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# A Victim of Its Own Success: The Story of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair, 1910–13

JOSH CLOUGH

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The Indian fair is that rare example of a government program for Indians gone terribly *right*. Implemented by the Office of Indian Affairs on reservations in the early 1900s, Indian fairs allowed Native people to exhibit their crops, livestock, and domestic handiwork in competition for prizes much the same way whites did at their numerous county and state fairs. The Indian Bureau hoped that such competition would inspire more Indian men to take up farming and raise better crops and help Native women become better housewives. In addition, the organization believed that reservation fairs would cut down on the amount of traveling Indians did during the summer months. Instead of attending dances, feasts, and county fairs, government officials reasoned, Native peoples would be content to hold a single large fair in the fall after crops had been harvested. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert G. Valentine enthusiastically supported Native fairs as a way to derive some benefit from Indians' love of dancing and visiting. Valentine recognized that although the Indian Bureau could not prevent Indians from dancing, by "combining Indian amusements and ceremonies with an educational exhibit, some practical benefit must result."<sup>1</sup> Valentine also liked the fact that Indian fairs were conducted under the watchful eyes of the Indian Bureau's own agency superintendents. He believed little could go wrong with bureau agents firmly in control of such events.

From a single government-sponsored Indian fair on the Crow Reservation in Montana in 1905, Native fairs spread rapidly across the country. Little more than a decade later, fifty-eight reservations and agencies could boast of holding one or more of them on a yearly basis.<sup>2</sup> The proliferation of Indian fairs occurred because all parties involved in their operation—Indians, the

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Office of Indian Affairs, local businesses, and fairgoers—benefited from them. The Indian Bureau used the fairs as propaganda tools to demonstrate the efficacy of its numerous assimilation programs for American Indians: whites could observe displays of Indian-grown crops and see Natives congregating at an acceptable, Euro-American institution (the fair) and feel confident that the government’s efforts to “civilize” them were succeeding. Indians benefited financially from fairs by charging Anglos to watch them dance and through exhibit premiums. Fairs served an important social function by bringing tribal members of all ages together at the end of the summer.<sup>3</sup> Local merchants profited from the influx of visitors into their towns, while fairgoers were afforded the opportunity to see Indians dressed in buckskin and feathers performing dances, racing horses, and living in tipis—things many whites assumed Indians did everyday.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes of Oklahoma held their first fair in Weatherford, Oklahoma in October of 1910. The popularity of the three-day event prompted its continuation for the next three years, and it was held, alternately, at Weatherford and Watonga, Oklahoma (see table 1).<sup>4</sup> The event attracted between 2,000 and 2,500 Indians annually and at least as many Anglo spectators. Given that the entire Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes numbered no more than three thousand individuals at the time, it can be safely stated that at least two-thirds of tribal members attended the fair every year.<sup>5</sup> Under Valentine’s pro-Indian fair administration, the future of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair seemed promising, but a change in commissioners in 1913 along with the growing disillusionment of local Cheyenne-Arapaho agents toward the fair led to its closure after the 1913 event (see table 2).

**Table 1**  
**Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Locations and Dates**

Fair Year	Fair Location	Fair Date
1910	Weatherford	18–20 October
1911	Watonga	12–14 September
1912	Watonga	10–12 September
1913	Weatherford	9–12 September

**Table 2**  
**Superintendents at the Cheyenne and Arapaho Agencies by Year**

Fair Year	Darlington	Cantonment	Red Moon (Hammon)	Seger (Colony)
1910	William B. Freer	Byron E. White	Willis E. Dunn	Walter F. Dickens
1911	William B. Freer	Byron E. White	Willis E. Dunn	Walter F. Dickens
1912	William B. Freer	Walter G. West	Willis E. Dunn	Walter F. Dickens
1913	Frederick E. Farrell	Walter G. West	Willis E. Dunn	W. W. Small

While an examination of a single Indian agricultural fair within a four-year time frame may seem trivial at first glance, I hope to demonstrate that to the Cheyenne and Arapaho people, the event was by no means trivial. It brought tribal members of all ages and both sexes together for one last community-wide celebration prior to the opening of schools in late September. Men and women could dance, live in tipis, and visit with one another at the fair without fear of harassment by government officials because the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) sanctioned it. The event offered the Cheyenne and Arapaho the opportunity to earn money in a variety of ways—through exhibit premiums, by working odd jobs at the fair, and by competing in horse races and athletic contests. Also, the fair allowed intermediary chiefs from both tribes to reinforce their authority among the communities they represented.<sup>6</sup> Cheyenne-Arapaho headmen determined the fair's location, its program of events, and to a great extent who would be in charge of these events.

In a broader sense, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair, similar to Indian fairs across the United States, became an expression of cultural identity amidst a sea of government programs aimed at removing all vestiges of Native cultures.<sup>7</sup> The Indian Office may have implemented Native agricultural fairs, but they clearly did not control them. Tribes from Oklahoma, Montana, Wisconsin, South Dakota, and other states incorporated the fair into their yearly gatherings and in the process altered its content in tribally specific ways.

To understand better the machinations of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair, it is helpful to have at least a cursory knowledge of where the tribes stood on the eve of the fair in 1910. The federal government had forced the two tribes onto a four-million-acre reservation in present-day western Oklahoma in 1869. Since that time, the number of agencies that served them had increased from one to four—Darlington, Cantonment, Red Moon, and Seger—but their land base had been reduced considerably. The allotment of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation in 1892 opened 3.5 million acres to white settlement, leaving the two tribes with barely one-eighth of their former land-holdings.<sup>8</sup> The tribes received \$1.5 million for their surplus land and after one-third of it was disbursed to tribal members the remainder was deposited in the US Treasury to draw 5 percent interest annually. Each year the Office of Indian Affairs divided fifty thousand dollars in interest income among the Cheyenne-Arapaho people in a per capita payment.

The government hoped that tribal members would settle on their allotments, build houses, and become farmers, but this did not happen. Most continued to live together in extended families and small villages, resisting Anglo-Christianity, education, family structure, and concepts of private property.<sup>9</sup> By 1910, more Cheyenne and Arapaho were raising crops than ever before but mainly on a small scale. Few Indians took up farming as a vocation due to a variety of factors. First, marginal soil fertility and insufficient rainfall made farming a risky proposition in Cheyenne-Arapaho country. As Faze, a tribal elder, put it: "We can't depend on our crop—sometimes we fail, can never be sure about our crops."<sup>10</sup> A lack of farm implements and livestock and a limited capacity to operate agricultural machinery also kept tribesmen out of the fields.<sup>11</sup> Mainly, though, the Cheyenne and Arapaho

simply did not want to farm. They much preferred to lease their allotments to white farmers and ranchers, which assured them a steady income without the uncertainties of farming.

Fearing that Native lessors would spend their money unwisely, the Indian Bureau placed lease funds into individual trust accounts where they could be withdrawn only with written approval from the commissioner of Indian Affairs. Thus, the Cheyenne and Arapaho wanting to purchase such simple items as food and clothing first had to ask their superintendent to submit a spending application to the Office of Indian Affairs. If the commissioner deemed the expenditure necessary, the agent could then disburse the funds. If not, the individual was out of luck. Because the entire process usually took several weeks, a person seeking money to treat an emergency medical condition might die before receiving the necessary approval. Also, because the commissioner's approval hinged largely upon an agent's recommendation, Indian agents wielded considerable power over the Indians belonging to their agencies. Tribal members who failed to obey agents' strictures, for instance, could expect some difficulty when trying to gain access to their trust money.

