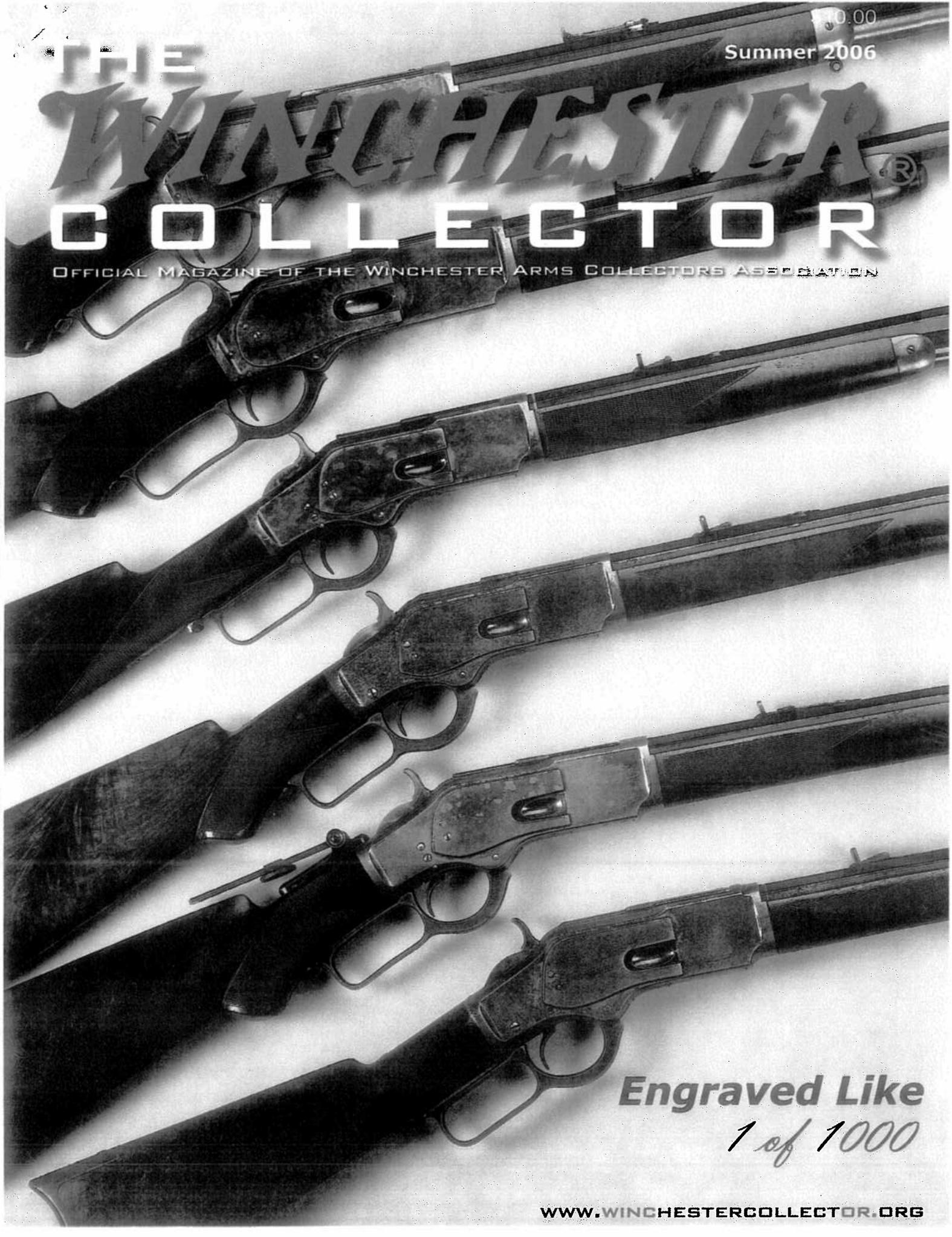


10.00
Summer 2006

THE WINCHESTER COLLECTOR

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE WINCHESTER ARMS COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION



Engraved Like
1 of 1000

“Winchester Model 1866 Saddle Ring Carbine” by Larry Nirenberg

As antique firearms collectors we all seem to live in the past. How far back in time depends on the type and period of firearms we collect. This is the story of a Winchester, a Winchester that was manufactured in the last quarter of the Nineteenth century, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

I would now like you to sit back, for you are about to start a journey. It is a journey that will move you back to that last quarter of the Nineteenth Century and then move you forward to the present. It is an adventure, as some journeys turnout to be, a true adventure. It is however most of all a mystery. And like all good mysteries this one has all the components. There's lust, greed, lies, death, subversion, blank walls and finally the truth. It spans the years in America's history, the 1870's to the first years of the Twenty First Century. It is the true story of a gun, a Winchester carbine to be exact. It is a story of one of America's great military defeats, a story of one of America's great shames. A story of turbulent times, and this Winchester, this Model of 1866, this carbine played a roll in it.

The journey started out innocently enough on a summer afternoon in 1990. I had been collecting antique firearms for over twenty years when this Winchester 1866 came to my attention. I had been looking for this model year to fill a time slot in a collection of Lever Action Winchesters I'd put together over the past few years.

My area of expertise in Winchester collecting was the Model of 1873, a most famous Winchester, with great historical significance. I also had a good working knowledge of the models of 1876 and 1866.

The pursuit of a Model 1866 had not been going well. Most were too expensive for my limited pocketbook. I felt however that since it didn't matter to me just what type I acquired, be it rifle

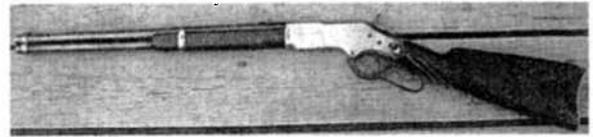
or carbine, one would eventually come my way.

A fellow collector that I knew had heard I was in the market for an 1866, not being a collector of Winchesters himself he telephoned me and told me of a carbine he knew of that was for sale.

We got together at his home where I saw for the first time this 1866 carbine. Let it be said that at first I wasn't very impressed. Yes, it was a Winchester Model of 1866. Yes, it was a carbine. It was not however in the finest of condition to say the least. The butt stock had obvious hard wear from being carried across a saddle. The wood, being worn on the top of the stock had no signs of cracks or breaks, a good sign. The bronze frame, also with heavy wear, didn't have a sharp edge anywhere on it. What did intrigue me about this carbine was the type and location of the serial number. The number was stamped in block numbers within an engraved ribbon. Around the ribbon was a dotted stipple design. The serial number was located just behind the lever. This location and type of numbering indicated a “Special Order” piece and not the standard run of the mill Winchester. Needless to say I now was more than just a little interested in owning this particular weapon. I next checked out the action. While being a little stiff, it did function without a flaw. Next, the rifling of the barrel, while being used, it was in much better condition than I hoped for.

“How much”? I asked. The answer was forthcoming. The Seller being a collector of military firearms and knowing that I had a few interesting pieces he was

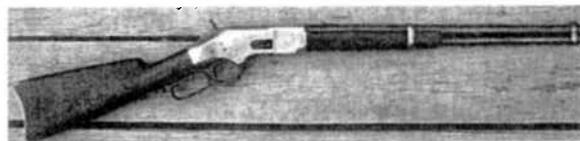
interested in, suggested that if I didn't have enough cash for his asking price, perhaps a “trade plus cash” deal could be worked out. I was ready to trade



my “First Born” if I had to for this Winchester. The deal without my “First Born” was struck.

Upon getting home and into my shop where the light was good, I was now able to take a really good look at what for me I had paid a mighty sum for. I was not disappointed. I noticed that although being very faint, there was an engraving pattern on both sides of the frame of the carbine. The engraving pattern of the border could just be made out. I then decided to remove the side plates and check out the condition of the moving parts inside. When removed, the plates and the protected areas of the frame turned out to have a gold wash on the underside. Upon further inspection, not only the plates and frame, but also the elevator was gold washed. The best however was yet to come.

