
CHAPTER 2

Picturing a Western Myth

Photography and the Blackfeet

When Glacier National Park in Montana opened its doors to the public in the summer of 1911, its advertising promised tourists that a visit to the park would include a “wilderness experience” replete with glimpses of the “vanishing” American Indian. Countless brochures, calendars, postcards, and magazine layouts featured photographs of the Blackfeet, the tribe that was native to the region in northwestern Montana that became Glacier Park. The Glacier Park publicity campaign was so successful that the image of the Blackfeet, with their feathered headdresses and buffalo-hide tipis, became a standard image of all American Indians, despite great variations in dress and housing among Native Americans.

Descriptions of the Blackfeet as “specimens of a Great Race soon to disappear” lent immediacy to Glacier Park’s promotional campaign and tapped into the then-familiar idea that Native American cultures were wholly incompatible with modern life. The assumption was that if people maintained their native identities and cultures, then they were sadly stuck in the past and destined to be mowed down by modernity. If they adjusted themselves and their cultures to modern life, then they were no longer Indians; they had, in effect, “vanished.”

The belief that people can be either modern or native, but not both, shapes the Native American story into a tale of unavoidable natural disaster, similar to a flood or an earthquake: no one was responsible, and Indians like the Blackfeet were helpless in its wake. There are two historical problems with this interpretation: first, it overlooks U.S. government policies that actively hindered

natives' freedom to blend native culture with modern life; second, it ignores the ways in which people like the Blackfeet refused to let their cultures vanish and, despite government policies, found ways to accommodate native culture to modern culture. For example, the story of Glacier National Park is, in part, a story of Blackfeet adaptation to modern life. In accommodating to the park, the Blackfeet carved out a clever market niche: they sold back to white Americans, who were seeking a "wilderness experience," the mythic image of a "vanished people."

The Blackfeet signed their first treaty with the federal government in 1855, which made them one of the last native tribes to establish any treaty relations with the United States. According to that treaty, Blackfeet allowed whites to build roads, telegraph lines, military posts, missions, schools, and U.S. government agencies throughout their territory. In exchange, the U.S. government agreed to pay out \$200,000 in "useful goods and services" and to provide \$150,000 to promote the "civilization and Christianization" of the Blackfeet.

The terms of that 1855 treaty, and all subsequent treaties between the Blackfeet and the U.S. government, included the key feature limiting natives' power to design their own accommodation to modern life: all government payments for the land the United States bought from the Blackfeet were made in goods, services, and programs that the government deemed appropriate for civilizing and Christianizing the tribe, and all such payments were made according to the government's timetable. The government did not pay the natives directly for the lands it acquired, as would have been customary in any other European-American land deal, and the Blackfeet did not gain the economic resources from land sales that would have allowed them to invest in their own style of assimilation. While the government stated its desire to have natives assimilate into modern American life, it denied people like the Blackfeet the economic independence that was central to American identity. Compare this with the experience of immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth century. While immigrants struggled economically, they were not legally denied control over whatever wages or business profits they could earn. As a result, they were able to direct their earnings toward building an independent community base from which to influence the timing and the terms of their accommodation to American society. It was this economic autonomy that U.S. policy denied to native tribes.

In the four decades between 1870 and 1910, between the close of the Civil War era and the opening of Glacier National Park, the problems in federal Indian policy became clear for the Blackfeet, for in these decades the buffalo disappeared from the northern Montana grasslands. This happened, in part, because whites overhunted the buffalo for sport, but it also happened because supplying buffalo meat to the tribe and selling buffalo hides to whites were the only economic activities left to the Blackfeet. They, too, overhunted. At the same time that the buffalo were declining, over twenty thousand land-hungry white settlers poured into the Montana territory. They occasionally met with violent resistance from the Blackfeet, and the U.S. military helped the settlers fight off that resistance.

The combination of food shortages, smallpox, and conflict with whites reduced the Blackfeet population from eight thousand in 1855 to twenty-five hundred in 1880. Another 20 percent died of starvation in the winter of 1884 when the federal government failed to deliver food allotments owed in exchange for land. U.S. military reprisals against Blackfeet resistance were sufficiently harsh in these years that the *New York Times* questioned if the killing of women and children was necessary to achieve peace with the Blackfeet. Adding to these difficulties was a major change in U.S. policy in 1871 that declared that the government no longer regarded Native American tribal groups as independent, treaty-making nations. They were now defined as "wards" of the state.

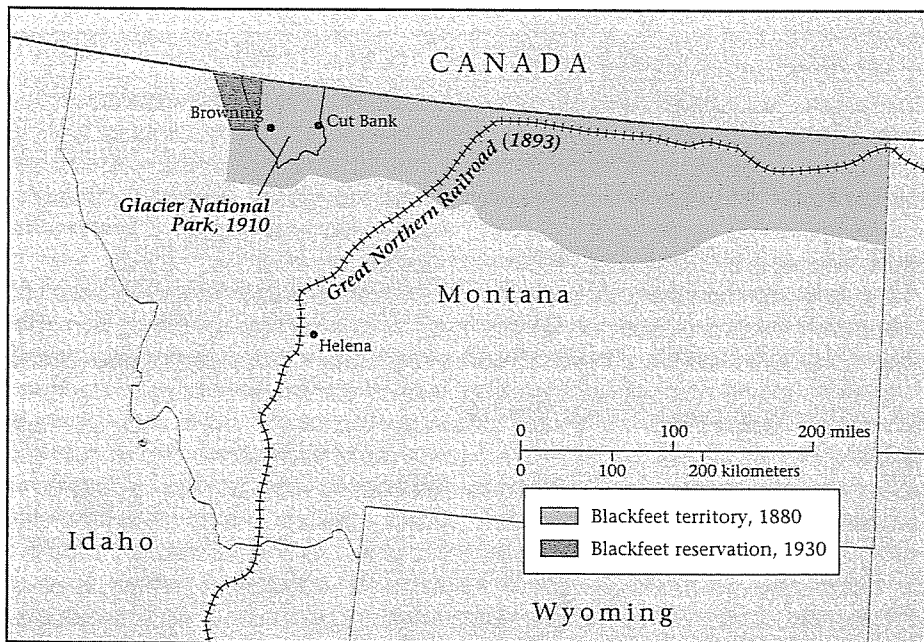
It was as wards of the state that the starving remainder of the Blackfeet nation negotiated two major land sales to the government, one in 1887, the other in 1895. By the turn of the century, the two thousand residents of the Blackfeet reservation still owned 1.5 million acres of grazing land but had relinquished ownership of the western mountains, lakes, and streams that had traditionally been a vital source of spiritual and dietary nourishment. For the land, the Blackfeet received \$3 million, half of what they had asked for. Again, payment never came as a direct infusion of capital for the tribe to control and invest; it was always in the form of goods and services controlled by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a then-famously corrupt arm of the federal government.

