

# Crying Hill

Rising up from the surrounding plains, Crying Hill dominates the Mandan and Missouri River Valley skylines, now as it has throughout human history. Sought out by Plains Indians centuries ago as a place for prayer, protection, and solitude, the rising ridge continues as an epic place to bring regional identification, recreational activities, and spiritual identification to generation after generation of Mandan residents.

Contrary to an incorrect modern myth that states that Crying Hill was a point from which mothers and wives watched to see if their sons and husbands were among returning warriors (/c/ the Mandan Indians were agrarian), the name Crying Hill derives from its centuries-old recognition as a sacred place; a natural cathedral to where the Mandans and later cultures could go to “Cry Onto the Lord” - to beseech, ask for guidance, and seek solace – with a spirit common across all faiths.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, the site is most closely linked to the Mandans, one of eight distinct tribes which for centuries have lived within the modern-day boundaries of North Dakota. Mandan tradition describes a route of migration from a southerly location, near the Gulf of Mexico, northward, following the Missouri river. While Mandan men hunted buffalo, women farmed crops such as corn, beans, turnips, squash, pumpkins and sunflowers.<sup>2</sup>

A Mandan settlement formed at the base of Crying Hill, known alternatively as the village of “Good Fur Robe” or “Scattered Village.” A few anthropologists and archaeologists have argued that Good Fur Robe, namesake of the settlement, was a “mythological cultural hero of the Mandans who was involved in the origins of many sacred ceremonies” which formed the core of Mandan spiritual life. Regardless, a June 1998 discovery of the remains of Scattered Village at the base of Crying Hill, with subsequent archaeological excavation, research, and analysis completed by the PaleoCultural Research Group of Flagstaff, AZ<sup>3</sup> identified Crying Hill as holding undeniable importance in the establishment of the Mandan community.

Several insightful archaeological digs and studies, numbering hundreds of pages of research, analysis, and conclusion, are on file in the North Dakota Department of Transportation and State Historical Center’s archives.

Per a June 21, 1981 Bismarck Tribune historical article by Stan Stelter:

“Mandan’s founding generally is linked to the growth of the railroad westward in the late 1800’s, but its roots are much deeper. The area was once occupied by ancestors

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<sup>1</sup> Regional Native American Oral History, Mandan, ND.

<sup>2</sup> *Manatani: History of Mandan and Martin County*, (Mandan, ND: Mandan Chamber of Commerce, 1964), 4-5.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.dot.nd.gov/manuals/environmental/scatteredvillage/tocpreface.pdf>

of the Mantani, or Mandan Indians, who reportedly occupied the land hundreds of years ago, apparently moving in from the southeastern United States. The Indians had a

sedentary type of culture and maintained a life of hunting, gardening, and fishing along the Missouri River bottomlands.<sup>4</sup>

“As a result of continuing attacks from a nomadic tribe, the Mantani – a Dakota word for riverbank dwellers – began drawing together near the confluence of the Heart and Missouri rivers around 1600.<sup>5</sup>

“One historian estimates the Mandan population at the mouth of the Heart in 1700 at 8,000. Historians say one of those settlements was made by Good Fur Robe. It was called “The Crying Hill” because a nearby hilltop –reportedly the hilltop in the eastern portion of present-day Mandan – was used as a mourning place.<sup>6</sup>

“The village also was known as “Two Faced Stone” for the outcropping of granite, serving as the source for a mystical experience by the medicine man. In 1738, in one of his visions, he foresaw visitors from the north, according to historical accounts. That coincides with the earliest recorded visit to the area by a white man, Sieure de la Verendrye, and his son. While exploring the Louisiana Purchase territory, the Frenchman arrived in the area thought to be the present site of the (then) Amoco Oil Co. refinery on Mandan’s northeast edge. More than a hundred years passed, however, before white settlement began.”<sup>7</sup>

From this and subsequent outlying villages, the Mandan continued to make pilgrimages to Crying Hill, one of three recorded sacred hills in the region. One common reason was that the Mandan visited Crying Hill and other sacred sites when coping with fertility. The Mandan believed in the concept of “rebirth”—that children who had died in infancy, before being named, returned to these sacred sites, awaiting a new parent. Thus, a childless mother might come to Crying Hill to pray for a child.

According to Mandan tradition, if she desired a girl, she would carry with her girl’s clothing and a ball; if she desired a son, she would bring with her a small bow and arrow. The Mandan believed that at Crying Hill and other similar sites, children selected their mothers

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<sup>4</sup> [http://bismarcktribune.com/gallery/north-dakota-history-in-photos-mandan/collection\\_efe58106-050f-11e7-8571-ffedd30bdd47.html#2](http://bismarcktribune.com/gallery/north-dakota-history-in-photos-mandan/collection_efe58106-050f-11e7-8571-ffedd30bdd47.html#2)

<sup>5</sup> [http://bismarcktribune.com/gallery/north-dakota-history-in-photos-mandan/collection\\_efe58106-050f-11e7-8571-ffedd30bdd47.html#2](http://bismarcktribune.com/gallery/north-dakota-history-in-photos-mandan/collection_efe58106-050f-11e7-8571-ffedd30bdd47.html#2)

<sup>6</sup> [http://bismarcktribune.com/gallery/north-dakota-history-in-photos-mandan/collection\\_efe58106-050f-11e7-8571-ffedd30bdd47.html#2](http://bismarcktribune.com/gallery/north-dakota-history-in-photos-mandan/collection_efe58106-050f-11e7-8571-ffedd30bdd47.html#2)

<sup>7</sup> [http://bismarcktribune.com/gallery/north-dakota-history-in-photos-mandan/collection\\_efe58106-050f-11e7-8571-ffedd30bdd47.html#2](http://bismarcktribune.com/gallery/north-dakota-history-in-photos-mandan/collection_efe58106-050f-11e7-8571-ffedd30bdd47.html#2)

“when desiring to be born into the tribe.”<sup>8</sup> Additional renditions indicate that pregnant women would go to Crying Hill to pray for a boy.<sup>9</sup>

Crying Hill was also used for mourning purposes. The bodies of deceased Mandans were wrapped in buffalo robes, carried to Crying Hill, and mourned by their family and neighbors before being buried at the site<sup>10</sup> who were not buried in the modern sense, but were “dressed and wrapped in a new buffalo hide, and set upon scaffolds, a little higher than anybody in the tribe could reach, with the feet of the deceased facing east. Then, when the scaffolds collapsed from wear, the family would pick up the skull of the skeleton, and place it among other skulls, in a circle 8 or 9 inches apart from each other.”<sup>11</sup>

“You could see the women with their sewing materials or a hide that needs tanning, going out to the plain to spend a better part of the day conversing with the bones of their deceased like they are really there in person. Then when dark falls, or when they are done conversing, they go back to their lodge to come back another day.”<sup>12</sup> This tradition is similar to families who visit loved ones in cemeteries today, occasionally taking with them a blanket, chair, or book.

In the late 1970s, excavations by a local contractor unearthed bones predating the year 1700, seeming to confirm accounts of Crying Hill as a “common burial area,” according to archeologist Nick Franke of the North Dakota State Historical Society.<sup>13</sup>

Other regional ethnic groups have incorporated Crying Hill into their daily and spiritual lives. Anthropologists have uncovered evidence of the Crying Hill’s use by the Hidatsas, another local tribe on sometimes tenuous terms with the neighboring Mandan,<sup>14</sup> as well as the use of Crying Hill by members of the Lakota, Dakota and Arikara ethnic groups as a site for ritual and prayer.<sup>15</sup>

As Crying Hill was coming into its heyday, European-descent explorers made contact with Mandan-region Native Americans and their accounts shed vital evidence on life around Crying Hill.

In December 1738, an expeditionary force led by Canadian-born French trader Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de La Vérendrye reached Mandan villages near Crying Hill. A group of eight men, led by one of Vérendrye’s sons, visited a Mandan village called “The Mortar” located four miles north of modern-day Mandan, then moving south to a village nearer Crying Hill.

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<sup>8</sup> Alfred W. Bowers, *Mandan Social and Ceremonial Organization*, (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press, 1950, reprint, 1991), 60.

