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Pine Ridge Reservation Fairs: Building Intercultural Communities through Play

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Abstract

The consolidation of Native American groups onto reservations often resulted in the formation of new communities that developed a collective identity from the shared experience of forced assimilation and occupation. Rarely do historians associate the reservation border towns as extensions of this community. The racial, social, and cultural differences between reservation and white populations are often perceived to be too divergent to have fostered a regional community. Indeed, for most intercultural interactions this assumption holds true. Thus the reservation fairs held in the early twentieth century offer a unique instance in which rural populations on and off the reservation came together as a regional community to celebrate common interest such as equestrian sports, dancing, and agricultural production. This paper will examine the development of the Annual Pine Ridge Reservation Fair and the ways in which it fostered a multicultural community during a time period known for intolerance and racism.

Many studies on multicultural interactions have used Richard White's concept of the "middle ground" to explain the negotiations and hybrid societies that developed as a result of cooperative interactions. This study also utilizes the concept to illustrate how "playing" at the fairs was itself a "middle ground" because it necessitated agreeing upon rules and maintaining mutual trust. This study treads a new path by expanding the lens of what can be considered a "middle ground," and also the time periods in which such interactions occurred.



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The consolidation of Native American groups onto reservations often resulted in the formation of new communities that developed a collective identity from the shared experience of forced assimilation and occupation. Rarely do historians associate the reservation border towns as extensions of this community. The racial, social, and cultural differences between reservation and white populations are often perceived to be too divergent to have fostered a regional community. Indeed, for most intercultural interactions this assumption holds true. Thus the reservation fairs held in the early twentieth century offer a unique instance in which rural populations on and off the reservation came together as a regional community to celebrate common interests such as equestrian sports, dancing, and agricultural production. This paper will examine the development of the Annual Pine Ridge Reservation Fair and the ways in which it fostered a multicultural community during a time period known for intolerance and racism.

Historical analysis of relationships between Native Americans and whites has been a popular subject in the past twenty years. Richard White's "middle ground" has spurred historical attention. White originally developed the concept of the "middle ground" to explain the unique relationships and social practices that developed when Europeans and Native Americans created a mutual system in which to live and work together during the fur trade era. White was not the first historian to identify that these relationships and systems existed, but he was the first to articulate this anomaly into an analytical paradigm.¹ The middle ground, White stressed, was not a romanticized utopian society nor was it even deliberately formed. Shared meanings and practices were developed out of the misinformed efforts of both groups to persuade the other through appealing to what they perceived to be the others practices and values.² By finding the middle grounds in American history the outcome is not to replace the conquest and resistance narrative but to demonstrate that other and more complex responses also occurred when different groups came into contact. Contact involved a range of responses and strategies, one of which was compromise.

While many historians have followed in Richard White's example, the majority of resulting studies remain pinned to colonial and

early American episodes. This suggests that historians have viewed the interactions of whites and Indians after 1890 as either not occurring or existing exclusively under inequitable terms. Collin Calloway asserts in *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* that middle grounds occurred through American history until the era of the removal of Indians and the implementation of reservations. Until this breakpoint, Indians and Europeans lived in close proximity; intermarrying and trading. Did these bonds cease to exist? Was this strategy no longer desirable or effective?

While not denying the disparate power relationship, this study will demonstrate how reservation populations did not accept their role as pacified people, but instead worked both against and in cooperation with whites to retain control over their culture and lives. The reservation fairs are the primary example of the way Native Americans formed positive relations with white communities while promoting their freedom for cultural expression. In the process, regional communities were formed through mutual interest in equestrian competitions, sports, dancing, and general socializing.

The Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) objective in sponsoring the fair was to promote agricultural interest and competition among the Indians. The Oglala, however, conceived an entirely different meaning for the fair, one that emphasized kinship and tribal unity over agricultural development. Although the Oglala did not reject the agricultural aspects of the fair, they did not attend the fair exclusively for this purpose. This was a continual point of contention, because OIA officials not only wanted the Indians to become economically independent but also wanted them to develop a sense of “purposeful” use of time, which the social components of the fair did not constitute. Indeed, many OIA officials thought the social components of these fairs were counterproductive to their primary goal. Throughout the first thirty years of the fairs, these opposing perspectives necessitated continual negotiations between OIA officials and the Oglala.³

While performance employment often served as an opportunity to escape from the reservation, participation in the reservation fairs created an environment that encouraged residents to stay on the reservation. In addition, the fairs did not create the sense of encroach-

ment experienced in cattle ranching when white ranchers illegally grazed their cattle on the reservation and pressed for reservation land sales. Rather, the fairs provided the opportunity for the Oglala to host other reservation populations and neighboring white communities, on their own terms. In this way, the fairs facilitated a sense of ownership of reservation activities that ultimately contributed to the reservation's transition from a "prison into a homeland."⁴

The fact that the fairs were held on the reservation also influenced the nature of interactions between the different groups attending. Although there were never any detailed attendance records kept on the fairs, Indians were most likely the largest group in attendance. This is a reasonable supposition not only because Oglala were the primary contributors and organizers of the fair, but also because relatives from other Sioux reservations also attended in great numbers. The proportion of Indians to white fairgoers undoubtedly changed the nature of interactions at the reservation fairs, at least when compared to those held in white communities where Indians were the minority. While interactions with area cattle ranchers also occurred on the reservation, these interactions differed significantly from the fairs because white ranchers were generally uninvited and undesired guests. Similarly, in performance travels, the Show Indians were the guests in the exchanges, which made them less inclined to exert their own opinions and mannerisms. The reservation fairs were the closest to producing a "middle ground" in which the power ratio in the interactions neared a balance. At the reservation fairs, the Oglala were hosts, but the outside fair goers were desired guests. Both voluntarily attended with the understanding that interacting was a primary element of the event.

The fair was not only a voluntary point of contact but the various groups had the same mutual goal; to play. Kenneth Cohen's historical analysis of play defines the act as "voluntary and pleasurable," operating under a set of rules different from those of everyday life. While the Show Indians and cowboys also partook in a form of play, performing was primarily an occupation and not just a voluntary act designed for their own enjoyment. Conversely, the sole purpose of competitions and games at the reservation fairs was entertainment.

The fair games, ranging from horse races to boxing, functioned under a set of rules different from everyday life, rules upon which all participants had to agree upon. According to Cohen, play also requires a certain level of trust that the competitor will abide by the set rules or else cheating will ultimately overshadow the focus on play.⁵ Therefore, intercultural competitions at the fair required a level of trust and cooperation from all participating parties.

Starting in the late 1890s, the reservation fairs became one of the only OIA-approved summer gatherings. OIA officials promoted the fair as a replacement for Native American religious and social gatherings. However, the fair served a similar historical and cultural function to pre-reservation era Native American gatherings. The American fair, based on the Berkshire fair model, focused around agricultural production. However, by the twentieth century, entertainment had surpassed agricultural competitions as the most popular component of any fair. The rural American fair also provided isolated populations a rare opportunity for social interaction, with preparations for the fair creating further excuses to gather together.⁶ While agriculture provided a justification for the event, the fair fundamentally served as a, “significant recreational event in the social life of many generations” of Americans.⁷ Correspondingly, when reservations adopted the concept of a fair they also embraced the social and cultural components within the fair tradition.

It is unclear when the first Pine Ridge fair was initiated but sources indicate that fairs were being held in the individual farm districts by 1905.⁸ These small fairs were promoted by the OIA as providing “a rational basis for meeting together,” which would eventually “take the place of the indiscriminate gatherings of Indians, which are usually productive of considerable harm.”⁹ However, the district fairs quickly became social gatherings and the “rational basis” of promoting agriculture soon became secondary to entertainment. However, it was not fairs per se that OIA officials viewed as the problem but rather the quantity of them. For this reason, Reservation Superintendents began working to consolidate the district fairs into single, reservation-wide, events. In 1904, the first reservation-wide fair took place on the Crow reservation in Montana.¹⁰ The ini-

tial fair consisted only of a horse race and a dance. Agricultural displays and competitions were added over the course of the following years until the Crow Reservation resembled county fairs both in size and attendance.

