

Sitting Bull - Saville Ledger

The "City-Boo" elision is from the mouth of the Hunkpapa, Sitting Bull the BAD (Ass), while he was touring with Bill Cody in 1885. But it turns out that not surprisingly, the Oglala and Hunkpapa Sitting Bulls were commonly confused, and from an early date. On July 13, 1876, hardly a week after the U.S. had learned of the Custer Massacre and had the name "Sitting Bull" seared into the national consciousness, an enterprising reporter for the *New York Daily Graphic* learned of five drawings attributed to "Sitting Bull", and was among the first to confuse the two men. These were reportedly then in the Smithsonian collections. I do not find them in the National Anthropological Archives Online inventory. They may be in the Museum of Natural History collection, not much of which is yet Online.

I've attached the five engravings from the *Daily Graphic*. You will be pleased to learn that the artist was YOUR guy, the "GOOD Oglala," and four of the five drawings **duplicate** vignettes from the collection of Agent Saville. These were obtained even earlier, in 1870. While lacking color, we can see the same shield depicted in the Saville drawings, with horizontal center band, blue top and yellow bottom. With these helpful clues, we now gain the context for your drawing #17, when Sitting Bull was shot four or more times and his horse was shot 8 times: the Fetterman Massacre near Fort Phil Kearny, W.T., 21 December 1866.

As I originally suggested, most of the events occurred in the context of the Powder River War and subsequent Red Cloud's War, 1865-1867. Your drawing #12, featuring a foot charge by Sitting Bull on army artillery, and depicted twice in the *Daily Graphic*, occurred Sept. 1, 1865, near present Dayton, Wyoming, close to the Montana line and about 15 miles northwest of Sheridan. The James Sawyers expedition was surveying the Bozeman Trail, to Virginia City. Stopping at the newly-

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founded Fort Connor, an escort was added to Sawyers' civilians, a unit of the 6th Michigan Volunteer Cavalry with two "three-inch-rifled cannon," the so-called Parrott guns which could hurl a nine-inch canister of case shot about 2,000 yards. While crossing Tongue River at midday on September 1st, the expedition was attacked by Indians. "The cavalry unlimbered a howitzer, while Sawyers corralled the wagons."

I've attached photos of a Parrott gun and its case shell, which "*...was loaded with lead or iron balls and was designed to burst above and before the enemy line, showering down many small but destructive projectiles on the enemy.*" It is amazing to me that Sitting Bull in two of the Saville drawings was able to depict the shape of the UNEXPLODED case shells so accurately; while also showing the contents as they exploded in all directions. Note that the two *Daily Graphic* drawings show him running a meandering course into the teeth of the cannonfire, then lying prone behind his shield to fire on the cannoneers---the explanation for how he was able to see these details of artillery practice.

Your drawings #6 & #10, which originally were on facing pages, duplicate the *Daily Graphic* image of Sitting Bull leading three mules out of a barn while under fire from the nearby sod ranch house. This may memorialize one of several attacks near Fort Reno, W.T., when mules specifically were stolen during August-September, 1866.

The Saville drawing #9 may depict the event described by Margaret Carrington near Fort Phil Kearny, three months prior to the Fetterman Massacre (*Ab-sa-ra-ka, or Land of Massacre*):

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"Sept. 23, 1866 Lieutenant Matson, with an escort bringing wagons from the hay field...found upon the road the body of contractor Grull, who had been to Fort C.F. Smith with public stores, and was killed on his return with two of his drivers." The Saville drawing depicts the bodies of three Whitemen lying in a demarcated path, and trampled by the hoof prints of a large war party.

Both Connor and Cole during the Powder River campaign had Pawnee scouts. Reviewing the military accounts will probably allow us to specify events for Saville's drawings #5, 7 & 14. The joint composition of #8 & #16 depicts an attack on a Pawnee earthlodge village, which probably occurred earlier, in Nebraska.

