

Greasy Grass Fight

Created Dr. Susanne Bloomfield



The Military Campaign of 1876

After the discovery of gold in the Black Hills following Custer's 1875 Expedition, the US tried to buy the land from the Sioux, but they would not sell their sacred Paha Sapa. The government issued a decree requiring all non-reservation Indians to report to the agencies by Jan. 1, 1876.



Because of this decree,
in November of 1875,
Hunkpapa Lakota
Headman and Holy Man

SITTING BULL

sent out a call to gather
together all of the Sioux,
Cheyenne, and Arapaho
at the Chalk Buttes at the
end of the Moon When
Geese Return to discuss
what to do about the
incursion of whites into
the land granted them in
the United States treaties.

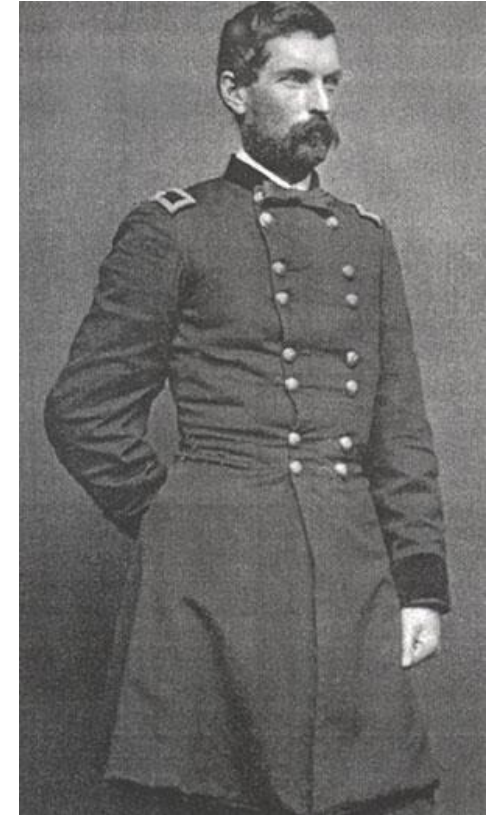


Sun Dance

Sitting Bull decides to hold a Sun Dance to gather the leaders to decide what to do about the white invaders and unite the people in the sacred ceremony. Sitting Bull sacrifices 100 pieces of flesh and has a vision of Long Knives Falling from the Sky.



General George Crook, General Alfred Terry, and Colonel John Gibbon Led the Campaign to move all Indians to reservations, defeating those who resisted.



Battle of the Rosebud

Or, Battle Where the Woman Saved Her Brother

On June 17, 1876, Sioux and Cheyenne forces led by Crazy Horse spotted General Crook, his 1,050 soldiers, and 260 Crow and Shoshone scouts, defeating them and eliminating them from the campaign.



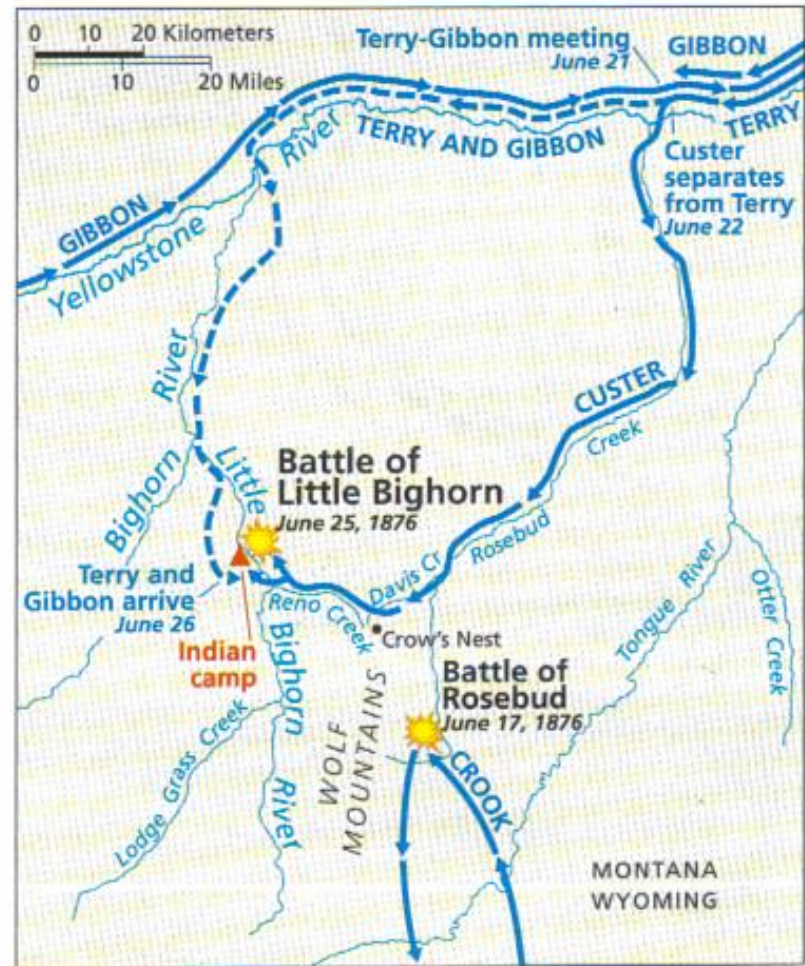
Three Army Expeditions

General Crook would be coming from the south from Fort Fetterman in Wyoming Territory

Col Gibbon would arrive from the west from Fort Ellis in Montana Territory

General Terry would travel from the east from Fort Abraham Lincoln in Dakota Territory.

They were to converge in Southeastern Montana.



