The History of Chief Rocky Boy and His Band and The Founding of Rocky Boy Reservation

John Phillip Well-Off-Man

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THE HISTORY OF CHIEF ROCKY BOY AND HIS BAND
AND THE FOUNDING OF ROCKY BOY RESERVATION

By

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The History of Chief Rocky Boy and His Band

And The Founding of Rocky Boy Reservation

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The history of Chief Rocky Boy including his birth place is still a mystery for historians and the United States government. However, the one known fact about Ojibwes, also known as Chippewas, is their belief in prophecies. A prophecy that began at the East Coast urged the Ojibwes’ westward migration. Chief Rocky Boy and his band continued west from Wisconsin into what is now Montana.

They arrived in Montana between 1885 and 1892. Their nomadic life led to campsites at Garrison, Missoula, Butte, Wolf Point, Havre, Deer Lodge, Anaconda, Helena, the Flathead and the Blackfeet Reservation. They endured homelessness, unspeakable hardship, and racial discrimination from Indians and non-Indians alike. Ojibwe elders conducted pipe ceremonies and prayed for a place where they can practice their religion and preserve their stories.

In 1885, Little Bear’s band of Canadian Cree fled to Montana to escape Canadian justice after their role in the Frog Lake Massacre. Although they were deported in the summer of 1896 they returned to Montana, and eventually, Little Bear decides to follow Rocky Boy and his band.

In 1902, Rocky Boy dictated a letter to President Theodore Roosevelt asking him to establish a reservation for his band. A bill of 1904 to provide a home for Rocky Boy’s Chippewa did not pass. Five years later Rocky Boy’s band was loaded into boxcars and transported to the Blackfeet Reservation. The unsuitable area they were assigned to and the living conditions under Indian agent Arthur Mcfatridge led them to leave. Although guards surrounded their camp the Ojibwes managed to escape.

In 1916 President Woodrow Wilson signed a bill into law to set aside land for Rocky Boy’s band and other homeless Indians. According to tribal history pipe ceremonies played a major role in the development of the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation. Several civic leaders, including Frank Linderman, Charlie Russell and William Boles helped Rocky Boy to secure land for his people. Today Rocky Boy Reservation is home to new generations of Ojibwes and Crees.

The story of Rocky Boy will be the subject matter of my documentary film. During my writing of his story I was inspired by Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences. I used original sources such as legislative bills as well as secondary sources like publications on Montana history. However, I found the most important source was traditional Ojibwe oral history, passed on to me by my brother Duncan Standing Rock.
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PREFACE

My final project for the Creative Pulse program is preparing the script for a film production titled *Chief Rocky Boy and His Band and the Founding of Rocky Boy Reservation*. Preparing the script during the preproduction stage involved extensive research and visits to state libraries and three Indian reservations. This is the finished product, this is the story. My two summers of intense study with the Creative Pulse program at the University of Montana culminated in new questions and new understanding of Howard Gardner’s *Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. After my initial introduction to the *Multiple Intelligences* and their impact on the whole, I asked myself how does this influence any indigenous person that wishes to communicate his/her story to Non-Indians who like most Native Americans have no awareness of multiple intelligences. Growing up in an Ojibwe home in the 1950’s was to be told constantly this is now the white man’s world. My uncle admonished me to behave and to obey the law! He often said the white man’s law is not afraid of you and if you go around acting tough he will show you that his law is tougher than you. Our times are changing. This was now his knowledge of tribal life. It became my knowledge as he spoke to me that day. Today, with my knowledge of Multiple Intelligences I am able to ascertain what is involved in living in two worlds.

Growing up in an Ojibwe family meant maintaining the oral tradition of story telling. The art of communicating stories is the natural process of preserving one’s identity. The oral reciting of tribal history, folklore and songs keeps the languages of tribal peoples alive.
Our tribal language is our identity. The successful grasping of this knowledge from the previous generation is what identifies an individual as a member of the tribe. Stories are told to help us function within family, community and within the tribe as a whole. These stories or songs and our religion were given to us in our own language. This is what makes us Ojibwes, Crows, Assiniboines or Navajos. If an individual does not speak his language then he is a Native American or an American Indian. For those of us who do speak native languages we can do so only when we are home on the reservation, and even there our language is slowly being replaced by English speaking peoples, both Indian and non-Indian. When native speakers leave reservation boundaries they can only communicate using the language of the dominant society.

My story and identity is deeply connected to the history of Chief Rocky Boy – he was my great grand uncle. Although I could have told this story in the traditional sense, I chose to use non-native technologies like filming and editing software to pass on Chief Rocky Boy’s story to reach wider audiences of Native and non-Native peoples.
I.

