

In January of 1877, the newlyweds Frances and John Grady of St. Louis honeymooned in Jacksonville, Florida. During the two years before their trip, they had presumably read in the St. Louis newspapers such stories as were carried by papers all over the country about the seventy-two "fierce and wild indians" of the Great Plains who were being held captive at Fort Marion, an old Spanish fort in nearby St. Augustine. Alleged by U.S. officials in Indian Territory to be among the most hostile and warlike individuals of their tribes, and accused of numerous crimes against whites, these Cheyenne, Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho and Caddo were incarcerated to serve as examples to other warriors and Indian freedom fighters that the U.S. Army was determined to prevail against Indian uprisings. Stories of the former deeds and the present incarceration of these warriors and captured the popular imagination, and hundreds of tourists visited Fort Marion to see these men.

Many, like the Gradys, spent \$2.00 for a memento of the visit: a notebook filled with drawings done by one of the Indians. Frances and John Grady bought two twelve page sketchbooks, the leaves of which were filled, front and back, with drawings by Wo-Haw, a twenty-two year old Kiowa.

Frances Barry Grady died in 1879, and her belongings apparently went back to her parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Barry. Mr. Barry had been a founder of the Missouri Historical Society, and its president from 1876-77. When he died in 1882, the two sketchbooks were presented by his widow to the Historical Society.<sup>1</sup> They remained unstudied until the 1940's, when Mrs. Dana O. Jensen, editor of the *Bulletin* of the Historical Society, rediscovered the sketchbooks in the archives and researched their history. The forty-eight drawings from these notebooks, along with three individual drawings in the Smithsonian, form the total known corpus of Wo-Haw's work.

In general, the art produced at Fort Marion has been well studied. In addition to Karen Daniels Petersen's

encyclopedic work, *Plains Indian Art from Fort Marion*, a number of picture books on individual artists have been published.<sup>2</sup> However, the artist who so skillfully rendered the narrative scenes discussed and illustrated here has received less attention than his cohorts Zo-Tom, Howling Wolf, Cohoe, or Bear's Heart. Except for two local St. Louis publications, only two of Wo-Haw's drawings have been widely published.<sup>3</sup>

His work is, on one level, quite representative of the kind of work that was done at Fort Marion. Wo-Haw was a youthful warrior, plucked from his tribal existence and set down in a new culture. His art is a response to that alien culture and a re-affirmation of his tribal heritage. On another level, Wo-Haw's work in several instances goes beyond the particular confines of autobiography or tribal history to stand as a metaphor for the struggles of many Plains peoples in the last third of the nineteenth century, a time when traditional Plains life was in a state of eclipse. Nowhere is the passing of an era more vividly depicted than in Wo-Haw's art.

The reservation period had begun for the Kiowa with the treaty of 1865 that moved them to the area of what is today southwestern Oklahoma. The Treaty of Medicine Lodge in 1867 confined the Kiowa to the reservation; no more would they be free riders and raiders on the southern plains. In 1869, Fort Sill was established in the center of the Kiowa reservation. It had been right near the site of Fort Sill that more than thirty years earlier Auguste Chouteau had established the first trading post within Kiowa territory.<sup>4</sup>

The men from the southern plains who were rounded up at Fort Sill in April of 1875 were sent in chains on a long overland train ride from Fort Sill, to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, and then through St. Louis, Indianapolis, Nashville, and Atlanta to Jacksonville, Florida. At each of these cities, crowds greeted the train, eager for a glimpse of these renowned warrior-criminals. They finally arrived at Fort Marion on May 21, 1875, to begin a three year sentence.<sup>5</sup>

During the years of their captivity, and with the encouragement of a relatively benevolent warden, Captain Richard Pratt, the former Plains warriors passed the time and earned money by making art objects and curios to sell to tourists. At least twenty-six of the men, principally Kiowa and Cheyenne, spent most of their free time making drawings in small artist's notebooks provided by Captain Pratt. They worked in pencil, ink and crayon. Petersen has located 745 individual works done by these twenty-six artists at Fort Marion.<sup>6</sup>

At first glance, one might dismiss such works as "tourist art" because it was made, apparently not for tra-

ditional use within the Indian culture, but rather in an alien setting for sale to outsiders unfamiliar with the mores and customs of the group. And yet, despite *apparent* differences from the older Plains pictorial tradition of hide painting, the notebooks drawn by Wo-Haw and the other Fort Marion artists actually conform quite closely to the traditional Plains ideals of pictorial painting.