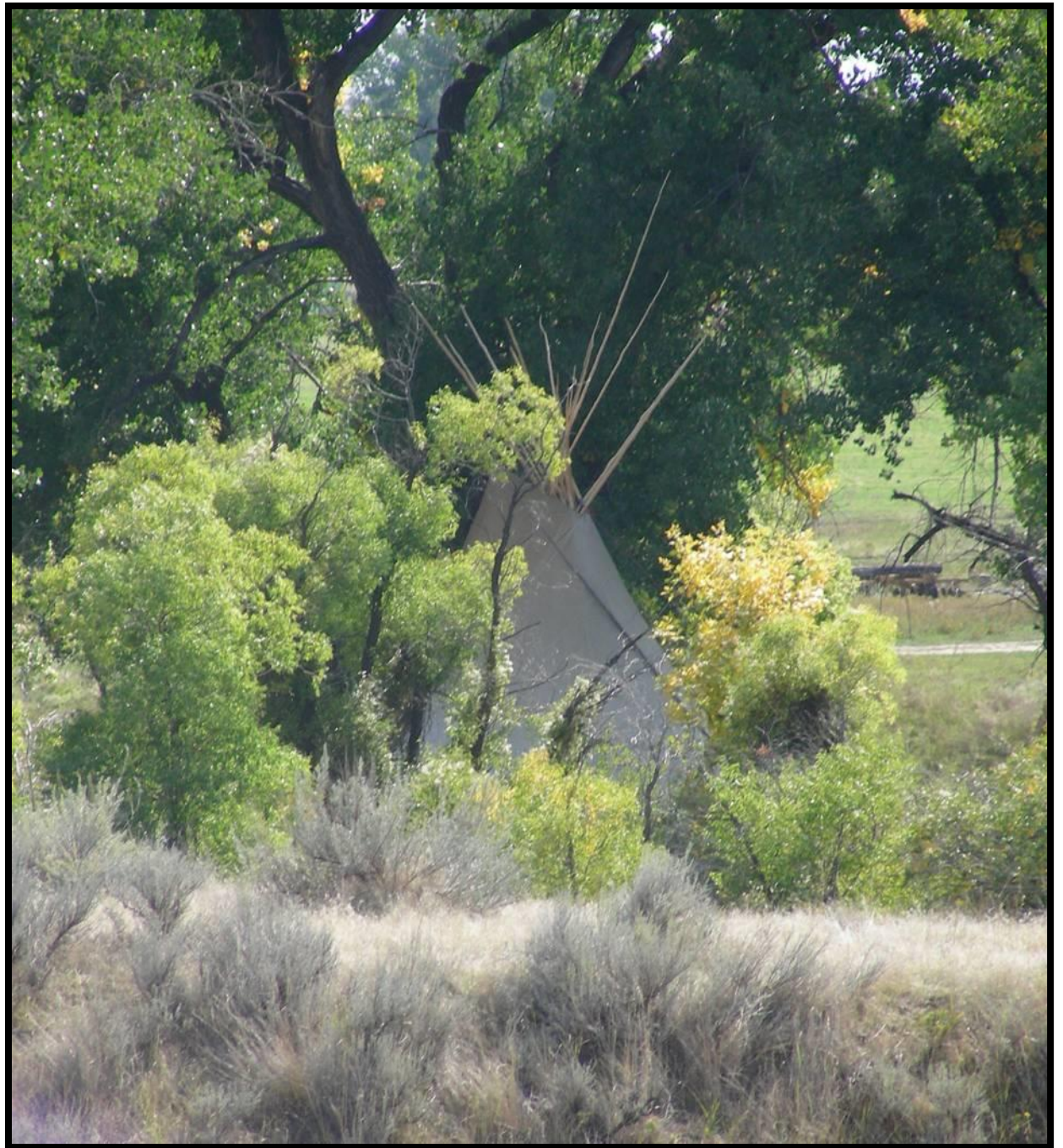
Little Bighorn River

Since the thousands of Indians and horses needed a new campsite, Sitting Bull led the people to the valley of the Little Big Horn.





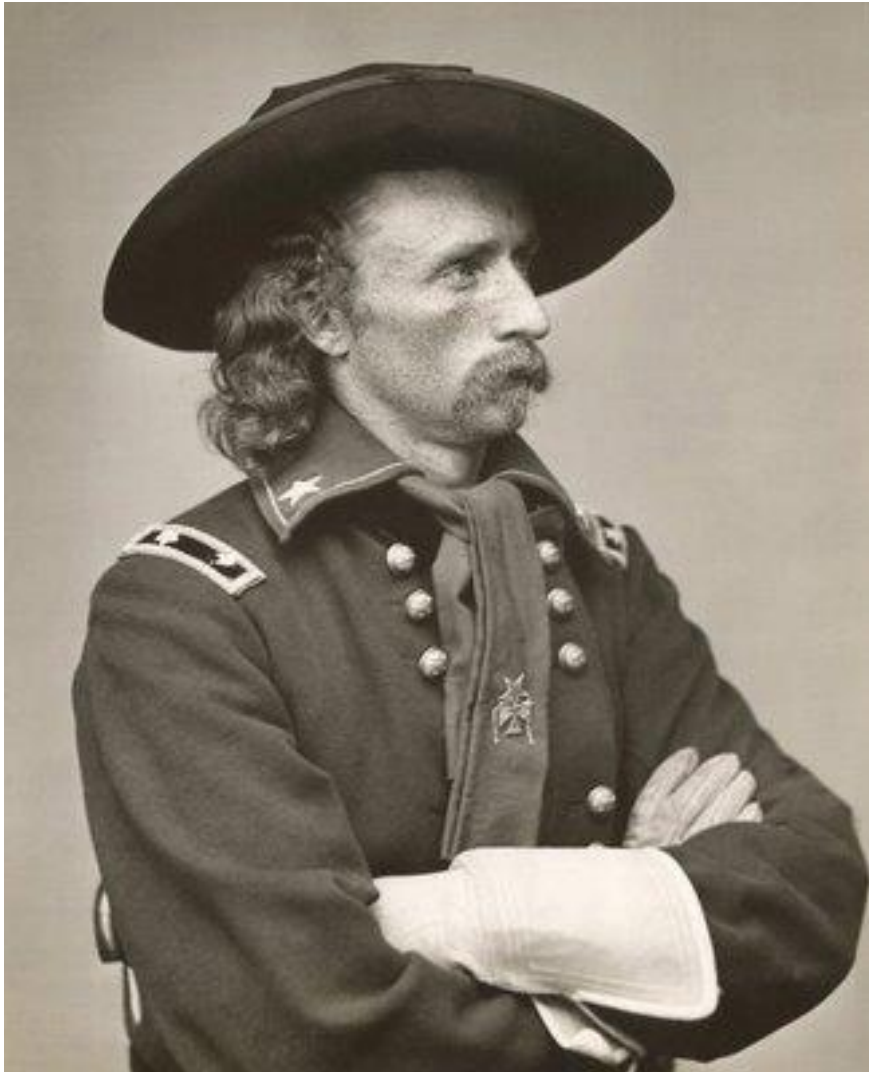
“Because of the trees, the village could not be arranged in one large circle, as it had been along Ash Creek. Instead, the medicine men had let each group pick out their own sites and form smaller circles”
(Marshall 348).



The Lush valley of the Little Bighorn River provided good grazing for the thousands of horses.

