



CUSTER BATTLEFIELD
National Cemetery ☆ Montana



Main entrance to the Custer Battlefield National Cemetery. Courtesy of K. F. Roahen, Billings, Mont.

THE COVER

A reproduction of Prof. Elk Eber's striking painting entitled "General Custer's Last Battle." It is used with the special permission of the artist.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

HAROLD L. ICKES, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE · NEWTON B. DRURY, *Director*

USTER BATTLEFIELD

National Cemetery

Scene of one of the last important Indian resistances to the westward march of civilization, on June 25–26, 1876, in which Gen. George Armstrong Custer and his immediate command met defeat and death.

THE BATTLE of the Little Bighorn River (Custer's Last Battle) was one of the last important organized resistances of the American Indians to the westward expansion of white civilization and occurred between the United States troops and the Sioux and Northern Cheyenne Indians on June 25 and 26, 1876. The causes for this war followed much the same pattern as those of many previous Indian wars in the United States—intrusion of whites into Indian land in violation of existing treaties, hostility of Indians, and then armed encounters between Indians and the United States troops.

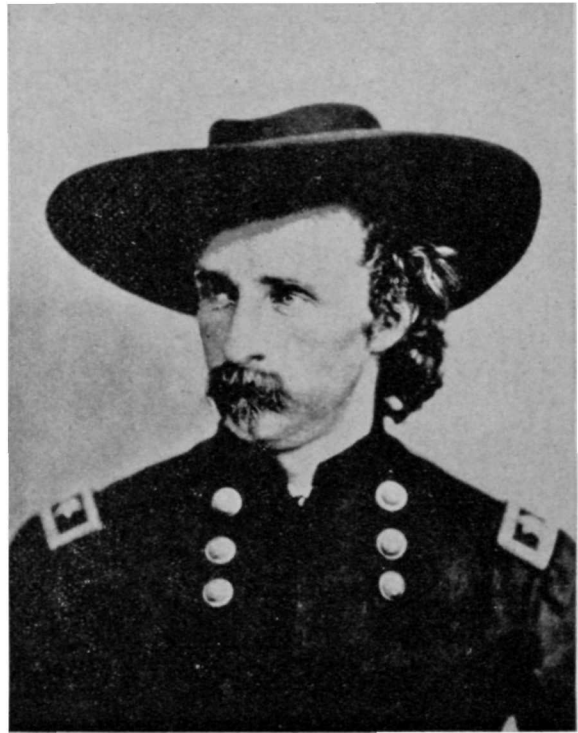
The battle consisted of two separate phases or

engagements. That under General Custer started at about 3:45 p. m., June 25, 1876, and ended in the complete annihilation of General Custer and his immediate command of five troops of the Seventh Cavalry between 7 and 7:30 p. m. on the evening of the same day. The second engagement was fought by the remaining seven troops and pack train of the Seventh Cavalry under Major Reno and Captain Benteen. This phase commenced about 2:30 p. m., June 25, 1876, and ended about 9:30 p. m., June 26, when the Indians withdrew from the field of battle. Great gallantry was displayed by the soldiers in defending their

Chief Gall of the Uncpapa Sioux, leading Indian chief at the battle of the Little Bighorn River. Denver Public Library Western Collection. Photograph by D. F. Barry



Maj. Gen. George A. Custer, from a photograph taken about 1870. Courtesy Signal Corps, United States Army



position against overwhelming odds, and they deserve a place on the pages of history.

The name "General Custer" had become to many people synonymous with victory. In the Indian Wars of the Southwest in the late 1860's he had acquired a reputation of being invincible. Consequently, the news of his defeat and death and that of his immediate command shocked the American people and aroused in them and their Government the determination to settle once and for all the Indian problem. The press insisted upon a thorough investigation into Indian and military affairs. The "Peace Policy" and fair treatment advocates were now thoroughly discredited. Treaties involving cessions of large territories were dictated by the Federal Government, and no consideration was given to any friend of the red man until every Indian had been assigned and returned to such diminished reservations as were approved by the Federal Government. The defeat of General Custer did not result in a new Indian policy, but accelerated the last stages of a program followed by the United States Government for almost two centuries.

Today, Custer Battlefield National Cemetery commemorates one of the last principal engagements that brought to an end the long conflict between the whites and the Indians for possession of the American Continent and the prominent part played by the Army in the conquest of the last frontiers. It also memorializes General Custer and his gallant men as symbols of that traditional devotion to duty and love of country which govern all actions of the United States Army.

Causes of the Warfare

THE CONTINUED EXPANSION of the white men west from the Mississippi River forced the Plains Indians onto restricted reservations. Treaties were negotiated but often not ratified before the rapidly moving frontiersmen arrived at the outskirts of the Indian territory. The dispossession of the aborigine from his native lands is a story of injustices and cruelties. For nearly two decades the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians had been forced to accept more restricted reservation boundaries. Good grazing and hunting lands had been allotted to them, only to be taken when avaricious white settlers and fortune hunters demanded the land for other uses.