At the time that white ranchers, farmers, and miners were moving onto Blackfeet lands, an emerging lobby of white conservationists were increasingly alarmed that uncontrolled development would destroy the West's natural beauty and resources. These conservationists figured out that they could protect precious pockets of the region by appealing to modern Americans' nostalgia for the vanishing wilderness. Thus it was, in 1910, that conservationists joined with the Great Northern Railway Company to win congressional approval for Glacier National Park, sixteen hundred square miles of alpine beauty that had once formed the "backbone" of the Blackfeet's world (see Map 2.1 on p. 31). The Great Northern, which stood to profit from a tourism trade in Montana, financed the construction of roads and trails, two magnificent hotels, and a series of smaller "chalets" and tourist-friendly camps around the park. In less than a decade, aggressive marketing increased tourism to Glacier National Park from four thousand in the summer of 1911 to almost twenty thousand in the summer of 1920.

To provide tourists with opportunities for contact with the supposedly vanishing natives, the Great Northern hired Blackfeet every summer to relocate from the reservation into designated areas of the park. There, they could be viewed in a living museum, occupying traditionally styled tipis and wearing costumes that twentieth-century whites thought of as authentic. Though publicity stills occasionally depicted a Blackfeet male spearing a fish or holding his bow and arrows, Glacier Park rules actually followed the national parks' prohibition on hunting rather than the Blackfeet's treaty rights to hunt and fish in their old territory. In devising means of economic survival in the modern world, the Blackfeet found that they could adapt native culture to U.S. culture as entertainers but not as hunters of game or fish.

For those Blackfeet who profited from their summertime performances as historical artifacts, this pragmatic use of their culture was layered with irony. Glacier Park's romantic myth of the "vanishing" Indian was reinforced by government policy on the Blackfeet reservation, where federal agents spent the money owed to the tribe on programs to transform Blackfeet hunters into the mythic American family farmer. The Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 had made it U.S. policy to encourage natives to divide tribally held lands into individually held, 160-acre plots and to farm independently from the tribe. The government would hold each plot of land in trust for twenty-five years and then grant the land and citizenship to the former tribe member. Hailed as a reform of the failed reservation system, the Dawes plan proved unsuited to the harsh western environment. White farmers at this time were concluding that western agriculture demanded substantial capital outlays for irrigation, planting, and harvesting technology applied to vast grain acreage, but Indian agents, implementing the Dawes plan, insisted that the Blackfeet could survive and assimilate by farming small plots of oats, barley, and vegetables.

Reports by the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs indicate that the Blackfeet adopted some features of the government's assimilation program and resisted others. For example, the commissioner reported in 1900 that the number of reservation Blackfeet who wore "citizens' dress"—the clothing style of whites—had increased to 2,085 from only 40 in 1886. There were similar increases in Blackfeet use of "citizens'" household wares, wagons, and foodstuffs because the Blackfeet were paid for their land with all manner of modern, American goods. But in that same 1900 report, the commissioner admitted that



Map 2.1 Glacier National Park and the Blackfeet, 1880-1930

only five hundred acres on the Blackfeet reservation were under farm cultivation. Denied the independent authority to invest the tribe's funds in livestock ranching, which was the endeavor that made the most economic and cultural sense to the Blackfeet, native men resisted federal efforts to turn them into vegetable gardeners in a grassland climate of hot, dry summers and long, cold winters. Indeed, the most prosperous Blackfeet were mixed-bloods whose white fathers had profited by bringing their livestock to graze for free on the Blackfeet wives' tribal grasslands.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, right at the time that the Great Northern Railroad was eulogizing the passage of a "Great Race," the Blackfeet were not, in fact, vanishing, nor were they strictly adhering to the government's assimilation plan. Instead, they were struggling to create an alternative method of survival that retained native traditions while utilizing the opportunities presented by the surrounding white society. An excellent example of the Blackfeet's creativity in this regard is their adaptation of the Sun Dance. From the 1880s on into the twentieth century, Christian missionaries and federal agents opposed the Sun Dance as a blatant display of "heathen worship" that had to be eliminated if the Blackfeet were ever to assimilate. But other whites, including, eventually, those at Glacier National Park, were fascinated by the Blackfeet's elaborate ritual of sacred vows to the holy sun. By the turn of the century, the Blackfeet had rescheduled the Sun Dance to coincide with the Fourth of July, thereby turning it into a patriotic celebration that became a major tourist event that the church and the government did not dare oppose. In this way, as in other ways, the Blackfeet preserved their traditions while accommodating to the realities of life in white society.

Using Photographs as a Source

Photographs are one of the most modern types of documents available to students of history. For centuries, historians have consulted written texts, paintings, sculpture, music, and all sorts of manufactured artifacts to reconstruct human life in the past. But it was only in the 1840s that advances in camera design made it possible to capture and preserve an image of a physical object. This technological invention revolutionized human access to the past; permanent photographs gave every viewer a unique window on people and places long gone.

Native Americans became the subjects of photographs as early as the 1850s when Indian delegations to Washington, D.C., were regularly photographed as part of the official record of treaty negotiations. In photography's early years, the camera's shutter speed was too slow to capture the action of battle, but hundreds of native warriors went to portrait studios in the 1860s, where they sat motionless for the eighty seconds required to capture an image on a glass "plate." In the same era, dozens of intrepid photographers ventured out west with horses bearing cameras, tripods, glass plates, developing chemicals, and a

tent "darkroom." Though burdened by the technology's requirement that they develop every photo within ten minutes of taking it, these early western photographers were determined to capture images of tribal people in their native environments.

Like other European Americans, photographers assumed that Native Americans were destined for oblivion and believed, therefore, that they were preserving on film the last survivors of a doomed people. Joseph Henry, the first secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, tried to raise government funds in 1867 to build a complete photographic record of the "principal tribes of the U.S." by arguing that "the Indians are passing away so rapidly that but few years remain within which this can be done, and the loss will be irretrievable . . . when they are gone."

Secretary Henry was not granted his funds, so photography of Indians proceeded in a haphazard way, driven by technology and influenced by commercial, cultural, and personal motives. Thanks to the introduction in 1888 of George Eastman's handheld "box" camera, photography became the pastime of amateurs as well as the business of professionals, and the "vanishing" Indian continued to be a favorite photographic subject into the twentieth century. There are today over ninety thousand photographs at the National Museum of the American Indian at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. And the NMAI is just one of dozens of photographic archives in the United States that serve, according to one historian, as "a collective witness to Indian transitions."