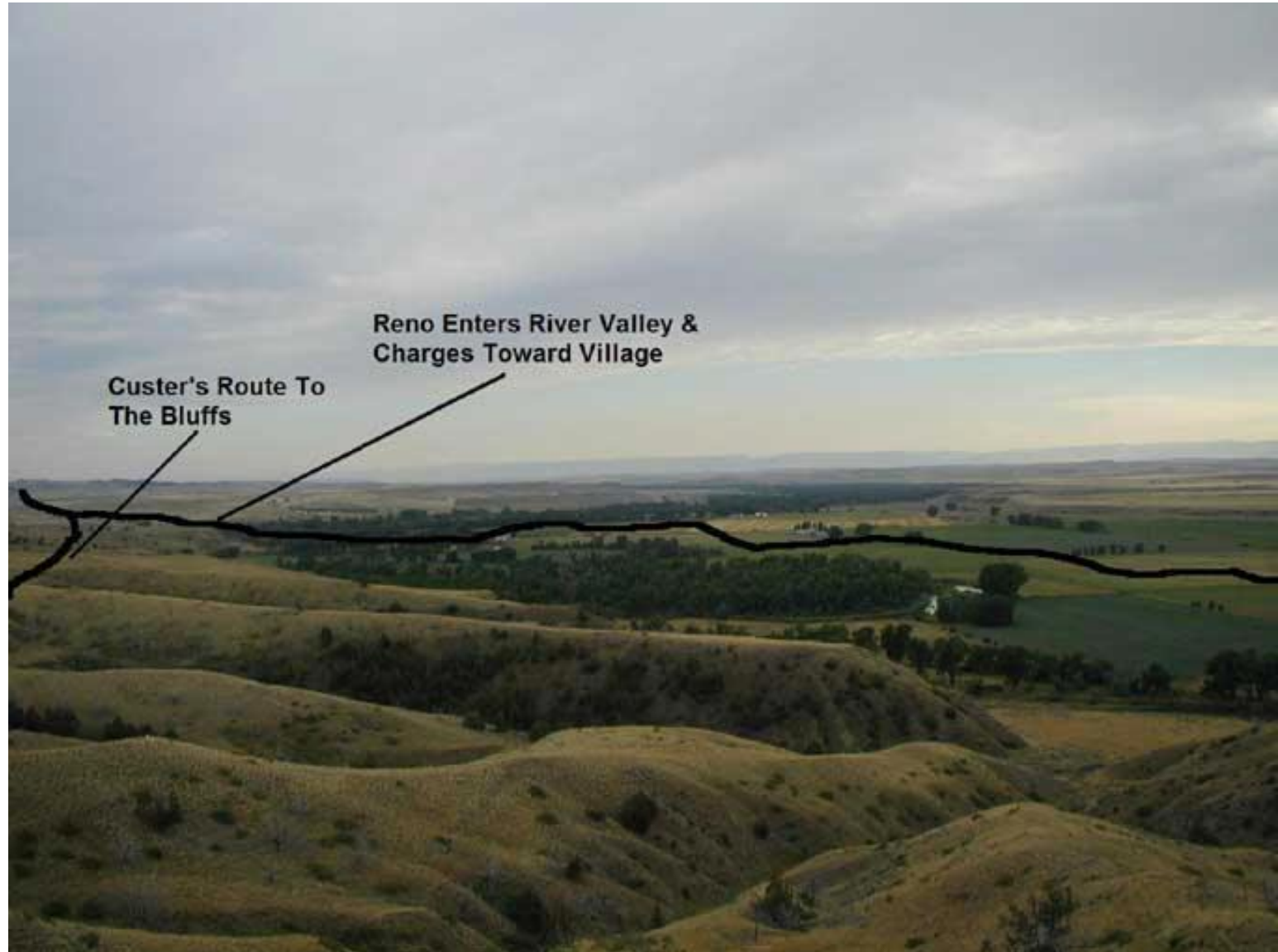


George Armstrong Custer



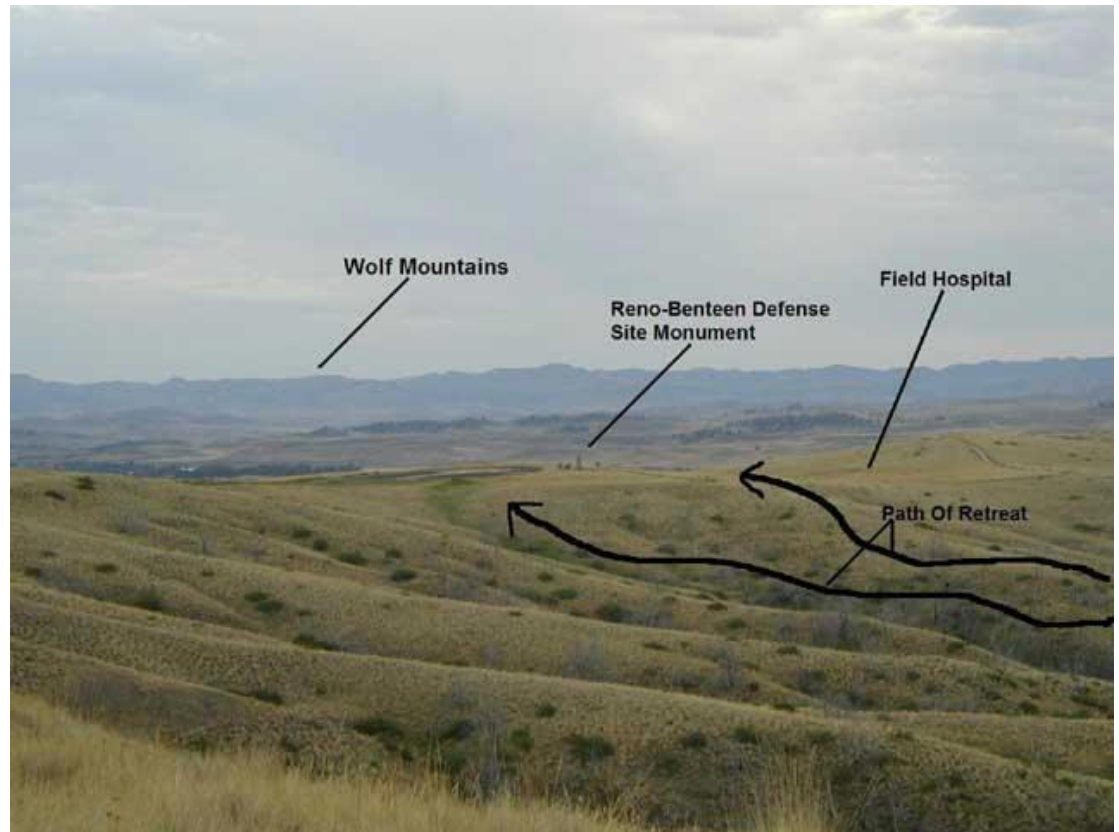
Gibbons and Terry sent Lt. Colonel George Armstrong Custer to circle from the south while they were to come from the north to trap the Indians between them. Fearing he had been detected by the Indians and they would scatter, about noon on June 25, 1876, in the Wolf Mountains, near the hill called the Crow's Nest, Custer divided 12 companies of the 7th U.S. Cavalry into three battalions.

Reno's Charge on the Encampment



Reno's Retreat

Reno held the timber about 10-15 minutes before retreating back across the Little Bighorn. Indians were pulling soldiers from their saddles, shooting them point blank. Reno lost nearly 30 men during this retreat. Either on horseback or on foot, the soldiers made their way up these bluffs to the Reno-Benteen Battlefield.



Reno's Retreat

Little Bighorn Battlefield

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Under mounting pressure, Reno abandons the timber. His retreat disintegrates into a rout as pursuing warriors ride in amongst the troopers killing more than 30 soldiers. Indian casualties are few. Lakotas and Cheyennes drive the

cavalry across the river and up the steep bluffs to your left. Receiving word of other soldiers downstream (to your right) they abandon Reno to meet the new threat to their village.



"We've had a big fight in the bottom, got whipped like hell and I am damned glad to see you!"

— 2nd Lt. Luther Hare, Co. K, 7th Cavalry

"The Sioux and the Cheyennes charged and the troops ran for the river. The Indians rode right up to them and knocked some off their horses as they were running, and some fell off in the river. It was like chasing buffalo... a grand chase."

