

WC8708086

Drawings by White Arm, Crow, c. 1889

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Ancestors of the Apsaalooke, or Crow Indian people, may be traced in the archaeological record to the Coteau des Prairies of eastern North Dakota, more than 1500 years ago (Bowers, 1963: 10-15 & 476-80). After many years of wandering, recounted in the tribe's oral history, they found a prophesied homeland in the valley of the Yellowstone River and adjacent Bighorn Mountains of southeastern Montana and northeastern Wyoming

(Medicine Crow, 1992: 1-25).

Pictographs and petroglyphs at numerous cave and cliff sites in the Crow country testify to a rich artistic tradition, already ancient, four centuries ago (Conner & Conner, 1971; Loendorf, 1990). These compositions on stone reflect a simultaneous artistic tradition of artwork painted on leather clothing and the tanned buffalo or elk robes, which were the ubiquitous "overcoats" necessary for an environment in which temperatures during nine months of each year might veer in a few hours from temperate to below zero.

The robes of prominent warriors often were painted with self-portraits depicting the artists' martial or hunting prowess. Prehistorically, these were further decorated with colorful bands of dyed porcupine-quillwork embroidery created by each man's wife, sisters or mother. When Italian glass beads were introduced to the Crow by Canadian traders during the 18th century (Wood & Thiessen, 1985), Crow women quickly added this new medium to their artistic repertoire. By the mid-19th century, distinctive beadwork in a rainbow palette characterized Crow personal appearance and was reported by nearly every awed visitor (Catlin, 1857: Vol. I: 45-46). Compare the many examples of Crow beaded artistry elsewhere in the Splendid Heritage Collection.

When paper, pencils, ink and pens became avail-

able to Crow artists in the mid-19th century, the martial and hunting exploits and family portraits formerly painted on animal skins were translated to these newer media. Since the pages of account ledgers were then the most commonly available source of paper, 19th century Plains Indian drawings on paper are characterized as "ledger art." Often, however, as in the collection presented here, the actual medium was unlined foolscap paper from composition notebooks. All too often dismissed by those unfamiliar with them as "doodles" or "cartoons," these in fact are vividly accurate representations that serve as valuable and often unique elements of the historical record.

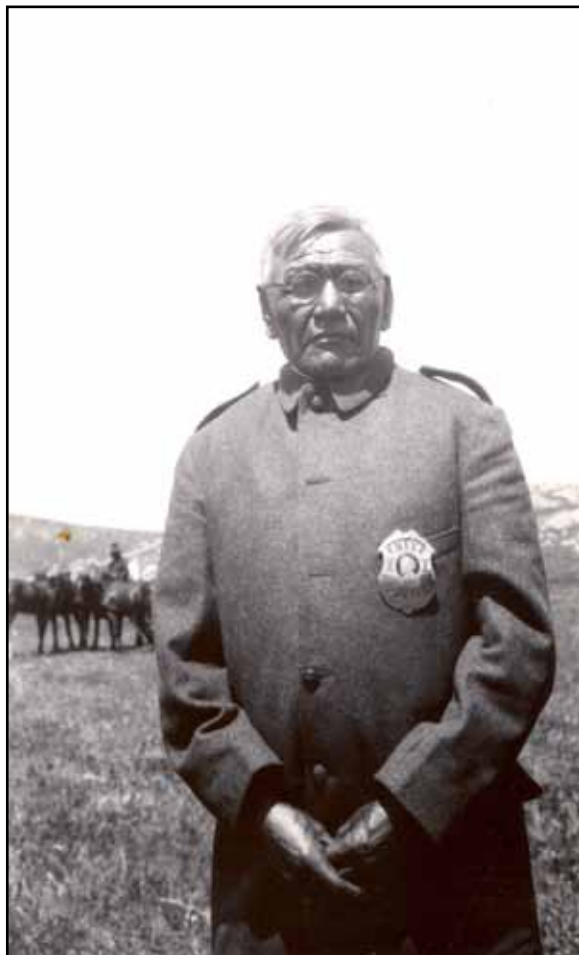
The American artist Edwin Willard Deming (1860-1942) was another early visitor to the Crow. A prominent illustrator whose work was often paired with the better-known Frederic Remington (Wetmore, 1899; Eastman, 1909; King, 1903), Deming listed his avocations as "hunting [and] visiting various Indian tribes" (Leonard, 1909: 386). On one such journey to Montana, Deming acquired 19 drawings on foolscap paper which he later mounted in an album with his bookplate, inscribed: "These drawings were made by an Absaroka (Crow) Indian at the Crow Reservation, Little Big Horn, in 1889. E.W.D." and his full signature. Subsequently, these drawings passed through several hands before entering the Splendid Heritage Collection.