The drawings, as you have arranged them in the Drop-Box storage, are not in their proper order. In the following list, the first number is the Drop-Box sequence, 2 - 18; followed by Saville's pagination either in ink, or inferred where possible from a contiguous half of the same composition.

2 - [p. 6] This depicts a "brave-heart" run along an entrenched, enemy position on the edge of a well-traveled road, almost certainly the Bozeman Trail (upper right). The large number of rifles denotes that the enemy force are Whitemen, probably soldiers. The purpose of the run was to empty the enemy's single-shot Springfield carbines, so that other Lakota might safely countercharge. Bay mare w/white stockings; Horse paint: yellow circles on shoulders, hips & jaws, with stripe along spine; personal war lance with 2 tabs of 3 tiers of feathers.

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3 - [p. 4] A Lakota attack on an enemy Indian tipi village, either Crow or Shoshone. Bay mare w/white stockings, unpainted; *Cante T'inza* (Strong Heart) Warrior Society lance banner of black & white feathers. As Sitting Bull is known to have been a member of the *Wiciska* Warrior Society, this appears to be a depiction of one of his relatives or war comrades; and the warrior's shield is entirely different than the several depictions of Sitting Bull's blue & yellow shield.

4 - [p. 8] Personal tally of battle wounds & war-damaged possessions: 5 personal wounds, 4 caused by bullets and 1 by an arrow; 9 wounds to his horses (bleeding horse tracks); damaged shield, shirt, blanket (stripes at each end), quiver & parfleche cylinder case for a headdress. This was probably the container in which Sitting Bull carried the stuffed hawk skin worn on his head in one of the *Daily Graphic* engravings. Note that he shows himself wounded and supported on two canes. Caption: Represents the number of wounds *scored* in all the [battles?].

5 - [p. 7] Brindle buckskin mare. In the *Daily Graphic* engraving of Sitting Bull counting coup on 4 dead soldiers, his horse is a brindle buckskin gelding. The depiction here is probably the outer cover of his war shield, with two golden eagle feathers affixed to a red background, and a blue band at the top circumference. Sitting Bull charges a line of mounted Pawnee Scouts and shoots one of their horses in the rump.

6 - [p. 15] [Faces #10] Attack on a ranch with sod buildings & surrounding, walled corral. This forms the right half of the same composition shown in the *Daily Graphic*. In the Saville version, the projections on the roof have the appearance of crosses; while in the *Daily Graphic* engraving the

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center adornment is a rack of elk antlers.

7 - [p. ?] [Faces #14] Attack on a Pawnee war party of 14 men. All are armed with bows & arrows, except one (shown on p. 14) who has fired a rifle from behind a hill. Their lack of firearms denotes that these cannot have been scouts for General Patrick Connor's Powder River Expedition, so the encounter probably occurred in Nebraska, earlier than 1865.

8 - [p. 25] [Faces #16] A Lakota attack on a Pawnee earthlodge village. The Sioux began by running off some of the Pawnee horse herds, which drew men out from the village, both on horseback and afoot, to initiate the personal duels shown on p. 16.

9 - [p. ?] Three Whitemen were killed on a wide trail and overrun by a large war party. Two lines of Indian horsemen were hidden along each side of the road, when the Whites arrived. For a short time they defended themselves from the circular position shown mid-road, but were chased down and killed a short distance away. This probably documents the death of an Army hay contractor named Grull and two of his employees who were killed by Lakota on 23 September 1866, and their trampled bodies left lying in the road to Ft. C.F. Smith, a short distance from Ft. Phil Kearny, W.T. (mentioned by Margaret Carrington, *Ab-sa-ra-ka, or Land of Massacre*).

10 - [p. 16] [Faces #6] While other Lakota attack the adjacent, sod ranch house shown on p. 6, Sitting Bull enters the barn and steals three mules. His brindle buckskin mare awaits his return; his blue/yellow war shield has been left temporarily on the ground. Vignette repeated in one of the *Daily*

Graphic engravings.

