

“In 1854, a recent West Point graduate, Army Lieutenant John Grattan, became involved in what is known as the Mormon cow incident. Grattan boasted that given thirty men, he could subdue the entire Lakota nation. He rode into Conquering Bear’s camp with thirty men to punish the people for butchering a stray Mormon’s cow that had wandered into their camp. Conquering Bear refused to give up the guest in his camp who had shot and butchered the Mormon’s cow. He explained that it was a misunderstanding, and he offered compensation to the Mormon with his choice of Conquering Bear’s horses. When negotiations broke down and Conquering Bear turned to leave, the troops began shooting into the tipis and shot Conquering Bear. He later died from the wounds. In retaliation for the shooting of Conquering Bear, the warriors attacked Grattan and his men, leaving the bragging Grattan lying in the dust.”

Craig Howe, Lydia Whirlwind Soldier, and Lanniko L. Lee, eds., *He Sapa Woihanble: Black Hills Dreams* (St. Paul: Living Justice Press, 2011)

This story, often referred to as “the Mormon cow incident,” provides damning evidence for both the abuse of power and the value of a stray cow over the lives of Lakota people.