

IN CAMP ALONG THE MONOCACY



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Editor: Gloria Swift



From the Desk of the Editor In Frederick, Maryland:

You Either Love him or You Hate Him.

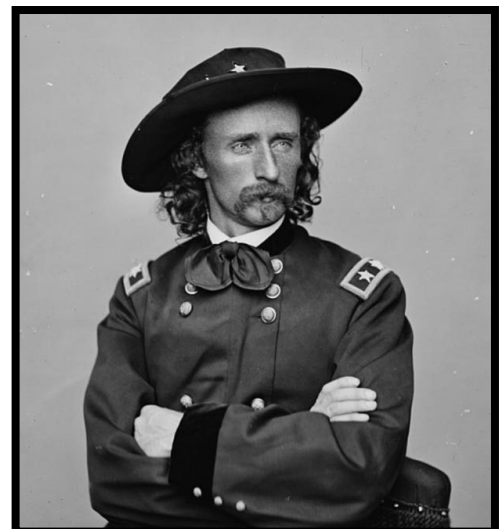
There is no in-between!

George Armstrong Custer. An instantly recognized figure in history. And an instantly recognized controversial one. Just his name alone is enough to solicit groans, protective defense, spirited conversations and/or knock down drag out arguments!

Gloria Swift with assistant Fred

I myself used to heartily dislike George A. Custer, but I changed my mind after doing more research, but I will tell you about that later. I am also not going to use this newsletter to convince you to change your own mind if you don't like him. I wouldn't be able to do that. But what I will do is to encourage you to get to the know Custer the man and not just Custer the Indian fighter. Custer, unfortunately, is generally viewed within the narrow scope of his post Civil War career. Why is that?

It's a shame because there is much more to George Armstrong Custer as a whole. Was he perfect? No. Did he make mistakes? Absolutely! Was he ambitious? Yes! But who wasn't ambitious serving in the post war army where promotions were scarce? Anyone who studies history should know to look at the entire subject before rendering a verdict.



George A. Custer during the Civil War

What I would like you to remember is that Custer, in fulfilling his duty in the United States Army, was no different than any other officer at the time who commanded troops in the West. As more and more settlers moved onto the Indian lands, they demanded that something be done about the Indians who were fighting to sustain their way of life and the lands in which they lived. The Army was tasked to round up these “hostile” Indians and move them onto a reservation, often far from their original homelands, where the Government promised to take care of them, but of course did not. This period of time is a very sad chapter in our American history. Was it right? No. But it was the policy of the United States Government and the Army at the time. So is it truly fair to view one person’s life through this lens alone? Custer I believe, more than any other, shoulders the blame for the wrongs of this era when everyone from the President on down should be considered suspect and viewed with the same disdain and dislike as well. My question is, why aren’t they?

So if you dislike Custer, take a minute to ask yourself why. If it is based on only this one aspect of his life, then go to the library and pick up a few books in which you can learn more. From his Civil War escapades to his marriage to Libby, to their excursions together on the plains of the West. You can also learn about the animals George and Libby kept as pets, from pelicans to wolfhounds and who kept same said pets in their tents when they traveled. I can guarantee that once you see the man as a whole, you may still not like him, but you may not dislike him as much.

Gloria



Dream History Trip of a Lifetime!

By Gloria Swift

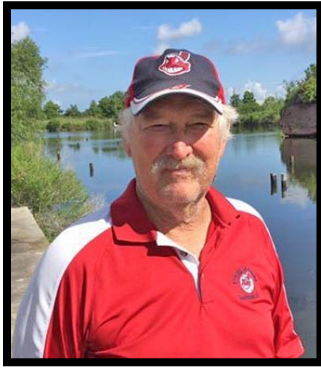
When I began to read about George Armstrong Custer, I started at the end of his life. Not necessarily by choice as by happenstance. I didn’t like him very much in the beginning, but in working backwards through his life, I learned a lot. Not only about the man, but also about perceptions and how they can change.

I met Custer while reading about the horse Comanche who survived the Little Big Horn battle. His rider, Captain Myles Keogh, was killed with Custer on June 25, 1876. At that point, Keogh was a hero to me and how dare Custer get him killed!

