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New Biography from State Historical Society Focuses on Red Cloud

PIERRE, S.D.—A larger-than-life figure in the history of the West, Red Cloud is the only American Indian leader who defeated the United States Army in a war.

In “Red Cloud: Oglala Legend,” the latest book from the South Dakota State Historical Society, author John D. McDermott examines the Sioux leader’s rise to prominence, his struggle against cultural domination and the victory that closed the Bozeman Trail in 1868.

“With ‘Red Cloud,’ McDermott has used little-known sources to illuminate the early childhood and worldview of this historical legend who lived during a time of great upheaval for his people,” says Jay D. Vogt, director of the South Dakota State Historical Society.

Born in 1821 in present-day Nebraska, Red Cloud fought to keep non-Indian settlers and the United States military out of his people’s territory in 1866–1868. In what would come to be known as Red Cloud’s War, the chief defeated the army but would alter his tactics from armed resistance to a long-term strategy that included diplomacy.

In his latest book, McDermott goes beyond the Oglala leader’s experience as a warrior and focuses on his time as a statesman. Chronicling his diplomatic trips to the United States Capitol, the author examines Red Cloud’s vision for maintaining Oglala life and culture.

McDermott is a research historian who has written numerous articles and books on western history, including “Red Cloud’s War: The Bozeman Trail, 1866–1868” (2011). Now residing in Rapid City, McDermott served as a historian for the National Park Service and a policy director for the President’s Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. He will be speaking at the South Dakota Festival of Books in Deadwood this September. More information about the festival can be found at sdbookfestival.com.

“Red Cloud: Oglala Legend” is the fourth book in the South Dakota Biography Series. It is available for \$14.95, plus shipping and tax. Published by the South Dakota Historical Society Press, the biography series highlights the state’s most prominent residents. Titles from the series can be purchased from most bookstores or ordered directly from the South Dakota Historical Society Press. Visit www.sdhspress.com or call (605) 773-6009.

The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Education. The State Historical Society, an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.