General George Crook and the Sioux war of 1876

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GENERAL GEORGE CROOK AND THE SIOUX WAR

OF 1876

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of History
and the
Faculty of the College of Graduate Studies
University of Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Forrest Delmont Newman
January 1967
Accepted for the faculty of the College of Graduate Studies of the University of Omaha, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

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A voluminous bibliography of excellent materials devoted to the Sioux War of 1876 attests to the fascination this subject holds for amateur and professional historians. One basis of interest may be a morbid preoccupation in the shocking violence that was manifested as standard practice by the red man—and sometimes by his white adversary. A more humane motivation may be found in the sympathy which many students express on behalf of the underdog, the Indian. Other researchers associate themselves, in their imagination, with the hardy folk who forged a civilization in the savage West.

The object of this work is to present the role Brigadier General George Crook fulfilled during the most extensive Indian war west of the Mississippi River. In conformance with the precepts of modern historiography, this objective will be approached in the following phases: a study of background events and causitive factors; review and analysis of General Crook's campaigns during the conflict; and, his contribution to immediate results of the conflict.

Reference must be made to the works compiled by contemporary participants of the Sioux War of 1876. These
materials have been invaluable in determining chronology and color. *War Path* and *Bivouac*, by John F. Finerty, the doughty correspondent of the *Chicago Times*, has been helpful in specifying the dates of marches and camp locations. Accounts written by the soldier-authors, Captain Anson Mills, Lieutenants John G. Bourke, Charles King, and James H. Bradley have been utilized to gain an understanding of military action.

This literature generally affects the romantic style typical of the latter half of the nineteenth century, and often betrays the authors' partiality to their respective commanders. Their accounts tend to be highly localized and a sound perspective of the complete action in a large campaign is usually lacking. This deficiency stems from the limited field of vision of the contemporary soldier-author, who did not enjoy the blessings of unrestricted access to all correspondence, particularly that of high-ranking officials. Regardless of these limitations, their works are a valuable contribution to latter day understanding of their involvement in historical events. When their records of privation, sacrifice, and bravery are compared, they are commendably similar in presenting the details of events, that were common to their observation.

Indebtedness is acknowledged to the staff personnel of the Nebraska State Historical Library, the Omaha Public
Library, and the University of Omaha Library for their kind assistance, or suggestions, during the research phase of the paper. Especially appreciated has been the guidance and scholastic inspiration afforded the writer by Dr. Roy M. Robbins, Professor of American History, University of Omaha.
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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

Westward expansion of the United States was forced by several principal groups. The most important of these was the immigrants; miners, trappers, traders, ranchers, and farmers, most of whom traveled toward the new lands west of the Mississippi in trains of white-topped Conestoga wagons.

Protection for the immigrants was provided by another important group—the United States Army. Garrisoned in bleak and wretched forts that became the nuclei for primitive and bustling towns, cavalrymen aged rapidly or died young in pursuit of the elusive Plains Indians.

Transportation and supply for the West first demanded the important services of the freight wagon and stage coach organizations. These groups were later supplanted by the builders and operators of railroads. It was the Union Pacific and the Northern Pacific that helped spell the finish of the vigorous Sioux Indians. These railroads, built by the sinew of Chinese and Irish immigrant laborers, provided a medium for accelerated movement of foodstuffs, manufactured goods, people, and troops between the outposts of civilization and the economically substantial Eastern
States.

The odoriferous and avaricious buffalo hunters played a vital role in curbing the Western Indians. These killers of the plains left bleached bones, where, only several seasons before, the shaggy beasts had grazed. In destroying the Indians' commissary, they eliminated the economic underpinnings of the dreaded plains tribes.

The impact of these groups upon the primeval West was repetitious of the course of history as it had happened east of the Mississippi. Initially, the few white men venturing into the trans-Mississippi prairies and Rocky Mountains aroused little more than curiosity in the Indians. Of course, most of these first adventurers were traders and trappers, who did not decimate the buffalo herds, assets considered most tangible by the Indians.

With the arrival of increased numbers of immigrants when gold was discovered in Montana, Colorado, and finally in the Black Hills of South Dakota, the Indians divined the ultimate effect on their hunting economy. By 1875, the more responsible Indian leaders, namely, Red Cloud and Spotted Tail of the Sioux, realized that their nomadic way of life was ended.

During their long fight against the civilized invasion, the Sioux occasionally won individual battles. These victories were attained through shrewdness, startling
courage, and sacrifice of life during charges into the gunfire of the Great Father's soldiers. It is unlikely that any course other than vigorous resistance by the Sioux could have occurred. The Indians had every reason to reject a system that was diametrically opposed to their concept of the good life. Over the years, though, the tribesmen were battling a never-ending tide of enemy manpower.

It was the United States Army that delivered the coup de grace. Western military forces, assigned the task of placing the defiant, painted bands onto the reservations, were thinly spread throughout numerous small forts. In fulfilling their assignment, it did not matter that an expedition was bloodied at the Rosebud or another destroyed at the Little Big Horn. The persistent government forces, supplied from areas beyond the Indian's reach, continually harried and finally forced the white man's will on the Sioux. Even Crazy Horse, one of the most valiant protectors of the old way could see in 1877 that he must walk the white man's road. Farmers and ranchers were to take possession of the lands, where once the great, black herds had pastured.

Over the tumultuous years of Sioux conflict, beginning with Lieutenant John L. Gratten's foolish death in 1854, and continuing until the Battle of Wounded Knee of 1890, the names of white and Indian leaders were common knowledge. In 1876, Sitting Bull, Red Cloud, Spotted Tail,
Crazy Horse, Hump, and Gall were leaders of the Sioux Indians. Power among the whites was actively invested in Army officers who possessed distinguished records. Among these notable soldiers were Sherman, Sheridan, Terry, Custer, Gibbon, and Crook.

Of the three distinct groups comprising the Sioux Nation—the Dakotas, Nakotas, and Lakotas—it was the Lakotas who were the dreaded enemy of 1876. Since all members of the major divisions were properly called Sioux, specific reference will be made to the Army's great antagonist, the Lakotas, known as the Teton Sioux, or earlier—Dwellers of the Prairie. The seven tribes that comprised the Teton Sioux were: the Oglalas, meaning, Scatter One's Own; the Brulés, or Burnt Thighs; the Minneconjous, or Those Who Plant by the Stream; the Cohenonpas, or Two Kettles, as they were more commonly known; the Hunkpapas, or Those Who Camp at the Entrance; the Sihasapas, or the Blackfeet; and the San Arcs, or Without Bows.1 Allied with the Teton Sioux in their fight against the white man, were the Arapahoes and the valiant, impetuous Northern Cheyennes. The Teton Sioux, more hostile to the westward march of civilization than any other Plains Indians, mounted a fierce

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and desperate resistance to the inroads of the wasicu.  

Events of 1876 were crucial to the lives of Indians and white men alike. The struggles in Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota signaled the end of one civilization and the dominance of another. These affairs, most tragic for the mighty Sioux, were the culmination of repeated failures to establish mutual faith, respect, and understanding between the antagonists.

Lack of rapport between the Sioux Indians and the United States Government stemmed from political, economic, and cultural differences. While these factors were relatively simple among the Sioux, they were complex matters among the Americans. The intense preoccupation of the white man with these elements was motivated by a desire for materialistic achievement. An aggressive spirit, resulting from this background, was imparted to the relations the Western pioneers experienced with the Plains Indians, who frustrated the materialistic aim of the Americans. To appreciate the importance of the last great Sioux war, it is necessary to recount the major political and economic developments that initially opened and then widened the long trail to the troubles of 1876.

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2 "Wasicu is the Lakota word for white man. The original meaning was 'can't get rid of them'." 
In a political sense, the problem was initiated in the Government's established policy of locating the Plains Indians on two separate and enormous reservation areas. During initial discussions of this plan, the reservations were simply referred to as the north and the south Indian groups, or colonies. It was conceived that the Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, and other lesser tribes of the Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas areas would be established on the southern reservation, in the present state of Oklahoma. Sioux, Arapahoe, Crow, and Pawnee tribes were to be confined to the northern reservation, located north of the Platte River and west of the Missouri.

Movement of immigrants to the Far West and Pacific coastal areas required clearance of the Indians from the Central Plains areas if continuous turmoil between the wagon trains and marauding warrior bands was to be minimized. Travel to the new northwest territories was over the Oregon Trail, through Nebraska, along the North Platte River to South Pass. The southwest territories, obtained as a result of the Mexican War, were served by the Santa Fe Trail that penetrated the plains through Kansas. Since

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3James C. Malin, "Indian Policy and Westward Expansion," Humanistic Studies, II, No. 3. Bulletin of the University of Kansas, XXII, No. 17 (November 1921), pp. 77-78.

primary interest in this study concerns conflicts of interest between the Sioux Indians (a northern group) and the Government, discussion of major events will accent efforts to restrain this formidable people.

In early relations with the Indians, the United States Government determined it was cheaper to feed, bribe, and cajole, than to fight. The Treaty of Laramie of 1851, concluded with the Sioux and the other northern bands, was a manifestation of this policy. Major provisions of the agreement permitted "... the Government to establish roads, military and other posts, within their territory," granted annuities of trade goods and food to the Sioux for fifteen years, and designated specific tracts of land as hunting areas located north of the North Platte for individual tribes. The Indians' rights and claims to other lands were not abandoned. 5

The first agreement at Laramie was only a partial success; fifteen years of comparative peace was observed on the northern plains. During this interlude, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was introduced by Stephen A. Douglas, the Democratic Senator of Illinois. This proposal, passed by Congress in 1854, was of immediate importance because of the strife it activated between the pro-slavery and

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anti-slavery forces over the settlement of Kansas. The displace­ment effects of the Kansas-Nebraska Act on the unsuspecting Plains Indians was inherent in the basic aims of Senator Douglas.

In the ante-bellum era, Douglas was one of the strongest advocates for construction of the Pacific railroad. A northern, central, and southern route had been surveyed. Proponents of the southern route, through Texas and New Mexico, stated the railroad would pass through organized areas, while the northern and central routes would cross unorganized territories. Passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act countered the southern argument and also initiated the settlement of these territories prior to the Civil War.\(^6\) Even before the iron rails of the Union Pacific penetrated the prairies, a wedge of white occupancy was being driven between the northern and southern Plains Indians. Completion of the Union Pacific Railroad hastened the occupation of Nebraska and made the north-south reservation policy a reality. The buffalo herds of Nebraska were short-lived after completion of the railroad through the Platte Valley. By 1875, they were extinct on that portion of the Great Plains.\(^7\)

\(^6\)Malin, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

Fifteen years of peace with the Teton Sioux were terminated in 1866 by the obtuse conduct of the Government. In the spring of that year, arrangements were made to renew the provisions of the 1851 Treaty of Laramie. Concurrent with renegotiations, the United States Army organized a construction party at Fort Laramie for the purpose of establishing strong points along the Bozeman Trail. On determining the purpose of these military preparations, the most militant Sioux, under the leadership of Red Cloud, angrily withdrew from the parleys. 8

Under that chieftain's aggressive leadership, the Teton Sioux actively harassed travel and military activity along the portions of the Bozeman Trail that passed between Fort Laramie and the eastern slopes of the Big Horn Mountains. From 1866 until the summer of 1868, Red Cloud's followers gave the occupants of Forts Phil Kearney, Reno, and C. F. Smith no respite from continuous observation, feints, and deadly attacks. The primary engagements of this period were: the massacre of Captain William J. Fetterman's column on December 21, 1866, at Fort Phil Kearney; the fight with Captain James W. Powell's woodcutters, August 2, 1867, near Fort Phil Kearney, which is now called the Wagon Box Fight; and the skirmish near Fort

8Ruby, op. cit., p. 91.
C. F. Smith, August 1, 1867, or the Hayfield Fight.

Occupation of Forts Phil Kearney, Reno, and C. F. Smith was terminated in August 1868, by negotiation of the second agreement between the Teton Sioux and the Government—the Treaty of Laramie of 1868.

Closing of the forts resulted in termination of travel over the Bozeman Trail to Montana. The latter Treaty of Laramie has been described as an agreement in which the Government granted the desires of another party and gained nothing in compensation. This contention ignores the westward construction progress of the Union Pacific. By 1868, the railroad terminal at Cheyenne, within the Rocky Mountain region, provided direct northward routes to Montana, west of the Big Horn Mountains, through safer territory. In brief, the wagon road through the western hunting grounds of the Teton Sioux was not worth a fight.9

In 1871, the sanctity of the game preserve was threatened by the projected Northern Pacific Railroad. During the summer of that year, a survey party wended its way to the south bank of the Yellowstone. No hostiles were sighted during that survey. In 1872, the parties were under constant surveillance by the Sioux and subjected to a determined attack by groups of Sioux warriors. Again, in the

summer of 1873, a party accompanied by George A. Custer and the Seventh Cavalry reviewed the proposed Yellowstone route. Custer's force experienced two sharp fights with the Tetons along the north bank of the Yellowstone.10

While the security of the Yellowstone valley hunting grounds was being threatened, rumors were circulating that mineral wealth abounded in the Black Hills. To confirm or dispel these stories, Lt. Col. George A. Custer led the Black Hills Expedition of 1874 to that portion of South Dakota.11 To the Teton Sioux, the Black Hills were a treasured hunting and camping site--rich in game, good water, grass for the pony herds, and refuge from the extremes of summer heat and winter winds. The Teton Sioux venerated the Hills, calling them their "Meat Pack".12 Although Custer's Expedition was not attacked, the Sioux were indignant over what they considered unjustified trespassing of property protected by the Laramie Treaty of 1868.

Another Black Hills Expedition of 1874 confirmed the Indians' suspicion that the Government would not abide by


12Hassrick, op. cit., p. 75.
the provisions of the treaty. This time, the column was led by Lt. Col. Richard Irving Dodge and accompanied by Professor Walter P. Jenny, of the School of Mines, New York City. Both the Custer and Dodge Expedition reported the presence of gold in the mountain streams.

This information launched an influx of miners into the Black Hills. As if prompted by second thoughts, the Government directed closure of the Black Hills to white settlement. Cavalry patrols were dispatched to turn back prospectors. In spite of these official efforts, determined gold seekers found their way through, or around the patrols and the mining population of the Black Hills increased.

By 1874, it was becoming evident to the Teton Sioux that promises made at Fort Laramie in 1868, to observe the sanctity of Indian treaty property, were to be broken. Although the Indians had never completely ceased their forays against ranchers, farmers, and travelers, the proposals for increased war against the white men gained popularity among the Sioux. Subsequent intensive military action has often been justified on the basis of the Sioux

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depredations; but in reality, the more accurate cause lies in the Government's violation of the 1868 treaty.

As the tenuous situation between the Government and the Teton Sioux deteriorated, the quality of United States Army commanders in the northern Great Plains area became a subject of prime importance. The Department of the Platte was a region faced with an impending confrontation between the Government and powerful Sioux. The aphorism, "Nothing succeeds like success," applies to the assignment of Brigadier General George Crook to the command of the Platte.

Prior to assuming his new duties in the spring of 1875, General Crook had established a reputation as a successful soldier. After graduation from the Military Academy at West Point in 1852, he had served on the West Coast against the Indians of northern California and Oregon with steadfastness and resolution. His sober traits and qualities of leadership accounted for his promotion to the brevet rank of Major General during the Civil War.

After Appomattox, he reverted, like many of his rapidly promoted contemporaries, to a lower rank in the peace-time army. Crook continued on active duty in the actual rank of Lieutenant Colonel, but was addressed and referred to as General, in deference to his wartime brevet rank. He was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General on
October 29, 1873.  

General Crook's assignment to command the Department of the Platte was in response to the need for a capable Indian fighter. Crook's credentials were impressive. During the years of 1871-1875, while commanding the Department of Arizona, he had pursued, fought, and defeated the murderous Apaches. His victory over the Southwest tribes was followed by their placement on reservations. Although some of the Apaches subsequently bolted from the reservations and resumed depredations, Crook's methods in subjugating them had been noted and were applied by his successors.

Warfare in the Southwest was characterized by several features. The most generally accepted trait of Apache fighting was the extreme cruelty with which the Indians treated captives, or the wounded. The elaborate atrocities practiced upon these unfortunates were horrendous because of the fiendish ingenuity displayed in extracting the last ounce of suffering from the victims. A less acknowledged characteristic of Apache warfare was the inability of these desert warriors to unite when faced with a common enemy.


16Ibid., pp. 163, 187.
Between 1871 and 1875, when Crook commanded the Department of Arizona, the Army fought only small groups of renegade Apaches from the Chiricahua, Apache Mohave, and Tonto tribes. As one official stated, they were "... divided into about as many tribes as there are families." While this proclivity for division gave them a mobile and elusive quality, the small groups of Indians were unable to withstand attrition, fight off the relentlessly pursuing cavalry, and simultaneously support their dependents, who invariably accompanied them.

