pennsylvanian, former telegrapher, and Civil War soldier who had just completed a two-year term as clerk in the sutler's store at Fort Abraham Lincoln. Returning from a trip to St. Paul, Parkin rode the same train that brought Orvil Grant to Bismarck. He also made the trip to Fort Peck with Grant, who then made him local manager of his Standing Rock trading store on November 14, 1874.<sup>40</sup>

Parkin had scarcely taken charge at Standing Rock when he grew suspicious that Mrs. Galpin's store was a front for Harmon's trade. Although he was dead wrong, it took him a long time to discover his error. He had seen boxes delivered to Mrs. Galpin with Harmon's name on them, but these were surplus goods Harmon had sold to Mrs. Galpin in May 1875 when he had lost his sutlership at Fort Rice. Nonetheless, Parkin fired off a wire to Orvil Grant on his first suspicion. In turn, Grant wrote Harmon from New York on November 27, accusing him of violating their agreement and remarking that "with competition there is no money to anyone."<sup>41</sup>

On December 3, Indian Commissioner Smith sent orders to Agent Palmer to stop Mrs. Galpin's

trade, but by the time Palmer received the letter, Indians at Standing Rock were in turmoil over the arrest of Rain-in-the-Face at Parkin's trading store on December 14 by a battalion of 7th Cavalry sent from Fort Abraham Lincoln. The charges against Rain-in-the-Face that created the turmoil were that he had killed two whites on the fringes of a battle with the 7th Cavalry on the Yellowstone River in August 1873. All of this prevented Palmer from stopping Mrs. Galpin's trade. As he wired Smith on December 16, he could do nothing about Mrs. Galpin's trade until troops were sent to control the angry Indians.<sup>42</sup>

There was irony in this reply, for right after the arrest Mrs. Galpin had once again saved the day for both Indians and whites. Captain George W. Yates, who commanded the 7th Cavalry battalion, later related her role:

Capt. Yates received a note [written by Louise DeGrey] from an Indian woman, daughter of a Sioux chief . . . and married to a white man named Galpin. . . . The note read: "Do not leave here tonight." Yates decided to trust the woman and remained all night. At dawn another note arrived: "Don't go by the bluffs." Capt. Yates also followed this advice. When they left they saw about two hundred Indians riding off to the bluffs by the river . . . but the troops reached safety because of the Indian woman's advice.<sup>43</sup>

Harmon took up the cudgels on December 26 by writing to his Minnesota congressman, former General John T. Averill. He protested the illegal order to prevent Mrs. Galpin's trade and briefly described a number of her exploits. The letter ended:

A few days ago troops went down to the agency to arrest an Indian [Rain-in-the-Face] and serious trouble seemed inevitable. She sent for the different Indians and labored with them not to attack the

37. "Belknap Inquiry," 235-236.

38. Ibid. The law cited is in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1866), 312.

39. *Bismarck Tribune*, September 30, October 7, October 14, November 11, 1874; "Belknap Inquiry," 236-237. C. K. Peck dropped out of the fur trade and began a steamboat business. E. H. Durfee died in September 1874.

40. "Belknap Inquiry," 249-250; Parkin obituaries in *Bismarck Tribune*, June 11, June 14, 1895; *Bismarck Tribune*, September 30, November 11, 1874.

41. "Belknap Inquiry," 237.

42. Palmer to Indian Commissioner, December 16, 1874, *LR from Grand River Agency, 1874*, Micro. 234, Roll 306, Frame 665, NA. For the full story of the arrest of Rain-in-the-Face, see John S. Gray, "Custer Throws a Boomerang," *Montana the Magazine of Western History* 11 (Spring 1961): 2-12.

43. Cyrus T. Brady, "Capt. Yates' Capture of Rain-in-the-Face," *Tepee Book* 2 (June 1916): 10-11. See also Frank Fiske, "Obituary of Louise Degrey-Van Solen," *Sioux County Pioneer* (Fort Yates), March 18, 1920.

troops, and finally the soldiers took the prisoner away without molestation.

