

50¢

DEEP RAVINE TRAIL



LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD
National Monument • Montana

For Your Safety

Beware! This is rattlesnake country. Please stay on pathway. Extinguish all smoking material before entering trail.

Help us protect the resources

- Stay on Trail
- Do not disturb wildlife or vegetation
- Do not remove artifacts
- Do not disturb headstones
- Please do not litter
- Pets are not permitted outside vehicle
- CAUTION: THERE ARE STEEP GRADES!
- PLEASE NOTE: THE TRAIL IS NOT WHEEL CHAIR ACCESSIBLE.
- BE PREPARED! WEAR APPROPRIATE HEAD AND FOOT WEAR.
- BRING A CANTEEN.



**FEDERAL LAW PROHIBITS RELIC HUNTING
AND USE OF METAL DETECTORS
REPORT OFFENDERS TO PARK HEADQUARTERS**

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Cover photograph

*Deep Ravine Trail from upper Deep Ravine
c. 1937 Photograph by Charles Kuhlman*

Introduction

On a hot and dusty Sunday afternoon in June 1876, five companies of the 7th U.S. Cavalry were met in battle by an overwhelming force of Lakota Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho warriors. After the smoke and dust of battle cleared, 210 cavalymen and attached civilian personnel lay dead on the field.

The earliest historic use of Deep Ravine Trail began immediately after the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876 when Army personnel interred Seventh Cavalry battle casualties on the field and erected temporary wooden stakes made from tipi poles to mark each site. By 1879 heavy rains and erosion exposed many burials, prompting annual maintenance of the site and additional re-interments. In 1881 a granite memorial was erected on Last Stand Hill and human remains placed in a mass grave at the base. Use of the area increased by 1890 when white marble markers were erected at the original burial sites. By the early twentieth century, the early maintenance paths attracted visitors to the area. Today the markers scattered over this rugged cultural landscape aid visitors and researchers in reconstructing the historic battle, known the world over, as Custer's Last Stand.



Early view from Last Stand Hill of Cavalry horse bones, boots, rotting equipment, and early tipi pole burial stakes for Custer's command. Note Army reburial party in background. Photograph by S.J. Morrow, 1879



1. Placement of Headstones

On June 28, 1876, three days after the Battle of the Little Bighorn, survivors of the Seventh Cavalry under the command of Major Marcus A. Reno began the painful task of burying Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer's command. The men were buried where they fell in shallow graves, marked with wooden tipi poles collected from the abandoned Indian village. In 1877 the remains of Lt. Col. Custer and many of the officers were re-interred at various locations back east. Custer's remains were re-interred at West Point, New York. In 1881 a granite memorial was erected by the War Department and the remains of Seventh cavalymen and attached personnel left on the field were collected and re-interred in a mass grave around the base on Last Stand Hill. In 1890 Army personnel erected 252 white marble markers at the original gravesites.



7th Cavalry Marker

Cheyenne families also marked warrior casualty sites on the Custer Battlefield. Two small stone cairns were erected at the casualty sites of Southern Cheyenne Chief Lame White Man (Vehoenohnenehe), and Northern Cheyenne Suicide warrior Noisy Walking (Nestonevahtseste) after the battle. In 1999, these sites were commemorated with red granite markers, of the exact size and dimensions as the historic Seventh Cavalry markers. ***(Note: These markers are not accessible from this trail).***

Today these historic Seventh Cavalry and Cheyenne warrior markers aid researchers and visitors alike, in reconstructing soldier and warrior movements during the battle.



2. Sturgis Marker

Second Lieutenant James G. Sturgis, Company E (detailed from Company M), was the young son of Col. Samuel D. Sturgis. Commanding officer of the Seventh Cavalry. The young lieutenant's remains were never identified although his bloodstained clothing was discovered in the Indian village. In 1878 soldiers, in an act of kindness, erected a cairn of stones and wooden marker in preparation for his mother's



Sturgis Marker

visit to the battlefield and her son's grave. After Mrs. Sturgis departed, the cairn and marker were quickly dismantled.