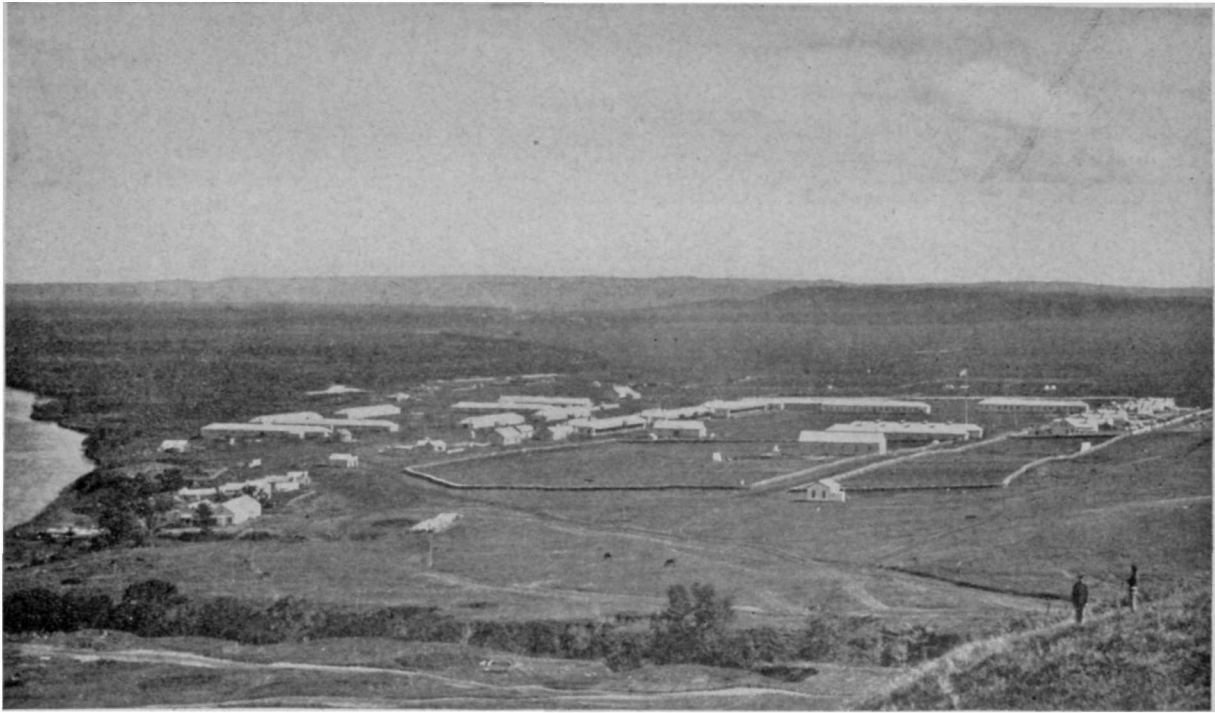
Sitting Bull, Uncpapa Medicine Man. While not a fighting chief, he exerted a strong influence over the Indians. Denver Public Library Western Collection. Photograph by D. F. Barry

Such action precipitated dissatisfaction among the Indians and eventually resulted in armed conflict between them and the United States Army.

The treaty of 1868 settled the Northern Cheyennes, the Northern Arapahoes, and various Sioux tribes on reservations in Dakota territory. One reserve, known as the "Great Sioux Reservation," for some of these tribes included the extensive Black Hills area. These lands were to be a hunting ground for all Indians, with all whites excluded.

In 1874 General Custer and the Seventh Cavalry were sent from Fort Lincoln in Dakota Territory with a scientific expedition into the Black Hills, ostensibly to explore the area and to secure military information. While exploring the country, rumors of gold in the hills were confirmed by prospectors who accompanied the military force.

The immediate effect of the circulation of news of the gold discovery by Custer's Black Hills expedition was the invasion of the region by hordes of miners. Because the hills lay within the Great Sioux Reservation, the Federal Government was



A view of Fort Lincoln, Dakota Territory, from which General Custer and his command operated from 1874 until the ill-fated battle in 1876. Photographed in June 1877 by Frank Jay Haynes and used with the permission of Haynes, Inc., Yellowstone National Park, Wyo.

by treaty stipulation honor bound to prevent the migration of its citizens to the area. Because of actual and potential values of the Black Hills to the Indians, would-be intruders could expect anything but gentle treatment. The magnetic attraction of gold, however, was too powerful for either fears of physical dangers or personal hardships to counteract. Nor did respect for the sanctity of treaty stipulations serve as an effective deterrent. Hence, the white adventurers were ready to brave the hardships of a Dakota winter in an isolated wilderness infested by semihostile Indians, in face of threatened eviction by the military forces of the United States.

From the viewpoint of the whites, the ensuing conflict was caused by the hostility of certain bands of Indians who made raids on the white settlements and refused to be confined to the reservations. From the Indian viewpoint, the conflict was due to continued encroachment on their lands by the whites and repeated violations of solemn treaty obligations. The Indians were especially angered by the invasion of the Black Hills and by the irregular and insufficient issuing of rations.

The Expedition Against the Indians

THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE of the campaign of 1876 was the Government's order of December 6, 1875, asking that all the Indians report to their reservations on or before January 31, 1876, or be regarded as hostile. It was practically impossible for the Indians to comply with this order because of the limited time allowed and because of the extreme weather conditions at the time. Because the Indians failed to comply, on February 7, 1876, the Secretary of the Interior and the General of the Army gave Lt. Gen. P. H. Sheridan authority to commence operations against the hostile Sioux.