This order of the Commissioner [to stop her trade] will create great dissatisfaction among the Indians and at the same time do Mrs. Galpin great injustice, simply to gratify the President's brother. I have no financial interest in this trade of Mrs. Galpin. But she is my wife's mother and I shall not sit tamely by and see this injustice perpetrated. I am satisfied that this act of Commissioner E. P. Smith is a usurpation of authority without law to sustain him. If this decree is to be enforced by the bayonet, as it will have to be if done at all, I intend that the country shall know of it through the press.<sup>44</sup>

Again on December 31 Smith ordered Palmer to stop Mrs. Galpin from trading. The agent replied on February 2, 1875:

I ordered Mrs. Galpin to stop trading, but she declines to obey on the ground that she is an Indian and entitled to trade with her people in order to support her family. . . . I am not aware of anybody trading under Mrs. Galpin's name; indeed, I am certain there is none. She manages her business herself and seems quite competent to do so.<sup>45</sup>

While she calmly continued her trade, Eagle Woman also helped her people, who were suffering from agency shortages that winter. As a reporter put it the next June, "the trader here was charging exorbitant prices, while Mrs. Galpin was giving the Indians provisions from her little store."<sup>46</sup>

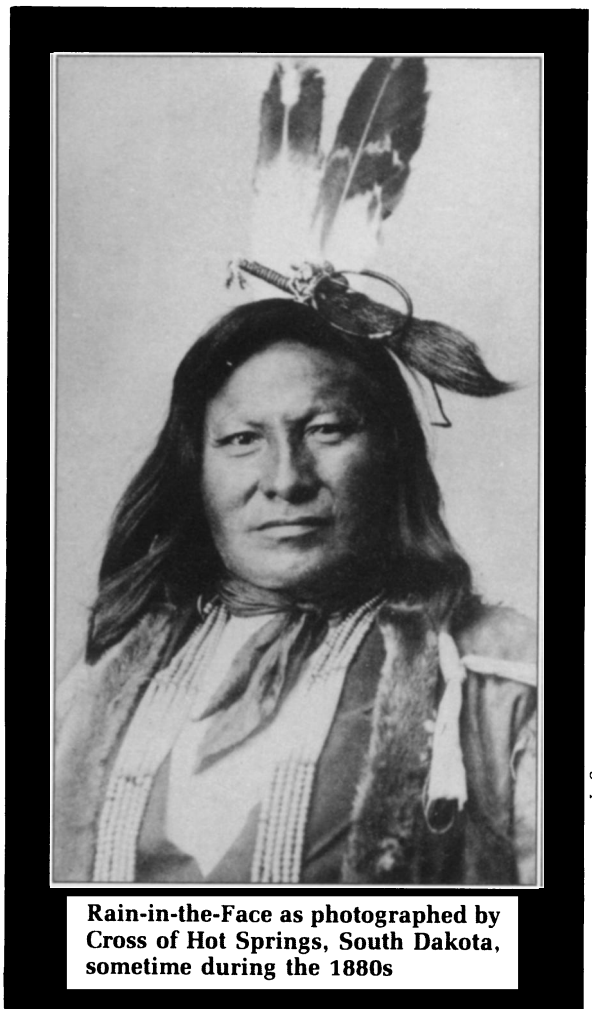
Hoping to place on the record an illegal rejection of an Indian license, Harmon applied to Agent Palmer on March 23, 1875, for a license to trade at Standing Rock, submitting impeccable credentials from high Minnesota officials and a proper bond. He later testified that Palmer "told me he could not sign it, as he had an order not to sign a license until so directed by the Indian Commissioner. He did forward it, unsigned, but I got no further word of it, nor did the agent." The document remains in the Indian Office files marked "no action."<sup>47</sup>

44. *New York Herald*, July 9, 1875.

45. J. C. O'Connor to E. P. Smith, February 2, 1875, *LR from Grand River Agency*, 1875, Micro. 234, Roll 846, NA.

46. *New York Herald*, July 9, 1875.

47. "Belknap Inquiry," 235; "Harmon License Application," *LR from Grand River Agency*, 1875, Micro. 234, Roll 846, NA.



**Rain-in-the-Face as photographed by Cross of Hot Springs, South Dakota, sometime during the 1880s**

MHS Photograph Archives

Because Agent Palmer failed to halt Eagle Woman, John Burke succeeded him on May 1. Since December, the agency had boasted a military post (later named Fort Yates), which was commanded by Captain John S. Poland, 6th Infantry, who incessantly feuded with Agent Burke. When Burke sent Mrs. Galpin a written order to cease trading, she ignored it. When he came in person, she graciously refused to obey. And when Burke asked Captain Poland to post a guard and keep her store closed, Poland gleefully refused, with the approbation of his superiors, General Custer and General Terry. Finally, when he demanded that the U.S. Marshal confiscate her goods, the marshal also refused.<sup>48</sup>

48. Harmon's testimony outlines this story, but the agency letters give all details.

49. Zachariah Chandler to Indian Commissioner, November 22, 1875, *LR from Grand River Agency*, 1875, Micro. 234, Roll 846, NA.

