

NOTES ON ASSINIBOIN SUN DANCE, FORT BELKNAP INDIAN RESERVATION, MONTANA.

Notes taken. These notes were taken down a short time after the Sun Dance ceremonies were observed at Fort Belknap in 1906 and 1907.

Time and place of ceremonies. The two Sun Dances here observed took place July 5, 6 and 7, 1906 and 1907, at the camp ground just east of the Agency of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in Montana.

Directors of the Sun Dance. In 1906 an Assiniboin Indian, known to the white men by the name of Nosey, or Old Nosey, and known to the Assiniboins as The Male and to the Gros ventres as Yellow Lodge, was Director of the Sun Dance. Nosey died in the spring of 1907, and an Assiniboin named Eyes in the Water was ambitious to succeed him in the position of Director of the Sun Dance. When the Assiniboin camp formed east of the Agency about July 1 or 2, 1907, Eyes in the Water kept to his tipi in the camp circle, where he fasted, beat a hand drum, sang his medicine songs, and blew on an eagle bone whistle, in order to qualify himself for the position of Director. A storm came up one night while Eyes in the Water was thus seeking to qualify himself as Director, and blew down many tipis in the camp. Eyes in the Water's wife was killed by a falling lodge pole during the storm. Some Assiniboin reported that he had seen Nosey's ghost riding a horse in the storm. This evidently put Eyes in the Water out of the running as Director, and the Assiniboins approached an Cree Indian from Canada, who was a visitor in the camp, and who was evidently qualified to Direct the Sun Dance, and sought and obtained his services as Director of the 1907 Sun Dance. A Cree Indian therefore directed the 1907 Sun Dance.

Secret tipi, or tipi of preparation. The rites of the secret tipi were not observed in 1906 or in 1907. In 1906 Nosey used one of his tipis as the secret tipi. Nosey owned two tipis. Both were painted yellow. In one of these he lived with his two wives, and in the other he conducted his business affairs of Medicine Man, Priest and Rain-maker. The second tipi was used as secret tipi. It was decorated with a Thunderbird, in blue, near the smoke hole, and had highly conventionalized buffaloes painted on the sides. The tipi used by the Cree director in 1907 was an unpainted tipi. On both occasions the tipi was ~~located~~ located on the north side of the camp circle, at a distance inside the ring of tipis that formed the circle. The secret tipi in 1907 was moved once during the preparatory rites. The day or evening before the tree for center pole was to be selected this tipi was observed to be closer to the center of the circle than on the day previous.

The camp circle. Both in 1906 and 1907 the camp circle was a large one, being almost a mile in diameter. It is estimated that about 3,000 Indians were present in the 1906 and 1907 camps. The majority were Assiniboins from the Fort Belknap Reservation, and Gros ventres from the same Reservation. The circle consisted mostly of tipis or lodges, but the visiting Crees from Canada, camped in the northern and north eastern parts of the circle occupied wall tents. There were also present Stonies from Canada, and in 1906 there was a large delegation of Piegans from the Blackfoot Reservation, led by Judge Shorty White Grass. There were large herds of horses outside the camp, and many dogs in the camp. There was only one skin tipi in 1906, and that was a small one. The Indians were well supplied with buckskin costumes, beaded and worked with porcupine quills, and garnished with weasel tails. All tipis and lodges were of canvas. All wore moccasins, except for a few mixed bloods, who wore shoes. There were many war bonnets, and there was much display of Indian wealth of all kinds.

Photographs. In 1906 photographs were taken of the camp activities and ceremonies by Sumner Matteson. In 1907 photographs were taken of the camp activities and Sun Dance ceremonies by Maude Galen Walker.

1907. Selection of the tree for center pole of Sun Dance lodge. It is understood that the party to select the tree for center pole was formed and assembled first at the secret tipi. They proceeded from that point by horse back, it is understood, to the grove of cotton wood trees bordering the south bank of Milk River. They left their mounts at some distance, and entered the grove on foot. They entered the grove at about half past eight of the morning on which the Sun Dance lodge was to be erected. There were about eighteen Indians, and they marched in single file, the Director of the Sun Dance in the lead. The director was followed by his assistants, and the remaining members of the party were dressed and outfitted as warriors prepared to go against the enemy. These latter carried extra moccasins, tied to their belts, and carried guns. They appear to have served as guards, and will therefore be hereinafter referred to as such. Lead by the Director, all proceed silently through the grove, on foot and in single file. Upon entering the grove the Director and his assistants search for a tree suitable for their purpose. Other Indians join the party after its entrance into the grove, and two horses, painted yellow, are likewise led in. The warriors, or guards, now separate from the party composed of the Director and his assistants, and sit down in a line some distance away from them, the line running east and west, the guards facing north. The Director and his assistants are in single file, at right angles to the guards and in front of them, and they are also facing north. The Director appears to do some actual hunting for a suitable tree, while his assistants follow his lead, but do not appear to take an active part in the search. A tree is discovered by the Director, but after some consultation with his assistants, all apparently come to the conclusion that this tree is not the one they want, and so they proceed further. The line of guards moves up, remaining in the same relative position to the Director and his assistants as before. A second tree is discovered by the Director, who points to it. This tree is evidently satisfactory, and so is chosen. The Director and his party now takes its position to the west of the tree selected, in single file, facing east, the Director in the lead. The warriors or guards move up to a distance within fifteen feet of the rear of this line, and seat themselves, forming a line running north and south, the guards facing east toward the tree. During the subsequent ceremonies the guards leave this position, and sit in a line east of the tree, about fifteen paces distant from it, the line running north and south and the guards facing west. The Director and his assistants now scatter through the grove. Some of them cut willow branches, that they wash in Milk River, while others build a fire south and west of the tree. The willow branches, which have been washed, are laid in front of the tree, forming a thick bed of branches which extends almost to its ~~foot~~ trunk. This bed is west of the tree. Two sticks are planted in the ground, one north and one south of the bed of willows. The stick to the north has some hair floating from the end of it, which may have been a scalp lock, or else a bit of buffalo hair. The stick to the south of the bed is a branch of cottonwood, stripped of its leaves, except for a tuft of leaves at the tip. The fire which was made has been allowed to die down to a bed of coals. The trunk of the tree is now incensed by placing live coals at the north, west, south and east of its base, and placing on these coals fragments of dried sweet grass from a braid of sweet grass. The smoke ascends from the coals.