The plan of this campaign was to march into the hostile Indian territory with three separate expeditions from different directions. In the spring of 1876 a military force under the command of Brig. Gen. George A. Crook moved northwest from Fort Fetterman, Wyo. Gen. John Gibbon, with a force of cavalry from Fort Ellis, Mont., and infantry from Fort Shaw, Mont., started in early April and moved slowly east down the north bank of the



Group of Seventh Cavalry officers and ladies taken at Fort Lincoln shortly before the regiment left for the Little Bighorn campaign. The third officer from the left is General Custer, while Mrs. Custer is the first lady from the left on the lower step. Denver Public Library Western Collection. Photograph by D. F. Barry

Yellowstone River. Gen. Alfred H. Terry, commanding the entire military operations, started from Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory, on May 17, 1876, with two companies of the Seventeenth United States Infantry, one company of the Sixth United States Infantry, a gatling gun platoon from the Twentieth United States Infantry, and the entire Seventh United States Cavalry, numbering in all about 925 men. Gen. George A. Custer and his Seventh United States Cavalry led the expedition as it left the fort at the beginning of the westward march.

Slowly and with forced marches this column reached the Powder River where that stream joins the Yellowstone River. It was here that 78 men of the Seventh United States Cavalry were left to care for and protect a base of supplies. The main column continued up the Yellowstone and on June 8 came upon General Gibbon's command opposite the mouth of the Tongue River. Gibbon with his 350 men remained on the north side of the Yellowstone and marched upstream, paralleling General Terry's column on the south bank. The entire

force then continued upstream to the mouth of Rosebud Creek.

The steamboat *Far West*, loaded with supplies, was there. Terry, Gibbon, Custer, and some subordinate officers used this steamboat as a ferry for exchanging visits in conference. General Terry, the commanding officer of the expedition, outlined the plan of progress from this point. General Gibbon's troops were to go back up the Yellowstone, cross to its south side, and march up the Bighorn River and then the Little Bighorn River. The steamer *Far West* would follow these streams as far as it could go. General Custer would lead his Seventh United States Cavalry up Rosebud Creek, following a broad Indian trail reported by Maj. Marcus A. Reno and his scouting troops. The objective of this procedure was to get the Indians between the two forces of soldiers and thus compel them to fight, since the officers feared that the Indians might escape.

At this point on June 22 the command was split with Terry and Gibbon continuing up the Yellowstone while Custer, with his column, marched toward the source of Rosebud Creek.

Indian Movements and Their First Conflict With the Troops

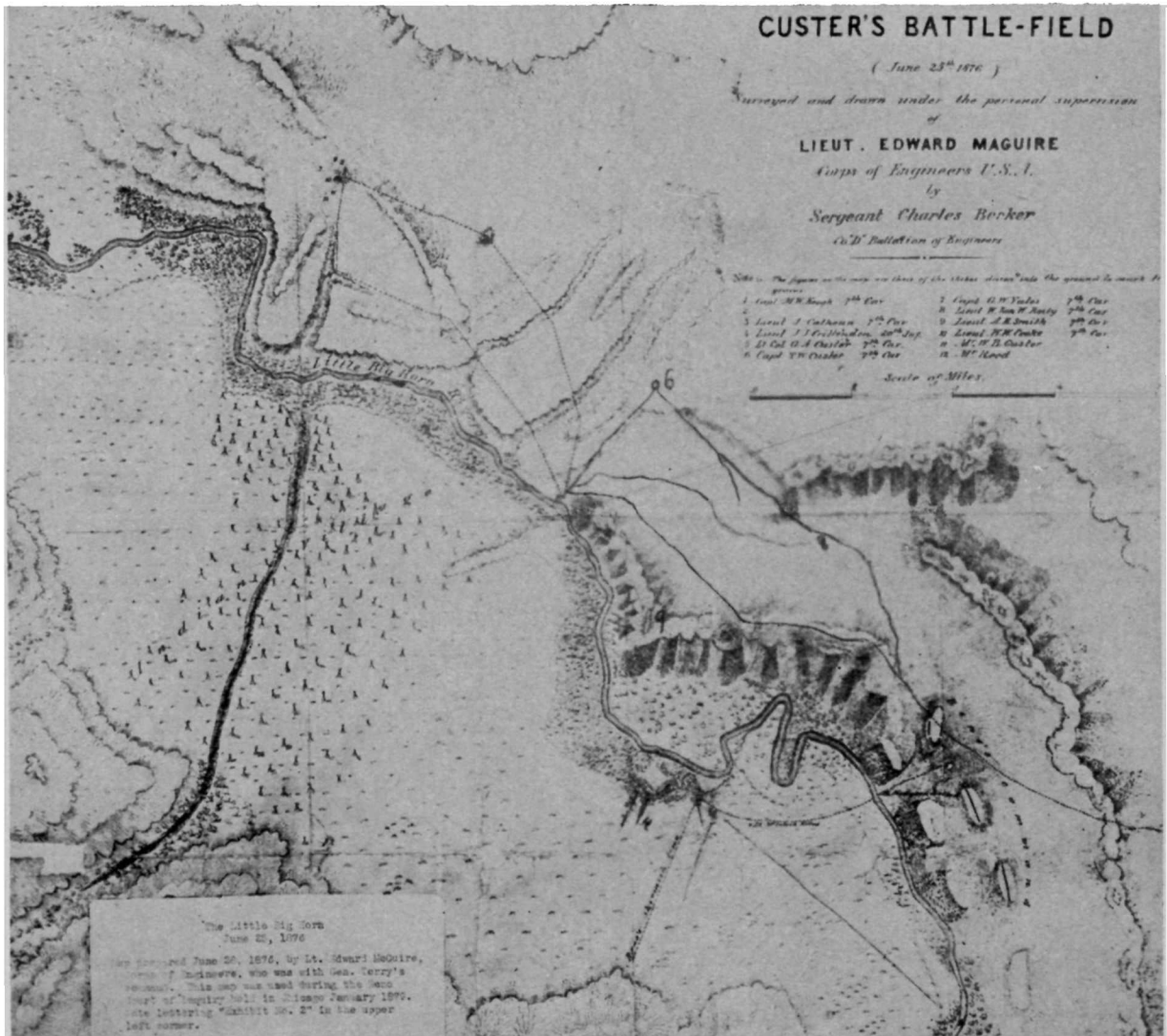
THERE WERE SIX separate tribal camp circles in the aggregation of hostile Indians. These were the Northern Cheyennes, the Ogallala Sioux, Uncpapa Sioux, Minneconjoux Sioux, Sans Arc Sioux, and Blackfeet. A few other bands of Indians were mingled with them. Each tribe had its own chief; each had its own separate camp circle.