Agent Burke abruptly dropped this campaign in mid August, and months later Eagle Woman received official vindication. Orvil Grant's little empire collapsed when Secretary Delano resigned under a cloud of suspicion on October 1. The new Secretary of the Interior, Zachariah Chandler, found an eight-month-old letter on his desk from Commissioner Smith to Delano inquiring about Mrs. Galpin's rights, which Delano had never answered. Chandler wrote to Smith on November 22 that, having studied the statutes, "he could perceive no authority for preventing Mrs. Galpin from continuing her business as trader."<sup>49</sup>

Over a year later, a more enthusiastic vindication came from Lieutenant Colonel Pinckney Lugenbeel, who investigated the Burke-Poland feuding for General Terry. Lugenbeel's official report of January 26, 1876, contained the following paragraph:

With reference to the little trading store kept by Mrs. Galpin, I feel convinced that she is the owner and no other person is interested pecuniarily in its profits. As she is a full-blood Sioux Indian woman, she is authorized by law to keep a store if she thinks proper. I consider her a very meritorious person and trust that she will remain unmolested in her laudable efforts to educate her children. Mrs. Galpin is the bright particular star of the Sioux Nation, and I honor her for her former deeds and for her present unexceptionable conduct.<sup>50</sup>

**T**he discovery of gold in the Black Hills by Custer's expedition in 1874 was followed the next summer by an invasion of prospectors and miners, which stimulated a national demand to open this most sacred part of the Sioux Indian Reservation to white occupation. This violation of the treaty angered all of the Sioux, but the agency Sioux realized that violent resistance would provoke confiscation of the Black Hills. The roamers' preference for isolation, however, left them relatively ignorant of the whites' power, although they surely understood the whites' motives in opening the territory to mining.

50. Lieutenant Colonel Pinckney Lugenbeel to Terry's Adjutant, January 29, 1876, LR from Grand River Agency, 1876, Micro. 234, Roll 847, NA.

On June 18, 1875, a commission was appointed to secure a cession of both the Black Hills and unceded territory. An advance party went out to invite all the agency Sioux and as many roamers as runners could bring in to a grand council. This party soon learned that the Indians would unite in defending their unceded lands and that even the agency Indians would demand a high price for the Black Hills. Thus alerted, the commission decided to dismiss as "inconvenient" the treaty law that required consent of three-fourths of the tribe's adult males and to relegate the request for unceded land to an obligatory gesture and to lease only the mining rights to the Black Hills; this was a distinction that meant a "cheap" purchase to the commission but still meant "occupation" to the Indians. In mid September, the Indians and commissioners assembled near Red Cloud's Agency in northwestern Nebraska.<sup>51</sup>

On August 16, the Standing Rock bands had started *en masse* for the council, with Mrs. Galpin and interpreter Johnnie Bruguier and Louis Agard, soon followed by Agent Burke. It was this exodus to the council that had abruptly halted Burke's efforts to stop Mrs. Galpin's trade. Eagle Woman's peace-keeping performance at the coming stormy councils would convert the agent to her point of view, and he became another of her admirers. Commission chairman Senator William B. Allison opened the first council on September 20 and proposed the lease of mining rights and the purchase of unceded territory. With no reference to a financial offer, he asked the chiefs to report whether or not they would accept and at what price. They sat in dumbfounded silence, until one chief asked for a week's time to counsel among themselves. Ignorant of the chiefs' democratic mode of reaching tribal decisions, Allison gave them one night. He fidgeted for two days.

About noon on September 23, the commissioners took their seats under a large canopy, guarded closely by a detail of infantry. Also at some distance to the commissioners' front two full companies of armed cavalry stood horse-to-horse. They watched, unsure and apprehensive, as thousands of agency Indians rode up: Red Cloud's Oglala, Spotted Tail's Brule, and the Missouri River Bands. The Indians formed a semicircle in front of the canopy, many remaining armed and mounted, while the chiefs ad-

51. "Report of Black Hills Commission," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1875* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875), 184-191.

vanced to seat themselves in the forefront. A *New York Herald* reporter spotted Mrs. Galpin at the head of the Grand River delegation:

The Yanktonnais and Uncpapas, unarmed and dismounted, advanced toward the canopy, led by the prophetess and real chieftainess, Mrs. Galpin, a civilized and educated lady. . . . A few years ago she possessed a wonderful influence over all the Sioux on the Missouri, and they are evidently guided by her at present.