A surprising facet of Apache fighting was the success the Army experienced in recruiting scouts from defeated bands, and hope for preferential treatment by the Government were motives for turning Indian against Indian. Again, love of fighting—even engaging other Apaches—appeared to be reason enough for some individual Indians to accept white man's pay. The effectiveness of the Apache scouts was unquestioned; no one could trail, or read the subtle signs of enemy passage as skillfully. No white scouts could persist so unflaggingly in pursuit as the natives who seemed impervious to the tortures of the Southwest: the body-searing heat, suffocating dust of the trail, the stale water of murky holes, and hot canteens, or sometimes no water for

long stretches of the march. The Apache, like the Bedouin, had adapted to his inferno. The white man did not possess the physical and mental toughness of the desert Indians.

As products of individualistic behavior, the Apache scouts required extremely firm leadership. The Army's success in molding these desert wildcats into some semblance of a partisan body is attributed to the peculiar talents of Al Sieber, Crook's Chief of Scouts in Arizona. Sieber was unique in commanding the loyalty of his Apaches while maintaining undisputed dominance over them. He possessed the gift of knowing when trouble was due from one, or several, of the scouts. This insight, together with a stern mien and heavy hand for offenders of his discipline, accounts for his success in carrying out General Crook's policy of applying Indian against Indian.\(^\text{18}\)

Raiding in small groups of warriors from temporary encampments, the Apaches could strike with the dispatch of a lightning bolt and disappear as rapidly. To achieve successful pursuit, General Crook ordered small mobile cavalry columns on the trail of murdering and horse-stealing raiders.\(^\text{19}\) Mobility of the cavalry was enhanced by abolishing the time-honored wagon trains, that normally


\(^{19}\) Crook, *op. cit.*, p. 175.
supported troops and mounts with food, ammunition, and essential forage. Horses subjected to rigorous field duty required a supplemental ration of corn; well-bred horses weakened on a prolonged diet of grass. The Indian's mustangs were adjusted to the scanty fare of their natural habitat. To conserve the strength of their war horses, some warriors—particularly the Teton Sioux—took two horses when on a raid. A utility horse provided transportation to the battle field, and the prime war horse which was led to the site of conflict, was mounted only when a fight was imminent.

In place of the wagon trains, General Crook borrowed a page from the miners and early Spanish freighters; he established the mule train as the medium of troop support. Mules were cantankerous, but tough, sure-footed, and could follow the troops into the heart of a desert broken with arroyos, or into the low boulder-strewn mountains. An important tactical reason for employing mule trains was to minimize the telltale dust cloud that marked the advance of a column when accompanied by a wagon train. The troops had to pursue the renegades into rough country because the Apaches favored broken hills, or mountain terrain, for raising their temporary camps. In the event of attack, the braves could engage their enemies in a holding action, while the families escaped.
Success in fighting the Apaches can be attributed to several factors; first, the lack of cohesion among the Indians—even within one band—that resulted in their fighting as small groups; secondly, success of the Government in utilizing Apache scouts; and lastly, assuring mobility of cavalry columns by use of mule trains for logistic support. The commendable results Crook obtained indicates the validity of his methods. Indian scouts and mule trains would be employed in his subsequent campaigns. However, fighting small groups of warriors in Arizona might have deadened the great Indian fighter's realization that other tribes, in other places, could be capable of united resistance.

When General Crook moved to Omaha, he assumed a position that was invested with considerably more political and military significance than his previous command. The Department of Dakota, commanded by Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry, and Crook's Department of the Platte included the reservations and hunting grounds of the Teton Sioux. These departments were located within a larger military unit, the Division of the Missouri, commanded by Lieutenant General Philip H. Sheridan.

George Crook was in a strange fighting environment. He would soon appreciate the vast extent of territory over which the Sioux roamed, and the long marches he would make
to reach their encampments. Extremes in weather encountered on the Northern Plains were in contrast to those experienced in Arizona. Oppressive temperatures of the Southern Deserts wilted men and horses in July and August. However, during winter campaigns, the troops of the Dakota and the Platte shivered under their blankets when the temperature dropped to minus thirty degrees Fahrenheit.

General Crook would encounter the increased war potential of the Sioux. The demonstrated capability of the seven tribes of the Tetons to assemble their fighting forces into large single bodies attests to the social and political maturity of the Northern Plains Indians. Common social and cultural factors of their tribes facilitated their gathering into confederations in time of war.20 Sagacious in fighting small bands of Apaches, Crook was now to be pitted against an enemy who could—as a matter of official record—field one thousand warriors for a single occasion. No comment is available concerning Crook's opinions regarding the new potential enemy. Therefore, it is not known whether he was familiar with this important information.

The average Sioux warrior was a remarkable fighting

man. A superb horseman, he was inured to physical discomfort, and unknowing of the word fear. The Sioux was the product of a society that heaped adulation on the fighter in victory, and assured him a place among his ancestors if he fell in battle. Among these warriors, a system was practiced whereby each coup, scalp, or great deed in battle was recognized as a feat, that increased the prowness and stature of the individual. Indeed, the magnificent war bonnet of the Plains Indians, comprised of many eagle feathers, was the crowning glory of the outstanding warrior; each feather was representative of a notable deed performed in battle. 21

This system of recognition of bravery and adulation of the fighting man created aggressiveness and desire for achievement on the battlefield. Warriors were competitive for battle honors; if victorious, they knew they would be praised and admired; if they fell in combat, they would be venerated. Live or die, they could not lose—it was an unbeatable system among the Plains Indians. 22

In view of the value placed on the Black Hills by the Sioux, it is remarkable that this warrior-oriented society did not react immediately with large scale violence against

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22 Hassrick, op. cit., p. 93.
the intrusion of the Custer and Jenny Expeditions in 1874. Final breakdown of restraint between the Sioux and the Government resulted from two factors: the discovery of gold in the Black Hills and the failure of the Allison Commission to negotiate the mining and mineral rights in that area with the Indians. The commission, appointed by the Secretary of the Interior on June 18, 1875, was headed by William B. Allison and was comprised of eight other prominent citizens including Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry.

The Allison Commission began negotiations on September 17, 1875, at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, with representatives of the Brulés, Oglalas, Minneconjous, Hunkpapas, Blackfeet, Two Kettles, Sans Arcs, Lower Brule, Yankton, Santee, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapahoe tribes. The Indians were divided into two parties: the larger was willing to sell the Black Hills if a satisfactory price could be obtained; the smaller party, composed of young warriors, resisted sale for any price. Turmoil broke out among the Indians and the lives of the commissioners were threatened. Intercession by Young Man Afraid of His Horses and his warriors prevented bloodshed.

Spotted Tail, the great Brulé chief, experienced in

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24 Ibid., p. 689.
negotiating with the Government, requested the commission to state in writing the terms of their offer. Finally, on the 29th of September, he received the essence of the Government’s proposal: annual rental of mining rights for $400,000, or outright purchase for $6,000,000; also, purchase of right of way for the Bozeman Trail, or Montana Road, for $50,000 rental annually. At one time during negotiations, the Indians had wanted subsistence for seven unborn generations. Later, they had stated a price of $70,000,000 for complete purchase.

Outright relinquishment of title was never seriously hoped for by the commission. The Treaty of Laramie of 1868 stated in Article 12 that no sale or cession of Indian property would be considered without assent of three-fourths of the male Indians. This provision was considered an impossible obstacle to concluding agreement for sale.

The Indians and the commission failed to reach an agreement on the Government’s offer of September 29, 1875, for either sale, or rental of mining rights. This impasse created an intolerable situation for both parties; the Government could not resist the political pressure of

25 Ibid., p. 692-93.
26 Ibid., p. 700.
27 Kappler, op. cit., p. 1002.
thwarted miners and the Indians would not tolerate violation of their treaty rights.

Resentment against the aggressive Teton Sioux had been accumulating over a long period within the War Department and among certain groups within the Department of the Interior. The Northern tribesmen had vigorously resisted subjugation by large military forces commanded by Brigadier General Henry Sibley in 1862 and Brigadier General Patrick Conner in 1865. In smaller confrontations, typified by Red Cloud's War, the Indians were victorious in achieving their ends.

The Treaty of Laramie of 1851 had confirmed Crow ownership of the rich hunting grounds south of the Yellowstone, between the Big Horn Mountains and the Powder River. The Sioux coveted the area and forced the Crows westward during the period of 1855-1862. This displacement created bitter enmity between the Sioux and Crow tribesmen, and in subsequent tribal warfare the Sioux had prevailed. Indeed, favorite Sioux camping areas, the Big Horn and Little Big Horn River valleys were on the Crow Reservation area. In the summer of 1875, the Sioux were raiding the Crow Agency and in June, Crows were driven from

28Kappler, op. cit., p. 595.

the Big Horn by a body of warriors from 1,500 Sioux lodges. These depredations against a tribe, essentially friendly to white people, created dissatisfaction in the Indian Bureau with the Teton Sioux. One prominent scholar of the causes of the Sioux War of 1876, Mark H. Brown, avers that the true origin of the conflict was to be found in "... many flagrant acts of aggression ..." committed by some Sioux, between 1868 and 1876. Mr. Brown developed this thesis from General Crook's statement that, "The occupation of the Black Hills country had nothing to do with the hostilities which have been in progress." This statement, dated September 25, 1876, was in the General's annual report, rendered after his participation in the gruelling struggles of the summer which witnessed the Battle of the Rosebud and Custer's defeat at the Little Big Horn.

There was no store of good will toward the Sioux among other tribes and the white people, who were acquainted with Teton aggressiveness. The Sioux War of 1876 had its genesis in an incident, rather than the Government's accumulated aggravation over a series of Indian raids. The problem in this case was the deadlock created between the Government and the Tetons over the negotiations for the

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30 Brown, op. cit., p. 228.

Black Hills. The mechanics for dealing with this situation had been created in the establishment of President Grant's Peace Policy of 1869.

The Peace Policy, frequently mistaken for the Quaker Policy, was simultaneously a credit and a disgrace to this Nation's history of relations with its Indians. The Quaker Policy embodied the appointment of Indian agents from a panel of ministers nominated by religious denominations. The Peace Policy was concerned with "... that body of principles by which the Indian was eventually pacified and which outlived Quaker participation in Indian administration."32

The essence of the Peace Policy was the location of the nomadic tribes on designated portions of the great northern and southern reservations. This move was necessary, not only to clear the way for westward expansion, but to earnestly institute a program of civilization and Christianization of the pagan Indians. Tribesmen who remained defiant to the Government were to be placed under the jurisdiction of the Army.33

Despite the auspicious plans embodied in the Peace Policy, affairs did not improve noticeably for the Indians.


33 Ibid.
Religious ministers were placed in charge of reservations as agents; not only Quakers, but also pastors of other denominations. Some proved incapable of management and others, far removed from religious restraint, became suspiciously wealthy in handling reservation supplies. A program was initiated whereby peaceful Indians were to be assisted in accomplishing the transition from the nomadic life to the idyllic pursuit of agriculture. Insufficient implements, draft animals, and supervision were provided at some reservations. Drought and grasshoppers often consumed the pitiful crops. The frailties of the white man's character and the weakness of his vaunted agricultural system were duly observed by the Indians; it was no wonder that large numbers of them chose to stay away from the reservations.

The punitive provision of the Peace Policy provided the fulcrum for initiating the Sioux War of 1876. The lever that initiated military action against the Tetons was the Black Hills impasse. Events between September, 1875, and March, 1876, demonstrates the Government of President Grant moved surely and knowingly toward an armed confrontation with the Indians.

After the failure of the Allison Commission to conclude an agreement with the Sioux, the military patrols assigned to keep miners and prospectors from flooding the
Black Hills were withdrawn. Immediately, venturous men poured into the Hills. On November 3, 1875, a mysterious meeting was convened at the White House. One news dispatch stated:

The president, Secretary Belknap, Generals Sherman and Crook had a private interview yesterday regarding Indian matters in general and the Black Hills in particular. At the close, Secretary Chandler and General Cowan were sent for and the subject was discussed further. The result of this conference is that the government will preserve a neutral position towards the miners who are crowding into the Black Hills in great numbers. Four hundred men left Cheyenne a few days ago for the gold fields, and it may be said positively that they will not be molested by the troops. General Crook says that miners are crowding in from all directions, and that it is impossible to keep them out.

Captain John G. Bourke, General Crook's aide and mentor, makes oblique reference to this meeting in his work, *On the Border with Crook*:

General Crook said that at the council where General Grant had decided that the northern Sioux should go upon their reservation or be whipped, there were present Secretary of the Interior Chandler, Assistant Secretary Cowan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Smith and Secretary of War Belknap.

No reference is made to President Grant's high level conference in the official documents related to the Sioux War of 1876. Instead, the official springboard for war, as

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36 Bourke, *op. cit.*, p. 287.
cited in War Department Reports of 1876, was the report submitted by Inspector E. C. Watkins to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. This report was dated November 9, 1875, or six days after the White House conference. The following statement from this report was to embody the Government's repressive measures against the Indians:

And yet these hostile, renegade Indians number, all told, but a few hundred warriors and these are never all together or under the control of one chief.

In my judgement, one thousand men, under the command of an experienced officer, sent into their country in the winter, when the Indians are nearly always in camp, and at which season of the year they are almost helpless, would be amply sufficient for their capture or punishment. . . . The true policy, in my judgement, is to send troops against them in the winter, the sooner the better, and whip them into subjection. They richly merit the punishment for their incessant warfare on friendly tribes, their continuous thieving, and their numerous murders of white settlers and their families, or white men wherever found unarmed.27

On December 3, 1875, Zachariah Chandler, Secretary of the Interior, notified William W. Belknap, Secretary of War, that he had directed the hostile Sioux Indians, residing outside reservations, to proceed to the reservations by January 31, 1876. They were also informed that if they failed to comply, "... they will be reported to the War Department as hostile Indians, and that a military force will be sent to compel them to obey the orders of the

Indian Office."

These instructions reached the agents at Sioux reservations after mid-December; specifically, the Cheyenne River Agency on December 20, and the Standing Rock Agency on December 22, 1875. A messenger dispatched from the Cheyenne Agency was not able to complete the notification and return to the Agency until February 11, 1876. He reported that the Indians received the message in good humor, some replying that they were in the midst of hunting and would come to the agencies in the spring. The severity of the winter undoubtedly dissuaded some of the bands from making the journey across the bleak landscape, on skeletal ponies, that were half starved from the insufficient forage of the frozen plain. Other bands displayed a mañana attitude; besides, why should the Great Father attack them? They were perfectly within their rights to hunt outside the reservation, as long as they remained on the unceded lands, that had been defined in the Treaty of Laramie of 1868. There was every reason for them to be hunting at this time because the agencies had run short of provisions. 39

When January 31, 1876, arrived and only several bands of Indians had returned to the reservations, the mechanics for instituting Government reprisals were set in motion.

38 Ibid., p. 10.
39 Robinson, op. cit., p. 422.
On February 7, 1876, Lieutenant General Philip H. Sheridan received authority, by General Sherman's endorsement on a letter from the Secretary of the Interior, to commence operations against the hostile Sioux. Generals Crook and Terry were notified to carry out the request of the Secretary of the Interior, but specific orders were not issued because of the uncertainty of the location of the Indians. General Terry was informed that General Crook would operate in the vicinity of the headwaters of the Powder River, Tongue River, Rosebud, and Big Horn Rivers, where the wildest of the Tetons—Crazy Horse's and Sitting Bull's bands—were known to frequent. Geographical lines of departmental division were to be ignored until objectives were attained. During the initial phases of direction and planning at General Sheridan's Headquarters in Chicago, Illinois, concerted actions between the two departmental commanders were not required. In light of the vast distances involved and severe weather experienced by General Terry's troops, coordinated actions would have been impossible in the first stage of action against the Sioux.


