



Military Involvement

The fur trade had been vital to development of the Territory, but a negative side developed when the good years ended in the mid-to-late 1850s. Indians had fewer furs to sell and became reliant on manufactured goods provided by the American government.

Serious confrontations occurred on the Oregon Trail as immigrants in numbers began crossing Indian lands with impunity. One episode in particular, the unfortunate Grattan Affair, precipitated the need for a fort on the Missouri River as well as a military road to connect it to a government warehouse in Sioux City.

In 1854, hungry Brule Indians, while waiting for annuities which were not forthcoming, shot a cow belonging to a Mormon train passing near Fort Laramie. Officials at the post insisted that the culprit(s) be turned in, and Lieutenant John Lawrence Grattan, totally inexperienced in Indian warfare, willingly volunteered to produce the culprit. With 31 volunteer soldiers and two howitzers, he confronted a group of as many as one thousand Sioux warriors peacefully gathered for a summer hunting expedition. When the culprit did not appear as requested, Grattan ordered his men to fire, killing the chief. In retaliation, the angered warriors killed the lieutenant and all his men. In response to the huge public outcry, the government recruited the general they considered the most skillful Indian fighter available to punish the Indians. Thus it was that General William S. Harney was recalled from leave in Europe.

General William S. Harney

William Selby Harney was born in 1800 in Tennessee. He died in Orlando, Florida, in 1889, highly regarded for his long and faithful service as military officer and public servant. He had entered military service at age 25 as a lieutenant, and that year accompanied General Henry Atkinson on a peace expedition to the Indians during which they ascended the Missouri River well past the Yellowstone River. Harney later served with honor in the Black Hawk and Florida Wars.

General Custer's wagon train required as many as four columns to move his troops into hostile country.

and was recognized as a competent cavalry leader in the war with Mexico. His reputation as an uncompromising and successful Indian fighter was well established. Harney was considered a vigorous foe when warring with Indians but just and honorable when they submitted to his orders. He recommended more humane treatment and reforms, which were largely ignored.

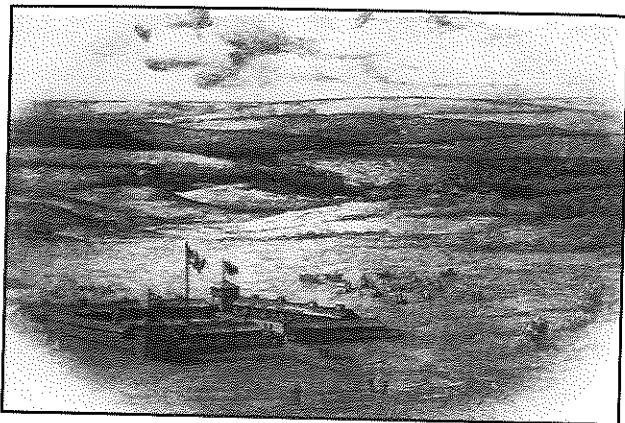
When Harney was recalled from retirement in the spring of 1855 to confront the Brule Indians, who continued to commit depredations against immigrants traveling west, he reported to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. There he was given command of 1,200 men. (From 1856 to the start of the Civil War in 1861, all military posts in the west including Fort Randall were controlled from Fort Leavenworth in Kansas Territory, which was then under command of Robert Lee.)

General Harney's Sioux Expedition proceeded to Fort Kearney, Nebraska, then to the North Platte River where the notable Battle of Ash Hollow transpired. The brutally successful military action against the Brules led to a treaty of amity with promise of annuities. From the North Platte, Harney was ordered to Fort Pierre along the Missouri River to examine the trading post which the federal government had recently purchased from the Pierre Chouteaus for \$45,000 (an exorbitant amount for the pathetic condition of the site). Upon his arrival on October 19, 1855, he quickly declared the establishment totally unsatisfactory for winter quarters and scattered some of his men to Fort Lookout. Soldiers remaining at Fort Pierre and vicinity expressed their unhappiness with the dreary condition of the premises in tongue-in-cheek song: (SDHC, vol. I, p264)

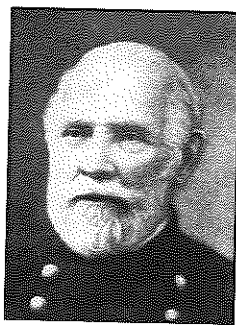
*"Oh, we don't mind the marching, nor the fighting do we fear,
But we'll never forgive old Harney for bringing us to Pierre,
They say old Shoto built it, but we know it is not so
For the man who built this bloody ranch is reigning down below!"*

In the spring of 1856, General Harney briefly considered Fort Lookout as a permanent fort, (like Fort Pierre, it had been a fur trading post), but after further deliberation, chose a location on the west side of the river thirty miles below. He named the site Fort Randall in memory of Daniel Randall, a colonel and paymaster general of the army.