THE PROPHECY

The history of Chief Rocky Boy (Appendix A) in terms of where he really came from is a mystery. Even the United States government is not sure of his birthplace. Immediate family members know there were five brothers and five sisters. One of the five brothers was Asiniweyin, or Stone Man, - or as everybody knew him, Chief Rocky Boy. Today the name Chief Rocky Boy comes to mind when Rocky Boy Indian Reservation is mentioned. The other brothers were Onenaco (Crazy Boy) (Appendix B), Baginagisiquape (Hole in the Sky), Okinigeh (Young Man), Wakakisiquape, (Sitting in the Center of Heaven or Round Day, or Charlie Chippewa) (Appendix C). The name of one sister, Scumcut, is remembered while the names of four sisters have been lost over time. (Interviews with Duncan Standing Rock). Red Stone (Appendix D,) daughter of Onenaco, remembers stories where Wisconsin is mentioned as his place of birth. The one known fact about Ojibwes, also known as Chippewa’s is their belief in prophecies. One prophecy handed down to the Ojibwes urged them to leave their original homeland on the eastern shores of North America as it predicted the arrival of a new race of people. The vision urged a westward migration (Standing Rock). Some interpreted the prophecy to mean that going west to the land of the big mountains may lead to survival. This is what moved Rocky Boy’s band of Ojibwes into what is now Montana. This is the story of Chief Rocky Boy and the impact he had on Montana history. It is also a life of wandering, starvation, and poverty in the state of Montana for the first band of Ojibwes to arrive en mass to the state. It is believed Rocky Boy’s band arrived in what was then Montana Territory in the late 1800’s. Their route was a circuitous one.
II.
THE JOURNEY TO MONTANA

Rocky Boy and a small band of Ojibwes left Wisconsin traveling through Minnesota, North Dakota, and into Montana. During their journey Rocky Boy and his followers made extended stops at several places. During their journey through North Dakota they made a brief stop at Minot, where the band separated into two groups. One group traveled north into Canada where it is believed some made their final stop at Rocky Mountain House, Alberta. Chief Rocky Boy with his followers continued west and arrived in Montana between 1885 and 1892. Their first stop in the state towards the big mountains was Garrison, Montana. Their stay in Montana was to endure homelessness, unspeakable hardship, and racial discrimination from Indian and non-Indians alike. To survive they would split into small family groups traveling in search of food and jobs. These small bands of Ojibwes consisting of several families would usually set up camps on the outskirts of Montana cities to spend the winter. This nomadic life led to campsites at Garrison, Missoula, Butte, Wolf Point, Havre, Deer Lodge, Anaconda and Helena.

III.
LIFE IN MONTANA

1. Hardships

The list goes on to include campsites on Montana Indian reservations at Flathead and the Blackfeet. These campsites drew opposition and contempt from white residents as well as
the unwelcome mat from the Flathead and the Blackfeet. Tales of hardship and hunger were passed on down as tribal history when old timers recalled life spent in tents and tar paper shacks. Survival depended on salvaged meat from meat packing plants, seasonal ranch jobs, and selling beadwork. The more lasting jobs meant following the potato harvest, living in temporary work camps from Sun River to Fort Shaw and Deer Lodge. This nomadic lifestyle lasted into the early 1950s allowing me the opportunity to experience the tail end of Chief Rocky Boy’s trail. I remember living in work camps with my family and other Ojibwe members of the band. Some of these camps included salvaging food at city dumps and dead livestock either found or given by local ranchers. The oral reciting of tribal history tells of Rocky Boy, weary from leading a nomadic life of hunger, homelessness, and facing total rejection from white residents finally asking for help to secure a place for his people.

2. The Prayers

All tribal elders of Rocky Boy’s band of Ojibwe’s were considered leaders and they made all decisions in matters affecting the entire band, the tribal chief was their spokesman. In their decision to ask for help in order to survive, tribal elders called the people together for a pipe ceremony to pray. According to stories handed down to Duncan Standing Rock, these ceremonies became ongoing events at all Ojibwe campsites during their travels throughout Montana. It was during these ceremonies the elders prayed for a place where they can keep alive their culture. They considered their purpose sacred in seeking a tribal home where they can practice their religion and preserve their stories. Since pipe
ceremonies were used, the intent was to keep this new homeland free of negative
influences such as alcohol. It was meant to be alcohol free for everyone. While the
Ojibwes lived a life of hardship in Montana, another group of hard-pressed Indians were
making their case for sympathy and a home on American soil.

IV.

LITTLE BEAR’S BAND OF CANADIAN CREE

In 1885, a small band of Cree led by Little Bear (Appendix E) fled Canada to escape
Canadian justice after their role in the Frog Lake Massacre. They fled south across the
Medicine Line into Montana. During his youth, Little Bear, described as a mean child
was given the name, Imasees, to fit his disposition. He left his father’s band after a
disagreement and several families chose to do the same, thus he became a spokesman for
this group of followers. His father, noted Cree Chief Big Bear, supported the Northwest
rebellion of 1885 which was led by Louis Riel. Big Bear was sentenced to prison for his
part in the rebellion and Louis Riel was hanged for treason. The Frog Lake Massacre was
an aftermath of the Northwest Rebellion. The arrival of the Cree in Montana was not
welcome news; in fact, public outcry constantly demanded they be deported back to
Canada. The stigma of their status as Canadian fugitives followed them everywhere as
they moved from city to city in an effort to survive. In July 1890, Little Bear’s group of
eighty Indians and half breeds moved to the Flathead Reservation and even though some
members found jobs, Agent Peter Ronan denied them the right to stay saying “British
Crees have no right here and should be sent back” (Unknown, 17). One report after
another was drafted by Indian agents, army officers, and politicians to address the Cree
presence in Montana. Senate Report 821 dated April 29, 1896 covered the “Delivery of
refugee Cree Indians to Canada.” Congress eventually provided funds for their removal
from Montana.