— American Horse, Northern Cheyenne



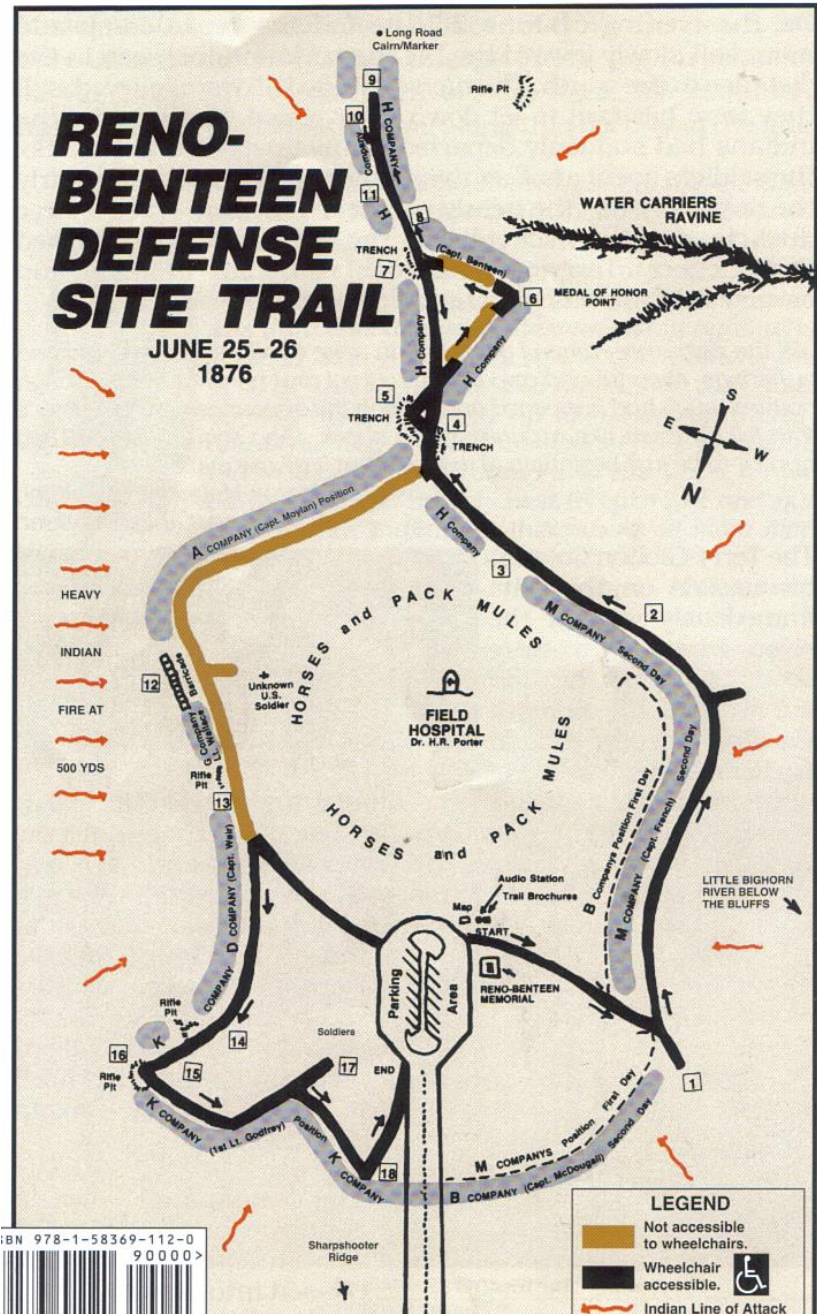
Reno's Retreat Up the Bluffs



After Reno reached the defense site, Benteen arrived with his three companies. Following behind him came the pack train. All seven companies would dig in around this area to form their defense.



Reno-Benteen Defense Site



Reno & Benteen's troops barricaded themselves behind packsaddles, boxes, and dead horses and mules. The field hospital was also here.



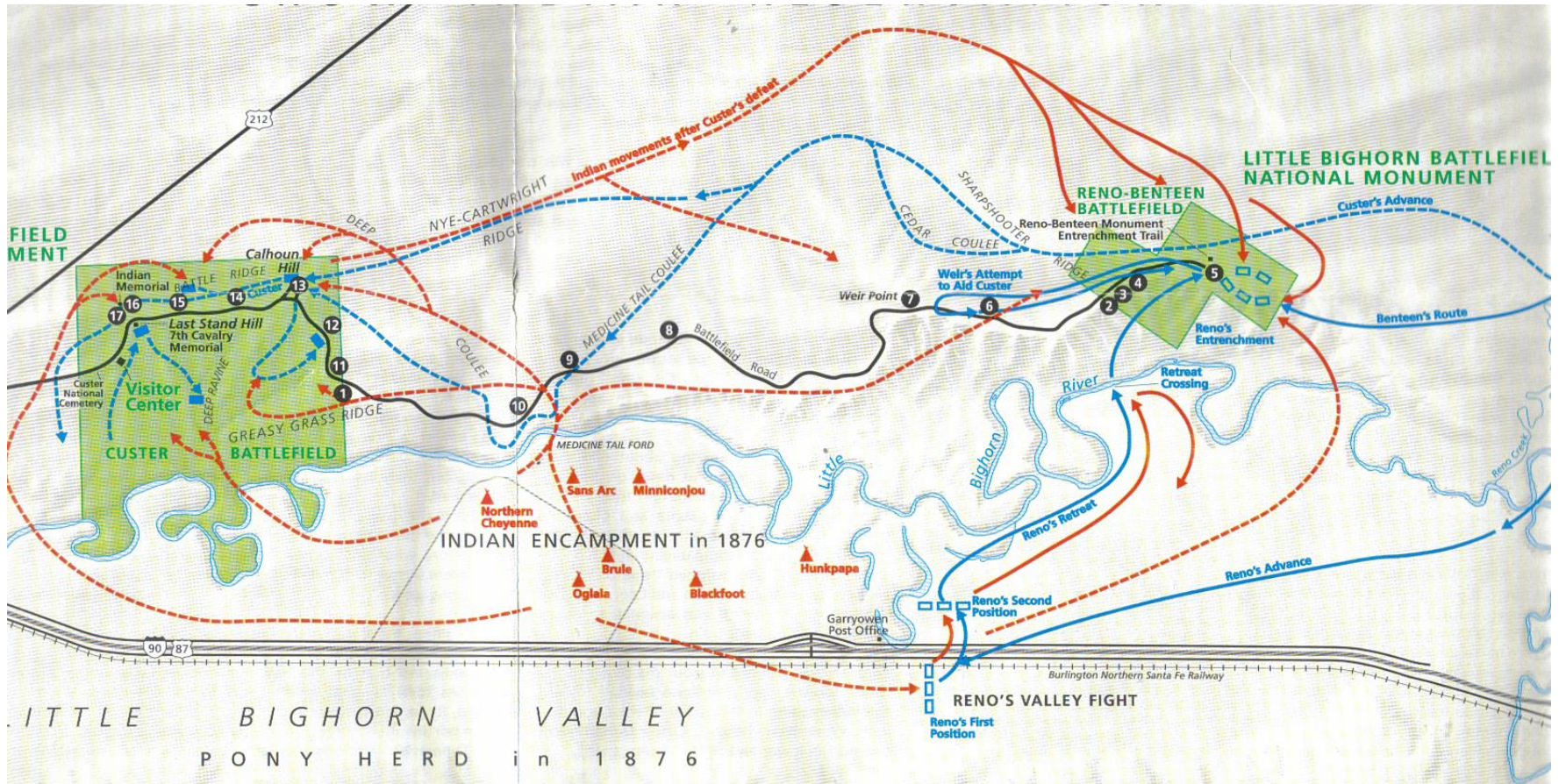
Reno & Benteen's Rifle Pits and Principle Indian Firing Positions in Background



Sharpshooter's Ridge is in the center right of the photo. From here warriors who were good marksmen did damage to the soldiers on the northern lines. The white marker seen in the left foreground was the field hospital.



