

The Story of Mrs. Picotte-

by John S. Gray

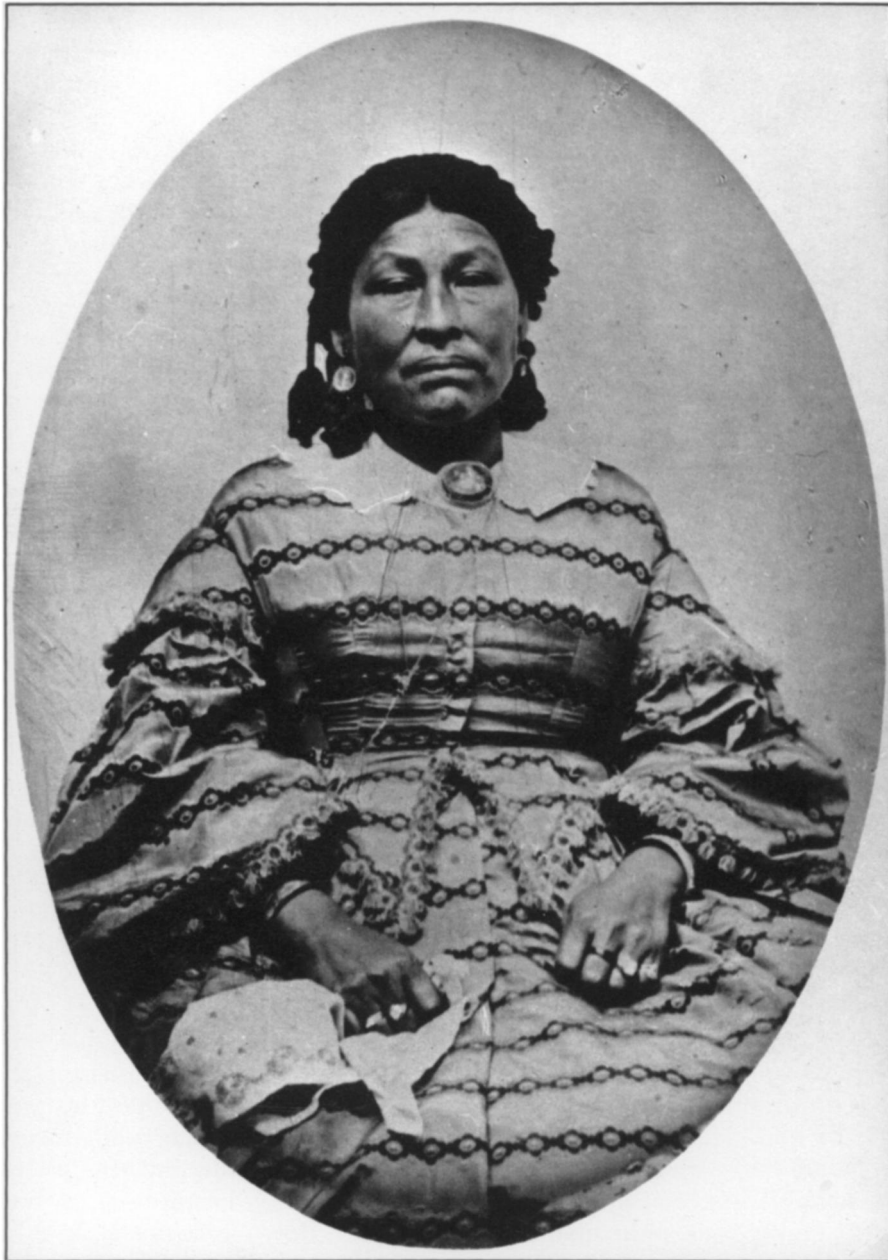
It is self-evident that women play an indispensable and integral role in every race and society. Yet, the popular image of the American Indian woman, at least among whites, is decidedly amorphous. Considered a nameless and faceless drudge, she only rarely emerges as an "Indian Princess," whatever those words may mean. One reason for this anonymity is that Indian women have so seldom been written about that few people can call to mind the names of more than two—Pocahontas and Sacagawea. As a step toward filling this vacuum, the life story is presented of a remarkable, full-blood Sioux woman.

Her people named her Wambdi Autepewin, translated as "Eagle Woman That All Look At." Look at her they did, and with that special respect that was accorded the noble eagle. By adult baptism she was given the name "Matilda," but by successive marriages to prominent fur traders she became first Mrs. Picotte and then famous all over Dakotaland as Mrs. Galpin.

She was not exposed to alien white ways during her childhood, for she grew up in the villages of the then-roaming Sioux who instructed her in their ways and values. This heritage endowed her with a strength of character and depth of insight that enabled her to exert a remarkable influence among Indians and whites alike. Her sixty-eight years spanned the turbulent Indian-white wars and the anguishing transition from traditional life to reservation existence. But where many others could only fight the white tide in suicidal desperation or submit in passive despair, she was able to assimilate and integrate the best from the two cultures and thus serve as a leader and mediator during those trying times.

This is the first of a two-part story of Mrs. Galpin's remarkable life (the concluding part will appear in the next issue of the magazine). This segment covers the years from 1820 to 1868, during which her character developed first when she lived among her own people and then broadened through her successive marriages to two fur traders. She also raised two families, seeing to it that her children experienced both Indian and white ways of life. And she served as a diplomat during crucial negotiations between Sioux bands and the United States government. During these years, she came to understand the strengths and weaknesses of both cultures—Indian and white—and came to recognize that the establishment of mutual respect and understanding was the surest road to peace.

Galpin, a Sioux Heroine



Courtesy of the author

Matilda Galpin, ca. 1860

Eagle Woman Learns About White Ways and Racial Conflict, 1820-1868

Eagle Woman, as we shall shorten her native name, earned the distinction of being the only woman to become a chief of the Sioux—not as an Amazon, but as a woman of courage, wisdom, and generosity, traits the Sioux held in highest esteem. She also raised two fine families; when eventually widowed, she went into business for herself to pay for her youngest children's education in eastern schools. None of her four sons lived to maturity, but her four daughters carried on their mother's good work.

During the late 1880s, Eagle Woman related some of the highlights of her life to Mrs. Frances C. Holley, a local historian in Bismarck, North Dakota.¹ Eagle Woman told Mrs. Holley that she had been born in 1820 in a Sioux lodge on the east bank of the Big Bend of the Missouri, some forty-five miles below Pierre. In her veins mingled the blood of two bands of the Teton, or western division of the Sioux Nation. Her father belonged to the peace-seeking Two Kettle band, but her mother was a member of the Hunkpapa band, who would fight for freedom to the last under the famous Sitting Bull. Since she was the youngest of eight children, her parents had started their life together before the turn of the century, when the Teton bands were still feeling their way across the Missouri.²

Eagle Woman was proud of her long-lived father, Two Lance, a distinguished chief. According to her nephew, Four Bears, Two Lance had represented his people in 1791 on a long journey east to attend a trade fair held by Canadians on the Minnesota River; the next winter, he returned home by dogsled with a cherished medal.³ The intertribal marriage of Eagle Woman's Hunkpapa mother, Rosy Light of Dawn, made her daughter well-known to both bands. Little is known about her grandparents, save her maternal grandfather, Iron Horn. Although Iron Horn had died on the east bank of the Missouri before Eagle Woman was born, she learned from her older sisters that he had left the band and had brought back white men with

packs of goods on their backs—the first whites his people had seen. At that time, the tribe was poor, lacking both guns and horses.

Eagle Woman grew up in a Sioux village that provided a blend of danger and merriment, of excitement and spirituality, of play and industry, and continual instruction in tribal heritage. Ever on the move in quest of good hunting or lodges or in flight from the elements or tribal enemies, they frequently joined with other villages for the social visits so dear to Indian culture. By this time, the Teton were penetrating the butte-studded plains west of the Missouri all the way to the wooded highlands of the Black Hills. As the daughter of a senior chief, she learned—and never forgot—that this degree of leadership could be earned and retained only by integrity, wisdom, generosity, and selfless dedication to the good of the tribe.

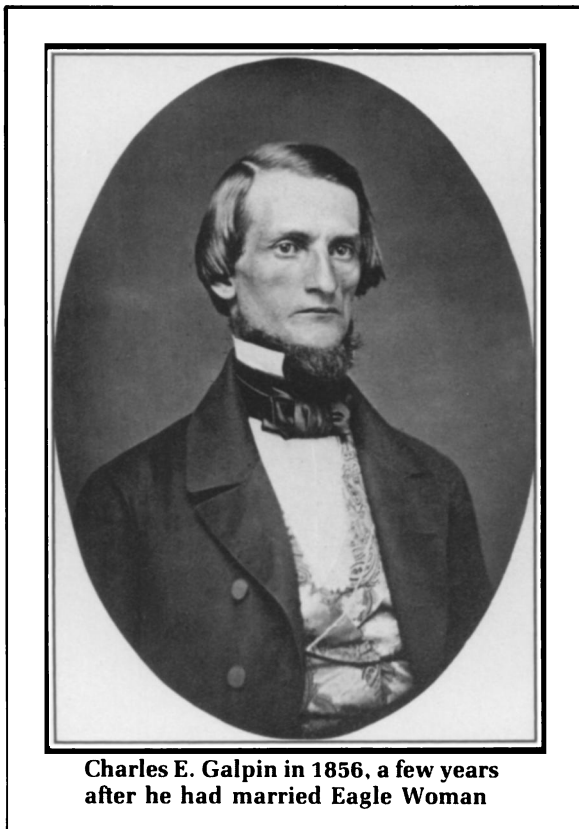
Occasionally, the villages gathered on the west bank of the Missouri at the mouth of Bad River to barter furs for goods at the trading post that would soon be called Fort Pierre. Eagle Woman sometimes accompanied her parents to the palisaded fort and into the fascinating store that displayed colored beads, gay cloths, and metal wares. At the age of five she saw the trader with the funny name, Picotte. Tall and straight he was, like an Indian, and quick, animated, and expressive, even among strangers. His hair, instead of black and straight, was brown and curly. He even let it grow on his face, but this unsightliness was forgotten when his eyes so unexpectedly twinkled at her. Perhaps this was her first perception that similarities count more than surface differences.

Eagle Woman recounted to Mrs. Holley an incident of her early youth that illustrates how human behavior transcends racial differences. One day, arrayed in her prettiest finery, she was leading her pony, laden with presents, to attend the Ghost Feast, her favorite festival. Attracted by a flashing brightness in her path, she swooped down and picked up a fragment of a mirror. Posturing with her rare treasure, she resumed her way, entranced by the vision the glass returned to her. Oblivious of her surroundings, she suddenly plunged into a miry creek, soiling and drenching herself and her finery. She remarked that it was a merrier incident in the recollection than in the occurrence.