<sup>9</sup> “Hill has a rich history,” *Bismarck Tribune*, June 10, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> “Hill has a rich history,” *Bismarck Tribune*, June 10, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> <http://mandanindians.weebly.com/religion.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/jeff/learn/historyculture/mandan-and-hidatsa.htm>

<sup>13</sup> “Bones Likely Prehistoric,” *Bismarck Tribune*, July 19, 1979.

<sup>14</sup> Ahler, “Prehistory on First Street NE,” 1.14-1.16.

<sup>15</sup> “Endangered Landmarks,” *Grand Forks Herald*, May 3, 2008.

Although archaeologists are skeptical that Vérendrye's son visited the "Good Fur Robe" village, what is beyond dispute is his encounter with a Mandan village very near the Crying Hill site.<sup>16</sup>

Nearly 70 years later, in October 1804 the famed Lewis and Clark expedition passed by the original village site at the base of Crying Hill, which had already been abandoned. Walking the western banks of the Missouri river, William Clark viewed the ruins of multiple Mandan villages on both sides of the river, and "Scattered Village" at the base of Crying Hill was almost certainly among them.<sup>17</sup> Recordings of such possible visits appear in the Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in their entry of 19th October Friday 1804:

"Near one of those knolls, on a point of a hill 90 feet above the lower plain I observed the remains of an old village, [NB: high, strong, watchtower &c.] which had been fortified, the Indian Chief with us tells me a party of Mandans lived there. Here first saw ruins of Mandan nation."<sup>18</sup> (William Clark)

## THE MANDAN SIGN

As non-Native settlers continued to push west and into the Missouri River valley, and particularly with the founding of Mandan in 1872 by Frederic Gerard, a Trader and later a Scout for George Custer, white settlers assumed the area as their own.<sup>19</sup>

In June 1934, Mandan Boy Scouts constructed a "MaNDan" sign on the southern slopes of Crying Hill. The capitalized letters spanned 70 feet tall, and the entire word was 300 feet in width.

As described by the Mandan Historical Society:<sup>20</sup>

"... "Crying Hill" has welcomed visitors and returning residents with its notation for over 50 years. The landmark is comprised of three separate features; (1) concrete letters denoting the city's name on the northeast face of the hill; (2) the word 'Mandan' spelled out in trees on the south face of the hill; and (3) the hill itself, a sacred place culturally important to the Native American population."

and again:<sup>21</sup>

"In the days before GPS coordinates and radio navigation aids, the forerunner to

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 1.10-1.12; La Vérendrye, *The Publications of the Chaplain Society Journals of La Verendrye*, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1927), 331-341; Ken Rogers, "Workers uncover Mandan artifacts," *Bismarck Tribune*, July 18, 1998; Mike McCleary, "New facts unearthed," *Bismarck Tribune*, October 17, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition 1804-1806*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1904), 199-202.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/jeff/learn/historyculture/mandan-and-hidatsa.htm>

<sup>19</sup> [http://bismarcktribune.com/gallery/north-dakota-history-in-photos-mandan/collection\\_efe58106-050f-11e7-8571-ffedd30bdd47.html#2](http://bismarcktribune.com/gallery/north-dakota-history-in-photos-mandan/collection_efe58106-050f-11e7-8571-ffedd30bdd47.html#2)

<sup>20</sup> "Mandan Hill - 501 N Mandan Ave," <http://www.mandanhistory.org/arealandmarks/mandanhill.html>.

<sup>21</sup> "Mandan Hill - 501 N Mandan Ave," <http://www.mandanhistory.org/arealandmarks/mandanhill.html>.

the ND State Aeronautical Commission encouraged rural areas to denote their community's name on water towers and hillsides to assist airplane pilots in identifying their location during cross-country flights. Another version of the truth attributes the practice to plain civic pride.

“Culminating two years of intermittent work and spearheaded by Mandan Pioneer newspaperman Edwin D. Tostevin. The sign was suggested by Tostevin in 1932 during a meeting of the Mandan Lions Club. The Mandan Boy Scouts completed a 300 foot long by 70 foot high sign on the south side of Mandan's Crying Hill in June 1934. Mandan's layout features the two middle characters as upper case letters 85 feet high to represent the abbreviation of North Dakota.

“The project involved forty-seven truckloads of rock which area business sponsors had delivered to the base of the hill. The stones were collected from fields around the city. The Boy Scouts applied more than 12 gallons of white paint to the stones to brighten the letters before hauling and placing the rocks. The local Boy and Girls Scouts maintained the sign for more than 30 years.

“In August 1963, eight gallons of paint and 12-hours of effort by the Mandan Jaycees members went into rehabbing the sign. A second line consisting of white painted railroad timbers was added to promote the Custer Drama at Fort Lincoln State Park.

“In June 1959, work was again completed on refurbishing and replacing stones and repainting the sign. Railroad ties were added to the display which denoted "Trail West" to promote the new Custer-based drama debuting at Fort Lincoln State Park in July 1959. The project was sponsored by the Mandan Jaycees with member Larry Sullivan serving as project chairman.

“With the construction of Interstate 94 on the north side of the hill in 1968, the original white-colored sign was transferred from the hill's southern side to the east side in 1987 to be viewed by approaching traffic. Instead of using stones, large concrete rectangles were constructed. This designed was expected to discourage vandals from removing stones and/or destroying the letters.

“The marker is the largest sign in North Dakota.

“Trees were planted in the late 1990s across the original location of the sign, i.e. the southern face of the hill, also spelling out "MANDAN."<sup>22</sup>

Crying Hill, with its highly visible “MaNDan” sign, continue to hold enduring cultural, social, and spiritual significance for both Native American and non-Native populations, as well as serve as a source of community heritage and pride.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.mandanhhistory.org/arealandmarks/mandanhill.html>

## CURRENT AND CONTINUING USE

Several contemporary Christian congregations, prayer groups, and youth organizations regularly use Crying Hill for sporting, spiritual, and outdoor activities, and it continues to be researched, written about, and included in numerous personal postings and professional journals.

Most recently, an early-morning prayer service was held on Crying Hill on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017, and involved participants from several states. A much larger activity organized by the Native American Development Center (NADC) requested permission to use Crying Hill, also in August of 2017, but planning for this activity was moved indoors to the North Dakota Heritage Center due to forecasted inclement weather.

Until recently, regional tourist maps encouraged visitors to “Climb Crying Hill”, and different community volunteer days and groups have slated this culturally-important yet still private property for activity.

## OWNERSHIP

By far, most people in the Mandan and surrounding communities, and those who pass by on Interstate 94, assume that Crying Hill is municipal, city park board, or state land. It is not, and in fact its owner has been removed from the land by Mandan City Police, who believed he was trespassing on city land.

In late May 2003, North Dakota-native Patrick Atkinson was receiving routine physical therapy for an injury he suffered in a 1984 car bombing in El Salvador, when he learned from his physical therapist that Crying Hill, a Native American heritage site, was slated for sale and eventual commercial development.

A quick drive brought him to the very site, where he saw ample evidence of the site’s religious significance. Sage had been planted and cared for, while piles of prayer stones, sometimes stacked five stones high, beseeched an unknown individual’s prayer. Still, he had the lingering question—was it relevant in the 21st century?

His son Ernesto Atkinson, now a family therapist in Chicago and Milwaukee, and a professional artist, is of Mayan-Cakchiquel Native American descent, and told him it was. Ernesto convinced his father that the site was home to a centuries’ old religious heritage that should be preserved for future generations, and that it was a birthplace for the entire regional community.

Atkinson then met with then-Mayor Ken Lamont, who encouraged Atkinson in the purchase of the land with the idea that Atkinson would gift the land to the people of Mandan, through a donation of the land to the Mandan Park Board or the City of Mandan. Atkinson purchased the nearly five-acre property.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Sue Bartholomew, “Saving Crying Hill,” *The Mandan News*, June 2, 2003; Frederic Smith, “More Magic: Crying Hill Site,” *The Bismarck Tribune*, July 1, 2003.

