

P.O. Box 370  
1 Forestry Lane  
Crow Agency, MT 59022  
(406) 638-2228, 638-7211

# **The Little Big Horn 1876**

**The Official Communications,  
Documents and Reports**

**With Rosters of the Officers  
and Troops of the Campaign**

*Compiled and annotated by*

**Loyd J. Overfield II**



University of Nebraska Press  
Lincoln and London

# 1

Saint Paul, Minn. May sixth (6) [1876]  
Adjutant General, Division Missouri, Chicago

I forward the following to his excellency, the President, through military channels:

I have seen your order transmitted thro' the General of the Army, directing that I be not permitted to accompany the expedition about to move against hostile Indians. As my entire regiment forms a part of the proposed expedition and as I am the senior officer of the regiment on duty in this department, I respectfully but most earnestly request that while not allowed to go in command of the expedition, I may be permitted to serve with my regiment in the field. I appeal to you as a soldier to spare me the humiliation of seeing my regiment march to meet the enemy and I to not share its dangers.

(signed) G. A. CUSTER  
Brevet Maj. Gen. U.S.A.

In forwarding the above I wish to say expressly that I have no desire whatever to question the orders of the President, or of any of my military superiors, whether Lieutenant Colonel Custer shall be permitted to accompany my column or not, I shall go in command of it. I do not know the reasons upon which the orders

NOTE: Colonel Custer was ordered by President Grant to remain at Fort Abraham Lincoln while the 7th Cavalry marched on the summer's campaigns under Major M. A. Reno. General Terry, at Custer's request, interceded on Custer's behalf.

already given rest, but if those reasons do not forbid it, Lieutenant Colonel Custer's services would be very valuable with his regiment.

(signed) TERRY  
Commanding Department

Official copy respectfully furnished by mail.

R. C. DRUM  
Assistant Adjutant General

(copy)  
Telegram

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI  
Chicago, Illinois, May 7th 1876

Brigadier General E. D. Townsend,  
Washington, D.C.

The following dispatch from General Terry is respectfully forwarded. I am sorry Lieutenant Colonel Custer did not manifest as much interest by staying at his post to organize and get ready his regiment and the expedition as he does now to accompany it. On a previous occasion in eighteen sixty-eight (1868) I asked executive clemency for Colonel Custer to enable him to accompany his regiment against the Indians, and I sincerely hope if granted this time it will have sufficient effect to prevent him from again attempting to throw discredit on his profession and his brother officers.

(signed) P. H. Sheridan  
Lieut. General

NOTE: This endorsement by General Sheridan refers to the time in 1868, when Sheridan was instrumental in getting Custer restored to duty from a sentence of suspension and loss of pay imposed by a Court Martial.

copy  
telegram

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES

Washington, D.C., May 8, 1876

General A. H. Terry  
St. Paul, Minn.

The dispatch of General Sheridan enclosing yours of yesterday touching General Custer's urgent request to go under your command with his regiment, has been submitted to the President who sends me word that if you want General Custer along he withdraws his objections. Advise Custer to be prudent not to take along any newspaper men who always work mischief, and to abstain from any personalities in the future. Tell him I want him to confine his whole mind to his legitimate office, and trust to time. That newspaper paragraph in the New York World of May 2nd., compromised his best friends here, and almost deprived us of the ability to serve him.

(signed) W. T. SHERMAN  
General

NOTE: Permission to accompany his regiment was finally granted by the President, and General Sherman sent these words of warning to Custer.

# 4

## HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA

In the Field Camp  
near Fort Abraham Lincoln, D.T.  
May 14, 1876

### GENERAL FIELD-ORDERS No. 1.

The Department Commander hereby assumes, in person, the command of the force organized for field operations.

The following named officers will act upon the staff:

Captain E. W. Smith, 18th Infantry, Acting Assistant Adjutant General.

Assistant Surgeon J. W. Williams, Chief Medical Officer.

Captain O. E. Michaelis, Ordnance Officer

1st Lieutenant H. J. Nowlan, 7th Cavalry, Quartermaster

1st Lieutenant Edward Maguire, Corps of Engineers

Lieutenant Nowlan [*sic*] will discharge his duties upon the staff of the Department Commander in addition to those of Regimental Quartermaster.

The Indian Scouts will report to Lieutenant Colonel Custer, 7th Cavalry, for duty with his regiment. All interpreters, guides and other civil employees in the pay

NOTE: As stated in the May 6th communication (Document 1), General Terry personally commanded the expedition. This is the order designating his field staff. From *United States Army and Navy Journal*, July 1, 1876, vol. XIII, no. 47, p. 754.

Field Orders, May 14

of the Quartermaster's Department will report to Lieutenant H. J. Nowlan, Quartermaster of the force in the field, to be by him assigned to duty under direction of the Department Commander.

By Command of Brigadier General Terry  
ED. W. SMITH, 18th Infantry,  
Acting Assistant Adjutant General

## 5

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA  
(In the Field)

Camp on Powder River, June 10, 1876.

## SPECIAL FIELD ORDERS

NO. 11.

1. The Quartermaster of the expedition is hereby ordered to purchase, for public use, two Mackinac boats, at a price not to exceed twenty-five dollars apiece.

2. Major M. A. Reno, 7th Cavalry, with six companies (the right wing) of his regiment, and one gun from the Gatling battery, will proceed, at the earliest practicable moment, to make a reconnoissance of the Powder River from the present camp to the mouth of the Little Powder. From the last-named point he will cross to the head waters of Mizpah Creek, and descend that creek to its junction with Powder River; thence he will cross the Pumpkin Creek and Tongue River, and descend the Tongue to its junction with the Yellowstone—where he may expect to meet the remaining companies of the 7th Cavalry and supplies of subsistence and forage.

NOTE: The expedition left Fort Abraham Lincoln on May 17, 1876. On June 10th General Terry issued these orders to Major Reno for a scout with Companies B, C, E, F, I, and L, 7th Cavalry. Reno left camp about 3 p.m. on the 10th. During the course of this scout, on June 17th, Reno was within forty miles of the scene of General Crook's Battle of the Rosebud. This command reached Colonel John Gibbon's camp on June 18th. The eight scouts were four Dakota: Bear Waiting, Buffalo Ancestor, Caroo, and White Cloud; and three or four Arikara: Forked Tongue, One Feather, Young Hawk, and possibly Tall Bear who was rejected because his horse gave out.

Major Reno's command will be supplied with subsistence for twelve days, and with forage for the same period, at the rate of two pounds of grain per day for each animal.

The guide, Mitch Bouyer, and eight Indian Scouts, to be detailed by Lieutenant Colonel Custer, will report to Major Reno for duty with his column.

Acting Assistant Surgeon J. E. Porter\* is detailed for duty with Major Reno.

By Command of Brigadier General Terry:

ED. W. SMITH,  
Captain 18th Infantry, A.D.C.,  
Acting Assistant Adjutant General

\* The correct name of the Acting Assistant Surgeon was Henry R. Porter. The appearance here of the initials "J. E." was, no doubt, a mistake of Captain Smith or of a clerk who copied the order. James E. Porter was an officer of Captain Keogh's Company 1, and was killed on June 25th.

## HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA

In the Field, Camp at mouth of Tongue River  
June 20, 1876

SPECIAL FIELD ORDERS  
No. 15

Lieutenant-Colonel Custer, Commanding 7th Cavalry, will proceed without unnecessary delay, with the Headquarters and six companies of his regiment, the Indian Scouts, and the Gatling battery now at this camp, to the point occupied by the camp of Major Reno's command, where he will assume command of the force there assembled, and to-morrow proceed with it to the mouth of Rosebud River, where he will await for further orders.

By command of Brigadier General Terry.

(signed) ED. W. SMITH

Captain, 18th Infantry, A.D.C.

Acting Assistant Adjutant General

NOTE: Learning that Major Reno had reached Colonel Gibbon's camp, General Terry issued orders for Custer to join him. From microfilm copy, National Archives, File #6160, Adjutant General's Office, 1876.

## HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA

(In the Field)

Camp at Mouth of Rosebud River,  
Montana, June 22nd, 1876.

Lieut. Col. G. A. Custer, 7th Cavalry.

Colonel:

The Brigadier-General Commanding directs that, as soon as your regiment can be made ready for the march, you will proceed up the Rosebud in pursuit of the Indians whose trail was discovered by Major Reno a few days since. It is, of course, impossible to give you any definite instructions in regard to this movement, and were it not impossible to do so, the Department Commander places too much confidence in your zeal, energy, and ability to wish to impose upon you precise orders which might hamper your action when nearly in contact with the enemy. He will however, indicate to you his own views of what your action should be, and he desires that you should conform to them unless you shall see sufficient reason for departing from them. He thinks that you should proceed up the Rosebud until you ascertain definitely the direction in which the trail above spoken of leads. Should it be found (as it appears almost certain that it will be found) to turn towards the Little Horn, he thinks that you should still proceed southward, perhaps as far as the headwaters of the Tongue, and then turn towards the Little Horn, feeling

NOTE: Having a fairly good idea (from Major Reno's report and from the reports of several scouts made by the 2nd Cavalry with Colonel Gibbon) that the Indians would be found in the vicinity of the Little Big Horn valley, these orders were given to Custer.

constantly, however, to your left, so as to preclude the possibility of the escape of the Indians to the south or southeast by passing around your left flank.

The column of Colonel Gibbon is now in motion for the mouth of the Big Horn. As soon as it reaches that point it will cross the Yellowstone and move up at least as far as the forks of the Big and Little Horns. Of course its further movements must be controlled by circumstances as they arise, but it is hoped that the Indians, if upon the Little Horn, may be so nearly inclosed by the two columns that their escape will be impossible. The Department Commander desires that on your way up the Rosebud you should thoroughly examine the upper part of Tullock's Creek, and that you should endeavor to send a scout through to Colonel Gibbon's Column, with information of the results of your examination. The lower part of the creek will be examined by a detachment from Colonel Gibbon's command.

The supply steamer will be pushed up the Big Horn as far as the forks if the river is found to be navigable for that distance, and the Department Commander, who will accompany the Column of Colonel Gibbon, desires you to report to him there not later than the expiration of the time for which your troops are rationed, unless in the meantime you receive further orders.

Very Respectfully,  
Your Obedient Servant,  
ED. W. SMITH, Captain, 18th Infantry  
Acting Assistant Adjutant General

Camp on Little Big Horn,  
20 miles from its mouth.

June 27".

General Terry:

I have had a most terrific engagement with the hostile Indians. They left their camp last evening at sundown moving due south in the direction of Big Horn Mountains. I am very much crippled and cannot possibly pursue. Lieutenants McIntosh and Hodgson and Dr. DeWolf are among the killed. I have many wounded and many horses and mules shot. I have lost both my own horses. I have not seen or heard from Custer since he ordered me to charge with my battalion (3 companies) promising to support me.

I charged about 2 P.M., but meeting no support was forced back to the hills. At this point I was joined by Benteen with 3 companies and the pack train rear guard (one Co.). I have fought thousands and can still hold my own, but cannot leave here on account of the wounded. Send me medical aid at once and rations.

M. A. RENO,  
Maj. 7th Cavalry.

As near as I can say now I have over 100 men killed and wounded.

NOTE: Leaving General Terry's camp on June 23rd, the 7th Cavalry marched toward the Little Big Horn. On the 25th the Indian village was located and orders given for the attack. This message, entered as Exhibit #5 at Major Reno's Court of Inquiry, was delivered to General Terry as his column marched up the valley of the Little Big Horn on the morning of the 27th. The messages which Indian Scouts were unable to deliver during the night of the 26th may have been identical to this one.