1. Frances Chamberlain Holley, *Once Their Home, Or, Our Legacy from the Dakotahs* (Chicago: Donahue & Henneberry, 1892). 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. These sources sparked a prolonged search for corroborative and amplifying information in official records, newspapers, and so on.

2. Holley, *Once Their Home*, 284-289.

3. Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian*, vol. 3 (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), 168-169.



Charles E. Galpin in 1856, a few years after he had married Eagle Woman

Courtesy of the author

In November 1833, the year of the great meteor shower, the thirteen-year-old girl mourned the passing of her chieftain father, Two Lance, and saw him buried on the bank of the Cheyenne River, west of the Missouri. The sharing ways of Indians made this more a personal loss than a disaster, for relatives welcomed her and her mother into their lodges. As her carefree years passed, Eagle Woman developed into an attractive young woman, who could easily have been claimed as an extra wife by the husband of one of her sisters; but she was developing an unusual spirit and independence of mind. She pleasantly ignored the hints of other women and parried the blandishments of aspiring young men.

Then came the year of the great sickness—1837—when Sioux camps fragmented and fled from the river to escape the dreaded smallpox that carried off untold numbers. On reaching apparent safety on the plains, the widowed Rosy Light of Dawn was suddenly stricken and placed in an isolated lodge. Her son, also named Two Lance, kept anxious vigil from nearby until the sick-lodge fell ominously

silent. Thus, seventeen-year-old Eagle Woman found herself a marriageable, but unmarried, woman without parents.

In 1838, the year after her mother's death, Eagle Woman became the proud wife of Honoré Picotte, the trader at Fort Pierre whom she had first met as a child. Marriage to a white man was the dream of many Indian girls; it not only conferred status, but a well-chosen trader was also apt to shower affection and finery on a faithful Indian wife and spare her much drudgery.

Born in Canada in 1796, Picotte had received a good education and had entered the Canadian fur trade by age twenty.⁴ In 1822, he joined the first of several independent, American-based fur companies and served at various posts on the Missouri, including the one where Eagle Woman first saw him. In 1830, he became associated with the American Fur Company, by then dominant on the Missouri; eight years later he rose to the ranking position of General Agent for the firm's Upper Missouri Outfit. From then until his retirement in the early 1850s, he skillfully directed the fortunes of this giant of the fur trade.

It was a business obligation for traders to marry native women as a means of assuring the trading allegiance of the tribes. By 1829, Picotte had married a sister of Struck by the Ree, the principal chief of the Yankton band of Sioux. By her he sired two known children: Charles Felix Picotte, born on August 20, 1830, and destined for a prominent career in Dakota, and a girl fated to die before maturity. Their mother may have succumbed to smallpox by the time Picotte married Eagle Woman in 1838, at which time he sent young Charley Picotte away to school.⁵ After the boy returned in 1854 and Eagle Woman took him under her maternal wing, she was often mistaken for his real mother. In accordance with another common pattern, trader Picotte also married a respectable French girl in 1831, who presided over his permanent residence in St. Louis and bore him two daughters.

Eagle Woman married the forty-two-year-old Picotte just as he reached a top position in the fur trade. It was a prestigious alliance for her; but what was more significant, it gave her contact with whites without fully separating her from her people. Although Picotte made his

4. John S. Gray, "Honoré Picotte, Fur Trader," *South Dakota History* 6 (Spring 1976): 186.

5. Holley, *Once Their Home*, 53-72.

headquarters at Fort Pierre, each spring he took a trip to St. Louis, followed by an inspection tour of the far-flung posts under his management. When he was present at the fort, Eagle Woman had ample opportunity to learn white ways from him, from fur company personnel, and from prominent visitors. During his absences, she could join her people in their excursions to hunt and to visit.

Eagle Woman's alliance with Picotte was flexible enough to enable her to assimilate new ways gradually, but one step brought utter anguish. On December 21, 1839, Eagle Woman had given birth to a daughter: Mary Louise Picotte, known to the family as Louise. The child had accompanied her mother on a hunt near the Black Hills when she was two years old.⁶ But a day in June 1843, when Louise was three years old, was a day of tears. Picotte took Louise from her mother's arms and boarded the American Fur Company's *Omega* for a three-day trip down the Missouri to the Council Bluff subagency for the Pottawatomie. There he left his daughter to be raised by the family of David Hardin, a former agency farmer who was now a miller. Picotte undoubtedly reasoned that the sooner that Louise learned white ways the less traumatic her adjustment to living in white society would be. Not completely heartless, Picotte had chosen a family in which two sons had Pottawatomie wives; they would be understanding and sympathetic toward a mixed-blood girl.⁷

Louise never complained of her treatment by the Hardin family, but she did suffer at the hands of local Indians who were tribal enemies of the Sioux. She told Mrs. Holley that the Sioux raided the Pottawatomie in about 1846, and many were killed on both sides. The next day a few angry Pottawatomie warriors came to the Hardin home to seek revenge on little Louise, whom they knew to be half-Sioux. Finding her playing in the yard, they knocked her unconscious with a blow to the forehead, but one of the Hardin Indian wives rushed out to restrain them until Mr. Hardin arrived to calm them down.⁸

The Hardins took Louise with them in 1847 when they moved down and across the Missouri to Fort Kearny, located at present-day Nebraska City. The next May, that short-lived post was

abandoned and David Hardin became its custodian. In the meantime, Picotte had not forgotten Louise. On his return from St. Louis to Fort Pierre aboard the *El Paso* in 1850, he spent May 21 in the vicinity of abandoned Fort Kearny. It must have been at this time that he visited Louise and the Hardins, for that year he sent the eleven-year-old girl to St. Mary's Mission, which the Jesuits had established in 1848 on the new Pottawatomie reservation in Kansas and which featured excellent boarding schools for Indian children. For the next eight years, Louise would study earnestly at St. Mary's school for girls, which was staffed by the Ladies of the Sacred Heart.⁹

On March 4, 1846, while Louise was with the Hardins at Fort Kearny, Eagle Woman bore a second daughter, Zoe Lulu Picotte, known as Lulu or LouLou. During the summer of 1848, Picotte decided to retire from the fur trade and enjoy his leisure and wealth with his family in St. Louis, thereby sparing Eagle Woman a battle to keep Lulu by her side. Alexander Culbertson, the veteran trader from Pennsylvania, succeeded to Picotte's position; but after two years the firm enticed Picotte to return to supervise half of the company posts. It was on this return to service in 1850 that he had sent Louise to school. Failing health, however, forced the trader's permanent retirement in the summer of 1852 at age sixty-six. In the eight years remaining to him he would not forget his mixed-blood daughters.

Whatever shortcomings may have attended Picotte's part-time alliance with Eagle Woman, he was a considerate gentleman and was perceptive enough to recognize her superior intelligence and capacity to learn. When he temporarily retired in 1848, he apparently consigned her to the care of his most promising protégé in the Indian trade, Charles E. Galpin. The choice was inspired; no later than early 1850 the young trader took Eagle Woman as his only wife. The union developed into complete and mutual devotion, warm and permanent. During their lives together, they both profited from their contrasting heritages by familiarizing the other with the best features of their own.

9. *Ibid.*, 300; Benjamin F. Gue, *History of Iowa*, vol. 1 (New York: Century History Company, 1903), 100; *History of Pottawatomie County, Iowa* (Chicago, 1883), 75; A. T. Andreas, *History of Nebraska* (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1882), 1192; Louise Barry, *Beginning of the West* (Topeka: Kansas Historical Society, 1972), 725, 773-774; Thaddeus A. Culbertson, *Journal of an Expedition to . . . the Upper Missouri, 1850*, ed. John Francis McDermott, *Smithsonian BAE Bulletin* 147 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952), 11.

6. *Ibid.*, 298-299.

7. *Ibid.*, 299; Hiram M. Chittenden, *American Fur Trade of the Far West*, vol. 2 (Stanford, California: Academic Reprints, 1954), 1001-1002.

8. Holley, *Once Their Home*, 299-300.

Galpin was born in 1821, probably in New York of French descent; he read, spoke, and wrote French as well as English. He received a good education, perhaps collegiate, before coming west as a nineteen-year-old to enter the fur trade.¹⁰ He first worked for the American Fur Company as a clerk at Fort Laramie, where numerous travelers from 1842 through October 1845 mentioned him in cordial terms.¹¹ In October 1845, Galpin transferred to Fort Pierre, where he took charge of operations at various winter outposts under Honoré Picotte's watchful eye and probably first met Eagle Woman.¹² From 1847 through 1862, his name appears on each annual trading license of Pierre Chouteau, Jr. & Company. Thaddeus Culbertson found him in charge of Fort Pierre in 1850, and by 1854 Galpin had become a share partner in the firm.¹³

Pleased that her new husband had no other family to draw him away and that he spent most of his time at the Fort Pierre headquarters, Eagle Woman found him a warm companion, a faithful husband, and a doting stepfather to little Lulu. Galpin made his wife hostess at Fort Pierre, where her warmth and poise impressed and then charmed all visitors, despite the fact that though she understood English she rarely spoke it.

The congenial Galpin home soon began to fill with children. The first was Samuel T., born in 1850; another son, Robert, born in about 1853, lived for only a brief time. On August 20, 1856, Alma Jane was born, followed by Richard in 1858 and Annie on April 10, 1861.¹⁴ All of Eagle Woman's children, by both her husbands, were apparently baptized by Father Pierre Jean De Smet, the famous Jesuit missionary from St. Louis, whom Picotte and Galpin aided at every opportunity on his thirteen missionary trips to the Missouri River between 1840 and 1871.¹⁵

During the 1850s, a parade of scientists made trips up the Missouri with generous support from the fur company and the Galpin family. The one who became most intimate with the Galpins was Dr. Ferdinand V. Hayden, who spent from 1853 to 1860 exploring the Upper Missouri and who would make significant contributions to the knowledge about the geology of the American West. In the spring of 1854, when Charley Picotte returned from school, Galpin employed him as a clerk. That same year, Dr. Hayden spent the winter at Fort Pierre on his return from a trip up the Yellowstone River. As an amateur but knowledgeable geologist, Galpin treated Hayden "like a brother" and offered him financial support; for his part, the doctor offered to earn his keep by teaching the mixed-blood children at the post. During the spring of 1855, Charley Picotte guided the geologist on a fossil-gathering trip to the Dakota badlands.¹⁶

Repercussions of Indian-white conflict, something Mrs. Galpin came to abhor, intruded at Fort Pierre during the summer of 1855 when troops steamed up the Missouri to purchase Fort Pierre for use as a military base. The conflicts began when Lieutenant John L. Grattan shattered a long reign of peace by marching a company of soldiers into a quiet Sioux village in search of an emigrant's stray cow. This brash command met annihilation on August 18, 1854; in retaliation, General William S. Harney slaughtered a village of Sioux a year later. Although both events occurred on the North Platte in the Fort Laramie area, they prompted the army to purchase Fort Pierre as a military base on the Missouri. Galpin had to move his family and headquarters to a camp a few miles upriver, and trade with the resentful Sioux turned dangerous and difficult.

