The Anne S.K. Brown Military collection contained in the John Hay Library at Brown University offers a diverse sample of military and naval uniforms from around the world. Amassed over a forty-year period by Anne Brown (1906–1985) of Providence, the collection covers the eras from 1500 to 1918. Thousands of books, albums, scrapbooks, sketchbooks, prints, drawings and watercolors, as well as some five thousand miniature lead soldiers, comprise the collection.

In 1947, Brown added a colorful book of drawings to her already significant holdings. The commercial drawing book, eight-and-a-half by eleven inches, contains four drawings in lead pencil, one with both lead and colored pencil, and eleven in pencil, ink, crayon and colored pencil. Two of the drawings depict groups of military figures in uniforms, thus explaining Anne Brown’s interest in the small volume.

The following ink inscription is on the inside front cover: “Drawings by Indians on the Reservation in St. Augustine, Florida — March 1877.” This inscription bolsters the visual information provided by the drawings. St. Augustine was in the midst of an artistic explosion in March of 1877. The old seventeenth-century Spanish fort of San Marcos, called Fort Marion during the nineteenth century, was used as a prison for Plains captives brought to St. Augustine at the end of the Southern
Plains wars. Many of the younger prisoners created drawings in commercial drawing books and sold those drawings to visiting tourists or dignitaries. Some drawings were sent home to Indian Territory to the friends and families from whom the prisoners were separated. Other books were given as gifts by Lt. Richard H. Pratt, the army officer in charge of Fort Marion, to government officials and leaders who might be of future benefit to the Indians.

The final page of the book has a drawing depicting four mounted Plains warriors, each with shield and lance, with a handwritten pencil notation — "Chief Killer" — in the upper left corner. This inscription is the signature of the Fort Marion artist who created the drawings in the book. A Southern Cheyenne warrior, Chief Killer fought during the late pre-reservation years and was one of the seventy-two Southern Plains warriors and chiefs sent to Florida. He remained a prisoner of war from the spring of 1875 until his release in April 1878. Upon his return to the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation in Indian Territory, Chief Killer held various jobs including those of police officer, butcher and teamster in repeated attempts to fight the poverty of reservation life (Petersen 1971:234; Oestreicher 1981:164-165). In a case of historical irony, the former captive sent his daughter to his old jailor Richard Pratt for education at Carlisle Institute in 1887 (Oestreicher 1981:253-254). In 1899, at the Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency, Elbridge Ayer Burbank painted the aging Chief Killer's portrait; the dignity of the man who had fought bravely, been exiled and had experienced recurring poverty etched in the sitter's face (Fig. 2). The former prisoner of war died in 1922.

Chief Killer was twenty-six or twenty-seven when he was exiled to Fort Marion due to his involvement in one of the most notorious episodes of the Southern Plains wars. As a member of a small war party led by the Southern Cheyenne Medicine Water, also a Fort Marion prisoner and the artist's stepfather, Chief Killer took part in the attack on the John German family in present-day Kansas in October 1874 (Meredith 1927; Berthrong 1963:392-400; Powell 1981:867-891). The parents and an older daughter were killed and four younger sisters, ranging in ages from five to eighteen, were taken by the war party. The girls' abduction was a major impetus for increased military activity by the federal government in attempts to guarantee their safe return. Medicine Water and his warriors ultimately set the girls free, the youngest two in November of 1874, and the older sisters in March of 1875 (Meredith 1927; Miles 1897:167-168). Subsequently, eight members of the war party, including Chief Killer, Medicine Water and Medicine Water's wife Buffalo Calf, were sent to prison in Florida (Pratt 1964:138-144). The drawing book from the Brown collection is an important addition to the corpus of Fort Marion art. Prior to the examination of this book, only two Chief Killer drawings were known to be housed in public collections. Those two drawings, approximately four by six inches, appear in an autograph book filled with drawings by twenty different artists from the Fort Marion group and now contained in the Richard H. Pratt Papers at Yale University (Fig. 1). The sixteen drawings from the Brown book add significantly to history's view of Chief Killer, the artist. They help identify forty-four total drawings as Chief Killer's. While Karen Petersen, with good cause, referred to Chief Killer as a minor artist in her 1971 ...
study of Fort Marion art (1971:xvii), he now joins the ranks of major artists from the Florida period.