(Telegram)

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA,  
Camp on Little Big Horn River, Montana,  
June 27, 1876.

To the Adjutant General of  
the Military Division of the Missouri,  
Chicago, Ill., via Fort Ellis:

It is my painful duty to report that day before yesterday, the 25th instant, a great disaster overtook General Custer and the troops under his command. At 12 o'clock of the 22d he started with his whole regiment and a strong detachment of scouts and guides from the mouth of the Rosebud. Proceeding up that river about twenty miles, he struck a very heavy Indian trail which had previously been discovered, and, pursuing it, found that it led, as it was supposed it would lead, to the Little Big Horn River. Here he found a village of almost unexampled extent, and at once attacked it with that portion of his force which was immediately at hand. Major Reno, with three companies, A, G, and M, of the regiment, was sent into the valley of the stream, at the point where the trail struck it. General Custer, with five companies, C, E, F, I, and L, attempted to enter it about 3 miles lower down. Reno forded the river, charged down its left bank, dismounted, and fought on foot until finally, completely overwhelmed by numbers, he was compelled to mount, recross the river, and seek a refuge

NOTE: The above, and the following document (10), are General Terry's first reports of the battle, carried to Fort Ellis, Montana, by the civilian scout, "Muggins" Taylor. Taylor left the command on July 1st and reached Fort Ellis the evening of the 3rd.

on the high bluffs which overlook its right bank. Just as he recrossed, Captain Benteen, who, with three companies, D, H, and K, was some two miles to the left of Reno when the action commenced, but who had been ordered by General Custer to return, came to the river, and, rightly concluding that it was useless for his force to attempt to renew the fight in the valley, he joined Reno on the bluffs. Captain McDougall, with his company, B, was at first some distance in the rear, with the train of pack-mules; he also came up to Reno. Soon this united force was nearly surrounded by Indians, many of whom, armed with rifles of long range, occupied positions which commanded the ground held by the cavalry—ground from which there was no escape. Rifle-pits were dug, and the fight was maintained, though with heavy loss, from about half past two o'clock of the 25th till 6 o'clock of the 26th, when the Indians withdrew from the valley, taking with them their village. Of the movements of General Custer and the five companies under his immediate command scarcely anything is known from those who witnessed them, for no officer or soldier who accompanied him has yet been found alive. His trail, from the point where Reno crossed the stream, passes along and in the rear of the crest of the bluffs on the right bank for nearly or quite three miles. Then it comes down to the bank of the river, but at once diverges from it as if he had unsuccessfully attempted to cross; then turns upon itself, almost completes a circle, and ceases. It is marked by the remains of his officers and men and the bodies of his horses, some of them dotted along the path, others heaped in ravines and upon knolls, where halts appear to have been made. There is abundant evidence that a gallant resistance was offered by the troops, but that



they were beset on all sides by overpowering numbers. The officers known to be killed are: General Custer, Captains Keogh, Yates, and Custer, Lieutenants Cook, Smith, McIntosh, Calhoun, Porter, Hodgson, Sturgis, and Riley, of the cavalry; Lieutenant Crittenden, of the Twentieth Infantry; and Acting Assistant Surgeon DeWolf, Lieutenant Harrington, of the cavalry, and Assistant Surgeon Lord are missing; Captain Benteen and Lieutenant Varnum, of the cavalry are slightly wounded. Mr. Boston Custer, a brother, and Mr. Reed, a nephew, of General Custer, were with him and were killed. No other officers than those whom I have named are among the killed, wounded, and missing.

It is impossible as yet to obtain a nominal list of the enlisted men who were killed and wounded; but the number of killed, including officers, must reach 250; the number of wounded is 51. At the mouth of the Rosebud, I informed General Custer that I would take the supply-steamer Far West up the Yellowstone to ferry General Gibbon's column over the river; that I should personally accompany that column; and that it would, in all probability, reach the mouth of the Little Big Horn on the 26th instant. The steamer reached General Gibbon's troops, near the mouth of the Big Horn, early in the morning of the 24th, and at 4 o'clock in the afternoon all his men and animals were across the Yellowstone. At 5 o'clock, the column, consisting of five companies of the Seventh Infantry, four companies of the Second Cavalry, and a battery of three Gatling guns, marched out to and across Tullock's Creek. Starting soon after 5 o'clock in the morning of the 25th, the infantry made a march of twenty-two miles over the most difficult country I have ever seen. In order that scouts might be sent into the valley of the Little Big

Horn, the cavalry, with the battery, was then pushed on thirteen or fourteen miles further, reaching camp at midnight. The scouts were sent out at half past 4 in the morning of the 26th. They soon discovered three Indians, who were at first supposed to be Sioux but, when overtaken, they proved to be Crows, who had been with General Custer. They brought the first intelligence of the battle. Their story was not credited. It was supposed that some fighting, perhaps severe fighting, had taken place; but it was not believed that disaster could have overtaken so large a force as twelve companies of cavalry. The infantry, which had broken camp very early, soon came up, and the whole column entered and moved up the valley of the Little Big Horn. During the afternoon efforts were made to send scouts through to what was supposed to be General Custer's position, to obtain information of the condition of affairs; but those who were sent out were driven back by parties of Indians, who, in increasing numbers, were seen hovering in General Gibbon's front. At twenty minutes before 9 o'clock in the evening, the infantry had marched between twentynine and thirty miles. The men were very weary and daylight was fading. The column was therefore halted for the night, at a point about eleven miles in a straight line above the mouth of the stream. This morning the movement was resumed, and after a march of nine miles, Major Reno's intrenched position was reached. The withdrawal of the Indians from around Reno's command and from the valley was undoubtedly caused by the approach of General Gibbon's troops. Major Reno and Captain Benteen, both of whom are officers of great experience, accustomed to see large masses of mounted men, estimate the number of Indians engaged at not less than twenty-five hundred.

Other officers think that the number was greater than this. The village in the valley was about three miles in length and about a mile in width. Besides the lodges proper, a great number of temporary brush-wood shelters was found in it, indicating that many men besides its proper inhabitants had gathered together there. Major Reno is very confident that there were a number of white men fighting with the Indians. I have as yet received no official reports in regard to the battle; but what is stated herein is gathered from the officers who were on the ground then and from those who have been over it since.

ALFRED H. TERRY  
Brigadier General

## 10

(Telegram)

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA  
Camp on Little Horn, June 28, 1876

Assistant Adjutant General  
Military Division of the Missouri, Chicago, Ill.:

The wounded were brought down from the bluffs last night and made as comfortable as our means would permit. To-day horse and hand litters have been constructed, and this evening we shall commence moving the wounded toward the mouth of the Little Big Horn, to which point I hope that the steamer has been able to come. The removal will occupy three or four days, as the marches must be short. A reconnaissance was made to-day by Captain Ball, of the Second Cavalry, along the trail made by the Indians when they left the valley. He reports that they divided into two parties, one of which kept the valley of Long Fork, making, he thinks, for the Big Horn Mountains; the other turned more to the eastward. He also discovered a very heavy trail leading into the valley that is not more than five days old. This trail is entirely distinct from the one which Custer followed, and would seem to show that at least two large bands united here just before the battle. The dead were all buried to-day.

ALFRED H. TERRY,  
Brigadier General.

Camp on Little Big Horn  
June 28th., 1876

Dear Major,

We will start down the river today for the steamboat with the wounded of Custer's command and from the mouth of this stream move down to the mouth of the Big Horn. Gen. Custer's command met with terrible disaster here on the 25th. Custer with 5 Co.'s were so far as we can ascertain, completely annihilated, no living man of them having yet been found and probably none of them escaped except two of our Crow scouts who were lent Custer by me and brought us the first news. Mitch Bouyer was killed, and the bodies of Gen. Custer, Col. C. (his brother) and another brother (citizen), Capts. Keogh and Yates, and Lieuts. Cooke, Adjt. Calhoun, *Porter, Riley, Sturgis* (son of the Gen.), Crittenden (2nd Inf., son of the Gen.), Hodgson, McIntosh, Harrington, Actg. Asst. Surgs. DeWolf and *Lord* have all been identified positively except those *underscored* [in italics].

On the 26th *we* made a long march till dark, came in sight of some few scattering Indians, and the next day (yesterday) reached Col. Reno's command fortified on the hill. They were in a desperate strait until 6 o'clock the night before (26th) with very little water and 50 wounded men and the Indians decamped in very great

NOTE: This letter from Colonel John Gibbon was to Captain D. W. Benham, Brevet Major, of the 7th Infantry, the commanding officer of Fort Ellis. This letter was also carried by the scout, "Muggins" Taylor. From Montana Historical Society, Contributions, vol. 4 (1903) pp. 284-86.

haste at our approach, leaving an immense quantity of plunder behind which we shall destroy today.

The delight of the poor fellows when they finally discovered us to be friends was extreme. Roughly stated, the loss of Custer's command is about one half, say 250 men. The Indians were in great strength and were estimated at from 1800 to 2500 *warriors*. My command is intact and in fine order, and I wish you would telegraph the C.O.'s Fort Shaw and Camp Baker that we are all well, to allay the anxiety of friends. I wish I knew where Mrs. Gibbon was that you might telegraph her but I do not. At a venture you might telegraph Mr. Henry Moale, 18 Commerce St., Baltimore, "Tell Fannie myself and command are all well. J.G." Date it "Camp on Little Big Horn, June 28th."

When the fight commenced Col. Reno with 3 Co.'s charged, had a heavy fight, was overpowered and driven back and took to the bluff's where he met 4 other Co's and they had heavy fighting all the rest of that day and all of the 26th knew nothing of the fate of Custer and his 5 co's until we arrived and informed them of it. 3 P.M. We have buried all the dead and I hope to have litters for the wounded finished in time to go a few miles down the river today, camp near the site of the Indian camp and destroy the property deserted by them. When you read this send it to Gen. A. J. Smith, Helena, who will please give it to Col. Broadwater at request of Carroll who is with us here.

Yours Truly,  
J. G.

Maj. Benham  
Ft. Ellis.

(Telegram)

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA  
 Camp on Yellowstone,  
 near Big Horn River, Montana,  
 July 2, 1876.

Lieut. Gen. P. H. Sheridan, Chicago, Ill.,  
 The Adjutant General, Military Division  
 of the Missouri, Chicago, Ill.

In the evening of the 28th we commenced moving down the wounded, but were able to get on but four miles, as our hand-litters did not answer the purpose. The mule-litters did exceedingly well, but they were insufficient in number. The 29th, therefore, was spent in making a full supply of them. In the evening of the 29th we started again, and at 2 A.M. of the 30th the wounded were placed on a steamer at the mouth of the Little Big Horn. The afternoon of the 30th they were brought to the depot on the Yellowstone. I now send them by steamer to Fort Lincoln, and with them one of my aids, Capt. E. W. Smith, who will be able to answer any questions which you may desire to ask. I have

NOTE: This and the following telegram (Document 13), both dated July 2 and both to General Sheridan, were carried to Fort Lincoln by Captain E. W. Smith, General Terry's Adjutant, aboard the steamer "Far West," arriving on the 5th of July. The dispatches were telegraphed out the morning of the 6th, and Captain Smith then proceeded to report in person to General Sheridan. Due to a break in the line from Bozeman, Montana, Sheridan received these two letters before he received the reports carried by Taylor (see Documents 9 and 10). When the "confidential" dispatch was forwarded to the War Department in Washington, it was intercepted by a newsman and published in an evening newspaper of July 6th.

brought down the troops to this point. They arrived to-night. They need refitting, particularly in the matter of transportation, before starting again. Although I had on the steamer a good supply of subsistence and forage, there are other things which we need, and I should hesitate to trust the boat again in the Big Horn.