The Director now lights a pipe with a live coal and seated just west of the willow bed, facing the tree, smokes. He then takes a branch of willow from the willow bed and ties it around the trunk of the tree. He then takes another branch of willow from the bed and makes it into a wreath, and, wrapping his head in a white cloth, places the wreath over the cloth. He now takes white paint and with it paints his face, hands and the stock of his gun. When this is done the Director crouches in his place at the west end of the willow branch bed and offers a prayer, making a throwing motion with his right hand, the thumb, index and middle fingers of the hand being flung outward to the tree with each of these motions, but the other fingers of the hand remaining clenched. This motion is made several times during the course of the prayer. At the conclusion of the prayer the two upright sticks at the north and south of the willow bed are removed. The assistants now form in line behind the director. The line is in the form of a semi circle, the curve of the semi circle being to the north. The last man in line is due west of the tree, and in direct line with the leader, or Director, who is standing in front of the tree. The Director, at the head of the line, having concluded his prayer, the assistants, each in turn, offers a prayer to the tree. These prayers are said standing, and as each assistant concludes his prayer he passes on to the line of guards who are now awaiting at the east of the tree. During these prayers two of the assistants led the yellow painted horses which were brought into the grove before the tree was discovered and selected. The assistants and guards, as well as the director, are now all wearing wreaths of willow, each man having made his own wreath. This concludes the ceremony of selecting the tree, and the Director, his assistants, and the warriors or guards now file out of the grove and return to the camp. The ceremony was of about two hours duration. All the participants, according to Powder Face, an Arapaho informant who had long resided among the Gros ventres at Fort Belknap, were dressed for this occasion in their old war costumes. In 1906, when the selection of the tree was conducted by Nosey, the Assiniboin, a great crowd attended from the camp, and returned from the grove bearing branches of cottonwood and willow. In 1907 when the visiting Cree was Director of the ceremony of selecting the tree, only a few were present, but a great crowd attended the cutting down of the tree that year.

Sham battle on the site of the Sun Dance lodge. 1907. The Director, his assistants and the guards now return to the camp. They approach the camp from the west. In the center of the camp circle, and south of the tipi where the preparatory ceremonies of the Sun Dance are conducted, a large crowd is assembled. The crowd forms in a half circle, standing east and north of the spot on which the Sun Dance lodge is to be erected. All are dressed in their best clothes of buckskin, beaded or embroidered with porcupine quills, and fringed with weasel tails. The party returning from the selection of the tree for center pole now deploy in scout formation, and approach the site of the lodge from the south. Two of their number move ahead of the line of scouts and repair to the spot where the Sun Dance lodge is to be erected. These to represent the enemy. The enemy make camp and go to sleep. The rest of the scouts, representing the attacking party, advance, sending out pickets ahead of them. These pickets discover the enemy, and signal the attacking party to advance. The attacking party have their heads still wreathed with willow, cottonwood or sage brush. These wreathes, together with the crouching position assumed by the

party, serves to conceal their movements. When close to the enemy the line of attackers make a charge, yelling and firing as they advance. The attack is a complete surprise to the enemy, for one of them is "killed" as he sleeps, and the other is "killed" as he escapes from the battle. Copus are made upon the enemy. The enemy who tries to escape has a hand to hand encounter with his attackers. The on lookers give the war whoop, together with such other whoops and cries as their several tastes and abilities permit them. The victorious attackers now cross the battle ground, which is also the site of the Sun Dance lodge, and go to the side occupied by the spectators. The spectators now encircle the site of the battleground, and the attackers stand within the circle and recite their war stories, and recount their battle exploits. At this time presents are given to members of the war party, and other presents are exchanged among the spectators. These presents consist of clothing and provisions. Some impromptu feasting is indulged in. Many of the crowd carry branches of cottonwood, and many carry pieces of red, green and yellow cloth, such as is used later on to hang upon the center pole of the Sun Dance lodge. The disposition made of the cloth carried at this time was not noted. The ceremony of selecting the tree, and the sham battle in the Sun Dance of 1907 was observed with Mr. A.C.J. Farrell of New York.

