

# Agate Fossil Beds

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Agate Fossil Beds  
National Monument

## Running Water Winter Count



Artist Dawn Little Sky (Lakota), who lived on the Pine Ridge Reservation, created this modern chronology of events impacting the lives of James Cook and Red Cloud and the place called Agate Fossil Beds. Events are portrayed yearly from the birth of Red Cloud in 1821 until the death of James Cook in 1942. Many of these events were taken from actual historic Lakota winter counts, such as those of Whiteman Stands In Sight, American Horse, Lone Dog and Blue Thunder. Plains Indians used winter counts to keep track of their history, picking one event each winter to stand for the year's activities. Such events were kept in memory and painted on hides to help the story teller's recollection.

- **Earth Forms.** Dates of origin vary among scientists and theologians. Symbol includes earth, air, fire and water spinning clockwise.
- **225-65 million years ago.** Dinosaurs rule the earth. Their remains have not yet been found in western Nebraska, but occur further west and north. Stegosaurus remains found in Colorado and Wyoming.
- **20-19 million years ago.** Various animals die during a long drought at isolated water-holes, including Agate, in what will become the Great Plains of North America. The half circle symbol at the top means "gone under" or death.
- **10-11 thousand years ago.** Early human hunters killed elephants and ancient buffalo (bison) and camped at preferred sites throughout the plains.
- **1492.** An Italian, Cristoforo Colombo (Columbus), sails from Spain and discovers many people already living in the Americas (mistakenly thought to be India).
- **1620.** Pilgrims settle in Plymouth seeking religious freedom and new homes.
- **1720.** Pawnee attack and turn back a Spanish military expedition from Santa Fe under Don Pedro de Villasur on the eastern slopes of the Rockies.
- **1759.** Wicablesa han waniyetu (they scatter winter). Different bands of the Sioux (Lakota, Nakota and Dakota) disperse among the upper Mississippi and Missouri river valleys. They scattered because camps became too large to feed by hunting; so they had to break up into small groups which would still meet once a year.
- **1768.** Iyeska kici zapi (mixed blood they fight). Fur traders and members of the kunhinyan band, ancestors of Red Cloud, took sides and quarreled, finally splitting up into several bands (curved line that looks like the bottom half of a circle indicates family relations).
- **1775.** Standing Bull returns home with a tree from the Black Hills (tree was cedar from where the thunders build their nests).
- **1776.** Kiklela Hi (Goes Comes Home arrives). A white fur trader visits the Oglala for the first time.
- **1781.** Sunka wakan natan ahi (dog mysterious charging they arrive). Wild horses were seen charging through camp. These horses charged the camp like warriors. It was remarkable and included in wintercount.
- **1791.** Wowapi wan mako ka yuha hiyayapi (flag earth around carrying they went). Several tribes united to form a confederation to repel foreign invaders.
- **1799.** The Good-White-Man (trader) brought guns for the first time.
- **1801.** Newicasli (rash). Many died of smallpox. Pictograph sign means illness.
- **1803.** United States purchases "Louisiana Territory" from France.
- **1805.** Lewis and Clark hold a council with friendly Lakota while exploring the upper Missouri on their western expedition.
- **1815.** Lakota peace missions to neighboring tribes along the North Platte River end in conflict with the Kiowa but succeed with the Pawnee.
- **1817.** Permanent log trading posts are built in Lakota country.
- **1820.** Wan nuplala wicicaske kicagapi (arrow two sash they made for him). Red Cloud's grandfather, Two Arrow, was given a "no flight sash" by the Brave Heart Society.
- **1821/22.** Red Cloud was born near the forks of the Platte Rivers and a roaring shooting star was seen in the sky.
- **1822/23.** Seminoles of Florida are forced onto a reservation, preliminary to being removed to Indian Territory, west of the Mississippi River. Other eastern tribes will follow between 1822-1842.
- **1823/24.** Sioux joined United States military punitive raid against Arickara village on the Missouri River and took much corn.