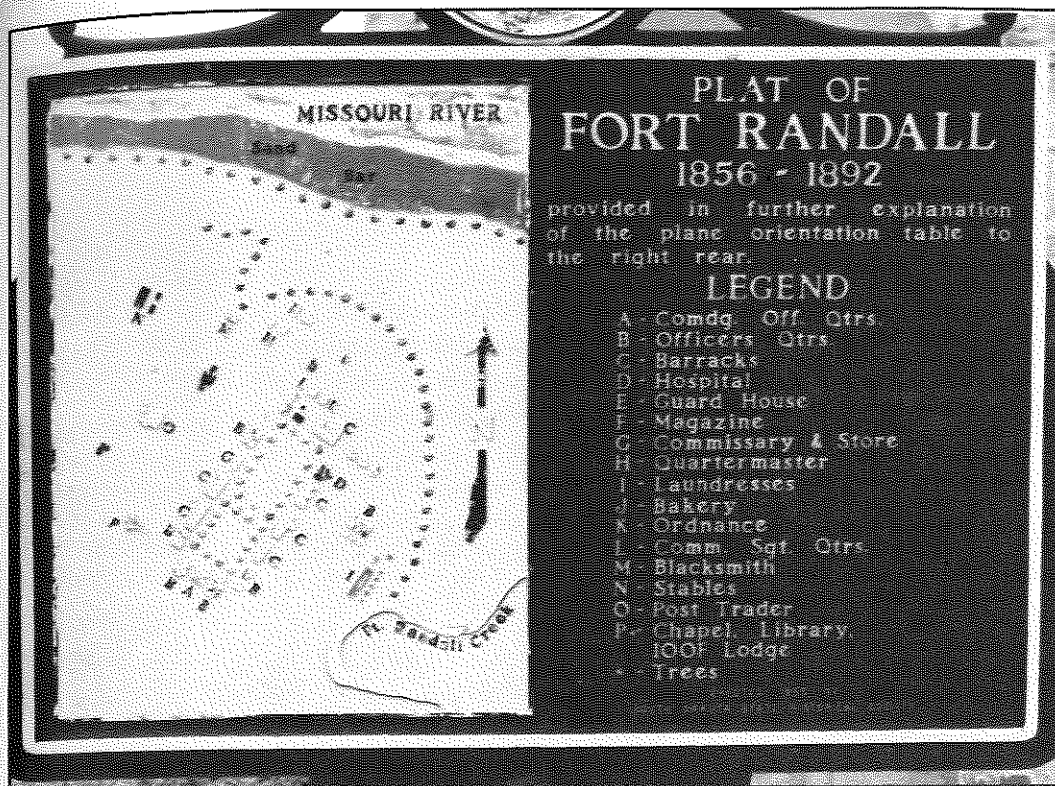
The new fort, the first military establishment on the Upper Missouri River, would complete a link between Fort Ridgely, Minnesota (1852); Fort Laramie, Wyoming (1849); Fort Riley, Kansas (1853); and Fort Leavenworth, Kansas (1827). It was strategically located near today's South Dakota-Nebraska border at a point where the Missouri River turns sharply in its progression up



Old Fort Pierre Trading Post commanded a view of unspoiled rolling hills.



General Wm. S. Harney earned a reputation as an uncompromising and successful Indian fighter.



A sign "Plat of Fort Randall, 1856-1892" erected in 1955 by South Dakota State Historical Society depicts the fort's layout.

the Missouri Valley. Troops stationed there were to maintain peace between Indians and white settlers.

The nearest government warehouse was located approximately 150 miles east-southeast of the new fort at the fledgling village of Sioux City, Iowa. Supplies for the military and annuities for the Indians would be dispersed from there. Now a land road was needed to deliver those supplies, particularly in the winter when river traffic was impossible. That spring of 1856, General Harney commissioned topographical surveyor Lieutenant G.K. Warren to lay out a trail which would become the Sioux City to Fort Randall Military Road.

Lieutenant G.K. Warren, Topographical Engineer

Lieutenant G.K. Warren, explorer, cartographer and career soldier, was born January 8, 1830, at Cold Springs, New York, and graduated from West Point second in his class in 1850. Because of his competence, he was appointed to the United States Topographical Engineers, and served in that capacity for over 30 years, attaining the rank of Major General, United States Volunteers.