Mrs. Galpin is of matronly appearance and modest and timid in manner. Her features are of the Roman type and very refined and benevolent in expression. Her complexion is of a rich olive tint, her eyes darkly brown, and her long and luxuriant black hair is slightly tinged with gray. She at present wears mourning attire and there is nothing in her dress or countenance indicating Indian. She commands the utmost respect among both whites and Indians, and her example and benevolent efforts in the cause of advancement of her race are of great and undoubted public service.<sup>52</sup>

Last to approach this meeting was a large party of roamers from unceded territory—Oglala from Crazy Horse's camp and Hunkpapa from Sitting Bull's camp (though not these chiefs themselves), and some Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho—who were bent on preventing any land cession. They rode in, painted and feathered, singing defiance and brandishing their weapons. Among the agency Indians, however, were two armed and mounted forces of Indian police: an Oglala police force organized by Young Man Afraid of His Horses and a Standing Rock police force organized by Mrs. Galpin's trusted friends. After the Standing Rock chiefs had seated themselves, with Mrs. Galpin "at their front, carrying a sunshade over her bare head," Spotted Tail arose to shake hands with each of the whites, while the Standing Rock police moved close to the canopy, sitting motionless on their horses, weapons in hand. The *Herald* reporter continued:

The armed array of nearly all the Indians made an unpleasant impression on the commissioners. . . . The chiefs and

braves from Standing Rock Agency, known to be very friendly and most completely under control, were asked why they remained mounted in council. They replied: "We are afraid there will be trouble in this council, and if there is, we want to have our horses near us. We would like to remain mounted." The commissioners, after a moment's consultation, sent reply by an interpreter, that if they desired, they could stay on their horses.

The Oglala police quietly moved in front of the troopers, facing the belligerent roamers, who had crowded toward the battalion. Under superb discipline, the police forced the belligerents back, while the Standing Rock police threw a protective cordon around the commissioners. No violence erupted, but the commissioners fled to the agency clutching their scalps, their mission an utter and ignominious failure. The Oglala and Standing Rock police had controlled the situation, and Mrs. Galpin's peace-keeping efforts brought her recognition as a chief. As commissioner member Reverend Samuel D. Hinman later testified, "Mrs. Galpin, of Standing Rock," had saved their lives.<sup>53</sup>

**A**fter this tense episode, Eagle Woman returned home in mid October, where she resumed her trading with no more harassment. She was able to send Annie down to school in St. Louis on October 26, in the charge of Will Harmon.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, the Black Hills problem continued to fester and agency Indians understood what might happen next. As Two Bears, the Yanktonais chief, said in a late October interview: "The government will take the Hills without a treaty, which the river tribes will not like, but will accept without an outbreak, but the Northern bands [roamers] are bent on war." But he had underestimated the whites, for on November 3, at a secret White House conference, the president and his advisors made plans to launch an aggressive war against the roamers.<sup>55</sup>

On December 20, General Philip H. Sheridan (a secret conferee) requested General George Crook (another conferee) and General Alfred H.

52. For this and following quotes, *New York Herald*, October 7, 1875.

53. "Report of Dawes Investigating Committee, 1883," 48th Cong., 1st sess., 1883, S. Report 283 (Serial 2174), 202.

54. *Bismarck Tribune*, October 27, 1875.

55. *Bismarck Tribune*, October 20, 1875; John S. Gray, *Centennial Campaign, the Sioux War of 1876* (Fort Collins, Colorado: Old Army Press, 1976), 25ff.



As a result of treaties between Sioux tribes and the United States government during the 1860s, Sioux Indians on the reservations in South Dakota no longer lived by the hunt but received rations through reservation agencies. This photograph, probably taken during the 1880s, shows a ration day at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

Terry to report confidentially on the feasibility of prompt winter campaigns against the roamers. Four days later, Poland wired Terry that he calculated the Standing Rock Indians were shipping 150,000 rounds of ammunition a year to the roamers. Before receiving authority from the Indian Office, Terry ordered Poland to enforce a total embargo on arms sales at the agency. This triggered another spate of haughty letters between the feuding Poland and Burke, which also disclosed that Mrs. Galpin had not traded in arms and would not, regardless of loss to her business.<sup>56</sup>

By this time, however, Mrs. Galpin had entirely won over Agent Burke, and she began to cooperate with him on a favorite project, a school for Indian children. The agent's budget included a teacher's salary, but the Catholic Indian Bureau, to which his agency was assigned, was not ready to staff a boarding school, the only kind it would approve.<sup>57</sup> With her oldest daughter, Louise DeGrey, an available, experienced, and qualified bilingual Catholic teacher, Mrs. Galpin would brook no further delay. Agent Burke hired Mrs. DeGrey on

January 15, 1876, to teach at the first Indian school at Standing Rock, a day school.<sup>58</sup>

The *Bismarck Tribune* of January 26 noted that a man had arrived from Standing Rock to purchase books and supplies for an agency school whose teacher will be "Mrs. DeGrey, who will begin with about twenty half-breed children and about thirty Indians." The May 17 issue added that "the Indian school under Mrs. DeGrey at Standing Rock is a complete success."

