

Lame-White-Man

On June 25, 1876, Lame-White-Man started his morning with Brave-Bear, his neighbor and close friend. Twin-Woman, Lame-White-Man's wife, his two daughters, Red-Hat and Crane-Woman and another woman, Monahseetah, made breakfast for Lame-White-Man and Brave-Bear. Monahseetah lived with Lame-White-Man, but was not his daughter or his wife. She served them breakfast while the men talked. Brave-Bear had come that morning to tell Lame-White-Man of the scouting reports that soldiers were coming. When he heard the reports, Lame-White-Man reached for his Spencer for two reasons. First, he wanted Brave-Bear to join the "Medicine Wheel Mirror Society" and by showing Brave-Bear his weapon, Lame-White-Man could tell him about the society.

Lame-White-Man knew Brave-Bear had always followed the teachings of the Medicine Wheel, so joining the Mirror Society was only an extension of his beliefs. He explained to Brave-Bear that the society was a projected extension of the Medicine Wheel. A mirror allowed an individual or community to examine and outwardly manifest all situations that the Medicine Wheel showed them which protected them, and allowed them to gather surrounding energies to a focal point, the mirror. They could commune with the Spirit, Self and Nature. Everything about the human condition was reflected back. Courage was required to look into the mirror and really see what was reflected back. The mirror created "visions" to tell them about their lives and how they could be better. The mirror was a tool to be used for uplifting the Spirit and for the betterment of humankind, for healing and connecting to the infinite. [1] The ceremony of the mirrors was a direct connection to the Medicine Wheel, which was a physical manifestation of spiritual energy, a connection to create an internal dialogue with the Great Creator and the Spirit within. The mirror was one part of the Medicine Wheel teachings which were vast and limitless and formed the basis of the nation's beliefs – The Great Circle of Life[2].

The second reason Lame-White-Man grabbed his gun was to make sure it was loaded. Brave-Bear had seen Lame-White-Man's carbine many times before and everyone knew about the mirrors in the stock. After Lame-White-Man had joined the Mirror Society some five winters before, he had traded for the mirrors while on a trip to Fort Rice to spy on the soldiers there, to see when they would be leaving to escort survey crews for the railroad. Lame-White-Man traded some beaver pelts to the trader Augustus Balirain for three mirrors. He gave one to his wife and daughters, the other two were in the stock of his rifle.

As Brave-Bear and Lame-White-Man continued their conversation, they both agreed that after the battle that was surely coming, Brave-Bear would join the Mirror Society. Then they both went into the sweat lodge for a time, until they heard shots. Everyone ran for their tepees to get their weapons. The horses were late getting to them, and Lame-White-Man watched Two-Moon and his group ride south of the camp, and women and children run toward Squaw Creek by the north ford to hide in the trees. Lame-White-Man mounted his horse, raised his rifle in the air with the sun reflecting off the mirrors and shouted, "Let us kill them all this time!" Then he, Brave-Bear and their Cheyenne warriors rode south, on the west side of the camp. They were just about to the Blackfoot camp when they heard shots,

which they thought were coming from the Deep Coulee ford. They turned north and headed for the ford. They saw Two-Moon behind them, riding north, and when they got to the ford, they saw everyone going up the Deep Coulee.

Lame-White-Man crossed the Deep Coulee ford, turned northwest along the river to the Greasy Grass Coulee, and then rode up the coulee to cut-off the soldiers. Some Sioux led by Crow-King followed behind him, but they went up further north to Calhoun Coulee. When Lame-White-Man and Brave-Bear reached the top of the hill, they saw soldiers everywhere and Lame-White-Man raised his rifle again and shouted, "Kill them all!" He rode head-long into the closest soldiers, who were dismounted. [3] This was the start of the Custer phase of the battle. Lame-White-Man and his Cheyenne warriors, along with the Hunkpapa, Blackfoot, Sansarc and Two Kettle warriors charged three times before Company L finally collapsed. With these soldiers out of the way, Brave-Bear told Lame-White-Man to set his sights on the next group of soldiers on the battle ridge, which happened to be Company C. As Lame-White-Man rode straight into the group of soldiers, he was shot dead and fell off his horse.

Brave Bear gave this story to Benjamin Black Elk:

"We had gotten separated, and I didn't realize something was wrong until I saw some Sioux warrior carrying Lame-White-Man's rifle, with the mirrors glaring in the sun. I rode back to find Lame-White-Man. I rode up to Tall-Bull just as he was turning Lame-White-Man over. He had been scalped. We threw a blanket from his horse over his body, and then rode back into the battle. We killed many soldiers. I took a rifle from the first bunch of soldiers we fought. When a Two Kettle warrior killed the last soldier, we took Lame-White-Man's body, tied it on his horse and took him home to his wife. Later that evening, a Sioux warrior came and gave back Lame-White-Man's scalp and rifle. We would bury him with his scalp so he could pass to the other side. Twin-Woman broke the mirrors out of the rifle and gave it back to the Sioux warrior. She did not want it. I heard later that the Sioux warrior threw the rifle away because he was sorry for what he had done.

When we took down the camp the next morning, the women from Lame-White-Man's camp were still weeping. We had placed his body in his lodge, and I asked his women to join my lodge because they now had no man. Lame-White-Man's lodge, along with a few others was left standing."

The Spencer rifle S/N 19756 used by Lame-White-Man was found at the battlefield and is currently located in a private collection.

Sources:

- [1] <http://www.dancingtoeaglespiritociety.org/medwheel.php>
- [2] <http://www.dancingtoeaglespiritociety.org/medwheel.php>
- [3] Thomas B. Marquis, *Wooden Leg*, Page 231

Friends Of The Little Bighorn Battlefield

The Next Generation In The Study Of Custer's Last Stand

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Edward Luce Inside the Stone House

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Rare Look Inside the Stone House with the Luce Family

In This Section:
Earliest Photo Stone House



Superintendent Edward Luce at left

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Dr. Douglas Scott recently forwarded me an email from William Schneider of the Larimer County History Museum in Wellington, Colorado. Mr. Schneider needed help identifying a young man seen in two photos from 1954. What struck my interest was the fact that the photos were shot inside the Stone House (today's White Swan Memorial Library) and included Edward Luce and his wife Evelyn. It is rare to find photos from inside the Luce home while he was superintendent of then Custer Battlefield National Monument.

Mr. Schneider explained in his email that he is documenting the history of an Indian carbine and artifacts from Lt. Col. Elwood L. Nye. Nye was a U.S. Army Veterinarian

and his name shared in the famous Nye/Cartwright/Blummer Ridge of the battlefield.

I had no idea who the young man was, but I immediately thought of Robert Utley and Jerome Greene – they might know, so I sent them an email. Mr. Utley could not make an identification because he had completed his work as a "summer aide" (today's interpreter of the battle story) two years previously, but he was able to explain that the location in the photo "was the dining room in the old stone house, with access to the kitchen just behind Evelyn."