Chief Killer, The Artist

Chief Killer’s style is one of firmly outlined forms filled with a variety of colors (Fig. 7). Humans appear with rounded foreheads, long noses with slight upturns, curving nostrils and prominent, often pointed chins. Forearms and hands, if rendered at all, are cursory. Long-legged but otherwise well-proportioned horses appear in profile with angular backs and large hoofs. It is, however, Chief Killer’s use of color and pattern which is the most distinctive characteristic of his finished works. The artist applied color lightly in some areas while coloring with greater pressure in others to increase intensity, thus broadening the range of hues. He experimented with textural variations; mottled or spotted horses or the fur of animal quivers, for example, appear against other solidly colored areas. The vibrant patterns of textiles play against horse ornaments and the detailed beadwork of clothing.

The majority of Chief Killer’s drawings from the Brown book have counterparts among the works of other Fort Marion artists. Two of the scenes depict buffalo hunts, rendered only in pencil, while two others illustrate detailed courting scenes. A single sketch of the Sun Dance — nineteen warriors included from a foreshortened rear view within the lodge — suggests the ritual aspects of Plains life. Five of the sixteen images depict groups of Plains warriors on horseback, parallel lines of men walking between mounted leaders or standing warriors holding their horses near lodges.

The importance of people and what they carry or wear is the visual focus of each of these drawings. Chief Killer carefully detailed blankets with beaded strips, breastplates, shields, war bonnets, German silver hair plates, saddle blankets, quivers and lances. Indeed, the details of clothing and paraphernalia contrast strongly with the generic faces, most without eyes, of the figures who wear or carry these objects.

One drawing seems to diverge conceptually from Chief Killer’s other work. Three rows of government soldiers move above two cryptic buildings, probably a fort (Fig. 4). While the specific subject matter differs, Chief Killer’s interests are similar to those of his other drawings. Clothing and arms of the soldiers and officers are carefully detailed, the color scheme limited by the reality of army attire. The artist did not abandon his color sense; the horses appear as vibrant variations of red-orange, rose, yellow and green. The addition of the outlined and crosshatched buildings in the lower pictorial space, however, signals a new concern in the artist’s work.

Five remaining scenes in the Chief Killer drawing book, one pencil sketch and four crayon and ink images, offer a radically different approach to the act of representation. A sketch and two of the images are of military posts (Fig. 5) while another drawing records trains passing through a city (Fig. 9). The final image is a detailed panoramic view of the city of St. Augustine (Fig. 6). Given the location of the artist at the time he rendered this view and the inclusion of various scenes of the Plains as well as of Florida, the train scene must represent a portion of the journey which the Fort Marion-bound prisoners took through many cities on their way from Indian Territory during the spring of 1875.
The episodes taking place on the Plains, the courting scenes and standing or mounted warriors appear against the blank background of the drawing page (Figs. 1, 7). No further identification of setting or environment is offered since the location is understood to be Indian Territory. These drawings tell or suggest a story in which the participants who are portrayed serve as the central focus. Warrior society members appear in societal regalia and Medicine Lodge participants stand at a specific moment in the ceremony. Other images of men and women on horseback or engaged in social meetings or the columns of cavalry moving across the page suggest actions to the viewer. Yet, like drawings created by Plains artists prior to the Fort Marion confinement, these images suggest a story, but one that cannot be adequately reconstructed from the drawings alone. Men on the Plains created drawings on paper as part of the recognition and celebration of heroic deeds. Drawings were part of a more comprehensive cultural setting. The images did not have to relay the entire account of various battles, for warriors themselves recounted the events verbally. Similarly, most Florida drawings are suggestions of events, not fully detailed illustrations of them.

Within Fort Marion, the Southern Plains artists created drawings for various reasons. The fact that many drawing books were sold to people who knew little, if anything, about actual life on the Plains makes it likely that the kinds of partial messages relayed through the image portion of traditional Plains ledger art, and by extension through the majority of the Chief Killer drawings under examination, would be lost on the new audience. If more complex episodes were the subject of illustration for the Fort Marion artist, these would not be clear to the purchaser. Perhaps in partial compensation for this, many Fort Marion drawings have handwritten captions, most recorded either by Pratt or by the fort interpreter, George Fox. Such legends communicated the basic message of the drawing in the event that the visual image did not do so. Chief Killer’s drawings from the Brown collection, however, carry no such written messages. Most offer only a partial suggestion of the people and the actions they record.