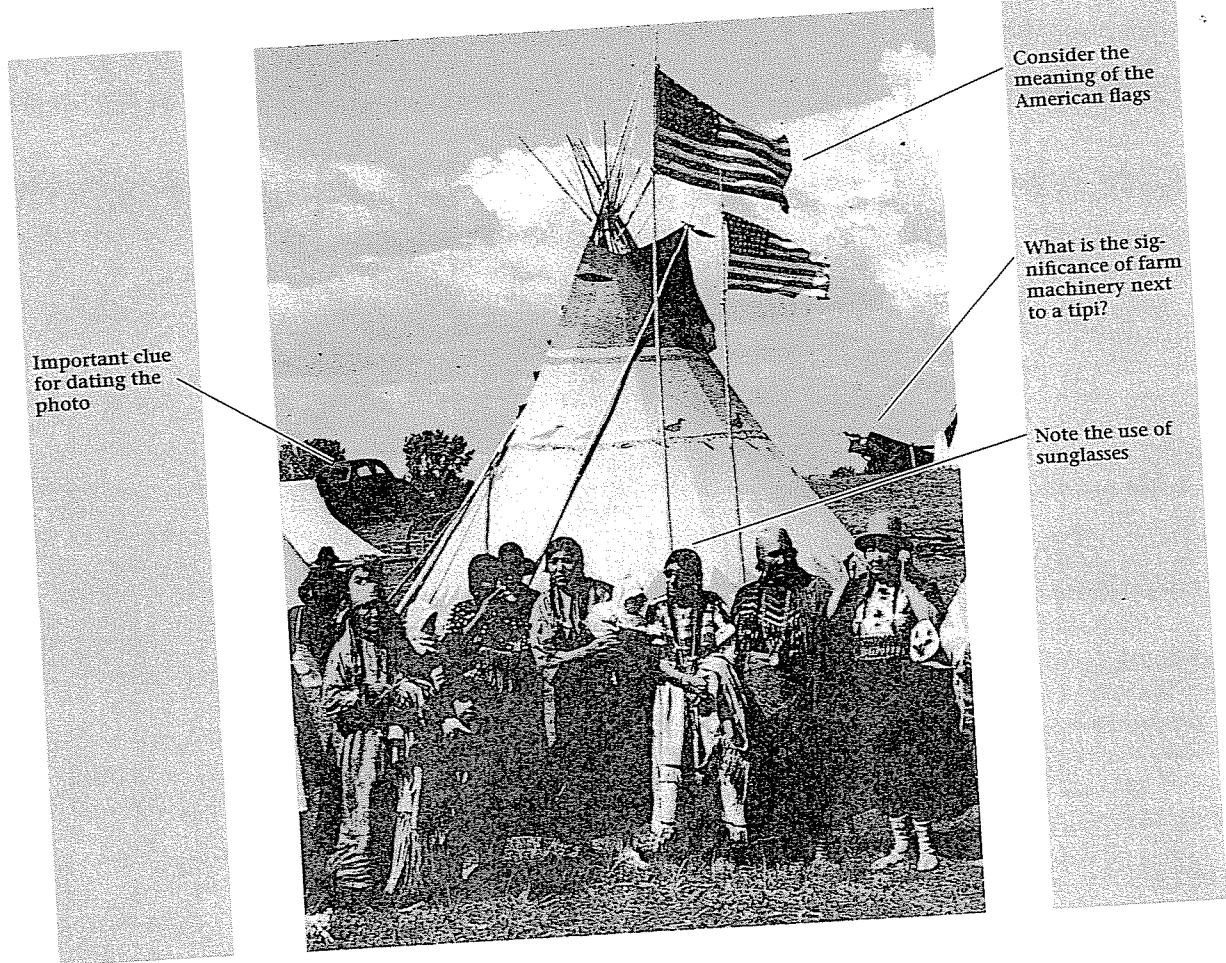
Advantages and Disadvantages of Working with Photographs

Photographs are a valuable historical source for the obvious reason: they give us access to subtle and minute details on the natural world and social life. From the dusty look of a Blackfeet family's vegetable harvest to the jaunty swing of a golfer's club at Glacier National Park, photos can capture and preserve a wealth of information without even intending to. The lens that focused on a quartet of Blackfeet students also recorded useful information on reservation clothing, activities, and attitude. Indeed, the record of individuals' facial expressions, body poses, even their gestures and glances toward one another is one of photography's greatest contributions to our connection to people in the past.

There are disadvantages, however, to working with photographs. Everyone who has ever dug through a box of old, unmarked photographs knows that pictures cannot answer all of the questions they raise. The image itself cannot tell us why a man in a photo was smiling, whether his smile was genuine or an act for the camera, whether he owned the clothes he was wearing in the photo, or what his relationship was to the person taking the photo.

Consider, for example, the detail on page 34 from a photograph taken around 1930 at a traditional tribal dance on the reservation, where the audience included tourists from Glacier Park. (The photograph can be seen in its entirety on p. 43.) On the one hand, it provides a wealth of evidence on the blending of native culture with modern American culture. On the other hand,

it raises a host of unanswerable questions about the thoughts and feelings of those who appear in the photo.



Important clue
for dating the
photo

Consider the
meaning of the
American flags

What is the sig-
nificance of farm
machinery next
to a tipi?

Note the use of
sunglasses

While this slice of a photograph offers valuable information on Blackfoot incorporation of American products into daily tribal life, it cannot tell us the attitude of the women toward the automobile in the background. Does the car signify the natives' own prosperity or is it a sign of white wealth derived from Blackfoot land? Do the American flags denote Blackfoot deference to governmental power or a calculated use of white icons in tribal rituals? Might the flags simply testify to Blackfoot patriotism?

Such questions remind us that photographs alone cannot reveal all we want to know about the objects in front of the camera. But this is not photography's only limitation in recording the past. For in addition to asking questions about who and what are in front of the camera, historians must also ask

questions about who is behind the camera. We have been told that “the camera doesn’t lie,” yet we also know that every camera has an angle. More precisely, every camera has a photographer operating it, a person who brings some mix of cultural attitudes, personal emotions, economic motives, and artistic assumptions to the picture-taking process. When reading a photograph for evidence of the past, we cannot afford to regard the camera as a neutral technology or the photograph as purely an “objective” witness. We must regard every photograph as the creative product of a photographer’s point of view and must attempt to put each photograph into the context in which it was taken.

The selection of photographs included in this chapter allows you to compare two very different types of photographs of Blackfeet. The first six photos were taken by commercial photographers who were hired by the Great Northern Railway to create advertising pictures for Glacier National Park. These commercial photos are representative of the vast majority of surviving images of Native Americans; they convey a romantic image of the Indian as the embodiment of a noble and pristine American past. The highly skilled, world-famous photographers, such as Edward S. Curtis and Roland Reed, who created these photographic myths for companies like the Great Northern Railway often manipulated the scene by dressing tribal people in anachronistic costumes, blocking out signs of modern life, and posing natives in a wistful or stoic stance. By contrast, the amateur photographers on the Blackfeet reservation, who were probably store merchants or U.S. Indian agents, did not block out modern life or natives’ accommodation to that life. We know the economic motives of the commercial photographers, the economic purpose of their photos, and the economic reasons that the Blackfeet posed for those photos. But we are left to guess at the motives of the amateurs standing behind the camera on the reservation and at the attitudes of the Blackfeet whose images, shorn of mythic romance, were recorded for posterity.

