



"To Be Remembered"

Robert J. Ege - - Great Falls, Montana 59401

NEWSLETTER OF THE LITTLE BIG HORN ASSOCIATES .. Vol. 1, No. 1 January 1967.


The purpose of this monthly letter is primarily to afford the members of the association a media or outlet in which to "air their views", seek information, and volunteer information beneficial to other serious historians of General George A. Custer, the 7th United States Regiment of Cavalry and the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

The Little Big Horn Associates is a group comprised of twelve charter members selected for their interest and historical integrity. To date, there are no officers, nor have any dues or membership fees been established. As it is a non-profit organization, devoted solely to the exchange of historical data, members will be assessed only for the cost of production materials and postage. Future plans, subject to approval of the charter group, may include membership cards and lapel pins. Subsequent copies, which will be distributed "gratis" to interested historical societies, will be produced (first page only) on a suitable letterhead.

All of the members are hereby solicited to provide pertinent, condensed material for use in the letter. It is only by your contributions that our effort can be a success.

The above statement is in no way intended to be a charter or set of rules governing the activities or policy of the association. It is, however, the basis upon which the group and idea was formed. Pending an election of officers, Robert B. MacLaine of 2406 North Puget Sound Avenue, Tacoma, Washington, 98406 has agreed to act as Treasurer and collect such fees incurred in the production of the bulletin.

SO.....here we go! Sound off and be heard from. We have an excellent nucleus and the most interesting subject in the world. It is not our aim to convert anyone and we will probably never resolve any of the so-called "mysteries" that purportedly surround the famous last battle, except maybe, among ourselves. But we shall be heard from.


ROBERT J. EGE
Acting Editor

COST OF LETTERHEADS: A close "guesstimate" of the cost of a suitable letterhead on quality paper to be used as a first sheet on each of the monthly letters is about \$20. per thousand. This would include an appropriate line cut to be used as a distinctive heading. It is our hope and desire that all of the historical societies set up and maintain a file of these letters for use by non-member students of history.

CHARTER MEMBERS....."LITTLE BIG HORN ASSOCIATES"

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It is suggested that this list be retained pending your wish to correspond with any of the group.

MEMBER HI-LITE.....

Herman Marmon was born in Zanesfield, Logan Co., Ohio. After graduation from the Zanesfield High School, he attended Cedarville College and graduated with A. B. and B. Sc. degrees. His A. M. was conferred by Wittenberg College, Springfield, Ohio.

Herman embarked on a teaching career that carried him through three states, Tennessee, Georgia and Ohio. After spending a little more than half-a-century in the classrooms, he retired on June 30, 1965. History and allied subjects are his field and he is a photo hobbyist. Through the years, Herman has been a serious and interested student of "The Old Northwest", Ohio History and Custeriana. He is a member of the Logan County Historical Society, Ohio Historical Society and the Historical Society of Montana.

AS A FREQUENTLY PUBLISHED WRITER-HISTORIAN, BOB MacLAIN MAKES SENSE....

Nothing stands out so clearly as one delves deeply into the Little Big Horn Battle than the undeniable fact that much about it will never be known. Except for the result, exactly what happened to Custer's command will always be shrouded in mystery. Even the Indian versions clarified nothing, for all were too vague and conflicting. Despite such obvious "dead end", from this mystery has grown a welter of false claims, myths, and fictions intended to solve the unsolvable; but they merely encrust known facts with more hogwash.

For years, unethical charlatans, with no regard for truth, have foisted upon the gullible public, fantastic tales purported to be history — phony survivor's yarns, fake Indian legends, and similar poppycock. Now that all bona-fide survivors, red or white, are gone, the unscrupulous writer resorts to sheer imagination to ensure sales — long lost diaries, newly unearthed startling facts, scurrilous attacks on Custer, or Reno, even sacrilege and lurid sex. Compared to the "sensationalists", Baron Munchhausen was an honest man.

** For example take "Red Berries," a Custer-hating Cheyenne, who joined his command near Weir Point, led him into Gall's ambush, then "killed him." The same writer dreamed up another lulu ab at Custer's real last message, using a phony 58 word dispatch, that serious historians long ago debunked, which Custer supposedly wrote to Reno DURING the final melee of the "Last Stand."

Then there is Mon-ah-see-tah, Custer's Cheyenne "wife" according to some legends. This may be true, although unsupported by any white evidence. Whatever, it isn't true that she rode with Custer to his doom, and protected his corpse from mutilation, as certain "know nothings" have alleged. A woman in the column would have provoked much comment, and afterward it would have come out. Especially from those like Benteen who disliked Custer.

