NED WYNKOOP BLACK KETTLE

LOUIS KRAFT

COLORADO TERRITORY, 1864. Two men from different cultures were about to meet. One was white and harbored the typical prejudices of the frontier, believing that Indians were wild beasts fit only to kill. The other was a Tsistsista, a Cheyenne, who had led war parties but now in later life left the fighting to the younger men. One was a major in the First Colorado Cavalry. The other was a chieftain. They were at war. They should have been enemies until the bitter end, but fate intervened, joining them in a common goal that would reach a climax three years later during the Moon of the Changing Season at a creek called Medicine Lodge. A peace treaty signed that fateful October of 1867 would be termed a success. It should have been the pinnacle of both their careers.

By the fall of 1864 war paralyzed Colorado. The Cheyenne and their allies attacked the whites at will. Major Edward W. Wynkoop, Indian hater, was at Fort Lyon in what is now the southeastern part of the state. His orders were simple: kill all Indians on sight. One problem was that he could not bring the foe to battle.[1]

His nemesis, probably the most notable member of the tribe at that time, was Mokatavatah—Black Kettle. The Wu 'tapiu Tsistsista chieftain had just been formally seated on the Cheyenne council of forty-four. He was sixty winters old.[2] On August 29, he sent out two offers of peace. One reached Wynkoop at Fort Lyon.[3] It would test the major's bias. He would later write: "I was bewildered with an exhibition of such patriotism on the part of two savages, [that I] felt myself in the presence of superior beings; and they were the representatives of a race that I had heretofore looked upon without exception as being cruel, treacherous, and blood-thirsty, ..."[4]

Against the angry advice of his subordinates, and the threat of mutiny, Wynkoop led one hundred twenty-seven soldiers out of the safe confines of the fort on September 6. Five days later he was greeted by a screaming line of six hundred painted warriors ready for battle.[5] It looked as if he had made the blunder of a lifetime.

Black Kettle appeared and stopped the confrontation.[6] Wynkoop met with the chiefs in council the next day. Dog Soldier chieftain Bull Bear stated that no peace could be made with the ve?ho?e, the white men, as they

ABOVE: (Left) ***Black Kettle, 1864. Detail from photo courtesy of Archives and Manuscript Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society, #6737.*** **(Right)** ***Edward W. Wynkoop, 1861. Detail from photo courtesy of Colorado Historical Society.***

were foxes. Another said: "This white man thinks we are children, but I tell him we are neither Papooses or Squaws, that we are men, warriors, chiefs...does he think we are fools that he comes to laugh at us?"[7]

While the leaders continued to tear into Wynkoop, Cheyenne warriors created a tense situation when they attempted to take some tobacco from the soldiers. Black Kettle moved quickly and was able to sooth the frazzled nerves.[8] Back in council Mokatavatah was true to his words. He discussed his peaceful intents and offered to hand over several white captives.

Wynkoop told the congregation he did not have the power to discuss peace but that he would take the leaders to Denver to meet Governor John Evans and Colonel John Chivington. The Indians agreed. Wynkoop returned to Fort Lyon with four white children and a delegation of three Cheyenne and four Arapahoe chiefs.[9]

On September 28, a peace council was held at Camp Weld, outside Denver. Evans told the Indians "that they should make their terms of peace with the military authorities." Chivington then said "You are nearer Major Wynkoop than any one else, and you can go to him when you get ready to do that." Wynkoop and the chiefs thought peace had come to the frontier. The Cheyenne and Arapahoe moved their camps to Fort Lyon and then to Sand Creek, about thirty miles northeast of the fort.[10]

A month and a half after the Camp Weld meeting, Wynkoop was relieved of his command and soon after ordered back to Kansas to face charges of being absent from his post in time of war. Three days after he left, on November 29, Chivington and a volunteer force attacked these same Indians on Sand Creek. Chivington claimed that four hundred villagers died, but a more accurate count is between sixty and seventy.[11]

Wynkoop was livid when he heard the news. The tragedy marked a turning point in his life; he was no longer an Indian-hater. It also marked a turning point for Black Kettle. He knew that if the Tsistsistas were to survive, they would need to walk the white man's trail. Few agreed with him. He had lost face with the People. From this time forward, fewer and fewer would follow his lead.

