

Thursday Morning, April 14, 1938

George Bird Grinnell Saved Blackfeet From Starvation

Following receipt of a telegram Tuesday night, James Willard Schultz of Browning, noted Indian author, wrote a sketch of Dr. George Bird Grinnell, who died Tuesday morning at New York. Schultz and Grinnell were early explorers in the Rocky mountains in and near what since has become Glacier park. The wire received by Schultz and the sketch follow.

"James Willard Schultz, Browning, Mont.

"George died at 2:42 this morning. Funeral Wednesday.

"ELISABETH GRINNELL."

Dr. George Bird Grinnell, last member of the noted family for whom Grinnell's Land was named, died at his home in New York April 11. He was in his 89th year. A graduate of Yale university, for a time he was instructor of comparative osteology there and then for some years was owner and editor of Forest and Stream. He was the scientific member of General Custer's "Black Hills expedition" in 1874.

It was due to Dr. Grinnell's great friendship for them that the whole Pikuni (Blackfeet) tribe of Indians did not die from starvation in the winter of 1883-84. Buffalo herds at last exterminated, the tribe turned to their agent, Major Young, for help. But, in his annual reports to the secretary of the interior, he had stated that, under his wise care, his

charges had become self-supporting farmers, so he did not dare reveal their true condition. At Dr. Grinnell's request, I wrote him a full report of the condition of the tribe and he hurried to Washington and gave it to the powers-that-be, with the result that supplies of food were freighted to the reservation from Fort Shaw and from Fort Benton. Before the supplies arrived at the agency, more than 450 members of the tribe died from want of food.

When in 1885 Dr. Grinnell first visited the Pikuni, they insisted that he become a member of the tribe and gave him a chief's name, Pinutoyi Istsimokan—Fisher Hat. Thereafter, while he was physically able to do so, he annually visited the tribe and hunted in and explored their section of the Rockies with William Jackson, J. B. Monroe and myself.

So was it that we were the first whites to penetrate certain parts of the Rockies, and name some of their outstanding topographical features: Grinnell mountain, Grinnell glacier, Gunsight pass, Gunsight lake, Blackfeet glacier, Mount Jackson, Red Eagle lake, Red Eagle mountain, Almost-a-Dog mountain, Little Chief mountain, Fusilade mountain, Goat mountain, Single Shot mountain and others.

Dr. Grinnell was one of the three United States commissioners who made the treaty of 1887 and the treaty of 1896 with the Pikuni—mistakenly named Blackfeet by our Indian bureau. It was due entirely to his insistence that, in each treaty, the tribe got \$1,500,000 instead of \$1,000,000 for land it ceded to the government.

When the treaty of 1896 was ratified by congress, Dr. Grinnell began in his Forest and Stream weekly and in conferences with government officials to advocate that that section of the Rockies relinquished by the Pikuni be made a national park. From the beginning, it had the hearty indorsement of his close friend, President Theodore Roosevelt. So, in time, Glacier national park was created, Dr. Grinnell being the father of it.

Today there is mourning in the lodges of the Pikuni over the passing of their dear friend, Fisher Hat. As old Raven Eyes just now said: "Honest, brave, kind hearted, our

ELI GUARDIPEE, AGED INDIAN, RECALLS WHEN OLD AGENCY WAS BUILT NEAR PRESENT CHOTEAU

Special to The Tribune.

CHOTEAU, Nov. 16.—It's a far cry back to the days of the building of the old Indian agency on Spring creek three miles above Choteau, yet there is today a man living who was here at the time and saw the agency built. He is Eli Guardipee.

Mr. Guardipee, of French and Shoshone Indian blood, was brought from Family on the Blackfeet reservation to assist James Willard Schultz in compiling material for a series of short stories on frontier life which that noted writer, now a resident of Choteau, is preparing. Guardipee was years ago adopted into the Blackfeet tribe and his Indian name is I-iss-se-na-maka, which, interpreted, means "takes gun ahead."

Father a Buffalo Hunter

His father, Baptiste Guardipee, was a buffalo hunter and was born in the province of Manitoba, Canada. There he married a Shoshone Indian woman who previously married a Frenchman who had been in the Rockies and had taken his bride back with him.

The Frenchman died and Guardipee married the widow. They migrated into the Dakotas. Near Turtle mountain in North Dakota, Eli was born May 31, 1857.

Baptiste roamed the prairies of the Dakotas and eastern Montana in the vicinity of Fort Union as a buffalo hunter and eventually brought his family to Fort Benton in 1868. There he learned of the building by the Conrads of a trading post on the Marias and he set out with his family for that place shortly after arriving at Fort Benton.

When they had nearly reached the trading post on the Marias, they met two scouts, Adolph Fellers and Pete Cadotte, who advised them not to go on because of Indian hostility. Fellers and Cadotte told them that the government was about to build an Indian agency on the Teton and a bull train was enroute from Fort Benton to the place where the agency was to be built.

Guardipee, accepting the advice of

the scouts, turned south and camped on the Teton east of the present town of Collins until the bull train came along.

16 Wagons in Train

The train was in charge of Tom Healy. He had about 16 wagons, each with eight yoke of oxen, loaded with material for construction of the agency. In all, Healy had more than 200 cattle and a large number of men in his party. Accepting the additional safety the large party offered, Guardipee put in with them and arrived at the spot where the agency was to be built.

Eli was then 11 years of age and he recalls that they came off the bench into Teton valley just about where the present Choteau-Dutton road ascends the hill east of the cemetery. Reaching here, they made camp east of Spring near the vicinity of the present W. D. Helm place. Across Spring creek it was swampy and some time was spent before a route could be laid out to move the bull train up the bottom to the spot where it had been decided to build the agency.

Carried Mail by Night

The boy witnessed construction of the agency, which was surrounded by a stockade of logs, and lived in this vicinity from that time thence. At present he is in the employ of the Indian service and is a ditch rider on the Two Medicine unit of the Blackfeet reclamation project. His father, who carried afoot the mail from the agency to Fort Shaw, died Oct. 22, 1909, and was buried at Dupuyer.

Mail had to be carried on foot and in the night to avoid hostility of the Blackfeet. Baptiste brought his mother to the agency, where she died in January, 1896 or 1897, and was buried alongside the grave of Chief Bullhead in the old Indian burying ground at the agency. Eli's mother was buried in the Choteau cemetery.

Despite his 77 years, Eli's mind is as clear on events of long ago as though they were yesterday. He is a living storehouse of Indian lore.