

CALENDAR OF THE PAPERS

OF

GEORGE BENT (1843 - 1918)

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF COLORADO

Processed by

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George Bent - A Short Biography

Colonel William Bent, George Bent's father, was one of the famous Bent brothers of Saint Louis who owned and operated the trading post on the Arkansas River known as Bent's Fort. The Bent brothers had been fur traders in the 1820's but moved south to tap the profitable Sante Fe-Taos trade. The Bents actually built and owned a number of forts successively. William Bent also owned a ranch not far from the last fort.

George Bent's mother, Owl Woman, was the daughter of a Cheyenne high priest.

George Bent was born in 1843 and grew up at the old fort (the first one). In 1853 he and his younger brother Charlie were sent to school at Westport, Missouri. He went to Saint Louis in 1857. When the Civil War broke out Bent enlisted in the Confederate Army under Colonel Green and was in the battles of Wilson's Creek and Pea Ridge. He participated in General Earl Van Dorn's Arkansas and Mississippi campaigns, was captured at Corinth, Mississippi in 1862 and taken back to Saint Louis. Fortunately his brother Robert was in Saint Louis and through the intercession of some family friends he was released. Shortly thereafter Bent returned to the Arkansas River Valley and joined his mother's people, the Southern Cheyennes. He married Black Kettle's step-daughter (niece?) Maggie. Bent lived among the Cheyennes the rest of his life. He died in Oklahoma in 1918.

Bent participated in many of the Indian battles that took place on the Plains after the Civil War which he described. His experiences, and that of other Indians whom he knew, are the subject of the letters of this collection.

Chronology

|                    |   |   |
|--------------------|---|---|
| 1843               | George Bent born  | Battles Continued:                      |
| 1853-1857          | School, Westport, Missouri  | 1869 General Carr on South<br>Platte    |
| 1857-1860          | Academy, St. Louis, Mo.   | General Carr on<br>Beaver Creek         |
| 1860-1862          | Confederate Army  |   |
| 1862               | Captured at Corinth, Miss.  | No dates given for following battles:   |
|                    | Released  | Colonel Collins n.p.                    |
| 1863               | Lives with S. Cheyenne  | Maj. J. A. Forsyth at Arickaree<br>Fork |
|                    | (Confederates try to<br>entice the Plains Indians<br>to fight the Union.) | Capt. L. Carpenter on Beaver Creek      |
| 1864<br>(starting) | Various Indian Battles:   | Lieut. Casper n.p.                      |
|                    | 1864 General Blunt at Ash Creek   | Geo. A. Custer at Little Big Horn       |
|                    | 1865 Julesburg  | Reno no rank or place given             |
|                    | Mud Springs   | No names or dates given for following:  |
|                    | Colonel Moonlight at Powder River   | Platte Bridge                           |
|                    | Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek  | Laramie Bridge                          |
| 1867               | Battles continued:  | 1918 George Bent died in Oklahoma.      |
|                    | 1868 Major Elliott at Washita   |   |

Foreword

George Bent was a member of two worlds--the white world of his father and the Indian one of his mother. He lived in both at different times of his life. His letters to George E. Hyde offer an unique narration of the life of the Plains Indians. While most researchers will probably use them for the accounts of the battles, Bent also included comments on other facets of Cheyenne life. This included a description of the soldier societies, economic activities, social and political organization, current Indian life (1904-1906), geography, and some legends and history. He gave the Indian interpretation to some of the events of the 1860's.

Although Bent's reliability as an informant can be questioned and much of his information is second-hand, he is one of the few sources now available. Therefore a researcher must exercise caution when using or quoting Bent.

This particular collection contains a total of twenty-six letters, twenty-four of which are from George Bent to George E. Hyde. It is these twenty-four to which all the comments refer, unless otherwise indicated. These letters were written from June 10, 1904, to December 31, 1906. They are arranged in chronological order and are still in remarkably good condition. All except one were written in pencil. The June 1, 1905, letter was written in ink. All were signed by Bent.

The twenty-fifth letter was written to Bent from a Mr. W.H. Ryus. It is written in ink and signed by Ryus. The twenty-sixth letter was a type-written copy of a letter from Hyde to Mr. John Van Male concerning the Bent letters. It was not signed.