Warren would spend 1856 and 1857 making a critical reconnaissance of the Upper Missouri River Valley, first traveling east from Fort Pierre in a more or less straight line to the upper Big Sioux River, then following that river south to its mouth, then up the Missouri to Fort Randall and back toward Fort Pierre.

South Dakota Historical Collections, Volume II, published in 1922, contains exact entries that Lieutenant Warren recorded in a carefully kept notebook. The following excerpt describes his activities after reaching the ferry at the Big Sioux River, at that time located about seven miles above the Missouri River, and his return west. As was his custom, Warren made celestial observations for latitude and longitude, measured miles between sites on his odometer, noted topographical features and weather details, and added descriptions of flora and fauna.



Topographical Engineer Lieutenant G.K. Warren surveyed the Upper Missouri River Valley including the Sioux City to Fort Randall Military Road in 1856-1857 for General Harney.

"As this route has very little wood, it is not safe in very cold weather, and as at such times as we may calculate on crossing the Vermillion and James Rivers, near their mouths, on the ice, the route near the Missouri should be taken. The following distances, etc., along it were given me by Mr. Henry Goulet. (Goulet had been a trader at Fort Pierre and had come down to Sioux City about 1855.) From the Big Sioux ferry go direct to near the mouth of the Vermillion where the point of the bluffs end; 14 miles from the Big Sioux is a lake with large willows for fuel; 4 miles further, plenty of wood at a spring; thence to Vermillion, 16 miles; take now the ridge of the high prairie straight to where James River comes out from the bluffs, in 16 miles you reach White Clay Creek; water in a spring, and wood plenty; thence to James River, 17 miles; from this river to the forks of Manuel creek is 25 miles, and here you are 12 miles from the Missouri, not far from l'Eau qui Court River (Niobrara); at the forks plenty of wood. The next camp would be on Andy's Lake, 27 miles; here wood is plenty; from this lake to Yagalinyaka Creek, 14 miles, wood plenty; thence to Pratt's Creek, 20 miles; thence to Bijou Hills, 17 miles; thence to Crow Creek, 25 miles. If this route should be taken in the spring and summer, the Vermillion and James Rivers must be crossed by a ferry."

In 1857, Warren completed his labors by traveling afoot from Fort Randall to Sioux City by the shortest practical overland route, choosing well-drained high land when possible in order to avoid troublesome ravines and gullies, always making provisions for watering holes, preferably within eight or so miles of each other in order to give respite to oxen or mules pulling heavily-laden wagons. It is likely that Warren marked the trail with charred stakes, as was the custom, or by marking trees. Thus was born the Old Military Trail, known also as the Sioux City to Fort Randall Road.

Before long, deep ruts marked the trail. Surprisingly, some side-by-side pairs remain in native prairies and on banks along shallow waterways where wheels were chained to act as brakes while descending and then loosed to dig deeply while regaining solid ground. It is likely but not confirmed that the federal government had awarded contracts for constructing firmly packed rock crossings. Suitable stones were likely gleaned from glacial deposits lining the waterways. A few crossings remain today in recognizable form, including some at Snatch and Emanuel Creeks in Bon Homme County and at Choteau Creek on the border of Charles Mix County.

Fort Randall

Many have written about Fort Randall. Relatively recent histories include one by Jerome A. Greene titled *Fort Randall on the Missouri, 1856-1892*, and another published in *South Dakota History (Journal)*, vol. 37, no. 3, Fall 2007, titled "An Iowan's View from Fort Randall: The Letters of Dr. Samuel N. Pierce, 1861-1862." Both feature life at the fort at a time when the country was becoming embroiled in the Civil War and few professional soldiers were available.

The author has chosen to describe in this chapter at least one example of leadership challenges at the fort—that faced in 1861 by Captain John Pattee, and personal remembrances of two men, one military and one private citizen, whose stories bring life to historical accounts. Also included are brief accounts of military detachments who visited the fort en route to battles and skirmishes elsewhere. Among those were Companies A and B of the First Dakota Cavalry, organized to protect settlers after the Minnesota Sioux Uprising in 1862.

Captain John Pattee

In October 1861, Companies A, B, and C of the Iowa Fourteenth Infantry gathered in Iowa City to prepare for service at Fort Randall. Captain John Pattee, Company A, who was politically connected but lacking in experience, acted as senior officer. The 300 soldiers, seven ladies, twenty-five baggage wagons and an ambulance left Sioux City on the Sioux City to Fort Randall Road in November that year. They crossed the Big Sioux River by ferry, the Vermillion River and the James and Missouri Rivers on ice.