The Cree were finally rounded up by the U.S Army in 1896 and deported in July and
August of that year (Appendix F, 1-3). However, these funds were soon depleted before
all the Crees could be identified for deportation. Some escaped the round up by
identifying themselves as American born Chippewas, Flathead or Blackfoot. The Crees
that were deported returned to Montana much to the dismay of white citizens who once
again demanded they be removed. Little Bear with his followers moved from one
location to another making serious attempts to avoid the vocal citizens that became the
loudest critics of their presence in Montana. The Cree like the Ojibwes also lived on the
outskirts of Montana cities and since some of them were related by marriage to some
Ojibwes of Rocky Boy’s band they would follow Rocky Boy for short durations until
they moved back to Little Bear’s band. Although the opposition against Rocky Boy was
strong, he was an American born Indian and this put him in favor of a select group of
white citizens that came to his aid. In 1902, one of these citizens wrote a letter dictated by
Rocky Boy to President Theodore Roosevelt asking him to establish a home or a
reservation for the one hundred thirty surviving members of his group. These supporters
argued the United States had an historical obligation to give the Ojibwes a home and
financial assistance. They argued the same for Little Bear but white Montanans and
Indian agents like Peter Ronan considered Crees British subjects and countered the
United States government had no legal responsibility to provide them with anything. In
February, 1904, Mr. Stewart, from the Committee on Indian Affairs submitted the following report titled “Wandering American-Born Indians of Rocky Boy’s Band, Montana” (Appendix G). The object of this bill was to provide a home for Rocky Boy and his band on the Flathead Reservation.

V.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

Although a small number of Cree families were with Rocky Boy at this time, the bill specifically excluded Crees from placement on the Flathead Indian Reservation. The report of 1904 cites Paris Gibson, United States Senate, writing to the Department Of The Interior that it was his opinion that only twenty or thirty of Rocky Boys group were American born and once determined who they were, the Government should provide them the relief they needed. The bill did not pass. In November 1909, the Ojibwe band were loaded into boxcars at Helena for their transport and permanent placement on the Blackfeet Indian reservation. Nine months later, Little Bear and his followers arrive at Browning to take full use of Rocky Boy’s position there. By late 1910, the Ojibwes were all but forgotten by the Indian administration. In 1911, Arthur Mcfatridge is hired as the new Indian agent for the Blackfeet, he hires his wife as treasurer and sets up his son as supervisor with vague responsibilities. The new agent forces Little Bear’s band from the reservation and it wasn’t long before life began to deteriorate for all tribal people under Mcfatridge’s rule. The corrupt nature of the Mcfatridge family became so intolerable they were called “The father, son and holy terror.” (Scriver)
VI.

HOME AMONG THE BLACKFEET

In 1912, appropriations were made to pay the Blackfeet for land allotments granted to Rocky Boy’s Band of Ojibwes (Appendix H and I). The new arrivals hesitated as they had some questions concerning the eighty acres they were to receive because it was less than the one hundred sixty acres they were originally promised. They felt eighty acres wasn’t enough to sustain a living. Only a few took allotments. The terror for the Ojibwes deepened after they were forbidden to cut firewood, and rations were withheld by Mcfatridge. According to Ojibwe memories, they were situated at the northern regions of the Blackfeet Reservation which they found unsuitable for living conditions during the winters and it was then their need for wood was greatest. Desperate, the Ojibwes began to leave the reservation. Mcfatridge responded by calling in guards and the reservation police to prevent further migrations. Ojibwe elders soon realized they were prisoners of war. The late Mary Snake, daughter of Wakakisiquape (Appendix J), remembered their camp was surrounded by Indian police and whites hired as guards to prevent their escape. She recalled two ridges overlooking their encampment where the guards had big bonfires blazing at night. She knew tribal elders realized they were under constant surveillance and that they had begun to formulate an escape plan for an early morning exodus. Only immediate members of the band were informed of the decision to leave (Interviews with Duncan Standing Rock). Mary Snake, recalled in vivid detail the elders informing Rocky Boy of their decision to abandon Browning for Garrison, and when they inquired as to what his plans were, he just sat for a long time without saying a word, he then got up and
walked out of his tent. The Ojibwes with packed belongings, horses and wagons left
undetected during the night. Chief Rocky Boy, old man Morsette, and Whitford for
reasons unknown stayed behind. They stayed on the Blackfeet Reservation until late
1913, when Rocky Boy left to join his group at Great Falls (Interviews with Duncan
Standing Rock).

Although the placement of Rocky Boy’s band at Browning was to include only the
Ojibwes, the Crees were not deterred until Mcfatridge evicted them. The Crees also
stirred up among some Blackfeet old animosities that dated back to the days their tribes
met in battle over tribal boundaries and hunting grounds. Eventually, the wide spread
resentment and its far reaching consequences toward the Crees made Little Bear realize
the United States Government had no intention of creating a reservation for Canadian
Crees. Over the years he had written letters, attended meetings at Helena and even invited
townspeople to his camps to witness the Sun Dance. And the request to meet with
government officials at Washington, D.C. received no response. Little Bear facing reality
came to the conclusion that the only way he can find a place for his people in Montana
was to follow Rocky Boy.
VII.