The absurdity of having to ask permission to spend one's own money was not lost on the Cheyenne and Arapaho who, in various councils with Indian Service personnel, let their feelings on the matter be known. Big Nose called the trust fund application process "a waste of time," explaining, "it is our money and when we need it we ought to get it." Faze left little doubt as to where he stood on the issue: "I want to get money every month; sometime the Agent will not let me have it. It is my money and when I want it I should have it. It makes no difference to the Agent what I do with it and he has no right to say I must not have it."<sup>12</sup> Arnold Woolworth (Arapaho) asked only that his people be allowed to withdraw money from their accounts just as white people did.<sup>13</sup> When the Indian Office turned a deaf ear on these complaints, some Cheyenne and Arapaho resorted to extralegal means to get at their money. They requested trust money to purchase such items as plows and horses, telling their superintendent they needed them to farm. The commissioner, always willing to encourage Native agricultural pursuits, invariably approved the application. Once the desired item had been purchased, however, the Indian buyer would immediately sell it to a white farmer for pennies on the dollar. Although the disposal of trust property by any method without the consent of the superintendent was illegal, few agents had the time or the money to pursue these offenders. A reporter for the *Colony Courier* newspaper sided with the Cheyenne and Arapaho on the trust money issue, believing there was "something wrong with a system that encourages the Indians to scheme for authority to buy implements . . . [t]hat they don't need or want so they can dispose of it at a fraction of its value to get a little of their own money to spend as they please."<sup>14</sup>

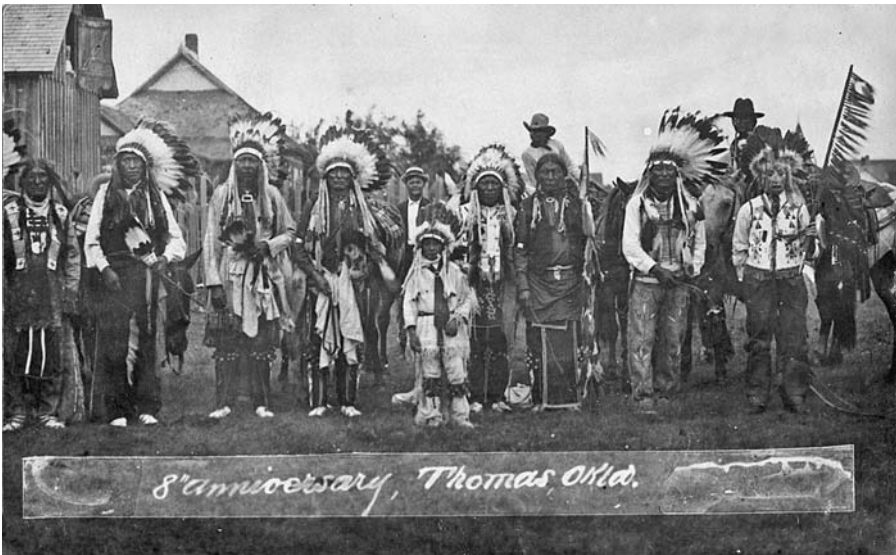
In addition to lease money, all Cheyenne and Arapaho received annual annuity checks that they could spend however they wished. It was not a great deal of money (usually fifteen to twenty dollars), but because annuity payment days brought tribal members together in a festive atmosphere, they served an important social function. Despite the pleas of the agents not to do so, men,

women, and children from both tribes would gather at their respective agencies for several days of dancing and visiting before and after the payments were issued. With these multiple sources of income, one might wonder if the Cheyenne and Arapaho ever had to work at all. The answer is “yes”—but not on a regular basis. For one reason, steady jobs, especially for Indians in western Oklahoma, were exceedingly scarce. While a handful operated large farms or found steady employment at one of the four agencies, most had to live off lease and annuity money or rely on the generosity of their families or friends to get by. Others turned to short-term seasonal labor if the need for money arose. For men this entailed threshing wheat or picking cotton for white farmers in the fall; for women this meant making beaded craft items for sale to markets in the East.

Although the Cheyenne and Arapaho people held very few steady jobs, they managed to stay remarkably busy. But it was exactly the type of busy that the Indian Office could have lived without. Social activities—seemingly an endless list of them—occupied much of the Indians’ time from January to December. Cheyenne and Arapaho visited each other, other tribes, and friends and relatives in other states; attended tribal and intertribal dances and ceremonies; and traveled to fairs and celebrations throughout the state. To whites living in Cheyenne and Arapaho country, it appeared that the tribes were on a perpetual vacation, or possibly “in the visiting period of their progress toward civilization.”<sup>15</sup> To the Cheyenne and Arapaho, however, these times of coming together were simply who they were as a people, as essential to their well-being as food and water.

One of the stated goals of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair was to prevent the tribes’ yearly “merry-go-round” of visiting and dancing.<sup>16</sup> But how realistic was this goal? If the two decades leading up to the Indian fair are any indication, not very realistic at all. The Cheyenne and Arapaho, once their land had been allotted, had the time, the money, and the legal right to go wherever they wanted for as long as they wanted and dance if they so desired. This did not mean that Indian agents of the two tribes allowed them to do so—at least not without a fight. However, most agents must have known they were fighting a losing battle because the further removed in time from allotment the Cheyenne and Arapaho people became, the more opportunities they found for visiting and dancing and the more encouragement they received from whites living in western Oklahoma. Civic leaders in towns throughout Cheyenne and Arapaho country recruited tribal members to dance, parade, and stage sham battles at their local fairs and celebrations to increase attendance (see fig. 1). The Cheyenne and Arapaho were only too willing to oblige, as long as they received some compensation for their services. Normally, they were given one or two cows to barbeque, but sometimes cash inducements were necessary to ensure their participation. Against a united front of Indians and Anglo citizens, the Indian Bureau stood little chance of convincing the Cheyenne and Arapaho to stay at home and farm during the summer.

The experience the Cheyenne-Arapaho tribes gained from attending Fourth of July celebrations and local fairs served them well when the time came for them to hold their own fair. They filled the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair’s program with dances, horse races, sham battles, and parades—events they



**FIGURE 1.** A group of Cheyenne and Arapaho at Thomas, Oklahoma annual anniversary celebration. Leaders of communities located in western Oklahoma often paid Indians to appear at their events to increase attendance. Photo ca. 1909. Photo is from author's personal collection.

had been participating in for years at local Anglo gatherings and at gatherings of their own. Tribal members enjoyed these activities as much as whites enjoyed watching them. The Cheyenne and Arapaho also used the negotiating skills they had learned bargaining for beef with civic leaders in order to extract various concessions from towns competing for the Indian fair. Tribal leaders realized their fair was a desirable commodity and demanded commensurate compensation from the locale they eventually decided upon. Contrary to popular media accounts of the Indians' unfamiliarity with the operations of fairs, by 1910 the Cheyenne and Arapaho were veteran showmen.

Approximately two thousand Cheyenne and Arapaho gathered together at Big Jake's Crossing on the Washita River in June of 1910.<sup>17</sup> At this large dance Indians could be seen drinking lemonade, shooting firecrackers, visiting with friends and relatives, and dancing. A number of white people were also present. While most Anglos came as curious spectators, some set up concession stands (for a fee) and sold cold drinks, beef, and other foods to people on the grounds.<sup>18</sup> Three of the Anglos in attendance, Willis Dunn, William Freer, and Walter Dickens, superintendents of the Red Moon, Darlington, and Seger agencies, respectively, had not traveled to Big Jake to sell concessions or to watch the dancing. In fact, the proposal they were going to make to a council of Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders would hopefully eliminate the very event at which they were present. The three superintendents envisioned a large-scale Indian fair that would take the place of yearly dances and intertribal visiting. Members of the two tribes, while embracing the notion of an all-Indian fair, would attach a very different meaning to it.

