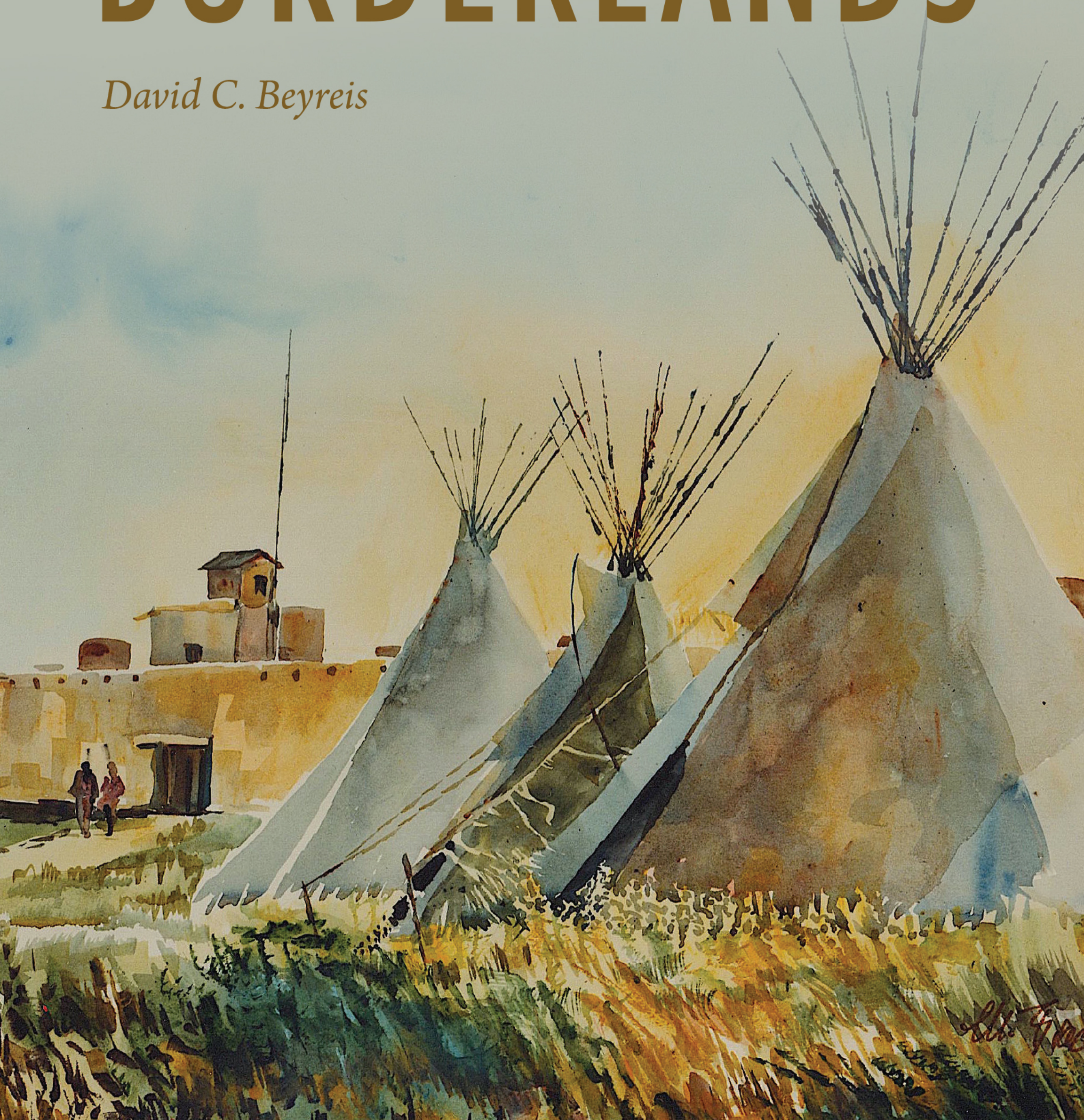
BLOOD IN THE BORDERLANDS

Conflict, Kinship, and the Bent Family, 1821–1920

David C. Beyreis



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David C. Beyreis

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For Chris—I am always with you

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Blood in the Borderlands

Introduction

The Bents might be the most famous family in the history of the American West. The lives and adventures of Charles and William and their children spanned a century that included some of the region's most transformational events. Family members trapped beavers, traded for bison robes, intermarried with powerful Indian tribes and traded with others, acquired Mexican land grants, became political leaders, fought against the United States government, became diplomats for the United States government, and shaped historical narratives that remain central to contemporary scholarly research. Family ties and the creation of alliance networks helped the Bents become phenomenally successful businessmen in the years before the U.S.-Mexican War and helped them adapt to the political, social, and economic changes wrought by American expansion after 1846. In the face of horrific violence and family tragedy, the Bents proved remarkably creative, adaptable, and pragmatic during the upheavals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They deployed a range of strategies to protect their personal and familial interests that included violence, negotiation, education, intermarriage, land acquisition, and the curation of historical memory. Although not every stratagem was successful, no one could dispute the fact that the Bents cast a long shadow over the history of the American West. This book charts the family's story between roughly 1821 and 1920 and unfolds in three phases.

The years between 1821 and 1849 marked the entry of the Bent brothers and Ceran St. Vrain into the iconic businesses of the trans-Mississippi

West and Mexican borderlands, as well as the rise and fall of Bent, St. Vrain and Company, their successful commercial venture. When Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, the event sent tremors of anticipation through American frontier communities. The "opening" of the Santa Fe Trail by Missouri merchants in that year roughly corresponded with an acceleration of the fur trade in the Rocky Mountains and on the Missouri River. During this period the men forged a business that overlapped with the fur, bison robe, and Santa Fe Trail mercantile trades. Like all successful newcomers to the West, the partners forged marital and family alliances with prominent local powerbrokers. The Bents and St. Vrain sought their allies among the Southern Cheyennes and in New Mexico. Business boomed, but not without controversy, as trouble with the Comanches and Kiowas and certain political factions in New Mexico threatened to disrupt company affairs. The war with Mexico unleashed forces that ultimately destroyed these ventures: Charles Bent was killed in an uprising in Taos in 1847, and the violence, disease, and environmental degradation that accompanied Manifest Destiny forced the company into oblivion.

Much of this story, especially the emphasis on the connection between intermarriage and profitability, will not surprise readers familiar with the fur trade and nineteenth-century borderlands studies. A deep, well-developed literature in western, borderlands, and ethnohistory attests to the importance of these unions.[1] However, too much emphasis on stability and intercultural accommodation can overlook the fact that families were profoundly connected to violence and instability. This book builds on works by historians including James F. Brooks and Lance R. Blyth and discusses the ways in which conflict helped shape families, communities, and networks of alliances.[2] The political rivalries and upheavals of Mexican politics discussed by Andrés Reséndez, Raúl A. Ramos, and Phillip P. Gonzalez add another layer of complexity to the Bent story, and *Blood in the Borderlands* is the first work to firmly contextualize the family's successes and failures within this borderlands milieu.[3] Certainly, without the stability marriage sometimes provided, the partners would not have been as successful as they were. But we should not overlook the fact that family alliances allowed the Bents to do things—smuggle, trade with powerful Indian tribes, and acquire land grants—that endangered the New Mexican frontier. Families could thus be resources in, and sometimes sources of, violence and disruption. The Bent story serves as a reminder that family affairs in the West were very complicated and contentious.

From 1849 until William Bent's death in 1869, the family struggled to adjust to the catastrophic violence and new sociocultural ideas that disrupted life for Indian and mixed-race peoples in the West. After the discovery of gold in Colorado in 1858, thousands of white miners, ranchers, and settlers flooded into the plains and Rocky Mountains. They brought new ideas about how to live and work that threatened the Bents and their Cheyenne kin. Farmers, miners, ranchers, merchants, and ministers sought to plant an Anglo-American version of civilization in Colorado that emphasized racial purity, agriculture, private landownership, Christianity, and domesticity. These views left little room for older ways of living and being. No one has described these processes better than Elliott West, although the burgeoning literature of settler colonialism has also influenced the chapters that cover these years.[4] In the face of these new pressures, William Bent's family was nearly overwhelmed by violence in the 1860s. Pressure on Cheyenne lands and the unrest that accompanied the Civil War led to five years of bloody warfare that began at Sand Creek and ended, temporarily, at the Battle of Summit Springs in 1869. William's family embodied the "hard choices" about resistance and accommodation discussed by Anne F. Hyde.[5] Sometimes this side of the Bent family chose to work with the government as Indian agents and Missouri-educated diplomats. At other times they violently resisted the United States and each other. The New Mexico side of the family—Charles Bent's descendants—was insulated from these conflicts, and their fortunes developed with much less controversy. Education, socially respectable marriages, land grants, and ranching allowed several of Bent's children to make their mark in New Mexico and southern Colorado.

During the five decades after William Bent's death the family faced a new set of challenges and opportunities. William's children—especially George, Robert, and Julia—had difficult adjustments to make as the United States government sought to confine the Southern Cheyennes to a reservation in Indian Territory and assimilate them to the new way of life that revolved around private property, free labor, domesticity, and Protestantism.[6] By and large, the Bents went along with the new system. But rather than seeing them as "selling out" their Cheyenne kin, it is more useful to see them as pragmatists looking out for their family's interests. Some of their actions helped undercut Cheyenne political and economic sovereignty, but the American education the Bents received and the connections they made beyond the reservation ultimately helped them—especially George and his daughter Julia—advocate for

Cheyenne interests and cultural continuity later in their lives. Like the Clarke family of Montana, described by Andrew R. Graybill, the Bents dealt with traumatic violence and, by turns, helped facilitate the assimilationist aims of the federal government and protect tribal interests and culture. The theme of pragmatic accommodation in the service of personal, family, and tribal preservation runs through the last chapters of the book.[7] As they had in the 1850s and 1860s, several of the New Mexico and Colorado Bents weathered these years with considerably less controversy. Their education, economic and political connections, and creation of family history allowed them to claim respectability and status more easily than their cousins in Oklahoma.

The simplest thing a historian can say about families is that they are complicated. The driving question of this book asks how a mixed-race family like the Bents navigated a West in the process of changing from a region characterized by intermarriage and coexistence to one increasingly defined by Anglo-American social, cultural, and economic systems. To address such issues, this study relies on a large body of family studies produced over the last twenty years. Defined by Elliott West as a demographic, economic, and social unit, families are profoundly important in shaping how people interact with the world around them. Families are sites of accommodation with, and resistance to, outside economic and cultural forces. Trade, military force, government policy, and social ideology all helped shape western families. Family, write David Wallace Adams and Crista DeLuzio, is "a contested terrain." A family can cooperate and rally together in the face of danger. A family can advance its interests by forging alliances with other groups. But families can clash bitterly with other families, or even with themselves, over resources, power, and identity. As Ann McGrath notes in her study of mixed-race unions in North America and Australia, marriages and families "could draw worlds together or rip them further apart."[8] The Bents displayed all these characteristics. They married and formed alliances that brought them not only prosperity but also trouble. They contested the authority of governments. They cooperated with the authority of governments. They clashed with other families and with each other. *Blood in the Borderlands* seeks to understand the circumstances, terms, and results of such interactions. When and why was the family successful? Under what circumstances were they unsuccessful? When and why did they choose adaptation and accommodation as a strategy? Why did some of them choose violence over diplomacy? How did they determine their loyalties? This book attempts to answer these questions and, by so doing,

supplement the vibrant field of borderlands and western family studies, and add to a growing list of works on individual families by historians like Andrew R. Graybill, Adele Perry, and Louise Pubols.[9]

Although the Bents have been the subject of historical investigation for over a century, there are still significant gaps in the research. Charles and William Bent figure prominently in the class studies of the fur trade and Manifest Destiny, and David Lavender's monumental 1954 work *Bent's Fort* was the standard source on the brothers for decades. Lavender was a superb literary stylist and storyteller, but the usefulness of his work is limited by the ethnocentric interpretations of American Indian and New Mexican culture that defined mid-twentieth-century historiography. Modern studies of the family also have their limitations. Douglas Comer's book *The Ritual Ground: Bent's Old Fort, World Formation, and the Annexation of the Southwest* ends with the collapse of Bent, St. Vrain and Company and is longer on literary and anthropological theory than historical narrative and analysis. The most detailed work on any single member of the family is *Halfbreed: The Remarkable True Story of George Bent—Caught between the Worlds of the Indian and the White Man* by David Fritjof Halaas and Andrew E. Masich. Although their coverage of George and much of the rest of William Bent's family is richly detailed and superbly researched, *Halfbreed* does not cover Charles Bent or the New Mexico side of the family. Other scholars like Anne F. Hyde and Elliott West have produced seminal works on family formation in the West and the traumas unleashed by American expansion, but even these studies are limited in their chronology and include characters and issues beyond the Bents themselves. Moreover, surprisingly few western scholars have devoted book-length studies to individual families.[10]

Blood in the Borderlands seeks to close these gaps by offering the first comprehensive study of the family. This work follows the Bents' story from Charles and William's entry into the fur and robe trades through the deaths of George Bent and Teresina Bent Scheurich in 1918 and 1920, respectively. *Blood in the Borderlands* analyzes the strategies that the family used to achieve financial and political success in the southern plains and southwest borderlands before the disruptions of American expansion that began in the late 1840s. The book discusses the challenges posed by the wars between the United States Army and tribes like the Southern Cheyennes and Comanches, the implementation of assimilationist policies, and the ways in which William Bent's children negotiated the treacherous cultural terrain of Indian Territory and Oklahoma in the decades between William's and George's deaths. This work also

integrates the stories of Charles Bent's children into the narrative in a way that no other work has done. Usually left out of the story, the New Mexico and Colorado side of the family achieved success through intermarriage, ranching, land grant acquisition and sales, and the construction of triumphant historical narratives. Through these actions they found status and respectability sometimes denied to William's descendants.

Expanding the chronological and geographical scope of the family narrative beyond the parameters laid down in previous studies of the Bents has advantages beyond simply including new characters. If the story stopped in 1849 with William's abandonment of Bent's Fort and the destruction of his company in the face of American expansion, the story is a simple one: things were good, the United States expanded, and things got bad. Similarly, if the story ended in 1869 with William's death, the defeat of the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers at Summit Springs, and the rancor between his sons, the story would remain a declension narrative about the "end of an era" and the proverbial nail-in-the-coffin of an old-time social and economic order based on intermarriage and mutual understanding between Indians and fur trade families like the Bents. Enlarging the chronological, geographical, and gendered scope of the story—bringing in new characters, locations, and issues—provides a much more complicated picture. William's sons and daughters proved remarkably adaptable, if not always popular or successful, in navigating the assimilationist policies of the United States government, while the descendants of Charles Bent—and one of William's daughters—especially some of the family's women, used marriage, land grants, and family history to secure a place for themselves as pillars of respectable society in Colorado and New Mexico. Investigating this last period of both sides of the family's history is something that no other book on the Bents has done.

Blood in the Borderlands is divided into eight chapters and a conclusion. Chapter 1, "Into the West: The Bents and St. Vrain to 1834," covers the early years in the fur and Santa Fe trades and the formation of their partnership. Chapter 2, "Marriage, Business, and Diplomacy in the Great Plains: William Bent and His Family, 1834–1846," looks at the strategies that William Bent used to grow his fur, hide, and freighting businesses. His marriage into a prominent Southern Cheyenne family and continued connections with the St. Louis business community allowed Bent to expand the scope of his business and eliminate rivals. Chapter 3, "Marriage, Business, and Diplomacy in New Mexico: Charles Bent and His Family, 1834–1846," analyzes Charles Bent's years in Taos

and Santa Fe. Like William, Charles used family alliances to expand his business and political interests. However, his actions made him a deeply unpopular figure in some New Mexican circles. Chapter 4, "Collapse: The Final Days of Bent, St. Vrain and Company, 1846–1849," discusses the political, economic, environmental, and epidemiological factors that led to Charles Bent's death and the destruction of the company. Chapter 5, "Fifty-Niners, Freighters, and Schoolchildren: The Bent Family, 1849–1861," covers the years between the collapse of the company and the beginning of the Civil War. The chapter discusses the forces that undermined Cheyenne sovereignty in the southern plains and the strategies the Bent family used to adapt to changing political, economic, and cultural circumstances in Colorado and New Mexico. Chapter 6, "The Road to Sand Creek: William Bent and His Family, 1861–1865," looks at the involvement of William's family during the violence that wracked Colorado during the Civil War and examines the reasons that the family began to come unraveled. Chapter 7, "War, Diplomacy, and Land Grants: The Bent Family, 1865–1869," discusses the last years of a turbulent decade of war and diplomacy that ended with William Bent's death. While his children faced hard choices about political and family loyalty, the Bents of New Mexico and southern Colorado began to flourish socially, economically, and politically. Chapter 8, "Reservations, Ranches, and Respectability: The Bent Family, 1869–1920," covers the responses of William's children to the end of the southern plains Indian Wars, the beginnings of the reservation system, and George Bent's collaboration with historians and writers including George Hyde and George Bird Grinnell. This chapter also deals with the sometimes controversial land deals made by Charles's family and their business and literary ventures. The conclusion, "Contesting the Memory of the Bent Family," uses several historic sites in New Mexico and Colorado to discuss the ways in which historians and local citizens have commemorated or complicated the story of the famous family.

1 / Into the West: The Bents and St. Vrain to 1834

Personal connections and hard experience laid the groundwork for Bent, St. Vrain and Company's success in New Mexico and the Great Plains. Charles and William Bent's father's personal relationships allowed the brothers to tap a network of economic, social, and political influence in Missouri. Beginning in the fur trade during the 1820s, Charles gained a wealth of practical experience in the business until his employer's bankruptcy forced Bent and his brother to head for New Mexico in 1829. Their future partner, Ceran St. Vrain, had impeccable connections. Close friends with some of the most influential French families in St. Louis, St. Vrain used their financial backing to support his earliest ventures in New Mexico and his later partnership with the Bents. Bent, St. Vrain and Company was a diverse operation that relied on cooperation and kinship with New Mexicans and Cheyennes. Accommodating to local protocols in Taos, Santa Fe, and along the Arkansas River, the Bents and St. Vrain began building a business that stretched across the Great Plains and into Mexico. Building on their early experiences, the partners became, for nearly two decades, the most politically and economically influential businessmen in the borderlands.

Although Silas Bent, the clan patriarch, was not a member of the St. Louis aristocracy, he was a man of means who held important local offices and mingled with the elites of the Gateway City. Born in Massachusetts in the 1760s, Silas migrated to Wheeling, Virginia, where he practiced law, ran a store, and worked as a surveyor, skills that made him an up-and-coming man. He served as an associate justice of the

Court of Common Pleas of Washington County, Ohio, before moving his family to St. Louis to accept a position as principal deputy surveyor of the Louisiana Territory in 1806. Bent advanced rapidly in his new home. Appointed presiding judge of the Court of Common Pleas of St. Louis, he served on the bench with local powerbrokers Auguste Chouteau and Bernard Pratte. President James Madison then named Bent to the Missouri Supreme Court, where he served from 1813 to 1821. Bent ended his career as a state senator. While he never acquired wealth or status comparable to that of men like Chouteau or Pratte, Bent and his large family lived comfortably.[1]

Silas and Martha Bent had eleven children, many of whom made their mark in St. Louis and beyond. Charles, the eldest, along with William, George, and Robert, entered the Indian and Santa Fe trades. John became an attorney and was prominent in the St. Louis social scene. Silas Jr. gained some notoriety as a naval officer and oceanographer. He sailed to Japan with Commodore Matthew Perry and gained acclaim for his scientific theories regarding ocean currents. Bent hypothesized that currents of warm water, like the Gulf Stream in the Atlantic and Kuro Siwo in the Pacific, weakened the Arctic ice fields to the point where ships could pass easily through into the Open Polar Sea. The Open Polar Sea was thought to be a sort of nineteenth-century Northwest Passage whose tantalizing mystery enticed the disastrous naval expeditions of John Franklin and the USS *Jeannette* as well as inspiring the fiction of Edgar Allan Poe. Dorcas Bent married Lilburn Boggs, later governor of Missouri. Dorcas died well before Boggs assumed the office, but the two families remained close and continued intermarrying.[2] In a family with such wide interests and growing local connections, Charles and William surely learned the importance of patronage and personal alliances. Charles deepened his ties to the St. Louis business community as a young man when he entered one of the city's most lucrative enterprises: the fur trade.

The St. Louis of Charles Bent's adolescence was the heart of the western fur trade, and anyone who sought fortune in furs had to contend with the Missouri Fur Company and its driving personality, Manuel Lisa. Lisa's trading forays on the Upper Missouri River inspired other St. Louis merchants to invest in this potentially lucrative market.[3] Charles Bent's first experience in the business came as an employee of Missouri Fur. He may have hired on as a clerk as early as 1818, but the first definitive evidence of his involvement dates to May 1824, when he came to the company's post at Council Bluffs and presented one of the fort's traders

with "10 Buffalow Tongues of good quality." Bent came from upriver, so he may have traveled far beyond Council Bluffs. By 1824, Missouri Fur was bankrupt, crippled by conflict with Indians and increasingly tough competition from John Jacob Astor's behemoth, the American Fur Company, and Bent was looking for a new opportunity.[4]

In 1825 Bent joined several other Missouri Fur men thrown out of work who formed their own short-lived outfit, Pilcher & Company. Bent was probably an appealing junior partner for Joshua Pilcher and other veteran traders. The young man had clerking experience and might have used his family connections to contribute a share of the firm's initial startup capital of $7,712.82.[5] Pilcher & Company faced a complicated set of challenges as the partners tried to muscle into the rapidly crowding fur trade. They had to contend with established firms headed by Astor's western representatives and merchants like William Ashley, in addition to the numerous independent French traders who operated out of the city. Pilcher's resources were stretched thin. There were too many miles of river to adequately cover and too few men to do it. Credit was tight. Pilcher & Company had two choices: sell out to American Fur or leave the Missouri River trade to trap in the Rocky Mountains. In 1827 the partners chose the second option and failed miserably. They netted a paltry twenty packs of beaver pelts, hardly enough to keep the company solvent. They "have broken up," trader J. P. Cabanné wrote Pierre Chouteau Jr. in October 1828. Some of the partners, including Bent, planned on returning to the mountains, the Frenchman wrote. If they did, they would not go back as independent traders but as someone else's employees.[6]

Despite the failures of Missouri Fur and Pilcher & Company, Bent gained important insights into the inner workings of the fur trade. On the river and in the mountains he learned how to trap beavers, skin the carcasses, and properly process and store the pelts. In St. Louis he observed the methods of auctioning and buying, banking, and the importance of credit. Courting eastern merchants and their Missouri subsidiaries was crucial. Aggressively deploying family connections and ties with the larger mercantile community might mean the difference between a timely loan and bankruptcy, or between successfully marketing the year's haul of pelts in New York and watching it rot in a warehouse on the St. Louis waterfront. With the river blocked by Astor, and the Rockies crawling with trappers, Bent turned toward the burgeoning fur markets of northern Mexico to seek his fortune.[7]

The family of Ceran St. Vrain held a high position in St. Louis society. His grandfather, the Chevalier Pierre Charles de Hault de Lassus de

Luzière, was a councilor to Louis XVI until the French Revolution overthrew the monarchy. Ceran's uncle, Charles de Hault de Lassus, served as governor of Louisiana Territory from 1799 to 1803. Jacques Marcellin Ceran de Hault de Lassus de St. Vrain, Ceran's father, was a former French naval officer who immigrated to North America in 1795 and settled in St. Louis. Jacques held numerous civic positions and speculated in land grants before his death in 1818. After his father's death, Ceran St. Vrain entered the fur business.[8]

Ceran went to live with Bernard Pratte, a prominent St. Louis merchant and fur trader. Pratte had impeccable connections within the city's French community, most importantly through marriage into the Chouteau family. This tie was critical for the Chouteaus had deep pockets, refined social skills, keen business instincts, and political allies. Their extended family was enormous; most of the city's upper crust was linked to them in some way. Ceran's new guardian was a Chouteau partner and a one-third stakeholder in the firm of Berthold, Chouteau and Pratte. Pratte's company also had ties with American Fur, which established a western branch in St. Louis, where it bought pelts from the partners and acted as their outfitter on occasion. In 1823 Jean Pierre Cabanné joined the firm, which took the new moniker Bernard Pratte & Company. By 1827 Pratte and his associates had become the sole western agent for American Fur and solidified their position in the business.[9] Ceran St. Vrain began working for Pratte in December 1822 and clerked for his guardian for almost two years. In the fall of 1824 the twenty-two-year-old St. Vrain quit Bernard Pratte & Company. Astride a good horse and newly partnered with a man named Francois Guerin, St. Vrain headed west for New Mexico.[10] He may have quit working for Pratte, but their ties were by no means severed. The patronage, investment capital, and markets provided by the creole merchants of St. Louis were crucial factors in the future success of St. Vrain and his partners. Without the help of men like Pratte and Chouteau, the future wealth of Ceran and the Bents might have been impossible.

The fur trade in northern Mexico was in its infancy when St. Vrain left Missouri. But by the early 1820s, small bands of American trappers scoured the region, from the southern Rockies, west to the Gila River. Blessed with a milder climate that allowed the possibility of year-round operations, the rivers of the borderlands, particularly the Gila, were prime trapping spots. Known as "drab beaver," the region's pelts were lighter in weight and color than those of beavers living in the northern Rockies. New York buyers like Astor preferred the northern pelts but

FIGURE 1. Ceran St. Vrain. Courtesy of History Colorado. 89.451.3435.

recognized the value of the Mexican product.[11] Many trappers and traders chose the northern New Mexican village of Taos as their base of operations. The location offered numerous advantages. While trappers in the northern Rockies sold their pelts and resupplied at the annual summer rendezvous, those trapping the Upper Rio Grande River, southern Rockies, and Gila River country had the luxury of visiting towns like Taos and Abiquiu, where they sold their haul and outfitted new expeditions. Many trappers wintered among the comforts of civilization with access to food, whiskey, and female companionship. Taos was also far from Santa Fe, the region's governing center. Despite official efforts to patrol the border region, the isolation provided by the surrounding mountains aided trappers and traders, who could enter the valley unnoticed and

sell their goods without paying customs duties. Smuggling was common, and perpetrators often escaped detection and punishment. For all these reasons, George Frederick Ruxton, an English sportsman and keen observer of mountain-man life, called the settlements "the paradise of the mountaineers." The scenery was grand, but St. Vrain's initial prospects were not.[12]

His partnership with Gueṛin struggled for several months despite the backing of Pratte money and supplies. After a "long and trublesum voiage" across the plains the men arrived in Taos intent on selling the sundries St. Vrain had purchased from his mentor before leaving St. Louis. The young man soon recognized that the real moneymaking potential was in supplying the fur brigades, not pulling beavers out of frigid mountain streams. Although trappers might return with a small catch, they always needed to outfit for their next expedition. Business was slow, however, and St. Vrain uneasy. Pratte held a one-third interest in the venture and expected a return on the investment. After five weeks, St. Vrain confessed, "we have sold but verry fue goods and goods is at a verry reduced price at present." If his plans fell apart, he intended to "buy up goods and articles" and travel southwest to Sonora to purchase mules to sell in New Mexico. He still hoped that either venture could result in "verry profitable business." Whichever path St. Vrain took, though, he would take it without Gueṛin. The two men ended their brief partnership, St. Vrain informed Pratte, "for reasons two tedius to mention." Gueṛin returned to St. Louis while Ceran St. Vrain stayed in Taos and weighed his options.[13]

His days as an independent operator were shortened by the arrival of Bernard Pratte's son Sylvester. Ceran outfitted a couple of trapping expeditions after his partnership with Gueṛin ended. In a letter to his mother, St. Vrain confided that "if they make a good hunt, I will doe verey good business." They must not have done well enough to keep the young man from waged work.[14] Bernard Pratte & Company's entrance into the borderlands fur trade marked an extension of St. Louis mercantile power into the region. Although the company helped underwrite St. Vrain's first trip to New Mexico, Pratte had never sent his own men into the field. His son's arrival marked the first time a major fur company set out in search of "drab beaver." Not much is known of Pratte's first ventures. Ceran commanded one brigade that trapped the area around Utah Lake in 1825, but no details of the expedition have survived.[15]

Although Pratte's 1825 adventures did not raise much interest in New Mexico, the authorities in Santa Fe followed his 1826 activities more

closely and with greater trepidation. The Mexican government experienced great difficulty regulating commerce in the northern borderlands. American fur trappers had little difficulty circumventing customs enforcement, sometimes with local help.[16] The 1826 American incursion into the Gila River country aroused the ire of New Mexico's governor, Antonio Narbona. Despite issuing passports to St. Vrain and his companions, the governor quickly reconsidered the wisdom of the decision and wrote his counterpart in Sonora to warn of the trappers' approach.[17] The Americans sought to "plunder the most precious product this territory produces," warned one communique. The trappers also flouted Mexican laws with "such arrogance and haughtiness that they have openly said that in spite of the Mexicans they will hunt beaver wherever they please," complained James Baird, a naturalized citizen. Ceran's men trapped the Gila, traded with the Maricopa Indians near the presidio of Tucson, got robbed of their blankets and mules, and beat a hasty retreat to New Mexico. A second group, commanded by Miguel Robidoux, fared far worse. Indians, either Yavapais or Apaches, killed twenty-seven of the brigade's thirty men.[18]

Stung by these disasters, Pratte launched a third round of expeditions in the autumn of 1827, the result of which thrust Ceran St. Vrain into the crucible of leadership once again. Headed "to the borders of the Mexican Federation," Pratte recruited several men bound for fame in the annals of the western fur trade, including William "Old Bill" Williams, Thomas L. Smith, and Milton Sublette. Ceran accompanied the party as clerk. The trappers traveled north from Taos along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains until they reached the headwaters of the North Platte River, where they trapped. However, while camped in North Park, Pratte fell ill with an unknown malady and died in September. Ceran St. Vrain took up his pen "with a trembling hand" to inform the young man's father of the event. Ceran had stayed by Pratte's side "until the Last Moment of his Life," even though the clerk's ministrations were "of noe youse." Pratte did not suffer long, "but a very few days," St. Vrain wrote his mentor. He commended Pratte's soul to God and the expedition pressed forward.[19]

Misfortune dogged the rest of the venture. After the men buried Pratte, Ceran took command at the "special request of the whole." After promising the men that they would be paid for their work, they returned to the North Platte. There they ran into an Indian ambush. In the exchange of gunfire, a bullet struck trapper Thomas Smith above his left ankle. Gritting his teeth, Smith started to amputate the shattered appendage. When he fainted from the pain, Milton Sublette finished the job. After

the fracas the trappers moved to the Green River, where they passed "the most vigurus winter" St. Vrain could remember. Spring brought no better luck. In April St. Vrain determined to return to the Platte and continue trapping. From there, he planned to head downriver to market the pelts in Missouri. Several days into the journey, however, the men ran across a "large Indian trace." With his men low on ammunition St. Vrain decided to end the trip and return to New Mexico. The trappers arrived in Taos in late May.[20]

The trouble did not end once they got home. Mexican customs officials arraigned St. Vrain in Santa Fe and accused him of trapping without a license and demanded to know where he sold his pelts. Ceran falsely denied the smuggling charge. When he tallied the results, the expedition had failed on nearly every level. They lost a life, a limb, and a great deal of money. After "Expenses made going for Biver," the net loss approached $500. True to his word, St. Vrain paid his men out of the value of Pratte's estate. Ceran's own share was $1,910.02 in addition to several yards of cloth, one pair of gloves, a gun, seven mules, eight horses, and seventeen traps. Pratte's death effectively ended any interest the St. Louis firms had in fielding trapping brigades in the borderlands. After 1828 independent operators dominated the declining beaver trade.[21] Despite the losses, the expedition was a formative event for St. Vrain. He gained more leadership and organizational experience. He had deepened his ties to Bernard Pratte and renewed bonds in the face of tragedy. He acquired some level of expertise in circumventing Mexican customs laws. Ceran St. Vrain made use of these skills and connections in the coming years.

As Ceran St. Vrain struggled to find his way in New Mexico, the Bent brothers prepared to enter a new phase of their lives as Santa Fe merchants and Indian traders. From Charles Bent's first trip over the Santa Fe Trail in 1829 through the construction of their adobe fort on the Arkansas River around 1834, the brothers learned the necessity of pragmatism, flexibility, and the cultivation of a wide range of personal contacts and in-laws. Over the years, the Bents established an economic and political network that spanned much of the North American continent. They made friends, family, and enemies of powerful Indian tribes, St. Louis fur titans, New Mexican governors, American soldiers, Taoseño women, and Catholic priests. Alternately deploying violence, negotiation, and eventually marriage, the Bents forged the most extensive American trading operation in the borderlands. The most intimate ties of friendship and marriage formed the core of the enterprise.

After the inauguration of successful trade between Missouri and New Mexico in late 1821, it did not take long for frontier merchants to recognize the vast potential of overland trade with Santa Fe and to establish themselves as the middlemen for a network of commerce that stretched from New York to Sonora. The markets of Mexico, recently opened to foreign trade, offered a vast field for mercantile endeavor and a new clientele ready to purchase anything the Americans could haul: cotton textiles, buttons, thimbles, medicine, bugles, Jew's harps, violin strings, and much more.[22] In return, the Missourians carried bags of silver and drove herds of horses and mules from Chihuahua and Santa Fe to the bustling towns of the state's western counties. Frontiersmen like the Bents cultivated business alliances with merchants like Samuel Lamme and the Aull brothers who made annual trips to the Atlantic coast to purchase goods from trading emporiums in New York City, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Floated down the rivers and canal network of the Old Northwest, boatloads of trade goods docked in St. Louis and tied up at the landings of river towns like Independence and Westport. The prairie towns were a transition point for goods coming into Missouri and those destined for western markets in the Rocky Mountains and Mexico. On the crowded streets traders and emigrants jostled each other, purchased livestock, hired teamsters, and laid siege to local stores. Pennsylvania-built Conestoga wagons rumbled down the thoroughfares past braying herds of New Mexican mules bound for the farms and plantations of the Deep South. Within a few years Bent wagons loaded down with bison robes and trade goods crisscrossed the plains every summer. But before that could happen, the brothers had to master the rules of the business.[23]

The brothers learned quickly, for Charles was saddled with tremendous responsibility on their first venture in 1829. The Santa Fe company that the Bents joined elected Charles their captain by unanimous consent although he had no experience as a freighter.[24] Taking the lead over a column of nearly forty wagons and seventy men, Bent was responsible for a wide range of duties. As captain he set the pace of the day's march, chose campsites, assigned guard duty, monitored the health of the livestock, and kept peace and order among the men. Typically, a well-run caravan that avoided any kind of trouble could reach Santa Fe in eight weeks.[25] Bent's first command exposed him to the dangers of overland travel and proved a rough welcome to his life in the borderlands.

The 1829 trip taught Charles Bent the necessity of cultivating relationships that might help mitigate the violence that erupted from time to time along the route of the trail. The increased frequency of Indian raiding in

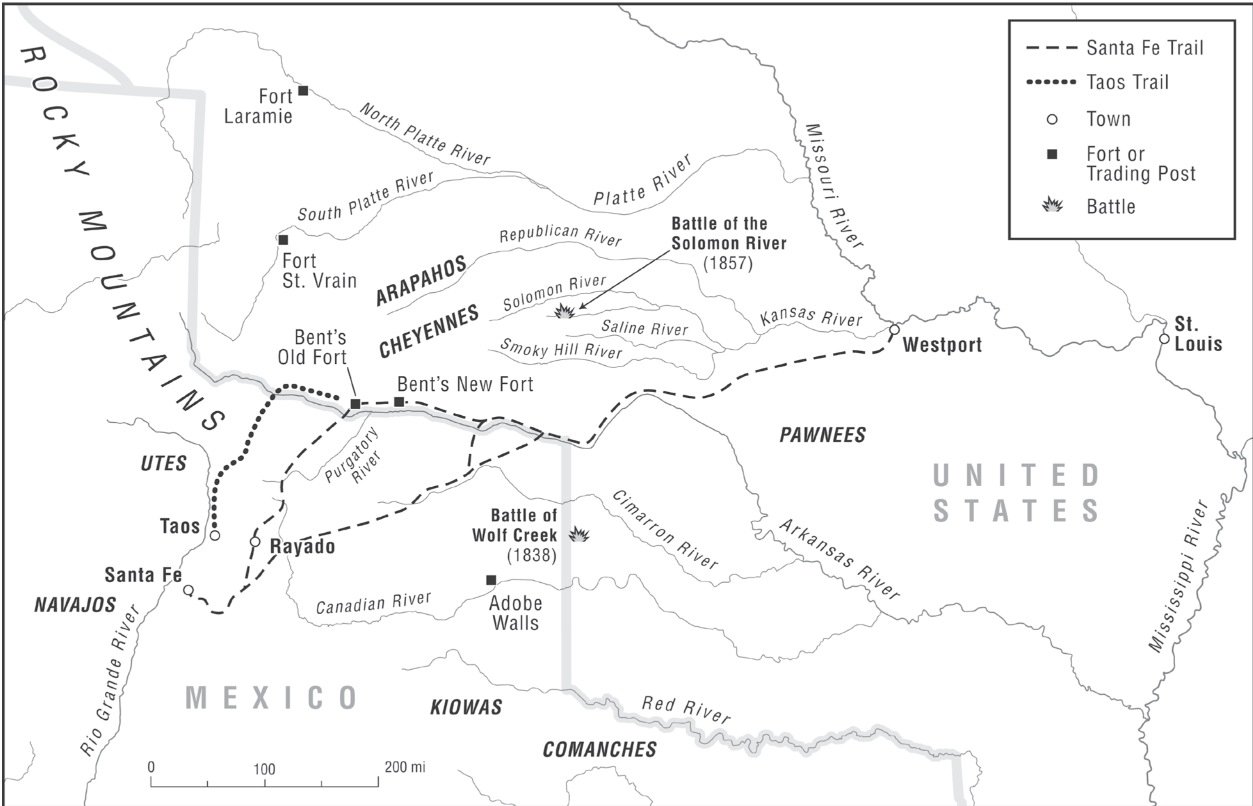

FIGURE 2. The West of the Bent Family, to 1859. Map created by Erin Greb.

the vicinity of the caravan route convinced American authorities to order a military escort for Bent's wagon train.[26] Accompanied by four companies of the Sixth United States Infantry, Major Bennett Riley commanding, the party reached the international border at the Arkansas River in early July without incident. Riley's orders did not authorize him to cross into Mexico, so the caravan splashed across the river on their own. Still new to command, Bent took some precautions to protect the company and dispatched an advance guard to scout the country ahead. Nevertheless, when an Indian war party struck on July 11, the wagons were strung out along nearly a mile of trail. Trader William Waldo recalled that their "surprise was complete." Concealed in deep ravines throughout the sand hills on the south side of the river, the attackers "seemed to spring out of the ground like swarms of locusts."[27] The attackers—Comanches, Bent thought—killed one member of the advance guard and swept down on the wagons as Bent rallied his men for a defense. Firing a small cannon at the attackers, Bent's men blunted the attack and dug in for a siege. The trader sent a party of nine men back to the river with a message urging Riley to come to their aid. Heedless of his orders, the major marched his command over the border and relieved the caravan.[28]

Riley's column temporarily drove off the attackers, but Bent's caravan still had a long, dangerous road to Santa Fe in front of it. He implored Riley to continue on as an escort, appealing to the major's patriotism, sympathy, and historical precedent. Riley could not leave his fellow Americans exposed to another attack by the "hostile and ferocious" Indians. Orders had not stopped Andrew Jackson from crossing into Spanish Florida to chastise the Seminoles, Bent wrote. Left on their own, the traders would not make it to their destination. The venture would fail. The traders would be impoverished, their families "cast upon the cold charities of [a] friendless world."[29] Riley did not budge; the caravan continued and engaged in a sporadic, running fight with the Indians for the next few weeks before a contingent of Mexican militia and American trappers from Taos—Ceran St. Vrain possibly among them—escorted the wagon train to safety.[30]

Worried about the return trip to the Arkansas River, Bent secured letters of introduction from Riley to his counterparts in the Mexican army and government. The officer commended Bent to Governor José Antonio Chávez as a "gentlemen of the first respectability in our country" and urged the executive to assist the Americans through the territory between Santa Fe and the border.[31] Chávez responded positively and sent the Americans back to the Arkansas with an armed escort. From the

border, the American infantry marched with the caravan back to Missouri. Bent must have recognized that the venture would have been more difficult without the aid of influential men. Riley and Chávez helped guarantee the success of the venture, and the traders arrived in the western settlements carrying cargo valued at almost $240,000.[32]

The genesis of the partnership that became Bent, St. Vrain and Company might have emerged out of the 1829 trip. In his monumental work *Bent's Fort*, David Lavender speculates that St. Vrain rode with the relief party that escorted Bent's caravan after Riley's troops left the wagons. If so, this may have been the second time the two men had met. The first time might have been on the Green River in the winter of 1827–28. Lavender's argument cannot be proven definitively, but the two men were in St. Louis in the spring of 1830 and were part of the annual Santa Fe caravan that summer. They may have had plenty of time to talk business.[33]

The two men established business ties in 1830. Bent and St. Vrain reached Santa Fe on August 4 accompanied by Mexican cavalry that met them on the Red River "to prevent smuggling." Ceran's wagons quickly passed through customs, but business was "very Slow, So Slow that it was discouraging," he lamented to Bernard Pratte. Bent did not plan to stay in Santa Fe. He received a passport and trading license that authorized him to travel south to Chihuahua. Bent probably never made the trip. Instead, he most likely returned to Santa Fe and set about convincing St. Vrain that they should partner up.[34]

Ceran was interested, for such an arrangement "will be to our mutual advantage," he wrote his mentor in St. Louis. Partnership had much to recommend it. For starters, time spent traveling back and forth between Missouri and New Mexico meant lost time and profits. The men would delegate responsibilities. Bent proved himself a competent wagon train captain, so he would spend the spring and summer hauling goods along the trail. Both men had connections in the St. Louis merchant community that could provide credit and inventory. Ceran would stay in New Mexico, where his Catholicism, knowledge of Spanish, and expanding network of contacts would help boost the business. Their first transaction involved Bent selling half of his goods to St. Vrain to sell in New Mexico. In exchange, Ceran loaned Bent a wagon so he could go back to St. Louis "for to bring to this Cuntry goods for him and my Self." Ceran also sent six hundred dollars and some mules with his new partner, intending them as payment for goods purchased at Pratte's warehouse. If Pratte did not want the mules, St. Vrain wished him to "doe me the favor to let Mr. Bent have them." Ceran hoped that the new partnership would

improve his prospects. Money was "verrey scrse" in New Mexico, trade goods still sold low, and tariff duties were "very hie." Yet the borderlands markets offered more opportunities than Missouri, and the new partners intended to tap both ends of the commerce of the prairies.[35]

The new partnership strengthened its ties in Missouri and New Mexico in 1831 and 1832. In January 1831 Bent took out a license to trade with the Interior States of Mexico. It is impossible to determine if he made the journey south. If he did, the journey was a rapid one, for he was in Missouri by late spring.[36] During the 1832 trading season Bent forged a new business connection with James and Robert Aull of Independence, who provided him with a generous line of credit. Bent might have captained the spring caravan consisting of nearly 150 men, seventy wagons, and $140,000 in merchandise. That fall Charles returned to Missouri bringing bullion, mules, and furs accumulated by the partners over two trapping seasons. The caravan's value totaled nearly $190,000.[37]

The size and scope of the new business continued to grow in 1833 and 1834. The partners opened a store in Taos, neared completion of a new post on the Arkansas River, and took out their first license to enter the Indian trade. Charles Bent continued to hold down the Missouri end of the operation. He took out more loans from the Aulls and purchased goods from St. Louis merchants. In the spring of 1833 signs pointed to a profitable trading season. James Aull wrote an associate, "Captain Bent is taking out a large quantity of Goods this year, report says $40,000," and speculated, "I am inclined to think that the trade will be better this year than usual." Fewer traders controlled a larger portion of the goods, "which must be a grate advantage" to them in New Mexico. Bent again served as the seasonal caravan's captain, exercising nominal control over nearly eighty wagons. The *Missouri Republican* reported on the "badness of the roads" due to a rainy spring, but the traders and accompanying American soldiers had an uneventful trip to Santa Fe.[38] The following winter the company entered the Indian trade. The United States government granted Charles a trading license on December 14, 1834. The document gave the company wide latitude. Valid for two years, it applied to twenty-nine employees and authorized trade from the north bank of the Arkansas River north to the Black Hills of present-day Wyoming. The partners could trade west as far as the Bear and Colorado Rivers. The government allowed them to deal with the Cheyennes, Arapahos, Kiowas, Shoshones, Sioux, and Arikaras. Bent posted a $2,000 bond for good behavior and listed the value of the company's trading assets at $3,877.28.[39]

The shape and pace of Bent, St. Vrain and Company's freighting business had settled into a predictable rhythm by the middle of the 1830s. One or more partners and their employees spent spring and summer on the Santa Fe Trail. The company caravan, usually upward of thirty wagons, left Bent's Fort in April loaded with pelts and bison robes. Accompanied by teamsters, herders, hunters, and guards, the wagons managed between ten and twelve miles a day. When they reached the Missouri settlements, they went into camp. Bent's men then loaded the robes and pelts onto steamboats, which the partners rode down to St. Louis, where they sold out to merchants like Robert Campbell and Pierre Chouteau Jr. After purchasing supplies for the coming trade season, the Bents or St. Vrain returned upriver to the frontier towns, where their men had spent their time resting, drinking, and dancing with "low down women." They loaded the new freight into the wagons and headed west for Taos, Santa Fe, and their fort on the Arkansas.[40]

In New Mexico the partners' success often depended on close adherence to local customs and tastes. At the most fundamental level, communication was critical. Merchant and author Josiah Gregg recorded that "As the Mexicans very rarely speak English, the negotiations are mostly conducted in Spanish." Many American traders, the Bents and St. Vrain included, bowed to this necessity. Those who hoped to enter the trade knew they needed to learn the language as quickly as possible, since those without a working knowledge of Spanish were at a disadvantage.[41] Familiarity with Mexican consumer tastes was also important. An examination of customs invoices demonstrates the variety of goods the Americans brought to the borderlands. Textiles and fabric—calico, gingham, crepe, flannel, and cashmere—were essential. Besides textiles the traders' inventory seemed endless: butcher knives, chintz mugs, apothecary scales, snuff, turpentine, vermillion, cloves, coffee, knives, and neckties.[42]

Partnerships and connections with Mexican merchants also facilitated American success. These alliances were unavoidable, and their importance grew in the 1830s and 1840s. In the early years of the trade Anglos and New Mexicans cooperated more than they competed. The former provided financing and connections with eastern suppliers. Mexican traders reciprocated by helping the newcomers navigate the labyrinthine world of trading licenses, customs payments, and informal negotiations that reached south past Chihuahua City to Zacatecas, Durango, and the great trade fair at San Juan de los Lagos in Jalisco. The two groups extended credit to one another, traveled together, and

sometimes intermarried. By the late 1830s, however, Mexican traders began bypassing American middlemen altogether and traveled to places like New York on their own. By the 1840s they dominated the Santa Fe trade in many places.[43] Through savvy partnerships in Missouri and New Mexico, and adherence to local consumer tastes and customs, the Bents and St. Vrain laid the groundwork for prosperity. But to be truly successful, the partners had to accommodate themselves to the politics and business practices of the Indian nations that dominated the borderlands and Great Plains.

From the early 1700s until the middle of the nineteenth century, anyone seeking opportunity in the southern plains had to confront the greatest military and economic power in the region, the Comanches. A Shoshonean people who migrated east out of the Great Basin, the Comanches crossed the Rocky Mountains and descended into the plains in search of bison and horses. Aided by the Utes, the Comanches quickly mastered an equestrian, nomadic lifestyle and began a series of wars that established them as the preeminent power in the Spanish borderlands.[44] Their preeminence rested on trade as well as military prowess. Driving the Apaches out of the Arkansas River valley in the early 1700s, the Comanches established themselves as the economic powerhouse of the southern plains. From here they expanded their commercial interests in all directions. Vast horse herds were the backbone of Comanche economic and military power. Control of the Arkansas River and points south was critical because the waterway marked a crucial environmental boundary line. Although blizzards were a threat, winters south of the Arkansas were mild in comparison to those in the northern plains. Raiding, trading, and selective breeding combined with climate to make Comanchería the horse emporium of North America. Comanche horses and mules flowed north in exchange for guns, metal, and textiles coming out of Canada. These environmental conditions and the equestrian wealth they helped stimulate attracted raiders as well as traders. The potential for horse wealth drew the Cheyennes south to the Arkansas in the early nineteenth century. They came not just to trade but to carve out their own autonomous space along the river.[45]

Between about 1680 and 1800 the Cheyennes transformed themselves from an agricultural woodlands people into equestrian nomads. Likely under pressure from enemy tribes, the Cheyennes migrated west from their home in the Mille Lacs region of Minnesota into the plains and settled along the Sheyenne River in the 1770s. They acquired horses but did not immediately abandon agriculture. The Cheyennes lived

a semi-sedentary lifestyle for most of the eighteenth century. Disease, Sioux incursions, the lure of bison herds, and better trading opportunities propelled the Cheyennes west again, and by 1800 they were near the Black Hills, a fully nomadic people. West of the Missouri the Cheyennes fought, traded, and allied with their plains neighbors. At first the Cheyennes were a relatively small group, unable to challenge powerful tribes like the Blackfeet and Sioux. Vulnerability forced the Cheyennes to seek allies, and by the late 1700s they had formed an indissoluble bond with the Arapahos. Their combined power allowed them to drive the Kiowas from the Black Hills, but the Sioux kept expanding, and the Cheyennes and Arapahos eventually abandoned the region for greener pastures south of the Platte River.[46]

The Cheyenne migration put them in an advantageous economic position. They were perfectly situated to become the middlemen of a trade network that spanned the Great Plains on a northeast-southwest axis. Through their contacts with the agricultural villages along the Missouri River, the Cheyennes acquired the guns and manufactured goods that filtered out of Canada. They funneled these items to the Comanches and returned with horses and mules to satisfy the demands of the northern tribes. The extent of the Cheyenne trade network was noted by impressed American observers as early as 1819. However, as Cheyenne influence grew, some of them recognized that migration to the Arkansas River had the potential to give them even greater power.[47]

Vast bison herds and increased demand for horses drew some of the Cheyennes south. William Bent's son George recalled that the Hairy Rope Clan, the tribe's best mustang catchers, led the move around 1826. The new migration was controversial, though, and resulted in a tribal split between northern and southern bands. Direct access to these horses and Comanche herds bolstered Cheyenne power and provided the animals necessary to support a rapidly expanding population. Anchored along the Arkansas, the Cheyennes and Arapahos gained the same benefits that had drawn the Comanches: access to wider economic markets, an environment suitable to horse husbandry, and abundant game. The Comanches, though, would not give up without a fight.[48] The struggle over the Arkansas River borderlands would test the strength and diplomatic skills of Bent, St. Vrain and Company during the 1830s, especially the young man entrusted with overseeing its expansion: Charles Bent's younger brother William.

William Bent was a good choice to establish the new partnership's position in the Indian trade along the Arkansas River. Although ten

years younger than Charles, William was hardly a novice in the fur trade. Direct evidence for his ventures is spotty, but he may have accompanied Charles and Joshua Pilcher on their 1827 expedition. William was with his brother on the Santa Fe Trail in 1829. After arriving in New Mexico, he signed on with a trapping expedition to the Gila River country in the fall of 1830 and took part in a fight with Indians on the San Pedro River. William may have started trading along the Arkansas at his brother's behest as early as 1831. He was certainly well entrenched by 1834.[49]

Bent was late getting to the Arkansas. John Gantt, a former army officer cashiered for allegedly falsifying pay reports, bounced between the North Platte River and Taos before he informed Mexican authorities of his intention to build a "post on the Napeste [Arkansas] river," in a February 1832 letter. Having solicited the approval of authority in Santa Fe, the trader constructed a wooden stockade during the winter of 1832–33 in the vicinity of the Purgatoire River. He then entered the Indian trade. Gantt was an improviser, and the Bents profitably emulated several of his business strategies. He recognized the profitability of trade with the Cheyennes and Arapahos, was the first American trader in the region to haul goods by wagon instead of on mules, foresaw that bison robes would replace beaver pelts as the main regional trade item, and had the dubious distinction of introducing liquor to the Arkansas River trade. In time the Bents and St. Vrain utilized all these tactics. But Gantt had to go before they could.[50]

In July 1834 William Bent saw an opportunity to simultaneously remove Gantt as a trading rival and impress the Cheyennes and Arapahos. That summer Bent claimed that a party of Shoshones—enemies of the Cheyennes and Arapahos—stole company mules near Taos. When the thieves traveled north, they stopped to trade at Gantt's post. Bent sensed an opportunity to solve two problems at once. He proposed to the Cheyennes and Arapahos that they attack the Shoshones while his employees provided support. By chastising the Shoshones, William probably hoped to show the tribes of the southern plains that they could not steal from the family and escape without retribution. Attacking Gantt's trading post could undermine the trader's position in the region and render his business vulnerable. According to the recollections of one of Gantt's workers, "Bill Bent (who never did like Comanches and Shoshones)," offered to buy any horses the warriors took from the Shoshones. Eleven of Bent's men would "assist him in attacking and defeating the Snakes," an anonymous eyewitness told American officials the following year. The unnamed individual protested Bent's plan and pointed out that

"the step he was about to take was in my opinion an improper one and in all probability would not meet the views of the Government." Bent was unfazed and allegedly snarled, "Damn the Government, I do it now any how." The attackers killed three Shoshones and captured two women, thirty-seven horses, and "many other articles such as Kettles axes ropes etc." The next day the victors divided the booty "by lottery." The strike not only drove Gantt from his post but also helped establish the Bents as new trading partners of the Cheyennes and Arapahos.[51] Bent's willingness to help the Cheyennes attack the Shoshones demonstrated the trader's willingness to help the tribe defend its regional interests against interlopers, while his offer to divide up the loot showed his understanding that his new neighbors valued generosity in their allies. Gantt had no other option than to leave the country; as William Bent strengthened his alliance with the Cheyennes he made it almost impossible for any other traders to compete with him in the lucrative Indian trade along the Upper Arkansas River corridor.

Gantt's removal allowed William Bent to move the company's business into a prime location. Bent built the company's famous trading post on the north bank of the Arkansas River, the boundary line between the United States and Mexico. The Upper Arkansas River valley was a long-established crossroads of trade and interaction between the tribes of the southern plains. Traders needed several things to support a viable post: grass for livestock, wood for fuel, water, and an easily fordable river crossing. The post's location in a relatively sterile part of the valley later caused the company some difficulty. Although the river provided a consistent supply of drinking water, the fort's inhabitants eventually had to travel as far as the foothills of the Rocky Mountains to cut their timber and send their herders miles afield to find forage for the livestock. In the earliest days of the business the Cheyenne chief Yellow Wolf tried to get the Bent brothers to move downstream to the Big Timbers of the Arkansas. This location, the chief pointed out, had better shelter, grass, and wood. It was also closer to the bison range. Despite the potential advantages, the Bents chose not to relocate. The partners might have wanted to take their goods to New Mexico by way of Timpas Creek and over Raton Pass. Settling at Big Timbers would have meant company wagons bound for Santa Fe would have to backtrack down the Arkansas, cross the river, and follow the notoriously dry Cimarron Cutoff route to New Mexico. Additionally, none of the environmental factors that bedeviled William Bent in the late 1840s and 1850s were evident at the time he drove John Gantt from the field.[52]

The new location was a prime spot for trade with local Indians and New Mexican markets. Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, Arapahos, and occasional bands of Utes visited or passed through the region. Straddling the route of the Old Trapper's Trail that ran from Taos to Fort Laramie, the post's location put the partners in a position to purchase any beaver pelts or bison robes headed for the New Mexico markets. Trade with Missouri was another prime consideration. To an associate in Santa Fe, Charles Bent spoke favorably of the Santa Fe Trail's track along the north bank of the Arkansas River. The route "is not surpassed by any other natural road that I have ever traveled," he wrote. Heavy wagons could rumble from the American settlements to the fort in five weeks. Access to Santa Fe and Taos was also important. Charles and St. Vrain lived in the village, owned a store there, and marketed pelts and robes. Farmers from northern New Mexico shipped the flour, bread, and beans that helped feed company employees.[53]

Such a location needed a suitable fort, and by 1835 William Bent was overseeing the construction of the largest trading operation on the southern plains. Although christened Fort William, most travelers knew it as Bent's Fort.[54] Its size and defenses broadcast both the company's economic clout and its vulnerability. To the other American traders in the area and to the Mexican government in Santa Fe the message was clear: Bent, St. Vrain and Company tolerated no Anglo or Mexican rivals on the Arkansas. With an interior rectangular courtyard measuring nearly 100 × 150 feet, capable of housing more than one hundred men at the height of the trading season and with ample space for sleeping, eating, and storing supplies, Bent's Fort was massive. A smithy and carpenter's shop maintained the men's gear, while the post's billiard room provided recreational space for the partners and their important guests. "The appearance of the fort is very striking," George Frederick Ruxton wrote, "standing as it does hundreds of miles from any settlement on the vast and lifeless prairie, surrounded by hordes of hostile Indians, and far out of reach of intercourse with civilized man."[55] Impressive in its size, Bent's Fort projected confidence and economic power to some observers, yet its defensive works were a reminder that the post was an island in a sea of powerful Indian groups. The adobe brick walls that reached a height of twenty feet, parapets with cannons, and a large corral whose walls were planted with prickly pear cactus demonstrated that the Bents lived and traded on the Arkansas on sufferance. Careful tactics were necessary to ensure profitability and that the walls and guns would protect company workers if danger arose. Bent's Fort attracted visitors from all over the

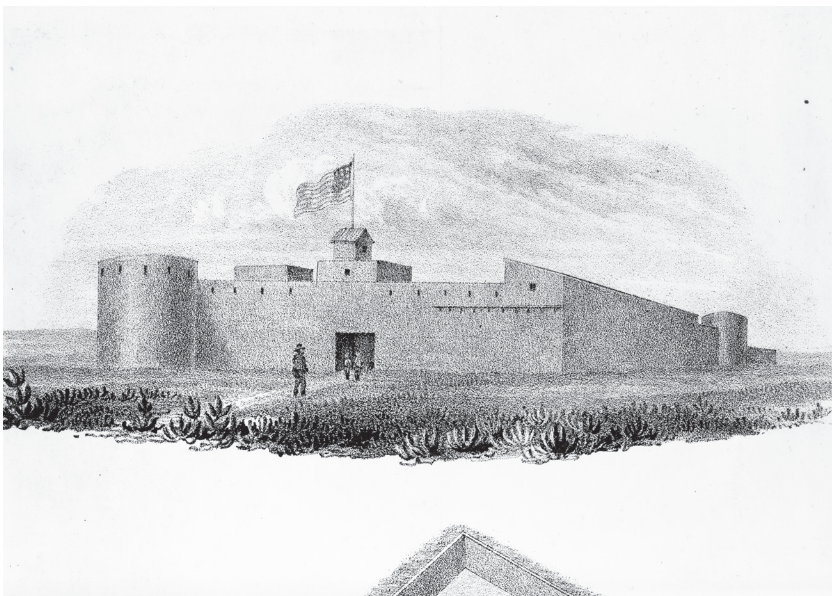

FIGURE 3. *Bent's Old Fort*, Lithograph by E. Weber & Co. Courtesy of Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-65638.

borderlands. As an entrepôt for Indians, Americans, and Mexicans the post was an inviting beacon of trade and relaxation for some, a looming and ominous presence for others.