Although an exonerated Wynkoop led an investigation of the so-called massacre, the newly breveted lieutenant colonel would not see the Cheyenne again until the following August when he was in command of the troops that escorted a peace commission to the Little Arkansas River. Wynkoop was unsure how the red man would receive him and was not looking forward to this meeting. Surprisingly, Black Kettle and his people did not blame him for the disaster. Instead they welcomed him with open arms. Wynkoop was named the Tall Chief, a title he would cherish the rest of his life.[12] Although the Treaty of the Little Arkansas specified a new reservation south of the Arkansas River, the Tsistsistas retained the rights to hunt north of the river. Those present signed.[13] However, most of the Cheyennes did not attend the council, much less agree to the terms.

This had to be rectified. In late December 1865 Wynkoop was put on detached duty from the Army and made special agent to the Cheyenne.[14] His task was to bring the militants to the council fire. This was not easy as the nomadic bands were spread over a large area. Bad weather did not help matters. Finally, Wynkoop met about 4,000 Indians at Bluff Creek in southern Kansas on February 28. The next day supplies were distributed. Black Kettle was at the council, as was Tsistsistas [Aorta band] mystic, and Cheyenne Keeper of the Sacred Arrows, Stone Forehead. The Dog Soldiers were also present. The Dog Soldiers had begun as one of the six Cheyenne military societies, but in 1856 they broke away from the Southern band, creating three distinct divisions within the tribe. Roaming along the Smokey Hill and Republican rivers, they acted as a base for any warrior willing to fight white aggression. The Dog Soldiers were not pleased about a road going through their hunting grounds along the Smoky Hill, much less giving up this land and living south of the Arkansas. Still, Wynkoop convinced Stone Forehead the peace was good and the Dog Soldiers agreed to the treaty terms.[15]

While the two sides met, a raiding party appeared on the Smoky Hill. Wynkoop sent out runners and they were able to talk the hostiles into meeting with him at Wood Creek on April 4.[16]

This aborted raid demonstrates a problem that forever foiled white-red peace relations because the Indian leaders spoke only for themselves and those who followed them at that moment. Therefore, any warrior could experience a dream that told him to lead a war party. As the leader, or pipeholder, of the proposed raid he would then invite others to join him.[17]

The night before the Wood Creek meeting was to take place, Wynkoop heard that Porcupine Bear planned to kill him to revenge his father's death at Sand Creek. Wynkoop may have desired peace, but he was no fool. During the meeting the next day his brother George hid inside a tent with a rifle pointed at the Dog Soldier's heart. Wynkoop was so nervous that when Porcupine Bear stood to sign the treaty, he yanked his revolver out. Luckily, no one noticed.[18]

The Dog Soldiers may have signed the paper, but they did not do it quietly. They threatened Black Kettle's life if the peace did not prove true. Mokatavatah was so frightened he refused to touch this most recent paper of treaty amendments.[19]

On April 9, Wynkoop wrote a letter to the *Rocky Mountain News* in Denver stating: "I have now seen every single hostile Indian of the Arapahoe and Cheyenne nations, and have concluded what they themselves are pleased to term, a 'strong peace.'"[20] Historian Timothy Zwink surmises that Wynkoop's efforts were the main reason so little blood was shed in 1866.[21]

The Camp Weld Council, September 28, 1864. ***This photo was taken immediately after the meeting ended.*** **Left to right: (Standing)** ***unknown, unknown, John Smith, (Wynkoop's interpreter on more than one occasion), White Wolf (Kiowa), Bosse (Cheyenne), unknown, unknown.*** **(Seated)** ***White Antelope (Cheyenne), Neva (Arapaho), Black Kettle (Cheyenne), Bull Bear (a Cheyenne Dog Soldier), Left Hand (Arapaho).*** **(Kneeling)** ***Major Edward Wynkoop, Major Silas Soule, Provost Marshall. Courtesy Colorado Historical Society.***

However, hostilities soon resumed along the Smoky Hill as Dog Soldiers harassed whites who entered the area. Interior Department agent W.H. Watson claimed the reason was that Wynkoop had misled the Indians into believing the land would remain theirs and then failed to alert government officials as to the real reason he was able to obtain certain signatures.[22] Historian George Hyde offered perhaps a more logical reason for the reversal: he suggested that the Dog Soldiers really wanted peace and were convinced by Wynkoop that it really could happen but then regretted giving up their beloved land.[23]

The stage was set. Black Kettle would have to put himself in peril with his own people, and Wynkoop would constantly be blocked by an official body in Washington. Both would become outcasts.