- **1824/25.** First fur trade rendezvous held on the Green River in Wyoming.
- **1825/26.** The Office (later renamed Bureau) of Indian Affairs was created under the War Department to negotiate with Indian nations and tribes.
- **1826/27.** Six Lakota die from eating the rotten carcass of a buffalo. Upside down figures also show death.
- **1827/28.** Pso ohanpi (?). The snow was so deep, snowshoes were worn.
- **1828/29.** Many antelope were killed by herding them into a corral.
- **1829/30.** Ite glega wa aksija (Face Spotted he retains him). Spotted Face stabbed his son-in-law for whipping his wife, Spotted Face's daughter.
- **1830/31.** Trader Red Lake brought goods in wagons for the first time.
- **1831/32.** Red Lake's house accidentally blown up by gun powder.
- **1832/33.** Broken Leg found whiskey, drank it and died.
- **1833/34.** Wicanpi okicamna (star it storms). Shooting stars like snowflakes in a storm.
- **1834/35.** European artists George Catlin and Karl Bodmer paint Indians along the Upper Missouri and throughout the west.
- **1835/36.** Lame Deer shot an Assiniboine three times with the same arrow. Sign shows mouth with tongue. Assiniboine speak the same as Lakota with slight difference.
- **1836/37.** Caga akicin in pi (ice they fight on). Oglalas battle Pawnee across the frozen North Platte River.
- **1837/38.** Blacksmith John Deere invents the steel deep plow, allowing tilling of Great Plains grass sod and revolutionizing prairie farming.
- **1838/39.** Crazy Dog carried the pipe around to organize a war party.
- **1839/40.** A Crow man and his wife were killed by the Lakota when found along the trail.
- **1840/41.** Young warrior Red Cloud kills chief Bull Bear and others also die in a fight influenced by alcohol and rival power struggles among Oglala bands on the Chugwater River.
- **1841/42.** First large wagon train (the Bidwell/Bartleson party) travels to Oregon territory through Indian lands.
- **1842/43.** Oglala Feather Earring killed along with four lodges of Shoshoni.
- **1843/44.** Cheyenne medicine arrow returned from Pawnee by Oglalas (four sacred arrows).
- **1844/45.** Kangi Bloka ahi kte pi (Crow male arrived they killed him). He Crow and twenty-nine Oglala are killed while out on a war party by the Shoshoni (Shoshoni and Ute were shown as living where Bighorn sheep live).
- **1845/46.** Eastern journalist John O'Sullivan coins the phrase "Manifest Destiny" to justify United States expansion westward.
- **1846/47.** The United States and Mexico go to war over the territories of Texas, New Mexico and California. These areas join the United States after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.
- **1847/48.** Mormons emigrate to Utah seeking religious freedom and new homes.
- **1848/49.** Ft. Laramie created to protect Oregon Trail traffic, including a flood of new gold seekers to California.
- **1849/50.** Cholera (cramps) epidemic kills many Indians as well as whites along the western trails.
- **1850/51.** Smallpox epidemic.
- **1851/52.** Wakpamni pi tanka (they distribute large). Government issues large distribution of annuity goods in response to first Ft. Laramie treaty, which establishes tribal boundaries, temporary peace among several tribes, and safe passage for white travelers.
- **1852/53.** Waniyetu wasma (winter snow deep). Winter of deep snow.
- **1853/54.** Mato wan ti hi (bear house arrived). Prowling bear killed in village following cries of help from a lodge.
- **1854/55.** Chief Conquering Bear and Lt. Grattan and his command are killed east of Ft. Laramie in a quarrel over a lame Mormon cow.
- **1855/56.** General Harney (known as "Hornet" by the Lakota) punitive raid attacks Sichangu (Brule) village near Ash Hollow and takes prisoners (many killed).
- **1856/57.** Lt. Warren surveys the Black Hills and a route along the Niobrara River for possible supply trail to Ft. Laramie. James Cook, owner of the future Agate Springs Ranch near one of Warren's camps, is born in Kalamazoo, Michigan.
