

Time of Dance. July 5, 6 and 7, 1908. (Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.)

Indians. Rocky Boy's Band, consisting of Chippewa, Plains Cree, and Red River Half Breeds, or Metis. Linguistic Stock, Algonquin. Culture, Buffalo hunting, plains culture, dominant.

Location of camp. On the ~~north~~ side of Helena Avenue, west of the junction of South Rodney street with Helena Avenue.

The camp: Consisted of wall tents, not pitched in a camp circle. Most of the wall tents were in an irregular line and faced east. The tents were old, and the camp was dirty, and the people very poor. The camp numbered about two hundred or two hundred and fifty men, women and children. There were many mixed bloods, the Metis being mixed bloods consisting of French Canadians, mingled with the blood of many tribes, principally Chippewa, Cree, and Assiniboin, and some Mandan, Arickari and Minitari. There was one squaw man in camp, a scotchman. The people are poor, ragged, shabby and dirty. They constitute a wandering and unattached band of poor Indians and mixed bloods, under the leadership of Rocky Boy, a Chippewa. They live off of the offal thrown out by different slaughter houses throughout the Eastern part of Montana, and by money obtained from sale of small Indian trinkets, and by casual and occasional labor. On this occasion they were paid by the Committee in charge of the Helena Fourth of July celebration to put on an Indian show and a Sun Dance, and are allowed to charge admission, twenty five cents or two bits, to the Sun Dance. The Cree element in the camp brought the Sun Dance to this band. The Chippewa never had the Sun Dance, and the Metis are neither white men nor Indians, in the strict sense of the word, but a people apart, and are nominally, at least, Roman Catholics.

Director of Sun Dance: Is Little Bear, a Cree Indian, and a member of Rocky Boy's band. It is believed that Little Bear's helpers, or assistants were drawn from the Cree element in the camp, but that the Chippewa and Canadian or Red River Half Breeds, the Metis, took part in the Sun Dance as dancers.

Not observed: The ceremonies of the Secret lodge, and the selection and cutting down of the center pole were not observed. The formation of the camp and the erection of the secret lodge was not observed. I did not have an interpreter or an informant or informants for this ceremony, but talked to a few of the Indians, and later met the head men with Little Bear and Rocky Boy in council.

Observed: The bringing in of the center pole and materials to build the lodge, and the raising of the center pole and the erection of the lodge. The opening of the lodge, and the Sun Dance.

Photographs: None were taken. Some sketches were taken.

Transportation of these Indians. No Red River carts observed. They have horses, and ordinary dead ax wagons. Not a great many of either, but just enough for them to get around. They have some dogs.

Costumes. Women mostly dressed in old calico and the men wear overalls, old cloth trousers, and shirts. White men's hats are worn. Men and women wear plain moccasins. Such bead work as is in evidence is of the flower Chippewa design, and not the geometric design used by the plains tribes. Men for the most part wear the hair long, and in braids. Younger men have the hair cut short.

Location of Sun Dance lodge. The lodge was located south of the camp, and close to Helena Avenue. The tents of the camp were north of the lodge. The entrance of the lodge faced south. Secret lodge location was not observed, but it is probable that it was north and west of the Sun Dance lodge. A board fence was built around the Sun Dance lodge, and admission was charged beginning with the opening of the dance. The fence was completed as the lodge was completed. At the same time.

Bringing in of the center pole and materials for the lodge. On visiting the camp on Sunday afternoon, July 5th, there were a number of Indians seated at the site of the lodge smoking. They were seated near the post hole prepared for the center pole. One Indian smoked after first turning the pipe so that its mouthpiece described a clockwise circle. The pipe was then used as a yard stick to measure the distance from the center pole excavation to the point where it was desired to dig the first hole east of the center pole for one of the wall supports of the lodge. This distance was measured off in pipe lengths, and the hole was dug. Other holes were then dug for the posts which were to form the wall posts of the lodge. Some of the poles for the lodge were already on the ground, and the wooden fence, about seven feet high, which was to surround the lodge was completed, except for the north side, and part of the east side. The procession bringing the center pole was observed approaching from the north east, up Helena Avenue, from the direction of the Northern Pacific Railroad Station. Most of Rocky Boy's band appear to have been in that procession. The wagon bearing the center pole was in the lead. The pole was embedded in cottonwood boughs. The wagon box had been removed. Other wagons followed carrying other poles, and brush. A mounted escort of Indians accompanied the wagons, and they were shouting and singing as they rode up Helena Avenue. The road was dry, and a cloud of dust followed the procession. On reaching the camp the procession swung to the north side of the Avenue, and to the camp, going east of the site of the lodge. The center pole was unloaded, and placed with its butt near the hole prepared to receive it, the two branches forming the fork pointing to the north, forks east and west. The pole was placed in a semirecumbent position, supported by a tripod of short poles placed just under the crotch which formed the starting point of the two branched forming the fork. The other poles and brush were unloaded.