During Commissioner Valentine's tenure, the OIA used the Crow Fair as the model for its entire reservation fair program. Many reservation-wide fairs were established during Valentine's "pro-fair" term. However, when Cato Sells took over the position of Commissioner in 1913, the fairs came under much scrutiny. While the fairs still played a role in Sells' agricultural program to "free" the Indians from federal supervision and protection, he strongly disapproved of the dancing and other celebratory functions that had been added the fair's activities.¹¹

Sells issued a circular in 1914 regarding how the Indian fairs should be best implemented and incorporated into the overarching goals of the OIA and offered several suggestions for improving the positive qualities of the fair, while eliminating the features that would dilute the "progressive" aspects:

Indian fairs should be as nearly as practicable a counterpart of the white man's fair. Eliminate the wild west features and the horse racing as much as possible. Remember that the campaign for the Indian's industrial development anticipates the passing of the Indian fairs in favor of the county and State fairs where the Indian farmers on equal terms will compete with the white man.¹²

Sells' plan presented the Superintendents with a task that was a blatant contradiction in terms; the fairs were supposed to emulate the "white man's fair" while not having the wild west and horse race features which were central to every county and state fair at the time. Another inconsistency in Sells' vision was that he believed the reservation fair would be the only travel the Indians would make during the summer, while white fairgoers would often visit multiple fairs each season, including the reservation fairs.

In the fall of 1915 the first Pine Ridge Reservation Fair was held. The fair lasted three days and was well attended. The program in-

cluded races, ball games, and “other clean sports.”¹³ Although *The Oglala Light* proclaimed the first annual fair as a “decided success from every point of view,” there were already indicators that the fair had the capability of encouraging cultural preservation, just as much, or even more, than assimilation. The fair had several characteristics consistent with traditional gatherings including its size, with large numbers of Indians attending from all six districts. The length of time Indians spent at the fair also resembled pre-reservation gatherings, with camps of Indians staying near or on the fair grounds for days before and after the fair dates. Like other rural fairs, preparations for the fair involved family collaboration. Families traveled and camped together at the fair, and the *tiyospaye* was re-affirmed through “give-aways” during the fair.¹⁴ Despite these unwanted results, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs selected three days for the next annual fair to take place on Pine Ridge and announced in *The Light* that the Pine Ridge Fair would be held “every year hereafter.”¹⁵

The 1916 fair expanded exponentially from the event of the previous year. The rapid growth can be partially attributed to the addition of a second permanent building on the fair grounds, but is more likely related to the OIA's decision to let the tribe handle the planning and organization of the fair. An OIA circular explained how the Indians would be more likely to participate and embrace the fair as their own enterprise if they were given an active role in the planning. While the circular described the association members as representing the whole population, it later specified that the delegates should be “progressive Indians, who are really interested in the fair, as demonstrated by their active participation.”¹⁶

The attendance at the 1916 Pine Ridge Fair was estimated at four to five thousand people on the grounds at any given time during the fair; however, the final report still stated that there was “room for improvement.” Brennan described how the “experiment” to have the Indians manage the fair was carried out by creating a committee from representatives chosen by the different districts. However, Brennan had reserved the right to appoint a “mixed-blood employee” to the committee to “keep a watchful eye on the disbursement of funds.” This was printed in the public report as if it was common knowledge

that mixed-blood Indians were more competent and trustworthy than full bloods. Even with the appointment, Brennan continued, the arrangement would have to be modified for the subsequent fairs, giving the agency office more direct control over certain unidentified features of the fair. In particular, Brennan cited the tendency for the Indian committee to organize the event more as a “celebration than an exhibition.”¹⁷

In terms of the OIA’s vision of the reservation fair, the 1917 fair was a definite improvement. The fair was reported as a success, largely because “Unlike previous fairs the Indians did not collect at the fair grounds for days in advance but came simply for the fair or for one or more days of the fair and then left for home or work.”¹⁸ In addition, the fair finally generated what the OIA deemed the right kind of exposure in the neighboring communities. *The Oglala Light* reported that a group of white residents from Buffalo Gap, South Dakota came on the last day of the fair in support of the reservation population, which regularly attended their fair. The report deemed their attendance as “a sample of the co-operation and good feeling that is being built up between the Indians on one hand and their white neighbors on the other.” In addition to Buffalo Gap’s delegation, individuals from Gordon and Chadron, Nebraska were also reported to have visited the agricultural hall and were impressed by the exhibits. *The Oglala Light* even reported that the white visitors had remarked that the quality of the exhibits surpassed those of their own fairs. The article continued that it was the mutual interest and competition of agricultural pursuits that would “materially aid in cementing the ties that bind the two races into closer accord.”¹⁹