Mr. Greene replied with the details Mr. Schneider was hoping to find plus some. "I checked the monthly superintendent's reports and found the following notation for August 1954 under Visitors: 'Colonel Elwood L. Nye, U.S. Army, Retired, now a professor at Colorado A & M College, Mrs. Frank Sibrava of Goodland, Kansas, and City Manager Dick Baker of Fort Collins, Colorado were at this area August 24-27, collecting data for an article on the battle.' There is also this notation: 'Mr. James S. Hutchins of Columbus, Ohio, formerly of the U.S. Army, Class of 1946, West Point Military Academy, was at this area from August 10 to 27, collecting data and photographs to be used in a book concerning cavalry equipment used by the cavalry in the Custer Battle.' I think the young man might be Jim Hutchins. I knew him, and it kind of looks like him to me."



In the photo L to R:

James S. Hutchins of Columbus, Ohio, formerly of the U.S. Army, Class of 1946, West Point Military Academy

Lt. Col. Elwood L. Nye

Evelyn Luce

City Manager Dick Baker of Fort Collins, Colorado

Superintendent Edward Luce

Photo Copyright: Vestige Press 2012

Thanks to my friends, I could now advise Mr. Schneider who the mystery man was but I was still perplexed as to where in the Stone House this dining room table was located. My earliest recollection of inside the house was from my first visit in June 1981 and my viewing of the NPS interpretive film, "Red Sunday". We were seated in the area which would later be converted to John Doerner's office. The TV was sitting on a stand near the back window in the area of today's library.



L-R: Luce, Nye, Hutchins, Luce, Baker
Copyright: Vestige Press 2012

Although there are drawings of the interior and changes to the Stone House over the years, those are located at the battlefield and I am not. Luckily, Dr. Scott – with Mr. Utley's hint – figured it all out. Dr. Scott explained in an email, "I believe the fireplace is in Doerner's office and some of the stacks are just beyond it in what would have been the kitchen according to Bob Utley. I think that is where you would have seen Red Sunday. The area where the bathrooms are now, may have been a mudroom at one time. The back door area once had a cover that went to a large barn/maintenance building made of rock like the house."

You can see a very early version of that "large barn/maintenance building" in this 1895 photo of the Stone House.



**Copy in the White Swan Library files, courtesy of
the Montana Historical Society Collection.**

A day after posting this report, Mr. Utley followed up with another email to me which included more details about the interior of the Stone House and Jim Hutchins:

The dining room in the Old Stone House was not big, and since the office and reception center were in the front room, it had to serve as a living room too. It had a couch against the wall facing the cemetery and another easy chair slanted toward the couch. The curtains hang from the top of the door leading into the kitchen. In the second picture I can definitely confirm Jim Hutchins. He was a longtime friend who ran the Plymouth dealership in Columbus, Ohio, until I induced him to apply for one of those federal scholarships of the time. He went to the University of Arizona for several years before dropping out to pursue his true love as a museum objects guy rather than a historian-writer. Jim graduated from West Point in 1946 and was assigned to the 27th

Infantry, then on occupation duty in Japan. He decided he didn't want an army career and opted out in May 1950--a month before Korea. The regiment deployed at once to Korea a month later and suffered terrible casualties. All the officers in Jim's company were killed.

Thanks to Robert Utley, Jerome Greene, and Dr. Douglas Scott for all the pertinent details. And, a big thank you to William Schneider of Larimer County History Museum, Nye/Baker Archives for permission to publish these photos.

I'll see you on Last Stand Hill,

Bob Reece

February 26, 2012

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1. The first group of respondents (n = 10) was composed of students who had completed the course and were currently employed in a related field. These respondents were contacted via email and asked to participate in the study. The second group (n = 10) was composed of students who had completed the course and were currently employed in a related field. These respondents were contacted via email and asked to participate in the study. The third group (n = 10) was composed of students who had completed the course and were currently employed in a related field. These respondents were contacted via email and asked to participate in the study.

"We" has been used to cover a number of persons interested in history writing about the campaign of 1812, leaving under the term "we" terminated in writing on the title "We". However, interest has to the ritual of the, and particularly for one, that of an order. This is the condition of the f. directly, as of the order and name of the expedition.

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also a very interesting and important document. It is a letter from the Confederation to the Government of the United States, dated July 2, 1862, and signed by the President of the Confederation, Jefferson Davis. The letter is a very important document, as it shows the Confederation's attitude towards the United States, and its desire for recognition. The letter is a very interesting document, as it shows the Confederation's attitude towards the United States, and its desire for recognition. The letter is a very interesting document, as it shows the Confederation's attitude towards the United States, and its desire for recognition.

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A recent book, "Keech, Comanche and Custer," by Captain Smith (Capt. U.S.A.), retired, gives information descriptive of the horses in use by the cavalry in that period, 1867 to 1876. Captain Luce states: "During the Civil War, horse-traders from the far West were culling the most lively-looking horses and supplying the Union and Confederate armies. Their stock was better for the hard usage of warfare and cheaper in price than the breed which had come from importations of Danish, Dutch, French and English horses of the middle seventeenth century to the West. England and Southern states. The horses of Comanche's breed were standing the tough campaign better than their blue-blooded cousins from the blue grass fields of Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee. The crying need for more horseflesh was urgent, and traders went farther west and north into Nevada, Utah, Oregon, and Washington for a tougher strain--these horse traders had come from Egypt to Arabia, the coast of Europe and finally to America, where they had been left to shift for themselves.

At the close of the Civil War, and for a few years afterwards, inter-breeding was tried and it was found that a three-quarter American and one-quarter Spanish horse possessed remarkable endurance and stamina for western cavalry service. Such was the breed of Comanche, a horse that never flinched, but kept onward, outrunning and outcampaigned the others. On April 3, 1868, he and many others were purchased by the Quartermaster at St. Louis, Missouri for the sum of ninety dollars--his entrance fee to the cavalry service of the United States Army.

No longer would Comanche range the plains of Texas and Oklahoma, nor could he stand hunched in the river bottoms amid the cottonwood trees, seeking protection from snow blizzards. Those days were gone forever. He was a cavalry mount now. He would have corn, oats, and the best of hay for his fodder; not the hard straw grass and brush roots he previously had to scrub and dig for. No more would he have to rub and scrape at just a tree to get coccolburrs out of his rough, shaggy coat--his master and rider would do that for him. Nor would he have to go miles and sometimes days before he could quench his thirst. Now there would be watering troughs where he could drink. ~~Did he do that?~~ In fact, he soon learned in the corral at the depot in St. Louis that the trumpeter blew a musical call--"Water Call"--when he was supposed to drink. Did he wonder whether the musician had ever heard the old saying, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink"? But Comanche much preferred this water from the Mississippi River to the alkaline waterholes of the Texas Panhandle, and drank off and on cheerfully.

For the short time that this light bay or buckskin horse was corralled in St. Louis, he met a number of the bluebloods from Kentucky and the Eastern states. They were quite a little heavier, as he weighed only about 950 pounds and stood about 15 hands high. Nevertheless, his mates were going to be cavalry mounts, so he, and it would be a test of breeding against background, here heights and weights were minor items.

