

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Primary Source Document Collection

MISSION 3: "A Cheyenne Odyssey"

Ledger Art, *Courting Couple* – Wild Hog

As the Plains Indians came into contact with European and American traders they gained access to new tools for creating art. Painting on buffalo hides slowly gave way to drawings on paper, muslin, or canvas. As bound paper ledgers and color pencils became accessible, Plains Indians adapted their painting and recording keeping forms to these new materials, but often kept some traditional aspects of buffalo hide paintings. This drawing is from a ledger book titled: "Pictures drawn by Wild Hog and other northern Cheyenne Indian Chiefs while in the Dodge City jail May 1879." It depicts a courting couple. The water bucket on the left is an example of a convention of icons or glyphs in ledger art that represent a shared meaning. The chore of drawing water was one of the few times that proper Cheyenne girls were not chaperoned so it was often an occasion for young couples to meet and court. Water buckets therefore symbolize courtship.



Source: Wild Hog: "Courting: Couple with Water Bucket" (No. 6 of 61), kansasmemory.org, Kansas State Historical Society.