Colonel Sheridan's dispatch informing me of the reported gathering of Indians on the Rosebud, reached me after I came down here. I hear nothing of General Crook's movements.

At least a hundred horses are needed to mount the cavalrymen now here.

ALFRED H. TERRY,  
 Brigadier General.

(Telegram)

CONFIDENTIAL [to Gen. Sheridan]

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA

Camp on Yellowstone,  
near Big Horn River, Montana,

July 2, 1876

I think I owe it to myself to put you more fully in possession of the facts of the late operations. While at the mouth of the Rosebud I submitted my plan to Genl. Gibbon and General Custer. They approved it heartily. It was that Custer with his whole regiment should move up the Rosebud till he should meet a trail which Reno had discovered a few days before but that he should send scouts over it and keep his main force further to the south so as to prevent the Indians from slipping in between himself and the mountains. He was also to examine the headwaters of Tullock's creek as he passed it and send me word of what he found there. A scout was furnished him for the purpose of crossing the country to me. We calculated it would take Gibbon's column until the twenty-sixth to reach the mouth of the Little Big Horn and that the wide sweep which I had proposed Custer should make would require so much time that Gibbon would be able to cooperate with him in attacking any Indians that might be found on that stream. I asked Custer how long his marches would be. He said they would be about at first about thirty miles a day. Measurements were made and calculation based on that rate of progress. I talked with him about his strength and at one time suggested that perhaps it would be well for me to take Gibbon's cavalry and go with

him. To this suggestion he replied that without reference to the command he would prefer his own regiment alone. As a homogeneous body, as much could be done with it as with the two combined and he expressed the utmost confidence that he had all the force that he could need, and I shared his confidence. The plan adopted was the only one that promised to bring the Infantry into action and I desired to make sure of things by getting up every available man. I offered Custer the battery of Gatling guns but he declined it saying that it might embarrass him: that he was strong enough without it. The movements proposed for Genl. Gibbon's column were carried out to the letter and had the attack been deferred until it was up I cannot doubt that we should have been successful. The Indians had evidently nerved themselves for a stand, but as I learn from Capt. Benteen, on the twenty-second, the cavalry marched twelve miles; on the twenty-third, thirty-five miles; from five A.M. till eight P.M. on the twenty-fourth; forty-five miles and then after night ten miles further; then after resting but without unsaddling, twenty-three miles to the battlefield. The proposed route was not taken but as soon as the trail was struck it was followed. I cannot learn that any examination of Tullock's creek was made. I do not tell you this to cast any reflection upon Custer. For whatever errors he may have committed he has paid the penalty and you cannot regret his loss more than I do, but I feel that our plan must have been successful had it been carried out, and I desire you to know the facts. In the action itself, so far as I can make out, Custer acted under a misapprehension. He thought, I am confident, that the Indians were running. For fear that they might get away he attacked without getting all his men up and divided his com-

mand so that they were beaten in detail. I do not at all propose to give the thing up here but I think that my troops require a little time and in view of the strength which the Indians have developed I propose to bring up what little reinforcement I can get. I should be glad of any that you can send me. I can take two companies of Infantry from Powder River and there are a few recruits and detached men whom I can get for the cavalry. I ought to have a larger mounted force than I now have but I fear cannot be obtained. I hear nothing from General Crook's operations. If I could hear I should be able to form plans for the future much more intelligently.

I should very much like instructions from you, or if not instructions, your views of the situation based as they might be on what has taken place elsewhere as well as here.

I shall refit as rapidly as possible and if at any time I should get information showing that I can act in conjunction with General Crook, or independently, with good results, I shall leave at once.

I send in another dispatch a copy of my written orders to Custer, but these were supplemented by the distinct understanding that Gibbon could get to the Little Big Horn before the evening of the 26th.

ALFRED H. TERRY  
Brigadier General

Camp Seventh Cavalry, July 4, 1876.

Sir:

In obedience to verbal instructions received from you, I have the honor to report the operations of my battalion, consisting of Companies D, H, and K, on the 25th ultimo.

The directions I received from Lieutenant-Colonel Custer were, to move with my command to the left, to send well-mounted officers with about six men who would ride rapidly to a line of bluffs about five miles to our left and front, with instructions to report at once to me if anything of Indians could be seen from that point. I was to follow the movement of this detachment as rapidly as possible. Lieutenant Gibson was the officer selected, and I followed closely with the battalion, at times getting in advance of the detachment. The bluffs designated were gained, but nothing seen but other bluffs quite as large and precipitous as were before me. I kept on to these and the country was the same, there being no valley of any kind that I could see on any side. I had then gone about fully ten miles; the ground was terribly hard on horses, so I determined to carry out the other instructions, which were, that if in my judgment there was nothing to be seen of Indians, Valleys, &c., in the direction I was going, to return with the

NOTE: This and the following document (15) are the official reports of the battle, submitted by the two surviving battalion commanders. Captain Benteen made his report to Major Reno, through Lieutenant Wallace, the Regimental Adjutant. Major Reno then made his own report to General Terry, through Captain Smith who was the General's Adjutant.

battalion to the trail the command was following. I accordingly did so, reaching the trail just in advance of the pack-train. I pushed rapidly on, soon getting out of sight of the advance of the train, until reaching a morass, I halted to water the animals, who had been without water since about 8 P.M. of the day before. This watering did not occasion the loss of fifteen minutes, and when I was moving out the advance of the train commenced watering from that morass. I went at a slow trot until I came to a burning lodge with the dead body of an Indian in it on a scaffold. We did not halt. About a mile further on I met a sergeant of the regiment with orders from Lieutenant-Colonel Custer to the officer in charge of the rear-guard and train to bring it to the front with as great rapidity as was possible. Another mile on I met Trumpeter Morton [Martin], of my own company, with a written order from First Lieut. W. W. Cook to me, which read:

"Benteen, come on. Big village. Be quick. Bring packs.  
W. W. Cook."

"P. Bring Pac's."

I could then see no movement of any kind in any direction; a horse on the hill, riderless, being the only living thing I could see in my front. I inquired of the trumpeter what had been done, and he informed me that the Indians had "skedaddled," abandoning the village. Another mile and a half brought me in sight of the stream and plain in which were some of our dismounted men fighting, and Indians charging and recharging them in great numbers. The plain seemed to be alive with them. I then noticed our men in large numbers running for the bluffs on the right bank of the stream. I concluded at once that those had been repulsed, and

was of the opinion that if I crossed the ford with my battalion, that I should have had it treated in like manner; for from long experience with cavalry, I judged there were 900 veteran Indians right there at that time, against which the large element of recruits in my battalion would stand no earthly chance as mounted men. I then moved up to the bluffs and reported my command to Maj. M. A. Reno. I did not return for the pack-train because I deemed it perfectly safe where it was, and we could defend it, had it been threatened, from our position on the bluffs; and another thing, it savored too much of coffee-cooling to return when I was sure a fight was progressing in the front, and deeming the train as safe without me.

Very respectfully,

F. W. BENTEEN  
Captain Seventh Cavalry

Lieut. Geo. D. Wallace  
Adjutant Seventh Cavalry

## 15

Headquarters 7th U.S. Cavalry,  
Camp on Yellowstone River,  
July 5th, 1876

Captain E. W. Smith  
A.D.C. and A.A.A.G.

The command of the regiment having devolved upon me as the senior surviving officer from the battle of the 25th and 26th of June between the 7th Cavalry and Sitting Bull's band of hostile Sioux on the Little Big Horn River, I have the honor to submit the following report of its operations from the time of leaving the main column until the command was united in the vicinity of the Indian village.

The regiment left the camp at the mouth of the Rosebud river after passing in review before the Department Commander under command of Brevet Major General G. A. Custer, Lieutenant Colonel, on the afternoon of the 22nd of June and marched up the Rosebud twelve miles and encamped;—23d marched up the Rosebud passing many old Indian camps and following a very large lodge-pole trail, but not fresh making thirty-three (33) miles; 24th the march was continued up the Rosebud, the trail and signs freshening with every mile until we had made twenty-eight (28) miles, and we then encamped and waited for information from the scouts; at 9-25 p.m. Custer called the officers together and informed us that beyond a doubt the village was in the valley of the Little Big Horn, and in order to reach it, it was necessary to cross the divide between the Rosebud and the Little Big Horn, and it would be impossible to do so in the day time without discovering

our march to the Indians; that we would prepare to march at 11 p.m.; this was done, the line of march turning from the Rosebud to the right up one of its branches which headed near the summit of the divide. About 2 a.m. of the 25th the scouts told him that he could not cross the divide before daylight. We then made coffee and rested for three hours, at the expiration of which time the march was resumed, the divide crossed and about 8 a.m. the command was in the valley of one of the branches of the Little Big Horn; by this time Indians had been seen and it was certain that we could not surprise them and it was determined to move at once to the attack. Previous to this no division of the regiment had been made since the order had been issued on the Yellowstone annulling wing and battalion organization, but Custer informed me that he would assign commands on the march.

I was ordered by Lieutenant W. W. Cook Adjutant, to assume command of companies M, A, and G; Captain Benteen of companies H, D, and K, Custer retained C, E, F, I, and L under his immediate command and company B, Captain McDougall, in rear of the pack train.

I assumed command of the companies assigned to me and without any definite orders moved forward with the rest of the column and well to its left. I saw Benteen moving further to the left and as they passed he told me he had orders to move well to the left and sweep everything before him. I did not see him again until about 2-30 p.m. The command moved down the creek towards the Little Big Horn valley, Custer with five companies on the right bank, myself and three companies on the left bank and Benteen farther to the left and out of sight. As we approached a deserted village, and in which was standing one tepee, about 11 a.m.