Working with the Source

Historians of Native American life often trace tribal responses to the assumption that traditional tribal life among natives like the Blackfeet could not coexist with modern American life. As you examine the photographs in this chapter, take note of the Blackfeet response to this assumption, using the table on page 36. Where do you find evidence of tradition, of modernity, or of both?

The Source: Photographs of the Blackfeet at Glacier National Park and on the Reservation, 1890–1930

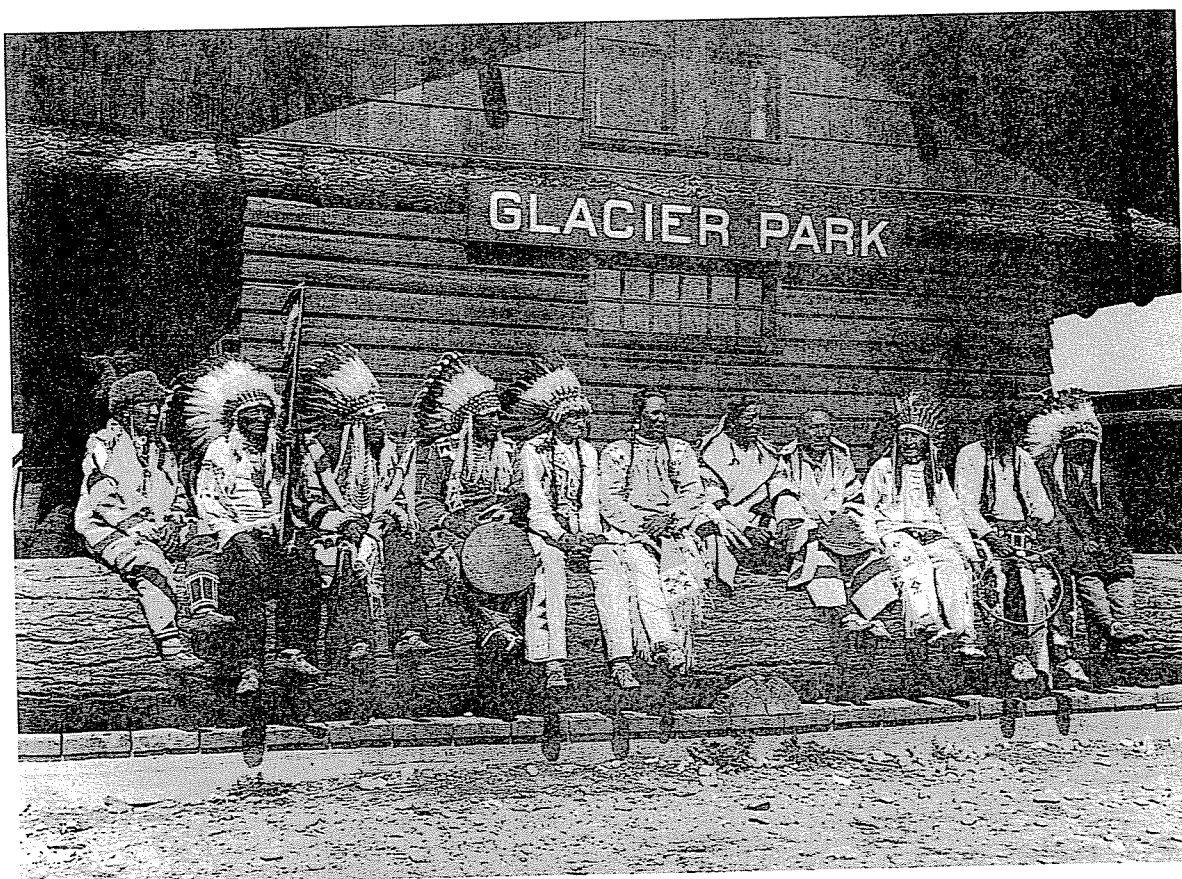
PHOTOGRAPHS FROM GLACIER NATIONAL PARK



Greetings from Glacier National Park, c. 1920

The following photo was used on a wide variety of Glacier National Park publicity materials throughout the 1920s. This photo appeared at the top of park stationery and on the front of specialized brochures sent to convention participants. It was often accompanied by the words, “Ki-tuk-a, Stum-ik-Us-tsi-kai-yi” and “Ok-yi! Ik-so-ka-pi” along with the translation: “Us Indians will be glad to see you at Glacier Park this summer and next summer too” and “We shake hands with you!” Typically the photo’s caption promised that the men in the photo would be at the Glacier Park train station to greet conventioners when they arrived.

Source: Great Northern Railway Collection, Glacier Park Views, Minnesota State Historical Society. Photographer unknown.

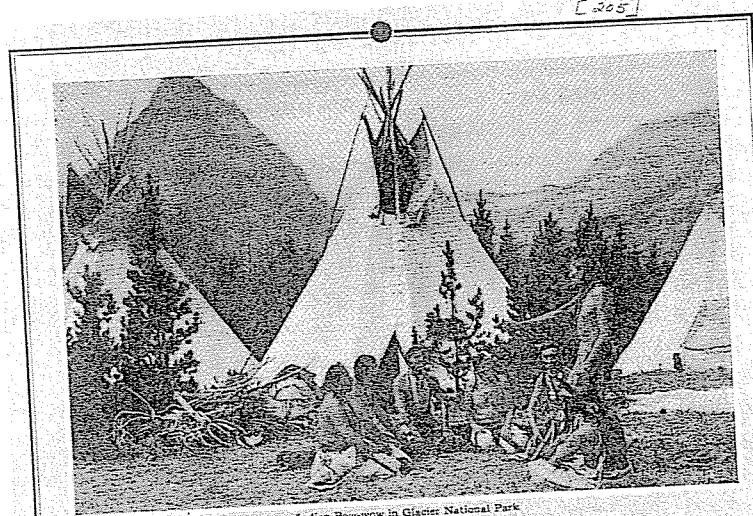


2

Great Northern Railway Calendar, 1923

The Great Northern Railway Company made extensive use of commercial photographs of the Blackfeet in this popular form of advertising.

Source: Great Northern Railway Collection, Glacier Park Views, Minnesota State Historical Society. Photographer unknown.



Indian Pow-wow in Glacier National Park

“The Iron Horse is Coming”

The Blackfeet Indians were suspicious of the railway building of 40 years ago. To them it meant the invasion of their beautiful hunting and fishing grounds.