Superintendent Dickens opened the Big Jake council with a brief mission statement of the proposed fair:

The object of this fair is to encourage agricultural pursuits among the Indians. We wish it to be the Indians' Fair conducted and managed like those of the white people. It will be held at some central point convenient to the four reservations, in the fall of the year, after the crops have been gathered. We wish all the Indians to take part in this enterprise.<sup>19</sup>

Following these opening remarks, Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders were asked to express their opinions on the fair. Cloud Chief, Three Fingers, Standing Water, White Spoon, and Prairie Chief (all Cheyenne) and Grant Lefthand and Jock Bull Bear (both Arapaho) reacted favorably to the proposition, although White Spoon worried that alcohol might become a problem at such a large event. John Washee (Cheyenne), who had attended Indian fairs on other reservations, wanted to know where the prize money for exhibits would come from. Other headmen used the Indian fair council as a forum to address more pressing issues. Mower and Roman Nose Thunder (both Cheyenne), for example, complained that annuity and lease payments were late in being disbursed, causing some Cheyenne and Arapaho to go hungry. Despite these concerns, tribal leaders agreed to hold an election the following week to choose officers for the newly formed Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Association.<sup>20</sup>

As the council at Big Jake demonstrated, men of influence from both tribes endorsed the fair from the very beginning. The agents knew that their support was crucial in getting the rest of the tribal members to participate in the venture. Though allotment had eroded the power of traditional chiefs, many intermediary chiefs or headmen had emerged to serve the needs of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. The majority of these men were over the age of forty and among the highest-ranking religious leaders in their respective tribes.<sup>21</sup> Superintendents to the Cheyenne and Arapaho, regardless of their personal feelings about headmen's ceremonial activities, learned to work through them to get things done. Thus, even though agents wanted young, educated men to assume leadership roles in the fair, they necessarily deferred to tribal members in choosing coordinators for the event. Not surprisingly, the Cheyenne and Arapaho people selected primarily older, well-established headmen to run their fair rather than elevate young men to positions of leadership they had not earned (see fig. 2).

The presence of a large number of Indians in the fair's organizational hierarchy allowed the Cheyenne and Arapaho to conduct the event on their own terms. The executive committee of the association consisted of a president, vice president, and secretary/treasurer (all Indians) plus the four superintendents.<sup>22</sup> This executive board determined when and where the fair would be held and what activities would take place each day. A twenty-eight-member advisory committee made up of Indians from each of the four agencies provided input on key fair-related decisions, encouraged the





the matter was . . . necessarily left to the committee of Indians, and the excellent fairgrounds [at Watonga], together with the large and convenient camping ground and pasturage nearby [for the Indians' horses], appealed to them strongly.<sup>27</sup>

The Cheyenne and Arapaho also made their voices heard in the daily program of events at the fair. The degree to which they were able to mold the fair into a uniquely Indian event becomes obvious when one compares the inaugural 1910 fair program (which the agents put together with little Native input) with those of later years. In 1910, the entertainment portion of the fair consisted of little more than horse races and track and field events. Indians competed in nine footraces ranging in distance from fifty yards to one mile, two hurdle races, a high jump and a long jump, and a baseball-throwing contest.<sup>28</sup> Though the tribes gave evening dance performances, they were not a part of the official fair program (see fig. 3).

After 1910, the events and entertainment features of the fair changed markedly. Athletic contests, save for a handful of footraces, were scrapped in favor of traditional Indian games and more horse races.<sup>29</sup> Reasons for the alteration were twofold: the Cheyenne and Arapaho did not like the track and field events, and the superintendents realized that the new contests and increased horse races would attract more Anglos to the fair. Following a meeting with John Otterby, a Cheyenne who served as the fair's secretary in 1910 and its president in 1911, Seger Superintendent Dickens explained to his fellow agents what the 1911 fair program would look like:

[T]he hurdle races and other events . . . have been eliminated . . . for the reason that the Indians do not take much to this kind of athletics. I believe [that] most of the Public are interested in the horse races. Where the footraces can be pulled off promptly they are good but the high jump, putting the shot, throwing the baseball, etc., are rather dry sports.<sup>30</sup>

Sham battles, Native dances, and historic tableaux (outdoor plays) also began to appear on fair programs after 1910. These features had been part of



### THE BIG INDIAN FAIR AT WEATHERFORD

This Fair will be held by the Indians of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes. A Fair held by the Indians. A Fair different from all others. A Fair Full of Features. A Fair Worth Coming to see.

The Government Authorizes This Fair

FIGURE 3. Newspaper advertisement for the inaugural fair held in Weatherford, Oklahoma. Photo from Weatherford Democrat, 9/19/10, 1.

Wild West shows for years and appealed as much to the Native participants as to white spectators. During the sham battles, opposing groups of Cheyenne and Arapaho mounted on horseback squared off against one another in mimic warfare. Men who took part in the battles dressed in buckskin shirts and leggings, wore elaborate warbonnets, and carried either buffalo-hide shields and lances or guns. Each side received a liberal supply of blank cartridges for their rifles or revolvers, and the noise and smoke that resulted from the “ferocious battle” pleased fairgoers immensely.<sup>31</sup> Participants used red paint to simulate bloody scalplings and gunshot wounds, but injuries sometimes occurred that were not part of the script. In 1911 for instance, an Arapaho man was thrown from his horse during an afternoon sham battle. After turning several “aerial flip-flaps,” the man landed heavily on his shoulder, breaking his collarbone.<sup>32</sup> The sham battles had their lighter moments as well, however. During the same 1911 performance, the Cheyenne and Arapaho decided to have a little fun with a cameraman from New York City who was filming the event. According to a reporter, the Indians discovered that by shooting close to the filmmaker’s feet they could make him jump and so “kept him jiggling” the remainder of the performance.<sup>33</sup>

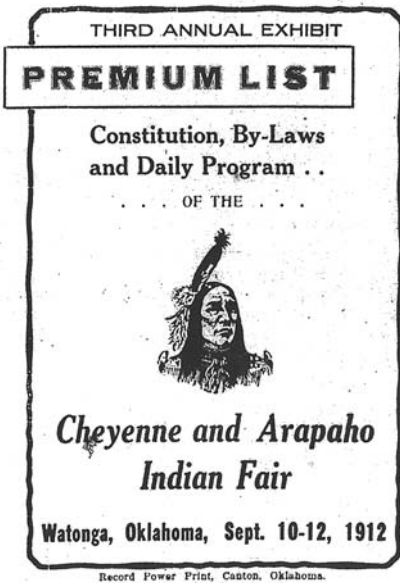
It seems likely that status played a major role in who was allowed to take part in the sham battles. After all, most of the participants were intermediary chiefs, religious leaders, or both. Few were under the age of forty and a handful, such as Burnt All Over and Little Chief (both Cheyenne), were in their seventies.<sup>34</sup> All performers received a dollar or two for each battle fought, and there were other perks as well. Participants in the 1911 sham battle received 102 bottles of soda to quench their thirst, adding \$5.10 to their already robust performance fee of \$175.50.<sup>35</sup> Watan, a member of the Arapaho sham battle contingent, apparently tried to make firearms part of the compensation package in 1912. After the fair concluded, he failed to return two of the Colt’s army revolvers loaned to the fair association by agent Freer. Freer eventually tracked Watan down, however, and one assumes restored the missing weapons to the government’s arsenal.<sup>36</sup>

The historic tableau made its first and last appearance at the 1911 fair—not because it was unpopular but because it was too expensive to produce. Superintendent Freer came up with the idea for “an interesting and spectacular representation of old time Indian life” but never imagined how elaborate (or costly) the production would become. So many Cheyenne and Arapaho wanted parts in the play that the cast swelled to more than two hundred members.<sup>37</sup> Performed on the second and third nights of the fair, the tableau contained several short acts in which tribal members of all ages participated. After two large bonfires were started to illuminate the scenes, the production commenced with two Arapaho women doing beadwork. Other acts included two men making bows and arrows, two Arapaho men smoking pipes, a Cheyenne woman making bread, and a Cheyenne mother singing a lullaby to her baby. Girls and boys from both tribes had small parts as well. Girls played with dolls and set up toy tipis while the boys wrestled with one another. The pageant concluded with the Cheyenne performing a shield dance and the Arapaho performing a staff dance.<sup>38</sup>