Custer motioned me to cross to him, which I did, and moved nearer to his column until about 12-30 a.m. [p.m.] when Lieutenant Cook, Adjutant, came to me and said the village was only two miles ahead and running away; to move forward at as rapid a gait as prudent and to charge afterwards, and that the whole outfit would support me. I think those were his exact words. I at once took a fast trot and moved down about two miles where I came to a ford of the river. I crossed immediately and halted about ten minutes or less to gather the battalion, sending word to Custer that I had everything in front of me and that they were strong. I deployed and with the Ree scouts on my left charged down the valley driving the Indians with great ease for about 2½ miles. I however soon saw that I was being drawn into some trap as they would certainly fight harder and especially as we were nearing their village, which was still standing, besides I could not see Custer or any other support and at the same time the very earth seemed to grow Indians and they were running towards me in swarms and from all directions. I saw I must defend myself and give up the attack mounted. This I did, taking possession of a point of woods, and which furnished (near its edge) a shelter for the horses, dismounted and fought on foot. Making headway through the woods I soon found myself in the near vicinity of the village, saw that I was fighting odds of at least five to one and that my only hope was to get out of the woods where I would soon have been surrounded, and gain some ground. I accomplished this by mounting and charging the Indians between me and the bluffs on the opposite side of the river. In this charge 1st Lieutenant Donald McIntosh, 2nd Lieutenant Benj. H. Hodgson, 7th Cavalry and A.A. Surgeon J. M. DeWolf were

killed. I succeeded in reaching the top of the bluff with a loss of three officers and twenty-nine enlisted men killed, and seven men wounded. Almost at the same time I reached the top, mounted men were seen to be coming towards us and it proved to be Colonel Benteen's battalion, companies H, D, and K. We joined forces and in a short time the pack train came up. As senior my command was then A, B, D, and G, H, K, M, and 380 men and the following officers, Captains Benteen, Weir, French, and McDougall, 1st Lieutenants Godfrey, Mathey, and Gibson, and 2nd Lieutenants Edgerly, Wallace, Varnum, and Hare and A. A. Surgeon Porter. 1st Lieutenant DeRudio was in the dismounted fight in the woods but having some trouble with his horse, did not join the command in the charge out, and hiding himself in the woods joined the command after night-fall of the 26th. Still hearing nothing of Custer and with this reinforcement, I moved down the river in the direction of the village, keeping on the bluffs. We heard firing in that direction and knew it could be only Custer. I moved to the summit of the highest bluff but seeing and hearing nothing, sent Capt. Weir with his company to open communications with him. He soon sent back word by Lieut. Hare that he could go no further and that the Indians were getting around him. At this time he was keeping up a heavy fire from his skirmish line. I at once turned everything back to the first position I had taken on the bluff and which to me the best. I dismounted the men and had the horses and mules of the pack train driven together in a depression, put the men on the crests of the hills making the depression and had hardly done so when I was furiously attacked, — this was about six p.m. We held our ground with a loss of eighteen enlisted men

killed and forty-six wounded until the attack ceased about 9 p.m. As I knew by this time their overwhelming numbers and had given up any hope of support from that portion of the regiment with Custer, I had the men dig rifle pits; barricaded with dead horses and mules and boxes of hard bread the opening of the depression towards the Indians in which the animals were herded, and made every exertion to be ready for what I saw would be a terrific assault the next day. All this night the men were busy and the Indians holding a scalp dance underneath us in the bottom and in our hearing. On the morning of the 26th I felt confident that I could hold my own and was ready as far as I could be when at daylight about 2-30 a.m. I heard the crack of two rifles. This was the signal for the beginning of a fire that I have never seen equalled. Every rifle was handled by an expert and skilled marksman and with a range that exceeded our carbine, and it was simply impossible to show any part of the body before it was struck. We could see as the day brightened, countless hordes of them pouring up the valley from out of the village, and scampering over the high points towards the places designated for them by their chiefs and which entirely surrounded our position. They had sufficient numbers to completely encircle us, and the men were fighting all the Sioux nation, and also all the desperadoes, renegades, half-breeds, and squawmen between the Missouri and the Arkansas and east of the Rocky Mountains, and they must have numbered at least twenty-five hundred warriors. The fire did not slacken until about 9-30 a.m. and then we found they were making a last desperate effort and which was directed against the lines held by companies H, and M. In this charge they came close enough to use their bows and arrows, and one man lying

dead within our lines was touched with the coup stick of one of the foremost Indians. When I say the stick was only twelve feet long, some idea of the desperate and reckless fighting of these people may be understood. This charge of theirs was gallantly repulsed by the men on that line led by Colonel Benteen. They also came close enough to send their arrows into the line held by Co's. D, and K, but were driven away by a like charge of the line which I accomplished. We now had many wounded and the question of water was vital, as from 6 p.m. of the previous evening until near 10 a.m., about 16 hours, we had been without.

A skirmish line was formed under Colonel Benteen to protect the descent of volunteers down the hill in front of his position to reach the water. We succeeded in getting some canteens although many of the men were hit in doing so. The fury of the attack was now over, and to our astonishment the Indians were seen going in parties toward the Village. But two solutions occurred to us for this movement, that they were going for something to eat, more ammunition (as they had been throwing arrows) or that Custer was coming. We took advantage of this lull to fill all vessels with water, and soon had it by camp kettles full. But they continued to withdraw and all firing ceased soon; [except] occasional shots from sharpshooters sent to annoy us about the water. About 2 p.m. the grass in the bottom was set on fire and followed up by Indians who encouraged its burning, and it was evident to me it was done for a purpose, and which purpose I discovered later on, to be the creation of a dense cloud of smoke behind which they were packing and preparing to move their village. It was between six and seven p.m. that the village came out behind the dense clouds of smoke and

dust. We had a close and good view of them as they filed away in the direction of Big Horn mountains, moving in almost perfect military order. The length of the column was fully equal to that of a large division of the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac as I have seen it in its march.

We now thought of Custer, of whom nothing had been seen and nothing heard since the firing in his direction about six p.m. on the eve of the 25th, and we concluded that the Indians had gotten [between] him and us, and driven him towards the boat at the mouth of the Little Big Horn River. The awful fate that did befall him never occurred to any of us as within the limits of possibility.

During the night I changed my position in order to secure an unlimited supply of water and was prepared for their return, feeling sure they would do so, as they were in such numbers; but early in the morning of the 27th and while we were on the *qui vive* for Indians, I saw with my glass a dust some distance down the valley. There was no certainty for some time what they were, but finally I satisfied myself they were cavalry, and if so could only be Custer, as it was ahead of the time that I understood that General Terry could be expected. Before this time however, I had written a communication to General Terry and three volunteers were to try and reach him. I had no confidence in the Indians with me and could not get them to do anything. If this dust were Indians, it was possible they would not expect anyone to leave. The men started and were told to go as near as it was safe to determine whether the approaching column was white men, and to return at once in case they found it so; but if they were Indians to push on to General Terry. In a short time we saw them returning

over the high bluffs already alluded to. They were accompanied by a scout who had a note from Terry to Custer, saying Crow scouts had come to camp saying he had been whipped but that it was not believed. I think it was about 10-30 a.m. that the fate of General Custer and his brave men was soon determined by the dead bodies of many of their men: General G. Custer; Col. W. W. Cook, Adjutant; Captains M. W. Keogh, G. W. Yates, and T. W. Custer; 1st Lieuts. A. E. Smith, James Calhoun; 2nd Lieutenants W. V. Reilly of the 7th Cavalry, and J. J. Crittenden of the 20th Infantry, temporarily attached to this regiment. The bodies of Lieutenant J. E. Porter and 2nd Lieutenants H. M. Harrington and J. G. Sturgis, 7th Cavalry and Assistant Surgeon G. W. Lord, U.S.A. were not recognized, but there is every reasonable probability they were killed. It was certain that the column of five companies with Custer had been killed.

The wounded in my lines were during the afternoon and eve of the 27th, moved to the camp of General Terry, and 5 a.m. of the 28th I proceeded with the regiment to the battle ground of Custer and buried 204 bodies, including the following named citizens: Mr. Boston Custer, Mr. Reed (young nephew of General Custer), and Mr. Kellogg, a correspondent for the New York Herald. The following named citizens and Indians who were with my command were also killed: Charles Reynolds (guide and hunter); Isaiah Dorman (colored) interpreter; Bloody Knife who fell from immediately by my side; Bobtail Bull and Stab of the Indian scouts.

After traveling over his trail, it is evident to me that Custer intended to support me by moving further down the stream and attacking the village in the flank, that he

found the distance greater to the ford than he anticipated; that he did charge, but his march had taken so long, although his trail shows he had moved rapidly that they were ready for him. That Co's. C, and I, and perhaps part of E, crossed to the village or attempted it, at the charge; were met by a staggering fire, and that they fell back to find a position from which to defend themselves, but they were followed too closely by the Indians to permit time to form any kind of line. I think had the regiment gone in a body, and from the woods from which I fought advanced upon the village, its destruction was certain. But he was fully confident they were running away or he would not have turned from me. I think (after the great number of Indians there were in the village) that following reasons obtain for the misfortune. His rapid marching for two days and one night before the fight; attacking in the daytime at 12 M and when they were on the *qui vive* instead of early in the morning, and lastly his unfortunate division of the regiment into three commands.

During my fight with the Indians I had the heartiest support from the officers and men, but the conspicuous service of Bvt. Col. F. W. Benteen, I desire to call attention to especially; for if ever a soldier deserved recognition by his government for distinguished service, he certainly does. I enclose herewith his report of the operations of his battalion from the time of leaving the regiment until we joined commands on the hill. I also enclose an accurate list of casualties as far as it can be made at the present time, separating them into two lists: "A", those killed in General Custer's command; "B", those killed and wounded in the command I had. The number of Indians killed can only be approximated until we hear through the Agencies. I saw the

bodies of 18 and Captain Ball, 2d Cavalry, who made a scout of thirteen miles over their trail says that their graves were many along their line of march. It is simply impossible that numbers of them should not be hit in the several charges they made so close to my lines. They made their approaches through the deep gulches that led from the hill top to the river, and when the jealous care with which the Indian guards the bodies of killed and wounded is considered, it is not astonishing that their bodies were not found. It is probable that the stores left by them, and destroyed the next two days, was to make room for many on their travois. The harrowing sight of the dead bodies crowning the height on which Custer fell, and which will remain vividly in my memory until death, is too recent for me not to ask the good people of this country whether a policy that sets opposing parties in the field armed, clothed and equipped by one and the same government should not be abolished.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

M. A. RENO,  
Major 7th Cavalry,  
Com'd'g Regiment.

Headquarters Department of Dakota, in the Field  
Camp on North Side of the Yellowstone River  
near the Mouth of the Big Horn River,  
July 9 1876

Gen'l George Crook  
Comdg Department of the Platte, (in the field)

General,

On the 25th, ult. General Custer, crossing over from the valley of the Rosebud to the Little Big Horn found on the last named stream an enormous Indian Village. He had with him his whole Regiment and a strong detachment of scouts. At the time of the discovery of the Indians he had but eight companies close at hand, but with these he attacked in two detachments, one under himself of five companies; the other under Major Reno, of three companies. The attack of these detachments were made at points nearly, if not quite, three miles apart.

I greatly regret to say that Custer and every officer and man under his immediate command, were killed. Reno was driven back to the bluffs where he was joined by the remainder of the Regiment. He was surrounded by the enemy and was obliged to entrench himself, but succeeded in maintaining himself in this position with heavy loss until the appearance of General Gibbon's

**NOTE:** This letter was carried by Privates James Bell, Benjamin Stewart, and William Evans of Company E, 7th Infantry. These men left Colonel Gibbon's camp on July 9th and arrived at General Crook's camp on July 12th. All three were commended in official orders, and later received Congressional Medals of Honor.

command induced the Indians on the evening of the 26th. to withdraw.

Two hundred and sixty-eight officers, men, and civilians were killed and there are fifty-two wounded.

This affair occurred about twenty miles above the junction of the Little Big Horn and the Big Horn. While Custer's column was in motion, Gibbon's column of about one hundred and fifty cavalry, one hundred and sixty Infantry and three Gatling Guns, was advancing to join Custer and co-operate with him in the attack upon the Indians. It was ferried across the Yellowstone at a point just below the mouth of the Big Horn, on the 24th. ultimo. On the 25th. it advanced through country of extreme difficulty, the Infantry twenty-two, the cavalry thirty-six miles. Custer had been informed that Gibbon's column would reach the mouth of the Little Big Horn on the evening of 26th. ultimo. Its advance was within four miles of that place at midnight of the 25th. ult. Reno's position was reached by Gibbon on the morning of the 27th. ult.

It is estimated that not less than twenty-four hundred warriors were in the fight. Beside the lodges in the village, a vast number of temporary shelters were found, showing that many Indians present there, besides those who properly belong to the village.

A reconnaissance southward was made on the 28th. ultimo and very large trail was found leading down the stream a distinct trail from the one (a heavy one) which Custer had followed from the Rosebud. Captain Ball, of the 2d Cavalry, who made this reconnaissance, was of the opinion that after leaving the valley the Indians divided into two bands, one making towards the mountains and the other towards the South and East.