THE BILL OF 1916

1. Other homeless tribes

When the Ojibwes received word they were close to getting the new reservation they set up camp at Fort Assiniboine to await their new home. The Crees were there and when word went out that Ojibwes and Crees were at the abandoned fort in anticipation of the new reservation, Metis, Turtle Mountain Chippewas and homesteaders poured in. The thought of including themselves in on free rations and free shelter was a temptation that was too much to resist. It was the complaints against Rocky Boy that became such a headache for Washington that Congress introduced a bill in 1915 to isolate Rocky Boy from white Montanans. The bill would convert part of Fort Assiniboine, an abandoned fort near Havre as a permanent home for Rocky Boy’s band of Ojibwes and other homeless Indians. However, during the legislative session of 1916, the bill introduced in 1915, was amended to strike out the word permanent; this allowed the government to set aside land for the reservation without promising that it be permanent (Appendix K). The bill was introduced as amended and passed on a voice vote. President Woodrow Wilson signed it into law on September 7, 1916.

2. Pipe Ceremonies

What is known about tribal history is the belief that pipe ceremonies played a major role in the development of the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation. During times of hardship and
upheaval tribal members relied on pipe ceremonies to get through times of distress. It was here they drew comfort. Although Rocky Boy passed away five months before congress converted parts of Fort Assiniboine into an Indian Reservation he had comfort in knowing their new homeland was to become reality.

3. Dependencies

And then there were the citizens that began to step forward to help. Several were civic leaders driven by their humanity to work in unison to help Rocky Boy secure a tribal home. They included Indian philanthropist Frank Linderman, western artist Charlie Russell and editor of the Great Falls Tribune William Boles. Frank Linderman led an ongoing campaign to help gain an Indian Reservation for Chief Rocky Boy. Editorials written to the Great Falls Tribune by Charlie Russell and William Boles raised an awareness of the need to help Montana’s homeless Indians. The Great Falls Tribune saw their readership respond with donations of food and clothing earmarked for Rocky Boy and Little Bear’s band of followers. This humanitarian aid created a lifestyle of dependency on those who advocated on their behalf since it was easier for white men to approach their fellow citizens for help without any backlash. This became more obvious to Rocky Boy when white friends became the leading voices in their advocacy for the establishment of an Indian Reservation. This lifestyle of dependency demonstrated itself as the Ojibwes relied heavily on Frank Linderman, Charlie Russell, and William Boles to speak in their favor at all levels during their struggle. Rocky Boy used interpreters to
communicate their needs. These interpreters became crucial to connecting with outsiders that could help fend for the tribes.

VII.
Rocky Boy’s Final Days

The struggles grew worse for the Ojibwes when their leader left for the new world. The passing of Chief Rocky Boy left a void in leadership for the Ojibwes when Wakakisiquape declined Rocky Boy’s request that he take over as spokesman for the tribe. He wanted Wakakisiquape to assume leadership after he was gone. According to family history Wakakisiquape wanted Rocky Boy to name his own son Charlie Rocky Boy as the new leader but somehow Rocky Boy sensed his only son who was handicapped did not have long to live. Rocky Boy’s wife Little Rain had died several years earlier and Charlie Rocky Boy passed away soon after his father that same year. Towards the last years of his elderly life Rocky Boy and an elderly lady from the Samatt family lived together as companions, however, due to their advanced years no children evolved from this relationship. (Interviews with Duncan Standing Rock).

All tribal descriptions of Rocky Boy define him as a very kind and gentle individual who encouraged his followers to help one another and to love one another. The Great Falls Daily Tribune ran an article to announce the death of Chief Rocky Boy (Appendix L). In describing Rocky Boy the newspaper proclaims “In that passing, one of the most picturesque of the Indian characters in the last third of a century of Montana history
disappears from the stage and the passing marks the closing of an unique chapter in Montana Indian history”. The newspaper refers to Rocky Boy’s name recognition in the state when he became the subject of congressional action in the arrangement of the reservation where he died. Today, the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation which was intended to isolate wandering Ojibwes of American origin is now home to new generations of Ojibwes and Crees.
IX.

REFLECTIONS

The idea of when to live up to my role as story teller in terms of passing on information to the next generation is an old tribal function that awaits my eventual participation. Although my imagination led to day dreaming sessions of delivering dynamic episodes of tribal lore, I began to have doubts and wondered if I was capable of preserving the story of Chief Rocky Boy beyond the amount of time it would take to tell his story from start to finish. The need is important but longevity must be assured. Since this will probably lead to my most important endeavor in life, accuracy and continuity is of primary concern. I began to explore avenues that would keep the story of Chief Rocky Boy remembered for years to come. As a modern Ojibwe and urban extraordinaire, the lack of tribal connections to help reinforce information is a constant reminder of my late father’s admonishment: “this is the white man’s world”. Indeed, living in the white man’s world is a tough sport. In fact, there were times I was driven to the edge of giving up and said to myself let a white man tell this story; they have all the tools required to do the task.