Although the production received favorable comments in the local press, Freer, like any good producer, was slightly more critical of the performance. Apparently he had purchased some type of powder that, when thrown into the bonfires, was supposed to have burned bright red. Hoping to end the play in dramatic fashion, Freer had asked the Indians to toss the powder into the fires before the final performance to cast a red glow over the scenes. Although the Indians carried out their end of the bargain, the red light failed to materialize. The superintendent/producer pronounced the entire illumination scheme "a complete fizzle."<sup>39</sup>

Native dances took center stage on the evening bills of the 1912 and 1913 fairs after the historic tableau was discontinued. The Cheyenne and Arapaho performed a greater variety of dances than in previous years and, ironically, were encouraged to do so by the very agents who discouraged these dances every summer. Tribal members must have been especially pleased to receive fifty cents for each dance they performed.<sup>40</sup> At the 1912 fair, the Arapaho gave a crow dance that caught the fancy of the local press—not for its style or beauty, but for the effect it was supposed to have had on the weather. Prior to the Thursday night dance performance, John Washee (Arapaho), announced to the grandstand crowd that the crow dance always brought rain and to expect it soon after the dance was over.<sup>41</sup> Many fairgoers were probably skeptical of Washee's prediction—after all the summer had been a typically dry one. But, as a local reporter explained, Washee knew what he was talking about: "The crow dance was given and sure enough it had hardly finished when the long delayed rain commenced to fall. There was a tradition for many years among the Arapaho that the crow dance was a sure rain producer. They still believe it, especially are they stronger in the opinion since . . . Thursday's experience."<sup>42</sup>

Besides the influence they exerted in the management of the fair, the Cheyenne and Arapaho also embraced the event for financial reasons. Each year the fair association paid out five hundred to one thousand dollars for winning exhibits in five categories (see fig. 4).<sup>43</sup> In addition to the standard exhibit groups found at Anglo fairs (livestock and poultry, farm and garden products, sewing and fancy work, and cooking), the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair, similar to virtually all Indian fairs at the time, added an additional one: Native handiwork. This department allowed Cheyenne and Arapaho artisans to compete for cash prizes in categories ranging from the best cradleboard to the best beaded tent door. In 1911 alone, eighty families exhibited more than two hundred articles in the Indian handiwork department.<sup>44</sup> The majority of items displayed were not for sale, but Cheyenne and Arapaho women sometimes sold moccasins for between \$4.50 and \$5.00 per pair. Usually Indians were the buyers rather than whites.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately a handful of articles never made it back to their owners. Anna Eagle Nest, Medicine Woman, and Blind Bull all had moccasins stolen at the 1911 fair, and a pair of buckskin leggings belonging to Blackwhiteman were taken in 1910. Cheyenne-Arapaho agents reimbursed the women \$5.00, \$3.50, and \$3.00, respectively for their moccasins, while Blackwhiteman received \$6.00 for his leggings.<sup>46</sup> "The Indian [Blackwhiteman] would much rather have the leggings than the money," observed Darlington Superintendent Freer, "but of course that is impossible."<sup>47</sup>



**FIGURE 4.** *By its third year, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair Association had established itself to such a degree that it was able to issue a premium list totaling nearly fifty pages. Inside, fairgoers could find out the types of items being exhibited, the cash prizes on each item, and the daily program of events at the fair. Local merchants and civic leaders paid for advertising throughout the booklet to offset printing costs. Photo from Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency Records—Fairs, Oklahoma Historical Society, reel 47.*

name was Red Feather, used the fair as an opportunity to honor the woman she had been named after by constructing a replica of the dress Red Feather, a niece of Black Kettle, wore prior to the 1868 Washita Massacre. Save for the use of trade beads for ornamentation rather than porcupine quills, the replica dress mirrored the original exactly.<sup>51</sup> More than simply a beautiful garment, the Red Feather dress symbolized the endurance of the Cheyenne people despite attempts by the Indian Bureau to obliterate them culturally and the US Army to obliterate them literally.

While the cooking and sewing departments always received a full complement of exhibits, filling display booths in the livestock and farm products categories proved more challenging. Logistical factors largely accounted for the paucity of livestock exhibits. Most Indians lived too far from either Weatherford or Watonga to herd their cattle to the fair, and shipping them by rail was too expensive. Crop exhibits suffered because of the near drought conditions in western Oklahoma during the years of the fair.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless,

Although the fair probably had little long-term impact on art production in Cheyenne-Arapaho country, it did spur the manufacture of specific articles that were both worn and displayed at the event. In 1911 Red Feather received permission to spend twenty-five dollars of her own money to purchase beads and other supplies to make beadwork exhibits for the fair.<sup>48</sup> That same year Standing Out (Cheyenne) made two buckskin dresses for exhibition at Watonga while several women asked Lightning Woman, a skilled Cheyenne quillworker, to design dresses for them.<sup>49</sup> Cleaver Warden, an Arapaho peyote leader and Carlisle graduate, wrote to Superintendent Freer in August of 1912 requesting money to buy eagle feathers for his young son Robert's warbonnet, but was denied. Freer thought Robert too young to take part in the sham battles (the reason he wanted a warbonnet) and turned down the request.<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps the most significant item to appear in the Indian handiwork department was a beaded buckskin dress belonging to Lily Page Riggs. Riggs, whose Cheyenne

whites judged the Indians' agricultural displays "splendid" considering the adverse conditions under which they were grown.<sup>53</sup> Little did Anglos realize that the crops they were praising might be their own. Every year a handful of Cheyenne and Arapaho, hoping to secure some easy prize money, selected choice produce from the fields of their white neighbors and represented it as their own.<sup>54</sup> Both the Indians and the superintendents condemned the practice, but little could be done to stop it.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho who failed to win blue ribbons at the fair could still take home prize money. First-place finishers in the footraces, for example, received three dollars for the shorter sprints (less than 220 yards), five dollars for the half-mile, and ten dollars for the mile.<sup>55</sup> Champions of the shield-throwing and bow-and-arrow-shooting contests earned five dollars, while the winning women's shinny team received three dollars.<sup>56</sup> Small cash prizes were also awarded to the best-dressed Indian man, woman, and family at the fair; the oldest Indian woman on the grounds; and for the best-kept tipi. The Indian baby show, undoubtedly one of the noisier events at the fair, gave parents the opportunity to show off their toddlers and compete for premiums at the same time. In 1911, twenty babies, "all very attractive," competed in the contest. Those judged the cleanest, prettiest, best dressed, best behaved, and fattest earned their parents \$1.50 prizes.<sup>57</sup>

By far the biggest payoffs at the Indian fair occurred at the horse races. The Cheyenne and Arapaho loved to race horses, and their fair certainly reflected this. At least six, and sometimes as many as eight, races were run for purses of between ten and twenty-five dollars per event each day.<sup>58</sup> Indians who owned a fast horse might easily pocket more money during the three-day fair than they could make working as a field laborer for an entire month.<sup>59</sup> Of course, there was always a chance that one's horse would not win anything. Anninta Washee came up empty at the 1913 fair despite entering his horse Wire Quail in several races. When asked why his horse failed to place in any of the events, Washee explained simply, "[He] didn't fly fast enough." Perhaps the reason for Washee being shut out lay not with his horse, but with its rider. At the same fair, an Indian boy employed as a jockey won second place in every race he ran and received a one- to two-dollar cut of the prize money each time.<sup>60</sup> Placing bets on the horses, while discouraged by the agents, did occur. To what degree remains uncertain owing to the somewhat sanitized accounts of the fair in local papers. However, Superintendent West made mention of the (to him) distasteful practice in his 1913 report to the commissioner of Indian Affairs saying, "I regret to . . . [inform you] that there was some betting in connection with the races."<sup>61</sup> Regardless of the superintendents' personal feelings about the issue, betting on horse races was perfectly legal at the time.