The Oriental Limited

with its modern steel Pullmans and huge “Iron Horse” traverses this interesting old western country, rich in scenic effects and Indian lore. Service plus scenery means doubly satisfied patrons—72 hours Chicago to Pacific Northwest daily via Burlington route and

Great Northern Railway
CHICAGO · TWIN CITIES · PACIFIC NORTHWEST



1923 MARCH 1923						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

1923 APRIL 1923						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

1923 MAY 1923						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

A. L. JOHNSTON
City Passenger Agent
416 E. Jackson St.
St. Paul, Minn.
Phone Garfield 3851

A. J. DICKINSON
Passenger Traffic Manager
St. Paul, Minn.

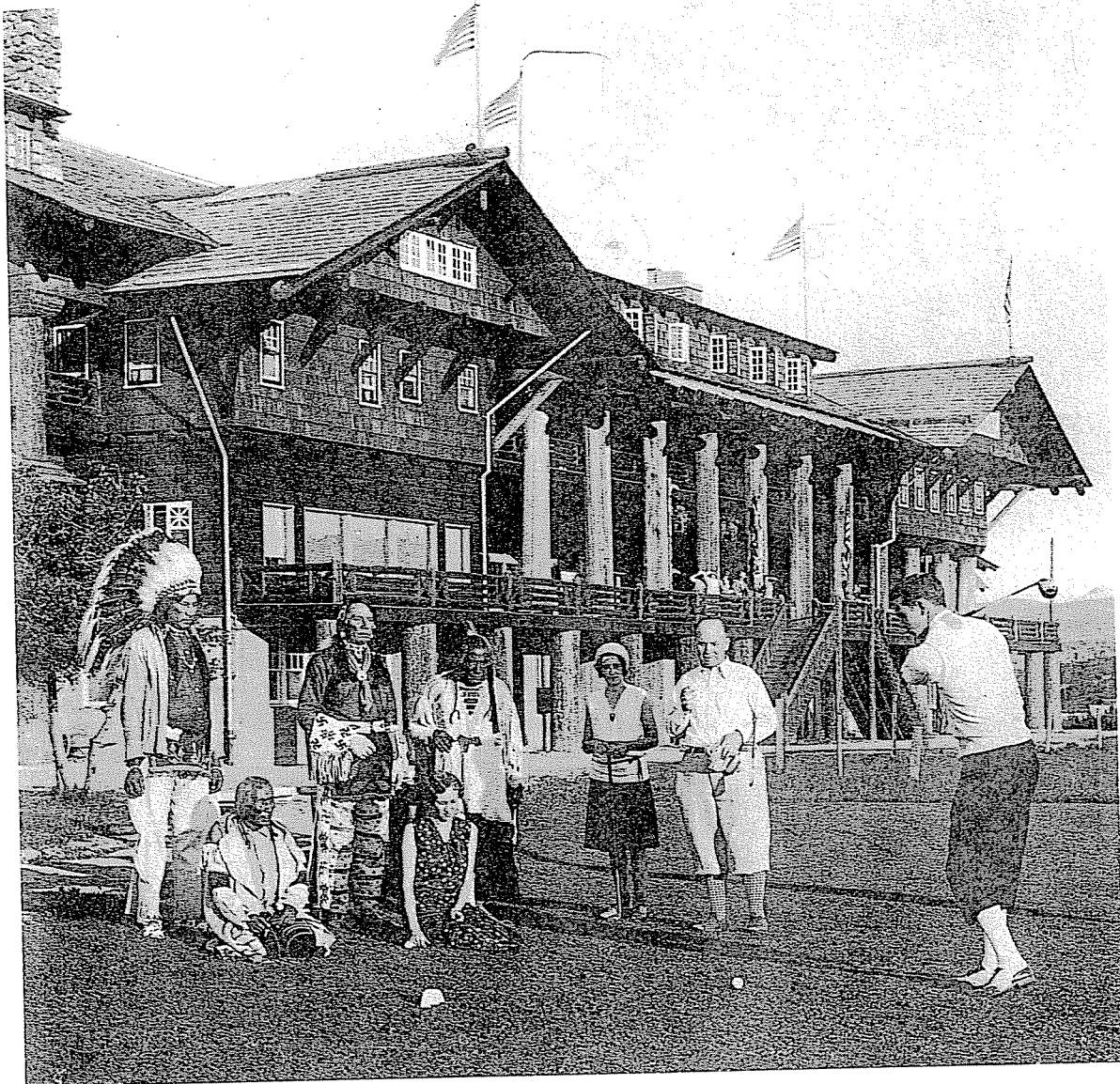
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3

Blackfeet and Park Golfers, c. 1930

Blackfeet sometimes served as caddies for Glacier Park golfers, but this undated publicity photo does not depict the natives in that role.

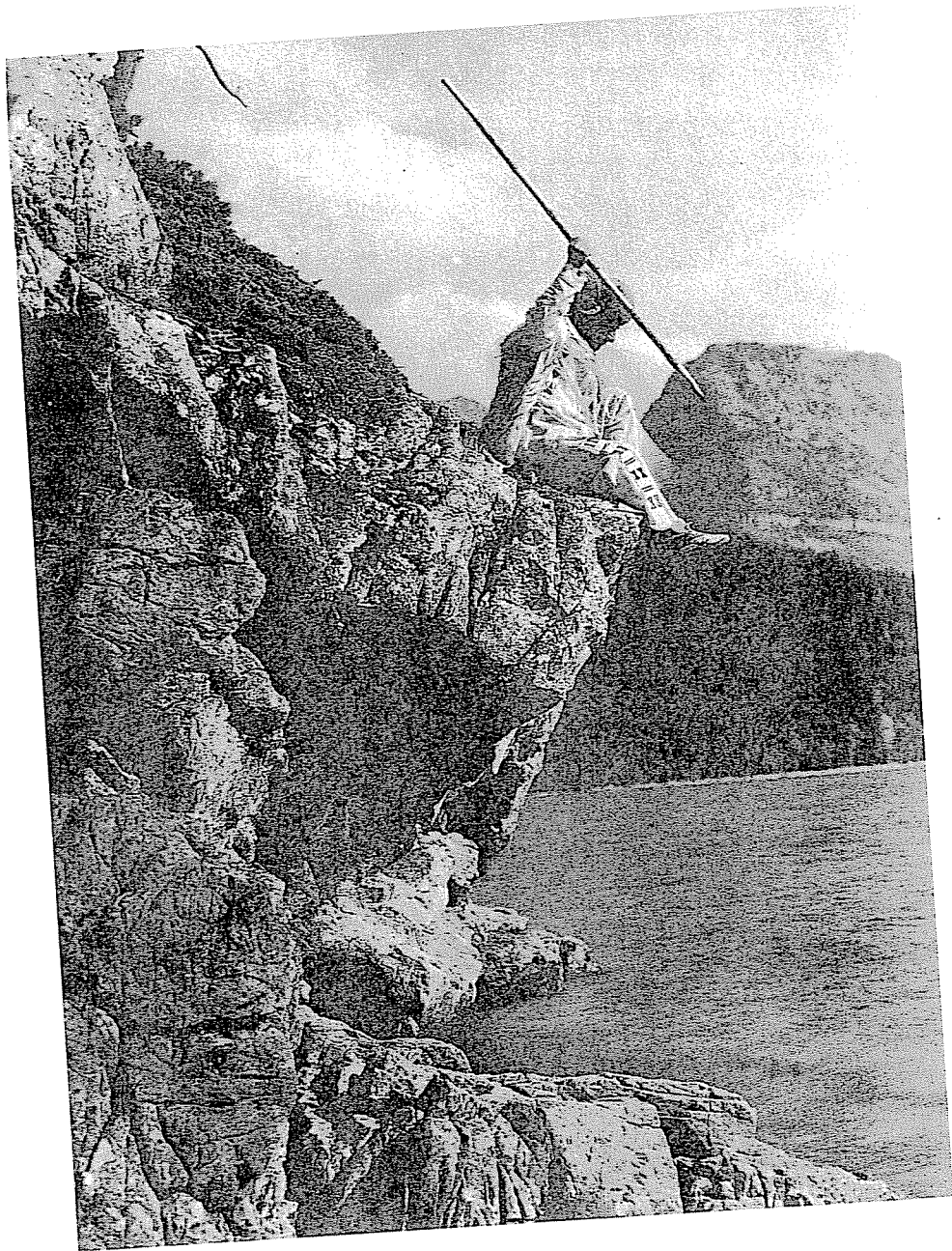
Source: Great Northern Railway Collection, Glacier Park Views, Minnesota State Historical Society. Photographer unknown.