11 - [p. 20] A Lakota attack on a U.S. Army tent bivouac. This undoubtedly occurred during the late-summer of 1865, and the enemies are soldiers of General Patrick Connor's Powder River Expedition. Sitting Bull crawls within arrow range of one of Connor's Parrott guns, while two teams of artillerymen lob exploding case shells into the Lakota positions. A close review of the Army reports ought to pinpoint the exact occasion and date.

12 - [p. 25] A Lakota and Northern Arapaho attack on the Sawyers Surveying Expedition, where the Bozeman Trail crossed Tongue River near present Dayton, Wyoming, 1 September 1865. The artillerymen belonged to the 6th Michigan Volunteer Cavalry. The Indians attacked as the soldiers were crossing the Tongue, whereafter Sawyers circled his wagons on the north bank and fought a battle of several hours. After a truce the next day, the Sawyers party was surrounded and stopped for several days. Two of the *Daily Graphic* engravings show this same encounter, with Sitting Bull prone on the ground behind his shield, firing with a musket at the cannoneers. In the Saville drawing, Sitting Bull is accompanied by a comrade, both on the ground and under heavy fire.

13 - [p. 22] Sitting Bull, recognized by his painted shield, charges on foot toward a ranch house with laundry hanging on a line---a unique depiction in Plains Indian ledger art. The telegraph line shown behind the building denotes that it was located on the road along the North Platte River, probably near Julesburg, Nebraska, where there were on-going Indian attacks during January-February, 1865. The telegraph line was pulled down and all ranches and outbuildings were burned

along 100 miles of the route, in retaliation for the Sand Creek Massacre, earlier in the winter.

14 - [p. ?] [Faces #7] A foot-charge by Sitting Bull on a party of 14 Pawnee warriors. We recognize the artist from his painted shield. Sitting Bull jumped down from his horse and charged one enemy, counting coup en passant, by smashing him in the face with his empty rifle, which was then thrown down. Continuing the same sprint, he shows himself then counting coup with a lance on another Pawnee, as 11 arrows fired by the crouching group on p. #7 miss their target. The lance is that of an officer of the *Wiciska* (White Marked) Warrior Society, an organization in whose membership Sitting Bull is documented.

15 - [p. 24] A foot charge by Sitting Bull on corralled wagons. This may be a continuation of the action on p. #12, later on the afternoon of 1 September 1865, as the attack on the Sawyers wagon train continued for several hours. Sitting Bull exposes himself, to draw the soldiers' fire, allowing a comrade to dash forward (dotted line of footprints) and count coup on a fallen teamster. Another Lakota, making a similar risk, has been shot through the head and killed.

16 - [p. 26] [Faces P. 8] Sitting Bull overcomes two Pawnee enemies during the attack on a Pawnee village shown on p. #8. Holding the same *Wiciska* Warrior Society lance as on p. #14, he kills a first enemy by crashing into and trampling his horse; then continues, to count coup on a second Pawnee. His bay mare is painted protectively like the mount shown on p. #2, but this is a different animal, lacking the white stockings.

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17 - [p.?) A rare and unusual, rear-perspective version of the Fetterman Battle, 21 December 1866, also shown in the *Daily Graphic*. A long line of Lakota horsemen are indicated in ambush at top. We know from historical accounts of the battle that the Sioux were lying in ambush along a ravine, while a force of Cheyenne were concealed on the opposite side of the road. Sitting Bull departs from the Lakota line to charge a perpendicular line of enemy horsemen. In the effort, he shows himself wounded at least four times---perhaps as many as 7 bullet wounds, indicated by the tally at right; while his sorrel horse is bleeding from 8 bullet wounds and almost certainly was killed. On p. #4, Sitting Bull shows himself after being shot through the thighs, hobbling off the field supported by two canes.

18 - [p. 30] Sitting Bull captures two, blue roans, a particularly beautiful and coveted equine coat color. The single-trailer headdress of golden eagle feathers is a personal ornament. The headdresses worn by two officers of the *Wiciska* Warrior Society were distinguished by the addition of buffalo horns.