That the races meant more to tribal members than a simple payout is readily apparent from descriptions of the events. Winners gained not only money but also prestige, which reflected well on the individual's family and band. The following account of the horse races at the 1910 fair demonstrates that riders were racing for more than monetary gain when they rode onto the track:

All day long the fences were lined with men, women, boys, and girls looking at the horses. Often there was applause as some favorite rider or the owner of some noted horse went by. . . . The starter beats on a tin pan with a club, and announces a race. Star, an old, old man who was sent in shackles to Florida in 1875 . . . was the official caller, and rode from camp to camp . . . calling out in Cheyenne that the race was to be run. Most of the Indian riders were bareback . . . and all of them without their shoes. Some had put the braids of their plaited hair under their vests, lest the braids strike them in the eye. . . . Bang! Goes the club on [the] pan and away go the horses. . . . Instantly, a high keening chant begins among the women lined against the fence along the track. They are singing to encourage their friend or kinsman riding in the race.<sup>62</sup>

Odd jobs provided the Cheyenne and Arapaho with yet another source of revenue at the fair. Many took tickets at the gates, guarded the exhibits, or cleared trash from the grandstand.<sup>63</sup> Others acted as interpreters so that agents could communicate with Indians who spoke no English. Though the Indians probably did not consider it work, dancing, singing, and performing in sham battles earned them just as much money as other odd jobs at the fair (see fig. 5).<sup>64</sup> And, truly an injustice, the two Native boys assigned to empty shot from the hundreds of shells used in the sham battles received a paltry thirty cents each for their trouble.<sup>65</sup>

The Cheyenne and Arapaho not only made money at the fair, but also used the event as leverage to gain access to more of their own money. Normally the government was loathe to approve any expenditures deemed



**FIGURE 5.** Cheyenne and Arapaho men at the 1912 fair in Watonga. Photo by Chaufty Studio, 11 September, 1912. Photo is from author's personal collection.

unessential—and fair expenses certainly fit this description. However, the Indian Office routinely allowed superintendents to issue checks to Indians attending the fair. The reason? The Indians demanded it and were in a position to get it. They knew that people came to the fair to see them and that by boycotting the event they could effectively kill it. The agents realized this as well. As Superintendent White astutely pointed out, “[I]t would be difficult to hold an Indian fair unless the Indians would attend.”<sup>66</sup> Thus, each year at the fair the Cheyenne and Arapaho received between three and twenty-five dollars from their individual accounts to spend however they wished.<sup>67</sup>

Some Cheyenne and Arapaho were not content with only a fair expense check, however. They wanted money even before the event began so they could dress and eat well while at the fair. These Indians crafted their requests for additional funds in such a way as to play up their involvement in the fair and emphasize their strong work ethic. Before the 1912 fair, for instance, Albert Red Nose informed Superintendent Freer that

Every Indian is working hard for the fair at Watonga, and also I am looking for the program for the Indian fair. . . . I like to read them, and also we are commencing bailing hay for our own use this coming winter, and we want to try to bail over thousand bales [*sic*] before the Indian fair at Watonga and we are working pretty hard in these hottest days and I am needing some clothing and groceries for the Indian fair. . . . I am out of clothing myself, and we getting ready for the fair, and I am sure needing groceries and clothing right away.<sup>68</sup>

Freer replied that he was glad Red Nose and his “boys” were working hard and that a check would be sent soon.<sup>69</sup>

The Cheyenne and Arapaho were not the only tribes that benefited financially from the fair. As implausible as it may seem, Northern Cheyenne residing a thousand miles away in Montana also felt its economic impact. In a classic case of supply and demand, the Northern Cheyenne possessed a resource—pine trees—that their southern kinsmen needed and were willing to pay for. The trees, once stripped of their bark and branches, made excellent tipi poles because of their light weight and flexibility.<sup>70</sup> Oklahoma Cheyenne and Arapaho had purchased pine poles from Montana prior to 1910, but only in limited quantities. After the advent of the fair, this all changed. The thousands of Indians who poured into Weatherford and Watonga every year had to stay someplace—and many chose to camp near the fairgrounds in tipis. This sparked a tipi-building boom between the two tribes that sent orders for pine poles soaring. To meet the demand, the Northern Cheyenne organized work teams to harvest trees in the Big Horn Mountains on their reservation.<sup>71</sup> As money was “very scarce” among the Northern Cheyenne, the one to two dollars they received for each pole was a welcome addition to their yearly incomes (see fig. 6).<sup>72</sup>

Because a majority of Indians paid for tipi poles with money from their trust accounts, the four Cheyenne and Arapaho superintendents were necessarily involved in the process. After all, it was they who could advise the Indian Office to disburse or withhold monies requested by Indians under





**FIGURE 6.** *Tipis at Watonga in 1912. It is likely that at least some of the lodge poles seen in the photo came from Montana. Photo by Chaufy Studio, September 1912. Photo is from author's personal collection.*

their authority. As a letter sent by Superintendent Freer to Tongue River (Montana) Agency Superintendent J. R. Eddy indicates, the agents fully supported the Indians' attempts to procure poles:

Enclosed find check #14861 for \$15 payable to Standing With Wind and endorsed to you. Standing With Wind, the wife of Three Fingers, requests that you kindly deliver this check to Little Hawk of your Agency. The latter desires the poles to be shipped to her . . . at once so that the poles may arrive in time for the Indian Fair. . . . If one of your employees could see that the poles are properly secured, I would consider it a favor. Any surplus left after prepaying the freight is to go to Little Hawk.<sup>73</sup>

Superintendents, while they approved of the Cheyenne and Arapaho having tipi poles shipped to Oklahoma, looked less favorably on those who journeyed to Montana to select poles for themselves. Agents felt such trips were a waste of money and time; when Indians should have been tending to crops, they were instead traveling across the country. Not surprisingly, when White Bird, a Cheyenne desiring to travel north for tipi poles, asked Superintendent Freer for assistance (in the form of money and a letter of introduction to take to Superintendent Eddy in Montana) he received an icy response.<sup>74</sup> "It seems a long trip to make to get poles for a tepee," wrote Freer to field matron Mary Freeman who was helping White Bird with his request, "and I am satisfied that the expense of the trip will be at least twice as much

as the value of the tepee when finished. It seems to me that White Bird should be doing some sort of work this present season—that he should, at least, be as industrious as the majority of his tribesmen.” Freer concluded sullenly, “Under these circumstances, I do not feel like writing White Bird a letter of introduction.”<sup>75</sup> Whether White Bird made it to Montana or not is uncertain. If he did, it was through no help of his superintendent.

The chance to socialize with others was probably as important a reason as any as to why the two tribes embraced the event. Fairs by their very nature are inclusive institutions and the Indian fair was no different. It brought together all segments of Cheyenne and Arapaho society—young and old, male and female, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, churchgoers and followers of Native religions—in a festive environment at the conclusion of summer. Adding to the celebratory mood was the fact that most families had at least some money to spend because lease, annuity, and fair expense checks were distributed at the fairgrounds. This allowed parents to indulge their children with carnival rides and candy and for the Cheyenne and Arapaho in general to hold feasts and giveaways for one another and visiting tribes. A sense of community permeated the grounds, and as government farmer George A. Hoyo observed, the annual event became, simply, a “good place to have a good time.”<sup>76</sup>

Although the fair lasted only three days, tribal members arrived long before the event and remained several days after visiting with friends and family, dancing, feasting, and giving away property. These activities had been central to Cheyenne and Arapaho social and ceremonial gatherings for generations and provide evidence of how seamlessly the two tribes incorporated the event into their established patterns of gathering. Without skipping a beat, the two tribes found continuity in an outside institution, in the process creating an institution all their own.