Records of New Experiences

The journey drawings from the Brown book (Figs. 5, 6, 8, 9) differ in style as well as focus from the vast majority of Plains art, both art produced on the Plains and at Fort Marion. The Fort Marion-bound prisoners began their unified journey to Florida from Fort Sill where they were confined in the guardhouse, the ice house and surrounding tents. Subsequently, the Florida-bound prisoners were loaded into wagons to travel to the train depot at Fort Leavenworth and, from there, to Florida via wagons, trains and ships. In one of the drawings, a scene which certainly attracted Anne Brown’s attention, there is a fort with military personnel on the parade ground, the officers’ presence made clear through Chief Killer’s attention to different style uniforms and headgear (Fig. 5). Here the artist has so carefully detailed the fort that it can be identified as Fort Sill although no caption accompanies the drawing. Comparison to existing drawings and photographs of Fort Sill from the second half of the nineteenth century confirms the parallels (Nye 1969; Griswold 1958).

Chief Killer’s spatial orientation is precise; he has rendered the north portion of the fort and its locale to the right of the drawing with west at the top of the page. Medicine Bluff Creek traverses the lower right and bottom section of the drawing, with the fort and parade ground located in relation to that creek as they were in actuality. The hospital, separated from the remainder of barracks and officers’ quarters, is in the upper right region of the base; and the aforementioned guardhouse is rendered in the upper left corner of the drawing just south of the cavalry barracks. Chief Killer differentiated the commanding officer’s quarters, too, with the columned porch of the prominent house appearing to the left of the parade ground (Fig. 3). The ice house and surrounding tents
appear in the bottom of the drawing. This topographically
detailed drawing recorded a place Chief Killer had
observed nearly two years before the drawing was made.

This record of Fort Sill is one of four drawings that
relay information which Chief Killer’s other drawings do
not. The remaining three images — one of a post nestled
in the mountains, another of trains passing through a
town, and the third of the city of St. Augustine — are sim­
lar to the Fort Sill drawing in that each describes a place
rather than narrating a story.1 Detailing the mountains,
the houses and the topography of St. Augustine (Fig. 6),
for example, Chief Killer has not placed himself or any
other figure within the boundaries of the drawing page.
He describes the specifics of the place as he saw them.
In the same way, while the Fort Sill scene contains many
participants, it is more a description than a narration. The
plan of the fort, the differentiation of buildings, the varia­
tion in officers’ and enlisted men’s uniforms are all
recorded as a fully illustrative reproduction of Fort Sill.
Chief Killer is an observer, emphasizing descriptive skills
that were not previously a part of ledger art.

Drawings on the Plains detailed important identifying
features of participants in actions portrayed. The person
involved in a scene was known by virtue of his parapher­
nalia, such as shields, specific lodge designs, horse accou­
trements or body paint which could stand on their own as
signifiers for the owner of the shield, horse or design.

Ledger art dating from this period prior to Fort
Marion often included representations of the principal
protagonists in battle encounters or horse raids. The
Plains artist directed his attention to the important
aspects of each event — who did what to whom —
though occasionally he presented a house, an army
post, a wagon or, more rarely, a landscape. It was not
necessary to illustrate where actions took place.

The communications system of Fort Marion art was
dramatically different. Drawings made there existed for
many reasons — exploration of scenes of the distant
Plains for exiled prisoners, the creation of drawings to
send home to families, and the use of such art for sale
to interested outsiders. Audiences beyond the confines
of the prison did not share a common base of experience
with the artists. Without this foundation, drawings lost
their traditional ability to communicate narrative without
additional verbal or written explanation.

Directly or indirectly, Richard Pratt may have had an
effect on the type of subjects explored in Florida by the
prisoners of war. In recalling the long trip from Indian
Territory to Florida, Pratt observed that “these incidents
and many others made vivid pictures in the minds of the
Indians... Soon the Indians with their pencils and paper
began...to make pictures of the incidents of their prison
life, beginning at Fort Sill” (Pratt n.d.). However, the ear­
liest Fort Marion drawings bearing collection dates of

1Svetlana Alpers promoted the questions posed here of Fort Marion
the exacting details of location and the vast panoramas depicted differ from the other images in Chief Killer's drawing book and from previous Plains drawings. The view of Fort Sill, St. Augustine and the town along the train's route is profile, yet simultaneously bird's-eye, as the viewer looks down on the angled town or fort.