By the mid-1830s, the Bents and St. Vrain were prepared to put a decade's worth of frontier experience into practice on their own behalf. The partners spent the 1820s and early 1830s learning the lessons necessary for success in the borderlands. They learned the importance of establishing a broad base of business contacts in Missouri and New Mexico. They discovered the importance of diversification and spread their men and capital over multiple economic enterprises. The partners grafted themselves onto long-standing trade networks that stretched from Missouri to the Platte River and into Mexico. They would need to remember these lessons, for the company was about to plunge headlong into a world of wide-ranging and volatile markets and alliances where successful participants utilized all means at their disposal to get ahead. In the coming years Bent, St. Vrain and Company would use sex, citizenship, personal friendships, accommodation, guile, and occasionally violence to secure their place in the changing world of the southwestern borderlands.

2 / Marriage, Business, and Diplomacy in the Great Plains: William Bent and His Family, 1834–1846

The Great Plains were a place of opportunity and danger for Bent, St. Vrain and Company during the 1830s and 1840s. After completing his fort, William Bent solidified his social, political, and economic ties with the Southern Cheyennes in the most intimate way. He married the daughter of an influential religious leader, fathered children, lived among the tribe, and built his business on the foundation of their goodwill. The strategy was risky; by tying his fortunes to the tribe Bent made enemies of the Comanches and Kiowas. War between these tribes and the Cheyennes in the 1830s put the company in a precarious position. The peace that came in 1840 allowed the Americans to breathe easier, but the company also faced stiff competition from several small American trading outfits on the South Platte River. Over almost twenty years William Bent learned that his success depended on friends and family ties, in the lodges of Indian villages and the countinghouses of St. Louis. Family ties, Indian power, and the necessity of financial aid from the East framed the strategies and actions of William Bent during these tumultuous years.

Through marriage William Bent demonstrated his willingness to comply with Native cultural and economic protocols. Marriage placed the trader within a new kinship system and gave him an identity as someone worthy of trust and friendship, and anyone outside these kinship structures was suspect and a potential enemy.[1] Marriage provided sexual companionship, facilitated the acquisition of new languages, opened channels of political influence, provided protection in a dangerous

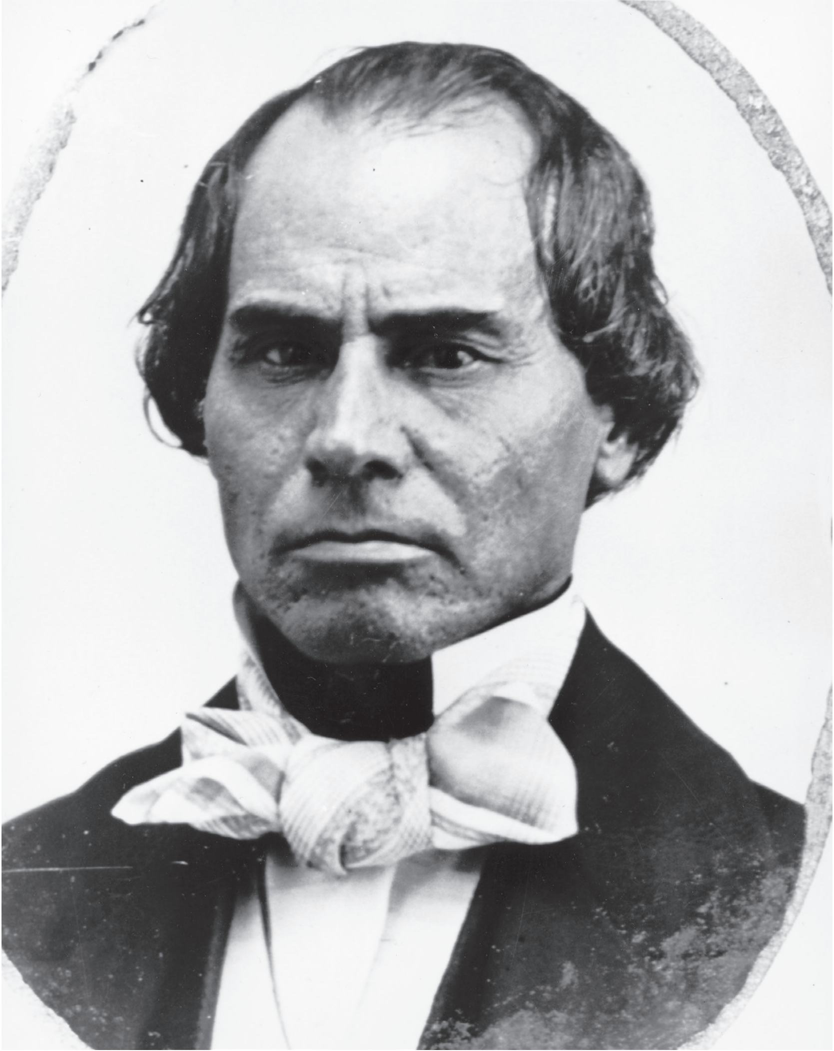

FIGURE 4. William Bent. Courtesy of History Colorado. 89.451.3349.

environment, and stimulated trade. Women were the indispensable link in these relationships. They were the cultural brokers and conduits to a world of new possibilities. For William Bent and his partners, "success depended on family and community relationships, the work and status of women, and not on their own individual efforts," writes Anne Hyde.[2]

The Southern Cheyennes had a long history of seeking unions with new peoples. The accrual of relatives outside the band and the tribe was good economic and political strategy and was also driven by strong cultural imperatives. By marrying women from allied tribes or adopted captives, the Cheyennes created a diverse nation.[3] Beyond practical strategy, strong incest taboos required that the Cheyennes marry outside their band. To marry within the same clan "was a disgrace," George Bent recalled.[4] Marriage tied families and clans to outside groups and extended the economic and political power of the Cheyenne people.

Recognizing the importance of kin ties, William Bent next found a father-in-law with the status needed to guarantee that the company's interests had a powerful advocate. That man was White Thunder, the Medicine Arrow Keeper, whose influence flowed from his guardianship of the people's most sacred objects. Mahuts, the four arrows given by the Cheyenne holy people to the culture hero Sweet Medicine, gave the people power over the bison herds and their human enemies. Together with Is'siwun, the Sacred Buffalo Hat, the embodied female regenerative power necessary for the bison herds to reproduce themselves, the Arrows were the source of Cheyenne power, identity, and survival.[5] The Arrow Keeper was a unifying religious figure for the Southern Cheyennes. He prayed for the people and embodied the wisdom of Sweet Medicine. The Arrow Keeper had to be a good and generous man. He must be wealthy, for Mahuts needed accommodations worthy of their power. The Arrow Keeper had to be married and live in a "fine lodge," according to George Bent. William Bent could not have found a better ally than White Thunder, who guarded the Arrows during the 1820s and 1830s. Marriage to his daughters brought Bent into a family with impeccable political and spiritual credentials. The trader also counted other influential medicine men in his extended family. Although Cheyenne political power was diffuse, David Lavender observed of White Thunder, "As nearly as the Cheyennes had a headman, he was it."[6] A political alliance with such a man as he provided William Bent with instant credibility.

Marriage and the trade it facilitated also brought Bent into close contact with the council chiefs, the important political figures who spoke on behalf of the people's ten bands. Council chiefs had no

coercive power and could not dictate policy to the people, but their recommendations carried weight. They oversaw moving camp locations, organized tribal bison hunts, and made recommendations regarding war making and treaties.[7] In their capacity as diplomats and cultural brokers, the council chiefs touched Bent's operations most directly. They "were selected for [being] peacemakers," George Bent remembered, and trade was possible only if there was peace. By negotiating with the Americans, the council chiefs established the terms of trade and funneled its benefits to the rest of the nation. One of Bent's first meaningful contacts with the Cheyennes was with Yellow Wolf and High-Backed Wolf, council chiefs who had encouraged him to put down roots along the Arkansas River. The chiefs made strategic marriages between their daughters and other American traders with connections to the Bents, thereby extending the power and influence that accrued to both groups.[8]

Although the public world of trade and diplomacy revolved around the actions of men, Cheyenne women were a powerful force in village economics and politics. Their marriages to traders formed the most intimate setting for intercultural cooperation. Historian Michael Lansing states the case forcefully: "Through their roles as mediators, economic informants, cultural transmitters, companions, producers, and consumers—all in the context of liaisons and intermarriage—Native women gained status in Indian and white eyes." Quite simply, "they acted as agents of change in their Plains societies."[9] Their expertise as robe processors and their ownership of camp goods made them crucial figures in the villages. The success of Bent, St. Vrain and Company as an economic enterprise depended greatly on women's work and women's skill. The ability to leave disadvantageous marriages and establish new ones also indicates some room to maneuver within societal mores. Cheyenne women also exercised influence through persuasion, advising and admonishing their husbands on political matters.[10]

When negotiating a marriage, men were expected to follow well-established courtship customs. The process might take up to five years and culminated in an exchange of horses between the families. The young woman was free to make her own decision on the marriage. She could accept the suit or decline the match. Often she accepted parental advice on her first marriage, but if either party terminated the union, she retained considerable power over her future relationships.[11]

At least one Bent employee tried to follow these steps. Alexander Barclay, a company clerk, tried to negotiate a match of his own with a Cheyenne family and failed. He offered the requisite gift of horses to the young woman's father, but the man pitted the Englishman against a warrior who offered an even higher bride price. Barclay could not match this, but after dressing down the father "in his own tongue," Barclay concluded that his failure might have been a blessing in disguise. If the marriage went forward and the young woman "behaved well," the union would have produced children for whom he would be responsible. If she "behaved ill," they probably would not have had children, but he would "have been minus a pretty round sum of dollars." Either way, he felt ill-equipped to live up to Cheyenne familial expectations.[12]

William Bent was more successful in his marriage proposals, in part because of his adherence to Cheyenne customs. During the 1830s he married Owl Woman, White Thunder's oldest daughter. This union grounded Bent in the region and provided his company a measure of protection in a potentially dangerous part of the West. Owl Woman and William Bent had four children: Mary, Robert, George, and Julia. The trader later married Owl Woman's sisters. This practice of sororal polygyny was voluntary and normally limited to men of considerable wealth. By marrying these women Bent expanded the size of his kin group and the scope of his financial and social obligations to the Southern Cheyennes. His multiple marriages signaled his willingness to respect tribal tradition and likely deepened their respect for him.[13] Bent's practice of seasonal matrilocality—residence with his wife's family band—also demonstrated his shrewd sensibilities. Matrilineal descent defined Cheyenne kinship and the custom of living with the wife's family was a sign of female status. The wife's band was a group of extended families who lived together most of the year, small enough not to degrade the local resource base yet large enough to provide mutual protection. Bent did not live in the Cheyenne villages year-round but usually spent time there during the winter trade season.[14]

Marriage brought William Bent new allies and clients, and new social and economic obligations. His standing with his relatives needed constant maintenance through gestures of generosity to his wives and their extended family. Giving gifts of clothing, trade goods, and food deepened the trader's integration into Cheyenne society.[15] Food could symbolize obligation and generosity. Lieutenant James W. Abert, writing from Bent's Fort, thought the Indians abused William's generosity. Although food was scarce and the garrison was tightening its collective belt, the Indians

"never fail to be present at meal times." He missed the deeper significance of the act of feeding guests as a gesture of familial support, but he recognized that they had tremendous influence over the traders, writing, "if their wishes are not gratified, they would not bring their furs to this place to trade." Lewis Garrard, who traveled with company traders in the winter of 1846–47, made the same point. When Ceran St. Vrain met with a party of Cheyennes, he immediately distributed presents of tobacco and ammunition. He did this "not through love" but rather "to influence them in his favor; for they belong to the Cheyenne nations, with whom the firm . . . trade largely for robes."[16] These actions were practical, necessary steps to secure native goodwill. William Bent may not always have been enthusiastic about these requests, but he was in no position to refuse them.

The desire for family and trade connections was not limited to the company's leadership; William Bent recognized the benefits of his employees marrying into local bands. The more of his men did this, the better. They took up this charge with enthusiasm, according to Alexander Barclay. He told his brother that he was one of the few men at the post who had "escaped the folly which most men have fallen into in this country"—taking an Indian wife. Barclay's attitude did not prevent him from trying to establish his own relationship with a Cheyenne woman later that spring. The traders often worked exclusively with their wife's band, a strategy that boded well for company profits.[17] Most of the matches took place with Cheyenne and Arapaho women. Bent traders including Dick Wootton, Charley Autobees, and John Poisal married Arapaho women. John Prowers married the daughter of Cheyenne council chief One Eye. Autobees also had a Cheyenne wife.[18] Ceran St. Vrain's brother Marcellin had Cheyenne and Sioux wives with whom he had three children while he oversaw the company's operations on the South Platte River. George Bent also recalled that St. Vrain had another wife who may have been Pawnee. She was a large woman who stood over six feet in height. George did not like her. He thought "she was strong and mean."[19] Perhaps Bent's most effective trader was John Simpson Smith, whose knowledge of Cheyenne language and customs was widely praised and who lived with the Blackfeet and Sioux before settling among the Cheyennes and starting a family. According to Garrard, Smith "became such an adept in the language of the Cheyenne tongue, and such a favorite with the tribe, that his services were now quite invaluable to his employers."[20] These marriages allowed William Bent to disperse his traders over a wider field of operations, expanded the number of potential clients, and helped sustain the profitability of the company's operations.

Bent also recognized the necessity of conducting his trade on native ground, a business strategy that reflected the dominant position of the Cheyennes. The Americans did not peremptorily summon the Indians to Bent's Fort; instead, they went to their clients. Twice a year Bent and his men sought out the Cheyennes and Arapahos at their favorite camping sites. Taking the trade to the Indian camps was a more effective use of time for all parties involved. The trading season for robes was short, and the Indians produced more robes if the Americans came to them. Maintaining a presence in the villages through trade and seasonal residence also helped the company stifle competition from smaller independent operations based in New Mexico and trading posts like Pueblo and Greenhorn in the southern Rockies.[21] Perhaps most importantly, sending traders to the villages was a recognition of indigenous power. Cheyennes, Arapahos, Comanches, and Kiowas controlled the southern plains, and their encampments were the true centers of regional political and economic power.

Before setting out for the Indian camps, Bent and his traders crafted their strategy at the company's Arkansas River post. Bent usually assigned men to trade with their wife's band or village. The traders met with the fort's clerk and discussed which goods to take and in what volume. Then, in teams of two or three, the men set out. The mode of transportation depended on the topography of the region where they traveled. Flat, gentle country allowed them to haul their goods by wagon, whereas rugged terrain called for pack mules. Bent needed honest men for the job, for he often entrusted them with a small fortune in trade items. They discharged their duties with great scrupulousness, and William Boggs recalled that the traders were "perfectly reliable and devoted to the interest of the Company."[22]

When the traders arrived at their destination, they sought the lodge of an influential family. The choice of "headquarters" was hardly random. George Bent stated that the best trader "always made his trading place at some noted chiefs lodge" to maximize profitability. Bent passed the winter of 1846–47 in the company of Cinemo, a prominent chief. Half of the living space was set aside for the trader's goods and operations. Since lodges belonged to Cheyenne women, trading out of them was a way for family to reinforce their influence within the band. The advantages were mutual. Bent and his traders needed powerful patrons, and their presence was a visual reminder of the family's connection to an important source of economic power and opportunity. Once lodging arrangements were finalized, a crier went through the camp announcing

that the traders had come, what items they sought, and what goods they had to exchange.[23]

The physical location of trade and the social protocols surrounding it reinforced the influence of Cheyenne women, even if few traders recognized or wrote about it. American observers rarely missed the fact that the camp's women did a prodigious amount of physical labor. They "did all the drudgery," William Boggs remembered. The women cooked, cleaned the lodges, hauled wood, sewed clothes, watched the children, processed trade robes, broke down and loaded the lodges onto travois when the band moved camp, and erected them at the new location. By comparison, it seemed to outsiders that the warriors did little. Although men and women had well-defined tasks to do in the camp, such recollections exaggerated the laziness of the men and the "drudgery" of the women. Although many Americans observed the work that women did, they were less inclined to comment on what it meant to the success of trade operations.[24] Trade and its rituals took place under the woman's roof. The presence of influential men was crucial, but so were the unrecognized labors of mothers and daughters. They owned the lodges where Bent and his men traded and slept. Women owned the camp goods the traders often utilized: bowls, dishes, and sleeping robes. Cheyenne women hauled the wood that cooked the food and fed the fires that kept the men comfortable during the winter's trading season. They performed the tasks essential to creating a welcoming environment for the traders. Women's work was a vital part of the hospitality that enabled trade and diplomacy.

Also important to Bent was the female muscle and skill that went into the production of the item most essential to the company's financial success: bison robes. The company shipped thousands of processed robes to eastern markets during the 1830s and 1840s for use as overcoats, gloves, and lap blankets. The task of turning tough, "green" hides into soft, supple robes fell exclusively to the women of the camp.[25] This was backbreaking work. The women first spread out a fresh hide on the ground and staked down the outer edges with pegs. Then, with a small scraper, they removed all the fat and muscle that clung to the hide. The next step was "dressing" the hide. To soften it, the women mixed bison brains, boiled marrow, liver, and soapweed and rubbed it into the hide. They then folded it and left the mixture to soak overnight. The next morning, they unfolded the hide and laid it out to dry in the sun. It went through a final softening process in which women tugged it back and forth through a hole drilled into a bison's shoulder blade or drew it over a sinew rope.[26]

From beginning to end it took a woman an average of ten days to process one robe. Wives who prepared the most robes with the least amount of help were the most prized by the men of the tribe. Despite claims by some historians and anthropologists that the rise of horse culture and market hunting degraded the status of Indian women, this was not the case for the Cheyennes. The work they did reflected their skilled labor and an integral part of their status within the larger community. The practice of sororal polygyny reinforced the female family network, and sisters aided each other with childcare, physical labor, and in disputes with their husbands.[27] Like the institution of marriage, women's labor and expertise was at heart of Bent, St. Vrain and Company's prosperity.

Gift giving and scrupulous attention to Indian consumer demands were also critical to the success of Bent's trading expeditions. Demonstrations of continued generosity reinforced the trader's commitment to square dealing and strengthened the preexisting kinship ties he had with the group. Even Bent's closest allies, the Southern Cheyennes, needed to be reminded that the company had their best interests in mind. The gifts did not have to be grand. Sharing coffee could be a small but meaningful gesture. Lewis Garrard recognized this dynamic when he wrote, "To secure the good will and robes of the sensitive men, we had to offer our dear-bought Java at meal-time—the price of our greatest congregation." Tobacco was another popular gift.[28] Canny traders like Bent knew the Indians were discriminating consumers, and the orders he placed with his St. Louis mercantile connections illustrate the volume and variety of goods his men packed to the Cheyenne villages. The list seemed endless: Northwest guns, bread, salt, percussion caps, shells, beads, awls, axes, nails, coffee, sugar, shirts, blankets, mirrors, rings, and "War and Scalping" knives.[29] If traders failed to satisfy a client's demands, the firm lost business.

Not all trade took place in the Indian villages, and Bent's Fort could also be busy. At certain times of the year the post pulsed with life and commerce. Men and women from all over the West came to the fort to trade, work, and live. Over bison steaks and whiskey men discussed beaver and robe prices, swapped geographical information, and told stories about their exploits in English, Spanish, French, and several Indian languages. "I am often at my wits end to understand all the appeals made to me by such a Babel-tongued multitude," Barclay confessed to his brother.[30] Taking care of guests and clients made good political, economic, and social sense. George recalled that his father's men fired the fort's artillery to welcome Indian guests. That was the signal to come and

eat. After the meal, the traders "made presents to them."[31] Caution was necessary, however, and armed guards walked the fort's parapets and manned the cannon as a precaution against trouble.[32]

The Cheyennes received special access to Bent's Fort despite some fears that allowing any Indians into the fort posed a danger to the garrison and traders. Cheyenne freedom of movement befit their ties to Bent. They had greater mobility within the walls, but William still made most of them spend the night outside the walls. Barclay's letters confirmed that the Cheyennes were not alone in browsing the courtyard and storerooms of the fort. The clerk did not approve of this. He griped to his brother about "allowing the whole Nation of Arapahos" into the fort. More worrisome was Bent's decision to admit the Utes. Their warriors "were admitted into the fort in overwhelming numbers and to a man might have annihilated us at any preconcerted signal" if not for the constant vigilance of the whites. Why William Bent opened the gates to men "well armed with their bows and arrows" baffled the Englishman. The trader's instincts were good, however, and the space inside the walls remained peaceful.[33]

Patience, adherence to local protocol, and attention to consumer tastes paid off for Bent. From the Cheyenne camps his men hauled the robes back to the fort where they were sorted according to quality and bundled into packs weighing around one hundred pounds. Men then reloaded the packs into wagons for shipment east to Missouri every summer.[34] Ceran St. Vrain once told a journalist that the company shipped forty thousand robes per years. Probably closer to the truth was Barclay's estimate that his employers cleared a very respectable profit each year, between twenty and forty thousand dollars.[35] Regardless of the actual numbers, the Bents and St. Vrain built through their political and family connections the most formidable and profitable American trading venture south of the Platte River.

No company ledger books survive so most of the references to the company's robe sales are rough estimates and anecdotes. In 1839, they sold "about six hundred packs" of robes and a "considerable amount of furs," according to J. F. A. Sandford and newspaper reports.[36] The most detailed records come from 1842, when the company sold 2,319 beaver pelts, 277 bison calf robes, 2,659 adult bison robes, 1,668 bison tongues, a handful of otter, mink, and muskrat pelts, and one "Grisley Bear" skin for $15,953.73. Accounts from Charles Bent and Missouri newspapers also attest to a good trade season.[37] No numbers are recorded for 1843, but Charles Bent was optimistic about the year's prospects. Another

observer, though, noted only five wagons of robes in the summer caravan.[38] They shipped out about seven hundred packs in 1844, but the number might have fallen as low as two hundred the next year.[39] A better year came in 1846. The company made a "good trade" on the South Platte River and around Bent's Fort.[40] Small operators sometimes siphoned off robes but never represented an existential threat to the Bents.[41] A much greater threat to their security was the violence inflicted by Native groups who resented the company's close ties to the Southern Cheyennes.

Warfare and raiding were deeply significant to tribal culture and economics in the southern plains. These activities served critical functions for groups like the Southern Cheyennes, Kiowas, and Comanches. Success in war demonstrated superior power over rival groups and helped determine control of the bison ranges that provided the necessary sustenance for the group and guaranteed access to trade goods. The desire for horses was another source of conflict. A prime indicator of wealth and social status, as well as trade items and the source of a group's mobility and military power, the horse was central to tribal life. Wars and raids also resulted in deaths that needed to be avenged. "The killing of enemies brought comfort and consolation to those whose relations had been killed. . . . [I]t wiped away their tears," George Bird Grinnell wrote of the Cheyennes. The Comanches and Kiowas followed a similar code. What resulted was nearly constant warfare and raiding—a cycle of conflict easier to set in motion than to stop.[42] The violent landscape of the southern plains helped shape company policies in significant ways as the Bents and St. Vrain attempted to navigate the complex, often treacherous diplomatic landscape of the region and tried to balance the interests of the Cheyennes against the desire to do business with all comers, even enemies of their kinfolk.

War with the Pawnees was a defining fact of Cheyenne life in the early nineteenth century. The Southern Cheyennes spent more time fighting the Pawnees than any other tribe. The Pawnee conflict, George Bent remembered, existed from the earliest days of Cheyenne history, when the people moved west onto the plains. The tribes clashed over the bison grounds between the South Platte and Arkansas Rivers. Pawnee horse raids often led to clashes as their warriors ran off Cheyenne livestock. Honor and the warrior ethos demanded retaliation, and the war intensified. The Cheyennes respected their enemy's fighting prowess. The tribes were like evenly matched bison bulls, "first one would push back the other, until he got tired, and then the other would push harder and drive back his opponent" an old Cheyenne told George Bird Grinnell.[43] The

Cheyennes lost Mahuts to the Pawnees around 1832, and, despite White Thunder's best diplomatic efforts to retrieve them, the cultural imperatives and deep-rooted animosities that fueled tribal war culture meant any peace between the groups was temporary.[44]

Despite the loss of the Arrows, the Cheyennes faced a greater threat in the 1830s: the Kiowas and Comanches. This conflict likely began over horse raids that dated to the mid-1820s.[45] George Bent attributed the start of the conflict to Cheyennes envious of the success other tribes had raiding Comanche horse herds. The Cheyennes "were very jealous" of Blackfeet raiders and decided to try for themselves. They were very successful.[46] By the mid-1830s, the scale of raiding escalated to dangerous levels. American officials tried to negotiate a peace in 1835, but the Cheyennes were unreceptive, and the violence continued with disastrous results for William Bent's family.[47]

A few years after this failed mediation, the killing of forty-two Cheyenne warriors by a Kiowa war party instigated calls for revenge. When White Thunder hesitated to perform the ceremonies necessary to success in war, several young men beat him with their quirts until he relented. He performed the ritual but predicted the expedition would fail. White Thunder was correct. An attack on a Kiowa camp along Wolf Creek in 1838 was turned back, and the Arrow Keeper was among the Cheyenne dead. Devastated by the defeat and fearing more humiliation, White Thunder chose his place to die. "I will give the people a chance to get a smarter man to guide them," he shouted. That his people had called him "a fool" was his last lament. He stood tall as the charging enemies rode him down. Heavyhearted, the Cheyennes limped back to the Arkansas River, where William Bent learned of his father-in-law's death. White Thunder's widow passed the Arrows over to Lame Medicine Man as the Cheyennes faced an uncertain future.[48]

By 1840 both sides were tired of war and ready to make a peace that had a profound influence on the politics and ecology of the southern plains and southwest borderlands. Although each group struck deep into the enemy's heartland, neither the Cheyennes nor the Comanches could deliver a decisive military blow. Instead, they gathered on the Arkansas, downriver from Bent's Fort, to exchange goods, forge new kinship ties, and initiate a military alliance that lasted until 1875. Peace freed the Comanches and Kiowas to accelerate raiding into Mexico, with bloody consequences that destabilized the nation's northern frontier. It opened new hunting territories and facilitated trade opportunities. Ironically, while the peace allowed the Bents to expand their operations

FIGURE 5. The Great Peace of 1840. Howling Wolf (Southern Cheyenne, 1849–1927), *Drawing Book*, ca. 1875, ink and watercolor on paper. Courtesy of Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. Gift of Alexander M. Maish in Memory of Anna Bourke Richardson, 1991.19.

into Comanche territory, the bison population suffered from overhunting.[49] The end of the war began a long, almost invisible environmental catastrophe that ultimately ended the company's profitability.

Amid this swirl of violence, William Bent tried to chart the safest course for the company's Arkansas River operation. He and his men walked a fine line. Their ties to the Cheyennes and Arapahos were central to the firm's profitability, but too much favoritism toward their kinsfolk could limit trade with other groups. Nations at war with the Cheyennes might lash out violently against Bent's men. George Bent recalled that his father's position had been clear from the beginning: the company must not actively choose sides in any Indian conflict. Bent ordered that "no Employee should take [a] hand or help any Indian in their battles" and that his men would "be friends to all Indians that came there [Bent's Fort]."[50] This was easier stated than enacted. William could not help favoring his family, which exposed the company's operations to attacks

from Cheyenne enemies and limited the firm's ability to extend trade operations south of the Arkansas River.

Company wagon trains were especially vulnerable on the Santa Fe Trail. In 1838, Marcellin St. Vrain led a small party west from Missouri. Pawnee raiders hit the camp near the Arkansas River, killing one man and wounding three more. The warriors ran off the livestock and carried away merchandise valued at $3,273.13. The Pawnees stole cloth, saddles, sugar, coffee, paper, ink, bison robes, four guns, and two "Latin missals" probably intended for a church in Santa Fe or Taos and valued at forty dollars. The partners appealed to the federal government for reparations but got only an apology. The Pawnee headman Big Soldier said he had no idea he was attacking Americans. The federal officials adjudicating the case said the incident had not taken place on American soil, so the Bents were on their own. To honor their claim would set a bad precedent, a commission report ruled.[51] Despite the incident, company wagon trains moved relatively unharmed across the plains during the 1830s, but by the mid-1840s the situation would change dramatically.

Attempts to expand Bent, St. Vrain and Company's business into the Ute country were also dangerous. Records of Bent's dealings with the Utes before 1850 are sketchy. According to one anecdote passed along by the traveler Thomas Jefferson Farnham, sometime during the 1830s the partners sent a small caravan and an armed escort into the mountains west of the fort. After a long journey they came upon a Ute village. The Americans tried to negotiate with the band's headman, who "received them with great haughtiness" and demanded to know why they had come uninvited. The Americans got no permission to stay or trade. After the talks broke up the traders erected breastworks and prepared for the worst. The Utes charged Bent's men "like herds of bears intent on their prey" before a volley of rifle fire dropped a chief. The Indians retreated, regrouped, and proposed another parlay. The Americans agreed. The Utes said they desired peace but demanded a payment of seven hundred dollars. The traders refused, and the meeting "broke up tumultuously," according to Farnham. Under cover of darkness, they packed up their belongings and slipped away to safety.[52] The Utes never became a major source of profitable trade with the company, likely because their country did not contain large bison herds.

Aiding the Cheyennes marked William Bent as an enemy of the Comanches in the 1830s. One famous, possibly apocryphal, story traces the origins of the trader's ties to the Cheyennes to an incident when Bent hid several warriors at his stockade and protected them from a Comanche

war party. The Cheyennes had ridden in on their way to the mountains to raid against the Utes. Simultaneously, a Comanche war party led by the warrior Bull Hump was riding north, following the trail of a Cheyenne party that had stolen horses south of the Arkansas River. All paths converged on Bent's doorstep. The trader hurried the Cheyennes inside and hid them behind piles of trade goods. Their tracks were everywhere when the Comanches rode up to the stockade. Bull Hump demanded to know if his enemies were still close by. Bent lied and said the Cheyennes were not there. They had passed through the area headed for the South Platte River. The Comanches believed him and rode on. The Cheyennes and William Bent had barely escaped with their lives.[53]

Despite the close call with Bull Hump's warriors and their escalating hostilities with his Cheyenne kinsmen, William Bent was determined to open trade in Comanchería itself. In 1835 he traveled south to meet the Kiowas and Comanches on the Red River. He encountered "upwards of two thousand" Indians who "treated him with great kindness," according to an American army officer. Nothing came of this venture. Although Bent took out trading licenses for the Kiowas in 1836 and 1838, there is no evidence that he followed through with the business. The Comanches and their allies did not need Bent's trade because they could trade with other Americans and French creoles operating out of east Texas and Missouri. More importantly, travel north to the Arkansas put the Comanches and Kiowas at risk for an attack by the Cheyennes or Arapahoes. However, as the 1830s passed, the Comanche trade network was shrinking, and they were being pushed aside as the go-to traders of the southern plains. Faced with the withdrawal of white trading partners and the reorientation of business networks toward the Arkansas River and Bent's Fort, by 1840 the Comanches were ready to explore their options.[54]

Before trade there was violence. In June 1839 a party of Comanches ran off the company's horse herd and killed a Mexican wrangler within sight of the fort. The incident demonstrated the Comanches' power to strike close to the heart of Bent's enterprise, and they made threatening gestures in the following months. The raid upset Alexander Barclay but did not frighten him. If the fort's cannon and swivel guns did not stop the Indians, the clerk was ready. "I am not a bad shot and if they will come within two hundred yards, I'll bespeak one of them," he crowed to his brother. The Great Peace of 1840 ultimately ended the gravest threat to the fort, but the truce could prove tenuous.[55]

An incident with the Kiowas only months after the peace treaty threatened to unravel the Bents' plans to expand the scope of their

operation. In the spring of 1841 a delegation of Kiowas rode to Bent's Fort with a request to have a trader sent to their village. The partners entertained the guests as was "customary under such circumstances" and distributed presents. The Americans were wary, but one man eventually stepped forward to volunteer. He had two wives and three children and "hoped to improve his fortunes" by traveling south. Barclay loaned him a horse, and the party rode away. Two days into the trip, two warriors rode up behind the American, shot him dead, and took his horse. When an Arapaho brought the news to the fort, Barclay was furious. While the clerk raged, the arrival of another group of Kiowas offered an opportunity to set things right. When confronted with the story, a warrior "spoke plainly" that the account was true but that the murder should not spark more violence. They could not resurrect the American, but they could bring horses as payment for the killing. The offer defused the volatile situation. Barclay gave vent to his anger with William Bent in a letter to his brother: the trader was "too much disposed to put unlimited confidence in any Indians who come with overtures of peace." Bent had little choice but to overlook the killing and accept the gift of horses.[56] He needed the Kiowa and Comanche trade, and violence was sometimes the price of commerce. Unable to dictate the terms of political or economic engagement with the region's powerful Native peoples, the partners occasionally had to make compromises they found distasteful or insulting in order to preserve their operations. Bent, St. Vrain and Company did not dictate policy in the region.

With peace reinforced, the partners finally expanded operations into Comanchería. After a decade of uncertainty and war a vast new market opened. Although the Kiowas and Comanches had come to the Arkansas River to make peace with their enemies, it was more convenient if the Bents came to them.[57] Business was good from the beginning. Company trader John Hatcher had a Kiowa wife, so he was a natural fit to head operations in the south. By late 1842, Bent's men were trading out of a log stockade on the Canadian River. The next year the volume of robes Hatcher gathered at the stockade offset lower trade volume elsewhere, a phenomenon noted by other plains traders.[58] The company later built a larger adobe structure. Traders operated out of both posts, which continued to draw large numbers of Indians. Ceran St. Vrain later took charge of the adobe post and stocked it with goods shipped south from the Arkansas. Business declined in 1846 as rumors of war with Mexico destabilized the region. The operation fell apart completely during the conflict as the Comanches and Kiowas raided aggressively along

the Santa Fe Trail.[59] Cheyenne and Comanche initiatives at peacemaking had allowed the Bents to expand the scope of their business south and open lucrative new markets. As the firm solidified its position in the southern plains, the partners also looked north for opportunity.

Financial considerations and tribal politics drew William Bent to the South Platte and into a short-lived trade war that tested the strength of the company's ties to the St. Louis business community. In 1835 and 1836 American traders gravitated to the river, long a favorite watering and camping spot for the Cheyennes and Arapahos. The short-term peace between the Cheyennes and Pawnees negotiated near Bent's Fort in 1835 opened an opportunity for commerce. Ecological factors including several years of good rainfall and grass growth had drawn the bison herds close to the river as well. The herds drew Native hunters, and their demand for trade goods brought the Americans. By 1838, four companies had constructed adobe trading posts within twelve miles of each other.[60]

For two trading seasons Henry Fraeb and Peter Sarpy were William Bent's biggest rivals on the South Platte. The two men had good credentials: Fraeb had been a partner in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, and Sarpy apprenticed in the American Fur Company and was a relative of the Chouteau family.[61] The partners joined forces in 1837 with the blessing of Pratte, Chouteau, and Company, the most powerful trade outfitter in St. Louis. The credit and marketing connections Chouteau extended to the small firm allowed Fraeb and Sarpy to briefly challenge William Bent in the central plains. Their success troubled Bent, St. Vrain and Company, but 1838 brought William Bent a reprieve. The financial panic that struck the nation in 1837 had moved west, caught Chouteau temporarily vulnerable, and might have led him to withdraw support from Fraeb and Sarpy. As a result, in 1839 Bent bought out his rivals and acquired all the "merchandise, peltries, livestock, utensils, etc." in their post, Fort Jackson. He also agreed to pay the back salaries owed to Fraeb and Sarpy's employees.[62]

Market forces beyond Fraeb and Sarpy's control contributed to their downfall, but the close relations the Bents and St. Vrain had established with Pratte and Chouteau were also crucial. The families moved in the same St. Louis social circles. They attended the same parties, where they dined on venison, nougat, and chicken bouillon, and danced late into the night. Charles Kennerly, one of the city's nineteenth-century chroniclers, recalled that "the town was still small enough in the forties for people to know each other well." The old families entertained lavishly during these

years. Additionally, Ceran St. Vrain grew up in Pratte's home and mentored the man's son in New Mexico. Ceran may logically have been one of the individuals to negotiate a trade deal with Chouteau and Pratte.[63]

In June 1838 Bent, St. Vrain and Company reached a deal with Pratte, Chouteau, and Company that divided the Great Plains between their operations. The deal was simple. The signees promised "not to enter into competition against each other in the business of the two firms or in any way interfere with their several interests in the business of the Indian trade," and the Bents agreed they would "not send [men] to the north fork of the Platte and [the] Sioux Outfit would not send [men]" into territory worked by the Bents between the South Platte and Arkansas.[64] The new deal did not immediately satisfy everyone. That winter Chouteau's traders accused William Bent of violating the terms of the agreement. Bent had gone beyond the boundary line to encourage the Northern Cheyennes to come into his company's trading territory. Frederick Laboue, a Chouteau man, informed a St. Louis correspondent that he told Bent "that St. Vrain had made a contract with Pierre Chouteau not to come on the North Fork of the Platte River." Bent replied that "he could go where his savages were," Laboue complained. This incident did not damage the overall health of the relationship, which proved mutually beneficial. The deal strengthened the St. Louis merchants' southern flank, while it guaranteed that Bent and St. Vrain would not have to deal with large-scale competition between the South Platte and Arkansas. Potentially more importantly, William Bent would market his furs and robes through Chouteau's operations, while the Frenchman extended Bent a generous line of credit for use purchasing supplies and paying employees. Bent, St. Vrain and Company now deepened its connections to the mercantile networks stretching from St. Louis east to the Atlantic. The kinship ties that William Bent forged with the Southern Cheyennes were undoubtedly his most important connection, but ties to the city's merchant community were also critical.[65]

The opportunities for trade on the South Platte induced the company to construct another adobe post to anchor its northern flank. In 1837 or 1838 the partners built a new installation called Fort George. Traders and trappers in the region knew it better as Fort St. Vrain. Located about a mile below the mouth of St. Vrain Creek, its fourteen-foot walls enclosed a courtyard roughly 100 × 125 feet. George Bent said that the fort was constructed on the "same plan as Bent's Fort only it did not have the bastions" of the Arkansas River post. Fort St. Vrain serviced the demands of the Northern Cheyennes, Northern Arapahos, and Sioux—groups that rarely traveled as far south as the Arkansas.[66]

The basis of the trade was the same on the Platte as it was at Bent's Fort. The partners relied on marriage and gift giving to strengthen their business. Ceran's brother Marcellin St. Vrain oversaw most of the day-to-day operations. While the younger St. Vrain never became a partner in the company, his marriage ties to the Sioux were particularly useful. He worked at the post until it closed in 1845. As for the trading operations, George Bent recalled seeing his father give his customers "presents such as looking glasses . . . shirts . . . [and] brass rings" to demonstrate his generosity. Marcellin St. Vrain was also a competent trader and host, John C. Frémont recalled. When his expedition passed through the vicinity, St. Vrain provided it with horses and feted the explorer and his officers during their stay at the fort.[67]

Fort St. Vrain initially prospered, but tribal politics and environmental factors reduced it to seasonal occupancy and operations in the 1840s. The Great Peace of 1840 had opened the former "neutral grounds" of the central plains to intensified commercial hunting that damaged the herds. Severe drought compounded the problem. Trader Solomon Sublette confirmed these changes in a series of letters to his brother William in the summer of 1844. Sublette noted in two letters that Fort St. Vrain was abandoned during the summer months and operated only during the winter. Furthermore, he worried about the declining number of bison on the plains. "You were speaking of returning to this country," but "you would find it very different. . . . [I]f the Buffalo do not come in more plentifully than they have been for the last year it will be starving times," Solomon lamented in a letter written from Bent's Fort.[68] The declining trade along the South Platte was another indicator that despite the firm's general profitability, Bent, St. Vrain and Company was never the master of its own destiny. Rainfall, the size of bison herds, and Native politics created situations that forced the partners to adapt if they wished to thrive.

Although the bison herds along the South Platte had begun their long decline, the alliances the Bents and St. Vrain built during the 1830s and 1840s were the source of their success in the southern and central plains. The kinship ties William Bent and his employees forged with the Cheyennes and Arapahos put the company in an enviable position. By adhering to the Native expectations that surrounded family formation and reciprocity, the traders secured access to thousands of bison robes each season. For a time, their relations with the Cheyennes exposed Bent, St. Vrain and Company to the hostility of the Comanches and Kiowas. The Great Peace of 1840, however, allowed the company to expand

its operations and increased its short-term profitability. Long-standing connections to the St. Louis merchant community helped the Bents and St. Vrain eliminate the competition of small, independent trading operations along the South Platte River during the late 1830s. Without these connections, profitability and a measure of security were impossible dreams for the traders. Having seen the benefits that accrued to kinfolk and business partners in the Great Plains, Charles Bent and Ceran St. Vrain sought to replicate this model in the communities of the Mexican borderlands.

3 / Marriage, Business, and Diplomacy in New Mexico: Charles Bent and His Family, 1834–1846

Intermarriage and family connections were at the heart of borderlands communities like Charles Bent's adopted home of Taos. Newcomers arriving in northern Mexico quickly recognized that the establishment of intimate kinship ties was essential to their success in the region. On the margins of nations, personal relationships were critical. These relationships often defined one's standing and status within the community. No one truly had a meaningful identity if they remained unconnected to a larger family network. Through marriage and the Roman Catholic practice of godparenthood Anglo-American and French-Canadian men gained access to local and regional markets, political clout, and potentially wide swaths of land. Mexican families stood to benefit as well. Through the newcomers, borderlanders acquired trading partners and easier access to goods, credit, foreign markets, and social prestige. Family was one of the most important identifying markers of belonging and exclusion in the borderlands. Kinship shaped, and was shaped by, political philosophy, religion, economics, and class status. Profit, influence, and danger flowed from the personal ties Bent forged in the towns and villages of the Mexican borderlands.

But kinship did not guarantee that strangers would join in together in harmonious bonds. The connections Charles Bent made were critical to his success yet enmeshed him and his associates in a web of suspicion, animosity, and violence. While some Mexicans eagerly sought out alliances with Anglos and French-Canadians, many other families viewed the newcomers negatively. Nor were borderlands communities free from

conflicting family agendas. Intra- and interfamily rivalries existed everywhere over business, politics, and the power of individual personalities. The tensions unfolded in a fraught political context as Mexicans across the northern borderlands debated the nature of their national identities and loyalties.[1] The lines of family and national loyalty often blurred at the edges of the country. Charles Bent's experience in Taos demonstrates the ambiguities of life in the borderlands—a place where love and hate, profit and loss, hope and fear, coexistence and violence intertwined and overlapped.

Elite borderlands families were expected to act as edifying examples of personal conduct and unifying forces within Mexican communities. They guarded local interests, dispensed charity, and exemplified virtue. They performed for the community, and their legitimacy was based in part on the successful fulfillment of obligations to the whole. Failure meant forfeited status and opposition. Most newcomers to northern Mexico assimilated quickly.[2] But Charles Bent never truly joined the community. He refused to become a Mexican citizen, convert to Catholicism, or legitimate his marriage with the Church's sacramental blessing. Combined with the fact that several of his business ventures were dangerous to the safety of the region, his position in Taos was ultimately untenable.

Like his brother William on the Arkansas River, Charles Bent recognized the necessity of attaching himself to a local woman. Sometime between 1832 and 1835 he began cohabiting with a young Taos widow named María Ignacia Jaramillo, with whom Bent had five children, three of whom survived infancy. Charles and Jaramillo kept a home in Taos, although he spent a good deal of time traveling for business.[3] She was a beautiful woman with dark hair and striking eyes who was also unfailingly kind and generous to those who spent time under her roof.[4] As the matron in charge of the Taos household, María Ignacia would have participated in, or supervised, a wide range of activities including weaving clothes, doing laundry, making soap, grinding wheat, and baking bread in addition to her duties as a mother. Such work, so often overlooked by outsiders, was critical to the success of the domestic economy.[5]

But María Ignacia Jaramillo's life, like that of many New Mexican women, was not cloistered, nor were they without legal privileges unknown to their contemporaries in the United States. Under Mexican law, based on the older Spanish legal system, women retained their property, ability to sue and testify in court, and their wages after marriage. Jaramillo was in no sense subordinate to Charles Bent. Many New

FIGURE 6. Charles Bent. Courtesy of History Colorado. 89.451.3346.

Mexican women worked outside the home in occupations ranging from seamstress to miner to midwife. In rural areas they did heavy agricultural labor, especially when their husbands and sons were away with the militia fighting Indians. They brought suits in local courts involving the disposition of estates, tested marital disputes, and obtained divorces when necessary. María Ignacia Jaramillo also demonstrated an entrepreneurial spirit during her years with Bent. There are records of her involvement in at least four property conveyances, all of them taking place during her time with Charles and one between herself and another woman. She acquired three separate parcels of land and bought a small home in Taos. She paid for these properties with cash and goods including cloth, crops, and once, a gun.[6]

María Ignacia's physical beauty attracted Charles Bent, and her kin connections were also alluring. The Jaramillos were a respectable family but not a rich one. Because of that, their connections to the Vigil clan was significant. Owners of extensive tracts of land and mercantile interests, the Vigil family also had a distinguished record of military and political service in New Mexico. María Ignacia's uncle, Cornelio Vigil, held several civic posts in Taos and later partnered with Ceran St. Vrain in a massive grant of which Bent was a silent partner. Donaciano Vigil was territorial secretary to two governors, an assemblyman, eloquent speaker, and good soldier. Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid was lieutenant governor of New Mexico when war with the United States broke out in 1846. Through godparenthood, María Ignacia's children linked Charles Bent with other influential families in the region.[7]

And yet, Bent never fully became part of the family. He did not marry María Ignacia or seek to legitimate their children in the eyes of the Catholic Church, nor is there any evidence Bent took religion seriously. The antipathy between Bent and Antonio José Martínez, the parish priest of Taos, likely contributed to the trader's decisions. It is unlikely that he would have feared being stigmatized in St. Louis for marrying a New Mexican woman; the city was full of merchants and traders who recognized the necessity of such cross-cultural unions. Simultaneously, cohabitation was common in the borderlands and did not necessarily carry a social stigma for high-status families. Whatever Bent's reasoning, Catholicism, marriage, and citizenship were markers that indicated belonging and cultural accommodation by borderlands expatriates.[8] They were values that many New Mexicans cared about deeply, and Bent refused to comply with these norms. He found great success in Taos, but many people never trusted him.

Bent probably did not care because he neither liked nor trusted many of his neighbors. He was the product of an ethnocentric culture that viewed Mexicans as racially and culturally inferior. "The Mexican character is made up of stupidity, obstinacy, ignorance, duplicity, and vanity," he wrote to the United States consul in Santa Fe in an 1845 letter. Despite his cohabitation with Jaramillo and ties to others in the region, there is nothing inconsistent about Bent's words and actions. Like many Anglos in the borderlands, he made exceptions and partnerships with men and women whose status and connections he found useful while denigrating those he classified as obstructionist or useless for his larger purposes.[9]

Charles Bent's closest relations and partners in New Mexico also formed relationships with local women. His younger brother George had a common-law marriage with María de la Cruz Padilla that produced two children. Bent left her property in Taos provided she give up custody of the children so they could be educated in St. Louis. She agreed. Ceran St. Vrain lived with three different women and had a child with each of them. He made the same custody arrangements as Bent.[10] The most famous intercultural marriage in Taos took place between Kit Carson and Josefa Jaramillo, sister of Bent's wife. Carson had had relationships with New Mexican women in the past, losing one to fellow mountain man James Beckwourth, who, according to a later account, was the "best swung" of the two. Carson most likely met Josefa at Bent's home in Taos. Carson converted to Catholicism and formalized his marriage in the parish church, perhaps as a conciliatory gesture to Josefa's parents. Conversion and a church marriage may have swayed a pair of reluctant parents, but Carson might have taken the initiative because he had a long history of adapting to Native American and Hispanic cultural habits and protocols.[11]

Outside of his immediate family circle Bent developed contacts with other Anglo-Americans and French-Canadian expatriates around Taos. Stephen Lee came to New Mexico around 1824 to trap beaver. He acquired the reputation of a smuggler, but he married, became a citizen in 1829, and got involved in politics and the land grant business. Although Lee became Taos sheriff, he was the first person killed during the revolt of 1847.[12] Charles Beaubien was a well-educated Quebecois who came to New Mexico in 1826. Like other French-Canadians who came west, he entered the fur trade. He married María Paula Lobato in 1827, and the couple had nine children. Beaubien became *alcalde* of Taos, an advisor to Governor Armijo, and a partner in a massive land grant during the 1840s. His Catholicism and skills in language acquisition meant he was

"steeped in the process of middle-grounding," writes Jay Gitlin. But his success came at great personal cost. His oldest son, Narciso, was among those killed along with Lee and Bent in 1847.[13]

There were other kin networks in New Mexico whose identity and goals were quite different from those with whom Bent associated. A rival faction coalesced around the Martínez family. Intermarriage also linked the Martínez clan to some of the same families related to Bent's common-law wife, including the Vigils. Owning large tracts of land and sizable herds of sheep, they were key political and economic players in the community. Antonio José Martínez became the most outspoken critics of Bent and his allies.[14] Martínez was one of the most remarkable figures in New Mexico. He entered the seminary after the death of his wife and became a student of the revolutionary nationalism of Mexican heroes like Father Hidalgo. The young man took charge of the Taos parish in 1826, served in the New Mexico assembly, founded schools, and developed a reputation for safeguarding the interests of his parishioners.[15] He and Bent clashed over trade, land grants, and politics. The priest had a diametrically different vision for New Mexico than did the trader, one grounded in centralist political ideology, religious nationalism, and the curtailment of the foreign interests that threatened Taos and his family's power.

These issues divided Mexican politics into federalist and centralist factions. Federalists on the frontier favored local political control, free trade with the United States, and liberal immigration policies. Men like Donaciano Vigil also blamed Mexico City for the lack of protection from powerful Indians as well as the stagnant condition of the borderlands economy. Centralists favored the concentration of political authority in the capital, viewed Americans with intense suspicion, and grounded their identity in strict adherence to Catholicism and a celebration of culturally conservative values. The church hierarchy, large landholders, and the military officer class were the backbone of the centralist constituency. The debate between the two sides, writes Raúl Ramos, created an environment "where opposition to the government could be voiced while maintaining loyalty and patriotism to the Mexican nation" with a clear conscience.[16] This atmosphere where both sides could claim to be truly "Mexican" framed the Taos feuding of the 1830s and 1840s.

Charles Bent appeared as a threat to New Mexico during the Chimayó Rebellion of 1837. During the late 1830s a wave of rebellions against a reassertion of centralist authority rocked Mexico from the Yucatán Peninsula to Sonora. In Texas, secessionist forces triumphed over Mexico,

FIGURE 7. Reverend Antonio José Martínez (1793–1867). Courtesy of Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), neg. no. 174508.

and there was violence in Santa Fe and Alta California. New Mexican rebels rose up in opposition to higher taxes and clerical fees, the curtailment of local political autonomy, and the imposition of an outsider, Albino Peréz, as governor. Their success was short-lived.[17] In the shadow of the Texas Revolution, some Mexicans blamed Americans for instigating the rebellion, and traders like Charles Bent became objects of suspicion and resentment. His critics can probably be forgiven their fears even though no evidence exists to implicate him as a secessionist.[18] Some priests certainly felt he deserved blame. The rebels "move hand in hand with the adventurers of Texas," Padre Juan Felipe Ortíz wrote Manuel Armijo. The priest singled out "the foreigner Bent" as the "conduit of these relations," an opinion formed on the basis of the trader's shady reputation.[19] The cleric was not alone in his suspicion of Bent and his

associates. On August 12, 1837, several American traders, including Bent, attempted to smuggle contraband out of Santa Fe. When a military detachment stopped them, a scuffle took place. The merchants were furious. Indignantly, they petitioned the governor for redress. They asked for "the protection of the laws" and demanded "the punishment of those unruly men" who had "shamelessly" attacked them. The rebels executed Peréz before he addressed the issue.[20] Suspicions that Bent and his associates acted to undermine the security of New Mexico by cooperating with outside forces emerged as a consistent criticism of the trader during the next ten years and undermined his credibility with many of his Taos neighbors.

In 1841 an invasion by Texan forces turned suspicious eyes on Bent again. Flat broke and commercially stagnant, the Republic of Texas turned its attention to New Mexico, hoping that conquering their western neighbor would divert profits from the Santa Fe trade into Austin's empty coffers. Assuming New Mexicans welcomed annexation, President Mirabeau Lamar authorized an expedition to conquer the territory. Poorly organized and ill-conceived, the invading force of three hundred fell apart before it reached Santa Fe, defeated by poor logistical support, Indian raiders, and the vast, waterless distances of the Llano Estacado. Inglorious as the expedition was, it deepened mistrust between many Anglos and New Mexicans in the borderlands communities.[21]

Rumors of American collusion with the Texans swirled in New Mexico, leading to resentment, suspicion, and violence. Most of the Anglo-American community in the borderlands viewed the Texans as troublemakers. Charles Bent used his connections with Governor Manuel Armijo to protect the interests and property of his compatriots. He offered intelligence on Texan movements, hoping to curry favor with Armijo. On January 16, 1841, Bent passed information about the "many reports" the company's employees received about invasion preparations. On January 20, he requested that United States Consul Manuel Alvarez secure "leters of security" from Armijo for all Americans in New Mexico.[22] Territorial Secretary Guadalupe Miranda responded that all Americans "shall be protected and respected, and that it shall not be permitted to any to persecute or insult them." However, if anyone aided the invaders, "that person shall be held as an enemy, and shall be proceeded against forthwith conformably to law," Miranda warned Alvarez.[23] The Americans would have to prove their loyalty by remaining aloof from the conflict. Any sign that they were sympathetic to the Texans risked swift reprisal.

Unrest also roiled Taos. Suspicious individuals claimed that Bent, John Rowland, and William Workman acted as Texan agents. Before the invasion Lamar had sent a man to Taos to contact Rowland and Workman—local merchants—and enlist their services to convince the New Mexicans to accept annexation. While Workman's pro-American sentiments were well known, he and Rowland might not have known of Lamar's actions beforehand. Regardless, both men had their homes searched and some property confiscated by local authorities, Alvarez informed Secretary of State Daniel Webster. The two men left for California shortly thereafter.[24] Bent also came under intense scrutiny. Taos authorities arrested him on suspicion of aiding the Texans and brought him to Santa Fe for questioning. The consul intervened, and they released the trader. Alvarez blamed the incident on a misinterpretation of orders by the Taos officials. Americans coming into New Mexico from near Bent's Fort were arrested and interrogated. Alvarez also wrote to Secretary of State Daniel Webster that three travelers, despite "good references" and no evidence of lawbreaking, were incarcerated in the capital.[25]

Not all the tensions in 1841 divided the residents of Taos along racial and ethnic lines, for in February an incident took place that exposed tensions in the expatriate community and possibly within María Ignacia's extended family. On February 19, Bent and William Workman met Juan B. Vigil in the street in Taos. The two men asked why Vigil, an attorney, had submitted a legal document to Governor Armijo accusing them of some sort of wrongdoing. They claimed the "representation" was a false one and demanded that Vigil retract the document. The attorney swore his statement was true, but "the word was hardly out of his mouth, when Workman struck him with his whip," Bent wrote Alvarez. Workman then dropped the whip and pummeled the fallen man with his fists until Bent "thought he had given him enough" before pulling Workman off Vigil.[26] There is no consensus among historians as to the source of the dispute. Although the standard explanation of the event is that Vigil accused the two men of working with the Texans, evidence in Bent's correspondence with Alvarez paints a picture of bad business dealings.[27]

The incident likely dealt with the dissolution of a small trading firm, Branch & Lee. Stephen L. Lee and Alexander K. Branch had partnered in a retail business in 1838, and settlement of debts or the sale of the business after Branch's death might have sparked the violence in Taos. Branch & Lee had had dealings with Bent in the past, and Charles implied that some favorable settlement "had [been] done in for the interest of booth partys," presumably himself and Lee. However, Lee's attorney,

Vigil, threatened to derail the transaction. Bent thought Lee "ignorant of his own interest" and charged that Vigil manipulated Lee and tried to pump him for more legal fees. Real estate might have been involved in the dispute.[28]

Bent blended bluster, diplomacy, and possibly violence to resolve the Vigil dispute. The day after the assault Bent reached out to his friends for help. Taken before the local magistrate, he faced an irate Vigil, who "threatened to raise his relations and friends" if he did not get a ruling against the American. Bent argued his way out of a jail sentence, settling for two days of house arrest and a cash bond. He thought of pursuing legal action against Vigil but rejected that course. Violence could be more gratifying. He would rather thrash a man than sue him, Bent told Alvarez. Lawsuits were for "cowards and wimen," he wrote. But the trader recognized that he also needed to plot a strategy within the law. Hearing that Vigil had gone to Santa Fe to petition the governor, Bent sent Armijo a gift of coffee and gunpowder to secure a favorable decision.[29] The next month, he might have attempted to take matters into his own hands. Vigil escaped through the bedroom window when a barking dog alerted him to the presence of armed men outside the house where he slept. The attorney fled "nearly naked" across the prairie to the next town and secured protection from local authorities.[30] Bent had triumphed in the short term, but his reputation likely suffered in the eyes of the Taos community.