4 *Spearfishing in Glacier National Park, date unknown*

Though it made for an impressive publicity shot, the Blackfeet art of spearfishing could not actually be pursued in Glacier National Park.

Source: Great Northern Railway Collection, Glacier Park Views, Minnesota State Historical Society. Tomer J. Hileman, photographer.

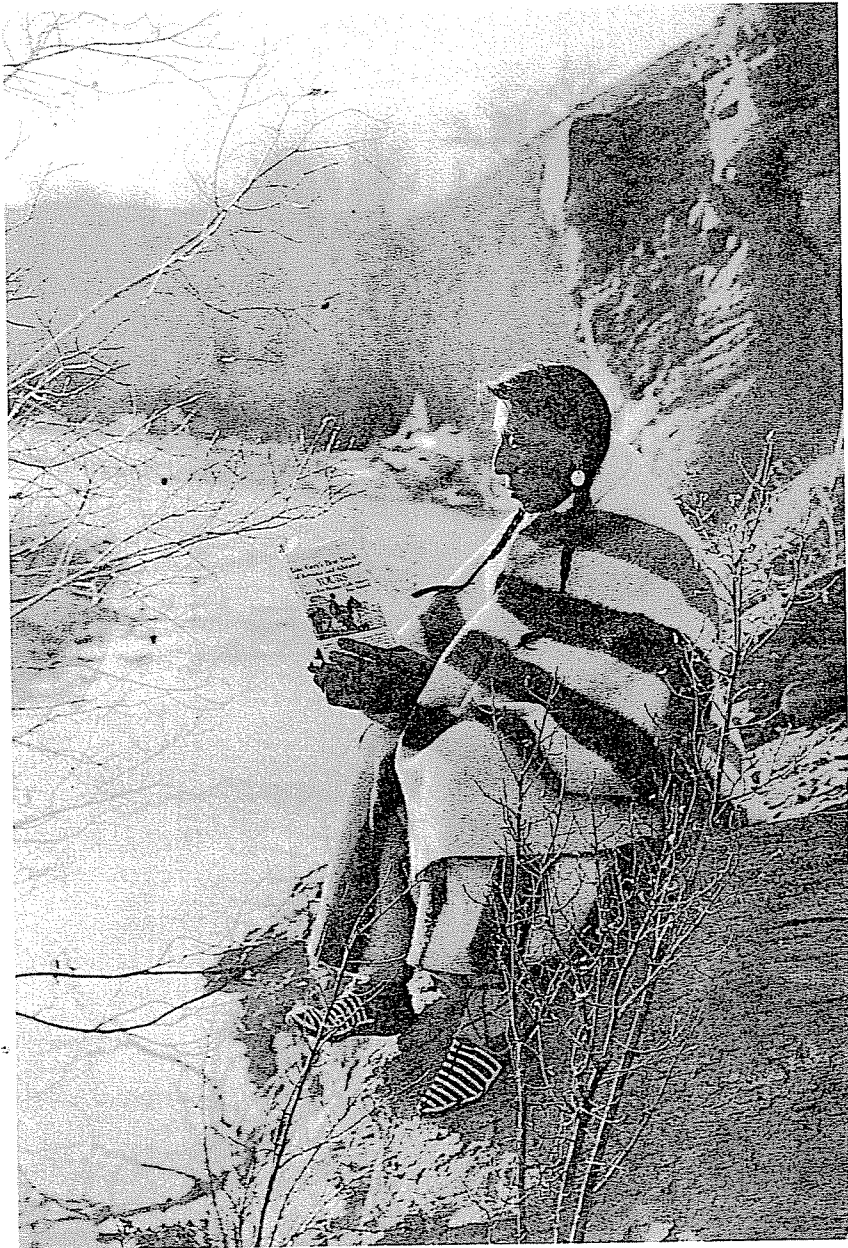


5

Two Guns White Calf Reading, date unknown

Two Guns White Calf often appeared in Glacier Park publicity shots. Here, Tomer Hileman posed him reading a book by Zane Grey, a famous writer of western stories.

Source: Great Northern Railway Collection, Glacier Park Views, Minnesota State Historical Society. Tomer J. Hileman, photographer.



PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN ON BLACKFEET RESERVATION IN MONTANA

6

Old Ration Place, date unknown

Blackfeet sale of tribal lands to the U.S. government was paid for in food rations. After the buffalo disappeared, Blackfeet gathered each week for the one and one-half pounds of beef, half pound of flour, and small amounts of beans, bacon, salt, soda, and coffee allocated to each man, woman, and child.

Source: Montana Historical Society.



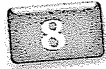
7

Blackfeet Performance, c. 1930

This photo from the Great Northern Railway's photo archives does not appear to have been used for Glacier Park publicity. It suggests that park visitors in the 1930s took day trips to the reservation to view Blackfeet performances. This may have been a combined celebration of the Blackfeet's Sun Dance and the Fourth of July.

Source: Great Northern Railway Collection, Glacier Park Views, Minnesota State Historical Society. Photographer unknown.





Family at Sun Dance Encampment, 1908

Blackfeet traveled to a central location on the reservation for the annual Sun Dance. This 1908 photo, taken at that year's Sun Dance encampment, shows one family's display of finery and prized possessions.

Source: Photo by Thomas Magee.