Hide painting done by men was unique among Plains arts, for it focused on tribal history, autobiography, and record-keeping. Those who painted hides were warriors and hunters, celebrating and recording their exploits on hides. Successful warriors earned the right to publicly memorialize their brave acts, recording them pictorially on clothing and tipis for all to see. Thus personal history was made public history, adding to the status of both the individual and the group.

Throughout the Great Plains in the second half of the nineteenth century, as buffalo hides became scarce because of the massive slaughter of these animals by whites, Indians turned to imported materials with which to record their visions and exploits. Ledger books replaced hides; inks and pencils replaced the indigenous earth pigments and split twig brushes. There is evidence that the small ledger books were treated by their makers in much the same way as portable, wearable hides. On more than one occasion, U.S. soldiers removed ledgers from the bodies of Indian men killed in battle. The warriors seem to have worn these notebooks on their persons as validations of their bravery on previous occasions. For example, a ledger book drawn by the Sioux painter and warrior Red Hawk was taken from his dead body on the battlefield of Wounded Knee in 1890. In it were 116 drawings of warfare, horse capture, and other tribal events.<sup>7</sup>

Changes in the pictorial conventions of hide and ledger book painting during the nineteenth century have been thoroughly studied by John Ewers and others, and are a familiar chapter in Plains art.<sup>8</sup> The expansion of the formal vocabulary of the painter is the most significant of these changes, a result of contact with European conventions of three dimensionality, modeling, foreshortening, realism, and the use of one point perspective. Skillful Indian artists imitated and adapted foreign pictorial conventions to their own uses after watching artists like Catlin and Bodmer paint. Nowhere are such changes in the Indian pictographic tradition more apparent than in the scores of drawings on paper known from the second half of the nineteenth century, including those of the Fort Marion artists.

More than one contemporary observer commented



Figure 1. Kiowa warriors on horseback.

that Wo-Haw and the other prisoners received no art training at the Fort, but drew as they pleased.<sup>9</sup> It is clear, however, that the artists were eager to experiment with formal problems of pictorial space, diagonal foreshortening, and the like. They surely observed photographs, prints, and other popular media on their forays to the stores in St. Augustine where prisoners on good behavior were allowed to go to spend their earnings.

Figure 2. Wo-Haw's depiction of Fort Sill, Oklahoma where he was taken captive.

Despite their formal innovations, which are common in late nineteenth century Plains painting, and