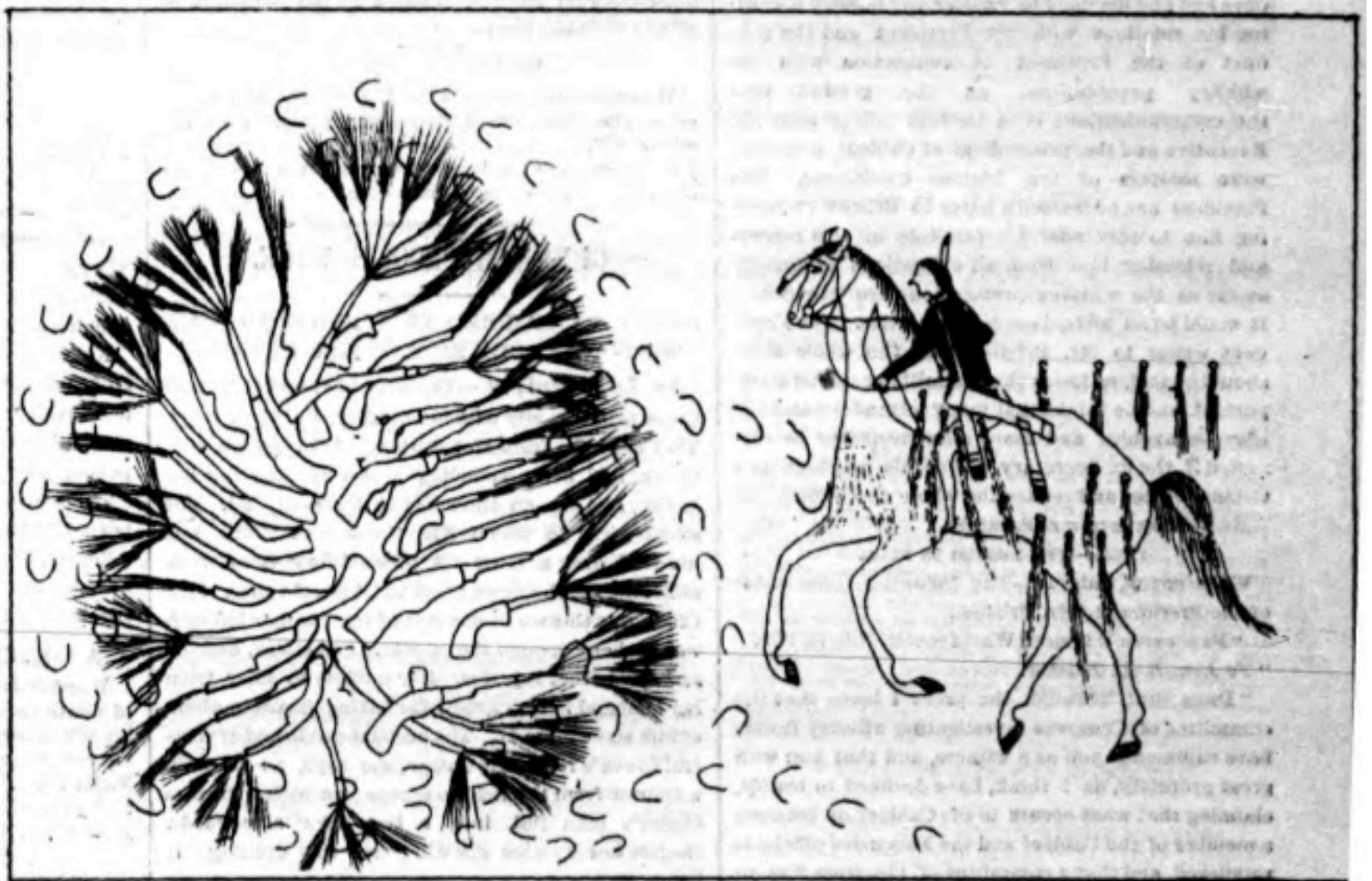
If you decide that you wish to take this analysis further, I can research Sitting Bull's family connections. I already know that he was a grandson of the Oglala Head Chief Bull Bear, who was painted by Alfred Jacob Miller in 1837, then assassinated in 1841 by the youthful Red Cloud. The presence of the two men together, as members of the 1875 Oglala delegation to Washington, D.C., represented a kind of tribal rapprochement, healing the Oglala civil war of the preceding thirty years. Sitting Bull was also closely connected to Old Man Afraid of His Horses, was in fact the *Akicita Itancan*, or Head Soldier (= Sheriff) in Old Man Afraid's camp. The 1868 Treaty was signed first for the Oglala by Old Man Afraid. Sitting Bull signed tenth.