Headmen from both tribes usually arrived first at the fairgrounds to select their campsites and decide on the locations of others’ campsites.<sup>77</sup> Many tribal members chose to live in tipis during the fair, while others erected large canvas wall tents instead. These tents had rugs or carpeting for floors and occupants slept on either cots or beds.<sup>78</sup> One visitor to the fair, impressed with the number of camps in and around Watonga in 1911, commented that the town resembled a “regular Chicago of tents.”<sup>79</sup> Although life in the camps may not have been as interesting to Anglo fairgoers as the dances and sham battles, it had a familiar appeal to the Cheyenne and Arapaho (see fig. 7). Reporter Fred Barde, who visited the 1910 and 1911 fairs, perhaps best captured the essence of camp life with the following description:

White tepees that shone like a ghost-city at night were adorned with improvised scalp locks and all the various devices that distinguish the families one from another. Everywhere children were at play and the mothers and young women engaged in their household duties—some bringing firewood, others buckets of water, and some leading horses to the wells. There was much chattering and gossiping. Old men sat in the shade . . . and kept the red stone pipe filled with tobacco, passing [it] round the circle as they talked.<sup>80</sup>



**FIGURE 7.** *The “Chicago of tents” and tipis pitched in and around the Weatherford fairgrounds in 1913. As is apparent from the photo, many tribal members journeyed to the fair in horse-drawn wagons. Photo taken September 1913. Photo is from author’s personal collection.*

That elderly members of both tribes—some blind and too feeble to walk—attended the fair reveals the importance it assumed in Cheyenne-Arapaho society. These men and women could not travel as often as they had when they were young but obviously thought enough of the Indian fair to do so. Each year a cash prize of five dollars was given to the oldest woman on the grounds, which was determined by a panel of Cheyenne and Arapaho elders.<sup>81</sup> Contestants simply recounted their life stories and the individual able to recall the earliest events in tribal history was declared the winner. To say that these women had seen much during their lifetimes would be an understatement. Elk Woman, ninety years old and the co-winner of the five-dollar prize at the 1911 fair, had been born in Colorado before the city of Denver was even a speck on the map.<sup>82</sup> Ninety-six-year-old Cash Woman, although settling for second place at the 1913 event, took a back seat to no one in terms of having lived an amazing life. She had been one of the few survivors of the Sand Creek Massacre in 1864, escaping with only a gunshot wound to the arm. Her parents, brothers, and sisters, however, all perished that day at the hands of US troops.<sup>83</sup>

Cheyenne and Arapaho adolescents considered the fair socially significant because it afforded them the opportunity to meet members of the opposite sex. At a time when Indian schools kept males and females separated as much as possible, the fair brought them together in an environment relatively free from sexual strictures. According to local newspapers, some teens felt so liberated that they decided to tie the knot with their newfound sweethearts. “The Indian Fair was quite a wedding affair,” reported the *Colony Courier*, “judging

by the number of marriages following right after it among the Indians.”<sup>84</sup> Fair committeeman John Washee called this trend a “very bad thing” and claimed that between fifteen and twenty Cheyenne and Arapaho girls had run off with young men after the 1913 fair and gotten married.<sup>85</sup> Exactly why Washee was so concerned about the extracurricular activities at the fair is uncertain. Perhaps he saw the elopements as a challenge to the system of arranged marriages among the tribes, or maybe he was just speaking out as a concerned parent. Regardless of Washee’s stance on the marriages, not all weddings were such spur-of-the-moment events. Other couples planned well in advance to get married at the fair because they knew all their friends and relatives would be there.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the success of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Cato Sells ordered its abolishment early in 1914. Sells, who replaced R. G. Valentine as commissioner in June of 1913, was a progressive Democrat from Texas with no prior experience in the Indian service.<sup>87</sup> Whereas Valentine had allowed Indians to dance and race horses at their fairs to ensure their participation, Sells would make no such concessions. Soon after taking office, he began a personal crusade to rid Indian fairs of traditional dances, sham battles, and horse races, naively believing Native people would attend the fairs without them.<sup>88</sup> Sells was only too happy to shut down the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair because it featured all of these “inappropriate” amusements.

While the immediate cause of the fair’s closure is obvious, a number of underlying factors contributed to its demise. Most important was Indian agent turnover in Cheyenne-Arapaho country during the years of the fair. In 1910, when the fair began, William B. Freer headed the Darlington Agency, Byron E. White headed the Cantonment Agency, Walter F. Dickens headed the Seger Agency, and Willis E. Dunn headed the Red Moon Agency. By November of 1912, only Dunn remained.<sup>89</sup> Their replacements, Frederick E. Farrell (Darlington), Walter G. West (Cantonment), and W. W. Small (Seger) helped carry out the 1913 fair, but Farrell and West clearly believed the event had outlived its usefulness. Their opinions carried considerable weight because they oversaw the two largest Cheyenne and Arapaho agencies. Commissioner Sells needed little encouragement to terminate the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair. Farrell and West made certain he received that encouragement shortly after the 1913 fair ended.

In a lengthy letter to the commissioner in October of 1913, West conceded that the Cheyenne and Arapaho undoubtedly benefited from the fair but felt they had lost sight of its true purpose. “The tendency seems to be to give too much prominence to horse racing, merry-go rounds, and wild west shows,” he complained, “and too little to agricultural, culinary, and live-stock exhibits. The question in the minds of the Indians seems to be, how much fun and amusement can be had, rather than how much useful knowledge can be gained.” West also denounced the fair because it failed to keep the Indians at home during the summer. Instead, he argued, it actually encouraged traveling by giving the Cheyenne and Arapaho “one more occasion . . . to go.”<sup>90</sup> Writing to Sells a month later, Farrell claimed to have been “an ardent believer in the

Indian fair” until recently.<sup>91</sup> He had changed his mind, however, after seeing Indian exhibits at Anglo county fairs. In a sort of epiphany, he concluded that only when Indians competed directly with whites as they did at these county fairs could they progress toward civilization. Both Farrell and West agreed that the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair should be scrapped and that Indians should participate in white county fairs instead.

As the voice of dissent, Red Moon Superintendent Dunn crafted a powerful moral argument for the continuation of the fair. He asserted that Indians at the event were protected from the many vices so prevalent at Anglo county fairs because agents controlled which shows were allowed on the grounds. He had personally “turned away many objectionable shows, gambling and catch-penny devices” as concessions manager at the 1912 and 1913 events.<sup>92</sup> According to Dunn, encouraging the Cheyenne and Arapaho to attend county fairs, as his fellow superintendents suggested, would expose them to a host of evils:

In their affiliation with local fair associations, the Indians will be used principally as an attraction, and as a result of attending county fairs in the past . . . the men have fallen prey to women in side-shows, or other cheap attractions, and three have died from loathsome disease. One good Indian Fair under close supervision of the agents is far better . . . than turning the Indians over to several bunches of grafters for advertising purposes, where the welfare of the Indians is not considered, but how much money can he be worked for.<sup>93</sup>

Compared with the perversions of Anglo fairs, the inappropriate “wild west features” at Indian fairs seemed tame. Though Dunn was undoubtedly the most qualified to comment on the fair owing to his involvement in the event from its inception, his views ran counter to Sells’s and, as such, were politely dismissed.