However, the popularity of the 1917 fair was more likely caused by the incorporation of rodeo and dances into the fair schedule. Rodeo was not only growing, as an important Oglala pastime but was also a positive point of contact for whites and Indians. The fair schedules for both 1917 and 1919 listed rodeo events such as a barrel roping contest and a relay horse race. While rodeo events were also popular at white fairs and celebrations, the Oglala had a special connection to the events which originated not only as a competition showcasing ranching skills, but more directly from the “cowboy fun” seg-

ment of the wild west shows, which included whites and Indians riding wild broncos, wrestling and roping steers, and other “skills of the range.” The Oglala also had a long-established cultural value attached to horsemanship. Competitions regarding equestrian skills, while not providing the premium monies of the agricultural exhibits, held far more prestige within the community.²⁰ Frederick Hoxie has referred to the popularity of the rodeo among Native Americans in the early twentieth century as a cultural innovation that enabled Indians to continue to gather as a people, although in ways that local whites would accept.²¹ Not only did whites accept Indians participating in rodeos, but it served as one of the only events at the reservation fairs where white visitors actually competed directly with Oglala.

After the 1917 “progressive” fair, the annual fair began to receive less press. In 1924 the OIA officially reversed its position on the reservation fairs. The central reason given for this decision was the growth of white settlements around the reservations. It was argued that the “strictly Indian fair” had been initiated only because the reservations were located in such isolated areas that it made it difficult for Indians to participate in off-reservation events. However, with “the coming of whites, the organization of counties, and the opening of the reservation to settlement and entry” the OIA would no longer encourage the reservation fairs. The new policy would focus on encouraging Indians to enter farm products and livestock at the “conveniently located county fairs on the same basis as other exhibitors.”²²

There were several incongruities in the OIA’s justification for the abolition of the reservation fair. First of all, the report does not account for counties completely encapsulated within the reservation boundaries; would they be required to travel to far off white counties rather than holding their own fair on the reservation? Second, if incorporating the Indians into competitions was the main reason for the discontinuation of reservation fairs, then it would be just as acceptable to invite neighboring whites to compete at the reservation fair rather than eliminate the reservation fair event. Furthermore, many reservations were already sending exhibits to county and state fairs in addition to those destined for their own local competitions.

Pine Ridge Reservation had been participating at the South Dakota State fair since the advent of the annual reservation fair.²³ Thus the Oglala did not need to be forced into competition with other groups but were already demonstrating their capability of exhibiting within the structures of dominant white society.

Given these discrepancies, it seems more likely that the OIA discontinued the reservation fairs because officials were unhappy with the cultural developments that had been built up around the event in the reservation setting. By the early 1920s many reservations had reshaped the fairs into family reunions and treated them as such with an emphasis on rodeo events and dancing. It was probably this transformation of purpose that caused the OIA officials to withdraw support of the reservation fair and promote reservation populations to instead attend white sponsored and organized county and state fairs as a way of diluting the cultural significance associated with the reservation fairs.²⁴

The Pine Ridge residents were not content to return to the previous system, as by now they had a cultural and economic investment in the popular reservation-wide fair. In 1927 a petition was sent to Commissioner Burke for the reservation fairs to be reinstated. The petition was signed by forty-six Oglala men, stating that the fairs had "an incalculable value to the Indian from the aspect of advertising and demonstrating the industry and farming produce of the Indians to the outside communities from which vast numbers of white people attend the celebration."²⁵ Pine Ridge Indians sent other similar petitions in support of the reestablishment of the reservation-wide fair, but the Commissioner insisted that the Superintendent of Pine Ridge promote only the district exhibits.²⁶

