

## Aberdeen's Own "Peg" Lamont

Jean Elliott Rahja

Peg Lamont was named Frances Bailey by her parents, Frederick B. and Frances K. Stiles. She was born in Rapid City, South Dakota on June 10, 1914. Her nickname Peg came from her father after a popular song of that era titled, "Peg O' My Heart," and it stuck throughout her lifetime. Her family moved to Watertown, South Dakota two years after she was born.[1]

Frances Bailey Stiles graduated from Watertown High School with honors, and went on to receive a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism and a Master's Degree in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin, Madison.[2] Both degrees came with special recognition and honors.

Peg's first job was working in research and as a writer for *Ladies' Home Journal* in New York City. She was later hired to do research for *McCall's Magazine*, also in New York City.[3]

Peg met William M. Lamont briefly in Aberdeen, South Dakota. She later met him again in New York City. He was a Harvard graduate who was there studying art, and when they discovered they were both from South Dakota, they began seeing each other on a regular basis.

William Lamont's uncle, Spencer Nichols of Connecticut, was a well-known artist and member of the Academy of Arts. He had a strong influence on William, who majored in fine arts at Harvard University. William was offered a job teaching art at Harvard after his graduation, but he had promised his grandfather that he would return to the family business in Aberdeen.

A few years after graduation, William returned to New York City to study sculpture and went on to study at the University of Pittsburgh and at Stanford University at Palo Alto, California. He was locally known for his art work. Several of his paintings have hung in

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the Lamont Gallery which was named after him and is located on the second floor of the Dacotah Prairie Museum in Aberdeen.

William and Peg were married October 6, 1937 and made their home in Aberdeen where William had joined the family business. Four children were born to this union: William (Marty), Nancy, Frederick, and Frances M. "Peggy" as well as one child named Laura Bailey who died as an infant.[4]

William lives in Aberdeen. Nancy married Andre Roby and lives in Montreal, Canada. Frances "Peg" married Gregory Lauver of Mesa, Arizona and Frederick Lamont lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. There are three grandchildren: Lauren, Laura, and Lindsey.

When William was old enough to join the Cub Scouts, Peg volunteered to be a den mother. When Nancy became a Brownie, Peg served as a Girl Scout leader. From that time on she took an active role in both the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. She became active in the Parent Teacher Association and served as president. She taught Sunday school at St. Mark's Episcopal Church.

Peg Lamont was active in many projects for children. She started a Little Theater Group for children, but it folded shortly after the start of World War II. She commented that there was a balance of \$125 if any organization was interested. She was one of three women who set up a Red Cross surgical dressing program in 27 counties throughout the state. Later, she became one of a 15-member Home Service Committee of the Red Cross who taught first aid techniques and classes and worked with service men and their dependents during and after the war. This was a two-year tour of duty for Peg.[5]

Aberdeen's new First Lady, Peg Lamont, was honored by the members of Beta Sigma Phi at a tea on Sunday afternoon, March 24, 1955, at the First Presbyterian Church. In attendance was a

record of 150 guests which included her mother, Mrs. F.B. Stiles, her mother-in-law, Mrs. Margaret Lamont, and her two daughters, Nancy Lamont and Peggy Lamont.[6]

When Peg Lamont was elected chairman of the Board of Directors for the Dacotah Prairie Museum in Aberdeen, she asked the county to take an active role in the maintenance of the museum. The following year, Peg was elected chairman of the county-appointed Board of Directors. The Brown County Museum and Historical Society was incorporated on June 5, 1964. The county commission agreed to fund the museum using the quarter-mill levy allowed by law. The museum then became a separate entity from the Historical Society. The county appointed a Board of Trustees to govern the museum.[7] A permanent location was needed for the growing number of artifacts.

Fred Hatterscheidt was a local business man who was part-owner of a three-story building on Main Street that has a history of its own. Fred liked to go on African safaris and had a friend who was a taxidermist. Fred needed a home for his animals. The decision was made that the three-story building would become the home of the Dacotah Prairie Museum with the provision that the animals would have a permanent home there. Peg used her influence in these arrangements.

Lora Schaunaman is an artist employed by the museum who has created a background for the display of animals that looks like their actual habitat. I don't know if Peg had any influence in this decision or not, but she may have. The museum was high on Peg's list of priorities. Every child visiting wants to see the animal display before they leave the museum.

It was 1974 when Peg Lamont was named "Aberdeen Mother of the Year." *The American News* showed a picture of her standing beside her mother, Mrs. F. B. Stiles, when Peg said, "This should be the real Mother of the Year because I would not have been able to do all that I am credited for without her help." [8] Her mother just smiled after that remark.

Peg wrote the first grants for Brown County's Foster Grandparent Program and RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program). She pioneered South Dakota's first Meals on Wheels Program.[9] These programs are vital to the senior citizens of Aberdeen and Brown County.

After the death of William M. Lamont in 1973, the Dacotah Prairie Museum dedicated the art gallery on the second floor as the Lamont Gallery in his honor. A complete showing of his work was on display there. It included sculptures, etchings and paintings that he created using various mediums and paints.

In 1974, Peg ran for South Dakota Senate from Brown County and won. She went on to serve seven terms in the Senate. She served on the Health, Education and Welfare Committee. One senator commented that her resume was longer than any other he had ever seen except for George Mickelson's. She served on the Appropriations Committee and sponsored legislation on aging, youth, family issues and education.[10]

First Lady Rosalynn Carter invited Senator Lamont to a one-day meeting of community leaders in Washington, D.C. in July of 1978. Representatives from across the country discussed how to improve employment opportunities in their communities. Mrs. Carter said her plan was to focus on federal resources that could increase employment with success stories from the private sector. She said that she hoped the participants could help her address the problem of unemployment.[11]

Peg was recognized for her years of service to older citizens of Brown County during a program celebrating the Aberdeen Senior Center's tenth anniversary. Lamont is one of the founders of the Aberdeen Senior Center and was instrumental in starting the South Dakota Office of Aging. More than 400 people attended this celebration.[12]

In 1982, President Reagan appointed Peg to the Federal Council on Aging, a post she held for three terms. It was a 15-member national board.[13] She served on the National Trust for

Historic Preservation. She served on the Northern State College Business Advisory Council and the board for the Foster Grandparent Program.[14]

“Lamont Receives Service Award” was the headline of an article in the *American News* on November 27, 1983. This award was presented to Peg and also to Jim Krueger, an assistant business law professor at Northern State College. The award was presented at the Region VIII Meeting of the Council of Community Mental Health Centers held in Bozeman, Montana. This is an organization of health centers and boards representing North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. Lamont received the award for her outstanding contribution in the field of mental health. Her active involvement in mental health programs in the state of South Dakota has covered a span of more than 34 years.[15]

Peg sponsored legislation on July 1, 1982 that created the Youth Development Center for Young Women located at Redfield, South Dakota. Governor George S. Mickelson later set a date for an open house at the center and proclaimed the day as “Peg Lamont Day.” He changed the name to Lamont Youth Center to honor Senator Lamont who sponsored the bill for its development. The youth center was later moved to Custer and the name became Custer Lamont Youth Development Center.[16]

Peg worked for the preservation of historic farm buildings, bridges, small town depots, and churches. She proposed signs for Century Farms in South Dakota.[17] In 1995, Peg was honored by the National Trust with the National Preservation Honor Award for 30 years of commitment to state and local preservation.[18]

Peg received a Congressional Appointment to the Civil War Battle Site Commission that continued from 1991 to 1994. There are 100 sites that were recommended for federal protection.[19]

On June 6, 1991, Peg was inducted into the South Dakota Hall of Fame. She received praise for her successful work in government including her efforts regarding the health and welfare of aging citizens and implementing the program, Meals on Wheels.[20]

When Lamont sought her sixth term for the District 2 South Dakota Senate seat, she had no Republican opponent, so her name was not on the ballot.[21] Two years later she won her seventh term as District 2 candidate for the South Dakota Senate.

This is the story of how the Lamont family settled in Aberdeen in the first place. A young man named Byron C. Lamont, a graduate from Wisconsin University Law School, was born in Livingston County, New York on November 28, 1858. He was raised on a farm in Wisconsin and came to Huron, Dakota Territory to hang out his shingle and practice law. He found the law business pretty well monopolized by earlier arrivals. For an entire winter he slept on his office floor, ate crackers and canned fruit. The following spring he closed up shop and boarded the train going east. At the second stop out of Huron at Iroquois, he got off the train and was walking on the platform when a young farmer approached him and asked him where he was going. He said he was leaving Dakota Territory. The young farmer talked him out of it and offered to put him up for a week.[1] The offer was accepted. He knew he had a cousin named B.W. Narregang, who he thought lived at Ordway, Dakota Territory. He had been to Dakota Territory once before to visit an uncle who lived at Bath but he had no intention of remaining.

Success came for him at Aberdeen. With \$15 in his pocket, Bryon spent \$5 to go to his cousin's farm near Ordway. With \$10 left in his pocket, the two of them decided to start a real estate and mortgage business. They remained partners for a dozen years or more before each one ventured out on their own. After establishing himself in Aberdeen, Bryon returned to Lodi, Wisconsin where he married Anna Breyerton and brought her back to Dakota.[22] Three children were born to this marriage.

In 1898, Bryon bought 20 farms from eastern owners within a triangle that was bordered by Aberdeen, Groton and Warner. He sold most of them later to those who had been renting the land.[23]

Bryon and Anna outlived their three children. Two grandsons, William and Robert, became associates with him in his real estate business. Two descendants of Bryon are blazing a trail in real estate in Aberdeen and South Dakota yet today.

