



Dr. Daniel Franklin Royer

Dakota Images

Daniel Franklin Royer was the Indian agent on the Pine Ridge Reservation during the tragic Wounded Knee massacre. He was born on 21 March 1851, at Greencastle, Pennsylvania. He attended State Normal School in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania and was graduated from Jefferson Medical School in Philadelphia in 1875.

In 1883 Dr. Royer moved his family to Alpena, South Dakota. In addition to his medical practice, he became postmaster, city treasurer, chairman of the board of education, and coroner of Jerauld County. He represented Jerauld County in the territorial legislature in 1887 and also served in the last session before South Dakota became a state in 1889.

President Harrison appointed Royer to the position of Indian agent at Pine Ridge in 1890, even though Royer was interested in the position of registrar at the land office in Huron. Royer was totally inexperienced and incompetent in Indian affairs and the Indians were quick to perceive his weakness. At this time the Sioux Indians were practicing the Ghost Dance religion. Although cooler heads advised that the Indians be allowed to dance themselves out, Royer panicked and called for troops. The presence of the soldiers resulted in the tragic incident at Wounded Knee. Royer was dismissed on 8 January 1891, less than three months after he had arrived.

In 1896 he moved to Orange, California and became the local surgeon for the Sante Fe, Southern Pacific and Pacific railroads. In 1897 the California Board of Medical Examiners brought charges against Royer for dispensing an excessive amount of narcotic drugs. He was found guilty, but the charges were dismissed because of his advanced age. He died in Long Beach on 27 November 1929, at the age of seventy-eight.

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