1906. Cutting down of the center pole of the Sun Dance lodge. In 1907 the ceremonies attendant upon the cutting down of the center pole, conducted by a visiting Cree, were said to have been more elaborate than those conducted by Nosey in 1906, and a greater number of Indians attended, according to all reports. The 1907 ceremony was not observed. The 1906 ceremony of cutting down the tree was observed with Sumner Matteson, a photographer from Saint Paul, Minnesota, who took pictures of the same. In 1907 it was reported that the tree was cut down by women, which, it was said, was the way it should be done. In 1907 the center pole was dragged to the camp with lariats, pulled by men on horse back, which is the old time method of bringing in the center pole. The other poles as well as the brush used in constructing the Sun Dance lodge were dragged to camp at the ends of lariats, pulled by men on horse back, both in 1906 and 1907. Upon these occasions the men dragging the poles and brush each had a woman riding in the saddle before him. At the ceremony of cutting down the tree ~~observed~~ in 1907 many of the returning party carried sprigs or branches of cotton wood or willow, tied in their hair or attached to their horses. Upon this occasion many of the people and many of their horses were painted red or yellow, or both red and yellow. The following is an account of the cutting down of the center pole of the Sun Dance lodge as observed in 1906, and as conducted then by Nosey. At about eleven o'clock in the morning, the selection of the center pole having taken place about three hours previously, Nosey, mounted on a pony, and carrying an otter skin attached to a stick, entered the grove on the south bank of Milk River. He was dressed as if he were going on a scouting expedition. He wore grey blanket leggings, buckskin moccasins, and a shirt trimmed on the arms and sleeves with wisps of hair. He carried a pipe with a black stone bowl and a wooden stem, and with it a buckskin, beaded pipe bag, containing tobacco and a braid of sweet grass and a cleaning stick. He was ~~girded~~ girded about the middle with a grey blanket. His hair was very long, and to all appearances was unwashed, uncombed and unbraided, but its two long braids were held together by wrappings of fur. The two strands of hair came down over each shoulder, and were wrapped and held in place by these bands of fur, the hair being unbraided. It is reported that the length of his hair was increased by the addition of



false hair, and some of the Indians and whites round about state that Nosey's power resided in his hair. Following Nosey into the grove was a wagon drawn by two ponies. The wagon is of a type known locally as a "dead ax" wagon, that is, a wagon without springs, the wagon box ~~is~~ resting dead on the axles of the wagon. On this wagon the box had been removed, leaving only the axles, connected with the center tree or pole. The driver was perched on the front axle, and two other Indians rode on the center tree, holding on as best they could. These three Indians wear their ordinary clothing, which consists of a stetson hat, a white man's shirt, either blue or brown, and overhall trousers and moccasins. The selected tree had been previously marked with a band of willow, and the party, led by Nosey, approach the tree. The wagon stops a short distance to the south and west of the tree~~x~~, the road to the tree coming in from that direction. Nosey is accompanied by his assistants, and by a number of warriors or guards. Nosey dismounts and goes to the tree, where he is joined by his assistants and by the guards. Nosey crouches to the west of the tree and facing it, and brings out his pipe, sweet grass and smoking materials. There is no trace of a fire having been built previously near this spot. Nosey, holding the braid of sweet grass in his right hand now makes a prayer. As he prays the forefinger, middle finger and thumb of his left hand are extended, the other fingers of the hand remaining clenched. The gesture thus made is that of throwing or of flipping something into or at the base of the tree. Nosey then fills his pipe and a fire having been started to the south and west of the tree, a coal from the fire is brought to him by one of his assistants, and with it he lights his pipe and smokes. During the smoking of this pipe the assistants join Nosey, and take seats on either side of him, forming a semi circle, all facing the tree. Nosey is seated a bit forward of the line formed by this semi circle, and nearer to the tree. Nosey now carefully scrapes the dirt from around the roots of the tree, and an assistant goes to the fire and fetches live coals which are placed to the north, west, south and east of the trunk of the tree. Nosey takes the braid of sweet grass, and from it scrapes fragments of sweet grass upon the live coals. The smoke of the ~~insense~~ rises around the trunk of the tree. Meantime, cottonwood boughs are cut, and are placed to the south of the tree, in such a position that the tree will fall upon these boughs when it is cut down. Nosey and his assistants are dressed in much the same manner as were the Director and his assistants at the ceremony of selecting the tree which has already been described. Some wear sage brush wreaths, or wreaths of willow, over white cloth which is wrapped around, or folded over the head, like a kerchief. Others wear no wreaths. The man on the extreme left of the line wears a skin, with the furry side turned outward. The pipe is now finished by Nosey, and is cleaned, emptied, and refilled by him. It is then relighted from a live coal, and is passed from Nosey down the line to the man seated on the extreme left of the line, who smokes it and passes it to the man on his immediate right. (This is in error: The pipe is always passed from right to left in smoking). Thus each man in the line smokes in his turn until the pipe reaches the extreme right (left) of the line, who finishes the smoke. The pipe is then passed along the line to Nosey, who cleans, empties and refills it. The pipe is again lighted and passed and smokes by all of the men in the line as before. When Nosey's turn is reached he offers the stem of the pipe, that is points the mouth-piece, to the trunk of the tree before he smokes. The assistants now withdraw, with the exception of Nosey and five others. Nosey now takes his position at the northwest of the tree and facing it. Four men with