The first 1876 clash between Indian warriors and soldiers was on March 17. Early that morning General Crook's forces attacked a Northern

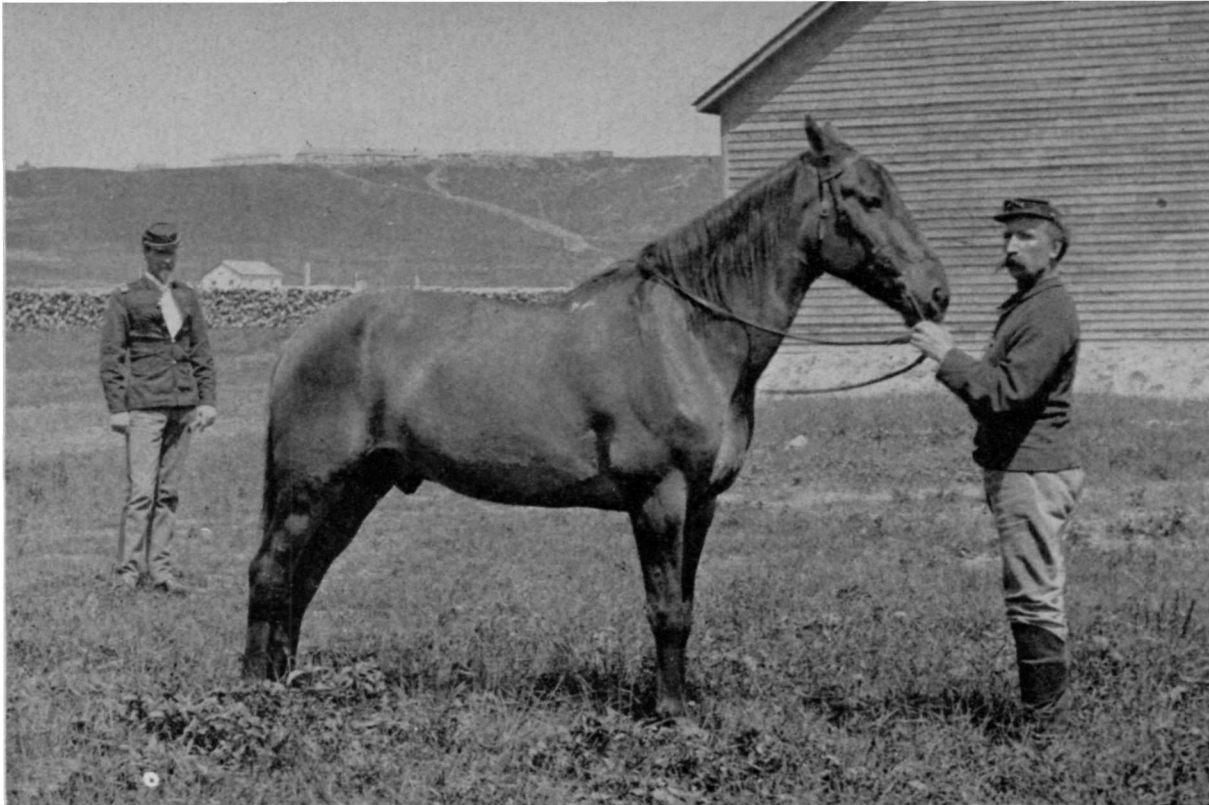
Cheyenne camp on the west side of Powder River near what is now Moorhead, Mont. A few were killed on each side. The Indians fled, while the soldiers burned the vacated tepees.

These same troops, reinforced, met the Indians again on June 17, this time on upper Rosebud Creek. The warriors of all tribes participated, and the battle lasted most of the day. Crook was forced to retreat toward his base in Wyoming, and the Indians then moved toward the Little Bighorn River.