Without the approval or financial support of the OIA, individual residents of Pine Ridge continued to press for the renewal of annual reservation-wide fair. In August of 1926, the former Pine Ridge Fair Association held a meeting at the police station in Pine Ridge village to discuss the possibility of independently organizing the fair.²⁷ By 1928 the group had reorganized themselves as the Pine Ridge Fair and Rodeo Association. The Association started with twenty-five members and their new title indicated a change in purpose for the event. Unlike

the OIA, the Pine Ridge Fair and Rodeo Association could openly embrace the social and entertainment aspects of the event. The rodeo was the predominant feature of their event, while the agricultural exhibits were eventually dropped from the program entirely.²⁸

The Rodeo quickly gained regional popularity. Early on the Association developed a sense of purpose that extended far beyond a simple annual celebration. This purpose was articulated at the Association's 1929 meeting:

The Rodeo Association has only one primary aim and object in view. In fact the only purpose for its existence is to put Pine Ridge and the reservation on the map. Let the people know where it is; let them know what kind of country it is; show them the wonderful farm lands, natural resources, etc., but to do that they must be brought here with the proper kind of inducements in the way of entertainments and amusements.²⁹

The Association had no problem with creating the proper "inducements;" they had the experience of performance employment and the cultural desire for large celebrations. The first rodeo turned out to be especially popular. Not only did it draw people from South Dakota, Nebraska, and Wyoming, but it also acquired the presence of an entire military unit. Captain A.E. King from Fort Robinson arranged early in the summer of 1929 for his charges to fulfill their annual 65-mile hike, by walking to the Pine Ridge Rodeo. The group of over two hundred and fifty men camped near the rodeo grounds and took in the festivities as a reward for their hike.³⁰

In the coming years, the Rodeo's popularity continued to grow in the region. In the midst of the depression, the 1931 Rodeo was reported as an escape from the "worries and troubles at home."³¹ Many did escape to the reservation rodeo, in addition to the three thousand Indians who attended; the 1931 Pine Ridge Rodeo also drew in visitors from across the mid-west. The main competitors for the boxing contests reported hometowns ranging from as close as Chadron, Nebraska, to as far away as Oklahoma.

In addition to boxing, there were also baseball games that went on throughout the rodeo festivities. Baseball was very popular on

and off the reservation during the summer months. Cultural historian, Philip Deloria, has described baseball as the perfect sport for Indians and whites to play together because it lacks the “allegorical contest over space” and the physical contact that other sports such as football entail. The Oglala were well acquainted with baseball because of its promotion by missionaries and later at boarding schools. By 1931 every district on the reservation had a baseball team that regularly competed against each other and other communities in the area. During the rodeo, the Pine Ridge village team defeated the district teams from Porcupine and Kyle and teams from Gordon and Rushville, Nebraska.³² Although baseball was a new form of play for the Oglala, they quickly excelled in the game and were thus able to relate with the surrounding white communities in their commonly held enthusiasm for competition and athleticism.

Not only did the rodeo facilitate interactions through competitive sports, but it also brought the cultures together through the adoption of individuals into the tribe during the rodeo festivities.³³ Through making the give-aways and adoptions a public activity, whites were allowed to observe and participate in two of the Oglala’s cultural practices. Every night whites and Indians would come together to dance to the Dance Lass Orchestra. Thus the Association created what the OIA could not, an environment that actually fostered Indian incorporation into white society and vice versa.³⁴

Through rodeo, baseball, boxing, and dancing, the Pine Ridge Fair and then later Rodeo helped form a reservation pastime, and more importantly, a regional community celebration. Communities are formed around commonalities; some are more blatant than others. The Pine Ridge Fair and Rodeo demonstrates that despite the numerous discrepancies between cultures, religions, and ethnicities, the Oglala and white neighbors were able to set these differences aside to participate in one of the most basic shared interest, play. Further studies are needed to fully explore the influence of middle grounds that were not exclusively economic or political, but still played an important role in intercultural relations, especially in early reservation histories.

