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Lizzie Brokenhorn with husband John

**Collateral Damage: Sand Creek and the Fletcher
Family Indian Captivity Story**
by Jeff Broome, P.M.
(Presented March 26, 2014)



Our Author

Jeff Broome is a fifth generation Coloradan with a life-long interest in Western history. He has written three books on the Indian wars: *Dog Soldier Justice: The Ordeal of Susanna Alderdice in the Kansas Indian War*; *Custer into the West With the Journal and Maps of Lieutenant Henry Jackson*, and his new book, *Cheyenne War: Indian Raids on the Roads to Denver, 1864-1869*.

Jeff has won three awards in Western history: the Lawrence Frost Literary Award of the Little Big Horn Associates for outstanding article on Custer, 2001; Wild West History Award, for best article on the West for 2012; Philip A. Danielson Award of Westerners International, 1st Place - for best program/presentation in 2012; 3rd place for best book in 2013 also from Westerners International.

A former Sheriff and long-time posse member, this is Jeff's sixth presentation with the Denver Westerners.

Collateral Damage: Sand Creek and the Fletcher Family Indian Captivity Story

by Jeff Broome, P.M.
(Presented March 26, 2014)

When gold was discovered in the Rocky Mountains in the late 1850s, life as the central plains Indians knew it began a rapid change. No longer was it just “mountain men” entering the territory to trade with Indians, or travelers crossing on their way to California, Utah or Oregon. The discovery of gold changed all of that. Denver City soon became the destination point for ventures into the mountains in the elusive search for mineral riches. The new route into Colorado Territory – technically Colorado was admitted as a new territory in 1861 - took freighters, miners, businessmen and settlers through what was for the Indians prime buffalo land, following the Platte River through Nebraska Territory and then continuing along the South Platte River at Julesburg and on to Denver.

Fur traders had developed working relationships with the Plains Indians, especially the Cheyenne. Bent’s Fort, located on the north side of the Arkansas River along the well-traveled Santa Fe Trail, was a bustling business by the time gold was discovered in the Rocky Mountains. Along with William Bent’s partner, Ceran St. Vrain, who operated another trading post not far from present-day Fort Collins along the Cache la Poudre River, Bent and his brothers had prospered well with their trade business. William had married into the Southern Cheyenne tribe, first to Owl Woman, the daughter of White

Thunder, who had the important role of being the keeper of the sacred arrows, “which symbolized the life of the tribe, embodying its soul.”¹ Owl Woman bore William four children, the oldest son named Robert, and the third child, George. Owl Woman died giving birth to her fourth child and William then married her sister, Yellow Woman, and had another son, Charles, born in 1847.² As young children, the boys and a sister had been sent to St. Louis to attend school. That was interrupted when the Civil War began, and in fact both George and his half-brother Charles served for a short time in the Confederacy. George was captured and brought to St. Louis. Recognized there as the son of William Bent, he was released and then returned to Bent’s Fort on the Arkansas, where he remained living with the Cheyenne for the remainder of his life. Charles soon finished his enlistment and also returned to the Cheyenne. They had not been back very long when everything changed and a five-year Indian war began along the roads to Denver.³

The causes of this war have never been agreed upon by historians, but what is not argued is that there were multiple reasons fanning the war embers. Among the prominent ones was the straining of the natural resources in the semi-arid land east of the Rocky Mountains. Earlier treaties resulted in a significant shrinkage of land severely incapacitating the Indians’ hunting



Wyoming State Archives, Dept. of State Parks & Cultural Resources

Amanda "Mary" Fletcher Cook

lifestyle. A diminishing of food sources were especially exacerbated with the growing and seemingly unending influx of freighters, miners, settlers and merchants, most entering from the northeast into Colorado Territory following the South Platte River to Denver. The South Platte corridor was essential to the Native American in the quest for buffalo. With the influx of white people came diseases and other hardships, such as shrinking timber sources for fuel. Clearly the Plains Indians could foresee the demise of their way of life. As this was building, territorial Governor John Evans had received information from multiple sources, as early as 1862, informing him that all the Plains Indians, which included Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Brule and Oglala Lakota, had agreed together to act friendly with all white

people, but trade only for guns and ammunition. When a sufficient supply had been obtained, the warriors would then begin a campaign of violence, intended to remove all white people from present-day Colorado, Nebraska and large portions of Kansas.⁴

By the spring of 1864 the Indian war began, and it would not abate until the destruction of Tall Bull's Cheyenne Dog Soldier village at Summit Springs in 1869. But it was August 7-9, 1864 that marked the most violent events that ushered in the war, when a conglomerate band of warriors, consisting of Upper Brule (later of the Rosebud Reservation), Oglala Lakota called Cut Offs (later of the Pine Ridge Reservation, also called Kiyaska), Northern Arapaho (later of the Shoshone Agency), as well as a small mixed band of Lakota, Northern and about 100 Southern Cheyenne – led by a chief named Two Face, began a series of deadly raids on the Little Blue River and Plum Creek in Nebraska Territory.⁵ At the time it was the main road to Denver. When the raid was over, more than 50 freighters and settlers were dead and a number of women and children captured. Several weeks later four of the captives were released by Black Kettle and brought into Denver.

The rescue of the captives began on September 4, when two Indians, Lone Bear (also called One Eye) and Eagle Head (also called Minimic) approached some soldiers near Fort Lyon. It was a dangerous mission they were on, for a few weeks earlier, in response to the deadly attacks on the Little Blue and Plum Creek, Governor John Evans issued a proclamation, dated August 11, simultaneous to learning of the deadly attacks in Nebraska,

... authorizing all citizens of Colorado, either individually or in such parties as they may organize, to go in pursuit of all hostile Indians on the plains, scrupulously avoiding those who have responded to my said call to rendezvous at the points indicated; also, to kill and destroy, as enemies of the country, wherever they may be found, all such hostile Indians.⁶

The rendezvous Evans referred to was to a proclamation he made nearly seven weeks earlier, on June 27, when he sent messengers to all the chiefs under his superintendence, announcing that all friendly Indians were to report to various forts. Any Indians not reporting would be considered hostile and subject to punishment. Specifically, the friendly Cheyenne and Arapaho were to report to Indian agent Major Samuel G. Colby at Fort Lyon, on the Arkansas River near Bent's Fort.⁷ But in fact the well-known Cheyenne peace chiefs Black Kettle and White Antelope did not heed the June warning, not until after the deadly raids in Nebraska, and thus by the August 11 proclamation, all Indians not settled near a fort were to be shot on sight, including Black Kettle's Cheyenne. Such were the orders of Major Edward W. Wynkoop, who was commanding the post at Fort Lyon. He recalled making "stringent orders to kill all Indians that could be reached, when one day a sergeant made his appearance at my quarters with the information that with a squad of men he had captured two Indians," who were brought into the post. Wynkoop verbally reprimanded the sergeant for disobeying his orders to shoot all

Indians on discovery, to which the man replied that he was about to shoot them when they held up their hands, making signs of peace, and waving a piece of paper.⁸

One Eye and Minimic must have known how dangerous their journey was. They came from their village, camped with the raiding warriors' villages located about 140 miles northeast of Fort Lyon on Hackberry Creek, the southern branch of the Smoky Hill River.⁹ The two Indians had been sent by Black Kettle, and each one had a hand-written letter, one written by Edmund Guerrier and the other by George Bent, the letters bearing the identical message. Guerrier was married to Bent's half-sister, Julia.¹⁰ Both writers were half-blood Cheyenne and both letters were dictated by Black Kettle and written in crude English.¹¹

Black Kettle's letter, dated August 29, 1864:

Sir: We received a letter from [William] Bent, wishing us to make peace. We held a council in regard to it. All come to the conclusion to make peace with you, providing you make peace with the Kioways, Comanches, Arapahoes, Apaches, and Sioux.

We are going to send a messenger to the Kioways and to the other nations about our going to make peace with you.

We heard that you have some provisions [captives?] in Denver. We have seven prisoners of yours which we are willing to give up, providing you give up yours.

There are three war parties out yet, and two of Arapahoes. They have been out some time, and expected in soon. When we



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Amanda "Mary" Fletcher Cook

held this council, there were few Arapahoes and Sioux present. We want true news from you in return – that is, a letter.¹²

When Wynkoop interviewed the two Indians he later wrote that this was a conscience-shifting momentous event in his personal life. He recalled asking One Eye whether he knew he would likely be shot in trying to bring the peace proposal to the fort. One Eye replied, "I thought I would be killed, but I knew that paper would be found upon my dead body, that you would see it, and it might give peace to my people once more." Minimic "would not let One Eye come alone and was willing to go with him to the Happy Hunting Grounds satisfied if he could look down and see his people happy once more." Wynkoop described how this display of

bravery impacted his understanding:

I was bewildered with an exhibition of such patriotism on the part of two savages, and felt myself in the presence of superior beings; and these were the representatives of a race that I had heretofore looked upon without exception as being cruel treacherous, and blood-thirsty, without feeling or affection for friend or kindred.¹³

Within a year, Wynkoop resigned his military commission and was appointed Indian Agent for the Upper Arkansas Agency, which included the Cheyenne and Arapaho, as well as Kiowa and Plains Apache.¹⁴ He remained their agent until November 1868, when he resigned amid his inability to defer a military expedition that resulted in the death of Black Kettle, in an attack made November 27 by Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer's 7th Cavalry along the banks of the Washita River in present-day Oklahoma. But before that happened there was the infamous Sand Creek Massacre, November 29, 1864. The events leading to Sand Creek began with Wynkoop's interview with One Eye and Minimic. One Eye promised to bring Wynkoop to his village and where Black Kettle was keeping several captives taken during the violent raids August 7-8 in Nebraska.¹⁵

Once news of the deadly Nebraska raids reached Denver via telegraph on August 8 and shortly thereafter by eyewitnesses arriving at Denver on stagecoach, Governor Evans received permission to enlist a new regiment of Colorado Volunteers.¹⁶ He immediately ordered the formation of the Third Colorado Cavalry. More

than 700 Coloradans responded to Evan's call for a 100-day enlistment. Meanwhile Wynkoop, acting without orders and under his own digression, ignoring Black Kettle's instructions to send a letter in reply, took a column of soldiers, went to Black Kettle's village and secured the release of four of the seven captives and brought them into Denver in late September. Accompanying his journey to Denver were Black Kettle and several other Indians.