After checking, wiping and lubricating the moving parts of the Action I turned my attention to the stock of the Winchester. The stock screws hadn't looked as though they had been turned out often. There was the usual grime and dirt one finds under old screws that haven't been touched in many years. With some tapping of the palm of my hand against the wood it slid off the tangs. Sure enough there was more



remnants of gold wash. However it was the bottom tang that caught my attention. Wiping away years of grime brought out into the light the words (continued)

"W O U N D E D K N E E 12 29 1890". All of the letters were individually hand stamped. I also noticed that on the upper Tang, scratched lightly into the metal, the name "CPL. JAMES". I was amazed and felt this stamping to be an added bonus. This Winchester had the condition as promised and I certainly had no complaints.

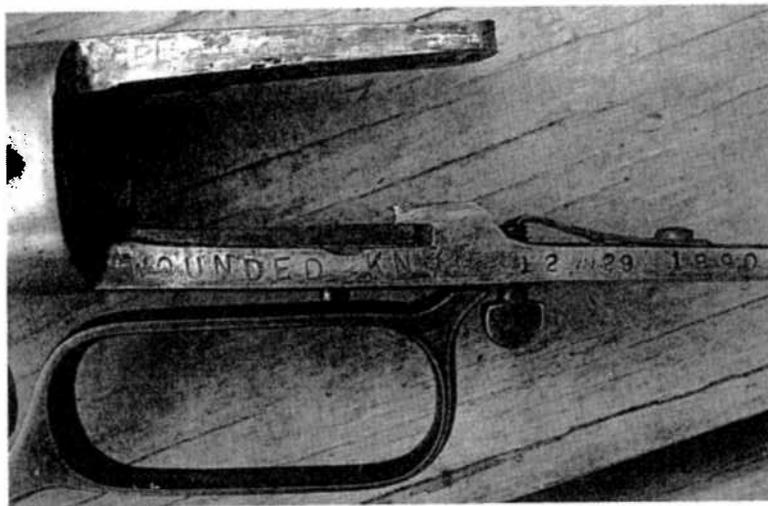
I added the Winchester 1866 to my collection.

Time passed.

In 1991, at a close friends home, I revealed to him what I had found under the Stock of this carbine. I told him that perhaps this Winchester had been a most unusual find. His response. "Why don't you find out if this Corporal James really ever existed"? So began Fourteen Years of research and this story.

Where to start? How does one begin to checkout the existence of an individual that had been dead for over 100 years? The first place I went to was the New York Public Library, located on 42nd Street in Manhattan. They had on file I found out, books containing the names and units of the men that had fought at Wounded Knee Creek. My thoughts being that perhaps this firearm had been at the battle. Perhaps this carbine was a prize of war for this Corporal James. A souvenir of the battle he'd fought in. Nothing mentioned about any Winchesters or a Corporal James. What I did find out however was that the same 7th Cavalry Regiment that had been so badly mauled at the Little Big Horn battle some 14 years earlier, had defeated some of the same Lakota Indians at Wounded Knee. On a hunch I looked back on the records of the 7th Cavalry units that took part in the battle at the Little Big Horn.

Under the listing of men killed, under Company E, 7th Cavalry Regiment, a Sergeant James. No first name, just James. The same James as on the top Tang of my Winchester? I started to wonder if in fact this 1866 carbine could have been at the Little Big Horn fight. I would have to search out the full name of the Sergeant James listed as killed in action. I would then try to find out the weapons confiscated at the Wounded Knee battle. Not many questions to inquire about I thought.



I contacted both the Department of the Army and the National Archives in Washington D.C. That was in the spring of 1992. The Department of the Army suggested that I contact the Springfield Armory Museum in Springfield Massachusetts. I telephoned the museum and was able to speak to the Curator. He informed me that originally the weapons that were captured at Wounded Knee were cataloged at the arsenals, in both Springfield and in Rock Island, IL.

He also told me that eventually all of the captured weapons ended up at the Rock Island Arsenal. They were to be held there until their final disposition a some time in the future.

During the late spring period I had also contacted the National Archives to find out what information I could about both the weapons and the soldiers that fought at Wounded Knee. All inquiries in triplicate if you please. More time lost.

In the summer of 1992 I again contacted the Department of the Army and requested the records of a Sergeant William B. James of the 7th Cavalry, Company E. The same Sergeant killed at the Little Big Horn. I was informed that I could get these records from the National Archives. Here we go again! This time however was pleasantly surprised. I received a copy of the En-

listment Records of William B. James. He had enlisted in the United States Army in February of 1872.

In August of 1992 I contacted the Rock Island Arsenal Museum via the telephone. I was put through to the Curator at that time, Kris Gayman Leinicke. I explained to her that I needed information on the firearms captured at the Wounded Knee battle. I told her about the writing on the tangs of my Winchester and what if anything in her opinion it represented. She informed me that she thought that this might have been one of the methods possibly used by the Army at that time to catalog arms captured in battle. I then asked if there was any information on any Winchesters brought in from the Wounded Knee battle. She told me according to the information she was able to acquire, (continued)

of the recording of 8 captured weapons, among them 4 Winchesters. These weapons were given to a J.W. Ellis on March 18, 1897. These firearms were from the Wounded Knee fight. She also told me these firearms were sworn to be authentic by J. D. Sieberling, the Assistant Foreman of the Rock Island Arsenal at that time. He also provided to Ellis a partial list of the names of the former owners. They were as follows. Chief Red Cloud, Crew Necklace, Sitting Eagle No. 2, White-Tail, Poor Bear and Broken-In. The entire Ellis collection was auctioned off, after his death in September of 1966. I asked if there was perhaps an old catalog still available giving a list and description of the arms that were auctioned. She said that she would try to locate one. As it turned out none could be found. My thanks to her for the help she gave me.

In November of 1992 I received an answer to a letter I had sent to the Department of the Interior. They sent me a Biographical account of Sergeant William B. James's service record with the 7th Cavalry Regiment.

From the National Archives I requested a microfilm copy of the "Muster Rolls" of Company E, 7th Cavalry Regiment, U. S. Army. The copy of the Muster Rolls revealed that a Private William B. James was promoted to Corporal on January 24, 1875. This showed me, that at the very least he had been promoted to Corporal just after the Winchester's manufacture, which was in December of 1874. A gift to himself perhaps? I must take time now to explain just what these "Muster Rolls" represent. They are a written account of the men, pay, deductions and the goings on of any given unit in the Army on a monthly basis.

According to these reports by the Army, Corporal William B. James was promoted in March of 1876 to the rank of Sergeant. The last rank he would hold before his death at the Little Big Horn. In March of 1993 I started to collate

the facts I'd been able to gather up to this point. Fact #1, William B. James did actually exist. Fact #2, William B. James, a private in the United States Army, 7th Cavalry Regiment had been promoted to the rank of Corporal on January 24, 1875. The Winchester, Model of 1866 carbine in question, had been manufactured in December of 1874. One month prior to James's promotion. Fact #3, The Lakota Indians that had the Winchester carbine at the Wounded Knee battle also fought the very same 7th Cavalry, Company E at the Little Big Horn and wiped them out to a man. At this point I felt perhaps I'd owned a very special Winchester indeed.

It seemed to me that evidence found thus far was starting to point out that this Winchester was a genuine historical article. However, I felt that much more information needed to be acquired before I could truly believe in the carbines historical authenticity. The search continued.

Again I contacted the Department of the Interior, this time asking about the arms used at the Little Big Horn. It was suggested that I contact a Richard Harman in Lincoln Nebraska. His telephone number was given to me and I called. It seems that in the early 1980's, after a wild fire had occurred on the Little Big Horn battlefield, a search had been conducted to gather what artifacts could be found there. Numerous artifacts, including many cartridge casings of various calibers had been turned up. Richard Harman had been one of the researchers. He, along with Douglas Scott did the ballistic testing on weapons to be checked out for their authenticity at having been at the battle fought on this sight. Some were at the battle, some weren't.

When I spoke to Mister Harman, explaining about the '66 I owned, I told him of my beliefs, my doubts and my unanswered questions. I wanted his feelings on this Winchester, given what information I'd gathered thus far. I

asked him if he would test my carbine. He told me that each test took about 40 hours of labor and he just did have it in him to do any more at this time. "If I start these tests up again, I'd be happy to do yours".

Information wasn't forthcoming. I put my research aside.