This file also contained Hyde's notes of five typewritten pages concerning the twenty-four Bent letters. Also included in the file is a type-written transcript (original and one carbon copy) of everything listed above, minus the June 1, 1905, letter which I added. It is suggested that researchers use this transcript first and then read the letters, or a Xerox copy of them, for details of Bent's spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar. The transcript was relatively accurate on information but not these details. However, there are mistakes in the transcript which should be noted by researchers. Following are some examples of the mistakes.

1. The transcript gave the date of one of the letters as January 9, 1905. Although Bent abbreviated, the letter is definitely dated June 9, 1905. Hyde's notes also say June, not January.
2. The transcript gave the date of a letter as October 2, 1905. Again, both the letter itself and Hyde's notes said October 3, 1905.
3. The May 4, 1913, from Ryus to Bent gave the amount as \$1.06. The transcript said \$1.00.
4. The transcript of the September 25, 1904, letter contained a few mistakes. The transcript said "around with lances"; the letter "armed with lances". The transcript said "were dressed ???? himself with"; the letter said "No one pinned

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himself with". The transcript said "soldier, ???? himself when"; the letter said "soldier plined himself when". The transcript said "Mandan Chieftains, Arapahoes"; the letter "Mandan, Cheyennes, Arapahoes,".

5. The letter of September 7, 1905, also contains some errors in the transcription.

The transcript said "who ??? on Major Elliott"; the letter "who counted 'Coe'\* on Major Elliott". The transcript said "counted 'Coe' out"; the letter "counted 'Coe'\* on".

\*Probably supposed to be "coup", BCNCC

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I have listed the names and dates as Bent did, both in the Calendar and the Index.

Another researcher\* has correlated Bent's information with other sources. It would be wise of researchers using these letters in the future to check the works of this scholar, as Bent was often incorrect regarding details, especially people's names. I have also only listed what was included in the letters of this collection. Other important events of Cheyenne history are not included because this collection does not refer to them.

For example, none of the letters concerned the Sand Creek Massacre, so it was not listed here. If the researcher wishes to look elsewhere for more letters, I would suggest the Denver Public Library. These letters were originally part of the collection at the Denver Public Library and were traded to the State Historical Society of Colorado in June 1930 .

\*George E. Hyde, Life of George Bent: Written From His Letters. Savole Lottinville editor. (Norman, Oklahoma, University of Oklahoma Press, 1968). Illustrations and Bibliography included.



Letters of George Bent Calendar

| File Folder | Number | To             | From        | Place               | Date      | Form                        | Description   |
|-------------|--------|----------------|-------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1           | 1      | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 6/10/1904 | Letter<br>Pencil<br>7 pages | Cheyenne battle with<br>Forsyth, Cheyenne<br>battle with Carpenter<br>of 10th Cavalry on<br>Beaver Creek. Killed<br>By-Bull, not Roman<br>Nose, was the dead<br>warrior that was<br>found on the scaffold<br>after the Forsyth<br>fight.  |
| 1           | 2      | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 6/20/1904 | Letter<br>Pencil<br>3 pages | Roman Nose was not a<br>chief, only a brave<br>man. He belonged to<br>the society called<br>Bone Scrapers or<br>Crooked Lances.<br>Describes this society,<br>Little more on the<br>Forsyth fight. Speaks<br>of a battle on South<br>Platte in 1869 between<br>General Carr and Dog<br>Soldiers and Spotted<br>Tails, Sioux. Fall<br>Bull killed.<br>Dog Soldiers outlawed. |