However, by the time I had read everything I could get my hands on about the battle and Custer as an individual, I had come to admire this handsome and exciting cavalryman who had died much too young and under the most terrible circumstances and in one of the worst chapters of our American history.

I have been fortunate enough to have visited the Little Big Horn battlefield three times. If you want to learn about Custer, you might want to start at the ending as I did and work your way back to the beginning of his life. And if you can, make a visit to the battlefield.

My last visit to the Little Big Horn was three years ago on a BGES trip. Our historian, Neil Mangum, is someone who knows the Little Big Horn story inside and out and I was very excited to be able to go on this tour with Neil. Neil is retired from the National Park Service, but in his career,



Neil Mangum

he had the fortunate opportunity to serve at the Little Big Horn Battlefield twice. The first time Neil was at “Custer Battlefield”, as it was then called, he was the Park Historian. He left that position for a new duty station, but later returned to become the Custer Battlefield Superintendent. Neil was at the helm when the battlefield name change took place, to Little Big Horn National Monument, and also when the Indian participants were finally and rightfully recognized with individual markers on the field and a new large memorial.

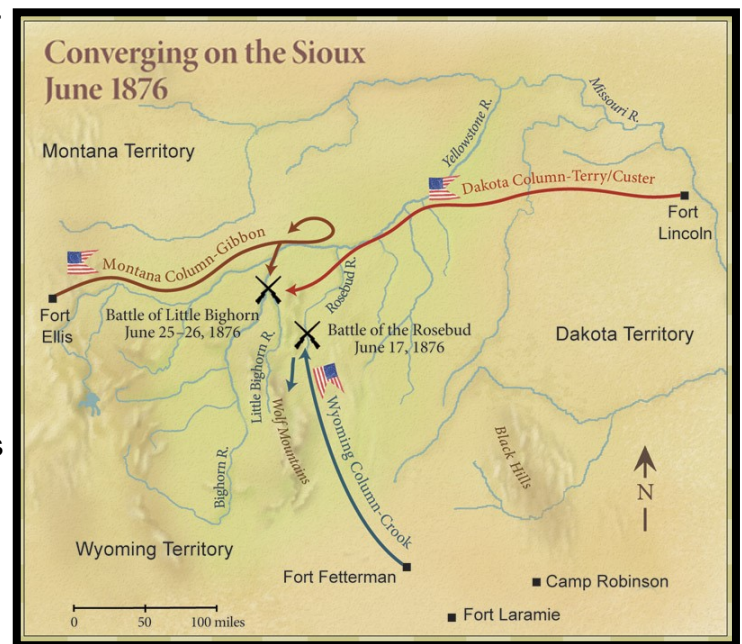
So, who better to go with on a trip to Montana to get the full story?

I consider myself very lucky to have been able to go. This time, I got the full picture and saw things that I had only read about in books and which I thought I would never get to see! It remains one of the best trips I have ever been on, thanks to Neil.

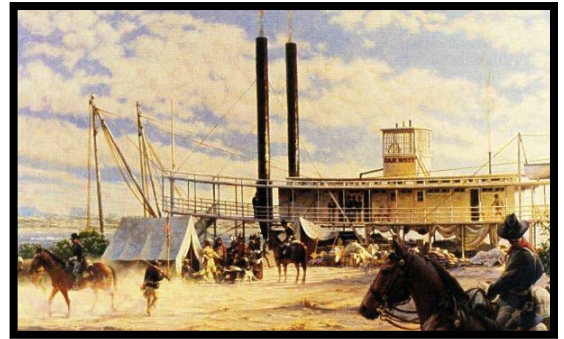
The campaign and battle are so large and complex that I am not going to even attempt to get into that here with this article. If you don't get to the battlefield, there are numerous books, some very good ones, that will help you learn about the many aspects of this event. But what I would like to do here is share some of the photographs and memories of my own trip there with Neil – and to share with you some of the places of the campaign that I got to see for the first time. When we started on the trip, we were covering other cavalry actions in the west as well as the Little Big Horn, which we saved for last. And boy, oh boy, was it worth it!