- **1857/58.** Kangi wicasa wikcemna wicaktepi (Crow man ten they killed them). Red Cloud war party kills 10 Crow in Montana on Wren Creek. Hair style and dress indicate Crow Tribe.
- **1858/59.** Tasinga gi tepi (robe brown they killed him). Crow Chief Yellow Robe is killed in a horse raid on the Oglala.
- **1859/60.** Broken Arrow fell from his horse and broke his neck while running buffalo.
- **1860/61.** American Civil War begins in dispute over slavery and fair trade.
- **1861/62.** Homestead Act opens western land to outside settlement. The midwest becomes a destination rather than a thoroughfare.
- **1862/63.** 38 Santee Sioux were hanged at Camp Lincoln for their role in the Minnesota Dakota uprising in which some 400 settlers were killed.
- **1863/64.** Eight Lakota were killed while on joint Oglala and Miniconjou raid which netted three hundred Crow horses.
- **1864/65.** The Colorado militia massacred a peaceful camp of Cheyennes and Arapahos at Sand Creek, including many women and children. Scalps of Indians were paraded in Denver to cheering crowds.
- **1865/66.** Many Lakota horses died during severe winter and white women were captured and released for ransom by an Indian named Old Crawler.
- **1866/67.** Wasicu opan winge wicaktepi (white man hundred they killed them). Warriors under Red Cloud's general direction killed the entire 81 man command of Capt. William Fetterman outside Ft. Phil Kearny on the Bozeman Trail.
- **1867/68.** Peace commissions make peace throughout the region, including the second Ft. Laramie Treaty, which Red Cloud finally signs after the Bozeman Trail is abandoned.
- **1868/69.** The first cattle are issued by government Indian Agents to tribes in designated reservations along the Missouri while the hungry Oglala overwinter in their hunting grounds and sell mules for food while resisting moving to reservations. Blue line through stomach shows hunger.
- **1869/70.** The Union Pacific railroad is finished across the continent.
- **1870/71.** Red Cloud first visits Washington D.C. to see President Grant, discusses provisions of the Ft. Laramie Treaty and gives a speech in New York.
- **1871/72.** Yellowstone National Park was created as a "public pleasuring ground" following the Hayden Survey which documented its natural wonders.

- 1872/73. Joseph F. Glidden of DeKalb, Illinois invents barbed wire which will greatly contribute to the closing of the open range.
- 1873/74. The temporary Red Cloud Agency is moved from the North Platte River to the White River and closer to the Lakota's designated reservation in South Dakota. The military soon follow and build Ft. Robinson nearby to discourage incidents, such as the killing of agency clerk, Frank Appleton, in February 1874.
- 1874/75. Lt. Col. Custer leads an expedition into the Black Hills confirming the presence of gold and prompting the government to negotiate for the removal of this land from the reservation. Prof. O.C. Marsh leads an expedition into the White River Badlands looking for fossil bones.
- 1875/76. Red Cloud goes to Washington to complain of rotten beef rations. Professor Marsh tries to help by showing the poor quality to various committees.
- 1876/77. Mahpiya Luta sunk kipi (cloud red horse they rob). In the mutual distrust following the Custer defeat, Col. R.S. MacKenzie impounded Red Cloud's horses at his camp on Chadron Creek and forced him to move close to the Agency. Many other Lakota horses are also impounded. This followed the battle on the Little Bighorn in which northern Indians led by Sitting Bull defeated Custer's forces.
- 1877/78. Tassunke Witko kte pi (Horse Crazy they killed him). Crazy Horse surrenders and is soon killed trying to escape confinement at Ft. Robinson.
- 1878/79. Sahiyela wakan wan kte pi (Cheyenne sacred they killed him). Many of Dull Knife's band of Cheyenne were killed escaping confinement at Ft. Robinson rather than return to forced resettlement in Indian Territory in Oklahoma.
- 1879/80. Capt. Richard H. Pratt recruits children at the recently created Pine Ridge Agency in South Dakota to attend his Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. Red Cloud sends a grandson and American Horse two sons and a daughter. Dr. Elisha Graham starts his 04 ranch on the upper Niobrara River.