Soon after Atkinson's May 2003 purchase of Crying Hill, he founded The Crying Hill Foundation, as a 501(c)3 non-profit community organization dedicated to preserving the site. The Foundation's mission statement articulated the unique opportunity Crying Hill offered to "develop and promote Native American awareness, and works and activities of charity that will

improve the family, economic, educational, spiritual, physical and cultural situation of the community, children and their families."<sup>24</sup> The Foundation's plans made for headline news throughout the region, receiving generally positive reviews. "The more 'magic' places in a city, the better," opined the *Bismarck Tribune* editorial board.<sup>25</sup>

However, Atkinson's plans to preserve Crying Hill for public use were not met with universal praise. Pre-arranged efforts to donate the land to the City of Mandan and the Mandan Park Board were turned down after campaigning by a few neighboring property-owners, who stated it would disrupt their "idea of solitude"<sup>26</sup>. So too was the construction of a federally-funded surface trail, complete with landmark identifiers and benches, along Crying Hill's ridge.

By October 2003, the proposed trail up and across the Crying Hill property Atkinson had purchased with personal funds and a bank loan to donate to the people of Mandan had fallen in priority, according to a funding ranking schedule provided by the North Dakota Department of Transportation.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, the preservation of Crying Hill—which had months' earlier seemed inevitable—was placed on the back-burner. Five years later, in 2008, the site was listed among a group of endangered historic landmarks in North Dakota.<sup>28</sup>

Today, Crying Hill remains in as much danger as ever. Major residential development is planned for most of Crying Hill; a failure to preserve the historical southeast corner of Crying Hill, with its MaNDaN sign and forest, would be devastating to the local cultural, recreational, and spiritual heritage. As the editorial board of the *Bismarck Tribune* so aptly remarked, Crying Hill is a "magic place." For now, Atkinson maintains the land open and respectfully posted with:

Centuries of deep and ponderous human interaction among several centuries and cultures have given Crying Hill this regional identification. While Crying Hill can be lost forever with the stroke of one pen; the magical appeal it possesses and has given the Mandan community for centuries never to be regained.

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<sup>24</sup> Sue Bartholomew, "Atkinson creates foundation for preservation of Crying Hill," *The Morton County & Mandan News*, May 29, 2003.

<sup>25</sup> "More mgic: Crying Hill site," *Bismarck Tribune*, July 1, 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Virginia Grantier, "Proposed trail threatens privacy, homeowner says," *Bismarck Tribune*, August 23, 2003.

<sup>27</sup> Virginia Grantier, "Proposed Crying Hill trail ranked low on funding list," *Bismarck Tribune*, October 31, 2003.

<sup>28</sup> "Endangered Landmarks," *Grand Forks Herald*, May 3, 2008.

As then-mayor Ken Lamont wrote in 2003 when Patrick Atkinson began the effort to preserve as much of Crying Hill as was possible for the people of Mandan,<sup>29</sup>

"There is a strong sense of community in our area with a deep respect for its history. Crying Hill carries a significant role in that history. It represents an important part of tradition and culture to the Native American community, our very first citizens.

"Patrick Atkinson's efforts to preserve the eastern ridge of Crying Hill and efforts to share its significance with future generations plays an importance beyond comprehension to creating understanding of the Native American culture and tradition.

"It is our responsibility to generate avenues for awareness. I want my grandchildren to understand, more importantly appreciate, the influences and contributions of the Native American people."

Crying Hill has transitioned with the ages and today continues to meet the social, local identity, recreational, and spiritual needs of many different generations, groups, and cultures.

Unchanged yet always changing through the ages, Crying Hill is, quite simply, an epic representation for the Mandan community.

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<sup>29</sup> Ken LaMont, 2003, "A Reflection on Preserving Our Culture and Our Heritage," <http://cryinghill.org>. Accessed August 27, 2017.



## APPENDIX A: The Posting on Crying Hill

The southeast corner of Crying Hill, which includes sixty percent of the east-facing MaNDan sign and the south-facing MANDAN forest, is private property. Over the years, the owner has been approached by various groups, including Christian religious organizations and out-of-state Native American tribes, inquiring acquiring this property.



Crying Hill is currently posted (and these signs disappear almost as fast as they go up):

# Crying Hill

- A Regional Native American Heritage Place -

**This land is private property.**

**Respectful recreational trespass for exercise, relaxation, spirituality, or education allowed by owner (NDCC 53-08-01)**

**Please be considerate of any signs of all forms of worship, and of Native American tradition.**

**No hunting, fires, vehicle trespass, plant cuttings, or land alterations permitted.**

**This land is not maintained and contains animals and animal nests, hidden holes, stones, loose soil, and other obstacles.**

**To learn more about this historic land, visit:  
[www.CryingHill.com](http://www.CryingHill.com)**



## **APPENDIX B:**

### **A Sampling of Quotes from Area Residents About Crying Hill**



Regina Schanandore, known as 'Eagle Plume Woman', and her brother Carl Whitman, chairman of the Three Affiliated Tribes, circa 1950.

by Monica Comeau

My family, the Schanandores, moved to Mandan, North Dakota in 1951. I can recall how my mother, Regina Schanandore, a well-known and respected woman of Mandan Indian descent, was always concerned about Crying Hill and the encroachment of homes being built closer and closer to that vicinity. It was with oral tradition that my mother and Indian elders knew that the site was sacred to them, and it was an aspect of the past that you won't necessarily find in a history book.

The pioneers who built the town of Mandan knew of the existence of Crying Hill and they called it as such. When the controversy arose regarding the extensiveness of economic development creeping towards Crying Hill, concerned residents approached my family and expressed their knowledge of what they had been told orally by their grandparents and others of the past generations about the Hill. Again, this is oral tradition from even the people of Mandan who are not of Indian descent. They too were concerned and respected the sacredness of the area and did not want to see its obliteration.

Because of the numerous Indian villages that existed along the Missouri River, we can assume there were many such sacred hills, but today we do not know where they are located. However, with Crying Hill in Mandan, we literally know of its existence and can revisit and memorialize the

site.

I am pleased and grateful to you for your generosity in making the effort to preserve it. Hopefully, in the end my mother's concern about Crying Hill will be, metaphorically speaking, laid to rest.



Mandan Indian  
family collecting  
buffalo berries



Mandan Indian  
buffalo dance  
costume



Arikara medicine fraternity  
prayer



Hidatsa mythic stone

\* \* \* \* \*



Crow's Heart, of  
the Mandan  
Indian tribe



Mandan bull-  
boat



Mandan "buffalo  
dancer"

## .....REMEMBERING CRYING HILL.....

by Nancy Feist

Having lived in this area all of my life, I grew up knowing about a local hill that we all called Mandan Hill. Nevertheless, the only real connection I had with it during all these years was just reading the words MANDAN every time I drove by - first on the highway, then on the interstate. The majesty of this regional landmark gave me the wonderful familiar feeling of being only a few miles from home.

Within the last few months, however, I have become aware that Mandan Hill is also called Crying Hill. In fact, it has been known as Crying Hill for hundreds of years. It is not just a hill with a word on it. It is a hill with rich history and a beautiful heritage. It is a hill with a profound meaning and a sincere message to those willing to listen.

I have recently been spending a lot of time at Crying Hill, and have had the opportunity to meet and visit with people who have had a personal or family connection to that majestic part of God's land. I now see it through different eyes.

Crying Hill is a place that we need to preserve for so many reasons. We can enjoy learning about the hill's cultural heritage, or simply sit at the top and listen to nature. I've seen an eagle flying overhead, and heard the wind whispering through the tall grass below me. The sun has set as I've looked out over the Missouri River valley. The experience is personal to each person who visits there... this is just one of the many wonderful things about Crying Hill.

This is a wonderful place to visit with family, friends, your children, and where you can be alone.....



Mandan Indian  
family collecting  
buffalo berries



Mandan Indian  
buffalo dance  
costume

Suzie (Helvig) O'Gorman

I grew up in Mandan and although I didn't know a lot of history about the hill, when I was younger, I had a family memory of my own. My dad was the one who put in the MANDAN sign on the side. I remember being up there when I was around 8 years old and looking at the view.

I remember baking a cake for my dad and his workers and delivering it to him on the side of the hill. It has always been something I can show my kids when we go back. I am very proud of what he did and I thank you for preserving that location. It really would have been a shame to develop that land.

Thank you for your interest in preserving our city's past and letting our kids experience a place of peace.



Mandan Indian  
cutting rushes  
along the  
Missouri River



Mandan offering  
a buffalo skull  
offering



Mandan girl



Mandan earthen  
lodge

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by Vi Eckroth

My sister sent to me the information on Crying Hill via the web site [www.cryinghill.com](http://www.cryinghill.com) and BismarckTribune article.