The Camp Weld conference resulted in no peace, and Black Kettle was advised to move his Indians near Fort Lyon and from there, pursue his peace proposal with military authorities. However, before any further negotiations could be accomplished, Black Kettle's village was attacked by the 3rd Colorado Cavalry, along with troopers of the 1st Colorado Regiment stationed at Ft. Lyon. The dawn attack on November 29 resulted in more than 20 dead soldiers as well as 50-plus wounded, making the battlefield a hotly contested event. However, it is what happened to as many as 100 innocent women, children and elderly, who were brutally murdered – many also mutilated - while unarmed and begging for their lives, that makes Sand Creek the most controversial event in the saga of the Central Plains Indian war. As far as history goes, following Sand Creek, the Cheyenne war had commenced and would continue for years to come. One incident in this war deserves exploration, viz., the capture of two females, daughters of Jasper Fletcher, as well as the killing of Jasper's wife, Mary Ann.¹⁷

After Sand Creek, Black Kettle's band joined with several other bands of

Cheyenne, Arapaho and Lakota tribes and soon attacked the wagon roads in northeast Colorado Territory and southwest Nebraska Territory. Julesburg was attacked two times in January and early February 1865. All buildings were burned in the February attack. The warriors continued their warring havoc on the stage stations and ranches for several miles to and from Julesburg. After destroying most stage stations and ranches for about 200 miles along the Denver road, the warriors soon ventured north into Dakota Territory in present-day Wyoming. For most of the summer 1865, several hostile Northern and Southern Cheyenne remained north in the Powder River country with their Lakota brethren, as George Bent noted, "to hold the usual summer medicine ceremonies."¹⁸ There were more than just "ceremonies" being attended to. War was also being carried out. On July 26 the Cheyenne were involved with their Lakota and Arapaho brethren in an attack upon Platte Bridge at present-day Casper, Wyoming, as well as the destruction of a supply train under the command of 11th Kansas Cavalry Sergeant Amos Custard. Five men were killed at Platte Bridge, including 2nd Lieutenant Caspar Collins of the 11th Ohio Cavalry. Custard and 21 soldiers were killed a few miles from the cavalry post at Platte Bridge, soon named Fort Caspar.¹⁹

In addition to George Bent, young Minimic, following the loss of his wife and two daughters at Sand Creek, had joined with the Dog Soldiers.²⁰ Following the fight at Platte Bridge, Minimic, and in all likelihood George Bent, ventured to the southern end of present-day Wyoming.²¹ While there on July 31, a band of Cheyenne and



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Amanda "Mary" Fletcher Cook

Arapaho Indians – led by Sand Creek survivor, Southern Cheyenne Sand Hill and his Aorta band,²² made an attack upon the family of Jasper Fletcher, about 35 miles east of Fort Halleck and just east of Rock Creek Station, 75 miles northwest of present-day Cheyenne. The Fletchers were with a larger train of 75 wagons – perhaps as many as 200-300 people, which had been delayed at Fort Laramie until the wagon party was large enough to protect itself from Indian attacks. A part of the wagons included a military escort, taking supplies for Camp Douglas, outside of Salt Lake City. Nearly all of the heavily loaded freight wagons were pulled by oxen, which meant the wagon train was slow moving, averaging a little more than half the miles each day that a similar

train could travel, if pulled by mules. By contrast, the Fletcher family's two wagons were pulled by horses, making their attachment to the slower moving caravan a daily challenge. In fact, each day of the journey, Jasper would move his two wagons several miles to the forefront, as far as he thought his family could travel, and the oxen-pulled wagons could catch up by camp-time.²³ In the tree-less barren prairie of the 1860s, one could see for miles, especially when distant wagons produced visual columns of road dust caused by the heavily laden freight.

The Fletcher family had come from Eastwood, Derbyshire, England in 1861, with the intentions of moving to the gold mines in California. Jasper and his two brothers, Henry and Samuel, had owned and operated a coal mine called Jessup Coal Pits. While in England, Jasper read numerous accounts of the gold fields in California, from which he began his quest to come over to America. As daughter Mary later recalled, "He became each day more convinced of the truth of the stories of fabulous wealth that only waited his coming..." Fletcher's wife Mary Ann was not as excited for the family upheaval from England and did not want to leave her Motherland, but by 1861 Jasper's wishes were consummated and the young family boarded a ship at Liverpool, and from there journeyed to New York.²⁴ However, Mary Ann became quite ill shortly after their arrival, and as a result the family stayed with English friends – old schoolmates of Mary Ann – they knew in Quincy, Illinois, until she was well enough to travel. Though she was finally able to continue in Jasper's quest for the West, her health

kept her frail and she was basically an invalid.²⁵ During this time, on August 6, 1863, Elizabeth – Lizzie - was born. The rest of the family included 37-year old Jasper and his 36-year old wife Mary Ann; 17-year old Amanda Mary – called by her family Mary; 11-year old William Henry; six-year old Jasper, Junior; and four-and-a-half year old Oscar D.²⁶

The Fletcher family finally left Illinois on May 10, 1865. They first went to Omaha, and from there joined a 100-wagon caravan and followed the Platte River west, and then, with about half the caravan, took the South Platte from Julesburg to Denver, the most-traveled route in 1865 that carried freight goods into the new settlement. There the family stayed a couple weeks, camping on Cherry Creek, and experiencing the frontier town. They then continued their journey to California. Leaving Denver with another large caravan, they went north to Fort Laramie. When they arrived at the post, Jasper's family was placed with a freight train numbering 75 wagons, whose destination was Camp Douglas just outside Salt Lake City. The caravan left the fort on the evening the Fletcher family had arrived there.

After traveling about 80 miles, the wagon train neared Rock Creek Station. The Fletcher family's two wagons – one carrying their possessions and the other a "convenience" wagon allowing the women to travel in leisure - were as usual several miles beyond the slower ox-driven wagons, when they stopped near the station to prepare their noon meal.²⁷ The family intended, after eating and the other wagons catching up, to cross the creek at the stage station, which was on the opposite side of the

water. The stage station operated a ferry to make the crossing. While Jasper was preparing camp, Mary Ann and her two daughters walked beyond their wagons about 400 yards in the direction of the station. As they approached the creek, suddenly Indians – 300 in number – shouting their war cries, sprang on the unsuspecting family, riding out from their concealment in the hills surrounding the creek valley. The warriors quickly killed Mary Ann with a well-thrown spear thrust into her head as she was holding Mary's hand. Mary was carrying little Lizzie in her other arm. The Indians quickly captured both sisters, apparently wounding Mary with several arrows which she quickly pulled out.²⁸

The victorious Cheyenne then charged at the two distant Fletcher wagons and wounded Jasper, hitting him in the wrist with an arrow. It was his first time he and his family had seen an Indian. Jasper, seeing the Indians attacking his wife and daughters hundreds of yards to his front, ordered his three small boys to run back in the direction of the slow moving caravan. The Indians did not chase the boys and instead focused their attention on the unknown trophies hiding inside the wagons. Somehow, when Jasper was wounded, he managed to hide in a small ravine, where the Indians ignored him. He remained suffering from his painful wound, and loss of blood, until another caravan discovered him two days later, treated him and brought him to Camp Douglass, four miles from Salt Lake City.²⁹ When he arrived in the desert town, unknown to him, his boys – picked up by the original caravan and thought to be orphans - had during the journey to Utah been placed with

another caravan travelling back east to Denver, where their prospects for adoption were more likely. It would be months before Jasper's three boys were sent back to Salt Lake City to be with their father.

Before ending their raid on the Fletcher family, the Indians took what they wanted from the two wagons and then destroyed the rest of the family possessions, by burning everything they didn't take. They also captured Jasper's three horses that had pulled the wagons.³⁰ Neither the military escort accompanying the government wagons, or the armed freighters with the train was able to come to the rescue of the Fletcher family. Jasper's apparent complacency in running miles in front of the slower moving train was a grievous mistake and the angry Cheyenne made him pay by capturing his two daughters and killing his wife. His grief when acknowledging his stupidity must have been nearly unbearable. Once Fletcher's wagons were set afire after being plundered, the Indians retreated at a leisurely pace back across Rock Creek. Mary Ann Fletcher's body was buried near the stage station the next day.³¹ The grave today, like thousands of others in the history of the Overland Trails, is lost.