- 1880/81. Boston children's author Helen Hunt Jackson turns reformer of failed government Indian policy and past atrocities with the publication of A Century of Dishonor.
- 1881/82. Sinte Gleska kte pi (Tail Spotted they kill him). Crow Dog killed noted Sichangu (Brule) chief Spotted Tail in a power struggle at the Rosebud Agency.
- 1882/83. Buffalo Bill Cody stages his first Wild West Show in Omaha. In future years, many prominent Indians such as Sitting Bull, Black Elk and Luther Standing Bear would participate in the performances.
- 1883/84. Ite canguu tahu pawega (Face Wood Burned neck he broke). A Lakota nicknamed Burned Wood Face broke his neck during what would prove to be their last buffalo hunt, as the American bison was almost wiped out.
- 1884/85. Religious leaders, reformers and politicians gather in upstate New York for the second of what would become an annual event, the Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian, to discuss national Indian policy.
- 1885/86. Peta wicasa wan iheyapi (Fire man they discard him). Indian agent McGilllicuddy had T.A. Bland, publisher of the Indian rights magazine "Council Fire" kicked off the Pine Ridge reservation as an outside troublemaker.
- 1886/87. The era of foreign cattle barons and open range ranching is doomed when a severe winter decimates cattle herds across the Plains.
- 1887/88. James Cook takes over his father-in-law Graham's ranch on the Niobrara (founded in 1879) and renames it Agate Springs Ranch.
- 1888/89. Wapahta yublecap (bundle they take apart). The Ghost Lodge ceremony is outlawed by the government because too much property is given away as part of it. This ceremony is one of the seven rites of the Oglala.
- 1889/90. Settlers claim previous Indian land in Oklahoma and South Dakota as the Dawes Act of 1887 and other new policies shrink the size of reservations and Indian Territory.
- 1890/91. Si tanka kte pi (Foot Big they killed him). Big Foot's band is massacred by United States soldiers at Wounded Knee and Sitting Bull is killed while being arrested due to mistrust over the Ghost Dance religion.
- 1891/92. Makamani akicita wicakagapi (earth soldier they made them). Oglala were recruited by and joined the United States Army as regular soldiers, rather than as scouts as in the past, and formed Company I, 2nd US Infantry stationed in Omaha.
- 1892/93. James Cook invites scientists onto his land, and Erwin H. Barbour of the University of Nebraska discovers several "Devil's Corkscrews" (fossilized burrows of ancient beavers).
- 1893/94. Oyawa tanka hughnaga (school big it burned). The Indian Boarding School at Pine Ridge burned down.
- 1894/95. Can nup yuha panakse yapi (Stick Two he has to cut by pulling they say). Two Pipes, a survivor of the Wounded Knee Massacre who killed five cowboys in 1892, was tried for murder and hanged.
- 1895/96. Toka omnicitye tanka kagapi (first council large they make). The Oglala took it upon themselves to form their own traditional Oglala Tribal Council to better discuss community issues.
- 1896/97. "Separate but equal" civil rights doctrine established in Plessy versus Ferguson case about freedom in train travel.
- 1897/98. An explosion rocks the battleship USS Maine and the United States becomes a colonial world power in the ensuing Spanish American War.
- 1898/99. Taka cunkaske kagapi. The Oglala reservation boundaries were fenced.
- 1899/1900. Petagu ta waniyetu. Fire Coals, the keeper of the agency fires, died.
- 1900/01. Wakpamnipi natakapi. Annuities from the first Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1851 stopped.
- 1901/02. Wicaahanhan awasu wicayapi. Small pox broke out and Dr. J.R. Walker imposed a quarantine to control it.
- 1902/03. The National Reclamation Act provides funds for irrigation projects in western Nebraska and elsewhere. Many Indian families earn money working in the newly irrigated beet and potato fields.