axes ready stand to the north, west, south and east of the tree. A man with a drawn knife stands at the at the south east of the tree. He holds the blade of the knife at a slant, the point toward the tree. The man with the knife then pushes the band of willow tied around the trunk of the tree upward with the point of his knife, thus moving the band away from the point on which the axes will strike. Nosey now sings a song, and the four axemen swing with their axes at the trunk of the tree, but do not strike the trunk. Nosey sings a second song, and a second feint is made at the tree trunk with the axes. A third song is sung by Nosey, and the axemen make a third feint at the tree trunk with their axes. Nosey sings a fourth song and the axemen strike the tree trunk with their axes. All now withdraw from the tree, except two of the axemen, one who stands at the north of the tree and the other who stands at the south of the tree. (Really the axemen standing east and west of the tree, as the tree is cut on its north and south faces, the southern cut being deeper, so that the tree will fall to the south. So the observation in the original notes was in error.) The two axemen now proceed to cut the tree down. The tree is so cut that in falling it rests upon the bed of cottonwood boughs prepared to the south of the tree, and meant to receive it. The tree is then trimmed of its branches, leaving, however, the necessary fork of three branches at the top for the Thunderbird nest. This is not a triple fork, but a forking of two branches, with a third branch forking again from the second fork. When the tree is trimmed it is ready for loading upon the wagon. During the ceremony Sumner Matteson, with his big tripod camera must have been a great annoyance to Nosey and his party. Matteson had all the nerve of a train robber. He would plant his tripod right up with one leg on the bed of branches, put the cloth over his head, squeeze the bulb, and fire away at point blank range. Just before making a prayer Nosey left his place and came up to where we stood, and pointing to me, said: "Whose papoose?" Matteson said "Logan." That reply probably saved Matteson, as Logan, the Superintendent of the Reservation, packed much weight with the Indians. During the ceremonies two cow punchers rode up, and keeping on their horses, watched the proceedings from a short distance. But when the tree was ready for loading, Nosey approached the punchers, Matteson and myself, and by signs indicated we could go to work and load the tree on the wagon, and help tie it on. We did so. But the job was not so good. On our way back to camp we passed Nosey and his party by the way. They were reloading the tree which we had tied on so carefully. It had fallen off the wagon. Perhaps the cow punchers had contrived that one. When the tree was loaded on the wagon, all departed from the grove.

Return to camp and preparation for the erection of the Sun Dance lodge. The party with the center pole, headed by Nosey, are met at the west of the camp circle by a great number of people on horseback. These Indians are dressed in their best buckskin beaded clothes, and are painted. Many are crowned with willow wreaths. The returning party, with the tree loaded on its wagon, are followed by this crowd, and turn right upon entering the camp circle, and proceed around the circle, along its inner rim, in a clockwise direction. All are shouting and singing. When the party reaches a point in the circle just north of the site of the Sun Dance lodge, they turn south and move on to the site. The center pole is there placed in position for elevation, with the forks pointed to the north, ~~and the butt near the hole prepared to receive it.~~ The pole is in a slanting position; supported near its crotch by a tripod of short poles. The hole for the butt is now dug



at a point very close to the end of the center pole, and one of the assistants steps off ten paces to the southward of this hole and marks a spot where a hole is dug for one of the wall and cross tree supports of the lodge. In like manner places are marked off and dug to receive the other side wall posts of the lodge. Meanwhile, men and women are preparing to bring in the poles, cottonwood boughs and choke cherry brush for the construction of the lodge. The choke cherry brush is used to build the screen in the lodge behind which the dancers stand. Apparently all of these materials have been previously cut and assembled at one point somewhere to the east of the camp. The poles and brush are dragged to the camp by horsemen, who use their lariats for this purpose. The horsemen ride double, each man having a woman in the saddle before him. All are dressed in their best costumes. On setting out to get the materials the riders are preceded by the warriors or guards who deploy in front of the main body of the riders. When the party is outside of the camp circle a scattered rifle fire is heard from the guards in advance of the body of riders.

1906-1907. Erection of the Sun Dance lodge and raising of center pole.