3. Basin Fight/South Skirmish Line

Warrior accounts describe fierce fighting here in the basin below last Stand Hill. The fighting that occurred in the basin is still controversial among scholars and researchers. Many early scholars argued that Southern Cheyenne Chief Lame White Man's charge occurred here against soldiers of Company E who had just rode down to this ridge from Last Stand Hill. Modern scholars place Lame White Man's charge against soldiers from Company C in Calhoun Coulee/Calhoun Ridge below Calhoun Hill.



White Bird, Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art "Custer's Last Stand"

Northern Cheyenne oral history's describe soldiers riding down from the present National Cemetery into this basin: "Custer (Yates Battalion) went into the center of a big basin below the monument (7th Cavalry Memorial), and the soldiers of the gray horse company got off their horses and

moved up afoot." A fierce charge was initiated by approximately 20 young Lakota and Cheyenne suicide warriors who earlier vowed to sacrifice themselves for their people. "The suicide warriors galloped up to the level ground (Visitor Center area)...some turned and stampeded the gray horses of the soldiers...the rest charged right in...Wolf Tooth, Northern Cheyenne, as told to John Stands In Timber. Yellow Nose, Northern Cheyenne, stated "He saw two Indian ponies run right into each other...both fell down and rolled...the dust was so thick he could hardly see...suddenly the dust lifted away...he saw an American flag...set in the sagebrush...he galloped past and picked it up." Soldiers who survived this fierce attack retreated to Last Stand Hill. Toward the end of the battle, a group of soldiers broke out from Last Stand Hill and attempted to either charge the warriors here or reach the apparent safety of Deep Ravine or perhaps the Little Bighorn River, but were quickly killed. Respects Nothing, Lakota Sioux states: "The soldiers at Custer Hill were all killed before those down along the ravine."

Known Cheyenne Suicide Boys killed or mortally wounded in action:

**Noisy Walking
Closed Hand**

**Little Whirlwind
Cut Belly**



Mitch Bouyer



4. Mitch Bouyer

In 1983 visitors discovered a human skull and teeth fragment (upper maxilla) at Markers 33 and 34. Formal archeological investigation in 1984 recovered a .50/70 bullet, bullet fragment, lead shot, rubber and mother of pearl buttons, cervical vertebrae, wrist and hand bones and a coccyx (tailbone).

Laboratory analysis indicates a male individual 35-45 years of age who suffered massive blunt trauma to the head, and was of mixed racial parentage (part Euro-American & Native American). The individual was also a chronic pipe smoker (commensurate with teeth wear). Civilian Interpreter Mitch Bouyer, 38 years old, fit the description. His photograph was superimposed over the skull fragment for a perfect match. Bouyer's father was French Canadian and his mother Santee Sioux, and Bouyer was known to smoke a pipe. It is probable that the remains are indeed those of Mitch Bouyer. ***(Note: Bouyer marker is not accessible from this trail.)***



5. Indian Encampment

On the flat bottomland upstream, and beyond the trees bordering the Little Bighorn River, **(front left)** lay the immense camps of the Lakota Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho, under the political and spiritual leadership of Tatanka-Iyotanka (Sitting Bull). The village included the seven council fires of the Teton Lakota Sioux: Hunkpapa, Oglala, Minneconjou, Blackfeet, Sans Arc, Brule, and Two Kettle; and approximately 120 lodges of the Northern and Southern Cheyenne. Also present were Santee and Dakota Sioux, and five Arapaho.



Indian Encampment, June 25, 1876; Martin Pate—Artist

Conservative estimates today place the village population at approximately 7,000 men, women, and children—1,500-2,000 of which were warriors. The encampment was spread approximately two miles up and down the Little Bighorn valley floor, and was one of the largest concentrations of Indians ever to assemble on the northern plains. An immense pony herd estimated at some 20,000-30,000 head was grazing above the valley on the flat bench land, located today just west of I-90. “We camped in the valley along the south side of the Greasy Grass. It was a very big village and you could hardly count the tipi’s. Along the side toward the east was the Greasy Grass with some timber along it, and it was running from the melting of the snow in the Bighorn Mountains.” Black Elk, Oglala Lakota.