41 Ibid.
Preparations for the Big Horn Expedition, the official designation of the first campaign of the Sioux War of 1876, were undertaken immediately on receipt of instructions by General Crook. The purpose of the expedition was to enforce Teton compliance with the Secretary of Interior's order that the non-reservation Sioux return to the agencies. Ten full companies of cavalry, from the Second and Third Cavalry Regiments, and two infantry companies of the Fourth Infantry Regiment were drawn from Forts Laramie and D. A. Russell. Fort Fetterman was designated as the concentration point for the troops, supplies, wagons, and pack trains. 1

The fighting forces were assembled into six battalions, each cavalry battalion being comprised of two cavalry companies, and the two infantry companies were organized as an infantry battalion. Command and composition of the battalions were as follows: the First Battalion was comprised of Companies E and M, of the Third Cavalry, commanded by Captain Anson Mills; Second Battalion, Companies

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A and D, Third Cavalry, commanded by Captain William Hawley; Third Battalion, Companies I and K, Second Cavalry, commanded by Captain Henry E. Noyes; Fourth Battalion, Companies A and B, Second Cavalry, commanded by Captain T. B. Dewees; Fifth Battalion, comprised of Company E, Second Cavalry and Company F, Third Cavalry, commanded by Captain Alexander Moore; Sixth Battalion, Companies C and I, Fourth Infantry, commanded by Captain E. M. Coates.2

The column consisted of thirty officers, 662 enlisted men, and 191 civilian employees engaged as scouts, wagoneers, and packers. Total strength of the expedition was 883 men. Less than half of the column's personnel were to be actively engaged with the Indians.3

Logistic support was provided by eighty, six-mule wagons and a pack train assembled in five divisions of eighty mules to each division. Cargo of the wagon train consisted primarily of forage that was to maintain the strength of the cavalry horses and pack mules.4

Major efforts were made to protect personnel from the extremely cold weather that would be encountered. Buckskin or woolen underwear were donned; several pairs of stockings of lamb's wool covered the feet; sturdy boots or

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3Ibid., p. 26-27.
4Bourke, op. cit., p. 254.
leggings of buffalo hide, with the fur turned inward, covered the legs and feet. Heavy double-breasted shirts and blouses were worn under overcoats of buffalo, bearskin, or beaver. As long as the wagon train accompanied the column, cork mattresses, comforters, and buffalo robes were available as bedding. 5

The troops were under the immediate command of Colonel Joseph J. Reynolds, of the Third Cavalry Regiment. General Crook accompanied the expedition, primarily to observe the feasibility of campaigning on the northern plains in the winter. Relations between General Crook and Colonel Reynolds were described by Lieutenant Bourke:

Crook was very kindly disposed towards General Reynolds, and wanted to give him every chance to make a brilliant reputation for himself and retrieve the past. Reynolds had been in some kind of trouble in the Department of Texas, of which he had been the commander, and as a consequence of this trouble, whatever it was, had been relieved of the command and ordered to rejoin his regiment. 6

Concurrent with the preparations being advanced within the Department of the Platte, were the attempts by elements of General Terry's Department of Dakota to mount a column against Sitting Bull. That wily chieftain's band was presumed to be encamped on the Little Missouri River. It was later discovered that he and his people were on the

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5 Ibid., p. 252-53.
6 Ibid., p. 270.
Dry Fork of the Missouri, approximately two hundred miles farther west.

General Terry's plan required concentration of detached companies of the Seventh Cavalry at Fort Abraham Lincoln, near Bismarck, Dakota Territory. While the troops were moving to Fort Lincoln, the season became so inclement that a great number of men were frostbitten. Because of the extreme cold and deep snow, Sheridan cancelled Terry's portion of the plan. On February 27, Terry had ordered Colonel John Gibbon, Commander of the District of Montana, to move as many troops as he could spare to the Yellowstone valley. Gibbon's force finally reached Fort Pease, near the mouth of the Big Horn on April 20, 1876. Since Terry had been delayed, Gibbon was instructed to remain at Pease and coordinate future movements with the Dakota Column.

Prior to departure of the Platte Column from Fort Fetterman, Black Coal, an Arapahoe chief, told Crook that the hostiles were encamped on the lower Powder River, about 150 miles from Fetterman. General Crook and the scouts formed the vanguard as the column marched briskly from Fort Fetterman on March 1, 1876. The scouts were led by Frank

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8Bourke, op. cit., p. 250.
9Ibid., p. 254-55.
Grouard, who claimed to be a Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islander. Others declared him to be the son of a French Creole father and an Oglala woman. His name was Walter Brazeau, instead of Frank Grouard. Although suspected by some officers of possessing conflicting loyalties, between white people and the Sioux, Grouard was generally an efficient scout and enjoyed the confidence of General Crook. He rendered valuable service to the United States Army in the year of 1876.

It was evident from nocturnal rifle fire into the encamped troops that the column was under observation by the Indians. On the evening of March 1, the Indians stampeded the cattle herd toward Fort Fetterman and forty-five head could not be recovered. Abandoned Fort Reno, the first major landmark during the march, was reached on March 5, 1876.

On March 7, the wagon train and infantry battalion were left at Crazy Woman's Fork of the Powder River. The ten cavalry companies and the pack train continued with fifteen days rations. The wagon train, accompanied by the infantry returned to Fort Reno on March 9, and there awaited the return of the fighting force.

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12 Ibid., p. 205.
During March 8 through March 16, the column continued its advance to the Powder River. On March 16, two Indians, later ascertained to be members of a hunting party of thirty or forty braves, were observed at some distance from the advanced scouting party. General Crook desired to create an impression among the hunters that the column was not interested in their trail. He therefore directed the command to halt and bivouac on Otter Creek. The General ordered the column to be divided into two parts. The major element under Colonel Reynolds, consisted of a combat force of about 300 men comprised of the First, Third, and Fifth Battalions, or six cavalry companies, accompanied by Frank Grouard and a portion of the scouts. This force was detailed to perform a night march eastward to Powder River. The balance of the column, commanded by General Crook, made up of the pack train, accompanied by the Second and Fourth Battalions, was to proceed to Lodge Pole Creek on the Powder River. At that point, Colonel Reynolds' force would unite with the smaller portion of the command. If the combat force sighted an Indian village, it was to be attacked; if nothing untoward was discovered, the forces would rendezvous as planned.

General Crook was criticized for dividing his command and sending only six companies of cavalry after the Indians. When asked his reason for this action during

\[13\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 59-61.}\]
subsequent court-martial proceedings against Colonel Reynolds, he replied: "It was so very cold and the ground was frozen and it was very difficult for the animals to go up an incline of ten degrees. It was so smooth after a few had gone over it, making it impossible to take the pack train, so the command was divided."\textsuperscript{14}

Colonel Reynolds stated, at a later period, he understood the purpose of the attack was to capture the village, accomplish maximum attrition among the Indians, run off the pony herds, and create as much havoc as possible. General Crook averred that he specifically directed Colonel Reynolds to save portions of the Indian's provisions, that could be used by the troops. General Crook's statement was denied by Colonel Reynolds, who claimed no specific orders were issued and he proceeded to create maximum damage through the employment of troops and methods as required in his judgment.\textsuperscript{15}

The combat force of three battalions was on the trail at five o'clock in the afternoon of March 16, and stumbled throughout the night, after the hoof marks left by the Indian hunting party. As the dawn light became stronger, a column of smoke was seen in the distance signaling the probable location of an Indian village. While the column halted, the scouts went forward to pinpoint the site of the encampment. At seven o'clock they returned and reported the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 61.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
results of their reconnaissance. A village of approximately 105 teepees was located within a bend of the Powder River, on the left, or west bank, and at the foot of the heights on which the combat force had halted. Trees, brush, and boulders were interspersed among the lodges. Five pony herds were grazing on the eastern perimeter of the village.

Colonel Reynolds' plan of attack, which was well initiated, involved three basic, concerted movements. The Third Battalion, with Captains Henry E. Noyes and James Egan as company commanders, was to move first; Egan was to charge the village with pistols and Noyes was to drive off the pony herds. The First Battalion, with Captain Mills and First Lieutenant John B. Johnson as company commanders, was to move in after Egan's charge, occupy the village and destroy it. The Fifth Battalion, under company commanders Captain Moore and First Lieutenant William B. Rawolle, was to move close to the west side of the village and take positions on a ridge overlooking the encampment. This was a vantage point where the Fifth Battalion could not only lay enfilading fire, but could deny the warriors use of the same advantage during an attempted counterattack.16

As the attacking column neared the village, it was sighted by a youthful pony herder. His ringing war whoop aroused the drowsy Indians, who poured from the teepees in

16Bourke, op. cit., p. 272.
various stages of savage dishabille. The warriors returned a spirited rifle fire at the horsemen of Captain Egan's Company K, as they swept in among the teepees with blazing pistols. All the battalions fulfilled their orders and the village was soon ablaze. Great quantities of dried meat, saddles, fixed ammunition, loose gun powder, clothing, gorgeous ceremonial regalia, and beautifully embroidered buffalo robes were destroyed. Tent poles, teepee covers, and miscellaneous contents soared skyward, as if erupting from Vesuvius, when quantities of stored gun powder detonated.17

When the Fifth Battalion moved to the ridge overlooking the village at the onset of the attack, Captain Moore did not extend his troops in a skirmish line long enough to prevent the warriors from occupying the north end of the same ridge. From this position, the Indians not only directed an effective rifle fire at the troops destroying their village, but threatened to flank Moore's position.18 Destruction of the village was completed and as the fire from the Indians along the ridge increased, Colonel Reynolds ordered evacuation and withdrawal. Immediately, the combat force proceeded to Lodge Pole Creek, to rendezvous with General Crook's portion of the

17 Ibid., p. 276-77.
expedition. No estimate of Indians killed, or wounded was presented. Colonel Reynolds' force lost four killed and six wounded. 19

Some confusion exists among various authors regarding identification of the Indian village. Bourke, in his *On the Border with Crook* relates:

In one of the lodges was found a wounded squaw, who stated that she had been struck in the thigh in the very beginning of the fight as her husband was firing out from the entrance to the lodge. She stated that this was the band of "Crazy Horse," who had with him a force of the Minneconjou Sioux, but that the forty new canvas lodges clustered together at the extremity by which we had entered belonged to some Cheyennes who had recently arrived from the "Red Cloud" Agency. 20

Another author states the village was predominantly Cheyenne, under the leadership of Two Moon. 21 Writers who dispute Bourke's statements may not appreciate the importance of Crazy Horse, or the degree of esteem he enjoyed among his people--both men and women--as a paramount war leader. If the headman of the village was Crazy Horse, the woman would have known and undoubtedly been proud to acknowledge membership in his band.

At sundown on March 17, Reynolds' force reached the assembly point in an exhausted and famished condition. On


20 Bourke, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-77.

departing from General Crook, the combat force had taken one day's ration which was generally consumed before reaching the rendezvous. The troops and most of the horses had received very little rest over a thirty-six hour period, or from the time of breaking camp on the morning of March 16, until they paused at Lodge Pole Creek. During that period they had fought a battle and marched seventy-three miles in extreme cold.22

The captured pony herd estimated at 400 to 700 head was allowed to graze along the Powder River, away from the troop horses. Colonel Reynolds stated that his men were so tired he could assure maximum security only for the cavalry animals, in the event the Indians made a night attack, to regain their most prized possessions. Although no Indians were detected in the camp vicinity, most of the herd was gone on the morning of March 18.23

About noon of March 18, General Crook arrived in camp with nearly 100 ponies he had recovered from Indians who had raided Reynolds' camp. He was initially gratified to learn the attack had been completed; to discomfit Crazy Horse and his band was particularly pleasing to the General. However, he was disappointed to learn that during withdrawal from the village, two soldiers—one still alive—were left on enemy

22Vaughn, op. cit., p. 211.
23Ibid.
ground and that Indian food supplies and robes were destroyed. Loss of the pony herd was considered inexcusable by the General. 

Return to Fort Fetterman began on March 19. Indians, shadowing the column, harassed the troops at night by firing random shots at the camp fires. Since the primary aim of the Sioux and Cheyennes was to regain the ponies Crook had captured, the General ordered the mounts destroyed. To discourage the Indians from endangering the camp with wild rifle fire, the scouts killed fifty horses by cutting their throats. The Indians at once recognized the pitiful sounds of the dying beasts and retired with a departing volley and defiant yells. The five battalions joined the wagon train and infantry at old Fort Reno on March 21. No attacks had been made on the rear element during the cavalry's absence. Having rested the command during March 22, the complete expedition departed Fort Reno on March 23. Fort Fetterman was reached on March 26, and the Big Horn Expedition was dissolved on March 27.

Continued exposure to the harsh winter had resulted in approximately sixty-six cases of frostbitten noses, hands, and feet. Two cases of inflammatory rheumatism were

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24 Bourke, op. cit., p. 280.
25 Ibid., pp. 280-81.
26 Vaughn, op. cit., p. 214.
reported. Temperatures as low as minus twenty-three degrees and minus twenty-six degrees Fahrenheit were reported on March 11 and 12, respectively.  

W. T. Sherman, General of the Army, reported to the Secretary of War that inconclusive results were achieved by the expedition. His statements reflected the dissatisfaction of General Crook with Reynolds' performance. Colonel Reynolds was acutely aware of his commander's pique and requested in his report to the Commander of the Department of the Platte, that his conduct of the attack be investigated. To his intense chagrin, court-martial charges were preferred against him. Through these charges, his capacity to exercise sound judgment was assailed and his veracity impugned. As if to protect himself, he in turn preferred charges against Captain Moore and Captain Noyes. Moore, through failure to adequately support the troops who destroyed the village, faced charges of cowardice before the enemy. Noyes, because he permitted his men to unsaddle

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28 Ibid.

29 Vaughn, op. cit., p. 213.

30 War Department, Record Group 94, File 6160 Adjutant General's Office 1875, Powder River Expedition. (Adjutant General's Office is hereafter cited as AGO.)
and make coffee during the skirmishing in the village, was charged with neglect of duty before the enemy. 32

Captain Noyes was the only defendant who emerged from the trials with his reputation intact. Moore was not found guilty of cowardice, but was judged guilty of the charge of conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline. 33 Regardless of the phrasing, Moore's career was ruined and he resigned in 1879. 34 The trial of Colonel Reynolds was punctuated with bitter statements against his detractors and disputes with General Crook regarding instructions the General maintained he delivered verbally to Reynolds. Hence, the case appears to rest on one man's word against the other's. Reynolds was found guilty of not obeying the Departmental Commander's orders and was sentenced to be suspended from rank and command for one year. 35 Subsequently, he was notified that President Grant had remitted the sentence. As with Captain Moore, Reynolds could not overcome the stigma of substandard conduct and retired in 1877, for physical disability. 36

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Vaughn, op. cit., p. 186.
35 War Department, Record Group 94, File 6160 AGO 1875, Powder River Expedition.
36 Vaughn, op. cit., p. 178.
The treatment of Reynolds and Moore may appear somewhat drastic. However, General Crook faced the necessity of tightening officer discipline when the enlisted men muttered against their leaders for permitting a wounded man to be captured by the Indians. Troop morale, on future campaigns, would have been seriously compromised unless he moved to correct deficiencies in leadership. All defendants possessed excellent records of brave and faithful service during the Civil War. Reynolds, a brilliant man, had served as Professor of Engineering at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Examination of the minute details of the conflict at Crazy Horse village, reveals the impossibility of completing all phases of General Crook's verbal orders, if given.

Captain Anson Mills stated in his summary of the action, "Owing to the age and feebleness of Colonel Reynolds and the bitter feud that existed in our regiment (the Third Cavalry) . . ., this attack on the village on Powder River proved a lamentable failure." Although Colonel Reynolds was only fifty-four at this time, he may have aged rapidly under the burdens of frontier military life. Captain Mills' words intimate the existence of a controversy within the Third Cavalry prior to the expedition. Neither the subject

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of the feud, or the names of the officers who were parties thereto are discussed in his book.

The United States Army in the nineteenth century was a likely organization in which to incur official censure. Rugged conditions created a necessity for hard discipline among personnel with highly individualistic characters. J. W. Vaughn presents the situation clearly:

It was inevitable that men of strong personalities would clash when cooped up within the narrow confines of the frontier posts. Officers spent much of their time sitting as judges during trials of court-martial proceedings. Often three or more families would live in the same house under very primitive conditions, which gave rise to many petty conflicts. There are many cases of officers being discharged or forced to resign because of personal spite and jealousy. I have been told by retired army officers that there are but few career officers who have not at some time been tried by court-martial for some petty offense. . . . . The phrase "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman" covered a wide variety of real or fancied sins. The rigid moral code of personal conduct during the period made it possible for the most innocent act to be misconstrued, and the small garrisons were hotbeds of gossip, talebearing, and personal feuds. 38

Colonel Reynolds had many friends and his court-martial undoubtedly damaged Crook's image in their eyes. Lieutenant Colonel William B. Royall, one of Reynolds' subordinates in the Third Cavalry Regiment appears to have carried his resentment against Crook for many years. In the subsequent Battle of the Rosebud, a near disastrous battlefield condition arose from the wide separation in the

38Vaughn, op. cit., p. 175.
tactical positions assumed by Crook and Royall. Lack of cooperation may have been motivated by Royall's resentment.

Even with the failure to achieve the detailed requirements of General Crook, the destruction of Crazy Horse village yielded one important military lesson; winter campaigns could be conducted. Although Army combat forces would experience extreme discomfort, winter attacks were to be disastrous for the Indians. Women and children would be without shelter, and food would be difficult to obtain with winter-weakened ponies. There is no evidence the Indians were awed by these implications, judging from their resolute defiance of the Army. The successes of Red Cloud's War during 1866-68, provided an incentive to fight for their convictions. General Crook would have a hard summer in 1876.
CHAPTER III

BATTLE OF THE ROSEBUD

Continuation of the Government's punitive policy against the militant portion of the Teton Sioux was unquestionably necessary after Reynolds' attack on the Crazy Horse village. Inconclusive results, as referred to in General Sherman's report to the Secretary of War, alluded to failure in accomplishing a basic objective--forcing the recalcitrant Indians onto the reservations. Sioux and Cheyenne inhabitants of the destroyed village became harbingers of the Government's hardened resolution against nomadic people who wished to live alone and removed from the white man's way.

