

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## Primary Source Document Collection

### MISSION 3: "A Cheyenne Odyssey"

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#### **Account from Charles Sharman, Railroad Surveyor on the Union Pacific Railroad**

*Charles Sharman, an Irish emigrant and Union army veteran, worked as a railroad surveyor for the Union Pacific railroad company. Sharman was hired in 1866, soon after the Union Pacific began laying track in Omaha, Nebraska, and witnessed the completion of the transcontinental railroad in Promontory Point, Utah on May 10, 1869. In 1929, at the age of eighty-eight, he wrote about his experiences, including the following description of an Indian raid that took place in the Spring of 1867 near Lodgepole Creek, Nebraska.*

The sod that had just been ploughed was unusually good so we built an extra good fort. We remarked...that were were in good shape for an Indian attack the next morning—that would be Sunday...[when] work was usually suspended so as to let the stock rest and graze. Sunday was usually a lazy day and an extra nap taken in the morning, but this Sunday morning a sound of horses' feet awoke us just a little before sunrise. It was so unusual that we jumped up and took a look out...and saw an interesting sight. A band of Indians on their ponies, stripped to the waist, decorated with warpaint and feathers, came riding at full speed, emitting that penetrating yell that only an Indian is capable of making.

This stampeded the stock and put them on the run in every direction...and caused a general panic of men and animals. The soldiers were going off guard but stopped to fire off their guns, but did no harm to any of the Indians....

I went to [another railroad construction camp] and told [the supervisor] the country was full of Indians; our camp had been cleaned out...and [I] would advise him to corral his stock at once. He said he thought his men, together with the soldiers, could protect his stock. "Well," I replied, "I have done my duty in a way that might be considered rather foolhardy, so now if anything happens, it is up to you." He thanked me and invited me into the mess tent for breakfast, after which I started my return to my own quarters. I had not gone more than fifty feet when I heard again the same yell ...and in the next ten minutes I saw every head of stock but one mule that belonged to a herder and was tied down, disappear.

Source: Ernest Haycox, "'A Very Exclusive Party': A Firsthand Account of Building the Union Pacific Railroad," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, vol. 51 (Spring 2001): 30-31.