If Eagle Woman had been reluctant to send nine-year-old Lulu Picotte away to school, the prospect of raising her daughter in a tipi sur-

10. Although Galpin's name appears often in records, there is no published sketch of his life. "Fort Pierre Correspondence," *South Dakota Historical Society Collections* 1 (1902): 412; Culbertson, *Journal of an Expedition*, 71, 75. This evidence negates George Hyde's claim in *Red Cloud's Folk* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), 45, that in 1834 Galpin (aged thirteen) was a veteran trader at just-founded Fort Laramie.

11. John C. Frémont, *Narratives of Exploration and Adventure*, ed. Allan Nevins (New York: Longmans, Green & Company, 1956), 131, 138; William Clark Kennerly, *Persimmon Hill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943), 161; James H. Bradley, "Affairs at Fort Benton," *Contributions to the Montana Historical Society* 3 (1900), 235; LeRoy R. Hafen and Francis M. Young, *Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 102; A. J. Allen, *Ten Years in Oregon* (Ithaca, New York: Andrus, Gauntlett & Company, 1850), 294.

12. "Fort Pierre Letterbooks," *South Dakota Historical Society Collections* 9 (1918): 201, 220, 229.

13. "Register of Indian Traders' Licenses, 1847-73," RG 75, National Archives, Washington, D.C. [NA]; Anne McDonnell, ed., "Forts Benton and Sary Journals," *Contributions to the Montana Historical Society* 10 (1940): 234-235.

14. Information from Joseph Richard Harmon.

15. Only one baptismal record of a child of Eagle Woman has been published: Father De Smet baptized Samuel T. Galpin at Fort Pierre on July 2, 1851. Gilbert J. Garraghan, *Jesuits of the Middle United States*, vol. 2 (New York: America Press, 1938), 479.

16. Holley, *Once Their Home*, 53, 63-64, 67; Moses K. Armstrong, *Early Empire Builders of the Great West* (St. Paul, Minnesota: E. W. Porter, 1901), 26; Galpin to Chouteau, February 17, 1855, in LR [Letters Received] from Upper Missouri Agency, 1855, Micro. 234, Roll 885, NA; John E. Sunder, *Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 176-177.

rounded by prying soldiers and angry Indians probably changed her mind. Honoré Picotte responded to the emergency by placing Lulu with the Lottinville family, his relatives living in a French community near Kankakee, Illinois. The strange surroundings made Lulu homesick, but she soon rallied and began her years of schooling, knowing she would see her mother and stepfather again.

During the winter of 1855-1856, General Harney joined the troops at Fort Pierre and soon perceived that the conflict was pointless, merely harming both friend and foe. With the help of the Galpins and other traders, he began assembling the friendlier Sioux factions for a peace council in March 1856. Arrogating the power to appoint tractable Indians as chiefs of the several bands, Harney chose White Hawk, another brother of Mrs. Galpin, as a subchief of the Two Kettle band. The trouble lingered on, however, for Congress failed to ratify Harney's treaty.¹⁷

When Mrs. Galpin came to know the officers as well as she did the Indian warriors, she recognized the absurdity of racial conflict. So convinced, she intervened in conflicts time and again, but always with impartiality. At Fort Pierre, she met Captain Alfred Sully, who would play an important role in the early Indian wars and would later avail himself of her services as mediator. She also met army surgeon Dr. George L. Miller who years later wrote about his impressions of Mrs. Galpin at Fort Pierre:

Agent Galpin of the fur company is remembered for his intelligence and kindness to me, especially on account of his bright-minded Sioux wife, whose hospitality we enjoyed in his wigwam, furnished with the richest furs and decorated with several children. Mr. Galpin was an educated man; I think a collegian. He sighed for a return to civilization, but the ties which bound him to the freedom and other charms of the aboriginal life made him a willing captive. He died among the Sioux with whom he had long lived, and to whose many good qualities he never

neglected a proper opportunity to pay just tribute.¹⁸

The army found Fort Pierre unsuitable for a military post and built Fort Randall downstream on the Missouri about one hundred and twenty-five miles from Pierre, which made Fort Randall the only army post on the upper river for the next six years. Galpin promptly moved his family back to old Fort Pierre, built a new fort of the same name adjacent to it, and resumed the trade.¹⁹

From June 18 to June 28, 1859, Dr. Hayden stayed again with the Galpins at Fort Pierre while he prepared to join Captain William F. Reynolds's Yellowstone expedition. The expedition, whose members included photographer J. D. Hutton, explored the upper Yellowstone River and the territory near present-day Yellowstone National Park. Dr. Hayden later acknowledged his indebtedness to the Galpins and published a cut from one of Hutton's photos of Mrs. Galpin, which showed her seated and holding little Alma in her lap. He captioned it:

This represents the daughter of a late chief of one of the principal bands of the Dakota who is now the wife of Mr. Charles E. Galpin, one of the chief partners of the American Fur Co. She is a woman of much intelligence and fine natural capabilities and may be regarded as the highest type of her sex among the Indian tribes of the Northwest.²⁰

While the Galpins established the new Fort Pierre, Louise Picotte had finished her education at St. Mary's Mission in Kansas and Honoré Picotte had arranged a teaching position for her at Rulo, Nebraska Territory. His nephew and former opposition trader, Joseph Picotte, had settled there with the large family of his son-in-law, Bruno Cournoyer. Louise boarded with Joseph's family while teaching all the children. Not until 1859 did she see her mother again and learn of Eagle Woman's abiding devotion and anguish at the enforced separation.²¹

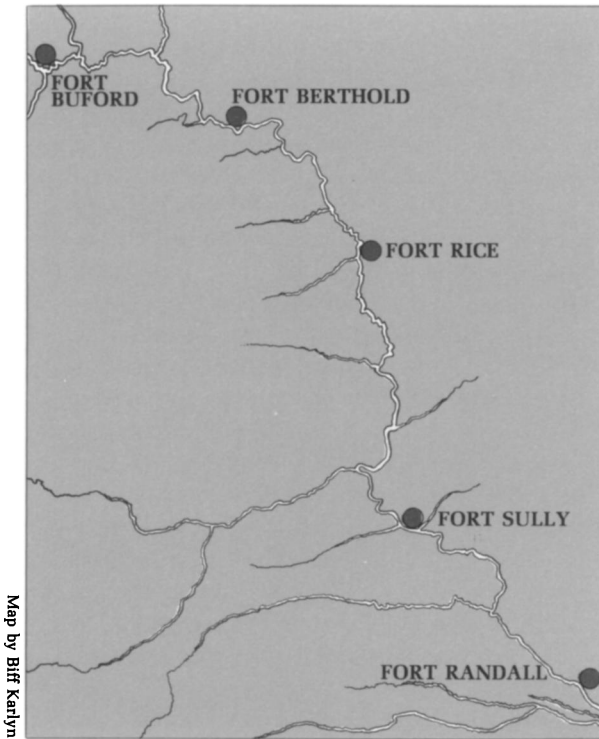
By 1860, Louise had married Charles DeGrey, who had been one of Galpin's traders and was a mixed-blood Sioux widower with three children. The newlyweds appear at Rulo in the 1860 census; and on June 12 of that year, Indian

17. "Harney's Council with the Sioux at Fort Pierre," 34th Cong., 1st sess., July 1856, H. Ex. Doc. 130 (Serial 859).

18. George L. Miller, "Fort Pierre Expedition," *Nebraska Historical Society Publication* 3 (1892): 310.

19. By a treaty of 1858, negotiated with the aid of Charley Picotte, the Yankton band of Sioux ceded all their lands save a small reservation along the east bank of the river opposite Fort Randall.

20. Ferdinand V. Hayden, *Contributions to the Ethnology and Philology of the Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri* (Philadelphia: C. Sherman & Sons, 1862), plate 1, figure 4.



Map by Biff Karlyn

Forts of the Upper Missouri, 1868

ethnologist William Henry Morgan, on a scientific voyage up the river, attended a ball at Rulo where he enjoyed dancing with Mrs. DeGrey. The couple would give Mrs. Galpin her first grandchild, Charles Edward (Eddy) DeGrey, who was born at Rulo in 1861. Soon after, Charles DeGrey moved his family to Fort Randall, where he became post interpreter and where Louise raised and educated their four children.²²

The Indian trade declined during the early 1860s, despite Pierre Chouteau, Jr. & Company's purchase of its opposition. The outbreak of the Civil War and the settlement of the new Dakota Territory also contributed to the continuing slide in the Missouri River trade with Indians. The gold strikes in present-day Idaho, however, promised to increase steamboat traffic up the Missouri, the easiest route of access to the new mines.

These portents of change occupied Galpin's mind during the fall of 1861 when he brought his family to the Yankton Agency. Early in the

spring of 1862, Galpin went to St. Louis, where he withdrew from the American Fur Company and became a partner in LaBarge, Harkness & Company. This new firm planned to operate two steamboats (the *Emilie*, captained by Joseph LaBarge, and the *Shreveport*, captained by John LaBarge), to sell merchandise in the Idaho gold camps, and to establish an opposition fur trade. James Harkness was to handle the Idaho business and Galpin the fur trade. The expectant Galpin then sped upriver to invite his wife on a gala trip to Fort Benton.²³

The light *Shreveport* had already passed Yankton on its way upriver when the palatial *Emilie* paused on May 25 at Fort Randall, where Harkness recorded that "C. E. Galpin and family" came aboard. Mrs. Galpin brought along four-year-old Richard; Lulu and Sammy were in school in Kankakee and New York City, respectively; and we surmise that Alma and baby Annie were left with Louise DeGrey. During the trip, Galpin engaged two veteran traders to build and boss two new posts later that summer, when the *Shreveport* would make a second supply trip; one trader was his old retainer, Frank LaFramboise, who would build Fort LaFramboise just north of Fort Pierre, and the other was Charles Larpenteur, who would build Fort Galpin near the mouth of the Milk River in present-day Montana. On June 11, when the *Emilie* dropped off Larpenteur to seek a site for his post, it also landed the Galpins with a crew to proceed overland on the Milk River trail to Fort Benton.²⁴

The leisure of the boat voyage may have pleased Eagle Woman, but she reveled in the 260-mile overland trek, camping out in Indian style, feasting on bison, and meeting the tribes that traded with her husband. They arrived at Fort Benton on June 25; three days later, the company ceremoniously laid out a major post, Fort LaBarge, a mile or so above Chouteau's Fort Benton. Galpin supervised its construction and traded with the Blackfeet and Crow, who flocked in to receive their annuities from their agent, Henry W. Reed. Harkness headed for the new

21. Information from Mrs. Angie Fiske (daughter of Bruno Cournoyer), Bismarck, North Dakota; Holley, *Once Their Home*, 300.