Preparations for additional thrusts against the non-reservation Tetons inaugurated a series of movements that were to be described as the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition. Approval for continuing the action was considered by General Sheridan to be embodied in the directive of February, 1876, that authorized the Big Horn Expedition.\(^1\) The Lieutenant General commanding the Division of the Missouri and the General of the Army were in rapport

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concerning the requirement for continued action and appear to have considered extensive discussion of this subject unnecessary.

Movement of troops and supplies were underway in May of 1876 to effect the concentrations required for the three-pronged plan of attack favored by Sheridan and Sherman. This tactic had been successfully employed in 1874-75 against the hostile Comanche, Kiowa, and Cheyenne tribesmen of the Southern plains. General Sheridan ordered "...three distinct columns to be prepared to move to a common center, where the hostiles were supposed to be ..."⁹

Personnel for the columns were drawn from the Departments of the Platte and Dakota. Points of origin for the troops and supplies were in Montana, Dakota, and on the North Platte. The three columns were to move simultaneously against the Indian encampment, thus decreasing the likelihood of their avoiding interception. In a letter to the General of the Army, dated May 29, 1876, General Sheridan stated:

The organization of these commands and what they expect to accomplish has been as yet left to the department commanders. I presume that the following will occur: General Terry will drive the Indians toward the Big Horn Valley, and General Crook will drive them back toward Terry; Colonel Gibbon moving down on the north side of the Yellowstone to intercept, if possible, such as may want to go north of the Missouri to the

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⁹Ibid., p. 29.
Milk River.

The result of the movement of these three columns may force many of the hostile Indians back to the agencies on the Missouri River and to the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail agencies on the northern line of Nebraska, where nearly every Indian, man, woman, and child, is at heart a friend.*

General Sherman opined that the troops would not encounter more than 500 to 800 warriors. This estimate of Sioux warriors, considered as being representative of the non-reservation Teton strength, was credited to the Indian Bureau. These figures are an understatement of such gross magnitude that one is amazed at their acceptance by the highest military circles. Depreciation of Sioux capabilities underscores the Army's record of engagement with these dynamic plainsmen. Destruction of Custer's scouting force and the near-defeat of Crook's major column was the price paid during the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition for over-confidence when engaging the Sioux.

Colonel John Gibbon, leader of the Montana Column, had been ordered by General Terry, on February 27, to participate in the Big Horn Expedition. His force, assembled at Fort Ellis, near Bozeman, Montana Territory,

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consisted of four companies of the Second Cavalry Regiment commanded by Major James S. Brisbin and six companies of the Seventh Infantry Regiment, commanded by Captain Henry B. Freeman. The column was accompanied by a twelve-pound Napoleon field gun and two, fifty-caliber Gatling guns. Transportation was provided by twenty-four government and twelve civilian contract wagons. Total strength of the Montana Column was about 478 men, including twenty-seven officers, 406 enlisted men and twenty civilian teamsters. First Lieutenant James H. Bradley, the soldier-author was in charge of twenty-three Crow Indians, who had been enlisted as scouts, and two squaw-men interpreters.  

Gibbon's force departed Fort Ellis on March 30, and had bivouaced at Fort Pease, opposite the mouth of the Rosebud, from April 20, until May 10, 1876. The delay at Fort Pease had been caused by the inability of the Dakota Column to move westward in March, 1876, and participate in the Big Horn Expedition. It was anticipated some of the Sioux would cross the Yellowstone to escape the pressure of the converging Dakota and Platte Columns. Until he joined with Terry on June 9, Gibbon guarded the north bank of the Yellowstone River and dispatched patrols through the

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Yellowstone Valley.\textsuperscript{6}

General Terry's Dakota Column was concentrated at Fort Abraham Lincoln. His force comprised of the twelve companies of the Seventh Cavalry Regiment, two companies of the Seventeenth Infantry Regiment, four companies of the Sixth Infantry, and forty Indian scouts. A battery of three potent Gatling guns, manned by detachments from the Twentieth Infantry Regiment, was attached to the column and generally supported the Seventh Cavalry. Total strength of the column was 1,200 men. A scouting force of forty Indians, mostly Arickaras, was under Bobtailed Bull and included Custer's favorite scout, Bloody Knife. The supply train, consisting of 150 wagons, was accompanied by a beef herd.\textsuperscript{7}

Lieutenant Colonel G. A. Custer was first assigned to command the Dakota Column, but was later relegated to command only his regiment, the Seventh Cavalry. Custer had become embroiled in an acrimonious political dispute concerning the malfeasance of W. W. Belknap, Secretary of War. In testifying before a Senate Investigating Committee, Custer's statements reflected adversely on President Grant's administration and implicated Orvil Grant, the President's


\textsuperscript{7}Brown, op. cit., p. 255.
Grant's displeasure was manifested in official harassment of Custer; he was ignored by the President when he tried to apologize; he was arrested in Chicago, during his return to Bismark, for failure to sign the departing officers' register at the War Department. Only by intervention of the gentlemanly Terry was Custer permitted to participate in the expedition—and certainly not as Commander of the Dakota Column.

Both the Montana and the Dakota Columns relied on wagon trains for the movement of supplies. No real capability for management of pack trains had been developed in the Department of Dakota. The wagon train of the Dakota Column carried about 250 pack saddles, to be used on the mules of the wagon train, if the need should arise. Re-supply of Terry's and Gibbon's columns was to be provided by steamboat delivery of provisions to a point on the Yellowstone known as Stanley's Stockade, near the mouth of Glendive Creek.

On the morning of May 17, the Dakota Column departed

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10 Ibid.
Fort Abraham Lincoln to join the Montana Column on the south bank of the Yellowstone at the Glendive Creek supply depot. Progress was extremely slow because the heavily laden wagon trains had difficulty on trails softened by spring rains.

General Crook's forces had concentrated at Fort D. A. Russell, Wyoming Territory, and at Medicine Bow, ninety miles west of the Union Pacific Railroad. Troops, wagons, and pack trains from these points were united on May 25, 1876, at Fort Fetterman, to become the Platte Column. The primary subordinate commanders, immediately under General Crook were Lieutenant Colonel W. B. Royall, Third Cavalry Regiment, and Major Alex Chambers, Fourth Infantry Regiment. Lieutenant Colonel Royall was designated as Commander of Cavalry, and Major Chambers was appointed Commander of Infantry.

Major A. H. Evans, Third Cavalry Regiment, was Lieutenant Colonel Royall’s subordinate in command of the ten companies of the Third Cavalry that were assigned to the expedition. These companies, or troops, were divided into three battalions. Command and composition of the battalions were as follows:

First Battalion: Commander, Captain Anson Mills.

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11J. W. Vaughn, With Crook at the Rosebud (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Co., 1956), pp. 4-5. (Hereafter cited as Vaughn, At the Rosebud.)
Company A, commanded by First Lieutenant Joseph Lawson.
Company E, commanded by Captain Alexander Sutorious.
Company M, commanded by Captain Anson Mills.

Second Battalion: Commander, Captain Guy V. Henry.
Company B, commanded by Captain Charles Meinhold.

Third Battalion: Commander, Captain Frederick Van Vliet. Company C, commanded by Captain Van Vliet.
Company G, commanded by First Lieutenant Emmet Crawford.

Captain Henry E. Noyes, Second Cavalry Regiment, was also subordinate to Lieutenant Colonel Royall and was appointed commander of the five companies of the Second Cavalry. The companies and commanders that formed this battalion were: Company A, Captain Thomas B. Dewees; Company B, First Lieutenant William B. Rawolle; Company D, First Lieutenant Samuel M. Swigert; Company E, Captain Elizah R. Wells; Company I, Captain Henry E. Noyes.

Major Alex Chambers of the Fourth Infantry Regiment commanded a battalion made up of five rifle companies from the Fourth and Ninth Infantry Regiments. The companies of the Fourth Infantry were commanded by the following officers: Company D, Captain Avery B. Cain; Company F, Captain Gerhard L. Luhn. Command of the companies of the Ninth
Regiment was as follows: Company C, Captain Samuel Munson; Company G, Captain Thomas B. Burrowes; Company H, Captain Andrew S. Burt.\textsuperscript{12}

Captain A. H. Nickerson, Twenty-third Infantry Regiment, and Second Lieutenant John G. Bourke, Third Cavalry Regiment, were assigned to serve General Crook as aides-de-camp.

Supplies, forage, extra ammunition, and other items essential to the force were transported on pack mules and wagons. The column was supported by a wagon train of 103 six-mule wagons, commanded by Major John V. Furey, who also served as the quartermaster. A pack train of approximately 1,000 mules was supervised by Chief Packer Tom Moore.\textsuperscript{13}

While the force was being assembled at Fort Fetterman, General Crook went to the Red Cloud Agency to enlist a contingent of scouts from peaceful Sioux bands. Several of the chiefs reacted favorably to the General's request and were disposed to send some of their young men with the troops. When Agent James S. Hastings returned to the reservation, after an unexplained absence, the Indians lost enthusiasm for the venture. Apparently, Hastings had influenced them against Crook's proposal.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12}Bourke, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 289-90.

\textsuperscript{13}Brown, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 257.

\textsuperscript{14}Bourke, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 286-87.
On May 29, 1876, Crook's forces crossed the Platte River and headed north along the trail the Big Horn Expedition had followed earlier in March. The military portion of the Platte Column totalled forty-seven officers and 1,002 enlisted men.\textsuperscript{15} John F. Finerty, as correspondent of the \textit{Chicago Times}, who accompanied Crook, commented on management of the column:

Colonel Royall, at the outset of our march, used to have us on the road at 5 o'clock in the morning, but General Crook, on assuming command, fixed the hour at 6 o'clock for the infantry and at 7:30 o'clock for the cavalry, in order that the horses might have sufficient rest, as he intended to make night marches in pursuit of the hostiles, accompanied by his pack train only, after the campaign had been fully developed.\textsuperscript{16}

The troops reached the abandoned Fort Reno on June 2. After several days march along the old Bozeman Trail, the command made camp near the site of Fort Phil Kearney about noon on June 5, 1876. On departing Fort Phil Kearney, the column made a difficult march to the junction of Prairie Dog Creek with Tongue River. After darkness, on June 8, there was a verbal exchange between the camp pickets and an unknown person. Arnold, a half-breed scout was sent by General Crook to investigate. Arnold replied in the Sioux idioms, to which the visitor did not answer. General Crook

\textsuperscript{15}Brown, \textit{loc. cit.}

was upset because he was momentarily expecting the arrival of overdue Crow scouts. He believed the visitor was a member of the Crow party, who was frightened by the reply. 17

Earlier in the day, the Commander had received dispatches notifying him that the Fifth Cavalry Regiment had been moved from Fort Hays, Kansas, to Fort Robinson, and that the male Indians capable of fighting had left the Red Cloud Agency. 18

In answer to the popular question regarding the whereabouts of the Sioux, a brisk rifle fire was directed against the camp about six-thirty o'clock on the evening of June 9. The Indians had made their first appearance and were located on a high ridge overlooking the bivouac area from the north. Captain Mills was directed to repulse the attack with Companies A, E, I, and M. As Captain Mills was completing the rout of Indians on the ridge, a party of attackers attempted to capture the horses by penetrating defenses on the south side of the encampment. After the abortive attack, a heavy picket force secured the ridge for the remainder of the night. This foray was believed to have been Crazy Horse's fulfillment of his vow to fight Crook as soon as he touched the waters of the Tongue River. 19

17Ibid., p. 57.
The command was moved to the confluence of the two forks of Goose Creek, where excellent water and rich pasturage were available. On the evening of June 14, 175 of the long-awaited Crow scouts arrived. They were well mounted and armed, each warrior possessing an extra pony and a fifty caliber breech-loading rifle. A short time later, eighty-six Shoshones—-or Snakes wheeled into camp in splendid style with a show of military discipline. They had been subjected to cavalry drill by their leader Tom Cosgrove, a former captain in the Confederate Thirty-Second Texas Cavalry, and Chief of Scouts at the Shoshone Agency. Later, General Crook assembled the officers of the column and issued instructions regarding the march against the Sioux. The wagon train was to be parked and guarded by the teamsters and 100 riflemen, under the command of Major John V. Furey. Officers and men were to carry four day's rations, one blanket per person, and 100 rounds of ammunition.

Throughout June 15, the day was given over to preparation for the strike. About 175 infantrymen were to be mounted so the column would have increased mobility. The pleasure of the walk-a-heaps, the Indian's designation of the foot soldier, was short-lived after learning they were

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20Brown, op. cit., p. 262.
21Bourke, op. cit., pp. 302-03.
to be assigned mules—and each man had to break his mule to a saddle.  

The command departed camp at five o'clock on the morning of June 16, with a force of 1,325 men, comprised of 803 cavalry, 175 mounted infantry, 262 Indian scouts, twenty packers and sixty-five miners, who had joined the column. The objective was a large Sioux village supposedly located in the canyon of the Rosebud. As the force crossed the beautiful grasslands of the Big Horn country, great numbers of buffalo were sighted. The Crows and Shoshones broke from the column and their rifle fire reverberated across the plains as they inflicted a wanton slaughter against the beasts. General Crook had hoped to approach the Sioux village without alarming the Indians and was disgusted with the careless conduct of his allies. 

At three o'clock in the morning of June 17, Crook ordered the camp awakened and at six o'clock the column was on the march. East of the big bend of the Rosebud and in the vicinity of the confluence of the north and south forks of the river, Crook halted the still-tired column for a short rest. It was about eight o'clock and the Crows had been sent northward to obtain intelligence concerning the Sioux location. The command was so extended by the broken

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22 Brown, op. cit., pp. 265.

23 Finerty, op. cit., p. 78.
ground along the line of march that the end of the column did not come into the rest area until about eight-thirty o'clock.24

Very little concern was displayed by officers and men over impending events; the mounts grazed contentedly and General Crook and Lieutenant Bourke sat down for a game of cards. An aura of confidence emanated from General Crook and he was not occupied with the realization that momentarily he would be involved in the most extensive Indian engagement in the history of the West.25

Characteristic of the Sioux concept of battle, the field of conflict was of their choosing and admirably suited for the slashing, feinting, and veering type of mounted attack preferred by the Plains Indians. Topographically, the battle site was dominated by a ridge on the north side of the Rosebud. This ridge was oriented along a northeast, southwest axis and was three miles in length. Three short ridges extended at right angles to the main ridge, toward the southeast and were separated by broad, shallow valleys, that emptied into the Rosebud. The northeast end of the main ridge terminated in broken terrain, that bordered on the great bend of the river. As the Rosebud's course turned to the north, it flowed through a

24Vaughn, At the Rosebud, p. 49.

25Ibid., pp. 48-49.
shallow canyon that narrowed to about 150 yards in width, at a distance of about four miles north of the bend.

About eight-thirty o'clock, sporadic rifle fire was heard by the command, to the northwest, beyond the main ridge. Immediately, the Crow scouts came in sight, riding wildly. They dashed down the slopes into the alarmed column crying, "Heap Sioux! Heap Sioux!"26 The Tetons' first charges, from the northwest and the southeast were repulsed by the Indian Allies, while the troops were being directed into combat formations.27

Sweeping charges and countercharges extended Crook's forces along the main ridge of the battlefield. During the engagement, the fighting expanded from the broken terrain at the northeast end of the ridge toward the southwest and around each of the three smaller ridges in turn. The Sioux, under the leadership of Crazy Horse, delivered well-conceived thrusts against weakened points in the soldier's defenses. A prominent Indian leader, assumed to be Crazy Horse, was observed directing the movements of the Sioux bands with a flashing mirror.28 Always swirling from one salient to another, they alternately increased and decreased pressure on the soldiers, thus attempting to draw

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26 Finerty, op. cit., p. 84.
27 Vaughn, At the Rosebud, p. 50.
28 Finerty, op. cit., p. 86.
the command into isolated formations and defeat them in
detail.

