



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

General Nelson A. Miles collection, 1869-1892

2011

National Museum of the American Indian
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	General Nelson A. Miles collection
Date:	1869-1892
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.035
Creator:	Wittick, Ben, 1845-1903 Grabill, John C. H. Miles, Nelson Appleton, 1839-1925 Choate, J. N. (John N.), 1848-1902 Randall, A. Frank Fly, C. S. (Camillus Sidney), 1849-1901 Morrow, Stanley J.
Extent:	305 Albumen prints ((some as cartes-de-visite and cabinet cards)) 6 Acetate negatives
Language:	No linguistic content; Not applicable .
Summary:	The collection brings together images by well-known Western photographers such as A.F. Randall, John Grabill, C.S. Fly, Stanley Morrow, Ben Wittick and John Choate. Primarily images of famous Indian leaders, as well as other portraits and scenes.

Administrative Information

Provenance

Gift

Processing Information

NMAIA Review

Preferred Citation

General Nelson A. Miles collection, 1869-1892, National Museum of the American Indian Archives, Smithsonian Institution (negative, slide or catalog number).

Restrictions

Access is by appointment only, Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please contact the archives to make an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

Copyright: National Museum of the American Indian

Biographical Note

General Nelson A. Miles fought for the Union in some of the Civil War's most crucial battles, including Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville and the Appomatox campaign. Wounded four times, he rose in rank to become a major general of volunteers and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his personal bravery at Chancellorsville. After the Civil War, Miles played a leading role in nearly every phase of the army's campaign against the tribes of the Great Plains. Three of the greatest Indian leaders---Sitting Bull, Chief Joseph, and Geronimo---surrendered to him. In 1874-1875, he was a field commander in the force that defeated the Kiowa, Comanche and Southern Cheyenne along the Red River. In 1876-1877, he led the winter campaign that scoured the northern Plains after Custer's defeat at the Little Bighorn, forcing the Lakota and their allies onto reservations. Then, in the winter of 1877, he drove his troops on a forced march across Montana to intercept the Nez Percé band led by Chief Joseph that had eluded or defeated every unit sent against it over the course of a 1,500 mile retreat from Oregon to the Canadian border.

The 1890 Ghost Dance "uprising" on the Lakota reservations brought Miles back into the field once again. In an effort to restore peace throughout the area, Miles directed troop movements that inadvertently panicked many Lakota bands into leaving their reservations and led both to Sitting Bull's death and to the massacre of Big Foot's band at Wounded Knee. Miles reacted to these developments by working aggressively to implement his longstanding belief that the Lakota should be forcibly disarmed and placed under military control. In his later years, Miles commanded the troops that put down the Pullman strike riots in 1894, and was commander of the army during the Spanish-American War. He retired from service in 1903, confirmed in his belief that graduates of West Point had an unfair advantage in promotion and were on the whole less capable of command than those who rose through the ranks as he had.

Arrangement

Negatives: organized in individual sleeves; arranged by negative number

Prints: organized in folders; arranged by print number

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Indians of North America

Cultures:

Indians of North America