22. William Henry Morgan, *The Indian Journals*, ed. Leslie A. White (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), 102; information from Joseph Richard Harmon.

23. (Yankton) *Dakotian*, September 7, 1861, June 3, 1862; "Condition of the Indian Tribes," 39th Cong., 2d sess., June 1867, Sen. Ex. Doc. 156 (Serial 1279), 422 (Galpin affidavit); Sunder, *Fur Trade*, 234; A. H. Wilcox, "Up the Missouri to Montana, 1862," SC 981, Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena, 1.

24. "Diary of James Harkness," *Contributions to the Montana Historical Society* 2 (1896): 345, 347, 384; Charles P. Barbier, "Recollections of Fort LaFramboise," *South Dakota Historical Society Collections* 11 (1922): 232; Charles Larpenteur, *Forty Years a Fur Trader*, ed. Elliott Coues (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, 1962), 338.

gold camps in present-day Montana with a load of merchandise. To Galpin's dismay, the homesick merchant returned on August 18, after he had consigned most of his wares to a competitor, thus initiating the ruin of the new company.

Tragedy clouded the Galpins' stay at Fort Benton. On August 26, the day before he left the Upper Missouri for home, Harkness made an emotionless entry in his diary: "William [sic] Galpin's boy died."²⁵ Grief-stricken over the loss of little Richard, Eagle Woman so dreaded burying him in a strange and distant land that she begged her husband to prepare the body to take home for burial. The *Shreveport* had not returned to Fort Benton; but Galpin learned that Alexander Culbertson, his old colleague in the trade who was now retired, was preparing to leave by mackinaw with Indian Agent Reed, a party of miners, and his remarkable Blackfoot wife, Natawista. The mourning Galpins, with their sad burden, joined this party when it started downriver on August 30.²⁶

The Culbertson mackinaw overtook the Harkness craft on September 5 at the mouth of the Milk River, where they learned that the *Shreveport* had been unable to get any higher on the river; it had unloaded and had started back a week or more before. Both mackinaws continued on, but the Galpins remained to help Larpenteur build Fort Galpin a dozen miles above the Milk River. They remained there for several weeks and then contracted to deliver ten miners safely to Fort Randall.²⁷

The party pushed off on about October 22, unaware that in August the Santee Sioux had broken out in the terrible Minnesota Massacre, slaughtering hundreds of settlers. One band, under White Lodge, had struck the isolated settlers at Lake Shetek in the southwestern corner of Minnesota, plundering, killing, and taking women and children captives. They had then fled with their prisoners northwest to the Missouri and were now lying in wait for

descending river craft.²⁸ On November 1, 1862, the Galpin mackinaw was nearing the mouth of the Grand River, near the junction of present-day North Dakota and South Dakota, when the Sioux fired on them. Eagle Woman related the events of that fateful day to Mrs. Holley:

Nothing unusual disturbed them on their way down until just above Grand River, when suddenly an Indian fired upon them; one shot went whizzing just over Mr. Galpin's head, and another through the shirt of one of the men. Presently, they saw an Indian running along the river bank . . . warning them of a big camp just below, and telling them that Indians had given the alarm of the approach of the boat.

It was not long before they were in sight of the village [of Santee Sioux]. . . . As soon as the boat stopped, they pulled it ashore, but Mrs. Galpin remained on board. . . . several of the Indians were shouting: "Kill them!" "Kill them!" But Stormy Goose, a Yankton [Yanktonais], came down to the boat and called out to Mrs. Galpin, "Sister, they will have no mercy on you!" Then another came down and said to her: "Sister, I have been among them a long time and have never asked for anything, but I will try and save you." He then told her to remain where she was, while he went back to the clamoring hostiles, and among other things said: "If you do kill her, you will have to kill me first!" Finally one of them spoke up, saying: "We will take them down to White Lodge and let him decide. . . ." At this she took a little courage sufficient to say to them: "I have traveled a long distance, have come clear through the enemy's country in safety and unmolested; and now, when almost home, I am surprised to be treated in this unfriendly manner!"

Mrs. Galpin sat so quietly in the boat that it aroused their suspicions, and one of them called out: "This woman is sitting on something!" The fact was she was concealing from them some sacks, pans and other articles; but she quietly replied: "I have my dead child here." "No," they said: "She drew something under her!" "Oh, well," she answered, "I want to take

25. Harkness, "Diary."

26. John E. Sunder, "Up the Missouri . . . Delaney's Pocket Diary, Pt. II," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* 19 (January 1963): 140-141. This corrects names and dates given by Culbertson in Bradley's "Affairs at Fort Benton," 281.

27. Harkness, "Diary"; Delaney, "Pocket Diary"; *Dakotian*, October 28, 1862.

28. See John S. Gray, "The Santee Sioux and the Lake Shetek Settlers: Capture and Rescue," *Montana the Magazine of Western History* 25 (January 1975): 42-54.

Wakeya ska (White Lodge) this present.' This satisfied them and they ceased worrying the poor woman; . . . [they] decided to turn them over to White Lodge, they towed the boat along; and as it was floating on down the river, those on board saw a white woman following them. Major Galpin asked her her name, and she told him; and also informed him that there were several white captives in the camp. . . . two of those [captive] women had children present with them, but did not know it—the camp was so large—till after they were ransomed. Major Galpin told this woman that she might expect some one to come, in about seven days, to rescue them. In that village there were four notorious chiefs, Black-Hawk, White-Lodge, Across-The-River, and Chase-The-Ree. Two of the chiefs, after some delay, came to Mrs. Galpin, who was still sitting in the boat, and informed her that none of them would be killed, and finally allowed them to go on their way. . . .²⁹

The Galpins floated swiftly down the Missouri to Fort LaFramboise (near Fort Pierre), where they buried their son. They delivered the miners to Fort Randall, where Mrs. Galpin rejoined her family; her husband started for Washington, D.C., to report on the Sioux hostilities, stopping long enough at Yankton and Sioux City to give his story to the newspapers.³⁰ As Galpin had arranged at Fort LaFramboise on their trip downriver, Frank LaFramboise sent out a band of Indians who were friendly toward whites; they soon ransomed all of White Lodge's captives, two women and six children. The ransomed captives reached Fort Randall on November 30 for three weeks of recuperation. From the moment of their rescue, they had discovered that Indians could also be kind and generous. Mrs. Galpin, who would never forget the cruelties that racial conflicts release, was there to give them aid and comfort.

While Galpin was in Washington, D.C., Mrs. Galpin learned that Little Crow, a ringleader in the Minnesota Massacre, was holding four more captive children upriver near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota. On his return from the

East in early 1863, Galpin promptly headed for Fort LaFramboise, where he sent out another ransom party on January 12 that included two of Mrs. Galpin's brothers, White Hawk and Drag the Stone (Two Lance). They ransomed one eleven-year-old girl and were dickering for three boys when a hostile courier arrived to dissuade Little Crow from yielding up the boys. The rescuers whisked away the girl, Luvina Ingles (or Ingalls), and reached safety at Fort LaFramboise on February 11.³¹

Four months later, Galpin again traveled upriver, arriving on June 10 at Sioux City where he saw his old friend, General Alfred Sully. Sully was organizing an upriver expedition to punish the still hostile Santee Sioux. That night the LaBarges's new boat, the *Robert Campbell*, docked at Sioux City. Galpin must have then withdrawn from LaBarge, Harkness & Company, for the next day Sully's expedition quartermaster, Captain Arthur H. Mills, hired Galpin to serve as chief guide and interpreter on Sully's personal staff from June 11 to September 19. The trader would recruit Frank LaFramboise, Charles DeGrey, and other frontiersmen for the expedition. On the march upriver, Sully would hold councils with all friendly Sioux to allay their fears, with Galpin undoubtedly advising and interpreting.³²

In the meantime, Mrs. Galpin remained at the Yankton Agency, where a detail of troops from nearby Fort Randall shot seven friendly Sioux on June 13. According to a post officer's one-sentence description, which has become the accepted version of this affair, when the detail sighted these "hostiles" they launched a gallant charge that left the entire party "food for the coyotes."³³ Other contemporary accounts disagree, recording that there was no charge, that the eight Indians were so friendly that they were puzzled at being disarmed, and that a senior chief carrying convincing credentials was set free before the soldiers simply shot down the disarmed seven. Mrs. Galpin, who reacted with impartial indignation to atrocities, whether committed by whites or Indians, added that one of

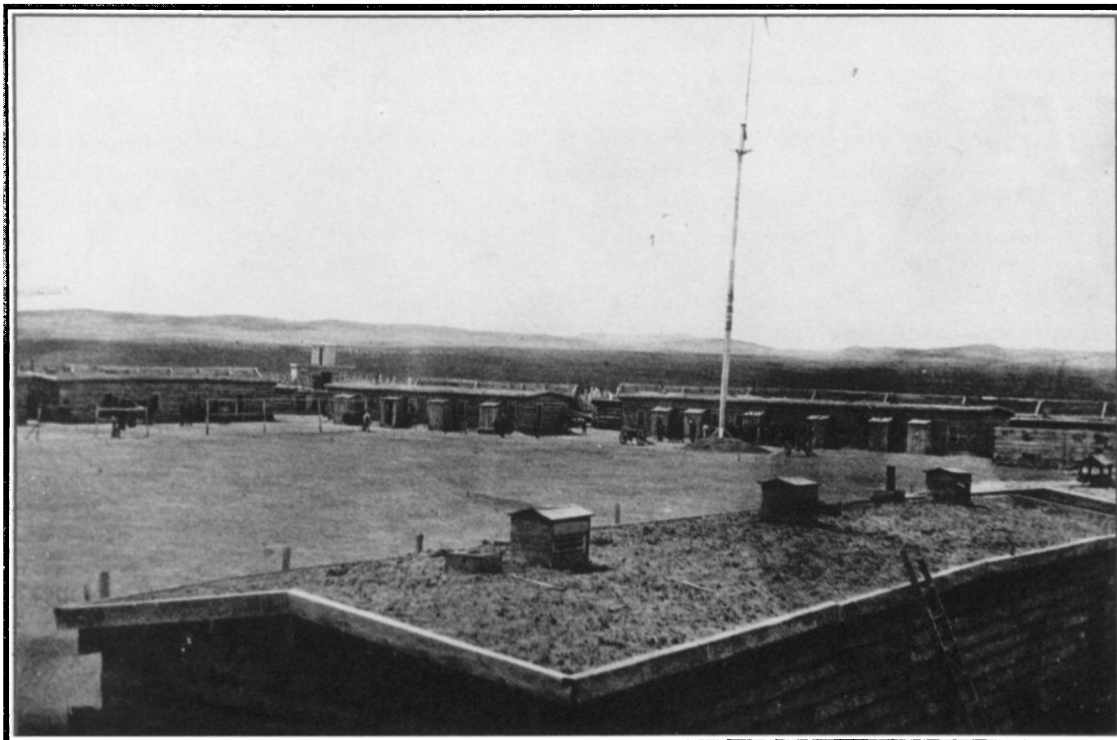
29. Holley, *Once Their Home*, 289-291; *Frontier Scout* (Fort Rice), August 31, 1865.