Crook's dispositions, on the fully invested battle-
field were: Noyes' battalion of cavalry and some infantry
held the broken ground at the northeast end of the ridge;
Mills' and Van Vliet's battalions, supported by infantry,
held the high position on the ridge, at the junction of the
main ridge and the first of the smaller ridges oriented to
the southeast. This position, later called Crook's Hill,
was the General's command post. Farther down the ridge, to
the southwest, Royall directed the fight of Henry's bat-
talion. This force occupied a position along the middle
ridge of the three short ridges extending southeast from the
main ridge. Henry's position was isolated from the Com-
mander's view and was about a mile from the command post.29

General Crook was determined to occupy the Indian
village presumed to be at the north end of the Rosebud
Canyon. To affect reassembly of the column, he dispatched
Captain Nickerson, one of his aides-de-camp, to Royall with
instructions to return Henry's battalion to Crook's Hill,
or the central position. Nickerson had notified Royall of
the General's withdrawal order three times previously, but
the Commander of Cavalry had been unable to comply because
of the extreme pressure exerted on their position. Captain

29 Vaughn, At the Rosebud, p. 56.
Henry had been incapacitated by a near-fatal wound. A bullet had traversed his face, below the eyes—entering one cheekbone, passing through his nose, and exiting the opposite cheekbone. The Sioux, on observing a leader of the soldiers fall from his horse, had pressed their attack with increased ferocity. In their retreat with their wounded, Henry's force was almost overwhelmed, but was saved by the long range rifle fire of the infantry.  

Prior to Royall's return, the General dispatched Mills' and Noyes' companies down the canyon with the assurance that he would soon support them with the remainder of the force. The Indians observed the withdrawal of the large number of troops from the center and soon concentrated their attacks against Crook's Hill. The General, still separated from Royall, concluded he could not hold long against the intensified attacks of the Indians and dispatched Nickerson to intercept Mills and Noyes with orders for them to return to the battle. The two battalions defiled from the canyon to the west and made a wide circuit to come in behind Crazy Horse's forces north of Crook's Hill. The Sioux were forming for a new attack and were disconcerted to find themselves outmaneuvered. They abruptly broke off the engagement and retreated to the northwest. Mills pursued

[30] Ibid., p. 60.
them for several miles, then returned to Crook's position. 31

Still imbued with his original plan, the General assembled his command and started north through Rosebud Canyon. When he reached the point where the terrain narrowed, the Indian Allies refused to go farther, saying it was a death trap. The Sioux, they said, would destroy the command when it reached the point where it had no room to deploy. 32 Frank Grouard complained that the supply of ammunition was dangerously low. A quick inventory was taken and "... it didn't average ten cartridges to the man, and that was the only thing that stopped him." 33 It was subsequently found that the force had expended 25,000 rounds.

The battle was over at two-thirty o'clock in the afternoon, having lasted for six hours, when the Sioux suddenly retired. At the time of Mills' appearance in their rear, the hostiles had rendered an excellent account of themselves, and the resulting question concerns the Sioux's reason for stopping the fight. Since they had ridden all night to reach the battlefield and had fought all day, there was undoubtedly truth in the statement made by a

32 Vaughn, At the Rosebud, p. 65.
subsequent Indian observer: "They were tired and hungry, so they went home."\textsuperscript{34}

Crazy Horse told officers at Red Cloud Agency in 1877 that he had 1,500 warriors actively engaged on the Rosebud battlefield and another 5,000 in reserve. Knowing the proclivity of the Indians to fight as individuals, it is difficult to conceive the system of discipline that would have rendered 5,000 warriors inactive, while a certain victory promised rich loot.\textsuperscript{35} There is little doubt that Crook would have been overwhelmed by the addition of a large reserve to Crazy Horse's force.

General Crook reported ten killed and twenty-one wounded. Frank Grouard stated that twenty-eight were killed and fifty-six wounded.\textsuperscript{36} It is impossible to verify either Crook's or Grouard's statements. Reports from Captain Peter D. Vroom and Lieutenants Bainbridge Reynolds and Emmet Crawford, company commanders of the Third Cavalry, are not contained in the National Archives. The units commanded by these officers are said to have sustained the largest losses in the battle. Vaughn, who has completed extensive research

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{34} Vaughn, \textit{At the Rosebud}, p. 147.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Oliver Knight, \textit{Following the Indian Wars. A Story of the Newspaper Correspondents Among the Indian Campaigners} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), p. 185.
\item \textsuperscript{36} DeBarthe, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 122.
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on this action, opines that Crook understated the magnitude of his casualties and that Grouard's figures are closer to the truth. 37

Neither the Indians or the cavalry could claim overall victory in the fight on the Rosebud. Both sides had retired in strength and required only rest and resupply to achieve potency in battle. Undoubtedly, the Indians considered themselves victorious because they had successfully defended their village. Crook claimed victory for the Platte Column in his annual report to General Sheridan dated September 25, 1876:

At the fight on the Rosebud, June 17, the number of our troops was less than one thousand, and within eight days after that the same Indians we there fought met and defeated a column of troops of nearly the same size as ours, killing and wounding over three hundred, including the gallant commander, General Custer himself. I invite attention to the fact that in this engagement my troops beat these Indians on a field of their own choosing, and drove them in utter rout from it, as far as the proper care of my wounded and prudence would justify. Subsequent events proved beyond dispute what would have been the fate of the command had the pursuit been continued beyond what judgment dictated. 38

Several tactical errors were committed, which could have resulted in disaster. At the outset of battle, the General allowed the force to become too widely dispersed with the result that Royall and Henry barely escaped

37 Vaughn, At the Rosebud, p. 66.

annihilation. Later, when he dispatched Mills and Noyes down the canyon, he divided his force dangerously and faced the possibility of being overwhelmed on the battlefield. He recouped this error by ordering the two battalions to return to the ridge from the northwest, or behind the battle line of the Sioux.

General Crook was greatly disappointed in the outcome of the fight and harbored bitterness toward Colonel Royall. This sentiment was demonstrated in 1886, during a discussion between the two men at Crook's home in Omaha. The scene was witnessed by Major Guy V. Henry, one Captain Roberts and Second Lieutenant W. V. Kennon, who recorded the scene and conversation in his diary. 39

It should be noted that none of the contemporary newspaper accounts attached the stigma of defeat to the Army's performance on the Rosebud in 1876. 40 Indeed, it is difficult to understand how the Platte Column could have achieved more against the well-led and resolute enemy.

39 Earlier in 1886, during a newspaper interview, Colonel Royall had criticized Crook for faulty generalship at the Rosebud. During the Omaha meeting, General Crook accused Royall of making disparaging and unfair statements to the public. Crook further blamed Royall and Nickerson for delayed response to his orders to regroup during the battle. Royall countered by saying that Crook was not specifically named in the newspaper article, and that he had responded to Crook's orders when Nickerson delivered them.


40 Knight, *op. cit.* , p. 141.
CHAPTER IV

JOINING WITH TERRY

Crook directed the return of his force to the site of the morning's bivouac, after deciding to abandon the quest for the Indian village north of the battlefield. Proper care of the wounded and decent burial of the dead were matters that required immediate attention. Military dead were covertly interred on the banks of the Rosebud, to prevent the Sioux from exhuming the bodies and removing the scalps.¹

After the Shoshones completed the burial ceremony of a youthful horse guard, early on the morning of June 18, the troops broke camp on the Rosebud. The column reached the wagon train encampment on Goose Creek the following day. General Crook ordered the wagon train to return to Fort Fetterman, on June 21, for additional supplies and to evacuate the wounded to that post for more adequate treatment. He requested reinforcements and attempted no action other than to reconnoiter the area east of the Big Horn Mountains and north of his encampment for Sioux forces.²

¹Bourke, op. cit., pp. 316-17.

General Crook was informed that Colonel Wesley Merritt would reinforce the Platte Column with the Fifth Cavalry Regiment. Merritt, an excellent officer who possessed an outstanding Civil War record, was detached from General Sheridan's staff to assume regimental command from Lieutenant Colonel Eugene A. Carr. Colonel Merritt was to be delayed in joining Crook until August 3, 1876.

While waiting for reinforcements, from June 21 through August 3, Crook constantly moved his camp to provide adequate pasturage for his animals. Bourke, who continued to serve as his aide-de-camp, remarked that another reason for the many moves was to keep the troops occupied. To dispell the boredom of dull camp routine, personnel went hunting in the Big Horn Mountains for elk, deer, and mountain sheep, or made phenomenal catches of the succulent trout from clear fresh water streams.

Crook was impatient to receive news from Terry and Gibbon, but fully appreciated the difficulty of communicating over the short distance that separated his force from the troops on the Yellowstone. The scouts constantly reported signs of Sioux parties beyond the perimeter of his camp and he was assured the country between the two commands was alive with hostiles. To ascertain the location and strength of the enemy, a party of twenty-five soldiers and

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3 Ibid., p. 507.
two scouts commanded by Lieutenant Frederick W. Sibley of Troop E, Second Cavalry Regiment, departed camp on June 6, to make a reconnaissance toward the Little Big Horn River. John F. Finerty, the correspondent who accompanied this venture, wrote a vivid account of the group's harrowing experiences. Only by leaving their horses as decoys for a party of Sioux and Cheyennes, who were besieging them, were Sibley's men able to slip away into the fastness of the Big Horn Mountains. With little rest and no food, the party returned fifty miles to camp, on foot, arriving on July 9.

General Crook was certain that disaster had overtaken Terry's command. His fears were confirmed on July 10, when messengers brought dispatches from Fort Fetterman, telling of the catastrophe that had befallen the capricious Custer. This information had been relayed from Sheridan's headquarters in Chicago to the Platte Column, making the line of communication between Crook and Terry over 2,000 miles in length.

The group of dispatches received by Crook on July 10, contained a communication from Sheridan enjoining the Commander of the Platte Column to "Hit them again and hit them harder!" After considering his commander's injunction, Crook remarked, "I wish Sheridan would come out here himself

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4 Finerty, op. cit., p. 113.
5 Bourke, op. cit., p. 334.
and show us how to do it. It is rather difficult to surround three Indians with one soldier."

The Platte Column received the first direct communication from Terry on July 12, when three courageous soldiers of the Seventh Infantry rode into Crook's camp. These heroes were Privates James Bell, William Evans, and Benjamin F. Stewart. On July 19, four Crow scouts arrived with copies of the same dispatches previously delivered by Bell, Evans, and Stewart. Terry had directed duplicate copies of his messages to be sent by a second group of couriers, because of the great risk involved in traversing the intervening country.

The wagon train returned with supplies from Fort Fetterman on July 13, accompanied by seven companies of the Fourth, Ninth, and Fourteenth Infantry Regiments. With it came the unwelcomed news of Merritt's delay, engendered by the threatened break-out of the Cheyenne warriors at Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies. Sheridan directed the impatient Crook to withhold his force from the field, until Merritt could join him. Sheridan further advised that after Merritt had joined Crook, the reinforced Platte Column

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6Finerty, op. cit., p. 129.
8Finerty, op. cit., p. 143.
should seek and join Terry before attempting action against the hostiles. The old Shoshone Chief, Washakie, concurred, saying to Crook:

The Sioux and Cheyennes have three to your one, even now that you have been reinforced; why not let them alone for a few days? They cannot subsist the great numbers of warriors and men in their camp, and will have to scatter for pasturage and meat; they'll begin to fight among themselves about the plunder taken on the battle-field, and many will want to slip into the agencies and rejoin their families.

Scouting parties sent out by Crook failed to discover the location of the Sioux. One party consisted of half-breeds who investigated the Big Horn River; the other party made up entirely of Shoshones went to the headwaters of the Little Big Horn. They found large camp sites and a trail leading northeast in the direction of Powder River.

Prior to joining Crook, Merritt was to be engaged in a rear area policing action. The Fifth Cavalry patrolled a broad avenue, running northwest of the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies, over which the warring bands on the Little Big Horn were reinforced. Approximately 1,000 Cheyenne warriors remained on those reservations and after news of the fights on the Rosebud and Little Big Horn, were impatient to join their allies. Colonel Merritt was informed

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9Bourke, op. cit., p. 341.
10Ibid., pp. 341-42.
on July 15, that 800 Cheyenne warriors would bolt the reservation on the following day, fully equipped for the warpath and determined to join the Sioux. After a vigorous forced march, the Fifth Cavalry was placed in position to intercept the Cheyennes on War Bonnet Creek. In the short engagement with the advanced element of the Indians, on the morning of July 16, Buffalo Bill Cody, who accompanied the troops as a scout, killed the young chief Yellow Hand. The surprised Cheyennes were stampeded back to the reservation, leaving a trail of saddle bags stuffed with Government provender.

Merritt departed Red Cloud Agency on July 18, and proceeded to Fort Fetterman. From Fort Fetterman, the Fifth Cavalry marched north, on July 26, and joined Crook on August 3. The Regiment comprised of ten companies that were divided into two battalions, each containing five companies. The First Battalion, comprised of Companies A, C, G, I, and M, was commanded by Major John J. Upham. The Second Battalion, that contained Companies B, D, E, F, and K, was commanded by Major Julius K. Mason.

Counting the new arrivals, the Platte Column mustered 2,100 men. The Command included twenty-five

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12 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
13 Ibid., p. 34.
14 Ibid., pp. 52-53.
companies of cavalry from the Second, Third, and Fifth Regiments; ten companies of infantry from the Fourth, Ninth, and Fourteenth Regiments; 225 Shoshone scouts, twenty-five Ute scouts, and thirty white and half-breed scouts and civilians.  

Spartan preparations, typical of Crook's combat marches, were directed for his move to join Terry. Each man was permitted to take one poncho, one blanket, an overcoat, and only the clothing he wore. Rations for twelve to fifteen days were provided. A mule train of 399 animals would accompany the march with needed supplies. Part of their cargo would consist of 150,000 rounds of ammunition, in addition to the 100 rounds each man carried. All superfluous baggage was stored in the wagons, which were to return to Forts Fetterman and Laramie after the column departed. Major Furey, still serving as quartermaster, supervised a force of 200 wagoneers who manned the train of 160 vehicles.

The horses were in poor condition, and under more favorable circumstances, would not have been subjected to field service. Crook's mounts had been without grain for two months, subsisting only on grass. Horses of the Fifth

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15Knight, _op. cit._, p. 253.
16Bourke, _op. cit._, p. 348.
17Knight, _op. cit._, p. 253.
Cavalry had been weakened in thwarting the Cheyenne on War Bonnet Creek and had subsequently made the long march to join the Platte Column. Many of the poor animals were to die of exhaustion before any of their number would again feed on oats in a civilized stable; many of the cavalrymen would become foot soldiers and dine on horse meat before their mission was completed.

There was a feeling of anticipation and relief from boredom when the long-awaited move to join Terry began on August 5. In an attempt to uncover some sign of the enemy, the line of march proceeded northward along the winding Tongue River. After failing to discover the Sioux trail, Crook moved westward to the Rosebud.

The command intercepted the Rosebud about six miles north of the bloody ground that had witnessed the desperate struggle between Crook and Crazy Horse, earlier on June 17. Riding north, the column passed the point Mills and Noyes had defiled from the canyon. About a mile and a half farther down the Rosebud, a barrier of felled trees and brush obstructed the floor and sides of the canyon. If the eight companies of the Second and Third Regiment had continued another half mile down the river, they would have been annihilated in the cul-de-sac cleverly prepared by the

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18Finerty, op. cit., p. 155.
Sioux. The site of the Indian village, Crook's objective during the Battle of the Rosebud, was discovered on August 8, in proximity to its reported location. Camp debris indicated the village had extended four miles down the river valley and was surrounded by rock-guarded eminences. Scouts reported Indian trails in the vicinity were ten to twelve days old, and were made by a herd of 10,000 to 20,000 ponies.

Much of the country traversed during August 7 and 8, was covered with smoke from grass fires that had been started by the Indians. Normally, burning was considered to promote luxuriant spring growth during the following season. In this case, the soldiers were certain denudation of the prairies was intended to deprive their mounts of pasturage.

The column proceeded northward along the Rosebud, to intercept an Indian trail, reported by the scouts to be of recent origin. On August 10, within thirty miles of the Yellowstone River, a huge cloud of dust was observed rising from the concealed Rosebud valley, north of their position. Scouts and commanders, on riding forward to determine if Indians or buffalo were to be encountered, finally saw

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21 Finerty, *loc. cit.*
large groups of horsemen in the distance. In response to sighting advanced elements of Crook's troops, the strange horsemen fanned out to form skirmishers, in the practiced manner of cavalrymen. The forces of Crook and Terry had converged while searching for the large body of Sioux, each force thinking the other was the object of the chase.\(^22\)

Details regarding the loss of Custer and his favorite troops of the Seventh Cavalry--Companies C, E, F, I, and L--was available to the personnel of Crook's command for the first time. Intimate accounts of the action were gleaned from surviving members of the battalions that had been under the command of Major Marcus A. Reno and Captain Frederick W. Benteen. Official reports of 1876 stated the estimated strength of the Sioux and their Cheyenne Allies to be approximately 2,500 warriors.\(^23\) Military witnesses, called to testify before the Reno Court of Inquiry, convened in Chicago on January 13, 1879, presented statements regarding the Indians' strength on the fateful day of June 25, 1876. These estimates range from 3,000 to 5,000 warriors.