A bundle of cottonwood boughs is prepared and placed in the crotch formed by the branches at the top of the center pole. This bundle of cottonwood boughs is said by informants to be the Thunderbird's nest. A design is also cut into the bark of the center pole in such a position that it will face the entrance of the lodge when the pole is raised. The entrance of the lodge is to the south. This design was cut on the center pole of the lodge in 1906. No center pole carving is recalled on the center pole of the lodge in 1907. In 1906 the center pole was carved by an Assiniboin named Long Knife. The carving is accomplished by cutting away the bark of the tree down to the wood. This is done with an axe and a knife. The following was the design carved: Just below the crotch which forms the place for the Thunderbird's nest is carved a crescent, the horns pointed downward. Below the crescent is cut into the bark the image of a Thunderbird, wings outspread, tail fanshaped, beak pointed to the west, legs and claws outstretched. Below the Thunderbird is cut into the bark a crescent, the horns turned upward, and to the crescent, joining its outer curve is a trough which runs down the pole about three quarters of its entire length. In the middle of this trough there is a groove cut into the wood of the tree. The trough ends before reaching the carving of a buffalo head which is cut in to the bark of the center pole near its foot. Nostrils and eyes are cut into the wood of the tree at proper places, representing the nostrils and eyes of the buffalo. Informants state (1906) that this carving was made on the center pole of the Sun Dance lodges of the Assiniboins in times past. By the time this carving is completed (1906) and the post holes dug, the riders are bringing in the poles and brush for the ~~completion~~/construction of the lodge, dragging these materials at the ends of lariats. The side wall posts of the lodge are speedily erected, and the connecting poles between them are put in place, and the frame work of the lodge is almost completed, with the exception of one connecting pole left out to allow for the raising of the center pole, the center pole itself, and the roof poles, all of which are put in place when the center pole has been raised. Red, green and yellow strips of cloth are now attached to the center pole, hanging down from the Thunderbird's nest. Strips of cloth are also attached to some of the roof poles, which are soon to be set in place. The roof pole banners are placed on the poles that will be at the northeast, northwest, southeast and southwest roof poles of the lodge. All is now ready for the elevation of the center pole of the lodge.

The center pole is now elevated (1906-1907) while mounted men fire their rifles in the air, and amid a chorus of war whoops, and yells. There is general rejoicing. The north cross pole is put in place, and the roof poles are laid on, and the frame work of the lodge is completed. The poles are secured in place at their points of junction with green rawhide strips. Boughs of cottonwood are now banked at the sides of the lodge, leaving a triple entrance at the south. (1906-1907). Inside the lodge a fire is built to the east of the center pole, and a screen of choke cherry branches is erected around the northern half of the lodge. This screen is about waist high, and is about four feet out from the wall of the lodge. It is held up by willow supports. It has an entrance in its center, that is, opposite to the south entrance of the lodge. Back of this screen, at the entrance into it, will later be placed the buffalo skull brought into the lodge from the secret tipi. Strips of canvas are laid across the roof beams or poles of the lodge, and are so placed as to cover the places behind the screen where the dancers will stand, thus affording them shade from the sun. The lodge is now ready. (1906-1907). On the night of the opening of the lodge both in 1906 and 1907 the white visitors were permitted to sit just in front of the dancers screen for the opening ceremony. But these seats throughout the following days and nights of the ceremony are reserved for the chiefs and headmen, and prominent visiting Indians, and the white visitors are seated at the south of the lodge, near the entrance, with the women and children, and Indians of lesser standing and note. Even the Superintendent and white visitors, some of them of distinction and prominence, were thus seated near the entrance of the lodge.

1906-1907. Opening of Sun Dance lodge and commencement of the dance. It is night before the lodge is completed. The dancers and the singers and drummers come in and take their places. The dancers are behind the screen, putting on their paint, and testing their whistles. The drummers and singers are seated east of the center pole, near the fire. In 1906 a guard was placed at the western doorway of the south entrance of the lodge, so that no one would cross the trail which is to be taken in entering the lodge by Nosey and his assistants when they come from the secret tipi. There is apparently no objection to visitors using the other two entrances in the south wall of the lodge. When all is ready Nosey and his party enter the lodge, the guard withdrawing from his place. Headed by Nosey the party proceeds directly across the lodge to the entrance in the choke cherry brush screen, and disappear behind the screen. This course was likewise followed by the Director and his party in 1907. The party comes from the secret tipi which is north of the lodge and slightly to the west of it. The Sun Dance party, consisting of the Director and his assistants carry the buffalo skull, wrapped in a blanket, and other objects wrapped in blankets, whose nature cannot be determined. They also carry a rawhide, which is of dried buffalo hide. There are no women in the party of the Director and his assistants. One of the assistants appears from behind the screen with a paddle shaped piece of wood, with which he procures live coals from the fire. He places these live coals at the north, west, south and east of the base of the center pole, and then places sweet grass incense upon the coals. The assistant then procures more coals and makes with them a trail of four coals(?) from the south door of the lodge to the place where the drummers and singers are seated to the east of the center pole. These coals are spaced several feet apart. The Director now appears with a rawhide, which is a buffalo hide. This hide is shaved clean of its hair, except for a ridge down the back, from the neck to the root of the tail, and is folded along this ridge, the hairy side being outward.



Standing with the coals between him and the center pole, the Director holds the hide folded in half over the coals. His right hand holds the hide near the neck, and his left near the root of the tail. The tail is away from the drummers, and the forward part of the hide is pointed toward the drummers. The Director carried the hide slowly and carefully over the trail of coals to the place where the drummers and singers are seated. When he reaches the end of the trail of coals he makes a feint as if to throw the hide among the drummers. This feint is then repeated ~~three~~ times, and on the fourth pass with the hide he throws it among the drummers. These strike the rawhide with an irregular roll and raise a great shout. Some strike the rawhide while others beat an irregular roll upon their hand drums. The irregular roll on the hide and drums turns into a regular beat, and the shout then becomes a song. Then there is a pause, and a second song is begun, some beating the hide and others beating their hand drums. At the third song some of the dancers make their first appearance, but it is not until several songs have been sung that all of the dancers are on their feet. The entrance of the secret tipi party headed by the Director, and the opening of the lodge by the throwing of the rawhide was the same both in 1906 and 1907.