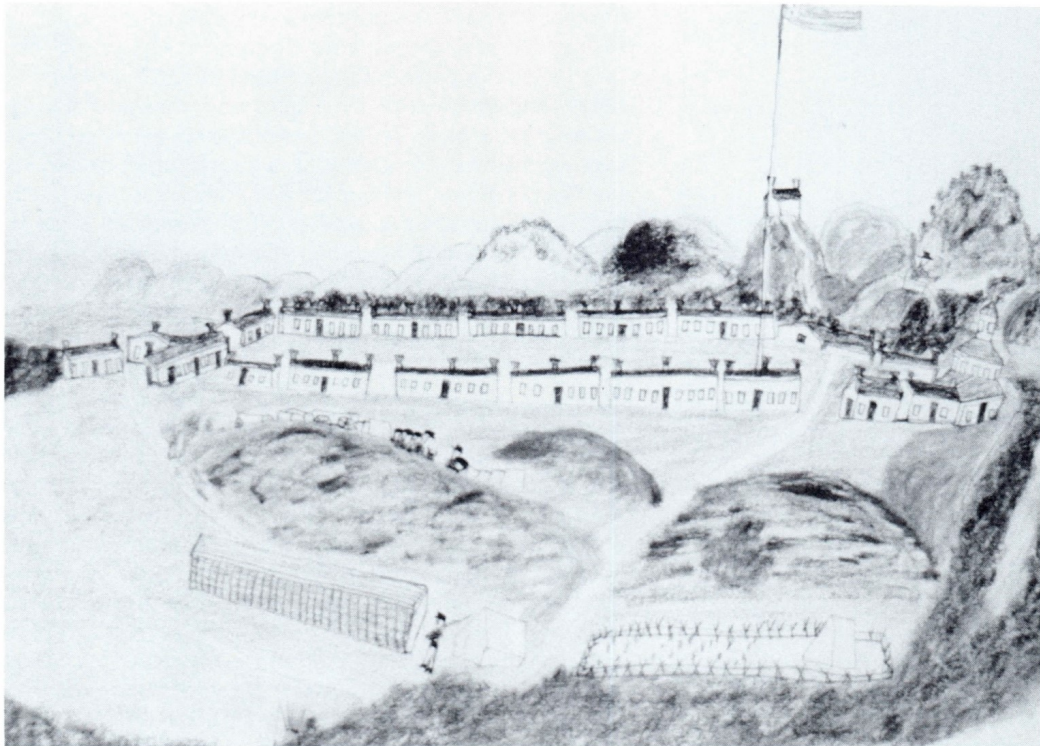


Figure 3. The train ride from Fort Sill to Fort Marion, Florida.



despite the making of this art for sale to tourists, the Fort Marion artists persisted in their own tribal traditions. They still were using visual art to record heroic deeds, to set down personal visions, and to recount the passing of historic events. Heroic deeds have taken a new turn here, however. They consist not only of the old type of bravery in warfare and the hunt, but of *new* adventures in a perilous and alien environment.

Wo-Haw begins one notebook with classic scenes of warfare on the plains: he paints a group riding out on a war party, complete with banners, war bonnets, and horses whose tails are tied up decoratively for war (Figure 1). But he rapidly moves into scenes that have no exact counterpart in the older tradition of hide painting: scenes of figures in a landscape, complete with western-style architecture. In an effort to faithfully record the events of his captivity, Wo-Haw bravely attempts new scenes and techniques: We see Fort Sill, in Oklahoma, the round-up point for the seventy-two Fort Marion captives (Figure 2). The barracks are skillfully set in a landscape and rendered with one point perspective. We see scenes of train travel overland to Fort Marion, utilizing sophisticated techniques of diagonal foreshortening (Figure 3.)

Wo-Haw is recalling and memorializing his personal odyssey as a captured warrior, an odyssey during which most of these men presumed that they would be killed, and during which one man committed suicide by jumping off the train. Wo-Haw in captivity is clearly a different Odysseus than the free warrior astride a horse on the southern Plains, however. His personal odyssey takes him down the white man's road, where he faithfully records the unfamiliar technologies of an alien culture. Wo-Haw draws the unfamiliar architecture of the massive, medieval Spanish fortress in which he was housed, and the nearby lighthouse, both of which must have seemed exceedingly curious to a horseman from the country's interior (Figures 4 and 5). The various types of sea vessels that Wo-Haw observed on the Florida coast, from paddleboat to double masted ship,