It was a difficult task to get our wounded away, as the

character of the country had not permitted ambulances to accompany the troops and mule litters had to be made. They have now been sent back to Fort A. Lincoln.

In view of the shattered condition of the 7th. Cavalry and the damage done to our small pack-train, I have thought it best to bring the troops down to this depot to refit. I have sent for horses and mules for the dismounted men of the 7th. Cavalry, and for two more companies of Infantry.

I have twice tried to communicate with you but my scout each time has been driven back by Indians or rather reports that he was driven back. This morning I received from General Sheridan a copy of your dispatch to him, giving an account of your fight of the 17th. ultimo and as it gives me information of your position at that time, I hope that the bearers of this may be able to find your trail and reach you.

The great and, to me, wholly unexpected strength which the Indians have developed seems to me to make it important and indeed necessary that we should unite to at least act in close co-operation. In my ignorance of your present position and of the position of the Indians, I am unable to propose a plan for this, but if you will devise one and communicate it to me, I will follow it.

The boat which took down our wounded will, I hope, return with a supply of horses and mules with material for the repair of my saddles &c, and with some reinforcements.

I expect her back about the 16th. inst. and soon after that I hope to be able to move. I hope it is unnecessary for me to say that should our forces unite, even in my own Department, I shall assume nothing by reason of my seniority, but shall be prepared to co-operate with

you in the most cordial and hearty manner, leaving you entirely free to pursue your own course. I am most anxious to assist you in any way that promise to bring the campaign to a favorable and speedy conclusion.

As my base of supplies is movable, (being a steam-boat) I can start out from any point on the Yellowstone which may afford the readiest means of joining you and I think I shall be able to take with me from 15 to 20 days' rations on pack-saddles, though no forage. If, however, I should move up the Rosebud I could take a wagon train with me.

The following officers were killed on the 25th. ultimo: General Custer, Colonel Custer, Captain Keogh, Captain Yates, Lieutenants Hodgson, McIntosh, Cook, (Adjutant); A. E. Smith, Calhoun, Porter, Sturgis and Riley. Lieutenant Crittenden, 20th. Infantry, (attached to 7th. Cavalry), Assistant Surgeon Lord, A. A. Surgeon De Wolf Lieut. Harrington missing.

Also Mr. Boston Custer and Mr. Reed, brother and nephew respectively of the General.

I am General, very truly yours,

ALFRED H. TERRY  
Brigadier General

Camp near Big Horn  
on Yellowstone River,  
July 4th, 1876

To his  
Excellency the President  
and the Honorable Representatives  
of the United States.

Gentlemen:

We the enlisted men the survivors of the battle on the heights of Little Big Horn River, on the 25th and 26th of June 1876, of the 7th Regiment of Cavalry who subscribe our names to this petition, most earnestly solicit the President and Representatives of our Country, that the vacancies among the Commissioned Officers of our Regiment, made by the slaughter of our brave, heroic, now lamented Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer, and the other noble dead Commissioned Officers of our Regiment who fell close by him on the bloody field, daring the savage demons to the last, be filled by the Officers of the Regiment only. That Major M. A. Reno, be our Lieutenant Colonel vice Custer, killed; Captain F. W. Benteen our Major vice Reno, promoted. The other vacancies to be filled by Officers of the Regiment

NOTE: This petition was drawn up and circulated by First Sergeant Joseph McCurry of Captain Benteen's company. The petition has been proven to have been "padded" with the names of soldiers discharged in May, deserters, and several outright forgeries. The petition traveled up through the various levels of official channels to General of the Army Sherman. After General Sherman added his endorsement (Document 23), the petition was returned to the Seventh Cavalry via General Townsend, the Adjutant General (see Document 24).

by seniority. Your petitioners know this to be contrary to the established rule of promotion, but prayerfully solicit a deviation from the usual rule in this case, as it will be conferring a bravely fought for and a justly merited promotion on officers who by their bravery, coolness and decision on the 25th and 26th of June 1876, saved the lives of every man now living of the 7th Cavalry who participated in the battle, one of the most bloody on record and one that would have ended with the loss of life of every officer and enlisted man on the field only for the position taken by Major Reno, which we held with bitter tenacity against fearful odds to the last.

To support this assertion—had our position been taken 100 yards back from the brink of the heights overlooking the river we would have been entirely cut off from water; and from behind those heights the Indian demons would have swarmed in hundreds picking off our men by detail, and before mid-day June 26th not an officer or enlisted man of our Regiment would have been left to tell of our dreadful fates as we then would have been completely surrounded.

With prayerful hope that our petitions be granted, we have the honor to forward it through our Commanding Officer.

Very Respectfully  
(236 signatures)

Headquarters Army of the United States,  
Washington, D.C.  
August 5, 1876.

The judicious and skilful conduct of Major Reno and Captain Benteen is appreciated, but the promotions caused by General Custer's death have been made by the President and confirmed by the Senate; therefore this petition cannot be granted. When the Sioux campaign is over I shall be most happy to recognize the valuable services of both officers and men by granting favors or recommending actual promotion.

Promotion on the field of battle was Napoleon's favorite method of stimulating his officers and soldiers to deeds of heroism, but it is impossible in our service because commissions can only be granted by the President on the advice and consent of the Senate, and except in original vacancies, promotion in a regiment is generally if not always made on the rule of seniority.

W. T. SHERMAN,  
General.

Headquarters of the Army,  
Adjutant General's Office,  
Washington, August 10, 1876.

Major M. A. Reno  
7th Cavalry  
(Through Headquarters Military Division  
of the Missouri)

Sir:

Referring to the petition of the enlisted men of the 7th Cavalry (forwarded by you the 15th ultimo) for the promotion of yourself and other officers of the regiment who participated in the engagement of June 25, 1876, I have the honor to enclose herewith, for the information of the officers and enlisted men concerned, a copy of the remarks of the General of the Army with reference to the request contained in the petition.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient Servant

E. D. TOWNSEND,  
Adjutant General.



## 25

Headquarters District of Montana,  
Fort Shaw, Montana, October 17, 1876.

Sir: I have the honor to submit the following report of the military operations of the troops under my command during the last spring and summer:

In accordance with telegraphic instruction from the brigadier general commanding the department, five companies of the Seventh Infantry left Fort Shaw on the 17th of March, and proceeded toward Fort Ellis.

The ground was covered with heavy snow and the roads a mass of mud and slush, but the command made good time and reached Fort Ellis on the 28th, a distance of 183 miles. In the mean time, one company of the Seventh (Clifford's) had been ordered to march from Camp Baker, and the snow being too deep on the direct road to Fort Ellis, Captain Clifford dug his way through snow-drifts to the Missouri River and reached Fort Ellis on the 22d of March. From that point he was instructed by telegraph to proceed as an escort to our supply-train as far as the new Crow agency.

The battalion of the Seventh Infantry from Fort Shaw, under command of Captain Freeman, left Fort Ellis on the 30th of March, and the 1st of April the four companies of the Second Cavalry left the post under command of Captain Thompson. Major Brisbin, although on crutches from rheumatism, and unable to

**NOTE:** Colonel Gibbon submitted this extensive report of the operations of his command to General Terry, via Major Ruggles who was the Adjutant for the Department of Dakota, after the summer's campaigns were completed.

mount a horse, insisted so strongly upon accompanying the expedition that I consented to his going, although he was obliged to travel in an ambulance.

The road over the divide, between Fort Ellis and the Yellowstone River, was in an almost impassable condition, and to add to our difficulties a furious snow-storm set in on the 3d of April, and it was midnight on the 4th before our train succeeded in getting across and reaching Shields River, a distance of thirty miles. From there the cavalry and wagon-train was pushed down the river after the infantry, fording the Yellowstone twice, and overtook Captain Freeman's command in camp on the river opposite the new agency on the 7th. On the 8th I proceeded to the agency, 18 miles, held a council with the Crows the next day, and the day after (10th) enlisted 25 of them as scouts. Lieutenant Jacobs having arrived with wagons, our supplies were loaded up to transfer them to the north bank of the Yellowstone.

Clifford's company having left the agency the day before, (9th) on the 11th the train was started in a furious snow-storm which had raged all night, and pulling for a part of the way through snow two feet deep, reached the point selected for our depot; the command in the mean time having marched there.

Having established the supply camp, and left "A" company (Logan's) in charge of it, the command resumed the march down the river on the 13th. The ground, however, was very soft, and our heavily-loaded wagons made but slow progress, but after fording the Yellowstone four times we reached the vicinity of Fort Pease on the 20th. The next day I received a dispatch from the department commander to proceed no further than the mouth of the Big Horn for the present, and placed the command alongside of Fort Pease. On the

23d, Captain Freeman's company was sent back with the wagontrain to bring up the supplies; and on the 24th Captain Ball, with two companies of the Second Cavalry, was started on a scout to old Fort C. F. Smith. He returned by the way of the Little Big Horn and Tullock's Fork on the 1st of May without having seen any signs of Indians. Captain Freeman, with Logan's company and our train, got back on the 8th of May, and on the 10th the march down the river was resumed with the consolidated command, and all our supplies in the train.

Up to the 3d of May we had seen no sign of Indians, but on the morning of that day the ponies of the Crow scouts, which had been carelessly permitted to roam at large, were found to be missing, together with two animals belonging to one of our guides, and signs demonstrated the fact that a war party had been in our vicinity.

On the 14th we went into camp near the Little Porcupine, (Table Creek of Lewis and Clarke,) where we were visited by a terrific storm of hail and rain which rendered the prairies impassable for our wagons and detained us till the 20th. Scouts had been sent out constantly, not only on the north side toward the mouth of Tongue River, but on the south side of the Yellowstone. These reported seeing various war parties of Sioux, and finally the smoke of a camp on the Rosebud about thirty-five miles from us. With the design of striking this camp and surprising it by a night march, I attempted to cross the Yellowstone on the 17th, but that river had become a rapid torrent, and after drowning four of our horses in attempting to get them across, the effort was abandoned. On the 20th, our scouts having reported a large body of Indians moving toward the

mouth of the Rosebud with an evident design of crossing the Yellowstone, I moved with the whole of the command, except Kirtland's company, hastily down the river and camped for the night below the mouth of the Rosebud, but saw no Indians, and the next day brought Captain Kirtland's company and the train down to the new position.

On the 23rd Lieutenant English, with I Company, Seventh Infantry, and Lieutenant Roe's Company F, Second Cavalry, to accompany it a part of the way, was started back to meet and escort in a contract-train, bringing us supplies from Fort Ellis. The morning the escort left (23d) two soldiers and a citizen teamster, while hunting in the hills a few miles from camp, were murdered by Indians, who, however, rapidly disappeared before a scouting party of two companies, under Captain Ball, sent after them. On the 27th I started a dispatch for the department commander down the river in a small boat in charge of Privates Evans and Stewart, Company E, Seventh Infantry, and Scout Williamson, the two soldiers having volunteered for the service; and the next day I received the department commander's dispatch of the 15th instant, directing me to march at once for the stockade above Glendive Creek, cross the Yellowstone, and move out east-ward to meet him. Captain Sanno, Seventh Infantry, with two companies his own and Lieutenant Roe's, Second Cavalry — was at once started, with all our wagons under charge of Lieutenant Jacobs, regimental quartermaster Seventh Infantry, back to lighten the contract-train and hurry it forward; and on the 4th of June it reached camp after a rapid march in spite of a furious storm of snow and sleet, which raged all day on the 1st. The next day (5th) the march was resumed down the river, but we were

delayed by steep hills and rugged country, and in four days made only 57 miles, which brought us about 17 miles below the mouth of Tongue River. That night (8th) I received by scouts the department commander's dispatch of that day from Powder River, and the next morning met him on the steamboat *Far West* a few miles below our camp. In accordance with his instructions the command was at once prepared to move up the river again, but a furious rain-storm that afternoon delayed the movement by converting the alkali flats surrounding us into impassable ground. The cavalry, however, got off on the afternoon of the 10th and infantry the next day, and after a march of 50 miles was again concentrated in camp below the mouth of the *Rosebud* on the 14th. On the 18th Major Reno, with a force of cavalry, arrived opposite our camp after a scout on Powder, Tongue, and *Rosebud* Rivers, during which he reported he had seen no Indians, and the next day he proceeded down the river.