The 1876 military campaign against the Northern Plains Indians began in the spring of that year with a three-prong movement into the Yellowstone area of Montana hoping to trap the Indians between the columns. General George Crook was to move north from Fort Fetterman in Wyoming Territory. General Terry, which included Colonel Custer's command of the 7th, was to move west from Fort Abraham Lincoln in the Dakota Territory. Finally, Colonel John Gibbon, with his Montana Column, came from Fort Ellis in western Montana. Supporting the columns of Terry and Custer, was the steamer, *Far West*, which followed along the Yellowstone River bringing supplies for the campaign and was occasionally used by General Terry as his headquarters.

On June 21st, Captain Marsh moored his steamer *Far West* on the Yellowstone River at the mouth of the Rosebud Creek. The columns of Terry, Custer and Gibbon had gathered together there, and the officers held a meeting aboard the *Far West* in which they solidified their next movements. On June 22nd, Terry ordered Custer and his regiment to scout south along the Rosebud, while he and Gibbon continued in a westerly direction toward the Big Horn and Little Big Horn rivers where they thought the Indians were encamped. The columns were to converge in that area around June 26th or 27th in an attempt to surround the Sioux and Cheyenne in order to bring them under control and back to the reservations.



Upon leaving for his march, Custer conducted a review of his troops for Terry and Gibbon. The last thing Gibbon said to Custer was "Now Custer, don't be greedy.....wait for us!" To which Custer replied, "I won't!" (his reply was to which of those comments or both?) and rode off into destiny. By the way, you may like to know that Custer had with him not only his brother Tom and brother in law James Calhoun, both of whom served in the 7th, but also younger brother Boston, and nephew Autie Reed. Five family members were about to perish together on this campaign.



"Far West" Oil on canvas by Robert E. Sticker



Location of the Far West mooring as it looks today

I mention the overall strategy here for understanding of general movement. Imagine my surprise, excitement and delight when Neil brought us to the very spot where the *Far West* had been moored, where the officers meeting had taken place, and where Custer had had his review! It was here that we too would turn away from the Yellowstone and follow Custer along the Rosebud and into history!

The Montana terrain that Custer rode through in 1876 has not changed much. Buttes, sagebrush and open prairie are still plenty. As we drove along, it was easy for me to envision the 7th Cavalry on their horses. In addition to seeing Custer's campsites of June 22nd and 23rd, we made a stop at his camp of June 24th – his last before the battle. This was truly a significant spot, for it was also the location of Sitting Bull's "Sundance" ceremony in which for days he had fasted, smoked a ceremonial pipe, danced, prayed and cut pieces of skin from his arms, all of which serve as a personal sacrifice for the future benefit of his family and community. When it was over, Sitting Bull collapsed, but was ready to tell the medicine men what he had learned during the ceremony. He said he had had a vision in which many soldiers "like grasshoppers" were falling upside down into camp. Sitting Bull's Lakota people took this message to be that there would be a great victory in battle in which a large number of soldiers would be killed. This vision was roughly three weeks before they met Custer at the Little Big Horn!



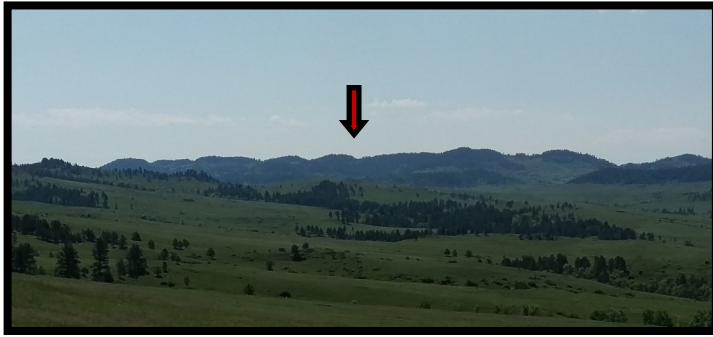
Site of the Sundance Ceremony and Custer's last camp



Deer Medicine Rocks - Sitting Bull's vision is carved here

Near the site of this ceremony is a place called Deer Medicine Rocks. Always considered sacred by the Sioux and Cheyenne peoples, Deer Medicine Rocks are sandstone formations that rise 50 feet above the immediate terrain. Right after Sitting Bull's vision, a drawing was made of it, cut solidly into the face of the rock! I was awestruck as I stood right in front of it! Today, Deer Medicine Rocks are preserved as a National Historic Landmark. They represent the first place where the Indian view of the campaign was recorded - before it even happened! Medicine Deer

Rocks are on private land, and while open any time to those native peoples coming to visit and pray, it is closed for others to view unless permission is granted by the landowner. How lucky were we to have access to see this?



