

## **William "Billie" Garnett. (1855-1928)**

William Garnett was born on April 25, 1855 in Fort Laramie, Wyoming in the Dakota Territory, the son of Brigadier-General Richard Brooke Garnett (1817-1863) and his Oglala Lakota wife, Akitapi Win (Looks at Him or Looking Woman, Molly Campbell, b. c. 1839-40).<sup>1</sup> William died on October 12, 1928 in Pine Ridge, Shannon County, South Dakota.

Billie Garnett served as a scout and guide throughout the Dakotas for many years. Billie Garnett translated Sioux accounts of the Battle of the Little Big Horn. He was eye-witness to the assassination of Crazy Horse. Billie Garnett was married three or four times and fathered at least five known children. He was married to: (1). Zuzella Janis; (2). Emma Janis; and (3). Filla Janis.



Richard Brooke Garnett was serving in the Federal Army at Fort Laramie in the Dakota Territory and never officially acknowledged "Looking Woman" as his legitimate wife. Richard Garnett only spent a short time with his infant son before his military duties took him to other duties in Kansas and California. After Richard Garnett left for Fort Pierre, he never saw his son or "Looking Woman" again. There's no evidence that he ever tried to contact either mother or son during the remaining few years of his life.

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Richard Brooke Garnett returned to the east, resigned his commission in the U.S. Federal Cavalry and joined the Army of the Confederacy. He was killed on the third day of the Battle of Gettysburg, July 3, 1863. At the time of his father's death, William Garnett was just 8 years old and living with his mother on the Rosebud Reservation at Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

Billy Garnett, raised as a "Half-Breed", and apparently knew his father's name and about his father's heroic death in 1863 at Gettysburg. Billy was raised by his mother in the traditions of the Oglala Lakota tribe. She was related in some way to chief Red Cloud of the Lakota Sioux tribe and young Billie became a full-fledged member of the Lakota peoples.

William "Billie" Garnett, known also by his Sioux name as "Billie Hunter", served as a scout, guide, interpreter and spy for the U.S. Army (serving in that capacity from at least October 1876 until September 1877).

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<sup>1</sup> Before she was married to Lieut. Garnett, William Garnett's mother Looks At Him (*Akitapi Win*) was the wife of fur trader John Baptiste Boyer. Through a different wife, Boyer was the father of scout Mitch Boyer, killed at the Little Bighorn. William and Mitch were step-brothers, though Mitch was considerably older.



**Baptiste "Big Bat" Pourier and Billy Garnett**

In 1877, Billie Garnett witnessed the assassination of the Indian Chief Crazy Horse. In the year after the Battle of the Little Big Horn, "Crazy Horse" and his half-starved followers finally surrendered to Chief "Red Cloud" at Camp Robinson, Nebraska. A year later, "Crazy Horse" was fatally wounded by a bayonet in a scuffle that was reported differently by several eye-witness observers.

Although Billie Garnett was honorably discharged from his duties with the U.S. Army in 1877, his 1920 claim for an Army pension was ultimately rejected by the Committee on Pensions in Washington, D.C. Since Billie Garnett was carried on the Army payrolls as an interpreter, he was therefore deemed ineligible for any government pension or further compensation.

He fought in campaigns against the Sioux under Chiefs Red Cloud, and Red Leaf, and the Cheyennes under Chiefs Dull Knife, and Little Wolf and played an active roll in several other battles." His file contains supporting documents from Indians, soldiers, and Interior Department bureaucrats attesting to his activities. Among those who contributed letters and depositions are J.D. Corder, an Indian trader and dealer in general merchandise; Indians named Lone Dog, Dirt Kettle, Red Shirt, Kills A Hundred, and Painted Horse; the superintendent of the Pine Ridge Indian Agency; and various other officials involved in the administration of the Pine Ridge Agency.

He married firstly Zuzella Janis in about 1875. They were married and subsequently divorced by Indian custom. Zuzella was born about 1850. At 26 years of age Zuzella became the mother of Charles Garnett, born in 1876. [Charles was enrolled with the Oglala Sioux and assigned an enrollment number of Oglala Sioux]. Billie Garnett next married Emma Janis in about 1879. They were married and divorced by Indian custom prior to 1884. Emma was born about 1860. At 19 years of age Emma became the mother of Susan "Suzie" Garnett in 1879. As his third wife, Billie Garnett married Filla Janis on April 2, 1884. Filla was born in the Fort Laramie Region in about 1860. Filla was the daughter of Nicholas Janis and Martha "He Bear". She died on September 27, 1946 at 86 years of age. At 25 years of age Filla became the mother of Richard Garnett in 1885. Two years later a second son, William Garnett Jr. was born [in 1887]. Finally, at age 30 Filla became the mother of Dolly Garnett [in 1890].

On September 26, 1907, William Garnett applied for homestead land in Shannon County, South Dakota. William "Billie" Garnett [a.k.a "Billy Hunter"] died on October 12, 1928 and was buried in the Holy Rosary Mission Cemetery at Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Exactly two months later on December 12, 1928, Billie Garnett's mother, "Looking Woman" [a.k.a. Mollie Campbell] also died and was buried in the same cemetery at Pine Ridge.

References: *The River of Blood and the Valley of Death* by Matthew W. Burton, published by The General's Books, Columbus, Ohio, 1998, pages 85 and 86; *The Killing of Chief Crazy Horse*, edited by Robert A. Clark; File #67A-D26 in the Records of the Committee on Pensions, 46th-79th Congresses 1880-1946; The 1896 Census of the Pine Ridge Reservation, Rosebud, South Dakota, transcription available on-line at:

[www.rootsweb.com/~neresour/OLLibrary/riley/PineRidge/1896census/pineridge1896](http://www.rootsweb.com/~neresour/OLLibrary/riley/PineRidge/1896census/pineridge1896).

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