The village, in moving west about four o'clock in the afternoon of June 26, formed a compact body of warriors, families, ponies, and horse-drawn travois. That savage formation had

\(^{22}\)King, op. cit., pp. 71-72.

Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition
August 5 through September 30, 1876

Montana Territory

Terry's Camp
Custer's Camp

Crook's Camp
Crook and Terry separate, Aug. 25

Terry and Crook join forces, Aug. 10

Crook leaves camp, Aug. 5

Deadwood
Rapid City

Dakota Territory

North Fork

Slim Buttes Battle, Sept. 9

Wyoming Territory

Ft. Fernando

Ft. Laramie

Nebraska

0 100 MILES

been estimated to be a half mile to a mile wide and two and a half to three miles long.  

Gibbon's Montana Column, after advancing to unite with Custer's Seventh Cavalry on June 26, found only the dead bodies of Custer and his five companies scattered along the east bank of the Little Big Horn on June 27. After burying the dead, Gibbon's force with the survivors of the Regiment retired to the mouth of the Big Horn, where he remained until July 27. On that date, he moved down the Yellowstone to a new depot at the mouth of the Rosebud, preparatory to uniting with Crook.

Terry had been reinforced by six companies of the Twenty-second Infantry Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel E. S. Otis, that reached him on August 1. Colonel N. A. Miles arrived the next day with six companies of the Fifth Infantry Regiment. The infantry had been reorganized into four battalions under the command of Colonel Gibbon. The eight remaining companies of the Seventh Cavalry were commanded by Major Reno, senior surviving officer of that organization. Four companies of the Second Cavalry Regiment were commanded by Major J. S. Brisbin. Terry's combined


force contained two, ten-pound rifles and one, twelve-pounder under Lieutenant W. H. Low of the Twentieth Infantry Regiment.  

The depot on the Rosebud had been fortified with entrenchments as a precaution against attack after departure of the command. Defense of that point was entrusted to Captain L. H. Sanger, who was supported by one company of the Seventeenth Infantry, the dismounted men of the Seventh Cavalry, and three Gatling guns.

To increase the mobility of his force, Terry returned his wagons to the depot and loaded the required supplies on pack mules. The pack trains of the Montana and Dakota Columns were in shabby contrast to the practiced and efficient operations of the Platte Column. Bourke, an experienced critic of mule trains observed:

On the first day's march, after meeting Crook, Terry's pack-train dropped, lost, or damaged more stores than Crook's command had spoiled from the same causes from the time when the campaign commenced.

Gibbon was quick to discern the importance of properly conducted pack trains and decried the amateur efforts of his personnel in his official reports of October 17, 1876.

26 Ibid., pp. 465-66.
27 Ibid., p. 466.
28 Ibid.
29 Bourke, op. cit., p. 353.
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.

... 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. 50

After Terry had stripped his command for action, the combined forces of about 4,000 men began a march eastward following the Indians' trail, on August 11, and camped for the evening on the Tongue River. 31 That night a heavy downpour pelted the shelterless command and the rain continued until the afternoon of the next day. The march turned northward at the Tongue River and through August 12 and 13, horses began dropping along the way. Within forty miles of the Yellowstone River, the direction of march was changed eastward to the Powder River.

Marching through the mud exhausted some of the newly-

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31 Finerty, op. cit., p. 165.
recruited infantrymen of Terry's command; by August 15, additional recruits were suffering from swollen and bloody feet. These young men were placed on travois, extra mules, or, in several cases, the Shoshones loaded them on their ponies. The expedition reached the Yellowstone on August 17, and camped at the mouth of the Powder River.

Slow movement of the expedition became a source of discontent to the Ute and Shoshone scouts. The friendly Indians would not serve with Terry's column because of its disreputable pack train. They said it impeded progress and the enemy would never be caught. The Utes and Shoshones returned to their homes on August 20. Reports received at that time informed the Commanders that the Crows would not send warriors so far from their own country with hostile Sioux on the warpath. Crook's only remaining acouts were the half-breeds, the white frontiersmen, and a small party of Ree warriors.

Steamboats, that had supported Terry since the beginning of the expedition, resupplied the forces at the Powder River from the depot on the Rosebud. After drawing fifteen days' rations, Crook's force moved southward up the Powder on August 24. Terry followed the next day, but returned to the Yellowstone after receiving reports of

32 Ibid., p. 167.
33 Bourke, op. cit., p. 355-57.
hostile Indians along the river. Before departing, Terry assured Crook that additional supplies would be transported to the mouth of Glendive Creek, eastward on the Yellowstone River. 34

Crook had resolved to follow the Sioux trail until he attained his objectives: defeat and capture the hostiles, or run them onto the reservations. The line of General Crook's march departed the Powder River on August 25, and assumed pursuit of the Sioux along the trail originally followed with Terry. The days and nights of August 25 through September 4, were punctuated with occasional rain, and one night of extreme cold. Mud continued to be the main enemy, but malnutrition, exposure, and overwork resulted in neuralgia, rheumatism, malaria, and diarrhea among the debilitated personnel. 35

The Little Missouri River, a sullen, turbid stream flowing northward from the Blackhills, was crossed on September 4. Continuing eastward, a tributary of the Heart River was intercepted on September 5, at a point 160 miles west of Fort Abraham Lincoln and 200 miles north of the Black Hills. The column had a small encounter with a body


35 Bourke, op. cit., p. 365.
of hostiles, thought to be the enemy's rear guard. 36

With only two and a half days' rations remaining General Crook was forced to choose between three alternatives: first, undergo a four or five day march eastward to Fort Abraham Lincoln, where his exhausted troops would find ease and comfort; second, countermarch over his previous trail and direct his column to the supply depot Terry had established for him on the Yellowstone--at the mouth of Glendive Creek; or third, proceed directly southward to the Black Hills, that were seven days' march from the Heart River. Since the scouts reported a fresh trail leading toward the unprotected mining communities, Crook considered himself duty-bound to pursue the elusive Sioux and prevent their depredating against the illegal residents of the Hills. 37 At this time, he was convinced the summer con

federation of the Sioux had dispersed; some bands had gone to Canada, others to the Black Hills, and the less defiant had returned to the reservations. 38

In dispatches rushed to Fort Abraham Lincoln, Crook reported his plans to Sheridan in Chicago and requested supplies meet the column, in the northern edge of the Black Hills. Discussing his plan with Finerty, General Crook


38 Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
anticipated shortages in rations, saying,

"I have sent a telegram for supplies to General Sheridan. The wagons will meet us at Crook City or Deadwood. If not, the settlements must supply our wants. Nobody knows much about this region, but it looks fair. We'll kill some game, too, perhaps, to make up for short rations. Half rations will be issued after to-night. All will be glad of the movement after the march has been made. If necessary," he added, "we can eat our horses."

The march to the Black Hills began on September 5, over country barren of firewood and palatable water. The column was pelted continually by cold rain. Horses were abandoned by the score and some abruptly collapsed on the trail, as if shot. On September 7, the Commander directed Captain Anson Mills to lead 150 men from the Third Cavalry Regiment to Deadwood to procure supplies for the starving column. Accompanying Captain Mills' party, were fifty pack mules and packers under Tom Moore. Other officers assisting Mills were First Lieutenants Emmet Crawford, A. H. Von Leuttewit, and Frederick Schwatka. Horse meat became a common source of sustenance on September 8, as the overstretched rations were exhausted.

As the column was breaking camp on September 9, a messenger from Captain Mills informed General Crook that

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39 Finerty, op. cit., p. 183.
40 Ibid., pp. 184-85.
41 Ibid., p. 185.
the detachment had attacked and captured a Sioux village of forty-one lodges at Slim Buttes. Mills advised the General that the Sioux were attempting to regain their village and each of his horsemen had been equipped with only fifty rounds of ammunition. The fight was seventeen miles south of the column, and Crook immediately dispatched 100 men to reinforce Mills. 42

Captain Mills had attacked the village at dawn, stampeding the pony herd between the teepees. Only a few Sioux prisoners were taken, the majority having reached a bluff from where they fired effectively on the troops, in the early morning light. Additional troops, accompanied by the Commander, reached the village at eleven-thirty o'clock and the balance of the column arrived in the late afternoon, after the fight was finished. 43

From captives, the soldiers learned the chief of the village was American Horse, who had been fatally wounded. The teepees yielded a large amount of military property identified as previously belonging to the Seventh Cavalry Regiment. 44 Great quantities of dried food, including meat, was immediately appropriated by the soldiers, who were

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
anxious to feast on something more appetizing than horse flesh.

Indian captives laughed when they saw the soldiers devouring the dried meat. When he asked them why they laughed, Grouard was in turn asked what kind of meat they thought they were eating. Grouard said they supposed it was buffalo and venison. No, an Indian replied, the pony soldiers had kept them too much on the run that summer for them to hunt. Well, then, asked Grouard, what kind of meat was it? That, said a delighted savage, was the ponies that died. 45

Crazy Horse, encamped in the near vicinity, answered the summons of his kinsmen and resumed the attack about five o'clock in the afternoon. Instead of finding only Mills' detachment of 150 troopers, the great Sioux war chief was opposed by the complete Platte Column. The long range fire of the infantry forced the Sioux to retire. Crook lost three dead and about twenty-seven wounded. Among the wounded was the valiant Von Leutteowitz, whose leg had been severely shattered at the outset, and had later been amputated. 46

The column camped at American Horse's village on the evening of September 9. Some of the soldiers obtained their first decent rest in six weeks, by draping their couches with buffalo robes. Before putting his force on the trail the next morning, Crook released the Indian prisoners. He

45 Knight, op. cit., pp. 274-75.
told them the Government had no desire to kill the Indians, but they must accept unconditional surrender or be continually harassed. 47 These words were undoubtedly carried to the tribes and Crook's kindness to the women and children must have scored strongly with the primitives, in their subsequent councils. As the troops filed southward from the camp on September 10, Crazy Horse attacked the rear guard and wounded several soldiers, but lost five of his braves.

The marches of September 10, 11, and 12, were miserable experiences; the rain and mud continued to be the bane of their existence and by September 12, some of the personnel had returned to the diet of fresh horse meat. Also, on that date, seventy of the horses collapsed. 48 While breakfasting on horse steak the morning of September 13, wagons with supplies, accompanied by a herd of fifty cattle, arrived in camp from Crook City. With the arrival of the food train, the members of the expedition could feel they were again in touch with civilization.

General Crook relegated command of the column to Colonel Merritt on September 15. 49 In pursuance to Sheridan's order to report to Fort Laramie, Crook and his

47 Bourke, op. cit., p. 375.
49 Ibid., p. 206.
staff departed Deadwood on September 19. After resting at Fort Robinson until September 22, the party continued to Laramie, arriving there on September 27.50

The march of the Platte Column from August 5, when the force departed its wagon train, until September 13, when supplies arrived from Crook City, has been treated by some writers as General Crook's invention to promote human misery. Truly, the hardships and privations experienced by those men have been seldom exceeded in the military history of the United States. "It rained for twenty-two days, most of the storms being of phenomenal severity."51 The men were thoroughly wet much of the time, and had no extra clothing. When they arrived in the small mining communities of the Black Hills, they bore no resemblance to military personnel. Between 500 and 600 horses were abandoned or killed because of exhaustion.52 Horse meat had comprised the source of food for more than a week prior to the arrival of the Crook City ration train.

The most obvious reason for General Crook's march was that his superiors directed him to harass, pursue, and drive the hostiles into the reservations. There is no indication that Crook did not understand the reasons for

50 Ibid., pp. 216-19.
51 Bourke, op. cit., p. 330.
52 Finerty, op. cit., p. 205.
this policy, or that he was not in full sympathy with the measures required to effect its enforcement. The march resulted from his firm resolution to fulfill the policy directed by his Government. He realized his force might be strained to the limits of endurance and he never assured his associates they would engage the Indians in a decisive battle, after departing from Terry. His justification for the march was that a resolute show of force would hasten the collapse of Sioux resistance. 

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CHAPTER V

FINAL AFFAIRS OF 1876

After General Crook's arrival at Fort Laramie on September 27, he discussed with General Sheridan three problems of immediate importance: first, the establishment of two military posts in the unceded Sioux hunting grounds, south of the Yellowstone; second, continuation of the punitive measures against the non-reservation Indians; and third, the dismounting and disarming of the Indians on the Sioux reservations.

The Commander of the Division of the Missouri had urged, in his report of 1874, the establishment of two forts in the midst of the area favored by the renegade Sioux; that is, the area south of the Yellowstone and between the Powder River and the eastern slope of the Big Horn Mountains. In his report of 1876, he cited the failure to build these forts as a reason for the difficulties encountered during the summer with the Sioux.

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1 Records at the War Department Record Group 94, Document File 4154 (Sioux War) 1876, Item: 5184 AGO 1876.
2 Knight, op. cit., p. 280.
Impressed by Sheridan’s reasoning and the exigencies of the situation, the Secretary of War had encouraged Congressional appropriation of $200,000 for construction of the installations. Congress, motivated by the terrible disaster that had befallen Custer, passed a bill appropriating the requested funds, on July 22, 1876. In his telegram of the same date, Sherman notified his Lieutenant General of the Congressional action and urged Sheridan to proceed with dispatch in establishing the new posts.

Sheridan’s recommendation of 1874 had envisioned additional forts on the Yellowstone, at the mouths of the Tongue and Big Horn Rivers. In his letter of August 10, 1876, Sheridan advised the General of the Army that he would be unable to build the fort on the Big Horn because of the lateness of the season and the consequent fall of the Yellowstone River. He suggested the second fort would be located in the vicinity of old Fort Phil Kearny, at the southern end of the unceded hunting grounds.

As of August 10, 1876, Sheridan doubted Crook and Terry would engage the hostile Indians in a decisive stand. He voiced the opinion that the only solution was through

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4 Ibid., p. 37.

5 Records of the War Department, Record Group 94, Document File 4163 (Sioux War) 1876, Item: 4212 AGO 1876.

6 Records of the War Department, Record Group 94, Document File 4163 (Sioux War) 1876, Item: 4718 AGO 1876.
control of the game country and firm policing of the Sioux agencies. Further justification for the forts was contained in his views on the Indians' modus operandi:

I have never looked on any decisive battle with these Indians as a settlement of the trouble, and in fact I have never expected any decisive battle at all. Indians do not fight such battles; they only fight boldly when they have the advantage, as in the Custer case, or to cover the movement of their women and children, as in the case of Crook on June 17, Battle of the Rosebud but Indians have scarcely ever been severely punished unless by adapting their own mode of warfare, or tactics, and stealing on them.7

General Sherman in his letter of August 25, 1876, to Sheridan continued to hope for a decisive engagement. The propriety of Sheridan's plans were obvious, in the event it became necessary to defeat the Indians in detail.8

Replying to Sherman's letter on August 30, 1876, Sheridan assured his superior the troops would pursue the hostiles until they were subdued. In discussing the site of the forts, he advised Sherman the installation at the mouth of the Tongue River would be established as originally planned. The southern fort would be located on the site of old Fort Reno, where some of the buildings could be reconditioned for use as barracks and storehouses. Strategically, this fort provided a point for surveillance of the upper Powder River and the Indian trail from the agencies to Powder

7Ibid.
8Records of the War Department Record Group 94, Document File 4164 (Sioux War) 1876, Item: 4990 AGO 1876.
River. It was near enough to Fort Fetterman to be supplied at the late period of the season when General Crook could furnish personnel and transportation.  

The new forts were to be of prime importance in supporting the winter campaign of 1876-77 against the non-reservation Sioux. Colonel Nelson A. Miles, the energetic Commander of the Fifth Infantry, would march from the Tongue River Cantonment to deliver damaging blows to the bands of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. George Crook, the taciturn veteran of numerous Indian wars, would conduct his final campaign of 1876 from Cantonment Reno. For the third time, in 1876, General Crook became engrossed in the collection of forces for a thrust against the hostiles. This column, officially designated as the Powder River Expedition, was to be assembled from military units that had not been exhausted in previous expeditions. The Fourth Cavalry Regiment, from Kansas, was among the new units assigned to the latest enterprise. Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie, Regimental Commander, was a contemporary of Merritt and Custer, and had been one of the victors of the campaigns against the Southern Plains Indians, during 1874 and 1875.  

9 Records of the War Department Record Group 94, Document File 4164 (Sioux War) 1876, Item: 5184 AGO 1876.

While planning the new movement, Crook was diverted by Sheridan to the Red Cloud Agency on October 14, and began disarming and immobilizing the Indians. When the General arrived, he received reports that the Agency Indians were in communication with the hostiles. The Oglala bands of Red Cloud and Red Leaf had moved their camps to Chadron Creek, twenty-two miles from the agency. The military wanted all the bands close to the agency to prevent the incoming stragglers from being confused with the peaceful Indians. The Red Cloud and Red Leaf bands were suspected of selling arms and ammunition to their hostile brethren. They incited further distrust of the Army by refusing orders to move to the agency.