By the summer of 1876, the Catholic Indian Bureau had recruited Abbot Martin Marty from a Benedictine abbey in Indiana to establish a chapel and boarding school at Standing Rock. When he arrived on July 31 and found the agency badly disrupted by the Sioux War, he decided to spend his first year becoming acquainted with the Sioux bands and studying their language. Father Chrysostone Foffa and Brother Giles soon joined him, but it was Louise DeGrey who undertook to tutor them in the Sioux language: "In return, Abbot Marty, an adept in Gregorian Chant, taught her and her sisters to sing at devine services."<sup>59</sup> Starting on

56. "Military Expedition Against the Sioux," 44th Cong., 1st sess., 1875, H. Ex. Doc. 184 (Serial 1691), 15, 27, 31.

57. Charles Ewing, Catholic Indian Bureau, to Agent Burke, July 23, 1875, LR from Grand River Agency, 1875, Micro. 234, Roll 846, NA.

58. "Service Records of Indian Agency Employees," Book 6, 1875-6, RG 75, NA.

59. Duratschek, *Crusading Along Sioux Trails*, 72-75, 77; Burke to Indian Commissioner, July 16, 1875, LR from Grand River Agency, 1875, Micro. 234, Roll 846, NA; *Bismarck Tribune*, March 15, May 10, May 24, 1876. Charles DeGrey had been post interpreter at Cheyenne River Agency in 1871-1872. Later the DeGreys moved downriver to settle on a ranch near DeGrey post office. While Charles guided a miner's party to the Black Hills in August 1875, Louise went to Standing Rock while her mother attended the Black Hills Council.

November 1, Alma Galpin was also hired as an agency teacher for at least two months.

No one was more distressed than Mrs. Galpin by the war the government waged against the roamers in 1876. After Custer's defeat, a shocked Congress refused a single penny to feed the helpless agency Sioux until they had signed away the Black Hills and the unceded territory. A flinthearted commission, forbidden to negotiate, sped from agency to agency with an ultimatum to sign or starve; in exchange, the Indians would receive a promise of "rights of property." The commission encountered no trouble, for General Sheridan had already seized the agencies, garrisoning each at regimental strength, and the commission again took only a few signatures to suffice as three-fourths of the population.

When the commission reached Standing Rock on the evening of October 9, 1876, Mrs. Galpin, with quiet dignity, offered them the hospitality of her home during their stay.<sup>60</sup> Commission Chairman George W. Manypenny, years earlier a Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and commission member Rev. H. B. Whipple, Episcopal Bishop of Minnesota, both signed Louise DeGrey's autograph album. Whipple penned an inspirational verse and Manypenny inscribed a more personal note:

Mrs. Galpin and her daughters, Mrs. DeGrey and Miss Alma Galpin, by their courteous, kind and hospitable attention to me while their guest, have deeply impressed me, and I hereby express my obligation to them. I shall treasure with pleasure the recollection of their kindness in the years allotted to me. May the blessing of God rest on their household.<sup>61</sup>

Forty-nine Standing Rock chiefs signed the treaty but Mrs. Galpin's name is not among them, although she did attend the councils. Perhaps she knew the document was fraudulent, even as the courts ruled generations later.<sup>62</sup> Within a week, the Standing Rock Sioux learned the meaning of "rights of property," when General Terry's army confiscated their horses and arms. And over the winter, fresh troops struck the roamers again and again, bringing the surrender in the spring of all but Sitting Bull's followers, who fled to Canada.