Toward the later part of 1993 I started in earnest to attack my research from the Little Big Horn side. I had run out of Wounded Knee leads. I tried contacting some of the Indian Reservations directly, with some success. I contacted the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota via the telephone. I was directed to a Brother Simon, one of the directors of the Indian school located there. I explained about the Winchester and about my leads drying up. I asked, knowing that many of the old stories were passed down to the younger generations verbally. Brother Simon informed me that although I was correct about the story telling, "it isn't safe to come up to the Reservation. Feelings against outsiders are running high." He did however suggest that I contact some of the Historical Societies in the Dakotas, Montana

and Nebraska. These were the territories where most of the Army had been stationed and the sights of the major Indian battles at that time. I contacted Kirby Lambert, the Director of the Montana Historical Society. Once again I told the whole story pertaining to both the Winchester and my research thus far. I asked if he knew of any information that might be helpful in my research.

Nothing.

I next got in touch with the Nebraska Historical Society. I had hoped that perhaps there would be some information in the Societies Archives. I spoke to Ely Paul, one of the Historians. After telling him about what I'd gathered so far, I asked him about any records that might still be available, (continued)

records of the stores where soldiers might have purchased firearms. The stores nearest any of the forts interested me the most. I asked Mr. Paul, "if not the records, than maybe the old sales slips were still in the societies records." Paul was unable to be of any assistance.

I spent the years 1994 through 1996 in reading everything I could lay my hands on pertaining to both the Wounded Knee and Little Big Horn battles. I was becoming quite the historian myself at this point. The library in my home had increased by leaps and bounds.

Then a break! A published article pertaining to the "Privately Owned", non-issued firearms purchased by both Officers and Enlisted men in the 7th Cavalry during the period from 1873-1876. Although no mention of any Winchesters as have being owned by any of the 7th men in this report, it stood to reason that there certainly could have been. The mention of a Sharps being owned by an Officer, a Special Order Sharps with a telescopic sight being owned by a Sergeant Ryan, a single shot Belgian made shotgun owned by a Private and of course Custer's private arsenal. All these were written about in this report, but no Winchesters. This article was to prove important to me. It showed that the men of the 7th carried into battle not only the issued Springfields and Colts, but other weapons of their own choosing as well. As for their not being any Winchesters mentioned in the article, and me being informed by several "Experts" of this "fact", it came to my attention several years later that except for Custer's guns, the only known privately owned firearms of the Little Big Horn battle were all in the hands of the survivors. The fact that for the most part the companies of the 7th Cavalry Regiment operated as independent and separate units, having little if any contact with one another prior to the fight on the Little

Big Horn seems to have been overlooked by these most knowledgeable men. The true fact was that the men of one company might not know the troopers of another company, nor what these other troopers might have possessed. All this seems to never have occurred to these "Experts". The old saying of "Never let the Facts interfere with the Truth!" seems to apply here. The fact that at least 5 Troops of the 7th Cavalry were wiped out by the Lakota Indians and all of their weapons taken from their dead bodies, leads me to believe that no one actually knew what firearms these men carried into battle with them except the Indians that took them. And they weren't talking. Still, one might say, "No Winchesters mentioned." "No evidence of any Winchesters in Army hands."

In 1997 a Winchester Collector published a set of books. Within the pages of those books, containing many fine photographs, a photograph of 3 soldiers, men from the operational area in question. Two of these men carried Springfields. One carried a Winchester. A Winchester Model of 1866 to be exact. Although this Winchester was a rifle and not a carbine, the point is "Here is photographic proof that at least one soldier carried a Winchester, and a Model '66 to boot. If one soldier had a Winchester, others most likely had them also. This certainly could account for the fact that a Winchester 1866 carbine, in the possession of Sergeant William B. James of the 7th Cavalry Regiment, Company E, ended up at the Custer fight on the Little Big Horn River, and at the end of that battle in the hands of the Sioux that killed them all.

It should be noted here that in trying to obtain information on events and on individuals that is over 125 years old, one realizes the utter frustration involved. You might get a bit of information here, of which nothing comes out of it. A lead there, which

you think is a waste of your time, but in fact turns out to be a major find. It all takes much time and effort, from 1991 to 2004. What in 1991 I believed an "Interesting Find", in 2004, after all these years of searching, I now believe the Winchester carbine to be a genuine historical treasure. The parallels of both time and place; Man and Gun seem to be more than mere coincidence.

This Winchester '66 carbine, engraved and Gold Washed, stamped inside on the lower Tang, hidden from view for all these years, "Wounded Knee 12 29 1890", the upper Tang scratched "Cpl. James", the correct time period that our Corporal James was promoted to that rank, the Butt Stock stamped in the same individual letters "D E C E M B E R 74", the date of manufacture. All this is more than mere chance. One could press the argument "FAKE!" Almost all Modern Collectors of this era of Winchester, the Model of 1866, know that these firearms were used as tools and not Collectables. When the Winchester Model of 1873, a more powerful weapon, was brought out, the Model of 1866 became obsolete. Almost worthless to anyone that could get a Model 1873. You couldn't give them away. Not until the late 1960's were these models considered anything more than "Grandpa's Old Gun". This Winchester Model of 1866, this carbine in question hadn't been touched nor altered in all these many years. The engraving had been virtually worn off. The Gold Wash worn off except in hidden areas. This Winchester carbine hadn't been fooled with, nor was it faked. It is just what it seemed to be, a rare Historic find. A National Treasure depicting a violent period of time in America's history, a time of conquest, a time of defeat, a time of National shame.

My search was not over, not by far. Time has a way of moving on. In the fall of 1999 I brought the Winchester to a traveling Antique Show (cont.)

in order to have one of their Experts look at the markings and give me their opinion. I thought that they surely would have the knowledge I sought. Mistake! There were two Appraisers of firearms at the road show. One saw the Winchester when I came in. He gave it a quick check and said to me "I'm looking forward to seeing this one later!" Unfortunately it was the other Appraiser I was directed to. He looked at the serial number location, and exclaimed, "This type and placement of the serial number is wrong!" I looked at him in disbelief. I thought to myself, "This is what I traveled 300 miles for? An "EXPERT" that doesn't know what he's talking about!" He then said "Take it away, I won't look at it!" Needless to say I was more than just a little upset by all this. In the most respected book on Winchesters there exists a photograph and script detailing just what and what type of serial markings were on the Winchester carbine I possessed. In fact the 1866 depicted in the photo was but a few numbers away from mine.

I started to realize that when it came to "Expert" opinions, I would need better than I'd been getting thus far.

As it turned out the Appraiser that claimed the '66 was wrongly marked was an "Expert" in fact on firearms other than Winchesters and according to the writings in his own book "You might say I collect everything except Colts and Winchesters." I disregarded his "Expert" opinion on my Winchester and looked elsewhere.

After my experience with the road show I needed a break. A rest from the search. I put my carbine and research away for now.

The year 2000 came and went without finding out any new information on my Winchester.

In the early summer of 2001 I realized that too much time was passing without putting any time into my research. Another prime mover was

also driving me on. My Ego! It seems that a Winchester Model of 1866, a carbine, had been auctioned off for the fantastic price of \$685,000. No small piece of change. It seems that a single cartridge casing had been matched to this carbine. The casing had been found at the Little Big Horn battle site during the excavation in the 1980's. Based on a letter that a shell casing had been found on the battle site, this firearm sold for this great price. Was this Winchester carbine used in the battle? Was it a cartridge casing left behind by a hunter? A great many of them had passed over this area between the years 1876 through 1983. Who knows! It was good enough provenance however for someone to spend big bucks on. I felt however that my Ego would need more than just a maybe or perhaps. I needed this Winchester of mine to be the most important find of the Sioux Indian Wars. In fact I wanted it to be the most important find of ALL the Indian wars. I needed irrefutable experts to look at this Winchester and it's markings. I needed them to give me their opinion on age and originality.