1906-1907. Method of dancing. Painting. Fasting. Duration of dance. vows.

The dancers, for the most part, dance looking at the Thunderbird's nest, or at some point in that direction. This position demands that they hold the head well back in dancing, and as many dance with the body bent forward, this position requires that the head be held back at even a more acute angle. The feet of the dancers do not move from the ground and do not change position during the dance, but the knees are flexed, and the body thus moved up and down in time to the drums. Two of the Cree dancers in 1907 were observed jumping up and down, stiff legged, in time to the drums. In time with this movement the dancers blow their eagle bone whistles in unison. The whistles do not have a shrill note, but rather a deep and metallic sound. The whistles of the dancers keep a certain uniform rythm, and do not always follow the time set by the drums. At times the drums cease their beat, and the singers continue the chant, with the whistles of the dancers keeping the time. At other times the male singers allow a chorus of women who sit to the south of them, to continue the chant, the drums having ceased beating, and the dancers keeping the time with their whistles. In 1907 some of the Cree dancers looked straight ahead while dancing, and this was done both in 1906 and 1907 by many of the Assiniboin and Gros Ventre dancers. Some of the dancers, who were evidently old timers who had been through the dance many times, put very little movement into their dance and do not waste effort. These veterans were still dancing without any trace of exhaustion, when many of their companions had fallen out of the dance, or were showing great exhaustion and distress, due to the lack of food, water and sleep. The two Cree dancers observed in 1907 performed most vigorously, looking straight ahead as they danced, and jumping up and down stiff legged and in quick time, in perfect unison with each other. These two were painted sky blue all over, and had fluffy white plumes stuck to their bodies. Some of the dancers hold braids of sweet grass in their hands, or eagle feathers, or fans of eagle wings. Others hold no objects, but keep their hands clenched. Some dancers held their elbows well out from their bodies, moving the elbows up and down with a sort of wing motion, in harmony with their movements in the dance. As time went on many of the dancers held on to the willow uprights that supported the choke cherry brush screen in front of them, their weakened condition demanding such support. There was no uniformity in the painting of the dancers.

As far as was observed the body paint of the dancers was not changed during the dance in 1906 and 1907, although it may have been touched up from time to time. Red Sun circles on a yellow background; zig-zag red lines; red tear marks under the eyes; Thunderbirds painted in dark blue or black on the faces of some of the dancers; buffalo heads or skulls painted over the mouths of other dancers, which resembled black Van Dykes, with the whistles protruding from them, were some of the paint designs observed. In 1907 Thunderbirds painted on the face appeared a favorite design. No white body paint was observed. For many of the dancers a fluffy white plume in the hair served for head adornment. Like plumes were attached to the ends of the Sun Dance whistles. These whistles were attached to the dancer's necks with a cord, and when not in use hung down on the chest. Some of the Cree dancers wore wreaths of sage brush. An old Cree, observed in 1907, who, from his manner appeared to be the veteran of many Sun Dances, had his face painted black and wore a wreath of sage brush. The old fellow dances slowly and stolidly, and was evidently unaffected by hunger, thirst or loss of sleep at a time when many of his fellow dancers were showing signs of great fatigue and distress as a result of their vigil and fast. When one or two dancers are called out in front of the choke cherry brush screen and are given a present to dance and pray for some one, they generally follow the movements of the dance with the flexing of the knees only. The head of the dancer is bowed in prayer at such times, and his arms are engaged either in holding the gift he has received, or are held clasped in front of the body. They do not generally use their eagle bone whistles when out in front of the screen in this prayer dance. But occasionally dancers when called upon to come out in front and give a prayer dance for someone will go through with the regular dance routine. It is understood that the dancers abstain from food, drink and sleep throughout the period of the dance, which, in 1906 and 1907 was two days and three nights. The appearance of many of the dancers in 1906 and 1907 indicated that not only was this a requirement, but that the requirement had been fully complied with. The dancers were not subjected to the customary mutilations or torture in either of the dances observed. It is understood that the last known occasion upon which the Sun Dancers were subjected to torture in Northern Montana was in a Sun Dance held near Great Falls in 1891. Little Eggs, a Cree, was director of that Sun Dance. Assiniboin informants state that in the good old days the dancers were tortured upon the last day of the dance. This torture consisted of cutting slits in the breasts of the dancers and running pegs of wood through the slits. A loop was then thrown over the peg of wood on each breast, and the other end of the cord which formed this loop was attached to the center pole. It then became the dancer's duty to tear himself loose, by jumping or pulling backward. Sometimes friends might assist in this, as the skin of the breast will stretch a great deal before it tears, and if the pegs are inserted to any depth in the muscles, tearing loose is not so easy. The Crees, as well as the Mandans, did not require the dancers to tear loose. They hung them up to the roof trees of the lodge, and let them swing and kick until gravity tore them loose. The Assiniboin say that only those dancers were subjected to the torture who had vowed to undergo it. It was not obligatory to take such a vow. It was all up to the dancer. Like vows were taken whereby a finger, or two fingers would be sacrificed by amputation. This was done by laying the finger across a log of wood, while a friend with a knife and a stone maul or a rock with which to hammer the back of the blade of the knife went to work. Amputation was at the first or second joint, as a rule.