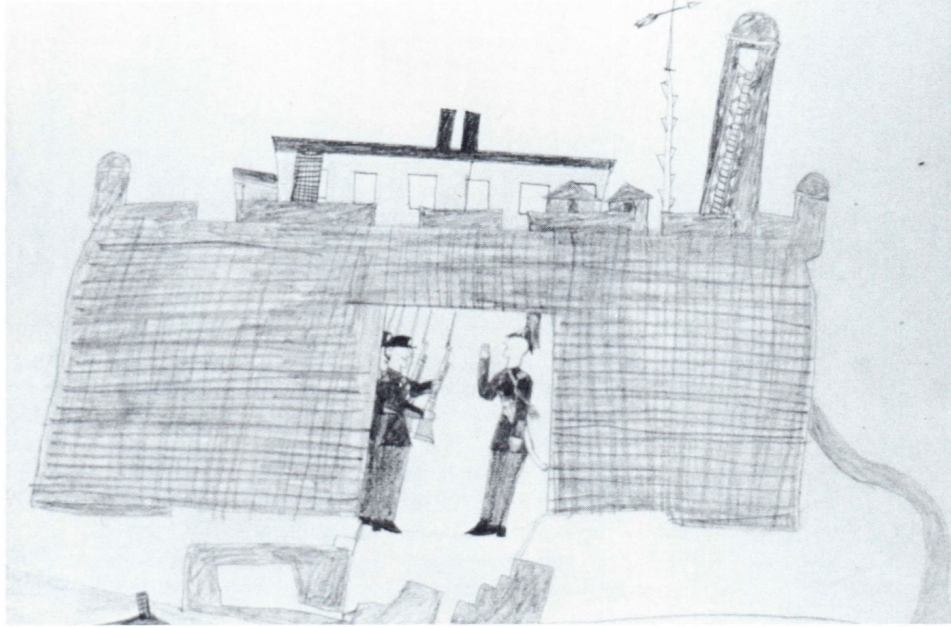


Figure 4. The massive Spanish stone fortress in which Wo-Haw was incarcerated in Florida.

were drawn in great detail, even to the prim, self-satisfied faces of the individual passengers (Figure 6).

All become part of Wo-Haw's personal history, and as such are recorded in the pages of his notebooks. Other processes of acculturation are recorded as well. The journey from saddle to school bench was not an easy one for Wo-Haw and his compatriots. Does Wo-Haw himself suggest this by the penciled-in specter of a brave in traditional dress whose ghostly presence observes the Fort Marion classroom (Figure 7)?

Captain Pratt, the Fort Marion warden, was a product of his era, despite his relatively enlightened ideas about education and personal liberties for the incarcerated man. He believed very strongly in the essential humanity of these men that others referred to as "incorrigible" and "savage." Yet Pratt was equally adamant that "in order to save the man we must kill the Indian." Thus he ordered that all men cut their hair, wear military garb, and conform to a scheduled roster of activities which included roll call, military formation, and classes in reading and writing. Soon after arrival at Fort Marion, the long-haired Kiowa, Cheyenne, and others were transformed to ersatz Army regulars in military blue.

Pratt himself described this transformation that Wo-Haw illustrated:

Very soon after being allowed larger discretion, their shackles were removed. It also seemed best to get them out of the curio class by cutting their hair and having them



Figure 5. A lighthouse near Fort Marion.

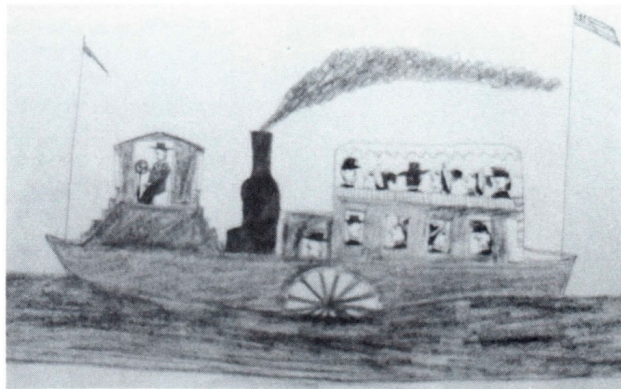


Figure 6. Wo-Haw's carefully rendered version of a sidewheel boat and its passengers.



Figure 7. Indians in military dress attend morning lessons at Fort Marion. A spectral Indian drawn in pencil looks on.



Figure 8.  
The butchering of a buffalo.

wear the clothing of the white man. There was some objection by them to these changes, but by kindly persuasion it was gradually accomplished. This change to army clothing was issued, a number cut off the legs of the trouser at the hip, laying aside the upper part and using the trouser legs as legging in the Indian way. This called for immediate correction. They were formed in line and a pair of the mutilated trousers shown them. They were emphatically told that the clothing belonged to the United States Government and that it was only loaned to them so that they might dress themselves becomingly, like the people they were meeting daily, and thus rid themselves of the stare of visitors who invariably noted every difference between them and ourselves. They must not, therefore, under any circumstances mutilate the clothing but wear it just as the white man wore it. They yielded good naturedly and soon became accustomed to the white man's toggery and wore it with satisfaction to themselves. I had the soldier guards teach them how to be neat in the care of their clothing, how to clean it and crease their trousers, keep the brass buttons on their coats and caps bright, and polish their shoes, and in a short time there was pride established in the wearing of the army uniform.<sup>10</sup>