The attack on Wynkoop made him aware that his current position was untenable. Resigning his Army commission on July 11, he continued to work for the Department of the Interior as a special agent. On September 26, President Andrew Johnson appointed him Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Plains Apache Indian Agent.[24]

Race relations remained strained as white encroachment continued into 1867. Major General Winfield S. Hancock, commander of the Department of the Missouri, set out that spring to meet with the Southern tribes. On March 13 he wrote Wynkoop: "My object in making an expedition at this time is to show the Indians within the limits of this department that we are able to chastise any tribes who may molest people who are traveling across the plains. It is not our desire to bring on difficulties with the Indians, but to treat them with justice and according to our treaty stipulations." Hancock then stated, "I go fully prepared for peace or war."[25]

The words, "peace or war," are the key to what followed. Actions speak louder than words and Hancock defeated any peaceful intentions he had as soon as he assembled his force of fifteen hundred men. Hancock's

army looked ready for war. Extremely mobile and superb at hit and run tactics, the Indian was most vulnerable when near his village. Hancock would make the mistake of closing in on the joint Cheyenne and Dakota village on the Pawnee Fork. Soldiers this close to the tepees put the Indian women and children at risk. This was unacceptable; the Indians would take no chances.

Hancock ignored repeated requests that he come no closer. On April 15, he was met by an angry battle line of three hundred warriors. It was a stand-off. Tense moments passed. Wynkoop sensed disaster and asked permission to ride between the lines. This was granted, and he rode forward to meet the Indian leaders at the top of a small hill. The Cheyenne "express[ed] their delight at seeing me," he reported, "saying that now they knew everything was all right, and they would not be harmed." The village had been fifteen miles distant and was proceeding toward the column as requested. There was no reason for a confrontation.[26] That obstacle bridged, the Tall Chief led the Indian leaders, including the Northern Cheyenne warrior Roman Nose, to Hancock. The general, however, refused to meet, then saying it was too windy. He told the Indians to return after dark.[27]

They would, but the meeting solved nothing. That night the Indians deserted their village. Soon after, fighting broke out north of the Smoky Hill. Hancock concluded the Cheyenne and Dakota were guilty of the depredations. Why else run?[28] He burned the village on April 19.[29]

Wynkoop was outraged. "General Hancock has declared war upon the Cheyennes, and ordered all to be shot who make their appearance north of the Arkansas or south of the Platte rivers." Wynkoop then asked, "What have these Indians done to cause such action?"[30]

Black Kettle was not at the Pawnee Fork, but the destruction of the village marked the end of his leading influence.[31]

That summer the Smoky Hill was aflame as the tribes sought retribution for the destruction of their homes. Roman Nose was at the forefront of the outbreak.[32] Seeking an end to the war, the whites called another peace council that fall. Medicine Lodge Creek in Kansas was selected as it had good trees, grass, and water.[33]

Wynkoop's job was to inform his wards of the coming powwow, a dangerous task at best as most Cheyennes still seethed over the Pawnee Fork incident. Mokatavatah's position was just as precarious when he went among the Dog Soldiers to make the announcement. They taunted him for being a coward, wanting to walk the white man's road, and warned him not to attend.[34] Black Kettle took this threat seriously. He asked half-breed George Bent if his family could travel to Medicine Lodge Creek with him. Bent agreed, but instead took them to the Arapahoes, who in turn took them to the council ground.[35]

Black Kettle was anxious for the peace. When Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Thomas Murphy, arrived he met him and the Tall Chief Wynkoop on September 8. He told the whites he knew of one Cheyenne raiding party that was still out, but that he had no control over it.[36]

On or near the eleventh, Black Kettle escorted Wynkoop and Murphy to Medicine Lodge Creek. Wagons, loaded with supplies to feed the Indians already assembled at the meeting ground, slowed the procession down. The sixty mile trip took three days. Already hundreds of tepees were set up. Thousands of ponies grazed on the benches on both sides of the creek. The Kiowa, Plains Apache, Comanche, and Arapahoe were there. Some fourteen hundred Indians were there. However, the bulk of the Cheyenne were not present. Only Black Kettle's family and closest associates, about twenty-five tepees and one hundred and fifty people were there.[37]

