



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

Bird Carson photographs of
Cheyenne River Indian Reservation

Emily Moazami

2022

National Museum of the American Indian
4220 Silver Hill Rd
Suitland, Maryland 20746-2863
nmaiarchives@si.edu
<http://nmai.si.edu/explore/collections/archive/>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Arrangement.....	3
Names and Subjects	3
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Bird Carson photographs of Cheyenne River Indian Reservation
Date:	circa 1890-1920
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.425
Creator:	Carson, Bird (Photographer)
Extent:	93 Photographs
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection contains 93 photographs shot by amateur photographer Bird Carson (1842-1925) depicting daily life on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation, circa 1890-1920. Bird worked as a housekeeper for the local school and her husband John Franklin Carson worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a teacher at Cherry Creek Day School on the Reservation.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Gift of the family of Catherine Spain, 2022.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Emily Moazami, Supervisory Archivist, Dec. 2022.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Bird Carson photographs of Cheyenne River Indian Reservation, image #, NMAI.AC.425; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Access to NMAI Archives Center collections is by appointment only, Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please contact the archives to make an appointment (phone: 301-238-1400, email: nmaiarchives@si.edu).

Conditions Governing Use

Permission to publish materials from the collection must be requested from National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center. Please submit a written request to nmaiphotos@si.edu. For personal or classroom use, users are invited to download, print, photocopy, and distribute the images that are available online without prior written permission, provided that the files are not modified in any way, the Smithsonian Institution copyright notice (where applicable) is included, and the source of the image is identified as the National Museum of the American Indian. For more information please see the Smithsonian's [Terms of Use](#) and NMAI Archive Center's [Digital Image request](#) website.

Biographical / Historical

Bertha "Bird" Louise Pickering Carson was born to Hannah Binford Pickering (1842-1925) and Philip Pickering (1837-1909) in Iowa on August 18, 1872. In 1891, she married John Franklin Carson (1860-1935) and they lived on the Cheyenne River Agency at Cherry Creek in South Dakota circa 1890-1920. John Franklin worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a teacher on the reservation and census records show that Bird Carson served as a housekeeper. The couple had four children: Catherine Hannah Carson Spain (1895- 1980); Franklin Morris Carson (1898-1941); John Henry Carson (1900-1964); and Philip D. Carson (b. circa 1902).

Bird Carson was an amateur photographer and photographed daily life on the reservation.

Biographical / Historical

[Excerpt below is from the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe website (2022) which borrows text from *Cheyenne River Sioux* by Donovin Sprague. Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, S.C., 2003.]

The name Sioux is part of the Ojibway/Chippewa/Anishinabe word "Nadoweisiweg," which the French shortened to Sioux. The original word meant "little or lesser snakes/enemies." The Sioux are really three groups comprised of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota, each having slightly different language dialects. Geographically, the Lakota are the most western of the groups and there are seven distinct bands. Four of the Lakota bands (Minnicoujou, Itazipco, Siha Sapa, and Oohenumpa) are located on the land known as the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation. The other three (the Oglala of Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Hunkpapa at Standing Rock Reservation, and Sicangu at the Rosebud Indian Reservation and also at Lower Brule Indian Reservation), are all located in western South Dakota. The Standing Rock Reservation also stretches into North Dakota. Some of the Lakota also settled in Canada at Wood Mountain Reserve in Saskatchewan beginning in 1876. Collectively the bands are part of the Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires) of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota.

The present land base of the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation was established by the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. Prior to this, the bands placed within this reservation knew no boundary to their territory. They were a hunting people and traveled frequently in search of their main food source, the sacred American bison or buffalo.