An unknown captioner, probably at Crow Agency in 1889, added titles in pencil to seven of the pages. At some later point, these sheets were disassembled by Deming and glued into an album. Additional ink captions on fourteen of the album pages apparently are in Deming's hand. It seems very likely that Deming rearranged the drawings when they were glued into the album, placing the more colorful, "warfare" compositions first. Especially, the separation of the two Tobacco Society drawings, which are part of the same sequence and probably faced each other originally, is suggestive of such a rearrangement. Deming apparently was less interested in the important drawing of the conical Tobacco Society Lodge, for he placed that image toward the back of the album.

In the following discussion, therefore, the drawings are considered by subject matter, rather than in Deming's sequence.

A large glue spot on the initial page of the secondary album suggests that one drawing had become separated from the collection sometime during the 20th century. It is to be hoped that this survives, and might be recognized at a later time.

A previous owner showed the drawings to members of the Crow tribe at Lodge Grass, Montana, where Louella White-Man-Runs-Him Johnson and her husband Gary recognized the artistic style as that of an early leader of the Lodge Grass community whose name was White Arm (Lessard, 1992). This provenance may be verified by comparison with another, 1903 drawing attributed to White Arm, which displays many similarities of style and line (Anonymous, 1948: 7; reproduced in Cowdrey, 2010).



Born in 1862, White Arm (see attached portrait) was a son of Splint (father) and She Sings

(our thanks to Bud Lake, and Alfredine Snell of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Crow Agency, who checked the tribal records for us). White Arm was among the last generation of Crow to know the traditional life-style, with a family's social standing based upon the husband's war record, in an economy supported entirely by hunting buffalo and other game animals



(Figure 1 - "Crow Indians Shooting Bison"). The last Crow war party occurred in 1888, when White Arm was twenty-six (Nabokov, 1967: 194-97). We may be certain that he had distinguished himself for bravery and daring, because of certain details in the initial self-portrait collected in 1889



(Figure 2 - "Showing Off"). White Arm portrays himself in the sort of "Victory parade" staged by

warriors returning from a successful expedition. The pompadour of stiffened hair combed above the forehead, red-painted face and striped breechcloth seen here and in other drawings are distinctive indications of Crow nationality.

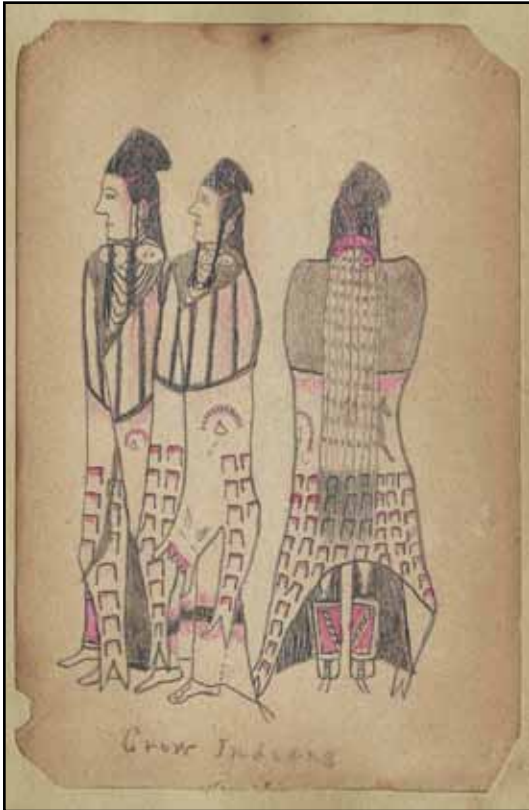
Among the Apsaalooke, four particular deeds of daring were required in order for a warrior to earn the status of a Chief: 1) capturing a firearm from the hand of a living enemy; 2) being the first man in a particular battle to strike a living enemy with the open hand (called “Dakshe”); 3) capturing a male horse from within the environs of an enemy village; and 4) leading a successful war party (Curtis, 1909: 12). The double-shafted weapon seen in White Arm’s right hand was called a “Long-bow.” Hanging from the shaft are three pendants of golden eagle tail feathers signifying the number of “great deeds” which the individual had achieved. The many, tanned ermine skins shown fringing the sleeves of his beaded shirt are another insignia of the distinguished warrior. Only a man who had achieved at least one of the “great deeds” was allowed to wear ermine skins; and only one who was well respected for many accomplishments would dare to wear so many. The stripes painted on the rump of the white horse indicate the number of war parties White Arm had accompanied. We see ten stripes; and there would have been an equal number on the far hip. The hair-lock fringe on his leggings denotes that White Arm had led at least one of these expeditions. The handprint on the horse’s chest indicates that he had ridden the animal over a pedestrian foe.