Nevertheless, other wild writers, claim a woman did share Custer's sack along the Rosebud — but not Mon-ah-see-tah. They claim she was Annie Elinor Jones, erstwhile officer's doxie during the Civil War. Just how, after 11 years, Annie turned up in the Montana wilderness, unseen by General Terry or Gibbon's entire command, or any 7th Cavalry survivor, is not explained. Nor is her fate on June 25th. Maybe Sitting Bull got her. Anyhow, one crackpot even today refuses to accept evidence to the contrary from one of our clique and stupidly insists he can prove "Annie was there."

As for me, I became interested in Custeriana when, as a boy in western Kansas, I roamed the scenes of Custer's first contacts with the Indians. In 1922, when 18, my folks moved to southeastern Montana. My visits to Custer Battlefield were countless, yet since leaving Montana I've made many more.

I am 62, retired from the army, have three sons, three daughters, and 12 grandchildren. Sold my first story when 20, made writing a remunerative hobby, and today specialize in a few factual Indian Wars articles each year. I've written no books. The Custer battle has been rehashed all too often, so what could I add in writing about it? I prefer to probe into that "mystery." After a 40-year search and much expense I now have what has been called the only such collection known -- an album holding photos of all 43 officers who belonged to the 7th on June 25, 1876. From official muster roles and other data I have compiled a correct roster of the 831 officers and men who comprised the regiment that fateful day, showing who was in the battle, or absent. I have an extensive "Custer" library, copies of several "Last Stand" paintings, framed photos of famous Indians and officers who fought them cover my study walls. My data files cover not only Custeriana but Indian Wars in general.

AND IT'S ALL AVAILABLE FOR RESEARCH TO ANYONE IN OUR GROUP....

DESPITE HIS NAME, HE'S A WARM FELLOW ... LAWRENCE A. FROST

Where does he find the time? In addition to his lengthy and distinguished career as a podiatrist and foot specialist, Dr. Lawrence Frost is curator of the Custer room of the Monroe County, Michigan Museum. He recently retired after serving a four year term as mayor of Monroe and has still found time to author "THE CUSTER ALBUM," an excellent pictorial history of the general's life. And, there is more coming up that will undoubtedly be of great interest to all Custer fans.

Dr. Frost, long-time friend of the Custer family, who still reside in Monroe, has been instrumental in amassing the huge collection of "Custeriana" that graces the shelves and archives of the Monroe memorial. His lectures on all phases of the general's life have held audiences spell-bound in many parts of the country. The "Associates" are indeed fortunate to have the Monroe doctor in the charter group. His contributions to this letter are eagerly anticipated.

FROM NORTH OF THE BORDER COMES DR. G. D. WEST

Dr. West is Assistant Dean of Degree Studies in Extension at McMaster University of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. He is a native of Scarborough, Yorkshire, England and a graduate of Oxford with a higher degree conferred at London University. During WW II, Dr. West was commissioned in 1942 and served in the Infantry (Green Howards) and the General Staff. Subsequently he held a commission in the Territorial Army for services with cadet forces, retiring in July 1966. As a Lieutenant-Colonel, he holds the Decoration for Territorial Efficiency.

Dr. West spreads his interest between Medieval French Literature and Western Americana. His literary efforts have been published in issues of The English Westerner's periodicals and in a volume of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Review. A current article on Sappa Creek is slated for publication in the journal of the Kansas State Historical Society. Dr. West is married and has two sons, one attending school in Hamilton and the other at McMaster University. Someday they too, may be able to sign T. D., M. A., and Ph. D. after their names. Certainly glad to have you aboard, Doctor.

After reading "FAINT THE TRUMPET SOUNDS", by John Upton Terrell and Col. George Walton, wherein Major Marcus A. Reno, in spite of his malignant military record and series of "misfortunes," emerges as the hero of the Little Big Horn and the brutal treatment afforded Custer by the late Mari Sandoz, a prominent Monroe, Michigan historian was heard to mutter:

"HOLY MACKEREL!!....1966 has been a rugged year. The "antis" have taken the hill again."

Fay Kuhlman, daughter-in-law of the late Dr. Charles Kuhlman is the mayor of Bearcreek, Montana. Once a ghost town and the scene of one of Montana's worst mine disasters, Bearcreek is making a strong comeback as an artist's and writer's colony.