Battlefield Movements



Meanwhile, Custer's troops advanced to the north.

Custer's Advance

From The Crow's Nest (○), a vantage point 14 miles away in the Wolf Mountains, Custer's Crow and Arikara scouts saw evidence of the massive Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho encampment. Convinced that he was discovered, Custer abandoned plans for a reconnaissance and a delayed attack. He divides his forces into four groups along Reno Creek deciding to strike the village before it could scatter. As Custer's battalions approach the Little Bighorn Valley, he orders Major Marcus Reno with approximately 175 soldiers and scouts to cross the river and charge. Custer, with approximately 225 soldiers and scouts, veered to the northwest and appear on the ridge to your left for their first view of the village.

RENO **CUSTER** **RENO**

Reno's battalion marched down the valley and developed into the south a small tributary to the Little Bighorn river. Custer's scouts followed the valley calling Custer's name. Reno's scouts, hearing of Reno's charge, bearing of Reno's pack train, and Reno's battalion to the left and front.

"I saw a cloud of dust rise beyond a ridge of bluffs in the east. The morning was hot and sultry. Several of us Indian girls were digging wild turnips... we girls looked towards camp and saw a warrior ride swiftly, shouting that soldiers were only a few miles away, and that the women and children, including old men, should run for the hills in the opposite direction."

— Moving Robe Woman, Hunkpapa Lakota

Little Bighorn Battlefield
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Custer Divided His Command Again, and Headed Toward the River and Village

Medicine Tail Coulee

Little Bighorn Battlefield

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

After leaving Cedar Coulee, Custer descends toward the Little Bighorn River in the ravine ahead known as Medicine Tail Coulee. Custer probably again divides his command: three companies likely ascend to the higher ridges beyond.

Two companies approach the river along Medicine Tail Coulee. Near here Custer sends back a message for Captain Benteen to "be quick." Most warriors are still engaged with Reno in the valley, yet some are aware of Custer's advance.



Lt. William Cooke gives Trumpeter Giovanni Martini the "last message"



YATES



KEOGH



Custer's Advance Toward the River



Medicine Tail Ford

Little Bighorn Battlefield

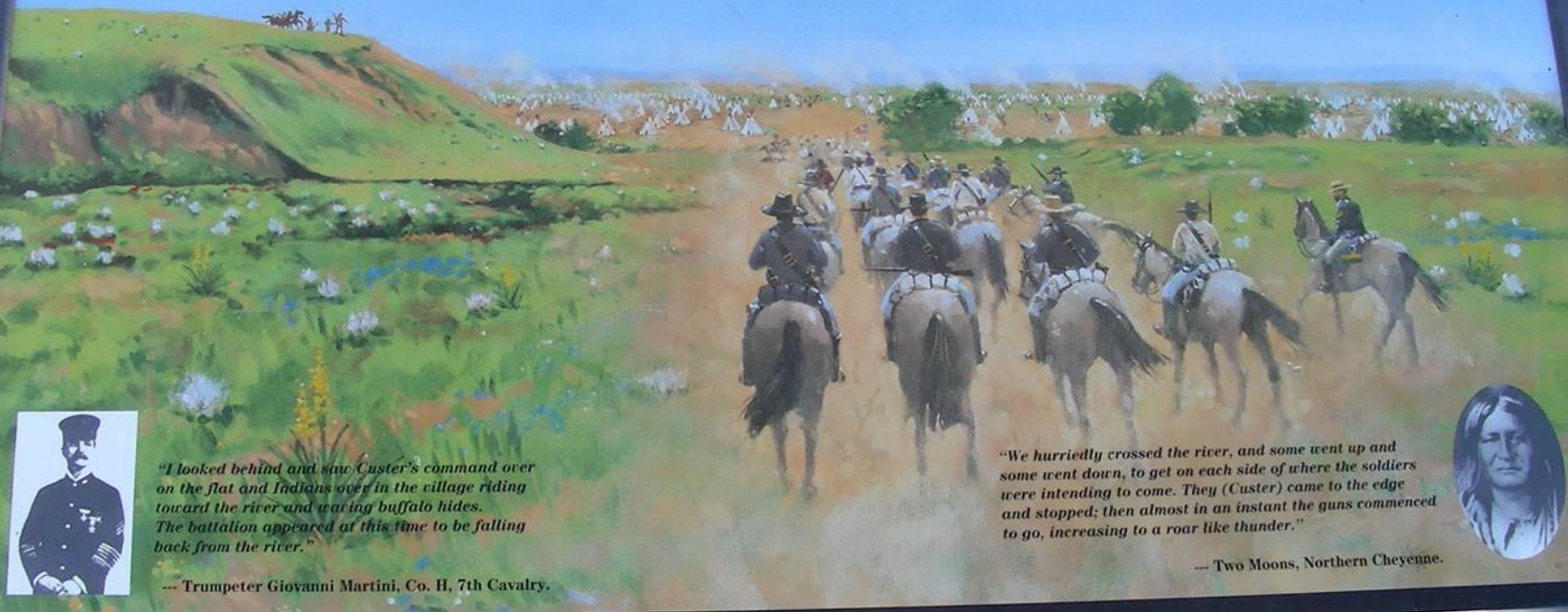
National Park Service
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"Crow Scouts recreate firing into village"
Photo by Edward S. Curtis, 1907
From left: Hairy Moccasins, Goes ahead,
and White Man Runs Him.
Courtesy Museum of New Mexico,
Neg. No. 160448

As soldiers descend Medicine Tail Coulee, the Minniconjou and Cheyenne camps were on the western bank. Archeological evidence supports Indian testimony, that initial fighting took place on the flats near the river to your left and cutbank directly ahead.

The Gray Horse Company (Co. E) and possibly Company F approaches this area. Indian pressure quickly forces these troops to battle ridge. Three Crow scouts who led Custer fired into the village from the bluff (at left) before departing.



"I looked behind and saw Custer's command over on the flat and Indians over in the village riding toward the river and waving buffalo hides. The battalion appeared at this time to be falling back from the river."

--- Trumpeter Giovanni Martini, Co. H, 7th Cavalry.

"We hurriedly crossed the river, and some went up and some went down, to get on each side of where the soldiers were intending to come. They (Custer) came to the edge and stopped; then almost in an instant the guns commenced to go, increasing to a roar like thunder."

--- Two Moons, Northern Cheyenne.