Black Kettle feared an attack. Arapahoes formed a protective barrier around the wagons and two white

ABOVE: ***U.S. Scout and chief arguing. Illustration by E. Lisle Reedstrom.***

leaders. Six Dog Soldiers appeared. When asked if they would attend, Gray Beard said: "A dog will eat provisions. The provisions you bring us make us sick. We can live on buffalo, but the main articles that we need we do not see: powder, lead, and caps. When you bring us these we will believe you are sincere." A message was sent to Stone Forehead, inviting the Dog Men to attend.[38]

However, the mystic had called for a gathering of the People thirty miles to the south on the Cimarron River. It was time to renew the Sacred Arrows. The Arrows symbolized the life of the tribe. They embodied the tribe's soul, its lifeblood. As cultural anthropologist E. Adamson Hoebel explains, "Their attributes are not in their material form, but in their ineffable supernatural qualities. Or in another sense, they may properly be called the supreme tribal fetish, a set of objects in which resides a spiritual power that belongs to all the people and is revered by all." Stone Forehead insisted that the ceremony be completed before any council could be attended.[39]

Most of the Cheyenne warriors refused to listen. The anti-peace faction among the young men became so vocal and violent that in late September a large war party rode out of the village on the Cimarron in defiance to even the Dog Soldier leaders.[40]

Beginning on September 20, a steady stream of wagons from Larned began to converge on the creek bringing more supplies and gifts. The whites were taking no chances; the treaty would be signed.[41]

Roman Nose did not attend the peace council. However, one night while Wynkoop ate with Black Kettle, Superintendent Murphy, and George Bent, Roman Nose and ten warriors charged the Cheyenne encampment. As far as he was concerned, the Tall Chief had destroyed the Pawnee Fork village. Roman Nose' purpose was simple, to kill Wynkoop. Luckily for Wynkoop, some Arapahoes delayed Roman Nose and he was able to race to Fort Larned and safety.[42]

This put him at Fort Larned when the peace commissioners arrived. The group was frightened as Indians had burned the prairie in an effort to halt their progress. Wynkoop's good humor and private supply of alcohol improved everyone's spirits. The Kiowa Satanta and the Arapahoe Little Raven were introduced and joined the party. They would travel the rest of the way with the commissioners.

On October 11, unbeknownst to Wynkoop, Kansas governor Samuel J. Crawford, who wanted all Indians out of his state, requested that the Tall Chief be replaced as the Cheyenne were openly antagonistic toward him. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Nathaniel G. Taylor refused.[43]

The peace caravan left Fort Larned the next day with Wynkoop in attendance. It was huge, bringing yet more gifts. They arrived on October 14.[44] Among others, the commissioners included Senator John B. Henderson, and the retired general, William S. Harney. The white contingent now numbered six hundred. Five thousand Indians milled about, waiting, ready.[45]

Black Kettle met the commissioners. He informed them that war parties were out and that no one at the council was safe from attack.[46] This information caused a panic. The wagons were hastily formed into a protective circle on the north side of the creek. Black Kettle, who had camped on the south side of the creek, remained on that side, away from the soldiers.[47]

The whites spent an uneasy night. Most conversations the next day centered around talk of an attack and which side the treaty Indians would take. For their part, the Indians already present were just as nervous.[48]

On the fifteenth, the tribes were painted and dressed in their finest. The chiefs all wore headdresses except Black Kettle. Mokatavatah wore a tall dragoon's hat and wrapped a blue trade blanket about himself. The Indians were anxious. Rations were issued and a preliminary meeting was held under a brush arbor. Twenty suits of clothing were given to each tribe and Commissioner Taylor announced that many more gifts would be distributed after the treaty was signed. During this meeting Black Kettle requested that the council be delayed eight days so that the Tsistsistas could complete the Sacred Arrows ceremony. At first, most of the tribes were in agreement about this; then the Kiowa Black Eagle said no, that he would like to meet the next day and receive all their gifts within four days.

This angered Black Kettle. "We were once friends with the ve?ho?e, but you"—he indicated the Kiowas and Comanches—"nudged us out of the way by your intrigues." He again stated that the Sacred Arrow ceremony needed eight days to complete.[49] The commissioners wanted to wait for the Dog Soldiers, but knew if they did, they risked losing those Indians already present.

