

Battle of Little Big Horn

Some of the bands of the Sioux were on friendly terms with the riverside tribes, but many of the Sioux were openly hostile, and for a hundred years, from 1775 to 1875, the tribes from Pawnees and Otoes in the south to the Mandan, Hidatsa, and the Sahnish in the north, were constantly under the pressure of Sioux hostility.

The Assiniboine and other tribes occasionally attacked the villages, but the Sioux danger was the ever-present problem. These wars were fed willingly by the traders who sold guns and ammunition to both the Sioux and the sedentary tribes. In the late 1800s and early 1900s the Sioux began to raid the villages of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Sahnish, because their sources of food, the buffalo and other game animals were disappearing with the advancement of white settlers and hunters. The intensity and hostility between the Sioux and the United States Army was leading to war.

The first scouting expedition for the Arikara scouts, also called "Ree Scouts"*, was in 1874, to assist Lt. Colonel George Custer Sioux country and the Black Hills. In early May and June of 1876, a call was put out for scouts to assist Custer again. This time, it was to find the small, renegade band of Sioux and bring them back to the reservations. All military reports said these small bands of Sioux were in the Montana territory. The agent at the reservations had failed to report that large numbers of Sioux were missing from the reservations. An accounting of the Ree scouts surrounding the battle is included in the Appendix. The circumstances that led up to that battle were far reaching and complex.

White settlers, backed by military forces, began to encroach on the territory claimed and assigned to the Sioux. Skirmishes followed with the Sioux losing most of the conflicts. On June 25, 1876, the Ree Scouts were involved in the infamous Battle of the Little Big Horn in Greasy Grass, Montana where they were pitted against their historic enemy, the Sioux. The Sioux nations defeated a stunned military force of the government.

In 1874, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs called for Chief Son-of-the-Star to come to Washington, D.C. to meet with him. Son-of-the-Star, Bull Head, Peter Beauchamp (interpreter), Arikara; Bad Gun, Bald Eagle, and Shows-Fear-in-the-Face, (Mandan), met with the officials in Washington and agreed to scout for the military in trade for protection from the vast numbers of Sioux.