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#### Endnotes

- [1] *South Dakota History*, Historic Preservation Issue, Vol. 45, No. 4, Winter Issue 2015, p. 368
- [2] Obituary: Frances “Peg” Lamont, *Aberdeen American News*, July 11, 2008, p. 2 B
- [3] *Ibid.* p. 2 B
- [4] *Ibid.* p. 2 B
- [5] *Capitol Notebook*, July 12, 2008, ps. 10, 3 B
- [6] *Aberdeen American News*, “Aberdeen’s New First Lady Honored at Tea,” March 29, 1955, p. 7
- [7] *Dakota Prairie Times*, Vol. 8, Issue 9, July-September 1997
- [8] *Aberdeen American News*, “Mother of the Year,” Feb. 11, 1974, p. 10
- [9] *Ibid.* “Meals on Wheels,” July 27, 1978, p. 2
- [10] *Ibid.* “Hall of Fame,” June 6, 1991, p. 5 C
- [11] *Ibid.* “Rosalynn Carter Invites “Peg” Lamont to Conference on Aging in Washington, D.C., July 25, 1978
- [12] *Ibid.* Senator Lamont Recognized: “Senior Center Celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday,” July 17, 1978. p. 9 C
- [13] *Op. Cit. American News*, Aberdeen, Obituary, “Meals on Wheels,” July 11, 2008, p. 2
- [14] *Argus Leader*, Sioux Falls, “Lamont Chairs Governor’s Council on Aging,” Sept. 13, 1989
- [15] *American News*, Aberdeen, Region VIII Meeting, Bozeman, MT, “Lamont Receives Service Award,” p. 7 B
- [16] *Op. Cit. Gov. Mickelson Recognition for Lamont’s Center for Young Women at Custer*
- [17] *Ibid.* “Peg Lamont Day.”
- [18] *Capitol Notebook*, Bob Mercer
- [19] *American News*, Aberdeen, Obituary, Civil War Battle Sites
- [20] *Op. Cit. Meals on Wheels*
- [21] *Op. Cit. No opposition on primary ballot for 6<sup>th</sup> run for Senate Seat*
- [22] *Aberdeen American News, Golden Anniversary Edition*, November 12, 1939, p. 17
- [23] *Aberdeen Weekly News*, 1898, p. 9

## The Germans from Russia and Their Legacy

Cassandra Reidburn

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, several prevalent ethnic groups migrated to North Dakota and called it home; one of these groups were the Germans from Russia. German in heritage, but having first migrated from Russia, this group of about 32,000 people began migrating to North Dakota in the 1880s. Once they began their new lives here, they prospered greatly. By 1910, there were about 60,000 Germans living in North Dakota, and that number continued to increase through both migration and natural births.<sup>1</sup> The Germans from Russia left a lasting legacy in North Dakota. By bringing with them their unique culture and way of life. Recipes, religion, and many other cultural aspects that made them unique were all passed down and these pieces of their culture is what created the legacy they have left for many future generations.

It is imperative that one understand the history of the Germans from Russia before fully appreciating their culture. There are numerous tales of Germans coming to America due to famine or for the search for a better life. Their tale began when Czar Catherine the Great urged Germans to move to the banks of the Volga river to find a better life.<sup>2</sup> This new life seemed unbelievable to begin with, but would soon turn into a nightmare. The Germans were promised free land and religious freedom, a new start. When these promises were not kept, their lives became increasingly more difficult. Angry, the people decided to set sail for America, the land of freedom and dreams. They had heard of the Homestead Act and planned to move to North Dakota to receive the land. Along with the Homestead Act there were several other land grab

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<sup>1</sup> "Germans from Russia Heritage Collection." Germans from Russia Heritage Collection. Accessed April 13, 2016. [https://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history\\_culture/history/riegert.html](https://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history_culture/history/riegert.html).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



grants available.<sup>3</sup> They saw these as signs that America could be a new beginning. So they set sail for a new nation and began planning their new lives. Once in America, they made their way to the Great Plains and settled there to do what they knew best, farming.

It was because these immigrants, unlike previous immigrants, wanted to make North Dakota their permanent home that they played a leading role in the settlement of North Dakota.<sup>4</sup> The Germans had spent numerous years in settlements where they were under appreciated and were poorly treated. All they wanted was to have freedom to enjoy their culture and grow their families. The Germans from Russia were the only group that migrated to North Dakota that was prepared for the vast, open, almost barren prairie.<sup>5</sup> They adjusted the quickest of all the immigrant groups and were able to make sun dried bricks for their homes before the bitter winter, and settled into their new home on the prairie.

Once settled, they were well on their way to starting their new lives. While Germans were prevalent in other areas of the nation, they were imperative to the development of North Dakota and influenced it as a state more than any other. Shortly after many had immigrated the United States entered World War I. Unfortunately, this led to many of them feeling discriminated against once again. In 1917, they were forced to change the name of sauerkraut to liberty cabbage and hamburgers to Salisbury steak.<sup>6</sup> While this seems like a small issue, it escalated into German music being shunned along with other cultural aspects. Even though their first years in America were not easy, the mass of them accepted the decision to go to war and to give it their full support.

The Germans from Russia may have given the war efforts their full support, but America did not return that support. At the beginning of the war, newspapers wrote of the extreme

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<sup>3</sup> Robinson, Elwyn B. *History of North Dakota*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>6</sup> Furer, Howard B. *The Germans in America, 1607-1970; a Chronology & Fact Book*. Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1973.

crimes against women and children committed by the Germans in Europe.<sup>7</sup> The Germans, loving their new home in America, fought to shed a better light on their people. They formed alliances and rallied to Congress stating that there should be an embargo on shipping arms to belligerent nations. However, other Americans viewed them as over zealous and saw this embargo as proof of their menace to America.<sup>8</sup> It seemed as though there would never be a place where the Germans from Russia would not feel discrimination.

The Germans from Russia in the mid-west and much of the rest of the nation adopted an isolationist view on America's involvement in the world.<sup>9</sup> Exhausted from proving their alliance and truly supporting the America war effort, they were still feeling the discrimination. In many communities, they were being forced to carry American flags, drape themselves in it, or kiss it when they passed one.<sup>10</sup> However, one only needs to take a look back in time to see that, even though they were being treated unfairly by the United States, they gave the war effort their full support. This is evident in both World Wars, and even many German printed newspapers in North Dakota urged the men to sign up for the draft and everybody to collect scrap metal to recycle for the efforts.<sup>11</sup> They worked hard to prove their alliance which eventually it did pay off in the long run for the Germans from Russia.

In 1920, there were 116,535 Germans from Russia that had emigrated, and there were over 186,000 more descendants of these immigrants.<sup>12</sup> They were a growing population of people who wanted nothing more than to stay to themselves. Around 90 percent of Germans

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<sup>7</sup> Billigmeier, Robert Henry. *Americans from Germany: A Study in Cultural Diversity*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub., 1974.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>9</sup> Furer, Howard B. *The Germans in America, 1607-1970; a Chronology & Fact Book*. Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1973.

<sup>10</sup> "Germans from Russia Heritage Collection." Germans from Russia Heritage Collection. Accessed April 19, 2016.  
[http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history\\_culture/history/iseminger.html](http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history_culture/history/iseminger.html).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Furer, Howard B. *The Germans in America, 1607-1970; a Chronology & Fact Book*. Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1973.

living in North Dakota were farmers.<sup>13</sup> By remaining farmers when they emigrated, they were able to keep their small rural communities. In these small communities they knew everyone along with their struggles to get to this point in their lives. It was not uncommon that they would only get together during the week for church on Sundays. The most popular denomination among the Germans from Russia was Lutheran.<sup>14</sup> Even after all of the years they spent in Russia, they still celebrated their religion the traditional way that their ancestors celebrated while they were still in Russia.

Part of their deep religious views was that they honored their family after death. In the areas surrounding many of the German towns there are prairie cemeteries filled with iron crosses honoring their deceased family members.<sup>15</sup> It was their religion that helped them to assimilate after the wars. It was during and after these wars the German churches began using the English language consistently during services.<sup>16</sup> This made it easier to communicate with the Scandinavians who had also immigrated to North Dakota looking for a new start. It was a slow transition that started with churches offering one English service a month. This allowed for the older people in the community to keep their strong beliefs in the German language and God.<sup>17</sup> Gradually the churches started speaking more and more services in English, and this appeared on the outside to be an issue for older members of the German community. However, it is known that the pastors and ministers would give an overview at the end of service to the non-English speaking members of the church. They knew how important their faith was and would not refuse them the opportunity to attend and understand the church services.

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<sup>13</sup> "Germans from Russia Heritage Collection." Germans from Russia Heritage Collection. Accessed April 19, 2016.  
[http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history\\_culture/history/iseminger.html](http://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/history_culture/history/iseminger.html).

<sup>14</sup> Zersen, David. "When Lutherans Sang in Russian." *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (2010): 205-10. Accessed April 19, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Zersen, David. "When Lutherans Sang in Russian." *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (2010): 205-10. Accessed April 19, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Billigmeier, Robert Henry. *Americans from Germany: A Study in Cultural Diversity*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub., 1974.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 165.

Another important aspect in both their religious life and their every day life was music. In 1902, a pastor's wife in Sykeston was singing a Russian song to her grandchildren. Later they shared the song with a historical society in the hopes of it being translated for them.<sup>18</sup> This is a tune that had remained with the family even while they lived in Russia before they moved to America, as was the case with many tunes sang in other households. Another reason music was so different for the Germans from Russian was that much of their music was passed down without printed songbooks.<sup>19</sup> Many western nations at this time were following songbooks in church services and in community events. The Germans believed the best way to preserve their music was to pass it along by memory rather than writing it down in a book.

School was not very important to the Germans from Russia. Many Germans would say, "Erfülle deine Pflicht, um alles Andere kümmere dich nicht." Do your duty and don't worry about anything else.<sup>20</sup> It was important to them that the farm and family were cared for first. It was also a point of pride to many families when their children decided to remain on the farm and work instead of going to school.<sup>21</sup> It was incredibly uncommon for any of the children to attend high school. Because it was a common occurrence that older children had to remain home to care for younger siblings while the parents spend the day working in the fields.<sup>22</sup> Do your duty and don't worry about anything else.

A large part of a German from Russia's duty at home was to make sure the farm was running smoothly. They worked day in and day out and as mentioned before, often kept their children home from school to help with farm and house work. Many historians emphasize how hard working the Germans from Russia were and how simple their ways were.<sup>23</sup> It was not just

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<sup>18</sup> Zersen, David. "When Lutherans Sang in Russian." *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (2010): 205-10. Accessed April 19, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Berg, Wesley. "Songs of the Germans from Russia. The Old Colony Mennonite Perspective / Die Lieder Der Russlanddeutschen. Aus Der Perspektive Der Alten Mennoniten." *Lied Und Populäre Kultur / Song and Popular Culture* 47 (2002): 59-76.

<sup>20</sup> Rippley, La Vern J. *Of German Ways*. Minneapolis, MN: Dillon Press, 1970.

<sup>21</sup> Billigmeier, Robert Henry. *Americans from Germany: A Study in Cultural Diversity*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub., 1974.

<sup>22</sup> Rippley, La Vern J. *Of German Ways*. Minneapolis, MN: Dillon Press, 1970.

<sup>23</sup> Clark, Jessica. "'Work Makes Life Sweet': Germans from Russia Remember Their Childhood." *Historian* 72, no. 4 (2010): 809-30.

the adults that were doing taxing work on the farm though. When the children stayed home from school, it was often hard physical labor and taxing responsibilities.<sup>24</sup> It was not always hard labor, but they made sure that their children understood responsibility and how far that hard work could get them in life. This helped to create generation after generation of hard working people in North Dakota.

It was not always just hard work on the farm. Another incredibly important part of their life was their food. Food was more than just nutrition to them; it was a tradition. "German Russian traditional cuisine is basically old-style German farm home cooking. It is simple food based on the goodness of ingredients and their true flavors. It is neither bland nor spicy, neither plain nor embellished. The flavors of German Russian cuisine are honest, often subtle, but always pleasing."<sup>25</sup> There are numerous dishes that are traditionally by the Germans from Russia. Two of the most common are strudels and cheese buttons.<sup>26</sup> Comprised largely of dough and cheese, they were simple dishes that were loved greatly by the people and are still widely popular today. Like the other aspects of their lives their food was simple but a great tradition. They would no sooner give up their favorite dishes than attend a different church service.