Decoration and raising of center pole and construction of lodge. Black and red paint is mixed with tallow. A black band is painted encircling the center pole just below the crotch, and some feet below that is painted a red band, also encircling the pole. Below this red band, some feet, is painted another black band. Another red band is painted around the pole some feet below this. Another black band is some feet below this, and near the foot of the pole another red band is painted around the pole. The cottonwood boughs forming the Thunderbird nest are placed in the crotch forming the two forks of the pole, and are tied in place. Banners are hung upon the center pole. Meantime the side posts have been erected, and connected with their cross poles, with the exception of the north and south cross poles which are not put in place until the center pole is raised. Amid shouts and songs the center pole is raised into place, and the north and south cross poles are put on. The roof poles of the lodge are then laid, the ends running through the Thunderbird's nest, their butts resting on the cross poles which connect the side wall posts. Boughs of cottonwood are banked against the sides of the lodge, leaving a triple entrance to the south, and the brush screen behind which the dancers are to stand is constructed inside the lodge. This screen is almost breast high, and runs around the northern half of the lodge, about four feet out from the outer wall of the lodge. It has an entrance at its central point, which is a point due north of the center pole.

Entrance of Sun Dance party into lodge. Not observed.

Opening of the lodge, and interior plan of lodge. The board fence around the Sun Dance lodge was completed at about the same time as the lodge was completed. The crowd of white spectators were admitted upon the payment of twenty five cents each. The south part of the lodge, near the entrance was roped off from the rest of the lodge for their accommodation. When admitted, the Sun Dance party were already in the lodge.



There is a large fire in the lodge, north and slightly to the east of the center pole, and midway between the center pole and the dancers screen. To the east of the center pole are seated the drummers and singers. South of these, after the opening of the lodge, are seated women who assist in the singing from time to time. On the night of the opening of the lodge a small fire was built to the south and east of the center pole, about half way between the center pole and the entrance of the lodge. There were some calico offerings on the center pole, hung like banners, but these were few in number, due to the poverty of these people. A dried hide, folded down the middle of the back lies to the east of the entrance. A helper procures live coals from the fire to the south of the center pole and lays a trail of coals from the east of the entrance of the lodge, near the outer wall, to the place where the drummers are seated. Little Bear comes forward and picks up the dried hide, the neck of the hide toward the drummers, and holding the hide between him and the center pole. His right hand holds the hide near the neck, and his left hand holds it near the tail. He carries the hide slowly over the trail of coals until he comes near the drummers. He then recites a prayer in a loud voice, and offers the hide to the drummers. He makes a second prayer and again offers the hide to the drummers, and then a third prayer, and a third time offers the hide to the drummers. He makes a fourth prayer, and throws the hide among the drummers, who beat the hide and raise a shout. They also beat a roll on their hand drums and shouted after each of the first three offerings of the hide to them. After beating the hide and shouting for a time, the drummers begin a song. After singing and drumming for a time the dancers rise in their places, and moving up and down, blow their whistles toward the Thunderbirds nest. Soon the dancers are all on their feet, dancing and whistling in unison, and in time with the drum beat. Women dancers are behind the screen in the eastern part of the lodge. The dancers are not naked, as are the Assiniboin dancers, but wear their shirts. There is not much face paint, and there is no body paint visible. There are no head ornaments, and the dancers carry nothing in their hands. It is not known if the dance continued all night or not.

The dance. During the dance no gift giving or other activities were noted in the Sun Dance lodge. It is not known whether the fast was rigidly observed or not. Rocky Boy's band of Indians are extremely poor. The Sun Dance was not a ceremony used by the Chippewa and Red River Half breed members of the band. The construction of the lodge, and its interior arrangement is identical to that of the Assiniboin lodge at Fort Belknap as observed in 1906 and 1907. But the Assiniboin lodge had a center pole carving, and the Rocky Boy lodge run by Little Bear the Cree used a paint design on the center pole composed of black and red bands of paint, six such bands, alternately. In talking to a young member of the band he laughed and said that the white people wanted the Indians to ride naked in the Fourth of July parade up main street. This the band refused to do, not caring to take off their shirts. They wore their shirts in the Sun Dance as well. These Indians apparently do not care to go about in their hides, as do other Indians. It may be the French Canadian in them.

Council with Rocky Boy's Band. On Wednesday, July 8, Rocky Boy, Little Bear, the Scotch squaw man, some Red River mixed bloods, and other members of the band came to our house in Helena, at 644 Bearborn Avenue and held a council on the front lawn with my father. I attended the council. They want the United States to give them a reservation and an agent, or else to provide them with a place on some existing reservation. They are tired of wandering, and find living hard.