



150TH ANNIVERSARY – FORT LARAMIE TREATY

150th Anniversary - Treaty of Fort Laramie features important historical photographs by the nineteenth century American photographer **Alexander Gardner**, a Scottish-born immigrant who is celebrated for his emotionally moving photographs of Indian Delegations and Civil War soldiers and his photographic portraits of Abraham Lincoln. In 1868, Gardner was commissioned by the federal government to photograph the peace talks between a federally appointed commission and chiefs of the Plains Indians tribes at Fort Laramie in Wyoming. Gardner's photographs of the many Indian tribal leaders who gathered at Fort Laramie to meet with U.S. government peace commissioners are considered to be among some of his most poignant works.

In 1841, the first westward-bound emigrants arrived at the fort located at the confluence of the Laramie and North Platte rivers. They were bound for Oregon, California and Salt Lake City in Utah. In the years 1858 to 1861, the Pike's Peak Gold Rush brought even more white settlers to the western territories, accelerating conflicts between settlers and the Indians. In 1865, a congressional committee began a study of the Indian uprisings and wars in the West, resulting in a written report, *Report on the Condition of the Indian Tribes*, published in 1867, which ultimately led to the establishment of an Indian Peace Commission on July 20 of the same year. The intent and purpose of the commission was to end the Indian wars and prevent future Indian conflicts. In 1868, the Indian Peace Commission comprised of three generals: General William Tecumseh Sherman, General Alfred Howe Terry and General William Selby Harney, and four civilians: N. G. Taylor, Commissioner of Indian Affairs; Senator John B. Henderson, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs; Samuel F. Tappan; and John B. Sanborn, found enough Indians at Ft. Laramie to warrant making a treaty.

The **Fort Laramie Peace Treaty was signed on April 29**. Additional signatures by the Oglala band of Sioux by the chiefs and headmen were subscribed and duly authorized on **May 25**. Unfortunately, conflicts over hunting rights and ownership of land were to continue well into the next two decades. The discovery of gold in the Black Hills in 1874 had much to do with the unravelling of the treaty.

The **150th Anniversary - Treaty of Fort Laramie** exhibit features twenty-seven of Gardner's works. From the haunting image of an Indian burial place near Fort Laramie to the timeless, photographic portraits of Plains Indians such as Grey Eyes, White Horse, Mountain Tail, Little Face, Yellow Bull, and others, Gardner's photographs tell the story of a peoples' life in the West that was rapidly disappearing.

Photographs in this exhibit are part of a larger collection of more than 2,000 recently acquired photographs of the American West by important photographers of the period.