Two years after their failed campaign the Texans tried again, with more negative consequences for Bent. Armed with commissions secured from President Sam Houston, the filibusters recruited men around Bent's Fort and won a victory over New Mexican militiamen before a detachment of United States Dragoons broke up the expedition along the Santa Fe Trail.[31] Although the Texans failed, Bent could not avoid official scrutiny. The recruitment attempts on the Arkansas River amplified the uneasiness Armijo felt when he received word that Las Vegas authorities had captured "two thieves" from that area who knew the Texans and their intentions. Bent and Alvarez kept Armijo appraised of the filibusters' movements.[32] Many New Mexicans were still wary of the trader, and he grew increasingly resentful of their suspicions. He complained that many people viewed Americans as "intruders" and argued that the United States government should protect their rights and property. He said that the "rabble" were the main instigators of harassment but claimed that they were "excited . . . by some of the first citizens of the country." Simultaneously, Bent became involved in a lawsuit with a

Taos neighbor and was almost mobbed by citizens in Santa Fe. The case was eventually settled despite the “slanderous reports” Bent accused his opponents of spreading.[33] The trader emerged from the Texan incidents legally unscathed but unable to shake off the whiff of suspicion that clung to him in the coming years. Being seen as an agent of conquest was the quickest way to stir up resentment and animosity among Mexican patriots, but even nonviolent business transactions could be controversial.

Internal problems also afflicted New Mexico and commerce with the United States and were a source of conflict between centralists and federalists. No one questioned the importance of the Santa Fe trade to the departmental economy. However, business strengthened the ties of many borderlands merchants to their American counterparts in Missouri and on the Atlantic coast. Here was the conundrum for authorities in Santa Fe and Mexico City—trade was essential to the economic survival of frontier communities, but commerce risked drawing the borderlands away from the mother country and into the orbit of the United States. Centralists feared this scenario as men like Bent used federalist networks to enhance their power. Attempts to limit trade or restrict these merchants' activities were usually unsuccessful. Inexperienced and underpaid customs officials and complicit local authorities made enforcement of national laws difficult, especially when they conflicted with New Mexican interests. When borderlanders thought directives from Mexico City conflicted with their interests, federalism usually won the day.[34] And the mercantile interests of local federalists often overlapped with those of the company. Even cooperation with enterprises that facilitated the economic development of the region would be controversial for Bent if they raised the specter of deepening dependence on the United States.

Both Charles Bent and his federalist allies found Mexican customs enforcement frustratingly inconsistent and deployed a range of tactics to protect the profitability of their ventures. Bent tried to protect his interests by cultivating good relations with Armijo and trusting him to enforce or ignore laws in the best interests of the merchants. New Mexican centralists were not as accommodating, and Bent worried that changing leadership hurt the interests of the Americans.[35] His fears were confirmed in 1844, when Mariano Martínez ascended to the governorship in Santa Fe. He closed the New Mexico market to all traders except naturalized citizens and those who “have Families resided in the country,” according to one American observer. Bent likely had some influence with customs officials because he paid duties in October and December. Perhaps they accepted his union with Jaramillo as evidence of family ties and allowed

him to continue his business.[36] If persuasion and diplomacy failed, Bent smuggled. Evidence for this is anecdotal, but in an 1844 letter to Alvarez the trader said that his brother George had reached the crossing of the Las Animas River and warned the consul to keep the news to himself "for feare that an escort might be sent out" to meet the caravan. If Bent's intent was to evade customs duties, he was unsuccessful.[37]

Some Mexican authorities feared that the American was a lawbreaker, and that some Taos officials aided and abetted his malfeasance. Even Armijo wrote to authorities in Mexico City naming Bent as a threat. In an 1840 letter to the secretary of war, Armijo claimed American forts along the Arkansas River, especially "that of Charles Bent," sheltered dangerous renegades. The trader sold guns to the Indians and protected those who robbed and killed Mexican traders. Without prompt and decisive action, "New Mexico must go to total ruin," Armijo predicted. He also saved criticism for Taos authorities, saying they were "familiar with these strangers" and did nothing to curb their activities.[38] Five years later, on a military inspection of the northern frontier, Francisco García Condé concurred with Armijo's earlier assessment. He urged authorities to discipline Bent and to pay close attention to those in Taos who engaged in "dangerous" and "frank communication" with smugglers, provided them with passports, and ignored violations of Mexican law.[39] In times of crisis, however, Taos officials did zealously surveille Bent and his associates. In 1841 authorities raided Bent's home searching for contraband. Ironically, Bent believed the information came from an American expatriate whom the trader called a "damd Lyer." During the 1843 troubles another official ransacked Charles Beaubien's property, prompting a letter of reprimand from Governor Armijo in which he apologized to Beaubien, saying that customs officials "cannot nor should not tear down any house unless he has sufficient proof" of lawbreaking.[40] Like Bent, who often modified his business and political strategies as new circumstances dictated, New Mexican officials could be pragmatic. If Bent's operations benefited local merchants, authorities often looked the other way, but in times of national crisis, patriotism tinged by anti-Americanism might trump the economic principles of federalist thought.

Trade and Indian relations also created a set of interconnected problems for borderlands officials. During the 1830s and 1840s, frontier defense languished as military resources were hoarded in the nation's core states. New Mexican federalists like Donaciano Vigil lamented the inability or unwillingness of centralist administrators to take the situation seriously or provide meaningful financial or military aid. As

a result, the challenge of confronting powerful tribes along the nation's northern border necessitated flexible diplomacy. Frontiersmen sometimes deflected violence away from their communities through trade and localized peace treaties. Despite these efforts, Indian relations oscillated between war and peace, a situation dependent on the strength and objectives of the competing groups. Navajos, Utes, and New Mexicans raided, captured, and killed each other throughout these years, and periods of peace were brief. Simultaneously, borderlands settlers strove mightily, and often successfully, to placate the powerful Comanches and Kiowas.[41] In light of the military power of these tribes, New Mexican authorities had to carefully monitor the actions of local citizens and American merchants like Bent to be sure that their actions did not threaten regional security.

And yet, Bent family ties to the Cheyennes endangered the northern frontier. William Bent's marriage secured the company's profitability, but the alliance also deepened tensions with New Mexico. The two sides had a long history of conflict with each other, and evidence of their raids into the territory was apparent to American observers. Violence intensified after the conclusion of the Great Peace of 1840, stimulated by grievances over slave raiding, horse theft, and contests over access to prime bison hunting grounds. American observers reported that Arapaho warriors carried north "herds of cattle and numbers of Mexican scalps" in addition to captives. Cheyenne stories also tell of raids into Mexico.[42]

Padre Antonio José Martínez warned high-ranking officials in Mexico City that American traders colluded with local government officials and Indian raiders to undermine the security of borderlands settlements. As these entrepreneurs pushed into west Texas and collected in greater numbers along the Arkansas River, they threatened to reorient the Indian trade away from New Mexico. The tribes had their own reasons to attack Mexican settlements—revenge for comrades lost in battle and the acquisition of the livestock necessary to their personal socioeconomic and political advancement—but American markets offered a reliable place to trade horses and captives for anything from cloth and metal cooking pots to guns and alcohol.[43] In an 1843 letter to Antonio Lopéz de Santa Anna, Martínez noted that under Spanish rule the Americans had been unable to erect trading posts along the international border. Under Mexican rule, Anglos like the Bents built forts with impunity. In addition to legitimate trade goods, the Americans peddled liquor, which created such a powerful craving for alcohol that the Indians slaughtered the bison of the southern plains indiscriminately, so they could trade

the hides for liquor. The destruction of the bison herds, facilitated by the American demand for robes, threatened the economic and physical safety of New Mexicans used to supplementing their crops through hunting. As the herds shrank, it became more difficult and hazardous for *ciboleros* to bring home meat for the winter. The desire for trade goods also prompted the tribes to raid into New Mexico and points south. The government took no action in response to the warning.[44]

Although anecdotal evidence exists that the Bents were reliable buyers of stolen Mexican livestock, they sometimes found themselves the targets of raids or as mediators between their Indian kinfolk and frontier settlers. Multiple reminiscences state that the company purchased horses and mules from Comanche raiders, no questions asked. William's son George Bent told one correspondent that his father's men drove these animals north and sold them to gold seekers bound for California.[45] Considering their reputation as unscrupulous businessmen, it is unsurprising that the Bents rarely received help from New Mexican authorities. When Taos residents purchased horses the Comanches had driven off from Bent's Fort, Armijo told Alvarez that since the crime took place in the United States, he could do nothing to punish local buyers. Simultaneously, Bent recognized that the violence that could accompany horse theft might disrupt his operations. When New Mexicans raided a Cheyenne horse herd in 1845, the trader warned Armijo that the Indians would kill all the Mexican merchants they found along the Santa Fe Trail. This violence would be counterproductive. He sarcastically wrote Alvarez that "if the Indians commit any depradations on the Mexicans they will say that we are the cause of this outrage," a complaint that reveals the frequency with which some neighbors accused him of malfeasance.[46]

William Bent's marriage alliance and the history of violence between his Indian kinfolk and the New Mexicans framed the arguments and accusations that Charles and Padre Martínez hurled at each other in February 1846. On February 15, Ute raiders drove off a large flock of sheep belonging to the priest's family. After efforts by the priest and local soldiers failed to recover the livestock, tongues wagged in Taos that Bent had foreknowledge of the raid and benefited from its results. Bent was furious and identified Martínez as the rumormonger. He was "determined to fix this theft on us if he can find the least pretext for doing so," the trader complained. The priest's original accusation misidentified the thieves. Martínez had stated that the Cheyennes and "our people"—Bent, St. Vrain and Company employees—had carried out the raid. The connection seemed logical to the priest, given the overlapping context

of violence, theft, and kinship. Although evidence eventually convinced the cleric that the Cheyennes were not involved, the accusation still rankled.[47]

Beyond purchasing stolen livestock, the Bents were also involved in the borderlands slave trade. Purchased captives worked at Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River. George Bent claimed that these women and men preferred his father's employment to debt peonage on a Mexican hacienda or captivity in a Comanche camp. Most of these individuals likely came from the Comanches and Kiowas, the most aggressive raiders. Charles Bent also purchased a Ute woman for domestic service. The family sponsored María Guadalupe Bent's baptism after they acquired her. She is listed in the baptismal register as an "Indian servant of Charles Bent" who had been "rescued from the Northern nations." The family also sponsored the baptism of her daughter, María Soledad Bent, in March 1845.[48] The purchase of Indian captives by New Mexicans also threatened to draw Bent into conflict with some of his neighbors. In the spring of 1841 some traders purchased several Arapaho captives from the Utes. Bent warned Alvarez that a combined force of Arapahos, Cheyennes, and Lakotas was gathering to strike New Mexico in retaliation. They "will play the devil with the frontear settlements," he wrote. The American admitted to the consul that the company could make a lot of money if war broke out, but his warnings to Armijo should demonstrate his real intentions. And yet, all he received was suspicion and accusation, Bent complained. By spring the attacks began, and he had no doubt the Indians "will kill all the Mexicans they can" as far as south as Pecos. The final resolution of the conflict is undocumented, but it clearly indicates the violence and tensions that flowed from the company's involvement in the shadow economies of the borderlands.[49] The captive taking and raiding that violently disrupted frontier life worried men like Padre Martínez as they watched Bent's attempts to acquire the one resource New Mexico had in abundance: land.

Land grants were essential to the survival of communities in New Mexico's northern borderlands. In an environment characterized by aridity, the grants allowed villagers to access diverse ecosystems with allotments for pasturage, woodlots, agricultural plots, irrigable waterways, and hunting grounds. Nevertheless, the Mexican government had failed to stimulate much immigration from the nation's core or from Europe. Because of this, officials in Santa Fe turned to private citizens. Such colonization plans backfired spectacularly in Texas, but Governor Armijo pressed ahead. His actions made him unpopular with centralists

like Martínez who feared that the grants gave the federalists and their American allies too much power. Armijo largely ignored these arguments and used the grants to curry political favor and keep the departmental bureaucracy functioning.[50]

Although the grant system was designed to benefit small communities, it was open for exploitation by those who knew how to deploy local political allies. There were many loopholes in the system. Under Spanish rule, the maximum acreage for a grant was 63,894 acres; during the Mexican period, the amount tripled. The largest grants during the 1840s went to small partnerships, many of which involved naturalized citizens rather than villages and pueblos. Officially, an individual, partners, or a community petitioned the governor for a grant in which they described the land itself and their qualifications for acquiring and developing it. The governor often referred the matter to the local *alcalde,* who investigated the petition to see if the land was already in use or claimed, as well as the qualifications of the applicants. If the land was unclaimed and unused and the petitioners were upstanding citizens, the grant was usually obtained.[51] In reality, the cultivation of personal contacts often mattered more than the letter of the law, and conflicts of interest abounded. If the governor who heard the petition had a conflict of interest, he was supposed to recuse himself from the process. If local *alcaldes* had family or financial ties to the applicants, the case was supposed to be heard by an alternate official. Despite these technicalities, Armijo was notorious for overlooking legal niceties and granting massive amounts of land to business partners and political favorites. For the governor, self-interest overlapped with national interest.[52]

Legally, only Mexican citizens could acquire land. Expatriate Anglo-Americans and French-Canadians who converted to Catholicism and married local women highlighted these ties to the community in their grant applications in the hope that marriage might make it easier to acquire large grants. Controversy over Armijo's openhandedness first arose over lands granted to Charles Beaubien and Guadalupe Miranda in 1841. A well-connected New Mexican partner could aid naturalized citizens like Beaubien in the grant process. Guadalupe Miranda was certainly a player in New Mexico politics. He served as secretary of the Mexican Departmental Government in Santa Fe and was also collector of customs. In his capacity as secretary, Miranda fielded much of Charles Bent's correspondence, funneled through Manuel Alvarez. The two men argued for their grant on the basis that the land was unoccupied and undeveloped. They would ranch and farm on the grant. Armijo granted

the petition on January 11, 1841, but the hostility roused by the Texan invasion forced the partners to postpone their plans for two years.[53]

Padre Martínez was the loudest voice of opposition to the grant. That the governor received a one-quarter interest in the venture struck the priest as highly problematic. Simultaneously, Beaubien and Miranda had signed a one-quarter interest over to Charles Bent. Martínez angrily pointed out that Armijo had no authority to grant land to noncitizens. Bent's involvement should have voided the entire deal.[54] The padre also argued that the lands included in the grant were already in use by the Jicarilla Apaches and the Taos Pueblo. The potential threat to the Pueblo was especially important, for Beaubien and Bent might threaten communal grazing lands and water rights. Pueblo elders said that part of the land in question was part of Spain's original grant to the Indians. Their long history of fending off outside encroachment meant that they would defend their land at all costs. Despite a provision in the land laws for native testimony against grants that encroached on lands claimed by the Pueblo, it appears that Armijo took no steps to solicit Indian views on the issue.[55]

The priest's protests proved fruitless as the partners lied and blustered their way through the case. Governor Mariano Chávez, a man whose brother had been killed by American bandits and who was in no mood to accommodate anyone associated with the Anglos, upheld a court decision that voided Armijo's original concession.[56] The partners were furious with the priest, the governor, and the Indians. Other influential New Mexicans commiserated with Miranda and Beaubien. Donaciano Vigil sympathized with Miranda, writing him in 1844 that Father Martínez, mocking the padre as "the man of learning and sage of the century" who had duped Governor Chávez into blocking the grant. Beaubien was also angry and frustrated. During the process he and three other naturalized citizens from Taos wrote a letter to the governor outlining their troubles. They were being denied their rights as citizens and the "guarantees of the constitutional laws" of Mexico. Despite "our union with the daughters of the country," they continued, they were constantly being threatened "with death without any reason" by the Indians from the Taos Pueblo. "Because we are sons of other countries," their neighbors did not recognize their citizenship and rights because they were "not within reach of what they consider as Mexicans," the letter concluded.[57] The grantees were adept at outrage and lied to protect their interests. They denied Bent was a partner in the grant. When questioned about the fact that the nearly two-million-acre swath of land violated the Mexican Colonization Law

of 1824, which limited the size of a grant made to two partners to ninety-six thousand acres, they claimed that the grant was only a little bit over that number. Their impassioned arguments ultimately carried the day. In April 1844, the Departmental Assembly ordered the grant restored. Another governor, Felipe Seña, upheld the assembly's decision, and later that year Cornelio Vigil, María Ignacia Jaramillo's uncle, placed Beaubien and Miranda in official possession of their massive new holdings. Now secure from interference, Charles Bent began ranching operations on the Poñil River, before he, Beaubien, and Miranda sold their claim to another group of American investors in December 1846.[58]

Charles Bent benefited from other deals that escaped the priest's attention. In March 1843 he acquired a one-sixth interest in a grant involving Ceran St. Vrain and Cornelio Vigil. Vigil and St. Vrain split up the interest in the grant, conveying a one-sixth interest to themselves, Charles Bent, Governor Armijo, Donaciano Vigil, and Eugene Leitensdorfer. Soon after the deal was completed, William Bent began using the land to raise livestock and crops. However, by 1847, Indian raids made the project untenable. Had Martínez known of this arrangement, he assuredly would have protested, but there is no record of his opposition to the Vigil–St. Vrain Grant.[59] Bent also became a one-sixth partner in a grant awarded to Stephen Lee and Charles Beaubien's son Narciso. The trader's associates played pivotal roles in other grants as well. Beaubien and Lee served as official witnesses when Cornelio Vigil placed Gervais Nolan in possession of nearly one million acres. For the time, Bent and his partners stood to reap massive profits. But their intrigues in the land business came at the expense of the Taos community and were especially threatening to the economic well-being of the Pueblo. Their activities would have bloody consequences in a short time. "In casting their lot so firmly behind land-based accumulation of wealth, some of these families would bear the brunt of the violence that erupted after the American conquest in 1847," writes James F. Brooks.[60] Involvement in the land grant business was another step in a series of business deals that put Bent and his allies on a collision course with some of their Taos neighbors. Smuggling, the Indian trade, and the grants all threatened the security of the local community. If Bent could not be trusted, he must be opposed.

Family and extended kin connections were also crucial to local politics in northern New Mexico, as relations between Bent and his Taos neighbors fluctuated between coexistence and violent conflict. Election victories might translate into expanded political and economic opportunities for allies connected with the officeholder. Well-placed family

members and friends could tip the scales in favor of someone seeking favors or preferment. The path to citizenship and land grants could be smoothed by the cooperation of friendly politicians. Lawsuits might settle swiftly, get dismissed, or disappear entirely. Thus, elections became hotly contested events. Bent hung his hopes on Charles Beaubien's electoral success, while Martínez often boosted members of his own family. The rivalry notwithstanding, Taos politics was relatively calm in the early 1840s, when the priest offered little opposition to Beaubien's election as justice of the peace in 1842. The French-Canadian's Catholicism, marriage, and naturalization might have overridden any suspicions he might not be completely loyal to Mexico. Any feelings of bipartisanship, however, had evaporated when Beaubien ran for office again in 1846.[61]

The elections that spring brought latent tensions between Bent and his rivals to the surface. The trader expressed deep concern that the election of one of the priest's brothers would damage the company's interests as the United States and Mexico moved closer to war. He worried that Martínez was unduly influential in the process and was "exerting himself for his brother Santiago," touting him as the only man in Taos capable of filling the office. Bent was skeptical, and his anxiety led him to bash the man's temperament and intelligence, although Martínez was just as fit for the post as Beaubien. Initially Bent felt confident in the outcome and gloated that the priest was getting worried.[62] But by late March his optimism had dimmed considerably. He griped that the padre would "suffer no one in authority heare" who did not support the family's political interests. Bent warned Alvarez that "a great many" of the citizens of Taos "are bound to say as the priest directs them" in all civic matters. The American accused Martínez of attacking him through unspecified rumors and innuendos. "The Priest will spair no meanes to injure me," Bent raged. The man would not rest until he made "Cats Paws" of the local officials. The trader warned that "if he can suxcead in this thare is no telling what he may accomplish" when Santiago assumed office.[63]

The animosity between the two men was so high that the priest apparently believed that Bent planned to settle the dispute with a shockingly violent act. The trader reported to Alvarez that Martínez was paranoid. Bent heard the story secondhand that the priest believed the American had tunneled under the parish church and placed three kegs of gunpowder, which he planned to detonate during Good Friday services. Martínez had urged his brother Pascual to search Bent's home for evidence of the plot. Bent sardonically concluded that even Pascual—"fool as he is"—could not believe such a ridiculous story, even coming from his

brother. The explosion that followed did not come from beneath the altar of the church, however, but rather in the streets of Taos a few days later.[64]

The tensions reached a violent climax on May 3, 1846, when a crowd attacked George Bent and his friend Francis Preston Blair. Charles admitted Blair was "in liquor" but claimed that George was simply helping his friend home to sleep off the drunk. About thirty men took part in the assault and left the two Americans "very much beaten," with Blair suffering from severe cuts on his head. A crowd then gathered outside George's home shouting insults. Charles warned Alvarez that "if anything further is done heare I would not like to answer for the consiquences" before adding, "I am very excited at this moment." Bent held the Martínez family personally responsible for the violence. He claimed the attackers were "servants of the big family" and singled out Pascual Martínez as the mastermind behind the attack. He ordered his men into action and then refused to interfere "because it was Sunday," the trader fumed. Rumors also reached Bent that the justice of the peace would not punish anyone, and now the Mexicans were "going about town drunk and singing and rejoicing in consiquence of thare victory." Bent had no faith in the local courts. "While this family is in authority," the lives and property of the Americans "are not secured," he warned the consul. Armijo should investigate because without the governor's help, Bent claimed, his family would have to leave town.[65]

Armijo received news of the altercation and ordered the Taos prefect to investigate the matter and detain the guilty parties. Alvarez passed on Bent's account to the governor that while George convalesced local rowdies gathered outside his window shouting "loudly" that they would kill him just as they had another American several years earlier. The local authorities saw this transpire but remained "cold-eyed" and refused to intervene. Armijo found this unacceptable. He wanted the matter resolved "with the greatest impartiality and sanity," he told the Taos officials. The consul repeated much the same information to Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid on May 6.[66]

The testimony collected during the investigation told a very different story from the one Bent sent south to Santa Fe. The most thorough account came from José María Martínez, one of the justices of the peace and the priest's brother. He testified that he was shopping when he heard the fracas in the plaza. Bent and Blair were "intoxicated" and abusing the people before the crowd fell on them, Martínez said. After the beating Charles complained to the justice, who told him that his suit against the attackers would be heard by the proper authorities. When a quarrel later

erupted, the "foreigners" were said to be "preparing their guns to go and kill" potential witnesses against Bent and Blair. After hearing testimony, the court declared that the two young men had been the "promoters and aggressors" in the incident. The court found that the attackers had not been "completely prudent" but found their actions justifiable. The justice also accused Bent of hatching a "plot" against the Martínez family and worried that the trader and his allies would deploy their connections with frontier Indians to bring on war with New Mexico. Bent had threatened to turn the Utes "against us to make war," he warned. Local authorities arrested a couple of men for assault but released them almost immediately. Bent was furious when Armijo failed to step in. The governor, however, had bigger issues to deal with. War with the United States loomed on the eastern horizon.[67]

By the time of the Taos incident, Charles Bent had spent more than ten years building alliances in New Mexico. Like most shrewd borderlanders, he recognized the necessity of forging intimate ties with key members of the local community. Such alliances were the bedrock of any successful economic or political venture. Bent's union with María Ignacia Jaramillo linked him to a network of Mexican federalists who favored better trade and political relations with the United States. Partnership opened doors to trade, land acquisition, and political influence in northern New Mexico. Simultaneously, however, Bent was easily portrayed as a dangerous outsider who threatened the stability of the Taos community and even the northern borderland itself. Accusations flew that he was a smuggler, that he had twice tried to help Texan filibusters conquer New Mexico, that he and his partners aided Indians who wreaked havoc in Mexico, and that he had fraudulently acquired hundreds of thousands of acres of land. As war between Mexico and the United States loomed, Charles Bent had emerged as one of the frontier's most prominent, and potentially dangerous, residents.

4 / Collapse: The Final Days of Bent, St. Vrain and Company, 1846–1849

The American conquest of New Mexico should have been a glorious moment for the Bents and their business interests; instead, the U.S.-Mexico War unleashed political, economic, and environmental forces that destroyed the company. After Stephen Watts Kearny's Army of the West seized Santa Fe in August 1846, he immediately implemented a new regime with Charles Bent as governor and several of his closest allies in key positions of influence. The state of war between the two countries, the fall of the capital, and Bent's appointment resulted in a massive rebellion in the northern borderlands. By the time it was over, Bent and several of his Taos allies were dead, and the United States Army had killed scores of Indians and New Mexicans. War and the discovery of gold in California catalyzed a wave of migration west on the Santa Fe Trail that led to increasing violence between travelers and Indians squeezed by drought, disease, and a declining resource base. Caught between these forces, Bent, St. Vrain and Company collapsed.

While expansionist fervor swept many parts of the United States, some Americans in the borderlands feared war with Mexico. James K. Polk's election unnerved Charles Bent. The trader expressed his unease in January 1845. "I am fearfull that this election will cause great difficulty between this and our country," Bent confided to Manuel Alvarez. Other Santa Fe merchants expressed similar sentiments. They feared that hard-liners in Mexico City might expel foreigners and confiscate property, "or due worse," Bent fretted.[1]

Unaware of Bent's political worries, American strategists planned to turn his post into a temporary military garrison. Secretary of War

William Marcy hoped Bent's knowledge of New Mexico might ease the military conquest. Marcy dispatched American trader George Howard to inform the Anglo-Americans in New Mexico of the army's approach and gather intelligence. He was supposed to contact Bent but failed to connect with the partners. They learned of the war in Kansas on their way east with the summer caravan.[2] The traders then rode to Fort Leavenworth and met Kearny, who commanded three hundred army regulars from the First United States Dragoons supplemented by the one thousand volunteers of the First Missouri Volunteer Infantry led by Colonel Alexander Doniphan. There the partners learned they would be hosting the column. The lead detachment of the Army of the West reached Bent's Fort in late July, and Kearny arrived soon after.[3]

The arrival of so many men and animals turned the post into bedlam and stretched the company's ability to provide supplies and space for the army's provisions. The incessant clanging of blacksmithing tools, whinnying of horses, braying of mules, laughing of children, and arguing of men "are all enough to turn my head," Susan Shelby Magoffin confided to her journal. The young woman, recovering from a miscarriage in one of the fort's spare rooms, wrote that "the Fort is crowded to overflowing" and that Kearny seemed to have brought the entire world with him.[4] The soldiers explored the fort, swam and fished in the Arkansas River, and chased stampeded horses. The army's twenty thousand animals and tons of supplies strained the company's accommodations and the partners' patience.[5]

While his men drank, pursued stray livestock, and wrote letters home, Kearny gathered intelligence on New Mexico and tried to convince Governor Armijo not to resist the Army of the West. The general urged citizens not to oppose the army. If they did not resist, they would be unmolested. If they fought, the Americans would crush them. Any blood spilled would be on Armijo's hands. Having informed his superiors, "I have done all in my power to obtain possession of the Country quietly and peaceably," Kearny marched the Army of the West south on August 2, 1846, following the Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail toward Raton Pass.[6]

William Bent guided the soldiers south as far as the pass. He and Kearny had argued over wages, and Bent left in a huff, convinced his talents were undervalued. They eventually reached an understanding, and Bent hired on with six of his employees.[7] Bent and his men captured several Mexican scouts on the march south. The intelligence he pumped out of them left the impression that Kearny's men would face desperate resistance from hundreds if not thousands of men.[8]

Despite rumors of impending resistance, the Army of the West marched into Santa Fe unimpeded on August 18. Kearny wrote to a colleague that he had taken the city "without firing a gun or spilling a drop of blood" and that the populace viewed the change in government favorably.[9] Kearny met stressful acquiescence. Acting governor Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid told the American that the New Mexicans had surrendered out of self-preservation. The mood was somber, and he told Kearny that the population needed to grieve the loss of their ties to Mexico because "she was our mother." Nonetheless, the governor swore allegiance to the United States on behalf of the Santa Feans.[10] Sustained Mexican resistance would have been difficult. Beset by economic, military, and political turmoil, the Mexicans would have found it challenging to form a united front against the invaders. Other issues loomed larger than the state of war between the nations. Indian raids, lack of military funds, the specter of bankruptcy, and a general sense of neglect by Mexico City were threats as great as the Army of the West. Federalist sentiment was also strong in the borderlands, and some prominent citizens sensed opportunity in the conquest.[11]

Feeling secure in the capture of Santa Fe, Kearny formed a new government. A new legal code created a system with an executive branch, territorial legislature elected by the citizens, and three judges for a superior court. The code also created counties, appointed local officials including justices of the peace and sheriffs, mandated the separation of church and state, imposed direct taxation, and set up public schools.[12] Manuel Alvarez, a man with deep experience in New Mexico, urged Kearny to reach out to the prominent families in Albuquerque and Santa Fe to gain their support for the new order. The consul had written to Secretary of State James Buchanan that "a good portion of the Public offices should be filled by native citizens," to soften the blow of conquest. Secretary of War Marcy had advised a similar approach. Kearny ignored both men.[13] Instead, those he placed in high office were profoundly unpopular. Americans and their New Mexican allies monopolized positions of power. Charles Bent became governor. Francis Preston Blair, George Bent's drinking partner, was appointed district attorney, and Charles Beaubien served as a justice of the superior court. Donaciano Vigil's ascent to territorial secretary was cold comfort to centralists who viewed him as an American collaborator. Kearny snubbed the leading families of New Mexico from whose ranks later rose some of the first men to challenge American rule.[14] Had the general consulted with contacts outside

Bent's circle, Kearny would have found resentment and discontent with the appointees.

The Americans initially radiated confidence in the local population's satisfaction with the events, but events proved this optimism misplaced. "The appointment of Mr. Bent as governor is a most excellent one," wrote Christian Cribben, one of Kearny's soldiers. Cribben also praised Vigil's new role and stated that the new government was popular throughout the territory.[15] The actions of the occupying army did little to gain public support. The Missourians who garrisoned Santa Fe proved rude and provocative. They were idle, insubordinate, and undisciplined. Americans swaggered drunkenly through the streets telling anyone within earshot that they were "the freest and 'smartest people in creation,'" complained Lieutenant Jeremy Gilmer. British adventurer George Frederick Ruxton "found all over New Mexico that the most bitter feelings and most determined hostility existed toward the Americans," and he was not surprised by the violent events to come. Even men like Cribben, who looked on the locals as "but children unaccustomed to be governed or to governing themselves," admitted that soldiers committed outrages on the New Mexicans. "The state of things here is indeed deplorable," he wrote in October.[16]

Beneath the self-congratulation, Governor Bent also detected a strong undercurrent of discontent. Rumors of insurrection flew through New Mexico, the conduct of the American troops was deplorable, and the new government's financial resources were severely strained. In letters to Kearny and Major Edwin Sumner, the governor passed on rumors of plotting priests in Albuquerque and the presence of a Mexican spy ring in El Paso that passed intelligence to citizens in the capital and other settlements. Bent recommended a quick strike against the clerical conspirators to "strike terror into these people" and the establishment of a counterintelligence unit in the south.[17] He traced the plots in part to the conduct of the soldiers, especially Doniphan's volunteers, whose "insubordination and often offensive and abusive conduct" was inexcusable. They were there to protect the New Mexicans and "respect" their rights. Instead, the Missourians insulted the locals and stole their sheep. The governor wrote to Doniphan that if he did not "compel" better behavior there would be trouble. Searching for support in high places, Bent reached out to Missouri's powerful Democratic senator Thomas Hart Benton and asked him to press his colleagues to appropriate funds for more troops, to establish schools, and promote economic development

in New Mexico. Such steps might help ameliorate the tensions that roiled the territory.[18]

By December prominent New Mexicans were planning an uprising against the new government. Rumors of secret meetings in rented rooms and on the roofs of abandoned buildings circulated through the capital. The men named as the chief conspirators all had impeccable patriotic credentials as politicians and military men who fought Indians and Texans. The list included figures snubbed by Kearny including Diego Archuleta, Nicolas Pino, Tomas Ortiz, and Manuel Antonio Chaves.[19] The plan was for the population to rise against the Americans on Christmas Eve while they wandered drunkenly between fandangos. The ringing of a church bell would signal the beginning of the attack. The New Mexicans would divide into groups, seize American artillery, and capture Governor Bent and Sterling Price, commander of the Santa Fe garrison.[20]

The plan never came off because someone tipped off Bent and Price, who quickly quashed the plot. Bent never named his source of the intelligence. The news came "from a Mexican, friendly to our government," he informed Buchanan. "I immediately brought into requisition every means in my power to ascertain who were the movers in the rebellion," the governor continued. A sweep of Santa Fe netted all but one of the "secondary conspirators," but several prominent men escaped.[21]

Although the revolt failed to materialize, Bent worried privately that the situation was still precarious. The main conspirators were still at large and "will not leave their homes and country without a last and desperate struggle," he wrote Price on Christmas Day. The governor tried to put a better face on the situation when he wrote Secretary of State James Buchanan, assuring him that the conspirators were all men of little standing in the community. Nevertheless, Price put his men on high alert and declared martial law in Santa Fe. Bent approved of the order and urged the commander not to draw down the garrison's numbers lest the move embolden the rebels.[22] The unease did not keep Bent from enjoying the season's festivities. On December 26 he hosted a lavish party at the Palace of the Governors with a menu that featured shad, oysters, preserves, and "champagne in the greatest abundance." He yarned with old associates and seemed in good spirits.[23] Still, he recognized that discontent simmered in Santa Fe. On January 5, 1847, he issued a proclamation to remind the populace of their obligations to the new government. Bent warned them to ignore the "notorious" and "ambitious persons" who would lead them astray with rumors of a Mexican army marching north to reconquer the territory. The governor urged the New

Mexicans to "turn a deaf ear to such false doctrines" and "remain quiet, attending to your domestic affairs," leaving him to guard their interests. Then he rode north to spend the rest of the holiday season with his family in Taos. Two weeks later Charles Bent was dead.[24]

The storm broke over Taos on January 19, 1847. The governor encountered discontent from the moment he arrived in town the previous evening. A crowd gathered around him and demanded the release of three Pueblo Indians incarcerated in the town jail. Bent angrily refused and pushed through the throng to his home. The next morning, the crowd reassembled outside the jailhouse and called on Sheriff Stephen Lee to release the men. Vastly outnumbered, Lee prepared to acquiesce when Cornelio Vigil, the prefect of Taos and staunch Bent ally, arrived. Vigil "came in and objected, denouncing the Indians as thieves and scoundrels." The men charged forward, killed him, "and cut his body to pieces, severing all the limbs from it," before they freed the prisoners. The Taos Revolt began spontaneously, but the violence that followed was the result of years of anger and frustration with Bent, the American community, and the New Mexicans who allied with the new regime. The revolt was an outgrowth of an alliance based on what historian Anthony Mora calls "strategic nationalism." Mexicans and Pueblo Indians united in the face of a common threat.[25] Each group had its reasons for hating the Americans and those who collaborated with them. The new government was a blow to political self-determination, an affront to Mexican patriotism, and a threat to the economic and landed integrity of the community.

From the jail the crowd moved to the governor's home. The family was still in bed "when the Mesicans and Indians came to the house," Teresina Bent Scheurich recalled in 1881. Five years old at the time of the attack, she recalled it in detail. The men gathered in the courtyard and shouted for the family's Ute servant woman to open the door and tell them where Bent was hiding. When no answer came, they pounded on the door and climbed onto the roof. When the governor appeared, he demanded to know what they wanted. They wanted his head, came the reply. When the crowd opened fire, Bent ducked back inside the house and bolted the door. Teresina remembered that her mother urged him to flee. Bent refused. Governors did not run. Besides, he would not abandon his family. In another story María Ignacia was more bellicose. She thrust a brace of pistols at her husband and told him to fight. Bent pushed the pistols away, telling her that if he fired on the attackers the whole family would die.[26]

The crowd then surged forward and battered on the door. As they pounded, the women in the house desperately dug at the adobe walls with an iron cooking spit and a soup ladle, trying to tunnel into the adjoining room. Then the rebels poured into the room and unleashed a volley of arrows. Two of them struck the governor. He reeled backward and staggered onto his hands and knees to crawl after the family. The arrows stuck in his head and shoulder and impeded his passage, so he ripped them out. Temporarily out of reach of the mob, he called for pen and paper and furiously scribbled a note. Before he could finish, the attackers crawled through the passage and dropped him with a volley of rifle and pistol fire. María Ignacia told an interviewer that Charles died in her arms. Several men in the crowd pulled the corpse away and scalped it before the family.[27]

The women in Bent's family and circle of friends survived because they posed no threat to the community. One story says the rebels tried to kill the women. One man aimed at María Ignacia and would have shot her dead if the family's Ute servant woman had not stepped in front of her mistress and taken the bullet. Another account said that violence was imminent, but Rumalda Luna and Josefa Jaramillo fell to their knees and begged for mercy. Teresina recalled that "some of the crowd wanted to kill the family, but some of the Mesicans said no, women folks and children we must not kill, but we will not help them for anything." William Boggs said a local woman saved his wife's life by draping a serape over her while she huddled in the corner. The crowd, intent on looting the house, paid no attention to her. María Ignacia said that she was wounded by the gunfire that killed her husband and that several men menaced her as she lay bleeding. But her life was spared "because she was one of their own people" and "now that the Americans had been driven out of the country" she could not harm the community. The rebels left the women and children shivering in their nightclothes. Too terrified to move, they huddled in the house with Bent's body into the evening. Early the next morning a friend brought them food, clothing, and blankets. Mother and children escaped to the home of Juan Catalina Valdez two days later. Another friendly woman took Josefa and Rumalda into her home, disguised them as Indian servants, and put them to work grinding corn so the rebels would not harass them.[28] Unlike Bent, the women had deep ties within the community, and the family networks they helped forge through marriage and godparenthood might have shielded them from the violence.

From Bent's home the crowd fanned out through Taos. After the violence Sterling Price wrote his superiors, "It appeared to be the object of the insurrectionists to put to death every American and every Mexican who had accepted office under the American government." Sheriff Lee escaped the riot at the jail, but assailants quickly caught up to him and killed him on the roof of his house. The rebels trapped attorney James W. Leal, scalped him alive, and paraded him through the streets prodding him with lances. Then they threw him into a ditch where he lay for hours until a Mexican dispatched him with a bullet. One story says Leal hid in a haystack. When the rebels prodded the hay with their lances they struck him in the stomach. When he cried out for mercy, they dragged him out, scalped him, and "left him twitching like a chicken," María de la Luz Lujan told an interviewer in 1907.[29] Charles Beaubien probably would have died if he had been in Taos. Unable to find him, several men searched for his son Narciso. The young man and an Indian servant fled to the family's stable and hid under a pile of straw. The rebels searched the premises and, finding nothing, prepared to leave. Then one of the family's other Indian servants called out to them and pointed to the hiding place. "Kill the young ones," she shouted, "and they will never be men to trouble us." The searchers doubled back, killed Beaubien, scalped him, and cut off one of his fingers to get his ring. According to family lore, his sister Luz escaped the attack and hid at a neighbor's home until the violence ended.[30]

Family and business ties to the Americans marked several prominent New Mexicans for attack. The crowd destroyed the home of José Rafael Sena de Luna, María Ignacia's father-in-law. Rebels also killed her older brother, Pablo Jaramillo. Later, Americans like Dick Wootton portrayed the Taos Revolt as a race war. "The half-breed children" of the community "were, however, marked for the slaughter," he wrote in his memoirs. But race was not the prime motivator in the attacks. Outrage was directed at anyone associated with the conquest or who benefited from economic ties to the Anglo merchant community. Men viewed as threats to the political, territorial, and economic fortunes of the community were in danger. Prefect Vigil is an example of this careful targeting. Both he and Pablo Jaramillo had ties to Bent and were named as partners on some of the large land grants that threatened the holdings of the Taos Pueblo.[31] The rebels targeted those men whose actions during the previous decades had threatened to undercut the standing of large segments of the local community.

The revolt spread quickly from Taos to other communities across northern New Mexico. At Arroyo Hondo rebels attacked Simeon Turley's liquor distillery, another hated sign of American mercantile activity. The Americans trapped in the settlement's flour mill fought desperately until the attackers set fire to the building. Turley fled into the surrounding hills, where his assailants tracked him down and killed him. Three other Americans escaped and sent word of the violence to Santa Fe and the settlements on the Arkansas River. New Mexicans also killed eight American traders at Mora, drove off livestock from the Bent, St. Vrain and Company ranch on the Poñil River, and attacked government livestock herds near Las Vegas.[32]

William Bent was trading in the Cheyenne villages along the Arkansas when he got word of his brother's death. John Albert, a survivor of the attack on Turley's Mill, brought the news to Pueblo and Bent's Fort, where a company trader heard the story and rode to tell William. The Cheyennes offered to ride south with Bent and fight the insurgency, but he politely and tactfully refused their aid. Instead, the trader rode back to the fort. Here he hesitated briefly. William knew his brother was dead, but that was it. For all he knew, a force of New Mexicans might be marching to attack the post. Quickly overcoming his trepidation, Bent rallied his men and told them he intended to ride to Taos. They enthusiastically agreed to go with him. Before the men reached the town, a messenger intercepted them to say that Sterling Price had already exacted a fearful revenge on the rebels.[33]

On January 20, Price received word of the uprising and organized a column to put in the field. Three days later, he marched out of Santa Fe at the head of three hundred men and four howitzers. Accompanying Price's Missourians was a volunteer company raised by Ceran St. Vrain. Most of them had been friends with the men killed at Taos and Arroyo Hondo and itched to avenge them. The Americans fought two skirmishes with New Mexican forces at Cañada and Embudo, winning victories and inflicting heavy losses on the rebels. The column reached Taos on February 2 after a march "through deep snow." Despite their weariness and frostbitten extremities, the men were spoiling for a fight.[34]

The battle for Taos took two days. On February 3, Price reconnoitered the enemy's defenses—the strong adobe walls of the Taos Pueblo—and began an artillery bombardment. The next day he ordered a frontal assault on the Pueblo church. The morning's attack failed. That afternoon Price's gunners wheeled the howitzers to within sixty yards of the church, and several volleys shattered its doors. The Americans hauled

FIGURE 8. Ferenz Fedor. Mission Church ruins, Taos Pueblo, New Mexico, 1940–1950? Courtesy of Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), neg. no. 100275.

the guns to within thirty feet of the gaping holes and fired three rounds of grapeshot into the crowded sanctuary, with devastating effect. The soldiers charged into the building as the defenders fled.[35] As Price's guns raked the church with shrapnel, about fifty men ran for the safety of the mountains. Ceran St. Vrain's mounted volunteers rode them down on the plain and killed them all. "Of course we pursued them, and not much quarter was asked or given," Dick Wootton remembered. There was melodrama in the slaughter. Stories later circulated that St. Vrain encountered his partner's killer in the melee. The man wore Charles Bent's bloodstained coat, and St. Vrain cut the murderer down. The Americans won a resounding victory. Price estimated 150 rebels killed and an unknown number of them wounded. He placed his own casualties at seven killed and forty-five wounded.[36]

In the wake of the battle Americans in New Mexico struggled to explain the violence. The easiest answer posed by Anglos and prominent former federalists like Donaciano Vigil was that unscrupulous demagogues

incited the barbaric bloodlust of the Pueblo Indians and poor New Mexicans against the government for their own ends. Vigil shifted the blame away from territorial elites. He even accused the Mexican government of creating the troubles; the chief conspirators at Taos had also risen against Albino Peréz in 1837 and killed him. They had escaped punishment then and treacherously bided their time for a decade, Vigil claimed. He recommended swift and merciless punishment for those convicted in the attack.[37] Self-interest and pragmatism had been among the chief characteristics of New Mexican federalists during the 1830s and early 1840s, and Vigil's willingness to accept office under the new American regime and root out those responsible for the rebellion was the latest example of some members of the frontier population cautiously trying to maneuver their way through a fraught political situation.

Blaming Bent's nemesis, Padre Antonio José Martínez, was another option. The governor and Consul Manuel Alvarez had long feared the priest's influence in Taos. Prior to the conquest Alvarez warned the secretary of state that Martínez preached sermons "bitterly denouncing the annexation of any part of this country to the United States," tried to "excite the strongest prejudices against the Americans," and urged his countrymen to resist the invasion if it came. Only days before his death, Bent reported a similar homily in which the priest "directed some of the citizens to attack the soldiers" and drive them from the region. The governor could not confirm the truth of the "very strong anti annexation sermon," but his clashes with the padre likely predisposed Bent to believe the worst about him.[38]

Despite the padre's dislike for the American regime, evidence indicates he was shocked by the violence and shielded some of its potential victims. One of his students and biographers related that on the day of the attack a crowd met Martínez in the street and greeted him, saying, "Father we have killed every one of those heretic Americans" and demanded that he "write in every direction about it, stating that we performed our duty." He refused and chastised them for attacking helpless people while they slept. A New Mexican tradition says that the priest's home became a haven for people fleeing the violence. The story states that a terrified crowd rushed to the house and banged on the door shouting: "For God's sake open the door! Open it! The Indians are murdering Don Carlos Bent, Don Luis Lee and others!" Martínez gave the people sanctuary and ordered his servants to defend the buildings and "repel any assault at all costs."[39] Contemporary testimony corroborates the story of his efforts on behalf of at least one American. The priest

saved the life of Elliott Lee, the slain sheriff's brother. When Lee ran to the Martínez house seeking shelter, the priest hid the American under a pile of wheat and rebuked the rebels who came to find Lee in such strong language "that they abandoned their purpose," according to American soldier Richard Smith Elliott. New Mexican oral tradition confirms this account. An early twentieth-century New Mexican reminiscence said that Lee's daughter and another young woman also sought shelter in the priest's home and hid under a bed throughout the day.[40] Although Martínez despised Charles Bent and did much to promote a version of Mexican identity grounded in strict Catholicism and opposition to United States expansion, there is no evidence that the priest precipitated the rebellion. He was undoubtedly aware of the anger that swirled in and around Taos, but there is nothing to indicate his complicity in the violence.

What American observers and Vigil labeled treachery, the Indians of Taos Pueblo called self-preservation. Accordingly, they rose against the American regime to protect communal lands and customary rights. In the wake of Price's bloody victory, some shaken survivors approached the colonel and pleaded for clemency. They blamed Mexicans as the prime movers in the plot. These men "instigated them to insurrection" and promised an easy victory and the restoration of old prerogatives. Although they took up arms to defend traditional lifeways, they shifted the blame to spare themselves further retribution in the face of a catastrophic military defeat.[41] Thus, while their actions convinced the Americans of the bloodthirstiness inherent in the Indian character, the appeal to Price for clemency allowed them to appear chastened and willing to aid the victors in crushing any remaining rebel forces.

Such arguments did not impress American authorities, who moved quickly to make public examples of the men associated with the rebellion. The trials began in Santa Fe in March, when the government charged four men with treason. They had revolted against a lawful and benevolent government and convinced others to do the same. The court convicted one man, Antonio María Trujillo. Judge Joab Houghton, citing the verdict of an "enlightened and liberal jury," sentenced the man to hang.[42]

The six men accused of killing Bent who came to a tribunal in Taos that April had no chance of a fair trial. Friends and family of the revolt's victims packed the court offices. Charles Beaubien presided as judge. George Bent served as jury foreman and oversaw a box filled with current and former company employees. Ceran St. Vrain acted as the official

interpreter. The scene was "a strange mixture of violence and justice," wrote Lewis Garrard, who left the only eyewitness account of the proceedings.[43] The court heard testimony from María Ignacia and her sister, Josefa Carson. María Ignacia's testimony was especially damning. Before the assembly, she calmly pointed out her husband's killer. The accused betrayed no sign of agitation but remained stoic, "an almost sublime spectacle of Indian fortitude," Garrard marveled. The jury deliberated for a "few minutes" before returning with the verdict. In the dimly lit courtroom Judge Beaubien read the guilty verdict and sentenced the men to death.[44] They died on April 9, 1847. Despite the intercessory efforts of Padre Martínez, who wrote to Price condemning the American juries as "a class of ignorant men" who were "tainted with passion," the hangings continued through the rest of April and into May.[45] The traumatic violence of the rebellion had ended, but the changes unleashed by the war with Mexico and its aftermath presented an insurmountable challenge for the venerable firm of Bent, St. Vrain and Company.

The company did not long outlast Bent's death. William and St. Vrain established a short-lived new partnership, St. Vrain and Bent, with William as junior partner. They opened a store on the Santa Fe plaza that catered to a wide variety of consumer tastes. Advertisements in the *Santa Fe Republican* proclaimed that this "extensive establishment" housed "a large and splendid assortment of merchandise of every variety from the United States" offered at retail prices. The partners sold clothing "of all kinds and qualities," in addition to coffee, sugar, tea, jellies, butter, sperm candles, mackerel, oysters, champagne, and raisins. The good times did not last, and the two men sold out to Joab Houghton. Shortly thereafter, St. Vrain departed for St. Louis.[46] The partners then settled their outstanding debts with the Chouteaus. Why the men broke up the partnership is unclear. Perhaps the loss of Charles Bent's drive had robbed the company of its animating force. Maybe St. Vrain saw better opportunities in the freighting contracts he secured to ship supplies for the United States Army. They left no record of their rationale.[47]

The war forced policymakers to reexamine Indian policy along the Santa Fe Trail. The increased commercial and military traffic along the route that began with Kearny's march added special urgency to calls for the army to anchor itself on the Arkansas River. Thomas Fitzpatrick, the first United States Indian agent appointed for the region, thought the construction of military posts paramount. He envisioned a fort on the river as one in a cordon of garrisons stretching from the Rio Grande to the Missouri River.[48]

Fitzpatrick spent much of 1847 trying to maintain the peaceful relationship between the United States government and the Cheyennes. He used Bent's Fort as a temporary agency for it gave him access to William Bent's cultural and political connections and expertise in tribal matters. Although the Cheyennes had no quarrel with the United States, their close trade ties to the increasingly restive Kiowa and Comanche bands south of the Arkansas River made it imperative that Fitzpatrick and Bent continue to cultivate close relations lest the Cheyennes raid travelers on the trail. The agent and other government officials were confident of the tribe's goodwill. In February 1848, Fitzpatrick wrote his superiors, "The Arapahos and Cheyennes have been competing whose conduct should be the most pleasing" to the Americans.[49]

Bent and Fitzpatrick's efforts helped secure peace with the Cheyennes in the late 1840s. In the spring of 1847, the agent gathered the Cheyennes at the fort for a council, reiterated the government's peaceful intentions, and warned them against raiding. The two sides signed no official treaty, but Fitzpatrick was optimistic. The Comanches might cause trouble, he warned, but the Cheyennes had offered to help the army if fighting broke out. That winter he persuaded the Cheyennes and most of the Arapahos not to join Kiowa and Comanche raiding parties and even convinced some of those bands to stop attacking white travelers.[50] He continued talks in 1848 and 1849. Despite complaints that he lacked an interpreter and an adequate supply of gifts, Fitzpatrick held conferences with the Northern Arapahos and Sioux along the South Platte River in February 1848. Between late 1848 and into 1849 he held talks near Bent's Fort and negotiated the release of some Mexicans held captive by the tribes.[51]

Peace with the Cheyennes was critical for Fitzpatrick, because Indian raiding along the Santa Fe Trail accelerated in response to the increased traffic that accompanied the war. The trail had never been as crowded as it was during the war years. Besides the normal commercial traffic, active and discharged troops, surveying parties, and dispatch riders clogged the route along the Arkansas River. In 1849, D. D. Mitchell noted that relations between many of the Indians and the government "are very much changed by our territorial acquisitions in New Mexico and on the Pacific Coast."[52] The area was "in a far less state of security and tranquility than before the commencement of the Mexican War," Fitzpatrick told his superiors. In 1848 he was franker: the Santa Fe Trail was in "need of some speedy measures for protection."[53]

Indian raiders struck Bent, St. Vrain and Company trains during the summer of 1846. Comanches attacked the company's eastbound caravan

in late May. The warriors hit the whites west of Pawnee Fork, killing one employee. Raiding later in the season prompted St. Vrain to take greater care planning the return trip to Bent's Fort. Initially, the trader departed ahead of the caravan with a small escort. However, members of other eastbound caravans informed him of Indian raiders ahead. As a result, Lewis Garrard wrote, "he waited for us to come up, preferring slow travel and a large company to a small party and uncertain possession of his scalp."[54]

The most dangerous trading season in the trail's history to date came in 1847. A Comanche war party attacked a company caravan at the crossing of Walnut Creek on June 3 and killed one man, William Tharp, after cutting him off from help while he hunted bison. The *St. Louis Reveille* reported that the attackers had been Cheyennes and Arapahos and that "the rascals drove off a large number of mules and oxen belonging to the party." The report probably misidentified the raiders. Less than a week later, the train was attacked again, near Ash Creek, but suffered no losses. The men reached Westport on June 9.[55] Raiding remained a serious problem that summer. Former company employee turned independent trader Alexander Barclay sought the protection of St. Vrain's wagon train on the westbound journey, "in consequence of the depredations of the Comanches" in the "neighborhood of Pawnee Fork." The entire caravan reached Bent's Fort safely on September 20, 1847.[56]

In the autumn of 1847, Fitzpatrick was disconsolate about the situation along the overland trails. "It is very evident" that the situation was deteriorating, he told his superiors. Nothing the army had tried could "check their ardor and hostile movements," and the Indians were "becoming still more insolent and emboldened every day." The agent pleaded with his superiors to send more troops to the region and accelerate their timetable for a campaign against the Comanches and Kiowas. The news of American incompetence did not improve the situation. Worse still, Fitzpatrick heard rumors of "a combination between the disaffected Mexicans, Apaches, and Comanche Indians," for the purpose of "carrying on a guerrilla war against all travelers on the Santa Fe road next summer."[57] The total costs of the summer's raiding provided the agent's superiors with startling confirmation of his pessimism. Fitzpatrick reported that the Comanches, Kiowas, and Pawnees were responsible for the deaths of forty-seven Americans, the destruction of 330 wagons, and the theft of 6,500 head of livestock, mostly from government wagon trains.[58]

William Bent aided government attempts to crush the raiders in the spring of 1848. The previous year, troops operating out of Fort Mann, a tiny outpost on the Arkansas River near the Cimarron Cutoff, had

been ineffective in their attempts to punish the Comanches. The spring campaign, commanded by William Gilpin, sought aid from Bent, who procured horses and mules for the troops and accompanied them as far south as his ranch near Mora, New Mexico. Gilpin's Indian Battalion engaged the Comanches on two occasions and inflicted casualties. The Indians ceased raiding after these encounters, but Fitzpatrick did not attribute that fact to Gilpin's campaign. Rather, the agent wrote that in 1846 and 1847 the Indians had "secured so much booty during their raids" that they "are now, and have been the past summer, luxuriating and enjoying the spoils" of their attacks. He worried that the raids would restart in 1849.[59]

Much of the increased raiding was attributable to competition over declining natural resources in the Arkansas River valley. Environmental factors put greater pressure on the bison herds of the southern plains and undermined Bent's trading operations. Besides fire and wolf predation, the bison faced pressure from the horse and cattle herds that accompanied the wagon trains. These animals competed with the herds for the grass, water, and wooded river valleys the bison relied upon for shelter during the region's cruel winters. Diseases jumped from emigrant cattle to the herds and led to more deaths. The severe drought that began in 1849 and continued until 1862 exacerbated these factors. Without rain, grass withered, and rivers ran dry, dramatically limiting the carrying capacity of the region's prairies. The southern plains were driest at a time when the region was at its most crowded.[60]

Indian hunting practices and American trade demands made the situation even worse. By itself, subsistence hunting by plains tribes contributed to the decline. In the case of the Comanches, expanding military and economic power went together. As they raided and traded farther afield, they became richer. As they became wealthier, their population grew as did their demand for meat and hides. The arrival of traders like the Bents and St. Vrain accelerated the pace of Comanche hunting; now they also hunted to satisfy the demands of American markets. Indians hunting for these markets disproportionately targeted cows for slaughter, since their hides were lighter, more pliable, and more easily converted into the robes sought by white traders. Such hunting patterns curtailed the normal reproductive rhythms of the herds. The arrival of other tribes on the southern plains, including the Delawares and Shawnees moving west from Indian Territory, increased the number of hunters in the region, and hunters from New Mexico added to the number of animals killed each year.[61]

Men associated with Bent, St. Vrain and Company also commented on these trends. "Our chief dependence here is on the Buffalo for meat which are generally to be found within fifteen to thirty miles of the fort," post clerk Alexander Barclay wrote his brother in 1838. Seven years later, things had changed. Although Barclay hoped to enter the robe trade on his own after quitting the company, he noted that "the buffalo are decreasing rapidly" and that the future "is all incertitude." At the close of the year he wrote his brother that the "robe business is becoming limited every year from the decrease of the animals" and that hunters had to travel nearly two hundred miles east of the Rocky Mountains to "get the first sight of one."[62] Reminiscing years later, Dick Wootton, another former Bent trader, marveled at the decline of the herds. "It never occurred to me that I should live long enough to see all the buffaloes killed off," he said. Long gone were the days when he could ride out, shoot a bison, dress the meat, and gather the hide "with about as little troubles as a ranchman has in getting a beef out of his herd of cattle." When he hunted for the Bents, he easily killed thirty bison in a day, more than enough to supply the needs of the fort's employees.[63]

Squeezed by so many new arrivals, the Cheyennes suffered dreadfully from disease in the late 1840s. Smallpox found its way to the region in 1839–40. The Kiowas called the winter of 1839–40 the "Smallpox Winter." George Bent informed George Bird Grinnell that 1845 was the worst year for the "Red Small Pox" among the Cheyennes. Whooping cough came hard on the heels of this epidemic. Disease combined with the shifting migration patterns of the bison herds away from the Arkansas River made 1846 a very difficult year for the Southern Cheyennes. Starvation loomed.[64]

Cholera was the worst disease to strike the Southern Cheyennes during the final years of William Bent's operations. The scourge came to Cheyenne country in several different ways. California-bound emigrants, traveling along the Arkansas and Platte Rivers, probably infected some Indians. Spread through contact with human excrement, tainted food, and contaminated water sources, cholera thrived in the unsanitary conditions often found in emigrant rest stops along the Overland Trail and Indian hunting camps. Cheyennes infected along the trails might have transmitted the disease to other bands. One Cheyenne story says that the tribe caught the sickness from travelers along the Platte. A raiding party searching for Pawnees happened upon an emigrant camp already devastated by the disease. The warriors recognized the danger and rode south. One young warrior rode ahead to warn the main camp

along the Smoky Hill River. The man reached the camp and cried out that the "whole war party that he was with [was] now dying and falling off their horses with cramps." The Dog Soldiers in charge immediately ordered the panicked families to scatter.[65]

Cheyenne and Kiowa sources agree that the Osages brought the worst of the disease to the Kiowa sun dance in 1849. The Kiowas called the summer of 1849 the "Cramp sun dance" summer, and George Bent's Cheyenne informants told him that all the tribes of the southern plains remembered this time as "When the Big Cramps Took Place." The 1849 assembly "was an awful big gathering" of Cheyennes, Kiowas, Comanches, Osages, and some Arapahos. The Osages came as traders, but disease traveled the same trails as the goods.[66] The epidemic broke out during the middle of the ceremonies. The Kiowas said that during the dancing a man saw a vision and prophesied about a coming calamity. The rest of the people thought he was "crazy" until one man sickened and died, and then another. Within days the disease spread through the camp. Kiowa tradition says half the tribe died.[67] George Bent's Cheyenne sources provided more detail. Porcupine Bull told Bent that a Kiowa sun dancer fell over and died in the sacred lodge. Then an Osage trader died within "a few feet" of Porcupine Bull, who cried out for everyone to leave the lodge and abandon the camp.[68] Sitting in Lodge remembered that the disease struck just as the dance ended. A Kiowa sickened and died. Curious, the men, women, and children gathered around the dying man. An old Kiowa man recognized the symptoms and shouted that the cramps had come. Other Indians quickly sickened and died, and a great cry went up throughout the entire camp.[69]

The Cheyennes joined the chaotic exodus from the sun dance site the same day the disease broke out. Bent recalled that the Cheyennes and Arapahos fled north toward their camps along the Arkansas, the Kiowas fled south, the Osages east. George's grandmother died during her band's all-night flight. Near the Arkansas, the panicked Cheyennes ran into the band that had caught the disease from the emigrants on the Platte. The Indians were trapped. In the confusion, a warrior painted himself for battle, mounted his war horse, and rode through the camp shouting, "if I could see this thing if I knew where it came from, I would go there and fight it!" Tradition says that he then collapsed into his wife's arms and died.[70]

Cholera devastated the Southern Cheyennes. Bent's sources informed him that a "whole lot of them died and cholera was only [a] few days among them." Cheyenne historian John Stands In Timber told an

anthropologist that the victims convulsed "as if shot" before they died. Clans were decimated. Old people and holy men died, taking their valuable cultural and ceremonial knowledge to their graves. Politically, a shift began in the Cheyenne nation. The increasingly militant Dog Soldiers, who held aloof from contact with the whites, survived the scourge without damage. The faction that favored more trade with the Americans and aligned with the peace chiefs suffered dreadfully. Power and influence began shifting into the orbit of the soldier society. Malnutrition and shock made the trauma worse. The sickness ruined William Bent's trade prospects for 1849. The Cheyennes, scattered and demoralized, looked to survival first, and only then toward commerce.[71] The disruption of the epidemic, combined with the increased hostility of the Comanches and some Arapaho bands, made Bent's position on the Arkansas precarious.

George Bent said his father abandoned the fort because there were too many bad memories there. The trader had seen too much death recently. William "was disgusted" because "whenever he looked around" he saw memories of family members passed on, and he grew despondent.[72] His sister Dorcas wrote a St. Louis acquaintance that the deaths of family members had worked a changed in William's demeanor. Charles's death was awful enough, but she said William was "entirely changed" by his brother George's death. George had come west with his brothers, became a full partner in the business, and took charge of Fort St. Vrain in 1837. He died of fever or tuberculosis at Bent's Fort in October 1847. William became responsible for George's children after the man was buried. Dorcas wrote to her friend that William "intends henceforth to devote his life" to the well-being of the family.[73]

While sorrow might have played a role, Bent had pragmatic reasons for abandoning the fort. There were tensions with the United States government. The trader felt Kearny's men abused the company's hospitality in 1846. The Army of the West had swarmed over the fort, eaten up the post's supplies, taken up valuable storage space, and frightened away Indians who tried to trade. The command's horse herds also stripped the banks of the Arkansas River bare of vegetation, wrote the young Boston tourist Francis Parkman.[74] Bent's dislike of the government might have stemmed from an 1843 dispute with the government over a lucrative supply contract.[75] Such experiences did not stop St. Vrain from offering to sell the fort to the army for $15,000 in 1847. He might not have informed Bent of the offer, a step that might have contributed to the estrangement between the two men. The army turned down the proffered sale, although George Bent said they offered his father a reduced price. Affronted by

their figure of $12,000, "he loaded what goods he could into his wagon and set fire to the powder magazines and blew up the fort."[76]

Despite George's tale of destruction, his father did not destroy the fort in 1849. The family probably left in the summer, for a group of travelers reported hearing "a loud report, resembling that of a cannon" and came upon the "rubbish" of the post. They assumed that the Utes had set fire to the fort's powder magazine. A report from the superintendent of Indian Affairs of New Mexico reported to his superiors simply, "One of the owners of Bent's Fort, has removed all property from it, and caused the fort to be burnt."[77] The evidence contradicts the story of complete destruction. The sheer size of the fort would have required a tremendous, impractical amount of gunpowder to blow it up. Bent probably set fire to the ceilings and support beams to make it unusable as a trading post by any competitors. There is archaeological evidence of fire damage, but the fact that others used the fort as a camping place and stage station in the following years makes George's recollections only partially credible. Regardless of the actual damage done, Bent abandoned the fort and relocated his family downriver to the Big Timbers, where his family would try to adjust to a new life in a changing world.[78]

The U.S.-Mexican War had undone the company. Charles Bent's death was the culmination of years of tensions in northern New Mexico. Despite the momentary flush of victory, Kearny's conquest proved far from decisive or bloodless. The war stimulated increased traffic over the Santa Fe Trail, which sparked several years of violence between travelers and the Indian nations who lived astride the route. Disease and environmental degradation followed the wagon trains. The Cheyennes and their Native neighbors spent the last years of the 1840s struggling to survive and adapt to the rapidly changing circumstances. William Bent also had to adjust to a new order of things. Drought, cholera, war, and shrinking bison herds threatened the company's profitability to the point where he did the unthinkable in 1849 and abandoned Bent's Fort. As the family moved operations down the Arkansas River, they faced an uncertain future.

5 / Fifty-Niners, Freighters, and Schoolchildren: The Bent Family, 1849–1861

The violent carnage of the late 1840s marked the beginning of a long transition period for the Bent family. Between William's abandonment of the old fort and the beginning of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush—which dramatically expanded the white population of the region—the borderlands the family had long known were slowly changing. In the face of a series of stiff challenges, both sides of the family proved eminently adaptable. William's family modified older socioeconomic practices to suit changing markets without abandoning the kinship ties that had grounded the business for decades. They attempted to mediate between the interests of the Southern Cheyennes and the United States. William and his wives educated their children in Missouri, probably hoping this would ease their passage through a changing cultural landscape. In New Mexico, Teresina Bent emerged as an example of cultural adaptability. Living with her uncle Kit Carson and her aunt Josefa, she was exposed to the land grant business that would play a pivotal role in her adulthood. Her mother and in-laws took advantage of the educational opportunities offered in Santa Fe that laid the groundwork for Teresina's social and economic success later in her life. None of this change was easy. William and his wives grew slowly apart during these years, perhaps because of the cultural and economic changes encroaching on the Upper Arkansas River valley. Violence was an omnipresent threat in Colorado and New Mexico for both sides of the family, and the choices the Bents made during the 1850s were critical to their survival and helped shape their actions in the coming decades.

William Bent's family faced an unsettled future in 1850. The events of the previous three years—war, deaths in the family, disease, and the dissolution of the company—were unnerving. William's business was in limbo, and Owl Woman's death had shaken him. After abandoning the adobe post on the Arkansas, the family lived a seminomadic existence until they settled temporarily at Bent's post on the South Platte, Fort St. Vrain. From there William traded with the Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Sioux, experiencing modest success. In 1851 he heard the news that the United States government had summoned the northern plains Indians to a great council. The family packed their belongings and headed for Fort Laramie in present-day Wyoming.[1]

The American government and military also adapted to the circumstances that followed the war with Mexico. As policymakers and generals discussed their options for more fully incorporating the Far West into the Union, three priorities emerged: the protection of emigrants on the overland trails, the elimination of Indian raiding on these routes and south into Mexico, and the eventual extinguishment of Indian land titles. The United States Army figured prominently in this mission. As the "sharp edge of Manifest Destiny," the military would try to implement congressional policies. Few white Americans, Bent included, seriously questioned the legitimacy of American expansion or that violence might be necessary to protect white interests and crush Native resistance. Despite having a Cheyenne family, Bent came to advocate the use of force against Indians who hesitated to accept the coming order of things.[2]

The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 was the government's first major attempt to bring an Americanized version of order to the Great Plains after the U.S.-Mexican War. That September United States agents laid out their vision and terms for the assembled tribes. Each would pick a head chief to negotiate with the Americans. The tribes would make peace with each other and promise not to harm overland emigrants or harass any forts. They would agree to new tribal boundaries. In exchange they would receive presents at the treaty ground and annuities in the coming years. Bent's Cheyenne kin retained the land between the North Platte and Arkansas Rivers and were not ordered to surrender hunting or traveling privileges in this territory.[3]

Mixed-race families like the Bents were key to the proposals crafted by American agents at Fort Laramie. Many policymakers, including Thomas Fitzpatrick, argued that the fate of the Indians was tied to agriculture. Only by adopting a "civilized" economy would they avoid extinction. Farming offered possible salvation, and mixed-race families

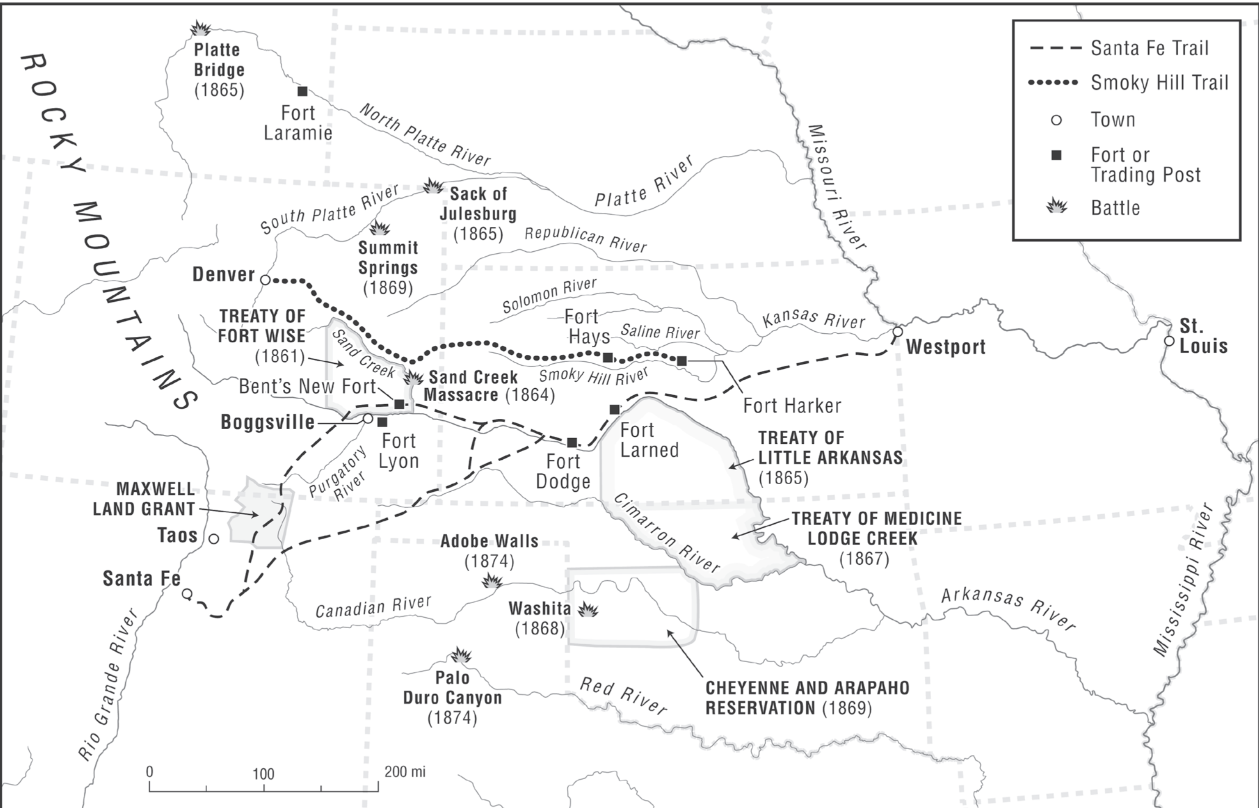

FIGURE 9. The West of the Bent Family, 1859–1920. Map created by Erin Greb.

could point the way forward. If the government provided livestock, seed, tools, and expert advice, these individuals could form their own communities on ceded Indian land. These colonies would be showpieces for the American way of life. If their kinfolk operated these farms, the Indians might be willing to abandon their nomadism. Fitzpatrick supported setting aside land for mixed-race families on the Upper Arkansas River. He reported that these families were "quiet and orderly" for the moment but "in a few years will become formidable" and that it was important to channel their energies and ambitions in the proper direction.[4] Fitzpatrick's optimism that he could promote the interests of those families interested in assimilation and use their successes as a showcase to impress other members of the Native community carried into many of the government's Indian policies during the late nineteenth century and would force the Bents to make controversial decisions in the coming years.

The Cheyennes and Arapahos did not approve of the proposal, but Fitzpatrick's ideas help illustrate the dual vision held of these families by many Americans. On the one hand, families like the Bents were potential agents in constructive policy initiatives. Several of William's and Charles's children, especially their daughters, successfully adapted to their changing world. They used education and kinship ties to solidify their positions as respectable members of white society, especially in Colorado and New Mexico. The transition for the sons would be more difficult. Some of them adopted their fathers' business practices and successfully navigated the terrain between white and Indian society. Others chose violent resistance, with deadly consequences. Although mixed-race families could be held up as exemplars of possibility in a changing world, many Americans viewed them with suspicion and loathing. When George and Charley Bent chose war against the United States in the 1860s, military and political officials feared that their education and cultural adaptability made them especially dangerous enemies.

Not everything went well at the Fort Laramie treaty grounds, for a deep rift in the Bent family might have originated during this time. It is possible that William quarreled with his Cheyenne wives over religious and cultural ceremonies. George Bent's most thorough biographers state that William's wives resisted having the children baptized by the Jesuit missionary Pierre-Jean De Smet during the treaty talks, while the trader balked at their insistence that George have his ears pierced in a traditional ceremony expected of high-status Cheyenne families. If these arguments occurred, they raised potentially significant issues for

the children's identities. Would baptism make them too Americanized at the expense of their Cheyenne identity? Would the ear-piercing visibly reinforce their Indianness, thereby limiting their options in the white world? These wedge issues might have begun to develop between William and his wives in 1851.[5]

The family left Fort Laramie for a permanent home at the Big Timbers of the Arkansas River and settled in by 1852. A thick stretch of cottonwoods almost four miles long and two miles across, the Big Timbers provided wood, grass, water, and shelter for the Cheyennes and their horses. Perhaps most important for Bent, his son George recalled, the Big Timbers was a "regular winter camping place for [the] Cheyennes and Arapahos."[6] The new fort, three log cabins constructed to form a U-shape, was a small structure, cramped and uncomfortable. Yet Bent did brisk business. George remembered that the "Buffalo was thick" around Big Timbers that winter, and there was trade "every day."[7] During the winter of 1854 William ordered the construction of a new, larger post with stone walls, similar in layout to Bent's Fort but smaller in scale.[8]

The new post would be useless if Bent could not reinvigorate the robe trade that had sustained his family's fortunes for nearly twenty years. Any success William had at Big Timbers was based on his continued adherence to traditional Cheyenne trade protocols. The Americans conducted trade in the Indian camps as before the war. William dispatched traders to the Cheyenne villages on the Arkansas River and prepared to send men to the Kiowas and Comanches. Bent personally traveled through the camps and likely reinvigorated preexisting social and economic ties. Family was still essential to business. Even greenhorns like James Milligan, who traded for Bent in the winter of 1854, recognized this. On January 11 he boasted to his journal that he had outworked Lucas Murray, a veteran trader. The secret to his beginner's success was his relationship with a Cheyenne woman. He admitted that his wife's "influence" with her kinfolk brought in good profit. Generosity was still expected by the clients. The trader reported that brewing a "kettle full of coffee for the Indians" put him in their good graces.[9] Family ties and gift giving remained the backbone of the Indian trade even as its overall value declined with the environmental catastrophes that accompanied United States expansion.

Even if imperfectly, James Milligan grasped some of the connections between sex, reciprocity, and familial obligations during his stay on the Arkansas River. The young man entered at least three sexual relationships during his short stint working for Bent. The first was with

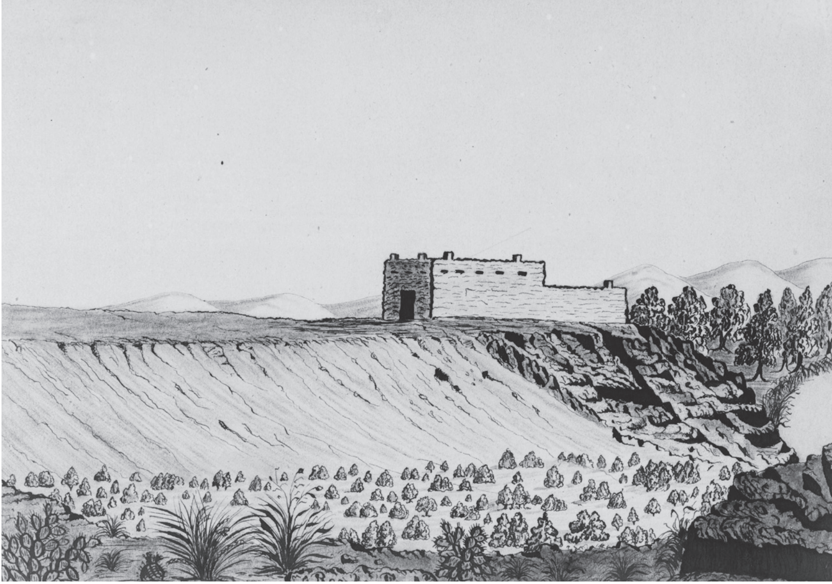

FIGURE 10. *Bent's Fort*, Daniel A. Jenks (1827–1869). Courtesy of Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsc-04810.

a Cheyenne woman. After spending the night with her the American awoke to find himself with a new set of responsibilities and a much wider network of kinfolk. He noted in his journal that "In the morning I was informed that I now had to cloth my new *esposo*," and he immediately provided her with a blanket. Over the coming days he continued to give her gifts, including several yards of fabric. He found that he was now expected to be a gracious host for the woman's extended family. He had not expected this and griped, "Boarders and old squaws pretty thick in the lodge all day." Milligan was now also responsible for protecting his new wife. When a Mexican teamster made a sexual advance at her, the American "broke his head with the whip stock," an action that met with the "satisfaction" of her relatives. The young trader also provided another woman, an Arapaho, with sugar to give to her family, although he portrayed this as paternalistic largesse for "her punctuality" and good behavior. He also entered a relationship with another Cheyenne woman through her husband's negotiations. Milligan repaired the man's guns and spent the night with his wife on multiple occasions. Although these women sewed him clothes, tended to his physical ailments, and repaired

his lodge, he ultimately decided that the obligations to new kinfolk were too much and sent one of the women away, "determined to hire for the future, which is said to be less expensive."[10]

Cheyenne women also demonstrated their own autonomy and power over the sexual dynamics of the camps. Milligan probably missed the deeper significance of the most scandalous story he related that winter. On January 19, 1854, the trader recorded that he "Lent my wife" to the son of the Arrow Keeper in exchange for his Arapaho companion. Both women "appeared to be pleased with the trade at least for a change." It is possible that Milligan's wife looked at the new relationship as a way out of her ties to the American. In Cheyenne legal culture divorce was relatively easy. A man could disown his wife privately or in a public ceremony. Wives could simply leave their husbands, going back to her parents' lodge or going away with another man. Milligan's wording implies that he felt he had control over her actions, but Cheyenne women were free marital agents and not male property.[11] She certainly had good reasons to leave Milligan. His journal shows him as immature and petulant with a volcanic temper. Once he knocked an Arapaho unconscious with a metal bolt during an argument, and in March he shot a Cheyenne dog he blamed for "Scalding" him. When the woman's band moved camp on January 17, 1854, he "Tied my squaw to a wagon to keep her from following the other Indians off." Later in January she left him. Despite their proprietary claims, white traders never owned Cheyenne women.[12] That winter William Bent, too, might have laid more foundation for marital difficulty. He contracted gonorrhea and sought treatment for it in Missouri several times. For Cheyenne women, a husband's adultery was grounds for divorce.[13] Bent's marriages would collapse in the 1860s, and his divorces might have resulted in part from his own sexual practices.

Despite his ties with the Cheyennes, the robe trade was dwindling, so Bent accelerated the pace of his freighting operations. This shift in emphasis drew him into closer contact with the United States government, and as these ties developed the trader became an advisor on Indian policy. For the time being, however, government freighting contracts helped offset losses in the robe trade. Shipping goods was a continuation of old practices but in a new context. Bent had not always considered the government a welcome presence in the borderlands, but now it offered a lot of business, and he began hauling annuity goods for the Upper Arkansas Indian Agency. George Bent remembered that his father shipped robes to the Missouri markets and loaded up annuities for the westbound trip. He recalled that his father "was paid enough

from hauling the annuities to buy his goods." Bent also continued to ship freight to New Mexico.[14]

One of the most difficult adjustments for William Bent's family during the 1850s must have been the decision to send the children to Missouri for an education. School was one of the most meaningful adaptations they would make. William must have felt an American education would equip his sons and daughters to survive in a world on the brink of change and might help white society accept them as equals. What his wives thought of this is unclear. Literacy would prepare the boys to join their father in the family business. Mary and Julia could also expand their options by attending school. An American education gave the Bent children another set of skills to navigate their changing world. For years, Missouri schools had attracted the sons and daughters of elite borderlands families, Anglo and Nuevomexicano. Separation from the children would have been difficult for the parents, but the Bent children had family waiting for them in Westport and St. Louis.[15]

In 1854 the children entered another world defined by long-standing business and kin connections. That February, George, Charley, and Julia traveled east with their father and stepmother to join Robert and Mary, who had started school the previous year. The plan was to leave the children under the guardianship of Albert Gallatin Boone, a business associate and relative of William's.[16] The choice of school may have helped ease the children's transition. Their parents had selected Reverend Nathan Scarritt's Western Academy. A progressive educator, the reverend believed in educating children of all racial backgrounds together. When he left the school, his successor, Chris Huffaker, continued educating Native, Anglo-American, and mixed-race children in the same classroom.[17]

After several years in Westport, George, Charley, and Mary made their way to St. Louis. The boys' guardian there was Robert Campbell, another of their father's associates and a powerful figure in the business community. George was enrolled in the Academy of Christian Brothers before he transferred to Webster College for Boys. Charley entered Webster in 1861. Here they would have studied Latin, Greek, German, and classics and been examined by recitation.[18] In St. Louis, Bent relatives surrounded the children. The family was intimately tied to Webster. One relative sponsored a scholarship for boarding students, and another, a contractor, helped construct the school buildings. Their aunt, Dorcas Bent Carr, was also an important presence in their lives. The Carr family

was part of the "social aristocracy" of St. Louis. They lived in a large, well-appointed house, and their fine racehorses won prizes yearly at the city's track. Mary Bent seems to have thrived under her aunt's care, becoming an accomplished pianist.[19] Like her New Mexico cousin Teresina Bent, Mary would effectively adapt to an Americanized lifestyle, marry well, and become a pillar of her community. As the level of violence in the West increased between the 1850s and the 1870s, the flexibility demonstrated by the Bent women would help their families effectively navigate through the storm of American expansion.

The Fort Laramie Treaty had temporarily brought peace to parts of the Great Plains, but between 1852 and 1854 William Bent found himself drawn into a violent conflict between the Cheyennes and their borderlands enemies, the Utes. The trader might not have been directly involved in the war, but his kinship ties made it clear where his sympathies lay. At the heart of the problem was that American Indian agents and traders supplied the Cheyennes and Arapahos with guns and ammunition that they used in raids against the Utes.[20] The Utes knew this and clearly articulated their grievances against the Americans with connections to their enemies. "We fear the Americans care more for the Kioways and Cheyennes than they do for the Utahs for many of them are married and have children upon the Prairies but the Utahs have no pale face children," a Ute delegation told agent John Grenier in 1852. There is no evidence tying William Bent to the gun trade, but other actions made his biases clear. In 1853 he hosted a celebration for Cheyenne warriors at his post. They had returned from a successful raid against the Pawnees and planned to raid the Utes. James Milligan noted that "Bent, in accordance with the custom of the traders[,] gave them a feast and received a fine horse in return to reciprocate the obligation."[21] The Utes ran out of patience in 1854. Years of frustration exploded on Christmas Eve, when they attacked the settlement of Pueblo, killed eighteen residents, and captured two women and a child. Only those with the closest ties to the "Prairie Indians" were safe. The connections that helped escalate the violence now shielded Bent from it. That same year the United States Army invaded the Ute homeland and administered a stinging defeat. One of the men who led the army's scouts was Bent's former partner Ceran St. Vrain.[22]

There was also trouble on the New Mexico border. Violence broke out in 1853, when the Cheyennes clashed with New Mexican hunters over access to the Arkansas River bison herds. The Indians turned to Bent to mediate with American officials in Santa Fe. He wrote to Governor

David Meriwether that the Hispanic hunters started the trouble when they stole three Cheyenne horses. The Indians' patience was wearing thin, and if the New Mexicans did not make restitution, "we will kill them where we see them," they told Bent. The governor, however, put the blame on the Cheyennes and even revived old accusations that Bent's purchase of stolen livestock helped drive the violence.[23] The Cheyennes struck the New Mexico frontier in force during the spring of 1854. Their attacks killed fourteen people and took captive eleven boys near Tecolote and Las Vegas. Meriwether was gravely concerned. The territory "is now threatened with devastation by Indians from the north," he wrote his superiors in May. The governor eventually asked John W. Whitefield, another Indian agent, to free the captives. Whitefield parlayed with the Cheyennes, who gave up three boys. The Indians drove a hard bargain and were willing to make peace with the New Mexicans only if the hunters "let them and their buffalo alone." Intermittent warfare continued into 1858, when the *ciboleros* agreed to confine their hunting to Comanche territory.[24]

American officials had hoped treaties would bring peace to the Great Plains, yet conflict escalated through the 1850s, and even William Bent's kinship connections could not always keep him safe. The trader found himself the target of raids and threats as he tried to balance his advocacy for Cheyenne territorial rights with his deepening economic connections to the United States government. During the winter of 1854–55 he filed a claim with the government against the Kiowas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos for "depredations upon cattle" citing the loss of more than eighty head worth $3,220. In 1856 the Indians "acknowledged the justice of the claim" and agreed to have the value of the livestock debited against their annuity goods.[25] It had been even worse in 1855. That summer the Cheyennes talked to Agent Whitefield and Bent "in a very insulting manner" and threatened to scalp them because they failed to bring guns and ammunition with the other annuity goods. It took all of Bent's diplomatic skills to calm the situation and convince the Indians to accept the goods the government sent. Whitefield reported to his superiors that the country around Bent's post was "in a state of confusion, such as I have never witnessed before and hope never to witness again. Wars and rumors of wars were all that was talked about," he wrote. Hunger also agitated the tribes. Their country was "almost desolate of buffalo," and without a good hunt they would starve and turn to raiding to secure supplies. The Arapahos were already stealing sheep from New Mexico, and the Cheyennes had begun "stealing on the Platte road," the agent

reported. With all this news flowing east, American policymakers were less inclined to restrain the military.[26]

The army's 1857 campaign against the Cheyennes placed the Bent family into a dangerous situation. That summer Colonel Edwin V. Sumner put two columns of United States Dragoons into the field to punish the Indians for raids along the Platte River and the Santa Fe Trail. On July 29 his men surprised the Cheyennes with a saber charge in a fight near the Solomon River in western Kansas. The dragoons drove off the warriors and burned the Cheyenne village.[27] When Agent Robert Miller arrived at Bent's fort on July 20 with several wagonloads of annuity goods, the trader feared the Indians might attack the post and kill him if he sheltered Miller and his men. The trader quickly struck a deal with the agent and allowed him to rent the fort as a supply depot. Then Bent and his family left for the safety of Westport.[28]

Despite the violence of 1857, Bent hoped for peace and was prepared to do what he could to mediate between the southern plains Indians and the United States government. He returned to the Arkansas River from Missouri in the autumn to find his post "very mutch torn to pieces," by whom he did not say. Several Cheyenne chiefs visited the trader and complained about Sumner's campaign. They wanted peace but "hav it in theair power to do a gradeal of mischief," Bent warned officials. He felt peace was in everyone's best interests. Stability would protect his family and allow him to go about his normal business routine.[29] The trader had hoped to immediately put his affairs back in order, but in the summer of 1858 Robert Miller solicited Bent's help again. He helped Miller plan a new round of treaty talks with the Cheyennes, Arapahos, Comanches, and Kiowas. Several Cheyenne chiefs told the Americans they wanted peace but warned that they could not control their warriors. Every young man's business was his own, and the older men had no coercive authority. The Cheyennes asked Bent to travel to Washington on their behalf to advocate for their interests but he begged off saying he needed to look after his own business interests. Only a year removed from the Sumner fight, prospects for regional peace looked good.[30] Then gold changed everything.

"A great change now came over the Cheyenne and Arapaho country," George Bent remembered. While his father and Miller negotiated with the Cheyennes and Arapahos, events in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains sent shock waves through the white population along the eastern frontier of the Great Plains. There had been "indications of mineral wealth" in the creeks of the Front Range since the early 1850s. Thomas

Fitzpatrick had reported rumors of riches to his superiors in 1853, and Argonauts bound for California found traces of gold along the route through Colorado, but none had stopped to stake claims. Everyone was bound for the Pacific Coast, where the real money was. By the latter half of the decade, however, easily accessible gold claims in California had pinched out, and stories about the Colorado discoveries resurfaced. In the spring of 1858, two parties of prospectors left Kansas for the Rocky Mountains. The Cherokee Party, organized by William Green Russell and John Beck, started out one hundred strong, but pan after disappointing pan of Platte River dirt convinced all but fourteen men to turn back. Russell, Beck, and the remaining dozen kept at it until they struck a promising stretch of water near the mouth of Cherry Creek. Russell's discovery was promising but hardly a bonanza; placer gold was hardly enough to make the region a long-term prospect. But the remnants of the Cherokee Party had not counted on the actions of a Westport trader named John Cantrell, who had come down from Fort Laramie to see the action. A natural promoter, Cantrell took some of the gold dust and dirt from the region back to Missouri. In the streets of Westport he held demonstrations in which he "panned" the dirt. People saw the gold, and the Pike's Peak Gold Rush was born. By the end of the year, settlements had sprung up along the creeks and rivers where the mountains met the plains.[31]

Throughout the summer and fall, William Bent was a sought-after source of information on the gold discoveries and surrounding country as frontier newspapers began to boost the Cherry Creek region as North America's new El Dorado. Bent may have passed one of the original prospecting parties on his way to Kansas City during the summer, and the city's journalists eagerly sought him out for interviews. His reputation on the frontier was impeccable, the *Kansas City Journal of Commerce* reported on July 15. By autumn, the *Journal* noted that parties of travelers were assembling to accompany Bent and his caravan west. Multiple reports stated that he "expects to establish a trading post" near the diggings. The trader warned the journalists that the gold was on land claimed by the Cheyennes and Arapahos, and the tribes had always known of the mineral deposits and worried that news of them would leak out. Despite the claims of the journalists, Bent never intended to establish business operations in the goldfields. Rather, he seemed to sense that the gold rush would change his world and the world of his Cheyenne kinfolk forever. The discovery would spark a massive migration west through Indian country, bringing with it economic, social, and

political forces that threatened to upend the world of the trader and his Cheyenne family.[32]

The Cheyennes knew that the gold rush meant trouble, and the chiefs most interested in accommodating the Americans turned to Bent as their advocate. The new developments in the foothills of the Rockies worried them deeply, and they urged the trader to press their case to officials in Washington. The Cheyennes "wish you to do something for them conserning theair cuntry," Bent wrote. Miners were already "laying off Town lots" in the area, and the trader was "yusing all of my influence to keep the Indians quiet," he informed Charles Meeks in September 1858.[33] The tribe was, for the time being, willing to watch developments without resistance, but their patience was not infinite. They wanted to know what the president expected of them. As the rush to Colorado accelerated, the Cheyennes exercised considerable restraint, letting the migrants through their territory with only an occasional incident of horse theft. Nevertheless, they were "loosing the[ir] favorite hunting ground and their only place to get . . . summer and fall provisions," and "that goes rather hard with them," Bent warned. The chiefs had told the trader that they wished to become farmers and wanted him to "see what I can do for them," regarding the issue. Bent closed 1858 with an assurance that he would continue to work in the interests of a mutually agreeable solution to the problems being raised by the mineral discoveries.[34]

Eager to utilize William Bent's vast experience with the Cheyennes and Arapahos, policymakers requested him to take over leadership of the Upper Arkansas Agency, a post from which he would continue to mediate between the tribes and the United States government. The gold rush showed no signs of slowing, and as the trains of miners continued rolling west the potential for violence with the Indians of the central plains increased. Bent knew the region and its Native inhabitants well, probably better than any other American. He also had an interest in maintaining peace in the region; peace was good for business. William accepted the position in May.[35] It is easy to see Bent as a traitor to his Cheyenne kinfolk. After all, he was now advising the very people who would ultimately displace his Indian family. Viewed another way, however, his actions reflect the pragmatism that had characterized the Bent family's operations in the region for decades. His business had declined dramatically, the Americans were not leaving anytime soon, and his Cheyenne family needed an advocate. William Bent could not control the pace of events, but from his position at the agency he could try his

best to keep the peace and advocate for the people who had taken him into their society almost thirty years before.

Bent spent his short time as agent doing what he had done for years, trying to broker cooperation between the Cheyennes and Americans and looking after the family's financial interests. He clearly saw no reason to separate the two ventures and continued to utilize his broad network of contacts to put his son Robert in a financially advantageous situation. Bent's superiors in St. Louis urged their bosses in Washington to pay attention to Robert's bid to ship annuity goods to the western forts. The young man's bid was accepted. He received a government contract to ship eighty tons of annuities, which he delivered that summer.[36] William's letters to his superiors during the summer of 1859 stressed the peaceful disposition of the Arapahos and Cheyennes who ranged south of the Platte River. The Comanches and Kiowas were restless and prone to cause trouble, he wrote. Personal business in St. Louis also beckoned. Some observers might question his use of government time to make his own money, but Bent was blunt in his assessment of his finances. He made "more than three times the Amount of my Salary" conducting his own business, so no one should begrudge him a couple of weeks to clear up personal matters.[37]

By autumn the situation had grown worse. The agent estimated that sixty thousand people were raising dust on the trails to Colorado. "The concourse of whites is therefore constantly swelling," he noted laconically.[38] Despite the growing traffic, the Cheyennes and Arapahos remained at peace. Nevertheless, the circle was closing. They were "pressed upon all around" by the whites. Travelers shot game, cut wood, and fouled watering holes that the Indians relied upon for survival. "A desperate war of starvation and extinction is therefore imminent and inevitable, unless prompt measures shall prevent it," was Bent's bleak summary of the situation. To prevent this catastrophe, he recommended building forts at Pawnee Fork and the Big Timbers; and a new treaty that would relocate the tribes and turn them into agriculturalists. The treaty should also regulate trade and take care of the region's mixed-race families, including his own. William Bent was not an advocate for total Indian autonomy and a return to their traditional way of life. He was very much in line with the traditional Indian policy initiatives that emanated from Washington. Reservations and agriculture would save his wives' people, Bent believed. When he felt force against the tribes was necessary, he said so. The Kiowas held out against the new treaty negotiations and might need to be "whipped," he told his superiors.[39]

The world was changing for William Bent and his kinfolk. For much of the 1850s the pace had been incremental, and the balance of power still tilted in favor of the Native peoples of the southern plains. Any American control over the region was largely theoretical and not backed by any meaningful action. The United States had not yet projected its power much beyond Kansas and Missouri. But a new vision for the West gained clarity in the light of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush. This vision had little need—or space—for families like Bent's. Economic, social, and political systems were coming that did not depend on the robe trade, kinship ties, or maintaining the political balance of power between the region's Native peoples. The new, white vision was of "rich mines, prodigal fields, bustling commerce, contented cud-chewers, and towns of clapboard and Methodism," writes Elliott West.[40]

William Bent and his family took steps to prepare. The children studied in Missouri schools, William diversified to keep pace with the decline of the robe trade, and he spent the latter years of the decade giving advice on how to keep peace between the United States and the plains Indians. But his family could not avoid conflict. Signs of strain were showing in his marriages, the traditional basis for his company's wealth was diminishing, and war had erupted between his Cheyenne kinfolk and the United States Army. The acceleration of the gold rush in 1859 accelerated the pace of change, and the rising tensions would be exacerbated by the stress of the American Civil War. The Bents would try to adapt to change as they had always done, but the early 1860s would be years of hideous violence that threatened not only to push the family beyond the margins of acceptable society but also to tear it apart.

While her uncle William's family tried to settle into a new life, Teresina Bent and her kinfolk had their own adjustments to make. After Charles's death, Teresina moved into the home of her aunt and uncle, Josefa and Kit Carson. We do not know why she stayed with her in-laws instead of remaining with her mother. Perhaps María Ignacia was too traumatized by the events of 1847 to care for her children. Maybe Josefa and Kit needed help. Estefana Bent joined her sister in her new home, and they must have proved useful to the scout and his wife.[41] In the coming decades, Teresina Bent would be a valuable source for her family's history. She acted in much the same capacity as George Bent did for his kin, although her work received far less attention. Part of this is attributable to the fact that very little of her correspondence with historians and writers has survived. Additionally, she communicated with men of little historical consequence. Whereas George exchanged letters with scholars

and editors of the caliber of George Bird Grinnell and George Hyde, those who sought out Teresina's stories were little-known antiquarians like Francis W. Cragin. Nevertheless, her connection with Kit Carson gave her an audience, and her recollections appeared in several of his early twentieth-century biographies.

As a young girl Teresina experienced the dangers of borderlands life in New Mexico. In late 1850 she moved with the Carsons to Rayado. Carved out of the large Beaubien-Miranda Land Grant, the small settlement was founded by Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell. The son of a French Creole mother and Irish father, Maxwell was born in Kaskaskia, Illinois, in 1818. His family was well-connected to St. Louis powerbrokers like the Chouteaus, and the young man led an eventful life in the West. He worked for Bent, St. Vrain and Company on the South Platte River in 1839, accompanied two of John Frémont's expeditions, ranched with Charles Bent on the Poñil River, and, most importantly, married Charles Beaubien's daughter Luz in 1842. This marriage opened a new world of opportunities for Maxwell when his father-in-law turned to him to develop the grant after the deaths of Charles Bent and Narciso Beaubien in 1847. By the early 1850s the small settlement consisted of nearly thirty members. Carson and his family lived in a two-story log ranch house surrounded by an adobe wall. Charles Pancoast, a California-bound gold seeker who visited in Rayado in 1850, commented on its fine ranching potential. Rayado sat in a beautiful valley "covered with fine grass," he remembered.[42]

The ranch sat on some of the finest grazing acreage in New Mexico, but in the early years Rayado was isolated and vulnerable to Indian attack. Maxwell himself almost died fighting Jicarilla Apaches in 1849. Teresina remembered these days well and passed on vivid memories of Indian scares to Kit Carson biographer Edwin Sabin. Ironically, the incidents she remembered involved threats not only from Comanches but also from her uncle William's Cheyenne kinfolk. On two different occasions Teresina recalled them menacing Rayado. The first time Maxwell was away on business, and Carson talked the warriors out of attacking the ranch. Another time both men were away when the Cheyennes showed up and demanded food. While Teresina served dinner, she noticed a chief watching her carefully. When the man offered to purchase her as a wife, Teresina was terrified and "the tears were running down my cheeks" she told Sabin. "I did not want to go with the dirty chief," the woman recalled, and when Carson and the cavalry rode up to save them she was immensely relieved.[43] The construction of Fort Union in 1851 brought

peace and temporary prosperity to Rayado, and Maxwell made good money providing supplies to the garrison. Around 1857 the settlement's fortunes began to decline, and he relocated his operations to Cimarron. By then the Carsons were gone, and Teresina was off to boarding school in Santa Fe.[44]

The young woman matriculated at Santa Fe's Our Lady of Light Academy in 1853. The institution was founded by the Sisters of Loretto, a Catholic religious order headquartered in Kentucky, in response to a call for educational support from Bishop Jean Lamy. The sisters responded enthusiastically, but their trip to New Mexico was difficult. The rains were torrential, wagons broke down, and the Mother Superior and one sister died of cholera. But when they arrived in Santa Fe on September 26, 1852, they were greeted with great ceremony. Bells rang incessantly as the women entered the parish church and listened as a priest sang a Te Deum "accompanied by Mexican music" to celebrate their safe arrival. There were still many obstacles to overcome. None of the sisters spoke Spanish, and they needed to learn it before they opened the school. They committed themselves to the task and within weeks they were ready to start classes. They opened the school in January 1853, and Teresina Bent was one of the ten boarding students who attended, along with three day-students. By August enrollment had doubled. The main room in the house doubled as classroom and dormitory space. After remodeling with plank flooring, the institution was established enough in 1854 to host a "public exhibition and distribution of prizes" attended by the governor and his entourage. The facilities expanded again in 1855 to include a two-story building. The sisters held classes on the first floor, and the students slept upstairs.[45]

The education Teresina received from the sisters helped lay the foundation for her successful adaptions to the changes that overtook Colorado and New Mexico during her adult years. The purpose of boarding schools like Our Lady of Light was to "prepare students to be women of stature in society," writes Anne Butler in her study of Catholic nuns and sisters in the American West. To that end, the curriculum at most of these institutions reflected that of finishing schools in the East. But while the courses focused heavily on socially acceptable ornamental education, Teresina and the other girls probably drew inspiration from the determination and hard work of the sisters, who carved out a place for themselves in a hierarchical, patriarchal institution that did not always value their contributions to the success of the Church in the region.[46] The education she received in Santa Fe enabled Teresina to acquire the

FIGURE 11. Teresina Bent Scheurich, daughter of New Mexico Territory Governor Charles Bent, 1870? Courtesy of Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), neg. no. 007146.

social and cultural skill set that allowed her to claim respectability and community status during her married life.

Teresina and her fellow students benefited from a wide range of instruction provided by dedicated teachers. An early advertisement for the school boasted of its wide-ranging curriculum and skilled staff. The institution had already acquired a good reputation in the Territory, and the sisters "spare no pains to win the hearts of the pupils to virtue and impart to their minds a solid and refined scholarship," the ad bragged. The sisters offered classes in piano, guitar, harp, singing, drawing, "Artificial or Hair Flowers," and language. Prices ranged from twenty dollars to eighty dollars per course. The most expensive were piano and harp, which required rental fees for the instruments. The school charged two

hundred dollars per year for tuition and board and five dollars per month for day students.[47]

The Sisters of Loretto were successful in their educational efforts. Teresina excelled at penmanship and needlework, but her first love was music. In 1858 she purchased the first piano in Taos and played very well. Although Teresina left no account of her time at school, Marian Russell, who also attended in the 1850s, gave some detail into everyday life there. She remembered the dedication of the sisters, who were determined to pass along not only the "three R's" but also the virtue of self-reliance. Russell wrote that the students all wore uniforms—dark purple on ordinary school days, black for feast days, and "rosy pink" for holiday occasions. The pupils were intently focused on their studies despite the efforts of the students at the neighboring boys' school, who flirted with the girls by calling to them from across the river. Even Kit Carson was impressed by the work the Sisters of Loretto did in Santa Fe.[48]

The Bent family demonstrated a keen adaptability to changing circumstances during the 1850s. They adjusted to new economies, accelerating older business practices while aligning with new partners. William Bent emerged as an increasingly influential mediator between his Cheyenne kinfolk and the American government. Children on both sides of the family acquired educations that they would later deploy in expected and surprising ways. Yet the process of evolution was not smooth. Tensions over cultural practices might have split William's family into rival factions. War and raiding also remained daily facts of life. And the pace of change was dramatically accelerated by American expansion. The 1860s would be even bloodier than the 1840s, and William Bent's family would suffer terribly. The New Mexico side of the family would be more successful, maneuvering between Hispanic, Anglo, and Native communities as they staked a claim to lucrative business opportunities in the New Mexico–Colorado borderlands.

6 / The Road to Sand Creek: William Bent and His Family, 1861–1865

The dramatic increase of American emigration to Colorado helped create a society based on racially exclusive notions of politics, economics, and family. Increasingly, settlers sought to marginalize and displace indigenous and mixed-race families with white ones. Cultural ideas and political policies were, for settler societies, always backed by the threat of violence from private or state-sponsored sources.[1] The end result of these attitudes was traumatic for families like the Bents. A new focus on racial exclusivity undermined the old fur- and robe-trading economy that had been based on marriage and intercultural accommodation. William Bent could attest to the fact that his family's relations with Indian peoples in the borderlands had never been without conflict, but the system had functioned well, and he had grown wealthy because of it. The trader and his family faced a series of difficult choices during these years about their family loyalties, and whether they would resist American expansion or try to accommodate themselves to the changes taking place in the West. The answers to these questions threatened to shatter family unity as the pressures of settlement and war intensified.

The new vision for the West ushered in by the Pike's Peak Gold Rush was based on ideas of proper land usage and family formation that had deep cultural and racial consequences for mixed-race families. Utilization of nature's agricultural and mineral bounty necessitated the removal of Indian peoples who did not till or mine or raise cattle, ushering in a new regime of ownership in which land was surveyed, mapped, and commodified. Coloradans based their economic vision on the union of

agriculture and mining and had little use for older activities like the robe trade.[2] American cultural ideas called into question the appropriateness of intermarriage. The replication of "civilized" family life was critical to the project of expansion. White women and children and the institutions associated with them—churches, schools, homes, and benevolent societies—signaled that civilization had tamed a howling wilderness. Mixed-race families were anachronistic, disruptive, and potentially dangerous to these settler societies. Changing socioeconomic ideas had modified views of what types of family were acceptable, and the old trading families were deemed unacceptable.[3] William Bent made out better than most. He and his family were partially shielded by their money and important connections outside of Colorado. Yet even the advantages accrued by the parents would not protect two of the Bent sons from suspicion and hatred in the coming years.[4]

The economic landscape of Colorado was changing rapidly, but William Bent and his family continued to demonstrate pragmatic flexibility as they adapted to new circumstances. The Bents continued their freighting operations in the early 1860s. This business was augmented by the growth of the white communities along the Front Range and the military posts on the Great Plains. Robert Bent's operations were just one part of a much larger economy. By 1865 tens of thousands of freighters hauled untold tons of supplies across the plains, linking Colorado to the eastern economy. The intensification of the American military presence—its forts, the treaty system, and annuities—continued to provide the family an income. Robert Bent's success was aided by his father's Missouri connections and his appointment as Indian agent. In the summer of 1860 Robert won a government contract to ship goods to Bent's Fort for distribution during a series of talks with the Cheyennes and Arapahos set up by his father.[5] The work that Robert did with his father seems to have affected the choices he made in the 1860s and 1870s. Unlike Charley—and, for a time, George—Robert never took up arms against the United States. During the reservation years in Indian Territory he was a model of assimilated life. Perhaps the years he spent working with his father and cultivating contacts in the white business community shaped the decisions he made about how to work and live.

The family also continued to grow. In the summer of 1860 Mary, William's daughter by Owl Woman, married Westport saloonkeeper Robison M. Moore. Bent had initially opposed the marriage, fearing that Moore was simply after the family's money. The young man soon changed his father-in-law's mind. Moore proved diligent, hardworking,

and thrifty. Even though he tended bar, he was a teetotaler. Julia was generally considered to be the better-looking of the Bent sisters; one old-timer uncharitably called Mary "a large and swarthy woman." But Mary was a supremely talented and self-composed young woman. Like her siblings she attended school in Missouri, and she thrived. Mary received the most thorough American education of any of William's children and became an accomplished musician. These talents, along with Moore's work ethic, and connections to the family's larger kin network in New Mexico and Colorado would make the newlyweds prominent citizens in the coming years.[6]

Even as the Bents freighted, ranched, and wed, war clouds gathered on the southern plains. William's first challenge as agent in 1860 was to assess the disposition of the tribes in his jurisdiction. He concluded that the tribes near the Arkansas were peaceful and wrote to his superiors defending the Comanches against accusations that they raided in Texas.[7] The army saw things differently and launched a summer campaign against the Kiowas and Comanches. John Sedgwick's column, marching out of Fort Riley, fought the Kiowas in July, killed two warriors, captured forty mules, and took sixteen women and children captive. Sedgwick feared that the captives would slow him down and was grateful when Bent requested that the women and children be turned over into his care. The agent held them as "hostages for the safety of the emigrants on the road," Sedgwick informed his superiors. The summer campaign was largely unsuccessful in intimidating the Kiowas and Comanches.[8]

That year Bent also abandoned his post on the Arkansas River for good. The military presence on the plains had offered an important source of income but apparently not enough to justify the high overhead costs at the fort. In early January 1860 he informed his superiors in Washington that he was leaving.[9] The army's interest in his property was also an incentive to relocate. A flurry of correspondence during the summer and fall indicated recognition of the post's advantages as the location for a new fort. The trader offered to sell for $12,000, and negotiations dragged until William agreed to lease the fort to the army. He then relocated to a ranch about twenty miles away on the west bank of the Purgatoire River. The army christened the trading post Fort Wise. After the Civil War broke out, the government renamed it Fort Lyon to honor the staunch Missouri Unionist Nathaniel Lyon, who fell leading federal forces at the Battle of Wilson's Creek.[10]

Bent resigned his position as Indian agent in September 1860, citing health concerns, but not before he helped set in motion a new round of

negotiations between the Cheyennes and American government. Having helped frame the broad strategic outlines for the talks, Bent retired and recommended his old Missouri friend Albert Gallatin Boone for the position of agent. American officials met with a small group of Cheyenne and Arapaho chiefs at Bent's Fort that fall. The chiefs were eager for peace and informed the negotiators that they would sign a treaty regardless of opposition from other factions in their respective tribes.[11]

The Treaty of Fort Wise, signed on February 2, 1861, severely reduced Cheyenne land claims on the southern plains yet proved beneficial to the Bent family. In exchange for ceding all lands guaranteed by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and settling on a dramatically reduced stretch of land along the Arkansas River, the Cheyennes and Arapahos received $450,000 in annuity payments guaranteed over a span of fifteen years; $5,000 per year for five years to cover the expenses of building sawmills, gristmills, mechanic's shops, houses, and fences on the new reservation; and an agreement that Cheyenne territory be closed to all whites except approved traders.[12] The treaty stipulations and negotiations bore a strong Bent imprint. William helped craft the terms of the deal. Robert Bent acted as one of the government's interpreters. And Albert G. Boone, with his long-standing connections to the Bents, implemented the terms of the treaty. Additionally, William pushed for a provision in the treaty that granted Robert 640 acres of land within the reservation boundaries. John Simpson Smith, a former Bent employee and interpreter at the council, secured a similar deal for his son Jack. The Bents used the Treaty of Fort Wise to carve out a space for themselves in a rapidly changing world.[13]

American negotiators viewed it as necessary, the Bents stood to benefit from it, but the Treaty of Fort Wise exposed the deep political rifts developing among William's Cheyenne kinfolk. From the 1840s onward, a gap had been slowly widening between the Cheyenne peace chiefs and the warrior societies.[14] William Bent had built his business on alliances with the peace chiefs, the faction most willing to negotiate with the Americans. Bent had traded with them, cultivated their trust, and married into that political faction. Perhaps he overestimated their ability to guide Cheyenne politics and underestimated the growing discontent among the warrior societies, but the Cheyenne divisions would mirror the divisions that grew within Bent's own family during the 1860s. The gold rush with its attendant environmental and demographic squeeze exacerbated the preexisting tensions with sad consequences for the tribe.

More than any other group the Dog Soldiers came to represent the public face of those Cheyennes who had grown increasingly frustrated

with American expansion and the willingness of the peace chiefs to negotiate away lands occupied by the tribe. Tensions between the Dog Soldiers and the peace chiefs were not new. The soldier society had long treated white traders "in a high-handed manner," and their military activities, so essential to the construction of Cheyenne manhood, had "disrupted the trading and subsistence activities so essential to the peace faction" for years.[15] More critically, the gold rush and later treaty negotiations targeted the territory the Dog Soldiers considered their homeland, the valleys of the Smoky Hill, Solomon, and Republican Rivers. The society "became a gravitational center for men of a particular persuasion and belief," based on isolation from white traders and opposition to anyone, American or Cheyenne, who threatened their territory.[16] The argument made by the peace faction in the autumn of 1860 and at the treaty negotiations—that the Fort Wise provisions applied only to the signatories of the treaty—proved meaningless. The warrior societies resented the process itself, and white Coloradans believed that the treaty was binding on all Cheyennes. No Dog Soldier signed the document. And even though the initial government reaction to the treaty was positive, within a year, officials recognized that powerful voices within the tribe had not been represented and considered the treaty fraudulent.[17] Growing animosities in Colorado threatened the territory's stability even before the outbreak of the Civil War threatened to drown the West in blood.

For the Cheyennes the Civil War was a war of conquest, and the violence that erupted in Colorado was intimately tied to the larger conflict. The territory's strategic location and vulnerability created unstable conditions that made it fertile ground for conspiracy theories, bitter racism, and, ultimately, bloodshed. The war did not stop westward expansion, and the region's strategic significance made it a crucial theater of operations. The Confederates hoped to rouse secessionist sympathies in the West to seize the Colorado goldfields and take control of the southern overland trails to the Pacific Ocean, while the Union strategy focused on defending these mines and road. These goals taxed resources and resolve on both sides.[18] The gold discoveries in Colorado demonstrated the economic and psychological importance of the central plains to the Union cause. Regional boosters like Governor William Gilpin hammered home the strategic and economic importance of the region's trails, mines, and farms. Coloradans constantly reminded Washington of their importance to the Union cause and their vulnerability on the western fringe of the Great Plains. With adequate protection, the people of Colorado could contribute great things to the war effort.[19]

The prospect of Confederate agents forging a pan-Indian alliance to invade Colorado especially terrified white frontiersmen. Early in the war the *Rocky Mountain News* warned of "A subtle and malignant agent of the Secessionists" trying to stir up the tribes of the region. Governor Gilpin knew of Confederate attempts to woo the Cherokees and fretted that such an alliance might easily spread west to the Rockies.[20] Confederate negotiators rallied factions of some tribes in Indian Territory early in the war, with mixed results. The factual basis of this Confederate-Indian alliance provided fodder for anti-Indian sentiment in Colorado as the war progressed. When southern agents made overtures to the southern plains tribes, the Cheyennes went to William Bent for advice. "My father told the[m] to keep out of it," George Bent remembered.[21] The Cheyennes had their own reasons for avoiding the conflict. They were already pressed by white migration, reduced by the Fort Wise Treaty, and internally divided. The peace chiefs would not have wanted any more violent disruption of Cheyenne life, and the Dog Soldiers would not have wanted dealings with any white negotiator. Confederate overtures failed in the West, but both sides recognized the possible utilities and dangers that came with creating an alliance with Indian peoples.

The Confederate invasion of New Mexico and Arizona in 1861 added to a growing sense of danger and encirclement in Colorado. Southern strategists hoped to sweep up the Rio Grande River, capture Santa Fe, and threaten Colorado's gold mines. The invaders were initially successful in the Mesilla Valley of southern New Mexico and marched as far west as Tucson. However, their march north ended in decisive defeat. Although they captured Santa Fe, the rebels faced vulnerable supply lines, low rations, and a lack of grass and water for their livestock. Union forces, including troops from Colorado, stopped the Confederates at the Battle of Glorieta Pass in 1862. Farther west, a Union column from California routed the rebel forces in Tucson and pushed them back to the Rio Grande.[22] These victories kept the borderlands firmly in Union hands for the remainder of the war, despite the continued fears of Coloradans that they were under siege by malevolent forces.

George and Charley Bent were caught up in Missouri's war fervor in 1861. George's Civil War experience was a short one. He and Charley were in school in St. Louis when the war broke out. In June 1861 they returned to Westport on summer holiday, where they enlisted in the State Guard. When the Guard arrived in Springfield, it was assigned to Colonel Martin E. Green's Missouri Cavalry, part of the local Confederate army under the command of Sterling Price. A sergeant sent Charley

packing, telling him he was too small to serve, and the young man returned to the Cheyenne villages along the Arkansas. George remained and fought in every major engagement in Missouri and Arkansas in 1861 and 1862. His unit was in the vanguard of a Confederate counterattack that threw back Nathaniel Lyon's Union force at Wilson's Creek. George also saw action at Lexington and Pea Ridge. He joined a horse artillery unit and was captured while retreating from the Battle of Corinth. Bent arrived in St. Louis, a prisoner of war, on September 3, 1862.[23]

His family's connections saved him from a long imprisonment. George recalled that some of his schoolmates saw him being marched through the city streets and alerted his brother Robert, who was in town on business. Robert went to Robert Campbell, who petitioned District Provost Marshal Bernard G. Farrar, the son of Campbell's personal physician, to free George. Farrar signed Bent's release papers on September 5, 1862, and Robert took him into his care. George attributed his release to his father's network of friends and associates. Robert had gone to see "some of the officers" on George's behalf, and since "my father was known to all of the old officers at that time," they lobbied on his behalf. By the spring of 1863 Bent had joined the Cheyenne camps on the Republican River.[24]

Violence seemed to follow George Bent home, for the Indian war many white Coloradans had feared since 1861 exploded into life in April 1864. The fighting began when soldiers attacked and burned a Cheyenne camp in response to allegations of horse theft by several young warriors. Troopers also killed Lean Bear, a peace chief and brother of a Dog Soldier, when he approached a detachment of soldiers to parlay. The violence, especially the killing of Lean Bear, made it more difficult for the peace chiefs to be heard. The warrior societies began retaliatory raiding later in the spring, "and a terrible work they made of it," wrote George Bird Grinnell.[25]

The most spectacular incident of violence that summer struck at the very soul of the settler society taking root in Colorado: the family. On June 11 Nathan Ward Hungate and a hired hand named Miller were at work rounding up stray cattle on the ranch of Isaac P. Van Wormer, about thirty miles outside of Denver. The two men saw the ranch house burning. Miller rode to Denver for help, and Hungate charged back to the ranch to protect his wife and two daughters. Some Northern Arapahos who had a grudge against Van Wormer killed all four Hungates. Coloradans immediately blamed the Cheyennes.[26] Perhaps more shocking than the killings were the reports of the mutilations inflicted on the bodies of the Hungate family. The violence of the incident stunned

Denverites. The attack on the couple and two young daughters—"spoken of by their neighbors as having been very worthy and excellent people"—sickened, frightened, and angered white Coloradans. Three freighters described the scene in graphic detail. Ellen Hungate had been stabbed to death, scalped, and "the body bore evidences of having been violated," they reported. The two girls "had their throats cut, their heads being nearly severed from their bodies," while Mr. Hungate had been shot and scalped.[27] Rumor amplified the violence. In Denver diarist and housewife Sarah Hively heard that the youngest Hungate girl had been "sliced open," while others reported that Mrs. Hungate had been shot eighty times. The bodies had been bound and dumped into a well.[28]

Few images had a longer history or more capacity to infuriate settlers than the burned home and destroyed family. Stretching back in time to the colonial era and in space from New England to Mexico, the threat to family posed by Indians had a powerful resonance. The assault on the home was an attack on the Anglo-American economic value system. The images that helped define their civilization were wrapped up in home and family—productive fields, fat livestock, and cozy hearths. The killing of women was a blow to the reproductive capabilities of civilized society itself and cried out for vengeance. The deaths of Ellen Hungate and her daughters "threatened the social order" of the frontier, observes Ari Kelman.[29] The public display of the bodies in Denver reinforced the threat to white families in the territory and stoked anti-Indian attitudes to white-hot fury. The Hungates were displayed at the Denver post office, "and anyone that desire[d] to see them could do so," Sarah Hively confided to her journal on June 14. She chose not to go. So many other Denverites viewed the bodies that Nathaniel Hill, a chemist from Brown University who was touring Colorado's mining operations, was revolted. "So fond are these Westerners of excitement that all the people of the town with a few honorable exceptions went to see them," he wrote to his sister.[30] The Hungate killings had a galvanic effect. The incident graphically confirmed the governor's sense that Colorado was under siege. The ruined bodies also demanded retributive violence. As reports of more killings, mutilations, and rapes appeared in the columns of the *Rocky Mountain News* and in military correspondence, anger grew.[31]

The Cheyenne peace chiefs turned to William Bent for advice on how to avoid war with the Americans. In late May Black Kettle asked Bent to meet with the chiefs to explain why the soldiers had attacked their camps. The Cheyennes told the trader that they wanted peace, and Bent rode to Fort Lyon to discuss terms with John Chivington. The colonel

would have none of it. He said he was "on the warpath" against the Cheyennes, Bent later testified. William returned to his ranch with a sense that Chivington was a potentially dangerous adversary.[32]

Chivington might not have been receptive to Black Kettle's overtures, but Governor John Evans turned to frontier mediators like Bent and John Simpson Smith to deliver a peace overture to the chiefs. When he received the governor's instructions, Agent Samuel Colley immediately wrote to Bent asking him to come to Fort Lyon. The agent showed Bent the proclamation and requested that he find the Cheyennes and convince them to travel to Lyon or Fort Larned. Colley was relying on William's long experience and family connections to make an impression on the chiefs.[33] Bent found the Cheyennes and Arapahos near Fort Larned and expressed his desire for the chiefs to make peace with Evans. Black Kettle and the others agreed that they would begin negotiations. Bent took a Cheyenne and Arapaho delegation to Larned, where they talked to the post's commanding officer, Captain J. W. Parmetar. George Bent later said that Parmetar was drunk and insulting, but his father seemed satisfied with the meeting. The Indians agreed to move closer to Fort Lyon, well within the bounds of the Fort Wise Treaty territory. Bent was less optimistic about the prospects for peace with the Kiowas, who raided along the Santa Fe Trail route in August.[34]

Meanwhile, Bent's marital life was falling apart. Although Mary and her husband had traveled to Colorado to live on the Purgatoire with William, Yellow Woman left for the war camps along the Republican River in June or July. Charley joined his mother on the trip. Yellow Woman's sister Island then deserted Bent for one of his traders, Joe Barraldo. "I am not in a very good humor," Bent informed Agent Colley, "as my old squaw ran off a few days ago." His ex-wife "liked him better than she did me." Perhaps the incident saddened Bent; it certainly angered him. "If I ever get sight of the young man it will go hard for him," he wrote the agent.[35] There is no way to know for certain what caused the women to leave, and the Cheyenne divorce customs did not demand they justify their actions to Bent. Perhaps it was the culmination of years of cultural tensions over how to raise the children. Maybe Yellow Woman felt William had grown too close to the army, Agent Colley, and Governor Evans. Bent's own sexual proclivities could have pushed them away. Maybe the trader was not affectionate enough. Island might, as Bent intimated, simply have liked the younger man more. Whatever the reason, that summer William Bent's direct marital ties to the Cheyennes ended after nearly thirty years.

George's activities also brought unwanted attention to the family that summer. Union officials took note of George's presence and warned their subordinates that he was a dangerous man. Fears of Confederate raiders and provocateurs had not diminished, and everyone knew where Bent's loyalties lay. George himself recalled, "all the Indians called me 'Texan' on account of being in [the] Southern army." Major Edward Wynkoop's superiors ordered him to watch for "this young Bent" and arrest him if necessary. If he said anything that hinted at southern sympathies or impugned the Union, "it won't do him any harm or injustice" to shackle him in the guardhouse, J. S. Maynard wrote Wynkoop in May 1864. In December another officer at Fort Riley, Kansas, worried that Indians near his post were being pressed to war by "secession sympathizers" and renegades including Bent. The young man—"a son of old Bent by a Cheyenne woman"—had an American education and was "foremost in leading those wild tribes in their depredations" against the settlers.[36] John Chivington also worried about George, describing him as "a half-breed Cheyenne Indian, but educated, and to all appearances a white man," who had turned "bushwhacker" during the conflict in Missouri and came west to cause trouble. Chivington was "reliably informed" that Bent had been active in trying to turn the plains tribes against the Union. The Americans were busy fighting each other, and George had told the Cheyennes that the time was right to "regain their country" Chivington later testified. By linking Bent and the Indians with the Confederate war effort he could claim that the coming violence inflicted at Sand Creek was a necessary extension of the Union army's larger effort to crush the rebellion.[37] And George Bent seemed to stand in the way of victory.

The escalating pace of violence in the summer of 1864 did not prevent the peace chiefs and William Bent from seeking terms from Governor Evans. Bent remained active among the Cheyennes, sending letters and arguing that nothing could be gained from violence. George also played a role, taking down a dictation from Black Kettle and the other chiefs, which they sent to Agent Colley in late August. The letter stated that William Bent had encouraged them to reach out to the agent. The Cheyennes offered to meet with white officials and exchange prisoners—there were seven white captives in the villages—as a good-faith gesture toward a lasting peace settlement.[38] The letter to Evans deepened the animosity in the Cheyenne camps. The political fractures ran along generational lines. The peace chiefs—older men with deep financial and family ties to white traders like Bent—urged caution and accommodation. The warrior societies—younger men who neither had nor wanted such ties—continued

the war. None of this was new, of course, but never had the tensions been this high. The threat of violence loomed. The political divide "was far advanced, to the point of armed conflict," writes anthropologist John H. Moore. Nevertheless, the peace chiefs pressed forward and sent negotiators to meet with the commanding officer at Fort Lyon.[39]

The negotiations that followed gave the impression that peace was at hand. At first, Edward Wynkoop, the garrison's commanding officer, was unsure how to respond to the Cheyenne messengers. He arrested them when they arrived at Lyon, but after listening to their story, decided to ride out to meet the Cheyennes on a tributary of the Smoky Hill River. The major failed to redeem all the captives, but what he heard from the peace chiefs convinced Wynkoop that this was an opportunity to bring stability to the region. He told the Cheyennes that he lacked the authority to negotiate a formal settlement but promised to take them to Denver to meet with Governor Evans.[40] This parlay took place at Camp Weld, outside Denver, on September 28. Although the governor and Chivington offered no ironclad promises of peace, the talk convinced the peace chiefs that they would be safe if they reported to Fort Lyon and tried to keep their distance from the young warriors raiding throughout the territory.[41]

The assumption that all had been resolved at Camp Weld would prove tragically mistaken, but for the time William Bent felt that events were headed in a positive direction. Wynkoop assured Black Kettle that his people were safe at the fort. Wynkoop had no orders to make such a statement, but he believed that the conference at Weld had been successful and that everyone present had the same view. He was not around long enough to find out, however. Major Scott Anthony replaced Wynkoop as post commander at Fort Lyon in November.[42] Anthony's orders about dealing with the Indians near the fort were vague, and he arrived with a hostile attitude toward them. His views mellowed in the following days. Anthony told Black Kettle that he would try to keep peace but that the Indians could not stay near the post. The major told them to camp at Sand Creek and await further instruction. The Cheyennes and Arapahos felt they would be safe there. The Bents felt this way too, and several members of the family traveled to Sand Creek to be with their relatives. By late November George, Charley, Julia, and Island, along with John Simpson Smith and his son Jack were all in the camp.[43]

George was still warm in his bed on the morning of November 29, 1864, when the Colorado cavalry thundered down on the Sand Creek village. The previous day, John Chivington and the Third Colorado Cavalry

had arrived at Fort Lyon and convinced Major Anthony to join an attack on the encampment. The troopers then rode to William Bent's ranch on the Purgatoire, surrounded it, and pressed Robert into service as a guide to Black Kettle's village.[44] Cheyennes and Arapahos poured out of their lodges into a hail of gunfire. The surprise was complete. "The Indians all began running," George recalled. In the initial maelstrom, Black Kettle tried to rally the camp. Standing in front of his lodge, beneath an American flag, the chief called out to the fleeing people that the soldiers would not hurt them.[45] George was not going to take that risk. He grabbed his weapons and emerged to join the defense. He fell in with a group of warriors running toward a line of sandhills west of the camp. At the foot of the bluffs they found people digging a trench along the creek bank. The position was not a safe one; soldiers were maneuvering into position to fire directly on the defenders. Recognizing the danger, George and two other warriors dodged away for safer ground. The twenty or so Indians who stayed were gunned down. A bullet struck the young man in the hip. Despairing of stopping the assault, Black Kettle ran for cover. His wife fell wounded in a hail of gunfire. White Antelope, another peace chief, overcome with grief, stood before his lodge and sang his death song as the troopers gunned him down.[46]

Family connections probably saved Charley Bent's life. As the fighting raged through the camp, soldiers seized the young man. He was fortunate in his captors. George Bent recalled that they were New Mexico troops who "knew all of us Bent boys" and had also been acquainted with William for years.[47] With Charley under guard, Chivington asked Robert what to do with the young man. Robert told the colonel to turn Charley over to Silas Soule, one of Anthony's officers. Chivington followed Bent's advice. Even in custody Charley's situation was perilous. Some of the troops "were going to murder Charlie Bent," before the prisoner arrived at Fort Lyon, Soule wrote to Ned Wynkoop. Soule held them off, and Charley spent several days in the fort's stockade before being released into his father's custody, along with Island and several other prisoners. William Bent's reputation probably helped save his family from destruction at Sand Creek.[48] The trader's financial situation had deteriorated, his marriages had fallen apart, and the new settlers viewed old-timers like himself as cultural anachronisms in Colorado, but enough people still knew and respected him to deliver most of his family unharmed.

George barely survived the fighting. Limping severely from his wound, he joined a group of survivors fleeing the camp. Almost half of them were wounded, most of them half-naked, freezing, and without blankets.

The people spent a desperate night trying to stay warm huddled around small grass-fed fires that gave off little heat. When that failed, they tried to cover the old people, the children, and the wounded with handfuls of prairie grass.[49] The Dog Soldiers sent out relief parties with horses, food, and robes to aid these refugees. Eventually about four hundred Cheyennes and Arapahos reached the soldier society's camp on the Smoky Hill River. "The whole camp was in an uproar crying and weeping for the killed," Bent remembered decades later.[50] The message of Sand Creek was clear to George and Charley: the Americans were bloodthirsty and treacherous, and only violence could protect the Cheyennes. The Bent brothers were going to war.

The message of Sand Creek was clear to most white Coloradans as well; for them it was a completely justifiable whipping of a savage opponent. Sand Creek had been a battle in which the Colorado volunteers had played their military and cultural role to perfection. They had struck a stinging blow to the enemies of white civilization on the frontier. The troops had performed brilliantly against a determined enemy that had "stubbornly" contested "every inch of ground" on the battlefield. The Third Colorado, long mocked as the "Bloodless Third," were now heroes.[51] The *Rocky Mountain News* heartily concurred with the military reports. The columns of the paper gloried in the reports of hundreds of dead Indians and crowed that the troops would return to Denver weighed down with plunder and covered with glory.[52]

The return of the troops to Denver was a cathartic moment for white Coloradans and offered them a chance to revel in the display of their trophies. The celebrations began on December 22, when the soldiers marched through a teeming mass of citizens who sang their hosannas. The young women of the crowd merited special attention from the *Rocky Mountain News*. Members of the "fair sex" were prominent in displaying their affection for "the gallant boys who donned the regimentals" to protect "the women of the country" by killing Indians. That night in Denver, Cheyenne and Arapaho scalps were as numerous as "toads in Egypt," and the men who brandished them in the city's saloons and on the street corners bragged about getting more to send east as souvenirs. One week later, "a very full and fashionable audience" crowded into a Denver theater to witness a performance the *News* commended for its "splendid style" and "numerous novel trappings, trophies of the big fight at Sand Creek," including scalps. The celebrations mingled admiration and gratitude for the protection of white families with a celebratory display of the remains of Indian families.[53]

Defenders of Chivington and the Third Colorado argued that the erasure of Indian families was justifiable revenge for the outrages committed upon white families in Colorado during the summer raiding in 1864. According to this line of thought, the cavalry was simply responding in kind to a level of violence and violation outside the boundaries of civilized warfare. The violation of home and white womanhood called for vengeance. The protection of home and family was essential to the perpetuation of settler society. Women were the moral guardians of civilization, and a threat to them could unman their protectors and potentially destroy the social fabric of white Colorado altogether. This was not a new argument during conflicts with Native peoples; the rhetoric had a long pedigree.[54] Revenge for slain white families figured prominently in raising the fighting spirit of the soldiers that November morning and later in justifying the attack to critics outside the territory. Perhaps more than anything else, reports of scalps and clothing—particularly those of white women—proved to the satisfaction of many white Coloradans that Sand Creek had been retributive and righteous in its violence. The Cheyennes and Arapahos were not peaceful, and the evidence of their actions was clear to see, blared the *News*. The scalps were Chivington's "trump card," writes Ari Kelman, and their number grew with each telling. The colonel told a congressional committee that he could produce a captured Indian child "ornamented" with the scalps of half a dozen white women. Scalps of white women "with braids and fringes of hair" still attached adorned Cheyenne saddle blankets, raged the *News*. The stories of women's scalps and personal items were especially dramatic and reinforced the righteousness of the white cause. This unholy booty was all the proof necessary to justify the assault and vindicated the settler society and its core values.[55]

By 1865, Indian hating was becoming a powerful force for unifying white settlers across the West. Even many Americans who condemned the violence at Sand Creek never questioned the underlying logic of the act: that violence would be necessary to impose settler values on the frontier and that Indians stood in the way of progress. They only condemned the attack on Black Kettle's camp. Other Cheyennes and Arapahos were still legitimate targets for military coercion.[56]

Sand Creek fundamentally altered the political dynamic of the Cheyenne Nation as the Dog Soldiers drew more and more supporters into their camps in central Kansas. Before the attack, many Cheyennes viewed the society as a bunch of dangerous young hotheads whose belligerence threatened everyone's security. By the winter of 1865, they became

a symbol of resistance to white expansion, and their military prowess was now celebrated. For men without trade ties to the Americans, chiefs like Black Kettle seemed dangerously naïve. Sand Creek drove this point home. For young warriors like George and Charley Bent, the society held out the possibility for revenge on those who had tried to destroy their family in November. The young men rode with these experienced warriors in the coming months, making bloody reputations for themselves in the process.[57]

The Platte River valley burned that winter. Military and civilian correspondence recorded a litany of destruction: Beaver Creek Station burned, American Ranch burned, Wisconsin Ranch destroyed, wagon trains looted and torched along the trails. Raiders cut telegraph lines and chopped down poles, inhibiting communication with the East. There were reports of captivity and rape. Herds of livestock were driven off, and Coloradans feared they might starve. "Their signal fires could be seen in all directions," wrote one officer. Where there were signal fires, there was violence.[58] There was an endless variety of targets for the Cheyennes and their allies. Plunder was easy to obtain. The warriors seized clothing, hardware, and large amounts of food—corn, molasses, flour, rice, and sugar. The raiders traveled at night by the light of burning stage stations or navigated by listening for the sound of drumming in the camps. "On a still night you could hear them for miles and miles," Bent told George Hyde. Under the full moon, with firelight reflecting off the bluffs, the warriors celebrated, dancing through the night with the young women of their villages.[59]

Picking off stagecoaches and wagon trains was easy, and the warriors grew more ambitious in their choice of targets. On January 7, 1865, they struck the stage station at Julesburg, Colorado. Built in the 1850s at the crossing of the Platte River, Julesburg was a large operation with a telegraph office, nearly fifty employees, and a small garrison of troops stationed nearby. When a decoy party tried to lure the soldiers into an ambush, young warriors sprang the trap too soon, and the patrol escaped with a loss of twenty men. The Cheyennes and Lakotas looted a nearby store and warehouse before they burned the structures. On February 2 they returned and destroyed the stage station itself. "There was great rejoicing in the villages," Bent wrote; "the first blow had been struck in revenge," and the confidence of the warriors rose.[60]

White observers noted George and Charley's presence among the raiders with fear and disgust in the winter of 1865. George was particularly hard to miss. During the Julesburg raid he captured a fine major's

uniform that he wore in later negotiations, the insignia on his sleeves outranking many of the white officers who observed him. Among the other items captured at Julesburg were letters and dispatches that George translated for the warriors, a worrisome development for American officers. In February, reports also circulated of Indians who shot not only bullets but profanities at soldiers and ranchers. In a fight between Cheyennes and the Seventh Iowa Cavalry a man, presumably a Confederate agent, fired "a lot of good American words" at Eugene Ware. Shortly after that scrape Ware's patrol came across twenty-four burned wagons. Across the rim of one of the wheels, "written in a large bold hand," was an invitation to "Go to Hell." Refugees from Gillette's Ranch told of an Indian "who shouted loud swear words in English" at them.[61]

Reports of the brothers' exploits focused on their violence and cunning, a characterization of mixed-race frontiersmen and white "renegades" that dated back to the colonial era. In the white mind, few figures were more dangerous and despised than those who "went native" or the mixed-race men who attacked white society. Both groups supposedly "surpassed their Indian friends in savagery and cruelty," writes Colin Calloway. Such men allegedly combined the stereotyped worst traits of their ancestry: the listlessness, greed, and moral laxity of marginalized white men, and the bloodthirstiness of Indian warriors.[62] The Bents were viewed as even more dangerous because of their literacy, family connections, and George's military experience. Their turn against white society in the aftermath of Sand Creek threatened to blur the neat racial divisions between white and red that Americans hoped to impose on the frontier.

To counteract the raiding warriors, military officials launched a campaign designed to crush the Cheyennes and their allies, stretching the Bent brothers' war with the United States into the autumn of 1865. The army's strategy was to strike the Indians in the Powder River country by approaching them with three converging columns of troops.[63] George and Charley played visible, if exaggerated, roles in the Powder River War of 1865. The brothers and their compatriots first encountered troops escorting a party of road builders bound for Montana. The warriors attacked the convoy and forced it to take up a defensive position. During the encounter a warrior called the Americans "all the vile names imaginable," recalled Albert M. Holman. The next day the sides parlayed. Red Cloud, Bull Bear, and Dull Knife rode out to negotiate, accompanied by George Bent as interpreter. The chiefs demanded to know why the party, commanded by James Sawyers, had come to the Powder River country.

They were simply passing through, Sawyers responded. When he asked what he could do to convince the warriors to let his men through, George could not contain himself. Hang John Chivington, he blurted out. Sawyers countered by offering a gift of one of his wagons and three thousand pounds of supplies. The chiefs accepted the offer. However, Lakota warriors later charged down on the wagons to renew the assault. The Americans were too well entrenched, and the Indians had no interest in a siege, so they withdrew to their village, and the column continued.[64]

General Grenville Dodge's account of the parlay gave George Bent an outsized role and helped solidify the young man's reputation as a major player in the war. Dodge described Bent in detail, noting that "He was dressed in one of our staff officer's uniforms," a prize from the Julesburg raid. According to Dodge, the Bent brothers had turned their privileged Missouri education to dark ends. After being paroled in St. Louis, George returned to Colorado and became the leader "of the Indians organized on the Arkansas" while Charley took command of the Northern Cheyennes, Lakotas, and Northern Arapahos. Dodge claimed that he had prepared to send a column to rescue Sawyers, but George "got wind of the movements by his runners" and escaped with the warriors.[65] The general's story, embellished in his later correspondence with Nelson Miles, implied that the brothers' education, and George's military experience, gave them an almost preternatural organizational genius that made them dangerous opponents. This was patent nonsense. The Bents acted as translators and were competent fighters, but they were hardly leaders of the same status as Red Cloud, Tall Bull, or Black Kettle.

While George and Charley parlayed and fought, the family suffered a devastating blow. Island's marriage to Joe Barraldo had not lasted long, and after she divorced him she rode north with a group of Cheyennes, bound for the Powder River. On August 16, Island and four others rode ahead of the main column. As they neared the river another group of Indians standing on a distant hill waved blankets and gestured for the small party to meet them. Island and her companions, thinking the distant group were Lakotas or Cheyennes, rode into an ambush. The Indians were Pawnees scouting for the army. The warriors opened fire, killed the five Cheyennes, and scalped them. William had lost Island's affections the year before, and George had lost the woman who had been his mother for almost twenty years.[66] The family that had survived Sand Creek was being bloodily dismantled.

Other events in the autumn of 1865 drove a permanent wedge between George and Charley. As the Powder River War ended, the brothers rode

south with a band of warriors. On November 19, they attacked Downer's Station, a stage stop on the Smoky Hill River. The stagecoach arrived in the afternoon, and as the stock wranglers unhitched the horses and turned them loose to graze, the Cheyennes attacked. The men rushed for the cover of the adobe stage station to fight it out. There was an exchange of gunfire before a voice called out to the dugout "in excellent English" asking if there was a treaty between the Americans and the Cheyennes. The whites shouted that one had been signed and asked who wanted to know. A "son of Bill Bent," George replied. He told the men to come out and talk; the attack had been a mistake. The Indians would lay down their guns and shake hands if the whites agreed. As the men emerged warily, other Dog Soldiers opened fire on them. These warriors seized two wranglers as the other men fled for the shelter of a nearby bison wallow. The others held off the Dog Soldiers with rifle fire until nightfall. During a lull in the fighting the warriors tortured their captives. Theodore Davis, who wrote an account of the fight for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, was unsurprised by the actions of the Dog Soldiers. He expected that type of conduct from Indians, but the Bent brothers were even worse than Indians because they knew better than to double-cross peaceful, surrendering opponents. George's biographers David Fridtjof Halaas and Andrew Masich argue that the ambush at Downer's Station shattered the relationship between George and Charley.[67] George, knowing that a treaty was signed, was now prepared to work with his father to secure permanent peace in the region, whereas Charley chose to continue riding with the warriors. The brothers were now set on a collision course with each other, and William Bent's family would strain and burst apart in the coming years.

The Civil War years were traumatic ones for William Bent's family. The dramatic rise in white migration to Colorado ushered in a new set of social, cultural, and economic values that threatened to marginalize mixed-race families. The outbreak of war in 1861 raised tensions to a fever pitch. The Confederate invasion of New Mexico and the conflict that began with the Cheyennes in 1864 led to the horrific violence at Sand Creek. During the conflict, William's family divided over how to respond to their new, dangerous situation. William and Robert remained committed to finding a middle path between the United States and the Cheyennes. The patriarch of the family retired from the Indian service early in the decade but continued diplomatic work, trying to mediate between the contending factions. Robert, who had long experience in world of American business, tried to remain aloof from the fighting

but was ultimately forced into it. Although George would eventually rejoin his father as a peace negotiator, he and Charley became infamous participants in the fighting that followed Sand Creek. Yellow Woman and Island both divorced William during these years. Their rationale is unclear, but Cheyenne social custom gave women wide latitude to end their marriages. The war that threatened to destroy the family would only intensify in the coming years, but not all members of the Bent family found themselves at bloody odds with the United States or their own kinfolk.

7 / War, Diplomacy, and Land Grants: The Bent Family, 1865–1869

The two western branches of the Bent family had dramatically different experiences during the last half of the 1860s. While war and familial discord engulfed William and his children, the New Mexico side of the family began to flourish. William's deep ties to the Cheyennes drew his male children into the violence that wracked the plains after Sand Creek. The destruction of Black Kettle's village had set George and Charley Bent against the United States Army. George tired of the war, however, and joined his father and brother-in-law, Edmund Guerrier, as diplomats who sought to bring peace to the region. The Bent daughters fared better. In their case, geography and marriage largely insulated them from the struggle. New Mexico and the Upper Arkansas River valley were shielded from the worst of the violence after 1865. Moreover, Charles and María Ignacia's daughters, heiresses to their father's stake in the old Mexican land grants, married entrepreneurial Anglo-American men whose business ventures allowed their families to claim middle-class respectability.

George's return to the Arkansas River country coincided with the government's attempt to bring peace to the southern plains. The conclusion of the Civil War in 1865 intensified the process that Elliott West has called "Greater Reconstruction," an attempt by the United States government to integrate the entire continent into a meaningful whole. The war had ended slavery, but a new society needed to be built in the wake of the conflict. Constitutional amendments and military intervention were the tools used to reshape the South, but these attempts foundered on the shoals of violence, racism, and northern apathy. Ironically, although the

Civil War freed one group, it helped create a new economy and culture in the West predicated on violence and racial exclusion. For most westerners, Indians stood in the way of integration into the national market economy. The region should be a haven for free labor and white supremacy, and the refusal of the Indians to knuckle under and adjust to the new order of things produced calls for their destruction. Frontiersmen who normally had little use for the government turned to Washington to accomplish these ends.[1] The question centered on how to bring about this national integration, by force or by negotiation.

In the wake of the Sand Creek massacre, an increasingly vocal group of congressmen and senators called for an investigation of the incident and a new round of treaty talks to quell the violence that had devastated the plains in 1865. Wisconsin senator James Doolittle headed the investigative committee. President Andrew Johnson authorized Doolittle and his associates to form a peace commission to gather information and negotiate with the Arkansas River tribes. The army was skeptical of the venture but stood down operations until the commissioners completed their work.[2] Bent's advice was simple. The government should appoint honest Indian agents and traders. Only regular troops should garrison frontier posts. One of the horrible lessons of Sand Creek, he felt, was that volunteer troops had "no discipline" and only caused trouble. Bent was confident in his ability to sway the Cheyennes and their neighbors. "If the matter were left to me I would guarantee with my life that in three months I could have all the Indians along the Arkansas at peace, without the expense of war," he told the committee. He concluded with a suggestion to placate the Dog Soldiers. Give the Cheyennes a reservation in the society's home territory between the Smoky Hill and Republican Rivers, he urged. There was still good hunting there, and it was far from heavily traveled trails.[3] Carson concurred with Bent's assessment and deferred to his expertise, especially on matters involving the Cheyennes. Doolittle was impressed with the trader's statement and wrote to the secretaries of state and war, urging them not to launch any military operations until Bent had a chance to negotiate.[4]

That autumn William Bent took his message to the Southern Cheyennes. He convinced some of them to begin talks with the commissioners in the hope of signing a new peace treaty. His role in the talks that took place on the Little Arkansas River were essential to the treaty's conclusion, but his presence and actions also alienated many Cheyennes, including his son Charley, who rejected any negotiations. Bent was sincere in his belief that treaties were the only logical solution to

the problems created by American expansion and the violence that often accompanied it. The Cheyenne peace chiefs were glad to see him. They wanted William as their official trader and Edward Wynkoop as their agent. On October 13, Bent gave a speech at the treaty grounds that called for peaceful accommodation. Do not "hesitate one moment in signing whatever propositions this committee may suggest to you," he told the Indians. The commissioners offered a square deal, and his presence testified to their honest intentions. He would not be there if he thought they did not intend to treat the tribes fairly, Bent continued. Unfortunately, Americans had deceived the Cheyennes and Arapahos in the past, "but we must not judge all white men alike," he cautioned. The commissioners were not like John Chivington or John Evans.[5]

Although Bent's efforts were influential in convincing the assembled Indians to sign the Little Arkansas Treaty on October 14, 1865, many Cheyennes and Arapahos viewed the document as deeply flawed. Under the terms of the treaty, the tribes ceded their lands between the Cimarron and Arkansas Rivers in exchange for a new reservation. All signees would receive 320 acres. Mixed-race individuals received 640 acres, a testament to Bent's lobbying efforts. In later years, treaty lands became a critical factor in the economic success of several individuals with marital or business ties to the Bents or their kin. The government also offered reparations for Sand Creek and officially condemned Chivington's act. The peace could not hold because the Dog Soldiers and Arrow Keeper refused to sign. The chiefs who signed the treaty were in the minority, and their willingness to work with the government contributed to the gradual decline of their political and social status within some powerful factions of the tribe.[6]

The military also solicited advice from Bent and Carson. On October 27, the two frontiersmen wrote to General John Pope outlining their recommendations for future Indian policy. Some of their advice and observations mirrored what they had told Doolittle's commissioners. The agents were corrupt and spreading false rumors about Indian hostilities, the two men claimed. Furthermore, the officers and soldiers garrisoning the frontier posts were often so bored they welcomed the opportunity for an Indian fight without questioning the truthfulness of the agent's claims. Bent and Carson were hard men, however, more pragmatists than idealists when it came to Indians. Future Indian policy should come from the War Department. The army should put Indians on reservations, by force if necessary, and should wage "vigorous and determined war" against any group that refused to sign treaties. These warriors should be harried

FIGURE 12. William Bent with Arapaho chief Little Raven and his family at Fort Dodge, Kansas, 1867. Courtesy of History Colorado. 89.451.3767.

"until all opposition is effectually destroyed," the men wrote. Once resistance was crushed, the army should solicit Indian opinion about the location of the new reservations. The reservations needed better management to make sure no unscrupulous traders sold guns or liquor. White hunters should be kept off the reservations at all costs. Bent offered to spend the winter with the Cheyennes and Arapahos to guarantee that they abided by the treaty terms.[7] Pope was impressed. He endorsed the advice and passed it along to William Tecumseh Sherman. Sherman recommended to Ulysses S. Grant that the army implement these recommendations as official policy. Pope ordered his subordinates not to interfere with Bent's work and to follow any advice that he gave.[8] In November, Bent reported his progress to Thomas Murphy. The Indians who signed the treaty were abiding by its stipulations. Bent heard news that many other Cheyennes living with the Dog Soldiers were interested in moving south to live among the peace faction, but the warriors were preventing them from coming. He urged new attempts to engage with the Dog Soldiers. If they remained committed to resistance, "we will have to fight them

next spring which will cost a round sum," Bent concluded. Additionally, he complained that the Kiowas and Comanches were stealing livestock in Texas and selling it in New Mexico and Colorado. Bent felt that these tribes would need "a drubbing" before the end of the coming summer.[9] The trader and diplomat's views of plains Indians was situational. Bent felt that assimilation was in the best interests of his Southern Cheyenne relatives and their neighbors and that those who adapted to an American lifestyle should be aided and protected. Those who resisted must be dealt with harshly. Just because he had family ties with the Cheyennes did not mean William Bent always supported their claims.

While Bent moved among the peace faction, Edward Wynkoop prepared to negotiate with the Cheyennes who had refused to show up at the Little Arkansas negotiations the previous year. In February 1866, the agent convinced Dog Soldier leaders to meet him at Bluff Creek to discuss the possibility of their signing the treaty. The talks featured George Bent in a surprising new role: intermediary for the United States government. The young men sat with the Dog Soldier headmen Porcupine Bear and Bull Bear. They refused to sign any treaty that ceded the Republican and Smoky Hill River country. At one point, Porcupine Bear threatened to kill Wynkoop before George pulled the chief aside and talked him out of it. Bent's entreaties, combined with pressure from the peace chiefs, finally convinced Porcupine Bear to sign the treaty, over the loud protests of his fellow Dog Soldiers. Wynkoop was optimistic that Bent had helped secure a lasting peace for the region. That a Dog Soldier headman had signed the treaty was especially encouraging. The new agreement "has been consummated with the warriors in the field, rather than the old men in council," he wrote his superiors. The Dog Soldiers agreed to stop raiding along the Platte and the Santa Fe Trail, "but they will make war on all travel on the Smoky Hill" if settlers and the railroads continued to covet the region, Wynkoop told his superiors.[10]

The Colorado press was skeptical of George's new role as peacemaker. The month after the talks at Bluff Creek, the *Rocky Mountain News* reprinted an article from a Missouri newspaper that contained more stories of Bent's alleged atrocities. The piece labeled George the "War Chief of the Cheyennes, Arapahos, and other Prairie tribes" and castigated him as a race traitor. "Notwithstanding his Anglo Saxon blood, Bent is said to be a bitter enemy of the whites" and could be expected to cause trouble during the upcoming summer. "Our people *know* George Bent"—he was a bloodthirsty savage and treacherous enemy of the frontier settlers, the *News* editorialized.[11]

Despite the mistrust, that spring George forged new family ties with the peace chiefs when he married Magpie Woman, Black Kettle's niece. William seems to have initiated the match, and the young couple did not protest the union. The traditional calculus of intermarriage as a social, economic, and political strategy still held true for the Bent family and their new relatives. Magpie Woman's family gained access to trade goods and solidified a connection with people whose opinion the government sought. The Bents gained increased influence with the Cheyenne peace faction. The act, however, would have decreased George's influence with the warrior societies. The couple was married in a lavish ceremony in which William gave away fourteen wagonloads of presents and Black Kettle presented the groom with a fine horse. When he was not trading or negotiating, George lived in Black Kettle's lodge until 1868.[12]

Most Cheyennes seemed increasingly reconciled to the Little Arkansas Treaty, but their patience was not infinite, and neither was William Bent's. By the end of May rumors of restlessness surfaced. Particularly galling was the government's failure to return the captives taken at Sand Creek. Two children remained separated from their relatives, yet at every conference the Americans demanded the return of all prisoners held by the Indians. Returning the children would be "an act of justice to the Indians that would do much towards restoring their confidence in the Government," Bent wrote in May. The Indians would lose faith in his word if nothing happened. He had advocated for the Little Arkansas Treaty. He had urged the Cheyennes to make peace before Sand Creek. Bent's credibility was on the line. The annuity goods promised at the Little Arkansas had not shown up either. Failure to deliver on this promise would lead the Indians to "think the Government has broken faith," he continued. The logical end of this train of events was "a more bloody and terrible war than has ever before taken place on the plains," he warned ominously.[13]

Bent also pressed forward on the government's obligations to his family under the treaty terms. The land grant promised at the council grounds was critical if his children were to survive in a rapidly changing world. Bent traveled to Washington to request action on behalf of his family, even including Charley in the petition he carried. Bent feared that, without the treaty's ratification and the government's guarantee of the land claims, "unscrupulous parties" would illegally enter the reservation and "make settlements to the prejudice of the rights of the Half Breeds."[14]

Agent Wynkoop hoped to convince the soldier society chiefs who had not signed the Little Arkansas Treaty to negotiate with him and urged the

FIGURE 13. George Bent and Magpie Woman. Courtesy of History Colorado. 84.100.1.

holdouts to meet him at Fort Zarah in October for a new round of talks. There were amendments to the treaty to discuss. Kansans demanded that Congress rescind Cheyenne hunting and territorial rights within the state's borders, a concession the Dog Soldiers emphatically refused to make. Raiding around Fort Wallace added a tone of urgency to the proceedings. Wynkoop asked William Bent to bring the Cheyennes and Arapahos to Fort Zarah, and the trader was optimistic about approval of the treaty amendments.[15] Although government officials estimated that two-thirds of the Cheyennes were amenable to new talks, Black Kettle wanted a treaty amenable to all factions. He convinced the Dog Soldiers to come and hear out the commissioners. The initial talks did not go well, however, and the warrior society broke off further negotiations until the following month.[16]

The November conference at Fort Zarah revealed the rifts that had broken into open hostility in the Bent family. The talks began on November 3, but everyone at the treaty grounds was edgy. The agents wanted a quick adoption of the proposed treaty amendments, a view the peace chiefs seconded, whereas the Dog Soldiers still vehemently opposed ceding Smoky Hill country. The family was also divided against itself. According to the negotiators, Charley Bent was the problem. The previous month he had done "much to cause trouble and is a bad man," W. R. Irwin wrote. Charley had acquired liquor and distributed it to the warriors. Imbibing himself, he stalked through the camp and "two or three times when intoxicated" threatened to kill William and George for their roles as government intermediaries. William wanted his son arrested, but that would be difficult. Charley was "very popular and has great influence among the Indians," especially the young warriors, Irwin concluded.[17] There was more trouble later in the week. Fox Tail, the son of the Arrow Keeper, bragged that he planned to kill a white man during the negotiations. Cooler heads counseled against it, but the warrior rode up to one of Bent's Mexican wranglers and shot the man through the head. Troopers escorted William and his other employees to safety at the fort. Fox Tail escaped from the camp, and the Dog Soldiers showed no inclination to bring him back and turn him over to the white authorities. The society soldiers left the council grounds shortly thereafter without signing the document.[18]

Their abandonment of the talks created an opportunity for compromise on the treaty amendments but at the cost of deeper alienation between the peace chiefs and the warrior society. Black Kettle was still "disposed to do almost anything that was required" in the interests of

peace, Irwin wrote at the beginning of the talks. The peace chiefs agreed to an amended treaty and signed the new document. Although the Dog Soldiers remained vigorously opposed to the treaty and the Arrow Keeper also refused to sign it, Black Kettle's signature was enough for the agents, who believed that the stipulations now bound all the Cheyennes. Their optimism was profoundly misplaced.[19]

In the spring of 1867, the army blundered into a new war. Although President Johnson had authorized another committee to investigate the causes of renewed warfare in the northern plains, the army moved ahead with plans to intimidate the Cheyennes and their allies. A column commanded by Winfield Scott Hancock would precede the commissioners. The Indians could talk with the general, fight him, or get out of his way. The Eastern Division of the Union Pacific Railroad had its eyes on the Smoky Hill country, and General William Tecumseh Sherman wanted the two tribes moved south of the Arkansas River to clear room for the new rail line. Hancock proved a poor choice as an expedition leader and negotiator. He knew little about the West and even less about Indians. His impulsiveness precipitated a new explosion of violence in the plains.[20]

To the Cheyennes and Arapahos, Hancock's actions seemed terrifyingly like John Chivington's maneuvers in 1864. His column marched out of Fort Riley in March and encountered the Dog Soldiers in early April. The general parlayed with them and announced that he planned to march to their nearby camp and negotiate there. The Indians and several of Hancock's subordinates argued against the ultimatum. As the troops moved closer, the women and children panicked and fled. Hancock saw the flight as evidence of Cheyenne hostility and ordered the camp burned on April 19. "Hancock was the cause of another Indian war," George Bent recalled. Others agreed. The Indians "had no means of discriminating between him and Colonel Chivington," Wynkoop complained to his superiors. Sand Creek was still a fresh, painful memory, and the general's decision to move on the village and then destroy it undermined the position of the peace commissioners. The burning of the village had the opposite effect Hancock intended; instead of cowing the warriors, the action roused them. That summer the Cheyennes and their allies pounded the trails from the Platte to the Arkansas, and all of Hancock's attempts to crush the resistance were ineffectual. The troops were easily avoided. The warriors stayed clear of the main columns and attacked smaller detachments with devastating effectiveness. The expedition "has resulted in no good, but on the contrary has been productive of much evil," Thomas Murphy wrote to Nathaniel Taylor in May. That autumn

Agent Jesse Leavenworth was even blunter in his assessment. Kansas militiamen "are hunting the Indians like wolves and getting whipped like dogs," he wrote to the commissioner of Indian Affairs.[21]

Charley Bent's name figured prominently in reports of Cheyenne raiding that summer. Many whites in the Great Plains believed that he was the greatest threat to their safety. Accounts of fighting near Fort Wallace said he led the attack on soldiers stationed there. Even Hancock passed this report along to his superiors in the War Department. The Bent name was notorious and now circulated in the highest military circles in the national capital. Other stories spread that Charley intended to kill his father. Word was, he would shoot William on sight, scalp him, and wear the trophy "in his belt" for all to see. In July, he supposedly led an unsuccessful attack on a caravan conducting Bishop Jean Lamy and nearly twenty priests and sisters to Santa Fe. That a young man with his education and family connections would turn to a life of violence continued to vex white observers. Instead of using his talents and opportunities in the service of the government as his father and brothers did, Charley was an incorrigible renegade. Although he was "quite intelligent," no one who claimed to know the young man could doubt that "he is one of the worst Indians on the plains," wrote journalist Theodore Davis.[22]

Charley may have tried to kill his father that summer, but not all his relations with family members were bad. William related his account of Charley's attempted bushwhacking to Theodore Davis, who published his work in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Charley had traveled to the Purgatoire River ranch, where he planned to ambush his father. His sister Mary looked out the window and noticed movement by the irrigation ditch. When she left the house to investigate, she found Charley waiting. She assumed it was a social call and thought the young man had come for a fresh set of clothes. No, he told her, he was here to kill his father. Mary told Charley that William was in New Mexico and invited him up to the ranch house. Charley turned her down. "I only wanted the old man," he said, uncocking his rifle. He left the ranch, and "that's the last we've seen of him," William told Davis. Mary was the one Bent Charley did not come to hate. He seems to have regarded her with affection, probably because she was a surrogate mother to him while they were both in Missouri before the Civil War. It is also possible that since she played no active role in aiding the government's agenda, he did not view her as an enemy in the same way he did George and William. For her part, family legend says she used to put candles in the window to signal to Charley when it was safe to visit her.[23]

FIGURE 14. Charley Bent. Courtesy of History Colorado. 89.451.3347.

Not all the family news during the late 1860s was bad, for it brought in another skilled member. Around 1867, Julia Bent became engaged to Edmund Guerrier. Like the Bent children, Guerrier had the benefit of an American education. He attended school in Kansas. He was also the child of a mixed-race family. His father had married a Cheyenne woman and been a frontier trader at Fort Laramie until an ember from his pipe fell into a barrel of gunpowder. His companions "couldn't find nothing of him" after the blast, according to one story. Julia Bent was considered an eligible young woman, and stories circulated on the plains that she had many suitors, including the famous Cheyenne warrior Roman Nose. She

chose Guerrier, and their courtship inspired tall tales of its own. According to one Denver publication Julia rejected the proposals of numerous men in Missouri. She fled her school in St. Louis and traveled hundreds of miles on foot to join Guerrier in the Cheyenne camps. A romantic account, to be sure, but the article hardly approved of the match, calling the young man "a good-for-nothing customer of no redeeming qualities." Julia was chastised as well for choosing him over "civilization and all its glamor." Now she was no better than "her miserable outlawed brother Charley."[24] The marriage proved a good one, however, and Guerrier proved a valuable addition to William and George's efforts to bring peace between the Cheyennes and the army. Guerrier acted as an interpreter for Hancock during his negotiations with the Dog Soldiers and spent time in their camp. George Bent later told stories that although Guerrier worked with the army, he also tried to prevent bloodshed by tipping off the Cheyennes about troop movements. Bent exaggerated. The warriors were already aware of the presence of the soldiers, but it made a good story.[25]

Not all the additions to the Bent family were so welcome, however. After Island and Yellow Woman both divorced William, he married Adaline Harvey, a woman significantly younger than himself. She was the daughter of Alexander Harvey, a notorious fur trader from the Upper Missouri River country, and a Blackfeet woman. None of Bent's children were pleased with the match. His servant said that she got William drunk and convinced him to marry her in an impromptu ceremony. They worried that she was just after their father's money and the house in Westport, Missouri. After William's death, Adaline got into a heated dispute with the children over the distribution of the estate. Although it angered them, especially Robert, she received $2,214 but lost the house. She died in Pueblo, Colorado, in February 1905.[26]

Hancock's actions pushed some Cheyennes to war, yet the violence also reinvigorated the push for peace in the region. In July, Congress authorized a commission to propose to the Cheyennes a new reservation south of the Arkansas River. Military officials were initially skeptical and the western press hostile, although a new treaty would open the region for the railroads. Orders came down that there would be no fighting while the talks transpired. If negotiations failed, the army would renew operations against the Indians.[27] George Bent played a key role in laying the groundwork for the talks. Agent Leavenworth asked the young man to spread word of the commission's impending arrival and gather the southern plains tribes to meet the Americans. That May Bent met Black

Kettle on the Red River and convinced him to bring his band to meet the commissioners. Together the two men talked the Dog Soldiers into attending as well. The Southern Cheyennes met the commissioners near Medicine Lodge Creek in October for one of the largest treaty conferences in American history.[28]

The Bent family was represented on both sides at Medicine Lodge Creek, with George acting on behalf of the government and Charley counseling the Dog Soldiers. The Kiowas and Comanches arrived early and signed the treaty a week before the Cheyennes were ready to begin.[29] Their lateness heightened the tensions, and "there was considerable anxiety because the Cheyennes had not come in, and what the attitude of Charley Bent would be," one participant recalled decades later. George, Charley, their brother-in-law Ed Guerrier, and John Simpson Smith translated during the negotiations. Charley might have been tasked by the Dog Soldiers to make sure everything was translated accurately and possibly to spy on George.[30] Other members of the family also attracted attention. Magpie Woman, George's wife, gave birth to a daughter on the first day of the council. His sister Julia also caused a stir. Dressed in a blue dress decorated with elk's teeth, she was a favorite among the young, bachelor officers. She had a charming laugh, one reporter noted, adding that "a peep at her ankles" would drive an ascetic monk to distraction.[31]

When the Cheyennes arrived, their message was short and clear: they would not abandon the lands between the South Platte and Arkansas Rivers no matter how badly the railroads wanted them. The tribe's refusal to budge on the issue threatened to derail the entire process. Senator John B. Henderson took Buffalo Chief, the Cheyenne spokesman, aside for an urgent conversation. With George and John Smith translating, Henderson assured the chief that if his people signed the treaty, they could hunt between the rivers as long as the bison remained. This verbal amendment did not make it into the written text of the treaty, but the senator's promise convinced Buffalo Chief, who urged his compatriots, including the solider societies, to sign.[32]

In the short term, the prospects for peace looked good. Many Cheyennes signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty on October 28, but deep problems remained unresolved. Despite the signatures of some of the Dog Soldiers, many prominent warriors and the Arrow Keeper refused. Without their consent, the treaty lacked full political and spiritual credibility. Furthermore, Henderson's promise to Buffalo Chief, the basis for many Cheyennes' willingness to agree to the terms, was not included in the treaty version ratified by the Senate. Officially, the central plains were

now wide open to the railroads, and the Cheyennes and Arapahos legally confined to reservations south of the Arkansas. Peace proved illusory.[33]

Government officials noticed and rewarded George for his role at the Medicine Lodge talks. When the treaty was signed, the commissioners distributed gifts. The Americans "issued so much stuff to those Indians they could not take away all of it," George remembered years later. He and John Smith carried away as many items as they could fit in their lodges. Wynkoop valued George's skills, and Bent viewed the agent as one of the best white friends the Cheyennes had. The agent offered George work as a roving diplomat to the Indian camps to report on their attitudes, collect their grievances, and monitor treaty compliance. Bent accepted the offer.[34] George Bent was following in his father's footsteps. As a new frontier diplomat, he believed that only peace protected Cheyenne interests.

Charley Bent's wars ended in the late autumn or early winter of 1867, shortly after the Medicine Lodge talks broke up. Most accounts of his death say he contracted malaria after suffering a wound fighting other Indians. Charley died from fever "and not from wound," George wrote in 1914. There are probably elements of truth in these accounts. A wound suffered in a fight with Kansa government scouts is a plausible scenario. According to the account of Major N. D. McGinley, a party of scouts encountered a band of Dog Soldiers at Walnut Creek. The Cheyennes offered to parlay if both sides agreed to lay down their guns. One of the scouts spotted Charley and swore he would never approach Bent unarmed. He slipped a pistol into his boot and rode out to meet the warriors. "Bent was insolent," McGinley remembered. The negotiations went badly, and Charley then cursed at the scouts and wheeled his horse around. The armed scout jerked out his pistol and fired, hitting Bent in the lower abdomen as he galloped away. Charley succumbed to pneumonia shortly afterward.[35]

The government's inability to live up to its treaty obligations stoked renewed violence. Congress did not ratify the Medicine Lodge Treaty until July 1868 and approved no appropriations for its implementation that year. No annuities were paid, and the rations promised to the Cheyennes came late. The government was unable to prevent white rustlers from running off Indian livestock. Settlers and railroad lines crept deeper into land that Senator Henderson told the Cheyennes they could hunt. War was narrowly avoided in the summer of 1868. After an unsuccessful raid on the Kansas, a party of Cheyenne warriors burned several buildings and ran off horses and cattle near Council Grove but did not

attack any white settlers.[36] Tensions escalated dramatically in August. The Cheyennes and Arapahos had been promised guns and ammunition as part of their annuity payments, but the delivery was withheld after the raids. The Indians said they would take no rations until they received the guns. Agent Wynkoop negotiated a settlement, and the Indians received some guns and ammunition on August 8. But before they arrived a party of warriors attacked white settlements along the Saline and Solomon Rivers. About a dozen settlers were killed and several taken captive. The Cheyennes ran off livestock, and there were reports of the rape of white women.[37]

George tried to intercede with the government on behalf of Black Kettle and the other peace chiefs. Black Kettle admitted that young warriors from his camp raided that summer but said they had been punished. But in the aftermath of the Solomon and Saline raids, he feared that he could not control them anymore. Wynkoop urged the chief to bring his band to Fort Larned, but he was skeptical. Sand Creek and Hancock's destruction of the Dog Soldier village did not enhance Cheyenne confidence in promises of government protection. The raids intensified in September and October.[38] George's work for the government and his kinship with Black Kettle put the young man in a difficult situation. In September, the Kiowas and Comanches were ordered to report to Fort Cobb to clear the southern plains for a campaign against the Cheyennes. In October he and his people fled south for the Arkansas River, hoping to cross it and get away from any troops that might take the field. George was not in the camp when Black Kettle made the decision. When the young interpreter arrived, the chief came to George's lodge to tell him that the women were packing for the move. He said that "trouble was coming" and he wished to keep out of the fighting. George, his sister Julia, Magpie Woman, and Ed Guerrier accompanied Black Kettle to the Arkansas River, where they parted ways. George and his small party headed for his father's ranch. They never saw Black Kettle again.[39]

While Black Kettle's band fled south, the army put in motion a plan to trap him between three converging columns that winter. Winter campaigns were not a new idea, and army strategists recognized that such maneuvers were risky but offered great potential rewards. Indian mobility was limited during the cold months, and their horses weak from lack of forage. Troops operating out of Colorado and New Mexico would move to block Black Kettle's path of escape, while the strongest column, the Seventh Cavalry, rode out of Fort Dodge to strike the killing blow. Black Kettle made one more attempt to compromise. On November

20, 1867, he rode to Fort Cobb to see what terms he could get. Make your peace with General Sheridan, came the reply. Disillusioned, Black Kettle rode away. In the bitterly cold early-morning hours of November 27, George Armstrong Custer's column struck Black Kettle's village along the banks of the Washita River. The Seventh Cavalry overran the village in a matter of minutes, but fearing the arrival of warriors from neighboring villages, Custer ordered his troopers to shoot hundreds of Cheyenne horses and then retreat. In the confusion of the withdrawal, Major Joel Elliott and eighteen of his men were left behind. The warriors surrounded the soldiers and wiped them out. Custer claimed to have killed more than one hundred Indians. George Bent's Cheyenne sources told him twenty-nine people were killed, eighteen of whom were women and children. Black Kettle had escaped Sand Creek and argued for peace at the most unpopular times, only to be shot down in the icy waters of the Washita River.[40]

The aftermath of the Battle of the Washita River rearranged George Bent's marital life. In January Corn Tassel Woman, Magpie Woman's mother, who had been taken prisoner during the fight, was released into George's custody. Although mother and daughter deepened their familial bond in the wake of the violence, George and his wife grew estranged. Cheyenne taboos prevented him from even making eye contact with his mother-in-law, so her presence in the lodge made it difficult for him to spend private time with his wife. Magpie Woman's attention was also devoted to the care of their young daughter, Ada, and George was eventually evicted from the lodge. At loose ends, he married eighteen-year-old Kiowa Woman, with whom he had a daughter. This marriage cut against the Cheyenne custom of sororal polygyny. For someone of George's status and reputation, marrying a sister or female relative of Magpie Woman would have been more acceptable.[41]

Cheyenne autonomy on the central plains did not long outlast the Washita campaign. When spring came in 1869, the Dog Soldiers moved north toward the Republican River, again threatening the expanding settlements. Determined to crush the society, Sheridan put the Fifth Cavalry, commanded by Eugene Carr, into the field. Led by Pawnee scouts, Carr's column struck the Dog Soldier camp of Tall Bull at Summit Springs in eastern Colorado on July 11. In a short, bitter fight the soldiers and Pawnees killed fifty-two Cheyennes, including Tall Bull, captured seventeen women and children, and destroyed more than eighty lodges. In the aftermath, some Cheyennes journeyed to join their kin north of the Platte River. Others went south and surrendered at Camp Supply,

Indian Territory. Regardless of where they went, the military power of the Dog Soldiers was severely crippled, and the central plains were open to farmers and railroad construction crews.[42]

An era ended for the family when William Bent died of pneumonia at his Purgatoire River ranch on May 16, 1869. As glorious as things had been in the heyday of Bent, St. Vrain and Company, for as much as William had done to aid the government in its negotiations with the plains Indians, he died broke, landless, and deeply in debt. His family had been bitterly divided by war. Several of his brothers were dead. His business had been in decline for two decades. His will provided the estate be divided equally among the children. The document was dated 1866, so provisions for Charley were included. Julia and Mary got William's furniture. Robert and George received livestock and cash. Creditors claimed $32,000 against the estate, and the courts liquidated William's other assets to pay off the debts. He passed on little but his name and legacy to his children.[43]

William Bent left little to his family, but in New Mexico marital connections could still make people rich. Lucien Maxwell, who maintained close connections with the extended Bent family, is a good example of this continuing phenomenon. Despite the grandiose title given him by an admiring biographer, the Napoleon of the Southwest, Maxwell might never have become wealthy without his wife, Luz. She brought him into the Beaubien family network in the 1840s and put him into a position to impress her father. Often portrayed as the West's greatest land baron, Maxwell co-owned an eponymous land grant with Luz, who retained the right to own and sell personal property under the old Mexican legal system. By 1866, Luz and Lucien had completed buying out the other Beaubien heirs and settled a lawsuit with Charles Bent's heirs. These moves put the couple in position to develop and later sell the massive grant, although its boundaries remained unclear. The haziness of the grant's extent caused extensive litigation and violence in the 1870s and 1880s. The Maxwells operated their land under the patron-peon system, where tenants worked the land in exchange for protection and goods. They became accustomed to paying rent in kind and usufructuary use of the land. These practices would be countermanded by new owners in the coming decades, with help from the Bent family. When prospectors discovered gold in 1867, Maxwell became involved in hydraulic mining, built a stamp mill to process ore, and leased claims. The family then moved to Fort Sumner, where Lucien farmed, raced horses, and invested in a bank. Luz ran her own cattle business after he died.[44]

Although she never became the land baroness that Luz Beaubien did, Charles and María Ignacia's daughter, Estefana, used her kin connections to help her family find financial success in the New Mexico–Colorado borderlands. About a decade after her father's death, she married Alexander Hicklin, a freighter with ten years' experience working and traveling in the West. In the autumn of 1859 the couple moved north onto land Estefana had been deeded along Greenhorn Creek in southern Colorado. The ranch prospered. By 1865, the ranch sold grain at a good profit and ran several thousand horses, cattle, and sheep, according to one visitor to the spread. James Rusling found the couple living modestly "in a rude adobe hut" despite their modest wealth. They were generous hosts and provided the traveler with "butter, eggs, and vegetables" from their table.[45]

Despite their success as farmers and stock-raisers, the ranch was sometimes a dangerous, violent place. Once, a neighbor shot to death one of Hicklin's friends in a dispute over rent. Hicklin and the man, Beaubois, were talking outside the ranch house when the attacker rode up. Hicklin shouted out to hold fire, but Beaubois was wounded. He staggered into the kitchen where Estefana worked. She screamed as the attacker followed the man into the house "and shot him through the forehead" while she watched in horror. Another time, Hicklin, now a justice of the peace, tired of two "Damned chicken thieves" who plagued the region. He arrested them, gave them a quick trial, hanged them, and left the bodies dangling overnight from a tree limb as an example. Old-timer and former Bent employee Dick Wootton thought Zan Hicklin was "the most famous practical joker in the mountains" and an all-around good fellow.[46] Hicklin's contemporaries said practically nothing about the woman who made his success possible.

For Thomas O. Boggs, marriage to Rumalda Jaramillo Bent was the necessary precondition to laying a claim to the agricultural potential of the Arkansas River valley. As in Hicklin's marriage to Estefana, the groom's life is far better documented than hers. Boggs was an in-law of the Bents. His father's first wife was a sister of Charles and William. Boggs came to New Mexico in 1844, began working for Bent, St. Vrain and Company, and acted as a dispatch rider during the U.S.-Mexican War. After the conflict he moved his family to California, where his brother grew grapes and produced a drinkable zinfandel. They returned to New Mexico in 1858, and Boggs went to work for the Maxwells on their grant herding sheep and cattle. Tom reacquainted himself with southern Colorado in the early 1860s, when he ran his boss's cattle along

the Purgatoire River.[47] Through her stepfather's silent partnership with Ceran St. Vrain and Cornelio Vigil, Rumalda laid claim to a parcel of land on the Purgatoire, where she and Tom moved in 1862 or 1863. Several years later, Rumalda acquired more acreage when her mother deeded her Vigil's one-sixth interest in the grant. Again, family ties were crucial to the transaction. Vigil was María Ignacia's uncle. By the end of the decade, however, Anglo-American expansion into southern Colorado brought new legal and surveying systems that threatened the family's title to the old grant. Rumalda and Tom chose to work within the system and petitioned the county recorder to formalize her claim. Boggs spoke on her behalf, telling officials in Pueblo that his wife's claim came from her relative and was reinforced by a subsequent promise from St. Vrain to confirm the claim to their ranch. The recorder upheld the deed, citing the family's long occupation of the parcel and the improvements they made on it. She was eventually awarded two thousand acres.[48] The couple had successfully worked across cultures and legal systems to confirm their holdings. Family connections and pragmatic flexibility remained hallmarks of the Bent children as they solidified their place in the borderlands.

By about 1867, Tom and Rumalda had helped establish a small, multiethnic community on the Arkansas River that thrived on agriculture, ranching, and marital connections. The Bent cousins, Cheyenne and Hispanic women, and Anglo-American entrepreneurs created thriving businesses in the region. Late in the decade, Boggs partnered with Robert Bent and John Wesley Prowers to dig an irrigation canal to provide water to the surrounding fields. When finished, the ditch irrigated a thousand acres of corn, wheat, and potatoes.[49] Like Boggs, Prowers found intermarriage essential to his safety and success. He was an experienced frontiersman who had freighted on the Santa Fe Trail between Kansas and New Mexico and worked as a sutler at Fort Lyon before he settled into ranching. Prowers also ran a general store and sold supplies to the Boggs and Bent families. He followed the example of his old employer, William Bent, and married a Cheyenne woman. His wife, Amache, was the daughter of a council chief and member of the political faction that tended to favor negotiation and trade with the United States. The marriage facilitated ties with the Cheyennes, which spared Boggsville the worst of the Cheyenne raiding in the 1860s. The union did not protect the community from all violence, however, and an 1868 attack prompted Boggs, Prowers, and Robert Bent to file a claim with the government seeking indemnities for the loss of about $18,000 in property, much of its

livestock. As the community grew in the early 1870s and Prowers established himself as the region's most prosperous rancher, Amache became a pillar of the community and a guardian of traditional Cheyenne lifeways, which she passed to her children and integrated with newer Anglo-American material culture.[50] The connections that men like Prowers and Boggs forged allowed them to muster enough votes on county election day to dominate local politics in the local 1860s and 1870s. In September 1868, an ally and ostensibly impartial election official called on the Hispanic men who worked for the leading citizens of Boggsville to cast their ballots in favor of their patrons. Their slate carried the vote. Election returns from 1873 also showed near unanimity in the Hispanic vote in favor of the Prowers-Boggs candidates. These men deployed their cultural connections to great political effect to build their businesses in the Arkansas River valley.[51]

While her siblings and in-laws sought their fortunes in Colorado, Teresina spent most of the 1860s in New Mexico. After completing her schooling in Santa Fe, she continued living with her aunt Josefa Carson and her aunt's husband, Kit. In May 1865 Teresina married Aloys Scheurich. Originally from Germany, he immigrated to the United States and joined the army in 1853. Eventually he was stationed near Taos, where he worked as a clerk. Scheurich left the service in 1858. His discharge papers listed him at five feet six inches tall with gray eyes and blond hair. His commanding officer attested to his character: "Good." Three years later, Scheurich became an American citizen, having impressed local officials with his "good moral character" and attachment "to the principles of the Constitution of the United States." Shortly before he married Teresina, he demonstrated his entrepreneurial spirit, partnering in a freighting firm "for the purpose to buy and sell Wool, Hides, Skins, and Furs" in Kansas City.[52] The match was a good one. Scheurich benefited from his wife's local community connections and land claims. For Teresina, her education and marriage to an upstanding, patriotic businessman allowed her to solidify her own place in an emerging, respectable borderlands middle class.

The household that Teresina and Aloys established in Taos was in almost every respect a mirror of middle-class Victorian homes in the East. Visiting the town shortly after the couple married, Eveline Alexander, the wife of a United States Cavalry officer, commented on the comforts and decorations of the house. She found Teresina "an exceedingly pretty, graceful woman" who spoke fluent English and doted on her new baby, Alice. The house was "very comfortable and well furnished."

There were carpets and the walls were papered. The parlor, though, had "a Mexican aspect" to it: guests reclined on cushions on the floor.[53] The music lessons Teresina took from the sisters in Santa Fe were another marker of the family's bourgeois sensibility. She was an accomplished pianist who, along with Aloys, passed on this love to their children. Their daughter Lena played the harp, and Aloys was a good violinist and an amateur composer. A photograph of the parlor reprinted in a 1952 Taos newspaper article shows a gathering not out of place in Chicago or Boston. The family gathered for a music recital, the women in dresses and the men wearing formal suits. A brass oil lamp and lace window curtains added to the sense of refinement indicated by the presence of a large rosewood piano that Teresina had shipped over the Santa Fe Trail in 1868.[54] At the same time that William's family was consumed by war, Charles's children were setting themselves up for success in the borderlands. Largely removed from the wars that wracked the Great Plains, the work done by the husbands and the land that came through the women allowed these families to claim the respectability and status afforded to upstanding middle-class citizens.

The Scheurichs were not cut off from events in Boggsville, however. In 1867, Kit Carson formally resigned from government service, ending a long career as a scout, courier, translator, Indian agent, and soldier. He moved his family to Boggsville, where he hoped for a quiet retirement. Despite having children of her own, Teresina willingly helped her aunt Josefa care for her large family, spending part of the winter of 1866 with them at Fort Garland, Colorado, Kit's last posting.[55] On April 27, 1868, Josefa Carson died from complications during childbirth. She was forty years old. Kit reached out to Teresina, Aloys, and María Ignacia and asked them to come help the family again. He, too, was "sick and worn out," he told Aloys. Josefa's death had been a staggering blow. He passed along his best wishes to Teresina and the "old lady," his sister-in-law. The aging frontiersman asked if the women could come to Colorado to care for his children while he convalesced. "Please tell the old lady that there is nobody in the world who can take care of my children but her," he wrote to Aloys. In early May 1868 Carson took a turn for the worse, and his doctor moved him to Fort Lyon to monitor his health. On May 15 the Scheurichs and María Ignacia arrived. The women went to the children while Aloys and Tom Boggs kept Carson company until he died on May 23. Tom and Rumalda took the Carson children into their home. After the mourning was over, there was land business to conduct in Colorado. The year after the Carsons died, both Boggs and Scheurich filed claims

with the county recorder in Trinidad for acreage on the Vigil–St. Vrain Grant. Both men cited their wives' family histories in the letters as the basis for acquiring the land.[56] Although they acted as legal intermediaries with the county, the two men recognized that their wives' family ties were what ultimately allowed them to make the claims, thereby enhancing their wealth and position.

The type of family ties the Bents forged dramatically affected their fortunes and trajectories after Sand Creek. William, his children, and their Cheyenne kinfolk could not avoid the violence that afflicted large parts of the southern and central plains. Although members of the family chose dramatically different paths in response to the wars of the 1860s, their experiences were largely defined by conflict. Geographically set apart from these struggles, the New Mexico Bents spent these years parlaying the family's old political connections into social and economic opportunity. The family's daughters helped their Anglo-American husbands establish towns and ranches. As educated, landed heiresses wed to upstanding, respectable men, they became respected members of the same types of frontier communities that often feared and resented men and women like William's children.

8 / Reservations, Ranches, and Respectability: The Bent Family, 1869–1920

The Bents of Indian Territory found themselves on a dramatically different trajectory than their kinfolk in New Mexico and Colorado during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For George, Robert, and Julia the years between 1870 and 1918 were difficult ones for themselves and their Cheyenne relatives. Faced with war, confinement to a reservation, drought, loss of land, and pressure from the United States government to assimilate to white cultural norms, families in Indian Territory sometimes struggled to adapt. The strategies George and Robert Bent deployed defy easy categorization. They seem to have believed that assimilation to a new regime of white education, private land ownership, citizenship, and Christianity was the best way for their families and relatives to survive and thrive. To that end, the brothers aided the very forces that undermined Cheyenne cultural and political sovereignty and became pariahs to many of their neighbors. At the same time, however, the histories George helped create in his last years challenged the dominant American narrative of the conquest of the West and instead valorized the heroic resistance and vibrant culture of the Cheyennes. Nevertheless, the Bents of Indian Territory never achieved the wealth and social standing that their cousins did. George, Robert, and Julia were still too Indian to gain acceptance into mainstream white society. The New Mexico and Colorado Bents achieved greater stature and respectability. The family's daughters provided their Anglo husbands with valuable economic connections that enabled the acquisition of wealth and social capital. Class trumped race in Taos and along the

Arkansas River. The status gained by men like Robison Moore and Aloys Scheurich, in conjunction with their wives' family name, created a space for the women to become middle-class wives and mothers. Land grants, education, entrepreneurship, scholarship, and the right kinds of marriages gave these Bents and their relatives a secure place in the mainstream of American frontier life.

During the early 1870s George's diplomatic skills were in high demand as the political situation in the southern plains became increasingly unstable. After the fighting in 1868 and 1869 wound down, Bent moved his family to the new Cheyenne and Arapaho agency at Darlington, Indian Territory. From there he traveled to the Cheyenne camps and reported their disposition to the agent. Although Bent's initial intelligence indicated that the local bands were peaceful, his superiors worried that emissaries from the Kiowas and Comanches might draw the Cheyennes and Arapahos into war with the Texans and the hide hunters at work decimating the region's bison herds. Bent and Agent John Miles worked together to keep the peace and resolve disputes between the Cheyennes and their neighbors, Native and white.[1]

Bent's work came to nothing when the Red River War erupted in 1874. Starvation and the slaughter of the southern plains bison herds pushed the Kiowas, Comanches, and many Cheyennes into the region's last great military conflict. When a Comanche medicine man claimed that an attack on the trading post and hide depot at Adobe Walls—in the Texas Panhandle—would result in a glorious victory, Cheyenne warriors joined the assault. The results were disastrous. Six Cheyennes died, and more white hunters poured into the region. Drought and violence at the agency compounded these problems. George remembered that most of the Cheyennes "were for war" and tried to intimidate anyone who attempted to stay out of the conflict.[2] In July 1874 General Philip Sheridan ordered five columns of troops into the field. The soldiers harried the tribes into the autumn. During the climactic battle at Palo Duro Canyon only three warriors died, but malnutrition, disease, drought, the disruption of trade networks, bison depletion, and the loss of valuable supplies undermined the Cheyennes and their allies. The soldiers kept up the pressure until winter. "Not being able to stand punishment like the Cheyennes," the Kiowas and Comanches surrendered first, recalled George. By February, however, the Cheyennes came in to the Darlington Agency in a starving, desolate condition. Their sufferings, Agent Miles reported to his superiors, represented an opportunity to show the Indians the folly of resisting the United States government and the necessity

of assimilating to a new set of cultural norms.[3] Life on the reservation tested the resolve, resiliency, and adaptability of both the Cheyennes and William Bent's children during the coming decades.

The Bents demonstrated extraordinary "cultural ambidexterity" during the late 1800s in Indian Territory. Like other mixed-race families in the West, it is impossible to confine the Bents into neat categories or to expect their actions to conform to one set of cultural expectations. They were never disinterested philanthropists who labored selflessly on behalf of their Cheyenne kinfolk. Indeed, their actions gave them a bad reputation in some quarters of the reservation. But neither were they unthinking American dupes, tools, or sellouts. They negotiated a difficult situation using the skills and connections they had learned through years of hard experience. By turns, the Bent brothers, especially George, engaged in bullying, fraudulent behavior, and then became fierce advocates for the preservation of tribal culture. They felt that assimilation was in the best interests of their Cheyenne kinfolk but recognized the need to keep traditions and values alive.[4]

The Bent brothers faced immediate challenges as they tried to help ease the Cheyennes into reservation life. Of immediate concern was the possibility of starvation. To offset short rations, Agent Miles allowed the Cheyennes to go out on several bison hunts between 1876 and 1879. Robert Bent led the 1876 hunt; he was authorized to be gone for twenty days but ordered not to take the Cheyennes into Texas. George left the fullest account of a hunt in his autumn 1876 reports to the agent. The expedition started well with no sign of white hide hunters, but the situation began deteriorating. Bent worried that the herds were moving away too quickly for the Indians to pursue. Rumored competition from the Osages, Pawnees, and other tribes threatened Cheyenne chances for success. Their horses were in poor condition and supplies of coffee and sugar were low. By late November things took a better turn. The Indians were "killing lots of buffalo," and trader Albert E. Reynolds came to the camps to purchase hides. But bad years followed. In 1877 the Cheyennes "can't find nothing but a few old Bulls and not enough to live on," Bent told Miles. The results of the 1879 hunt were also bad, but the agent saw this as a good thing. The Cheyennes must now realize that the old ways were dead, and they would have to adopt white values and practices, Miles claimed.[5]

Another problem affecting George and the Cheyennes was the theft of livestock by white rustlers. One of the sources of tension that sparked the Red River War, rustling was a serious issue on the reservation.

Compounding the problem, the army was unresponsive, even after repeated appeals from the agent and Kansas marshals.[6] In 1874, rustlers hit George's herd along with the rest. He complained to Miles that "Hurricane Bill" Martin, "the acknowledged chief of a gang of desperadoes and horse thieves" that operated in Kansas and Indian Territory, ran off animals Bent valued at $1,040. He paid hundreds of dollars to hire men to track down the Martin gang, without luck. George warned Miles that the Cheyennes' "record of peace will not be as good" if nothing was done to protect their livestock. The agent called the raids "very discouraging to the Indians" in his correspondence with Washington. Three years later little had changed. "There is a stolen pony in every stable from the Cimarron to the Platte," Miles lamented. And no one had been arrested for stealing George's horses. In fact, three of them had been seen "being driven by a grocer's wagon" in Deadwood, Dakota Territory.[7]

Against this chaotic backdrop George also faced accusations of drunkenness and indiscretion that followed him through the next two decades and made him very unpopular with many Cheyennes who opposed the government's assimilation policies. In the 1870s and 1880s, before he got sober, George struggled mightily with alcoholism. The first incident occurred in 1876, when his friend Philip McCusker got some liquor for Bent. When George went on a bender, Agent John Miles banned McCusker from the agency, citing the scout's own drunkenness, "giving whiskey to George Bent and other Indians," and prostituting Cheyenne women. McCusker was not the source of the local liquor problems. The trade in alcohol had flourished along with horse rustling since the early 1870s. George told some traders that Cheyenne men sold off their horses for liquor with potentially devastating consequences.[8]

McCusker responded to the accusations with a rhetorical blast aimed at Agent Miles, Bent, and the trading firm of Lee & Reynolds. The aggrieved plainsman accused these men of abusing their influence to enrich themselves at the expense of the Cheyennes. He accused Bent of double-dipping, drawing a salary from his work as agency interpreter while simultaneously getting paid by the traders for work he did for them. More specifically, McCusker said George received a government salary as interpreter for the Arapahos at the agency without doing any of the work. Miles was complicit in this, McCusker complained, and even allowed George twice the normal beef ration allotted to Indian families. This extra take, the defendant said, "would feed many half-famished women and children." Potentially most damning was his claim that Lee & Reynolds used Bent as a tool to manipulate Agent Miles. George and

Edmund Guerrier both worked for the firm in the 1870s, and Bent kept in touch with Reynolds after he left Darlington to become a highly successfully investor in Colorado mining interests. McCusker said that Bent drew a hundred dollars per month from the firm "in direct violation" of the laws binding government employees. "The Indian trader runs the Indians and their agent through this man Bent," he concluded. George weathered the accusations, and Miles successfully advocated on his behalf with authorities in Washington to help Bent keep his job at the agency.[9] George Bent might not have seen his actions as the conflict of interest McCusker did. Rather, Bent had a unique set of connections that he pragmatically used to protect his personal and family interests. He needed money, he had marketable skills, and he took the work where he found it. Bent had weathered one storm, but when new issues arose that involved tribal land, the stakes were raised, and George found himself on the wrong side of many of his Cheyenne kin.

After the Civil War, the federal government embarked on a decades-long mission to develop the American West and its natural resources. Through land policies, subsidies to railroad companies, and military force deployed against Native peoples, the American state reconstructed the territory beyond the Mississippi River. Although citizenship, legal protection, and the possibility of private land ownership appealed to former slaves in the South, Indians like the Lakotas and Cheyennes vigorously resisted the United States until almost 1880.[10] Policymakers still sought to "civilize" American Indians by transforming them into individualistic, acquisitive, educated, Protestant yeoman farmers. The anthropological theories of the day were optimistic that, with the proper tools and instruction, Indians could climb the evolutionary ladder to eventually take their place as productive citizens of the republic. Although this optimism faded in the 1890s and early 1900s, by 1887 reformist politicians were ready to begin breaking up the reservation system and turn the Cheyennes into independent landholders.[11]

Despite a host of obstacles, Robert Bent successfully made this transition into an agricultural and ranching lifestyle. Efforts at Darlington to turn the Cheyennes into farmers began almost immediately after the agency was founded; they met with minimal success. Inconsistent weather, lack of funds, and Cheyenne indifference defeated most efforts, although the agents had more success convincing the Indians to try ranching and hauling freight.[12] Robert Bent ranched on the Cheyenne reservation and offered his expertise to agency employees who wanted to develop agriculture and livestock husbandry. In 1878 he and Albert

FIGURE 15. Robert Bent. Courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division.

Reynolds donated "bulls of good blood" to the agency herd, much to Agent Miles's appreciation. Nearly a decade later, "Bent's District" was singled out for its good progress in these areas, whereas other sectors of the reservation were judged "essentially non-progressive" by the agent. Robert Bent had challenges, however. In 1884 one of his white cowboys was shot and killed. The agent suspected that he came upon an Indian rustler skinning a beef, but a coroner's jury that included George Bent could not find enough evidence to bring charges against anyone.[13] Perhaps this transition was easier for Robert because he had always seemed

more closely associated with his father's business interests than with his Cheyenne kinfolk. Robert had an American education, like all his siblings, but he was the only son that joined William in the freighting business and never joined George and Charley in the 1865 war. That he ran cattle and hired white employees is a testament to Robert's business sense and ability to transcend racial categorizations.

Bent's success as a rancher and his eye for business opportunities led him and George into a controversy over leasing reservation land to white stockmen. Even though Robert adjusted to the new order of things, his and George's desire to further the economic interests of forces outside the reservation drove a wedge between them and Cheyennes who resented the government's programs. At the agent's behest, the brothers lobbied the chiefs to open acreage for ranchers to graze their cattle. The Bents likely saw this as a potential business opportunity and a way for the Cheyennes to earn extra cash during hard times. The brothers, however, stirred up deep resentment when they spread around cash provided by the cattlemen to sweeten the deal. The chiefs eventually agreed to the leasing agreements, and in May 1883 white ranchers began stocking parts of the reservation. They leased the land for two cents per acre. Meanwhile, many Cheyennes starved. Two years later, some chiefs brought their grievances to Philip Sheridan and singled out the Bents as the authors of the troubles. George came in for an especially severe tongue lashing from a prominent spokesman, Stone Calf, who accused Bent of threatening to get the agent to withhold rations from anyone who opposed the leases and to lead troops against the Cheyennes if they continued to refuse. Stone Calf wanted everyone who aided the ranchers off the reservation. That did not happen, but on July 23, 1885, President Grover Cleveland ordered the reservation cleared of the lessees' cattle within forty days. "Not one Indian has expressed a desire for the renewal of the leases," the agent reported to the commissioner of Indian Affairs the following year.[14] What the Bents likely saw as a necessary, potentially self-enriching opportunity to make the most out of changing circumstances made them easy to portray as men who sold out their Cheyenne kin. George's reputation in some quarters was about to suffer even more damage as the government moved to dismantle the reservations altogether.

Even more controversial than Bent's involvement in the leases was the role he played in securing approval for the implementation of the General Allotment Act of 1887, more popularly known as the Dawes Act. Land reform was central to Indian policy in the late 1800s, and no

legislation threatened the reservations more than this legislation. Sponsored by Senator Henry Dawes and signed into law on February 8, the legislation allowed for surveys of reservation land and its division into private grazing and farming allotments for Indian landholders. Once the allotments were taken up, the rest of the reservation land was open for purchase and development by white buyers. By taking allotments Indians became citizens, taxed and governed by the laws of their state or territory. Dawes and his supporters hoped the legislation would break down tribal cohesion, foster individualism, and incentivize labor and the accumulation of private capital.[15] George Bent helped secure approval for allotment on the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation. His work wrangling the signatures necessary for enactment aroused bitter opposition. There were accusations that George gathered illegible signatures and illegally added the names of women and children to the roll of those in favor of the Dawes Act. Regardless of the fraud, allotment went forward, and the reservation was opened to white settlement on April 19, 1892. Thirty thousand settlers rushed in and staked their claims. Through private land sales, partition through inheritance, further leasing, and lack of meaningful government support, Indian landholdings declined by 60 percent nationally between 1887 and 1934 to 55 million acres, down from 138 million.[16] George's involvement in the implementation of the Dawes Act was possibly the lowest point of his public life in Indian Territory. His real estate dealings had helped strip land away from the Cheyennes and diminished his standing among the people.

George Bent's family also participated in another controversial part of the government's Indian policy: education. On the reservation and at boarding schools like Hampton, Haskell, and Carlisle, Indian children received instruction designed to break communal bonds, undermine tribal cultural sovereignty, and replace traditional values with Protestantism, patriotism, and a desire for economic self-sufficiency. Education, combined with allotment, might eventually lead to an end of government involvement in assimilation, some reformers hoped.[17] Julia Bent, George's daughter, started school at Carlisle during the autumn 1880 term. As a new nine-year-old student she took a field trip to Philadelphia for the Independence Day celebrations and wrote at least two short pieces for the *School News*, Carlisle's student newspaper. In one article Julia praised a teacher as a "funny" and "very kind lady." She also wrote about how much she loved to eat grapes and strawberries and about her pets back home—her horses and a puppy named Short Tail. As she grew older she gained vocational competencies in "sewing & laundry" before

she graduated in 1890. She was "discharged" from Carlisle in 1893.[18] Wherever the schooling took place, it met resistance from parents and students. Some Cheyenne and Arapaho parents refused to enroll their children in reservation schools until the agent threatened to cut off the family's rations. Other agents found that incentivizing school attendance by offering extra rations was more successful. At boarding schools, students resisted assimilation when they ran away, played pranks on the teachers, and quietly preserved languages and culture on the playground and in the dormitories. By 1900, many policymakers and educators were losing optimism in their ability to make progress with the Native communities and as they became more pessimistic about the mental abilities of their pupils, educational practices turned away from academic pursuits to emphasize manual industrial and domestic training.[19]

One of the greatest fears of white educators and Indian agents was that students would fall into old habits when they got home. The agents feared that without jobs the students would regress back into traditional lifeways after their homecoming. "The Government seems ready and willing to educate Indians at school," Agent Dyer wrote in 1884, "but after a boy has been at Carlisle for three years he is sent back to the filth and dirt of camp life with practically nothing to do or do with."[20] To prevent this from happening, some policymakers advocated hiring boarding school graduates to work in the Indian Service. They would provide examples for their kinfolk and act as emissaries of "civilization." Working for the government could be an attractive option. Employment at the agency provided steady work and a respectable income in a place where jobs and money were often scarce. Moreover, government work could, contrary to its intent, reinforce family and kinship bonds in the tribal community by keeping children at home. Although American policy was geared toward severing these ties, returned students sometimes became brokers between their people and the government. Their language skills and kin connections could stymie the agents and helped tribes defend their interests and exercise more control over their daily lives.[21]

Despite these efforts, local resistance and tribal factionalism often undermined assimilation policies and divided Cheyenne communities. Matters were not improved by the fact that agents often disapproved of hiring boarding school alumni and were especially touchy when Native employees disagreed with agents' decisions.[22] Returned students who worked for the government were often pulled in opposite directions. They felt that their work helped the community, but those who opposed the government's policies could be strident in their opposition and

FIGURE 16. Julia Bent (*front row, far left*) and classmates at Carlisle Indian School, ca. 1880. Courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division.

sometimes made the lives of Native Indian Service employees difficult. Although the military power of the Dog Soldiers was broken, the society remained a potent force favoring traditional Cheyenne values on the reservation. Agents noted this fact in their reports and singled these men out for special blame when tribal "progress" seemed slow. Indeed, Agent Dyer complained, "My hands are manacled" by the Dog Soldiers, who were the "supreme" force on the reservation. They abused anyone who crossed them or seemed open to farming, he continued. Dyer accused the soldier society men of destroying the property of anyone who owned livestock or tried to grow crops. As late as 1890 their influence was still felt on the reservation.[23]

Strong as the Dog Soldiers' resistance was, Cheyenne women were especially assertive guardians of tribal culture and traditions. Reconstructing Indian women and their domestic lives was an essential part of government assimilation policy. The production and protection of proper homes was central to the American value system in the late 1800s, and the wars against Indian peoples had been, at least in part, justified to remove a threat to white feminine domesticity and male economic competency. At the reservation and boarding schools, girls' education focused largely on homemaking and moral instruction. Cleanliness, good grooming

habits, cooking, sewing, laundry, and large doses of Protestant piety were central to a curriculum designed to transform young Indian women into Victorian housewives. If the program was a success, then assimilation was assured for "civilization" began at home and was largely dependent on women's work and the moral example they set for their husbands and children.[24] In the 1880s the agents on the Cheyenne reservation had modest reason to hope that Indians were establishing proper American homes. Many families now had tables, beds, and stoves, while "not a few have abandoned the tipi for more permanent structures," John Miles wrote to his superiors. But his optimism was not widespread. Although his successors felt that much of the resistance to American policies was age-based—with the older generation more reluctant to change—much of it was also gendered. Cheyenne women exercised a great deal of influence over the life of the camp and were unafraid to make their views known. "The mother-in-law is much in evidence among these people" and "makes herself a 'holy terror' unless the family affairs are conducted according to her ideals," wrote an agent in 1897. Two years later he faced similar challenges. "It is quite evident that the Indian women are the least progressive," he complained. They were committed to preservation of the old ways and chastised younger, educated women who might be open to alternative lifestyles. There was "no immunity from the sarcasm and ridicule" of the female guardians of Cheyenne culture.[25] Without the cooperation of women, American policymakers would have little success in reshaping Cheyenne home and married life.

When the government attempted to reorder Cheyenne marital customs, Julia Bent found herself at the center of controversy. Monogamous unions were essential to replicating respectable Victorian homes in Indian country, but the project faced intense resistance. If there was any hope for the agents to undo the custom of polygamy—which the agents found particularly odious—it was with the younger generation, the agents felt. But even here the task seemed Sisyphean. Agent Charles Ashley accused "the old Indians" of "generally" practicing polygamy and was able to cite only "several legal marriages" among the tribe's young people.[26] Literate, manually dexterous, possessing a degree from assimilation's flagship institution, and being a member of a prominent local family, Julia Bent was well-positioned to take a job in the Indian Service and edify other Cheyennes by her own marital example. Instead she chose a different path. In 1893 Julia married a Cheyenne man, Little Hawk, who had divorced his wife "according to Indian custom," without appealing to white courts. Agent A. E. Woodson was appalled because

Julia presumably should have known better. The agent hoped she would return home, take a government job, and settle into proper domestic life. Instead, she turned down the proffered job and married Little Hawk. The agent proposed taking the couple before a grand jury to investigate the matter but does not seem to have followed up on the threat. If marriage patterns changed to reflect respectable Victorian custom, it was not until after 1897, when the Oklahoma legislature passed a law mandating that men in polygamous marriages choose one wife. If plural marriage continued, the parties could be arrested for bigamy.[27] Julia's actions as a young woman might have reflected her attachment to Cheyenne customs at a time when her father was accused of promoting American interests. In this sense, she acted much as her grandmothers had in previous decades. Her choices might also have reflected her distaste for George's decision making because father and daughter also clashed over economic issues.

The deterioration of George Bent's family life paralleled his declining status with some members of the Cheyenne community. Although Magpie Woman, his first wife, divorced him shortly after the Washita battle and his marriage to Kiowa Woman, he continued to support his ex-wife and their three surviving children. Kiowa Woman divorced him in 1878 after giving him two children, including Julia. The relationship between father and daughter was a contentious one. Julia wrote to the commissioner of Indian Affairs in July 1892 to say that George had "never done right" by his family. He was an educated man, and there was "no excuse" for his conduct, Julia said. He also drank too much. At issue was her accusation that her father had used land and possibly sold cattle that belonged to her without her permission. When Agent Charles Ashley investigated, George denied his daughter's accusations. The agent supported him and concluded that "Miss Bent is mistaken" in her claims. No evidence existed that her father had scammed her, Ashely concluded, nor were there any agency records that she had received cattle from the government.[28] The familial unrest was probably a painful culmination of almost twenty rough years for George Bent. He was called a drunk and a swindler. Some of his own family and members of the larger Cheyenne community loathed him. His ruptured relationship with Julia was undoubtedly troubling, but her continuing story in Indian Territory was also a complicated one.

Julia Bent's first marriage and the legal ruckus with her father might be attributable to spirited, youthful rebellion, because by the early 1900s she had become a model Carlisle alumna. She divorced Little Hawk and married "a Carlisle boy" named Noble Prentiss. The couple lived first in

Darlington and then moved to Calumet, Oklahoma. They had 160-acre allotments and owned a house, wagon, buggy, and livestock. Noble was "employed by Uncle Sam," and the children went "to the public school with white children." Julia herself held multiple jobs in the Indian Service. She was a seamstress and laundress at Darlington before taking a job as assistant matron at the nearby Arapaho school. Perhaps most importantly, like her father she worked as a translator. A local Baptist church paid her three dollars per day to interpret at Darlington's summer camp meeting. But she also mediated at "the big councils" that took place between the agents and the Indians. The Cheyennes needed reliable advocates. "What greater thing or better thing could I do for my people," she wondered. Julia could not think of an answer.[29] Father and daughter proved remarkably adaptable as they charted a course through a world in flux. The transition was sometimes acrimonious and often personally painful. But in the early twentieth century George and Julia Bent had emerged as spokespersons for the rights and traditions of their Cheyenne kinfolk.

George Bent had been involved in the process that undercut Cheyenne landholdings, but his memory for historical events also helped the tribe hold onto much-needed annuity funds. During the 1880s white settlers and opportunists filed claims against the tribe, alleging depredations committed during the wars of the previous two decades. Successful claimants drew their restitution from tribal funds. Bent served as an advocate for the tribe in some of these cases. George's experiences and ability to recall people, places, dates, and skirmishes impressed the agents. In the late 1880s he disputed several white accounts about raiding in Kansas and Indian Territory and said that northern bands of Cheyennes or Sioux had caused the trouble, not the Southern Cheyennes. The agent called Bent "a very intelligent half-breed Cheyenne who was with them at that time," one of several references to his education and memory skills. In another case he alerted the agent to potential fraud. Bent had corresponded with Mary Fletcher, a woman captured by the Southern Cheyennes and freed by Edward Wynkoop in 1866, and told the agent that she was going to file a claim against the tribe. The agent reported to the translator that Fletcher's claim had already been paid out.[30] The agents would not be the only ones who benefited from Bent's memory and storytelling skills.

Bent achieved notoriety for his correspondence with white anthropologists, historians, and journalists beginning with James Mooney. An anthropologist employed by the Smithsonian, Mooney wrote

foundational texts on the Cherokees, Kiowas, and the Ghost Dance.[31] When he visited the Cheyennes, he hired Bent as a guide and interpreter. George angered some in the community when he allowed Mooney to photograph the Cheyenne Sun Dance ceremony. George was also a source for Mooney's work on the Kiowas and their history and provided a Cheyenne version of events that gave the scholar a fuller version of the story. Nevertheless, the relationship was strained. Mooney "thought he was right in every thing," Bent complained. Even when George gave Mooney an accurate description of the Cheyenne kinship system, the anthropologist dismissed Bent's account and claimed the tribe had no clans.[32] The most important result of the relationship was that Mooney put Bent in touch with other writers. Bent's collaboration with men like George Hyde and George Bird Grinnell allowed him to share the Cheyenne version of the Indian Wars and helped the wider reading public become aware of a previously unacknowledged version of historical events.

"I wish to tell you how the whites gets every thing mixed up in fights and I will be glad to answer any questions any time you wish to know about these fights," Bent wrote to George Hyde in 1904. Tired of reading accounts of the plains wars biased against Indians and recognizing that cultural, religious, and historical knowledge disappeared every time a Cheyenne elder or warrior died, George Bent spent the last years of his life working on his most important task: preserving the story of his family and their Native kinfolk. George Hyde was a willing partner. An autodidact obsessed with all things Indian, Hyde lived with his mother in Omaha, Nebraska. Rendered deaf and nearly blind by a childhood bout with scarlet fever, he was nonetheless a tireless letter writer who exchanged information with old-timers all over the West. Hyde and George Bent corresponded for over a decade. Almost 350 of Bent's letters to Hyde survive, but none of Hyde's letters to Bent have. Bent answered Hyde's questions, collected stories, and sent them to Omaha. He provided the rough draft, and Hyde polished the prose and sought publishers. "I want you to write out my writings better as you understand better than I do," Bent wrote; "Any thing you put out will be much better." Their first successful collaboration came in a series of four articles for *Frontier*, a small magazine published in Colorado Springs.[33] *Frontier* had a limited circulation and folded shortly after the last Bent-Hyde piece, but George Bent's recollections ignited a firestorm in the Colorado press over the accuracy of the stories he told about one of his people's most traumatic memories: Sand Creek.

"Hot shot is poured into George Bent of Colorado Springs by Major Jacob Downing," proclaimed the *Denver Post* on July 25, 1906. Bent's account of Sand Creek in *Frontier* was the most damning account of the event to appear in print since the congressional testimony of the 1860s. Jacob Downing, one of Chivington's officers, vigorously rebutted Bent's reminiscences on factual and racial grounds. The core of the magazine story stressed the peaceful nature of the Indians and the indiscriminate killing of Indian women and children by the Coloradans. Downing vigorously dismissed both points and claimed that Bent confused the facts of his account. For a "cutthroat, a thief, a liar, and a scoundrel" to claim credibility was insulting. Worse than that, Downing raged, Bent was "a half breed." Downing disparaged George's family, calling William Bent "a renegade" and "too much of an outcast to marry a white woman." No Indian or relative of Indians, the officer implied, had the authority to question the validity of a white man's recollections. Albert Reynolds, Bent's old employer from Indian Territory, was one of the few who defended George's truthfulness and publicly rebuked Downing's claims in the *Denver Post*. Bent repaid the favor in later years by seeking out Reynolds's memories to pass on to George Hyde.[34] Bent's family ties became central to the production of historical narrative. His connections to the Cheyenne community gave his stories the power to challenge white accounts of expansion. But being half-Cheyenne led some to dismiss his accounts altogether or claim they did not have the same credibility as government documents.

The rest of Bent's correspondence with Hyde was just as illuminating, if far less controversial, than the Sand Creek piece, and the two men established a productive working relationship during the early 1900s. Bent read widely in western history and corresponded with more than one hundred people to gather the stories he sent to Hyde. Especially important were his family contacts among the Cheyennes, who provided him information that Hyde and George Bird Grinnell might have found difficult to obtain.[35] Bent was a demanding partner, and his pressure on Hyde to keep up his writing drove the sickly Nebraskan to distraction. "I have plenty of time to write and lots of paper and envelopes," George wrote to Hyde in May 1905. He also provided feedback, telling Hyde, "I went over what you have written and it was all right." The writer was diligent about fact-checking and followed up with Bent to guarantee the accuracy of his edits and prose polishing.[36] Hyde's collaboration with George was a friendly one, but Bent also had better-connected correspondents.

George Bird Grinnell helped the Cheyenne voices reach their largest white reading audience. The son of a wealthy New York City banking family, Grinnell became interested in the West during his undergraduate days at Yale, when he traveled to Nebraska to collect fossils with a group of paleontologists. During that trip and subsequent ventures, he struck up friendships and correspondence with prominent frontiersmen. As he grew older, Grinnell feared that the Indian traditions were "vanishing" and that he had a responsibility to get their side of the story into print before it was gone forever. This was exactly George Bent's goal. Despite a genuine interest in Indian history and culture, Grinnell never became a relativist and continued to believe in the superiority of white culture and institutions. His background was scientific—he had a doctorate in osteology and paleontology—but he advanced no new theoretical frameworks for analysis. Grinnell was, however, a good storyteller and masterful synthesizer whose works on the Cheyennes reached a wide audience and remain classics in the field of western history.[37]

The relationship between the three Georges was sometimes strained, but it produced works of enduring quality. Bent began collaborating with Grinnell in 1905. "I have a good many [stories] written down," Grinnell confided, "but there a great many of which I have never heard, and which it is hard for me to get." The two men settled on a compensation schedule that ranged from fifty cents per story up to five dollars for the longer ones, some of which Bent stretched to almost thirty pages. At times Grinnell asked for specific details, and at others his questions were more open-ended. He was appreciative of Bent's skills and told one correspondent that George's "knowledge of the Cheyennes and for their wars is very great, and he has a most remarkable memory for news, dates, and places."[38] Despite Grinnell's praise, he could be difficult to work with. One of Bent's biggest complaints was that the man worked too slowly. "I am getting tired of him he does not seem to go ahead with what he has already," Bent complained to Hyde in February 1913. Grinnell was also an inconsistent correspondent. Most importantly, however, Bent and Hyde accused him of making their stories his own without giving them proper credit. Bent thought that Grinnell could be arrogant like Mooney. Some of the criticism was undoubtedly deserved, but Grinnell also helped Bent and his wife out of at least two financial jams, and George was grateful for that.[39]

As productive as his historical collaboration and cultural preservation projects were, George's twilight years were dogged by personal misfortune. During the late 1800s he lost his brother Robert, sister Julia, and his

first wife, Magpie Woman. In 1913 his second ex-wife, Kiowa Woman, died. Worse, in the summer of 1910 two of his children, Ada and Charley, passed away. Five years later he lost a grandson, aged four years, "a very bright boy," he told George Hyde. His own health was also deteriorating. By 1910 he was nearly deaf in one ear.[40] Still, he continued his correspondence with other historians, drew them maps, and planned to visit some of the historic sites of his youth, although age and health problems put the trips always just out of reach. On May 19, 1918, George Bent died. He fell ill with pneumonia and passed quickly, leaving behind "a lot of manuscript material" that was "of real historic interest and value," wrote Joseph Thoburn of the Oklahoma Historical Society.[41]

The Bent family legacy in Indian Territory and Oklahoma was a mixed one. George and Robert were well-connected, influential figures on the Cheyenne reservation. Their language skills and network of kinfolk made them valuable workers and consultants for a series of United States Indian agents. They also had friends off the reservation. Some of them aided George financially and vouched for his honesty when he was attacked in the Colorado press. And yet, George was often in financial trouble and developed a drinking problem. Hard times and the pursuit of self-interest led the brothers into questionable business opportunities and political work that undermined the economic and territorial integrity of the Cheyenne people, many of whom considered the Bent brothers tools of the United States government. The family also took steps toward assimilation. George's children received an American education, and Julia, like her father, worked for the Indian Service. Despite his shady dealings in the 1880s and 1890s, George spent the last decades of his life preserving the stories and histories of his mother's people. His collaboration with George Hyde and George Bird Grinnell did not erase his past deeds, and even today some Cheyennes view him unfavorably. But without his efforts the historical record of the American West would be much the poorer. If the Bents seemed inconsistent, even unprincipled, in some of their actions, they were not alone. Mixed-race families in the West often scrambled to adjust to changing circumstances and sought opportunity and security wherever available. The same families that sometimes helped the government break up reservations and undermine tribal sovereignty could, in later years, do heroic work to protect the lives, health, and dignity of their Native kinfolk.[42] The Bents were a complicated family trying to get by in a complicated world. The experiences of the New Mexico and Colorado side of the family mirrored those of William's children in important ways. As land dealers and sources for local

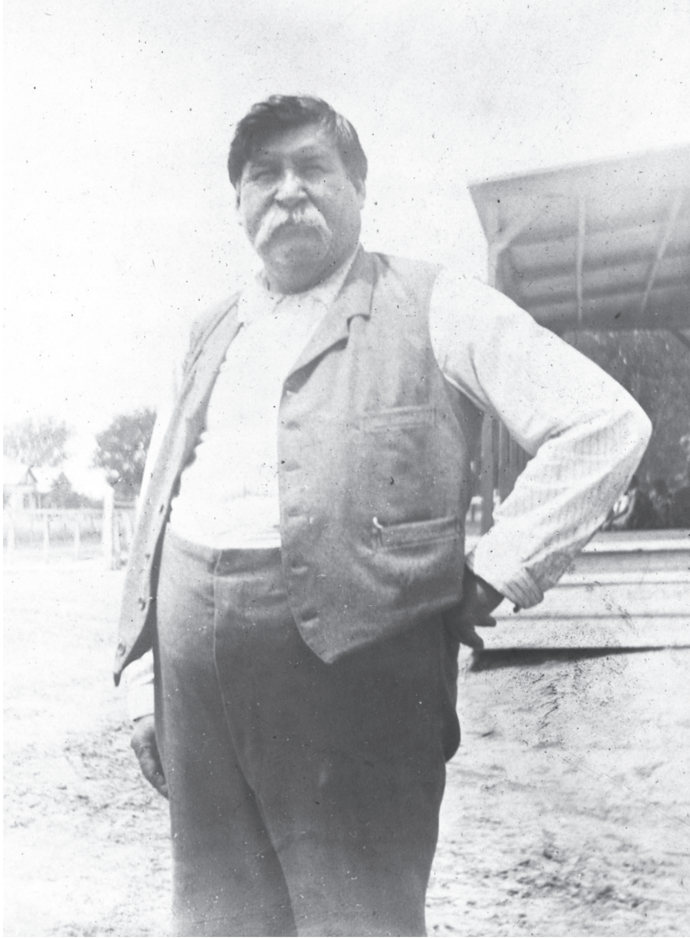

FIGURE 17. George Bent in 1905. Courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division.

historians, they sought to solidify their social and economic position in Taos and in the Arkansas River valley communities like Boggsville.

Marital connections and the land purchases they helped facilitate contributed to the wealth accumulated by Bent family members and their associates. George Bent was an especially effective intermediary between Cheyenne and mixed-race landholders and Anglo-American entrepreneurs like John Wesley Prowers and Albert E. Reynolds. Both men benefited from their marital ties and friendship with the Bent family. George

Bent was particularly helpful. He sold a 640-acre plot to Prowers before leaving Colorado to settle in Indian Territory, and, as other members of the family left the Arkansas River, Bent helped the rancher purchase additional land from his sister Julia and her husband, Edmund Guerrier. Aided by George's negotiations, Prowers built a cattle empire in southern Colorado.[43] Bent also facilitated Albert E. Reynolds's purchase of Cheyenne land. Reynolds eventually became the owner of Indian Claim 13, Julia Bent's former parcel on which sat the ruins of Bent's Fort. In 1901 he donated the land to the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The organization deeded the property to the State of Colorado in 1954, and it became a unit of the National Park Service in 1963.[44] For the ranchers who replaced the Cheyennes in the Arkansas River valley, kin connections were as indispensable as they had been for William Bent when he arrived in the region decades before.

Although John Wesley Prowers benefited from the removal of the Southern Cheyennes to Indian Territory, his own mixed-race family was a pillar of society in southeastern Colorado in the late nineteenth century. The reminiscences of white settlers and civic boosters lauded Prowers for his business acumen, especially his importation of eastern breeding stock to improve the bloodlines of his cattle operation. But lost in many of these heroic pioneer memoirs was the fact that the family ties Prowers forged with the Cheyennes anchored him in the region and provided much of the land upon which he grew his fortune. The family benefited from his economic standing, and, like William Bent and his wives, Prowers and his wife sought to solidify their children's status in white society by educating them in Missouri. Their daughters and granddaughters received an eastern education designed to help them become respectable Victorian housewives.[45] Like her husband, Amache Prowers worked to accustom her children to American norms and modeled cultural adaptability in their home. She learned English and spoke it well. Her daughter Mary remembered that Amache spoke only English in the house, although she spoke Cheyenne to her kinfolk. Amache's mother tried to teach Mary Cheyenne when she was a girl but gave up saying she was "too dumb to learn Cheyenne talk." Amache's command of English and her long cultural memory were on display at a social function in Denver where she was introduced to John Chivington. She ignored his outstretched hand and said in a voice "audible to all in the room" that the man who stood before her "was my father's murderer." Amache was also involved in local civic and religious life. However, language, dress, and church attendance did not mean she chose to completely assimilate to a

white lifestyle. Rather, she kept Cheyenne traditions alive in her home. Mary recalled that the family benefited from her mother's knowledge of Native pharmacopeia and enjoyed her blending of Cheyenne and American recipes during the Christmas holidays. Amache Prowers died on February 14, 1898, at the age of fifty-one. John Wesley Prowers's connections to the Cheyennes through his wife were also important to the safety of his property in the 1870s. The generosity he extended a war party once helped prevent an attack on West Las Animas, Colorado. During the tumultuous years predating the Red River War, Cheyenne, Comanche, and Kiowa warriors struck into southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, killing settlers and ranchers and running off horses, but the property of the Prowers family and their friends around Boggsville was untouched.[46]

Like Amache and John Prowers, Mary and Robison Moore's family became prominent members of the local community. William Bent had been skeptical of his daughter's marriage to a Missouri bartender, but Moore was a loving husband, entrepreneur, and community leader. Like Prowers, Moore benefited from Mary's family ties to acquire land and become a prominent cattleman. He also became a judge and county superintendent of schools. He died on October 25, 1894, from injuries suffered in a buggy accident. As with Amache Prowers, so too with Mary Moore; William Bent's daughter, educated in Missouri, used her schooling, musical skills, and membership in the local Episcopal church to carve out a prominent place in local society before she died in 1878.[47] The Moore children used their own education and the family's respectability to advance their own interests. Ada Moore Lubers, Mary and Robison's daughter, probably attained the highest stature of any of William Bent's grandchildren. Like her mother, Ada attended boarding schools in the East—in Topeka, Independence, and St. Paul—while also retaining traditional Cheyenne skills like daredevil horseback riding. After her first husband, a clerk and recorder for Bent County named John W. Jay, died in 1888, she married Harry L. Lubers. A prominent figure in local politics, Lubers eventually rose to become the Speaker of the House in the Colorado State Assembly.[48]

The successes of these mixed-race families were remarkable for having taken place at a time when white Americans increasingly viewed these individuals with greater skepticism and contempt. Although racial attitudes were hardening, class status and personal performance allowed some Native women and their daughters a range of ways to gain acceptance in western communities. Who these women married mattered

greatly. A successful white husband provided a buffer behind which a wife could carve out her own autonomous space. Successful ranchers, politicians, and community leaders, Prowers and Moore achieved a socioeconomic position that gave their wives respectability in local white society. What these women did and where they did it also provided them with social capital. The ideology of separate spheres could shield these women from unwanted scrutiny. The better they were at performing the expected duties of a middle-class Victorian wife and mother, the better were their chances of finding a measure of white acceptance. Education in language, dress, music, and comportment allowed the daughters of Mary Moore and Amache Prowers to claim whiteness and class status. As hostesses, church members, and club officers, these women placed themselves on an equal level with their white peers. The sons of many mixed-race marriages faced a more difficult situation. They lived visible public lives and were often subjected to more scrutiny and criticism than were their sisters. None of this was easy, and many white Americans remained deeply prejudiced against the identities and values embodied by the Bent, Moore, and Prowers families.[49] Assimilation to these norms was a pragmatic adaptation for such families all over the American and Canadian Wests, who often struggled to find a place in a rapidly changing world.

The Bent women in New Mexico continued to be influential in the land business into the 1890s, although their involvement in real estate dealings was not without controversy. The most infamous incident involved the family's involvement with Lucien and Luz Maxwell. In 1859 Teresina, Estefana, their husbands, and brother Alfredo Bent sued Lucien Maxwell, claiming he had not paid them for Charles Bent's one-third interest in the Beaubien-Miranda Land Grant. Although the plaintiffs provided no documentation to support their claim, court decisions in 1865 and 1866 granted the children a one-quarter interest in the grant, which they quickly sold to Maxwell. The matter became more contentious when Alfredo Bent was shot and killed by a local gambler named Greek George. Bent's wife, Guadalupe, became responsible for the legal suit and guardianship of her children's interests. In 1873 her new husband, a Colorado rancher named George Thompson, initiated a lawsuit against Maxwell, claiming the man's sale of the grant to a consortium of investors was invalid and that he had duped Guadalupe into selling her portion of the land. For nearly fifteen years a head-spinning round of litigation ricocheted the suit between district courts in New Mexico, the Territorial Supreme Court, the Supreme Court of the United States,

and back to local jurisdiction. In 1882 Alfredo's son Charles joined the fray, adding Aloys Scheurich's name to Maxwell's as men who defrauded Guadalupe Bent Thompson. The issue was finally settled by an 1887 decision ruling against Thompson and Bent.[50] Other family land deals were less dramatic. In 1890, Teresina and Aloys Scheurich sold their interest in Charles Bent's Colorado grant holdings to George Thompson. The couple also sold real estate in Taos; Teresina followed in her mother's footsteps by acting independently of her husband on at least one land purchase.[51] Charles Bent's children and their real estate ventures drove home the point that marriage and financial opportunity in the New Mexico–Colorado borderlands were still intimately linked in the late nineteenth century.

Much of the controversy that swirled around land in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado was tied to Lucien Maxwell and the sale of his and Luz's grant to outside investors. In 1869 mining investor Jerome Chafee and his partner George Chilcott, the former territorial land registrar for Colorado, approached Maxwell about selling the grant. The next year the Maxwells sold out for more than one million dollars to the Maxwell Land Grant and Railroad Company. The trouble was that his title was vague, and the boundaries of the grant far from clear. A survey conducted at Maxwell's request gave him claim to two million acres, but the General Land Office's survey patented only ninety-seven thousand acres and opened the rest to homesteaders. This confusion led to conflict between the settlers, who based their claim on the government's survey, and the company, which considered them squatters and pointed to Maxwell's survey as proof. Even after the Interior Department upheld the General Land Office survey, the company continued to affirm its claim to two million acres. In 1875 a small range war erupted in Colfax County, New Mexico, that pitted homesteaders against the company and its allies in the Santa Fe Ring—a network of well-connected territorial politicians, merchants, attorneys, county judges, and newspapermen. Several men were shot or hanged during the violence that was later overshadowed by the unpleasantness taking place farther south in Lincoln County. In 1879 the courts finally ruled in favor of the company and upheld its claim to the legitimacy of Maxwell's survey. Violence had ceased for the time, but the company still had to deal with other forms of resistance, particularly the refusal of settlers to pay their rent or acquire individual title to the lands on which they lived.[52]

Although the company formally secured rights to their two million acres, the investors were worried about their financial stability and

accelerated attempts to collect rents and sign leases; to do this controversial work they turned to Tom Boggs for help. Boggs and his wife, Rumalda, had built their home in 1865 in Boggsville, where he built a reputation as a top-rate sheep breeder. As the community faded in economic significance, the family moved to Springer, New Mexico, where they continued in the wool business. Within a decade Boggs had taken employment with the company as a mediator with the homesteaders, both Anglo and Hispanic. The work supplemented the family's income, but the work Boggs did for his employers did little to endear him to his neighbors.[53]

As a diplomat and negotiator Boggs was not always successful despite the potential advantages his marriage to Rumalda and his fluency in Spanish might have given him in the local Hispanic community. Boggs seemed to be a natural fit to advocate for the company's interests. Because Boggs was bilingual and connected to a prominent northern New Mexico family, his employers initially felt that he might convince the men and women whom the shareholders considered squatters to move off the grant, sign a lease with the company, or purchase title outright. Boggs and his boss, Harry Whigham, advocated a divide-and-conquer strategy. Whigham's aim was to drive a wedge between Anglo and Hispanic settlers. By negotiating separate deals with these groups, the company could foster distrust, undermine any unified resistance, and secure deals that benefited the board of directors in Europe. Boggs agreed that he should mediate with each group independently. Whigham felt that the "leading Mexicans" would not deal with any other Anglo negotiator, and Boggs knew that "the Americans will pay but little attention" to a Hispanic negotiator, but "all the Americans know me."[54] No one, not even Boggs, knew what to expect from the talks. A meeting at Cimarron, New Mexico, did not go well. Another company employee groused that the settlers showed up late and drunk to the gathering. They said they had been attending a horse race. The negotiators faced such resistance that J. A. Schaumburg wrote to his bosses that Boggs was unlikely to make any progress "until after a few suites have been brought, so as to prove to them that the Company is determined to act firmly." Boggs was cautiously optimistic. While the "hardheadedness of these people is beyond all comprehension," he complained to Whigham, progress might be made. Some of the local rowdies insulted him "in slang Spanish words," but "this does not hurt," he assured his boss. Boggs apparently left the meeting on friendlier terms than he started. "I think we can accomplish a great deal," Tom confided to Schaumburg.[55] Boggs's abilities as an

intercultural mediator were born of long experience in the borderlands, but his ultimate success as a negotiator would be undermined by the less than generous terms he was authorized to offer to the settlers, especially the Hispanic ones.

Boggs was not around to see the long-term effects his negotiations helped facilitate, for his employment with the company ended in 1888. It is possible that the company fired him because his heart was not fully in the work. The leasing and purchasing terms his employers allowed him to offer were hardly generous, and his bosses feared that Boggs had gone soft. The high prices the company demanded for rents or outright purchase meant that many Hispanic settlers were either locked into a system that resembled debt peonage or forced out altogether. "I wish that you would not out of consideration for the Mexicans lose sight of our interests too," Pels warned him.[56] Boggs's marital connections to New Mexico's Hispanic community might have predisposed him to be more sympathetic to the settlers' plight than to the company's bottom line. It is also possible that they fired him simply because they felt Boggs was a lousy worker. His employers increasingly took a dim view of Tom. He was late filing his reports to the company, lost equipment, and cashed "checks like a draught horse." He was informed that he should quit by the end of August or be fired.[57]

The land deals that the Scheurichs, Hicklins, and Boggs participated in helped facilitate the dispossession of Hispanic settlers in a manner like the losses the Cheyennes suffered in Indian Territory. Like the Bent brothers, who helped open the Cheyenne reservation to grazing leases and allotment under the Dawes Act, Tom Boggs faced a situation in which he was asked to help facilitate the expansion of outside interests at the expense of those people who had long lived on the land. The Maxwell Grant, its board of directors felt, contained lands much too valuable to waste on Hispanic settlers. However, Tom Boggs, like George Bent, might have come to regret his actions and tried to disassociate from the process. Moreover, just as George labored to preserve his family's stories, so Teresina Bent Scheurich became the chronicler and memory keeper of the New Mexico side of the family.

Teresina and María Ignacia's curation of their family story was different from George Bent's in one notable way, for whereas George penned a story of Native cultural preservation and resistance to white expansion, mother and daughter told a heroic story of adventure and American conquest. In 1881 the women gave a tour of María Ignacia's Taos home to John G. Bourke, an army officer and amateur ethnographer. María

Ignacia showed him the bullet holes that still scarred the walls as well as the partially burned roof beams while she reflected on the trauma of the Taos Revolt. Bourke described her as "a finely preserved Mexican lady, comely and refined" before noting the household furnishings and handicrafts made by her and Teresina. After talking to Teresina, whom he inexplicably called María Ignacia's sister, Bourke praised the young woman's intelligence and command of English.[58] Teresina was also a fierce guardian of her father's memory and legacy. She was a major source of information to writers like Edwin Sabin, whose work helped perpetuate the legend of Charles Bent as a heroic martyr for Manifest Destiny. She also hoarded relics of Bent's death and once showed Sabin the iron poker the women used to dig through the adobe walls during the 1847 revolt. Teresina must have been sought out by other journalists because her stories appeared in western newspapers as well. George Thompson once showed Francis Cragin, a Colorado historian, a "fine full-page illustrated article" about Bent's death in the *San Francisco Chronicle* based on her recollections. Thompson also suggested that Cragin reach out to Estefana Hicklin as another source of information.[59]

By carefully curating their version of New Mexico's transition from Mexican to American rule, the Bent women made sure that Anglos who read their stories remembered the heroic sacrifices made by men like Charles Bent. Nowhere did they mention the deep roots of local discontent with him or what he stood for. George Bent's stories challenged the triumphant American narrative of conquest, whereas the history the women preserved perpetuated this version of events. Both versions of western history were born in acts of traumatic violence. The fact that Americans inflicted violence on George's family shaped his views. In the same way, Bent's death at the hands of lower-class Hispanics and Pueblo Indians molded Teresina's version of events. Both families were victims of violence but drew vastly different conclusions about the significance of the bloodshed.

As celebrated doyens of local history, mother and daughter also burnished Kit Carson's legacy against what they saw as slanderous attacks on his character.[60] María Ignacia came to the defense of her brother-in-law's memory in her conversations with Bourke. She showed the officer a Boston newspaper that had printed a story calling Carson a "reckless gambler," a characterization that she vigorously rejected, calling him a fine, upstanding man.[61] Besides providing Sabin and Cragin with details on Carson's time at Rayado and corroborating details of other events in his life, Teresina also defended Kit's sexual morality and his claim to

respectability. A curious letter written by Teresina and quoted at length in Marion Estergreen's 1962 biography of Carson claimed that he had not married his second wife, a Cheyenne woman named Making Out Road. Estergreen's text referred to her as "a woman of bad disposition" and blamed "some ambitious biographer" for concocting the story. Teresina's letter also denied a relationship Carson supposedly had with "an immoral white woman" when he was a teenager.[62] Carson's first marriage to an Arapaho woman did not merit comment, presumably because her reputation had been a good one and no threat to Kit's social standing. His marriage to Josefa Jaramillo, of course, was viewed as completely respectable. The Jaramillo family had a safe position in Taos's hierarchy, and the relationship had been mutually beneficial. Carson, at the time a poorly paid hunter for Bent, St. Vrain and Company, had married up, and his growing celebrity in life and death would reflect well on the Jaramillos, Bents, and Scheurichs. Any whiff of scandal tarnished Kit's memory and, by extension, that of his relatives.

Teresina and her family thrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Her marriage to Aloys Scheurich had produced six children, and the couple were loving, attentive parents. After his death in 1907, Teresina, an assertive and educated woman, sought and secured a veteran's pension from the United States government, citing her husband's service record. She died on the morning of February 5, 1920, in her Taos home. A local newspaper hailed Teresina Bent Scheurich's death as "the passing of one of the prominent characters of Taos and New Mexico" and praised her "rare mental qualities and pleasing personality" as well as her guardianship of local history.[63] Aloys Scheurich's status as a veteran and entrepreneur combined with Teresina's education, claims to land grants, and social standing in the community to secure respectability and financial security for their family that few of her siblings and relatives could match.

Life for her siblings and their families was not as grand. Rumalda and Tom Boggs lived in Springer, New Mexico, until 1889, when they moved to Clayton to live with their daughter, Minnie, and her husband. Educated in Missouri, Minnie lived a quiet life. Rumalda and Tom's son Charles, however, was shot and killed on June 13, 1887. His wife was the prime suspect in the crime. Tom Boggs died in Clayton in 1894 and Rumalda in 1906.[64] Alexander Hicklin died at his family's Colorado ranch in 1874. Estefana's life after that was marked by tragedy. Their son, Alexander Jr., was murdered in 1878, and she lived out her life "very poor," according to George Thompson.[65] None of Teresina's siblings or their families forged

the same types of business or social connections that she was able to despite the similar advantages of landholdings, education, and the Bent name.

The deaths of George Bent and Teresina Scheurich marked the end of an era for the West's most famous mixed-race family. The decades between the Battle of Summit Springs and the Taos obituary celebrating Teresina's contributions to the culture and history of the region had been marked by struggle, violence, and tragedy on the one hand, and adaptability, financial success, and respectability on the other. Where they lived, who they married, and how "American" the Bent children were mattered a great deal during these years. Simply by living in Indian Territory with Cheyenne spouses and relatives marked George, Robert, and Julia as different in the eyes of many white Americans. To be Indian was, for policymakers and reformers, to be backward and in need of "civilizing." The assimilation program that began in the 1870s and 1880s was designed to break down the fundamental bases of indigenous life and society. George and Robert Bent proved willing agents in this process in order to protect their lands, jobs, and families, yet by doing so they made enemies among their Cheyenne kinfolk. Despite becoming government workers and ranchers and educating their children in American schools, they never attained the wealth, status, or political connections to become respectable citizens. In New Mexico and Colorado different kinds of marriages and work allowed some of the Bent daughters to achieve what George, Robert, and Julia never could. Marrying Anglo husbands who became political and economic leaders in their communities, Mary and Teresina gained stature and middle-class status. Their connections helped their husbands attain the wealth and station that allowed these women to become model Victorian wives and mothers through their education, civic involvement, business savvy, and curation of family history. Not every member of the family was so fortunate, however, and there was plenty of tragedy and heartache in New Mexico and Colorado. By 1920 most Americans would be more comfortable with families like the Scheurichs and Moores than with the Bents of Indian Territory.

Conclusion: Contesting the Memory of the Bent Family

Consider two stories about how people remember Charles Bent's life and death. The first took place in 1910, when a large crowd gathered at a ceremonial unveiling of Bent's official gubernatorial portrait in Santa Fe. The local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution presided over the festivities during which "Fine Addresses Were Delivered" and "patriotic fervor" abounded, the *Santa Fe New Mexican* reported. The "beautiful ritual and responsive readings" of the day sanctified the event. Bent's daughter Teresina looked on as Governor L. Bradford Prince praised her father as a heroic martyr and a friend to all men of goodwill. Because Bent "represented a cause"—the spread of progress and civilization—his death was a tragedy. He was a hero whose memory should be cherished by all New Mexicans.[1] One hundred years later, a young graduate student had a tense exchange with an archivist at the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, also in Santa Fe. The man asked me what I was there to research. "The Bents," I replied. "Oh, Charles Bent," he responded. "We didn't like him, so we scalped him." The archivist then asked me about my interest in looking into the rich Spanish-language collections for information on the Bents, and, somewhat stunned by his response to my topic, I idiotically responded that I was only there to study the "American" part of Bent's story. We never spoke again during my two weeks in the repository, and I fully deserved the cold shoulder. At the time, new to the project and tremendously naïve, I had no idea how controversial the family was in New Mexico. This book is the result, at least in part, of my attempt to make sense of these conflicting accounts.

Historical memory is not an accurate remembrance of past events; rather, it reflects what groups believe or hope is true. Because of this, history must be interpreted. Memory and interpretation can unify peoples and nations, keep other groups at arm's-length, become a tool of cultural and political dominance, or be deployed as a weapon against marginalization and dispossession. Voices, stories, and memories often conflict and collide. Because history can so easily be politicized, its interpretation is often attuned to the social, cultural, and political issues of the day. Both the Left and Right claim to have truth on their side. This is true for those who study the history of the American West. For some people this is a story of violence, dislocation, colonialism, and the marginalization of nonwhite peoples. Others push back; they celebrate the West as a place where heroic men and women settled and tamed a wild continent. Those who hold to the first interpretation lament the naivety of hero-worship, while those clinging to the other view often carp about the "political correctness" of grimmer, bloodier stories and memories.[2]

These accounts are shaped and contested by competing groups and interests. While the public gets much of its knowledge from media, especially film and television, the National Park Service acts as the federal government's most visible purveyor of historical information. At the state and county level, museums, historical societies, chambers of commerce, and heritage groups like the Daughters of the American Revolution mediate historical events for consumption.[3] How history and memory are shaped is also important. Public celebrations—pageants, parades, reenactments, and the erection of monuments and placards—inform and obfuscate. Research agendas and methodologies that inform public history tend to favor the interpretation of the dominant society's values. In the American West this has often meant prioritizing the accounts of white settlers and the United States Army. The sources used in research—government records, military records, and archaeological surveys—can overlook and marginalize the interpretations and memories of other peoples, particularly Native American groups. Even if this is unintentional, it can still be a painful experience.[4]

Public history sources often employ value-laden language that supports the dominant group's interpretations. A prime example of this is the treatment and commemoration of the Indian Wars. Older books, plaques, and markers often talked in terms of "civilization" and "savagery." The United States Army protected "civilization" from the threat of "savagery." If Indians were "savage" and whites "civilized," it was easier to justify the wars as bringing "peace" and "progress" and building

up the nation.[5] Modern attempts to modify the language used on markers and in visitor's centers at National Park Service sites—profoundly important sites of public education—have been controversial. In a quest to produce a more symmetrical account of the violence, Park Service interpreters often overlook or ignore the social, political, economic, and racial contexts that precipitated the violence. Framing the conflicts as a "clash of cultures" passes them off as inevitable and unavoidable. Remembering the wars as a time when both sides committed atrocities and both sides suffered "has perpetuated the persistent belief in American innocence," writes Boyd Cothran, and ignores "the unequivalence of that violence" directed against Native peoples by white settlers and the American state.[6]

But peoples marginalized by dominant historical narratives and memories have used such tools to tell their side of the story. Native communities across the West engage in "memory activism" as a tool of "survival and persistence," writes David W. Grua in his study of the memory politics of the Wounded Knee Massacre. People like George Bent turned their education—a tool of the government's assimilation program—to their own ends to create new accounts of the past. Sometimes aided by white anthropologists, journalists, and historians, and sometimes working on their own, these writers composed letters and books that injected a Native version of events—often quite different from military and settler accounts—into the historical record. Bent was the most famous of these practitioners, but he was hardly the only one. The language these writers used often inverted the traditional pairings of whiteness with civilization, and Indianness with savagery. By using words like "massacre" to describe the events at Sand Creek, Camp Grant, and Wounded Knee, indigenous authors turned these traumas into examples of Anglo-American barbarism.[7]

Museums and cultural centers can also counter dominant memories and narratives. At places like Washita Battlefield National Historic Site in Oklahoma, the place where George Bent's in-law Black Kettle died, the National Park Service has successfully collaborated with the Southern Cheyenne tribe to create a more complicated version of violent conflict. By incorporating oral history, analysis of causation, and private spaces for prayer and religious ceremonies that are off limits to tourists, the two groups have created one of the best examples of public history in the West.[8]

Remembering, memorializing, and interpreting the Bent family demonstrates the complexity of telling historical stories in the West. The

most imposing commemoration of the family's contributions to western history is Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site. After Albert E. Reynolds's family donated the land on which sat the fort's ruins to the La Junta, Colorado, chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the organization oversaw the site from the 1920s until 1954. Although the DAR hoped to restore the post to its former glory—they sponsored design contests and solicited donations from local schoolchildren—they could not raise enough money for the project and so deeded 4.41 acres surrounding the crumbled structure to the state of Colorado for one dollar. Although the state sponsored archaeological surveys of the site, it lacked the necessary funds for a complete restoration and in 1957 began negotiations with the National Park Service to take over ownership of the land. In 1960, President Dwight Eisenhower signed legislation creating Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site over some minor congressional protests that the project wasted taxpayer money and that Colorado was perfectly capable of handling the place. The next pressing question was whether to preserve the ruins or reconstruct the post. Supporters of reconstruction won the debate in 1967. They argued that the historical and archaeological record was thorough enough to allow an accurate reproduction. Besides, tourists would not come simply to gawk at weathered adobe walls. The Gerald Ford administration provided the necessary funds to begin the project in 1974. Reconstruction began on May 27, 1975, and the fort was formally dedicated on July 25, 1976.[9]

Despite the painstaking care that went into the craftsmanship of the adobe bricks, wooden beams, and furnishings, for thirty years the fort's tours and signage lacked interpretive power. Visitors learned about the building itself, got biographies of the partners, and imbibed the lore of the Santa Fe Trail and fur trade. In the early 2000s this began to change. The site's interpreters began telling a more complicated, inclusive story that emphasized the cultural blending that took place at the fort, and the economic and political context within which the Bent brothers and Ceran St. Vrain operated. In recognition of the fort's Hispanic heritage, the National Park Service began celebrating festivals honoring the contributions of the post's Mexican employees.[10] While the Bents are celebrated on the Arkansas River, their story—and historical memory generally—is far more complicated in New Mexico.

Although the state's tourism apparatus celebrates New Mexico as a place that seamlessly blends Anglo, Hispanic, and Native cultures, the reality is that New Mexicans have deep and often antagonistic memories about the past. Public monuments are a flashpoint. One of the state's

most notorious incidents of vandalism happened in February 1998, when someone hacked the foot off a massive bronze equestrian statue of Juan de Oñate, a colonizer notorious for mutilating the male residents of Acoma Pueblo when they resisted Spanish authority. Seven years later there was a controversy over whose statue should represent New Mexico in the United States National Statuary Hall in the Rotunda of the Capitol. The decision to place Po'Pay, the man often credited as the leading figure in the 1680 uprising that temporarily drove the Spanish out of New Mexico, was praised by many Pueblo communities but harshly criticized by some who considered him a butcherer of innocent women and children.[11] During the 2017 festival that celebrated the beginning of Spain's 1692 reconquest of New Mexico, there were demonstrations in Santa Fe and an act of vandalism against monuments in Taos. Someone poured red paint on the foot of a statue of Padre Antonio José Martínez and draped a sign reading "Remember 1680" over a memorial commemorating the Bataan Death March. The incident "served as a timely reminder that . . . old ethnic resentments and violent ideations continue to simmer here in Taos and elsewhere in New Mexico," not just in places like Charlottesville, Virginia, wrote a columnist for the *Taos News*.[12]

Names also have the power to stoke passions in Taos. During a June 10, 2014, meeting, three town councilors voted to change the name of Kit Carson Park to Red Willow Park—"Taos" being the Tiwa word for "place of the red willow." The move, according to one councilman, was designed to make the community more inclusive and welcoming for citizens of Taos Pueblo, some of whom believed Carson was no better than a common murderer. The move caught the town and Pueblo by surprise. Tribal Secretary Ian Chisholm supported the change and saw it as a step toward reconciliation between the town and Pueblo. For many others the change sparked a vigorous backlash. The editorial board of the *Taos News* wondered why there was no discussion prior to the vote. More importantly, the editorial argued, changing the name of a public space did nothing to address more pressing concerns like land and water rights and access to social services. One angry opinion piece said that the change erased the past, denigrated the memory of a patriotic soldier, wasted taxpayer money, and ultimately would not fix a damn thing in Taos. Some historians were also outraged. Marc Simmons, a prolific author and noted Carson biographer, lamented "the dialectic today," saw the proposal as a "great travesty" that "tramples on the truth of history," and blasted the proposal as a manifestation of "the lean toward the extreme left"; he vowed never again to visit Taos if the proposed change stuck. Hampton Sides, the *New York Times* best-selling

author of another Carson book, also disagreed with the decision, but in more measured tones. Faced with such an outpouring of discontent, the town council held a public forum on July 8. After an emotional three-hour meeting they reversed the decision and voted unanimously to form an exploratory committee to investigate a mutually acceptable name for the space. Taos Pueblo elders opposed Red Willow Park because they considered the name tribal property, but they agreed to consult with the committee.[13] Nothing came of the committee, and the park retains its original name today.

The quality of memorials says a great deal about how communities remember their past, and Charles Bent has not fared well in Taos. His chief site of commemoration is the Governor Bent House Museum, a small, privately owned space ostensibly dedicated to telling his life story. Although billed as "perhaps historically the most interesting building in Taos, if not the entire West," it is, like many local history museums across the region, a mishmash of odds and ends—guns, farming implements, and animal oddities, in this case an eight-legged sheep. The highlight of the space is a bricked-over place in the wall that indicates the spot where María Ignacia and the other women dug their escape tunnel in 1847, along with the ladle and spit they were said to have used. The signage is minimal and offers more description than interpretation, telling the story of what happened but not why it happened.[14]

Bent's death and the suppression of the 1847 uprising are still fresh in the community, and local leaders took steps to bring people together to discuss the event. A lecture series emerged out of the ruckus over Kit Carson Park and included an autumn 2015 symposium on the Taos Revolt. The *Taos News* admitted that since the community "can't stop talking about something that happened years ago," perhaps input from professional scholars could bring greater clarity. The program included talks on archaeology, the racialization of Hispanic and Native New Mexicans by Anglo-Americans, and a lecture on the political and cultural roots of the violence. Sylvía Rodríguez, an anthropologist at the University of New Mexico, hoped that the recent controversies could create a teachable moment and help the communities "re-examine their history and think about how it may affect social relations in the present." The comments by Robert Torrez, the former state historian of New Mexico, fit into a long local narrative that portrays Bent and his associates as exploiters of the people and violent imperialists.[15]

Charles Bent's chief rival in Taos, Padre Antonio José Martínez, has fared much better in local memory. The priest's popularity is likely due in part to defensiveness. His reputation has not been favorable outside northern New Mexico. This is the result of literary and historical narratives that place him in an unflattering light. The most famous depiction of Martínez came from Willa Cather's 1927 novel *Death Comes for the Archbishop.* Cather portrays the priest as a gluttonous, tyrannical, abusive, lecherous, ugly, and rebellious character who also masterminded the 1847 violence that killed Bent. Simultaneously, Cather immortalized the priest's chief opponent, Bishop Jean Lamy—fictionalized as Jean Marie Latour—in her book. The two historical figures clashed in the 1850s and 1860s over issues ranging from canon law and clerical discipline to Lamy's attempted eradiation of local Catholic devotional practices. Cather drew from a deep reservoir of anti-Martínez accounts penned by Lamy's associates and allies. Her success, combined with Paul Horgan's 1976 Pulitzer Prize–winning biography *Lamy of Santa Fe: His Life and Times*, solidified this negative version of Martínez with the broader reading public.[16] Since at least the 1950s, New Mexico historians and writers have risen to defend the padre from these characterizations. They pointed out that there is no contemporary evidence linking him to Bent's death and blasted Cather for a range of factual errors and flawed interpretations. In these works, Martínez emerged as a defender of the local community. He was an educator, politician, forward-thinking theologian, and caring pastor. Biographies, literary anthologies, a one-man play in which the priest interrogates Cather's offstage ghost, and even an elementary school comic book attest to the positive ways in which Taos remembers him.[17]

The physical markers commemorating the priest also indicate his standing in the community. Whereas Bent's presence is limited to a small museum tucked away off the plaza, Antonio José Martínez casts a shadow over the town's central plaza. In 2006, the community erected an imposing bronze statue of the man crafted by Huberto Maestas, of San Luis, Colorado.[18] Outside of town, the Hacienda de los Martínez is a crown jewel of the Taos museum system. The reconstructed Spanish Colonial–style adobe buildings occupy the site where the priest's father and brother Pascual lived. The home and property changed hands between the Martínez family and Anglo buyers twice during the twentieth century before finally ending up under the trusteeship of the Kit Carson Memorial Foundation. The hacienda made the National Register

of Historic Places in 1973, and reconstruction efforts began the next year. The project finished in 1983 at the cost of roughly $500,000. Since its dedication it has hosted tens of thousands of tourists and has been favorably reviewed in several national publications.[19] Thus, although commemorated by imposing adobe walls in Colorado, in Taos the Bents have lost the battle of public commemoration. Their memory, like their history, remains complicated and contested.

Notes

Abbreviations

ABP	Alexander Barclay Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California
ARCIA	Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs
BFC	Bent's Fort Collection, HC
BL	Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut
BML	Bizzell Memorial Library, Norman, Oklahoma
BRC	Benjamin M. Read Collection, NMSRCA
CANR	Cheyenne and Arapaho Nation Records, 1860–1930, OHS
CAR	Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation: Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1875–1880, NARA-FW
CC	Chouteau Collection, 1752–1925: Papers of the St. Louis Fur Trade, Part 1, BML
CDSF	Consular Despatches, Santa Fe, 1836–1846, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, BML
COS-LR	Colorado Superintendency, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1861–1880, BML
Cragin Collection	Francis Whittemore Cragin Collection, NMSRCA

CS-LR	Central Superintendency, Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1851–1880, BML and NARA-FW
GBP-DPL	George Bent Papers, Western History Collections, Denver Public Library
GBP-HC	George Bent Papers, HC
GBP-Yale	George Bent Papers, BL
Grinnell Coll.	George Bird Grinnell Collection, Southwest Museum of the American Indian, Los Angeles
HC	History Colorado, Denver
JBSFP	Jaramillo-Bent-Scheurich Family Papers, NMSRCA
KP	Stephen Watts Kearny Papers, MHS
LAB	Ledger and Account Books, 1802–1871: Papers of the St. Louis Fur Trade, part 2, BML
Loretto	Sisters of Loretto, New Mexico Historical Records, Territorial Period, 1852–1912, NMSRCA
LR-War Dept.	Letters Relating to Military Affairs, 1800–1861, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, BML
MANM	Mexican Archives of New Mexico, BML
MHS	Missouri Historical Society Archives, St. Louis
MLGCP	Maxwell Land Grant Company Papers, Center for Southwest Research, Albuquerque, New Mexico
MWC	Mexican War Collection, MHS
NARA-FW	National Archives and Records Administration, Fort Worth
NMS	Records of the New Mexico Superintendency of Indian Affairs, 1849–1880, BML
NMSRCA	New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe
OHS	Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
OR	*Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*
Ritch Papers	William Gillett Ritch Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California
SC	William L. Sublette Collection, MHS
UAA-LR	Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Upper Arkansas Agency, 1855–1874, BML
UPA-LR	Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Upper Platte Agency, 1846–1856, BML

Introduction

1. Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*; Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*; Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers;* Lansing, "Plains Indian Women"; Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women*; Brown, *Strangers in Blood*; Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men*; Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations*; Casas, *Married to a Daughter of the Land*; Chávez-García, *Negotiating Conquest*; Pérez, *Colonial Intimacies*; Craver, *The Impact of Intimacy*; González, *Refusing the Favor*.

2. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*; Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos*. The best overview of the current state of borderlands studies is Hämäläinen and Truett, "On Borderlands."

3. Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*; Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo*; Gonzalez, *Política*.

4. West, *The Way to the West*; West, *The Contested Plains*; Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*; Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism*; Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race*; Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of* Illahee.

5. Hyde, "Hard Choices"; Pérez, *Colonial Intimacies*, 211–41.

6. Hoxie, *A Final Promise*; Adams, *Education for Extinction*; Lomawaima, "Domesticity in the Federal Indian Schools."

7. Graybill, *The White and the Red*; Ahern, "An Experiment Aborted"; Cahill, "Seeking the Incalculable Benefit of a Faithful, Patient Man and Wife"; Cahill, "You Think It Strange That I Can Love an Indian."

8. West, *The Way to the West,* 85–125; Adams and DeLuzio, introduction to *On the Borders of Love and Power*, 9; McGrath, *Illicit Love*, 5.

9. Graybill, *The White and the Red*; Perry, *Colonial Relations*; Pubols, *The Father of All*.

10. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*; Comer, *The Ritual Ground*; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*; Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*; West, *The Contested Plains*.

1 / Into the West

1. Gardner, "Bent's Fort on the Arkansas," 24; A. C. Bent to George Bird Grinnell, December 7, 1909, reel 41, frame 1, and Ralph Emerson Twitchell to Grinnell, March 24, 1913, reel 41, frames 27–28, both in George Bird Grinnell Papers, BML; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 18–20.

2. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 18; Grinnell, "Bent's Old Fort and Its Builders," 29; Sides, *In the Kingdom of Ice*, 45–52.

3. Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, 1:114–19, 127.

4. Kennerly, "Diary of James Kennerly," ed. Wesley, 69; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 31, 43; Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, 1:141–51; Sunder, *Joshua Pilcher*, 34, 40–41, 59.

5. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 43.

6. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 31, 48, 83–87; Sunder, *Joshua Pilcher*, 64–69; Dunham, "Charles Bent," 2:31–33; J. P. Cabanné to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., September 23, 1828, reel 14, frame 826, and Cabanné to Chouteau, October 14, 1828, reel 14, frame 898, both in CC.

7. Sunder, *Joshua Pilcher*, 28.

8. Gardner, "Bent's Fort on the Arkansas," 31–32; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 49; Paul Augustus St. Vrain, *Genealogy of the Family of Delassus and St. Vrain*, "Ceran St. Vrain," 14, 19, History Files 97, NMSRCA.

9. Christian, *Before Lewis and Clark*, 225, 252–53, 263.

10. "St. Vrain Account," August 18, 1824, reel 1, p. 359, LAB; Lavender, *Bent's Fort,* 57.

11. John Jacob Astor to O. N. Bostwick, November 11, 1824, reel 12, frames 301–303, and Astor to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., November 17, 1829, reel 16, frame 62, both in CC.

12. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 59; Weber, *The Taos Trappers*, 81, 93–94; Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, 4.

13. Utley, *A Life Wild and Perilous*, 104; Bernard Pratte and Company Ledger Book D, October 21, 1824, reel 1, p. 399, and Ceran St. Vrain to Bernard Pratte, April 27, 1825, reel 12, p. 537, both in LAB.

14. Ceran St. Vrain to Mother, July 1825, reel 12, frame 600, CC.

15. Utley, *A Life Wild and Perilous*, 108; Gardner, "Bent's Fort on the Arkansas," 45; Weber, *The Taos Trappers*, 91.

16. Utley, *A Life Wild and Perilous*, 104; Weber, *The Taos Trappers*, 156, 159–60.

17. Marshall, "St. Vrain's Expedition," 253–58.

18. Marshall, "St. Vrain's Expedition," 256–57; Weber, *The Taos Trappers*, 121; Utley, *A Life Wild and Perilous*, 105–6.

19. Manuel Martínez to Manuel Armijo, April 7, 1827, reel 6, frame 851, MANM; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 74–75; Weber, *The Taos Trappers*, 169–72; Ceran St. Vrain to Bernard Pratte, September 28, 1828, reel 14, frame 842, CC.

20. St. Vrain to Pratte, September 28, 1828, reel 14, frame 842, and "Statement of the Trappers," September 1, 1828, reel 15, frames 933–934, both in CC; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 76, 78–79, 84.

21. Weber, *The Taos Trappers*, 171–73; "Statement of the Trappers," September 1, 1828, reel 15, frames 935, 937, CC; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 84; Utley, *A Life Wild and Perilous*, 108.

22. "Bill of Purchase," May 6, 1844, box 1, folder 16, Manuel Alvarez Papers, NMSRCA.

23. Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe*, 86; Atherton, "James and Robert Aull," 5; David Waldo to Manuel Alvarez, April 20, 1841, box 1, folder 12, Manuel Alvarez Papers, NMSRCA.

24. Waldo, "Recollections," 73.

25. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 95; Young, *First Military Escort*, 75. The best description of life on the march is Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 23–60.

26. Oliva, *Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail*, 26–27.

27. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 99–102; Philip St. George Cooke, "Journal," July 10–11, 1829, in "Documents Relating to Major Bennett Riley's Escort of the Santa Fe Traders," typescript, 15–16, Bancroft Library, University of California-Berkeley; Waldo, "Recollections," 64, 73; and George Bent to George Hyde, June 27, 1914, box 4, folder 32, GBP-Yale.

28. Young, *First Military Escort*, 89–92, 98–101; Waldo, "Recollections," 73–74; Cooke, "Journal," July 11, 14, 1829, "Documents," 16–18.

29. Santa Fe Company to Riley, July 13, 1829, "Documents," 43–46.

30. Riley to Santa Fe Company, July 14, 1829, "Documents," 47; Waldo, "Recollections," 64; Young, *First Military Escort*, 140–41; Lavender, *Bent's Fort,* 105.

31. Riley to José Antonio Chávez, July 10, 1829, "Documents," 40, 62.

32. Cooke, "Journal," October 11, 13, 1829, "Documents," 30–31; Young, *First Military Escort*, 139–40; Dunham, "Charles Bent," 2:36; Evans, "Eastward Ho!" 252.

33. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 49, 408n7; St. Vrain's Account, April 13, 19, and May 8, 1830, book Q of Bernard Pratte and Company, reel 4, LAB; Dunham, "Ceran St. Vrain," 5:304.

34. St. Vrain to Bernard Pratte, September 14, 1830, reel 16, frames 1068–1069, CC; Charles Bent Passport, September 27, 1830, reel 12, frames 1140–1143, MANM; Dunham, "Charles Bent," 2:37.

35. St. Vrain to Pratte, January 6, 1831, folder 1, Bent-St. Vrain Family Papers, MHS; Dunham, "Ceran St. Vrain," 5:305; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 134.

36. Charles Bent Passport, box 3, folder 108, Ritch Papers; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 134.

37. Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe*, 94; James Aull to Edward Tracy, November 3, 1832, in Aull and Aull, "Letters of James and Robert Aull," ed. Bieber, 279; Barry, *The Beginning of the West*, 215–16, 222; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 144.

38. Dunham, "Charles Bent," 2:39; Aull to Tracy, in Aull and Aull, "Letters of James and Robert Aull," ed. Bieber, 279–80; Gardner, "Bent's Fort on the Arkansas," 59; *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis), July 12, 1833.

39. *Report from the Secretary of War,* 23rd Cong., 2nd Sess., S. Doc. No. 69 at 3.

40. Grinnell, "Bent's Old Fort and Its Builders," 52–54; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 70–71; Bent to Hyde, September 1, 1917, box 4, folder 42, GBP-Yale.

41. Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 80; Field, *Matt Field on the Santa Fe Trail*, 213; Alexander Barclay to George Barclay, December 1845, box 1, ABP; Samuel Wethered to Manuel Alvarez, March 27, 1844, box 1, folder 16, Manuel Alvarez Papers.

42. Customs Receipt for Charles Bent, February 23, 1842, box 5, folder 197, Ritch Papers; Guía Issued to Charles Bent, October 29, 1829, reel 10, frames 370–373, and September 27, 1830, reel 12, frames 1140–1143, both in MANM.

43. Evans, "Eastward Ho!" 249–51; Sandoval, "Gnats, Goods, and Greasers," 22–27; Sandoval, "Montezuma's Merchants," 43; Boyle, *Los Capitalistas*, xi–xiii; Webb, *Adventures in the Santa Fe Trade*, 229–52.

44. Anderson, *The Indian Southwest*, 204–50; Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 18–140; Kavanagh, *The Comanches*, 63–192.

45. Hämäläinen, "The Western Comanche Trade Center," 487–501; Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 70–73.

46. Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 6–19; West, *The Contested Plains*, 68–70; White, "The Winning of the West," 333–34.

47. Jablow, *The Cheyenne in Plains Indian Trade Relations*, 27; West, *The Contested Plains*, 71; James, *An Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1:502–3.

48. Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 21; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 33–34, 42; Jablow, *The Cheyenne in Plains Indian Trade Relations*, 64.

49. Arnold, "William Bent," 6:61–69. The chronology for Bent's arrival on the Arkansas River is hopelessly muddled. His son George claimed that William started trade operations sometime between 1826 and 1829, and these assertions influenced several other scholars. Janet Lecompte, the most careful student of the topic, admits that the timing of his arrival is a mystery and would only give a probable date, 1833 (see Bent to Hyde, May 11, 1917, box 4, folder 41, Bent to Hyde, April 14, 1908, box 1, folder 11, and Bent to Hyde, March 6, 1905, box 1, folder 4, all in GBP-Yale; Lecompte, "Gantt's Fort and Bent's Picket Post," 117–18).

50. Carter, “John Gantt,” 5:101–9; Lecompte, “Gantt’s Fort and Bent’s Picket Post,” 111–17; Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn*, 10–11; John Gantt to El Jefe Político de Nuevo Mexico, February 2, 1832, box 4, folder, 129; Ritch Papers; Cabanné to Chouteau, January 12, 1832, reel 19, frame 360, CC.

51. Arnold, “William Bent,” 6:69; Carter, “John Gantt,” 5:109–10; Lecompte, “Gantt’s Fort and Bent’s Picket Post,” 118–20; Francis Cragin interview with Tom Autobees, November 8, 1907, Notebook 2, p. 68, Cragin Collection.

52. Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 285; Lavender, *Bent’s Fort*, 141–42.

53. Lavender, *Bent’s Fort*, 141–42; Mumey, *Old Forts and Trading Posts of the West*, 9; Thompson, “Life in an Adobe Castle,” 11; Charles Bent to Manuel Alvarez, September 19, 1842, box 2, folder 57, BRC; Wislizenus, *A Journey to the Rocky Mountains*, 141.

54. As with dating Bent’s arrival on the Arkansas, historians have spent much time debating the date of the fort’s construction. George Bent’s dating was inconsistent, ranging from 1827 to 1832. LeRoy Hafen, the dean of fur trade historians, put the date at 1833. There is contemporary evidence to support a construction period between 1832 and 1834 (see Hafen, “When Was Bent’s Fort Built?” 105–19; Bent to Hyde, January 23, 1905, box 1, folder 3, February 26, 1906, box 1, folder 4, and April 14, 1908, box 1, folder 11, all in GBP-Yale; José María Martínez to Santiago Abreu, December 24, 1832, reel 14, frames 620–623, MANM; William Laidlaw to Chouteau, January 10, 1834, reel 20, frame 724, CC).

55. Field, *Matt Field on the Santa Fe Trail*, 143–44; Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, 181; Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, 34–35; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 42–43.

2 / Marriage, Business, and Diplomacy in the Great Plains

1. Thorne, “Marriage Alliance and the Fur Trade,” 21; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 93.

2. Lansing, “Plains Indian Woman,” 415–27; West, *The Way to the West*, 116; Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 19.

3. Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation*, 8–9, 189.

4. Bent to Hyde, November 29, 1912, box 3, folder 18, GBP-Yale; Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, 1:93; Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation*, 178, 319.

5. On Sweet Medicine’s life and teachings, see Stands In Timber and Liberty, *Cheyenne Memories*, 14–44; Powell, *Sweet Medicine*, 1:xxiii, 2, and 2:443.

6. Powell, *Sweet Medicine*, 1:42–43, 52; Bent to Hyde, July 6, 1914, box 4, folder 32, GBP-Yale; Lavender, *Bent’s Fort*, 186.

7. Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, 1:337–40.

8. Bent to Hyde, August 9, 1904, box 1, folder 1, no. 4, GBP-Yale; Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation*, 185–88.

9. Lansing, “Plains Indian Women,” 414.

10. Lansing, “Plains Indian Women,” 415, 425; Monaghan, “Travois Trails and War Songs,” 212–13; Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, 1:156.

11. Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, 1:137–57.

12. Alexander Barclay to George Barclay, May 1, 1840, box 1, ABP.

13. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 165, 416; Ford, “A Summer upon the Prairie,” 303; Hilger, *Arapaho Child Life*, 196–97.

14. Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, 1:91; West, *The Way to the West*, 108; Boggs, “W. M. Boggs Manuscript about Bent’s Fort,” 48.

15. Wood, Hunt, and Williams, *Fort Clark and Its Indian Neighbors*, 113; Eggan, "Cheyenne-Arapaho Kinship," 49, 58.

16. Abert, *Examination of New Mexico,* 8; Abert, *Western America in 1846–1847*, 21; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 35.

17. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 39; Alexander Barclay to George Barclay, March 10, 1840, box 1, ABP; Grinnell, "Bent's Old Fort and Its Builders," 58.

18. Thorne, "Marriage and Alliance in the Fur Trade," 19–20; Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation*, 186.

19. Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 42; Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation*, 187; Carter, "Marcellin St. Vrain," 3:274–75; Bent to Hyde, October 12, 1917, box 4, folder 41, GBP-Yale.

20. Abert, *Examination of New Mexico,* 9; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 45, 64.

21. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 154; Gardner, "Where the Buffalo Was Plenty," 24.

22. Grinnell, "Bent's Old Fort and Its Builders," 58; Bent to Hyde, May 19, 1914, box 3, folder 31, GBP-Yale; Boggs, "W. M. Boggs Manuscript about Bent's Fort," 67.

23. Bent to Hyde, December 17, 1913, box 3, folder 26, GBP-Yale; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 48, 50; Boggs, "Boggs Narrative," 49, BL.

24. Boggs, "Boggs Narrative," 55, BL.

25. Gardner, "Where the Buffalo Was Plenty," 23; Ford, "A Summer upon the Prairie," 298.

26. Boggs, "Boggs Narrative," 53, BL; Bent to Hyde, April 17, 1905, box 1, folder 18, GBP-DPL; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 67; Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, 1:216; Gardner, "Where the Buffalo Was Plenty," 24.

27. Beyreis, "If You Had Fought Bravely I Would Have Sung for You: The Changing Role of Cheyenne Women during Nineteenth-Century Plains Warfare," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 69 (Spring 2019): 12–13, 17–19.

28. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 157; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 35, 60; Boggs, "Boggs Narrative," 54, BL.

29. April 16 and July 21, 24, 1839, Ledger DD, 76–89, Fur Trade Ledgers, MHS.

30. Alexander Barclay to George Barclay, May 1, 1840, box 1, ABP; Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, 37.

31. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 160, 165; George Bent to Francis W. Cragin, October 5, 1905, box 1, folder 4, GBP-DPL.

32. Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, 37–38.

33. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 181–82; Grinnell, "Bent's Old Fort and Its Builders," 55; Alexander Barclay to George Barclay, March 12, 1841, box 1, ABP.

34. Olson, "Furnishing a Frontier Outpost," 166; Andrew Sublette to William L. Sublette, April 18, 1844, box 4, folder 1, SC.

35. Gardner, "Where the Buffalo Was Plenty," 23, 28–29; Alexander Barclay to George Barclay, May 1, 1840, box 1, ABP.

36. J. F. A. Sanford to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., June 1, 1839, reel 26, frame 463, CC; *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis), June 12 and July 3, 1840.

37. "Skin Sales," July 22, 1842, Journal EE, 246, Fur Trade Ledgers, MHS; Charles Bent to Manuel Alvarez, April 30, 1841, box 2, folder 53, BRC; William L. Sublette to William Drummond Stewart, June 16, 1841, folder 1, William Drummond Stewart Papers, MHS; *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis), June 12, 1841.

38. Bent to Alvarez, February 15, 1843, box 2, folder 61, BRC; Cooke, "A Journal of the Santa Fe Trail," 86.

39. Boggs, "W. M. Boggs Manuscript about Bent's Fort," 51; Solomon P. Sublette to William L. Sublette, May 5, 1844, box 4, folder 1, SC; Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn*, 132.

40. Bent to Alvarez, January 16 or 17, 1846, box 1, folder 1, BRC.

41. For other entrepreneurs in the robe trade, see Simeon Turley to Jesse Turley, April 18, 1843, folder 1, Turley Family Papers, MHS; Alexander Barclay, "Diary," March 22, 1846, box 1, ABP.

42. McGinniss, *Counting Coup and Cutting Horses*, 22, 66; Boggs, "Boggs Narrative," 57, BL; Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, 2:6.

43. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 48; Frémont, *Memoirs of My Life*, 181; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 69.

44. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 48–53; Bent to Hyde, February 6, 1905, box 1, folder 9, GBP-DPL; Bent to Hyde, December 18, 1913, box 3, folder 27, GBP-Yale; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 69.

45. Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 34–35.

46. Bent to Hyde, October 22, 1908, box 3, folder 12, GBP-Yale.

47. Dodge, "Journal," 140–41; Ford, "A Summer upon the Plains," 298–99.

48. Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 43–59; Bent to Hyde, June 2, 1914, box 3, folder 31, GBP-Yale.

49. Bent to Hyde, February 15, 1912, box 3, folder 16, and June 5, 1914, box 3, folder 31, both in GBP-Yale; DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts*, 80–83; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 60–66; Flores, "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy," 483; West, *The Way to the West,* 62.

50. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 168; Bent to Hyde, March 19, 1906, box 3, folder 7, GBP-Yale; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 71.

51. *Bent, St. Vrain and Company,* 28th Cong., 2nd Sess., H.R. Rep. No. 194 at 1–9.

52. Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, 36–37; Alexander Barclay to George Barclay, March 12, 1841, box 1, ABP. Ned Blackhawk's work, the most thorough study of the Utes during this period, does not mention this incident. It is possible that the Utes Barclay mentioned in 1841 came to Bent's Fort in response to an overture by the company, or on their own initiative to trade or make peace.

53. The encounter, if it happened, probably took place around 1830. See Bent to Hyde, March 6, 1905, box 3, folder 4, GBP-Yale; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 42–43, 46. Anthropologist Thomas Kavanagh called the event "probably only semihistorical" in his study of the Comanches (see Kavanagh, *The Comanches*, 216).

54. Dodge, "Journal," 145; Lecompte, "Bent, St. Vrain and Company among the Comanche and Kiowa," 274–75, 278–79; Hämäläinen, "The Western Comanche Trade Center," 512.

55. Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, 35–36; Smith, "The E. Willard Smith Journal," 163; Alexander Barclay to George Barclay, March 3, 1840, box 1, ABP.

56. Alexander Barclay to George Barclay, March 12, 1841, box 1, ABP; Lecompte, "Bent, St. Vrain, and Company among the Comanche and Kiowa," 280.

57. Comer, *Ritual Ground*, 94; Bent to Cragin, October 5, 1905, box 1, folder 4, GBP-DPL.

58. Lecompte, "Bent, St. Vrain, and Company among the Comanche and Kiowa," 281–82; W. D. Hodgkiss to Andrew Drips, March 25, 1843, box 1, Andrew Drips Papers, MHS.

59. Lecompte, "Bent, St. Vrain and Company among the Comanche and Kiowa," 282–91.

60. Newton, "Native Place, Environment, and Trade Fort Concentration," 240–49; Hafen, "Early Fur Trade Posts on the South Platte," 334.

61. Hafen, "Henry Fraeb," 3:131–35; Wickman, "Peter A. Sarpy," 4:283–87.

62. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 193; Newton, "Native Place, Environment, and Trade Fort Concentration," 252-54; Abel Baker, Jr. to Sarpy and Fraeb, April 1, 1839, reel 26, frame 43, CC.

63. Kennerly, *Persimmon Hill*, 178–79; Comer, *Ritual Ground*, 96; Dunham, "Ceran St. Vrain," 5:308.

64. Agreement Between Bent, St. Vrain, and Company and the Sioux Outfit, July 27, 1838, reel 25, frame 731, CC.

65. Frederick Laboue to P. D. Papin, December 15, 1838, reel 25, frame 1010–11, CC; Comer, *Ritual Ground*, 203; Gardner, "Where the Buffalo Was Plenty," 28; Gitlin, *Bourgeois Frontier*, 115–16. For examples of company sales and purchases in St. Louis, see account book entries for July, August, October 1839, book EE, reel 9, frames 236, 246, 259, 308, Fur Trade Ledgers, MHS.

66. Hafen, "Early Fur Trade Posts of the South Platte," 335, 340–41; Bent to Hyde, April 14, 1906, box 3, folder 11, and June 27, 1912, box 3, folder 18, both in GBP-Yale; Grinnell, "Bent's Old Fort and Its Builders," 42.

67. Carter, "Marcellin St. Vrain," 3:273–77; Bent to Hyde, June 27, 1912, box 3, folder 18, GBP-Yale; Frémont, *Report of the Exploring Expedition*, 31–32.

68. Newton, "Native Place, Environment, and Trade Fort Concentration," 251, 253; Solomon P. Sublette to William L. Sublette, May 5, 1844, box 4, folder 1, and Solomon P. Sublette to William L. Sublette, June 6, 1844, box 4, folder 2, both in SC.

3 / Marriage, Business, and Diplomacy in New Mexico

1. González, *Refusing the Favor*, 74–75; Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*, 128, 132, 140; Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo*, 140–41; Pubols, *The Father of All*, 51–52; Adams and DeLuzio, introduction to *On the Borders of Love and Power*, 9.

2. Pubols, *The Father of All*, 58, 82–83; Mora, *Border Dilemmas*, 39, 43; Casas, *Married to a Daughter of the Land*, 54; Craver, *Impact of Intimacy*, 39, 45.

3. Craver, *Impact of Intimacy*, 11, 22.

4. Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 181; Boggs, "Boggs Narrative," 36, BL.

5. Simmons, *Kit Carson and His Three Wives*, 65; Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away*, 186–87; Porter, *Their Lives, Their Wills*, 107–8.

6. Lecompte, "Independent Women of Hispanic New Mexico," 19–31; Land Conveyance of María Petra Montoya to María Ignacia Jaramillo, June 3, 1834, box 1, folder 1; Land Conveyance of José Gabriel Martínez to María Ignacia Jaramillo, May 7, 1840, box 1, folder 2; Land Conveyance of José del Carmen Maestas to María Ignacia Jaramillo, January 15, 1841, box 1, folder 3; Land Conveyance of Pedro Barcela to María Ignacia Jaramillo, March 12, 1841, box 1, folder 4, all in JBSFP.

7. Simmons, *Kit Carson and His Three Wives*, 57–58; Craver, *Impact of Intimacy*, 21–22; Weber, ed., *Arms, Indians, and the Mismanagement of New Mexico*, xvi; "Elfego Jaramillo," February 5, 1837; "Estefana Jaramillo," August 4, 1839; "María Teresa Jaramillo," October 26, 1841, all in *Taos Baptisms: Baptismal Database Management of*

the Archives Held by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe and the State Archives of New Mexico, advanced printing, June 22, 1999, database entry by Thomas J. Martínez, NMSRCA.

8. Simmons, *Kit Carson and His Three Wives*, 59–60, 64–65; Porter, *Their Lives, Their Wills*, 50; Craver, *Impact of Intimacy*, 4; Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*, 81–87.

9. Weber, *On the Edge of Empire*, 65; Charles Bent to Manuel Alvarez, February 23, 1845, box 2, folder 66, BRC; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 435–36n3; Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo*, 89.

10. Simmons, *Kit Carson and His Three Wives*, 40; Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn*, 72.

11. Interview with Albert Tison, March 14–15, 1908, Wagon Mound, New Mexico, Notebook 12, p. 4, Cragin Collection; Simmons, *Kit Carson and His Three Wives*, 40, 43, 64.

12. Weber, "Stephen Louis Lee," 3:181–86.

13. Murphy, "Charles Beaubien," 6:23–31; Chávez, "New Names in New Mexico," 296; Craver, *Impact of Intimacy*, 38; Gitlin, *Bourgeois Frontier*, 120.

14. Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 34–35; Weber, *On the Edge of Empire*, 17–79.

15. Chávez, *But Time and Chance*, 13–77.

16. Weber, "From Hell Itself," 115; Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo*, 145; Gonzales, *Política*, 52–55, 68, 80–83.

17. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 242–66; Lecompte, *Rebellion in Río Arriba*, 3–75.

18. Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*, 186.

19. Juan Felipe Ortíz to Manuel Armijo, December 19, 1837, box 2, folder 60, Donaciano Vigil Collection, NMSRCA.

20. Charles Bent, Josiah Gregg, William Workman, et al. to Albino Peréz, August 12, 1837, reel 23, frames 409–410, MANM.

21. Binkley, "New Mexico and the Texas-Santa Fe Expedition," 85–107; Loomis, *The Texan-Santa Fe Pioneers*, 6–7; Chávez, "The Trouble with Texans," 133–44; Reséndez, "An Expedition and Its Many Tales," 121–50.

22. Bent to Alvarez, January 16, 1841, box 1, folder 44, and January 20, 1841, box 1, folder 45, both in BRC.

23. Guadalupe Miranda to Manuel Alvarez, September 14, 1841, CDSF.

24. Binkley, *The Expansionist Movement in Texas*, 62–64; Weber, "William Workman," 7:386–87; Manuel Alvarez to Daniel Webster, February 2, 1842, CDSF; Thomas Rowland to Manuel Alvarez, October 26, 1841, box 5, folder 262, BRC; Simeon Turley to Jesse Turley, April 18, 1841, folder 1, Turley Family Papers, MHS.

25. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 217; Alvarez to Webster, February 2, 1842, CDSF.

26. Bent to Alvarez, February 19, 1841, box 1, folder 47, BRC.

27. Chávez, "The Trouble with Texans," 134–35; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 210; Reeve, "The Charles Bent Papers," 311n13; Twitchell, *The History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico*, 208.

28. Weber, "Stephen Louis Lee," 3:183–84; Bent to Alvarez, January 16, 1841, box 1, folder 44, and February 20–25, box 1, folder 48, both in BRC.

29. Bent to Alvarez, February 20–25, box 1, folder 48, BRC.

30. Bent to Alvarez, March 22, 1841, box 2, folder 51, BRC.

31. Myers, "Banditti on the Santa Fe Trail," 282–92; Hardeman, "Charles A. Warfield," 7:353–57; W. D. Hodgkiss to Andrew Drips, March 25, 1843, box 1, Andrew Drips Papers, MHS.

32. Minge, "Frontier Problems in New Mexico," 140–41; Weber, "Stephen Louis Lee," 3:185.

33. Bent to Alvarez, April 20, 1843, and Alvarez to Secretary of State, July 1, 1843, both in CDSF; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 233–34; Todd, "Antonio Montero," 2:261–63.

34. Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*, 94, 117, 120, 123, 130; Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 124–25, 149–56.

35. Bent to Alvarez, March 22, 1841, box 2, folder 51, BRC.

36. Andrew Sublette to William L. Sublette, April 18, 1844, box 4, folder 1, and Solomon P. Sublette to William L. Sublette, October 20, 1844, box 4, folder 3, both in SC; Boggs, "The W. M. Boggs Manuscript about Bent's Fort," 57–58; José Serafin Ramírez y Casanoba, Certificate of Customs Receipt, December 26, 1844, box 5, folder 256, BRC.

37. Bent to Alvarez, November 12, 1844, box 2, folder 63, BRC.

38. Manuel Armijo to Secretary of War, February 4, 1840, qtd. in Loyola, "The American Occupation of New Mexico," 65–66.

39. Francisco García Condé to Governor, September 20, 1845, box 1, folder 7, BFC.

40. Bent to Alvarez, January 16, 1841, box 1, folder 44, BRC; Governor to Charles Bent and Charles Beaubien, April 20, 1844, Document 6647, "Charles Beaubien," History File 81, NMSRCA.

41. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 115, 120; DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts*, 59, 145–47, 193; Tyler, "Mexican Indian Policy in New Mexico," 114–15; Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*, 208–57; DeLay, "Blood Talk," 229–56; Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*, 119–44, 176–84; Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 229.

42. Nidever, *The Life and Adventures of George Nidever*, 18; Bent to Hyde, January 6, 1912, box 3, folder 16, GBP-Yale; Boggs, "Boggs Narrative," 17, BL; Abert, *Examination of New Mexico,* 526–27; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 108.

43. Weber, "American Westward Expansion," 117–32.

44. Antonio José Martínez to Antonio Lopéz de Santa Anna, November 28, 1843, in *Condition of the Indian Tribes*, 359–62.

45. Hobbs, *Wild Life in the Far West*, 48–49; George Bent to Francis W. Cragin, December 4, 1905, box 5 F(I), folder 72, Francis W. Cragin Collection, Starsmore Center for Local History, Colorado Springs. All other citations from Cragin's work reference the typescript copies of his notebooks at the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives in Santa Fe.

46. Bent to Alvarez, October 11, 1839, Manuel Alvarez to Guadalupe Miranda, December 4, 1839, and Manuel Armijo to Manuel Alvarez, December 6, 1839, all in CDSF; Bent to Alvarez, February 23, 1845, box 2, folder 66, BRC.

47. Bent to Alvarez, February 26, 1846, box 2, folder 74; Bent to Alvarez, March 4, 1846, box 2, folder 77, and April 8, 1846, box 2, folder 82, all in BRC.

48. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 68; Hobbs, *Wild Life in the Far West*, 49–50; "María Guadalupe Jaramillo," January 9, 1843, *Taos Baptisms*, NMSRCA; "María Soledad Bent," March 24, 1845, reel 21, frame 765, Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, NMSRCA.

49. Minge, "Frontier Problems in New Mexico," 65–68; Bent to Alvarez, January 16, 1841, box 1, folder 44; January 30, 1841, box 1, folder 46; February 20–25, 1841, box 1, folder 48; March 15, 1841, box 1, folder 50; March 22, 1841, box 1, folder 51; March 29, 1841, box 2, folder 52; April 30, 1841, box 2, folder 53, all in BRC.

50. Van Ness, "Hispanic Land Grants," 159, 188–91; Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 182–95; Stoller, "Grants of Desperation, Lands of Speculation," 25–27.

51. Ebright, “New Mexican Land Grants,” 22; Westphall, *Mercedes Reales*, 36.

52. Westphall, *Mercedes Reales*, xvi; Ebright, “New Mexican Land Grants,” 22, 26; Ebright, *Land Grants and Lawsuits*, 67.

53. Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*, 81, 130; Montoya, *Translating Property*, 31–33; Murphy, “The Beaubien and Miranda Land Grant,” 29–31.

54. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 218–19.

55. Murphy, “The Beaubien and Miranda Land Grant,” 32; Rodríguez, “Land, Water, and Ethnic Identity in Taos,” 333–34; Ebright, “New Mexico Land Grants,” 22.

56. Murphy, “The Beaubien and Miranda Land Grant,” 32–33.

57. Donaciano Vigil to Guadalupe Miranda, May 31, 1844, box 2, folder 94, Donaciano Vigil Collection, NMSRCA; Charles Beaubien, Stephen L. Lee, George Gold, and Horace Long to Governor, June 8, 1844, Document 7698, “Charles Beaubien,” History Files” 81, NMSRCA.

58. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 246, 432n11; Ebright, “New Mexican Land Grants,” 26; Murphy, “The Beaubien and Miranda Grant,” 33; Westphall, *Mercedes Reales*, 46; “Contract between Charles Beaubien, Charles Bent, and Guadalupe Mirada with D. D. Mitchell, Benjamin Walker, Dunham Spaulding, Thomas B. Hudson, and Joab Houghton,” box 8342, folder 13, JBSFP.

59. “Title and Description,” Las Animas Grant, Document 129, box 1, folder 23; Testimony of Christopher Carson, July 28, 1857, Document 0137, p. 14, box 1, folder 30, and Testimony of William A. Bransford, August 27, 1857, Document 0137, pp. 15–16, box 1, folder 30, all in William Blackmore Land Records, NMSRCA.

60. Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn*, 17; “Contract between Bent Heirs and George W. Thompson,” March 17, 1890, box 8342, folder 51; JBSFP; Westphall, *Mercedes Reales*, 53, 55–56; Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*, 231.

61. Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 44–45; Weber, *On the Edge of Empire*, 74–75; Bent to Alvarez, December 25, 1842, box 2, folder 60, BRC.

62. Bent to Alvarez, February 26, 1846, box 2, folder 74, and March 4, 1846, box 2, folder 77, both in BRC.

63. Bent to Alvarez, March 26, 1846, box 2, folder 80, and April 8, 1846, box 2, folder 82, both in BRC; Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 45–46.

64. Bent to Alvarez, April 18, 1846, box 2, folder 84, BRC.

65. Bent to Alvarez, May 3, 1846, box 2, folders 86–88. During the day Bent wrote three letters to Alvarez, adding new details as they came in.

66. Secretary of Government to Prefect of the Northern District, May 5, 1846, reel 41, frames 196–197, MANM; Manuel Alvarez to Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid, May 6, 1846, reel 1, frames 557–558, Manuel Alvarez Papers, NMSRCA.

67. José María Martínez to Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid, May 11, 1846, reel 41, frames 160–168, MANM; Minge, “Frontier Problems in New Mexico,” 312–13.

4 / Collapse

1. Charles Bent to Manuel Alvarez, January 24, 1845, box 2, folder 65; February 24, 1846, box 2, folder 73, both in BRC; Webb, *Adventures in the Santa Fe Trade*, 118.

2. Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 127; William Marcy to George T. Howard, May 13, 1846, reel 26, LR-War Dept.

3. Dawson, *Doniphan's Epic March*, 28–102.

4. Gibson, *Journal of a Soldier*, 168; Magoffin, *Down the Santa Fe Trail*, 66–67.

5. Gibson, *Journal of a Soldier*, 167–68; Magoffin, *Down the Santa Fe Trail*, 59; Connelley, *War with Mexico*, 178–79; George Bent to George Hyde, February 26, 1906, box 3, folder 4, GBP-Yale. For six months in 1846 the army stored thirty-three thousand pounds of pork, eighty-nine thousand pounds of flour, twelve thousand pounds of coffee, and nineteen thousand pounds of sugar at the fort (see Quartermaster Commissary to Richard B. Lee, August 11, 1846, and William E. Prince to Assistant Commissary of Subsistence, August 26, 1846, William E. Prince Letterbooks, BL).

6. "Proclamation to the Citizens of New Mexico," July 31, 1846, Letterbook, pp. 45–46; Stephen Watts Kearny to Manuel Armijo, August 1, 1846, Letterbook, pp. 46–47, and Kearny to Adjutant General, August 1, 1846, Letterbook, p. 47, KP.

7. Turner, *Journals of Henry Smith Turner*, ed. Clarke, 67; Gibson, *Journal of a Soldier*, 180.

8. Gibson, *Journal of a Soldier*, 186–88, 195; Turner, *Journals of Henry Smith Turner*, ed. Clarke, 70–71; Johnston, *Marching with the Army of the West*, 96, 98; Marcellus Ball Edwards to Joseph Edwards, August 23, 1846, box 1, MWC.

9. Kearny to John E. Wool, August 22, 1846, Letterbook, p. 51, KP.

10. Speech of Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid, August 19, 1846, in Weber, ed., *Foreigners in Their Native Land*, 128–29.

11. Tyler, "Governor Armijo's Moment of Truth," 307–12; Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*, 241, 244.

12. Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 56–57.

13. Manuel Alvarez to James Buchanan, September 4, 1846, CDSF; Marcy to Kearny, May 27, 1846, reel 26, LR-War Dept.

14. "List of Civil Appointments," September 22, 1846, Letterbook, pp. 61–62, KP; Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe*, 350–51.

15. Christian Cribben to Unknown, September 26, 1846, typescript pp. 25–27, box 1, MWC.

16. Letter of Jeremy Gilmer, qtd. in Smith and Judah, eds., *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 127; Ruxton, *Adventures in Mexico and the Rocky Mountains*, 189, 197; Cribben to Unknown, October 20, 1846, typescript, pp. 29–30, box 1, MWC.

17. Charles Bent to Alexander W. Doniphan, December 18, 1846, vol. 65, p. 78; Bent to Edwin V. Sumner, October 20, 1846, vol. 65, p. 57; Bent to Stephen Watts Kearny, October 20, 1846, vol. 65, p. 60, Arrott Fort Union Collection, Thomas C. Donnelley Library Special Collections and Archives, New Mexico Highlands University, Las Vegas, New Mexico.

18. Bent to Alexander Doniphan, October 9, 1846, vol. 65, p. 53, and Bent to Thomas Hart Benton, November 3, 1846, vol. 65, p. 65, both in Arrott Fort Union Collection.

19. Elliott, *Mexican War Correspondence*, 133, 135; Connelley, *War with Mexico*, 511; M. F. Sena to Ralph Emerson Twitchell, n.d., box 8474, folder 173, Ralph Emerson Twitchell Collection, NMSRCA.

20. Twitchell, *A History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico*, 122–23; Myra Ellen Jenkins, "Rebellion against American Occupation of New Mexico," 20, box 6, folder 148, Dorothy Woodward Collection, NMSRCA; Connelley, *War with Mexico*, 512–13.

21. Bent to Buchanan, December 26, 1846, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., H.R. Ex. Doc. No. 70 at 17; Elliott, *War Correspondence*, 135; Simmons, *Little Lion of the Southwest*, 98.

22. Bent to Sterling Price, December 25, 1846, vol. 65, p. 79, and December 29, 1846, vol. 65, p. 81, both in Arrott Fort Union Collection; Bent to Buchanan, December 25, 1846, 17–18; Shalhope, *Sterling Price*, 60–61.