The Crow's Nest is on top of the mountain in the distance

From his camp late on the night of 24th and wee morning hours of the 25th, Custer was in a hurry. He thought that he had been spotted and he needed to hurry to catch the Indian camp before it disappeared. He pushed himself and his men hard and by very early morning got to a place with his scouts called the "Crow's Nest" where he spent time with them looking over the area of the Indian village before he advanced on it.

While we could not get access to the Crow's Nest, Neil took us to the next best place where we could look and try to envision the view that Custer saw on that morning. From the hill on which we stood, Neil pointed out the location of the Crow's Nest as well as the hillside in the opposite direction where Custer's scouts had told him there was a great pony herd, so many that they looked like worms crawling upon the ground. What did we think? Could we have seen them? Did Custer see them? He didn't, and others in his party could not either. Only the scouts seemed to have a sense of what was coming and despite telling him so, Custer could not believe that the Indian village was as large as they were reporting it to be. Why would it be if he relied on his past experiences?



The whiteish area under the arrow is where the immense pony herd was grazing. Custer's scouts described them as looking like crawling worms

Back in the car, Neil led us to one more location before getting to the actual battlefield. It was the site of the lone teepee. Custer didn't know it, but General Crook had had an encounter with a large contingent of Cheyenne and Sioux on June 17th just 48 miles to the southwest along the south fork of the Rosebud Creek. The Indian encampment that had attacked Crook had been located here – but had since moved, leaving behind a single teepee. Inside the teepee was the body of a Sans Arc warrior, Old She Bear, who had been wounded in the battle with Crook. He had died a few days later and it was Indian custom to move



Neil talking with us at the lone teepee site

the camp when a warrior died, leaving them behind with their possessions. It was here that Custer gave Major Reno his final orders to attack the village ahead while he promised to support him.

From the lone teepee site, we went on to the line of Reno's skirmish and retreat, the site and outline of the large Indian village (it was the first time I got a real sense of its immense size!), and of course to Custer's advancement across the ridges above the village. In touring the property of the National Park Service, at Little Bighorn National Monument, we saw where Custer and five out of twelve companies of the 7th Cavalry were completely annihilated. Among them, my friend Myles Keogh, Captain of Company I whom you will read more about. Further along we found the ridgetop where Major Reno and the rest of the 7th was able to dig in and hold out



The line of trees in the distance marks Reno's line of advance and also retreat

throughout the night of the 25th and all through the next day, June 26th. Perched on a hill in the blistering sun with no shade, little to no water and surrounded by warriors who were trying to kill them, these men, the wounded and the horses suffered mightily. They were rescued on June 27th when Colonel Gibbon and his Montana Column approached the field and the Sioux and Cheyenne finally withdrew towards the Little Big Horn mountains.

I was very lucky to have been with Neil on this trip. I came away with a much better perspective. The excitement of seeing the locations along Custer's trail to the Little Bighorn, things I never thought I would see, is still with me today and always will be. I have endeavored with this article to give you a brief insight into what you can expect to see should you go on a tour with Neil Mangum. I have done so without going into the complexities and detail of the campaign and battle; you can only imagine what the conversation going on in our van as we drove along!

In closing, I would like to offer some final words. Before condemning Custer alone for this event, think on the following points:

- The Indian agencies had mistakenly told the Army at the beginning of the 1876 campaign to expect no more than 800 warriors off the reservations, so the Army in its planning and actions did not expect large numbers of resistance.
- Traditionally, when an Indian village was located by the Army, the occupants always fled! Custer's methods and plans of attack had always been successful in battles with the Plains Indians before; there was no reason to think it would not work at the Little Big Horn. Custer had approximately 647 men under his command. Large enough to have taken on a normal size gathering of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors.
- Most importantly, this gathering of the Plains Indians was the largest ever! Never had they before, nor did they ever after, gather in such a large mass! There was an estimated 7000 Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho camped along the Little Big Horn River and their village stretched for miles along the valley floor! Of that number, roughly 2000 – 2500 were warriors. There were also about 15,000 ponies. By a quirk of fate, Custer found this encampment at the height of its number and heady with excitement over their victory against George Crook. If Custer had

arrived one or two days later, the camp most likely would have broken up into smaller bands, or in the process of doing so, as the land could not provide sustainability for long to either human or horse with the such high numbers living in one location.