Growing up as a student I had trouble learning English, math and numerous subjects conquered easily by my counterparts. However, as time went on I took notice of changing times and events, but now they were affecting everyone thanks to Bill Gates and Steven Jobs. The computer age that seems associated with these two gentlemen meant change was now to be measured in astounding leaps. My life became hi-tech and too fast paced. I was flabbergasted when computers and their components became obsolete the moment I paid for them. As I contemplated these recent events and my own position in the white man’s world, my past failures and long delays in my progress towards lofty goals made
me realize I needed to slow down and reassess the plan of action I was using. I knew in
order to find a medium that would give my story accuracy and continuity I may have to
become a white man or at least think like one. As opportunities for personal development
and artistic achievements become more prevalent, I began to formulate a definite plan of
action to stay focused on my creative project. My background in the arts includes film,
photography and some amount of time spent videotaping using outdated equipment. I
knew filming the story of Chief Rocky Boy was the answer to my need for accuracy and
longevity. The main obstacle to telling Chief Rocky Boy’s story using white man’s
technology was expense and time. Scheduling the project to proceed on course following
a carefully laid plan became a hair pulling experience that now qualifies me as a bona
fide filmmaker. The road to the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation from Missoula is
approximately a five hour drive. I began to reconnect with my home reservation with
telephone calls to scope out the thoughts of tribal members. However, as time went
along, I personally felt this was a waste of time, especially when the reservation received
grants to form tribal history projects. But the main factor was the stories these projects
and those produced by non-Indians in telling the history of Rocky Boy were either
fabricated or just not close enough. I knew Rocky Boy’s story would have to come from
his immediate family members. I heard a lot of these stories from my mother and Mary
Snake. My mother’s father Onenaco was Rocky Boy’s brother and Mary Snake who
recalled Rocky Boy prior to their leaving the Blackfoot Indian Reservation was the
daughter of Wakakisiquape, another brother of Rocky Boy. I knew their recollections
came from first hand experience or from past family members. To reconnect with some
of these stories meant reconnecting with my brother Duncan Standing Rock. Every
weekend, the road to Rocky Boy Reservation meant visits to old tribal stomping grounds such as Hill 57 in Great Falls and Tom Manuels, the Hilltop and the old city dumps at Havre. My weekend visits were often overlooked by tribal residents because they either left for the weekend for whatever reason or they were on the powwow trail. Other delays were caused by forest fires: the need for money is always great and employment for fire fighters was high at this time. Heavy smoke blanketed the entire state but eventually my filming got underway. The typing of Rocky Boy’s story took place with a lot of phone calls talking to my brother and visits to libraries to track down government documents pertaining to Rocky Boy. The gathering of historical photographs and newspaper articles also led to visits with humanities scholars and organizations involved with Indian affairs. Life during this period of living in the white man’s world led to eye opening moments as the actual filming began.

During the preproduction stage extensive research involved visits to three Montana reservations to interview tribal members and to gather stories. Historic photographs were borrowed. These images were scanned and transferred onto a disc for editing purposes. The soundtrack was created by Missoula bassist Ryan Beck. The music consists of four different base compositions recorded onto a single track. The narrator for the film is Missoula actor Bernie O’Connor. Narrating for the film took several hours. The narration was done by speaking directly into the computer and with voice layovers. Final editing of the film project will be done using Final Cut Pro. The film will be made available for purchase upon request.
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Unknown author. The Chippewa or Ojibwa, Rocky Boy Schools, no date.
Big Rock (left) and Onenaco (right)
Appendix E

Little Bear’s Camp, Little Bear (second from right)
WANDERING AMERICAN-BORN INDIANS OF ROCKYBOY'S BAND, MONTANA.

February 28, 1904.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. STEWART, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany S. 2705.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (S. 2705) for the relief of the wandering American-born Indians of Rockyboy's band, Montana, having considered the same, beg to report as follows:

The object of this bill is to provide a home for Rockyboy and his band, consisting of 110 wandering American-born Indian men, women, and children, of 40 acres each on the Flathead Reservation in Montana, for which the sum of $2 per acre, amounting to $8,800, is to be paid to the Flathead Indians, and an additional sum of $10,000 is provided to assist Rockyboy and his band in making homes on the land thus provided for them. The facts in the case are clearly set forth in a communication from the Secretary of the Interior who recommends the passage of the bill.

Your committee believes that this measure is a very meritorious one and therefore recommends its passage.

The report of the Secretary of the Interior is hereto attached.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, January 15, 1904.

Sir: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt, by your reference of the 18th ultimo for report of S. 2705, being "A bill for the relief of the wandering American-born Indians of Rockyboy's band, Montana," and in reply I inclose herewith copy of a letter of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated the 6th instant, in which he gives a history of this case and states that he can not too strongly recommend the passage of the bill, as it will not only help the American-born part of the Rockyboy's band to become self-supporting but also relieve their present distress, and no doubt save them from considerable suffering.

The recommendations of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs meet with my approval.

Very respectfully,

E. A. HITCHCOCK, Secretary.

The CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS,
United States Senate.
WANDERING AMERICAN-BORN INDIANS OF ROCKBOY'S BAND.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Office of Indian Affairs,
January 8, 1904.

Sr: This office has the honor to acknowledge receipt, by Department reference of the 21st ultimo, for report, of Senate bill 2706, referred, under date of December 18, 1903, to the Department by Hon. William M. Stewart, chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, with request for a report thereon. This bill reads as follows:

“A BILL for the relief of the wandering American-born Indians of Rockyboy’s band, Montana.

“Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of the Interior be, and he is hereby, authorized and directed, with the consent of the Indians of the Jocko (Flathead) Reservation in the State of Montana, to be obtained in the usual manner, to set aside a tract of land in compact form within the boundaries of said reservation, sufficient in area to give not to exceed forty acres each of arable land to each member, including men, women, and children, of the migratory band of Indians now roaming in said State, and known as Rockyboy’s band, as shall upon investigation be satisfactorily shown to have been born in the United States and who may desire to settle permanently upon said reservation; and that there be hereby appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, the sum of eight thousand eight hundred dollars, or so much thereof as may be necessary, to pay the Indians of the Flathead Reservation at the rate of two dollars per acre for the lands relinquished and set apart for said migratory Indians; and a further sum of ten thousand dollars to be expended in assisting said Indians in making homes for themselves on said reservation; in all, eighteen thousand eight hundred dollars, to be immediately available.”