It was only a matter of three or four weeks before he and 10 other horses were placed in animal cars and transported to their first Army post, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Here, Comanche entered the military service, a recruit cavalry mount.

Spring had arrived, and after the morning grooming, he was turned loose to graze in a large, grass-covered field, sprinkled with clover and alfalfa. This was very different from what he had known on the Pashandle plains, where he had to rustle buffalo grass for his forage. Nor were there any coyotes or wolves to guard against--he was now protected and well cared for. If it were cold, a large, heavy woolen blanket was provided for his comfort; it was much different from trying to keep warm and comfortable in the river bottoms among the cottonwood trees. Here at the fort there was no yelling, no lariats whirling around his head--only a firm tone, interspersed with a few well-chosen cuss words that only a trooper would use, and a halter for leading him. True, his freedom to roam the range had been somewhat curtailed, but the care and treatment he received compensated for that loss.

It was only a few days later that he and the other 40 mounts with which he had come from St. Louis were again placed in animal cars and sent on their way to join the Seventh Cavalry, which was now in the field protecting the early settlers of Kansas from murder and depredations from the roving bands of renegade Indians. The officer in charge of escorting these cavalry mounts was none other than First Lieutenant (Brevet Captain) Thomas M. Custer, Seventh Cavalry, twice winner of the coveted Congressional Medal of Honor, and brother of the illustrious cavalry leader of the Civil War, Major General George A. Custer.

When Comanche and the other 40 horses arrived at the detachment's headquarters in the field, the following report was made:

Camp Detachment 7th Cavalry
Near Ellis Station, Kansas
May 27th, 1868

Lieut. A.O. Smith, 7th Cavalry
Bvt. Capt. U.S.A.
Act'g Adjutant

Sir:--

I have the honor to report that I left Leavenworth City, Kansas at Six (6) o'clock P.M. May 16th in charge of Forty-one horses for the 7th Cavalry, was delayed at Lawrence Kas about three hours. I arrived at Ellsworth City Kas about Seven o'clock P.M. May 17th and was delayed there until about Eleven o'clock A.M. May 18th and did not reach Hayes City until about Five o'clock P.M. May 18th, 1868.

And I further state that I used every exertion possible at Ellsworth City to be sent on to Hayes City without delay.

I am very Respectfully, Sec--

T.M. Custer
1st Lieut. 7th Cavalry
Bvt. Capt. U.S.A.

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This letter was enclosed and forwarded with the following letter from Major Joel W. Elliot, Seventh Cavalry.

Camp Alfred Gibbs, Kansas
May 27th, 1868

Sgt. Major General Gibbs,
Comdg 7th U.S. Cav.
Fort Leavenworth, Ks.

Gen'l,

Enclosed please find report of Capt. Custer concerning the detention of his horses while enroute to Fort Hays. Aside from the unnecessary detention I find no fault with the treatment of the horses. The horses were in good condition. Some of them had distemper but most of them were looking well and I regard them as a choice lot of horses.

Very Respectfully

Joel W. Elliot
Major 7th U.S. Cav.
Comdg Det.

For came trying days for Comanche, and another phase in the life of a recruit cavalry mount--his introduction to saddle equipment and accoutrements, which he must learn to wear with grace and humility. Never before had he worn such contractions or carried a rider on his back or been directed to go in certain directions by the feel of the reins on his neck and a touch of the spur on his flank. He had been a carefree roaming life on the plains, and he had been master of his own destiny. But now this was changed and he was to have a kindly master and rider in the person of Captain Myles F. Keogh, who had admired his fine qualities only a few days after his arrival at Ellis station and had been granted permission to purchase him as his private mount, paying the same price which the Government had previously paid for him.

Comanche was indeed fortunate in having such an owner as this gallant Irishman, and under his tutelage and for understanding of equitation, it was only a matter of days before Comanche was a ideal cavalry officer's mount. And he was to share his master's affection with another horse named "Paddy."

The rider has had much personal experience with western horses, even to the wild (in fact) horses of Utah and Idaho. This experience dates back to 1900 when these animals were not greatly different from those of the post Civil War period. As to breeds and types, they represented everything conceivable in the equine world. There was the completely common little "throntail" with a curly tail in the mists of early American history, but no doubt tracing back to Arab or Barb. These animals, through inbreeding and unceasing war with nature, were small, tough, ill-shaped, and had the disposition of "cats in Persian."

Due to their small size and poor individuality, these horses were of very little use and saw little, if any, service with the Army. However, out of this "bromtail" base grew several types or groups of horses which did see military service. One of these types was the Thoroughbred-brocco cross. Animals of this type were fairly common through parts of the west as early as 1870. Such animals were produced usually by the simple expedient of turning Thoroughbred stallions out to run with range mares. This combination produced some good horses and many that were not usable. To the brocco sagacity, cunning and endurance was added the Thoroughbred speed and fire. The resultant animal often became an excellent trooper's mount if he could be captured, subdued, and handled. However, a goodly number was not suitable by reason of faulty type, vicious disposition, or untamable traits.

Another class, or type, was that produced by crossing the range mare with small draft, or grade-draft stallions. This crossing was more often a failure than not for it frequently resulted in a coarse "knot-headed" animal of no type and very little usefulness. However, some of them were fair individuals with endurance and ability to carry weight. Numbers of these found their way into the military service.

Aside from the above, there were all other possible combinations with a few Thoroughbreds and considerable numbers of standard-breds or grade-standard breeds.

We may safely conclude that a troop of cavalry in 1876 had a varied collection of horses as to breed and type, with cold-blood very evident. Such animals, of course, played an important part in the success or failure of the organization to which they were assigned.

In this discussion the writer will not consider that part of Custer's career covered by the Civil War and will mention only briefly an incident or two prior to the beginning of the fatal march from Fort Abraham Lincoln on May 17, 1876.

In the Spring of 1867, Custer was in command of the 7th Cavalry during an expedition through central Kansas and into Nebraska. After considerable marching, Custer was ordered to make a long scout from Fort Hays to Fort McPherson in Nebraska. This distance was about 225 miles. Records indicate that the command started from Fort Hays June 1st, arrived on the Platte June 9th, and remained a week around Fort McPherson, then south to the Republican River where no further march was made. The command then returned to the Platte, and from there to Fort Salado. During this march a trooper remarked of Custer, "He thinks more of his dogs than he does of us." The horses and men were much exhausted upon arrival at Fort Salado, but almost immediately and without delay Custer started for Fort Hays with a mounted escort of 75 men and officers. A small party of this escort, which fell behind because of the condition of the horses, was attacked by Indians. One man was killed and another wounded. Custer made no halt to rescue his men or attack the Indians, but pushed on to Fort Hays.

So much for Custer's methods of marching in that period of his career immediately following the Civil War. We see that the condition of men or animals concerned him but little. In the Wallace to Hays march Custer was not under orders, he was violating orders. Nor was he guided by any military necessity. He was, in fact, actuated solely by personal motives.

The next phase to be considered will be the marching, scouting and operations of the 7th Cavalry under Custer from Fort Abraham Lincoln to the place of his death. There is little information available as to the condition of the horses and mules of the unit when it left Fort Lincoln, but we do know that there was much confusion and uncertainty at the time and it may be safely assumed that the condition of the animals was not too good.