I contacted Kris Leinicke at the Rock Island Museum. Although many years had passed since I had spoken to her last, I thought she would be a good person to start with. I reintroduced myself and gave her a brief rundown on what I'd found out about the Winchester over these last 10 years. She told me that after reconsidering the stampings on both the wood and bottom tang of the '66, it was her opinion that they were probably put on at the Museum rather than by the Army. I explained to her that I needed as many qualified people to look at this Winchester as possible, and to give a truly qualified opinion on just what I had here. She gave me the names and telephone numbers of Douglas Scott, one of the original people at the excavation at the Little Big Horn battle site. She also gave me the name and phone number of Lester Jensen, Head Curator at the United States Military Academy Museum. Now

these were the type of experts I sought. I wasted little time in contacting Mr. Douglas Scott of the National Park Service. Mr. Scott informed me that he had been one of two men taught to do the ballistic testing on the many cartridge casings found during the archeological dig at the Custer battle sight. Both he and Dick Harman had done the ballistic testing on the Winchester that had been auctioned off. I told him of my 1866 carbine. I described in detail over the telephone, what and where the markings were on the Winchesters tangs. After going into findings thus far, I asked for his opinion. His reply was that what I had described was interesting, however as far as he knew there had never been any reports of any Winchester Repeating firearms being in the hands of the Troopers. I then explained that my research had shown the only known "Privately Owned" arms at the Little Big Horn battle had been in the hands of survivors. I then gave my point of view, "That if survivors had some other than Issue Firearms, then it stood to reason that the troopers that were killed probably had them also!" This he agreed certainly was a possibility. I then told him of the photograph of the 3 Troopers, one holding a Winchester 1866 rifle. His comment on this bit of information was "that's interesting!" Without him seeing the Carbine he really couldn't give me an opinion as to its age. This I realized also.

I next contacted the Custer Battlefield Museum and was put through to an editor of their magazine "The Greasy Grass". He informed me that no one had ever actually done any research into the "Privately Owned" firearms that the 7th had carried into their last battle. He thought it certainly would be a difficult job, but one that would be worthwhile doing. He then said that if I found out more on these firearms he would like to perhaps do an article on them. Now I asked myself, "What information did I get out of this phone conversation? Only that no one really knew what the Troopers of the 7th Cavalry actually

carried into their fight with the Sioux.”

The year 2002 came and went without much that was new turning up. Many more books passed through my hands during that time. Books on the Little Big Horn, Wounded Knee and the Sioux Wars in general. Although the knowledge I'd acquired with both my reading and speaking to various people thus far was informative, I needed a more definitive answer to the questions about my Winchester. I needed to have someone see the Winchester 1866 carbine up close, first hand. I needed someone with unquestionable knowledge, a person with an unquestionable reputation in firearms. I needed an individual that had seen and came into contact with firearms of all makes and age, firearms that had been used in battle, firearms that had been carried by Indians. I contacted Mr. Lester Jensen, Curator at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

On a cloudy, early September morning I brought my 1866 Winchester to Mr. Lester Jensen at the United States Military Academy. Over the next 3 hours we tore this carbine apart. We then stood backed and talked. We examined the patina of the outside, we examined the age of the Gold Wash, we checked the age of the wood, its stamping “D E C E M B E R 74”, we looked, sniffed tickled and anything else that could be done at the museum shop in the basement. Was it old? Yes. Was the scratching “Cpl. James” old? Seemed to be. Did it look to be a fake? No! The argument, “At the time the stampings were put on the carbine it wasn't worth anything.” Came up in our conversation.

I really want to thank Mr. Lester Jensen for the time and trouble he put into examining my Winchester. I really needed someone of his caliber to examine this carbine for me and give me an opinion that was worth something. Thank you.

After examining the '66, we went upstairs to his office. Mr. Jensen suggested

that I should get in touch with a Mike Musick, one of the Directors at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. He could point me in the right direction as far as searching for more information on the mysterious Corporal James.

Several weeks later I telephoned Mr. Michael Musick at the National Archives. A more pleasant and helpful man I couldn't have found. I told him that Les Jensen suggested that I speak to him about my Winchester, my search and my findings thus far. I explained that I needed more information on this Corporal James. His reply to me was that the information might be found in the “Annual Report to the Secretary of War”. In the course of our conversation I asked Mike. Musick “I wonder just how many Corporals with the last name of James actually were in the area of conflict during the years of 1875 to 1890? An insurmountable amount to research I'll bet.” Mike Musick's reply was “If there were more than a dozen I would really be surprised”.

It was suggested by him that before I travel to Washington D.C., I try the Connecticut State Library in Hartford. If not there, try the New York Public Library in New York City. I contacted the Connecticut State Library and was put through to the Head Librarian, a Nancy Peluse. Once again I explained a little about the research I'd been involved with over the years and about the Director of the National Archives suggestion on looking up the information in the Annual Report to the Secretary of War on how many Corporal James's actually were in the area of conflict during the Sioux War period. She said she'd try to get the information and would get back to me. An hour later my phone rang. Ms. Peluse was returning my call. The information she was able to get from the records available stated only the Officers names and units. None of the Enlisted men were in the Annual Reports.

On a snowy day in late January of 2004

I traveled to New York and the New York Public Library. I wanted to check these Annual Reports out for myself. Perhaps the possibility something has been overlooked, by Ms. Peluse. *She hadn't*. After looking through the many books pertaining to the Department of War, there was in fact no additional information on the Enlisted men.

On January 28, 2004 perhaps I found a source of information I'd been searching for. The United States Army General Staff War College. If anyone could get the answers to the questions I needed on the Non-Commissioned Officers serving in the area of the conflict, the Army General Staff School could. I requested this information. TWO! The reply to my question arrived the next day. The vast research library of the General Staff War College could only find that in the area at the time question, there were only 2 Enlisted men with the Surname of James. One was my Sergeant William B. James, the other a Private John James. They went on to tell me that Private John James was in fact an alias used by a Private John Cassela. Both of these men were in the 7th Cavalry Regiment, Company (Troop) E, at the Little Big Horn. No records of an enlisted man with the name of James could be found fighting at the Rosebud battle prior to and with the same Lakota Indians. No James, with General Gibbons, not with Tenor with Crook. Consider this, with combined force of over 55 companies both of cavalry and infantry, there were only two men with the Surname of James, and one of those an alias.

With the last sound of battle, with the greatest defeat of the Indian Wars to the U.S. Army, the Lakota tribes in victory dispersed to the Four Winds.

When the news of Custer's defeat at the Little Big Horn reached the seat of power in Washington, retaliation was swift and merciless. The Army was determined to use all its might to bring the “Hostiles” to heel. (continued)

And where was our Winchester carbine at this point? It was now in the hands of the victorious bands of the Lakota Nation, on the run for their lives.

Sitting Bull, the great Hunkpapa Chief, in his vision of victory over the "Blue Coats", told his people that if the dead soldiers were stripped of their possessions tragedy would fall down upon the Indians. His prophesy, was about to be fulfilled.

I'm getting off track here.

I realized that I've more to look for. The question as to how many enlisted men with the last name and rank of Corporal James that had served in the area and period of the Sioux War still hadn't been answered.

Where had the Miniconjou and other battles with the soldiers during the ensuing years? Could the Minconjou have killed and taken the Winchester from another Corporal James? A Corporal James attached to another unit operating against these Hostiles? These questions had to be addressed.

In the book "The Sioux Indian Wars" by C. T. Brady, written in 1904, the author interviewed many of the survivors of that turbulent period. Soldiers that fought at the various battles, from the Rosebud through to Wounded Knee. The Cavalry units that fought in the Sioux battle area were as follows. General Crook had the 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Regiments and several companies of the 4th" and 9th Infantry at the Battle of the Rosebud. The only unit that fought at the Battle of the Little Big Horn had been the 12 Cavalry Troops of the 7th Cavalry Regiment. General Gibbons had in the field 4 companies of the 2nd Cavalry along with 6 companies of the 7th Infantry. General Miles had the 5th Infantry, some units of the 22nd Infantry, some troops of the 2nd Cavalry. There were also units of the 5th Cavalry, 9th Cavalry, 4th Artillery, 1st Artillery and several different sup-

port units of infantry. These were the soldiers that fought in the Sioux Wars during the years 1875-1890.