In the quieter agency atmosphere, the Benedictines, having made progress in learning Sioux, soon opened a boarding school for boys in a refurbished agency building, while Louise DeGrey continued to teach a class of twenty-nine Indian girls in her day school. Despite the death of her husband on June 17, 1877, she would keep it flourishing, as occasionally noted in the Bismarck paper.<sup>63</sup>

Mrs. Galpin's household at Standing Rock in 1878 included Louise, Alma, and Annie. In late September, William Allen Rogers, an artist for *Harper's Weekly* who was making sketches around Bismarck, made a side trip to Fort Yates at Standing Rock and visited Mrs. Galpin's home.<sup>64</sup>

This woman was a really fine character. She was the widow of an old French trader, and on more than one occasion had prevented attacks on the whites by her own people. She had several daughters who were educated and refined women. . . . We arrived after a four mile walk at one of the most curious homes it was ever my good luck to visit. The house, built of cottonwood logs and adobe, nestled in a draw. In part, it was a dugout, several rooms running well back into the bluff. The house was so much a part of the bluff that it looked small in the half light, but on entering, we were to our surprise taken through several good-sized rooms and passage-ways into the principal living room.

We were received by the woman's oldest daughter, Mrs. D— [Louise DeGrey], the graduate of an eastern college who had the well bred manners of a woman used to the refinements of civilization. Her mother, dressed in full Indian costume, greeted us pleasantly and called a woman servant to take our hats.

The daughter showed the Indian strain of blood so little that it was impossible to realize we were not in an eastern drawing room, until her young sister, a girl of sixteen [Annie, seventeen] came in. She was fresh from an eastern boarding school and had every little air and grace of a white school girl of that age—all that exaggera-

60. "Certain Concessions from the Sioux Indians," 44th Cong., 2d sess., 1876, S. Ex. Doc. 9 (Serial 1718), 30-31, 44-55, 50; James C. Olsen, *Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 223.

61. Copy furnished by Dick Harmon.

62. *Bismarck Tribune*, October 18, October 25, 1876.

63. *Bismarck Tribune*, November 1, November 8, 1876; Duratschek, *Crusading Along Sioux Trails*, 75, 76; *Bismarck Tribune*, March 28, December 27, 1877, January 31, 1878.

tion of “grown up” mannerisms which very young girls affect—but she was pure Indian in type. Her hair was intensely black and straight, her complexion dark, and her eyes contained fathomless depths.

Mrs. D— had inherited from her French father a faculty for brilliant wit. It was curious to note how it supplemented the peculiar quality of the Indian mind, which as I often found, is full of deep satirical humor. The full blood Indian mother was reputed to be a rich woman. She still carried on the trading business established by her husband, and my real business out there that night was to purchase some Indian bead work and costumes. I succeeded in getting, among other things, a Sioux belt of great beauty and some handsome moccasins.<sup>65</sup>

**M**rs. Galpin's daughters attracted suitors. George L. Van Solen, saw-mill engineer at Fort Yates and the one who introduced William Rogers to the Galpins, had been courting Louise DeGrey and married her at Standing Rock in April 1879. They would have one son, George (who died young), and one daughter, Lucille. Van Solen, a solitary type, left some years later to pursue a wilderness life and died in December 1895. Louise, however, continued to teach Indian children at a second day school she opened in 1883.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, Henry S. Parkin, the trader who had first reported Mrs. Galpin's trading to Orvil Grant and was still in charge of the Standing Rock trading post, courted Alma Galpin. Parkin may have been the one who had persuaded Casselberry & Company back in October 1876 to “pay the Indians the exact value of their hides and to sell at whiteman's prices.” Even though the store ownership changed hands in 1877, Parkin continued to trade fairly. That he

had earned Mrs. Galpin's approval is revealed in an announcement that “Henry S. Parkin will be married on January 19 [1879] to Miss Alma J. Galpin, . . . one of the finest ladies in the Territory.”<sup>67</sup>

Parkin was enterprising and shortly after his marriage to Alma he purchased the Cannonball Ranch, which lay just north of the reservation. At the ranch, he opened a store and raised crops, beef cattle, and horses, which he marketed to cities, forts, and agencies. His partnership with Fred F. Gerard, the old Indian trader and former interpreter for the Arikara Indian scouts at Fort Abraham Lincoln, was supplying Mrs. Galpin's trading store at Standing Rock in 1883. After Parkin's death in 1895, Alma took over management of the ranch. Inheriting her mother's generosity and capabilities, Alma made the Cannonball Ranch famous for its open hospitality, drawing the entire countryside to its frequent festivities. “She never turned a soul away from her door,” one account reports, “and if people were in need and couldn't come, she would go out to help them.”<sup>68</sup>