Custer lost his life at the Little Big Horn and the Army lost 268 other men and attached personnel of the 7th Cavalry and had 58 more wounded of Reno's command to deal with. Once the burial details on the field were completed by Gibbon's and Terry's men, the wounded were taken over-land to the *Far West* stationed on the Yellowstone river and transported some 700 miles back to the hospital facilities at Fort Abraham Lincoln. From there, the news of Custer's defeat was flashed across the country just as it was beginning to celebrate its Centennial.

After the Little Big Horn, the Army doubled down in its efforts to suppress the American Indians. And unfortunately, they were successful. While colorful individuals like Custer, Terry, Gibbon and Crook served in the post-war army and fulfilled their duty as ordered, this time period is certainly a black eye on America and its idea of manifest destiny. As Custer himself said, *"If I were an Indian...I would greatly prefer to cast my lot among those of my people who adhere to the free open plains, rather than submit to the confined limits of a reservation."*



The beautiful Indian memorial at Little Big Horn battlefield



Memorial to the fallen soldiers



Markers for the fallen. Custer's marker is int the center with the black front

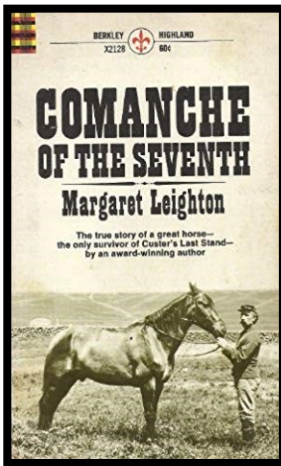
Myles Keogh and Comanche of the Seventh

By Gloria Swift

I grew up horse crazy like a lot of other girls I knew. As a small child I couldn't understand why I couldn't keep a pony in our backyard! Surely there was enough room and none of the neighbors in our Virginia suburb just outside of Washington DC would mind, would they?

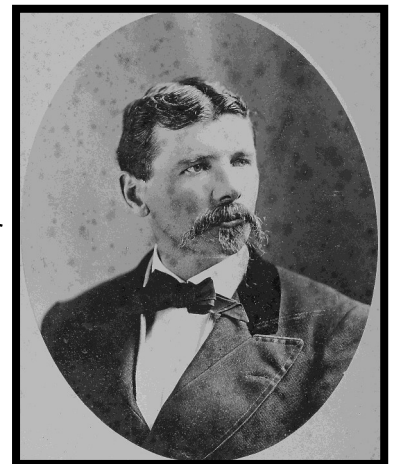
When the Centennial of the battle of Manassas rolled around, my mother put me in a fancy pink dress and shiny black dress shoes and off we went with my father to visit the battlefield and attend some of the special park events. Lo and behold, while driving through the battlefield, we came across a cavalry camp! I remember being so excited! My father, who was into photography at that point, convinced one of the cavalrymen to let me sit on their horse. I distinctly remember him telling me to look at my father because he wanted to take my picture, but heck! I remember thinking, forget dad! I was sitting on a horse! In a fancy pink dress and shiny black dress shoes!

By the time I was thirteen, some of the history that my father had been taking me to see and talking to me about was beginning to rub off. It was about this time that I picked up a book to read called, *"Comanche of the Seventh"* by Margaret Leighton. According to the cover, the book was "The true story of a great horse – the only survivor of Custer's last stand". I was instantly hooked. And something else happened too. I fell in love. Not only did I enjoy reading about Comanche, but I also learned a lot about his rider, Captain Myles Keogh. Now there are many of you who have heard me on BGES trips say that I fall in love with "dead guys" (historical figures – and I'll have you know I am not the only one! Check out the web page for "My Daguerreotype Boyfriend"). Anyway, where was I? Yes, Myles Keogh became my first love! And who wouldn't fall in love with this handsome, dashing cavalryman with the black hair and sparkly blue eyes?