I was born and raised in the state of North Dakota. I lived in Mandan for 21 years and 13 years of those years I lived right below Mandan Hill on 13th Avenue. My 4 children love the memories of sledding down that hill during the Winter months. My husband, who grew up in Mandan, also



has his stories and memories of - the hill.

I am writing to you, first of all, to thank you for taking the initiative and time to preserve this great part of history in Mandan. It is a very important, but often neglected, part of the Native American history which Mandan should embrace as it's namesake.

Thank you for preserving Crying Hill and it's history for the future of our people.

Win ja Waste

Thursday, June 12, 2003

I've talked with several of our people from Newtown, ND and they are very thankful to you. One particular old Indian woman, as I told her about the interest you had and Crying Hill, she got very teary eyed, put her head down, then looked at me, held my hand and said, 'Waste' which means....'Good'.

She was at a loss for words; she was very happy that this site had a chance of being saved.



Eagle Plume Woman overlooking North Dakota's Missouri River south of Crying Hill, Mandan, ND



Scattered Corn Woman, of the Mandans



Mandan ready for Okipe buffalo dance pipe



Mandan Indian bathing in the Missouri River

Craig (from Mandan, ND)

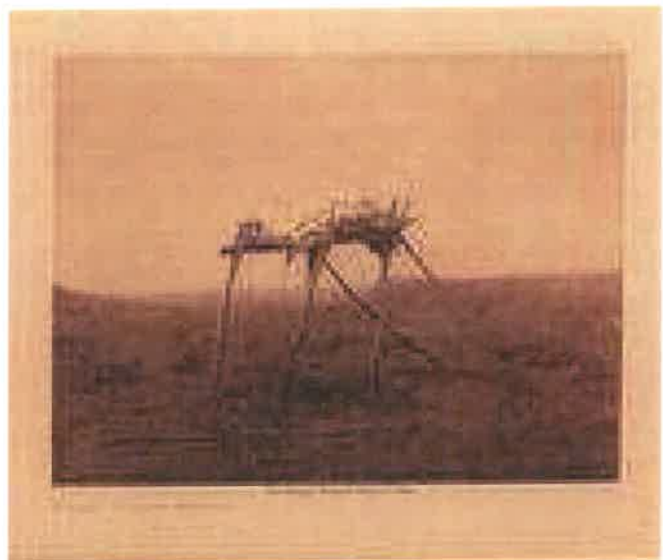
I was born in Mandan. My parents bought a house on the hill in 1979 and we sold the place in 2000-2001. I wish we hadn't since it was the most interesting place in the world for me. I understood that land and still understand this land!

I'm sure some people think I'm the craziest person in town. I have had numerous spiritual experiences up on the hill, had high school parties there, and grazed the land like my own herd seeking something I can't explain. Now that I'm older I've started to recognize this. It helped me become the person that I am.

The Hill saved my life. How? I don't know. I can't explain it. I just believe it! Please preserve this land for it is one of Mandan's last oasis.



Crying unto the spirits



Apsaroke burial platform  
similar to those done on Crying Hill

Caroline Conrath, Mandan

On visits to Bismarck, I make it a point on returning to stop at Custer Park to visit the grand eagle sculpture there. I have been giving a lot of thought to where it could be better displayed, so as to be seen far and wide.

Recently I read Sue Bartholomew's write-up in the Mandan News, Aug 7<sup>th</sup>, "Off to a good start – Crying Hill Trail" and I quote her first and third paragraphs:

"Crying Hill was here long before you and me. It was here before the civilizations of the Mandan, Arikara, and Hidatsa that walked before us, and the people before them. It will be here long after we are gone."

"And you can see forever when standing at the top of Crying Hill. Like a bird riding the currents of prairie wind, you can see miles up and down the Missouri River, from the University of Mary to Fort Lincoln to Chief Looking's Village to Double Ditch."

**APPENDIX C:**  
**A Sampling of Articles and Public Blogs about Crying Hill**  
**1924 Mandan Daily Pioneer Crying Hill article<sup>30</sup>**

**MANDAN DAILY**  
**PIONEER** MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 14, 1924

**"GOOD FUR BLANKET" WAS MAYOR OF  
MANDAN IN 1738—PROOF IS FOUND  
OF ANCIENT CITY ON PRESENT SITE**  
COMING OF VERENDRYE, DESCRIBED BY HISTORIAN WHO  
POINTS OUT LOCATION OF  
"TWO FACED STONE"  
Indian Name for Village, Now  
White Man's Mandan "Crying Hill"  
LOCATION OF FIVE "MANDAN" TOWNS 200 YEARS AGO  
READ BY SIGNS LEFT ON THE  
HILLSIDES TODAY

(By Major A. B. Welch)

On the morning of the 21st of December, in the year 1738, A. D., a strange figure stood erect upon the highest point of the hills, where now stand the Municipal Waterworks reservoir of Mandan and the Morton County Court House. A heavy buffalo robe was draped across his left shoulder and was caught up closely beneath his right and hung over his arm, which was bare; the robe was decorated upon the inner side which he wore to the weather, with brilliant paintings of his dreams; upon his feet he wore moccasins embellished with the design of the turtle, done in porcupine quills, and the upper part of them formed a leggings which reached to the knees and were tightly bound with buckskin thongs and under the robe, around his waist was a girdle of elk hide and tucked under this he wore a narrow strip of softly tanned doe skin, which passed between his limbs and hung down in the front and back, nearly to his knees.

In one hand he carried a rattle made of the hoofs of the antelope

and bound together low down between the eyes. This man was Mad Soul, the Medicine Man of the Mandan Indians, and there was a look of great interest upon the face of this old Indian as he turned and looked down upon the sleeping village of Good Fur Blanket, the Mandan chief, which was still in the shadow of the early dawn.

**First Mandan City**

This Mandan Village was the village of "The Crying Hill," so called after the mourning place of the inhabitants, upon the high, well known landmark just to the north of the lodges. The Gros Ventre, who lived at that time with the Mandans, called it sometimes "The Two Faced Stone Place." This Indian village occupied the same ground now covered with the residences of east Mandan, and was a fortified stronghold, impregnable to Indians who stormed it, being protected by strong palisades and ditches on its exposed sides and, according to Verendrye, the first white visitor to penetrate to this point, contained some 250 well built huts or lodges. The ruins of these lodges

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.welchdakotapapers.com/2011/11/tribal-history-notes-on-the-mandan/#crying-hill-village>



are very plainly located by those familiar with this line of study, and First street at the intersection of Sixth Ave. N. E. cuts directly thru the lodge of the chief, Good Fur Blanket, and which is 65 feet or more in diameter.

Mad Soul, the old Medicine Man, had been in the presence of the Talking Stone since early the evening before and, though the sounds of singing women; the cries of wildly excited warriors in the dance, and the throbs of the drums had come to his ears during the night time, he had listened more attentively to the spirit voices, which came to him from the stone. He had chanted at times, a low song to the Great Mysterious One and finally the sounds of the village had ceased in his ears; the blazing stars of the glorious western skies had died before his staring eyes until finally, complete-

ly enraptured with the influences which surrounded him, he lay inert by the side of the Holy Two Face Stone, upon the summit of the Crying Hill, as the heights of the present court house hill were called 186 years ago.

#### Stone Still Intact

This stone was a mass of dark red granite, smoothed by the action of

glacial flood and ice, and narrow seams of grayish quartz criss-crossed upon its surface. These seams, to the imaginative mind of the Mandan Indians, assumed strange and

fantastic shapes and forms. In the ever varying conditions of light and shadow no one ever saw the same symbols there but once. Sometimes

they took form as of tracks of birds; at other times the marks of elk or buffalo or bear were seen; a tipi, an arrow, an eagle; and, in those strange tracings Mad Soul the Medicine Man and other wise men of the people believed they could foretell the future events of their tribe or of individuals. Especially was this true when strange whisperings and soft bell-like tones; sharp reports and sybil-lant hissings and sounds as when the sod teems with a swarm of insect things, came from the Talking Stone to the expectant senses of the listener, until words of his own tongue came to him in "the voices of people long dead," and often the self-hypnotized Indian remained in a semi-conscious state for a long period of time.