Custer had become involved in the congressional proceedings against Secretary of War Belknap, and as a result, was relieved from duty with his regiment and placed under arrest as he was passing through Chicago. It was only upon the kind intervention of General Terry that he was reinstated to duty and permitted to accompany the expedition against the Sioux.

Custer arrived with Terry at Fort Lincoln on May 10th, and found the 7th Cavalry assembled and supplies collected. Some rather indifferent preparations had been made under Reno, but Custer stated that the field conditions far from satisfactory. With only a week under his supervision, the regiment moved out on May 17th, 1876. From the above, it appears entirely possible that the animals were not in the best condition for extended field service. To add to the difficulties of the mounts, a large percentage of the enlisted men were recruits with little or no experience in the care of animals under field, or any other, conditions.

The command, as it left Fort Lincoln, consisted of the 7th Cavalry, the commander of the 17th Infantry, a company of the 16th Infantry, a few men of the 20th Infantry, Indian Scouts, and about 150 wagons, which carried grain for a month's rations.

The morning of the start, May 17th, was cold, raw and foggy. The troops had been camped in tents outside the post while preparations for the march, but when all was ready for moving out, Custer gave the command to march first through the garrison, that the wives and children being left behind might have a last look at the regiment. How real that became! It was, indeed, the last glimpse for many a wife or child of the one they would not see again. The usual forced cheer or bravado, was missing. A sense of doom seemed to hover over men and families. The command came to "dismount and fall out," that a quick farewell might be taken. Then, mounted again, the troops moved quickly out behind the band to the loud strains of "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

Elizabeth Bacon Custer did not say farewell to her husband at Fort Abraham Lincoln, as art and fiction so fondly portray. She rode out mounted with the command as she often did when marches were to be made.

On many a change of station she rode her horse all the long way. When the 7th Cavalry made the move from Kentucky to Fort Lincoln in 1872, she had ridden the weary distance from Yankton, South Dakota to Bismark, North Dakota and enjoyed it, if one may judge from her account of the experience. But this time she was to ride only the first day. With her rode Maggie, Custer's sister, the wife of Calhoun. Sadly, the two women turned back to the post the morning of May 18th. Neither was to see her husband again.

The column moved out directly west to Heart River. The distance covered the first day was short, about 13 miles, and camp was reached at 1:30 p.m. Terry camped early in order that the men might be paid by the pay-master, who had come to the camp with the column. Terry would not permit them to have money while the temptations of Bismark were available. Later, the victorious Sioux were enriched beyond their own belief by the same money which they found in following their ancient custom of stripping the dead.

The morning of May 18th, the march was resumed with the cavalry in right and left wings. Custer, with one troop, went ahead to select route and camping places. The march this day covered about 11 miles and camp was made at Sweetbrier Creek. Shortly after camp was made, a heavy rain began to fall and continued throughout the day. The travel during the day had been very difficult because of the rain. The march was resumed about 6:30 a.m. on the 19th. The route lay over a rough country, and as Sweetbrier Creek was too much of a torrent to be crossed, a detour was made to the south. Part of the going was so bad it became necessary to double teams on each wagon. A severe storm of hail and rain broke at noon and lasted about 20 minutes, adding to the discomfort and misery of men and animals. It was night before the last wagon in, although the march covered only about 14 miles. To add to the general unhappiness, the camp was a dry one. Wood was not to be had and the buffalo chips were too wet to burn.

The column marched at 7:30 a.m. on the 20th and after a march of 10 miles, went into camp on a branch of the Big Muddy. During this day many antelope were seen and Custer gave his hounds a workout.

The marches from May 21st to 26th inclusive covered a total distance of 88 miles. During much of this time the command was assailed by rain and mosquitos and traversed some very rough country. Elk and other game was seen during this period and the men were encouraged to hunt, which some did with considerable success, at the same time adding to the distances covered by their mounts.

The first view of the bad lands of the Little Missouri was obtained on the morning of May 26th, after a march of a few miles. At a distance, these formations have a weird beauty and resemble ruined cities with broke towers and embattlements. On closer view, they present merely an inferno of eroded cliffs and high hills and gullies with a tenacious mud in wet weather. Terrain such as this is difficult enough for mounted parties, and practically impossible for vehicles. The march, which this day covered 17 miles, continued south to Davis Creek. The water here was alkaline, and insufficient in amount.

The next march, May 24th, was down Davis Creek toward the Little Missouri. The creek was so winding that it was crossed 10 times in 8 miles. The banks were high and steep and the streambed miry. It required 8 hours of heavy labor to cover as many miles. As the command approached the Little Missouri they found the grass, which had been sparse and poor, much better, while wood and good spring water were available. The river supplied excellent fish and game was abundant.

It had been rumored that large numbers of hostile Indians were located along this stream, so Terry decided to rest the command for a day or two and scout the region. The morning of the 29th Custer started off up-stream with four troops of the Seventh and part of the scouts. The river valley here is about a mile wide and closely bounded by badlands. This scout covered about 50 miles; during which time the Little Missouri was crossed about 34 times, so winding was its course. Custer returned at 6 p.m. and reported no Indians in the vicinity nor any signs that there had been any for 6 months.

The march was resumed on the morning of the 30th, the Little Missouri being crossed with some difficulty because of a soft and miry bottom. The course continued to Sentinel Buttes over a difficult country and then down a steep ravine to an open valley traversed by a small stream. Camp was made at 2 p.m. after a march of 11 miles. During this day Reynolds killed two bighorn sheep and Custer amused himself by shooting from ambush over the head of his brother, Boston. Custer and Captain Tom Custer, being far ahead, noticed Boston, who had been with them, had halted. Quickly they rounded an elevation, out of sight of Boston, and, dismounting, crept to the top. They saw that Boston was lost and, leveling their rifles, fired several rounds over the hapless brother's head. That was enough. Boston immediately mounted and beat a hot retreat back to the column thinking the whole Sioux nation was in pursuit. This type of sardonic humor seems to have appealed to Custer. On another occasion, his brother Tom was slow in getting up in the morning. Custer set fire to Tom's tent. It is reported that Tom came out with considerable promptness.

During the evening, rain started which soon changed to snow and by morning several inches had fallen. The storm continued during the day and the little creek on which the command was camped soon became a torrent. Wood was scarce and the animals suffered from exposure and poor grass.

Camp was broken on the morning of June 3rd. The first six miles were covered in cold and misery. Then the command marched out upon a beautiful rolling prairie where scouts from Colonel Gibbon of the Montana Column were met. The total march this day was 25 miles and camp was made on Beaver Creek.

The march of the 4th was generally south along the course of Beaver Creek. The road was fairly easy over a high, rolling prairie, and camp was again made on Beaver Creek after the column had covered 18 miles. Water, wood and grass were good and abundant and antelope and rabbits plentiful.