Mary recalled that awful day:

We were just camped for dinner, and a party of the Indians just came right down on us, - about three hundred of them as I afterward learned, - Cheyennes and Arapahoes. There were three Sioux [Brule] with them, but as to whether they were adopted into the tribe or not, I do not know. They came on the train as we were in camp, and just went

into fighting. Of course they came on their ponies in regular fighting order. I had my mother by her hand and my sister under the other arm. My mother was killed by my side and my sister taken. Then I was taken, picked up and put on horseback and taken back to the wagons. Where I was picked up I could not tell just exactly, but it must have been 300 or 400 yards from the wagons.³²

In a newspaper account years later, Mary again revisited her moment of captivity:

There was a wild whoop. From behind every rock and bush, it seemed, sprang an Indian in full war regalia. I had never before seen an Indian and I stared in amazement at their war paint and feathers. Frightened, I seized my mother by the hand, at the same time snatching up my baby sister. The Indian ponies circled and wheeled, their riders hurling spears and wielding axes as they rode their horses over us.

We stood there, hand in hand, too terrified to move, and then, without a word, mother sank to the ground. A spear had pierced her head and she died with the whisper, "Mary" on her lips. As I knelt there a brave galloped by, leaned down from his pony and snatched the baby away from me. Except for a glimpse of the baby later that same night, I never saw her again.

I was picked off my feet, tied and thrown on the pony, then led off in the gathering darkness.³³



Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

Camp Weld Picture

We crossed a river and went up a mountain side, and from the top we watched the massacre. I can see it now when I close my eyes as vividly as I saw it 60 years ago – the wagons in flames, women and children scurrying around like frightened animals, only to be dragged back and scalped and killed – the Indians worked to a passion of blood lust by this time, beating, burning, killing, torturing everything in their path.

We rode all that night and for three days and nights before we stopped to rest. I rode tied most of the time. Another prisoner, a woman, whispered to me during the third night that the Indians were planning to kill her. Her husband and baby

had disappeared in the first night's horror. She slipped me a housewife (a flannel-covered sewing case) that women carried in those days, asking me to give it to her husband if he survived her. In it were her wedding ring and the baby's little gold ring. I carried it for months before the Indians discovered it and took it from me.

That night when we stopped for rest, half a dozen warriors crept behind the sleeping woman and shot her to death. I was now alone with a tribe of warring savages and it was a very frightened little girl who wrapped herself in a buffalo robe that night and tried to sleep.

When we reached the Indian village the squaws tried to kill



Author's Collection

Custer

me. Once before the braves had tried to get me, but Chief Neir-mir-vier, whom they all feared, sat all night in front of the shelter he had built for me. When the women tried to slash me with their knives they tore my tent to ribbons but Neir-mir-vier and his squaw pushed me into the middle of the tent and walked around and around it.³⁴

With the large war party were two Cheyenne women. Three days after Mary was captured, she recalled the Indians attacking another single family, unwisely travelling alone on the road. Mary said the entire family was killed, "with the exception of the white woman. She was captured, and killed shortly afterwards." That unfortunate family's name apparently was Cackle. As Mary later shared, the family was on their way to Colorado when captured by the Cheyenne:

The Indians took a small child from Mrs. Cackle's arms and seizing it by the feet, dashed its brains out against a wagon hub. Mr. Cackle, two children and the mother of Mrs. Cackle were killed on the spot, but Mrs. Cackle was carried away. Three nights after the capture, however, the woman was placed against a tree in a sitting position and was made a target of, her body being pierced by more than a dozen poison-pointed arrows before her prayers were answered for the ending of her terrible existence.³⁵

The Fletchers' unfortunate experience had more bad luck accompanying their fate. The girl's capture happened just before the government had succeeded in placing troopers throughout the trail. They were brought out west at the conclusion of the Civil War, to provide protection to travelers. Had the Fletchers been just two days later in making their journey, the likelihood of escaping an Indian attack was quite probable. An anonymous letter, likely posted by an officer, written August 5 and published later that month in the *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune*, said that the 7th Michigan Cavalry, who served so gallantly with Brevet Major General George A. Custer at the close of the Civil War, had reported to Fort Halleck on August 2, one day's march from where the Fletcher family had been attacked. On their march to Fort Halleck they apparently observed the devastation of the recent Indian raid. The officer wrote additional details of the attack, saying that there were two parties in front of the larger Camp

Douglas-bound caravan that were attacked, one belonging to a man named Mr. Strong, who was killed, as well as two other men with him. Mrs. Strong, "riding in one of the advance wagons of the train, was taken, her person violated by 12 of 'the noble red men,' when she was entirely denuded of her clothing, and in that condition sent back to the train, among about 90 men." The officer went on to name Fletcher as the other victim, who was wounded, and whose wife was killed. But he mistakenly reported Mary Ann was pregnant, "ripped open, and the fetus cut from her by piece meal, her hands and legs cut off, and her body shot full of arrows. His two daughters, one 15, the other two or three years old, were taken, the former carried off captive, to a fate worse than 20 deaths, and the brains of the latter were dashed out."³⁶

The officer's details regarding Mary Fletcher's mutilation and Lizzie's brains being dashed out likely confused what happened to the Fletcher family with what happened to the Cackle family. In a later account Mary wrote:

I have never seen my dear little sister since about 10 o'clock on the night of the same day of our capture, when she was crying first for her mother and then for me to take her, till finally she was carried out of my sight. The next morning I inquired of a half breed, one who could understand and speak a little English, where my sister was and he told me she cried so much they had killed her, and I have every reason to believe he told me the truth for I was with them for nearly one year [she was in captivity seven months] before being rescued,

*and I never saw her afterwards.*³⁷

Thirty-five years after the attack a man named Thomas Harford wrote to Mary, from Pueblo, Colorado, and recalled some details of her capture that might help to sort out the mystery between what Mary wrote of her captivity and what the unnamed officer wrote. From Harford's recollections, there was probably a second attack near the Fletchers, possibly a day or two after the Fletcher attack. Harford wrote to Mary after he read an inquiry for assistance with her depredation claim, which had appeared in the *Rocky Mountain News*. The undated letter stated:

I was engaged with a number of others delivering freight for the government to the different forts on the plains thirty-five years ago. We had a scrap with the Indians at Rock Creek, Wyoming. Three of our party were killed and buried where we piled a mound of rocks over their graves. There was a man with a family a little ahead of us who had his wagon & outfit destroyed. The man's name was Fletcher. He came to us wounded with arrows. His wife was killed and the children I think was all captured. One or two I think were girls. This man Fletcher traveled with us afterwards to Fort Douglas Utah (Salt Lake City).³⁸

He identified his train as the train that found and brought Jasper to Camp Douglass, probably at least a day after the original attack, which would mean his train was a different outfit than with whom the Fletchers

were traveling with. He also said three men were killed, which confirms what the unnamed officer found when his command came upon the scene, probably just after the train Harford was with was attacked. This also makes sense of Mary's recollections of seeing the Indians attack other persons at the same sight from where she was taken.

In another interview Mary gave regarding her captivity, published December 2, 1887, in the *Clinton Register* (Illinois), she added more details about another train attacked nearby. In it, she said the warriors discovered "a ten gallon cask of brandy, and the band captured this and entered upon the scalp dance. Nearly every brave in the tribe became wildly drunk."³⁹

According to the government claim later filed seeking compensation from the Department of Interior for the Indians destroying and stealing the family property, one of the items the Indians stole from the Fletcher wagons was a metal box—12 by 18 inches—containing all of the money Jasper owned, which apparently was substantial, all in British notes or gold coin. Mary claimed the paper notes amounted to "17,000 pounds in Bank of England notes and 3,000 in gold sovereigns." This seems like a large amount of money, and probably both the paper notes and sovereigns are exaggerated. The sovereigns were each a pound (English money roughly equivalent at that time to an American dollar). If the family had as many as 3,000 sovereigns, they would have weighed a little more than nine pounds, which could fit into a box with the dimensions of 12 by 18 inches. The Fletcher family came from an upper-

class English family, and Jasper had sold his claim in a coal mining business before coming to America. They were hoping to bring that money to California and begin a new life.

Minimic kept much of the money in Fletcher's box, and throughout Mary's captivity—which lasted seven months—she recalled he had her count it and note its value, which he then spent with traders. But Minimic wasn't the only warrior who got some of the money. Several other Indians had substantial amounts. Before Mary was rescued, she said Minimic brought her to William Bent, George Bent's father.⁴⁰ Bent had brought several wagons down to the Indian village to trade with them. Mary said inside William's tent were "the Bent Brothers," probably meaning George and Robert.⁴¹ He knew the value of the money, and traded with Minimic for much of it. As Mary recalled Indians and money:

They didn't know the value of the bills, but they knew it was money. They knew they could buy something with it. Repeatedly several Indians came into the tent where I was, and would have the money in handkerchiefs, and in the handkerchiefs there would be bills laid in different shapes. They wanted me to count them. I would count the number. There was one that had 1700 bills. One Indian in particular had 2400 pounds of English money.... There was one that had 700 bills. I knew this money. It was a different kind from the American. I knew it was the same. The gold was divided among them. The squaws had the coins, after making holes in them, strung in



Smithsonian Institution

Cheyenne warrior Minimic, also called Eagle Head

their ears. Something grand and something that was very nice in their idea.⁴²

No historical record has been found which shows William Bent reported his knowledge that young Mary was a captive in a Cheyenne village. If this is because he made no report, one can only assume his desire for trade trumped his desire for seeking her rescue from captivity. But also, perhaps William was remembering Sand Creek and what a few of the soldiers there did to the women and children unable to escape. One son, George, was wounded. Another son, Robert, was forced to escort the soldiers from Fort Lyon to the village, and a third son, Charles, escaped from the village after the

attack. While Mary prior to her capture probably did not know anything about Sand Creek, she certainly knew about it during her capture. She recalled her captors making her write a note saying they were on the warpath because of Sand Creek, "and they so made me write a notice to the public which they nailed to a telegraph pole as a public notice."⁴³ Clearly, she understood she was collateral damage in this tit-for-tat war.