Myles Keogh was born in March 1840 at Orchard House, Leighlinbridge, County Carlow Ireland, about 45 miles from Dublin. The family farm contained a significant amount of land, roughly 300 acres, on which barley was the main crop. The family remained untouched by the potato famine that swept Ireland and were able to live in relative security - his father was gentleman farmer and his mother was from a prestigious and prosperous family in County Kilkenny. The home and lands are still in the Keogh family today and I have had the privilege of visiting there and speaking with Keogh's grandnephew also named Myles.

Having older brothers, Keogh knew that he would not be inheriting the family farm, so in 1860, when Myles was just 20, he heeded the call of Pope Pius IX to come and help preserve the independence of the Papacy from attack by the forces of Garibaldi. Traveling to Italy to serve, Keogh was commissioned a lieutenant. He and his battalion distinguished themselves in the defense of the port city of Ancona. For his gallantry and valor during the Papal war, Keogh was awarded the Pro Petri Sede and Ordine di San Gregorio medals that he wore for the rest of his life. Once the Papal war was over, he transferred to Rome and became a lieutenant in the Company of St. Patrick as a member of the Vatican Guard.



Myles Walter Keogh

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, America was fighting a Civil War. Secretary of State William Seward looked to Europe to recruit experienced officers for the Union cause. Archbishop John Hughes of New York traveled to Italy to recruit, on behalf of Seward, officers from the Papal war. Thus, it was in March 1862 that 22-year-old Myles Keogh resigned from the Vatican Guards and after a brief visit to his family in Ireland, boarded the ship "Kangaroo" bound for America. He received a Captain's commission and was just in time to join the cavalry of the Army of the Potomac and participate in the battle of Port Republic in Virginia. It was Keogh's company that barely missed capturing "Stonewall" Jackson at this battle.

With his actions at Port Republic, Keogh caught the eye of the Army commander, George B. McClellan who said he was, "*a most gentlemanlike man, of soldierly appearance,*" and whose "*record had been remarkable for the short time he had been in the army.*" Shortly thereafter, McClellan had Keogh assigned temporarily to his staff for a few months where he had the opportunity to meet another of his staff, perhaps for the first time, George Armstrong Custer, with whom his destiny was ultimately tied.



On Buford's staff

Keogh served with McClellan through the battle of Antietam and in November 1862 was reassigned to the staff of cavalryman Brigadier General John Buford. It was for the battle of Gettysburg with Buford that Keogh would receive his first brevet for "gallant and meritorious services" and be promoted to the rank of major in the Army, US Volunteers. In the fall of 1863 Buford was taken ill with what some believe was typhoid. Keogh cared for and nursed Buford during his illness while they were staying at the home of one of Buford's friends, General George Stoneman in Washington, DC. When John Buford died in mid-December, Keogh attended the funeral in Washington and then escorted the body to West Point for burial.

After Buford's death, Stoneman appointed Keogh as his aide de camp. Heading to the Western Theater, Stoneman and his cavalry struck south and east through Georgia behind Sherman. Under Stoneman, Keogh received his second brevet and promotion to Lt. Colonel for action at the battle of Dallas, north of Atlanta .



General Buford and his staff. Keogh is second from left

After the war, Keogh was assigned for a few months to occupation duty in Knoxville Tennessee. In November, 1866, he accepted a Captain's commission in the Regular Army. Shortly afterwards, Keogh was ordered to Fort Riley Kansas where he became Captain of Co. I in the newly formed 7th Cavalry. The 7th Cavalry's new Lt. Colonel? Someone that Keogh knew and had served with before, none other than George A. Custer!

Keogh was to find that fighting in the West was much different than fighting during the Civil War. He wrote to his family back home in Ireland, "*I have never before appreciated the difficulty of finding Indians, and have concluded that without knowing exactly where to surprise their camp,*

or having a guide who can track them at a run, it is a waste of horseflesh and time to endeavor to come up with them."