Many of these so-called holy stones are to be found in North Dakota and in this vicinity. The particular stone called the "Two Faced Stone" is still in its original position and was so called because no one but a very pure man could lift it—all others, no matter how strong

they were in bodily vigor, failed in such an attempt. Tradition has it that there was at one time a Mandan man who was so pure and holy that he often carried this stone around the camp in his extended hand, but rumor now has it that no Mandan man has been able to move it since the passing of this good man of the tribes.



Red Shield, the Herald, was loudly calling the program of the day thru the village, and the night herd guards were riding in from the grassy meadows of the river as the Mad Soul passed through the palisade gate and went directly to the lodge of the Good Fur Blanket, who listened intently to his tale.

"A cousin had appeared to him while he lay by the side of the Talking Stone on the top of the Crying Hill; a cousin who had met death while crossing the great river at the time of the spring running of ice. He had shown him strange things; eight white men were coming from the north with a beautiful cloth held aloft at the end of a slender pole; they were accompanied by several Indians of the Mandans. They were then but a short distance away.

"They had never seen white skinned men before and they thought that they must be very sacred people. They might even be the Lord of Life or the first man, themselves, whom they had not seen since that time when they had delivered the Mandans from their enemies, in the time of their grandfathers. They must be met with ceremony and escorted into the village, where they must be given food and shown much honor."

#### **Council Called**

A council was called. Scouts were dispatched and ordered to ride hard and to watch the river reaches and

lowlands from the highest hills. At the first sign of the expected visitors they were to signal the news back to the village. The chief and wise men would prepare for the reception of the strange but welcome guests, which had been foretold by Mad Soul.

The prophecy of the old diviner was true, for even at that moment the white skinned strangers were setting forth from the Mandan village of "The Mortar," a long league towards the north, with the expectation of reaching the "Valley of the Middle Hole" by the time of the high sun.

#### **At Boley Farm**

The ruins of this village of "The Mortar" are located upon the Boley Farm, some four miles north of this city and the Northern Pacific railway cut is directly through it. In 1738 it must have been an important community of Mandans. According to them, the Heart River flows out of the country of the "Middle Hole" and that is the real reason why it has always been known as the Heart river. It is the only name ever given to that river, except that some few modern engineers and park boards may have named it otherwise for a short season. The ancient inhabitants of Mandan did not name the beautiful river in honor of a heart shaped butte somewhere upon its banks. This river was the familiar habitat of The Lord of Life and The First Man and the place of the creation of land and of all living things, according to Mandan traditions.



## "Good Fur Blanket" Mayor of Man- dan in 1738

(Continued from Page 1)

Verendrye

On the 18th of October, 1738, this party had left the newly constructed trading fort "La Reine," sixty leagues below the forks of the Assiniboine river (the site of the present Portage la Prairie, Manitoba) under the leadership of Pierre Gaultier de Verendrye, Sieur de la Verendrye, who was commissioned by "The Marquis de Beauharnois, Commander of the Military Order of St. Louis, Governor and Lieutenant General of the Whole of New France, Lands and Country of Louisiana," with headquarters at Quebec, for the discovery of the Western Sea.

Early in December the large party arrived at a Mandan village or "Port" which was probably not far from the lower loop of the Souris or Mouse river, but the exact spot is not carefully described in the Journal of the expedition and a study of the distances travelled and the directions followed leaves room for doubt as to its location. However, here the village was inspected and found to be a fortified community of 120 huts or lodges and the Mandan chief said that there were five others on the Missouri, even larger.

The members of the expedition accepted ceremonies at this village for several days and at last, the elder Verendrye became too ill to advance further, but on December the 15th, he sent forward to the five villages in the vicinity of the Heart River the expedition which was now, on the 21st of December, 1738, nearing the

"Port" of the Mandan chief, Good Fur Blanket.

This noted chief was of normal birth, but attained to full size tremendous strength and mental wisdom within a very short time. Tradition credits him with the performance of many almost miraculous feats of strength and bravery. But it

is believed to be a fact that this man was an actual person and the principal chief at the time of Verendrye's visit.

News of the near approach of the strangers had been signalled to the village and the principal chief and his headmen went forward to meet them.

### Met at Mandan

The meeting took place upon the flat plain north of the "Crying Hill" where the Riverside cemetery is now. The chevalier took the hand of Good Fur Blanket in friendship and presented him with some tobacco and a knife and said "I have come from a long distance to make you my friend and will speak to your people when we arrive at their fort." The chief then gave him some corn on the ear and some tobacco also and, saying that he travelled in peace to meet the strangers, caused his men to carry the chevalier upon a robe, to the village where they went to the chief's lodge.

Here they were honored and feasted by the good people of Mandan for four days and the record says that "they did not cease going to the feasts." They also made visits of ceremony to the other nearby Mandan villages. The first one to the south of a permanent nature was called "The Young Man's Village," and was an extensive community

situated upon what is now called the Molsiff farm. At that time this village was well protected by high earthworks and deep ditches, which are still to be seen in the pasture east of the barn and silo, where they have been untouched by the implements of husbandry.

To the south of the "Young Man's Village" was another important community of the Mandan Indians. This was named "The Village of the Long-Sided Lodges," on account of the fact that these lodges were erected upon a sloping hillside and the interior was then excavated on the upper side to make a flat floor inside. This was probably the principal Mandan settlement and the journals of the expedition say that "these five



villages were all larger than the one where they visited first," and where the elder Verendrye had been detained by illness, and that the last one was the largest of any." Inasmuch as there is but one village site to the south of this one, and the indications are that it was not a large place, it is thought that the one at the mouth of the present Heart River and where old Fort Abraham Lincoln was built, 134 years after, was the last village at which they called.

#### Old Fort Lincoln

The one mentioned as being south of "The Looped Village" was called "Birds Hill Hill," and was located upon the flat to the east of the ed upon the flat to the east of the line of high hills, just north of the Little Heart River, and along the banks of the Missouri river. Mandan traditions say that it was on these hills that the nation was saved from "The Flood" which covered the entire world. In token of this event every Mandan village since that undetermined time has caused to be set up in the middle of the community a "Memorial to the Flood" the last one of which is now standing at the village of the Mandan Chief Crow Heart, at the mouth of the Little Missouri river. Around these "Memorials" were performed the terrible tortures of the Dance or Feast of the Okeeps, which has been so tragically described by Catlin, who visited them in 1832.

Lewis and Clark make mention of all of these villages which have been named in this article, as being ruins when they passed them in the fall of 1804, and that expedition camped on the night of Sunday, the 21st of October of that year, about two miles south of the Motliff farm, where they "saw great numbers of elk, deer, goats (antelope) and buffalo and the usual attendants of these last, the wolves, who follow their movements and feed upon those who die by ac-

cident or who are too poor to keep pace with the herd; we also wounded a white bear and saw some fresh tracks of these animals, which are twice as large as the track of a man." Of the village at the Fort Lincoln site they say "After making twelve miles we encamped on the south (the west side of the Missouri) at the upper part of a bluff — — — immediately below this bluff and on the declivity of a hill are the remains of a village covering six or eight acres formerly occupied by the Mandans. We came to a creek on the south (west) called Chleebetaw (the present Heart River) about thirty yards wide and with a considerable quantity of water. Our Arikara chief tells us that up this river is situated a large rock which is held in great veneration and visited by parties who go to consult it as to their own or their nation's destiny, all of which they discern in some sort of figures or paintings with which it is covered." This no doubt refers to the "Two Faced Stone" of this article, which lay upon the crest of the "Crying Hill."

Much might be written of this first visit of white people to this immediate locality and the Village of the Crying Hill numbering 250 well built lodges and of the return of these same adventurers in 1740 and again in 1742; of the hazardous journey southwest among savage tribes and probably into the Wyoming country, in search of the Western Sea; of the planting of a lead plate on the summit of a hill, near where they lingered with the "Little Cherry" Indians, and the recent discovery of this plate near Pierre, S. D.; of their return to Mandan in 1747 and the long fearsome march

### Once French Soil

However, since that visit in 1738, when for the first and last time the flag bearing the fleur-de-lis of France was flung to the breeze over a North Dakota city, the Mandan Indians have been known as "The Friendly Mandans," and have never taken the war path against the whites, and they boast that they have never killed a white man. The present motto of this city "We are all partners in Mandan," follows the sentiment of the first inhabitants.