- 1903/04. Tarca kute eya wica ktepi. Sheriff Miller of Newcastle tried to arrest an Oglala deer hunting party in Wyoming and five Indians and two members of the sheriff's posse were killed on Lightning Creek.
- 1904/05. O.A. Peterson of the Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh confirms and begins to excavate the "great (fossil) bonebed of Agate".
- 1905/06. Wapaha hota cica wan icikte. Grey Warbonnet's son killed himself.
- 1906/07. Sapa wicasa wicu hiyoyapi. Chief American Horse, White Buffalo Man, Henry Fielder and others persuaded the Utes to return peacefully to their reservation in Colorado.
- 1907/08. Canpa kmniyanpi wakpamnipi. Each Oglala family head received a team of horses, wagon, harness, two cows, plow, harrow, garden rake and hoe with which to work their individual land allotments.
- 1908/09. James Cook's son Harold homesteads 640 acres, including the main fossil hills of Agate, insuring their future protection and scientific investigation.
- 1909/10. Mahpiya Luta ta. Red Cloud dies.
- 1910/11. Prominent new Indian leaders, such as George Eastman, founded the Society of American Indians on Columbus Day 1911, which for twelve years offers advice and commentary from within the American Indian community on issues important to them.
- 1911/12. Muka yuganpi. The southeast corner of Pine Ridge Reservation was declared ceded land and became Bennett County.
- 1912/13. Ground is broken for Philadelphia businessman Rodman Wanamaker's proposed giant monument to the American Indian in New York harbor. The Indian head nickel is issued the same day. The monument is never finished.
- 1913/14. Cannupa gupi ta. Thomas Tyon, a mixed blood also called Gift Pipe, died. He was the Agency Farmer Aide for many years.
- 1914/15. Sunkan wakan ota gupi. A bad prairie fire killed many horses and destroyed property on the eastern Pine Ridge and western Rosebud reservations.
- 1915/16. Sapa on owayawa hunhnga. The Catholic school at St. Francis on the Rosebud Reservation burned down.
- 1916/17. Many Lakota enlist and sail for France as soldiers in World War I.
- 1917/18. Saka ici yote ya wamna kiyapi. The Oglala raised money from their arts and crafts and other projects for the Red Cross. One boy rode an outlaw horse and donated the prize money.
- 1918/19. James Cook's son John, Buffalo Bill's daughter Irma, Red Cloud's son Jack and many others died during a Spanish influenza epidemic.
- 1919/20. Waniyetu othika (winter of hardships). Deep snow and bitter cold caused great hardships.
- 1920/21. Lakota wawoyuspa tiwicakta iya on papi. The mixed blood sheriff of Bennett County shot and killed a white man and was tried and acquitted of murder.
- 1921/22. Nitaska makoce on hi (White Head came on land business). Government negotiator James McLaughlin came to Pine Ridge to encourage individual Oglala to apply for fee simple ownership of their land without any Federal protections as in the past.
- 1922/23. Henry Standing Bear and other Lakota file a formal claim against the United States Court of Claims for wrongful seizure of their sacred Black Hills. The 1911 Black Hills Council had first proposed such action.
- 1923/24. With the encouragement of western writer E.A. Brininstool, rancher James H. Cook publishes his autobiographical book Fifty Years on the Old Frontier through Yale University Press.
- 1924/25. The Indian Citizenship Act grants voting privileges to all, although some states continue to prohibit voting until 1957.
- 1925/26. Harold Cook investigates a possible fossil human tooth on Snake Creek.
- 1926/27. Itun kasan waste ta. Good Weasel, veteran of the Custer battle, died.
- 1927/28. Luther Standing Bear publishes My People the Sioux, one of a few early accounts written by Indians, themselves, about their adaptations to white society.
- 1928/29. The independent Brookings Institution issues a scathing report, The Problem of Indian Administration, commonly called Meriam Report, which strongly criticized past Indian policy and documented the sad condition of most American Indians.
- 1929/30. Stock market crash leads to a bank panic and the Great (financial) Depression over the next decade in the 1930's.