That night Dog Soldiers Tall Bull, Gray Head, and fifty warriors stormed the camp. Some guessed they were sizing up the gathering prior to massing an attack. Harney met them and diffused a potential confrontation. The Indian leaders then saw Black Kettle. This visit was not cordial. Black Kettle was told to join his brothers on the Cimarron. It was time to renew the Sacred Arrows. But that was not all; he would also need to explain what good another peace would bring. Mokatavatah knew how important the next days would be and knew it was imperative that he be present. This stood for naught. He was told that if he did not do as requested, his pony herd would be killed.[50]

The night of the sixteenth, Wynkoop was called before the commissioners to report the reasons for the recent war. Wynkoop did not mince words. He stated that Chivington's infamy in '64 had been responsible for the almost continuous hostilities and that Hancock's outrage the previous April ignited the summer war. He wasn't finished. The Cheyenne and Arapahoe had been cheated. Their annuities consisted of rotten blankets for which

they were charged $18.00 each. Barrels of sugar were half-full. Other annuities delivered induded women's bonnets and other useless articles of clothing. He concluded with the accusation that less than a third of the goods promised were ever delivered.[51] "The Indians told me," the Tall Chief said, "they would not have taken those [inferior] goods from anybody else but myself."[52]

Wynkoop then threw another wrench at the commission, claiming a Cheyenne girl found in the deserted Pawnee Fork village had been raped by the whites and not the Indians as reported. Wynkoop was told to get his facts straight.[53]

Tall Bull and Gray Head returned to the encampment. Apparently they heard of Wynkoop's testimony. Gray Head told the commissioners, "I was the last one that left the [Pawnee Fork] village, and she was not hurt then." This supported Wynkoop and was in direct opposition to the official version of the violated girl. Next the Dog Soldiers sought out the Tall Chief. They still held him responsible for the destruction of their village. He told his version of what happened. They must have believed his words were true, for they shook hands and departed friends.[54]

The peace council began officially on October 19. The only Cheyenne chieftains present were Black Kettle and the Dog Man, Gray Head. Mokatavatah was silent during this meeting. However, leaders from other tribes were not. They were angry that the council was still being held up while everyone waited for the Cheyenne.[55] Superintendent Murphy talked and Senator Henderson talked. They warned the Indians that the buffalo would not last forever and that they needed to plan for this day by living in white man houses and learning to plow Mother Earth.[56] These were inflammatory words to say the least, as not one Indian present wanted this.

It rained that night, stopping by dawn. First light brought Dog Soldiers to Black Kettle's tepee. They told him to dress, then pushed him outside. They mounted and rode across the creek and awoke the commissioners. Nothing happened until Harney appeared. Then the Dog Soldiers said they needed to talk among themselves.

BELOW: *Black Kettle. Illustration by Rudy Montoya.*

They took Black Kettle aside and spoke animatedly for ten minutes, then returned to Harney. It was announced that the Dog Men would attend the council. Black Kettle said four more days were needed to complete the renewal ceremony. Black Kettle looked nervous and for good reason—the Dog Soldiers took him with them when they left.[57]

On the twenty-first, the Kiowas, Comanches, and Plains Apache signed their treaty. That night it rained again. They received their gifts the next morning.[58]

Days passed, and still the Cheyenne did not appear. Rumors spread that the Dog Soldiers were mounting an attack on the encampment. On the twenty-sixth, Little Robe announced that his brethren would arrive on the twenty-seventh. The next day a shout went up that Indians were coming. A dust cloud billowed ominously to the south. Screams of fright sounded as the treaty Indians frantically deserted camp.[59]

Soldiers moved to barked orders as Indians emerged from the woods and pounded across the water and formed a long battle line one hundred fifty yards at their front. Both man and pony were painted. They yelled and sang and fired their weapons into the air. Some guessed three hundred warriors, others six hundred. Did the Cheyenne mean peace or war?

Neither Stone Forehead nor Roman Nose could be seen. However, Black Kettle appeared. He was "dressed in a dingy shirt and dingier blanket, his long black hair floating behind him like a bashaw's tail."[60] It looked as if he had not slept in days. Captain Albert Barnitz, U.S. Seventh Cavalry, anticipated a charge. But this did not happen. Barnitz recorded that: "Black Kettle...held a talk with the commissioners, and afterward withdrew his warriors to their camp.... Black Kettle is still considered leader of the militant faction."[61]

It was the Moon of the Changing Season. The Cheyenne had renewed the Sacred Arrows. They were now ready to listen to the ve?ho?e.

The conference continued on the twenty-eighth. Only one

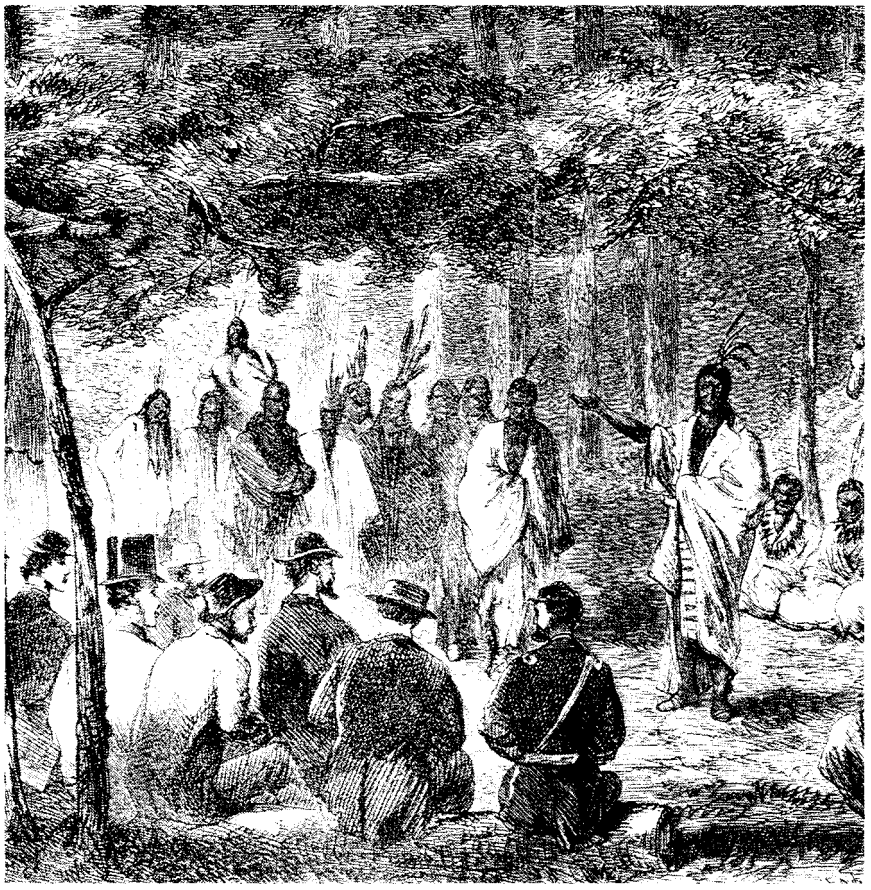
Cheyenne spoke—the little known Dog Soldier chieftain, Buffalo Chief. His message was simple: the Tsistsistas would never give up the land between the Arkansas and South Platte rivers. The commissioners refused to vary from their point of view that the life the Indians lived had changed forever. The land above the Arkansas River was prime. It would no longer be Indian land. The Cheyenne would move to a reservation granted to them in the Territories. Finally, an official-looking document was brought forward amidst pomp and ceremony. It was time to touch the paper. No Indian leaders stepped forward. They would not sign the treaty. Senator Henderson took the Cheyenne aside and promised them they could hunt buffalo north of the Arkansas in western Kansas for as long as there were buffalo.[62] It didn't matter that the treaty stated the opposite.

Arapahoe Little Raven signed, as did Black Kettle and Tall Bull. All signed save Bull Bear. This could not be. The Dog Soldier chieftain was the plum of the treaty. Harney played up to the chief's vanity. The flattery worked. Bull Bear picked up the pen and pushed it down with so much force that he almost tore the paper.[63]

Harper's Weekly listed the treaty's major points and proclaimed it a success.[64] Abolitionist Lydia Maria Child echoed the sympathetic Eastern view when she wrote: "Thank God! We have, at last, an Official Document, which manifests something like a right spirit toward the poor Indians."[65] But did she or anyone else really look at the terms of the treaty? The Indians gave up their land north of the Arkansas River. In return they would be given schools, supplies, and would become happy farmers. At least that is what the U.S. Government hoped. No one seemed to consider the Indians' culture.[66]