9

Students with Their Harvest, 1912 (above right)

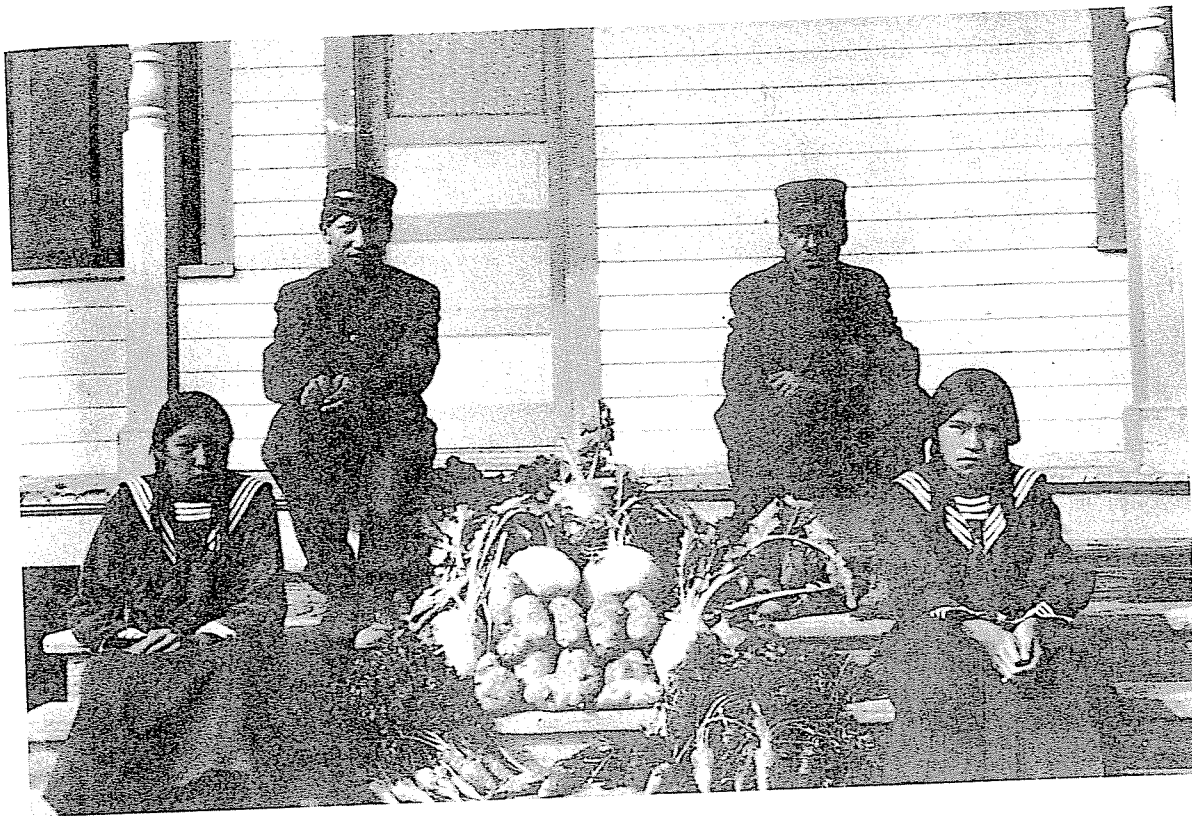
Source: Photo by E. L. Chase.

10

Mad Plume Family Harvest, c. 1920 (below right)

Source: Photo courtesy of Mae Vallance.

These two photos reflect the government's effort to encourage Blackfeet vegetable farming in the decades following the 1887 Dawes Act. The students shown in Source 9 attended the Cut Bank Boarding School, where sailor suits were the regulation uniform. Albert and Susan Mad Plume and members of their family display their harvest for a photographer in Source 10. They were among the full-blooded Blackfeet who supported the government's plans for agricultural self-sufficiency.

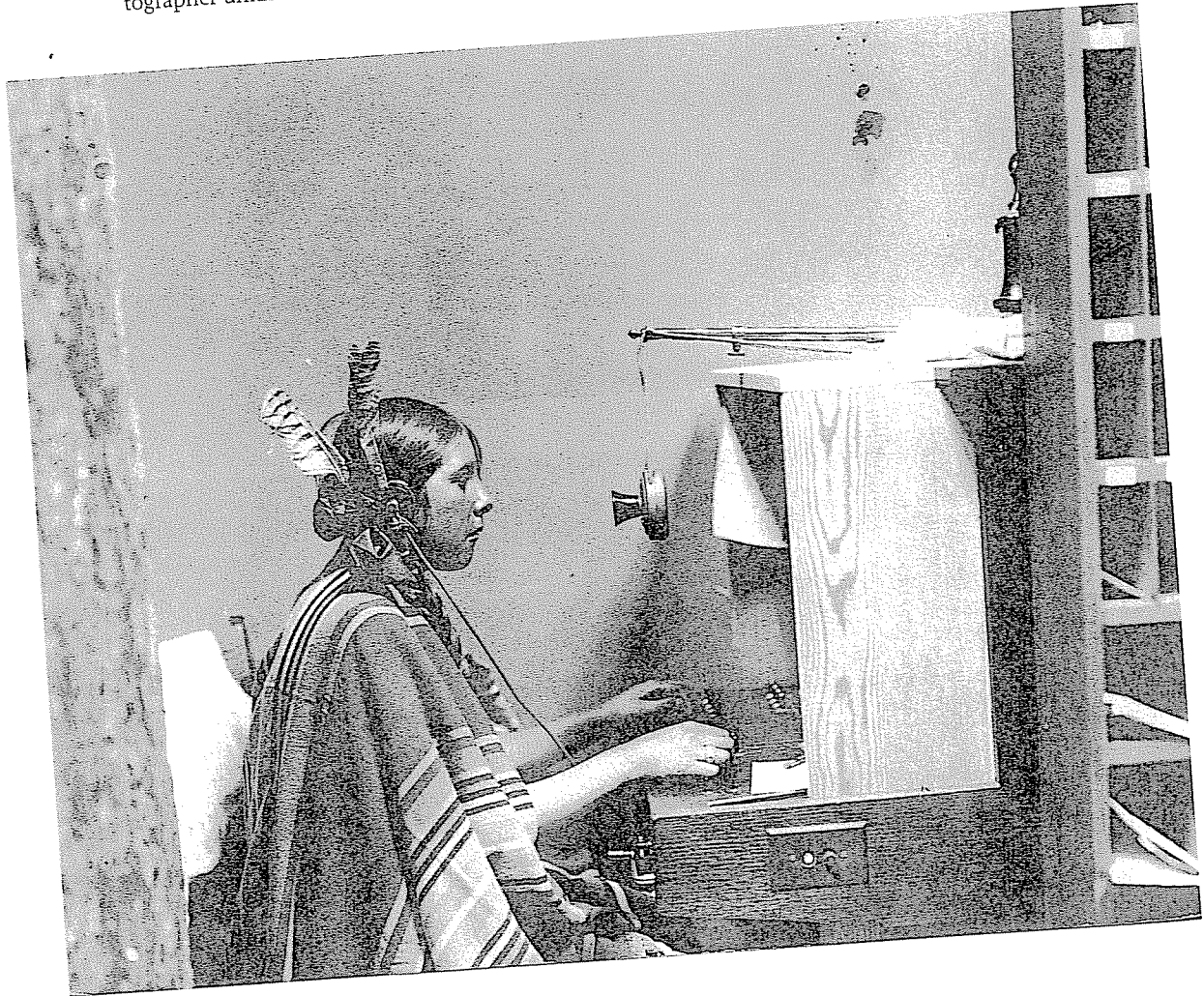




Blackfeet Girl at Glacier National Park Switchboard, c. 1920

This photo, probably taken in the 1920s, is from the Great Northern Railway's photo archive but was not used for publicity. It suggests that some Blackfeet were hired into jobs at Glacier Park that gave them training in marketable skills.