- 1930/31. Drought, grasshoppers and crop failure. Pine Ridge Reservation holds a sundance to alleviate misery; food is cooked in an old style paunch with hot rocks.
- 1931/32. Oglala ha wicagupi. Army surplus clothing were issued to the people on the reservations.
- 1932/33. Nebraska poet John G. Neihardt transforms his interviews with Oglala elder Black Elk into the epic narrative Black Elk Speaks. In the 1960's this book will continue to influence later generations of Indians and non-Indians alike.
- 1933/34. Can akicita wani tipi. Wood soldiers (emergency conservation workers) camped for the winter, caring for trees on the reservation.
- 1934/35. "New Deal" Indian Commissioner John Collier proposes radical new legislation including The Indian Reorganization Act. These policies restore Indian religion, arts, crafts and limited tribal sovereignty and communal land ownership.
- 1935/36. Sheep of the Navajo are issued for food to the Lakota, who disliking the unfamiliar "stinking meat" dump the carcasses in the river.
- 1936/37. Sunka bloka te. He Dog, Crazy Horse's friend and fellow war chief and later tribal judge, passed away.
- 1937/38. Oglala pejute winyan ti ile pi. The nurses quarters of the Pine Ridge hospital burned down.
- 1938/39. Ta opi Cigala owa onspe klye tipi hughnagu. Little Wound community school in Kyle, South Dakota burned down.
- 1939/40. The final of four faces, that of Teddy Roosevelt, is dedicated at Mount Rushmore in the Black Hills, a project of sculptor Gutzon Borglum.
- 1940/41. The Sioux Memorial Association of Chadron, Nebraska proposes a sculpture memorial to the Sioux Nation to be located in the Pine Ridge south of Chadron. It will not be built as world war intervenes.
- 1941/42. Japanese attack Pearl Harbor, causing the United States to enter World War II. James Cook dies.
- 1942/43. Japanese Americans from the western United States lose their freedom and much property when they are temporarily interned in relocation camps for several years because of suspicion they may aid the enemy.
- 1943/44. Indian war dead are brought back to the reservations (25,000 would serve in integrated units of the United States military).
- 1944/45. The atom bomb helps end the war and ushers in the atomic age and cold war.
- 1947. Artist Korczak Ziolkowski moves to the Black Hills to begin creating a monumental sculpture of Crazy Horse at the invitation of Henry Standing Bear, who conceived the idea in the mid 1930's.
- 1954. Government relocation programs encourage Indians to move from reservations to the cities in search of jobs.
- 1955. Lakota Eddie Little Sky lands his first job welcoming visitors to Frontierland when Disneyland opens in 1955 and goes on to become a Hollywood actor.
- 1964. As a protest against poor treatment and broken treaties, American Indians briefly occupy Alcatraz, followed by a longer stay in 1969.
- 1965. President Lyndon Johnson signs a bill creating Agate Fossil Beds National Monument. He also sends combat troops to Vietnam, escalating an undeclared war begun in 1954 with the defeat of the colonial French at Dien Bien Phu. Many American Indians will serve as soldiers until this conflict ends in 1975.
- 1969. The United States space program puts astronaut Neil Armstrong on the moon.
- 1973. Members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and local citizens stage a protest at Wounded Knee (site of the 1890 massacre) against Federal government-supported tribal government and national Indian policy.
- 1981. Following a decision on their Black Hills claim against the United States government, the Lakota refuse a monetary settlement of \$106,000,000. They want their land back.
- 1989. The Berlin Wall falls, signaling the end of the Cold War.
- 1990. Congress enacts the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act which requires respect for Indian graves on public property and the reversal of past practices by returning grave goods and sacred objects.
- 1991. Film, Dances With Wolves, awarded the Academy Award; features many Indians with speaking roles in the Lakota language.
- 1992. As the nation commemorates the Quincentennial of Columbus' landing, Indian people celebrate 500 years of survival in the face of many challenges. New museums dedicated to Indian culture open at Agate Fossil Beds National Monument and in New York, part of the new Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian.