

The following **Pre-Museum Visit** material is designed to prepare students for a guided tour of the Alexander Gardner photography exhibit. Contact Brinton Museum Educator Barbara McNab at **307-763-5924** to schedule a school tour. Admission for teachers and students is FREE.

**Curriculum Areas: History, American Indian Studies, Social Studies, Visual Arts (photography), Writing (W.1 and W.2) as well as Language Arts (SL.2)**

## 150th Anniversary - Treaty of Fort Laramie

An exhibit of rare, historic photographs by the 19th century American photographer **Alexander Gardner** who photographed the 1868 Fort Laramie Peace Treaty talks is on display in the S. K. Johnston, Jr. Family Gallery through November 9th.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Students will learn about the history of Fort Laramie beginning with the site serving as an important 19th century trading post in the early 1800s
- Students will learn about the American photographer Alexander Gardner and the importance of his work in documenting American history
- Students will learn about events leading up to the Fort Laramie Peace Treaty of 1868, and the Indian tribes who were present at the treaty talks
- Students will be asked to identify the causes and explain the reasons behind the collapse of the Treaty in the years following 1868



*Alexander Gardner, **Indian Peace Commissioners meeting with Arapahoes and Cheyennes, albumen photograph, 1868***

*Alexander Gardner, **Indians present at the Fort Laramie peace talks, albumen photograph, 1868***



**Fort Laramie** was an important 19th century trading post and diplomatic site located at the confluence of the Laramie River and the North Platte River in the eastern part of the state of Wyoming. It was a strategic meeting point for trappers, traders, American Indians, missionaries, emigrants, soldiers, miners, ranchers and homesteaders. Each spring caravans arrived with trade goods. The Indians brought tanned buffalo hides for trade. In the fall, the hides, which had been traded for goods, were shipped east.

**Alexander Gardner (1821-1882)** was born in Scotland and came to America in 1856. He is known for his deeply moving photographs of American Indians, U.S. dignitaries and his iconic portrait of Abraham Lincoln. He recorded the Civil War and was in the fields at Antietam (Maryland) and Gettysburg (Pennsylvania) where he took pictures of those who lost their lives. Hundreds of Gardner's Civil War photographs were later published in 1866 in a two-volume work entitled *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War*.

In January 1865, the year the Civil War ended, a fire destroyed hundreds of invaluable works of art in the Smithsonian Institution's Gallery of Art. Gone were the remarkable paintings of Indian Delegations (1820s to 1850s) and paintings depicting Plains Indians painted by artist George Catlin. In order to preserve what could still be preserved of the Indian delegations visiting Washington, Gardner was among the photographers contracted to take photographic portraits of the Indian delegations who were at that time in Washington D. C. It was following this body of work that Gardner was commissioned by the government to photograph the peace talks at Fort Laramie in 1868.

**History:** A few French explorers came West as early as the 1740s. The Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery Expedition (May 1804 to September 1806) led the way for the North American fur trade which brought trappers and merchants to the Plains. The discovery of gold in California in 1848, in the Colorado Rockies in 1858 and in the Black Hills of Dakota Territory in 1874 brought hundreds of thousands of white settlers to the Western territories. Work on the Transcontinental Railroad, which was completed in 1869, connecting the eastern rail work at Omaha, Nebraska, and Council Bluffs, Iowa, with the Pacific Coast at Oakland Long Wharf at San Francisco Bay in California, added to the number of whites heading west. The introduction of white settlers into the Western territories would forever change the Plains Indians' way of life. The Indians saw their hunting grounds shrink, the buffalo disappearing and their lands being taken away. In order to preserve their way of life, they resisted white settlement, sometimes violently. The intent of the 1868 Fort Laramie Peace Treaty was to bring an end to the conflicts between whites and Indians. However, the peace was short-lived, to be broken when gold was discovered in the Black Hills.

**Important Dates:** On December 21, 1866, the Fetterman Fight, Battle of the Hundred-in-the-Hand took place near Fort Phil Kearney between the Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho and the U.S. Army. Participating were Red Cloud, Crazy Horse, and High-Back-Bone; Capt. William Fetterman and 79 of his men were killed. On August 2, 1867, the Wagon Box Fight took place near Fort Phil Kearney where a small party of U.S. Soldiers and a few civilians fought off an attack by several hundred Lakota Sioux and Cheyenne warriors. On June 17, 1876 at the Battle of the Rosebud, troops led by General George Crook were fought to a draw by the Lakota and Northern Cheyenne in Montana. And on June 25 and 26 in 1876, not many miles away on what is today the Crow Reservation, the Battle of the Little Bighorn ended with the annihilation of Lt. Colonel George Custer and his command.

Plains Indian peoples present at the peace treaty talks included the different bands of the Sioux Nation of Indians as well as Cheyennes, Arapahos, Crows, and others. The Brinton Museum's collections of American Indian art and artifacts represent several of the Plains Indians tribes. A tour of the "To Honor the Plains Nations" exhibit in the Forrest E. Mars, Jr. Building's John and Adrienne Mars Gallery is recommended to accompany your tour of the Gardner show.