30. *Dakotian*, November 25, 1862; (Sioux City) *Register*, November 29, 1862. For Frank LaFramboise's account, see *Register*, January 31, 1863.

31. *Register*, February 28, 1863 (Galpin brought down this account by Dr. Justus Townsend, 31 Iowa Infantry); "Iowa Troops in the Sully Campaign," *Iowa Journal of Politics and History* 20 (1922): 414.

32. *Dakotian*, June 16, July 7, 1863; "Log of the Robert Campbell, 1863," *North Dakota Historical Society Collections* 2 (1908): 272; "Reports of Persons Hired for Indian Expedition by Capt. Arthur H. Mills, AQM, 1863," RG 92, NA.

33. Lieutenant A. M. English, "Dakota's First Soldiers," *South Dakota Historical Society Collections* 9 (1918): 265.



Established in 1864 to protect overland and river travelers on the frontier, Fort Rice was the scene of many negotiations between the Sioux and the United States government during the 1860s.

the seven was a Two Kettle chief who had “ ‘never even looked cross at a white man; he was always kind and good. . . .’ ”³⁴

When General Sully concluded his campaign, he returned to Fort Pierre and began building an army post nearby. Galpin’s service must have impressed the general, for by September 20 Sully appointed him the sutler at the new post, Fort Sully. Galpin started down to purchase supplies at Sioux City, where he entered into a business relationship with Theophile Bruguier, a former fur trader who had large families by two Yankton Indian wives and was a prominent merchant in Sioux City. On his return to Fort Sully, Galpin brought up his family. Happy to rejoin him in familiar home country, Galpin’s family enjoyed the social life of the garrison that winter, while he sutlered to the troops and traded with friendly Sioux.³⁵

During the summer of 1864, General Sully waged a more ambitious campaign against the Northern Sioux, who were threatening to run all of the whites out of the upper country. Pausing on July 7 on the west bank of the Missouri above the mouth of the Cannonball River in present-day North Dakota, Sully detached troops to build another new post—Fort Rice—and again appointed Galpin its sutler. The trader promptly moved his family upriver again and built a store and a home, where they would live for four years. That winter, they found new friends, William L. Larned and his wife Julia, a Montana-bound couple from Minnesota who had been stranded at the post. Larned recorded in his diary on October 11, 1864:

This morning Maj. Galpin, an Indian trader and sutler at the fort, called and

34. *Dakotian*, June 23, 1863; “Letters of Pvt. Milton Spencer, 1862-65,” *North Dakota History* 37 (Fall 1970): 245-248; Sergeant J. H. Drips, *Three Years Among the Indians in Dakota* (New York: Sol Lewis, 1974), 33; Colonel John Pattee, “Dakota Campaigns,” *South Dakota Historical Society Collections* 5 (1910): 293; Holley, *Once Their Home*, 291-292.

35. *Dakotian*, September 29, 1863; *Register*, October 10, 1863 (in this source, Fort Antietam is Fort Sully).

36. Ray H. Mattison, “Fisk Expedition of 1864: Diary of Wm. L. Larned,” *North Dakota History* 36 (Summer 1969): 240.

37. Holley, *Once Their Home*, 303; D. Alexander Brown, *Galvanized Yanks* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), 88-89; Mattison, “Fisk Expedition of 1864,” 258-259; *Official Record of the War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 48, pt. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1896), 434-435; *Register*, May 13, 1865.

38. Mattison, “Fisk Expedition of 1864,” 261; “Register of Ft. Rice Visitors, 1865,” (Dimon papers, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut) which names among passengers on the Yellowstone Chas. P. Chouteau (of Pierre Chouteau, Jr. & Company) and James B. Hubbell, Alpheus F. Hawley, and William Wirt Smith (of the Northwestern Fur Company).

made a proposition to me to move into his house, board his Indian wife, his three children [Lulu, returned from Kankakee, Alma, and Annie] and himself, and take care of forty cows.³⁶

At Fort Rice, near the heart of Sioux territory, Mrs. Galpin experienced firsthand the tensions between Indians and the military. On the dark night of March 29, 1865, she detected the whispering voices of Santee Indians and rose from her bed to see them sneaking about the post with lighted matches. She challenged them, but they muttered that they were looking for food and faded into the darkness. When they reappeared the next day, a troop patrol scattered them, except for two who sneaked into the lodge of Two Bears, a friendly Yanktonais chief camped in the shadow of the post.

Two Bears promptly turned them over to the guard; but while the pair was still in the guardhouse on April 13, some marauding Indians ran off Galpin's cattle and killed two soldiers in the process. The irate post commander, Colonel C. A. R. Dimon of the 1st U.S. Volunteers (a "galvanized yank" regiment), ordered the two prisoners shot. When post interpreter Frank LaFramboise informed them of their fate, they replied: "'We can't help it. We had no business to come here to steal.'" Mrs. Galpin, who knew that they had intended to set the post afire, registered no complaint.³⁷

Mrs. Galpin played a heroine's role in another episode at Fort Rice. On the evening of May 8, the steamboat *Yellowstone* docked at Fort Rice, bringing the startling news that the venerable Chouteau fur company was selling out to a new Northwestern Fur Company. Aboard were the new and old owners to oversee the turnover of trading posts. Promptly joining the new firm, Galpin boarded the boat with a load of trade goods for Fort Berthold and Fort Union; he would not return until June 8.³⁸ During his absence, on May 26, hostile Indians ambushed the post quartermaster, 1st Lieutenant Benjamin Wilson, as he rode out to join a logging detail. Other records fully confirm the story Mrs. Galpin told Mrs. Holley:³⁹

At an early hour one morning at Fort Rice . . . Mrs. Galpin . . . saw at some distance two or three Indians, whom she suspected were bent on mischief, and . . . she saw a mounted officer coming in the direction of where she was standing and the Indians on the chase. She immediately ran towards the officer, but before she got to him he fell from his horse, with three arrows in his body. As soon as she reached him, she knelt down by his side and lifted his head into her lap, and shielded him with her shawl from the Indians that were galloping up to the spot after their victim.

As they dismounted and came towards her, she commanded them to leave, . . . saying to them: "This man belongs to me now! You can not mutilate him nor touch him! Begone, everyone of you!" Meanwhile she would signal, by whirling her shawl, and loudly call for help. . . . One arrow had pierced his shoulder, one his thigh, and another had gone through into his back, and, in his agony, he had broken off two of the arrows before Mrs. Galpin got to him. An arrow can not be drawn out; it must be pushed through, but crazed with pain, he had unwittingly tried to pull them out, and had broken them off in his body. . . . after what seemed a very long time, she saw a soldier running towards them, that proved to be the young officer's orderly. Said Mrs. Galpin: "As soon as he saw us and recognized who it was, he hurried on, taking out his revolver as he ran. I told a woman that was near me to run for her life back to her lodge, for he might shoot her."

The suffering man was now moved on a stretcher to the hospital of the post, where he lived seven days. Mrs. Galpin went often to see him at his request. . . . he asks to look once more upon her face—it was his last request; he never spoke again. Later, as she softly and timidly steps into the room . . . the dying young man took the hand that shielded him. . . . He was too weak to speak; only with his dying eyes, and the touch of his silent hand, could he voice the gratitude which swept across his pallid face.

They buried the officer at Fort Rice, with military honors, while emblems of

39. Mattison, "Fisk Expedition of 1864," 262-263; *Frontier Scout*, June 15, 1865; Brown, *Galvanized Yanks*, 91-92.

mourning draped the quarters. Circling Bear, now at Fort Yates, fired the deadly arrows, and afterwards told Mrs. Galpin that had he known who she was, he would have killed her too.⁴⁰

During the next two months, Mrs. Galpin helped two white women at Fort Rice. On June 21, a Miniconjou Sioux named Ska Ska (White White), who had intervened to save a white woman during a raid in January on the South Platte and had nursed her back to health as he made his way slowly northward, turned her over to Frank LaFramboise at Fort Rice in exchange for two horses. The Larneds put her up in their quarters, while Mrs. Galpin and the post women set about sewing her a wardrobe. A week later, a steamboat gave her free passage to St. Louis, and the garrison collected money for the trip home to her parents in Indiana.⁴¹ A few weeks later, Mrs. Galpin extended her warm-hearted kindness to the expecting wife of a post private. The mother-to-be had been grateful for Mrs. Galpin's help; but joy turned to tragedy on July 9, when Elizabeth and her baby died. The most affected mourner was Mrs. Galpin.⁴²

The following month, Mrs. Galpin had the opportunity to pursue her growing conviction that peace between Indians and whites deserved effort even if that meant a risk to her husband and herself. She interrupted her reunion with fifteen-year-old Sammy Galpin, who had returned from his school in New York, to conduct a diplomatic mission in the interests of her people that would be fraught with danger.⁴³

During the summer of 1865, General Sully's third Indian campaign had been hampered by generals and politicians quarreling over the proper means of solving the Indian problem. By the time Sully returned to Fort Rice on August 25, the government was pressing for a peace policy. He consulted with the knowledgeable Galpins and the new post commander, Colonel John Pattee, an Iowa soldier with an Indian wife. The general asked whether a large village of hostile

Sioux camped to the west on the Little Missouri River could be induced to meet a peace commission then steaming upriver if Sully promised them safety. The answer he received is revealed in Larned's diary entry for August 28:

Major Galpin and wife started this a.m. on an expedition to the hostile camp, though unknown to all but three or four persons—Gen Sully, Col. Pattee, and a few others.