Annie Galpin captivated the young agency clerk, John E. Kennedy, who had come to Standing Rock in September 1881 with the new agent, James McLaughlin. On February 20, 1882, Annie and Kennedy married; their first child, Charles Louis Kennedy, was born in St. Paul on August 15, 1882. He was called “Chaske,” the Sioux word for “first born.” But tragedy struck first on December 13, 1883, when the father of the infant died, and again on June 14, 1884, when Annie succumbed to tuberculosis at St. Alexius Hospital in Bismarck. True to Sioux tradition, the childless Alma and Henry Parkin adopted the two-year-old boy, raised him at their ranch home as if he were their own, and then sent him east to school.<sup>69</sup>

The Harmon family, too, had been prospering and growing. Son Milan T. had been born on July 3, 1875, while Will was freighting to the Black Hills. After Will became sutler at Fort Abraham Lincoln in May 1876, a third son, William Elmer, was born on March 13, 1879. In

64. *Bismarck Tribune*, September 25, 1878; William Allen Rogers, *A World Worth While* (New York: Harper's, 1922), 75ff.

65. *Bismarck Tribune*, May 3, 1879.

66. A. B. Welch, “Mrs. Van Solen,” *Bismarck Tribune*, March 15, 1920; Frank Fiske, “Mrs. Marie Louise Van Solen,” *Sioux County Pioneer*, March 18, 1920. Louise's son Charles E. “Eddy” DeGrey was an agency teacher from July 1, 1879, to April 30, 1880. This fits with Dick Harmon's statement that Eddy died of tuberculosis while still a young man.

67. *Bismarck Tribune*, October 25, 1876, July 23, 1877, January 6, 1879.

68. Frank Fiske, “Cannonball Ranch,” *American News* (Aberdeen, South Dakota), May 14, 1950; *Mandan Pioneer* (North Dakota), July 6, November 17, 1883; Parkin obituaries in *Bismarck Tribune*, June 11, June 14, 1895. Parkin held several elected offices and was a state senator when he died on June 11, 1895.

69. James McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indians* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910), 32, 182; information from Dick Harmon. Charles Kennedy died at the Soldier's Home Hospital in Washington, D.C., on January 18, 1938.

1880, Will gave up this sutlership and moved his family into Bismarck, where he joined a real estate firm. There on May 17, 1882, Lulu bore her fourth and last son, Joseph Richard, who supplied the author with family and documentary information.

By 1881, the roamers who had fled to Canada after the Sioux War had begun to surrender to U.S. government officials and were returned, without punishment, to their respective agencies. The last to surrender, Sitting Bull and 187 of his Hunkpapa followers, arrived at Fort Buford on July 19, 1881, where they boarded the *Sherman* on June 29 for the trip downriver to Standing Rock. When the boat stopped at Bismarck on the morning of August 1, Will Harmon was among a throng of spectators on the levee. Harmon boarded to see Sitting Bull, who asked to see Lulu, because she was the daughter of his respected friend, Mrs. Galpin. Lulu came to the boat and talked freely with the chief in his own language.<sup>70</sup> Mrs. Holley, who accompanied Lulu, later recalled:

I shall long remember standing with Mrs. Harmon of Bismarck as she conversed with the just-surrendered Sitting Bull, while his surprised people stood by, listening with unfeigned admiration to the woman that was moving among them in the kindly and refined manner so characteristic of this lady. She was unconsciously giving a beautiful illustration of the lost graces of her once proud nation.<sup>71</sup>

Sitting Bull spent a month at Standing Rock, renewing his friendship with Mrs. Galpin. She was warm and sympathetic, but she also thoroughly discussed with him his new life. Sitting Bull and his party, as the chief soon discovered, were to be treated differently than all the other roamers, despite the promises that had induced him to surrender. On September 10, he and his party were shipped downriver on the *Sherman* to Fort Randall to be held as prisoners of war for almost two years. Concerned about Sitting Bull's fate, Mrs. Galpin had a letter written to her stepson, Charles Picotte, Esq., at Yankton Agency. She sent the letter on the same boat that carried Sitting Bull:



Eagle Woman's four daughters in about 1880. From left to right, Lulu Picotte Harmon, Annie Galpin, Alma Galpin Parkin, and Louise Picotte DeGrey-Von Solen

Courtesy of the author

I desire to introduce to your kind consideration the brave Sitting Bull. Since Sitting Bull has been at this agency, we have cultivated very kindly relations and feelings, and I believe that he is going to remain quiet and induce his followers to be quiet and obedient while in the hands of the authorities. His whole future will depend upon his conduct the next six months. Please impress him with this.