Colonel Wesley Merritt had been ordered south from the Black Hills to surround the reservation Indians. Crook had obtained information that some of the Indians at the outlying villages were preparing to flee to the war camps. He confounded their scheme by going into action before Merritt's arrival. Colonel Mackenzie, with eight companies of the Fourth Cavalry Regiment and some Pawnee Scouts departed Fort Robinson, near Red Cloud Agency, after

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11 Records of the War Department, Record Group 94, Document File 4163 (Sioux War) 1876, Item: 6429 AGO 1876.
12 Bourke, op. cit., p. 327.
13 King, op. cit., p. 140.
dark on the evening of October 22.\textsuperscript{14} Finding themselves surrounded the next morning, the truant bands peacefully surrendered, were immediately disarmed and deprived of their ponies, and returned to the Agency. About 700 horses and fifty rifles were seized.\textsuperscript{15}

General Crook assembled the chiefs of the Oglalas, Brules, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes to inform them the Government expected their loyalty in return for the rations and support they accepted from the Agencies. He notified the chiefs that they were to be held responsible for the conduct of their young men and since he had been charged with maintaining peace, they would regret future depredations.\textsuperscript{16} Red Cloud was informed he was no longer a chief and the friendly Spotted Tail was appointed head chief.\textsuperscript{17} In his letter of October 30, to General Sheridan, he justified his action in not disarming the bands that had demonstrated good faith:

\begin{quote}
The other bands, not disarmed, known as the Arapahoes, Loafers, and Cut-off Sioux have been loyal to us, and, to have disarmed them with the others would simply have arrayed the white man against the Indian and placed the loyal and disloyal on the same footing. By not doing this they were convinced in the most decided manner, that such was not our intention, and no amount of talk about "our friendship," and "the friendship of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14}Records of the War Department, Record Group 94, Document File 4163 (Sioux War) 1876, Item: 6429 A90 1876.

\textsuperscript{15}Brown, op. cit., p. 294.

\textsuperscript{16}Bourke, op. cit., pp. 387-88.

\textsuperscript{17}Brown, op. cit.
the Great Father," would have so thoroughly impressed it upon their minds.

For the first time in the history of this reservation did they see the loyal treated as well even as those who have been persistently stubborn and disloyal. This good effect was at once manifested in the desire of warriors from these bands to enlist, and enlistments have since been going on there in large numbers.18

Crook's letter was forwarded to the General of the Army and the Secretary of War. Sheridan's endorsement of November 6, to his subordinate's communication, illustrated a divergent point of view, in the technique of handling surrendered Indians:

The action of Gen. Crook in disarming the Redcloud and Redleaf bands of Indians at the Redcloud Agency is highly approved. His neglect to disarm and dismount other bands at that Agency is disapproved, and all the theories in his report seem to be given as a plea for not having performed what he promised and what was expected of him, and which would have been good policy and true humanity.19

Regardless of General Sheridan's opinions, the friendly Indians were not immediately disarmed and immobilized. In his letter of November 16, 1876, Major J. W. Mason, Commander of Fort Robinson, informed General Sheridan that the friendly bands were still armed. General Crook had successfully recruited scouts from among these Indians for his Powder River Expedition. Major Mason, possibly fearing reprisals from the former recalcitrant bands, informed

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18 Records of the War Department Record Group 94, Document File 4163 (Sioux War) 1876, Item: 6429 AGO 1876.

19 Ibid.
General Sheridan, "The families of Indians who are with General Crook are protected and cared for, so that no dissatisfaction may result from ill treatment of them."\(^{20}\)

The summer campaign was officially terminated and the troops returned to their permanent posts shortly after dismounting and disarming had been completed. General Crook's official farewell message to members of the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition was issued at Fort Robinson as his General Order Number 8, dated October 24, 1876. This document acknowledged the hardships encountered by the force and commended all personnel on the performance of their duty.\(^{21}\)

General Crook returned to his task of organizing the Powder River Expedition. The combat force for the General's second winter expedition consisted of units that had not previously participated in the campaigns of 1876--except for Company K of the Second Cavalry Regiment. This unit, under Captain James Egan, had been engaged in the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition. Other cavalry organizations were: Companies H and K of the Third Cavalry Regiment; Companies B, D, E, F, I, and M of the Fourth Cavalry Regiment; and Companies H and L of the Fifth Cavalry Regiment. All cavalry units were placed under the command of Colonel

\(^{20}\)Records of the War Department, Record Group 94, Document File 4165 (Sioux War) 1876, Item: 6788 ACO 1876.

\(^{21}\)King, op. cit., pp. 157-58.
Ranald S. Mackenzie of the Fourth Cavalry Regiment.\textsuperscript{22} Colonel Richard I. Dodge, of the Twenty-third Infantry Regiment, commanded a large force of riflemen.\textsuperscript{23} The organizations under Colonel Dodge's leadership were: Batteries C, F, H, and K, Fourth Artillery Regiment, that had been designated to serve as infantry; Companies A, B, C, F, I, and K of the Ninth Infantry Regiment; Companies D and G of the Fourteenth Infantry Regiment; and Companies C, G, and I of the Twenty-third Infantry Regiment.\textsuperscript{24}

A mule train of 400 animals was to provide mobility to the quartermaster's section. The able leaders, Tom Moore and Dave Mears, supervised the pack train and the sixty-five packers. A column of 168 wagons accompanied the expedition.\textsuperscript{25} The wagon train employed during the Big Horn and the Yellowstone Expedition had been returned to Fort Laramie for overhaul and refitting. It was then directed to proceed to Fort Fetterman to support the Powder River Expedition.\textsuperscript{26}

Major Frank North and his brother, Luther North, recruited a company of 100 Pawnee scouts for the expedition. General Crock enlisted 150 Sioux, Arapahoes, and Cheyenne to also serve as scouts. These Indians were mounted on ponies.

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\textsuperscript{22} \textbf{Bourke, op. cit., p. 389.}
\textsuperscript{23} \textbf{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{24} \textbf{Ibid., p. 390.}
\textsuperscript{25} \textbf{Ibid., p. 388.}
\end{flushright}
previously confiscated at Red Cloud Agency. After the expedition had been on the trail three days, the column was joined by 100 Shoshone and Bannock braves, led by Tom Cosgrove. Frank Grouard was also to accompany the force.26

When the Powder River Expedition was assembled at Fort Fetterman, it was composed of sixty-one officers, 1,436 enlisted men, and 350 Indians. The total number of fighting men was 1,847. If the sixty-five packers and their supervisors, together with over 160 wagon teamsters were included the total manpower of the expedition would have exceeded 2,000.27 It is well to remember that mule packers and wagon drivers were exceedingly capable Indian fighters.

The column departed Fort Fetterman on November 15, and proceeded northward along the Bozeman Trail, arriving at Cantonment Reno—old Fort Reno—four days later. Cantonment Reno was one of the two forts established at the behest of General Sheridan. Some of the old structures had been rehabilitated under the energetic administration of Major Pollock. Although restoration was incomplete, Cantonment Reno possessed supplies and shelter from strong Indian war parties and the rigors of the Northern Plains winter.28

General Crook directed the Arapahoes and Sioux to

27 Ibid., p. 294.
28 Bourke, op. cit., p. 391.
Powder River Expedition
November 15 through December 29, 1876.

Montana Territory

Ft Abraham Lincoln

Dakota Territory

Deadwood

Rapid City

Wyoming Territory

Ft Fetterman

Nebraska

perform a reconnaissance of the eastern slope to the Big Horn Mountains. The scouts departed Cantonment Reno on November 18, and returned three days later. Location of many of the villages had been determined from a young Cheyenne renegade, who had been captured by the scouts. The youth reported Crazy Horse's village was near the battlefield on the Rosebud River. 29

The column marched northward along the Bozeman Trail intent on mounting an attack on Crazy Horse. At Crazy Woman Creek, about twenty miles north of Cantonment Reno, Crook learned from one of his scouts, Sitting Bear, that Crazy Horse had been warned of the presence of the expedition. The General, certain that his old adversary could not be trapped, if forewarned, diverted his attention to a Cheyenne village at the south end of the Big Horn Mountains. 30

Following the advice of his scouts, Crook directed the column to move southwest toward the renegade Cheyenne camp. Mackenzie, with the vanguard of cavalry, made a rigorous night march on November 24 and 25. At dawn, his force of cavalry and Indian allies burst upon the sleeping village that was located in a small valley of the Red Fork

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29 Brown, op. cit., p. 295.

30 Records of the War Department, Record Group 94, Document File 4163 (Sioux War) 1876, Item: 565 AGO 1877.
of Powder River. The camp was instantly awakened and the Cheyenne warriors organized a rear guard action, while squaws and children hurried for the cover of rocks and ravines at the west end of the village.\textsuperscript{31}

After the first charge of the cavalry and the Indian Allies, the Cheyenne warriors retreated to the natural defensive positions where their families had hidden. The victors began destroying the village in the afternoon and in ramsacking the teepees, many articles were found that had previously belonged to members of Custer's annihilated battalion. Among the more grisly trophies were found a buckskin bag containing the right hands of twelve Shoshone babies and a necklace with eight Indian fingers attached as pendants.\textsuperscript{32}

Throughout November 25, the beleaguered Cheyennes conducted a long-range sniping duel with their enemies. Scouts, in guarded conversation with the hostiles, learned the village was under the leadership of Dull Knife. The Chief bitterly assailed the Sioux and Cheyenne scouts, calling out, "Go home—you have no business here; we can whip the white soldiers alone, but can't fight you too."\textsuperscript{33}

This statement justified General Crook's policy of using Indians to fight Indians.

\textsuperscript{31} Brown, op. cit., p. 297.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 299.

\textsuperscript{33} Bourke, op. cit., p. 393.
Unable to dislodge the fortified Cheyennes, Mackenzie requested the infantry to support him with their long rifles. General Crook arrived with the foot troops, commanded by Colonel Dodge, after the hostiles had withdrawn under the cover of darkness.34 The Cheyennes retreated several miles from their first defensive site and endured a grim night, unsheltered from the November cold. Eleven babies expired in their mothers’ arms; horses were killed and their bellies cut open so the half-naked old men and women could warm their feet in the entrails.35

Colonel Mackenzie reported 173 lodges destroyed, 500 ponies captured, and twenty-five Indians confirmed as killed. Among the Indian dead were three sons of Dull Knife. Crook’s force lost one officer and five enlisted men killed and twenty-five wounded.36 The expedition returned to Cantonment Reno and the Shoshones, upset by the pitiful trophies discovered in the Cheyenne camp, hurried back to their villages. General Crook led the column eastward to the headwaters of the Belle Fourche in a search for additional renegade encampments. Continuing their reconnaissance, the troops moved down the Belle Fourche to the base

34Ibid.
35Ibid.
36Records of the War Department, Record Group 94, Document File 4163 (Sioux War) 1876, Item: 565 AGO 1877.
of the Black Hills, enduring the discomfort of extreme cold. Messengers were dispatched to Red Cloud Agency to obtain information from the friendly Indians regarding the location of Crazy Horse's camp. Since the horses were losing their stamina, Crook also requested additional scouts with fresh mounts. His returning Indians brought information that Crazy Horse and his band had fled to the Bad Lands of the Little Missouri River, far beyond the range and endurance of his weakening horses. 37

Dispatches from General Sheridan, on December 20, cautioned Crook that expenditures for transportation had exceeded his monthly allowance of $65,000 by an additional $28,000. 38 Having exhausted the supplemental grain and feed from the pack train, the animals were forced to exist on grass of inferior quality, which was mostly snow-covered. Since there was little hope of establishing contact with the enemy, General Crook resolved to terminate the campaign. The column returned to Cantonment Reno, gathered its rear echelon, and arrived at Fort Petterson on December 29.

The hostile Cheyennes, after withdrawing from the vicinity of the plundered camp, started a painful march across the frozen landscape to the encampment of Crazy Horse. Crow scouts, traveling south to Cantonment Reno, had

37 Ibid.
38 Brown, op. cit., p. 300.
endured a frightful blizzard and near-starvation. This party had crossed the Cheyenne trail and had followed it toward Rosebud Creek. A Cheyenne campsite they examined had consisted of hundreds of fires and little couches of willows and grass—but no teepees. There was a difference of opinion regarding the degree of hospitality displayed by the Sioux to their Cheyenne friends. One author states: "The Sioux treated them kindly and supplied most of their wants."39 John G. Bourke related:

"Crazy Horse" was indifferent to the sufferings of his allies and turned the cold shoulder upon them completely, and this so aroused their indignation that they decided to follow the example of those who had enrolled under our flag and sent in word to that effect.

It was difficult to believe the Cheyennes would surrender and seemingly absurd to accept the proposition that they would enlist against Crazy Horse. The personnel at Red Cloud were astounded when, in the last days of December, 1876, and the first of January, 1877, groups of destitute Cheyennes arrived at the agency. Their progress was necessarily slow because of the condition of their ponies and the wounded. Finally, the main band arrived and announced their intention to fight their former friends.41

40 Bourke, op. cit., p. 394.
41 Ibid.
The impact of the Powder River Expedition on the Northern Plains Indians is implied in Bourke's statements. The Cheyennes had been the Sioux's most valuable ally. In warfare, they had rivalled the Sioux in bravery and had ridden in the vanguard with their friends, the Sioux, to do battle against the Great Father's pony soldiers. News of the destruction of Dull Knife's village, not only confirmed the mighty Cheyennes had been severely chastised, but that the Government's forces would continue to conduct the deadly winter campaigns until the non-reservation Indians were subjugated. Their will to resist withered even further when the loyal Cheyennes flocked to the reservations and became scouts for the Army. The capitulation of Crazy Horse, the greatest warrior of the Plains Indians, was undoubtedly hurried, in the summer of 1877, by these considerations.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Similar to the conflicts of mankind in other eras, the Sioux War of 1876 illustrated the diversity of aims fostered by the warring groups. Knowing the extreme divergence of economic and cultural aspirations of the Indians and the Americans, the historical results could hardly be avoided. This divergence can be summarized by the Indian's characterization of the white man as a despoiler and liar; the white man's antipathy to the Indian was represented by the inhumane statement, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." It was on these bases that the irreconcilable impasse of nineteenth century Western America was nurtured.

Final resolution was effected by the growing and overwhelming strength of the white men and the decreasing strength of the Indians. With the passage of years, a juxtapositioning of strength occurred involving manpower, economic foundation, and group morale. For the Tetons, the events of 1876 signaled the apex of this juxtapositioning and the formidable Lakota would never again be the scourge

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of the Northern Plains.

Popular commentary has converted Custer's annihilation on the Little Big Horn into the most significant event during the campaigns of 1876. From this bloody incident, the cursory reader may assume the Government's troops were led by inadequate officers. While Custer's action was undeniably gross, the basic military aims of the Sioux War of 1876 were doggedly pursued and the individual campaigns, as directed and conducted by the primary Army commanders, advanced the basic war objectives.

Prior to the Sioux War, it was conceived that if white and red men could not live peacefully on the same lands, they should be separated. Hence, the Americans—the stronger party—concluded it was humane to isolate the Indians on reservations thereby preserving both American and Indian lives. The red men were to receive the benefits of training in the white men's civilization and Christianity, for which the Indian would not have traded one moth-eaten scalp. Corralling the Indians onto reservations, consequently, was the basic military aim of 1876.

George Crook's contribution to the campaigns of 1876 was significant in achieving the Government's desired goal. While the terminal fights with the Tetons were to occur in the first portion of 1877 against Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull and their adherents, Crook had effectively
blunted the keen edge of the militant Lakota, in his expeditions of the previous year.

Success in implementing the Government's punitive policy against the non-reservation Tetons was achieved through slow, grinding attrition rather than spectacular victories on the battlefield. While the Indians avoided pitched battles, unless the odds were greatly in their favor, or unless their encampments were immediately threatened, the United States Army was reduced to employing the tactic of harassment. Except for the Battle of the Rosebud, the primary activity of the Government's forces in 1876 was the pursuit of the nomads and destruction of encampments. Constant military pressure disrupted their hunting economy and physically weakened the warriors, as well as the women and children.

General Crook was properly conditioned, by temperament and inclination, to live the life of an Indian fighter. Taciturn and phlegmatic, he bore the hardships of crude bivouacs and the rigors of the trail, without impairment to his judgment. As a dedicated soldier, he strove with single-mindedness of purpose to execute the policy of his government, without questioning the moral correctness of that policy. In the execution of his duties, he applied the tools found useful in previous Indian conflicts. Among these were the employment of Indians as scouts for combat
forces--preferably dissidents from the tribe being pursued; the transfer of essential war material from wagons to mule trains, attended by professional packers, when operating from advanced supply bases, or when it was necessary to strike rapidly or into rough, trackless terrain; the streamlining of his mounted troops by discarding nonessential equipment, thereby decreasing the load carried by his cavalry horses and increasing the speed and flexibility of his forces. Whatever the merits of Crook's charges against Colonel Reynolds and others, the legal actions taken after the Big Horn Expedition, solidified discipline in his subsequent campaigns. The Horse Meat March, of September 1876, could have resulted in subsequent widespread desertion, denouncement, or even mutiny. Instead, his capture of American Horse's village and the repulse of Crazy Horse's counterattack at Slim Buttes prove he retained command and control of his force, although it was operating on the verge of starvation and despair.

