

SOULE KINDRED OF AMERICA

PRESENTS

SHADOW-CATCHER

A Collection of Rare 19th Century Indian Photographs



by

WILLIAM STINSON SOULE

1868 – 1875

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William, or Will, Soule took his historic Indian photographs between 1868 and 1875 while clerking at military forts and serving as official photographer at the newly established army post, Fort Sill, deep in Indian Territory.

His photos of Indians in the area—Kiowas, Apaches, Cheyenne, Wichitas, Caddos, Arapahoes and Comanches—is the first known single collection of Indian photographs and one of a very few to record Indians not yet living on reservations. They precede Edward Curtis' photos by thirty years.

Soule photos were taken at a time when Indian tribes were in a fierce struggle against whites and many had been relocated to Oklahoma. The Sand Creek and Washita Massacres of the plains tribes were recent and some of his subjects were prisoners captured by General George Armstrong Custer. Yet the Indians, who called photographers “shadow-catchers” appear to be willing subjects. It was not long after these photos were taken that the Indian life he captured vanished.

A descendant of Mayflower pilgrim George Soule, Will was born August 28, 1836, in Turner, Maine, and raised on a farm. He learned the photographic trade from his elder brother, John P. Soule, founder of the Soule Photogenic Company in Boston. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Will enlisted in the 13th Massachusetts Infantry. He was wounded at Antietam and served out the war in the Invalid Corps.

In 1867, when a fire destroyed the photo studio in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where he was employed, Will moved west in an effort to improve his health. He found work as a clerk in the sutler's store at Fort Dodge, Kansas. A year later he moved on to Camp Supply and then to Fort Sill.