Your affectionate mother<sup>72</sup>

Mrs. Galpin found herself in the middle of another problem on the reservation. In 1882, a group of land speculators suggested reducing the Sioux Indian Reservation to six small reservations and opening the remaining land to white

70. Judson E. Walker, *Campaigns of General Custer in the Northwest* (New York: Jenkins & Thomas, Printers, 1881), 88, 92, 106.

71. Holley, *Once Their Home*, 270.

72. Copy furnished by Dick Harmon.

73. Charles J. Kappeler, *Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 2:1065ff.

74. George E. Hyde, *A Sioux Chronicle* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 107-144.

75. *Ibid.*, 126.

76. Welch, "Mrs. Van Solen"; Fiske, "Mrs. Marie Louise Van Solen." Lulu died of cancer on June 4, 1895. Louise became a government field matron at Standing Rock and taught Indians homemaking, which she continued until 1912 when she was seventy-three years old. She lived at the Cannonball Ranch with her daughter, Lucille Van Solen, until her death in Bismarck on March 9, 1920.

settlers. Again in violation of treaty law, another hard-nosed commission prepared a cession agreement for only some chiefs to sign that specified payment of 1,000 bulls and 25,000 cows (to be controlled by Indian agents) and the old promises to aid them in becoming self-supporting.<sup>73</sup> The Indians were opposed to ceding more land, especially at such a price, but the commission applied every ruthless and dishonest pressure to force them to sign.


Although he regretted the price and the tactics, Standing Rock Agent McLaughlin favored the cession as a means of forcing the Indians to change their ways. Bishop Marty, now head of the Catholic Diocese of Dakota, threw his influence on the side of the commission. Under great pressure, the chiefs suddenly panicked and rushed to sign on November 30, 1882. Learning of the commission's tactics at the agencies, Congress objected; the Senate ordered an investigation and the House returned the agreement for the signatures of three-fourths of the adult males. The commission could not get the required signatures, while the documentation of their tactics by the Senate investigation granted the Sioux six years of grace before they would have to face that proposal again.<sup>74</sup>

Halfway down the list of Standing Rock chiefs and headmen who had signed this agreement on November 30 is "Matilda Galpin, her X mark," the sole woman's name on the document. One authority has noted that while Mrs. Galpin signed, Sitting Bull did not, which implies that Mrs. Galpin and Sitting Bull were in disagreement on the treaty.<sup>75</sup> This point deserves clarification. Even though Mrs. Galpin and Sitting Bull had been at opposite poles on how to solve the problem their people faced, the absence of Sitting Bull's name signifies nothing, for he was still a prisoner of war at Fort Randall. Further, it is difficult to imagine that the independent and strong-minded Eagle Woman signed out of panic or even under priestly dictation, devout Catholic though she was. She would have signed only out of conviction, born of the same extraordinary insight that had guided her entire life. She likely believed that the new conditions demanded that the Sioux adjust and work at making themselves self-sufficient on their reservations.

**Eagle Woman** remained at Standing Rock, apparently with Louise, doing a little trading, looking after her aging Sioux friends, and often visiting Alma at the Cannonball Ranch. She even visited Lulu in Montana, where the Harmons moved in 1884 to live in Miles City during the winters and operate a cattle ranch near Ekalaka during the summers. Between visits she could reflect on her long and eventful life and take pride in the way her daughters were following her example.<sup>76</sup> At Alma's home on the Cannonball Ranch, on December 18, 1888, Eagle Woman, who had set the example for so many of her people, closed her eyes for the last time. Not a single notice of her passing has been found in contemporary newspapers. From letters of Dick Harmon, written while he was facing his own death from cancer, the following epitaph is gleaned:

I well remember my grandmother when she visited our ranch in Montana in 1887 and 1888, when I was only five or six. My mother was so good to her and would comb and braid her hair in the evenings. Although she understood English, she did not speak it herself, except a few words when she knew I could not understand her. She was kind to us boys. When my oldest brother, Leo, went out hunting deer and antelope, she would walk to the top of a hill near the ranch house and sit down with her shawl over her head and wait for him to return and then walk the rest of the way with him.

When she passed away at the Cannonball ranch, Mother and I went to the funeral. We took the body down to her old house on Porcupine Creek, a few miles north of Fort Yates. We drove our teams down there while the snow was falling fast, and I will never forget that cold ride in the dead of winter. Her body, with that of her husband, Major Galpin, was later moved to the cemetery at Fort Yates.

I've always wished that someone would write all about my grandmother, because her life was so filled with all the good that she was able to give our country during those awful years long ago, and about which the public knows so little. 

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