A cavalry scout up the river having reported the side streams almost impassable, by reason of floods from recent rains, I started Captain Freeman with three companies of infantry on the 21st, up the road to build bridges. General reaching the camp by steamer shortly afterward, the whole command was started up the river. I, at his request, accompanied him on the *Far West*, for the purpose of conferring with Lieutenant-Colonel Custer, who reached a point on the opposite side of the river with the whole of the Seventh Cavalry that afternoon.

That evening the plan of operations was agreed upon. Lieutenant-Colonel Custer, with the Seventh Cavalry, was to proceed up the *Rosebud* till he struck an Indian trail, discovered during Major Reno's scout. As my

scouts had recently reported smoke on the Little Big Horn, the presence of an Indian camp some distance up that stream was inferred.

Lieutenant-Colonel Custer was instructed to keep constantly feeling toward his left, well up toward the mountains, so as to prevent the Indians escaping in that direction, and to strike the Little Big Horn, if possible, above (south of) the supposed location of the camp, while my command was to march up the *Yellowstone* to the mouth of the Big Horn, there to be ferried across by the steamer, then to move up the Big Horn to the mouth of the Little Big Horn, and up that stream, with the hope of getting the camp between the two forces. As it would take my command three days to reach the mouth of the Big Horn, and probably a day to cross it over the *Yellowstone*, besides two more to reach the mouth of the Little Big Horn, and Lieutenant-Colonel Custer had the shorter line over which to operate the department commander strongly impressed upon him the propriety of not pressing his march too rapidly. He got off with his regiment at 12 o'clock the next day, (22d) three gatling guns, under Lieutenant Low, Twentieth Infantry, being detached from his regiment and sent to join my command. The steamer got away at 4 o'clock that day, and reached Fort Pease early on the morning of the 24th. My command except the train and Captain Kirtland's company, (B, Seventh Infantry,) being at once ferried across, was that evening, moved out to the crossing of Tullock's Fork. I did not accompany it and General Terry took command of the troops in person. The next day the steamer entered the mouth of the Big Horn and proceeded up that stream.

The next morning early, (26th,) I left the *Far West* and overtook the infantry portion of the command,

General Terry having made a night march with the cavalry and Gatling guns, and later in the day that portion of the command was overtaken on a high ridge overlooking the valley of the Little Big Horn near its mouth, where by direction of General Terry, I resumed command of my troops. Shortly afterward our scouts brought in news that they had encountered some Indians, and, giving chase had run them across the Big Horn. They had dropped articles in their flight which proved them to be Crows, assigned to duty with Lieutenant-Colonel Custer's command. They, having discovered that their pursuers belonged to their own tribe, refused to come back, and called across the river that Custer's command had been entirely destroyed by the Sioux, who were chasing the soldiers all over the country and killing them. We now pushed up the valley of the Little Big Horn as rapidly as the men could march, large fires being seen in the distance. Efforts were made to communicate with Lieutenant-Colonel Custer by scouts, but our Crow interpreter deserted and took the Crows with him, and two attempts made by white men to precede the command with dispatches failed, the scouts in both cases running into Indians. As we proceeded up the valley the fires increased in number and volume, giving rise to the impression that Custer had captured the camp and destroyed it. The Indians, who late in the afternoon appeared in sight on the hills in front of us, rather militated against the supposition, however and after marching until dark we halted and bivouaced on the prairie.

The next morning the march was resumed, and after proceeding about 3 miles we came in sight of a large deserted Indian camp, in which two teepies were still standing, and these were found to contain the dead

bodies of Indians. Many lodge poles were still standing, and the quantity of property scattered about testified to the hasty departure of the Indians. Our scouts reported only a few scattering horsemen in sight on the distant hills. We continued to move rapidly forward, still uncertain as to the fate of Custer's command, Captain Ball's company about a mile in advance. While passing through the Indian camp a report reached me from our scouts in the hills to the north of the river that a large number of bodies of white men had been discovered, and shortly afterward Lieutenant Bradley came in with the information that he had counted 194 bodies of dead soldiers. All doubt that a serious disaster had happened to Lieutenant-Colonel Custer's command now vanished, and the march was continued under the uncertainty as to whether we were going to rescue the survivors or to battle with the enemy who had annihilated him. At length we caught sight of a number of animals congregated upon the slope of distant hill, and on a point nearer to us three horsemen were evidently watching us. After Captain Ball's company had passed them these cautiously approached us, our troops being convinced we were friends, they came forward more rapidly and announced that the Seventh Cavalry had been cut to pieces and the remnant, under Major Reno, were intrenched in the bluffs close by. Communication was now soon opened with Major Reno. His command was found intrenched upon the tops of several small ridges, their dead and living horses lying about them, with some fifty wounded men lying on the hot, dusty hill-tops, where, until about 6 o'clock on the evening before, they had been unable to obtain any water except at the imminent risk of life. We were informed that in this spot they had been surrounded by overwhelming num-

bers of Indians from the close of Major Reno's charge on the 25th (about 2½ p. m.) until about 6 p. m. the next day, the Indians pouring upon them all that time a very close and almost continuous fire from the neighboring ridges, some of which commanded the position in reverse. The first inquiry made was if General Custer was with us, and the command appeared to know nothing of the fate of himself and that portion of his command immediately with him until we informed them of it. As described to us, the whole movement of the Indians when they abandoned their camp was visible from Major Reno's position, and the last portion disappeared in the hills to the south just at dusk on the 26th, when my command was 8¾ miles from Major Reno's position.

My command was at once placed in camp, and the arrangements made to bring down and properly care for the suffering wounded. This was effected by night-fall. The next day, 28th, Captain Ball, Second Cavalry, was sent out with his company, and followed the main trail some ten or twelve miles. We found that it led directly south toward the Big Horn Mountains, and in returning to camp he discovered a large fresh trail leading down the Little Big Horn toward the scene of the battle. The day was occupied in burying the dead and in constructing litters for the wounded. In the performance of the latter duty Lieut. G. C. Doane, Second Cavalry, was detailed to devise mule-litters, and, with the very crudest material, (cottonwood poles, raw-hide, and ropes,) made some six or eight. But the mules, when attached to them, proved so intractable that the attempt was abandoned, and hand-litters of lodge-poles and canvas constructed. With these, and the men to carry them, the command left camp at sunset on that

day. The movement, however, was exceedingly slow and tedious. The whole command, afterward assisted by two companies of the Seventh Cavalry, was used by relays, and it was long past midnight when camp was reached, at a distance of four and one-half miles.

The next day (20th) was occupied in destroying the large quantity of property abandoned by the Indians in their hasty flight. An immense number of lodge-poles, robes, and dressed skins, pots, kettles, cups, pans, axes, and shovels, were found scattered through the camp and along the trail followed by the Indians. Our progress with the hand-litters having proved so exceedingly slow and tedious Lieutenant Doane was called upon to continue the construction of the mule-litters, and by selecting from all the pack-mules in the command he succeeded in obtaining fifty gentle enough for the service, and in constructing a sufficient number of litters to carry all the wounded. With these a second start was made at 6 p. m., with the expectation of making a short march. But the litters worked so admirably as to call forth the most unbounded commendation in praise of the skill and energy displayed by Lieutenant Doane, and after proceeding a few miles information was received by courier that the Far West was waiting for us at the mouth of the Little Big Horn. The department commander therefore decided to continue the march with the view of placing the wounded in comfort and rest as soon as possible. The march was then resumed, but the night proved dark and stormy and road down from the plateau to the steamer rough and obscure, so that it was two o'clock on the morning of the 30th before the wounded were safely housed on board the boat. This was done without a single accident of any moment, and I desire to invite special attention to the invaluable

services of Lieutenant Doane in the construction of the requisite litters in so short a time out of the rude material of clumsy poles, horse raw-hide, and refractory mules. But for his energy, skill, and confidence our suffering wounded would probably have been several days longer on the road.

The Far West left that day for the mouth of the Big Horn, which point I reached with the command, after a two day's march, on the 2d of July. The whole command was then ferried across the Yellowstone River and placed in camp. Here it remained until the 27th, when, in obedience to the orders of General Terry, it was transferred down the river to the new depot at the mouth of the Rosebud, and on the 3d of August my portion of it was ferried across the Yellowstone, preparatory to the movement up the Rosebud.

The troops in the field were now re-organized, and I was assigned to the command of the four battalions of infantry belonging to the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Twenty-second Infantry. On the 8th the command started up the Rosebud, but the road was difficult, required a great deal of work, and our progress was slow.

On the 10th we encountered General Crook's command coming down, and the next day the united commands started with pack-mules on the Indian trail which General Crook was following, the battalion of the Fifth Infantry being sent back to escort our supply-train and scout the river to prevent the Indians crossing to the north of it. In the midst of very heavy rain the command moved across to Tongue River, down that and across to Powder River, and down that to its mouth, which was reached on the 17th. On the 25th my command, further reduced by the detachment of the Sixth Infantry, started up Powder River again, but the fol-

lowing day, on information that the Indians were below us, on the Yellowstone, we retraced our steps, and marched across the country to a point on the River near O'Fallon's Creek, and the day following, 27th, were ferried across the Yellowstone by steamer. That night the whole command made a night-march to the north, entering upon an almost entirely unknown country without guides, where, for the next four days, our movements were hampered by the necessity for marching toward the water pools, which had to be first sought for. Our general course, however, was northward, and scouting parties sent across the main divide and down the Yellowstone having demonstrated that no large bodies of Indians had made their way north, toward the Fort Peck agency, the command came in again to the Yellowstone, near Glendive Creek on the 31st.

On the 5th of September I received orders for my Command to return to its station in Montana.

Starting on the 6th, we reached our wagon-train a few miles above the mouth of Powder River, 81 miles, on the 9th, and placing our pack-mules in harness, resumed the march the next day. On the 13th we reached the mouth of Tongue River, and on the 17th passed Fort Pease. On our arrival at the mouth of Big Timber, on the 26th, the command was divided, the cavalry companies under Captain Ball marching to Fort Ellis, and the infantry to Camp Baker, via the forks of the Muscleshell. The cavalry reached Fort Ellis on the 29th of September, and the five companies of the Seventh Infantry arrived at Fort Shaw on the 6th instant, having left Company E (Clifford's) at Camp Baker on the 2d. I preceded the cavalry into Ellis, and, having arranged for the muster-out and payment of the Crow scouts, returned to this post on the 4th instant.

It gives me great pleasure to testify to the cheerful manner in which the whole command performed the long marches and arduous duties of the campaign. Starting out in the depths of winter, with the expectation of an absence of two or three months, they submitted to the tedious delays, long marches, and exposures of an unprecedentedly wet and cold season during six months with a soldierly cheerfulness worthy of the highest praise.