Indians Met Custer and Turned Him Back



However, Indian forces send them back to the Ridge

Deep Coulee

Little Bighorn Battlefield

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

After the brief encounter near the river, Custer's two companies retreat up the ravine to your right known as Deep Coulee. The remainder of Custer's command skirmishes with warriors on the high ridge 1/2 mile to your right. Seizing the initiative, Crow King, Gall, and Two Moons lead warriors in pursuit of the retreating soldiers.



"While Custer's firing at the cut bank was in progress, I saw no large body of Indians fording, but as soon as we began to retreat they must have swarmed across both above and below us, for we had not proceeded one-third of the way to the ridge before the Sioux were thick upon both our left and right flanks firing into us heavily."

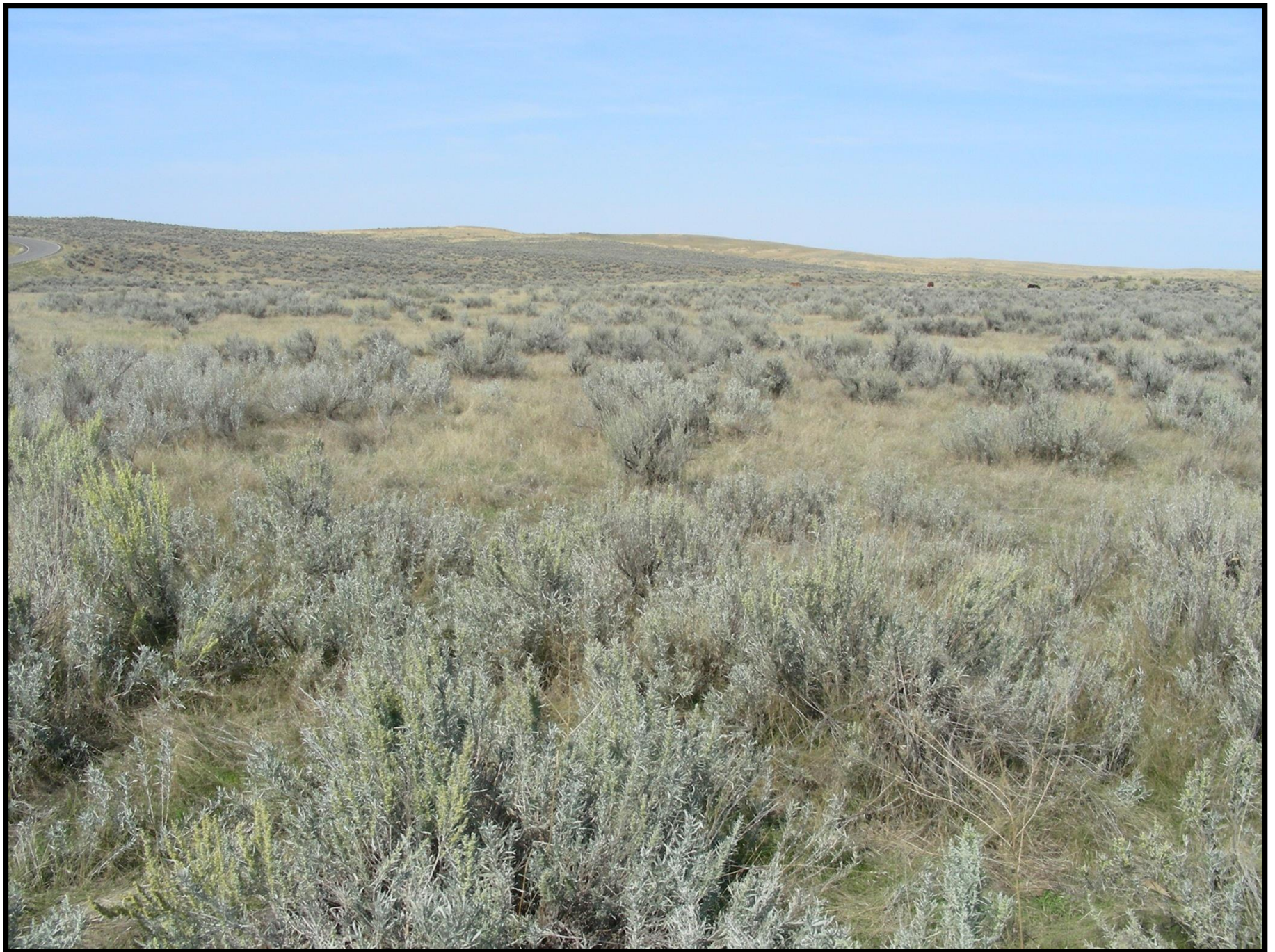
"The Indians rode in many small parties streaming northeast up the ravine toward the troops."

— White Bull, Minneconjou Lakota.

"Before fight started, we drove him (Custer) up a slope to a ridge and over to other side of it. Soldiers (were) mounted all (time) and kept going right along."

— He Dog, Oglala Lakota.