As winter approached Mary was brought by her captors to southern Kansas, and across the border into present-day Oklahoma. In the harsh winter her sufferings continued. She was finally trusted with a hatchet and made to cut bark from trees in order to give food to the starving village horses. Mary:

... when the snow was on the ground I was put in charge of a herd of ponies, for which I had to climb the trees and cut limbs that the ponies could get the bark to eat. That I continued all winter. Snow, rain or sleet, I had to go and do that work from early morning till late in the evening, with nothing scarcely to protect my body from the bitter cold and storms. When I returned to the lodge in the evening it mattered not how cold and wet I was, I had no change of wearing apparel and would try to sleep with the few clothes I had on, as I had nothing to cover myself, neither would they give me anything. Oh, those awful days and nights will live in my memory as long as life lasts. Not only that, but I had nothing to eat when I came in. One unacquainted with the

Indians would very naturally think that if I was out attending a herd of ponies, I would attempt an escape, but the people who know and are familiar with the ways of the Indians will know there were always squaws to accompany me to do the same work for their herds, and also to guard me. There was no possible chance to escape.⁴⁴

Mary's ordeal seemed to have no end in sight, her daily suffering nearly unbearable. By the end of February, however, things quickly changed. The Indians under the care of Ned Wynkoop had gathered together about 45 miles southeast of Fort Dodge, where they were told their annual annuities would be distributed. Wynkoop also hoped to get the signatures of the missing chiefs on the papers formalizing the Treaty of the Little Arkansas, which had been signed near present-day Hutchinson, Kansas at about the time the Dog Soldiers holding Mary in captivity proceeded to leave the Powder River country in anticipation of the approaching winter. Shortly after the village camp had been set, a young Indian trader, Charles Hanger, came into the camp in late February 1866. There he discovered Mary. He was able to purchase her for \$1,665 in trade goods. Once ransomed, she was brought into Fort Dodge. From there she was escorted to Fort Larned, and then turned over to Cheyenne agent Wynkoop. Charles Hanger was partners with a man named Morris and together they had a license to trade with the Indians under Agent Wynkoop's care. He stated he "bought her from the Indian who captured her ... that it was a party of

Cheyennes who attacked the train, and that no other Indians were with them at the time."⁴⁵

When he was trading with Minimic and the other Indians, Hanger stayed in the Cheyenne Dog Soldier camp. There were about 1,000 Cheyenne camped together. About 1,200-1,500 Arapahos under Little Raven were camped, one or two day's ride from the Cheyenne village. Also camped nearby were between 600-800 Apaches. After purchasing Mary, Hanger sent her down to the Arapaho village, fearing the Cheyenne would reclaim her. His interpreter—a half-breed named Poysell—was there with his wife, and they took Mary into their tent. When Wynkoop was informed of Hanger's actions he requested Captain George Gordon to send a military escort to Little Raven's village and bring Mary to him, where she was then brought under escort to Fort Larned. Gordon sent Lieutenant Alfred Bates, who accomplished the mission.⁴⁶

Mary recalled her rescue and transfer:

Mr. Hanger came into the village about 3 o'clock in the afternoon of the same day they asked him [to come trade with them]. You know, as all Western men know, that upon arrival in the village the first thing for the trader to do is to give the Indians a feast. I was forbidden to leave the lodge. They did not want the trader to know they had a girl prisoner. I thought to myself that I would go at all hazards, for I could not make my condition worse than it was. I did go and when the trader had seen me it was too late to drive



Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

George Bent

me back, for the Indians thought the trader would report it to the agent when the annuities arrived, which he would have done – and would cause trouble before they could get the annuities unless I was surrendered and in the meantime I would have been sold to another tribe and be far away before the arrival of the annuities.⁴⁷

Trader Hanger confirmed Mary's claim regarding William Bent that he earlier got money belonging to the Fletcher family, and told Hanger he got it.⁴⁸ But this Fletcher money apparently led to a white man's death. Captain Gordon was with Wynkoop when he was down in the Cheyenne village, just about when Hanger had traded for Mary. Gordon concluded his report of his excursion, by noting

that on February 21, a son of Mr. Boggs was killed and scalped by four Cheyenne, six miles east of Fort Dodge. The reason? He had gone to trade with them and traded with one Indian 10, one-dollar bills for 10, ten-dollar bills. The Indians knew money had value but did not know the specifics, and once the Cheyenne learned they had been cheated, they returned and killed the young Boggs. Gordon: "I think this case needs no further comment."⁴⁹

When Hanger first saw Mary in the village, he failed to recognize the Indian maiden was a white woman until she spoke to him, asking in her British accent if he had any soap. Her desire for soap was connected with the anticipated feast to welcome the trader into camp. The Indians knew he had with him the supplies to make flapjacks and Mary was assigned to make the desired pancakes, a rare delicacy the Indians loved. But she had been forbidden to leave her tepee while the Indians were preparing to receive the groceries. That was when Mary decided to make her own entry into his tent, asking for soap. In doing such, an Indian beat her and chased her from Hanger's tent.⁵⁰

It wasn't until Mary spoke that Charles realized she was a white woman. The reason he first failed to recognize her as white was due to how the Indians dressed her and made her appear Indian. It was a painful ceremony, repeated throughout her captivity. Mary later reported what the Indians did: "Every morning her face was painted red and striped with soot water, every few days they would burn her eye lashes and eye brows with hot ashes, holding her head to the ground for the purpose."⁵¹

After Mary appeared to Hanger and

was beaten for speaking to him, the Cheyenne didn't continue to hide her. She was soon brought to the lodge to prepare the feast. Mary recalled that moment:

As soon as I went into the lodge, Mr. Hanger asked me how I came to be with them, as he could talk to me and they could not understand what was said. I told him about the massacre, supposing father was killed and none had escaped. It was then Mr. Hanger asked me if there was no way to get me out of there. I told him I had tried running away but was always brought back and punished, or I would better say, tortured, every time I attempted to escape, but they had talked of selling me to the Kiowa Indians. Mr. Hanger told me he would buy me if it took his whole outfit to do so. Oh, how rejoiced I was to hear him say he would buy me. It was late that night when we started for our lodge but before starting he told the Indians who claimed me to bring me with them in the morning and he would buy me....⁵²

Years later George Bent recalled Mary, after her rescue, was turned over to Wynkoop, while he was trying to negotiate with the Dog Soldiers to sign the 1865 Treaty on the Little Arkansas that Black Kettle had earlier signed. But, according to Bent, Big Head and Rock Forehead refused to put their signatures on the treaty.⁵³ In Captain Gordon's report, dated March 5, 1866, he noted that Big Head rejected the treaty, and "said that he and his tribe objected strongly to the Smoky

Hill route, and to living south of the Arkansas: that the road lay through their best hunting grounds, and the country south of the Arkansas was not his, but belonged to the Apaches and Arrapahoes, and he and his tribe preferred to live in the country north of the Arkansas, where they were born and bred." Gordon wrote that Wynkoop told the Dog Soldiers to just stay friendly to the whites, and all warriors then professed peace.⁵⁴ When Wynkoop returned from his council with the Dog Soldiers, he stated—contrary to what Bent and Gordon both wrote—that all the chiefs signed the treaty, and naively concluded "I have now got all the hostile bands in, and can safely declare the Indians to be at peace, and consequently the different routes of travel across the plains perfectly safe."⁵⁵

Of course, Wynkoop was quite wrong in his thoughts that peace was finally assured, for this war with the Cheyenne continued through 1869, until the demise of Dog Soldier Chief Tall Bull at Summit Springs, July 11.⁵⁶

Mary's captivity had lasted a grueling seven months. Once rescued, she had no idea what happened to the rest of her family. She assumed her father had been killed and perhaps her brothers too. She had only one option — to return to Illinois where she and her family had spent time with friends of her mother before Jasper began his fatal journey out west. It wasn't until July, nearly a year after her terrible captivity began, before she finally arrived in Illinois. She remained with those friends until December 1866, when she moved into the residence of Judge William Cook. A year later, on New Year's Eve, she married his eldest son, also named William. She later had

four children, and remained living in Davenport, Iowa.