Notes

- 1 Daniel Herman, "Romance on the Middle Ground" *Journal of the Early Republic* 19 (Summer 1999): 280.
- 2 Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), x.
- 3 Kathleen Pickering, "Decolonizing Time Regimes: Lakota Conceptions of Work, Economy, and Society" *American Anthropologist* 106 (March 2004): 90; Ellis, 554.
- 4 Frederick Hoxie, "From Prison into Homeland: The Cheyenne River Indian Reservation before World War I" *South Dakota History* 10 (Winter 1979): 1-24.
- 5 Kenneth Cohen, "A Mutually Comprehensible World?: Native Americans, Europeans, and Play in Eighteenth-Century America" *American Indian Quarterly* 26 (Winter 2002): 70.
- 6 Rachel Vulkas, "Wheat Bundles and Blue Ribbons: Shawnee County Collective Agricultural Exhibit, 1926-1970" *Heritage of the Great Plains* 23-3 (1990): 28, 33.
- 7 Wayne Caldwell Neely cited in Vulkas, 33.
- 8 Allison Fuss, "Cowboys on the Reservation: The Growth of Rodeo as a Lakota National Pastime" *South Dakota History* 29 (3:1999): 217.
- 9 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (RCIA) 1910, Pierre Archives.
- 10 There are reports of reservation fairs from the late nineteenth century; however, the Crow Fair has been indicated by both OIA accounts and historians' accounts as the first actual reservation-wide fair.
- 11 Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 880; Diane T. Putney, "Robert Grosvenor Valentine, 1909-1912" in *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1824-1977*, Robert M. Kvasnicka and Herman J. Viola ed., (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 233-242.
- 12 "Circular on Indian Fairs" in 1914 RCIA.
- 13 "First Annual Pine Ridge Fair" *The Oglala Light*, October 1915.
- 14 Maroukis, 41.
- 15 Ibid, 8.
- 16 Progressive was generally defined as "Indians who wore white clothing, sent

- their children to school, converted to Christianity, and became economically self-sufficient..." from Ellis, 557. Biolsi adds that labels such as progressive were commonly used by the OIA to differentiate groups in the population and ultimately promote individualism through appointments and financial rewards, 38; OIA circular no. 1041 cited in the 1916 RCIA.
- 17 John Brennan, "Report of Pine Ridge Fair" *The Oglala Light*, October 1916.
 - 18 "Pine Ridge Reservation Fair, 1917" *Oglala Light*, October 1917.
 - 19 "Pine Ridge Reservation Fair, 1917" *Oglala Light*, October 1917.
 - 20 Fuss, 218; Clough, 47; Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence, *Rodeo: An Anthropologist Looks at the Wild and the Tame* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 44-83; "Pine Ridge Reservation Fair, 1917" *Oglala Light*, October 1917.
 - 21 Frederick Hoxie, *Parading through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1995), 363.
 - 22 "Fairs and Exhibits" 1924 RCIA.
 - 23 "South Dakota State Fair and Exposition" *The Oglala Light*, October, 1915; See also "At the South Dakota Fair" *The Oglala Light*, October, 1915.
 - 24 Mellis, 19.
 - 25 Petition cited in Fuss, 221.
 - 26 Commissioner Burke to Ernest W. Jermark, 1 July 1927, NA-CPR, PRA, Box 166.
 - 27 Minutes of Pine Ridge Fair Association Meeting, 16 August 1926, NA-CPR, PRA, Box 161.
 - 28 Minutes of the Pine Ridge Fair and Rodeo Association Meeting, 6 February 1928, NA-CPR, PRA, Box 166; Fuss, 222.
 - 29 Minutes of the Rodeo Association meeting, 22 January 1929, NA-CPR, PRA, Box 166.
 - 30 E.L.B. to Jermark, 11 July 1929, NA-CPR, PRA, Box 166.
 - 31 "Get Western! Don Your Spurs! The Pine Ridge Rodeo Is On!" *Shannon County News*, 30 June 1931; advertisement for Rodeo in *Shannon County News*, 30 July 1931.
 - 32 Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 116; "Pioneer Days of 'The Ridge' Depicted at the Sioux Rodeo" *Shannon County News*, 6 August 1931.

- 33 B.G. Courtright, Field Agent in Charge, to Mr. Hermus Merrivall, 18 June 1931, NA-CPR, PRA, Box 166.
- 34 Dance Lass Orchestra, which was composed completely of female musicians from Grand Island, Nebraska, hired by the Association for the nightly dances during the Rodeo.