Captain Adams must have been privy to this secret, for only this bold venture could have prompted him to publish in the August 31 *Frontier Scout* his tribute to "An Heroic Woman," which began:

Mrs. Galpin, wife of Major Galpin, is one of the finest women in the world. She makes us believe that Pocahontas was no fabrication of the poet. She speaks no English, only her native Sioux. She is a friend of her own race and also of the whites. Her friendship is not proved by words but by deeds.

The success of this perilous mission depended entirely on the hostiles' respect for Eagle Woman, but few of its details are known. The determined couple started upriver on horseback to reach Fort Berthold by September 1, when Mrs. Galpin suffered an accident with her horse that held them there for several days; they would return to that post in time to board the Northwestern Fur Company's *Hattie May* on September 20 and would land at Fort Rice three days later. They had a little over two weeks to complete the round trip alone to the camp of the hostile Oglala and Upper Yanktonais. As they had expected, they found the Indians' camp on the Little Missouri near the mouth of Beaver Creek, and in councils they extracted promises from the war-weary chiefs to meet with the Peace Commission at Fort Rice. On reaching that post, Galpin reported their success to the anxious Colonel Pattee and then, by letter, to General Sully.⁴⁴

Trouble developed, however, when Indian runners reported that after two days of travel the delegation of chiefs had learned about a fight between their relatives and soldiers near the Black Hills, which made them fear that Sully

40. Holley, *Once Their Home*, 300-302.

41. *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), August 2, 1865; Mattison, "Fisk Expedition of 1864," 265; *Frontier Scout*, June 22, 1865.

42. Brown, *Galvanized Yanks*, 99-100; *Frontier Scout*, July 13, 1865.

43. Mattison, "Fisk Expedition of 1864," 269; *Frontier Scout*, August 24, 1865.

44. Mattison, "Fisk Expedition of 1864," 269; *Frontier Scout*, October 12, 1865; Pattee, "Dakota Campaigns"; Sully to Pope, September 2, 1865, *Official Record of the War of the Rebellion*, vol. 48, pt. 2, 1223; Sully to AAG, September 14, 1865, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1865* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865), 209.



Sammy Galpin in about 1856, when Sammy was six or seven years old.

Courtesy of the author

had violated his guarantee. Sully sent the runners back with assurances that the troops were from another command (units of General Patrick E. Connor's Powder River Expedition) and that they would be safe.⁴⁵

The chiefs arrived at Fort Rice by mid October and the Galpins and Colonel Pattee gave them a warm welcome. Another hitch developed when they received news that the commissioners were delayed at Fort Sully by low water and that the chiefs would have to march down to meet them. It is likely that Mrs. Galpin's diplomatic talents helped to hold the skittish chiefs to their course. On October 18, Galpin and Colonel Pattee led the delegation on the trek to Fort Sully, where the few commissioners who had been willing to await their arrival hastily concluded a treaty with these Upper Yanktonais and Oglala on October 28-29. Returning on November 6, Galpin could assure Eagle Woman that their daring peace mission had borne some fruit.⁴⁶

Galpin left on November 25 on a winter trip to Washington, D.C., not to return until

February; but his family fared well during the holidays. They shared Thanksgiving dinner with the Larneds and their son, Horatio, who had taken a job with the fur company under Galpin; and they celebrated Christmas with Colonel John G. Clark and officers of the new garrison of the 50th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. Slim and sparkling nineteen-year-old Lulu Picotte was the belle of the post, joining horseback parties even in frigid January weather to visit the several Indian villages camped in the vicinity.⁴⁷

On about April 10, 1866, two months after Galpin returned from the East, he descended the Missouri by skiff to buy a herd of cattle, taking Sammy Galpin and Horatio Larned along. At Sioux City, on May 8, he boarded the ascending Northwestern Fur Company's *Miner*, captained by company partner Alpheus F. Hawley, and steamed back to Fort Rice, leaving Sammy and Horatio to recruit Ben Arnold to help drive the herd upriver.⁴⁸ Early in June, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph N. G. Whistler arrived with four companies of the 13th U.S. Infantry to relieve the volunteer garrison. On August 22, his new adjutant sent Galpin a military order that forbade Indian traders from residing on post reserves. As agent for the Northwestern Fur Company, Galpin protested; but he was compelled to move his store upriver to the edge of the reserve.⁴⁹

This inconvenience and danger to his family may have prompted Galpin to send Lulu to school at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in St. Louis. She probably took passage on the *Antelope*, which left Fort Rice on August 30 and arrived at St. Louis on September 14, just days before the beginning of the school year. For the next two years, Galpin would correspond with Lulu, telling her of activities at Fort Rice.⁵⁰

Disruption of Galpin's trade may have also prompted him to send Sammy to work at the company's post at Fort Union at the mouth of the Yellowstone River. Sammy probably took the *Miner*, the last boat in 1866 to ascend that far

47. Mattison, "Fisk Expedition of 1864," 271-274.

48. Governor Edmunds to Indian Commissioner, April 30, 1866, *LR from Upper Missouri Agency*, Micro. 234, Roll 886 (Galpin at Yankton), NA; *Register*, May 5, 1866, January 6, 1867 (steamboat registers); Ethel A. Collins, "Pioneer Experiences of Horatio H. Larned," *North Dakota Historical Society Collections* 7 (1925): 22-24; Lewis F. Crawford, *Rekindling Campfires, Exploits of Ben Arnold* (Bismarck: Capital Book Company, 1926), 127-139. The last reminiscences of this adventure are full of errors.

49. Adjutant Wm. D. O'Toole to Galpin, August 22, and Galpin to Indian Commissioner, August 22, 1866, *LR from Upper Missouri Agency*, Micro. 234, Roll 886, NA.

50. *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis), September 15, 1866.

45. Sully to Pope, October 1, 1865, *LR from Upper Missouri Agency*, 1866, Micro. 234, Roll 886, NA.

46. Mattison, "Fisk Expedition of 1864," 270-271; Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 905-906.

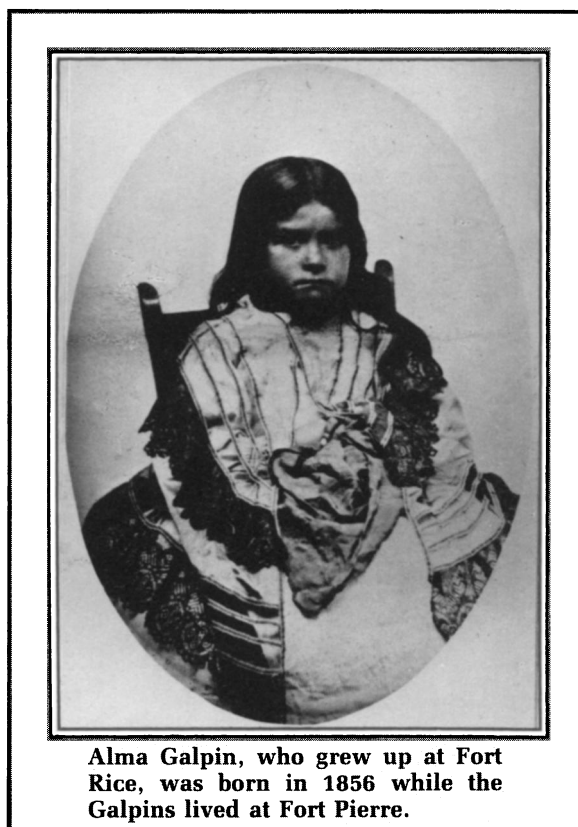
upriver.⁵¹ Sammy's winter-long service proved to be an exciting experience, for Hunkpapa Sioux under Sitting Bull attacked Fort Union and the nearby and recently built Fort Buford. Daily during the week before Christmas, the Indians challenged the soldiers and then kept them bottled up for months. The papers soon carried rumors of a bloody massacre of every inmate of the two posts.⁵² Sammy probably returned by mackinaw with Upper Missouri Indian Agent Mahlon Wilkinson, who passed Fort Rice in late April. Wilkinson brought the first public denial of the rumored "massacre" at Fort Union and Fort Buford.⁵³

A cryptic account of an incident that was included in Mrs. Holley's book may shed some light on Sammy's stay at Fort Union. Known as a sure shot, Sammy had taken "good aim" on famed Sitting Bull at some "post" when an officer, "Gen. H—," knocked his rifle barrel off target. This could have happened during that winter's Indian siege, and the unnamed officer could have been Colonel William G. Rankin who was commanding at Fort Buford.⁵⁴

While Sammy wintered at Fort Union, Galpin wrote Lulu in St. Louis, giving her news of the family. He wrote his first "Dear Lou Lou" letter on December 26, 1866, from Fort Rice:

Your letters have all been received, I think, and your last, which was on December 3rd, gave us great satisfaction not only because you were in good health, but that you were at the Convent and permanently settled for the winter with good friends and surely will be well cared for. . . .

Little Annie [then five] and Alma [then ten] are both well and running around as usual. . . . Mrs. Powell [wife of Captain Albert W. Powell of the garrison] and Mrs. Palmer [unidentified, but well-regarded by the Galpins] and in fact all the ladies about call on us often and always speak of you and send their best regards and love. They seem to miss you fully as much as we do and I can't say how much that means, ex-



Alma Galpin, who grew up at Fort Rice, was born in 1856 while the Galpins lived at Fort Pierre.

Courtesy of the author

cept that Mother has a crying spell every day, and now that she knows you are at the Convent, she seems more satisfied. . . .

Galpin's letters reflect his deep affection for Lulu and reveal how family relationships ignore race. On March 4, 1867, he passed on a message from her mother: "You must not fail to send her up a large pair of shears and a hoop-skirt, and she sends herewith twenty dollars for that purpose. She says you can keep the balance." On May 5, he wrote that Mrs. Larned and other ladies had come up from the fort "and Mother showed them your letters. They all agree with me that you have improved much in English and I have not the least doubt that you will do the same in your music [piano] and singing." On June 14, he gave her permission to visit her cousin in Kankakee (she made this visit late that summer). On June 28, he proudly acknowledged

51. Steamboat voyages were regularly graphed as locations (river-miles) versus dates, using innumerable sources; the source for a precise date in the text may be cited, but "about" dates, representing interpolations, will not, as they may involve dozens of sources.