But Pratt's efforts were not enough to "kill the Indian" in Wo-Haw. This is clear in Wo-Haw's art. The Fort Marion sketchbooks record the heroic deeds of the acculturated present and of the tribal past, but they also introduce new subject matter. Wo-Haw and other Florida artists expanded the pictorial tradition of Plains painting to include remembrances of traditional life on the plains, a way of life that was quickly passing out of existence. Not just the heroic moments or scenes of valor, but scenes of courtship, ceremony, and tribal life emerge in the pages of these sketchbooks.

Wo-Haw depicts the act of skinning a buffalo (Figure 8). In the scene, the warrior has killed the animal; three women stand by the sharpened knives, ready to expertly butcher the carcass, of which every bit would have been used for some item of food, utensil or clothing. A later scene depicts the smoking of the buffalo meat at a camp on the great plains. Wo-Haw tenderly



draws scenes of courtship, in which a betrothed couple are intimately wrapped in the same buffalo robe, thus proclaiming publicly their devotion to each other (Figure 9).

Tipis painted with the personal emblems of their owners were rendered, as are groups of Kiowa wrapped in beaded blankets (Figures 10 and 11). Kiowa religion is recalled, too, in scenes of the sacred Sun Dance lodge which was built every June, with leafy cottonwood boughs blanketing the exterior (Figure 12).

Although these notebooks were produced for outsiders, it is clear that the object was not simply to draw scenes of traditional life that would appeal to tourists, but also, through the creative process, to recall with sadness and longing the grand old days on the plains that were so far, both in time and space, from the military prison in St. Augustine. Art work at Fort Marion served an important function for the artists themselves, essentially the same function as traditional hide painting: it served as a means of self-definition. In the recording of their unusual travels and experiences, Wo-Haw and his companions reaffirmed their valor as intrepid men. By visually recreating their former deeds as hunters and horsemen, they stressed, both to themselves and to others, that despite cropped hair and white man's clothing, they were still adventuresome Kiowa, Cheyenne, Comanche, Arapaho and Caddo warriors. In their drawings they captured a way of life to which most of them hoped to return.

In April 1878, the men were released from Fort Marion. Several of them went to study at the Hampton Institute in Virginia, a school that until that time had been solely for the education of Blacks. Most of the men, however, returned to their tribes. All evidence indicates that it was very difficult for those sophisticated, acculturated Indians to re-enter the tribal world. They were no longer traditional Indians; they had experienced too much that was alien to a traditional culture. Yet neither could they ever be fully accepted in the white world of the nineteenth century.

Wo-Haw's life after Fort Marion illustrates the way in which many of these men continued to shuttle between two cultures for the rest of their lives.<sup>11</sup> Wo-Haw elected to return to the Kiowa reservation. He went to the Indian school there for a time, but then stopped attending. He became a private in the Indian Agency police force, and later joined an Indian Troop of the 7th Regiment of the U.S. Cavalry. After his discharge, Wo-Haw returned to his native community. There he became an active participant in the Ghost Dance religion, a visionary movement that swept the Great Plains

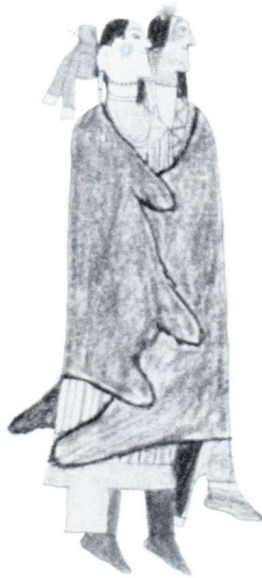


Figure 9. A Kiowa man and woman are wrapped in one buffalo robe, a gesture of affection for each other.