The book I was reading as a 13-year-old, *Comanche of the Seventh*, generally starts with Keogh finding his horse and continued on to show their bond as horse and rider as time passes. It highlights how Comanche was born around 1862 and was captured on the Plains in 1868 along with other mustangs and brought to St. Louis to be sold to the army. On April 3, 1868, Comanche (unnamed as yet) and 40 other horses were bought for \$90.00 each and brought to the 7th Cavalry's camp just outside of Hays Kansas. It was there that Myles Keogh took a liking to one of the new horses and began to ride him regularly on campaigns and in battle during the summer. As the story goes, in September 1868, while in a skirmish with some Comanches, an arrow struck the horse and he let out a scream, "just like a Comanche". Hence Keogh's horse now had a name.

Keogh and Comanche spent the next eight years performing various duty for the 7th Cavalry. They spent time in Kentucky during Reconstruction dealing with the Ku Klux Klan and moonshiners. They were sent to the Black Hills to eject miners from Indian lands and spent time on the Canadian border serving as part of an Army escort for the northern boundary survey. Rarely though, did Keogh and Comanche serve with Custer. Keogh was not with Custer during some of his most noted campaigns, such as the 1868 winter campaign along the Washita river that culminated in the destruction of Cheyenne leader Black Kettle's village, or the 1873 Yellowstone campaign against the Sioux and Cheyenne or the 1874 Black Hills expedition/survey where gold was discovered.

It wasn't until the summer of 1875 that Keogh joined Custer at Fort Abraham Lincoln in the Dakota Territory. He had just returned from a seven month visit to his family in Ireland. Shortly after his return, Keogh became severely ill with a fever and "nervous prostration". Taking additional time off to mend, Keogh was back in the fall of 1875 healthy and ready for duty.

The spring of 1876 brought a large offensive by the Army against the Sioux of the Northern Plains. Custer and his command at Ft. Abraham Lincoln were ready, including Keogh and Comanche. Keogh, though,

seems to have had a sense that this particular campaign would be his last. He took out a \$10,000.00 life insurance policy and made copies of his will which he gave out to trusted friends. He also took a bundle of his personal papers and gave them to Mrs. Elizabeth Porter, wife of Co. I's lieutenant James Porter, with instructions to burn them should he be killed.

During the Civil War and afterwards, Keogh had made close friends and visited often with the Martin family of Auburn New York. Just before leaving on the campaign, he took the opportunity to write to them, *"We leave Monday on an Indian expedition & if I ever return I will go on and see*



Custer and his staff - Keogh is in the left center at the bottom

to be buried there. God bless you all, remember if I should die—you may believe that I loved you and every member of your family—it was a second home to me”.

As we know, Keogh and Comanche rode off into the annals of history. Keogh would die on June 25th with Custer at the Little Big Horn, in a “last stand” of his own. When Colonel John Gibbon and his Montana Column arrived on the battlefield June 27th, Keogh’s body was found in the center of his troopers, along with two sergeants, the guidon bearer and the trumpeter. Stripped of clothing, the body had not been mutilated as others had been, perhaps because of an Angus Dei medal he wore around his neck that the Indians might have seen as his special “medicine”. Initially buried on the battlefield, Keogh was removed to Auburn NY and buried in the plot of the Martin family at Fort Hill Cemetery as he had requested.

Comanche, Keogh’s faithful battle horse, was found near Keogh with seven bullet wounds - three of which were severe. One of the wounds through Comanche’s left side corresponded to the positioning of Keogh’s left knee when in the saddle. Keogh’s knee had been shattered by a bullet – indicating that the bullet had passed through both rider and horse.

Other wounded horses located on the battlefield (the uninjured ones having been taken for use by the Indians) were dispatched as quickly as possible to put them out of their suffering. Comanche, however, was saved despite his tremendous wounds. Gustave Korn, a farrier of the 7th, made every effort to care for the horse in the days immediately following the battle. One of the most difficult tasks was walking Comanche 15 miles very slowly back to the steamer “Far West”. Once aboard, Comanche was transported by river along with the wounded of Major Reno’s command to Ft. Abraham Lincoln.



Comanche with Gustave Korn

and his men who had been under siege June 25th and 26th until relieved by Colonel John Gibbon, and of course, the Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho participants. Comanche, however, was seen as a symbol of all that had transpired on a dusty hilltop in Montana. The saving and promoting of Comanche as the “sole survivor” provided for good public relations of which the Army took advantage. The horse became a popular public representation of a terrible tragedy upon which the Army played for sympathy as it promoted its campaigns to annihilate and/or forcibly remove the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Sioux and others from their homelands onto reservations miles away.