It was necessary for the Engineer Detachment to bridge the creek on the morning of June 5th before the command could proceed and then a very rough country was reached. It was much cut up by ravines and bad lands and all hands had hard work in getting the wagon train through. After a march of about 20 miles, camp was made on a well-grassed prairie, but pools of melted snow provided the water.

On June 6th, the expedition reached O'Fallon's Creek after marching 22 miles and found excellent food and water. The march was resumed at 4:20 a.m. the 7th, and a region was entered that had never known a wagon train. This area formed the divide between O'Fallon's Creek and the Powder River. It was very rough and uninteresting country. A cold rain started and this did little to make the prospect pleasing. The descent to the river was difficult and dangerous, and camp was not made until 7 p.m. The distance covered was 32 miles and men and animals were exhausted. This point on the Powder offered pleasant camping as to food and grazing, but the river water was yellow with silt and bordered by black, sand which probably accounts for the name.

General Terry decided to leave the command in camp at this point and proceed to the Yellowstone to meet Gibbon, taking two troops as escort.

To this point, the expedition had been in the field 22 days and had marched about 290 miles. In addition, much additional distance was covered by parts of the command in scouting, hunting, locating routes, etc. As to one scout alone, he found a distance of 50 miles covered by Custer and four troops on May 29th. During the entire march to the Powder there were two or three days rest for parts of the command.

Up to this time, there is probably nothing to be criticized in the conduct of the march. Considered alone, the distances are, in fact, short. However, other conditions must be kept in mind. Most of the route was over extremely rough terrain. There was no road, no trail, for much of the distance. It was necessary to move a huge wagon train over country then unsuited to such transportation. The men of the expedition did much additional and exhausting work getting the wagons over country that today would be considered impossible.

Spring was late in 1876 and, as a consequence, grass was scant and poor in many instances, and the animals suffered accordingly. Many of the marches and camps were made miserable for men and animals by snows and cold rains. Water was frequently wanting, or so alkaline that it was of little use. In view of these conditions, it may certainly be assumed that the animals reached the end of the first phase of the journey in a depleted and exhausted condition; yet they were to have little opportunity ahead for rest and recuperation for the stern and tragic task which lay ahead.

Terry found the steamer, "Far West," under Captain Marsh, waiting on the Yellowstone and the boat proceeded up the river to a point near the mouth of the Tongue River where Gibbon was met.

After a conference, Terry returned to Custer's camp on the Powder. Here, he issued an order for Reno to take six troops of the 7th Cavalry, with Gatling gun and Ree scouts, and proceed to scout the valley of the Powder to the Little Powder, thence by Mizpah and Pumpkin Creeks to the Tongue River and down that stream to the Yellowstone where he would find the command. Reno was rationed for 12 days and a supply of oats for the horses was carried on pack mules.

Reno started June 10th. Thus we see that the animals he used had a rest of 2 days from an exhausting march to the Powder, unless some were in Terry's escort to the Yellowstone. If these went with Reno they had no rest at all. The route was up the Powder to the Little Powder, a distance of over 80 miles. From the Little Powder Reno marched westward to Mizpah Creek and thence to the Pumpkin where he found the great Indian trail, leading westward to the Tongue River. He crossed the Tongue and followed the Sioux trail to and the Rosebud; in all, a distance of 24 miles. The great camp on the Rosebud was found abandoned, and Reno proceeded up the Rosebud to a point 35 to 40 miles above its mouth. From this point he retraced his route down the Rosebud, following a good trail to the Yellowstone. Following the complete route, it is a little over 80 miles from the camp on the Powder to the Little Powder, and from that point over the march it is about 160 miles to the mouth of the Rosebud, making a total of over 240 miles which the animals of Reno's troops covered on this scout. As stated above, these horses and mules started from the Powder with little rest and must have been very tired and in poor flesh. They had about two pounds of oats per day per animal and such grazing as was possible for a command in enemy territory. Colonel Charles Varnum told the writer that Custer remarked to him, "Reno made the mistake of his life when he didn't follow the trail leading to the Little Big Horn and attack." We know now that Reno and all of his command would have died very quickly had he done so. Terry sent him orders to halt at the mouth of the Rosebud and await the command. This was on the evening of June 19th.

Returning to Custer's camp on the Powder, 20 miles above its mouth, on June 10th, Terry sent out one troop to locate a route to the Yellowstone suitable for wagons. The troop sent out failed to return when expected, and Custer, with one troop, started on the 11th to find a route and the lost troop. This was accomplished and, after a hard march of 24 miles, the command with train arrived on the Yellowstone and camped at 6:20 p.m.

By June 15th, supplies had reached the camp at the mouth of the Powder, and Custer, with the remaining troops of the 7th, two Gatling guns, and a train of pack mules, had marched out toward the Tongue River. The wagon train, infantry companies, band and Custer's dogs remained in this base camp.

Custer arrived at the Tongue River on June 16th and went into camp on ground which later became the site of Miles City, and near which Fort Keogh was established.

General Terry, with staff, was aboard the Far West at this time and the steamer became his headquarters. It was now at the mouth of the Tongue River. Here, the evening of June 19th, an Indian scout from Reno reported to Terry the former's position and operations.

Terry at once directed that Reno remain where he was on the Rosebud and await the assembling of the command at that point. The next morning Terry went to Reno's camp where he was joined by Custer and, after a conference and discussion, he told them in a general way of his plans. It is of special interest to note that at this time Terry cautioned Custer to take special care of his men and animals. Subsequent events disclose how little Custer regarded the instructions. As always, he was impatient of restraint and control.

General Terry had a final conference aboard the "Far West" the evening of June 21st, which Custer and Gibbon attended. Here, he issued the orders and instructions, written and verbal, which have become notable and which have been the subject of so much speculation and ~~the~~ discussion. Consideration of these orders and their obedience or disobedience is not a part of this article. That part of the story has been covered many times by writers far more able than the one who writes this. It will be necessary here to discuss only such points as had a bearing on the subsequent abuse of the animals that went with Custer.

Custer was to start immediately up the Rosebud continuing until the Indian Trail was reached and follow it far enough to determine whether or not it led to the Little Big Horn. He was to scout the headwaters of Tullocks Creek and at the same time (remain) far enough to ~~not~~ his left to prevent the Indians escaping around him to the east. He was also to send a scout through to Terry after he had scouted Tullocks Creek, and was then to March far enough south to avoid discovery and give Gibbon sufficient time to get into position at, or near, the mouth of the Little Big Horn. At the conference, Terry stressed to Custer and Gibbon the necessity for concerted movement and cooperation. He considered that Gibbon would have one day more marching than Custer, and that the two commands would meet for united action on the Little Big Horn June 26th.

All preparations had been completed before noon of June 22nd and Custer was ready to march. His command consisted of all 12 troops of the 7th Cavalry, 42 Crow and Ree scouts, under Lieut. Chas. Varnum, plus the white scouts, Chas. Reynolds and George Herendee. The supplies and extra ammunition were carried on a mule pack train, which was handled by six civilian packers. Most of these pack train mules had already made a difficult march under Reno on his scout. Custer was offered the Gatling guns and the four troops of cavalry under Brisbit of Gibbon's command. He refused them, saying that if the Seventh couldn't defeat any Indians encountered then additional troops would make little difference.*

The departure of the Custer command, shortly after noon on the 22nd, was made the occasion for a review of sorts. Terry, Gibbon and Brisbit were present to watch the troops pass and Custer sat his horse with them until the rear guard approached, where he shook hands and started off to the head of his column.