WHEN GENERAL CUSTER LOST HIS LUCK

by

Lawrence A. Frost

In the spring of 1867 General Winfield S. Hancock had been ordered to quell Indians depredating in northern Kansas. Assigned to him was the newly organized Seventh Cavalry under the command of General G. A. Custer who, like Hancock, had an enviable Civil War record but no experience fighting Indians.

The Spring campaign was fruitless. The heavily equipped cavalrymen had been no match for the fast moving Indians. General W. T. Sherman wanted the area between the Platte and Arkansas Rivers cleared of all unfriendly Indians. Custer and six companies of the Seventh set out to do this leaving old Fort Hays near the Smoky Hill River on June 1st.

They were to scout as far north as Fort McPherson on the Platte, describe a semicircle southward, touching the Republican River, and then move northerly toward Fort Sedgewick on the Platte. Once their supplies were replenished they would proceed south to Fort Wallace on the Smoky Hill, then to their starting point Fort Hays; in all some 1,000 miles.

The six weeks campaign was replete with action. Conferences with warring Indian chiefs, an officer's suicide, Indian fights, the discovery of the mutilated bodies of Lieut. Kidder and his party, wholesale daylight desertions of cavalrymen, and finally, the discovery that cholera-ridden Fort Wallace was besieged by Indians and cut off from all supplies and communication.

The taxpayers back East were aroused because of the high cost of Indian campaigning with no apparent results; a situation somewhat paralleling our present day war in Viet Nam. The Congress and the President were feeling the pressure and were looking for a way out.

Custer did the wrong thing at the right time. Doing what any well-trained, conscientious officer would do, he selected men and horses and pressed on to Fort Hays to obtain relief for Fort Wallace. Immediately he was placed in arrest, and a courtmartial arraigned. Momentarily, Custer's luck had deserted him. At any other time he would have been commended. This time he supplied what they wanted most -- a scapegoat.

HELP WANTED by Bob Ege

Perhaps all of the Associates are familiar with "FIREARMS IN THE CUSTER BATTLE" by Parsons and duMont. The authors, quoting from an 1876 Ordnance Report by 7th Cavalry Sgt.-Major W. H. Sharrow make brief mention on page 12 of the possibility of 155 Ward-Burton experimental rifles or carbines being slated for use in the expedition. The question is; how many of these arms were used in the famous last battle.

(See next page.)

HELP WANTED (Continued from preceding page.)

Authenticated statements by Lieut. E. S. Godfrey and Sgt. Charles Windolph and others indicate that "all men carried the .45 Cal. Springfield Carbine." I have strong reason to doubt this statement. In 1954 I personally discovered two .50 Cal. Ward-Burton cartridge cases on a ridge several hundred yards East of Reno's entrenchments on the hill. These are in my collection. Several others, about thirty in all, were recovered by CBNM personnel and are in the battlefield museum. All were recovered in areas occupied by Indians during their seige against Reno-Benteen battalions on June 26.

Although the Indians were quite canny in obtaining firearms and munitions, I find it impossible to believe that they possessed any U. S. Army experimental arms prior to the battle. From all appearances, a few, or possibly several men of Custer's ill-fated column were armed with Ward-Burtons and their fire power turned against the survivors after Custer's command had been overcome.

To date, I have been unable to locate any documentary evidence that any of the command carried these arms. Likewise, I have never found a record of arms taken from captive or returning Indians wherein the Ward-Burtons were listed as "recovered." The over-all picture, backed by discoveries, indicate that physical evidence outweighs the written, or as you may, the lack of written evidence. ANY INFO ???.

GENERAL ROSS SUGGESTS TOPICS.....

Major-General Frank S. Ross of South Laguna, California states that he is neither pro nor anti Custer and his wonderment at those that are causes him to suggest an interesting topic for future issues. He states:

"It has always puzzled me why so many people either worship or despise the man to such extremes. I am speaking of people who never knew him, primarily, but it sometimes seems to me that even some who did know him rather casually and were not at the battle certainly fall in those categories as well. I suggest that this might well be a subject for debate since there is such a wide difference of opinion on that matter.

Another subject which I think of is the moot question, did Custer disobey his orders? If so why? If not why? "

Well members, there you have it. The General has provided some fine food for thought. Your opinions are welcome and your editor is waiting.

It is expected that the 2nd issue of our newsletter will be 10 pages in length. From the Editor's standpoint, the first edition is the toughest. REMEMBER, The success of our joint venture depends on the cooperation of all concerned. Get your literary efforts in and we'll see that they get printed. Current events on our subject are always welcome.