The woman pictured in Figure 3 - “Crow Indian Medicine Woman” undoubtedly was White Arm’s wife, whose name was Pretty Shell (American Baptist Home Mission Society, 1905: 380; & 1906: 363). A daughter of White Hip and Strikes Plenty Women, Pretty Shell married White Arm in 1889, the year these drawings were collected (Individual History Card, BIA Records, Crow Agency). A photographic portrait is given in Cowdrey, 2010.

Whenever a tipi village was moved, usually at least weekly except in winter, to find new firewood and forage for their large herds of horses, women dressed in their finest clothing and paraded with the war gear of their husband. Pretty Shell is shown carrying the “Three Deeds” Long-bow of White Arm; together with his circular war shield hanging from the high pommel of her saddle. A tubular, fringed case of painted parfleche (semi-tanned rawhide) hanging from the cantle probably contained a feathered headdress. The dark shaft slanted forward is an otter skin wrapped straight-lance, indicative of White Arm’s membership in the Lumpwood Warrior Society, more evidence of his distinguished record. Slanted backward from her saddle is a purely display item called a Lance Case (compare Splendid Heritage Cat No. WC8708555-A). This indicated that the husband had achieved

the “great deed” of capturing an enemy’s weapon. While in the late-19th century the requisite capture had become a firearm, during the 18th century when this tradition originated, the primary battle weapon had been a lance. This was displayed on all formal occasions and zealously tended by the wife.



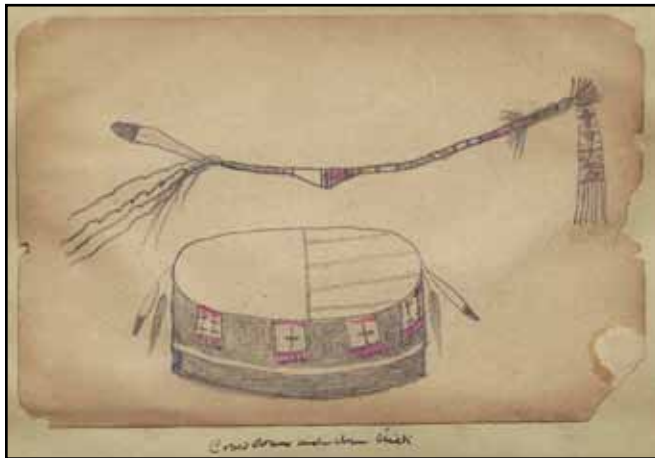
In Figure 4 (“Crow Indians”), White Arm is likely the man at the right. The purpose of the rear view is to display the elegance of his long, plaited “hair switch,” worn especially when courting. Another is seen in profile in Figure 2. The painted buffalo robes worn by all three men were a coveted Crow garment during the “warpath days.” Not a single example is known to survive; and this important drawing is the only graphic evidence for their actual appearance. A verbal account collected by the ethnologist Robert Lowie describes their 18th-century invention by a tribal hero named Gunhammer Boy (Lowie, 1960: 415-16). A successful war party on its return stopped the day before expecting to reach their home village, killed a buffalo and built a fire to char cottonwood logs. An open trench dug in the ground perhaps a foot deep was filled with the blood of the buffalo. Into this was mixed crushed charcoal to create a sticky black

“paint,” the symbolic color of victory. With stick brushes, this paint was applied to the buffalo robes of all members of the party who had achieved particular coups. U-shaped horse tracks indicated animals captured. The semi-circular emblems at waist level are the pictographic symbol for “scout-service,” common to many Plains tribes. The arc of short lines represents the members of the party ranged in a semi-circle. At the center, the triangle represents a pile of buffalo chips; and the dotted line is the trail of a returning scout. The scout kicked over the pile of chips as an oath that he would speak only the truth (“If I lie, may the buffalo trample me to death!”), then reported whatever he had observed. The entire black-painted top of White Arm’s robe indicates that he was leader on this occasion.