*Custer declined the Gatling guns on the grounds that, being drawn by condemned cavalry mounts, and difficult to transport over rugged terrain, they might slow his march and impede the command.

Having reached this position, a halt was called and the Indian scouts were organized in two groups. They proceeded the command by short intervals. The march up the Rosebud was rough, and the command was forced to cross and march up the left bank for about 10 miles. The stream was clear and small and slightly alkaline. The bottom lands being rather heavily timbered, the route followed some benchlands further out. After a march of 12 miles, camp was made in the shelter of a bluff, where wood, water and grass were good.

Officers' call was sounded in the evening and the meeting was at Custer's tent. He announced that bugle calls would be discontinued and that the march would be resumed at 5 a.m. All details except the to make and break camp would be left to the troop commanders. He also informed his officers at this time that the marches would be from 25 to 30 miles daily and he cautioned troop officers to exercise particular care of horses and mules. It quickly developed that Custer himself made these last instructions impossible of accomplishment. Animals could not be spared when he forced his command forward against all reason and in defiance of orders.

At 5 a.m., June 23rd, the regiment moved out up the Rosebud. The bluffs were now high and broken and the trail followed the creek, which was crossed five times in 3 miles. After marching five miles from camp, Reno's trail was found and three miles farther, the abandoned Indian village. During the day, three of these abandoned camps were found and the command halted at each. Camp was made at 4:10 p.m. on a site a few miles from the present settlement of Lee, Montana. The last of the pack train reached camp at sunset; the day's march was 33 miles.

The column marched at 5 a.m., the 24th. The Crow scouts had been out much earlier and returned to the command about 6 a.m., stating they had seen fresh signs of Sioux.

A halt was made for lunch about noon at the forks of the Rosebud, near Lone Deer, and the regiment rested here until 5 p.m. The command moved at 5 p.m. and crossed to the left bank and passed through the sites of several large camps. The Indian trail was new and the valley floor was scarred by the trailing lodge poles. Scouts were again sent ahead and camp was made at 7:45 p.m. near where the small village of Busby now stands. During the day, the headwaters of Tullock's Creek, which Terry had directed Custer to scout, were near. However, Custer did not then, or at any time, scout this area. And Terry, with Gideon, was left in ignorance of Custer's position, or what had been found.

The command had marched 28 miles by 7:45 p.m., the 24th, but the animals had been under saddle, on the alert, or marching, from 5 a.m. until 7:45 p.m., a total of 14 hours and 45 minutes. Nine hours and 45 minutes was consumed in actual march conditions. Every cavalryman knows that it is not alone the distance covered by an animal that wears him down, but also the time spent in making that distance. He may very well assume that Custer's horses and mules were exhausted and worn the evening before that last day of life for so many of them. Yet much remained to be done before the last great halt.

At 9 o'clock that night the scouts returned and reported that the Indian trail crossed the divide and into the valley of the Little Big Horn. It should be noted how much extra distance the ponies of the scouts were covering, and had been covering, since leaving the camp on the Powder. Their animals became so fatigued that several were unable to keep up with the command and dropped to the rear.

The column moved out again about 1:00 a.m. of the 25th, but due to delays in the pack train, had only proceeded about 8 miles by daylight. A halt was made here and some of the men made coffee which was so bitter from the alkaline water that it was not drinkable. The horses had no water for the same reason.

At about 7 a.m., Custer received a message from Varnum who was ahead with scouts at a point on the divide later called "Crows Nest." Custer at once gave orders for the regiment to march at 8 a.m., and he, together with some scouts, proceeded to join Varnum. The scouts, particularly Bouyer, tried hard to show Custer where the Indian village lay on the Little Big Horn, about 15 miles northwest. Even with glasses, Custer was unable to see it, and expressed the opinion that there was no village there. This opinion, or obsession seemed to have remained his and to have guided all his subsequent actions, at least until the time he ordered Reno to attack; and even at that time the village could be seen only in small part, if at all. However, the scouts on Crows Nest knew. They knew by the dust, smoke and the great pony herd on the mesa west of the Indian camp, even though the bluffs along the east bank of the Little Big Horn effectively screened the tepees. Had Custer accepted the humble but expert advice of these scouts, how different the fate of the regiment might have been. But Custer was Custer! He accepted no advice not conforming to his pre-conceived opinions.

At this time, while observations were being made on Crows Nest, six Sioux appeared near the divide and must certainly have located the command. They quickly disappeared and the Crow scouts told Custer that the enemy would surely be warred.

Custer received the command, which had arrived and was sheltered in a deep ravine, just east of the Crows Nest, and he immediately ordered that each troop detail one officer and six enlisted men to accompany the pack train.

It seems advisable here to check up on the condition of men and horses and the writer can do no better than to quote from the "Custer Tragedy" by (Fred) Austin: "Concerning the condition of the command at this time, it may be summed up thus: On June 22nd the command marched 12 miles, going into camp at 4 p.m. On the 23rd, starting at 5 a.m., the march was 33 miles, camping at 4:30. On the 24th, moving at 5 a.m., marched until 1 p.m., moving out again at 5 p.m. and camping at 7:45 p.m., distance 26 miles. On the 25th, the command marched at 1 a.m., one of the men having had more than three hours sleep, and many of them none at all. This march continued until about 4 a.m., and was resumed at 8 a.m., covering a distance of probably 14 miles to the ravine at the foot of Crows Nest."

From this point to the Custer Field Monument the distance is not less than 20 miles over his route, and Reno, in reaching his final position traveled still farther, while Benteen's three troops added at least 6-or-8 miles to their march. It will be manifest, therefore, that Custer and Reno's battalions marched over 60 miles from 5 o'clock in the morning of the 24th to approximately 2 o'clock in the afternoon of the 25th, Benteen upwards of 70 miles and the pack train and its escort over 55 miles, in a period of 33 hours, including halts, with very little sleep or food, hardly any water, almost no grass, and but few oats for the animals."

Another matter we must consider is that the scouts had covered from 10 to 25 miles more than any of the troops with the possible exception of Varnum and those in Benteen's battalion.

Military necessity cannot be urged as the motive for this abuse of men and animals. Custer was to have arrived on the Little Big Horn to cooperate with Gibbon on the 26th; instead, he reached the objective about 24 hours too soon. Had this additional time been allotted the marches, men and animals would have reached the scene of action in the exhausted state which was theirs.