Cold fear, unreasoning hatred, or secret guilt nurtured the theory of extermination as the nineteenth century solution to the Indian question. This Western myopia did not infect General Crook's attitude when fighting or negotiating with his savage adversaries. He discriminated between Teton bands, which displayed a complaisant attitude after surrender, in 1876, and those that remained
truculent after they returned to the reservations. To demonstrate that friends were properly recognized, he tried to avoid disarming and dismounting the friendly Tetons, thereby earning the displeasure of General Sheridan. However, scouts were enlisted for later campaigns from these bands.

The picture of George Crook which emerges from a study of his military activities in 1876 portrays a durable, stable, and reliable leader. He exuded no glamour and even in the immediate aftermath of his greatest forays against the Tetons, he appeared unspectacular. After interpreting the vignettes of history, it must be concluded that General Crook performed excellently in discharging his duties during the Sioux War of 1876.
Public Documents (United States—Executive and Congressional)


This document, with supporting reports, discusses negotiation of the Treaty of Laramie, 1851.


The Union Pacific Railroad had progressed 517 miles west of Omaha. Reviews background of the Indian's war-culture.


Brigadier General George Crook assumed command of the Department of the Platte, April 27, 1875. Outlines the areas that comprised the Division of the Missouri, the Departments of the Platte, and Dakota. Recommends establishment of forts at the mouth of Big Horn and Tongue Rivers. Crook reports 400 horses stolen from settlers along the line of the railroad.


The Army was unable to block entry of miners into the Black Hills. Advocates removal of Tetons to reservations on Missouri River, for ease of supply, and availability of good water, timber, and arable land.


Number of hostile Sioux estimated at 3,000. Sioux affairs administered under twelve agencies.

A detailed account of the difficulties of the Allison Commission in negotiating with the truculent Sioux.


Unprincipled white traders, whisky merchants, and Indian unrest regarding the Black Hills question created difficulties for government officials managing the Sioux agencies.


The lists of claims contain names of claimants, amount of each claim, date and locality of the depredation, and tribe of Indians responsible for the depredation.


Selected items of correspondence from the files of the Secretaries of War and Interior, related to the Sioux War of 1876, were compiled in response to a Senate resolution of July 7, 1876.


Formal reports of principal Army officers involved in the Sioux War of 1876 are attached, as supporting documents, to the Secretary's report.


Discusses problems encountered in negotiating the return of Sitting Bull's band from Canada to the United States.

Details of the final fights against Sitting Bull's and Crazy Horse's followers are reported by the primary Army officers in command of Western forces.


Brigadier General Crook expressed his opinion regarding transfer of the Indian Bureau from the Department of the Interior to the War Department.


Contains correspondence and reports dated from May 29, 1876 through December 13, 1877. This material is in the Nebraska State Historical Society Archives, as microfilm record, number 355, Un 3, NAS-68, Reel 1.

Office of the Adjutant General. Record Group 94. Selected Reports from 6160 AGO 1875.

Presents report of General Crook's activities during the Big Horn Expedition of March, 1876, and the attack on Crazy Horse's village. Also, contains records and correspondence related to Court of Inquiry, 1877, regarding the conduct of Col. Reynolds, Capt. Moore, and Capt. Noyes. This material is deposited in Nebraska State Historical Society Archives as microfilm record entitled "Powder River Expedition, 1876."


Includes correspondence and reports from General Crook to Commander of the Division of the Missouri (General Sheridan) during the period from August 16, 1875 to September 25, 1876. This material is deposited in the Nebraska State Historical Society Archives, as microfilm record, number 355, Un 3, NAS-68, Reel 1.
Books (Edited Government Works, Memoirs, and Reminiscences)

A reprint of the 1891 edition. Provides good chronology, detail actions and quotations of principal characters; also an extensive physical description of General Crook and his mannerisms.

Describes Colonel Gibbon's march from Fort Shaw, Montana Territory, to the Yellowstone River rendezvous with General Terry. Lieutenant Bradley, Commander of Scouts for Gibbon's Column, was one of the first officers to view the carnage of the Custer Battlefield.

A reprint of the 1890 edition. Excellent chronology, accounts of conversations, and description of activity in Crook's Command from May 6, 1876 through September 27, 1876. Chronology corresponds with that of Bourke and King.

Prepares the text of treaties negotiated by the United States Government and Sioux tribes in 1851, 1865, and 1868.

A reprint of 1890 edition. As acting assistant adjutant general for Colonel Wesley Merritt (Brevet Major General), King recounts the activities of the Fifth Cavalry Regiment in the interval between June 4, 1876 and October 24, 1876. Chronology parallels the works of Bourke and Finerty. Presents excellent details of Crook's Horsemeat March.

The author, who served as a cavalry commander under Crook, writes of his interception movements against illegal mining parties attempting to enter the Black Hills. Mills was also a contemporary observer of Crook's pursuit of the Sioux from June through September, 1876, and commanded the advanced cavalry elements engaged in the Battle of Slim Buttes.


General Sherman relates his experience with the Indian Commission, that promulgated the treaties of 1868. He states these treaties were designed to foster the North-South reservation plan. Presents political background for the Quaker policy.


Citations for outstanding performance of duty provides insight to the difficulties encountered by valiant soldiers during the Sioux War of 1876.


Crook's work is of limited value to this study. The Big Horn and Yellowstone Expeditions are presented briefly. The autobiography terminates on June 18, 1876, the day after the Battle of the Rosebud. The remainder of the story of Crook's life is presented by Schmitt.

Secondary Works

Books


Andrist's account of the troubles of 1876 occupies only sixty-one pages of his book, but this material is vividly presented. Excellent maps illustrate the movements of the major campaigns.

As Commander of the Division of the Missouri, 1865-1869, and General of the Army, 1869-1883, Sherman exerted great influence in settlement of the West, and was an eminent proponent of the transcontinental railroad.


Barrows contends the failure of American institutions to provide a fair solution to the Indian question was greatly affected by the low quality of frontier society encountered by the Indians.


An excellent history of the buffalo on the North American Continent and the impact of its demise on the Indians' nomadic culture.


In eighty-three pages of lucidly written material describing the Sioux difficulties, Brown advances the concept that the depredation of renegade Tetons was responsible for the Army's punitive action.


Provides colorful background on Sioux life and customs. Grouard's account sometimes appears to border on braggadocio and Mari Sandoz refutes his version of his racial origins in her book, *Crazy Horse*.


This book is a reprint of an earlier edition, the date of the original is unknown. However, the reproduction of the author's introduction was dated October 5, 1876. Although George B. Hyde in his
Red Cloud's Folk refers to Dodge's "stupid book" (page 150). Lt. Col. Dodge was a contemporary of General Crook and a student of the Plains Indians. His book contains interesting accounts of Sioux tribal customs.


Chapter IX, "The Army's Dark Ages," discusses the impact of the economy-minded, post-bellum Congress on the effectiveness of the Army in combating the militant Plains Indians.


A partial record of the investigation into the battlefield conduct of Major Marcus A. Reno by a Court of Inquiry convened at Chicago, Illinois, January 13, 1879, and adjourned February 11, 1879. Surviving officers of the 7th Cavalry estimated the strength of the Sioux, at the Little Big Horn, to be 3,000-5,000 warriors.


Grinnell, an unbiased scholar, has recorded the major battles fought by the Cheyennes. This book, originally printed in 1915, remains a classic on the subject of these valiant people.


This work outlines the tribal structure of the Sioux and describes their patterns of behavior, customs of their nation, and the concepts of their imagination in peace and war. Of special interest, is the analysis of the egocentric characteristics of their society, which produced the marked aggressiveness of the Sioux toward their enemies.


The story of the great chief's peaceful struggle with the United States Government to gain the treaty rights of his people. Although he
realized the futility of further conflict with the
government, he struggled against the conversion of
the Sioux into imitation white men overnight.

* Red Cloud's Folk: A History of the Oglala Sioux
Indians. 2d Printing, 1st ed. Norman: University

The Sioux migration from the western Great
Lakes region to the plains of Dakota and Montana
was spearheaded by the Oglalas. This tribe was
foremost in aggression against the white invaders
and other Plains Indians. Hyde presents an account
of the Oglala's massacre of Lieutenant Gratten's
detail in 1854, Red Cloud's War, 1866-68, and the
Custer Fight. During the wars against the white
invaders, between 1865-77, Red Cloud was the most
prominent Oglala and one of the greatest Sioux
leaders.

Johnson, Virginia Weisel. The Unregimented General: A
Biography of Nelson A. Miles. Boston: Houghton

Miles, as a troop commander was subordinate to
General Terry during the Yellowstone Expedition of
1876. Miles' campaigns, during the winter of 1876-
77, were a vital factor in forcing the surrender of
Crazy Horse.


A precisely documented biography of a capable
Indian fighter, who was a contemporary of Crook,
Terry, Mackenzie, and Merritt. Carr's opinions of
his superiors, during August and September, 1876,
are revealed in his letters to his wife.

Knight, Oliver. Following the Indian Wars: The Story of
the Newspaper Correspondents Among the Indian
Campaigners. Norman: University of Oklahoma

A specialized view of the Indian Wars compiled
from a review of the activities of outstanding
correspondents. Knight reveals the partisanship
which permeated the reports of several writers
attached to either Terry's or Crook's field head-
quarters.

Leckie, William H. The Military Conquest of the Southern
Plains. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press,
1963.
An excellent work, covering the subjugation of the Comanches, Kiowas, Arapahoes, and Southern Cheyennes. The concept of multi-pronged attack, planned for use against the Sioux in the summer of 1876, had been well utilized against the Southern Indians in 1874-75. Colonel Ranald Mackenzie, a participant of the Powder River Expedition of 1876 had been a notable troop commander in Texas prior to his assignment under Crook.


Until the recent publication of this book and The Troopers, below, little detail was available regarding the life of the rank and file Regular Army enlisted man. This work constitutes a well-documented source on the subjects of life on western posts, discipline, crime, vice, punishment and details of campaign preparation, field service and combat.


A rather cursory treatment of the impact of Sheridan's personality and directives during the major Indian engagements on both Northern and Southern Plains during the years 1868-77.


A detailed history of the Sioux Indians from their earliest traditions, through their many wars with white and Indian enemies, until their settlement on reservations and complete subjugation.


The Oglalas were the most warlike of the Lakota, or Teton Sioux. This book contains excellent detail on the lives of the two great Oglala chiefs, Red Cloud and Crazy Horse.


A detailed biography of the eminent Oglala warrior, written by one knowledgeable in the customs
and legends of the Sioux. Important events in the life of Crazy Horse are presented in chronological order, following the index.

A sympathetic, poignant treatment of Sioux folklore. Knowledge of the complexities of Indian society helps elevate them, in present-day evaluation, from the level of brutes to a plateau of sensitive and feeling people.

A valuable account of the difficulties of reservation agents in dealing with surrendered tribes.

Sheldon examines seventeenth and eighteenth century legal theories which justified state proprietorship of New World lands occupied by aboriginal people.

General Crook's philosophy of fighting Indians with Indians was conclusively proven by Al Sieber and his Tento Apache Scout during Crook's first tour of duty as Commander of the Department of Arizona, 1871-75.

Utley recounts the experiences of the Sioux on reservations between 1880-91. The failure of the government to help the Indians bridge the gap between two civilizations, together with the Indians' reluctance to accept change, terminated in the tragic massacre of the Sioux at Wounded Knee Creek.

The most detailed exclusive treatment of the Battle of the Rosebud available for this study.
Official reports and contemporary accounts have been utilized by the author. Vaughn designated the sites of individual battlefield actions by locating concentrated deposits of residual shells and shell cases with a metal detector. A front-piece map provides good battlefield orientation on the extensive and irregular terrain over which the many single actions of this engagement occurred.


The story of Crook's first expedition against the non-reservation Sioux and the first campaign in the series of four major military activities against the outlaw bands in 1876. Vaughn's literary styling has been improved in this work, as compared to his prior book With Crook on the Rosebud. The author has employed proper source material and again used the metal detector to pinpoint the sites of specific actions by locating deposits of shell cases.


A well written and engrossing biography of the most widely known Sioux chieftain. Vestal's work is based, in a large part, on interviews with Indian acquaintances of Sitting Bull and with white persons who possessed first-hand information of events important to a study of the chief's life.


An informative compilation of customs, traditions, weapons, crime and punishment, and military pay of Western troopers. Documentation of information is lacking and this book falls short of the scholastic effort produced by Don Rickey in his book on the same subject, previously listed.
Articles and Periodicals


Anderson contends the Sioux War of 1876 was the outgrowth of political byplay of the Grant Administration, in response to pressure from miners to open the gold fields of the Black Hills.


This article, by the soldier-author of the journal that describes the movements of the Montana Column in 1876, presents a harsh character analysis of the Tetons. Bradley emphasizes the majority of suffering the Sioux experienced from white immigrants and the government was the result of their deliberate devilment, and that good will to persons outside their familiar tribal circles was always nonexistent.


This issue was devoted solely to the life of Crazy Horse and presents articles from the Omaha Daily Herald, copies of military correspondence, and an excellent bibliography of sixteen entries.


Brown, author of The Plainsmen of the Yellowstone, discusses the dissatisfaction of civil authorities, military officials, and the Western citizenry with the Sioux because of their aggression against both whites and other Indians. The author states the government directed punitive action by the Army, in retaliation to the continued depredations of the outlaw Sioux.


An extensive treatment of the history of Sioux conflict with the government. Sources utilized are: Doane Robinson's History of the Sioux; reports from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs; and Volume II of
Charles J. Kappler's work on Indian treaties. De Land discusses the background of the Treaty of Laramie of 1851, the Powder River Expedition of 1865, Red Cloud's War of 1866-67, the surveys of the Northern Pacific Railroad, the Custer Expedition to the Black Hills in 1874, and the campaigns of 1876.


Camp (later, Fort) Robinson was established adjacent to the Red Cloud Agency and was named in honor of a Lt. Levi H. Robinson. This article discusses the establishment of the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies, and Camp Sheridan—in the neighborhood of the Spotted Tail Agency. Grange covers the final surrender of Crazy Horse and his hostile band, the Powder River Expedition of 1876, and the Cheyenne trek from the Indian Territory, (Oklahoma), to the Red Cloud Agency.

Malin, James G. "Indian Policy and Westward Expansion," *Humanistic Studies*, II, No. 3, Bulletin of the University of Kansas, XXII, No. 17 (November 1, 1929), 11-103.

An excellent treatise on the political factors and legislative measures surrounding the development of the Northern and Southern Indian Reservation policy. Malin's work is authoritative, clearly presented, and well documented.


The term, Northern Plains, in this article includes the present states of Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, and North and South Dakota. Mattison reviews the justification for establishment of the posts, lists their locations, provides intimate views of the troopers' lives on the Western frontier.

Mattison, Ray H. "The Indian Reservation System of the Upper Missouri, 1865-1885," *Nebraska History Magazine*, XXXVI, No. 3 (September, 1955), 141-172.

The author discusses the development of the government's policy for control of the Northern Plains Indians, the history of the agencies, and the difficulties encountered in administration. Mattison's footnotes provide references to
applicable books and government publications.


The death of Lt. John L. Grattan and his detail of troops in August 19, 1854, while penetrating a Sioux encampment, is considered a starting point in the history of bad relations between the Tetons and the United States Government. This incident occurred over the troops' attempt to recover a decapitated cow lost by Mormon immigrants.


Mears was with General Crook as transportation manager during the campaigns against the Indians from 1874 to 1879. The description of a military mule train by Mears is a valuable item of information from a contemporary expert.


Pennington discusses the instruments of the Teton political system: the chieftains, or executives; the tribal councils, or legislative bodies; and the warrior societies, or those who performed policing activities. The political organization of these powerful primitives was an anarchy only in that it permitted unrestrained individual freedom if tribal security was not endangered.


The nepotism of President Grant and the greed of his brother, Orvil, were a part of the gross governmental corruption that infected public employees in the post-Civil War era. The author presents intimate details of Secretary Belknap's involvement in the corruption associated with awarding of sutler's contracts on Army posts. General G. A. Custer's resentment of Belknap may partially account for the impetuous Indian fighter's ill-considered attack at the Little Big Horn.

An excellent and well documented review of the concept and management of Indian affairs during the Grant Administration. Utley proves that Grant's Indian policy, though well conceived, was nullified by inept supervision from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, loss of capable management talent through political maneuvering, and the corruption of political employees— at all levels.