In reply the office has to state that the question of the relief of Rockyboy and his band was brought to the attention of this Department in 1902, by a petition from him and his band—then located near Anaconda, Mont.—in which it was stated that he was the chief of a “band of Chippewa Indians that have for several years been wandering from different parts of the United States, without home or reservation,” and most earnestly requested that he and his band be given land by the Government upon which to make homes for himself and band and thereby become self-supporting and enabled to give their children an education.

The matter was referred to the United States Indian agent of the Flathead Agency, Mont., for investigation and report, and in reply he stated that he had held a long conference with Chief Rockyboy, an intelligent Indian, who seemed anxious to be permanently located where he and his people could build themselves homes, cultivate lands, and provide for themselves and families; that this band of Indians, which has been in Montana for a long time, is composed of Chippewas and Cree, some of whom were born in Canada; and that many of them were mixed-blood Indians of Chippewa descent, who claim that their relatives came from Chippewa Falls, Wis.

Later Hon. Paris Gibson, United States Senate, in a letter to this Department, stated that he was of the opinion that there were not more than twenty or thirty among Rockyboy’s band who were American born, and that it would not be difficult to identify them; that the Government should provide relief to such of them as upon examination should be found to be American born; and he asked that the matter be again looked into. Special Indian Agent Thomas Downs was thereupon instructed to ascertain just how many were American born and to report as to their condition, needs, etc.

Under date of October 3, 1903, he reported that owing to the migratory habits of these Indians it was very hard to get any definite information as to their identity or character; that they appeared to be able-bodied and in good health, and with some one to teach them could be made self-supporting; that they have in the past been able to eke out a mere existence by making and selling beadwork and polishing and selling horns; but within the last few years they have been unable to find a market for their work and as a consequence have nearly perishing from hunger during the past two or three winters; that it does seem that some provision should be made by the Government to care for all those who are American born, and especially to educate their children, as they are certainly as much entitled to help from the United States as are any other American-born Indians; and he recommends that arrangements be made with the Indians occupying the Flathead Reservation, Mont., “to allow this remnant of Indians, of which there will not be to exceed 103, including men, women, and children, in camp and absent, to settle on and occupy a part of said reservation.”
WANDERING AMERICAN-BORN INDIANS OF ROCKBOY’S BAND.

In the opinion of this Office the proposed legislation should be enacted into a law, as it will relieve these worthy and poverty stricken American-born Indians and provide means to enable them to become self-supporting and to educate their children. The Senate bill under consideration provides for 40 acres each to 110 persons, including men, women, and children, for which the Indians of the Flathead Reservation—whose consent is to be obtained to settling these deserving nomads on their lands—will receive the sum of $2 per acre; and also provides for an additional sum of $10,000 to be expended in assisting the American-born members of this band in making homes on the said reservation.

In this connection the Office can not too strongly recommend the passage of the proposed bill, as it will not only help the American-born part of Rockyboy’s band to become self-supporting, and also relieve their present distress and no doubt save them from considerable suffering.

The communication referred to this Office is returned herewith, together with a copy, in duplicate, of this reply.

Very respectfully,

W. A. Jones,
Commissioner.

The Secretary of the Interior.
Appendix H

February, 1912


Preliminary schedule of volumes of reports and documents of 61st Congress, 3d session, Dec. 5, 1910—Mar. 4, 1911. 1912. 11 p. GP3.11:8


INTERIOR DEPARTMENT

Notes.—The decisions of the Department of the Interior in pension cases are issued in slips and in signatures, and the decisions in land cases are issued in signatures, both being published later in bound volumes. Subscribers may deposit $1.00 with the Superintendent of Documents and receive the contents of a volume of the decisions of either kind in separate parts as they are issued. Prices for bound volumes furnished upon application to the Superintendent of Documents.

Belle Fourche project, S. Dak., [orders]. Feb. 3, 1912. 1 p. 4° II.49:B41/9

Same, public notice. Dec. 30, 1911. 2 p. 4° † II.49:B41/8

Blackfoot Indians. Estimate of appropriation for pay of Blackfeet Indians for lands granted Montana for school purposes, and to provide allotment for members of Rocky Boy's Band of Chippewa Indians. Feb. 20, 1912. 2 p. (H. doc. 553.) ‡

Hot Springs Reservation. General information regarding Hot Springs of Arkansas. 1912. 2° +8 p. il. 2 p. of pl. * Paper, 5c. 12—3507/3 II.17/2:In3/2

— Same, Addendum. [1912.] 1 p. oblong 32" [Included in price of General information regarding Hot Springs of Arkansas.] II.17/2:In3/2, add.