Source: Great Northern Railway Collection, Glacier Park Views, Minnesota State Historical Society. Photographer unknown.



12

Sewing Class at the Cut Bank Boarding School, 1907

At government-sponsored boarding schools, Blackfeet were taught to use modern technology and encouraged to assimilate into American culture. Native recollections of these schooling experiences vary widely; some former students have very positive memories, while others report being made to feel inferior.

Source: Courtesy of the Sherburne Collection, University of Montana Archives.



Analyzing the Source

REFLECTING ON THE SOURCE

1. The table on page 36 had you look for evidence of traditional and modern life in the Blackfeet photographs. In your analysis, did you find more evidence of tradition or modernity in the Glacier Park photographs? Was the evidence different in the reservation photographs? What explanation do you have for the pattern of tradition and modernity that you were able to trace in these photos?
2. Every photograph, like every written text, invites multiple interpretations. Try to construct two entirely different interpretations for each of the following photographs: Source 1, Source 3, Source 7, and Source 9. What additional evidence would you seek to test out the validity of these varying interpretations?
3. If the publicity photos taken at Glacier National Park are inauthentic representations of Blackfeet life, then of what legitimate use are they to historians? Since there are few surviving photographs of Native Americans taken by Native Americans prior to the 1950s, should historians not use photographs as a source in Native American history?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

4. Some might argue that the Blackfeet cooperated with Glacier National Park officials in perpetuating anachronistic stereotypes of the unchanging, tradition-bound Native American. How might members of the Blackfeet tribe in the 1920s have responded to that argument?
5. Very few photographs that historians find, whether in archives or attics, are accompanied by complete information on the photographer, the subject of the photograph, or the circumstances under which the photo was taken. In the face of such common deficits, what principles would you devise to guard against faulty historical interpretation of photographs?

Beyond the Source

In 1996, Elouise Cobell, a Montana banker and a member of the Blackfeet tribe, filed a lawsuit to force the federal government to provide a full accounting of the Indian Trust Fund, which had been in place since passage of the Dawes Severalty Act in 1887. Cobell took this drastic action because, she says, she "got fed up" with the government's chaotic bookkeeping and evasive answers to questions she asked about the workings of the Indian Trust Fund. Cobell, a trained accountant with considerable business experience, runs a ranch and directs the Blackfeet Reservation Development Fund, Inc., in Browning, Montana.

Under the provisions of the Dawes Act, it was the Indian Trust Fund that held legal title to individual Indian's land plots. Cobell and many of her fellow Native Americans suspect that federal agents in charge of the fund swindled natives out of millions of acres and billions of dollars by failing to honor native ownership, selling off plots of land to whites, and not transferring the profits to natives. The suit further claims that the federal government has never paid Native Americans what they are owed for oil extraction and mineral mining on native lands. In essence, this landmark suit, which is still being argued in federal court, purports that the U.S. government "has stolen, lost or misallocated" close to \$140 billion since the Dawes Act set up the Indian Trust Fund. The goal of Cobell's suit, which could affect five hundred thousand native beneficiaries, is to force the government to account for all trust funds and to reform the still-existing trust system.

Royce C. Lamberth, the U.S. district judge charged with the case, has been aggressive in pressing the Department of Interior, which manages Native American affairs, to produce an accounting method that can answer the questions raised by the suit. In September of 2002, Judge Lamberth declared that the Interior Department's conduct could serve as the "gold standard for mismanagement by the federal government for more than a century." He has underscored that view by finding Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt and, later, Secretary of Interior Gale Norton in contempt of court for failing to produce the accounting demanded in the suit.

For its part, the federal government points to a long history of charges of mismanagement of Indian lands, arguing that it cannot now reconstruct a record that everyone admits has been fraudulent. As far back as 1929, the General Accounting Office reported "numerous expenditures . . . made from these funds" that did not go to Indian landowners and that could only be justified by "using a very broad interpretation of what constitutes the benefit of the Indian." That same report conceded that the trust fund's accounting methods were so poor that it was impossible to certify that "the Indian received the full measure of benefit to which he was entitled." Over sixty years later, a 1992 congressional report again confirmed a history of inadequate accounting and payment practices at the fund. That report was titled "Misplaced Trust: The Bureau of Indian Affairs' Mismanagement of the Indian Trust Fund." Given this history, the federal government insists that even the best-faith effort could not reconstruct a valid account of all trust fund transactions. Plaintiffs in the case question the government's commitment to finding a solution, noting that the government continued to destroy hundreds of boxes of trust fund records after Judge Lamberth ordered that all surviving records be preserved.

However the case is settled, it certainly refutes all predictions that America's natives were destined to vanish. The nation's four million Native Americans, including its fifteen thousand Blackfeet, are still very much alive and often closely identified with their tribal cultures. Like Elouise Cobell, these natives are quite prepared to employ the tools of modern life, including the court system, to promote tribal prosperity and preserve their native communities.

Finding and Supplementing the Source

The commercial photographs of the Blackfeet used here can be found in the archives of the Great Northern Railway Company at the Minnesota State Historical Society in St. Paul, Minnesota. There are additional collections of Glacier Park photographs of the Blackfeet at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., and in the Sherburne family collection at the University of Montana. The reservation photographs of the Blackfeet were taken from *The Reservation Blackfeet, 1882-1945: A Photographic History of Cultural Survival* by William E. Farr (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984). This chapter was inspired by original research conducted at the Newberry Library in Chicago and the Minnesota State Historical Society by Amy E. Scott in 1996, when she was an undergraduate at Grinnell College.

Collections of Native American photographs are open for public view at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, D.C., and in archives in an array of state and local historical societies. The NMAI also has a Web site on which it presents "virtual exhibits" of photographs on various native tribes and topics. Two excellent published collections of Native American photographs are *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, edited by Tim Johnson (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), and *The Photograph and the American Indian* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), edited by Alfred L. Bush and Lee Clark Mitchell. For an intriguing discussion of the cultural meanings that now surround our approach to photographs, see Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

Among the many studies of the encounter between Native American and Euro-American cultures, two of the most useful are Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), and Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). A useful reference book on Native American history and modern life is *The Native American Almanac: A Portrait of Native America Today*, edited by Arlen Hirschfelder and Martha Kreipe de Montano (New York: Prentice Hall General Reference, 1993).

For more specific historical background on the Blackfeet Indians, see John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967); Howard L. Harrod, *Mission Among the Blackfeet* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971); and Paul Rosier, *Rebirth of the Blackfeet Nation, 1912-1954* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001). James Welch's highly praised novel, *Fools Crow* (New York: Viking Press, 1986), tells the story of the Blackfeet tribe through the eyes of a young male tribe member coming of age in the decades after the Civil War. For information on the Blackfeet tribe today, go to blackfeetnation.com.