The Sioux Agreement Act of 1889 set reservation boundary lines and was named the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation. West of the Missouri River was the waters of the Cheyenne River, known to the Lakota as the Good River (Wakpa Waste'). The "Post at Cheyenne River Agency" was established seven miles above Fort Sully on the Missouri River in 1870 and became known as Fort Bennett. Fort Bennett was next to the village named Cheyenne Agency, and was the quarters for the Indian Agent and soldiers. Separate from the fort was the agency town which housed U.S. Government employees and this location would later be moved to higher ground away from the river. The fort and town would be moved a total of four times in the coming years, with the name Cheyenne Agency attached to the town adjoining Fort Bennett. As reservation land was ceded following the Dawes Act of 1887, the town was moved again since it was now off the new reservation boundaries. After 1891, Fort Bennett was closed by the military and the reservation was believed to be safe without a military fort beside it. The next location of the agency would be between the Cheyenne River (Good River) and the Moreau (Owl) River at the site of Chief Martin Charger's camp. It was called Cheyenne Agency.

The final location of the Agency would be to the town of Eagle Butte in 1959, a move necessitated due to the construction of the Oahe Dam near Pierre, South Dakota, which flooded tribal lands along the Missouri River. When people refer to the Old Agency or Old Cheyenne Agency, they are referring to the Agency location prior to the move to Eagle Butte, which is now the tribal headquarters offices. There is also confusion about the name Cheyenne as people often think the four bands here are of the Cheyenne Tribe. Although the Lakota's

have been close allies with the Cheyenne, they are, nevertheless, a separate tribe. The tribal headquarters of the Northern Cheyenne are located in Montana and the Southern Cheyenne are in Oklahoma.

The first towns were Evarts and then LeBeau which were trading posts. LeBeau was established by Antoine LeBeau, a French trader. Evarts and LeBeau became non-existent when railroad service left and the town of LeBeau burned. Both locations are now under the waters of the Missouri River. The old main home camps of the Minnicoujou were in the towns of Cherry Creek, Bridger, and Red Scaffold in the western area of the reservation. Cherry Creek is believed to be the oldest permanent community in South Dakota. The home camps of the Oohenumpa went from Iron Lightning, Thunder Butte, Bear Creek, and White Horse along the Moreau (Owl) River. The Siha Sapa located around the Promise and Blackfoot areas in the northeast part of the reservation. Green Grass and On The Tree communities were home to the Itazipco. Green Grass is the home to the sacred Buffalo Calf Pipe. There would soon be some reshuffling of the band locations as allotments were chosen and intermarriage. Many Itazipco joined the Minnicoujou and the Siha Sapa had earlier camped in close proximity to the Hunkpapa on the neighboring Standing Rock Reservation. Today, other communities on or near the reservation include Eagle Butte, Dupree, Red Elm, Takini, Bridger, Howes, Glad Valley, Isabel, Firesteel, Timber Lake, Glencross, Swiftbird, La Plant, Ridgeview, Parade, and Lantry. There are also many rural areas on the reservation.

There are different spelling preferences by individuals of the band names and the spellings in this writing appeared on a tribal flag. An older name for Minnicoujou was Howoju meaning "the people." Minnicoujou means "planters by the water," Itazipco means "Without Bows," and the French called them Sans Arc. Siha Sapa means "Black Foot," and Oohenumpa means "Two boilings/Two Kettle." The Black Foot Lakota should not be confused with the larger Blackfeet/Blackfoot nations of Montana and Canada. Many tribal members are a mixture of the four bands.

Arrangement

Photographs arranged in the original order in which they were organized and donated to NMAI.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Cheyenne River Lakota Sioux
- Hunkpapa Lakota [Cheyenne River]
- Indians of North America -- Education
- Itazipacola Lakota [Cheyenne River]
- Minneconjou Lakota [Cheyenne River]
- Oohenonpa Lakota [Cheyenne River]

Cultures:

- Cheyenne River Lakota Sioux
- Hunkpapa Lakota [Cheyenne River]
- Itazipacola Lakota [Cheyenne River]
- Minneconjou Lakota [Cheyenne River]
- Oohenonpa Lakota [Cheyenne River]