The Germans from Russia have left a lasting impact on North Dakota that is evident not only to the state residents, but to people across the nation. When people from other states comment on how friendly and nice people from the Midwest are or how hard of workers they are; that is largely thanks to the Germans from Russia. There are school rooms, churches, traditions, and farms that have remained standing through the years that can attest to durability of these people. They endured trial after trial and yet remained faithful to their heritage and worked to create a better image during difficult times. Without the Germans from Russia, North Dakota would not be the same great state that it is today.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Andrews, John. "Noodles, Strudels, and Sausage for the Soul." November/December 2012, 1-7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

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## Exploits of Two Native American Warriors during World War II

Michael R. Riter

The image of the Native American Warrior: Fearless, loyal, courageous, and exceedingly brave. In the early parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many young Native American men were being raised in the warrior traditions of their forefathers. When the whirlwinds of the Second World War finally engulfed the United States, that same spirit of courage, dedication, duty, and honor would prevail in the lives of those Native Americans who answered the call to arms, and would carry over on to the battlefields. Their gallantry was duly recognized during the war; Native American servicemen were awarded 71 Air Medals, 51 Silver Stars, 47 Bronze Stars, 34 Distinguished Flying Crosses, and 3 Medals of Honor, a strong testament to their warrior tradition. [1]

Until recently, some of their most unique and valuable contributions were not made public due to military classification. The Navajo Code Talkers are the most often referenced group of Natives whose language was used by the Army as code to hide critical information from prying enemy ears, but members of other tribes, including a group of Lakota Sioux from the Rosebud Reservation, utilized their unique language skills in the service of the United States.

Native Americans answered the call to war in droves. According to War Department figures in 1942, 99 percent of able-bodied Native American males of draft age (18-44) had registered for Selective Service [2]. Many were not willing to wait for their draft numbers to be called, so they went and enlisted before they were called up [3]. In a story that has been attributed to many other tribes as well, the Blackfoot tribe mocked the need for conscription. "Since when" their members cried, "has it been necessary for Blackfeet to draw lots to fight?"[4]

The warrior ethos taught by their forefathers garnered much praise and admiration for the Native Americans' soldiering abilities. Major Lee Gilstrop, who trained 2,000 Native Americans at his post, said: "The Indian is the best damn soldier in the Army." Their talents

included hand-to-hand and bayonet fighting, marksmanship, scouting, and patrolling. Native Americans easily took to commando training; after all, their ancestors invented it. They endured thirst and lack of food better than the average soldier, had an acute sense of perception and excellent endurance, along with superior physical coordination, and were universally praised by their comrades and commanders for these traits [5].

Native Americans were also instrumental in helping to destroy racial barriers in the armed forces. This was a significant step in desegregating what was still at that point a segregated United States Military. The Native Americans' success in weakening racial barriers in the armed forces presaged the rise of the Civil Rights movement. [6]

Their stories beg to be told. Many perhaps never will be, but thankfully, many finally are. Here are two personal war stories from members of tribes from our region, Clarence Wolf Guts and Joe Medicine Crow:

#### **CLARENCE WOLF GUTS [7]**

Clarence Wolf Guts was born on Feb. 26, 1924 in the Red Leaf community on the Rosebud Reservation of south-central South Dakota. His birth certificate listed him as Eagle Elk, but his father and uncles soon decided to give him a more unusual name — Wolf Guts.

He learned to speak Lakota from his grandfather, Hawk Ghost, and his grandmother, Hazel Medicine Owl. Said Clarence of his upbringing: "My grandfather taught me the facts of life and the Lakota language. He told me 'you'll go to school and stay in school.' But he also said to speak Lakota because 'you'll need it later in life.'"

In 1942, Clarence and his cousin Iver Crow Eagle, both in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade at the boarding school they were attending, left to join the Army. They were assigned to training camps in Tennessee and Arizona, and finally ended up at the U.S. Army Ranger School at Camp Rucker, Alabama. It was there that Clarence would receive an assignment that would make him a key player in the war effort.

A captain came to Clarence's barracks one day and asked him "You talk Indian?"

To which Clarence replied, "I am Indian. One hundred percent Indian."

"Well, the general wants to see you."

"Me?" wondered Clarence. "What in the world did I do now?"



The captain told him to get a haircut, take a shower and dress in his best uniform. He also offered tips on military etiquette: stand two feet from the general, salute, say your name, rank and serial number. Then Clarence and the captain went to see the general. The captain introduced Clarence to the general: "Sir, this is Clarence Wolf Guts from South Dakota. He talks Indian."

Major General Paul Mueller was the commander of the 81<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. He explained to Clarence that the Japanese were intercepting vital radio communications, which tipped them on American movements, troop strengths, and other critical information. After further interviewing Clarence, General Mueller explained that he would like to develop a communication system using Native American language. Clarence then told Gen. Mueller that his cousin Iver, who was also stationed at Camp Rucker, was Lakota Sioux and spoke the dialect fluently, to which Gen. Mueller exclaimed, "I hit the jackpot!"

Two other Lakota from South Dakota — Roy Bad Hand and Benny White Bear — were also assigned this duty. The four learned how to operate military radios, and they worked with officials to develop coded messages. They developed a phonetic alphabet and assigned military meanings to common words like turtle, tree and horse. Their communications helped the army to move troops and supplies, and the Japanese had no way of knowing what they were doing. Clarence became General Mueller's personal code talker, and Iver accompanied Gen Mueller's Chief of Staff. They were each assigned two bodyguards for protection, as the Army did not want them to be captured, possibly compromising the secrets of the code talkers.

The Division was sent to the Pacific Theater in June of 1944, and saw action on Peleliu, and on the island of Leyte in the Philippines. Through their radio sets, Clarence and Iver could sometimes receive radio station signals from the United States, and would listen to popular music of the day. The drudgery, danger, and stress of war did have some humorous moments, however: Clarence started laughing one day while transmitting a message to Iver in Lakota. "Are you laughing at me?" asked Iver. "No, I'm laughing at the Japanese who are trying to listen to us!"

After the war, Clarence, Iver, and about a dozen other Lakota code talkers were discharged from the Army, and returned to South Dakota. The Code Talkers' contributions and

use during the war were kept classified until 1968. Decades after the war, a Japanese General admitted that his country's top code cryptographers were unable to decipher the mystery of the code talkers. When he was told that it was Native American language, he replied, "Thank you, that was a puzzle that I thought would never be solved."

After the war, Clarence worked as a rodeo rider, ranch hand, and cattleman. He and other Native American code talkers were finally recognized for their service after the declassification of the code talker program. Clarence received the Congressional Gold Medal, along with the rest of the Native American code talkers, in 2007. He passed away at the age of 86 on June 16, 2010.

### **JOE MEDICINE CROW [8]**

Joe Medicine Crow-High Bird was born on October 27, 1913 near Lodge Grass, Montana, on the Crow Reservation. He attended a Baptist Mission school, and was the first of his people to graduate from college. He began his college education at Bacone College in 1928, received a Bachelor's Degree from Linfield College in 1938, and a Master's Degree in Anthropology from the University of Southern California in 1939. His Master's thesis, *The Effects of European Culture Contact on the Economic, Social, and Religious Life of the Crow Indians*, has become one of the most widely cited documents concerning Crow culture.

While growing up on the Crow Reservation, Joe was schooled in the Warrior tradition by his paternal grandfather, Great War Chief Medicine Crow. Said Joe of his grandfather: "He was considered to be the bravest warrior of all time, and he was my inspiration, to follow in his footsteps."

In order for a Crow to attain the status of War Chief, there were certain war deeds that he must perform: He must touch a living enemy, take away an enemy's weapon, steal an enemy's horse, and lead a victorious war party.

Joe Medicine Crow joined the Army in 1943, and was assigned to the 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division as a scout. The division was engaged in combat in the Vosges Mountains in east-central France along the German border. Whenever he went into battle, he painted red stripes on his arms underneath his uniform, and kept a sacred yellow painted eagle feather in his helmet, which was given to him by a Sundance Medicine Man.

Joe was asked to lead a squad carrying explosives through a wall of artillery fire to blast German positions on the Siegfried Line. He then was tasked to help clear a German-held village. During this engagement, Medicine Crow was running through an alley when he collided with a German soldier coming around a corner. Joe grabbed the German soldier's rifle and threw it aside. He related: "There he was, just standing there, all I had to do was pull the trigger, but I dropped my rifle and tore into him with my bare hands. I was going to kill him. I had my hands around his throat, and with his last gasps, the German cried out 'Mama! Mama!' That opened my ears, and I let him go."

Without actually intending to, Medicine Crow had accomplished three of the four war deeds necessary for a Crow warrior to become a chief: He had touched a living enemy, taken away his weapon, and led a victorious war party. Now all that remained was to find some horses.

Joe's story continues: "I was working as a scout for my Company Commander, moving along a ridge on top of a hill, when we caught up with some horseback riders. I looked through my field glasses and saw they were Germans, so I followed them." The Germans took over a farmhouse and pastured some fifty horses outside. "So we surrounded the place and were going to attack early the next morning. As we were getting ready, I said to my C.O. 'Captain, I have an idea. If you give me five minutes, I'll stampede their horses.' So I snuck in and got one of their horses, then I took a rope and made a little Indian bridle, a double half-hitch, and I got on him and I stampeded their horses. As soon as I rode off, they opened fire."

Medicine Crow was impressed with the quality of the Germans' horses: "These were not ordinary horses, they were beautiful! The one I was riding was a sorrel with a blaze. So I felt pretty good! So I looked around and sang a praise song."

When Joe Medicine Crow returned home after the war, a tribal ceremony was held to welcome him. The elders then asked him about his wartime experiences. When Joe finished telling them of his exploits, the elders told him that he had completed the war deeds necessary to become a chief. He was known as the last Plains Indian War Chief.

Joe Medicine Crow became one of the most revered members of the Crow nation. He authored several books, was a frequent guest speaker at the Little Big Horn College and the

Battlefield Museum, and addressed the United Nations in 1999. Joe Medicine Crow passed away on April 3, 2016, at the ripe old age of 102.

The stories of Clarence Wolf Guts and Joe Medicine Crow are but two of scores that could be told. They are an excellent representation of the warrior spirit of Native American servicemen during the war.

With the passing of thousands of World War II veterans every day, many stories will be lost to the ravages of time. Many stories of courage and valor were prematurely snuffed out by the cruelty of war, and will never be fully told. Raymond Charging-Elk, of the Rosebud Reservation, was killed in action on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1944. Peter Goodshield, Joseph Running Horse, Winfield Loves War, and Edward Spotted Bear were also from the Rosebud Reservation, and died in the defense of their country. Alvin Bird Hat, of the Crow Nation, also gave his life during the war. Some of their stories were potentially recorded in a unit history, of others we may only know the end of their story, which came in the form of the ubiquitous war department telegram, which began “The Secretary of War regrets to inform you...”