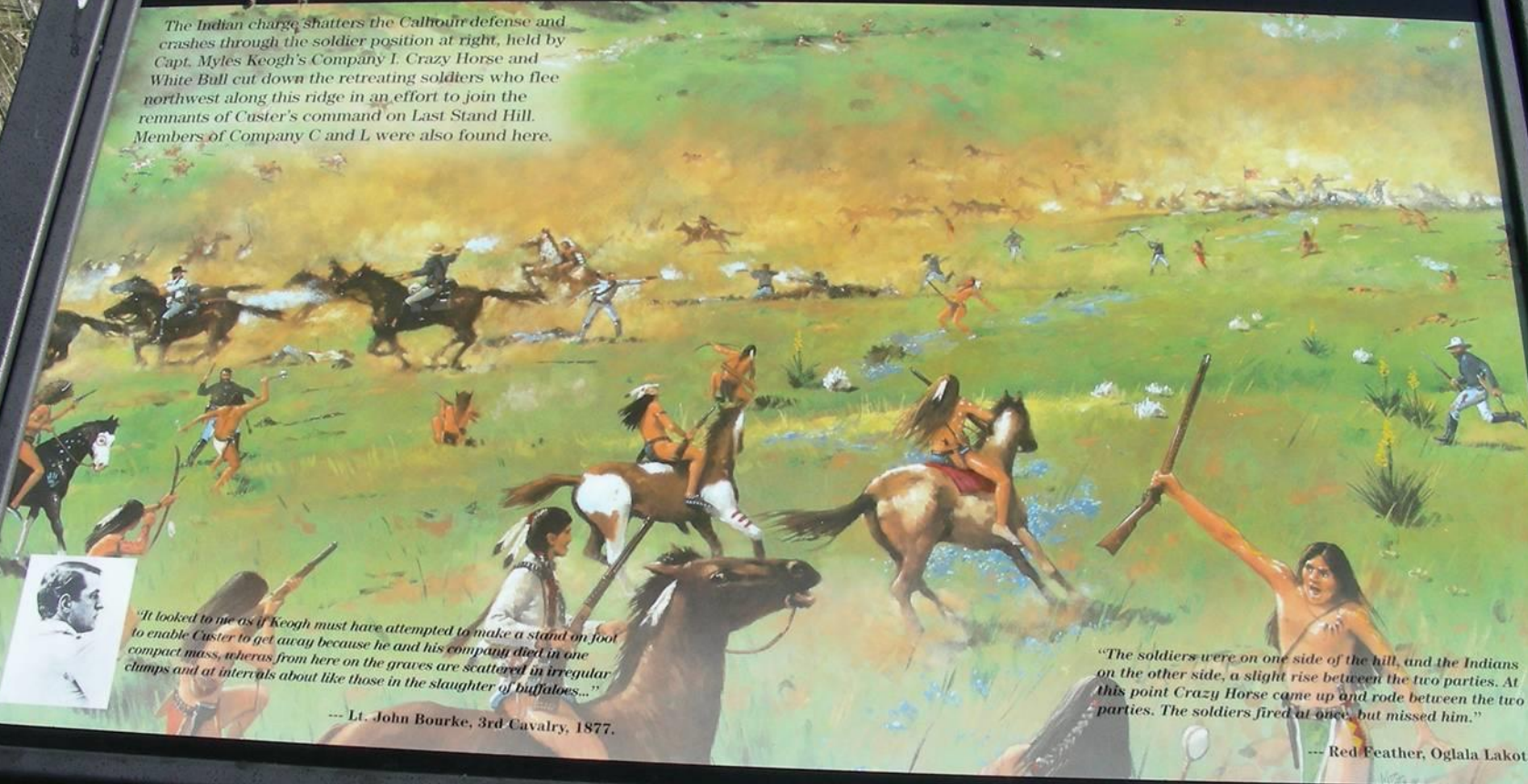


Keogh-Crazy Horse Fight

Little Bighorn Battlefield

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Indian charge shatters the Calhoun defense and crashes through the soldier position at right, held by Capt. Myles Keogh's Company I. Crazy Horse and White Bull cut down the retreating soldiers who flee northwest along this ridge in an effort to join the remnants of Custer's command on Last Stand Hill. Members of Company C and L were also found here.



"It looked to me as if Keogh must have attempted to make a stand on foot to enable Custer to get away because he and his company died in one compact mass, whereas from here on the graves are scattered in irregular clumps and at intervals about like those in the slaughter of buffaloes..."

--- Lt. John Bourke, 3rd Cavalry, 1877.

"The soldiers were on one side of the hill, and the Indians on the other side, a slight rise between the two parties. At this point Crazy Horse came up and rode between the two parties. The soldiers fired at once, but missed him."

--- Red Feather, Oglala Lakota.

Crazy Horse Battle Site North of Ridge



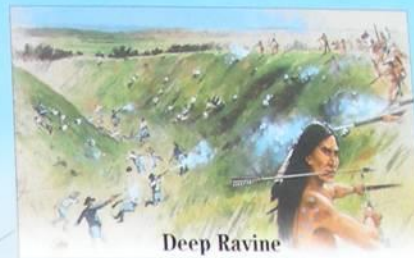
Before Custer retreated to his Last Stand, he gathered his troops together in a deep ravine to the south.

Deep Ravine

U.S. Department of the Interior

Custer's command deploys in the current national cemetery area and advances into the basin **across the road to your left** before withdrawing to Last Stand Hill. Toward the conclusion of the battle, soldiers from Company E moved toward the Deep Ravine.

Overwhelmed by warriors, including White Bull and He Dog, these soldiers sought refuge in Deep Ravine, but were killed there. Lame White Man, Southern Cheyenne war leader, fell near here.



Deep Ravine



"...Riding along the edge of the deep gully about 2,000 feet from where the monument now stands, I counted 28 bodies in this gulch."

--- Daniel Kanipe, Co. C, 7th Cavalry.

"We saw soldiers start running down hill toward us. Nearly all of them were afoot, and I think they were so scared they didn't know what they were doing. They were making their arms go as though they were running very fast, but they were only walking. Some of them shot their guns in the air."

--- Iron Hawk, Hunkpapa Lakota.



Custer's Remaining Troops Retreat to Last Stand Hill.





Last Stand Hill





After Custer's Defeat

Using guns and ammunition taken from Custer's dead soldiers, the Indians returned to Reno and Benteen's forces on the ridge. Indian riflemen occupied the ridges to the east and southeast of the ridge. Rifle pit in foreground



**No clouds, no rain,
and temperatures
reaching into the high
90s resulted in a
desperate need of
water for the wounded
soldiers. A team of
soldiers moved down
the steep bluffs,
through what is
known today as
"water carrier's
ravine", to retrieve
water from the river.**



Knowing that more soldiers were on the way, after removing their dead from the battlefield, the Indian encampment pulled stakes and scattered in different directions on the evening of June 26, leaving the surviving soldiers on their ridge.



Infantry and cavalry under the command Terry and Gibbon would find the Custer dead the morning of June 27. As Terry's column entered the former village area ,they found several Sioux tree burials within the village.



On June 28, Custer's dead were identified and buried in shallow graves where they fell. In 1881 they were reinterred in a mass grave, although officers were transferred east and Custer was buried at West Point. In 1890 the army erected 249 headstones to mark where each soldier died.



Memorial to Army Soldiers and Mass Grave of Enlisted Men



THE MEMORIAL

The remains of about 220 soldiers, scouts, and civilians are buried around the base of this memorial.

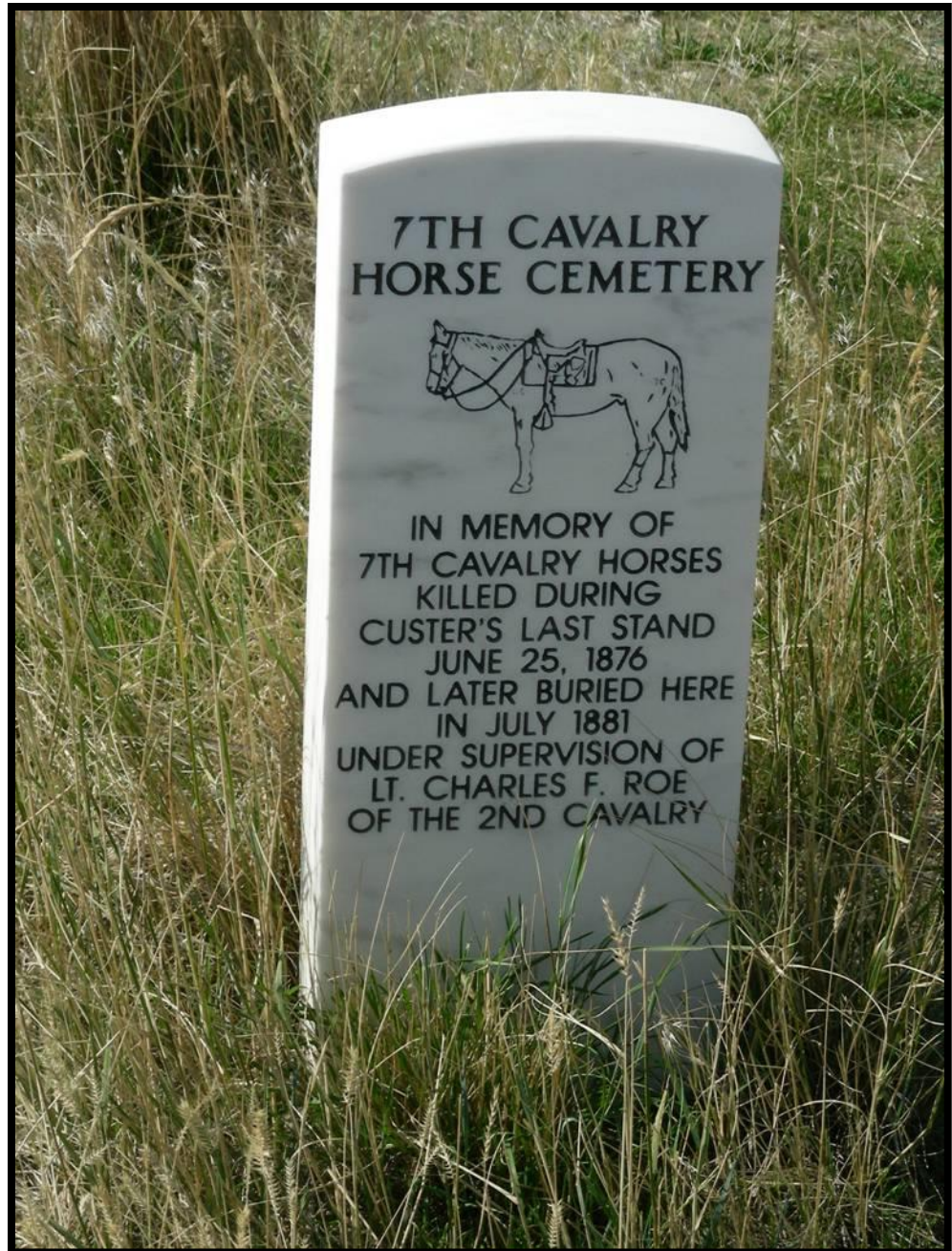
The white marble headstones scattered over the battlefield denote where the slain troopers were found and originally buried. In 1881 they were reinterred in a single grave on this site.