Another type of painted buffalo robe, with its lateral margins cut into forked fringes, is shown in Figure 5 (“Crow Indian”). Again, it is likely this is a self-portrait. The dark implement is a crooked lance wrapped with strips of otter fur, and pendants indicating particular coups struck with the weapon. Note that there are three pair, the same combination of feather pendants as on the “Long-

bow” seen in Figure 2. A man who had earned the rank of Chief would be able to display four such pendants. Members of both the Fox and Lumpwood Warrior societies---bitter rivals---carried emblems of this type. We may be sure that White Arm meant to indicate the Lumpwood version, because the club insignia of that organization, together with a decorated drum for their dance meetings, is depicted in another drawing



(Figure 6 - “Crow Drum and Drum Stick”). This is the only known depiction of a Lumpwood Society club.

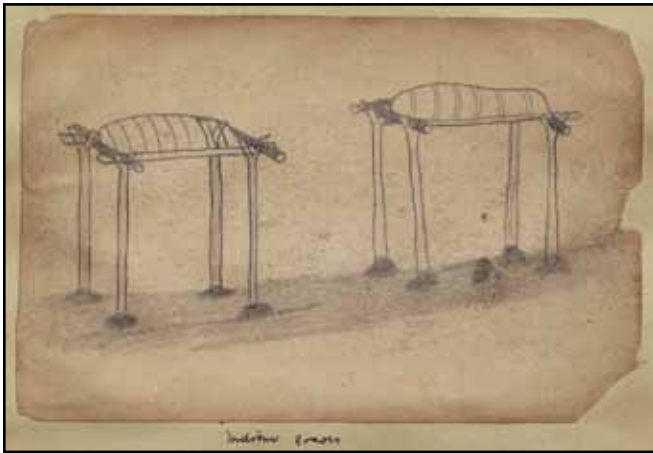


White Arm represents himself on a winter war

party in Figure 7 - “On a Raid (Crow)”, wearing a capote or hooded coat made from a striped wool blanket. A wood-handled quirt and tack-decorated knife case are secured in his cartridge belt. The tubular bundle on his back probably contained a straight-pipe, the insignia of a war party leader.



Figure 8 (“On the War Path (Sioux)”), is the rare exception in this memoir, the portrait of an enemy. Nearly always in Plains Indian ledger art, this is an indication of close contact. It may be evidence that White Arm killed this man, where after he had the opportunity to study his beaded clothing, eagle-feather headdress, weapons and horse at complete leisure. The Sioux tribes nearly overwhelmed the Crow in the quarter century after 1850, which is the reason the Crow allied themselves with the U.S. Army, to preserve their ancient homeland. War was a serious business and death the frequent cost. Two of White Arms’ associates, lost in this long conflict, are memorialized in Figure 9, (“Indian Graves”),



which depicts their high, scaffold sepulchers, raised above the reach of the omnipresent prairie wolves.



A final battle depiction (Figure 10 - "On the War Path, Crow") honors a clan relative and one of the most famous war chiefs of that generation of Apsaalooke, the incomparable Medicine Crow. In self-portraits from the same period, now in the University of Montana Library, Special Collections, Billings (Cat Nos. 1930.01- 1930.06), Medicine Crow depicted his distinctive coiffure, with the long hair gathered into a cone above the forehead, as a support for the stuffed skin of a hawk, un-

doubtedly the visionary source of his battle prowess. In Medicine Crow's more colorful drawings, the species of the bird is indicated specifically---the red-tailed hawk; and this agrees with a photographic portrait (Curtis, 1909:Folio Plate 117). A red-dyed eagle fluff, representing Medicine Crow's lifeforce, is shown in those drawings trailing at the end of a leather thong attached to the back of the hawk. As long as the ephemeral fluff remained untouched, the man would be protected. In a long and very distinguished career, Medicine Crow was never seriously wounded.