We must never, ever forget the courage and sacrifice of our war dead. In conclusion, I feel it would be fitting to share a stanza of the poem “*For The Fallen*” by the English poet Laurence Binyon. The poem was written in 1914 as a memorial to the first British soldiers who fell during the battles of Mons, Ypres, and the Marne during the First World War. I feel it is a fitting tribute to all of our servicemen and women who paid for our freedom with their lives:

***They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old***

***Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn***

***At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,***

***We will remember them.***

## NOTES

Notes 1-6: *Native Americans in World War II*, by Thomas D. Morgan, from the United States Army Center for Military History.

Note 7: *The Last Lakota Code Talker*, by Bernie Hunhoff, re-published in the Nov 11, 2013 issue of South Dakota Magazine.

Note 8: Excerpts of Joe Medicine Crow's wartime exploits were drawn from interviews with Ken Burns for his documentary miniseries: *The War*.

## **Patronage: The Dark Side of Politics and How It Affected the Dakotas**

John Timm

### **Brief History of Patronage Presidents Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Harrison**

The power to control political nominations and dispensing of federal jobs as a reward is a practice called patronage, and it has been a persistent problem since the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Historians believe patronage began with our third President Thomas Jefferson. He replaced some Federalists (1) in government with people more attuned with his political views. Such actions became a standard practice and became known as the *Spoils System*.

As the country and government grew, so did the spoils system and eventually became a major problem. By the time our seventh President Andrew Jackson was elected, political patronage had become firmly entrenched in our political system. Many political party workers thought they were entitled to a job on the public payroll.

By the time the Civil War broke out, the practice of patronage had randomly, carelessly and enormously increased. There were wide spread reports of bribes for jobs; or jobs being awarded or promised to friends of politicians with no regard to qualifications or competency. By the time the Civil War ended, our government was faced with changing the national understanding of race relations, politics, economics, and social change during the reconstruction period. If there was ever a time that the government needed to be staffed by competent experts and not party hacks, it was then! Tragically, what followed for the next ten years (between 1867-77), was a very sordid period of shameful Congressional or Radical corruption!

The growing number of reformers who were concerned about the reckless use of patronage had high hopes that there would be changes when Ulysses S. Grant was elected President. But patronage had become far too powerful a tool to the republican dominated senate. So, any

passage for reform was always killed. President Grant recognized that reality and refused to challenge congress. He permitted his cabinet to be filled once again with Republican regulars.

The disappointed reformers were irate with Grant for his partisanship and for tolerating the corruption that continued to surrounding him. Reformers also blasted Grant when he refused to exercise positive leadership with other major public issues during the reconstruction period —instead he continued using the same approach that had worked well for him during his years as a military commander. That was to leave policy making to President Lincoln and the Congress, while he sought out the best men he could find to serve as his underlings. He then instructed them as to the general tactics he wanted them to follow, and left them to work out the details.

In 1881 the assassination of President James Garfield once again shone the spotlight on the problems created by patronage. Garfield was shot in the back by Charles J. Guiteau a disgruntled and de-ranged office seeker and Stalwart. (2) The public was outraged and demanded massive civil service reform.

As a response, Ohio Democratic Senator George H. Pendleton sponsored a bill that was written by Dorman Bridgeman Eaton , an American lawyer and author. President Chester A. Arthur and his administration aggressively pushed congress to pass the Pendleton Act. It did pass and the President signed it into law on January 16, 1883.(3) President Arthur, then appointed Eaton as the first chairman of the three-man Civil Service Commission. Eaton served at that post until he resigned in 1886.

Not surprisingly, the Pendleton Act offended machine politicians within the Republican Party and it became a major political liability for President Arthur; and still, it still wasn't effective enough to satisfy the party's reformers either. Consequently, Arthur lost popularity within the Republican Party ranks and it cost him the party's Presidential nomination at the 1884 Republican National Convention.(4)

Democrat Grover Cleveland was elected as the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24th president of the United States.(5) He won the popular vote all three times he ran for the Presidency in the 1884, 1888

and 1892, but in 1888 he lost the electoral college and consequently the presidency to Benjamin Harrison. Cleveland and Woodrow Wilson were the only two Democrats elected to the presidency in the era of 1861 to 1933. During that 72 year span of Republican political domination, most civil service jobs were heavily held by Republican supporters!

President Cleveland won praise for his honesty, self-reliance, integrity and commitment to the principles of classical liberalism.(6) He relentlessly fought against political corruption, patronage and bossism. As a reformer, he was so admired that even many like minded Republican reformers, called "*wugmumps*", bolted the Republican presidential ticket and swung their support to him in the 1884 election. But in 1892, shortly after beginning his second term in office, the nation experienced the panic of 1893, causing a severe national depression, which Cleveland was unable to reverse.

It's been Benjamin Harrison's unfortunate destiny to be a Lost President, even among Lost Presidents. Unfortunately he is remembered primarily as the 23<sup>rd</sup> President, sandwiched between Grover Cleveland's two terms. Sadly, Benjamin Harrison's name is one more to be added to the list of presidents who paid the dear price for trying to resist or at least contain the abuse of patronage. But the Dakotas never had a better friend, than President Benjamin Harrison!

Benjamin was a peculiar character: He was a learned and brilliant man, a gifted, articulate public speaker. However, he was eccentric, introverted and was a loner who lacked the gifts that make a first-rate president. He generally preferred the company of books to that of other people. The experience of meeting him in person was routinely described as *Chilly, frigid, or frosty*. His handshake was limp and likened to "*a wilted petunia*." He was given the moniker of "*White House Iceberg*". His own supporters often kept voters at a distance from him after his public speeches.

But as a U.S. Senator or President, he was the best champion and friend the Dakotas ever had. Harrison did distinguish himself in the Civil War as a brigadier general. He impressed everyone—especially his own men—with his fighting spirit and leadership qualities. After the Civil War he became very well known in the Indianapolis area as a brilliantly successful lawyer,



businessman and investor. Although a native of Ohio, his record had allowed him to represent his adopted state of Indiana in the Senate. He became a leader in the Indiana state Republican Party, and was eventually elected to the U.S. Senate by the Indiana State legislature.(7)

Republicans strongly supported doctrines of nationalism and active governmental intervention to promote the expansion of the economy. Plenty of prominent businessmen favored Harrison's support of a high tariff. During his term he signed the McKinley Tariff Bill and the controversial Silver Bill of 1890.(8) At several international conferences, Harrison demonstrated his desire to expand American influence through peaceful means.

Although his efforts in foreign relations were fruitful, his domestic policy was his downfall. At this time in history, there was a growing hostility towards both big business and high tariffs, so the Populist Party and the labor movement were gaining strength and this anti-Republican coalition gave the Democrats control of Congress after 1890.

### **Harrison Struggles With Patronage**

Harrison had kept his nose remarkably clean while he had served in the Senate and had no baggage of corruption to carry. He promised to crack down on graft and corruption, stressing that the very centerpiece of his policies would reinforce the Pendleton Act and extend its coverage. He declared that the civil service law would be applied fully and that party service would not become "a shield for official negligence, incompetence or delinquency." But this would prove be difficult because at this time most Republican politicians were tainted by graft and other forms of corruption.

But Harrison, like the other preceding reformer presidents, couldn't always control the actions of Congress or his supporters. The Harrison campaign had been lavishly financed, and its prime money-raiser was John Wanamaker, the Philadelphia department store magnet and chairman of the campaign's finance committee. Wanamaker was given "unrestricted power in raising and expenditure of campaign funds." As the governing principle, he believed he had the authority to solicit for businessmen's contributions and promise favors in return.

President Harrison found himself caught between patronage reformers and the Republican National Committee Chairman and party boss, Pennsylvania Senator Matt Quay. Quay, along with other party leaders and workers emphatically reminded Harrison that he owed his election to their work and that their interest could be sustained only by an adequate reward. Harrison was unable to devise a formula acceptable to both constituencies. The compromises he structured only managed to badly damage his standings with reformers and party workers.

Unlike other presidents who had delegated patronage to subordinates, (*particularly to senators*) Harrison decided to handle the task himself. His cool, expedient management only served to create more ill will, especially his requirement that office seekers make a good case to him for their recommended appointments.

Because of the division in the Republican Party over patronage management, Harrison was unable to grow into the presidential office. All he could do was simply follow the lead of the Republican Party bosses who'd manufactured his election. He did manage some other accomplishments such as building up the navy and establishing the nation's first forest reserve. But his Republican support declined. In the end, Harrison's most important contribution may have been appointing a young ambitious Theodore Roosevelt to the civil service commission, thereby safeguarding the continuing overhaul of the patronage system.

At the end of Harrison's term some of his well meaning supporters caused him some discomfort in 1890. His postmaster-General, John Wanamaker, with some friends from the Philadelphia business community, gifted first lady Caroline Harrison with a pretty little cottage on Cape Bay, on the Jersey coast. It was never made clear if strings were attached, but when the gift was made public it certainly raised eyebrows. Harrison hastily insisted that he'd been planning to buy the cottage all along and that Wanamaker had merely been helping make the arrangements; Harrison quickly sent his friend a check for \$10,000 (*\$243,000 today*)

### **Harrison Legacy of expanding statehood**

One of President Harrison's lasting legacies was the expansion of the country to include the states of Montana, Washington Idaho Wyoming and the Dakotas. While serving as a U.S.

Senator and 23<sup>rd</sup> President, he always urged early statehood for territories. Soon after taking his seat in the U.S. Senate, he sought appointments to the two most important committees concerning Dakota Territory, the committees on Indian Affairs and U.S. Territories.

His goal was to steer legislators towards a Dakota vote for statehood. He was successful at seeing it through the Senate, but the House of Representatives would not budge. The House clung to the argument that the Constitution declares that new states cannot be created by merely merging or splitting existing states without approval of both the U.S. Congress and state legislatures. Congress is given the authority to determine the conditions for statehood.(9) For nearly a decade Democratically-controlled congresses had successfully blocked statehood for South Dakota, defeating 41 statehood bills and rejecting two petitions for the same. But, Senator Harrison would prove to be a momentous champion and friend to the Dakotas. The Democrats did not fare well in the election of 1888. Harrison defeated incumbent Democrat Grover Cleveland, for the presidency, and the Republicans gained control of Congress. Statehood seemed certain.(10)

#### **Arthur Mellette receives Patronage Appointments From Presidents Rutherford Hayes and Benjamin Harrison**

In November of 1878 Arthur Mellette was appointed as managing registrar of the government land office in Springfield, Dakota Territory by President Rutherford Hayes. Eleven years later on March 4<sup>th</sup> 1889, seven days after Harrison was inaugurated as President, he appointed Arthur Mellette as the tenth and final governor of Dakota Territory. Although Harrison and Mellette had been good friends for twenty-four years, that was not the determining factor for Mellette's appointment.