Simple economics may also have played a role in the cancellation of the Indian fair. An examination of its financial records indicates that in its first two years, the event netted \$79.54 and \$438.76, respectively, but lost approximately six hundred dollars in 1912 and even more in 1913, its final year. The 1913 fair proved such a financial disaster that the Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair Association barely managed to pay off its debts from the previous year and had just \$127.94 left over to pay \$1,200 worth of premiums.<sup>94</sup> Faced with an impossible situation, the four Cheyenne-Arapaho superintendents decided to pay only premiums won on livestock exhibits and horse races, and then only thirty-seven cents on the dollar.<sup>95</sup> The agents reasoned that individuals who had brought cattle or horses to the fair were most deserving of remuneration because of the expenses they had incurred transporting and feeding their animals. For the hundreds of Indians who went away from Weatherford with no prize money in 1913, the agents’ decision could have placed the fair’s future in considerable jeopardy. The Cheyenne and Arapaho of the Seger Agency voiced “considerable dissatisfaction” and threatened to boycott the 1914 fair if the premiums were not paid.<sup>96</sup> Indians at the other three agencies probably felt angry as well, but there is some doubt as to whether the tribes

would have jettisoned their fair after only one year of unpaid premiums. As late as February of 1914, the Cheyenne and Arapaho still planned to hold their fifth annual fair and, when notified of the event's cancellation, demanded a council with the Indian Bureau to protest the decision.<sup>97</sup>

Given that the fair continued to attract thousands of Indians and whites after 1911, one might be curious as to why the fair became a financial liability in 1912 and 1913. The reason appears to be a simple one: mismanagement of fair association funds by the four Cheyenne-Arapaho superintendents. Agents set a dangerous precedent after the 1911 fair of paying all expenses incurred by agency employees who attended the fair, regardless of how much or little they helped. Workers were reimbursed for transportation, meals, and lodging and, on one occasion, eighty-five cents for a shave.<sup>98</sup> At the 1910 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair, four government employees received expense checks that together totaled less than fifty dollars. By 1912, an army of at least thirty workers racked up over one thousand dollars in fair expenses. Obviously, word had gotten out that the annual Indian fair was a yearly paid vacation.

Red Moon Superintendent Dunn, in full damage-control mode, blamed the deficit on the large numbers of Indians who were paid between fifty cents and one dollar a day to participate in the daily parade and dances.<sup>99</sup> The numbers, however, fail to support this assertion. Cheyenne and Arapaho dancers and parade participants were paid a total of \$375 for their services at the 1912 fair; their lodging, transportation, and meal expenses were not included (see fig. 8). Such expenditure could be justified because people came to the Indian fair to see Indians, not government employees. Clearly, agents lost sight of who the fair was supposed to benefit. A letter from Ebenezer Kingsley to Seger Superintendent Dickens reveals the extent of agents' misappropriation of fair funds and their misplaced priorities:

Mr. White [superintendent at Cantonment] told me to send you my expense bill at the Indian fair. . . . I did not understand that the expenses of employes [*sic*] detailed at the Fair would be paid, hence I kept no account of expenses, but if the Fair Association wants to pay my expenses I shall make no strenuous objections. . . . You can call . . . \$7.85 as the bill.<sup>100</sup>

Kingsley received his expense check a little more than a week later.

In April of 1914, a group of Arapaho asked for and received a council with one of Commissioner Cato Sells's representatives. Tribal leaders such as Hail, Grant Lefthand, Bird Chief Jr., and Big Nose attended the council and aired a laundry list of grievances against the Indian Bureau. Each made a point of expressing his displeasure over the cancellation of the Indian fair. Hail called the fair "a good thing" and hoped "it could be kept up like it has been." Bird Chief Jr. and Big Nose felt the fair was important in the social life of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people and that they would be uncomfortable participating in Anglo fairs. The speech by Grant Lefthand may have best captured the feelings of his people on the matter: "The Indian Fair is an inducement to the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe of Indians in the way of Industrial pursuits,



**FIGURE 8.** *Cheyenne and Arapaho parading into Watonga for the 1912 fair. Photo by Chaufy Studio, September 1912. Photo is from author's personal collection.*

and it ought to be continued. . . . [W]e are all pulling one direction to prosper . . . and one of the best things we ever did is to have a Fair."<sup>101</sup> In a council four years before, agents representing the Indian Office had tried to convince the Cheyenne and Arapaho to hold a fair. Now, it was the Indians who were trying to convince the same government agency to let them continue that same fair. Things had come full circle and sadly to an end.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair, as short-lived as it was, quickly became the largest of the many community-wide gatherings held in Cheyenne-Arapaho country every year. The Indian Bureau hoped the fair would satisfy the Indians' "cravings for social intercourse" well enough to render their other gatherings obsolete.<sup>102</sup> It did not. While it did become an important event for Cheyenne and Arapaho people, the two tribes' numerous summer dances and ceremonials continued unabated. Thus, the reasons for implementing the fair in the first place were thwarted and the Cheyenne and Arapaho, at least for a few years, enjoyed a culturally meaningful event at the government's expense (literally and figuratively).

From the fair's inception Indians figured prominently in its operation—and necessarily so. Simply put, without Cheyenne and Arapaho support the fair would have ceased to exist. The Indians knew it and the superintendents knew it. The two tribes skillfully negotiated this position of power to transform the fair into something uniquely theirs and conducted on their own terms. At a time when most tribal members could not even purchase groceries without governmental approval, this was truly a notable accomplishment.

## NOTES

1. "Indian Fairs," *United States Indian Service Bulletin*, no. 1, 31 December 1909, in Chilocco Fair file, Oklahoma Historical Society (hereafter OHS), Oklahoma City, OK.

2. L. G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883–1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1999), 212. For information about Native rodeos in conjunction with the Crow Fair and other fairs, see Allison Fuss Mellis, *Riding Buffaloes and Broncos: Rodeo and Native Traditions in the Northern Great Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2003). For information on Native dancing at fairs, see Clyde Ellis, *A Dancing People: Powwow Culture on the Southern Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003). For an excellent article on early Indian fairs in what would become the state of Oklahoma see Andrew Denson, "Muskogee's Indian International Fairs: Tribal Autonomy and the Indian Image in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Western Historical Quarterly* (Autumn 2003): 325–45.

3. Frederick Hoxie, *Parading through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805–1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 306–7.

4. The fair switched locations so as to keep Indians on both sides of the South Canadian River happy. Those living on the east side of the river had to cross over to get to Weatherford, while those living on the west side had to cross over to get to Watonga. At this time, there were no bridges spanning the South Canadian in Cheyenne-Arapaho country, which made the crossing a bit of an adventure, especially after heavy rains.

5. *Weatherford Democrat*, 18 August 1910, 1.

6. Intermediary chiefs refer to those individuals recognized by both their tribal constituents and federal agents as leaders based on their ability to provide services to the former and to aid the latter in implementing Indian Affairs policies (or at least appear to be helping to implement bureau policies).

7. Loretta Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings: Gros Ventre Culture and History, 1778–1985* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1987), 73–74.

8. Donald J. Berthrong, "Legacies of the Dawes Act: Bureaucrats and Land Thieves at the Cheyenne-Arapaho Agencies of Oklahoma," *Arizona and the West* (Winter 1979): 337.

9. *Ibid.*, 338.

10. Council between Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders with W. W. Scott, new agent replacing Frederick E. Farrell, 19 June 1914, (*Council Meetings of the Major American Indian Tribes, 1907–1971*), University Publications of America, Inc., reel 13, series I.

11. Donald J. Berthrong, *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Ordeal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1976), 231.

12. Council between Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders and W. W. Scott, new agent replacing Frederick E. Farrell, 19 June 1914 (*Council Meetings of the Major American Indian Tribes, 1907–1971*), University Publications of America, Inc., reel 13, series I.

13. Council between Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders and Supervisor Brown at the Cheyenne and Arapaho School, Darlington, OK, 24 April 1914 (Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency Records-Fairs [hereafter CAA-Fairs], OHS, reel 45).

14. *Colony Courier*, 7 August 1913, 3.

15. *Colony Courier*, 10 August 1911, 6.



16. Ibid.

17. "Big Jake's Crossing," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 38 (Spring 1960): 50. The crossing was located twenty miles southwest of Weatherford near the town of Cloud Chief.