At the battle at War Bonnet Creek on 7/17/1876 the 5th Cavalry under the command of General Wesley Merrit fought the Cheyenne and defeated them. It is to be noted that at that battle the famous Scout and Western Personality Buffalo Bill Cody, scouting for the 5th Cavalry, did kill and scalp the famous young chief Yellow Hand. After his victory, Cody was heard to say "Here's the first scalp for Custer." At War Bonnet Creek there was a Buffalo Bill fighting with the 5th, but not one Corporal James. The 5th had been victorious over the Cheyenne, however there were no Sioux involved. No Miniconjou, no Hunkpapa, no Sioux at all. As each unit is read and checked out for the mention of a Corporal with the last name of James and as of yet none have turned up, the mystery and reasonable supposition starts to become clear. Perhaps William B. James of the 7th Cavalry is the "Cpl. James" scratched on the 1866 Winchester of mine. Let's look further.

During the summer of 1876, being under much pressure from Washington, General Crook had been determined to continue the hunt for the hostile Sioux and what Cheyenne remained off the reservations. This period in Crook's search was extremely hard on the men in the units involved. They were starving to the point of eating their own pack animals when the animals became to worn to continue on.

Complaining was the order of the day. A Sergeant Howard in his diary noted the following "This is a fine food for men in a civilized country!" Sergeant Howard was one of the Non-Commissioned Officers in the 2nd Cavalry under the command of Crook.

On September 8, 1876 Crook's command moved toward the Black Hills to obtain food and other supplies in order

that they might continue their search for the Hostiles. On September 9th they chanced upon a Sioux village in the Slim Buttes area of Northwest South Dakota. The entire command was soon in pitched battle with the Sioux of this village. The Indians were soon routed. After the battle the soldiers became involved in going through the village in search of food for their famished bodies. That day in addition to their usual ration of Horse Meat, dried Buffalo added some variety to their fare.

Sergeant Howard in his diary describes the following important information. He recalled that some of the men in their search of the Sioux village had also found articles taken from the 7th Cavalry troopers killed at the Little Big Horn. "We found a great many articles used in civilization, among the collection almost every article used by the housewife in the kitchen and a great many things recognized as belonging to the 7th Cavalry, showing that these Indians had been in that fight."

In a book by J. A. Green, "Slim Buttes, 1876: An Episode of the Great Sioux War" the following also describes the searching of that same village in which the following articles belonging to the dead of the 7th were found. "A locket, a picture of Captain Keogh, two Gold-Mounted Ivory handled pistols and a Spencer Sporting rifle." All of these items were not Army issue! "The picture and locket I gave to an officer of the 2nd Cavalry who claimed them as a relative of the officer killed with Custer, and a revolver I gave to Captain Rodgers of the Company A, 5th Cavalry. The rifle I sold some days later for two loaves of bread."

The finding of 7th Cavalry relics associated with the Little Big Horn here at the Slim Buttes and other Indian villages gave both the Army combatants and myself comfort. The soldiers received comfort in exacting retribution for the Custer disaster. I found comfort in the knowledge that the known "Privately

Owned" firearms that were reported to be at the Custer battle were in fact just but a few that probably were carried by the men of the 7th into the fray.

At the cost of being repetitive, at the battle at Slim Buttes, a fight in which units of the 2nd, 3rd and 5th Cavalry fought and killed the Sioux, among them the Chief American Horse, there could be found no mention of a Corporal with the name James fighting there.

General Crook's Command returned to Fort Fetterman to plan an extended campaign against the remaining Hostile Cheyenne and Sioux Indians.

General Crook ordered Colonel Ronald S. Mackenzie into the field. With Scouts and 10 Troops of Cavalry from the 2nd, 4th and 5th Regiments the chase was on. It was during this campaign that the Cheyenne Indian Nation was defeated and ceased to be a major fighting force. They soon surrendered and remained on the Reservation.

In checking out the information about the men in these units that fought in this operation against the Cheyenne, once again no Corporal James.

Now we go through the final campaigns of General Nelson A. Miles against the Sioux. General Miles had under his command one of the finest Infantry units that ever took to the field in combat, the 5th. No Infantry Regiment equaled or surpassed their record. It was Miles that defeated Sitting Bull, it was Miles and the troops under his command that defeated Crazy Horse and Gall. General Nelson A. Miles, the great Commander that he was, outfitted his Infantry with Army issued Springfield rifles. No Winchesters, Spencers, Sharps or other repeating firearms. As for Side-arms, issue Single Action Colts with perhaps a few old Smith and Wessons.

As my search drew closer to the Wounded Knee Battle and the year

1890, and still I could find no mention of another Corporal with the last name of James, how would I ever be certain that none other than William B. James was in that theater of operations during the time in question (1875 - 1890)? If in fact no other Corporal James saw action against the Cheyenne or Lakota (Sioux) in this time period, in this region, one could only arrive at one logical conclusion. William B. James, Corporal/Sergeant, serving in Company E of the 7th Cavalry Regiment at the Battle of the Little Big Horn and being killed there is in fact the "Cpl. James" on my Winchester Model 1866 Carbine. But still how could I be 100% sure?

In July of 2004 I made my long overdue trip to the Nation's Capital in Washington D.C. The only way to be positive that no other Corporal James could have been in the Sioux Wars during the years 1875 thru 1890 was to check each and every original Muster Roll of every unit, every Regiment, every Company that fought against the Indians, both Sioux and Cheyenne in that region.

There were 23 battles against the Cheyenne and Lakota Indians from April 23, 1875 through December 29, 1890. There were numerous units of Cavalry, Infantry and Artillery that either fought or supported the effort to control the "Hostile" tribes. In all these Army units, with thousands of men serving, thousands over the period between the years in question, how many Corporal James was there? Are you still sitting? There was ONE. That's right, just one. Mike Musick of the National Archives had been correct and I wrong. After searching through thousands of the original Army Muster Rolls of the units that had served during the "Sioux Wars" I could only find 4 soldiers with the Surname of James.

In the Mid 1880's, in the 2nd Cavalry, Troop D a, now get this, Private Jessie James from Vancouver British Columbia. Like his infamous namesake this Jessie James was also a "Ner-Do well".

His record showed that he had been brought up on charges and fined, once \$2.50 for being insubordinate, once \$10.00 and another time after being arrested by Civilian Authorities for "Petty Larceny" was Court Marshaled and thrown out of the Service. The highest rank he held in the Army was Private. The second soldier I found with the last name of James in the Muster Rolls was a Milford E. James, 3rd Cavalry, Troop H. He had been transferred into Troop I for the period of 2 days. He was then once again transferred to the Messengers Corps. His highest rank held had been Private. He saw no combat. The third soldier named James was as follows. Private John James, (Cassela) Company E, 7th Cavalry Regiment. Although a trooper in Co. E, he was with the pack train during the initial stages of the Little Big Horn battle. He later fought in the Hill Top fight and survived. He was discharged in 1877.

And last but certainly not the least, the only Non-Commissioned Officer listed in any of the original United States Army Muster Rolls during the Sioux War Period from 1875-1890 in that Theater of Operation, Sergeant/Corporal William B. James, Company E, 7th Cavalry Regiment, Killed in Action with Indians, Little Big Horn River.

The years have passed since the Little Big Horn battle. The 7th Cavalry has ridden on to glory. During the years that followed that battle there occurred 10 battles against the Lakota and Cheyenne tribes, Wounded Knee being the last of interest to this story. According to the original Army Muster

Rolls there were no other Non-Commissioned personnel with the Surname James serving in the area. There were only the 3 Privates mentioned earlier and none others.

Before closing my research it was suggested that I call the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Perhaps they would take a look at my carbine. The more qualified people that looked

at this '66 the better. I telephoned the museum and asked to speak to the Curator of the Arms department. I was put through to Mr. Stewart Pyhrr. I made an appointment, and on January 20, 2005 I brought the Winchester to the museum. I want to thank both Mr. Pyhrr, the Curator of the arms department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Mr. Hermes Knauer, the Armorer of the museum for the time unselfishly given to my Winchester and myself. It was one of the best 3 hours spent in my 14 years of research. Thank you.

Every trail and every story comes to an

end, even this one of 14 years. What did I find? What story did my Winchester tell? That Sergeant/Corporal William B. James, Troop E, 7th Cavalry Regiment lost this firearm and his life in combat at the Little Big Horn River on June 25, 1876. That the same 7th Cavalry in which Sergeant James had served, had its revenge 14 years later against the Sioux at Wounded Knee Creek. That in all probability this Winchester traveled to the Rock Island Arsenal. That in 1897 it in all likelihood went to the privately owned Ellis Museum. That in the 1960's it went back into the public domain via the Auction Route. And finally in the year 1990 to

me, where it now resides.