Letters of George Bent Calendar

| File Folder | Number | To             | From        | Place            | Date     | Form                  | Description  |
|-------------|--------|----------------|-------------|------------------|----------|-----------------------|--|
| 1           | 3      | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony, Oklahoma | 8/1/1904 | Letter Pencil 2 pages | more about Worsyth fight, who was killed. Mentions a fight with "Colonel Moonlight" on Powder River in the fall of 1865. "Bullet Proof", a Northern Cheyenne.  |
| 1           | 4      | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony, Oklahoma | 8/9/1904 | Letter Pencil 4 pages | Roman Nose, brave but not head man in his society, led the charge. Chief selected to keep peace and be friendly to everyone, generally were fighters in younger days, they are the protectors when chiefs. Describes Indian clothing. More on Moonlight fight. |
| 1           | 5      | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony, Oklahoma | 9/8/1904 | Letter Pencil 2 pages | Beaver Creek fight. Mentions Carpenter. Two Indians killed and two wounded. "Whites gets everything mixed up." Commented on exaggerations of Gen. Carr who said he killed 10 Indians.  |

Letters of George Bent Calendar

| File Folder | Number | To             | From        | Place            | Date       | Form                     | Description   |
|-------------|--------|----------------|-------------|------------------|------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1           | 6      | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony, Oklahoma | 9/25/1904  | Letter Pencil<br>3 pages | Movements of Dog Soldiers after the Carpenter and Forsyth fights. Who led charges. Roman Nose Killed. Mentioned "dog rope" Early fighting between Indian tribes.  |
| 1           | 7      | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony, Oklahoma | 10/15/1904 | Letter Pencil<br>4 Pages | Discusses Cheyenne and Arapahoe fight with Gen. Blunt on Ash Creek in Sept. 1864. Bent believed to be dead--two cases of mistaken identity. Bent interpreter at Council which resulted in the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek, Powder River. Indian Trails. Yearly activities of Cheyenne. |
| 1           | 8      | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony, Oklahoma | 11/2/1904  | Letter Pencil<br>2 pages | More about Forsyth fight. Bad Heart, a Medicine Man, led first charge and claimed to be bullet proof.   |

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Letters of George Bent Calendar

File Folder Number To From Place Date Form Description

1 9 George E. Hyde George Bent Colony, Oklahoma 11/16//1904 Letter Pencil 3 pages Promises to talk to Two Moons regarding Fetterman's fight in 1866 at Fort Kearney and also about Custer's fight. Discusses Plan of Confederacy to entice Indians to join Texas troops in 1863. He says the reason why they did not was because some chiefs had visited Washington in 1863 and were told to keep out of the war, which they did.

2 10 George E. Hyde George Bent Colony, Oklahoma 5/3/1905 Letter Pencil 7 Pages Northern branch of Arapahoos move south to visit southern relatives. Southern Indians want Northern relatives to join the fight against the whites after Sand Creek. Raiding parties. Planning attack on Julesburg. Description of Julesburg attack. More raiding.

Letters of George Bent Calendar

| File Folder | Number | To             | From        | Place               | Date      | Form                        | Description   |
|-------------|--------|----------------|-------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|---|
| 2           | 11     | George W. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 5/10/1905 | Letter<br>Pencil<br>6 Pages | Describes fight with Lt. Casper. Trouble with Gen. Connor on Powder River due to the post Connor wants to build there. Moonlight's retreat from Powder River. |
| 2           | 12     | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 5/16/1905 | Letter<br>Pencil<br>3 pages | More raiding and movements described after Sept. 1865.  |
| 2           | 13     | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 5/23/1905 | Letter<br>Pencil<br>3 pages | Mentions Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull was not the chief, Red Cloud was.   |
| 2           | 14     | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 6/1/1905  | Letter<br>Ink<br>2 pages    | Describes Mud Springs fight, the attack on Moonlight's forces, and the second Julesburg attack.   |

Not included in transcript.

Letters of George Bent Calendar

| Title<br>Folder | Number | To             | From        | Place               | Date      | Form                        | Description  |
|-----------------|--------|----------------|-------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|--|
| 2               | 15     | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 6/9/1905  | Letter<br>Pencil<br>7 pages | Moonlight loses his horses. Clarifies parts of the June first letter. Mentions Gen. Hancock as being the cause of the disturbances. Events of 1867 and 1868.                             |
| 2               | 16     | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 7/8/1905  | Letter<br>Pencil<br>4 pages | Describes the Council at Medicine Lodge (1867). Describes assorted small battles of 1868.  |
| 2               | 17     | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 7/24/1905 | Letter<br>Pencil<br>2 pages | Events of 1865. Talks about Indian conditions and life in 1905.  |
| 2               | 18     | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 8/11/1905 | Letter<br>Pencil<br>3 pages | Promises to get information when the Cheyennes camp around Colony to enroll their children in school. Reno's fight described. Illustration of cross-like decoration used by the Indians. |