Medicine Crow was one of the leaders of the 200 scouts who aided General George Crook during the Battle of the Rosebud, June 17, 1876. Many of Crook's officers credited the bravery of their Crow and Shoshone scouts with averting the disaster that annihilated George Custer's 7th Cavalry eight days later at Little Bighorn, against the same army of Sioux and Cheyenne. For the first half hour of the battle, Medicine Crow and his fellow Apsaalooke stood alone against ten times their number of Lakota warriors under Chief Crazy Horse, while Crook's soldiers got reorganized and into position. In this unique drawing, White Arm has preserved the only known image of Medicine Crow's famous war shield, with which he was buried in 1920. Robert Lowie, who gave two, somewhat contradictory descriptions of the shield (Lowie, 1922: 404; and 1935: 256), correctly recorded that the main figure was a buffalo, associated with "black lines" and "buffalo tracks." Two small, forked tracks are shown above the bull. The large cluster of great-horned owl feathers depicted on the brow-strap of Medicine Crow's bridle was part of the legendary war-medicine of Medicine Crow's stepfather, Sees the Living Bull. For an actual photograph, see Cowdrey, Martin & Martin, 2006: Figs. 3.7a - e.

Dr. Joseph Medicine Crow, grandson of the 19th century chief, is the last member of the Crow tribe to accomplish the four "great deeds," and in consequence is the last Chief of the Apsaalooke people. During World War II, he captured an armed German soldier and his rifle, led a scouting party behind German lines, and most astonishing of all, captured 50 horses in a night raid infiltrating an

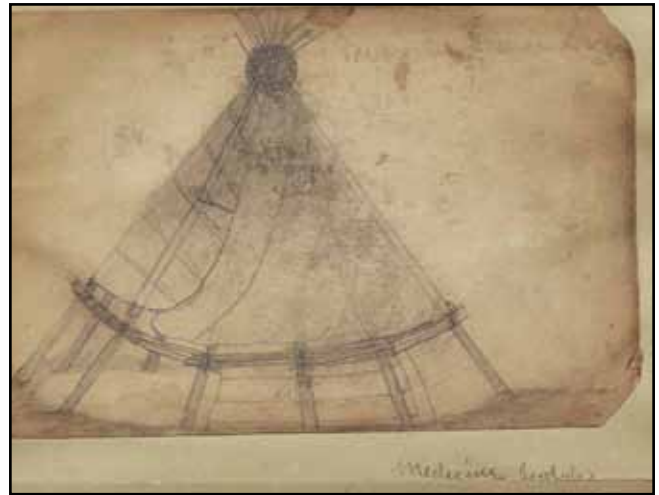
SS cavalry emplacement in the Black Forest. He earned the Bronze Star and the French Legion of Honor, for Valor. More important, he says, in 1939, he had been the first member of the Crow tribe to earn a Master's degree.

On August 12, 2009, at the age of 96, in the White House in Washington, D.C., which his grandfather had visited in 1880, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The next day his color portrait in eagle-feather headdress, with President Barack Obama presenting the award, appeared on the front page of nearly every newspaper in the United States.

The Tobacco Society is the essential, social organization of traditional Crow culture (Lowie, 1919). Believed to evidence a tribal origin long ago among the stars, seeds of the sacred tobacco plant, *Nicotiana multivalvis*, have always been revered, planted and harvested with great care by selected families, as emblematic of tribal identity.



Figure 11 (“MedicineDance”) depicts a ceremonial procession toward an Adoption Lodge



(Figure 12 - “Medicine Dance Lodge”), where new members will be inducted. The very careful accuracy of White Arm’s drawings may be compared with a photograph of a similar occasion, available Online in the Denver Public Library collection, Neg. No. X-31273 (reproduced in Cowdrey, 2010).

In 1881, five years after the Battle of Little Bighorn, Fort Custer was founded on the eastern edge of the Crow Reservation, and hardly three miles from the battlefield. Sioux and Blackfeet horse thieves were then still raiding Crow herds, so a major occupation of the soldiers stationed on the reservation



(Figure 13 - “Army Officer”) was protecting the

Crow horse herds (Hoxie, 1995: 138-150). Prominent Crow warriors proudly served at Fort Custer as scouts for the army.