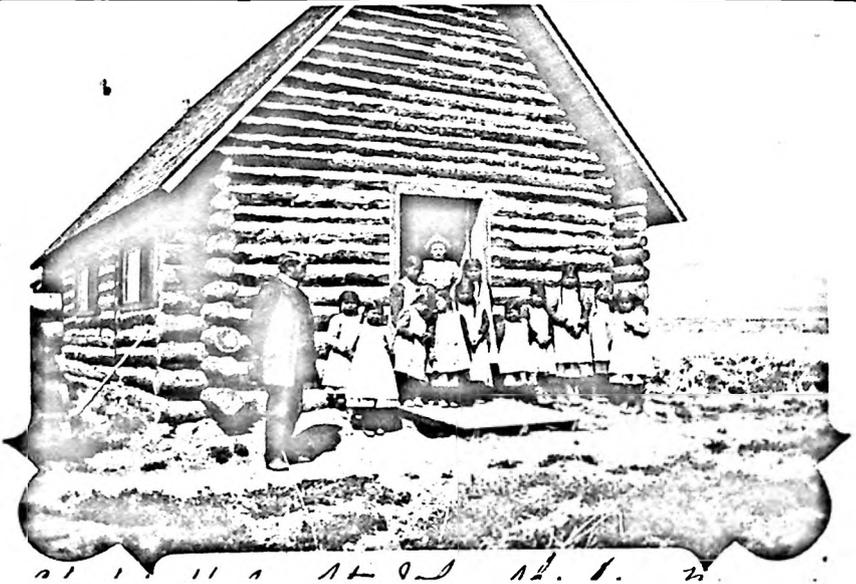
It was after Mary had married when her father read a newspaper account in Salt Lake City, reporting Mary's rescue. At long last, Jasper finally learned his eldest daughter was yet alive! He wrote her in Davenport, and when the letter arrived Mary had the same joy in learning that her father and brothers were also alive and living in Utah. Jasper made arrangements for Mary to travel to Utah and be reunited with her family, but she replied, saying she was happily married and "after what I passed through, was in mortal fear to again attempt to cross the plains."⁵⁷ She did not travel to Salt Lake City until January 1871, when the dangers of travel had passed and she could travel by rail and not wagon.⁵⁸

Though they didn't physically see each other for another three years, both she and Jasper did their best via letters to various government agencies and people to find out what happened to little Lizzie, and if yet alive, to rescue her too. Hope finally came when both wrote to Brevet Major General George Armstrong Custer, while he was involved in actively organizing the newly formed 7th Cavalry at Fort Riley, Kansas. Custer replied to Mary on January 27, 1867, and said Lizzie was spotted in the village of a Cheyenne chief called "Cutnose." Lieutenant Owen Hale and scout William Comstock had seen her just south of Fort Wallace, near Big Creek.⁵⁹ Custer's letter:

*Fort Riley, Kansas, January
27th 1867*

*Miss Amanda Fletcher
Yours of the 4th inst. came
duly to hand. Your sister of whom*

you make inquiries is not at this post nor has she been here. There are two persons here however who saw her within the past two months in the hands of the Cheyenne Indians. The Indian who claims her is a chief called Cutnose. One of the persons who saw her is Lieut. [Owen] Hale of the 7th U.S. Cavalry, the other is a guide and ranchman named [William] Comstock who lives near Camp Collins on the Utah road. At the time your sister was seen the party of Indians having her in charge were about two hundred and fifty miles west of this point [Fort Riley] on the Smoky Hill route to Denver City near Big Creek a short distance this side of Fort Wallace. This party of Indians has moved northward since, but I suppose could still be found if desired. The guide Comstock to whom I referred was in the fight in which your sister was taken prisoner near Fort Halleck. He saw your father after the fight was over and states that your father was slightly wounded in one of his arms. He has had a great deal of experience with Indians and is of the opinion that the only and surest way to obtain the release of your sister is to ransom her which would be probably by giving for her one or two horses. I would be glad to assist you in any way in my power. Please communicate with me. Your sister was in good health and was kindly cared for by the Indians being considered a great favorite by them. Very truly yours, G. A. Custer.⁶⁰



American Heritage Center, Univ. of Wyoming

Lizzie Brokenhom at schoolhouse, standing in door entrance

Custer later wrote about this in his 1874 book, *My Life on the Plains*:

The child [Lizzie] now held by the Indians was kept captive. An elder daughter [Mary] made her escape and now resides in Iowa. The father resides in Salt Lake City. I have received several letters from the father and eldest daughter and from friends of both, requesting me to obtain the release of the little girl, if possible ... all trace of the little white girl was lost, and to this day nothing is known of her fate.... "Cut Nose" with his band was located along the Smoky Hill route in the vicinity of Monument Station. He frequently visited the stage stations for purposes of trade, and was

invariably accompanied by his little captive. I never saw her, but those who did represented her as strikingly beautiful; her complexion being fair, her eyes blue, and her hair of a bright golden hue, she presented a marked contrast to the Indian children who accompanied her. "Cut Nose," from the delicate light color of her hair, gave her an Indian name signifying "Little Silver Hair." He appeared to treat her with great affection, and always kept her clothed in the handsomest of Indian garments. All offers from individuals to ransom her proved unavailing. Although she has been with the Indians but a year, she spoke the Cheyenne language fluently, and

seemed to have no knowledge of her mother tongue.⁶¹

Mary recalled finally reuniting with her father. Mary:

I was for some years after my captivity separated from my father. I met him again in Colorado and Utah [1871]. He had saved the boys and with them resided in Utah and I went there to him and found him. I found him mentally not the man he was before the attack on our train in 1865. The worry over us girl's captivity, and the murder of my mother had had their affect. He was not the business man that he had been before these depredations. I found that the depredations had impoverished him and that his earnings, much of same he had expended in looking for us captive girls, that his constant thoughts were on his sore affliction and losses.⁶²

Four years after being physically reunited with his eldest daughter Mary, Jasper died suddenly in Salt Lake City, October 15, 1875. *And Mary never forgot about little Lizzie.* In 1880, when Buffalo Bill Cody was beginning his career running his famous Wild West show, Cody used the Fletcher name in presenting a white female captive living among the Indians, even naming the captive Lizzie. Mary's local paper in Davenport reported this, and when Mary read it, she thought Cody might know something about Lizzie's captivity. Cody was contacted, and responded with a letter to the editor of the *Davenport Gazette*, written September 30, which was published in

the Davenport paper. Cody:

I am very sorry to say that the Miss Lizzie Fletcher of my company who is playing the part of Onita is not Mrs. Cook's sister although the circumstances connected with her capture are very similar to the story of my drama "The Prairie Waif" and I will have "John A. Stevens" the author write Mrs. Cook where he obtained the incidents connected with the plot and story of the play. I knew of the massacre of the Fletchers and the capture of the two girls but had forgotten it until it was brought to my mind through the columns of your paper [the Gazette].⁶³

Cody went on to state that he would write Mrs. Cook with any further information, assuring her that he believed Lizzie was still living among the Indians. He also informed her that the half-breed men in the Indian village associated with her captivity might have been George or Charles Bent, and said George Bent was still alive. Ten years later Mary received a letter from a person who was the brother of Thomas Boggs, who settled the town called Boggsville just east of Pueblo along the Arkansas River. In a response to Mary's inquiries, the unnamed letter writer replied back and said that George Bent might know information regarding what happened to Lizzie. Mary was advised "to open a correspondence with Ed Garry [sic: Edmund Guerrier] and George Bent, Indian interpreters at Fort Sill Indian Territory and perhaps through them you will get on the right track for your lost sister."⁶⁴

Mary wrote to George Bent, and he

later recalled his correspondence with her, saying she was captured by Sand Hill's band of Cheyenne. Bent wrote that in her letter to him she said she was well treated while a captive, that Sand Hill's wife was very kind to her during her captivity.⁶⁵ He erroneously stated that John Smith, working for Morris and Hanger, traded for her. Mary might have told Bent that when she wrote to him, by way of introduction, but in her own accounts of her captivity she penned a very different account from what Bent said:

As for telling my experiences with the Indians, I cannot command the language that would convey the remotest idea to one not experiencing it, of the freezing cold, sleet and rain, and the torture I would receive from these Indians, or I ought to say fiends, yes they were far worse than any name I could give them. If I could have my way about it there would not be one left alive. I have been almost starved [to death] days at a time, without one morsel to eat. Oh, how I prayed for death to come to my relief. I have begged of them time and again to kill me. I have often thought since my rescue, that it was my anxiety for them to kill me caused them not to do so. Certainly with me their tenderest [sic] mercies would have been instant death. They did not for the first few months permit me to have a knife in my hand, or anything with which I could take my own life. Than remain with them death would be far more preferable.⁶⁶

Mary later added in her captivity account that that she was not referring to all Cheyenne as the fiends she wished dead, "and to distinguish them from the peaceable Cheyennes, they were known at that time as the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers."

As far as being treated kindly by Sand Hill's wife, Mary had nothing kind to say about any Cheyenne women during her captivity, saying that the women "would often abuse her and beat her shamefully when angry." If a female was angry at her husband she would appease her anger by beating Mary. Once she described crossing an ice-swollen river in the dead of winter. Suddenly the ice she was on broke free and went down river in the strong current. She jumped off and swam to the shore. The warriors thought it a brave act, but the women thought she was stupid for not letting the ice carry her away from her captors. But Mary knew that not far downriver were deep falls, which would have drowned her.⁶⁷

It was shortly after Jasper's wife was killed and daughters taken captive that he filed for a "depreddation claim" against the Cheyenne Indians, making formal application January 6, 1865, while his daughters were still missing in captivity. Congress had a complicated set of laws in place which allowed citizens who were attacked by Indians under treaty with the United States and receiving annuities to file a claim against the guilty tribe for lost and destroyed property.⁶⁸ In his claim he stated a total loss of \$6,295.50, for the loss of all his possessions in his two wagons. He said he lost \$250 in gold coin. After Mary was rescued, married and living in Davenport, he made a second claim, dated March 9, 1867, and



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William Bent

lowered his total loss from \$6,295.50 to \$2356. In this second claim he stated his loss of gold coin was just \$150. But after Jasper suddenly died in 1875, Mary and her brother Jasper, Junior, together filed a third claim, dated January 24, 1876. The new claim grew the property loss to \$7,915, the children stating the loss of money was \$2000 in gold coin, in addition to \$1,000 in English bank notes, paper money. In addition to the large amount of money now claimed, there were other changes too. For instance, in the first claim Jasper said he lost three horses and four mules, but the mules were not claimed in the second or third claim. But many more personal items, including expensive clothing and bedding, were added to the last claim. In 1892, while giving testimony about the depredation claim, Mary revised the amount of money lost to 17,000 pounds in bank of

England notes and an additional 3,000 pounds in gold sovereigns. She said her father preferred not to convert his English pounds into American currency due to the fluctuating value of American paper money at the time.