The officers' remains were removed in 1877 to various cemeteries throughout the country. General Custer was buried at West Point.

In 1999, the Park Service began erecting granite markers at known Cheyenne and Lakota casualty sites.



**Even the horses
were buried in a
mass grave and
commemorated
with a marker.**



The Indian Memorial Was Dedicated June 25, 2003



Riderless Horses



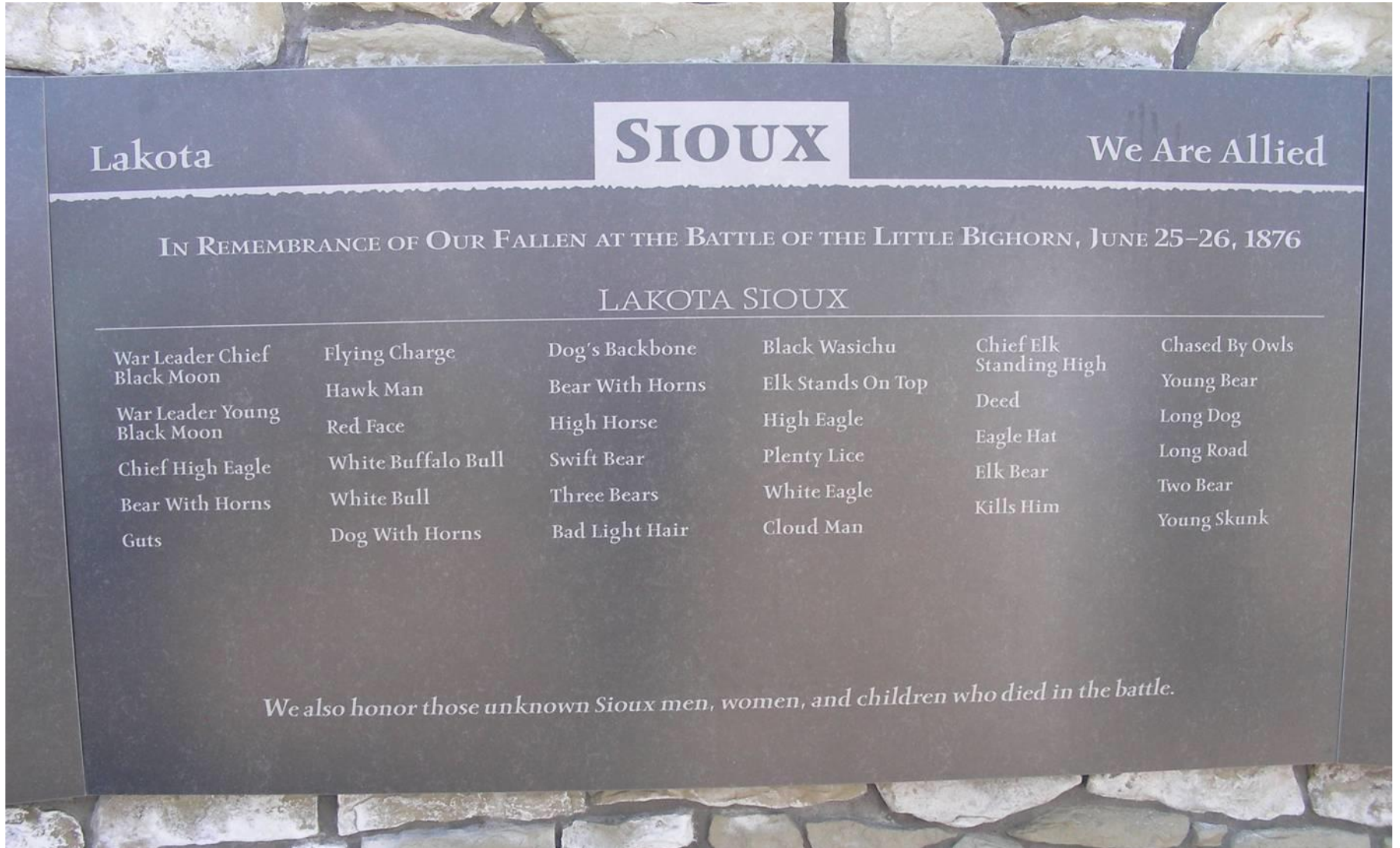
Indian Memorial



Memorial Interior with Spirit Riders



Along the Weeping Walls inside the Indian Memorial are panels for each tribe that fought in the battle: Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow, and Arikara.



Lakota

SIOUX

We Are Allied

IN REMEMBRANCE OF OUR FALLEN AT THE BATTLE OF THE LITTLE BIGHORN, JUNE 25-26, 1876

LAKOTA SIOUX

War Leader Chief
Black Moon

Flying Charge

Dog's Backbone

Black Wasichu

Chief Elk
Standing High

Chased By Owls

War Leader Young
Black Moon

Hawk Man

Bear With Horns

Elk Stands On Top

Deed

Young Bear

Chief High Eagle

Red Face

High Horse

High Eagle

Eagle Hat

Long Dog

Bear With Horns

White Bull

Swift Bear

Plenty Lice

Elk Bear

Long Road

Guts

Dog With Horns

Three Bears

White Eagle

Kills Him

Two Bear

Bad Light Hair

Cloud Man

Young Skunk

We also honor those unknown Sioux men, women, and children who died in the battle.



Created by
Susanne Bloomfield
to illustrate
The Long Knives Are Crying
by Joseph Marshall III