My journey has ended. My adventure, back in time, my mystery, my questions, my hunt into the history of this most important of Indian War historical treasures, all have been solved to my satisfaction. The years of not giving up, ever, regardless of the "Experts" opinions has given the Collector and the Historian new information that had not been researched in the past. I only hope you enjoyed this journey, this mystery, this hunt as much as I have relating it to you.

DECLARATION OF RECRUIT.

I, William B James, desiring to ENLIST in the Army of the United States, for the term of FIVE YEARS, DO DECLARE, That I have neither wife nor child; that I have never been discharged from the United States Service on account of disability, or by sentence of a court martial, or by order before the expiration of term of enlistment; and that I am of the legal age to enlist of my own accord, and believe myself to be physically qualified to perform the duties of an able-bodied soldier.

GIVEN at Chicago Ill this 30 day of February 1872.

WITNESSES
C. R. Proctor

William B. James

No. 749
William B James
Enlisted at Chicago Ill on
the 30 day of February 1872
by Robert D. M. Hanna
Regiment of Adelphi
enlistment; last served in Company ()
Reg't of
Discharged 18
DIRECTIONS.
Enlistments must, in all cases, be taken in triplicate. The recruiting officer will send one copy to the Adjutant General with his monthly accounts, a second to the superintendent with his monthly return, and a third to the superintendent of recruits not sent there. In cases of soldiers recruited in a regiment or of recruits from the depot, the original enlistment will be sent at the date to regimental headquarters for file.
Received A. G. O.
Assigned to the Regiment
of U. S. Army.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



OATH OF ENLISTMENT AND ALLEGIANCE.

State of Illinois }
Town of Lehuigan } ss:

I, William B James, born in Pembroke, in the State of Illinois, and by occupation a Coachman

DO HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE to have voluntarily enlisted this Fifth day of February, 1872, as a **Soldier** in the Army of the United States of America, for the period of **FIVE YEARS**, unless sooner discharged by proper authority: And do also agree to accept from the United States such bounty, pay, rations, and clothing as are or may be established by law. And I do solemnly swear, that I am Twenty three years and _____ months of age, and know of no impediment to my serving honestly and faithfully as a Soldier for five years under this enlistment contract with the United States.

And I, William B James do also solemnly swear, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the **United States of America**, and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whomsoever; and that I will observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the Rules and Articles of War.

Subscribed and duly sworn to before me, this 5th day of February, A. D. 1872. 

S. B. M. M. M.
Captain Cavalry
Recruiting Officer.

I CERTIFY, ON HONOR, That I have carefully examined the above-named recruit, agreeably to the General Regulations of the Army, and that, in my opinion, he is free from all bodily defects and mental infirmity which would, in any way, disqualify him from performing the duties of a soldier.

S. B. M. M. M.
Captain Cavalry
Examining Officer.

I CERTIFY, ON HONOR, That I have minutely inspected the above-named recruit, William B James previously to his enlistment, and that he was entirely sober when enlisted; that, to the best of my judgment and belief, he is of lawful age; and that I have accepted and enlisted him into the service of the United States under this contract of enlistment as duly qualified to perform the duties of an able-bodied soldier, and, in doing so, have strictly observed the Regulations which govern the Recruiting Service. This soldier has hazel eyes, light hair, light complexion, is 5 feet 9 inches high.

S. B. M. M. M. 
Captain Cavalry
Recruiting Officer, United States Army.

[A. G. O. No. 73.]



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL
ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS 61299

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

September 26, 1992

Museum Curator

Mr. L. Nirenberg
P.O. Box 26
Wilton, Connecticut 06897

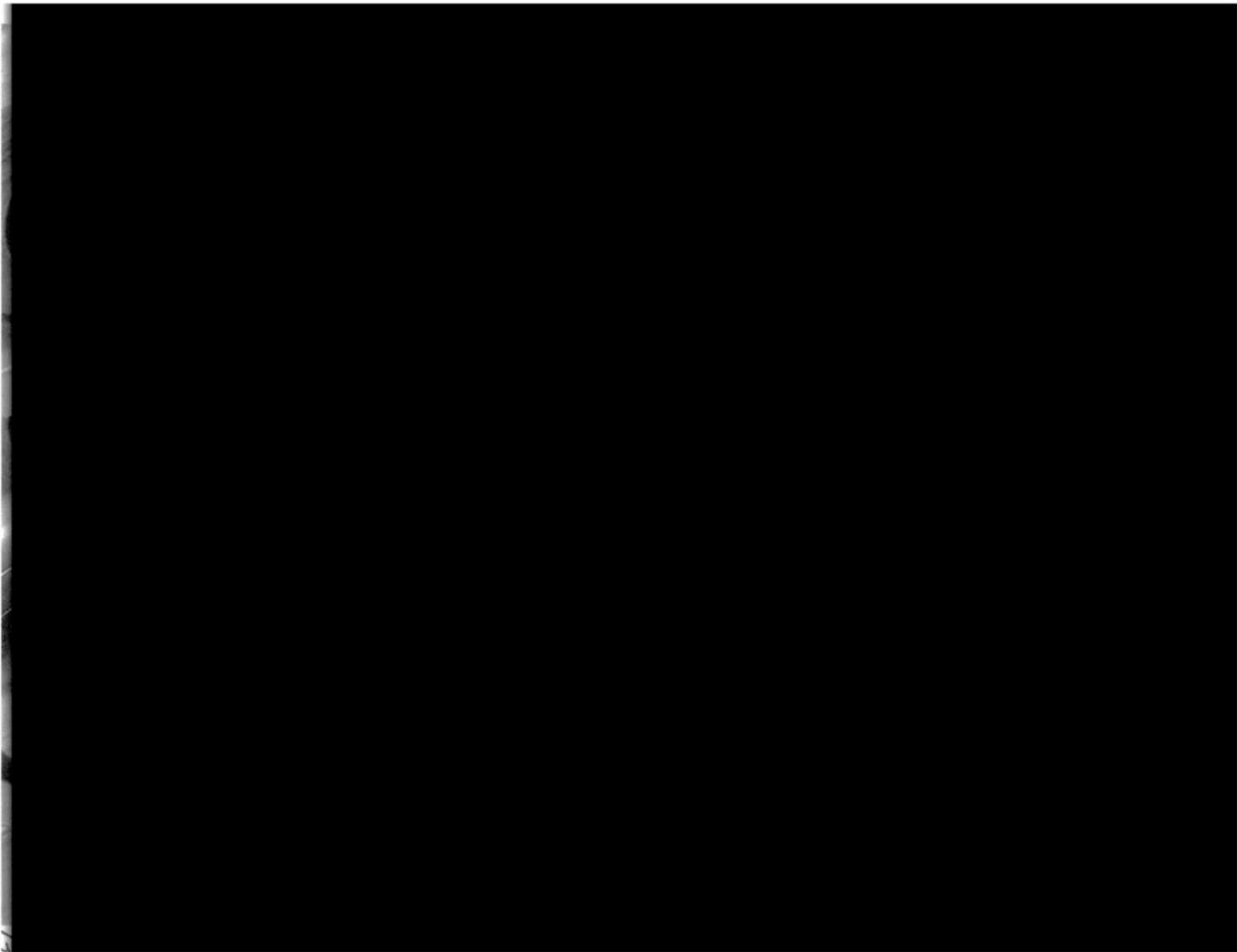
Dear Mr. Nirenberg,

Enclosed is a copy of Ordinance Notes No. 115, which details the transfer of captured Indian weapons to Springfield Armory in Springfield, Massachusetts, and the study of those weapons.

At the conclusion of the studies, the Indian arms were packed away and at some unknown time shipped to Rock Island Arsenal. I believe the weapons were here by 1897. A collector has provided me with a handwritten verbatim copy of an entry from the Catalogue Frank E. Ellis Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology of Maquoketa, Iowa:

#870 Eight captured Indian arms, "Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois, March 18, 1897. This is to certify that the 8 captured Indian arms delivered to Prof J. W. Ellis from this arsenal and now in his possession were captured from Indians at the battle of wounded knee, & at that time were in the possession of the indian's whose names are on the tags tied to the guns. Was present at the time of the receipt of the aforesaid guns, and know them to be authentic "J.D. Sieberling, Assistant Foreman. The following tags are attached to the guns to show the owner of the guns, Chief Red Cloud, Crow Necklace, Poorbear, Sitting Eagle No. 2, White-tail, Broken-In."