The first claim was disqualified because Jasper was not an American citizen, a government requirement in 1865 in order to qualify for filing a claim.⁶⁹ In refileing, papers were submitted showing that he had in fact filed for citizenship prior to the raid, thus making him eligible for compensation. As the claim was being investigated, Congress tweaked the depredation claims laws and allowed for all persons, citizens or not, to file new claims. With that new opportunity, and with Jasper deceased, Mary and her younger brother together filed the third claim. When the government evaluated the new claim, they expressed concern over the apparent inflation of monetary value of the goods lost, and especially questioned the gold and paper money said to have been taken.

In response to queries, Mary did her best to explain the problem with the large amount of money first not being reported. She said her father had been told the government would not compensate for lost money, so he merely noted a token amount, not expecting any reimbursement for that. Mary's claim corrected the incorrect amount. She also noted that when her father made his first claim he was still suffering from his arrow wound and was not articulate regarding his losses. The same argument was presented in his reduced second claim, noting that his extreme poverty as a result of the loss of his entire possessions had left him depressed and destitute, and thus

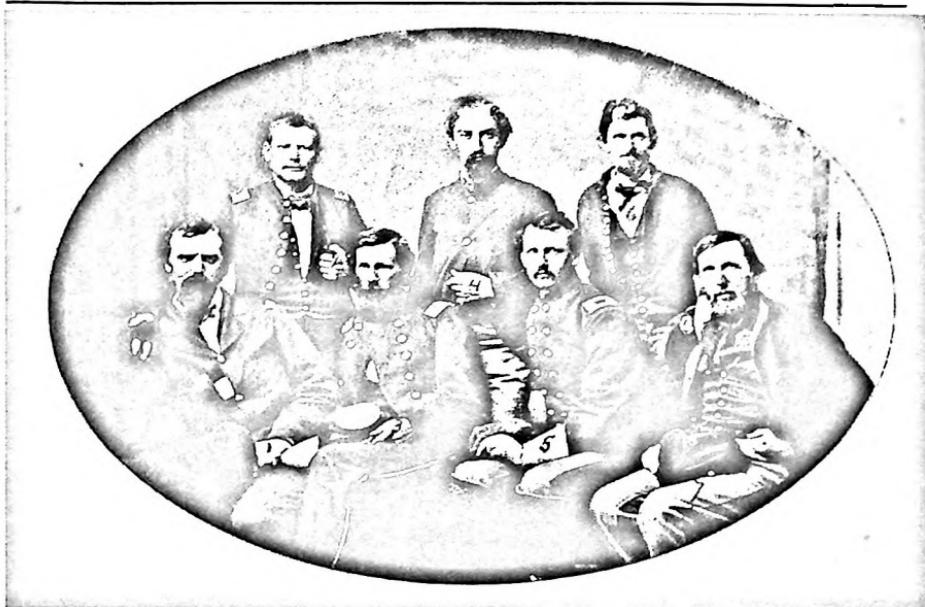
he was not thinking clearly when he made his claims. Again she asserted that her amended third claim was the accurate one, and that, together with her brother's recollections, they had noted the true losses and value of the family possessions. It was clear to the government investigators, however, that the children were overinflating the value of the property lost, including exaggerating the amount of money taken. A recommendation was made to pay the entire amount of the second claim, for a reimbursement of \$2,356. At about that same time Congress authorized a special payment to Mary, for \$2,000, for her sufferings in captivity. That was approved by Congress June 16, 1880, and she was issued a check by the treasury department September 24.⁷⁰ The recommendation to compensate the family for the amount filed in the second claim, however, was never approved, which was part of the reason for filing the third claim.

One might think it was a simple slam dunk that Mary and her younger brother Jasper were intentionally overinflating their losses, an act typical in many depredation claim filings.⁷¹ But to Mary's credit, 10 years after Charles Hanger secured her release, the two became reacquainted, and Charles testified under oath in Mary's behalf. Charles vouched for the larger amount of money. He said he had traded with the Arapaho and Apache Indians and all he received in remuneration was buffalo robes, but when he traded with the Cheyenne he reported that they had "over \$10,000 in Bank of England notes and about \$800 in English gold coin, and about \$1,000 in 7-30 greenbacks,

and the remainder was straight greenbacks." By sign language the Cheyenne informed him that they got the money from "Mrs. Cook's father's wagons." When asked how he learned that, since he could not speak the Indian dialect and did not have an interpreter with him, he said it was by signs: "By showing me what they had, and pointing to the child [Mary] and making the sign of her parent's wagons."⁷²

Charles also testified that he offered one Indian \$200 in trade goods for the wedding ring he took from Mary Ann Fletcher's finger when she was killed, but the Indian did not want to depart with his prized possession. He also gave testimony showing that William Bent had traded for about three times the amount of money that he had traded with the Cheyenne. Hanger received about \$14,000 in England notes in his trade with the Cheyenne, which he was able to convert at a 42% value. He used \$1,600 of that amount received to purchase Mary and end her captivity.⁷³

The government still did not pay anything for the property loss suffered during the July 31, 1865 attack, and by the early 1890s Mary enlisted yet another attorney to assist her in the recovery of her family's lost property. But by then the attorney filed an amended claim stating the preposterous amount of \$106,295.50. As a result of this claim, Mary was informed that the government was going to dismiss the claim because of "alleged frauds." The attorney apparently saw the futility of successfully adjudicating the claim, writing to Mary, "I do not understand why it was that your father in making his application claimed that the loss of money was so slight, if in fact he lost the amount claimed at the present



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Wynkoop, seated third from left, and 1st Colorado Cavalry

time.”⁷⁴ In the end the government made no payment to the Fletcher descendants for their losses in the 1865 raid, other than the special act Congress made in giving Mary \$2,000 for her personal sufferings during captivity.

There is more to Mary’s story than her struggle for compensation. As she was doggedly pursuing this, she never forgot her younger sister. But by the mid-1880s she seemed to have finally given up hope that her sister Lizzie was still alive. In the letter she received from Thomas Harford around 1900 he said that he seemed to recall that a stage driver told him that a little girl was found dead the day after the attack on the Fletcher family. That seemed to confirm Mary’s beliefs in 1887 when she wrote to the agent handling her depredation claim she had “no doubt in

my own mind my little sister was killed soon after – as I never saw her after the first day of my capture.”⁷⁵ Still, she must have often wondered what really happened to Lizzie.

Mary continued her futile fight for compensation throughout her life. Indeed, just three months before she died in 1928, she received a letter from her son, an eye, ear, nose and throat doctor residing in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, telling her that his lawyer advised Mary to turn the claim over to her son for final dispensation. Whether she followed his advice, so shortly before she died is not clear in the records.⁷⁶

One might think this is the end of the story: Lizzie lived her life out as an Indian, and Mary always wondered what happened to her little sister.

However, there was more to come and it was extraordinarily significant. A final dispensation occurred more than 35 years after Mary's rescue. In August, 1900, a caravan of Arapaho Indians had ventured 125 miles from the Wind River Reservation and an Arapaho sub-agency, down into Casper, Wyoming, to procure supplies as a part of their annual annuities. About 40 male Indians and half that amount of tribal women accompanied the band, where the women sought to sell trinkets and other hand-made items as their male compatriots transferred the annuities from the railroad cars into wagons for the journey back to the reservation. While purchasing Indian goods from the women, Casper citizens recognized one of the females as clearly a white woman, but knowing only the Indian dialect and fully dressed and acting as an Indian. She could not speak any English. A newspaper recalled,

She seemed almost as dirty and sunburned as the other squaws, but beneath the darkened skin were traces of a different race. Her hair was light in color, finer than that of the other women of her tribe, and her eyes were a clear blue. At the same time, she appeared to be a favorite in the band, and received more consideration than is usually given to a full-blooded squaw. Her clothes, blankets and even souvenirs, were of a better quality than those of her associates.⁷⁷

The curious citizens questioned one of the older Indian men who could speak English about the white Indian woman. He informed them

that the woman in question had been captured by the Cheyenne when about two years old. She—Kellsto Time or Killing Horn—was married to an Arapaho Indian by the name of John Brokenhorn. The story was reported in the *Natrona County Tribune*, and was soon published in several other papers around the country.⁷⁸ The story eventually appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, and one of her brothers sent a copy to Mary in Davenport.