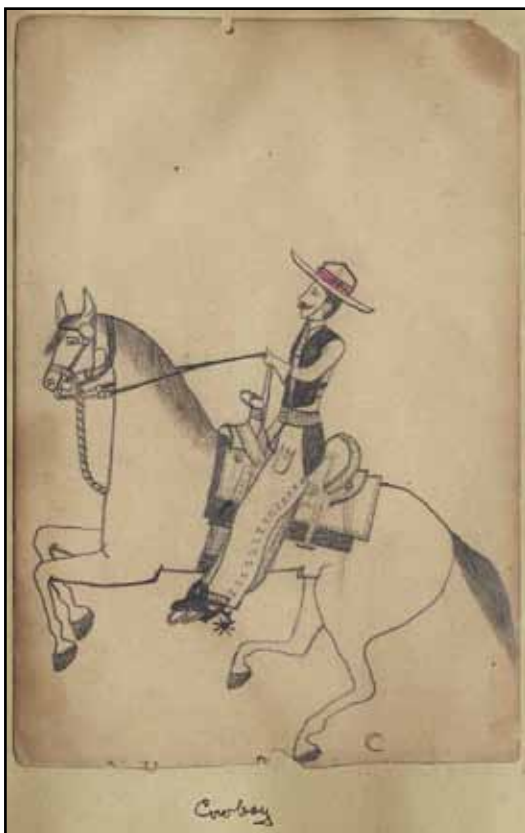


Figure 14 - "War Dance at Fort", depicts a common scene of that period, with Crow men celebrating beneath the Stars & Stripes on the Fort Custer parade ground.

In the same, early-reservation period, when the last of the great buffalo herds were being annihilated in Montana, large herds of cattle were also being grazed on the Crow Reservation. The lease for grazing in the eastern half of the reservation, where Lodge Grass is located and White Arm lived, was awarded to James A.



Campbell in the period 1887-1890, when these drawings were made (Hoxie, 1995: 151-160). Campbell is undoubtedly the man shown at center in Figure 15, ["Three Cattlemen"], with two associates. Campbell's foreman and several of his cow-boys are depicted in other drawings



(Figures 16 - 19 - "Cowboy"; "Cowboy"; "Cowboy on broncho" & "Cowboy, bucking broncho"). The

exquisite care with which White Arm recorded the details of their Mexican tooled-leather saddles, different types of bridles, pistols and the details of their distinctive dress and physical appearance are almost better than photographic documentation.

Like many other Crow men who had been war leaders, during the early-reservation period, White Arm moved very naturally into the role of Reservation policeman for his home district of Lodge Grass. He served continuously in that role from 1892 until 1901 (see, for example, Dept. of the Interior, 1894: 551).

When the young ethnologist Robert Lowie began his research among the Apsaalooke, in 1910, White Arm and Medicine Crow were among his primary informants in trying to preserve details of their unique culture and life experiences for the benefit of their descendants. Lowie recalled an aspect of White Arm's personality not suggested by his drawings, but certainly key to his success as a political leader and police officer: "Some people become popular as purveyors of entertainment. Among these is White-arm, who was described to me as "a regular clown." He picks up threads of gossip and retails them to interested audiences, which are convulsed with laughter at his topical narratives. Things that never appeared funny before become comic under his treatment. Two of his favorite tales of this order were recorded as texts and whenever I read these to groups of Indians I always produced inordinate merriment." (Lowie, 1917: 85).

About the time that White Arm ended his career as a policeman, a troubling problem for people of the Lodge Grass community was the government requirement that all of their children must effectively be kidnapped and taken to the government boarding school at Crow Agency, more than 30 miles away. In the days of horse-drawn wagons, this was a long, slow journey, so Crow families were separated for most of the year. Medicine Crow and White Arm searched long for a solution. In 1903, while in Sheridan, Wyoming, south of Lodge

Grass, they met and were impressed with a young, Baptist clergyman and educator named William A. Petzoldt. They invited him to come to Lodge Grass to found a church and build a school, which they paid for entirely, themselves. White Arm did a drawing of the occasion when Chief Medicine Crow, speaking for the entire community, invited Dr. Petzoldt and his young family to live among them (Anonymous, 1948: 7; reproduced in Cowdrey, 2010).

Generosity is one of the respected qualities of an Apsaalooke leader. When the Petzoldts arrived in Lodge Grass with their young children, White Arm and Pretty Shell gave their own log home to the teachers, and moved back into a traditional tipi. The couple was the first converts and members of the Lodge Grass Baptist Church (American Baptist Home Mission Society, 1906: 363; Beard, 1917: 61-63). They also donated 160 acres of their own land on which to build the school. Crow men and women cut and freighted all of the logs for the new buildings, 50 miles from the Wolf Mountains, and built the school themselves. A year later, all of the Lodge Grass children were able to reside at home year-round. The Petzoldts spent the rest of their lives among the Crow, more than 40 years. Lodge Grass High School is still in existence and serving the Apsaalooke people more than a century after it was founded. Pretty Shell died in 1917. Though White Arm is listed at the age of 68 in the tribal census of 1930, he must have died soon after. They had no children of their own; but raised many. The State of Montana honors their memory with a park near the community they served so well.

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