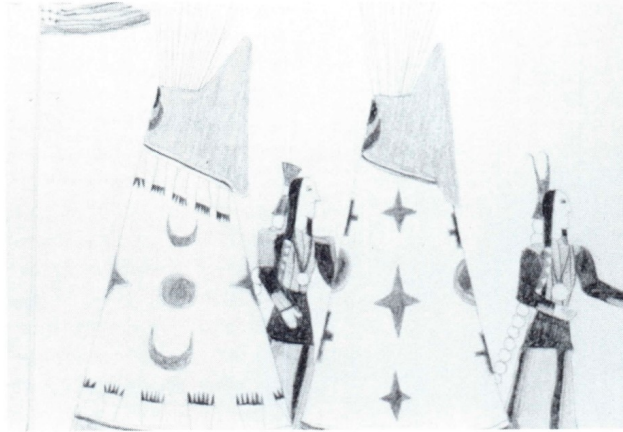


Figure 10. Two Kiowa men emerge from painted tipis.



Figure 11. A cluster of Kiowas wearing traditional robes.

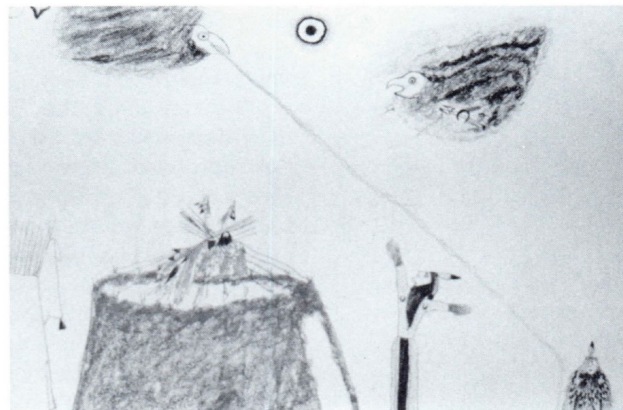


Figure 12. The Kiowa Sun Dance lodge of cottonwood boughs.

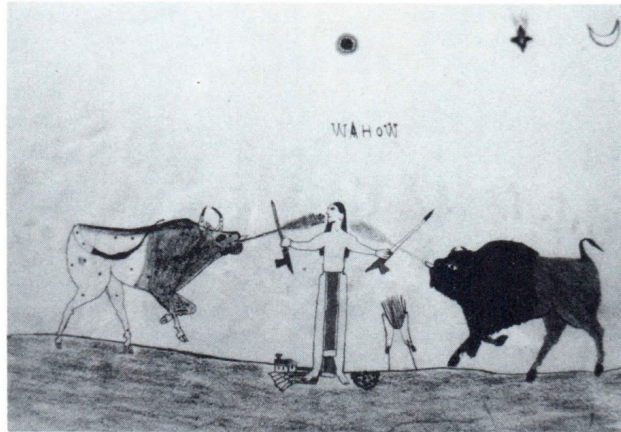


Figure 13. "Wo-Haw in Two Worlds." The artist depicts his own dilemma as an Indian with his feet in two different cultures.

in the late nineteenth century, prophesying the end of white culture and a return of the buffalo, the ancestors, and the ancient ways. Wo-Haw died in 1924, at the age of sixty-nine, on the Kiowa reservation.

Wo-Haw had journeyed a long way, both in miles and in experience from the plains of the Kiowa nation to three years in the Florida fort, wearing army dress, learning reading, writing, and bible study. His most famous drawing unequivocally and poignantly portrays his dilemma as a man caught between two cultures. In fact, the painting symbolizes the greater dilemma of all Plains peoples in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is unparalleled in Plains art of the period for its use of metaphor rather than literal depiction. It might well be titled "Wo-Haw in Two Worlds"(Figure 13).

Wo-Haw depicts himself in traditional dress. Above his head he has painted his own name. He stands on the great plains beneath the sun, a falling star, and the moon. These celestial bodies witness Wo-Haw's actions. To his left stands a domesticated beef cattle (for whom he is named). At his right, a buffalo approaches (sustenance of the Kiowa people). Wo-Haw holds a peace pipe out to each, although he is facing the domesticated cattle. One foot stands near the buffalo head and Kiowa tipi, but Wo-Haw's other foot is firmly planted in the tilled fields in front of a wooden house.

Wo-Haw knew that he, his people, and their art, had embarked irrevocably on the white man's way.