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After moving to the new Red Cloud Agency, Sitting Bull was a stalwart defender of Agent Saville. In the infamous "flagpole incident" in 1874, when a crowd of young hot-heads refused to allow the Stars & Stripes to be flown over the Agency, and chopped down the flagpole the agent had erected, it was Sitting Bull who personally drove the miscreants off with a knife-blade war club, and saved the lives of three hapless soldiers who had been detailed to guard the pole. It was for that courageous deed that U.S. Grant presented the engraved Henry rifle which would be the cause of Sitting Bull's death.

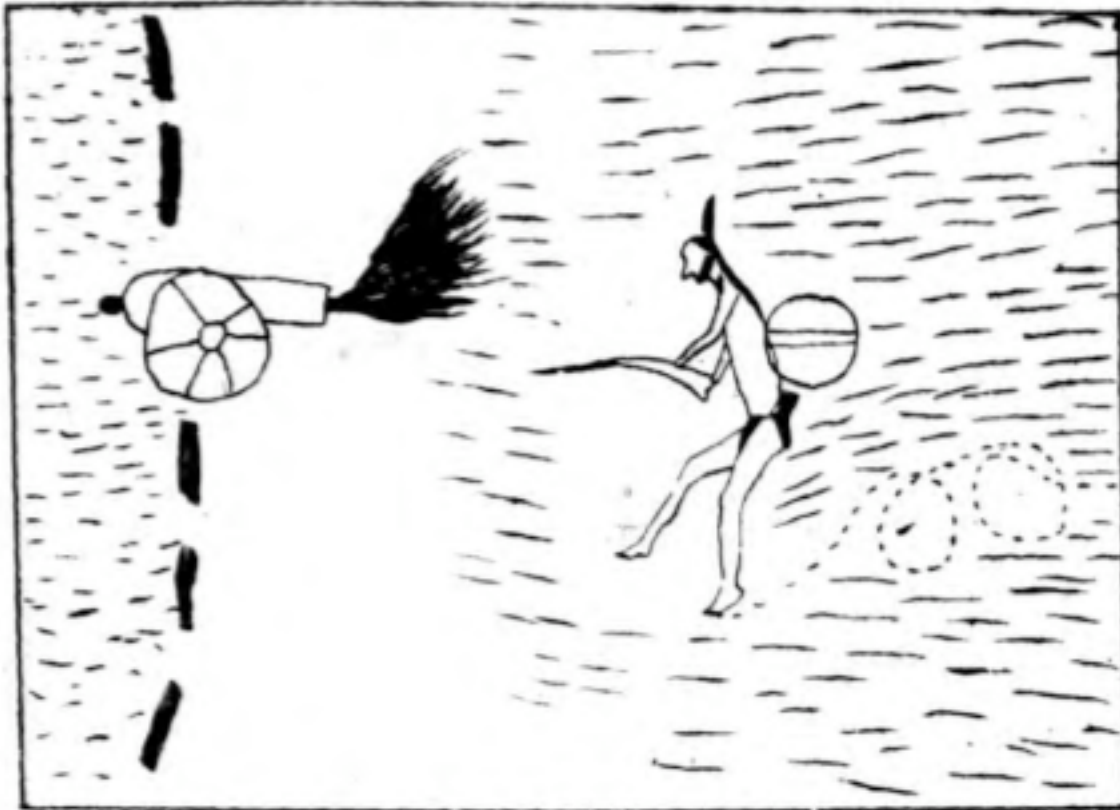
An unidentified relative had "borrowed" the rifle, and had used it at Little Bighorn. Sitting Bull had remained at the Agency; but in the autumn of 1876, he wanted his flashy rifle back, so he rode out to Montana and collected it. A large contingent in the wild Oglala camp wanted to surrender, before the Army attacked them again. They brought a pipe to Sitting Bull, and asked him to lead an embassy to talk peace with the soldier-chief at Cantonment Tongue River, later Ft. Keogh at present Miles City. Three hundred yards from their destination on December 16th, the ambassadors were ambushed and massacred by Nelson Miles' Crow scouts, extending the war another six months.