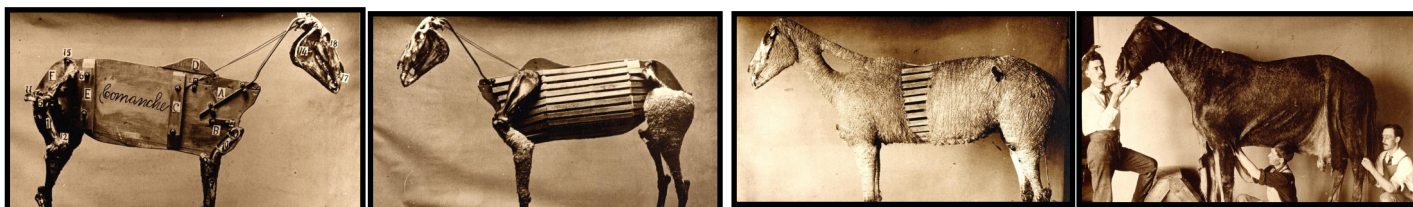
Once Comanche had healed and was completely sound, Colonel Samuel Sturgis, whose son had been killed with Custer issued General Order Number 7 in April 1878:

(1.) The horse known as ‘Comanche,’ being the only living representative of the bloody tragedy of the Little Big Horn, June 25th, 1876, his kind treatment and comfort shall be a matter of special pride and solicitude on the part of every member of the Seventh Cavalry to the end that his life be preserved to the utmost limit. Wounded and scarred as he is, his very existence speaks in terms more eloquent than words, of the desperate struggle against overwhelming numbers of the hopeless conflict and the heroic manner in which all went down on that fatal day.

(2.) The commanding officer of Company I will see that a special and comfortable stable is fitted up for him, and he will not be ridden by any person whatsoever, under any circumstances, nor will he be put to any kind of work.

(3.) Hereafter, upon all occasions of a ceremony of mounted regimental formation, 'Comanche,' saddled, bridled, and draped in mourning, and led by a mounted trooper of Company I, will be paraded with the regiment.

Comanche lived out the rest of his life with the 7th Cavalry, becoming somewhat of a pet and transferring to new posts when the regiment was ordered to do so. He developed a taste for beer and would often join on the parade ground of his own volition to do drills with the cavalrymen. On November 6, 1891, while at Fort Riley Kansas, Comanche died at the age of 29. Because Comanche was such a beloved figure to the officers of the 7th, even in death they could not part with him.



The business of taxidermy on Comanche. First the form, then filled out with wood, clay and other materials and finally the hide.

While Comanche was given a funeral with full military honors, his hide was sent to Professor Lewis Lyndsay Dyche at the Natural History Museum of the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas. There, a skeleton of Comanche was made of wood, wire and clay for the hide to stretch over. Dyche charged the 7th Cavalry officers \$400.00 for his work, but they never paid for the services nor did they attempt to pick up Comanche. Dyche later waived his fee, but only with the agreement that Comanche remain at Kansas University. Comanche is still there today in the Natural History Museum. He remains the most visited exhibit at the KU museum and I am happy to say that I was able to see him there myself. You can just imagine me with my face pressed up to the glass taking in every last detail!

You know, for a thirteen-year-old girl who loved horses, the story of "Comanche of the Seventh" was beyond exciting and incredible! Add in the handsome, dashing Myles Keogh and I was definitely hooked from then on with everything history. Upon finishing the book, I remember being quite angry and upset at the man named George Armstrong Custer who had gotten my favorite Captain killed. Who was he, or rather, who did he think he was? I was about to find out as I went on from there to begin to read about Custer. And you know what? The more I read, the more I actually came to like him! It turned out there is so much more to him than that one day in Montana.



Comanche of the Seventh as he looks today

After Custer, I went on to read about other individuals and events in history. Some fascinating, some not so much, and of course, I fell in love over and over again! But through it all, and no matter how many other figures I have read about, I have never forgotten about Captain Myles Keogh and his courageous horse Comanche. A girl never forgets her first love.