Her dream was that she saw the child returning to the Assiniboin camp with a pipe, that is, with the stem of a pipe. So the child was named Returns With The Pipe. The father, bearing the child, and the mother, take position to the west of the center pole. The gifts are laid down. The old men come forward and the father lifts the child in his arms. The old men pray over the child, lifting up their hands as if to grasp the sun light, and then opening their hands over the child as if to spread the sun rays over the body, and passing their hands up and down over the child as if spreading the sun rays over the body. The name of the child is announced, and the gifts are given, and the father, mother and child leave the lodge. Major Logan, the Agent, says that the white father of this child is married to a Gros Ventre woman. The father speaks only Gros ventre, and has lived with that tribe most of his life. The Gros ventres say that he wandered into their camp alone when he was a very small boy, and a Gros ventre family took him in and raised him. No one knows who his people were, and he has never known any other way of life than that of an Indian.

1906. Dance of Condolence. Cloud Eyes entered the Sun Dance lodge carrying a photograph of his dead son. He brings gifts with him, and as he walks into the lodge he holds his son's picture before him, and sings a death song, and cries. His family accompany him, the women bearing the gifts. The drummers beat their drums and sing a song, and the dancers rise in their places and give a prayer dance for Cloud Eyes' son. The gifts are made in honor of Cloud Eyes' son, and in his memory. It is also probably that the prayer given in the prayer dance is that such calamities as the loss of his son may not strike Cloud Eyes in the future. But many of the dancers, influenced by the teachings of the Black Robe Catholic Missionaries, may have prayed to Thunder for Cloud Eyes' son. In 1907 a prayer dance was given in the Sun Dance lodge for Nosey.

Prayer Dances. 1906-1907. The prayer dances are held for many purposes. Generally a family group enters the lodge bearing gifts. One, and sometimes two, dancers are called out from behind the screen and receive these gifts. Many times the gifts are brought into the lodge on the backs of horses. The horses are unloaded and all upon their backs are given away. Occasionally the horses are given away as well. The dancer or dancers called out stand before the center pole, between it and the choke cherry screen, but they never stand on a line between the center pole and the buffalo skull which lies back of the screen, at the point of the entrance through the screen. The drummers then commence a song, beating time with their hand drums, and all the dancers back of the screen rise in their places and go through the regular dance. The dancer or dancers called out before the screen dance with the gifts they have received held in their arms, and with heads bowed before the center pole. Generally they do not blow their whistles while doing this dance before the screen. But the dancers standing up back of the screen blow their whistles in the regular manner.

War stories and gift giving. 1906-1907. It is not recalled that war stories were told or that coups were counted in the Sun Dance lodge either in 1906 or in 1907. There was a great deal of gift giving. These people are naturally generous to their friends, and upon the occasion of the Sun Dance they outdo themselves in generosity. Visiting Indians receive many gifts, and some poor Indians likewise receive gifts. One Assiniboin made many gifts in honor of his daughter, who was his only child. In this manner much valuable property is given away in the Sun Dance lodge. The gifts consisted of some horses, many blankets and garnished robes, beaded shirts and leggings, carrots of tobacco, and

cloth. No feasting took place in the Sun Dance lodge either in 1906 or 1907, and it was observed that food was not among the gifts given. 1907. Bringing down rain from the center pole. It was stated by Major Logan that this feat was performed by Nosey, the former Director of the Sun Dance during his lifetime. In 1907 a Cree Indian was director of the ceremonies, Eyes in the Water, an Assiniboin, having attempted to get the position and having failed to do so. Eyes in the Water had been disqualified because of a storm which had blown down part of the camp, as has been previously stated. Eyes in the Water therefore attempted to re-instate himself by performing in the 1907 Sun Dance lodge old Nosey's feat of making rain come down the center pole. The weather was clear and bright. Eyes in the Water entered the Sun Dance lodge. He carried in his right hand an eagle skin and in his left hand a large bunch of sage brush. Live coals were placed at the foot of the center pole to the north, west, south and east, and on these coals was placed sweet grass incense. Eyes in the Water wore no distinctive costume or paint. The smoke arose from the coals as the sweet grass was consumed. The drummers started a new song, and the dancers arose in their places and began their dance. Both drummers, singers and dancers put much feeling and action into what they were doing. Eyes in the Water first held the eagle skin aloft, and then struck the center pole with the bundle of sage brush in his left hand. Dust flew from the sage brush when he struck the pole with it. Eyes in the Water began a dance, with a shuffling step. He danced around the center pole to the left from the entrance, and on the farthest side of the lodge from the drummers and singers. Major Logan, the Indian Agent at Fort Belknap, and Captain Ryan, Naval Attache of the British Embassy in Washington, were seated in the front row of people, to the left of the entrance. These two had bet Eyes in the Water five dollars he could not bring rain down the center pole. The money was layed on the ground, and Major Logan had one foot on the money lest it also disappear under the strength of Eyes in the Water's medicine. Eyes in the Water danced in front of the white guests and the people. He buried his face in the tips of the sage brush and made hideous faces, and appeared to be chewing the sage brush. He worked his mouth and lips violently, continuing meanwhile to dance. After a few minutes spent in dancing and chewing into the sage brush bundle, he appeared satisfied with the result, and swung the bundle in the direction of the white visitors and other spectators, and water sprinkled from the tips of the sage brush all over the people. A.C.J. Farrell, of New York, who was present explained that sage brush is highly irritant. That in the old days the Indians used it as a styptic for wounds received in battle. Sage brush stuffed into a wound would produce irritation and swelling, and the swelling stopped the bleeding. He claimed that when sage brush is chewed it will produce an active flow of saliva, and that by chewing the bundle of sage brush Eyes in the Water was able to produce enough saliva to soak the tips of the brush, and thus sprinkle the people. Neither Logan nor Ryan were convinced that they had received five dollars worth of water, but a shower just then came up from nowhere, and saved Eyes in the Water's professional reputation and won his bet for him. 1906-1907. End of the Sun Dance and abandonment of the lodge. It is reported that on the last day of the Sun Dance, at the conclusion of the ceremony the dancers ~~the~~ go out to meet and dance to the rising sun. This was not observed either in 1906 or 1907, but the source of this information as to the concluding dance, Major Logan, appears to be reliable. When the Sun Dance is ended, the participants leave the lodge, wash off their paint, and return to their tipis and take refreshment