Dr. Lord



6. Surgeon George E. Lord

Assistant Surgeon George E. Lord was one of three doctors serving the Seventh Cavalry. On June 25, Dr. Lord was ill and Lt. Col. Custer suggested that he remain with the pack train. Dr. Lord declined. Some evidence suggests that Lord's body was actually found on Last Stand Hill. His medical case was discovered in the abandoned Indian village after the battle.



7. Deep Ravine/Crazy Horse Charge

Historical evidence indicates that 28 soldiers, mostly of Company E, fell here. Sgt. Daniel Kanipe, Company C, 7th Cavalry, accompanied the burial detail after the battle and stated: "I next went along the line of dead bodies toward the river, and riding along the edge of a deep gully about 2,000 feet from where the monument now stands (7th Cavalry Memorial), I counted 28 bodies in the gulch." Captain Thomas McDougal, commanding Company B, 7th Cavalry, also reported the presence of bodies: "All of the bodies were buried in the deep gully—none was carried out." Errors in subsequent Army reburials account for the omission of headstones. Many of the markers back along the trail actually belong in Deep Ravine. Archeological testing conducted here in 1984, 1985, and 1989 were unsuccessful in locating any soldier remains. In 1995 & 1996, a Rapid Geophysical Surveyor Investigation in the area indicated magnetic and metal detector anomalies scattered throughout the ravine, with target density

higher in the upper two-third area.



Historical accounts and Indian testimony also strongly indicate the use of Deep Ravine by Oglala Lakota war leader Tashunka Witco (Crazy

The steep sides of Deep Ravine



Remote sensing, Deep Ravine

Photo Courtesy: NPS-Midwest Archeological Center

the Cheyenne camp. Flying Hawk, who accompanied the famous Lakota, stated: "after crossing (river) came to a ravine; then followed up the gulch to a place in rear of the soldiers."

Modern research suggests that Crazy Horse continued up the ravine to Battle Ridge and split the Yates and Keogh Battalion's of Custer's command, as soldiers positioned on Calhoun Hill and the Keogh sector retreated toward Last Stand Hill.



Deep Ravine with Little Bighorn River in background



8. Custer's Last Stand

From this point you are viewing Battle Ridge from the Lakota and Cheyenne perspective. Try to imagine the scene from the Indian warrior viewpoint. Soldiers are seen huddled behind breastworks of dead horses. Hundreds of warriors slowly creep closer, using the native vegetation and rugged terrain for concealment. Warriors fire their Winchesters or arch arrows toward the soldiers who are just visible through the thick veil of blue and white gunsmoke and dust.

You can almost discern the picture of frustration implanted on the soldiers' faces as they attempt to return fire and hit nearly invisible targets. Slowly you move closer, the number of soldiers resisting is dwindling. The soldiers' Springfield Carbine and Colt pistol fire becomes sporadic, then slowly fades into silence. Warriors next to you rise, utter shrill war cries and blow eagle bone whistles. Flushed with the thought of victory, they rush to the top. In a few short moments, the battle is over.



Last Stand Hill



Custer National Cemetery



9. Custer National Cemetery

The large cemetery on the tree-covered hill is Custer National Cemetery. Established in 1879, early burials included Indian Wars soldiers, U.S. Indian Scouts, and military families, from abandoned military post cemeteries of Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming. Recent interments include military personnel from the Spanish American War, World Wars I and II, Korean War, and the Vietnam conflict. Today the cemetery, which contains the remains of approximately 5,000 veterans and their dependents, is officially closed, except for spouses or dependents of those already interred.

LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL MONUMENT