The valley at the mouth of the Heart is also known as Mandan even unto the present time and the fair city of today is a fitting monument to those earlier Mandan inhabitants, whose dirt lodges were built behind the log fortifications of the Village of the Crying Hill, in the Valley of the Heart "which flows out of the Middle Hole."

Francol, the Chevalier Verendrye, who led this first expedition to Mandan, met his death in the memorable siege of Quebec in September, 1759, while gallantly serving his beloved France against the English, in that struggle under Montcalm, who also lost his life the day after the no less valiant Wolfe forfeited his own, while with his men, fronting Quebec upon the Plains of Abraham.



MANDAN DAILY PIONEER

THURSDAY, MAY 11, 1933

## SPADES OF WORKMEN RUDELY DISTURB LAST RESTING PLACE OF ANCIENT GROS VENTRE WARRIORS

Ancient ghosts of long-dead Indian warriors hovered over Mandan Wednesday as the white man's spade rudely rattled their musty ribs. Uppermost in their thoughts, perhaps, was the red man's glory when Mandan was an Indian village site and white men were unknown.

Bones of 11 Indians were uncovered here as workmen excavated in the east end of the city for two new houses. Under the shadow of "Crying Hill," ancient Indian burial grounds, and on the site of the old village they dug. Three skeletons were bared in one excavation, eight in another.

Buried with the group of three were bone implements, stone tomahawks and primitive tools, all bearing the mark of great age. Also buried with them were game bones and a dog, probably the property of one of the interred braves.

In the other grave seven adult skeletons and the bones of a baby were jumbled helter-skelter, as if they were buried hastily and without the usual burial ceremony and custom.

### 300 Years Old

Three hundred years ago a Gros Ventre village stood on the spot declares Col. A. B. Welch, Mandan Indian expert. Made up of 300 lodges, the village contained nearly 3,000 Indians and occupied a space

several hundred feet in diameter. A fort of their construction crowns a nearby hill, the earthworks still evident.

Fully 3,000 Indians lived in the village during Gros Ventre occupancy. There they lived and fought and died as their own bones, mingled with game and buffalo skeletons, give ample evidence.

The village site is a veritable bonyard. The surface of the ground, especially after a rain, is covered with bits of bone, pottery fragments and refuse of the ancient camp. The smallest excavation, for a tree or ditch perhaps, turns up new bones, new pottery fragments and signs of Indian occupation.

Nearly three hundred years ago the Sioux, a more warlike and nomadic tribe, chased the Gros Ventre from the village and took over the Missouri river valley for their own. They did not live in the village, but wandered from place to place.

Bones uncovered Wednesday are those of Gros Ventre inhabitants who lived here three centuries ago, Welch believes. From the graves he has recovered four well-preserved skulls, several hide-scraping implements, a rude shovel constructed of bone, a bone whistle, several bones rounded off and pointed for use as amoothers and awls and several jawbones, bearing an excellent complement of teeth.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.welchdakotapapers.com/2011/11/tribal-history-notes-on-the-hidatsa-gros-ventre/>

# **SAVING CRYING HILL**

## **The Mandan News**

### **June 2, 2003**

by Sue Bartholomew

Pat Atkinson went in for a regular physical therapy treatment last Monday and came out a historical philanthropist.

The therapist, named Denise Wentz, did some musing about Mandan's Crying Hill and said it was up for sale. She was concerned, she said, that it was going to be sold and developed.

This triggered a memory for Atkinson about a toboggan and the hill. "Tell me the lore and legend, the history behind Crying Hill," he said.

After listening to her story, Atkinson said to himself, they can't sell this, what are they going to do with it?

So, he drove to Mandan to Crying Hill and parked the car.

"As I walked the hill, I put into perspective the history and what I had been told. It became apparent to me that these were very sacred grounds. This is a place where generations of kids grew up, where churches came to pray a place of mourning, fasting, communing with the dead," he said.

Atkinson could see that people had used the hill. There was evidence of sage being planted and piles of prayer stones; some were five high.

Hungry for more information, Atkinson talked to Juanita Maxon, a Mandan/Hidatsa who works at Five Nations Art. Maxon shared stories about Crying Hill from her mother and grandmother.

The next day, Atkinson brought his son, Ernesto, of Mayan Indian Cakchiquel descent, to the hill. Ernesto is studying to be an architect.

"Ernesto," he said, "I don't feel anything here."

Ernesto said, "Papa, just listen." So they did. They lay down on the hill in the sunny afternoon, and they heard the birds, the wind, the rustle of grass. These are sacred grounds, they both agreed.

"What could we do with this property?" Atkinson asked. "If I purchased it."

"We could put a house up here," Ernesto said. "Look at the view. It would make a beautiful home, but it wouldn't be right."

Atkinson did purchase the land within two days of discovery.

"I didn't buy this for myself," Atkinson said, "I believe I am being used as a tool to pursue this."

**More Magic: Crying Hill site**  
**The Bismarck Tribune**  
**News Editorial**  
**July 1, 2003**

By Frederic Smith

"The more "magic" places in a city, the better. The city of Mandan has one in the Missouri River Natural Area, that delightful woods hideaway in which you can dip into the world of Lewis and Clark right next door to Interstate 94. (Go on a windy day, when the roar of the cottonwoods will drown the traffic noise.)

"It has another in Crying Hill, which now has been preserved for all time, courtesy of Bismarck's Patrick Atkinson.

"You know Crying Hill. It's the prominence on the east side of Mandan that sports the town's name in concrete slabs on one side and in live trees on the other. Its real claim to fame, though, is its association with a Mandan Indian village now overlaid by the modern city. (Some of it was excavated in connection with the rebuilding of First Street a few years ago.)

This was in the Mandan tribe's "golden age," when the Mandans occupied a half-dozen towns near the confluence of the Missouri and Heart rivers. The tradition of the Mandans is that women resorted to the hill to watch for their men who had gone off on war raids. Burials also took place up there. There probably were a lot of those when an early smallpox epidemic ravaged the tribe about 1782.

That was the end of the Heart River period, with what was left of the Mandans moving north to join their Hidatsa friends at Knife River. Leaving Crying Hill, Double Ditch, On-A-Slant, Chief Looking's and other wonderful old sites behind.

"Lewis and Clark saw all of these in their abandoned state.