Mary thought this might be her long lost, but never forgotten sister Lizzie. She wrote Wind River Indian agent, Captain H. G. Nickerson. Nickerson confirmed to Mary that Mrs. Brokenhorn was likely a white captive and indeed could be the long lost Lizzie. Nickerson told Mary

Of course I have seen the squaw, and I have tried to learn her true story. But that is rather a hard thing to do. She herself speaks only the Indian tongue, and says she has no recollection of any white parents. Moreover the Broken Horn, her husband, is not altogether anxious that she should be made the subject of an investigation. He prefers not to have any white people around, and should someone attempt to visit with his wife, he might move further back into the country... he is afraid the whites might take away his squaw.⁷⁹

Nickerson's warnings did not deter Mary's efforts to find her long lost sister. In late summer, 1901, Nickerson wrote Mary and told her that the rumors of smallpox on the reservation, as well as a rumored Indian uprising were both a hoax,

and she could visit the reservation if she desired. He offered his assistance to set up an interview with the white Indian woman. Further, Nickerson now felt that the Brokenhorns would not object to a visit.⁸⁰ That was all Mary needed to hear. In the summer of 1902 she travelled by rail to Casper, and from there took a stage to the Arapaho sub-agency. She had found her sister, apparently verified by a birth mark Mary never forgot. Now 39, Lizzie had been living with the Indians for 37 years. Through an interpreter, Mary explained to Lizzie how she was captured, and who her white family was. Mary desired that her long lost sister return with her to Iowa and begin to live her life as her sister, a white woman.

But Mrs. Brokenhorn would not go; she declared that she was an Indian, that she was satisfied to live as she had always lived; to call a tepee her home, to wear a blanket, to do the drudgery as all the squaws were doing, and to claim a full-blooded Indian as her husband, and that she could not remember anything about being captured, as her white sister had explained to her.⁸¹

Hearing long-lost Lizzie declare her commitment to her Indian life was devastating to Mary. She left her visit broken-hearted. She claimed that the rejection of her sister “was the hardest blow she had endured since she saw her mother killed by being thrust through the body with a spear by a blood-thirsty Indian.”⁸²

Thus ends the story of Amanda Mary Fletcher - Mary Cook. The fact that Lizzie disappeared after the first



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Wynkoop

day of capture was not because she had been killed—a thought Mary struggled with over the years—rather, it was probably because the raiding Indians had split apart, the majority wandering one way with Mary and the smaller band leaving in a different direction with Lizzie. If Lizzie was the little white child seen in the village of a Cheyenne named Cutnose, she remained with that faction until sometime later, mingling with Northern Arapaho and meeting John Brokenhorn, her future husband. Even at Mary’s death, she still struggled with her fate of losing her little sister. Her obituary said:

In later years Mrs. Cook kept up a constant search for her little sister. At one time she thought she had located the missing woman who was supposed to

*be living among the Indians and refused to leave them to return to civilization. However, no absolute proof was ever established that it was the sister of Mrs. Cook.*⁸³

Lizzie's story continued. After learning her white heritage, Mrs. Brokenhorn continued to live at the Arapaho Agency. She changed her first name to Lizzie and let her fellow Indian women know that "she was of superior birth and was of considerable more importance than the common Indians." Her husband John, 13 years senior in age, felt his status elevated too. After learning of his wife's English heritage, John set himself up as an Indian doctor, horse trader, and maker of Indian artifacts. Along with his white wife, they made a modest income, and when last noted in a publication in 1923, they had a comfortable existence together as husband and wife, and as one record reported, raised five children. John was 73-years-old and Lizzie - Kellsto Time or Killing Horn - was 62-years-old.⁸⁴ Ancestry.com confirms the story and notes that Mrs. Brokenhorn died May 31, 1928, at the Wind River Indian Reservation in western Wyoming. John Brokenhorn - Tutankaham - died February 2, 1930, at the Shoshone Agency.⁸⁵

How coincidental that the two sisters' journey on earth ended the same month of the same year. Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook died May 9, 1928, just 22 days before Lizzie Fletcher Brokenhorn's journey ended. Perhaps they finally joined together into an afterlife excursion.⁸⁶

Endnotes

1. Louis Kraft, *Ned Wynkoop and the Lonely Road to Sand Creek* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 161; David Fridtjof & Andrew E. Masich, *Halfbreed The Remarkable True Story of George Bent* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004), 23. For more on the sacred arrows and their meaning to Cheyenne culture, see Father Peter John Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, Volume 1 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), 3-15.
2. Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, Vol. 1, 631.
3. Dan L. Thrapp, *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography, Volume I* (The Arthur H. Clark Company (Glendale, CA: 1988), 96-100. See also Jeff Broome, *Cheyenne War: Indian Raids on the Roads to Denver, 1864-1869* (Sheridan and Sterling, CO: Aberdeen Books/Logan County Historical Society, 2013).
4. Broome, *Cheyenne War*, 39-41.
5. Statement of V. T. McGillicuddy, Pine Ride Indian Agent, in Joseph Eubanks Indian Depredation Claim, Record Group 123, Claim #2733, Indian Depredations Claims Division, National Archives Building, Washington, DC. The raids along these two water sources were nearly 100 miles apart. The Little Blue raids included all of the above named Indians, whereas the Plum Creek raid consisted mostly of Southern Cheyenne. See Broome, *Cheyenne War*, 89, 131.
6. "Massacre of the Cheyenne Indians," *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, at the Second Session Thirty-Eighth Congress* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1865), 47.
7. "Massacre of the Cheyenne Indians," 61.
8. Christopher B. Gerboth, edited, *The Tall Chief The Unfinished Autobiography of Edward W. Wynkoop, 1856-1866* (Denver, CO, Monograph 9, Colorado Historical Society, 1993), 86.
9. Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, Vol. 1, 283.
10. H. L. Lubers, "William Bent's Family

and the Indians of the Plains" (*The Colorado Magazine*, Volume XIII, January, 1936, Number 1), 19.

11. Kraft, *Ned Wynkoop*, 106.

12. *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1864* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 233.

13. Gerboth, *The Tall Chief*, 89.

14. Kraft, *Ned Wynkoop*, 174.

15. For an account of these raids, see Broome, *Cheyenne War*, 67-111. See also Ronald Becher, *Massacre Along the Medicine Road: A Social History of the Indian War of 1864 in Nebraska Territory* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 1999).

16. David A. Chever, Affidavit, August 21, 1865, "Reply of Governor Evans of the Territory of Colorado to ... "Massacre of Cheyenne Indians." Records of the Department of State, Territorial Papers, Colorado, Volume 1, 12. National Archives Building, Washington, DC. See also John M. Carroll, compiled, *The Sand Creek Massacre: A Documentary History* (New York, NY: Sol Lewis, 1973), xvii-xviii.

17. For an account of the causes of this war, covering the years 1864-1869, see Broome, *Cheyenne War*, 40-42. For information relating to Sand Creek, the following is recommended: For an overview emphasizing the Cheyenne perspective, Gary Leland Roberts, *Sand Creek: Tragedy and Symbol* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1984); for an overview emphasizing the civilian and military view, Gregory F. Michno, *Battle at Sand Creek: The Military Perspective* (El Segundo, CA: Upton and Sons, Publishers, 2004); for a contemporary analysis emphasizing modern issues in understanding Sand Creek, Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

18. George E. Hyde, *Life of George Bent Written From his Letters* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 225.

19. Broome, *Cheyenne War*, 181-183.

Eric S. Johnson, compiled, *No Greater Calling A Chronological Record of Sacrifice and Heroism During the Western Indian*

Wars, 1865-1898 (Atglen, PA: Schiff Military History, 2012), 20-21. For a comprehensive account of this affair, see John D. McDermott, *Frontier Crossroads The History of Fort Caspar and the Upper Platte Crossing* (Casper, WY: the City of Casper, Wyoming, 1997).

20. Ida Ellen Rath, *The Rath Trail* (Wichita, KS: McCormick-Armstrong CO., Inc., 1961), 27.

21. Bent writes of his involvement at Platte Bridge, but ignores saying anything regarding further attacks upon whites immediately following Platte Bridge. The band that made the attack on the Fletcher family on July 31 could have included George Bent, as Bent writes that he remained with the Cheyenne in the Powder River country until October. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 243.

22. Mary Fletcher in 1887 stated that Minimic was chief of the band that attacked her family, while Black Kettle was chief of the tribe. See "Year in Savagery Mary Fletcher's Life Among the Indians," November 2, 1887. The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers. Accession No. H73-35, Folder 1. Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne, WY. In that manuscript she also stated that a leading brave took charge of her and she remained his slave throughout her captivity. In another account she named him as Neei-Mia-Reah. See Deposition, Folder 2. A newspaper article names him as Chief Neir-mir-vier. Long Beach newspaper, undated, 1924. Folder 1. It should be noted that in later accounts given of the raid, the date was changed to August 1. See The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, Folder 6. However, in another account Mary says the attack happened on a Monday, which would be July 31. Indian Depredation Claim, Folder 13. It is quite possible Minimic and Neei-Mia-Reah are one and the same person. Powell, in *People of the Sacred Mountain*, never gives the Indian name for Minimic, other than Eagle Head. When the Wyoming State Archives acquired the papers from Mary Cook's granddaughter, Mary Elizabeth Farr, Virginia Cole Trenholm studied the files

and summarized Mary's story in "Amanda Mary Cook and the Dog Soldiers," *Annals of Wyoming* (Volume 46, Springs, 1974, Number 1), 5-46.

23. *Davenport Republican*, October 22, 1901.

24. "Story of Mary Fletcher," Folder 1.