Mellette was well qualified for both patronage appointments "land office registrar" and later "territorial governor". He had been well educated at Indiana University. His studies in math/science, Greek/Latin and business accounting earned him A.B. and A.M. degrees, he also started his law degree. After serving in the Civil War, he returned to Indiana University and completed his law degree. He married Margaret Wylie and the couple moved to Muncie, Indiana where Arthur established a respected and successful law practice. He bought the

Muncie Times Newspaper and was managing editor. He wrote several scathing editorials about the poor and unfair condition of Indiana's two district school system.(11) He drew attention to the widespread corruption in the sale of public school lands and lack of accountability of school funding of country schools. There were no statewide standards of competency or qualifications in hiring teachers or measuring student development. And most shameful of all, was the improvidence of state politicians which caused the whole horrible mess! His editorials so outraged the public, that it drew the attention, favor and support of the state Republican Party.

After winning election and serving a term as County Superintendent of schools, Mellette won election to a seat in the Indiana State House of Representatives. Although he served only a single term 1873-1875, he accomplished what he had set out to do, establish one standard for supporting, monitoring and regulating education for all public schools across the state. He did not have any ambition to seek any other political office.

Harrison and Mellette first met at an Indiana State Republican convention in 1865. In the following twenty-four years, their friendship flourished and prospered. They began making financial investments with a few other businessmen. Collectively, the group had plenty of business acumen and money to make most of their investments successful. They did very well!

Through the years the prominence of Harrison and Mellette grew substantially within the Republican Party. Harrison began making important connections and friendships at the national level. One of those useful friendships was with President Rutherford Hayes, and it would prove to be of vital importance to Harrison, Mellette and Dakota's two states.

### **Margaret Mellette's Health Problems**

Arthur Mellette's wife Margaret had suffered recurring episodes of consumption since childhood. Doctors had hoped she would outgrow these exacerbations, but Indiana's heavy humidity only worsened her condition. In 1876, Arthur, Margaret and their four boys took a trip to the east coast to celebrate the country's centennial celebration. On the trip Margaret became sicker than she had ever been! Several doctors were consulted, each declaring that she was terminally ill. Her only chance for survival was to escape the high humidity of Indiana.

At this time in history, medical science had only limited success at treating consumption. Treatment consisted of many months of complete bed rest, continuous exposure to fresh air, sunshine and a healthy diet. Even then, most cases did not end well.

Colorado was chosen as the most suitable location for Margaret's recuperation. The severity of her body wasting and lung deterioration had reached the point that she could no longer care for her four young boys. It was a heartbreaking circumstance the Mellette and Wylie families. Arthur and Margaret left their four sons with Margaret's parents at their home on the University of Indiana campus.(12)

It was difficult for Arthur to leave his business and political activities. But to his credit, he had surrounded himself with close and trusted friends and employees. They would keep a close and caring eye on the Mellette investments and interests.

Leaving was very difficult for Margaret. She not only was leaving her children, but all of the beloved members of the Mellette and Wylie families. The day they all gathered at the Muncie train depot to see Margaret and Arthur off to Colorado, was a day of agony and sorrow. Margaret was a woman of unusual dignity and refinement. Her frail body possessed a spirit of irrepressible courage. She faintly, but warmly smiled as she serenely and bravely boarded the train hiding the tortuous sorrow that gripped her heart. Every family member struggled fiercely with the dreadful thought of never seeing Margaret alive again.

Arthur sat right there at Margaret's bedside overseeing her care. Most days were spent outside in a large screened-in porch with dozens of other patients. All were breathing in that precious, healthy, clean Colorado air and soaking up the warm healing sunshine. As weeks turned into months, Margaret's health began to improve, her symptoms were noticeably declining. Arthur and Margaret's spirits turned optimistic, back in Indiana the Wylie and Mellette families were ecstatic at the news!

Spending those many hours at Margaret's bedside gave Arthur time to do plenty of reading. He was particularly intrigued by the news coming out of Dakota Territory. Every day, every newspaper across the nation trumpeted the news of a "gold discovery" in the Black Hills and

several years of climate change had turned the Red River Valley in northern Dakota into an agricultural oasis.

Bonanza farms in the Red River Valley of northern Dakota were producing world record units of wheat, and farming success was spreading into southern Dakota as well. Population boomed as immigrants streamed into Dakota Territory. Investment opportunities seemed limitless and endless! Interest rates had risen as high as 20%.

But once again misfortune struck the Mellette family. Arthur received a telegram informing him that his Muncie Times Newspaper and Publishing House had burned to the ground and was a total loss. Arthur had been a financial success, but most of his wealth had been invested into capital assets to grow his newspaper and publishing plant. His situation seemed hopeless. He was now essentially broke, had a terminally ill wife to care for and four young children to raise. Arthur immediately made arrangements for Maggie's care and he returned to Muncie.

Arthur stood at the corner of Washington and Walnut streets staring at the fire ravaged ruins that lay before him. His troubled face and teary eyes reflected his feelings of hopelessness and sorrow. The Muncie Times Newspaper and A.C. Mellette Printing and Publishing House, representing fourteen years of dreams, blood, sweat and now tears, lay in front of him in ruins. He was a worried man, singing a worried song. Possibly facing a future without Margaret, raising four young boys by himself, and now financially bankrupted by this catastrophic fire. He felt like a broken man.

But through these same fourteen years, Arthur had also built a reputation on his integrity, political savvy and business acumen. In this hour of need, he was surrounded by a solid group of friends. Arthur's investment associates pledged their compassion and support to him. The investment group had been discussing investment possibilities in Dakota Territory and decided to develop a prospectus. They reasoned that a good source for gathering reliable information could be come from one of the government "land offices" being established in Dakota Territory.

They hatched a plan that would place Arthur in one of the many "land offices" needed in Dakota Territory. Arthur's legal background, knowledge of several foreign languages, business

and political experience and an eye for sound financial investments made him a perfect fit. Arthur certainly needed a job, a new location to live for Margaret's sake and the investors trusted him. Benjamin Harrison was a close friend to President Rutherford Hayes, so he made a trip to Washington D.C. in hopes of landing an appointment for Arthur.

The newspaper stories had been so outrageous, that President Hayes had taken a train trip to northern Dakota to see if it were true. A St. Paul newspaper reported about the President's visit. What President Hayes saw even surpassed his expectations! President Hayes related to Harrison that agriculture was indeed making a lot of money in the northern plains. The President told Harrison that town site promoters, stage coach services, and railroad companies were promoting aggressively to lure easterners into Dakota Territory. Land developers found they could buy journalists and were publishing magazines and brochures in German, English, and Norwegian. They described beautiful regions that were yielding bountiful harvests of almost anything! They exaggerated that summer lingered into November, and by February it was already spring!

The 1870's and early 1880's had been unusually wet years in Dakota Territory. For thousands of years, millions of buffalo and antelope roamed the plains fertilizing it and filling it with nutrients. The prairies were being plowed and planted for the very first time and the promoters were making the most of it. They proclaimed, as if they had been promised by the Almighty himself, that the plains and its climate had changed forever. Homesteading had become Dakota Territory's number one industry!

The President voiced his serious concerns at how the Territorial government was being overwhelmed by the workload of unrecorded claims. There was also a developing crisis at the amount of complicated court cases that had to be sent on to Washington D.C. for decisions. There was a shortage of "land offices" as well an insufficient number of competent men to manage them.

Migrant pioneers with high expectations were lured to Dakota Territory by extravagant promises. Many ethnic groups colonized together in towns or communities. As the flow of

land-hungry pioneers rushed into the Territory, new land offices and land-districts needed to be established at Aberdeen, Huron, Springfield, Watertown, and many other centers.

A couple of weeks after Harrison visited Washington D.C., Mellette received a letter from President Hayes appointing him as the “managing registrar” of a government land office to be established in Springfield, Dakota Territory. Arthur was to report to Territorial Governor William Howard in Yankton, Dakota Territory. After receiving indoctrination he was to proceed on to Springfield.

The Mellette run of bad luck had ended. Federal government jobs paid well. Arthur was able to get a good price for their home and liquidate some of the fire damaged assets. Margaret’s health was continuing to improve. She felt she was strong enough to care for the children again. The healthfulness of Dakota Territory proved to be very healing for Margaret, the family was happy and relieved to be together again.

The Mellette family arrived in Yankton, Dakota Territory in January of 1879. Normally the streets of Yankton were noisy, chaotic and over-crowded with a wide variety of very interesting characters. But, a great blizzard had brought a great deal of snow the two previous days. Extraordinarily high winds howled across the prairie and temperatures fell to 20 degrees below zero. On this day, the streets were empty!

It was two weeks before the roads and trails to Springfield were clear enough for the Mellette family to continue on to Springfield, Dakota Territory. Arthur made good use of the time delay by getting indoctrinated by Governor William Howard.

### **Springfield**

Upon opening the land office in Springfield, Arthur was astonished at the backlog of claims to be filed and disputes to be settled. In many instances applications were made for tracts of land already taken; disappointed, the unlucky parties would hopefully file another application on another tract. There were many disputes with claims being filed, but Arthur’s law experience and knowledge of a few foreign languages reduced many arguments and misunderstandings.



Those more complicated disputes were sent to the territorial judges or on to Washington D.C. to be heard. The individuals who filed on public domain during the land boom fell into two categories: those who hoped to establish permanent homes on the land, and those who merely intended to hold the claims long enough to obtain title, convert the land into cash, and then move out of the territory. It was the second group which was responsible for the many flagrant abuses of land laws. (13)

Day after day, all day long, the mob of people filled the land office and the street outside. It never seemed to get let up! Sometimes, a deputy sheriff and several citizen were deputized to preserve the order.

### **Watertown**

After a year and a half in Springfield, Arthur received orders to move to Watertown and establish a land office there. Watertown, located in the east central part of the territory but well north of Springfield, had become a booming hotspot for homesteading and settlement. Although it was only two years old, it had quickly grown to 2,000 residents and development was well behind demand. The region around Watertown was filling up quickly with immigrants wanting to file claims.

Arthur opened the land office May 1, 1881. The workload was so heavy that extra clerks were hired. The land office was kept open day and night for several days in an effort to get caught up. One day the office logged in 158 entries, involving 25,000 acres of land! The huge demand during the land boom years were reflected in the 1884 land office reports from Yankton, Mitchell and Watertown. Those reports revealed that only isolated sections of open lands were left.

### **Mellette leaves Federal Employment**

In the spring of 1883, the new administration of President Chester A. Arthur made a series of new appointments throughout the nation. Even though President Arthur was a republican, Mellette was not reappointed as the managing registrar of the Watertown land office. A man named Charles G. Williams succeeded him.

Eastern and foreign investment in Dakota Territory peaked in the years 1880-1890. The Mellette family stayed in Watertown and Arthur went back to practicing law. As a federal employee managing land offices in Dakota Territory, he was limited as to the types of financial investing he could participate in. But as a private citizen, he was free to invest. He had worked in two land offices for the last five years. During that time, he had gathered a lot of information, made a lot of observations and secured many friendships.

Although the Mellette family's major reason for coming to Dakota Territory was for Margaret's health, finding investments for Arthur's investment partners also played a major factor. Aside from establishing his law practice in Watertown, he eventually purchased land in Huron, Redfield, Watertown and Mitchell. He established a local narrow gage railroad line from Lake Kampeska to destinations in eastern Minnesota, he was president of a Watertown bank, kept 1,000 head of cattle at Scotty Phillips ranch.

Arthur took on a business partner by the name of William McIntyre, a local businessman and close friend. Together they started the Mellette-McIntyre brickyard. It turned out to be a huge success, employing over 250 workers! They were the biggest employers in Watertown. He built the "Mellette Block" in downtown Watertown. Many downtown buildings were constructed with bricks manufactured by his brick plant.

Arthur and William McIntyre purchased land together. One of their joint projects was developing a housing tract in northwest Watertown. The land was surveyed and plotted into nine blocks of lots. Designated as the "Mellette and McIntyre Addition" it was Watertown's finest housing development.

### **Pettigrew's Patronage Abuse**

Many of Pettigrew's fellow republicans, as well as democratic challengers, disapproved of his less than virtuous campaign techniques. He knew that "patronage" was the secret to political success, so his campaign slogan was "Dakota for Dakotans". His campaign goal was to, "get rid of every democrat and non-South Dakotan in the state who held a federal job". Since most federal jobs were on the Indian reservations, he knew it was imperative that he get

appointed to the Indian Affairs Committee and then quickly maneuver his way to chair that committee.

Pettigrew started handing out the spoils of victory almost as soon as he was elected to the Senate. He appointed the party faithful to such position as bank examiners, post masters, town-site commissioners, artesian well examiners, census enumerators and law clerks. He also appointed a United States attorney and the veterinary surgeon at the state agricultural college. But, these few positions did not reward many of Pettigrew's supporters. The best jobs were the federal jobs on Indian reservations. And that is where Pettigrew flagrantly abused the patronage system to gain political advantage.

Patronage on Indian reservations was not a new phenomenon. When the democrats gained control of the White House in 1885, fifty of fifty-eight Indian agents were replaced with Democrats. The Cleveland administration had however, selected men who at least had some understanding of the Indian situation. Pettigrew had no problem with choosing appointees who lacked any qualifications or experience and quickly set out to replace every Indian agent in the state who was not a South Dakota republican. He pillaged the reservation system for jobs by removing all democrats, right down to the cow herders, carpenters, blacksmiths, clerks, teamsters, warehousemen and assistant teachers. He replaced them with his supporters, even if they had never met an Indian or stepped foot west of the Missouri River.

The election of 1890 stirred up immense interest and excitement throughout most of South Dakota. The competition for a permanent state capital was being contested by almost every town east of the Missouri River. As election day grew near it was beginning to look like Mitchell and Pierre were the leading contenders.

By this time Pettigrew had positioned himself as a real powerhouse in the state republican party. Governor Mellette was facing re-election and his close relationship with President Harrison often stopped Senator Pettigrew's patronage appointments. His resentment ran very deep, so he sent out feelers for a dump Mellette movement! Pettigrew's political strategy, as usually, was to use patronage. In the end though, he decided Mellette was too popular and decided not to have Mellette opposed. But, he did inflict as much damage as he could.

Mellette was re-elected, but not by anywhere near the margin he had previously won. The badly split Republican party caused Democrat James Kyle to unseat Republican Senator Gideon C. Moody and Pierre was elected as the permanent capital.

**Pettigrew Gets Daniel Royer Appointed**  
**As Pine Ridge Reservation Agent**

Senator Pettigrew had been able to get Daniel F. Royer appointed as Indian Agent of the Pine Ridge Reservation. Royer, a successful businessman and member of the Dakota territorial legislature had no experience or understanding of Indian affairs. But, he had supported and worked hard for Pettigrew's election. Pettigrew reciprocated by rewarding Royer with the Pine Ridge appointment. Royer saw it as an opportunity to increase his own wealth. He replaced Hugh Gallagher a President Cleveland appointee. Gallagher had managed to keep control of any rebellious Indian activity since his appointment in 1886. But, he was from Indiana and worse yet, a Democrat.

Royer wasted no time in cheating the Indians and embezzling from the federal government. Huge amounts of grain disappeared from the storage bins on the reservation, then reappeared in Rushville, Nebraska and were sold. Other supply vouchers were signed, but the supplies never made it to the reservation and cattle were bought at inflated prices.

A cattle drover brought in a large herd of trail-thin cattle which had been purchased by past agent Gallagher's administration. The cattle had been bought as 950 pound steers and put out to pasture on the reservation lands to graze and fatten. Then when Royer took over as agent he had his clerk, B.J. Gleason purchase the steers at 1,200 pounds. As a result the government paid for the fattened beef all over again! The extra money was split between the drover, Gleason and Royer.

This kind of corruption was even obvious to the Indians and served only to increase the distrust and tension that already had reached a volatile level. It did not take long for Royer to lose control of the reservation. It would not be accurate or fair to say that all Indian agents were corrupt, but too many were!

The Sioux had become economic prisoners, constantly being told that they owed more and more money to the reservation storekeepers. The buffalo, deer, and game birds became scarce due to the draught, causing the Indians to become even more dependent on the goodwill of the traders and the promises of the federal government.

The annual payments made by the Indians for their debts to the reservation store traders were only a small portion of the profits the traders and others were making off of the Sioux tribes. Every time the government ratified a treaty with the Indians, middlemen seized the opportunity to act as agents, negotiating agreements or expediting paperwork and effectively scheming to steal most of the money the tribes were to receive as compensation for selling their land.

### **Patronage abuse leads to Wounded Knee Massacre**

Mellette and Pettigrew each had their own ideas and choices as to how and where patronage should be used. They were in constant disagreement with each other's choices and the reasons for the appointments to state or federal positions. Many of their disagreements fell under the auspices of the Department of the Interior. Senator Pettigrew spent much more time in Washington D.C. than did Governor Mellette. So, Pettigrew had the advantage of direct access to the Senate, House of Representatives and other cabinet members such as, the Department of the Interior. However, the Secretary of the Interior was appointed by the President, and Mellette had the President's ear! This created a lot of in-fighting which also involved Thomas J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The political battles between Pettigrew and Mellette were bitterly fought, each man winning and losing their battles.

Those dozen wonderfully wet years that began in 1877, that had transformed the Northern Plains into an agricultural oasis, turn into a devastating draught in the summer of 1889. Day after day the burning sun beat mercilessly down on the dry and parched land. Hot southwest winds swept and scorched the prairies. From horizon to horizon the withered, dried prairie grasses were seared brown. The creeks and wells went dry and the gardens withered, country homesteads and townships were completely engulfed by the severe draught.

The conditions were even worse for the Indians. They were expected to learn the methods of agriculture while being subsidized on handouts authorized by Congress. If the white society was having disastrous results with farming, the plight of the inexperienced Indian farmers was worse! For the most part, the Indians were not fond of farming anyway. The government rations given the Indians were barely enough during the good years when they could be supplemented by gardening, hunting and gathering.

Many Indians had farmed the fertile creek bottoms, but now even the creeks had dried up and their meager crops had withered and died. The wild game had disappeared. The Indians were not allowed to leave the reservation. They became acutely malnourished and susceptible to disease. Their death rate shot up. Measles, whooping cough and influenza swept through their villages. On the Pine Ridge reservation alone, the death rate was forty-five a month! Hardest hit were the children.

The Indians turned their desperate hopes to the teachings of Wovoka and the Ghost Dance religion. This caused fear and panic to sweep through the white population, particularly in western South Dakota. Eastern newspapermen seized the opportunity to send horrible and exaggerated stories back to their home offices of deadly skirmishes and Indian atrocities. The Seventh Cavalry was ordered in to keep the peace and maintain order. Many observers felt the soldiers still harbored bitterness about Custer's great defeat at the Little, Bighorn and were anxious to get even. All the elements were in place for the Wounded Knee Massacre!

### **Footnotes**

1. *Federalist*-A supporter of strong central government. A member of the Federal party, formed in 1787, advocating adoption on the Constitution of the U.S.
2. *Stalwart*-A loyal member of a party.
3. *Civil Service Act of 1883*-Sponsored by George H. Pendleton, Democratic Senator of Ohio, and written by Dorman Bridgeman Eaton, a staunch opponent of the patronage system who was later the first chairman of the United States Civil Service Commission. This federal law stipulated that government jobs should be awarded on the basis of merit. The act provided

selection of government employees by competitive exams, rather than ties to politicians or political affiliation. It also made it illegal to fire or demote government officials for political reasons and prohibited soliciting campaign donations on Federal government property. To enforce the merit system and the judicial system, the law created the United States Civil Service Commission. A crucial result was the shift of the parties to reliance on funding from business, since they could no longer depend on patronage hopefuls. The law applied only to federal government jobs, not to state and local jobs that were the basis for political machines. At first, the Pendleton Act only covered a very few jobs, as only 10% of the U.S. government's civilian employees had civil service jobs. However, there was a ratchet provision whereby outgoing presidents could lock in their own appointees by converting their jobs to civil service. But, after a series of party reversals at the presidential level (1884, 1888, 1892, 1896), the result was that most federal jobs were under civil service. ^*abcdefghijkl*

[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=&psid=1098](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=&psid=1098)

4. *"To The Best Of My Ability"*, (The American Presidents) General Editor James M. McPherson Pp 157, Author Bernard A. Weisberger. Publisher: Dorling Kindersley London, New York, Sydney, Delhi, Paris, Munich and Johannesburg

5. President Cleveland is the only President in American history to serve two non-consecutive terms in office.

6. *Classical liberalism*: a political ideology and a branch of liberalism which advocates civil liberties and political freedom with representative democracy under the rule of law and emphasizes economic freedom. It advocated a specific kind of society, government and public policy as a response to the industrial revolution and urbanization.

7. The 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution established the popular election of United States Senators by the people of the states. The amendment supersedes Article I, paragraph 3, Clauses 1 and 2 of the Constitution, under which senators were elected by state legislatures. It also alters the procedure for filling vacancies in the Senate, allowing for state legislatures to permit their governors to make temporary appointments until a special election can be held.

The amendment was proposed in the 62<sup>nd</sup> Congress in 1912 and became law in 1913 after being ratified by the required 36 state legislatures. It was implemented in special elections in Maryland (November 1913) and Alabama (May 1914) and then nationwide in the November 1914 election.

8. McKinley Tariff-was sponsored by Ohio Representative William McKinley, who later became the 25<sup>th</sup> President of the U.S. McKinley Tariff became law on Oct. 1, 1890, was a protective tariff that raised the average duty on foreign imports to almost 50%. The act was backed by the Republicans who strongly supported high tariffs on imported goods.