On June 24, the combined tribes moved the first 5 miles of their planned journey down the Little Bighorn River. Setting up their camp circles



The first map of the Custer Battlefield, prepared by Lt. Edward Maguire, Corps of Engineers, United States Army, on June 28, 1876, 2 days after the battle. War Department photograph



Comanche, "the only living thing found on the Custer Battlefield." This photograph was taken at Fort Lincoln, 1877, about 1 year after the battle. Blacksmith Korn is holding the bridle and Capt. H. J. Nowlan, Seventh Cavalry, is in the background. Courtesy Haynes, Inc., Yellowstone National Park, Wyo.

along the banks of the Little Bighorn River immediately west and south of the present Custer Battlefield Area, they located the Northern Cheyennes on the north and the Uncpapas Sioux on the south, with the other four tribal camp circles and extra unattached bands taking positions between the two end camps. Practically all of the lodges were family lodges. The total number of men, women, and children in camp was probably between 12,000 and 15,000.

Custer's Troops Take to the Trail

GENERAL CUSTER, with 660 men, 44 Indian scouts, and some 20 or more packers, guides, and civilians, left about noon on June 22 from the camp at the mouth of Rosebud Creek and traveled toward its source. They continued up Rosebud Creek until the night of June 24. Scouts that afternoon had reported that the Indian trail the troops were following turned westward toward the Little Big Horn River Valley. After darkness set in, Custer broke camp and continued to follow the Indian trail. During the night, the cavalrymen moved several

miles nearer the Little Bighorn River Valley. Then they stopped and awaited the daylight so that a more careful investigation of the area might be made.

Custer went out with some of his scouts and discovered the location of the Indian camps in the Little Bighorn River Valley. He returned to camp and was informed that the Indians had discovered their presence. He then called a conference of officers and to them he stated that his plan had been to rest a day in the hills and make the attack early on the morning of the 26th. Their discovery by the Indians, however, altered the plan, and it was now necessary to attack at once. A delay until the next day might result in the escape of the Indians.

Custer Divides His Command, and Reno Engages the Indians

ABOUT NOON ON JUNE 25, Custer divided his command into three battalions. They were divided as follows: Three troops (A, G, and M) under the

command of Maj. Marcus A. Reno, three (H, D, and K) under Capt. Frederick W. Benteen, and five troops (C, E, F, I, and L) under his, Custer's immediate command, with the last troop "B" protecting the pack train which was to follow the column as closely as possible. These three columns moved along for several miles in parallel lines until they reached a point about 8 miles from the present site of the little town of Garryowen, where Captain Benteen's column was sent to the left of the Little Bighorn River to scout along the small valleys and ravines, while Custer and Reno followed on opposite banks of the river.

About 2 miles from the present station of Garryowen, Indians were found camped along the banks of the river. Reno was told to charge this camp, while Custer moved to the right, obviously to gain higher ground from which to make a better survey of the Indian camp and surrounding country. It is believed that he planned to support Reno's attack in the river bottom by appearing suddenly in the Indian camp and attacking their flank and rear.

Major Reno crossed the Little Bighorn River to its west side and advanced down the valley toward the Indian camps. He had not gone far when

Steamer Far West, General Terry's headquarters during the campaign of 1876. This boat carried the wounded in Reno's command from the battlefield back to Fort Lincoln. Courtesy Haynes, Inc., Yellowstone National Park, Wyo.



it became evident that there were a great many more tepees and Indians in the valley than had been observed from the hills prior to his separation from Custer. Bluffs and the foliage of tall cottonwood trees had hidden the camps from their view.

The Indian warriors swarmed into view as Reno and his men rode down the valley. Shortly after the battle between Reno's troops and the Indians began, Reno had his men dismount and spread out along a skirmish line to fight on foot. This move tended to check the onrush of the Indians. After a few minutes the increasing number of Indians crowded the soldiers into a timber thicket. A defensive stand was made here, and Reno ordered his men to mount their horses for a retreat. It was apparent they would be overwhelmed by the increasing numbers of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors.

The retreat of the soldiers became a panicky flight in which every man was for himself, while the Indians continued their attack until the troops crossed the river. About a third of the whites dropped out, having been either killed, wounded, or having sought cover in the brush. The others crossed the river and reached the top of the hill on the east side. Here they took a stand for defense. Few Indians followed them beyond the river.

Custer's Last Battle

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN about the Custer phase of the battle, but very few facts can be definitely stated. Custer's route after he was last seen with the Gray Horse Troop on a high promontory overlooking the river bottom where Reno was engaging the Indians is still shrouded in mystery. As he looked down from the bluffs at the battle between Reno's troops and the Indians, he was seen by many of these troops to wave his hat in encouragement. Perhaps he was signaling them to keep and hold the Indians until he was able to descend with his troops to the river bottom and along the banks of the Little Bighorn River to support their attack by crashing through the flank and rear of the Indian encampment.

During the time Custer disappeared from the bluffs and descended for a short distance, probably down the deep ravine near Medicine Tail Creek, Reno had started his retreat from his position on the river flat to seek higher ground for defensive



The present Custer Monument upon which are inscribed the names of those killed in the battle of the Little Bighorn River

purposes. At approximately the time Reno left the river bottom, Custer and his troops reached a point across the Little Bighorn River from the main Indian camp. The attack against Reno's troops had eased off, and the mass of Indians immediately started after the Custer column. There were only about 225 cavalymen against Indians numbering around 5,000. This was more than the small body of troopers could stand, and the cavalymen were gradually pushed back to the positions now indicated by the silent white marble markers that dot Custer Hill.