I have been unable to fully verify this source. According to the Jackson County Historical Society in Maquoketa, Iowa, there was an Ellis Museum of Maquoketa which was the collection of Frank Ellis and his father J. W. Ellis. The entire contents of the museum left the community on September 21, 1966, and were to be auctioned in Delaware, Ohio and Richmond, Indiana. I do not know the date of the catalog and have been unable to locate a copy to verify the entry.







Bibliography of the Research on Winchester 1866 - Information gathered from "Encyclopedia of Indian Wars"
by Gregory F. Michino

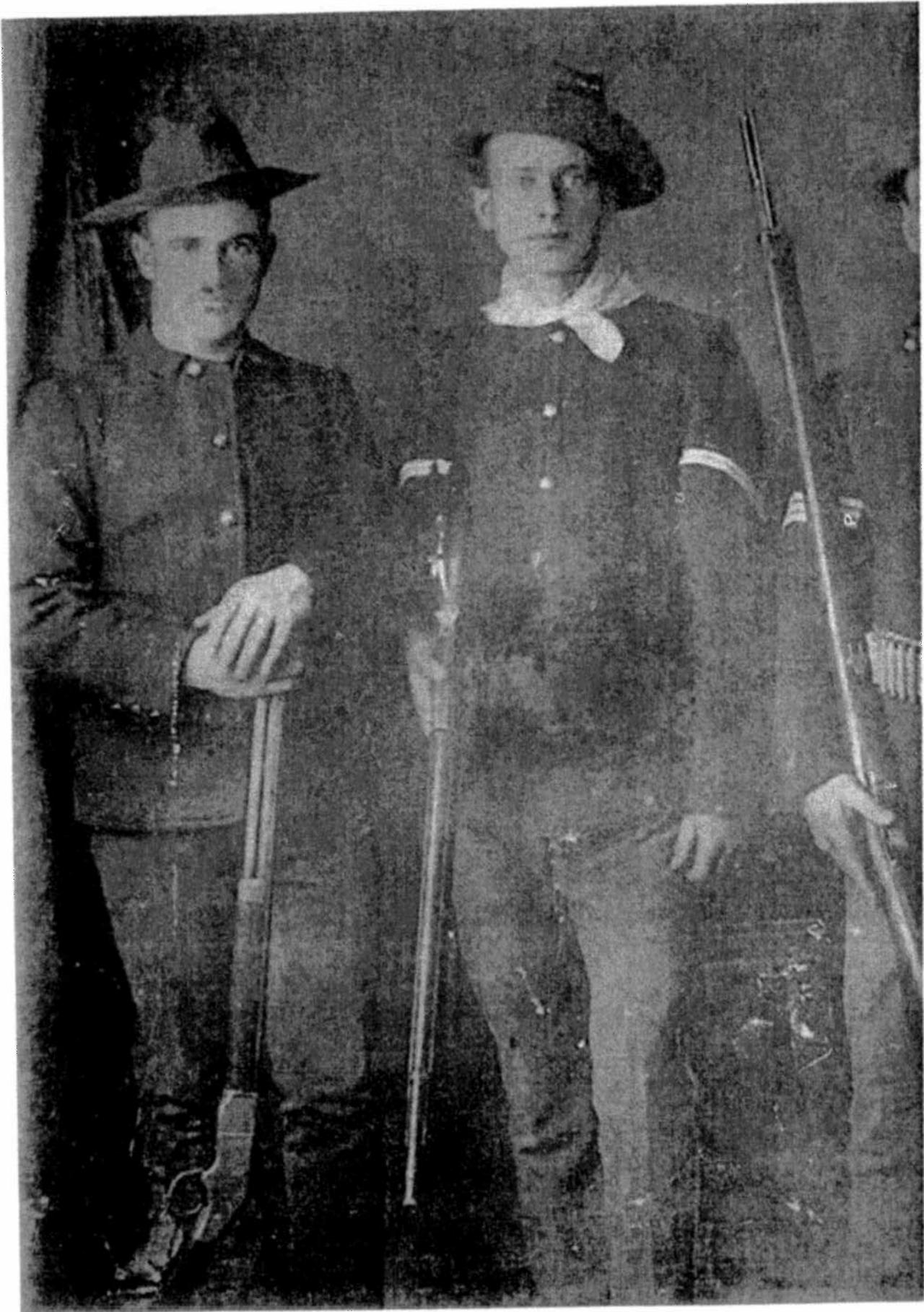
Battles fought in the area of the Sioux War of 1875 - 1890

- SAND HILLS (El Reno, Oklahoma) April, 6, 1875
- SAPPAL CREEK (Oberlin, Kansas) April, 23, 1875
- SMOKY HILL STATION (Russel Springs, Kansas) October, 27, 1875
- POWDER RIVER (Moorehead, Montana) March, 17, 1876
- GRACIE CREEK (Burwell, Nebraska) April, 28, 1876
- ROSEBUD CREEK (Decker, Montana) June, 17, 1876
- LITTLE BIG HORN (Crow Agency, Montana) June 25, 1876
- HAT CREEK/WARBONNET CREEK (Warbonnet, Montana) July 17, 1876
- SLIM BUTTES (Reva, South Dakota) September, 9, 1876
- CEDAR CREEK (Terry, Montana) October 21, 1876
- RED FORK OF POWDER RIVER (Wyoming) November 25, 1876
- ASH CREEK (Brockway, Montana) December 18, 1876
- WOLF MOUNTAIN (Birney, Montana) January 8, 1877
- LITTLE MUDDY/LAME DEER FIGHT (Lame Deer, Montana) May 7, 1877
- TURKEY SPRINGS (Camp Houston, Oklahoma) September 13, 1878
- PUNISHED WOMEN FORK (Scott City, Kansas) September 27, 1878
- FORT ROBINSON (Crawford, Nebraska) January 1-22, 1879
- CARELESS CREEK (Montana) April 17, 1879
- MILK RIVER (Saco, Montana) August 17, 1879
- PUMPKIN CREEK (Volburg, Montana) February 12, 1880
- POPLAR RIVER (Poplar, Montana) January 2, 1881
- CROW AGENCY (Crow Agency, Montana) November 5, 1887
- WOUNDED KNEE CREEK (Wounded Knee, South Dakota) December 29, 1890
- NOTES

- The quotes from Sgt. George S. Howards diary taken from the book "We Trailed The Sioux" by Paul L. Hedren and "The Adventures of Moccasin Joe: The True Life Story of Sgt. George S. Howard." By S. C. Reneau.
- Quotes from the diary of a private soldier taken from the book "Slim Buttes, 1876: An Episode of the Great Sioux War" by Jerome A. Greene.
- Photograph of "Three Soldiers, one with a 1866 Winchester" taken from "Winchester, New Model of 1873: A Tribute" by J. Gordon
- Various Documents used in my Research. Photographic copies from National Archive correspondence, Microfilm copy of "Muster Rolls of Co. E, 7th Cavalry Regiment, Examination of Muster Rolls of U.S. Army Units in the Sioux War area of operations, from 1875-1890. Letter from Curator of Rock Island Arsenal Museum, Department of the Interior correspondence, Army General Command College response to question on Rosebud and Little Big Horn battles. Enlistment records of William B. James. Copies of e-mail questions and answers from editor of Greasy Grass magazine, Custer Battlefield Museum. Copy of article on Little Big Horn battle and "Death List" from newspaper The Tribune 7/6/1876, South Dakota Territory. Various newspaper and Army articles depicting accounts of Wounded Knee battle.
- The quote "You might say I collect everything except Colts and Winchesters." From "Sharps Firearms" by F. Sellers
- Telephone conversations with various Historical Societies. Telephone conversation with a Brother Simon, a teacher at the Pine River Indian Reservation School.