Sherman Silver Purchase Act-Farmers were straining under growing debt and sharply falling prices. Western mining interests were anxious for a ready market for their silver and exerted pressure on Congress. Western voices were much stronger with the recent addition of Idaho, Montana, Washington, Wyoming and the Dakotas to the Union. The Sherman Silver Purchase Act was part of a broader compromise. The Democrats gave their support to the highly protective McKinley Tariff in return for Republican votes for silver. The Sherman Silver Purchase Act called for the Treasury to purchase 4.5 million ounces (or 281.250 pounds) of silver each month at market rates. The Treasury would issue notes redeemable in either gold or silver. The planned government purchases amounted to almost the total monthly output from the mines. However, the increased supply of silver drove down the price. Many mine operators in the West tried to reduce expenses by cutting the miners' wages, labor unrest and sporadic violence followed.

9. "The Congress shall have the power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States..." U.S. Constitution, *Article IV, Section 3, Clause 2*.

10. *"To Have This Land", The Nature of Indian/White Relations South Dakota 1888-1891, Pp.12.* The University of South Dakota Press Vermillion, South Dakota

11. Due to lack of family resources, Arthur Mellette earned money for college by teaching in a country school. Through his teaching experience he discovered how poor and inadequate the



Indiana State education system was. He vowed that if he were ever in a position to correct the awful situation, he would! Most country school teachers were local people who were poorly educated, poorly paid and less than a third of them had four years of education beyond the eighth grade. Teaching certificates were obtained by attending a teacher's institute at the nearest county courthouse. The course usually ran from one to four weeks. The quality of education provided to the urban communities was far superior to that provided to rural communities. This two district school system was shamefully unfair and unequal. The lack of uniformity among the townships in school affairs was primarily due to the absence of central county supervision and the improvidence of the state politicians. This enabled land sharks and local school officers to concoct unscrupulous plans to sell public school lands too cheaply, sometimes as low as \$1.25 - \$2.50 per acre.

12. Margaret's father, Theophilus A. Wylie, was one of the leading professors at the university. His second cousin, Andrew Wylie had been the first president of the university. Andrew had the house built and lived there with his family until his death. Then Theophilus moved into the home. Altogether, the Wylies' had lived in the house for over 80 years. The house now is now on the campus as a museum.

13. There developed a class of people who were chronic settlers; these men made "settling" a business. It made little difference to them that the laws of the United States allowed an individual to exercise his homestead right only once. They might file claims under one name in Iowa, another in Kansas, and still another in Dakota. It was not even necessary to migrate to a different state to work this scheme. They might take five or six homesteads in the same state over a period of twenty or thirty years. A change of name was no inconvenience; in fact it was a blessing, especially for those leaving an eastern prison. Many after living on a homestead for a year or two, sold their rights to others. The seller was said to have relinquished his right to the buyer who proved up in his own name. This was known as a relinquishment and the original settler was free to move on and take another homesteads. Relinquishments were frowned upon by the land office, became quite a business and land men frequently secured a fee for bringing these parties together. There was no set price for relinquishments. The price varied

from leased real estate, jewelry, clothing, furniture or other possessions to several hundred dollars. The price depended on how optimistic the buyer was and how desperate the seller was. Sometimes a man with some money would offer good wages and very little work for a period of six months if the men would join his gang and use their preemption rights in concert, prove up, and after securing the titles in their own name, deed them to their employer.

## **Records and Letters Bring the War Home: Military and Personal Communication in South Dakota, 1942—1945**

A. Blair Tremere

This paper describes and shares several forms of communication that brought awareness of and information about the Second World War to the personal attention of South Dakota individuals and families. The presentation included visual and audio examples of official and personal communications sent mainly to and from South Dakotans who thus experienced World War II as it came to the northern plains.

Finding personal material including correspondence, service records, and notifications involving South Dakota residents proved to be a challenge. I received help from friends and acquaintances who responded to my inquiries with references to information sources, with copies of reports and correspondence, and with personal accounts about the fate of close relatives. [1]

A valuable resource has been Professor Lynwood Oyos book, Reveille for Sioux Falls, published by the Center for Western Studies. I was reading the book as I coincidentally contemplated a paper for this conference. Its relevance struck close to home since I am a native of Sioux Falls and, as I will discuss later, since my father, also a Sioux Falls native, was drafted into the Army in 1942. But an acknowledgment by Professor Oyos at the start of his account jogged my memory of an event that impacted my research as it did his: “On July 12, 1973, a disastrous fire at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, Missouri, destroyed approximately sixteen to eighteen million official military files.” [2] Much remaining official and unofficial data has yet to be digitized at federal, state, or local levels.

### **Aware and Informed**

The source of news about world events and the impending war up to and after the attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii for most residents of the continental U.S. was printed newspapers and

periodical literature, as well as the still-developing mass media of network radio and motion pictures. The events commencing the Second World War on December 7, 1941 were stunning and disturbing, but for many, were not yet a personal concern.

The U.S. Mail and the then popular telegram delivery services were to become the primary means by which the War came personally to South Dakotans. Letters from local Selective Service offices---“draft boards”---were the initial contact with men who were ordered to report to a designated location for a physical examination and evaluation. Those who successfully passed were then inducted into the armed service and assigned to active duty for training and soldiering, often overseas and often for the duration of the war.

The volume of personal correspondence grew dramatically from the time soldiers left their home community for training centers in the United States to when they departed, mainly by ships, to European and Pacific Theaters of War. As World War II intensified and expanded, letters and telegrams eventually arrived at the homes of the families whose relatives were missing in action, imprisoned, or deceased.

President Franklin Roosevelt directed that the U.S. Post Office, the armed services, and the general population place high priority on promotion and maintenance of personal—mainly written—communications, recognizing the value of this for both military and civilian morale. The War Department strived to ensure all status notifications would be expedited to the next-of-kin.

Knowledge of a service member’s whereabouts and welfare often lagged behind news of battles and results, and that information was typically dated by several days and weeks. Information delays due to security requirements were common. Occasionally one would first learn of a friend’s or loved one’s fate through a news report.

Special and then innovative resources were provided to support personal communication and to boost morale. The United Services Organization [U.S.O.] was inaugurated on February 4, 1941. Facilities typically run by civilian volunteers were located on or near military installations across the country and eventually in selected venues overseas. Entertainment was provided

often by professional and amateur actors and musicians, and musical instruments—typically a piano—and jukeboxes were widely available. The USO facilitated soldiers' personal contact with families and friends by supplying materials for writing letters and recording equipment for producing "talking letter" records.

The U.S. Post Office and the War Department established a special mail product known as "V-Mail" ("V" for victory) to cope with the massive logistical challenge of distributing tons of mail. Soldiers and civilians were encouraged to use it by means of official and unofficial advertising campaigns and patriotic peer pressure.

"V-Mail" consisted of several formats including stationery made of a light weight durable paper that became the envelope when folded properly. Another consisted of a special form that the sender used to compose a letter within a pre-determined space. The completed form was taken to the post office or authorized facility and the letter was microfilmed and transmitted to a facility at or near the recipient's location. The individual letters were then developed and printed as photographs with reduced dimensions of both paper and type. These were forwarded to the recipient in special envelopes.

V-mail was postage free for soldiers, and the USO was a typical source of supplies. Civilians paid for standard postage and for supplies. Private firms that manufactured writing instruments, ink, stationery, microfilm, and photographic papers heavily advertised "V-Mail." Other firms produced and sold magnifying glasses sold as "V-mail Readers" to assist with reading the reduced print.

The USO often provided a room or special cubicle that served as a recording studio at their entertainment and relaxation centers. Soldiers were able to produce phonograph records made of special waxed paperboard that were known as "a letter on a record" and "talking letters." Sample scripts or outlines were provided so the soldier could develop a concise message that would fit on the two-sided record. The playing time was about three minutes per side.

## What happened to that soldier?

**Arnold W. Tremere**, my father, was thirty-two years old and single when Pearl Harbor was attacked. He was the youngest of three brothers, and the other two had families and apparently were exempted from the draft. He inquired about enlisting and was informed his corrected vision might result in rejection. He was married at the end of January, 1942 and received a letter in July, 1942 from the Minnehaha County Selective Service Board that he had been selected for induction (the official "Draft Letter" was to follow). He was on his way to the Induction Station at Ft. Crook, Nebraska later in July.

He trained at Camp Bowie near Brownwood, Texas. He left for various battle areas in the Pacific Theater in February, 1943 and was stationed on the Japanese island, Okinawa, at the War's end. He returned to Sioux Falls in November, 1945, received an Honorable Discharge, and later served in a Sioux Falls-based Army reserve unit for four years. He died in 1986.

As I searched through family albums hoping to find correspondence that might be used for this paper, I unexpectedly discovered four recorded letters that my father produced and sent to my mother in 1942 and 1943. They had been in long-forgotten storage very likely since the end of the War.

The records were produced at the USO facility at Camp Bowie. I had the records professionally cleaned and re-recorded in digital format. The messages are directed to my mother and to family members and friends. At one point, my father states that he would not "trade Sioux Falls for all of Texas." He also mentions his experience of having leave in Brownwood on weekends and tells my mother that he suspects it must be similar to weekends on Phillips Avenue in Sioux Falls due to the "air boys." That impact on Sioux Falls is confirmed by Oyos in Reveille for Sioux Falls [3]. At another time, he states that he had come to the "end of the script," and realized he still had some recording time so he "rambled on." He praised the facilities provided by the USO.

**Harold Feser** was an athletic graduate of Claremont, SD High School in 1937. He was drafted in the first peace-time draft and inducted into the Army in June, 1941 (six months before the attack on Pearl Harbor). He was sent overseas in 1943 and was in combat. He was wounded January 22, 1945 on Luzon Island, Philippines, and he died on February 3, 1945. Sgt. Feser was buried in a U.S. Armed Forces cemetery at Santa Barbara, Philippines. Evidence of a timely notification letter or telegram has not been found.

His father, Frank Feser who farmed near Amherst, South Dakota did receive a letter dated June 6, 1947 from a Brigadier General who was the Chief of the Memorial Division. It contained a picture of the cemetery and said, in part, "It is my sincere hope that you may gain some solace from this view of the surroundings in which your loved one rests. "As you can see, this is a place of simple dignity, neat and well cared for. "Here, assured of continuous care, now rest the remains of a few of those heroic dead who fell together in the service of our country."

The General explained that the cemetery will be maintained "as a temporary resting place until, in accordance with the wishes of the next of kin, all remains are either placed in permanent American cemeteries overseas or returned to the Homeland for final burial." Sgt. Feser's remains were returned and are buried in the Groton, SD cemetery.

**Lt. Edgar S. Gable** from Wagner, SD was a Japanese prisoner of war in the Philippines Islands from 1942-44. He was aboard a Japanese freighter when it was bombed and destroyed by U.S. forces; he survived. He managed to secretly keep a diary during his imprisonment and he buried it. A fellow prisoner who survived later returned to the prison site and unearthed the diary which is now in the SD State Archives. Lt. Gable also sent several postcards from the prison camp through the Imperial Japanese Army postal service to his mother who had moved to California. The brief messages indicate he received mail from family in the U.S.