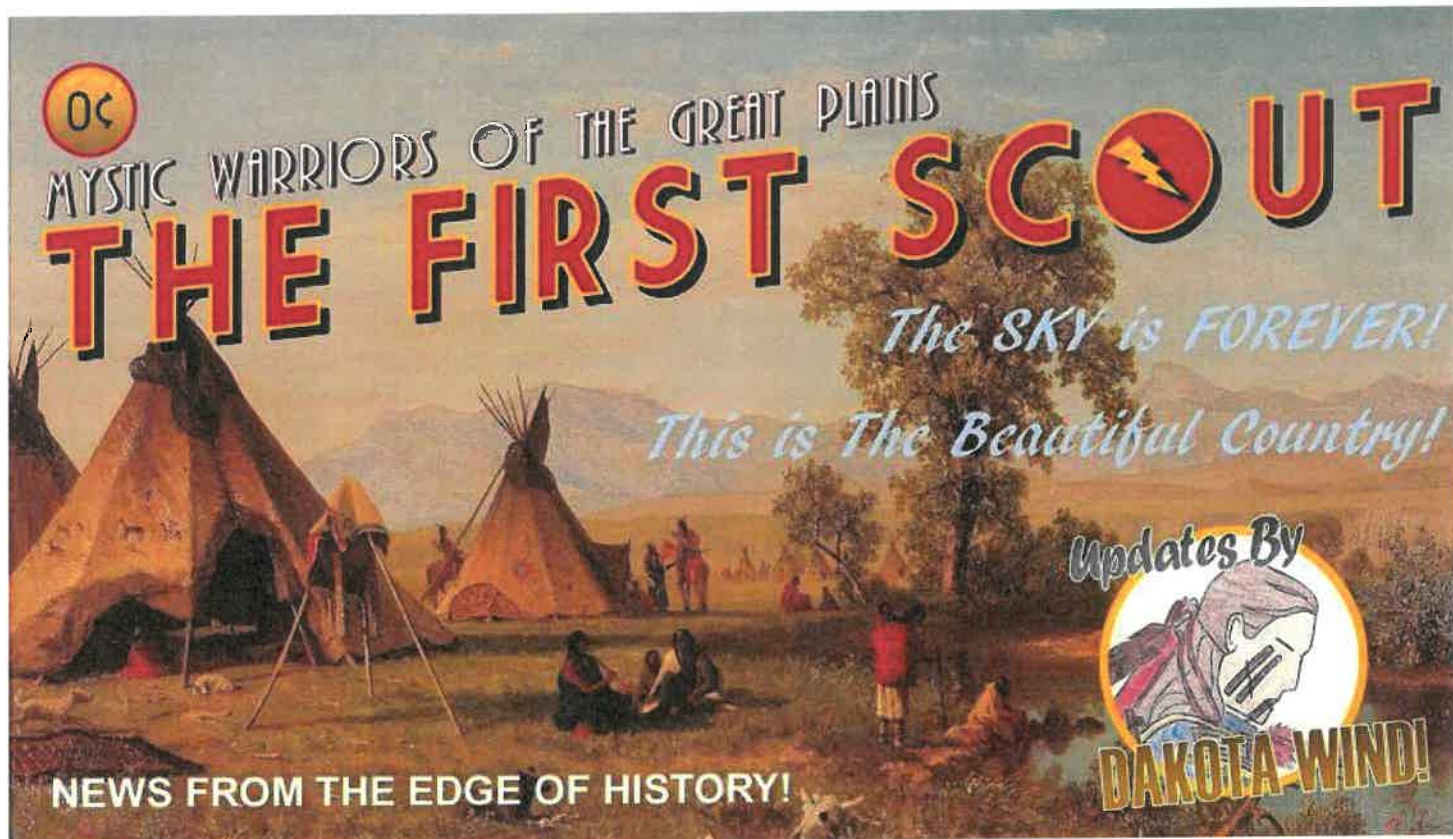
"Fate has been kind to Crying Hill, preserving most of it, at least partly because of its steepness. Another deterrent to construction has been the probability of running into artifacts and human remains. It's far from pristine, however. The north and east sides have been gnawed at by road construction, and I-94 roars at its base in place of the old Missouri River.



"Still, it was for sale again, and who knows? That's the thought that bothered Atkinson, whose Indian son also convinced him that the old spirits are still around. So, Atkinson bought it to protect it into perpetuity.

"Atkinson has done Mandan and the larger community -- including descendants of those old Mandans -- a good turn, preserving one of the magic places that add depth to our everyday lives.

"We residents should all do what we urge our tourist visitors to do -- climb a hill (like Crying Hill) or take a walk in the woods (like the Missouri River Natural Area) to catch a glimpse of the yesterworld we live in the middle of. It's magic."

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Friday, August 4, 2017

## Crying Hill, An Endangered Historic Site



"Crying Hill," or "Mandan Hill" can be seen in the middle of this photo, the Missouri River down below, city development behind in the distance.

### Crying Hill Endangered

*Site Overlooks River, City, Interstate*

By Dakota Wind

Mandan, N.D. (TFS) – A hill rolls above the floodplain where the Heart River converges with the Missouri River. It divides the city of Mandan from traffic of I-94. It loudly proclaims “MaNDan” on its east face in bright white concrete lettering; the south face of this same plateau says the same but with trees spelling the city's name.

It's the home of the Mandan Braves, named after the indigenous people who lived there on the banks of the Heart River as traders, fishers, and farmers. The Nu'Eta, as they call themselves, could defend themselves when called for as well. They lived in fortified villages in the Heart River area from about 1450 to about 1781.

Each village had a civil chief and a war chief to advice and look after their interests. The Nu'Eta were productive and hard-working. They must have been doing something right; their villages possessed no jails.



*Welch's notations on a 1911 US Geological survey map. Bismarck and Mandan have grown considerably in the hundred+ years since.*

The village along the banks of the Heart River in present-day Mandan, ND was large, with a population of perhaps as many as 3000. Its identified mainly as a Nu'Eta site, but the Hidatsa claim the populace as their own. The Hidatsa became neighbors of the Nu'Eta sometime around 1600 C.E., and inter-married with them over the centuries that today one isn't Nu'Eta without having Hidatsa relatives.

This large village was known by many names. The Nu'Eta called it Large and Scattered Village. The Hidatsa called it the Two Faced Stone Village for the sacred stone feature atop the plateau overlooking their village. Crows Heart, a principle leader of the Nu'Eta, informed Colonel Alfred Welch that that they called the village there in present-day Mandan, "The Crying Hill Village." Crows Heart also essayed to Welch that they called it so because their women went to the top of the hill to mourn for lost relatives.

Another village there, south of the Crying Hill Village, called Motsif today, was known by the Nu'Eta as Youngman's Village. According to Welch's informants, the Nu'Eta of both these two villages would gather together and inhabit a winter camp in the timber on the floodplain of the Missouri River[1].

According to the late Mr. Joe Packineau, the Crow separated from the Hidatsa at the Crying Hill Village, adding that the village was also called the Tattoo Face Village, and further, that it was Hidatsa, not Nu'Eta. In the time of Good Fur Robe, he had a brother whom they called Tattoo Face. A hunt concluded with a dead bison recovered from the middle of the river. Good Fur Robe divided the kill and took the paunch, which infuriated Tattoo Face and his people, who picked up and moved west. According to Packineau, the Hidatsa called them not Crow, but "The Paunch Jealousy People." Where the Crow broke away from their Hidatsa relatives was at the Crying Hill Village[2].

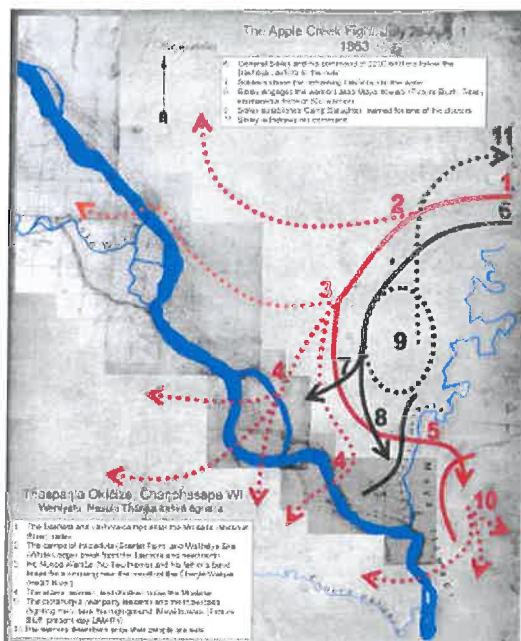


At the top of Crying Hill were stone features (including a stone turtle effigy measuring twelve feet across), sacred to the Nu'Eta, upon which were images or pictographs, which changed, and were said to be able to tell the future. One oracle stone in particular, was said known as the "Two Face Stone." When diviners gathered 'round to interpret the stone's musing for the future, they would lift the stone, which seemed to them to be very light. Upon putting it down, they would lift again, and the stone mysteriously weighed more than one could lift. They called this stone Two Face because of its dual nature, and according to Welch's informant, the village below was called "Two Face Village." Enemy Heart, an Arikara man, estimated the side of the Two Face Stone to be a diameter of about 18 inches[3], it's location, at least in 1912, was lay just east of the Morton County Courthouse in Mandan, ND[4]. Enemy Heart insisted that the Crying Hill Village's proper name was Two Face Village.

In the 1870's, as the city of Mandan developed on the remains of the Large and Scattered Village, or Crying Hill Village, or Tattoo Face Village, Two Face Village, homes and streets encroached on Crying Hill itself. One day, a prospective home owner, took dynamite to the sacred stone on the hillside of Crying Hill and blew it up[5]. Welch contends that the greater oracle stone was drilled and split by white settlers for building stone. One resident, Mr. G.W. Rendon built the basement of his house from fragments of this holy stone[6].

There used to be a burial ground at Crying Hill. In 1933, laborers of the city of Mandan were expanding development of the city for two new houses, and disturbed the graves of eleven Nu'Eta men and women, including a baby. Col. Alfred Welch was called on to offer his assessment of the findings, and he estimated that the size of the Crying Hill Village at about 3000 souls, and was occupied for about 300 years[7], from ~1500 C.E. to about ~1800 C.E. The bodies were hastily buried, possibly due to the haste in which the survivors departed the Heart River villages in 1781 following the smallpox epidemic which struck them.