Research Books on Winchester 1866 & Sioux War of 1875 - 1890

- INDIAN FIGHTS AND FIGHTERS by Cyrus T. Brady
- FIGHTING INDIAN WARRIORS by E.A. Brininstool
- SITANKA by Forrest W. Seymour
- LIFE OF SITTING BULL and HISTORY OF THE INDIAN WAR OF 1890-1891 by W.F. Johnson (copyrighted 1891)
- INDIAN WARS OF THE WEST by P. I. Wellman
- SITTING BULL by Alexander B. Adams
- WE TRAILED THE SIOUX Enlisted Men Speak on Custer, Crook and the Great Sioux War by Paul L. Hedren
- THE ADVENTURES OF MOCCASIN JOE: The True Life Story of Sgt. George S. Howard by S.C. Reneau
- CUSTER'S GOLD by Donald Jackson
- MY LIFE ON THE PLAINS by G. A. Custer
- CUSTER'S FALL: The Indian Side of the Story by D.H. Miller
- MEN WITH CUSTER: Biographies of the 7th Cavalry by Kenneth Hammer (1995)
- THE MYSTERY OF E TROOP by G.F. Michino
- THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIAN WARS 1850-1890 by G.F. Michino
- FRONTIER REGULARS by R. Uteley
- YELLOWSTONE COMMAND by Greene
- SLIM BUTTES 1876 by Greene
- BURY MY HEART AT WOUNDED KNEE by D. Brown
- FIGHTING CHEYENNES by Grinnel
- FIRST SCALP FOR CUSTER by P.L. Hendren
- THE WAGON BOX FIGHT by Keenan
- A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF WOUNDED KNEE





DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL
ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS 61299

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

September 26, 1992

Museum Curator

Enclosed is a copy of Ordnance Notes No. 115, which detail the transfer of captured Indian weapons to Springfield Armory in Springfield, Massachusetts, and the study of those weapons

At the conclusion of the studies, the Indian arms were passed away and at some unknown time shipped to Rock Island Arsenal. I believe the weapons were here by 1897. A collector has provided me with a handwritten verbatim copy of an entry from the Cata Frank E. Ellis Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology of Maquoketa, Iowa:

#870 Eight captured Indian arms, "Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois, March 18, 1897. This is to certify that the 8 captured Indian arms delivered to Prof J. W. Ellis from this arsenal and now in his possession were captured from Indians at the battle of wounded knee, & at that time were in the possession of the Indian's whose names are on the tags tied to the guns. Was present at the time of the receipt of the aforesaid guns, and know them to be authentic "J.D Sieberling, Assistant Foreman. The following tags are attached to the guns to show the owner of the guns, Chief Red Cloud, Crow Necklace, Poorbear, Sitting Eagle No. 2, White-tail, Broken-In."

I have been unable to fully verify this source. According to the Jackson County Historical Society in Maquoketa, Iowa, there was an Ellis Museum of Maquoketa which was the collection of Ellis and his father J. W. Ellis. The entire contents of the museum left the community on September 21, 1966, and were to be auctioned in Delaware, Ohio and Richmond, Indiana. I do not know the date of the catalog and have been unable to locate a copy to verify the entry.

National Archives



Washington, DC 204

November 19, 1992

Reply to: NNRM93-1106-MTM

This is in response to your letter of October 29, 1992, requesting information on the Battle of Wounded Knee.

I have enclosed a copy of National Archives Microfilm Publication, M983, Reports and Correspondence Relating to the Army Investigations of the Battle of Wounded Knee and the Sioux Campaign of 1890 - 1891.

National Archives microfilm publications are available for \$23. per roll from our Publication Division. Remittance should be made payable to the National Archives Trust Fund (NATF - NEPF) and sent to the National Archives Trust Fund Board, P.O. Box 100793, Atlanta, GA 30384. Please complete and return the enclosed NATF Form 36 with your remittance.

In addition, the Hearings before the committee on the Judiciary of the United States Senate, have been published. You should ask for these hearings as S. 1147 and S. 2900, of the Ninety - four Congress, Second Session, February 5 and 6, 1976. Perhaps you will be able to locate this in a library which is also a Federal repository.

We have in our custody the muster rolls of the 7th Cavalry. To provide you a price quote for the copies of them, though, I will need to know the company or companies in which you are interested. If you would like a price quote, please provide the information and request one.

I am unable to assist you with the serial numbers as the War Department did not maintain serial numbers of individual weapons. If that information exists, it may be in one of the reports reproduced on microfilm.

General George Custer An Overview of the Weapons Used

Since Dave Higginbotham is somewhat of an historian and is particularly interested in George Armstrong Custer's use of a Remington Rolling Block at Little Big Horn, he thought you might be interested in a history of the weapons used by the troops and the Indians.

George A. Custer's 7th Cavalry had Springfield carbines and Colt .45 revolvers; the Lakota and Cheyenne Indians had a variety of long arms, including repeaters. But were the weapons used on June 25, 1876, the deciding factor in the famous battle?

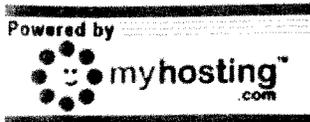
By Terry Shulman IT MAY BE THAT the Battle of the Little Bighorn is the most written about in American history. For more than 120 years, people have speculated about how Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer and five companies of the 7th Cavalry were overwhelmed in southeastern Montana Territory by a combined force of Lakota and Cheyenne Indians on June 25, 1876. Yet, the controversy does not appear any closer to resolution today.

A number of reasons have been given for the defeat: Custer disobeyed orders, disregarded the wishes of his scouts, violated the principles of warfare by dividing his command, was ambushed or was a victim of a conspiracy; internal regimental jealousies caused the defeat; the regiment was too tired for a long fight; there were too many raw recruits or too many Indians; the Indians had better weapons; or the Army had defective guns. Most of the conjectures are moot, for they can be debated endlessly--with intellectual and emotional biases interfering with reasoned arguments. Given the nature of the event, however, one should be able to study the role the weapons played in the battle's outcome with a modicum of objectivity.

During the battle, the 7th Cavalry troopers were armed with the Springfield carbine Model 1873 and the Colt Single Action Army revolver Model 1873. Selection of the weapons was the result of much confusion and error, plus official testing during 1871-73. The Ordnance Department staged field trials of 89 carbines, which included entries from Peabody, Spencer, Freeman, Elliot and Mauser. There were four primary contenders: the Ward-Burton bolt-action rifle; the Remington rolling-block; the "trapdoor" Springfield; and the Sharps, with its vertically sliding breechblock.

Overall, the soldiers were pleased with their weapons. Lieutenant James Calhoun of Company L wrote in his diary on July 1, 1874: "The new Springfield arms and ammunition were issued to the company today. They seem to give great satisfaction." Although most of the men drew the standard-issue weapons, it was their prerogative to purchase their own arms. George Custer carried a Remington .45-caliber sporting rifle with octagonal barrel and two revolvers that were not standard issue--possibly Webley British Bulldog, double-action, white-handled revolvers. Captain Thomas A. French of Company M carried a .50-caliber Springfield that his men called "Long Tom." Sergeant John Rya of Company M used a .45-caliber, 15-pound Sharps telescopic rifle, specially made for him. Private Henry A. Bailey of Company I had a preference for a Dexter Smith, breechloading, single-barreled shotgun.

It is well-known that Custer's men each brought a trapdoor Springfield and a Colt .45 to the Little Bighorn that June day in 1876. Identification of the Indian weapons is more uncertain. Participant accounts claimed to have gone into battle with a plethora of arms--bows and arrows, ancient muzzleloaders, breechloaders and the latest repeating arms. Bows and arrows played a part in the fight. Some warriors



> Perhaps some firearms were "liberated" from these whiskey running outlaws.
>

Do keep me informed. It might well be worth a Greasy Grass article, dependin
on what you learn.

To clarify my earlier point, I guess what I was saying is that even if
weapons were liberated, men in other companies might not have known that fac
especially if the two companies weren't stationed together prior to the
campaign.

In other words, you may be trying to prove something that may be hard to do.
If no one else knew about the existence of such a weapon, it is understandab
that accounts by survivors failed to mention that fact.

Best of luck!

>> Sandy

[Advertise with us](#) [About mail2web](#) [Terms and Conditions](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Help](#) [Announcements](#)



© 2003 SoftCom Technology Consulting Inc. All rights reserved.