

Edward Rose. (1780-1833)

Edward Rose, also known by the names: Five Scalps, Nez Coupe and "Cut Nose," was the son of a white trader father and a Cherokee and African American mother. As a youth, Rose lived with the Crow people in what is now southern Montana and northern Wyoming. He quickly acquired their customs as well as their language. By 1806 he was in St. Louis, and in the spring of 1807 he joined with a brigade of men lead by Manuel Lisa heading up the Missouri River, ultimately to build a fort (Fort Raymond) at the confluence of the Big Horn and Yellowstone Rivers. In the spring of 1808, he was unable to satisfactorily account for his time or the trade goods he had taken out with him. This soon lead to a violent altercation between Rose and Lisa, which ultimately required 15 men to subdue Rose. After the altercation Lisa made a hasty departure for St. Louis while Rose remained at Fort Raymond only long enough to coerce additional trade goods from the remaining employees before returning to the Crow Indians.

Soon after rejoining the Crows Rose had the opportunity to demonstrate his reckless bravery and ferocious abandon in hand-to hand fighting. Crow and Minnetaree (Hidatsa) warriors were engaged in a skirmish, and the Minnetaree were forted up in a strong defensive position. After several abortive charges the Crow were willing to give up the attack. At this point, Rose snatched two shields from the milling Crow warriors and armed with only a knife and tomahawk, single handedly attacked the Minnetaree position. Just as he approached the fortification, three bullets simultaneously struck the shields. Rose fell backwards, apparently dead, and then as if possessed by supernatural powers regained his feet and vaulted over the defensive position. The Minnetaree were paralyzed with shock while Rose went into a battle rage. Rose killed five with his ax while the Crow warriors drove off remaining, now demoralized Minnetaree. From his great luck and reckless actions Rose obviously possessed great medicine. He was now known among the Crow as "Chee-ho-carte" (The Five Scalps.) Rose now had firmly established his reputation with the Crow for both generosity and as a fearless warrior.

According to the historical record, Wilson Price Hunt, a prominent fur trader, employed Rose in 1811 as a guide through Crow Territory; Rose was dismissed, however, when he was suspected of leading the traders into an ambush. In following years Rose took up residence amongst the Omaha Indians where he again established himself in a high-ranking position by dispensing trade goods for favors. He married the daughter of one of the chiefs with whom he had two children.

By the early 1820's, Rose had also learned the Arikara language and was residing with them in North Dakota. In 1823, while serving as a guide and interpreter for William Henry Ashley's expedition up the Missouri River, Ashley disregarded Rose's warnings about an impending Arikara attack. As a result of Arikara depredations, Colonel Henry Leavenworth mounted his 1823 campaign against the Arikara, and Rose served under Leavenworth as interpreter and envoy to the Native Americans in the region. By September 1823, Rose had joined Jedidiah Smith's expedition journeying from the Black Hills to the Rocky Mountains. In 1825, Rose was Colonel Henry Atkinson's interpreter during his Yellowstone expedition.

Shortly after this expedition, Rose resumed residency among the Crows and became a famous war chief. The Crows named him “Nez Coupe,” meaning “Cut Nose,” because his nose was scarred. It is likely that Rose was killed during the winter of 1832-1833. John F.A. Sanford in a letter to General William Clark states that Rose along with two others were killed by Arikaras. Although the exact date of Rose’s death is unclear, some say that he died on the Yellowstone River along with two mountain men as a result of an Arikara attack in 1832 or 1833.

References:

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