To return to the command which was left in the ravine east of the Crows Nest, when the last troop commander, McDougall, reported "ready", it was noon of the 25th of June. The column moved across the divide and, at 12:15, Custer halted and divided the command into three battalions, or squadrons. Reno was given troops A G and M., Benteen got H D and K, and Custer retained the rest. Varnum and Hare had the scouts. The command totaled about 630 men. The halt was brief, and Benteen moved out to the left, under Custer's orders, to scout a line of bluffs five miles or so to the front and to look for Indians. Benteen was soon lost to sight from the rest of the command which moved down Reno Creek, Custer on the right bank and Reno on the left. In this way, they covered about 12 miles. At about this time, some Indians were seen running their horses toward the Little Big Horn. Custer, apparently considering the village in retreat, ordered Reno with his battalion ahead. Reno was ordered to move forward as rapidly as prudent, charge afterward, and was told that he would be supported by the "whole outfit." Reno forded the Little Big Horn near the point where Reno Creek empties, and halted on the left bank to form his command. Many of the horses had scattered in crossing in their frantic efforts to drink. However, no halt was made for watering, and a hastily snatched swallow here-and-there was all the desperately thirst animals got. Reno had about two-and-a-half miles to cover between the ford and his first position of attack. As soon as his battalion was formed, he took up the trot and after a short distance, the gallop. This pace was held until the command dismounted to fight on foot at a bend in the river opposite the present site of the village, Garryoven. Here, the horses got such rest as might be possible in the excitement of battle. Then followed the wild dash of Reno's charge ~~xxxx~~ to regain and cross the river and reach the bluffs beyond.

This charge, or rout, or whatever you might choose to call it, was made at the great speed of which the animals were capable and covered about a mile to the second ford. The ford was narrow and a wild confusion of charging, milling troop horses and screaming Sioux brought pandemonium back again. During this dash, and crossing, many men and animals were killed. The survivors surged across the river and struggled up a steep ravine to the top of the bluffs about a quarter of a mile from the river. Men and animals were, of course, exhausted, but there was no time to consider that, for the Sioux were pressing forward to attack the hastily formed position, and defense was the only consideration. Reno and the remnant of his command reached the position on the bluffs about 4 p.m., June 25th. Here, these animals, poorly protected from Indian fire, were to remain, tormented, without water, without food, and without relief for their wounds except the mercy of a quick death until the evening of June 26th. This takes the animals of Reno's squadron to the end of the trail so far as this story is concerned. In this connection, the Lieut. Wallace, testifying at the Reno Court of Inquiry in Chicago in 1879, made statement as follows: "They had been marching for three or four days, making many of the marches at night, and they moved that morning with little or no breakfast. The men were tired and the horses were worn out."

Let us return to Benteen and the pack train. As noted previously in this article, Benteen quickly disappeared with his squadron following Custer's indefinite orders to scout some rough areas to the left. Sergeant Windolph, now living at Lead, South Dakota, then a member of "H", Benteen's troop, told the writer that Benteen appeared much disgusted with the order and remarked that the Indians had too much sense to enter a country such as they were scouting. However, Benteen carried out orders and followed through two or three rough valleys and lines of bluffs, until he decided he was accomplishing nothing where he was and that he might be needed with the regiment. So he turned back to the right. When he left Custer at 12:15, he had no orders whatever as to where, or when, he should rejoin the regiment. He turned back after marching about 12 miles and at about 3:30 he struck Custer's trail. As he reached the trail he came upon a bog containing swamp water and paused to water his horses. As Benteen left the bog, a few of the pack train mules rushed up, and, frantic with thirst, plunged into the water and were soon mired. A few miles (two or three) further on down the trail, Benteen encountered Sergeant Kanipe of Tom Custer's troop. Kanipe explained that he had an order from General Custer to hurry up the packs. Benteen directed Kanipe to the train, far in the rear, and rode on. A little later, he was met by Trooper Martin with a message from the Commanding Officer directing Benteen to "Come on." Be it noted here that this was the first order, or instruction, Benteen had about rejoining the command. Had he not taken events into his own hands, had he been where Custer had every reason to expect him to be, he would have been at some indefinite point far to the left rear, where Martin might have ridden some many weary miles before finding him, if, indeed, he would have found him at all.

This meeting of Benteen and Martin probably occurred at a point on Custer's trail about a mile south of the hill on which Reno soon took refuge. Benteen read the message, showed it to Weir and Edgerly, and then taking up a rapid gait, rode on toward the sound of the firing. He did not wait for the pack train. He had already directed Kanipe to it.

Reaching rising ground, they saw Reno's command in its retreat, or charge, to the river. At this point, Benteen too came under fire, but the range was too great for damage. The command drew pistols and trotted forward and had soon joined Reno in his position on the bluffs. From here on, the condition of Benteen's animals was the same as that described above for those of Reno. Benteen's squadron had marched further, but had not had the several miles of extended gallop that was the lot of those horses with Reno.

In the meantime, the pack train, escorted by McDougall's troop and details from the other troops, was following the trail of the regiment. The train got far to the rear and, as noted above, only the first mules had come up to the bog on the main trail soon after Benteen cut into it. Benteen went on and the mules, after getting a drink and being dragged from the mud, were formed again and urged forward. The train reached the position of Reno and Benteen about 4:30 p.m.

The mules had carried heavy loads; among other items, the extra ammunition. They had covered all the line of march that the regiment covered, except the additional distances made by Reno and Benteen before reaching Reno Hill, and, of course, the final and fatal 4 miles traveled by Custer. The pack train carried the extra ammunition. Had the Sioux known how readily, how easily, they might have captured it from the small force available for its defense, they would surely have done so. Fortunately for Reno and Benteen, the Sioux did not know, and the train reached the position they had taken. The ammunition and supplies they brought made possible the successful defense of that position. Without the train, the men with Reno and Benteen must have shared very quickly the fate of those with Custer. The condition of the mules was now the same as that of the horses which arrived before them: thirst, hunger, wounds and death--until the evening of the 26th.

The condition of the animals of the Indian scouts was pitiful. They had not only made the distances that the regiment had covered, but they had ranged far-and-wide in advance and on the flank, day and night, until they covered many more miles than the troop horse. The ponies were so exhausted toward the end that when Custer ordered some of the scouts forward in pursuit of fleeing Sioux, as the regiment approached the Little Big Horn, they refused to go because of the condition of their animals. Some of the scouts dropped out completely during the last few miles of the approach, saying their horses were too poor, (meaning in too poor condition) to go on. Others tried to lash their faltering mounts forward but in several instances horse flesh had given all it could. There was no reserve strength remaining.

Most of the scouts whose ponies retained sufficient strength to go on fought with Reno and their mounts shared in degree the hardship and fate of that sore-beset command.

We have followed the fortunes of the command, save the five troops with Custer. What of them? After Reno crossed the Little Big Horn to attack at 2:30 p.m., Custer continued on down the right bank for a short distance and watered his horses, at a branch of Reno Creek. Then, bearing more to the right, he passed up and over a long ridge, heading downstream, and led his command just to the east of the hill on which Reno later took refuge. Why did he not support Reno with the "whole outfit" as he had stated he would do, is not a part of this narrative. He kept on northward along the bluffs until Varnum and DeRudio, fighting in the valley with Reno, saw part of the squadron as it passed a more open point in the bluffs. This was the last seen of Custer and his command until they were found by Bradley, of Gibbon's column, lying as they had fallen, stripped and mutilated, at a point 4 miles north, or downstream, from Reno Hill.