52. Agent Wilkinson to Colonel Rankin, December 19, and reply, December 20, 1866, and Agent Wilkinson to Governor Faulk, January 1, 1867, in Valentine Smith Papers, Chicago Historical Society. These sources supplement a number of standard sources.

53. (Yankton) *Union and Dakotian*, May 18, 1867.

54. Holley, *Once Their Home*, 310-311.

55. Hiram M. Chittenden and Alfred T. Richardson, *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre Jean De Smet, S.J.* (New York: Kraus Reprint Company, 1969), 881-882 (June visit); *Investigation of Fort P. Kearny Massacre*, Micro. 740, Roll 1, Frame 933 (June visit), Frame 1036 (July visit); De Smet to N. G. Taylor, August 3, 1867, LR from Upper Missouri Agency, 1867, Micro. 234, Roll 887 (July visit), NA.

a letter she had written in French and expressed joy at hearing Father De Smet's verbal confirmation of her progress and contentment at the convent academy.

In his letters, Galpin wrote Lulu about her half-sisters. On July 18, he wrote:

Little Annie and Alma spend their time mostly making gay lodges and working with me in the garden. . . . Annie says she has one hill of melons for LouLou and hopes you will be here to eat them with her. Alma you would hardly know—has grown wonderfully. . . . Little Annie has an awful time with her long hair and often wishes you were here to comb it, instead of her mother, who she says always pulls and can't comb like you.

In a letter written on October 18, he told Lulu: "Annie is always talking about writing you a letter, when she gets big and knows how to, she says." One month later, he revealed some squabbling at home:

Mother is always at work about something; like all good mothers, making something for the little girls and preparing generally for the winter and quite often scolds a little. Little Annie, the other day, got hold of one of your shoes and had a big crying spell over it, and finally asked Mother to take it away from her. She did not see why you should have left it, unless purposely to break her heart. And to wind up the matter, she got up and kicked the shoe back under the bed, where I suppose it will lie until she gets out with some of us, then will take it out and wish you back to take her part, as she says you always did.

During the summer of 1867, Sammy and then Mrs. Galpin and the girls left the post on vacation trips. Galpin's letters to Lulu reveal that Sammy was helping his father in the trading store on June 14, but by July 18 he had gone up to Fort Benton on a pleasure trip. Not having returned by October 6, Galpin wrote: "I hardly think the boat Sammy went up on will get down this fall, and he may winter at Benton." The boy finally reached home on November 6, and four days later the relieved father wrote: "He says he will write you today. He has grown beyond imagination and is almost as tall as I am." Later, on January 24, 1868, he wrote Lulu that "Sammy studies pretty well, though I think he would rather hunt than study his books."

During July, Mrs. Galpin took the two girls to visit Louise DeGrey at Fort Randall. Writing on August 17, Galpin remarked to Lulu about her mother's absence: "Mother has not returned from Louise's yet, though I expect her soon on the *Mountaineer*; it is lonely here—no one at home." They had probably left on July 21 with Father De Smet on the *Lady Grace* and returned on August 18 aboard the *Mountaineer*.

One month before Mrs. Galpin visited her daughter at Fort Randall, a meeting at Fort Rice began a series of events that would culminate in one of Mrs. Galpin's most courageous diplomatic exploits. On June 16, the *G. W. Graham* brought old friends Father De Smet and General Sully along with Ely S. Parker, a full-blood Indian who later became Indian Commissioner, to Fort Rice. They came as a Special Commission to gauge the temper of the River Sioux, who had been made restless by Red Cloud's War then raging to the west along the Bozeman Trail to Montana. For two days, using Galpin as interpreter, they heard the complaints of friendly Sioux. Having sent out runners to bring in the hostile Sioux, they proceeded up to Fort Berthold and Fort Buford. Returning on July 21 aboard the *Lady Grace*, the commissioners were disappointed to hear from Galpin and LaFramboise that many hostile Hunkpapa had come in late June, but after waiting ten days they had to leave to hunt. Surprisingly, the Indians had left word that they would welcome a visit to their camp by the respected Father De Smet.⁵⁵

If Mrs. Galpin and the girls did leave Fort Rice on the *Lady Grace* with Father De Smet, she probably offered to accompany him with a party of her trusted people to visit the hostiles' camp. He would have known that her presence would assure entrée to the Sioux camp. Before De Smet reached home, a government-sponsored peace program had materialized. At Fort Leavenworth, on August 13, he was called on to present his views to a new and prestigious Peace Commission, which had been charged by Congress to settle all differences with the Indians, to provide them with reservations, and to devise a plan to "civilize" them. They urged the exhausted mis-

sionary to accompany them back upriver on a preliminary visit with the tribes. His doctor forbade it, but he agreed to serve the following spring and thus became a commission adjunct, eligible for government support.⁵⁶

While recuperating that winter, Father De Smet kept up a correspondence with Galpin (always including news of Lulu) to keep abreast of the mood of the Indians and to ask advice on his spring visit to the hostiles. The trader revealed his reaction in a letter to Lulu on January 24, 1868:

I have just received a letter from Father De Smet in which he speaks of coming up here again this spring and using his influence with the Indians to make peace. I hope he may come, and I then wish you were here to act as interpreter for him. Your mother says that she will go to the different camps with him and use her influence with them to make peace. I am hopeful now that with the efforts of Father De Smet, the government will make a final and lasting peace with these Indians. If they do not, I am fearful the poor Indians will suffer a great deal, which I wish would not happen.

On April 1, 1868, the Peace Commission of high-ranking generals and prominent civilians gathered in Omaha for a meeting that Father De Smet also attended. The commissioners started west by rail to make treaties with western bands at Fort Laramie, but the priest left them at Cheyenne to return to Omaha, where he boarded the *Columbia* on April 21. Low water having delayed his arrival at Fort Rice until May 24, he spent several days counseling with the friendly Sioux and planning his dangerous visit to the hostiles' camp. On May 29, Galpin, still signing himself as agent of the Northwestern Fur Company, composed a letter of information to the priest, ending: "I herein tender you my services for your trip into the interior to meet the hostile bands; my wife and relations will also go with you."⁵⁷

The next day De Smet reported to N. G. Taylor, who was Commissioner of Indian Affairs and President of the Peace Commission:

Preparations are now making to leave Fort Rice on June 1. Messrs. Galpin and LaFramboise will accompany me. They are among the most influential gentlemen with all the Sioux tribes; Mrs. Galpin,

being of Sioux birth and a near relation to several war chiefs, also exercises great influence among her people and will accompany her husband.⁵⁸

As post interpreter, LaFramboise would not be released for the mission, nor would it depart on June 1. On May 31, the *Importer* landed General Alfred H. Terry, commanding the Department of Dakota and the first of the peace commissioners to arrive from Fort Laramie. He brought news of the commission's operations and the terms of the treaty it was offering, but he also sought assurance that the dangerous mission was feasible. He found the missionary, trader, and Indian woman of one mind: achieving a reconciliation between warring races meant more to them than personal safety. To serve as escort, Eagle Woman had chosen seventy men and ten women from among her people, who would prove both faithful and level-headed.

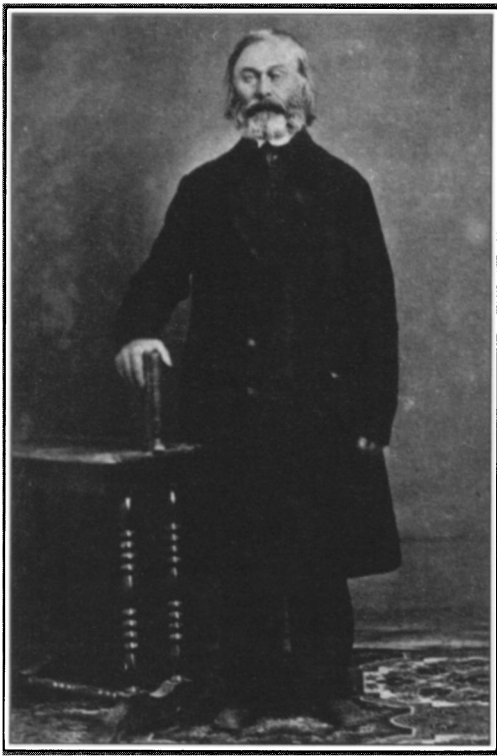
On the trip out, Galpin kept a detailed journal on which Father DeSmet based his own account.⁵⁹ The determined cavalcade set out on their journey westward from Fort Rice on June 3. On June 9, near the head of the Cannonball River, ten Indian couriers started ahead to warn the hostile camp of the party's arrival. On June 16, they camped on Beaver Creek, a western branch of the Little Missouri. Because these accounts never more than hint at some highly tense moments, it is worth quoting at length from the more forthright story that Eagle Woman told Mrs. Holley:

. . . when Mrs. Galpin's party reached Beaver Creek, . . . they were met by fifty Indians from his [Sitting Bull's] camp, whom he had sent out to meet her. One of them took occasion to tell Mrs. Galpin that it was the intention of Sitting Bull and his band to kill them all as soon as they got into his camp. "That was the only time my heart failed me," said she, "And I cried, as I looked at the two white men, my husband and Father De Smet, who sat eating. I told them that they better come back with

57. *Ibid.*, 900-902; Galpin to De Smet, May 29, 1868, LR from Upper Platte Agency, 1868, Micro. 234, Roll 893, NA.

58. De Smet to N. G. Taylor, May 30, 1868, LR from Upper Platte Agency, 1868, Micro. 234, Roll 893, NA.

56. Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, 887-888.



Father Pierre Jean De Smet gained the respect of the Sioux through his sincere and conscientious search for peace.

Photograph by Gustave Sohn, ca. 1863, MHS Photograph Archives

me. But the Father said: 'No, it will be of no use . . . for we are already with them.' . . .

As they neared the camp [June 19], and when within about two miles of it, the whole village came out to meet them; all were mounted, painted black, and armed for blood; on they came, thick as the grass, yelling and circling around the little band from Fort Rice. . . . Immediately Father De Smet took out his vestments and banner. Says Mrs. Galpin: "As he was trying to fasten the banner to a pole, I could see his hands tremble and his eyes were full of tears." . . . It now became apparent to them, that the hostiles had taken possession of them, as they immediately ordered Mrs. Galpin's people to fall back to the rear, with the wagons, away from her. Then the valiant *Thunder Hawk*, the bravest of them all. . . . turning to Mrs. Galpin, as he proudly ignored their threats, he said: "Aunt, tell uncle to give me the best gun he has got, we Indians

know each other and can't always depend upon each other." Mrs. Galpin handed the trusty gun to him, which he loaded, . . . with 16 cartridges. . . . *Thunder Hawk*, in particular, was told to *fall back with the others*, but undaunted, he scorned their terrible threatenings, and boldly refused. Said Mrs. Galpin: "He went right on, *close by my side!*"

They all now moved at a slow walk. . . . [soon] they were suddenly ordered to stop, and not go any nearer; and the hostiles were all yelling and circling and singing their war-song, "and when I heard them sing, *I got brave, too!*" said Mrs. Galpin. . . . Soon all the big chiefs rode up and shook hands with her, among them . . . *Sitting Bull*. *Four Moons* [Four Horns] told Mrs. Galpin to get off her horse and come into the circle of Indians, as that would be a safer place, if they were going to kill the white men. "*But I did not do it!*" said the faithful woman. . . .