Custer and his two-hundred-odd troopers on this hill fought one of the bloodiest battles with the Indians in the annals of American history. The horses that had brought these troopers nearly one thousand miles were shot to make breastworks against the deadly bullets and arrows from the Sioux and Cheyenne warriors.

It is thought that not long after the Indians began to show a strong force in Custer's front, he turned his column to the left and advanced in the direction of the Indian village to the junction of two ravines just below a spring. Here he probably dismounted two troops, under the command of Keogh and Calhoun, to fight on foot. It is quite possible that two troops advanced to a knoll, now marked by Crittenden's monument, while the

remaining three mounted troops followed them a short distance in the rear. The lead horses remained where the troops dismounted.

The line occupied by Custer's battalion was the first considerable ridge back of the river. His front was extended about three-fourths of a mile. The whole Indian village was in full view. A few hundred yards from his line was another but lower ridge, the further slope of which was not commanded by his line. It was here that the Indians under Crazy Horse from the lower part of the village, part of whom were the Cheyennes, formed for the charge on Custer's position. Gall collected his warriors, and moved up the ravine south of Keogh and Calhoun. With this action, the battle was on.

All evidence indicates that the Custer battle was largely a pitched battle. Many of the participants on both sides were on foot and doing much fighting from prostrate positions on the ground. The warriors outnumbered Custer's men in the ratio of better than 10 to 1. The horde of Indians were wriggling along gullies and hiding behind knolls on all sides of the troops. One needs only to walk over the battlefield today and observe the terrain to understand how well they could hide themselves from the fire of the whites.

Probably the only Indians the Custer men could see plainly were the many hundreds of noncom-

batant youths and old men on their ponies, moving here and there along the neighboring ridges out of bullet range and watching the battle. The only accounts of the battle have come from the Indians, since there were no surviving whites, and many of their stories are so similar that much of what happened on that day is probably known.

The fighting lasted from 1½ to 3 hours, the exact duration being open to question. Indians managed to start the troopers' horses into a stampede. Some of these horses carried extra ammunition in their saddlebags. It is thought that Custer's men had some of those extra storages of ammunition in their possession before the stampede occurred, but this loss may have seriously affected Keogh and Calhoun.

The horse stampede was followed quickly by a concerted attack by the Indians which was so successful and so swiftly carried out that not a Custer man remained alive. The Indians stated that not one prisoner was taken alive, and that they were not trying to capture any of them as prisoners. They also stated that there was no final charge on horseback such as often has been represented in writings and paintings. The only semblance to such culminating action was a "charge" by the mounted youths and old men in a rush to seize plunder from the dead bodies of Custer's men.

Reno Battle Renewed by the Indians

AFTER RENO'S RETREAT to the bluffs and the Indians' retirement to the north to fight Custer, the roll for Reno's command was called. There were absent 3 officers and more than 40 men, including a few civilians. How many were wounded, hiding, or killed no one knew. The troopers with Reno had numbered 112, as well as 20 Arikara scouts, 3 or 4 Crow scouts, 3 white scouts, and 1 Negro listed as an interpreter.

Benteen with his three troops had seen no action as yet, for he had swung far to the left, as ordered, and separated about 6 miles from the rest. Finding that the bluffs were almost impassable and that his horses were fast wearing out, he swung back toward the trail. About 3 o'clock a messenger from Custer met him. Sergeant Kanipe, of "C" troop, brought orders to Captain McDougall to hurry up the pack train. The sergeant was smiling, and as he passed on his way to the pack train, he called out "We've got 'em boys." Soon after, another

messenger arrived, Trumpeter Martin of "H" troop, on duty as orderly trumpeter to Custer. He bore a hastily scrawled message from Lieutenant Cooke, Custer's adjutant. "Benteen—Come on—Big village—Be quick—Bring packs. W. W. Cooke. P. S. Bring pacs." Indicating how urgently Custer then wanted his reserve ammunition, Cooke had added the underscored postscript, "Bring pacs." Martin had been fired upon during his ride, and his horse was wounded; but he also was elated, telling Benteen that the Indians were "skedaddling" and that Custer was charging the village. Increasing the gait, Benteen pushed forward and joined forces with Reno, whose command was depleted and unnerved as they had just gained their defensive position on the high bluffs. Not long after Benteen arrived at this point, Captain McDougall arrived with his cavalry troop and the train of pack mules.

Officers immediately conferred on what action to take. Reno's retreat had done considerable damage to the morale of the remaining men. Benteen's men felt more confident, naturally, as they had not seen any Indians.

While the combined command was being organized, heavy and continuous firing was heard from down the river, evidently from the Custer battle. The reorganized force then moved in the direction of the firing which diminished and then finally ceased. Reno, the ranking officer, decided to retain his defensive position. This was between 4 and 5 p. m., and not long afterwards the entire force of Indian warriors came rushing back over the hills and up the valley to renew their attack upon the men they had chased to the top of the bluffs. There they were surprised to find the increase in the number of men, but this did not deter them and they were soon all around the hill, were dismounted and creeping in the gulches and ravines, dodging from cover to cover, and sending bullets and arrows among the white troopers.

The remainder of that afternoon the pitched battle continued between the forces, the troopers having entrenched themselves as best they could. An additional defensive position on an adjacent hill had been taken by Captain Benteen and part of the force. The men renewed their courage and forgot their rout from the valley. They settled down in grim determination to hold their position. The coming of darkness put an end to the vicious fighting of the day.