Twice, Custer and a few of his staff rode furiously to the left, to high points on the bluffs, which permitted observations of the Indian camp below. The second of these observations was taken from a point about a mile north from Reno Hill. Here, he must have seen that he must continue on as committed and, after rejoining his squadron and proceeding about a ~~mile~~ half-mile further on, he sent Sergeant Kanipe back to hurry the pack train forward. Soon after sending Kanipe on his way, Custer also dispatched Trumpeter Martin with his message to Santee to hurry.

The route of the squadron was generally along the high ground east of the river bluffs for about 2 miles, then right oblique into a ravine which enters Medicine Tail Coulee at a point about a mile east of the ford. Custer apparently went down the Coulee toward the ford a short distance, and then turned back east and followed the Coulee to its source, and thence northeast and north for a mile-or-so along a ridge that lies about a mile-a-d-a-quarter east of the river and parallel to it. This soon brought the command to the part of the field now known as the Custer Battlefield, where the main monument stands.

The distance from Reno's final defensive position on the bluffs to the Custer Monument, near which Custer was killed, is a little over four miles. Figuring the time and distance as nearly as possible, it appears that after Reno crossed the Little Big Horn at 2:30 p.m., Custer and his command marched nearly seven miles to the final action which was culminated by 4 or 4:30 p.m. No man will ever know how long Custer was engaged. The Indians say, "as long as it takes to eat," perhaps half-an-hour, although other evidence more clearly indicates about an hour. If we accept an hour for the engagement, and assuming it terminated at 4:30 p.m., then Custer's squadron covered about seven miles of very rough going between 2:30 p.m. (after separating from Reno) and 3:30 p.m., or in about an hour.

This is rapid marching in any army, or country, and must have involved much extended trot-and-gallop, not considering the wild dashes to charge or escape which must have marked the end of that fatal conflict. We know that during this approach march, at least four troopers dropped out of the Custer column because their mounts were so exhausted they could not be goaded forward. We know this could be the only reason, for in a country then seen to be swarming with the enemy, no man would be left behind who could do anything to prevent it. Two of these men later succeeded in joining Reno. The fate of the others is not known.

Custer's squadron, with attached civilian personnel, numbered 225. All were mounted and we may assume that there were some extra animals. During the engagement many casualties naturally occurred among the animals. Numbers of them, frantic with fear, broke away from the horse-holders and dashed away to be gathered up by Sioux. Mute evidence on the stricken field showed plainly that troopers and officers had shot their mounts to form a breast-work behind which the last, desperate minutes were passed.

One living thing, one only, was found on the field. This was the horse Comanche, Leogh's mount. Severely wounded in several places by bullet and arrow, and with part of the equipment still hanging to him, Comanche wandered on the field, weak and near death, then found by Gibbon's men on the 27th. He was given gentle care and finally made the long journey by steamboat back to Fort Lincoln. He remained an honored member of the Seventh Cavalry until his death at Fort Riley when 28 years old.

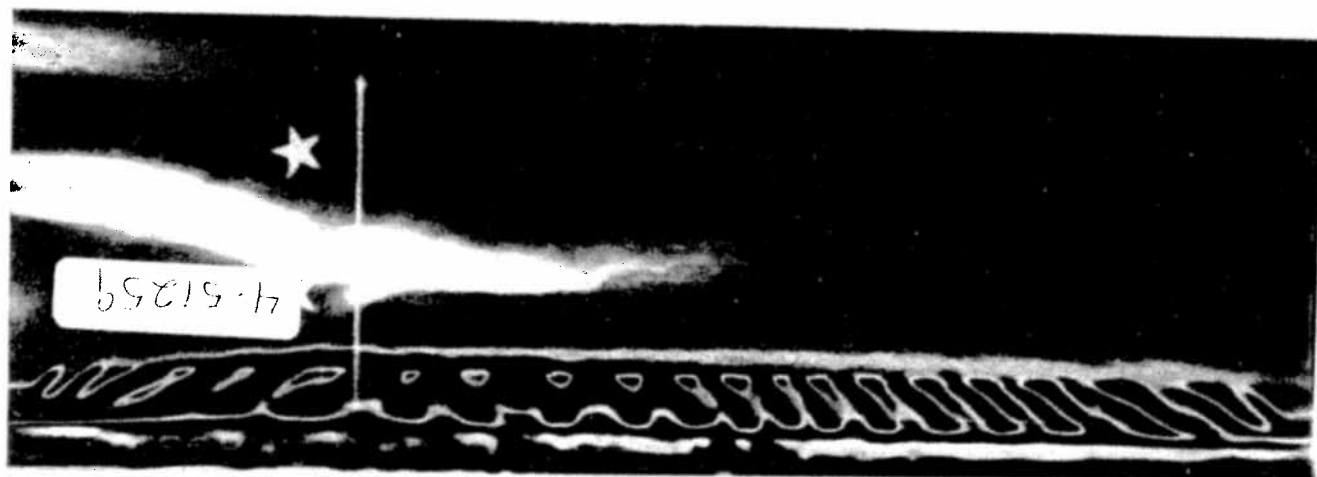
As stated above, the Indians secured all the troop horses possible and many were later seen under Sioux riders attacking Reno's command. Later, these animals were scattered far-and-wide as the Indians dispersed, or broke up into smaller groups. Several were found and re-taken by Crook (Crook?), in September of that year, when he surrounded and captured the village of American Horse at Slim Buttes in South Dakota. Others were found in various other Indian battles later.

The writer does not have the numbers of the horses killed, destroyed, or lost during the campaign. He does, however, risk the statement that the loss was excessive, far greater than it would have been had Custer conformed his marches and attack to the plans of Terry.

In considering Custer, and the care of his animals, one may wonder concerning his attitude toward veterinarians. The writer has found reference to two who served with the Seventh Cavalry under Custer. There were probably others. A veterinarian named Hunziger was present on the Stanley expedition in 1873 and strayed far from the column. He was killed and scalped by Indians under Rain-in-the-Face. There is mention of a veterinarian named C.A. Stern as with the Seventh Cavalry during the early part of the march from Bismarck, described in this article. Kellogg, in his diary, makes mention of the destruction of mule because of glanders. One wonders how many more animals of the command were infected. The above is all we know of Stern.

His name is not on the lists of killed, or wounded, and we must conclude, therefore, that he did not go with Custer's squadron into final action. He may have been with Reno or Benteen...or the pack train...or possibly he remained behind with the wagon train on the powder.

We see that on at least two occasions, Custer had a veterinarian, and since the presence, or absence of these men was entirely according to the wishes of the regimental commanders in those days, we may conclude that Custer desired their services. However, knowing Custer's impatient nature and impatience with advice, and the lowly status of veterinarians in the army in those days, we must assume that his veterinarians merely treated sick and injured animals, and had little to say concerning care of animals and animal management. There is ample evidence that Custer, in person, did at least part of his forage inspection. Whether or not his veterinarians did any of this work is questionable.



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CUSTER...INDIAN GUN



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