Barnitz may have been wrong in his estimation of Black Kettle's stature within the tribe, but he hit the mark with his comments regarding the treaty. The Indians, he said, "have no idea [what] they are giving up, or that they have...given up the country which they claim as their own, the country north of the Arkansas. The treaty...amounts to nothing, and we will certainly have another war sooner or later with the Cheyennes... in consequence of misunderstanding of the terms of present and previous treaties."[67]

The night was wild with celebration. Revolvers were fired off everywhere. The gaiety continued deep into the night and most likely would have extended to the wee hours of morning, but a wind swept up from the south, bringing a storm that pummelled the earth. It abated by morning and Indians gathered about three huge piles of goods that had been left in the weather.



THE COUNCIL AT MEDICINE LODGE CREEK, KANSAS. *(Detail) This etching by J. Howland originally appeared in the November 16, 1867, issue of* **Harper's Weekly.** *Courtesy Library of Congress.*

Black Kettle, Bull Bear, and other leaders held one last impromptu meeting with the commissioners. It was pointed out to them which piles belonged to which tribe.

Appointed warriors began to distribute the gifts. Camp kettles were passed out, as were axes and other pieces of hardware. Blankets, bugles, and clothing such as frilly women's dresses were distributed. It was just as Wynkoop claimed. Nothing had changed. Many of the gifts would prove useless to the Indians. They might delight in touching them and displaying them, but they would never use them.

The most prized gifts were the revolvers and ammunition that were distributed to warriors. The guns were loaded and fired immediately. So many shots were discharged that it sounded like a battle. Surprisingly, no one was hurt.

At eight in the morning the cavalry moved out, followed by the commissioners and the infantry. The distribution continued under a sky that changed from dark and foreboding to bright and full of hope. Soon the tribes began to depart. Their ponies and travois were so overloaded with possessions and presents that most had to walk. And still they left behind over half of the piles of gifts. Within a day the massive encampment was deserted.[68]

Most of the Cheyenne wintered sixty miles south of

Fort Dodge that year. Wynkoop spent the cold months going among the People in an attempt to secure absent signatures. He found them destitute, in desperate need of the annuities promised them. But none were forthcoming. Why? The answer was simple: although the treaty was all for the white man, Congress was not satisfied. Its members argued over it and began amending it. As the treaty changed, Wynkoop was then forced to go back among the tribes and get signatures from chiefs who had already signed at Medicine Lodge.

The treaty would not be ratified by Congress until July 25, 1868, nine months after the signing, and would not be proclaimed until August 19. By then it was too late.[69]

Whiskey sales led to a raid near Council Grove, Kansas. As punishment, there would be no delivery of arms. When Wynkoop next delivered annuities, the Cheyenne refused the shipment when they realized no weapons were included. The Tall Chief immediately campaigned for the release of the frozen arms. Commissioner Taylor gave in and the delivery was made early in August. But again it was too late. A raid on the Pawnees led to an attack on whites in the Saline Valley.[70] This quickly escalated to war across the Central and Southern Plains. The treaty had failed, but the war leaders had always said as much. Major General Philip H. Sheridan, who had replaced Hancock as commander of the Department of the Missouri, tried everything including a seek and destroy mission of fifty frontiersmen in September. It failed.[71]

But Sheridan would not admit defeat. That fall, he was at Fort Larned to assess the situation himself. Wynkoop stepped forward and asked permission to deliver another shipment of weapons. "Yes, give them arms," Sheridan said, "and if they go to war the soldiers can kill them like men."[72] A strange statement as there already was a war and Sheridan was already planning a winter campaign. It should be noted that Sheridan's bitterness was not without reason. Caught in a Catch-22 situation, he once said:

> If we allow the defenseless people on the frontier to be scalped and ravished, we are burnt in effigy and execrated as soulless monsters, insensible to the sufferings of humanity. If the Indian is punished to give security to these people, we are the same soulless monsters from the other side.[73]

Wynkoop was never more aware that his every effort to prevent war in the past had failed. Many times he honestly, if perhaps naively, thought his wards were mostly innocent. This time there was no denying that many Cheyenne rode the war trail. Whites on the borders cried for extermination. Wynkoop did not know what to do. He was at wit's end and fled east to hide.[74] The reprieve was short-lived. He was ordered back to the frontier and told to congregate his wards at Fort Cobb, Indian Territory. As Wynkoop went about the task, the villages on Sand Creek and the Pawnee Fork must have haunted his dreams.