Mrs. Galpin now fell back a short distance from the white men; . . . she wanted to closely watch the movements of a man whom she had seen with a revolver in his hand. "I told *White-Horse* to ride near my husband. . . . Pretty soon, I heard someone cry out, . . . hold him! hold him! and looking in the direction of the voice I saw *Gray Eagle's* brother with drawn bow, just ready to shoot. They caught him, but just then some one called out, 'Let him alone and see what he will do!' at the time covering him with his gun." . . .

Just at this juncture an Indian galloped up, . . . [and] exclaimed: "I am a *Minneconjoo!* And if these white men had come into my camp, I would kill them every one!" . . . Hemmed in by these hostile warriors. . . . at last, they reached *Powder river*, . . . where they found both banks thronged with Indians. . . . After all had forded the river they rode toward the camp. . . .

As they reached the Indian village a Chief came up and shook hands with Mrs. Galpin. . . . The hostiles then prepared a lodge for her, lining it comfortably with robes, and they told Father De Smet also to sit down in it. . . .

59. Gilbert J. Garraghan, "Charles Galpin's Journal," *Mid-America* 13 (October 1930): 141-163; Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, 899-922.

. . . close together in her lodge sat other young men as thick as they could be crowded, first Father De Smet, then Mrs. Galpin, and next to her Major Galpin, Four Horns and as many as could be seated; thus surrounded by her faithful friends she passed that memorable night of terror. . . . After the morning meal had been taken, they prepared for holding a Council. . . . All the Chiefs having taken their places, the Council then formally opened.

. . . In that Council the Indians expressed not only a willingness, but a desire "To be friendly with the whites, and wanted traders and the whites to go through their country; but did not want troops to come out, and fight them." . . . Father De Smet arose and . . . assured them that he would tell all their words to the Great Father. . . . Meanwhile Mrs. Galpin tried in every way that she could devise, to get them to come in and settle upon the Reservation, but Sitting Bull would not yield in the slightest. Said he: "Some of my people will go, and that is just the same as if I went, but as for myself, I will not go! My great reason is, I hear that they want to arrest me and take me a prisoner."⁶⁰

Sitting Bull was as good as his word. Thirty lodges of the hostiles' leaders, including Chief Gall, returned with the cavalcade to be greeted warmly by their relatives at Fort Rice on June 30. General Terry and two additional peace commissioners, General William S. Harney and lawyer John B. Sanborn, received them. Harney and Sanborn had arrived on June 11 on the *Deer Lodge* and had brought with them a copy of the Sioux Treaty of 1868, which already had been signed at Fort Laramie by the Brule, Miniconjou, and peaceful Oglala, but not by Red Cloud's Oglala. A grand council convened on July 2 to present the many-paged treaty to the bands of River Sioux. Before the day was over all the chiefs had "touched the pen"—Yanktonais, Hunkpapa, Blackfoot Sioux, Cut Head, Two Kettle, Sans Arc, and Santee.⁶¹

This landmark treaty promised the Sioux a permanent reservation extending west from the

Missouri to the western border of present-day South Dakota and a very thin slice of present-day North Dakota, of which no part could be ceded without consent of three-fourths of all adult male Sioux. The treaty promised the abandonment of the military posts on the Bozeman Trail to Montana, and it restored the Powder River country to the Sioux as "unceded territory," where they could roam and hunt without molestation by whites. It also promised to support the Sioux for four years while they transformed themselves from hunters into self-supporting dry farmers. Because the last proviso was an impossible dream and contradictory clauses nullified the second, the treaty would sow the seeds of future conflict.

The day after the treaty signing, the commissioners formally thanked Father De Smet and appointed two salaried special interpreters to maintain contact with two of the Sioux bands and hear their grievances: Charles E. Galpin for the Hunkpapa and Samuel D. Hinman, a Protestant missionary, for the Santee Sioux. On the morning of July 4, Eagle Woman received her only reward in the form of baptism at the hands of the grateful Father De Smet. That afternoon the commissioners boarded the *Agnes* to travel down to Sioux City, where it docked on July 7.⁶²

Father De Smet left the *Agnes* at Fort Sully to spend a few days with the Indians there. Leaving on June 11, he paused again for recuperation at St. Mary's Mission in Kansas. He was home in St. Louis by July 27, when he submitted his expense account to the Indian Office. While at Fort Sully, however, he had given commanding officer Colonel David S. Stanley an account of his mission to Sitting Bull.⁶³ On July 12, the colonel wrote to Archbishop John B. Purcell about the priest's achievement and included a nice tribute to Mrs. Galpin:

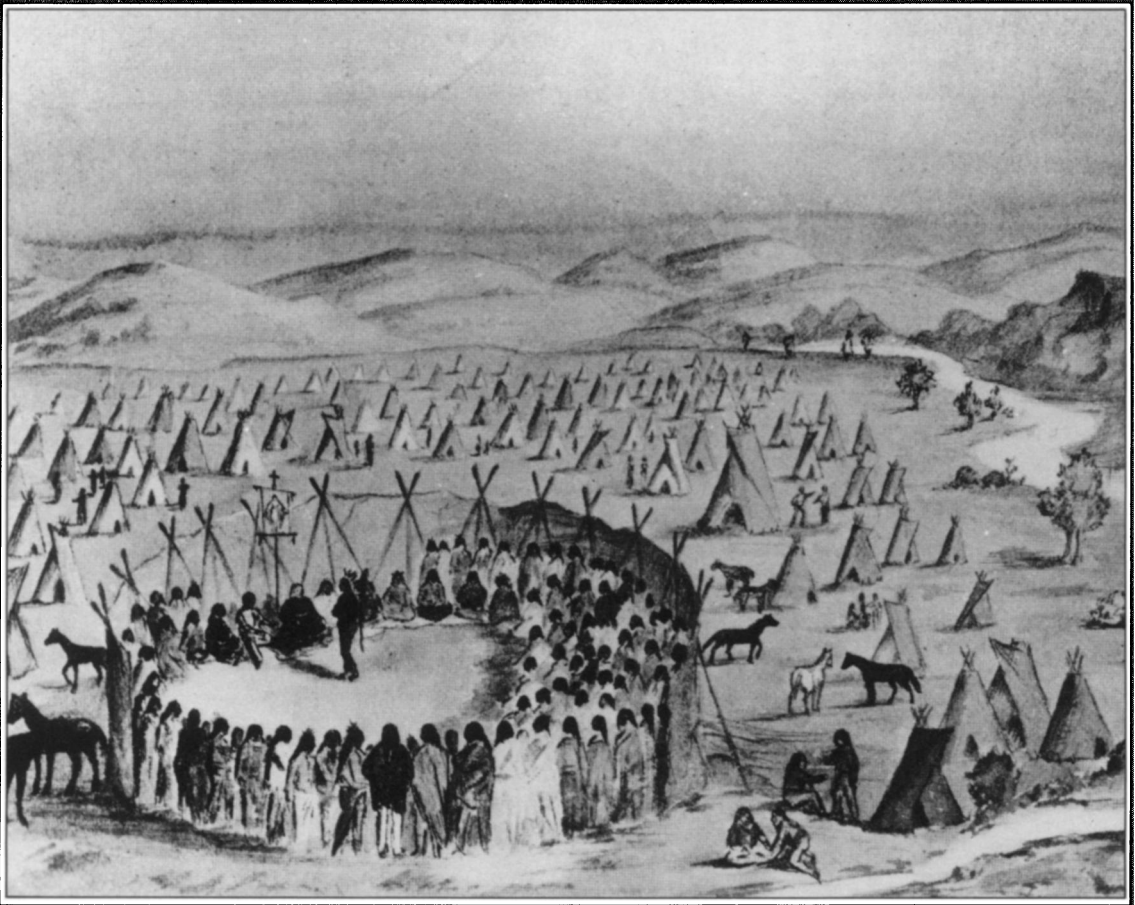
Father De Smet had with him as interpreter Mr. Galpin, who is married to an Indian woman of the Hunkpapa tribe. This lady is a good Catholic and an excellent person, a striking example of what the influence of religion and civilization can accomplish for the welfare of the Indian.⁶⁴

60. Holley, *Once Their Home*, 305-310.

61. *Register*, June 13, 1868; Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, 920; Kappeler, *Indian Affairs*, vol. 2, 998-1007.

62. Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, 921-922; *LR from Upper Platte Agency*, 1868, Micro. 234, Roll 893, NA; Garraghan, *Jesuits of the Middle United States*, vol. 2, 483; (*Sioux City*) *Journal*, July 9, 1868.

63. Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, 921, 1289; *De Smet to Indian Commissioner*, July 28, September 21, 1868, *LR from Upper Platte Agency*, 1868, Micro. 234, Roll 893, NA.



This sketch shows Father De Smet meeting in council with hostile Sioux bands on the Yellowstone River in July 1867, one of several such councils he participated in during the 1860s.

Mrs. Galpin's original heritage had been purely Indian, but she had learned about the whites' culture and through her superior insight and resolution she had incorporated the best of two contrasting worlds. Rejecting resistance and conflict, she was keen enough to recognize that accepting learning and adaptation was the only alternative to the extinction of Indian people.

She made the pursuit of this goal her life's work, a work that had just begun in 1868. When the commission triumphantly departed, it had left a dismayed and bewildered people to discard their heritage of ways like worn-out moccasins. All that had made life possible and rewarding for the Sioux was denied to them as they began a colossal struggle with alien and mysterious

substitutes. Faced with this reality, the indomitable Mrs. Galpin, then forty-eight, enlisted the aid of her husband and children for the remainder of their lives in her effort to help the Sioux to learn and to adapt. As will be seen in the second part of this story, regardless of the difficulties that lay ahead of them, they would never give up their goal of achieving racial understanding. *M*

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64. Chittenden and Richardson, *De Smet*, 1585. The letter was misdated "1864"; it was 1868.