

General George Armstrong Custer

Custer encouraged the gold rush to the Black Hills. He had spent some time in Dakota, fighting against the Sioux. Although he respected some Indigenous people, Custer was keen on American expansion and on building fame for himself.

Custer thought that political support for the removal of the Sioux from the Black Hills would increase if the area was more populated by Americans and he knew that sparking a gold rush would lead to an influx of settlers.

Custer wanted to build more forts in the Black Hills to gain a military advantage over the Sioux. More settlers meant that he would have a reason to do this; to protect the miners.

Custer believed in the concept of manifest destiny and wished to see American culture, religion and lifestyles reach the Great Plains.



Sitting Bull

Sitting Bull was the leader of many Sioux warbands. He was a greatly respected chief and, as a Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux, he saw the Black Hills as his homeland.

The Black Hills were an area that America was frequently trying to take control of. The American government even made two offers to buy the area, which the Sioux refused.

The Black Hills were not only the traditional homeland of the Sioux but also held special religious significance. The hills contain burial grounds, places with healing water and sites of strong medicine.

The Sioux were promised the Black Hills in perpetuity by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. This meant that no white people could ever settle in the area. This treaty was ignored to serve American greed for gold.