In concluding this report I beg leave to submit the following suggestions:

It became evident during the campaign that we were attempting to carry on operations in an extensive region of something like four or five hundred miles square with inadequate means. Had we been called upon to operate against only the Indians known to be hostile, any one of the three columns sent against them would have been amply sufficient to cope with any force likely to be brought against it; but when the hostile body was largely re-enforced by accessions from the various agencies where the malcontents were doubtless in many cases driven to desperation by starvation and the heartless frauds perpetrated upon them, the problem became less simple, and when these various bands succeeded in finding a leader who possessed the tact, courage, and ability to concentrate and keep together so large a force, it was only a question of time as to when one or other of the exterior columns would meet with a check from the overwhelming numbers of the interior body. The first information we had of the force and strategy opposed to us was the check given to Custer's column, resulting in a disaster which might have been worse but for the timely arrival of General Terry's other column.

The inadequate means at the disposal of the troops became painfully apparent at an early day. Operating on one bank of a deep and rapid stream for a distance of several hundred miles, my column was entirely without the means of crossing to the other bank to strike exposed camps of the hostile bands.

Incumbered with heavily-loaded wagon-trains, our movements were necessarily slow, and when we did cut loose from these our only means of transporting supplies were the mules taken from the teams, and unbroken to packs, unsuitable pack-saddles, and inexperienced soldiers as packers. These latter soon learned to do their part tolerably well, but at the expense of the poor animals, whose festering sores after a few days' marching appealed not only to feelings of humanity, but demonstrated the false economy of the course pursued.

At the end of one scout with pack-mules most of our animals had to be replaced by others from the train, and at the end of the campaign many of them were in anything but a serviceable condition for either pack or draught purposes. The contrast between the mobility of our force and that of General Crook's was very marked, especially for rapid movements. General Crook's well-organized pack-train, with trained mules and its corps of competent packers, moved almost independently of the column of troops, and as fast as they could move. His ranks were not depleted by drafts to take charge of the packs and animals, for each mule faithfully followed the sound of the leader's bell and needed no other guide, and his pack-mules were neither worn out nor torn to pieces by bad saddles and worse packing.

In addition to our other wants, we were entirely devoid of any proper means for the transportation of sick

or wounded. This, with a well-organized pack-train, was comparatively easy. As it was, a few wounded men were all-sufficient to cripple, for offensive operations, a large body of troops; for in savage warfare to leave one's wounded behind is out of the question.

Maps of the route passed over by the command will be forwarded as soon as they can be completed. The country visited by the troops is by no means the desert it has been frequently represented. There is, of course, a great deal of barren, worthless land, but there is also much land in the valleys susceptible of cultivation, and an immense region of good grazing country which will in time be available for stock-raising. Even where from the valleys the appearance of the so-called "bad lands" was most forbidding, we found on the plateau above excellent grass in the greatest abundance covering the country for great distances. This was particularly noticeable in the region north of Powder River, between the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers, and along the Tongue and Rosebud and the country between the two. The country along the Little Big Horn is also a fine grass country, and along the Big Horn itself immense valleys of fine grass extend.

During the summer's operations the cavalry marched nearly 1,500 miles, and the infantry nearly 1,700, besides some 900 miles by portions of the cavalry and 500 miles by portions of the infantry in scouting and escort duty.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN GIBBON  
Colonel Seventh Infantry,  
Commanding District

Maj. Geo. D. Ruggles  
Assistant Adjutant-General, Department of Dakota.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA  
St. Paul Minn.  
Dec. 9th 1876

General W. T. Sherman  
Washington D.C.

I see that in your Annual Report you quote at length my dispatch from the Little Horn battlefield. That dispatch was so mangled by the telegraph, that in some places it is almost nonsense. In my Annual Report I give it as it was sent, and I respectfully request that the quotation in your report be corrected to correspond with the latter.

ALFRED H. TERRY  
Brig. Gen'l.

NOTE: This letter of General Terry to General Sheridan requests some corrections in his official report for 1876, regarding the Battle of the Little Big Horn.



A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF BATTLES  
IN THE  
SIOUX-CHEYENNE CAMPAIGNS OF 1876

- MARCH 5, 1876 – Supply camp on Dry Forks of Powder River, Wyoming. Capt. Edwin M. Coates, commanding companies C and I, 4th Infantry.
- MARCH 17, 1876 – Indian Village on Little Powder River, Montana. Col. J. J. Reynolds, 3rd Cavalry, commanding companies E, I and K, 2nd Cavalry; and E, F and M, 3rd Cavalry.
- JUNE 9, 1876 – Army camp on Tongue River, Wyoming. Brig. Gen. George Crook commanding companies A, B, D, E, and I, 2nd Cavalry; A, B, C, D, E, F, G, I, L and M, 3rd Cavalry; D and F, 4th Infantry; and C, G and H, 9th Infantry.
- JUNE 17, 1876 – On Rosebud River, Montana. Brig. Gen. George Crook commanding companies A, B, D, E and I, 2nd Cavalry; A, B, D, E, F, G, I, L and M, 3rd Cavalry; D and F, 4th Infantry; and C, G and H, 9th Infantry.
- JUNE 25 & 26, 1876 – Indian village on Little Big Horn River, Montana. Lt. Col. G. A. Custer, 7th Cavalry, commanding companies A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, K, L and M, 7th Cavalry.
- JULY 7, 1876 – At head of Tongue River, Montana. Second Lieut. F. W. Sibley, 2nd Cavalry, commanding detachment of twenty men of the 2nd Cavalry.

JULY 17, 1876—Near Hat Creek, Wyoming. Col. Wesley Merritt, 5th Cavalry, commanding companies A, B, D, G, I, K and M, 5th Cavalry.

JULY 29, 1876—Steamer "Carroll" at mouth of Powder River, Montana. Lt. Col. E. S. Otis, 22nd Infantry, commanding companies E, F, G, H, I and K, 22nd Infantry.

AUGUST 2, 1876—Forage dump on Powder River, Montana. Maj. O. H. Moore, 6th Infantry, commanding companies D and I, 6th Infantry; and C, 17th Infantry.

AUGUST 23, 1876—Steamers "Josephine" and "Benton" near mouth of Yellowstone River, Montana. First Lieut. Nelson Bronson, 6th Infantry, commanding Company G, 6th Infantry.

SEPTEMBER 9, 1876—Indian Village at Slim Buttes, Dakota. Brig. Gen. George Crook commanding companies A, B, D, E and I, 2nd Cavalry; A, B, C, D, E, F, G, I, L and M, 3rd Cavalry; A, B, C, D, E, F, G, I, K and M, 5th Cavalry; D, F and G, 4th Infantry; C, G and H, 9th Infantry; and B, C, F and I, 14th Infantry.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1876—Owl Creek, Dakota. Maj. J. J. Upham, 5th Cavalry, commanding detachment of 150 men of the 5th Cavalry.

OCTOBER 11, 1876—Spring Creek, Montana. Capt. C. W. Miner, 22nd Infantry, commanding companies C, 17th Infantry; and G, H and K, 22nd Infantry.

OCTOBER 15 & 16, 1876—Clear Creek, Montana. Lt. Col. E. S. Otis, 22nd Infantry, commanding companies C and G, 17th Infantry; and G, H and K, 22nd Infantry.

OCTOBER 21, 1876—Cedar Creek, Montana. Col. N. A. Miles, 5th Infantry, commanding companies A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I and K, 5th Infantry.

OCTOBER 23, 1876—Chadron Creek, Nebraska. Col. R. S. Mackenzie, 4th Cavalry, commanding companies B, D, E, F, I and M, 4th Cavalry; and H and L, 5th Cavalry.

OCTOBER 27, 1876—Big Dry River, Montana. Col. N. A. Miles, 5th Infantry, commanding companies A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I and K, 5th Infantry.

NOVEMBER 25 & 26, 1876—Bates Creek, Wyoming. Col. R. S. Mackenzie, 4th Cavalry, commanding companies K, 2nd Cavalry; H and K, 3rd Cavalry; B, D, E, F, I and M, 4th Cavalry; and H and L, 5th Cavalry.

DECEMBER 7, 1876—Bark Creek, Montana. First Lieut. F. D. Baldwin, 5th Infantry, commanding companies G, H and I, 5th Infantry.

DECEMBER 18, 1876—Red Water Creek, Dakota. First Lieut. F. D. Baldwin, 5th Infantry, commanding companies G, H and I, 5th Infantry.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN  
COMMAND ROSTERS AND MUSTER ROLLS

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| AAAG        | Acting Assistant Adjutant General, the staff officer in charge of keeping official records, correspondence, etc.   |
| AAQM        | Acting Assistant Quartermaster, the staff officer in charge of supplies, forage, and ammunition.   |
| ACS         | Acting Commissary of Subsistence, the staff officer in charge of food.   |
| ADC         | Aide-de-Camp   |
| Bn          | Battalion  |
| CMO         | Chief Medical Officer  |
| D.S.        | Detached Service away from the regiment  |
| E.D.        | Extra Duty for which the soldier received extra pay, such as teamster or laborer with the quartermaster or subsistence departments or as hospital nurse. |
| E.O.        | Engineer Officer   |
| IHCA        | In Hands of Civil Authorities  |
| Mtd. Det.   | Mounted Detachment   |
| O.O.        | Ordnance Officer   |
| PM          | Paymaster  |
| QMD         | Quartermaster Department   |
| RQM         | Regimental Quartermaster   |
| S.D.        | Special Duty such as serving with the Mounted Detachment or the Gatling Gun crew.  |
| Subs. Dept. | The Subsistence or Commissary department.  |
| TDy         | Temporary Duty other than the regularly assigned; an officer serving with another company than his own.  |

**Contents of Command Rosters  
and Company Muster Rolls**

COMMAND TABLES OF ORGANIZATION

Department of Dakota, Montana Column, June 1876.

Col. Gibbon

Department of the Platte, Column awaiting reinforcements at Camp Cloud Peak, June 20, 1876.

Gen. Crook

Department of the Missouri, Column to reinforce the Department of the Platte, in the South Cheyenne Valley. Col. Carr

Department of Dakota, Dakota Column. Gen. Terry

MUSTER ROLLS OF COMPANIES  
IN THE BATTLE VICINITY

Seventh Infantry, under Col. Gibbon

Companies A, B, E, H, I, K

Second Cavalry, under Col. Gibbon

Companies F, G, H, L

Sixth Infantry, under Maj. Orlando H. Moore

Companies C, D, I

Twentieth Infantry, under Gen. Terry

Gatling Gun Detachment

Sixth Infantry, under Gen. Terry

Company B

Seventeenth Infantry, under Gen. Terry

Companies C, G

Seventh Cavalry, under Gen. Terry

Headquarters; Band; Companies A through M

## Command Rosters

### DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA Montana Column, June 1876

Col. John Gibbon, 7th Inf. (Brvt. Maj. Gen. USA)  
 1st Lt. Levi Frank Burnett, Adj. 7th Inf. (Brvt. Capt. USA)  
 1st Lt. Joshua West Jacobs, RQM 7th Inf.  
   Company A, 7th Infantry  
     Capt. William Logan  
     1st Lt. Charles Austin Coolidge  
   Company B, 7th Infantry  
     Capt. Thaddeus Sanford Kirtland  
     2nd Lt. Charles Austin Booth  
   Company E, 7th Infantry  
     Capt. Walter Clifford  
     2nd Lt. George Schæffer Young  
   Company H, 7th Infantry  
     Capt. Henry Blanchard Freeman (Brvt. Maj. USA)  
     2nd Lt. Frederick Monroe Hill Kendrick  
   Company I, 7th Infantry  
     1st Lt. William L. English  
     2nd Lt. Alfred Bainbridge Johnson  
   Company K, 7th Infantry  
     Capt. James Madison Johnson Sanno  
     2nd Lt. Charles Albert Woodruff  
 Crow Indian Scouts & Mounted Detachment, 7th Infantry  
   1st Lt. James Howard Bradley, Co. B, 7th Infantry

Maj. James Sanks Brisbin, 2nd Cav. (Brevt. Col. USA)  
   Company F, 2nd Cavalry  
     2nd Lt. Charles Francis Roe  
   Company G, 2nd Cavalry  
     Capt. James Nicholas Wheelan  
     1st Lt. Gustavus Cheeny Doane  
     2nd Lt. Edward John McClernand  
   Company H, 2nd Cavalry  
     Capt. Edward Ball  
     1st Lt. James George McAdams  
   Company L, 2nd Cavalry  
     Capt. Lewis Thompson (Brvt. Maj. USA)  
     1st Lt. Samuel Todd Hamilton  
     2nd Lt. Charles Brewster Schofield  
 1st Lt. Holmes Offley Paulding, Ass't. Surg.

DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE

Column awaiting reinforcements  
at Camp Cloud Peak  
after the Battle of the Rosebud  
June 20, 1876

Brig. Gen. George Crook, USA (Brvt. Maj. Gen. USA)  
AAAG 1st Lt. John Gregory Bourke, Co. L, 3rd Cav.  
ACS 1st Lt. John Wilson Bubb, Co. I, 4th Inf.  
CMO Capt. Albert Hartsuff, Ass't. Surg. (Brvt. Lieut.  
Col. USA)  
ADC 2nd Lt. Walter Scribner Schuyler, Co. B, 5th  
Cav.

Crow & Shoshone Indian Scouts  
Capt. George Morton Randall, Co. I, 23rd Inf.  
(Brvt. Maj. USA)

CAVALRY COMMAND

Lt. Col. William Bedford Royall, 3rd Cav. (Brvt. Col.  
USA)  
AAAG 2nd Lt. Henry Rowan Lemly, Co. E, 3rd Cav.  
AAQM 2nd Lt. Charles Morton, Co. A, 3rd Cav.

3RD CAVALRY

Maj. Andrew W. Evans, 3rd Cav. (Brvt. Lieut. Col.  
USA)  
Adj. 2nd Lt. George Francis Chase, Co. L, 3rd Cav.  
Company A, 3rd Cavalry  
1st Lt. Joseph Lawson  
Company B, 3rd Cavalry  
Capt. Charles Meinhold

Company C, 3rd Cavalry  
Capt. Frederick Van Vleit (Brvt. Lieut. Col.  
USA)  
Company D, 3rd Cavalry  
2nd Lt. James Ferdinand Simpson (Brvt.  
Capt. USA) (TDy from Co. B)  
Company E, 3rd Cavalry  
Capt. Alexander Sutorius  
1st Lt. Adolphus H. Von Luettwitz (TDy  
from Co. C)  
Company F, 3rd Cavalry  
2nd Lt. Bainbridge Reynolds  
Company G, 3rd Cavalry  
1st Lt. Emmett Crawford  
Company I, 3rd Cavalry  
Capt. William Howard Andrews  
2nd Lt. James E. H. Foster  
Company L, 3rd Cavalry  
Capt. Peter Dumont Vroom  
Company M, 3rd Cavalry  
Capt. Anson Mills (Brvt. Lieut. Col. USA)  
1st Lt. Augustus Choteau Paul  
2nd Lt. Frederick Schwatka

2ND CAVALRY BATTALION

Capt. Henry Erastus Noyes, Co. I, 2nd Cav. (Brvt.  
Maj. USA)  
Company A, 2nd Cavalry  
Capt. Thomas Bull Dewees  
2nd Lt. Daniel Crosby Pearson  
Company B, 2nd Cavalry  
1st Lt. William Charles Rawolle  
Company D, 2nd Cavalry  
1st Lt. Samuel Miller Swigert  
2nd Lt. Henry Dustan Huntington

Officers of the Campaign

Company E, 2nd Cavalry

Capt. Elijah Reville Wells (Brvt. Maj. USA)

2nd Lt. Frederick William Sibley

Company I, 2nd Cavalry

Capt. Noyes

2nd Lt. Frederick William Kingsbury

INFANTRY COMMAND

Company D, 4th Infantry

Capt. Avery Billings Cain (Brvt. Maj. USA)

Company G, 9th Infantry

Capt. Thomas Bredin Burrowes (Brvt. Maj. USA)

1st Lt. William Lewis Carpenter

Company H, 9th Infantry

Capt. Andrew Sheridan Burt (Brvt. Maj. USA)

2nd Lt. Edgar Brooks Robertson

Capt. Julius Herman Patzki, Ass't. Surg.

DEPARTMENT OF THE MISSOURI

Column ordered out as reinforcement  
to the Department of the Platte  
marching through the South Cheyenne valley, June 1876

Lt. Col. Eugene Asa Carr, 5th Cav. (Brvt. Maj. Gen. USA)

Maj. John Jacques Upham, 5th Cav.

1st Lt. William Curtis Forbush, Adj. 5th Cav.

1st Lt. Charles Henry Rockwell, RQM 5th Cav.

Company A, 5th Cavalry

Capt. Robert Phillips Wilson

Company B, 5th Cavalry

Capt. Robert Hugh Montgomery

Company C, 5th Cavalry

2nd Lt. Edward Livingston Keyes

Company D, 5th Cavalry

Capt. Samuel Storrow Sumner (Brvt. Maj. USA)

1st Lt. Calbrith Perry Rodgers

Company G, 5th Cavalry

Capt. Edward Mortimer Hayes

2nd Lt. Hoel Smith Bishop

Company I, 5th Cavalry

Capt. Sanford Cobb Kellogg (Brvt. Lieut. Col. USA)

1st Lt. Bernard Reilly, Jr.

Company K, 5th Cavalry

Capt. Julius Wilmot Mason (Brvt. Lieut. Col. USA)

1st Lt. Charles King

Officers of the Campaign

Company M, 5th Cavalry

Capt. Edward Henry Leib (Brvt. Lieut. Col.  
USA)

2nd Lt. Charles Henry Watts

Company F, 19th Infantry

Capt. Philip Halsey Remington  
2nd Lt. Cornelius Gardener

Maj. Thaddeus Harlan Stanton, PM

DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA

Dakota Column

Brig. Gen. Alfred Howe Terry, USA (Brvt. Maj. Gen.  
USA)

AAAG Capt. Edward Worthington Smith, Co. G, 18th  
Inf. (Brvt. Lieut. Col. USA)

AAQM 1st Lt. Henry James Nowlan, RQM, 7th Cav.

ACS 2nd Lt. Richard Edward Thompson, Co. K, 6th  
Inf.

EO 1st Lt. Edward Maguire, Engineers

OO Capt. Otho Ernest Michaelis, Ordnance

CMO Capt. John Winfield Williams, Ass't. Surg.  
(Brvt. Maj. USA)

ADC Capt. Robert Patterson Hughes, Co. E, 3rd Inf.  
(Brvt. Maj. USA)

ADC 1st Lt. Eugene Beauharnais Gibbs, Co. C, 6th  
Inf.

Maj. Orlando Hurley Moore, 6th Inf., Cmdg.\*

Company C, 6th Infantry

Capt. James W. Powell

2nd Lt. Bernard A. Byrne, Bn. ACS, AAQM

\* NOTE: Major Moore's Companies C, D and I, 6th Infantry, left Fort Buford, D.T., May 14, 1876, aboard the steamer "Josephine," and arrived at Stanley's Crossing of the Yellowstone on May 18. Here this battalion maintained a supply camp. The companies were moved to the Supply Camp at the mouth of Powder River: Co. C on June 5, Co. I on June 10, and Co. D on June 12 via the steamer "Far West." On June 12, Companies C and G, 17th Infantry, from General Terry's column were added to Major Moore's command.

Company D, 6th Infantry  
 Capt. Daniel H. Murdock  
 1st Lt. Frederick W. Thibaut, Bn. Adjt.

Company I, 6th Infantry  
 2nd Lt. George B. Walker

Gatling Gun Battery, 20th Infantry Detachment  
 2nd Lt. William Hale Low, Jr., Co. C, 20th  
 Inf.  
 2nd Lt. Frank Xavier Kinzie, Co. F, 20th Inf.

Company B, 6th Infantry  
 Capt. Stephen Baker  
 1st Lt. John Carland

Company C, 17th Infantry  
 Capt. Malcolm McArthur  
 1st Lt. Frank Dillon Garretty  
 2nd Lt. James Dallas Nickerson

Company G, 17th Infantry  
 Capt. Louis H. Sanger (Brvt. Maj. USA)  
 1st Lt. Josiah Chance  
 2nd Lt. Henry Perrine Walker

Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer, 7th Cav. (Brvt.  
 Maj. Gen. USA)

Maj. Marcus Albert Reno, 7th Cav. (Brvt. Col. USA)  
 1st Lt. William Winer Cooke, Adjt. 7th Cav. (Brvt. Lt.  
 Col. USA)

Company A, 7th Cavalry  
 Capt. Myles Moylan  
 1st Lt. Charles Camilus De Rudio, TDy from  
 Co. E, 7th Cav.

Company B, 7th Cavalry  
 Capt. Thomas Mower McDougall  
 2nd Lt. Benjamin Hubert Hodgson

Company C, 7th Cavalry  
 Capt. Thomas Ward Custer (Brvt. Lieut. Col.  
 USA)  
 2nd Lt. Henry Moore Harrington

Company D, 7th Cavalry  
 Capt. Thomas Benton Weir (Brvt. Lieut. Col.  
 USA)  
 2nd Lt. Winfield Scott Edgerly

Company E, 7th Cavalry  
 1st Lt. Algernon Emorey Smith, TDy from  
 Co. A, 7th Cav. (Brvt. Capt. USA)  
 2nd Lt. James Garland Sturgis, TDy from  
 Co. M, 7th Cav.

Company F, 7th Cavalry  
 Capt. George W. Yates  
 2nd Lt. William Van Wyck Reily, TDy from  
 Co. E, 7th Cav.

Company G, 7th Cavalry  
 1st Lt. Donald McIntosh  
 2nd Lt. George Daniel Wallace

Company H, 7th Cavalry  
 Capt. Frederick William Benteen (Brvt. Col.  
 USA)  
 1st Lt. Francis Marion Gibson

Company I, 7th Cavalry  
 Capt. Myles Walter Keogh (Brvt. Lieut. Col.  
 USA)  
 1st Lt. James Ezekiel Porter

Company K, 7th Cavalry  
 1st Lt. Edward Settle Godfrey  
 2nd Lt. Luther Rector Hare

Company L, 7th Cavalry  
 1st Lt. James Calhoun, TDy from Co. C, 7th  
 Cav.



**Officers of the Campaign**

2nd Lt. John Jordan Crittenden, TDy from  
Co. G, 20th Inf.

Company M, 7th Cavalry

Capt. Thomas Henry French

1st Lt. Edward Gustave Mathey

Arikara Indian Scout Detachment

2nd Lt. Charles Albert Varnum, Co. A, 7th  
Cav.

1st Lt. George Edwin Lord, Ass't. Surg.

**Company Muster Rolls**