North Platte project, Neb.—Wyo., public notice. Dec. 30, 1911. 3 p. 4° † II.49:N81p/9


Rhees, Benjamin R. Estimate of appropriation for reimbursement of Rhees. Feb. 16, 1912. 12 p. (H. doc. 544.) ‡

San Carlos Reservation. Department decision, Feb. 17, 1912, relative to rights of way applied for involving use of San Carlos reservoir site, Gila County, Ariz. Feb. 26, 1912. 4 p. (S. doc. 347.) ‡

Shoshone project, Wyo., public notice. Feb. 9, 1912. 2 p. 4° II.49:Sh7/6

Tieton unit, Yakima project, Wash., public notice. Jan. 24, 1912. 3 p. 4° † II.49:Y1t/4

ARIZONA

Report of governor, fiscal year 1911. 1911. 42 p. map. II.6:911

COLUMBIA INSTITUTION FOR DEAF

Supplemental estimate for repairs in lighting, heating, and power system at institution. Feb. 16, 1912. 3 p. (H. doc. 543.) ‡
Appendix J

Grace Crazy Boy (left) and Mary Snake (right), daughters of Onenaco and Wakakisiquape
Mr. MONDIEL. Let me call the gentleman's attention to the language of the bill:

"That all lands which were occupied by settlers or persons who were entitled to make entry thereof—"

So far, so good—and submit final proof under the provisions of the general homestead law of the United States prior to the hereinafter mentioned Executive order.

The bill as it stands would only relieve, if strictly construed, those who at the time of the issuance of the Executive order were not only in position to make entry but who had so far complied with the homestead law that they were in a position to offer final proof.

Mr. HAYDEN. Mr. Chairman, I think that was the fact—the settlers had resided there for a number of years and could not make entry because the land was surveyed.

Mr. MONDIEL. All right; if the gentleman is satisfied, I am.

The bill was ordered to be read a third time, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. HAYDEN, a motion to reconsider the vote whereby the bill was passed was laid on the table.

Mr. STOUT. I want to talk about that for a moment.

Mr. MONDIEL. Mr. Chairman, I do not understand the intention of the bill to relieve anyone who at that time had not been on the land long enough to make a homestead proof?

Mr. HAYDEN. Mr. Chairman, I am satisfied with the bill as it is. Mr. MONDIEL. All right; if the gentleman is satisfied, I am.

Mr. STOUT. The bill has been amended in the Senate to conform to the recommendations of the department.

Mr. MONDIEL. The Speaker, will the gentlemen from Wisconsin yield to me for a moment?

Mr. STOUT. Yes.

Mr. MONDIEL. How many individuals are there in the Rockey Boy tribe?

Mr. STOUT. I want to talk about that for a moment.

Mr. MONDIEL. We are not under any obligations to them.

Mr. STOUT. If they are a band of Canadian Chipewyas from Indians that came down here, and we have sent them back two or three times, but they have come back, and they wander around, and the people of Montana for several years have supported them by private charities. The people went down into their pockets and kept them, and the Government for some two or three years has been appropriating some $4,000,000 for the benefit of this band of Indians, and the Government of any sort, except that they are here, and we can not very well get rid of them.

Mr. STOUT. Is it not the opinion of the gentleman that the tracts proposed to be given them are really more than they actually need?

Mr. STOUT. We propose to give them here some 60,000 or 67,000 acres of land, which will be easily 100 acres per Indian, or a little better. This land is not all agricultural land. Most of it is not. I will say to the gentleman—and I speak from personal knowledge of the land, because I have been over it a number of times myself—that it is the finest grazing land in the whole State of Montana. That is the kind of land that these Indians require. They are naturally and exclusively stock-raising folks. They would not cultivate the Nilo Valley if you ever send them down there. There is no use trying to give them a great lot of agricultural land. They should have sufficient for gardens and to raise the things necessary, but we are giving them the very kind of land that are best fitted by training and heredity and natural inclination to make use of.

Mr. STOUT. Mr. Speaker, coming to the question which is uppermost in my mind, of whether this bill conforms to the recommendations of the Interior Department, the gentleman from Montana [Mr. Stout] says that it does, and I claim that it does not. I direct the gentleman's attention to page 3 of the report, in which the department recommends the following language:

On fractional townships 28 north, ranges 14, 15, and 16—

I now call attention to the pliography of the bill on page 2, section 19:

"Fractional townships 28 north, ranges 14 and 15 east—

Thus leaving out 14, as recommended by the department. Am I correct in my original statement that the bill does not conform to the recommendations of the department?

Mr. STOUT. I think the gentleman is correct. It was a mistake, however.

Mr. STOUT. I agree with the gentleman that he is correct in his contention. I thought the bill contained that amount of land, but I also agree with the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. Mann] that we have ample land here to take care of these Indians, and I want to put it up to the co-nominate in another way.

Mr. STOUT. I will submit this inquiry to the gentleman.

What guides are we to follow in these matters pertaining to Indian affairs—the claims of the individual representatives, which I submit are entitled to the greatest weight if they have personal knowledge of the conditions, or the recommendations of the department that has sent men out there to investigate the conditions?

Mr. STOUT. I think we are always safe in following closely the recommendations of the department, but I think that we are getting pretty close to the recommendations of the department. In all humility I submit that I have personal knowledge of this matter. I have been over this land, and I know this bunch of Indians. Old Rockey Boy himself has been gathered to the fathers. He died.
a few weeks ago. Another chief is dead, and they are all dying pretty rapidly, partly for the want of care and partly from exposure to the rain. The Yuma Indians are scattered all over the country, eating out of swill barrels and making existence the best they can. The reason I am somewhat insistent in getting action upon this bill 20 days is the only chance possibly the last opportunity at this session of Congress that we will have, and if we do not get the bill through now it will perhaps not get through at this session. I would like to have you understand that so that I can go to the Indians located down there on that tract of land before another winter comes, which may wipe out a good many of them out of existence.