**Cpt. Elmer A. Rusch**, originally of Raymond, SD was captured in June, 1944 by the enemy in Normandy, France. He had been in a glider and it was learned later that none of the crew survived. His wife, who lived with their two small sons in Watertown, received official notification from the War Department via telegram. The message said that his mail address could not be furnished until confirmation of the capture was received through the International

Red Cross. Later, his wife received word that the Purple Heart had been awarded *posthumously* to her husband, for military merit and for wounds received in action *which resulted in his death on June 7, 1944* [emphasis added]. She also received a memorial certificate, signed by President Roosevelt.

**Ensign Luvern H. Rusch** of Raymond and younger brother of Cpt. Elmer Rusch, learned upon return to the U.S. that many folks back home knew of an experience he had despite his thought that the event was not publicized due to heavy censorship. Consistent with standard military security standards, family members were not even to know where he was. He commanded a group of small landing craft in the Salerno battle and while enroute to Great Britain, witnessed a German glider bomb attack. A bomber appeared in the midst of a convoy, executed a banking turn, but then plunged into the sea with a violent explosion. Navy gunners initially thought they had shot down an enemy plane. Ensign Rusch said the glider looked exactly like a German fighter plane with its tail afire. The event however was reported by a news service and the local papers ran a story as Ensign Rusch later discovered when he returned home.

These are representative of the more than 68,000 South Dakota men and women who participated in the war and who sent and received communications, or who were among the 2,141 casualties who were the subject of notifications from the War Department [4]. This paper and presentation is dedicated to the memory of all who served and to the hope that originals and copies of correspondence (“V-Mail” and “talking letters,” as well as official notices) will be preserved and shared.

Blair Tremere  
Golden Valley, MN  
April, 2016



## **End Notes**

[1] Judge Arthur Rusch and Mrs. Monica McCranie, provided information from family and public sources about relatives. Mr. Jim Davies, Staff Sergeant Reggan Labore, and Mr. Durward V. Doering provided references and historical material from the South Dakota National Guard. Matthew Reitzel and Virginia Hanson of the South Dakota Archives staff were helpful and particularly instructive in how, both on-line and in person, access to apparently relevant data is limited due to laws and regulations that to me seem obsolete and arcane. Mr. Reitzel found and shared pertinent material from one of the archived collections. Mr. Glenn Griffin, Archivist for Hubbard Broadcasting, Inc. in St. Paul, MN cleaned and digitized recorded “letters” made at a USO studio by my father.

[2] Lynwood E. Oyos, “Reveille for Sioux Falls A World War II Army Air Forces Technical School Changes a South Dakota City,” The Center for Western Studies, Augustana College (now University), Sioux Falls, SD, (2014), p. vi.

[3] Ibid., pp. 24-29

[4] The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs maintains a data base of casualties. Included is the product of a statewide project begun in 2001 whereby high school and grade school students researched, and compiled biographies of those from South Dakota. It is titled “Fallen Sons and Daughters of South Dakota in World War II.”

## **Samples of Exhibits Presented at *Dakota Conference***

Prepare in Duplicate

Local Board No. 3	000
Hartford County	
42 Charter Oak Ave.	
Hartford 5, Conn.	

(LOCAL BOARD DATE STAMP WITH CODE)



APR 4 1944

(Date of mailing)

ORDER TO REPORT FOR INDUCTION

The President of the United States,

To Paul Richard McMahon  
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

Order No. 1304

GREETING:

Having submitted yourself to a local board composed of your neighbors for the purpose of determining your availability for training and service in the land or naval forces of the United States, you are hereby notified that you have now been selected for training and service therein.

You will, therefore, report to the local board named above at Hartford Railroad Station  
(Place of reporting)

at 7:15 A. m., on the 17th day of April, 1944  
(Hour of reporting)

This local board will furnish transportation to an induction station. You will there be examined, and, if accepted for training and service, you will then be inducted into the land or naval forces.

Persons reporting to the induction station in some instances may be rejected for physical or other reasons. It is well to keep this in mind in arranging your affairs, to prevent any undue hardship if you are rejected at the induction station. If you are employed, you should advise your employer of this notice and of the possibility that you may not be accepted at the induction station. Your employer can then be prepared to replace you if you are accepted, or to continue your employment if you are rejected.

Willful failure to report promptly to this local board at the hour and on the day named in this notice is a violation of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, as amended, and subjects the violator to fine and imprisonment.

If you are so far removed from your own local board that reporting in compliance with this order will be a serious hardship and you desire to report to a local board in the area of which you are now located, go immediately to that local board and make written request for transfer of your delivery for induction, taking this order with you.

Samuel B. Yaff  
Member or clerk of the local board.

# V-MAIL

*is SPEED MAIL*



**V-Mail Stationery 10¢ 25¢ 50¢ PACKAGES**

SPONSORED BY ARMY AND NAVY V-MAIL MERCHANDISING COMMITTEE FOR OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION

# A "Letter on a Record"

4

FROM *M. W. Tolmes*  
*572nd Ord. Ho. Maint Co. (C)*  
*Camp Bowie, Texas*

FRAGILE - DO NOT BEND

TO *Mrs. A. W. Tolmes*  
*P. O. Box 17*  
*Sioux Falls, South Dakota*



THIS "LETTER ON A RECORD" WAS MADE  
AT A USO CLUB OPERATED BY THE  
NATIONAL CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICE



IN REPLY REFER TO OSMGT 293

OFFICE OF THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

Feser, Harold E.  
A.S.N. 37 031 510

6 June 1947

Mr. Frank T. Feser  
Rural Free Delivery #1  
Amharst, South Dakota

Dear Mr. Feser:

Inclosed herewith is a picture of the United States Armed Forces Cemetery Santa Barbara, #1, Philippine Islands, in which your son, the late Sergeant Harold E. Feser, is buried.

It is my sincere hope that you may gain some solace from this view of the surroundings in which your loved one rests. As you can see, this is a place of single dignity, neat and well cared for. Here, assured of continuous care, now rest the remains of a few of those heroic dead who fall together in the service of our country.

This cemetery will be maintained as a temporary resting place until, in accordance with the wishes of the next of kin, all remains are either placed in permanent American cemeteries overseas or returned to the Homeland for final burial.

Sincerely yours,



G. A. HORKAN  
Brigadier General, CMJ  
Chief, Memorial Division

1 Incl  
Photograph

IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY

1. I am interned at THE PHILIPPINE MILITARY PRISON CAMP #1
2. My health is — excellent; good; fair; poor.
3. I am—uninjured; sick in hospital; under treatment; not under treatment.
4. I am — improving; not improving; better; well.
5. Please see that home tax -----  
----- is taken care of.
6. (Re: Family); Notify mother and Pete -----  
-----
7. Please give my best regards to Friends in Wagner. -----

460.3/48

From:  
Name Edgar S. Gable  
Nationality AMERICAN  
Rank First Lieutenant  
Camp PHILIPPINE MILITARY PRISON CAMP #1

To: Mrs. E. S. Gable  
4400 Eagle Rock Blvd.,  
Los Angeles, Calif.  
U. S. A.

455 7th Raymond  
Pasadena Calif

検 閲 済  
比島俘虜收容所

俘虜郵便  
きがは郵便

CENSORSHIP  
EXAMINED  
By 681

Source: SDSHS Archives

IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY

1. I am interned at—Philippine Military Prison Camp No. 1
2. My health is—excellent; good; fair; poor.
3. Message (50 words limit)

Your letter made me very happy. Hope for more. How are your family? Why the change of address? Florence didn't mention you in her letter. Do you ever see her? Where is Ted? Much love to you, Mother, regards to family and friends. All is well here.

*Edgar S. Gable*  
Signature  
July 22, 1944  
H60.3/46

SERVICE des PRISONNIERS de GUERRE

俘虜郵便

NAME Edgar S. Gable  
NATIONALITY American  
RANK First Lieutenant - Army  
PHILIPPINE MILITARY PRISON CAMP NO. 1

To: Mrs. Edgar S. Gable  
455 N. Raymond  
Pasadena, California  
U.S.A.



郵便はがき



## Military Award Being Sent To Mrs. E. A. Rusch

Mrs. Elmer A. Rusch, 618 N. Broadway, received word this morning that the Purple Heart had been awarded posthumously to her husband, Capt. Elmer A. Rusch, for military merit and for wounds received in action which resulted in his death on June 7, 1944. The document bore the official seal and signature of the adjutant general's office and of the secretary of war.

Mrs. Rusch also received a memorial certificate, signed by President Roosevelt, bearing the following inscription: "In grateful memory of Capt. Elmer A. Rusch who died in the service of his country in the European area on June 7, 1944. He stands in the unbroken line of patriots who have dared to die that freedom might live, and grow and increase its blessings. Freedom lives, and through it, he lives in a way that humbles the undertakings of most men."

The Purple Heart was established by General George Washington at Newburgh, N. Y., on August 7, 1788, and was revived by the war department on the 200th anniversary of Washington's birth, to pay respect to him and to honor military achievement.

## Capt. Elmer Rusch of Raymond, S. D., Captured in France

Clark, S. D.—Special: Relatives here have received word that Capt. Elmer Rusch, 31, was captured by the enemy on June 7 in France. His wife, Mrs. Catherine Rusch, who lives at Watertown with their two little sons, Robert and Roger, received official notification from the war department. The telegram stated that his mail address cannot be furnished until confirmation of the capture is received through the International Red Cross. Capt. Rusch is the son of Mrs. Clara Rusch of Raymond, and his wife is the former Catherine Delaney of Clark.

He has been in the service a little more than three years and has been in foreign service about four months. He entered the army immediately after receiving his degree and commission at State college, Brookings. While in this country he was stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.; San Antonio, Tex.; DeRidder, La.; Essler field, La.; Harlingen, Tex.; Desert Center, Cal.; Harrisburg, Pa.; Camp Knox, Ky.; Morris field, N. C.; and at camps in Virginia.

## Raymond Man Describes Nazi Rocket Bombs

By JOHN MECKLIN  
(Representing the Combined United States Press)

U. S. Amphibious Base, England, (Delayed)—(P)—Believing they had shot down an enemy plane, navy gunners cheered when they first saw a Nazi rocket glider bomb appear in the midst of a convoy, execute a perfect banking turn, then plunge into the sea with a violent explosion.

Ensign Luvern H. Rusch of Raymond, S. D., who commanded a group of small landing craft in the Salerno battle, told of this first reaction to the glider bomb attack he witnessed while enroute to Great Britain in mid-November.

"When we first saw the thing everybody thought that a German plane had been shot down—it looked exactly like a fighter with its tail afire," Rusch reported.

Ensign John J. Horan, Staten Island, N. Y., also witnessed a glider bomb attack on a convoy enroute to England—possibly the same action—and reported the bombs were released by Henkel four-engined bombers which apparently can carry at least two and probably more of the missiles.