18. *Colony Courier*, 30 June 1910, 6; 7 July 1910, 6; 14 July 1910, 6; *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Carrier Pigeon* (hereafter *Carrier Pigeon*), 15 August 1910, 1–2. Edited by Darlington Agent William B. Freer, the *Carrier Pigeon* began publication in 1910 and ceased when Freer left the agency in 1912.

19. *Carrier Pigeon*, 15 August 1910, 1–2.

20. Ibid.

21. Loretta Fowler, *Tribal Sovereignty and the Historical Imagination: Cheyenne-Arapaho Politics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2002), 72–75.

22. *Watonga Republican*, 4 June 1913, 1. As a rule, the president and secretary/treasurer positions went to a Cheyenne, while the vice presidency went to an Arapaho.

23. Ibid., 5 October 1911, 4.

24. Anglo business owners in Watonga and Weatherford held a substantial financial stake in the fair. Had Indians boycotted the event, it would have been disastrous as well as embarrassing. Indians had much less to lose, though they would have missed out on prize money and an end-of-the-summer gathering.

25. *Carrier Pigeon*, 1 June 1911, 2–3.

26. Byron E. White to William B. Freer, 23 May 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

27. William B. Freer to George M. Norris, Chairman of Indian Fair Committee, Weatherford, 31 May 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

28. 1910 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, Chilocco Indians School-Fairs, OHS, folder 8/1909–8/1920.

29. *Watonga Republican*, 7 August 1911, 4; 1912 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, Kaw Indian Agency Collection, Western History Collections (hereafter WHC), Norman, OK, box 30, folder 4; 1913 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 48.

30. Walter F. Dickens to William B. Freer, 31 May 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

31. *Weatherford Democrat*, 1 September 1911, 2.

32. Fred S. Barde Collection, OHS, box 14, folder 7.

33. Ibid.

34. Undated list of sham battle participants, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

35. *Carrier Pigeon* 15 May 1912, 1; Receipt showing payment to Tom Lightfoot, 14 September 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

36. Freer to Small, 4 November 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

37. William B. Freer to Superintendents White, Dunn, and Dickens, 3 June 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47; List of Performers for Play, undated, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

38. *Carrier Pigeon*, 1 October 1911, 3.

39. William B. Freer to Walter F. Dickens, 3 January 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

40. Undated list of Cheyenne and Arapaho dancers, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

41. *Watonga Republican*, 19 September 1912, 1. Adopted from the Northern Arapaho in Wyoming, the Crow Dance was a variation of the Omaha Dance that had developed around the Ghost Dance in the 1890s. It had no known connection with altering weather patterns. It is likely Washee knew it was going to rain and, taking

advantage of ignorant Anglos who thought all Indian dances were “rain dances,” simply made up the story.

42. *Ibid.*

43. 1910 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, Chilocco Indians School-Fairs, OHS, folder 8/1909–8/1920; *Watonga Republican*, 7 August 1911, 4; 1912 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, Kaw Indian Agency Collection, WHC, box 30, folder 4; 1913 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 48.

44. *Carrier Pigeon*, 1 October 1911, 2.

45. Fred S. Barde Collection, OHS, box 14, folder 7.

46. Dickens to Freer, 15 February 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47; Mary J. Freeman to Freer, 28 September 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

47. Freer to Dickens, 28 January 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

48. George A. Hoyo request for funds, 8 August 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47; Freer to Hoyo, 9 August 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

49. *Colony Courier*, 24 August 1911, 6.

50. Cleaver Warden to Freer, 5 August 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47; Freer to Warden, 6 August 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

51. *Colony Courier*, 1 September 1910, 6.

52. *Calumet Chieftain*, 22 September 1911, 4.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Carrier Pigeon*, 15 April 1911, 1.

55. *Watonga Republican*, 17 August 1911, 4.

56. 1913 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Premium List, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 48.

57. *Indian School Journal* (March 1913): 308.

58. 1910 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, Chilocco Indians School-Fairs, OHS, folder 8/1909–8/1920; *Watonga Republican*, 7 August 1911, 4; 1912 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, Kaw Indian Agency Collection, WHC, box 30, folder 4; 1913 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 48.

59. *Colony Courier*, 1 September 1910, 6.

60. *Ibid.*, 19 September 1913, 4.

61. Walter G. West to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 6 October 1913, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 48.

62. Fred S. Barde Collection, OHS, box 14, folder 7.

63. Undated check stubs from the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Association, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 46; statement of expenditures under various heads of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair Association, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 46. Usually these odd jobs paid \$1.00 to \$1.50 per day.

64. *Ibid.*; undated list of sham battle participants, singers, and dancers, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

65. Undated check stub from the Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair Association, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

66. Byron E. White to Superintendents Freer, Dickens, and Dunn, 14 August 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

67. William B. Freer to John P. Logan, 4 September 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47; Logan to Freer, 8 October 1910, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 46.

68. Albert Red Nose to William B. Freer, 16 August 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

69. Freer to Red Nose, 19 August 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

70. *Colony Courier*, 13 June 1912, 6.

71. *Ibid.*, 12 September 1913, 3.

72. *Ibid.*, 9 October 1913, 4.

73. William B. Freer to J. R. Eddy, 4 August 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.

74. Mary J. Freeman to William B. Freer, 13 May 1911, CAA-Field Matrons, OHS, reel 81. Without a letter from Freer, White Bird may not have been permitted to enter the Tongue River Reservation in Montana. At this time, Eddy suspected Southern Cheyenne of transporting mescal (it was actually peyote) to their northern relatives. This was why White Bird explicitly told Freer to mention in the introduction letter that he was “no mescal man.”

75. William B. Freer to Mary J. Freeman, 25 May 1911, CAA-Field Matrons, OHS, reel 81.

76. *Carrier Pigeon*, 1 September 1911, 1.

77. Dickens to Freer, 12 October 1910, CAA-Fairs, OHS reel 46.

78. *Watonga Republican*, 14 September 1911, 1.

79. *Ibid.*, 7 September 1911, 1.

80. Fred S. Barde Collection, OHS, box 14, folder 7.

81. *Colony Courier*, 24 August 1911, 6.

82. Fred S. Barde Collection, OHS, box 14, folder 7.

83. *Weatherford Booster*, 11 September 1913, 1.

84. *Colony Courier*, 2 October 1913, 4.

85. *Ibid.*, 4.

86. *Weatherford Booster*, 18 September 1913, 1.

87. Robert M. Kvasnicka and Herman J. Viola, eds., *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1824–1977* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 243; L. G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883–1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 212–18.

88. “Circular to Superintendents,” *Indian School Journal* (June 1914): 312. The commissioner suggested that these features be replaced with “slow mule races” or “athletic contests involving feats of strength and skill.” Needless to say, many Indians did not buy into Sells’s vision of Native fairs and chose instead to dance and race their horses at Anglo fairs (for money) or on private property.

89. Dickens was transferred to Red Lake, MN, Freer was promoted to Supervisor of Indian Schools in Oklahoma, and White retired.

90. Walter G. West to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 6 October 1913, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 48.

91. Farrell to Sells, 13 November 1913, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 48.

92. Willis E. Dunn to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 17 November 1913, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 48.

93. *Ibid.*

94. Dickens to Freer, 8 June 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47; *Carrier Pigeon*, 5 May 1912, 1; Statement of Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair Association for month ended 30 September 1913, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 48.

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Colony Courier*, 2 October 1913, 4.
97. Transcript of council between Supervisor Brown and the Cheyenne and Arapaho, 24 April 1914, CAA-Chiefs, OHS, reel 45.
98. Charles W. Edmister to Dickens, 1 November 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.
99. Dunn to West, 2 October 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.
100. Ebenezer Kingsley to Dickens, 4 October 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, reel 47.
101. Transcript of council between Supervisor Brown and the Cheyenne and Arapaho, 24 April 1914, CAA-Chiefs, OHS, reel 45.
102. *Watonga Herald*, 7 September 1911, 1.