23. Abert, *Examination of New Mexico*, 512–13; Hobbs, *Wild Life*, 138–39.

24. "Proclamation to the Inhabitants of the Territory of New Mexico," January 5, 1847, box 13694, folder 5, Ina Sizer Cassidy Collection, NMSRCA.

25. Elliott, *Mexican War Correspondence*, 139; Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe*, 386; Mora, *Border Dilemmas*, 52.

26. "Account of Teresina Bent Scheurich," box 8342, folder 13, JBSFP; Grinnell, "Notes on Bent's Fort," MS 5, folder 32–2, Grinnell Coll.; Bloom, ed., "Bourke on the Southwest," 51.

27. "Account of Teresina Bent Scheurich," JBSFP; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 176; Boggs, "The W. M. Boggs Manuscript about Bent's Fort," 59.

28. Simmons, *Kit Carson and His Three Wives*, 73–74; "Account of Teresina Bent Scheurich," JBSFP; Boggs, "Boggs Narrative," 40, BL; Bloom, ed., "Bourke on the Southwest," 52.

29. Price to Adjutant General, February 15, 1847, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., H.R. Ex. Doc. No. 1 at 520; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 176-77; Francis W. Cragin Interview with María de la Luz Lujan, December 21, 1907, Gillette, New Mexico, Notebook 11, pp. 35–36, Cragin Collection.

30. Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 177; Cragin interview with Eliza Ann Walker, December 4, 1907, Trinidad, Colorado, Notebook 11, p. 1, Cragin Collection; Murphy, *Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell*, 71.

31. Simmons, *Kit Carson and His Three Wives*, 73; Craver, *The Impact of Intimacy*, 43–45; Conard, *"Uncle Dick" Wootton*, 176; Mora, *Border Dilemmas*, 52–53; Gonzalez, *Política*, 128.

32. Hafen, "John D. Albert," 2:23–25; Carter, "Tom Tobin," 4:361–62; Lecompte, "William LeBlanc," 5:171–72; Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe*, 392; Twitchell, *A History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico*, 136, 138; J. R. Hendley to Price, January 23, 1847, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., H.R. Ex. Doc. No. 1 at 531; Donaciano Vigil to James Buchanan, February 16, 1847, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., H.R. Ex. Doc. No. 1 at 18.

33. Hafen, "John D. Albert," 2:25; Hafen, "Louy Simmonds," 5:318; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 117–23, 143.

34. *Santa Fe Republican*, August 31, 1848; Conard, *"Uncle Dick" Wootton*, 161–62; Twitchell, *A History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico*, 128–33; Price to Adjutant General, February 15, 1847, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Ex. Doc. No. 1 at 522–23.

35. *Santa Fe Republican*, August 31, 1848; Price to Adjutant General, February 15, 1847, 523–25.

36. Conard, *"Uncle Dick" Wootton*, 182–84; Simmons, *Kit Carson and His Three Wives*, 74; *St. Louis Daily Union*, April 1, 1847; Price to Adjutant General, February 15, 1847, 525.

37. *St. Louis Daily Era*, March 9, 1847; Ruxton, *Adventures in Mexico and the Rocky Mountains*, 192; Donaciano Vigil, "Circular," January 22, 1847, 22; Vigil, "Circular," January 25, 1847, 20–21; Vigil to Buchanan, February 16, 1847, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Ex. Doc. No. 1 at 19.

38. Alvarez to Buchanan, February 9, 1846, CDSF; Bent to Alvarez, January 17 or 18, 1847, box 2, folder 1, Manuel Alvarez Papers, NMSRCA.

39. Santiago Valdez, *Biographia de Antonio José Martínez*, "Antonio José Martínez," History Files 91, NMSRCA; Luís Martínez, "The Taos Massacre," 4, box 7, folder 154, Dorothy Woodward Collection, NMSCRA.

40. Waldo, "Recollections of a Septuagenarian," 63; Ruxton, *Adventures in Mexico and the Rocky Mountains*, 201; Elliott, *Mexican War Correspondence*, 139–40; Cragin interview with Juan Estevan, April 24, 1908, Taos, New Mexico, Notebook 12, p. 13, and interview with Severino Martínez, March 27, 1908, Black Lake, New Mexico, Notebook 12, p. 23, both in Cragin Collection.

41. Vigil, "Circular," February 12, 1847, 23–24; Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*, 257.

42. *United States v. Trujillo*, March 1847, United States District Court of New Mexico Territory, First Judicial District, "1847 Treason Trials," History Files 166, NMSRCA.

43. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 316; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 172.

44. Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 172–73, 182.

45. Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 190, 196–98; Antonio José Martínez to Sterling Price, April 12, 1847, box 13694, folder 5, Ina Sizer Cassidy Collection, NMSRCA; Crutchfield, *Tragedy at Taos*, 177–78.

46. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 334; Dunham, "Ceran St. Vrain," 5:313; *Santa Fe Republican*, November 20 and 27, 1847.

47. Dorcas Bent Carr to Silas Bent, December 26, 1848, box 1, William C. Carr Papers, MHS; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 322.

48. Hafen, "Tom Fitzpatrick and the First Indian Agency," 56; Thomas Fitzpatrick to James W. Abert, August 23, 1847, and Fitzpatrick to William Madill, August 11, 1847, reel 889, UPA-LR; Kearny, *Report of a Summer Campaign,* 212.

49. Hafen, "Tom Fitzpatrick and the First Indian Agency," 56; Chalfant, *Dangerous Passage*, 24–25; Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 108–9; Abert, *Examination of New Mexico,* 422; Fitzpatrick to Thomas Harvey, October 19, 1847, and Fitzpatrick to Thomas Waggoner, February 13, 1847, both in reel 889, UPA-LR.

50. Hafen, "Tom Fitzpatrick and the First Indian Agency," 55–56; Fitzpatrick to Harvey, October 19, 1847, reel 889, UPA-LR.

51. Fitzpatrick to Madill, August 11, 1848, reel 889, UPA-LR; Hafen, "Tom Fitzpatrick and the First Indian Agency," 56–57.

52. De Voto, *The Year of Decision*, 251; Wyman, "The Military Phase," 415; D. D. Mitchell to Madill, June 1, 1849, reel 889, UPA-LR.

53. Fitzpatrick to Harvey, December 18, 1847, and Fitzpatrick to Madill, August 11, 1848, both in reel 889, UPA-LR.

54. Barry, *The Beginning of the West*, 589; Wislizenus, *Memoir of a Tour to Northern Mexico*, 10; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 15.

55. *St. Louis Reveille*, June 15, 1847; Chalfant, *Dangerous Passage*, 158–60.

56. M. L. Baker to M. D. Baker Martin, July 27, 1847, box 1, MWC; Alexander Barclay, "Diary," August 7 and 24, 1847, and September 20, 1847, box 1, all in ABP.

57. Fitzpatrick to Harvey, October 19, 1847, and December 18, 1847, both in reel 889, UPA-LR.

58. Fitzpatrick to Harvey, October 19, 1847, reel 889, UPA-LR; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 320–21.

59. Chalfant, *Dangerous Passage*, 48–53, 166–69, 186–95, 237–20; Oliva, *Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail*, 80–81, 92; Fitzpatrick to Harvey, December 18, 1847, and Fitzpatrick to Mitchell, March 22, 1849, all in reel 889, UPA-LR; Fitzpatrick to Harvey, October 10, 1848, *ARCIA 1848,* 472.

60. Flores, "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy," 470, 480–81; Sweeney, "Thirsting for War, Hungering for Peace," 71–77.

61. Hämäläinen, "The First Phase," 103–7; Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 294–95; Flores, "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy," 483.

62. Alexander Barclay to George Barclay, October14, 1838, June 19, 1845, and December 1845, all in box 1, ABP.

63. Conard, *"Uncle Dick" Wootton*, 86.

64. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison*, 119; Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 101; George Bent to George Bird Grinnell, November 18, 1908, MS5 F-122b, Grinnell Coll.

65. Powers and Leiker, "Cholera among the Plains Indians," 319–21, 326–27, 330–31; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 96–97; George Bent to George Hyde, October 6, 1916, box 4, folder 39, GBP-Yale.

66. Bent to Hyde, April 3, 1915, box 4, folder 36; October 17, 1916, box 4, folder 39; March 29, 1917, box 4, folder 41, all in GBP-Yale; Mooney, *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians*, 289.

67. Mooney, *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians*, 289–90.

68. Bent to Hyde, March 16, 1915, box 4, folder 36, GBP-Yale.

69. Bent to Hyde, October 17, 1916, box 4, folder 39, GBP-Yale.

70. Bent to Hyde, February 10, 1915, box 4, folder 35, GBP-Yale; Hyde to Grinnell, February 9, 1916, MS 5, folder 51-B, and October 12, 1916, MS 5, folder 51-C, both in Grinnell Coll.

71. Bent to Hyde, October 26, 1916, box 4, folder 39, GBP-Yale; Stands In Timber and Liberty, *A Cheyenne Voice*, 343; Powers and Leiker, "Cholera among the Plains Indians," 335–36; Comer, *Ritual Ground*, 226.

72. Bent to Hyde, February 19, 1913, box 3, folder 20, GBP-Yale.

73. Dorcas Bent Carr to Silas Bent, December 26, 1848, box 1, William C. Carr Papers, MHS; Carter, "George Bent," 4:39–42.

74. Arnold, "William Bent," 6:75; Clarke, *Stephen Watts Kearny*, 109; Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 306.

75. *Petition of Bent, St. Vrain and Company,* 29th Cong., 2nd Sess., S. Doc. No. 115 at 1–3; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 244.

76. Taylor, "Charles Bent Has Built a Fort," 82–84; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 327, 335; Bent to Hyde, February 26, 1906, box 3, folder 4, GBP-Yale.

77. *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis), October 2, 1849; James C. Calhoun to William Madill, October 5, 1849, qtd. in Calhoun, *Correspondence of James S. Calhoun*, ed. Abel, 42.

78. Arnold, "William Bent," 6:78; Moore, "The Archaeology of Bent's Old Fort," 125, 219.

5 / Fifty-Niners, Freighters, and Schoolchildren

1. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 39, 56–58, 62.

2. Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 39–63; Ball, *Army Regulars on the Western Frontier*, xii–xix, 13–18; Dunlay, *Kit Carson and the Indians*, 152, 155, 159, 182.

3. Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 119–23.

4. D. D. Mitchell to Lea, October 25, 63–64, and Fitzpatrick to Lea, November 24, 1851, both in *ARCIA 1851*, 74.

5. Chittenden and Richardson, *Life, Letters, and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet*, 2:679; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 57–58. Halaas and Masich paint a dramatic scene that cannot be definitely verified. There is no direct evidence that De Smet baptized the Bent children. The priest said he baptized hundreds of Indians at Fort Laramie, and the Bents might have been among them. George never mentioned the incident. The young man did not get his ears pierced in 1851, but the portrayal of a vigorous spousal disagreement is conjectural.

6. Emory, *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance*, 13; George Bent to George Hyde, February 4, 1913, box 3, folder 20, GBP-Yale.

7. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 339–40; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 94.

8. Bent to Hyde, April 10, 1905, box 1, folder 17, GBP-DPL.

9. Milligan, *James F. Milligan*, ed. Stegmaier and Miller, 156, 163, 170.

10. Milligan, *James F. Milligan*, ed. Stegmaier and Miller, 152–53, 157, 159, 161, 163–64.

11. Milligan, *James F. Milligan*, ed. Stegmaier and Miller, 158; Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, 1:154; Llewellyn and Hoebel, *The Cheyenne Way*, 181, 190.

12. Milligan, *James F. Milligan*, ed. Stegmaier and Miller, 157, 160–61, 164, 178.

13. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 73; Llewellyn and Hoebel, *The Cheyenne Way*, 185.

14. West, *The Contested Plains*, 260; Spence, *The Expeditions of John C. Fremont*, 421; Bent to Hyde, April 25, 1906, box 1, folder 36, GBP-DPL.

15. Hyde, "Hard Choices," 97; Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 273; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah*, 177.

16. Milligan, *James F. Milligan*, ed. Stegmaier and Miller, 172; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 70–71; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 348.

17. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 72–73.

18. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 77–80; Bent to Hyde, September 1, 1917, box 4, folder 42, GBP-Yale.

19. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 80; Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 348.

20. David Meriwether to George W. Manypenny, September 1, 1854, *ARCIA 1854*, 169.

21. John Grenier to William C. Lane, December 31, 1852, reel 547, NMS; Milligan, *James F. Milligan*, ed. Stegmaier and Miller, 143.

22. Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn*, 237–53; Brooks, *Captives and Cousins*, 302–3; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 146–48.

23. Kenner, *New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*, 108–10; William Bent to Meriwether, February 15, 1854, Meriwether to Bent, March 11, 1854, and Meriwether to Manypenny, March 15, 1854, all in reel 547, NMS.

24. Kenner, *New Mexican-Plains Indian Relations*, 110–12; Meriwether to Manypenny, September 1, 1854, *ARCIA 1854*, 175; Meriwether to Manypenny, October 25, 1854, and John W. Whitefield to Meriwether, September 29, 1854, all in reel 547, NMS; Whitefield to Alfred Cumming, September 27, 1854, *ARCIA 1854*, 92–93; Dunlay, *Kit Carson and the Indians*, 192–93.

25. Manypenny to Whitefield, July 3, 1856, reel 878, frames 122–23, and Robert C. Miller to Cumming, July 20, 1857, reel 878, frame 144, both in UAA-LR.

26. Whitefield to Cumming, August 1, 1855, reel 878, frames 16–17, UAA-LR.

27. Chalfant, *Cheyennes and Horse Soldiers*, 61–131, 192–223.

28. Robert C. Miller to John Haverty, October 14, 1857, *ARCIA 1857*, 145–48;Contract between William Bent and Robert C. Miller, July 20, 1857, reel 878, frames 145–146, UAA-LR.

29. William Bent to Haverty, December 11, 1857, reel 878, frames 209–210, UAA-LR.

30. Miller to A. M. Robinson, August 17, 1858, *ARCIA 1858*, 98–100; Bent to Robinson, August 4, 1858, reel 878, frames 260–261, and Robinson to Charles E. Mix, August 4, 1858, reel 878, frame 259, both in UAA-LR.

31. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 105; Fitzpatrick to Cumming, November 19, 1853, *ARCIA 1853*, 126; West, *The Contested Plains*, 99–112.

32. Lavender, *Bent's Fort*, 359, 361; *Missouri Democrat* (St. Louis), September 8, 1858, and *Journal of Commerce* (Kansas City), July 30, September 7, and October 16, 1858, qtd. in *Colorado Gold Rush*, ed. Hafen, 26, 41, 43–44, 90.

33. Bent to Charles Meeks, October 20, 1858, reel 878, frame 192, UAA-LR.

34. Bent to Robinson, November 25, 1858, reel 878, frames 310–311, and December 17, 1858, reel 878, frame 315, both in UAA-LR.

35. Robinson to Mix, May 2, 1859, reel 878, frame 324, UAA-LR; Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 146.

36. Robinson to Mix, May 14, 1859, reel 56, frame 894; Robert Bent to Robinson, May 14, 1859, reel 56, frame 914, and "Abstract of Bids for Transportation of Annuity Goods, 1859–1860," reel 56, frame 917, all in CS-LR.

37. Bent to Robinson, July 23, 1859, reel 878, frames 333–335, and Bent to Robinson, August 1, 1859, reel 878, frames 338–339, UAA-LR.

38. Bent to Superintendent of Indian Affairs, October 5, 1859, *ARCIA 1859*, 139. Someone cleaned up Bent's grammar and syntax for the assessment he related to Washington. The language is clearly not his. In his July letter to Robinson, Bent apologized for his poor writing. Robinson "must excuse my bad spelling as I have bin so long in the wild . . . I have almost forgotten how to spell" (see Bent to Robinson, July 23, 1859, reel 878, frame 335, UAA-LR).

39. Bent to Superintendent of Indian Affairs, October 5, 1859, *ARCIA 1859*, 138–39; Bent to Robinson, November 28, 1859, reel 878, frames 310–311, UAA-LR.

40. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families*, 410, 421; West, *The Contested Plains*, 258.

41. Simmons, *Kit Carson and His Three Wives*, 99–100.

42. Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*, 2:618; Murphy, *Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell*, 4–13, 29–70; Murphy, "Rayado," 37; Pancoast, *A Quaker Forty-Niner*, 208–9.

43. Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*, 2:632–33.

44. Murphy, "Rayado," 43, 47–49, 51–52; Murphy, *Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell*, 105, 108, 110, 122–25.

45. Simmons, *Kit Carson and His Three Wives*, 105; "Catholic Annals of Kansas City in the Nineteenth Century," reel 2, Loretto; "Mother Magdalena Hayden's Early Annals," reel 1, Loretto.

46. Butler, *Across God's Frontiers*, 33–34, 38–39, 161, 268, 299, 306.

47. Advertisement for Our Lady of Light, reel 2, Loretto.

48. Russell, *Land of Enchantment*, 43, 45–46, 51; Ruth Fish, "Teresina Bent Scheurich Links Fighters and Builders Era," *El Crepusculo* (Taos), July 6, 1952, box 1, folder 15, JBSFP.

6 / The Road to Sand Creek

1. Adams and DeLuzio, introduction to *On the Borders of Love and Power,* 4; Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism*, 4–5, 7.

2. Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism*, viii, 1, 6; Brosnan, *Uniting Mountain and Plain*, 3, 40–41.

3. West, *The Way to the West*, 99; Graybill, *The Red and the White*, 83; Brosnan, *Uniting Mountain and Plain*, 41.

4. West, *The Contested Plains*, 190, 246; Hyde, "Hard Choices," 111.

5. West, *The Contested Plains*, 215–25, 273–78; Robert Campbell to A. B. Greenwood, June 22, 1860, reel 56, frame 1164, August 3, 1860, reel 56, frame 1173, and August 3, 1860, reel 56, frame 1175, all in CS-LR.

6. Francis Cragin, "Notes," Notebook 20, p. 5, and Cragin interview with Fred Fleshman, August 18, 1907, Colorado Springs, CO, Notebook 3, p. 39, both in Cragin Collection; Lubers, "William Bent's Family," 21-22.

7. William Bent to Robinson, January 3, 1860, reel 878, frames 437–438, February 27, 1860, reel 878, frames 441–442, and Bent to Greenwood, March 17, 1860, reel 878, frames 369–373, all in UAA-LR.

8. John Sedgwick to D. R. Jones, July 24, 1860, in *Relations with the Indians of the Plains*, ed. Hafen and Hafen, 208–9; Chalfant, *Cheyennes and Horse Soldiers*, 283.

9. Bent to Robinson, January 3, 1860, reel 878, frame 438, UAA-LR.

10. Edwin Sumner to John Sedgwick, July 6, 1860, 257–58; Sedgwick to Assistant Adjutant General, August 11, 1860, 262–63; all in *Relations with the Indians of the Plains,* ed. Hafen and Hafen; Mumey, *Old Forts and Trading Posts*, 174–76, 217.

11. Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 148–49.

12. Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 149–50.

13. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 101–3; Treaty of Fort Wise, in *Relations with the Indians of the Plains*, ed. Hafen and Hafen 298–99.

14. West, *The Contested Plains*, 194.

15. Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation*, 198.

16. West, *The Contested Plains*, 197–200, 234–35.

17. Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 86; Elbridge Gerry to Commissioners to the Northern Arapahos and Cheyennes, September 22, 1863, *ARCIA 1863*, 130.

18. Nelson, "Death in the Distance," 35–37; Ball, "Liberty, Empire, and Civil War," 69.

19. Schulten, "The Civil War and the Origin of Colorado Territory," 22, 39, 45; John Chivington to John Schofield, September 12, 1863, *OR,* ser. 1, vol. 22, pt. 2, p. 528.

20. *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), August 21, 1861; William Gilpin to William P. Dole, October 8, 1861, reel 197, COS-LR.

21. Ball, "Liberty, Empire, and the Civil War," 68; George Bent to George Hyde, April 17, 1905, box 3, folder 4, GBP-Yale.

22. Masich, *Civil War in the Southwest Borderlands*, 50–54, 87–111; Nelson, "Death in the Distance," 33–48.

23. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 82–90.

24. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 90–91; Bent to Hyde, February 26, 1906, box 3, folder 7, and April 25, 1918, box 4, folder 44 L2, both in GBP-Yale.

25. Good surveys of the spring fighting are found in Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 174–87; Hoig, *Sand Creek Massacre*, 36–53; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 123–36; and Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 131–36, 142. Military reports of these engagements include Chivington to Evans, April 15, 1864, 166–67, and George Eayre to Chivington, April 18, 1864, 218–19, in *OR,* ser. 1, vol. 34, pt. 3.

26. Hoig, *Sand Creek Massacre*, 58–59; Burkey, "The Site of the Murder of the Hungate Family," 140; Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 148; "Statement of Robert North," June 15, 1864, reel 197, COS-LR.

27. J. S. Brown, D. C. Corbin, and Thomas J. Darran to J. S. Maynard, June 13, 1864, *OR,* ser. 1, vol. 34, pt. 4, pp. 354–55.

28. Sarah Hively Journal, June 12, 1864, Western History Collections, Denver Public Library; Burkey, "The Site of the Murder of the Hungate Family," 141.

29. Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 81, 84–85, 96; Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 15, 17.

30. Sarah Hively Journal, June 14, 1864, DPL; Nathaniel Hill to Sister, June 15, 1864, "Nathaniel P. Hill Inspects Colorado," 246.

31. Roberts, "Sand Creek," 255; *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), August 18, 24, 1864; George K. Otis to Dole, August 31, 1864, *ARCIA 1864*, 254; D. H. Nichols to Chivington, October 11, 1864, *OR,* ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 3, pp. 798–99. On the long history of settlers publicly displaying bodies to incite anti-Indian sentiment, see Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 76–77.

32. William Bent, "Statement of William Bent," in *Condition of the Indian Tribes,* 93–94; Roberts, "Sand Creek," 241; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 119–21.

33. Evans to Colley, June 29, 1864, reel 197, COS-LR; Colley to James Doolittle, March 7, 1865, in *Condition of the Indian Tribes,* 27.

34. Bent, "Statement," in *Condition of the Indian Tribes,* 94; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 133; Bent to Hyde, April 30, 1906, box 3, folder 8, GBP-Yale.

35. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 122, 125; Bent to Colley, August 7, 1864, *OR,* ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 2, p. 735.

36. *Rocky Mountain News*, August 24, 1864; Bent to Hyde, April 12, 1906, box 3, folder 8, and January 18, 1906, box 3, folder 6, both in GBP-Yale; Maynard to Wynkoop, May 16, 1864, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 3, p. 630; B. S. Henning to Charlot, December 7, 1864, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 4, pp. 796–97.

37. John M. Chivington, "Testimony of John M. Chivington," in *Massacre of Cheyenne Indians,* 106; Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 16.

38. Cheyenne Chiefs to Samuel Colley, August 29, 1864, *ARCIA 1864*, 377; Colley to Evans, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 3, pp. 195–96.

39. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 142; Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation*, 192.

40. Kraft, *Ned Wynkoop and the Lonely Road from Sand Creek*, 108–15.

41. *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), September 29, 1864; Kraft, *Ned Wynkoop and the Lonely Road from Sand Creek*, 121–23.

42. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 146; Roberts, "Sand Creek," 397–400; Kraft, *Ned Wynkoop and the Lonely Road from Sand Creek*, 126.

43. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 147; Roberts, "Sand Creek," 402–6; Bent to Hyde, April 25, 1906, box 1, folder 36, GBP-DPL; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 139.

44. Bent to Hyde, March 15, 1905, box 3, folder 8, GBP-Yale; Roberts and Halaas, "Written in Blood," 25, 29; Robert Bent, "Statement of Robert Bent," in *Condition of the Indian Tribes,* 95–96.

45. Bent to Hyde, March 15, 1905, box 3, folder 4, GBP-Yale.

46. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 152-56; Bent to Samuel F. Tappan, February 23, 1889, box 1, folder 9, Samuel F. Tappan Collection, HC.

47. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 156; Bent to Hyde, March 19, 1905, box 1, folder 15, GBP-DPL.

48. Halaas, "All the Camp Was Weeping," 14–15; Silas Soule to Edward Wynkoop, December 14, 1865, in Roberts and Halaas, "Written in Blood," 26; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 159.

49. Bent to Hyde, December 21, 1905, box 3, folder 6, GBP-Yale.

50. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 158; Bent to Hyde, December 21, 1905, box 3, folder 6, GBP-Yale.

51. Report of Scott Anthony, December 1, 1864, 951–52; Chivington to Samuel Curtis, December 16, 1864, 949; Theodore Cree to George Shoup, December 6, 1864, 959, all in *OR,* ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1. The archaeological records indicates otherwise, showing that Sand Creek was more massacre than battle (see Scott, "Reassessing the Meaning of Artifact Patterning," 140, 147; and Levine, "Commentary," 113–15).

52. *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), December 7, 13, 1864.

53. *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), December 22, 29, 1864; Deposition of Simeon Whitely, July 27, 1865, in *Condition of the Indian Tribes,* 71.

54. The ideas about women, home, violation, and civilization figured prominently in the discussions and rationalizations of Indian wars across North America. For a sampling outside of Colorado, see Lepore, *The Name of War*; Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*; Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn*; and Alonso, *Thread of Blood*.

55. Leavitt Brown to George Shoup, November 30, 1864, *OR,* ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1, p. 957; Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre,* 15; Chivington to Curtis, November 29, 1864, *OR,* ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1, pp. 948–50; "Testimony of John M. Chivington," April 26, 1865, in *Massacre of Cheyenne Indians,* 104; *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), December 30, 1864; Deposition of Caleb S. Bierstelt, July 27, 1865, in *Condition of the Indian Tribes,* 72.

56. Chivington, "Testimony of John M. Chivington," April 26, 1865, in *Massacre of Cheyenne Indians,* 104; Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 25. The ideas of collective Indian guilt and the connection between wars and settler identity are illustrated in Griffin, *American Leviathan*; Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*; Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn*; Madley, *An American Genocide*; and Lindsay, *Murder State*.

57. Moore, *The Cheyenne Nation*, 197–204.

58. R. R. Livingston to John Pratt, February 5, 1865, p. 41, and Thomas Moonlight to Charlot, January 11, 1865, pp. 490–91, both in *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 48, pt. 1; "Report of Lieutenant Judson J. Kennedy," January 16, 1865, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 48, pt. 2, p. 42; Bent to Hyde, May 3, 1906, box 1, folder 38, GBP-DPL.

59. Bent to Hyde, September 21, 1905, box 3, folder 5; May 4, 1906, box 3, folder 8, all in GBP-Yale; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 181.

60. Haack, "This Must Have Been a Grand Sight," 6–17; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 168–75; Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 301–2.

61. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 170, 173; Bent to Hyde, April 24, 1905, box 3, folder 5, GBP-Yale; Ware, *The Indian War of 1864*, 362, 377–78.

62. Calloway, "Neither White nor Red," 43–53, 62–66.

63. A useful short account of the military maneuvers is Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 304–10, 322–32. The most detailed accounts are David E. Wagner's *Patrick Connor's War* and *Powder River Odyssey*.

64. Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 198–200; Holman, "The Niobrara and Virginia City Wagon Road," 308, 311, and Grenville Dodge to John Pope, September 15, 1865, 50–51, both in *Powder River Campaigns,* ed. Hafen and Hafen; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 232; Bent to Hyde, September 21, 1905, box 3, folder 5, GBP-Yale.

65. Dodge to Pope, September 15, 1865, in *Powder River Campaigns*, ed. Hafen and Hafen, 51; Miles, *Personal Recollections and Observations of General Nelson A. Miles*, 140–41.

66. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 186–87, 191; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 227; Bent to Hyde, May 16, 1906, box 3, folder 9, GBP-Yale; Wagner, *Patrick Connor's War*, 109–12; "H. E. Palmer's Account of the Connor Expedition," in *Powder River Campaigns*, ed. Hafen and Hafen, 118; Patrick Connor to Dodge, August 19, 1865, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 48, pt. 1, p. 358.

67. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 199–201, 203; *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), December 1, 1865; Davis, "A Stage Ride to Colorado," 143–45. The treaty referred to is the Little Arkansas Treaty discussed in chapter 7.

7 / War, Diplomacy, and Land Grants

1. West, "Reconstructing Race," 109–19; Richardson, *West from Appomattox*, 5, 74–77.

2. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 310–15, 337.

3. William Bent, "Statement of William Bent," in *Condition of the Indian Tribes,* 94–95.

4. Christopher Carson, "Statement of Kit Carson," in *Condition of the Indian Tribes,* 96-97; James Doolittle to William Seward and Edwin Stanton, July 19, 1865, *OR,* ser. 1, vol. 48, pt. 2, p. 1094.

5. John B. Sanborn and Commissioners to James Harlan, October 16, 1865, 516, and Sanborn to W. R. Irwin, October 16, 1865, 518–22, both in *ARCIA 1865*.

6. Roberts, "Sand Creek," 564–65; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 236; Chalfant, *Hancock's War*, 37.

7. Ellis, ed., "Bent, Carson, and the Indians in 1865," 61–68.

8. Ellis, ed., "Bent, Carson, and the Indians in 1865," 61; Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 243; Dunlay, *Kit Carson and the Indians*, 375.

9. William Bent to Thomas Murphy, November 21, 1865, reel 879, frames 147–48, and Bent to Hiram Dyer, January 19, 1866, reel 879, frames 435, 437, both in UAA-LR.

10. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 208–10; Edward Wynkoop to D. N. Cooley, April 8, 1866, reel 879, frame 720, and Murphy to Cooley, May 2, 1866, reel 879, frame 502, both in UAA-LR.

11. *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), March 19, 1866, emphasis in the original.

12. George Bent to George Hyde, August 1, 1913, box 3, folder 23, GBP-Yale; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 210–11.

13. Bent to Cooley, May 29, 1866, reel 879, frames 232, 235, UAA-LR.

14. Bent to Harlan, June 4, 1866, reel 879, frame 238, and Bent to Cooley, June 9, 1866, reel 879, frame 242, UAA-LR.

15. Chalfant, *Hancock's War*, 46–47; Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 184; W. R. Irwin to Cooley, September 26, 1866, reel 879, frames 458–462, UAA-LR.

16. Taylor to Murphy, September 30, 1866, 280–81, and Murphy to Cooley, October 6, 1866, 246, both in *ARCIA 1866*; Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 263–64.

17. Irwin to Lewis V. Bogy, November 3, 1866, reel 879, frame 472, UAA-LR; Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 263–64.

18. John Thompson to Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of the Upper Arkansas, December 21, 1866, reel 879, frames 1036–1038, UAA-LR; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 214.

19. Irwin to Bogy, November 3, 1866, reel 879, frame 468, UAA-LR; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 214–15; Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 265; Chalfant, *Hancock's War*, 58.

20. Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 111–19; Chalfant, *Hancock's War*, 61–69, 87.

21. Chalfant, *Hancock's War*, 88–235, 275–389, 431–63; Kraft, *Ned Wynkoop and the Lonely Road from Sand Creek*, 178–94; Bent to Hyde, June 9, 1905, folder 2, no. 15, GBP-HC; Edward Wynkoop to Murphy, September 14, 1867, *ARCIA 1867*, 314, and Murphy to Charles E. Mix, November 14, 1867, 292, both in *ARCIA 1867*; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 276; Murphy to Taylor, May 13, 1867, reel 879, frame 926, UAA-LR; Jesse Leavenworth to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 2, 1867, *ARCIA 1867*, 314.

22. Winfield Scott Hancock to William Tecumseh Sherman, June 27, 1867, in *Difficulties with Indian Tribes,* 62; Bell, *New Tracks in North America*, 53–54; Geatley, "Account of Journey to Santa Fe, 1867," reel 2, Loretto; Davis, "A Summer on the Plains," qtd. in Cozzens, ed., *Conquering the Southern Plains,* 49.

23. Davis, "A Summer on the Plains," qtd. in Cozzens, ed., *Conquering the Southern Plains*, 49; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 247–48; Lubers, "William Bent's Family," 21.

24. Lubers, "William Bent's Family," 19; Francis W. Cragin, "Notes," Notebook 2, pp. 62–63; Cragin interview with Fred Fleshman, August 18, 1907, Colorado Springs, Colorado, Notebook 3, pp. 38–39; *Denver Field & Farm*, August 25, 1900, Notebook 8, pp. 43–44, all in Cragin Collection.

25. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 260–62; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 243–44; Chalfant, *Hancock's War*, 176, 198.

26. Graybill, *The Red and the White*, 75–78; Cragin interview with Fleshman, August 18, 1907, Colorado Springs, Colorado, Notebook 3, pp. 34–35, 37, Cragin Collection; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 268, 404n4.

27. Chalfant, *Hancock's War*, 463–69; Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 185–86; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 130–32.

28. Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 260–63; Bent to Hyde, December 17, 1913, box 3, folder 26, GBP-Yale.

29. Jones, *The Treaty of Medicine Lodge*, 81–82, 138–39, 170; Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 202.

30. Godfrey, "The Medicine Lodge Treaty, Sixty Years Ago," qtd. in Cozzens, ed., *Conquering the Southern Plains*, 72; Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 196; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 233; Bent to Hyde, July 8, 1905, folder 2, no. 16, GBP-HC.

31. Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 196; *Daily Missouri Democrat* (St. Louis), October 25, 1867, qtd. in Cozzens, ed., *Conquering the Southern Plains*, 93.

32. Jones, *Treaty of Medicine Lodge*, 172–82.

33. Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 211–13.

34. Bent to Hyde, May 20, 1913, box 3, folder 22, GBP-Yale; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 243–44.

35. Bent to Hyde, July 6, 1914, box 4, folder 32, GBP-Yale; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 245, 398n3.

36. Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 214; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 286–88.

37. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 286–90; Hutton, *Phil Sheridan's Army*, 38. Reports of Cheyenne atrocities, especially the assaults on white women during these raids, might not be as straightforward as they appeared in contemporary accounts. Works that rely extensively on the depredations claims filed by settlers with the United States government can be unreliable. Gary Clayton Anderson's analysis of unpublished military correspondence indicates that at least some of the assaults attributed to the Cheyennes were the work of American outlaws (see Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 146; and Anderson, *Ethnic Cleansing and the Indian*, 259–60).

38. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 290; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 252–55; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 143–44.

39. Bent to Hyde, December 17, 1913, box 3, folder 26, GBP-Yale; Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, 41–42; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 255; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 291.

40. Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, 53–68; Greene, *Washita*, 61–138; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 313–22.

41. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 259–61.

42. Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 333–34, 340; Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, 110–11; Utley, *Frontier Regulars*, 157–58.

43. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 268–69; William Bent Estate Distribution Documents for George and Robert Bent, July 26, 1869, box 1, folder 18, BFC.

44. Montoya, *Translating Property*, 47, 50, 53–55, 63, 74, 78; Murphy, *Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell*, 152–67, 191–200.

45. Cragin, "Notes," Notebook 3, p. 53, Cragin Collection; Steinel, *A History of Agriculture in Colorado*, 21; Rusling, *Across America*, 83.

46. Cragin, "Notes," Notebook 4, pp. 46–47, Cragin Collection; Beshoar, *Hippocrates in a Red Vest*, 107; Conard, *"Uncle Dick" Wootton*, 365.

47. "Dictation of Thomas O. Boggs," typescript, pp. 1–3, box 7, Biography Files, HC; Gutiérrez, "Out from the Shadow of Giants," 10.

48. Hurd, *Boggsville*, 4; Pickrell, "Borderlands Identities and National Formation of the American West," 85–87.

49. *History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado*, 834–35; Hurd, *Boggsville*, 10.

50. *History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado*, 880–81; Scott, "John W. Prowers," 183–86; John W. Prowers Account Book, 1869, box 1, folder 19, BFC; Hurd, *Boggsville*, 18–19, 65; Church, "Homesteads on the Purgatoire," 61, 96, 296–97.

51. Pickrell, "Borderlands Identities and National Formation of the American West," 88, 133–34.

52. Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*, 655n20; Aloys Scheurich Discharge Papers, January 5, 1858, box 1, folder 20; Aloys Scheurich Naturalization Papers, January 5, 1861, box 1, folder 22; Aloys Scheurich and Teresina Bent Marriage Certificate, May 31, 1868, box 1, folder 23; Partnership Papers of Aloys Scheurich, Adolph Gutman, and Julius Friedman, March 26, 1863, box 1, folder 26, all in JBSFP.

53. Myres, ed., *Cavalry Wife*, 105.

54. Ruth G. Fish, "Teresina Bent Scheurich Links Fighters and Builders Era," *El Crepusculo* (Taos), July 6, 1952, box 1, folder 15, and "Historic Items Tell of Gracious Living," *El Crepusculo*, October 23, 1952, box 1, folder 15, both in JBSFP.

55. Carter, *"Dear Old Kit"*, 172; Simmons, *Kit Carson and His Three Wives*, 129.

56. Simmons, *Kit Carson and His Three Wives*, 144–45; Estergreen, *Kit Carson*, 274–75; Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*, 2:799–800; Gutiérrez, "Out from the Shadow of Giants," 11; Aloys Scheurich to William Lessig, September 1, 1869, Thomas O. Boggs to William Lessig, June 15, 1869, box 1, folder 25, both in Vigil and St. Vrain Land Grant—Trinidad Town Site Papers, Land Grants Collection, HC.

8 / Reservations, Ranches, and Respectability

1. Edward Wynkoop to Thomas Murphy, February 1, 1868, reel 880, UAA-LR; Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 355; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 353–55; Brinton Darlington to Enoch Hoag, June 10, 1871, reel 881, and John Miles to Hoag, August 6, 1872, reel 881, both in UAA-LR. The agency records from this point on come from the Fort Worth regional branch of the National Archives and Records Administration. This microfilm did not include frame numbers. Agency records in all previous chapters were accessed from the collections at the Bizzell Memorial Library at the University of Oklahoma and include both reel and frame numbers.

2. Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 338–39; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 312–13; J. M. Haworth to E. P. Smith, September 1, 1874, *ARCIA 1874*, 220; Miles to Smith, September 30, 1874, *ARCIA 1874*, 233–34, 236.

3. Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army*, 248–54, 261; Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 339–40; Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 364; Miles to Smith, September 30, 1875, *ARCIA 1875*, 268–69, 271.

4. Graybill, *The Red and the White*, 244. The term "cultural ambidexterity" comes from Graybill's study of the Clarke family of Montana. The Clarke children, who had a white father and Blackfoot mother, were culturally agile and adaptable. They approved of the government's reservation allotment policies and forged strong ties with the local white business community, yet they also provided support for vulnerable tribespeople and one son held a seat on the tribal business council. George Bent's influence on the reservation was widely recognized and sometimes resented by his Cheyenne kinsfolk. His brother-in-law, Edmund Guerrier, performed similar work in the 1870s (see Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 270, 298–99, 311; Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes*, 389; and Darlington to Hoag, January 6, 1872, Reel 881, UAA-LR).

5. Miles to William Nicholson, August 31, 1876, *ARCIA 1876*, 46; Nicholson to J. Q. Smith, June 20, 1876, reel 121, CAR; Bent to Miles, November 4, 10, 15, 17, 26, 1876, and December 20, 1877, all in George Bent Family File, 1876–1924, CANR; Berthrong, *The*

Cheyenne and Arapaho Ordeal, 11; Miles to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 31, 1879, *ARCIA 1879*, 58.

6. Miles to Hoag, September 1, 1873, *ARCIA 1872*, 220; Marshal E. C. Lefebvre to Miles, May 5, 1874, reel 882, UAA-LR.

7. Bent to Miles, May 6, 1874, Miles to Smith, June 23, 1874, and October 29, 1874, all in reel 882, UAA-LR; Miles to Nicholson, March 28, 1877, reel 122, CAR; Miles to Nicholson, August 31, 1877, *ARCIA 1877*, 82. Bent had better luck apprehending Cheyennes who stole American horses (see Miles to Smith, January 3, 1875, reel 610, CS-LR).

8. A. C. Williams to Philip McCusker, May 26, 1877, reel 123, CAR; W. M. D. Lee and Albert E. Reynolds to Miles, October 27, 1873, reel 881, UAA-LR.

9. McCusker to E.A. Hayt, March 3, 1878, reel 123, CAR; Scamehorn, *Albert Eugene Reynolds*, 48, 60; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 304.

10. White, *The Republic for Which It Stands*, 117; West, "Reconstructing Race," 113, 117–19; Hämäläinen, "Reconstructing the Great Plains," 481, 487, 490.

11. Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 211; Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 17–29, 43, 85, 90, 112.

12. Berthrong, *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Ordeal*, 58–62, 234, 243, 255; Miles to Nicholson, August 31, 1877, *ARCIA 1877*, 83–84; Miles to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 1, 1881, *ARCIA 1881*, 67; J. M. Lee to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 31, 1886, *ARCIA 1886*, 119.

13. Berthrong, *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Ordeal*, 122; Miles to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 31, 1878, *ARCIA 1878*, 56; Charles F. Ashley to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 27, 1889, *ARCIA 1889*, 184–85, 187; D. B. Dyer to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 9, 1884, *ARCIA 1884*, 76; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 311.

14. Berthrong, *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Ordeal*, 92–93, 96, 99–100, 108–9, 113; Lee to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 31, 1886, *ARCIA 1886*, 114. In the aftermath of the leasing controversy George became embroiled in another land issue. He lost his agency job after he tried to help a consortium of white businessmen negotiate land deals with the Cheyennes without government permission. His drinking and financial distress likely played a role in his decision to join the fraud, and his popularity continued to decline in some quarters of the reservation (see Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 315–26).

15. Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 212–15.

16. G. D. Williams to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 22, 1887, *ARCIA 1887*, 74; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 326; Berthrong, *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Ordeal*, 165–68, 181–82; Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 269. George had experience helping the agent count heads during periodic reservation censuses, see Reservation Census, June 1, 1877, reel 122, CAR.

17. Utley, *The Indian Frontier*, 215–219; Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 15–16, 149.

18. "What Little Ones Think about the Fourth of July in Philadelphia," *School News* 2, no. 2 (July 1881), http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/publications/school-news-vol-2-no-2; "A Nine Year Old Girl's Letter to a Teacher," *School News* 2, no. 5 (October 1881), http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/publications/school-news-vol-2-no-2; "Description of Historical Record of Student" and "Readmission Form," Julia Bent Student File, http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/student_files/julia-bent-student-file.

19. Berthrong, *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Ordeal*, 225–26; Dyer to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 22, 1885, *ARCIA 1885*, 78; Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 153,

224–33; Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 128; Lomawaima, "Domesticity in the Federal Indian Schools," 229.

20. Ahern, "An Experiment Aborted," 268–69; Dyer to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 9, 1884, *ARCIA 1884*, 76. In 1885 Dyer complained that Carlisle alumni on the reservation were doing little work (see Dyer to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 22, 1885, *ARCIA 1885*, 78).

21. Ahern, "An Experiment Aborted," 266–67, 273–74, 285–86; Cahill, "'Seeking the Incalculable Benefit of a Faithful, Patient Man and Wife,'" 75, 78–79; Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 260.

22. Ahern, "An Experiment Aborted," 278, 285–86.

23. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 212, 278; Dyer to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 9, 1884, *ARCIA 1884*, 71–72; Ashley to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 28, 1890, *ARCIA 1890*, 177.

24. White, *The Republic for Which It Stands*, 5, 137, 141, 151, 155; Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 149–50, 173, 175, 282–83; Cahill, "You Think It Strange That I Can Love an Indian," 108–10; Lomawaima, "Domesticity in the Federal Indian Schools," 229–31.

25. Miles to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 18, 1883, *ARCIA 1883*, 60; George W. H. Stouch to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 1, 1897, *ARCIA 1897*, 225; Woodson to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 4, 1899, *ARCIA 1899*, 285.

26. Ashley to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 28, 1890, *ARCIA 1890*, 182; Woodson to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 20, 1893, *ARCIA 1893*, 246–47.

27. Woodson to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 20, 1893, *ARCIA 1893*, 247; Woodson to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 4, 1899, *ARCIA 1899*, 284; Berthrong, *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Ordeal*, 223–25.

28. Halaas and Masich, 300, 312; Ashley to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Letterbook 34, pp. 157–58, CANR.

29. Julia Bent Prentiss to W. A. Mercer, January 21, 1907; "Record of Graduates and Returned Students," April 14, 1910; Julia Bent Prentiss to M. Friedman, January 18, 1913, all in Julia Bent Student File, http://carliseindian.dickinson.edu/student_files/julia-bent-student-file.

30. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 334; G. D. Williams to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, April 27, September 28, and December 17, 1887, Letterbook 27, pp. 105, 151, 309–11, 351–52, and Ashley to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 22, 1889, Letterbook 27, pp. 27, 236, all in CANR; Bent to Hyde, May 3, 1905, box 6, George Bent Biographical File, HC.

31. Fontana, "James Mooney," 734.

32. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 334–35; Hyde to John Van Male, October 24, 1929, FF3, No. 26, GBP-HC.

33. Bent to Hyde, September 8, 1904, FF1, No. 5, GBP-HC; Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 42; Faller, "Making Medicine," 67; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 336–41; Bent to Hyde, September 2, 1905, and October 2, 1906, both in box 6, George Bent Biographical File, HC. For some unknown reason Hyde destroyed many of Bent's letters when he moved out of his Omaha house. In 1966 he got his old manuscript on Bent's life out of the attic and sent it to the University of Oklahoma Press. *Life of George Bent, Written from His Letters* was published in 1968, a few months after Hyde's death (see

Hyde to Van Male, October 24, 1929, FF3, No. 26, GBP-HC; Haack, "Gathering War Clouds," 132).

34. *Denver Post*, July 25, 1906, and *Denver Times*, December 4, 1905, both in box 6, George Bent Biographical File, HC; Scamehorn, *Albert Eugene Reynolds*, 61; Bent to Hyde, June 27, 1912, box 3, folder 18, GBP-Yale. Bent's memories and correspondence with Hyde were critical in the acrimonious debates surrounding the foundation of Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site. Some prominent Southern Cheyennes felt that the National Park Service valued the government's accounts—reports and maps—more than their own oral traditions and Bent's letters and hand-drawn maps (see Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 41, 94, 99, 110–11, 144). On the production of Bent and Hyde's maps, see Haack, "Gathering War Clouds," 131.

35. Faller, "Making Medicine," 79; Bent to Hyde, November 16, 1904, box 6, George Bent Biographical File, HC.

36. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 342; Bent to Hyde, May 16, 1905, box 6, George Bent Biographical File, HC; Bent to Hyde, March 9, 1905, box 3, folder 4, GBP-Yale; Faller, "Making Medicine," 71.

37. Smith, "George Bird Grinnell," 19–22, 24–26, 30–31; Harris, "Preserving a Vision of the American West," 99–192, 387, 401–2, 523, 539, 551.

38. Harris, "Preserving a Vision of the American West," 543–45.

39. Bent to Hyde, February 19, 1913, box 3, folder 20; May 12, 1911, box 3, folder 14; February 22, 1912, box 3, folder 17; March 4, 1912, box 3, folder 17; January 13, 1913, box 3, folder 19, all in GBP-Yale; Faller, "Making Medicine," 69–70, 86n36.

40. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 316; Faller, "Making Medicine," 74, 87n45, 47; Bent to Hyde, March 3, 1915, box 4, folder 36, and August 31, 1910, box 3, folder 13, both in GBP-Yale.

41. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 346–47; Bent to Joseph Thoburn, September 14, 1917, box 20, folder 6; Thoburn to Samuel Griffin, June 27, 1919, box 20, folder 6; Thoburn to John D. Miles, n.d., 1919, box 21, folder 11, all in Joseph Thoburn Papers, OHS.

42. Again, the example of the Clarke family is instructive (see Graybill, *The Red and the White*, 5–6, 191).

43. Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 269–70.

44. Scamehorn, *Albert Eugene Reynolds*, 186–88, 190, 209.

45. Steinel, *The History of Agriculture in Colorado*, 122–23; Scott, "John W. Prowers," 186; Hudnall, "Early History of Bent County," 245; Pickrell, "Borderlands Identities and National Formation of the American West," 197.

46. Hudnall, "Early History of Bent County," 237–38, 241, 243, 246; Church, "Homesteads on the Purgatoire," 290; Hurd, *Boggsville*, 66; Taylor, "Plains Indians on the New Mexico-Colorado Border," 320–21, 329–31.

47. *History of the Arkansas Valley, Colorado*, 847, 875; *Colorado Chieftain* (Pueblo), October 25, 1894, Judge R. M. Moore, file 392, Charles W. Hurd Collection, HC; Halaas and Masich, *Halfbreed*, 270–71; McClung, *Carson-Bent-Boggs Genealogy*, 99–100.

48. Gamble, "William Bent's First Grandchild," 6–7.

49. Graybill, *The Red and the White*, 81–85; Ellinghaus, "Margins of Acceptability," 56; Gray, "Miengun's Children," 146–85; Van Kirk, "Tracing the Fortunes," 151, 160–61, 176–78.

50. Francis W. Cragin interview with Mr. and Mrs. George Thompson, December 19, 1907, Trinidad, Colorado, Notebook 11, p. 17; Cragin interview with E. T. Wells,

November 23, 1908, Denver, Colorado, Notebook 4, p. 52, both in Cragin Collection; Taylor, "A New Look at an Old Case," 214–25.

51. Contract between Guadalupe Bent Thompson and Charles Bent, William Bent, Albert Silas Bent, Estefana Bent Hicklin, and Teresina Bent Scheurich, March 17, 1890; Contract between Aloys and Teresina Scheurich and George Thompson, March 19, 1890, both in box 2, folder 50; Teresina Bent Scheurich Land Conveyance, October 7, 1899, box 2, folder 44, all in JBSFP.

52. Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 125–35; Montoya, *Translating Property*, 95, 110–13, 121–23.

53. Gutiérrez, "Out from the Shadow of Giants," 10; Hurd, *Boggsville*, 19, 21; Montoya, *Translating Property*, 133, 138.

54. Harry Whigham to Thomas Boggs, November 29, 1887, Letters, 1885–1888, MSS #117, item 47; Boggs to Whigham, November 23, 1887, box 24, folder 8, Letters Received, 1881–Nov. 1888, both in MLGCP.

55. J. A. Schaumburg to Marinus Pels, December 20, 1887, Letters, 1885–1888, MSS #147, item 47, and Boggs to Whigham, December 21, 1887, box 24, folder 8, Letters Received, 1881–Nov. 1888, both in MLGCP.

56. Pels to Boggs, December 22, 1887, Letters, 1885–1888, MSS #147, item 47, MLGCP.

57. Pels to Whigham, May 22, 1888, and May 23, 1888; Pels to Francis Clutton, August 8, 1888, all in Letters, Feb. 1888–Oct. 1888, MSS #147, Item 51, MLGCP. In 1887, the United States Supreme Court confirmed the Maxwell Land Grant and Railroad Company's title to nearly two million acres of land in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. In its renewed effort to drive squatters off the range, the company precipitated one more dramatic outburst of violence when its employees, along with local law enforcement officials, engaged in a gun battle with opponents in Stonewall, Colorado. By 1890, the company had triumphed, and mass resistance to its policies ended (see Montoya, *Translating Property*, 157, 191–202).

58. Bloom, ed., "Bourke on the Southwest," 52–54.

59. Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*, viii, 642n13; Cragin interview with Aloys Scheurich, May 1, 1908, Taos, New Mexico, Notebook 12, p. 68, and interview with Mr. and Mrs. George Thompson, December 19, 1907, Trinidad, Colorado, Notebook 11, pp. 18–19, both in Cragin Collection.

60. George Thompson recommended to Francis Cragin that he also seek out Estefana Hicklin as a source of historical information (see Cragin interview with Mr. and Mrs. George Thompson, Notebook 11, p. 18, Cragin Collection).

61. Bloom, ed., "Bourke on the Southwest," 53.

62. Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*, 2:955; Cragin, "Notes," April 24, 1908, Notebook 12, p. 49, and "Notes," April 30, 1908, Notebook 12, p. 64, all in Cragin Collection; Estergreen, *Kit Carson*, 77. Unfortunately, Teresina's correspondence has never surfaced (see Johnson, "Writing Kit Carson in the Cold War," 310n40).

63. Aloys Scheurich to Lena Scheurich, August 3, 1885, box 1, folder 39; Pension Bureau to Teresina Bent Scheurich, November 23, 1908, and J. L. Davenport to W. N. Andrews, June 8, 1909, both in box 1, folder 24; clipping from *Taos Valley News*, n.d., 1920, box 1, folder 15, all in JBSFP.

64. Gutiérrez, "Out from the Shadow of Giants," 12–13.

65. McClung, *Carson-Bent-Boggs Genealogy*, 90–91; Cragin interview with Mr. and Mrs. George Thompson, December 19, 1907, Trinidad, Colorado, Notebook 11,

p. 18, Cragin Collection. Nor were the Boggs and Hicklin families alone in their grief for murdered children. Robert Bent, the son of George Bent and Cruz Padilla, was also gunned down in a dispute. Like his cousins, Robert got an education in Missouri but returned to New Mexico and led a dissolute life. When he blew through his inheritance, he accused his guardian, Francis P. Blair, of "misappropriating" the money. Robert was apparently unsuccessful at acculturating to life in New Mexico and "couldn't speak a word of Spanish." He moved to Colorado and was killed in Grand Junction in 1875 (see Cragin Interview with Aloys Scheurich, May 1, 1908, Notebook 12, pp. 64, 66, Cragin Collection).

Conclusion

1. "New Mexico's First Governor," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, March 2, 1910, box 14023, folder 43, L. Bradford Prince Papers, NMSRCA.

2. Hurt, "Reinterpreting the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site," 387; Grua, *Surviving Wounded Knee*, 3–4; Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn*, 4; Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 43, 155, 191, 279; Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 18–19, 188; Pahre, "Reconsidering National Park Interpretation," 100; Weisiger, "No More Heroes," 289.

3. Hurt, "Reinterpreting the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site," 376; Weisiger, "No More Heroes," 290, 295; Grua, *Surviving Wounded Knee*, 73–80; Linenthal, "The National Park Service and Civic Engagement," 125; Pahre, "Reconsidering National Park Interpretation," 99–122; Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 164–65; Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn*, 276–77.

4. Hurt, "Reinterpreting the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site," 377; Grua, *Surviving Wounded Knee*, 49, 54–55, 67, 153; Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 20, 64–65, 89, 94, 111, 129.

5. Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn*, 225; Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 15, 19, 74–75; Grua, *Surviving Wounded Knee*, 56, 70, 83; Pahre, "Reconsidering National Park Interpretation," 99.

6. Pahre, "Reconsidering National Park Interpretation," 99–100, 114; Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 5; Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 26, 109, 189.

7. Grua, *Surviving Wounded Knee*, 4, 84, 92–93, 105, 112; Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 136–39; Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn*, 224; Hurt, "Reinterpreting the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site," 386.

8. Hurt, "Reinterpreting the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site," 385–86; Pahre, "Reconsidering National Park Service Interpretation," 115–19. Attempts at collaboration have not been without controversy, however, as Ari Kelman demonstrates in his prize-winning account of the battle over memory at Sand Creek.

9. Mattes, "From Ruin to Reconstruction," 57–99.

10. Thorson, "The Architectural Challenge," 103–38; Olson, "Furnishing a Frontier Outpost," 139–68; Weisiger, "No More Heroes," 293–95. I visited the fort in 2010 and was quite impressed with the signage and quality of the reconstruction, which is on par with Fort Vancouver, Washington, and Fort Union, Montana. I was fortunate enough to get a tour of the site from John Carson, Kit Carson's great-grandson, who patiently answered my questions and was obliging enough to roust the fort's peacocks for me.

11. Kessell, *Pueblos, Spaniards, and the Kingdom of New Mexico*, 183–87; Weisiger, "No More Heroes," 292–93.

12. John Miller, "Vandals Mark War Memorial, Padre Martínez Statue on Taos Plaza," September 8, 2017, *Taos News*, http://www.taosnews.com/stories/vietnam-memorial-bent-statue-vandalized-on-taos-plaza,42907.

13. Editorial Board, "Renaming Kit Carson Park: Why Was the Public Left Out?" June 18, 2014, *Taos News*, https://taosnews.com/stories/renaming-of-kit-carson-park-why-was-the-public-left-out,37288; Daniel J. Chacón, "Renaming Kit Carson Park Spurs Debate in Taos," June 14, 2014, *Santa Fe New Mexican*, http://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/renaming-carson-park-spurs-debate-in-taos/article_9724dd59-fbc4–5dd9-b2aa-01c15cce496c.html; Alex Jacobs, "Kit Carson Park Name Change Overturned; Back to Kit Carson, for Now," July 11, 2014, *Indian Country Today*, https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/kit-carson-park-name-change-overturned-back- to-kit-carson-for-now-9787WAduC0eItVjlQSR1ww/.

14. "Governor Bent Home and Museum and Art Gallery," "Charles Bent," Vertical Files, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico; Weisiger, "No More Heroes," 290, 293; Rich Grant, "On the Trail of Kit Carson in Taos," July 21, 2016, *Huffington Post*, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/on-the-trail-of-kit-carso_b_11074430.

15. Bill Whaley, "History and Controversy: 'They Report, You Decide,'" September 14, 2015, Taosfriction.com, http://www.taosfriction.com/?p=10123#.XBv4mFxKjZs; Yvonne Pesquera, "The Untold Story of the 1847 Taos Revolt," October 8, 2015, *Taos News*, https://taosnews.com/stories/the-untold-story-of-1847-taos-revolt,293318; "The True Story," *El Grito del Norte* (Espanola, NM), July 26, 1970, Lucien A. File Research Files, NMSRCA.

16. Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, 139–58; Chávez, *But Time and Chance*, 92–160; Aragon, "Padre Martínez," 139–43; Francis, "Padre Martínez: A New Mexican Myth," 270–89; Steele, "A View from the Rectory," 72, 88; Howlett, *Life of the Right Reverend Joseph P. Machebeuf*, 228–29; Horgan, *Lamy of Santa Fe*.

17. Chávez, *But Time and Chance*; Mares, ed., *Padre Martínez: New Views from Taos*; Vigil, "Willa Cather and Historical Reality," 123–38; Mares, ed.,*I Returned and Saw under the Sun*; "Antonio José Martínez," Vertical File, Center for Southwest Research.

18. Miller, "Vandals Mark War Memorial," September 8, 2017, *Taos News*.

19. Weber, *On the Edge of Empire*, 87–92.

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