Custer Hill showing the monument and the site where General Custer and 51 of his gallant troopers were found by General Terry's troops on June 27, 1876. Courtesy K. F. Roahen, Billings, Mont.

At dawn of the 26th the Indians were back to resume the battle, and by this time many of the troopers were suffering from thirst, especially those who had been wounded. Their distress was so great that a group of volunteers were called for, to make an attempt to get water from the river flowing at the base of the two hills. A special body of marksmen was organized to go along the ridges sloping in that direction and clear the way for water carriers to follow the ravines. The move was successful and the wounded cared for.

The battle continued through the forenoon and into the afternoon. It was at this time that the warriors began to withdraw, and late that afternoon the troops saw with relief the general departure of the entire Indian encampment. The long procession of ponies and tepee pole travois went slowly trailing southward up the Little Big Horn River Valley, and before the darkness enveloped them, the last of the Indians had disappeared from sight.

About a dozen of the men who had been left behind by Reno's force during the flight from the valley on the afternoon of the 25th had hidden in the brush and on the nights of the 25th and 26th had been able to rejoin their forces on the high bluffs. After their return the death loss from the valley and hilltop battles was finally calculated to be: Valley, 2 officers and 29 men, apparently including the scouts; hilltop loss, 1 officer and 18 men; wounded, 44.

The March of Generals Terry and Gibbon and Their Arrival at the Battlegrounds

THE TROOPS of Generals Terry and Gibbon, numbering about 450 men, left the mouth of the Rosebud Creek on June 22, proceeded up the Yellowstone River, and crossed to its south side just below the mouth of the Bighorn River. On the night of the 24th they camped on lower Tulock Creek. The 25th, the day of Custer's battle, they traversed the arid hills along the Bighorn River in an effort to get to the mouth of the Little Bighorn River.

On Monday the 26th, these troops at the mouth of the Little Bighorn River had sign talk with three Crow Indians who had been scouts with Custer. The Indians told them all the white men had been killed. None of the men fully believed this story. The entire command marched up the Little Bighorn River Valley, and that night as they were making camp saw hundreds of Indians to the southwest of them moving out of the valley.

On the morning of the 27th no Indians were seen by these troops, and following breakfast the march southward began. Lieutenant Bradley, with a detail, was sent on special scout duty to the east side of the valley. After the main column of troops had marched south up the valley about 3 miles, an

officer saw men and animals moving on a hill about 3 miles to the east across the valley. An officer with a few men, was detailed to get closer to this group to identify them. They proved to be a detachment which had been sent by Reno. The story was told of the terrific battles of the past 2 days and of the disappearance of Custer and his troops.

While this conference was in progress, Lieutenant Bradley and his scouting party arrived. He brought the first official news of the tragic loss. On July 27, 1876, in the Helena Weekly Herald, Bradley made the following statement of what he had found:

"Of the 206 bodies buried on the field, there were very few that I did not see, and beyond scalping, in possibly a majority of cases, there was little mutilation. Many of the bodies were not even scalped, and in the comparatively few cases of disfigurement it appeared to me rather the result of a blow than of a knife . . ."

Immediate action was taken to care properly for the 44 wounded men in Reno's command. They were transferred before the day ended from the Reno defense area on the hills to the camp of Generals Terry and Gibbon. The 27th and most of the 28th of June were spent in the care of these men.

On the 28th, at the Custer battlefield, efforts were first made to locate and count the bodies and to discover if any were missing, or if any might still

be alive and awaiting rescue. Four officers and 14 men were missing, but none found alive. The afternoon was devoted to the burial of the dead at the spots where they were found. A count showed that the regiment, exclusive of 10 scouts and civilians, had lost 16 officers and 237 enlisted men, as well as 319 horses. Eighteen bodies, which included 4 officers, were never found. The disappearance of these men is one of the mysteries of the battle. The loss to the Indians has never been satisfactorily determined, and published figures vary from 30 to 300.

The Return to Bismarck— Comanche Saved

ON THE NIGHT OF JUNE 29, 4 days after the battle, the entire forces of Terry, Gibbon, and Reno left the scene of the battle, transporting the wounded in Reno's command on litters to the mouth of the Little Bighorn River, where the steamer *Far West* was waiting.

The only survivor of the battle found on the field was Captain Keogh's horse, "Comanche," which was astray and badly wounded. He was moved slowly down the valley to the steamer *Far West* and taken down the river with the wounded men. Upon reaching Fort Lincoln, he was nursed back to health and by regimental order placed on the retired list. No person was allowed to ride or

Looking west from Calhoun Hill toward Custer Hill. The white markers show where the men of Troops "I" and "L" were annihilated and the approximate location where the horse, Comanche, was found. Courtesy K. F. Roahen, Billings, Mont.



work him, and he was paraded, saddled, and bridled at every ceremony of the regiment until his death in 1891 at the age of 30 years. After his death he was mounted for exhibit purposes and can now be seen at the Dyche Museum, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kans.

The 44 men suffering from wounds were put aboard the steamer *Far West* and men assigned to accompany them. The trip of 950 miles down the Bighorn and Missouri Rivers to Bismarck, Dakota Territory, was made in 54 hours, a record never again equalled in the history of Missouri River packet boats.