25. "Year in Savagery Mary Fletcher's Life Among the Indians," November 2, 1887, Folder 1. See also "Story of Mary Fletcher, from her handwritten account," 2, Folder 1. "Captured by Indians," *Proceedings and Collections of the Wyoming State Historical Department, 1921-1923*. Second Biennial Report of the State Historian with Recommendations and Remarks (Sheridan, WY: The Mills Company, 1923), 102. Folder 3. Mary also names her mother as Mary Limb Fletcher.

26. Jasper Fletcher filed his depredation claim January 2, 1866, while both his daughters' captivity fates were unknown, and in his claim he said Mary was 17 when captured. Mary's obituary in *The Davenport Democrat*, May 10, 1928, said she was born August 19, 1847, confirming her age as 17 when she was captured. See The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, folder 16. However, in all of Mary's writings, including her depredation claim, she states she was born in 1851 and was only 13 when captured, turning 14 nearly three weeks into her captivity. This discrepancy in age is easily understood, however, when one considers the social stigma of being in captivity and subject of the lust of the warriors. Mary was trying to protect her innocence during her ordeal. That she was the subject of sexual exploitation is beyond question, and explains why she misrepresented her age. She should not be blamed for that. What she did not understand, however, was that the Plains Indians sexually abused girls 13 and younger. For a similar instance of age misrepresentation in a depredation claim, see the claim of Peter Ulbrich, described in Broome, *Dog Soldier Justice*, 139-140. Veronica Ulbrich, 13 at her 1867 capture, was the subject of daily and nightly rapes from countless Cheyenne

warriors. In captivity about a month, she was nearly dead when ransomed. Her father explained in the depredation claim the necessity to misrepresent her age as being seven when captured, in an effort to protect her innocence. At the time they filed for reparations, Veronica was married and her husband did not know her true age. A similar story emerges in the 1874 Cheyenne captivity of the German sisters. See Arlene Jauken, great granddaughter of Sophia German, who was 12 when captured September 11, 1874, *The Moccasin Speaks: Living as Captives of the Dog Soldier Warriors* (Lincoln, NE: Dageforde Publishing, Inc., 1998), 97.

27. In "Captured by Indians," 102, Mary says the family was several hundred yards in front of the oxen-driven train. In other accounts she admits that each day the family was far in front of the slower train.

28. Alfred James Mokler, *History of Natrona County Wyoming* (Chicago, IL: R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company The Lakeside Press, 1923), 417. Reprinted, Mountain States Lithographing, Casper, WY, 1989. See also The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, folder No 1, "Year in Savagery," Folder 1.

29. "Year in Savagery," Folder 1.

30. Jasper Fletcher Indian Depredation Claim #5072. Record Group 123. National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

31. Jasper Fletcher Indian Depredation Claim #5072.

32. Jasper Fletcher Indian Depredation Claim #5072.

33. The way Plains Indians tied captives on horses was to stretch their hands and feet on each side and as far down the horse as possible, with the captive's head pressed against the horse at the top, and then using rope to tie the hands and feet together under the horse's belly. An Indian would then use a tethered rope to control the captive's horse while he raced away on his mount, pulling the captive's horse alongside him. Captives would remain in that position for the duration of the ride, which often lasted most of the daylight hours. It was a very painful method of securing a captive to a horse so

that they could not escape. See Broome, *Cheyenne War*, 74.

34. Long Beach newspaper, dated in the year 1924, The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, Folder 1. It was common among the Cheyenne that before a war party would return to a village, riders first came into the village announcing their return, and if there were captives, the villagers would line up in two lines and make the captives run a gauntlet where the villagers would inflict as much pain upon the captives as was possible. Oftentimes the torture was so severe that a frail female captive could die, unless a caring Indian intervened. See a summary of this in Jeff Broome, *Dog Soldier Justice: The Ordeal of Susanna Alderdice in the Kansas Indian War* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 132-133.

35. Mokler, *History of Natrona County*, 418. See also "Year in Savagery," folder 1.

36. Eldon Davis, complied, *They Thought It Was Over. The Michigan Cavalry On The Plains 1865-1866* (Howell, MI: Powder River Press, no date [2013]), 19.

37. "Captured by Indians," 102. Folder 3.

38. Thomas Harford letter, The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, folder 4.

39. *Clinton Register*, December 2, 1887. The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, folder 15.

40. "Amanda M. Fletcher Cook Deposition," undated, The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, folder 2.

41. "Amanda M. Fletcher Cook Deposition," The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, folder 2.

42. Jasper Fletcher Indian Depredation Claim #5062.

43. "Amanda M. Fletcher Cook Deposition," The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, folder 2.

44. "Captured by Indians," 103.

45. Hanger testimony comes from Jasper Fletcher Indian Depredation Claim #5062. Hanger is mistaken when he said it was only Cheyenne that captured Mary and Lizzie, as Mary made it clear in her recollections that there were some Arapaho and fewer Sioux in the war party. He noted

in his testimony that he remained friends with Mary for the next several years, and that about 10 years after her rescue she received a substantial inheritance from family in England. See also Kraft, *Ned Wynkoop*, 164-165.

46. Jasper Fletcher Indian Depredation Claim #5062. Kraft, *Ned Wynkoop*, 164-165. Captain G. A. Gordon, 2nd Cavalry, "Headquarters, Fort Dodge, Kansas, March 5, 1866." *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1866* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1866), 277-278.

47. "Captured by Indians," 104. Folder 3.

48. Charles Hanger testimony, Jasper Fletcher Indian Depredation Claim #5062.

49. Gordon, "Headquarters, Fort Dodge, Kansas, March 5, 1866," 277-278.

50. "Year in Savagery," Folder 1.

51. "Year in Savagery," Folder 1.

52. "Captured by Indians," 104. Folder 3.

53. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 251.

54. Gordon, "Headquarters, Fort Dodge, Kansas, March 5, 1866," 277.

55. Major E. W. Wynkoop, "Fort Larned, Kansas, April 8, 1866." *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1866*, 278.

56. Broome, *Dog Soldier Justice*, 163-185.

57. "Captured by Indians," 106. Folder 3.

58. Jasper Fletcher Indian Depredation Claim #5072, 40. Folder 13.

59. Jasper Fletcher Indian Depredation Claim #5072.

60. The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, Folder 5.

61. Gen. G. A. Custer, *My Life on the Plains, or, Personal Experiences With Indians* (New York, NY: Sheldon and Company, 1874), 45-46. Custer's letter to Mary was acquired by G. M. Brady in the 1970s. The letter was transcribed and published by Brady in "The Story of Little Silver Hair," *Manuscripts* (Fall, 1976, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4), 292-299.

62. Jasper Fletcher Indian Depredation Claim #5062.

63. The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers. Folder 1. Cody's letter is found in Folder 5.

64. Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, Folder 6.
65. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 251.
66. Undated manuscript, The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, folder 5. Mary's hand-written account was published in 1923 as the *Second Biennial Report of the State Historian of the State of Wyoming For the Period Ending September 30, 1922 with Wyoming Historical Collections*, by Eunice G. Anderson, State Historian. See Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, Folder 3.
67. "Year in Savagery," Folder 1. It is clear that Bent had a very different idea of Mary's captivity than was real. Powell used Bent's statement to declare, "Years later, Mary Fletcher still recalled how kindly Sand Hill and his woman treated her." Such claims do not have a grain of truth. Powell, *People of the Sacred Mountain*, Vol. 1, 407.
68. For a study explaining this complicated set of laws, see Larry Skogen, *Indian Depredation Claims, 1796-1920* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).
69. Skogen, *Indian Depredation Claims*, 104.
70. Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, Folder 5. See Folder 13 for a summary of the depredation claims. See too Jasper Fletcher Indian Depredation Claim #5062 and 5072.
71. Larry Skogen, "The Bittersweet Reality of Indian Depredation Claims," *Prologue, the Journal of the National Archives*, Vol. 24 (Fall, 1992), 293.
72. Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, Folder 13. See also Charles Hanger Testimony, Folder 8.
73. Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, Folder 8, 13.
74. Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, Folder 10.
75. Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, Folder 5.
76. Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, Folder 12.
77. *Davenport Republican*, October 22, 1901.
78. Mokler, *History of Natrona County*, 417.
79. *Davenport Republican*
80. The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, folder 11.
81. Mokler, *History of Natrona County*, 420.
82. Mokler, *History of Natrona County*, 420.
83. *The Davenport Democrat*, May 10, 1928. Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, Folder 16.
84. Mokler, *History of Natrona County*, 420-421. See also Beverley Elaine Brink, *Wyoming Land of Echoing Canyons* (Hettinger, ND: Flying Diamond Books, 1986), 99. Mary Cook's grandson said in 1935 that Lizzie had four or five children, all with blue eyes, believing that their white blood made them feel "far superior to the rest of the Indians." One of her children became a preacher, living in western South Dakota. See F. S. Cook letter, April 26, 1935, The Amanda Mary Fletcher Cook Papers, folder 3.
85. <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/24796863/person/1305288696> (accessed May 28, 2013)
86. The 1900 US Census shows her name as Kellsto Time (Sometime Kills To Time or Killing Horn), living with her husband at the Shoshone Indian Reservation in Fremont, Wyoming. http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?rank=1&new=1&MSAV=1&msT=1&gss=angs-g&gsm=Kells*&gsln=time&msrpnftp=wyoming&cpxt=0&catBucket=rstp&uidh=uh1&cp=0&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=74467689&db=1900usfedcen (Accessed April 6, 2013). The records also indicate Lizzie was born in Rock Island, Illinois on August 6, 1863. <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/24796863/person/1305288696> (accessed May 28, 2013).