and rest. The sacred objects in the lodge, such as the buffalo skull, buffalo hide, and pipes, are returned to their proper custodians. No such objects are to be found in an abandoned Assiniboin Sun Dance lodge. The Agency authorities, according to Major Logan, and the Indians, used the wood of the abandoned lodge for winter fire wood, and to this use the Indians seemed to have no objection. But the center pole and Thunderbird's nest could not be touched, and were left standing. In 1904 or 1905 a center pole was cut down by an Agency employee, and to this the Indians objected. The pole was therefore left where it had fallen. These center poles are left standing until weather and decay cause them to fall. As no center poles which had fallen from natural causes were seen on the camp site, it is believed that once such a pole has fallen, that there is no objection to taking it away and making use of it. It is believed that the cloth offerings attached to the center pole are likewise left untouched, but these soon disappear due to action of weather.

1906-1907. White visitors at the Sun Dance. In 1906 Mrs. Thomas H. Carter and John and Hugh Carter were the guests of Major Logan, Indian Agent at Fort Belknap, and Mrs. Logan, and stopped at the Major's quarters at the Agency. There were also present the Major's two daughters, Frances and Janet. Visiting the Agency at the time was Sumner Matteson, a photographer of Saint Paul, Minnesota. Mr. Hanna was Chief Clerk of the Agency. Bill Berry was Chief of Indian Police. Bill Berry is an Assiniboin. In 1907 a larger party visited the Agency for the Sun Dance, and Major Logan provided a number of wall tents pitched in front of the Agency buildings for sleeping accommodations and a cook tent and mess tent back of the Agency buildings where the party was fed. This year Powder Face, the Arapaho was Chief of Indian Police. The visiting party consisted of: Mrs. Thomas H. Carter, Mrs. Thomas J. Walker, sister of Mrs. Carter, John and Hugh Carter, Eddie Crawford, Captain and Mrs. Ryan, Captain Ryan being Naval Attache of the British Embassy in Washington, Miss Ella Lorraine Dorsey, and Mr. A.C.J. Farrell of New York City. Photographs were taken in 1906 by Sumner Matteson, with a large old fashioned tripod camera, and in 1907 by Mrs. Walker with a Brownie camera. My notes on the Sun Dance were not taken on the spot, but were written up in Helena, Montana, soon after returning there, while memory of the ceremonies was still fresh. In 1906 and 1907 Bushy Head, Otter Robe, Running Fisher were among the head men of the Gros ventre. In 1906 Nosey was an important medicine man among the Assiniboin, who laughed at him when at the Agency, but treated him with respect down in the camp. Also among the Assiniboin headmen were Horned Weasel, Horse Boy, Little Chief, Rattle Snake Bear, Boy Chief, and many others. The Superior at Saint Pauls Mission was Father Piet, S.J., and with him was Father Siam, S.J. Brother Gallegos was a lay brother of the Jesuits, and was also at the Mission. John Buckman, a Gros Ventre was the carpenter and interpreter at the Mission. There was a trading store back of the Agency run by a white man, and next to it was a Restaurant run by a Chinaman, who was married to a Gros Ventre woman. Their son was an interpreter at the Agency, and spoke Gros Ventre with a fine Cantonese lilt to it. In 1907 there were five Sicilian laborers at the Mission. They sang Neopolitan street songs very well. There was also an Irishman there who had come over to look after his brother's children. The brother and their Gros Ventre mother had died. Father Piet was French, Father Siam was swiss, and Brother Gallegos was a Spaniard from Barcelona. There was also a Gros ventre at the Mission named Blackbird, who was half negro. Guissepi was the boss of the Sicilians. We did not go down to the Mission in 1906, but did in 1907.