This reconstruction of the 1863 Apple Creek Fight is overlaid on 1850's Warren survey map.

Crying Hill overlooks one of the largest conflicts in Dakota Territory history. In 1863, General Sibley led ~2200 soldiers into Dakota Territory on a punitive campaign from Camp Pope in Minnesota. The campaign concluded at the mouth of Apple Creek, on Aug. 1, 1863, when Sibley withdrew from the field of conflict, unable to pursue the Lakhóta across the Missouri River. The Húnkpapá, led by Black Eyes, crossed the Missouri River where the Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge spans the river, and thence up the Heart River to escape pursuit.

A week after the Apple Creek conflict, Black Eyes brought the Húnkpapá back across the Missouri River and re-crossed the Missouri at the northern most mouth of the Heart River (which had three mouths at that time), and camped above the floodplain opposite Crying Hill. During the night, miners from Fort Benton, MT came down and camped on a sandbar. The next morning the miners tried forced themselves on a Lakhóta woman who had gone down to the river to refresh herself. She died at the miners' hands; Black Eyes retaliated and the Húnkpapá warriors awoke and hurried to the river's edge and exchanged gunfire with the hostiles. During the fight, the boat's swivel gun misfired into the boat itself causing a fire to break out. The miners were killed to the last man, and there precious gold was scattered about the sandbar[8].



The Mandan Historical Society features this photo of the "Mandan Hill" in the summer of 1959. Visit the [Mandan Historical Society](#) today.

In 1934, a local Boy Scouts troop arranged forty-seven truckloads of local stone into giant letters which spelled out "MaNDan," on what became renamed "Mandan Hill." It was maintained by the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the Mandan Jaycees over the years, then in 1968, after Interstate 94 (I-94) was complete, the "MaNDan" sign was reconstructed in concrete. In the late 1990's, pine trees were planted on the south face of Crying Hill arranged to spell "MANDAN"[9].

Sometime in 2003, Mr. Patrick Atkinson, acquired 4.7 acres of what remained of Crying Hill, to save it from development. Atkinson heard that the property was going to be put on the market, and he dashed up to Crying Hill after hearing a little about the lore, and provoked by his own winter

memories of sledding down the face of Crying Hill. He took his son to the site to talk about what it meant to them. They concluded to save what they could. Atkinson maintains that the Crying Hill preservation effort is ecumenical and non-political, preserving the site for the sake of the sacredness and inspiration found there by native and non-native alike<sup>[10]</sup>. Visit Atkinson's site about [Crying Hill](#).

In 2008, Preservation North Dakota declared that Crying Hill was endangered. To be declared endangered, a site must be of historical, cultural, or architectural significance and in danger of demolition, deterioration, or substantial alteration due to neglect or vandalism. Preservation North Dakota acknowledged the preservation efforts of Atkinson and the Crying Hill preservation coalition for saving Crying Hill for the edification and gratification of future citizens.

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[1] Welch, Alfred, Col. "Good Fur Blanket Was Mayor Of Mandan In 1738 - Proof Is Found Of Ancient City On Present Site." *Mandan Daily Pioneer* (Mandan), April 14, 1924.

[2] Welch, Alfred, Col. "Joe Packineau's Verson of The Split and Formation of Crows." Welch Dakota Papers. November 15, 2011. Accessed August 2, 2017. <http://www.welchdakotapapers.com>.

[3] Welch, Alfred, Col. "Arikara Hide Their Sacred Stone From The Sioux." Welch Dakota Papers. November 15, 2011. Accessed August 2, 2017. <http://www.welchdakotapapers.com>.

[4] Welch, Alfred, Col. "More About The Two Face Stone." Welch Dakota Papers. November 15, 2011. Accessed August 2, 2017. <http://www.welchdakotapapers.com>.

[5] Welch, Alfred, Col. "The Minnitari Stone." Welch Dakota Papers. November 15, 2011. Accessed August 2, 2017. <http://www.welchdakotapapers.com>.

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# **APPENDIX D:** **A Sampling of Crying Hill Archaeological Research Maps** (from studies on file at the North Dakota Department of Transportation<sup>32</sup> and State Historical Center)

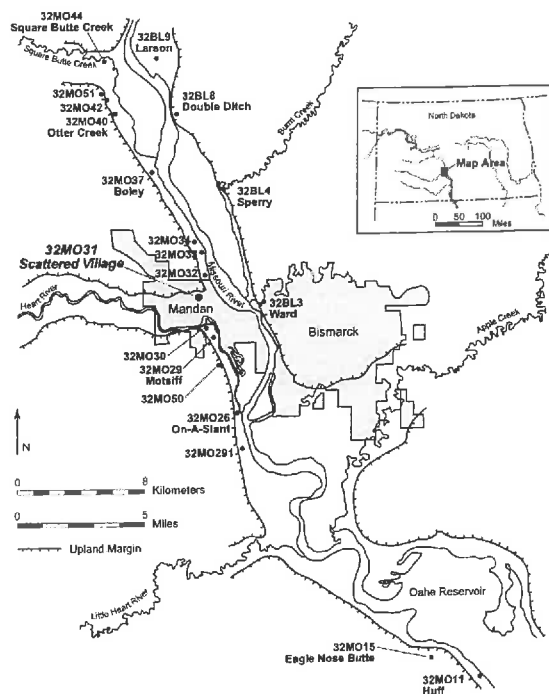


Figure 1.1. Map showing the location of Scattered Village (32MO31) and other archaeological sites of interest along the Missouri River valley, North Dakota.

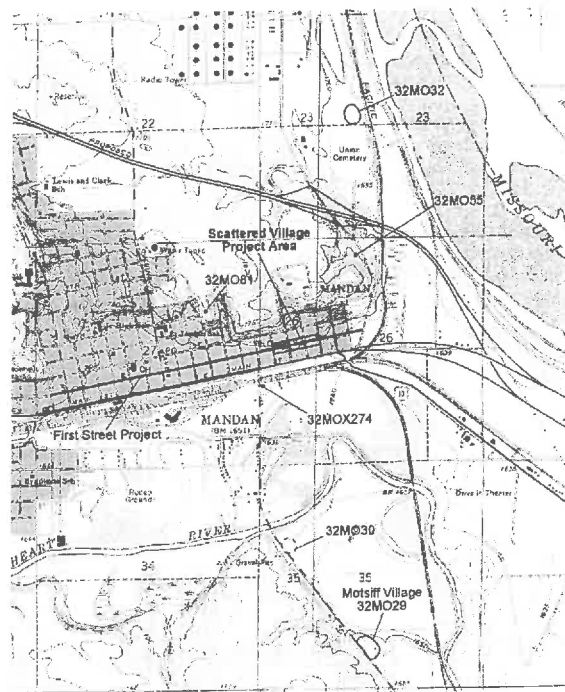


Figure 1.2. A portion of the Mandan and Bismarck USGS 7.5 minute quadrangles showing the location of First Street, Scattered Village 32MO31, and other nearby archaeological sites.

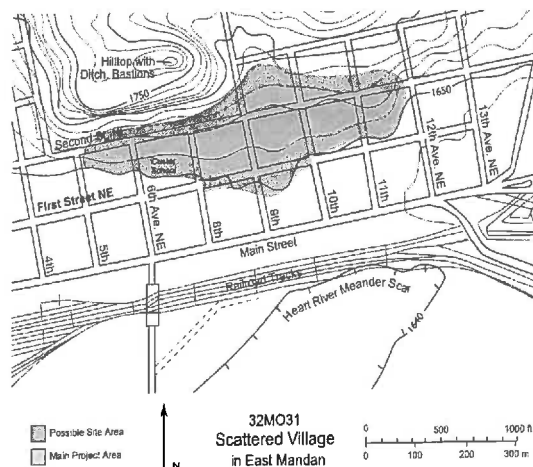


Figure 1.3. Detailed map showing the location of the project area along First St NE and the possible extent of Scattered Village (32MO31).

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.dot.nd.gov/manuals/environmental/scatteredvillage/ch01.pdf>