Major Edward W. Wynkoop
circa late 1870s or early 1880s.
Courtesy of the Colorado Historical Society

The future must have looked just as bleak for Black Kettle. He had tried to find a way for his people to peacefully co-exist with the ve?ho?e. He signed peace treaties at Fort Wise in '61,[75] the Little Arkansas in '65, and finally at Medicine Lodge. It had been his overtures that attempted to bring peace to Colorado in 1864. Was it all to be for naught?

By November, 1868, the Southern tribes were in their winter camps along the Washita River in what is now southwestern Oklahoma. Rumors seemed to float on the wind that Pony Soldiers were in the field. If true, this was disturbing information. On or about the seventeenth of the month, Black Kettle and several other leaders braved the bitter cold and traveled to Fort Cobb. Mokatavatah met with Lieutenant Colonel William B. Hazen on November 20. After talking of the war that always seemed to confront the Cheyenne when north of the Arkansas, he stated:

> I have always done my best to keep my young men quiet, but some will not listen, and since the fighting began I have not been able to keep them all at home. But we all want peace and I would be glad to move all my people down this way; I could then keep them all quietly near camp.[76]

Ironically, he wanted to bring his band to the very spot Wynkoop had been ordered to congregate them. Black Kettle's offer fell on deaf ears.

Hazen said: "[I was sent to] take care of all the Cheyennes; ...to look after them; ...to get them on to the reservations agreed upon a year ago at Medicine Lodge, and [to] see that they were treated aright [sic]." He went on

to say that he was a peace chief and that Cobb was designated as a safe area for good Indians. Next he warned of the war chief Sheridan. "With him," Hazen said, "you must make peace." After telling Black Kettle that his people were not welcome at Cobb, he ended the meeting with hope, stating: "I cannot stop the war, but will send your talk to the Great Father, and if he sends me orders to treat you like the friendly Indians I will send out to you to come in."[77]

Black Kettle and his companions headed back to their winter camps as snow fell. Perhaps he remembered similar words spoken four years before at Camp Weld. However, the winter was harsh. Soldiers could not fight in this weather. He still had time. Perhaps he would send out runners to find the troops if indeed they were in the field. Perhaps Hazen would succeed with the Great Father. Perhaps...

Two days later Hazen reported: "To have made peace with them would have brought to my camp most of those now on the war path south of the Arkansas."[78] The colonel's words echoed the U.S. Government's view of Black Kettle: Mokatavatah was one of the foremost leaders of the Cheyenne and as such was responsible for all his people's actions.

Wynkoop must have sensed what was soon to happen. In 1864, he almost pulled off peace between the races. There was no opportunity here to try again. However, a repeat of his Pied Piper performance would not do. He would not again don a Judas goat pelt. On November 29, while en route to Fort Cobb, he wrote that volunteer troops and Indians:

Black Kettle, Cheyenne.
Black and white wash drawing by John Metcalf.
Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Library.

> have expressed their determination to kill under all circumstances the Indians of my agency...[The Cheyenne] will readily respond to my call [to congregate at Fort Cobb], but I most certainly refuse to again be the instrument of the murder of innocent women and children.... All left me under the circumstances, with the present state of feelings I have in this matter, is now to respectfully tender my resignation...[79]

His words were apocalyptic for his friend Black Kettle. Two days before, on November 27, Custer's Seventh Cavalry attacked his village on the Washita River. Black Kettle and his wife, were among the one hundred one other Indians killed that day.[80]

In 1869, the Indian Commission supported Wynkoop's bid to become Commissioner of Indian Affairs.[81] Unfortunately, the Tall Chief allowed his heart to fog his facts when he lashed out at the government, ruining his validity and ties with Washington, and thus any chance for the assignment.[82]

Wynkoop's quest for peace was over. He almost found his niche on earth. Black Kettle's humanity and friendship changed him. The Cheyenne's untimely death changed him once more. Edward Wynkoop would spend the rest of his life, another twenty-three years, trying over and yet over again to find his way in a hostile world.

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