In his renditions of landscape, Chief Killer departed from the linear, outlined style that predominates in both Fort Marion and Plains art and instead used watercolors or inks in a painterly fashion, rather than outlining shapes and filling them with color. The flow of the liquid color across the pages resulted in mottled effects. Some areas of the ocher-shaded landscape appear muted while others are deeply saturated. The range of colors the artist used in the cityscapes, particularly in the view of St. Augustine, and the painstaking detail he provided are unusual.

Chief Killer's plan of the city of St. Augustine — its appropriately placed gazebo and monument in the midst of the city plaza, Trinity Episcopal Church located south of the plaza and the cathedral on the north, the jutting plan of the fortress of San Marcos, the piers and houses that line the city streets, and the presence across the bay of two lighthouses, both the older white structure to the north and the new black-and-white striped lighthouse — is complete (Fig. 6). The specificity of this drawing is comparable to exacting portraiture, only here the subject is a place not a person.

Chief Killer, like the other Fort Marion inmates, was not kept locked within the prison walls but was allowed to travel the streets of St. Augustine, thus familiarizing himself with the plan of the community. Maps or elevations of the city were available as were early postcards recording the city's formation. Such elevations and maps of St. Augustine created by various artists during the second half of the nineteenth century may have provided at least some inspiration for Chief Killer's view of St. Augustine.

The pictorial concept at work in these drawings includes clear landmarks of cities and transcribes those locations in ways that geographers might use. But the kind of mapping or transcription offered in Chief Killer's drawings differs from the sketchy maps known from the Plains. The artist's presence is suggested through his knowledge of the landscape, but he is not here as a participant in the scene; he observes from outside the space as well.

The detailed renditions of St. Augustine, the lighthouse and the fort may have served as mementos for the visitors who carried such colorful drawings home with them. Too, memories of the Plains wars were strong in March 1877. For years, press accounts of the Plains had fueled the fears and imaginations of readers. Many of the last major battles of the Central and Northern Plains, including Rosebud and Little Big Horn, had been fought after the Southern Plains prisoners were transported to Florida. Even if the Florida audience did not know that Chief Killer or any of the other Fort Marion captives had been involved in the well-publicized German affair, the story of Custer's defeat was still being told repeatedly. A drawing book from Fort Marion offered a way of coming into contact with these potentially dangerous events and
men while simultaneously keeping safe and removed from them.

The Fort Marion inmates themselves had many new experiences during their captivity. That artists chose to record memories of these new places and experiences cannot simply be attributed to Pratt's influence. Recording these places, presenting miniature renditions of their reality, was important to the artists. They were outsiders, placed in foreign locations, and their drawings were a means of exploring and understanding those new places.

As previously mentioned, some of the detailed drawings the artists created in Florida were sent home to friends and families in Indian Territory as a way of sharing at least a portion of their experience of foreign life. That at least the Cheyenne and Arapaho inmates were anxious to communicate with their families is apparent through extant picture letters as well as official correspondence between Pratt and the Cheyenne and Arapaho Agent John D. Miles (Miles 1875a, 1875b, 1876a, 1876b, 1876c; Pratt 1876a, 1877b). Pratt mentions only one drawing sent from Fort Marion to Indian Territory in enough detail to reconstruct its subject; the drawing, by an unnamed Southern Cheyenne artist, recorded the Fort Marion prisoners at work moving a local St. Augustine building (Pratt 1877a).

The multiple roles that Fort Marion drawings played for their creators and their various audiences give these drawings a unique position in the history of Plains art. The artists' dislocation from their previous lives and the related reasons for making art offer at least a partial explanation for the diversity of images included within a single book of drawings. Some of the sixteen Chief Killer drawings from the Brown book are closely related to the messages and narrative communication required of drawings previously created on the Plains; others, like the fully descriptive, non-narrative representations of St. Augustine or Fort Sill, suggest an artist now estranged from previous life and views of art, using drawings to communicate to entirely different audiences. The resulting books of drawings, in their entirety, illustrate the disjunction of these roles and the creation of what have now become multiple-voiced messages for diverse and disconnected audiences. The similarity of this disjunction to nineteenth-century artists of varying cultures under vastly different circumstances is striking.1 The mixed messages and multiple voices of Fort Marion drawings are part of the beginning of the era of modern art in which artists, faced with rapidly changing circumstances and diverse social structures, use art as a means of exploring, understanding and coping with newly fragmented lives.

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