The Tragic Story Released

THE STEAMER LANDED its precious freight at Bismarck at 11 p. m. July 5, 1876, and within a few minutes the news of the battle and its details were being given to the world. J. M. Carnahan, the telegraph operator at Bismarck, took his seat at the telegraph key to send out news of the battle, and for 22 hours he did not move from his chair. Upon completion of this message he remained another 60-odd hours at the key without rest or sleep sending newspaper dispatches throughout the country.

The country was stunned by the news of the disaster. It was a terrible sacrifice that brought repercussions echoing from East to West. It shook the Government administration like an earthquake. Congressmen, newspapers, and magazines demanded explanations and investigations of the unnecessary slaughter. Accusations and insinuations concerning the blame for the disaster led from

Washington to Fort Abraham Lincoln, the home station of the Seventh Cavalry. President Grant regarded the defeat as a "sacrifice of troops" by Custer. Others condemned Reno. The mystery that hung like heavy clouds over the battlefield on that fateful day in 1876 still is unsolved. The defeat and death of General Custer and his command accelerated the final stages in the solution of the American Indian problem and led to the establishment of clearly defined reservations and rights for these wards of the Government.

One year after the battle, during the summer of 1877, Troop "I," Seventh Cavalry, under the command of Capt. Michael V. Sheridan, returned to the battlefield and exhumed the bodies, several of which were shipped to the homes of the relatives of the deceased. General Custer's remains were sent to the post cemetery at the United States Military Academy, West Point, N. Y., and reburied October 10, 1877.

The remaining bodies, about 220, with the exception of Lt. John J. Crittenden, were carefully reburied in one large grave on top of Custer Hill, within the enclosure on which the large granite monument now stands. Lieutenant Crittenden's body, upon the request of his relatives, remained buried on the battlefield until 1931, when it was removed and buried within the cemetery grounds.

Gen. George Armstrong Custer

THE CUSTER BATTLEFIELD has been named after Brevet Major General Custer, the commander of the Seventh Cavalry, who, with more than 200 of his troops, lost his life on this battlefield.

View of the Custer Battlefield National Cemetery from Custer Hill. The first white marker on the right denotes the spot where General Custer's body was found. Courtesy K. F. Roahen, Billings, Mont.



Custer was born in New Rumley, Harrison County, Ohio, December 5, 1839, the son of Emanuel and Maria Ward Fitzpatrick Custer. He spent much of his early life with his halfsister, Lydia Reed, at her home in Monroe, Mich. He attended school there. When he was about 15 years old he met Elizabeth Bacon. Less than 10 years after their first meeting Elizabeth Bacon and George A. Custer were married. About the 1st of June 1857, Custer entered the United States Military Academy, West Point, N. Y. His days as a cadet were anything but "smooth sailing." His academic standing was not any too near the top, mostly close to the bottom. Following his graduation in June 1861, he was commissioned as second lieutenant in the Second United States Cavalry. Within 2 years of his graduation from West Point he won rapid promotion in the Union forces to brigadier general. On April 15, 1865, he was promoted to major general.

Following the War between the States, General Custer was for a short time in Texas and during the latter part of 1866 assisted in the organization of the Seventh United States Cavalry at Fort Riley, Kans. He was reduced in rank to lieutenant colonel, because of the reduction in the strength of the Army, and assigned to the Seventh United States Cavalry. These troops he led against the Indians on many occasions before his death on June 25, 1876, on the Custer Battlefield.

Burials From Other Indian Battles

WITHIN THE Custer Battlefield National Cemetery is a small area which is used as an active military cemetery. Many men who died in other Indian battles are buried here. Among those of historical interest are Capt. (Bvt. Lt. Col.) William Judd Fetterman and his command of 3 officers, 76 enlisted men, and 4 civilians who were slain in the Old Fort Philip Kearny Fight, commonly known as the "Fetterman Massacre," December 21, 1866. Both the Fetterman Fight of 1866 and the Custer Fight of 1876 are analogous, in that both commands were killed with no survivors to tell the tragic story. Others buried here are those slain at the Wagon Box Fight, August 2, 1867; the Hayfield Fight near Fort C. F. Smith, Mont., August

1, 1867; Battle of the Bighole, August 9, 1877; the Battle of Bear Paw Mountain, Mont., 1877; and other battles and skirmishes of lesser importance.

How To Reach the Battlefield

THE CUSTER Battlefield National Cemetery is located in southeastern Montana, about 15 miles south of the town of Hardin. It is easily reached from United States Highway No. 87, by tourists traveling across the country, as well as from Montana State Highway No. 8, which begins at the battlefield and continues east and south to Broadus, Mont., where it joins United States Highway No. 212 leading into the northern end of the Black Hills at Belle Fourche Valley, a few miles from Deadwood, S. Dak.

Those who desire to travel by train or motorbus may use the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy lines to Crow Agency, Mont., which is only 3 miles from the battlefield site.

Facilities for Visitors

THE CUSTER Battlefield National Cemetery has no facilities for camping or for picnic parties. Trailer parks and auto tourist camps may be found at Crow Agency, or Hardin, Mont.

The area is open for visitors the year round, and historical information and literature are always obtainable at the cemetery or administrative office. During the summer months, historical aides, or guides, are in attendance to lecture and give information to the public.

Administration

ALL INQUIRIES and communications concerning historical data or information regarding this area may be obtained by addressing the Superintendent, Custer Battlefield National Cemetery, Crow Agency, Mont.



USTER BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL CEMETERY

MONTANA