Mari Sandoz has a chapter on Sitting Bull in her *Hostiles & Friendlies*, a book I've never read. There's also reported to be another Sitting Bull drawing in R. Eli Paul's *Nebraska Indian Wars Reader, 1865-1877*. If this goes further, I'll pick up copies. Please let me know how you want to proceed. Best regards, Mike



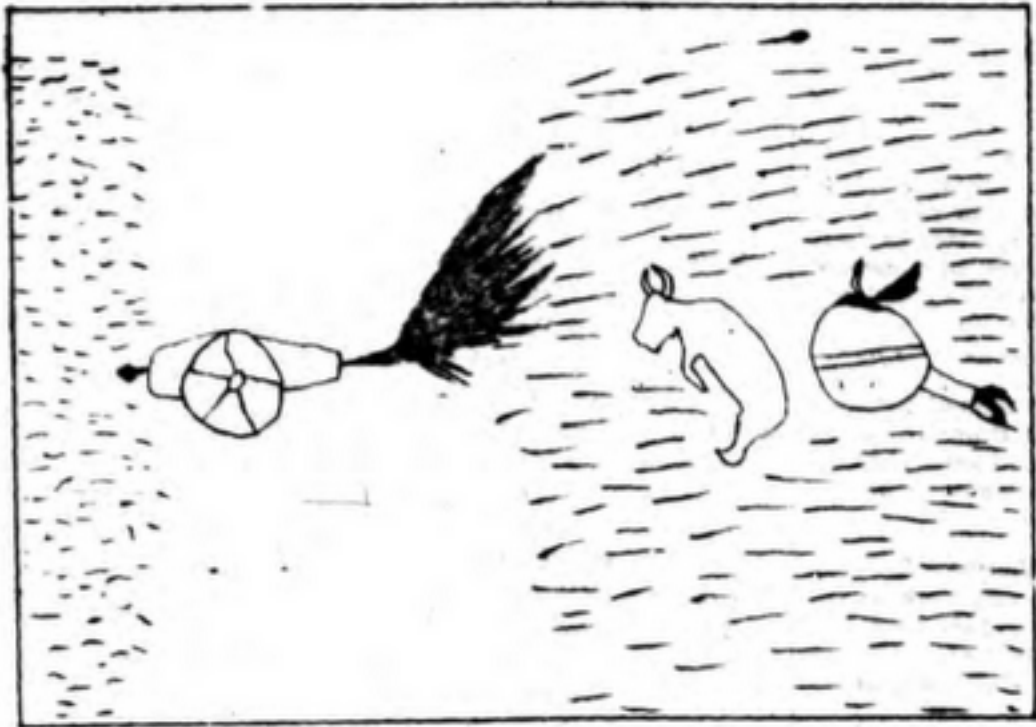
SITTING BULL AS THE HERO OF THE FORT PHIL. KEARNY MASSACRE.

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SITTING BULL DEFIING WHOLE PLATOONS OF HIS ENEMIES.

Sitting Bull - Saville Ledger



ANOTHER DEFIANCE.

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SITTING BULL CAPTURES AND KILLS FOUR WHITE SOLDIERS.

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