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Letters of George Bent Calendar

| File Folder | Number | To             | From        | Place               | Date               | Form                        | Description   |
|-------------|--------|----------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 2           | 19     | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 9/7/1905<br>(n.d.) | Letter<br>Pencil<br>8 pages | Meeting between<br>Custer and Medicine<br>Arrow described.<br>Cheyenne prisoners.<br>Assorted battles of<br>1864 described, esp.<br>fight with Elliott.<br>Mentions Custer<br>fight.  |
| 3           | 20     | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 9/2/1905           | Letter<br>Pencil<br>3 pages | Promises to see others<br>and gather informa-<br>tion regarding<br>Custer's and Reno's<br>fights. Mentions<br>George Bird Grinnell<br>and Hamlin Garland,<br>both of whom, he says<br>are writing and will<br>be visiting the<br>Cheyennes. |
| 3           | 21     | George E. Hyde | George Bent | Colony,<br>Oklahoma | 9/11/1905          | Letter<br>Pencil<br>6 Pages | Discussed Custer's<br>fight as promised.<br>Also describes the<br>war customs of the<br>Cheyennes (shields,<br>etc.) and Elliott's<br>fight.  |

Letters of Charles Bent Calendar

| File Folder | Number | To             | From           | Place                  | Date       | Form                                  | Description  |
|-------------|--------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 3           | 22     | George E. Hyde | George Bent    | Colony,<br>Oklahoma    | 10/3/1905  | Letter<br>Pencil<br>3 pages           | Promises to write about the time Emily Fletcher was captured in 1865. Describes fight with Major Mussey on the Republican River. Legend of Crazy Woman's Fork. Describes Julesburg town, not battle. |
| 3           | 23     | George E. Hyde | George Bent    | Colony,<br>Oklahoma    | 10/31/1906 | Letter<br>Pencil<br>2 pages           | Promises to find out about fight at Fort Robinson. Mentions Confederate Officers who were killed by the Osage.   |
| 3           | 24     | George E. Hyde | George Bent    | Colony,<br>Oklahoma    | 12/31/1906 | Letter<br>Pencil<br>4 pages           | Describes war customs, soldier societies, etc. Describes White Antelope, a famous Indian pony.   |
| 3           | 25     | George Bent    | W. H. Ryus     | Webb City,<br>Missouri | 5/4/1913   | Letter<br>Ink<br>1 page               | Regarding Ryus's book to be published. Asks to see Bent to compare notes.  |
| 3           | 26     | John Van Male  | George E. Hyde | Omaha,<br>Nebraska     | 10/24/1929 | Letter<br>Typed<br>1 page<br>Unsigned | Regarding how Hyde received the Bent letters. Explains how Hyde and Bent became acquainted.  |



|   |      |                |             |                  |         |
|---|------|----------------|-------------|------------------|---------|
| 4 | 1-25 | George E. Hyde | George Bent |                  | 1904-06 |
| 5 | 1    | S.F. Tappan    | George Bent | Darlington, I.T. | 2/23/89 |
| 5 | 2    | S.F. Tappan    | George Bent | Darlington       | 3/15/89 |
| 5 | 3    | S.F. Tappan    | George Bent | Darlington       | 4/16/89 |
| 6 | 1    |                |             |                  | n.d.    |

Typescripts of Bent's letter to Hyde.

Description of events during battle at Sand Creek.

Description of engagement between Army and Indians at Washita when Black Kettle was killed; fate of Black Kettle's family; events at Sand Creek.

Clash between Army and Indians at Washita in 1868; fate of Cheyennes after Sand Creek.

Unidentified newspaper article by George Bent, "Some Bent County History."

*See Tappan MSS 617*

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\* Materials in FF 4-6 has not been indexed.



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