Mr. STAFFORD. The gentleman has stated matters on his own knowledge and information, which, of course, I accept as worthy of consideration, and more so since the recommendation of a small area of approximately 46,235 acres, as hereby set apart as a permanent reservation for the Yuma Band of the Chupapa Indians, and other such matters, is sufficient to warrant the introduction of the bill. Mr. Secretary of the Interior may see fit to locate them, and so forth.

We do not owe these Indians anything.

Mr. MANN. Not a thing.

Mr. STOUT. Is it not sufficient to set aside as a reservation without providing that it will be permanent?

Mr. MANN. I think the suggestion is a good one, and I ask unanimous consent that the bill may be amended by striking out the words "permanent."

Mr. STOUT. I think the suggestion is a good one, and I ask unanimous consent that the bill may be amended by striking out the word "permanent."

The Clerk will read the bill. The Clerk reads as follows:

The next business is in order on the Calendar for Unanimous Consent was the bill (H.R. 10484) authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to transfer on certain conditions the south half of the southeast quarter of section 21, township 107, range 110, Moosby County, S. Dak., to the city of Bismarck, to be used as a public playground.

The Clerk reads the title of the bill.

Mr. DILLON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that this bill may be considered to have the House as in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

The SPEAKER pro tem. The gentleman from South Dakota asks unanimous consent that the bill be considered in the House as in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union. Is there objection? [After a pause.] The Chair hears none.

The Clerk reads the bill, as follows:

The committee amendments were read, as follows:

Page 1, line 25, strike out "forty-seven" and insert "forty-eight." Pages 1, line 1, after the word "public," insert the words "pitch of." Page 2, line 4, after the word "which," insert the words "of the public," and amend the title.

The question was taken, and the committee amendments were agreed to.

Mr. MANN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be amended by striking out the word "governmental" and the words "expensive" into the words in the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tem. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk reads as follows:

Page 2, line 4, strike out the word "governmental" and the word "expensive."
ROCKY BOY, CHIEF
OF CHIPPEWAS, DEAD

Veteran Head of Wandering Band of Indians.
Known Throughout Montana, Passes Away
on the Reservation Near Box Elder.

Rocky Boy is dead. The chief of the nomadic band of Chipewa Indians passed to the "Happy Hunting Grounds" on Tuesday, April 18, on the reservation near Box Elder, about 8 in the morning, according to advice received from his traveling by persons in the city yesterday. In that passing one of the most picturesque of the Indian characters in the last third of a century of Montana history disappears from the stage and the passing marks the closing of an unique chapter in Montana Indian history.

Possibly no other Indian in the memory of the people now living had held quite as general favor as old Rocky Boy. Interesting because of the wanderings of his band which, as the younger members grew to maturity, was little less than a band of organized mendicants playing on the sympathy, for the defeated and unemployed old chief Rocky Boy; he became known to the people of every city in the state, because the subject for congressional action in the arrangement for the reservation where death claimed him and he had personally been the object of a liberal charity from scores of people who took the view that he belonged to the age of Indians that had a right to be cared for by the white race that had come to claim their hunting grounds, kill off their game and turn the land into cultivated fields.

The news of Rocky Boy's death was brought to Great Falls by a letter to Theodore Gibson, the letter having been written for Baptiste J. Samulff, son-in-law of Rocky Boy, by his son, L.C. Reed. The letter is sufficiently interesting in character to print at least portions of it. (Cutting the formal portions, the letter runs:

"My Dear Sir: Today I am writing this letter to you to tell you a sad news. On the 18th inst. at 5 o'clock a.m., our leader of the band of Chipewas passed away to eternity.

"When he received letters from you he was glad and that he wished very much to see you an, who have labored so hard in his behalf, and gave you his thanks the last what he had in mind."

What made him think of you people was that he received a letter from Malcolm McAvoy, secretary of the Board of Indian Commissioners, Washington, D.C., telling him to appeal strongly to Mr. Paris Gibson about his situation and that Senator P. Gibson would sure write a strong letter to either Senator Myer or Senator Walsh. But he didn't have anybody to write a letter for him to Senator Paris Gibson about this matter. He wanted our farmer to write a letter for him but he was too busy to do so and that his son was away at the time and when he came back he was too well for him to tell and say anything.

"But these are his last words on his last breath. Never forget what I have tried to do for the homeless people in Montana toward the government and also, he said never forget me. William Hole and Theodore Gibson and his father, and Frank Linderman who done and taken paths to get us a home from our government. And he told all his people to strive and labor hard so the government may see that we are ambitious to get a home and land and also he told his people to be kind to one another and help one another.

"He died so peacefully, just like as if he was going to some place for a time. I wish you would tell Mr. Hole and Frank Linderman about the death of our chief, Rocky Boy. We have lost a valuable man. We are mourning and mourning for him. I am sending my best regards to you and also to the old man. May Almighty bless us all until we meet again."

The text as printed is just as written, so far as construction is concerned. The only changes made is a comparatively few misspelled words that have been written correctly.

The age of Chief Rocky Boy is not known to any persons in the city but those who guard a guess on it put him at 30 or 30 years old.