Some soldiers complained of unpleasant conditions and poor discipline on the march; however, when on February 4, 1862, local Dakotan William P. Lyman challenged Pattee for command, declaring that as Major he outranked the Captain, the Iowans did not relish the thought of a "Dakotan" in command and rallied without success to Pattee's support. J.B.S Todd, then Dakota Territorial delegate in Washington, had procured the commission for Lyman, supposedly from the War Department, and within days his man had usurped Pattee's position. It appears that the move to dislodge Pattee was implemented by a political faction headed by Todd for control of the fort and its resources. In mid-April the following year, federal officials notified Lyman that his commission was not valid and Pattee was released from military prison. He resumed command, and continued deploying his soldiers up and down the Sioux City to Fort Randall Road as needed.

South Dakota Historical Collections, (SDHC), Volumes 10 and 23 contain lengthy personal accounts of life at Fort Randall. In *Volume 10*, Augustus Meyers remembers his life in "Dakota in the Fifties," a time when he was a very young musician soldier serving in a very new fort. In *Volume 23* published in 1947, South Dakota historian Will G. Robinson interviews Danny Moran who as a young man was a civilian employee living at or near the fort in its declining years. The interview is titled "Danny Moran's Reminiscences of Fort Randall." Edited portions of both accounts follow.

Augustus Meyers

Augustus Meyers was a mere fourteen-year-old when he joined the United States Army, Second Infantry in June 1857. He recalled that the fort lay at a sharp turn in the Missouri, which provided a river front on both east and north sides. The only buildings present were several log cabins built the year before by four companies General Harney had ordered sent down river from Fort Lookout. A week after his arrival, Meyers and others from the three companies of Second

Infantry began rebuilding knocked-down cabins shipped by raft from Fort Lookout. Soldiers did most of the carpentry, adding heretofore nonexistent ceilings to the cabins and building a new mess hall.

Quarters for married soldiers were constructed in "The Hollow," bottom land located away from the higher land bench fronting the river. Also in "The Hollow" were cabins for single and married civilian quartermaster and commissary employees. A few soldiers detailed as gardeners lodged in tents near a large garden which flourished in the fertile soil, and a sizable number of peaceful Ponca Indians camped nearby.

Duties were light. The band played often, soldiers participated in garrison duty, dressed for Sunday parades, and practiced skirmish drills. Occasionally escorts accompanied wagons to Sioux City and back, and less often, made short marches to settle minor Indian difficulties.

The sutler's store stocked goods for both soldiers and Indians, including ale on draught, with some restrictions, for soldiers. Before long, smugglers provided whiskey from Sioux City, according to Meyers, resulting in "more cases for the guard house." The enterprising wife of a soldier manufactured corn whiskey from a still in her quarters in "The Hollow" until someone informed on her. As punishment, she was deprived of her ration allowance.

The wives and children of officers had joined their husbands, for most, following a separation of two years. One Captain returned from leave in Georgia accompanied by a black couple who cooked and did chores for his family. This apparently was allowed on base.

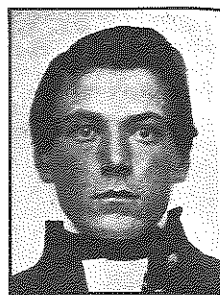
A marked change in uniform style occurred in those early years. The tight fitting jacket was replaced with a loose blouse of dark blue, and the hat underwent an absurd change (according to some of the soldiers, including Meyers). It now was made of stiff black felt with high crown and broad brim, which looped up on the left where it was fastened with a brass eagle. A worsted cord with light blue tassels circled the hat from which, on the right side, a single curled black feather protruded. When wet, the feather was said to resemble a drenched rooster's tail.

Meyers was among the first to occupy a cell in the newly built and roomy guard house located at the head of the road leading to the river. His crime had been refusing without extraneous circumstances an order to participate in the flogging (with 39 rawhide strokes) of a deserter from the post. However the now fifteen-year-old was treated kindly by the guards, making his 30-day sentence, including ten days in solitary confinement, easier to bear.

Meyers found his stay at Fort Randall interesting, including his friendship with the nearby Poncas with whom he spent considerable time. His recollections conclude with details of his company's departure in May 1858 for Fort Leavenworth. When the steamboat arrived, soldiers formed on the parade ground, and, escorted by the band, marched to the boat, leaving behind wives and children, dress uniforms and other articles not needed in an expected campaign.

Danny Moran

A civilian employee's memories of Fort Randall in its latter days add a new dimension to the fort's history. Danny Moran briefly visited Fort Randall in 1870 when he was ten years old with his military stepfather, but had little recollection of that time. In May 1883, now 23, he left Yankton by Concord Coach in early morning bound for Fort Bennett where a job as Headquarters Driver was



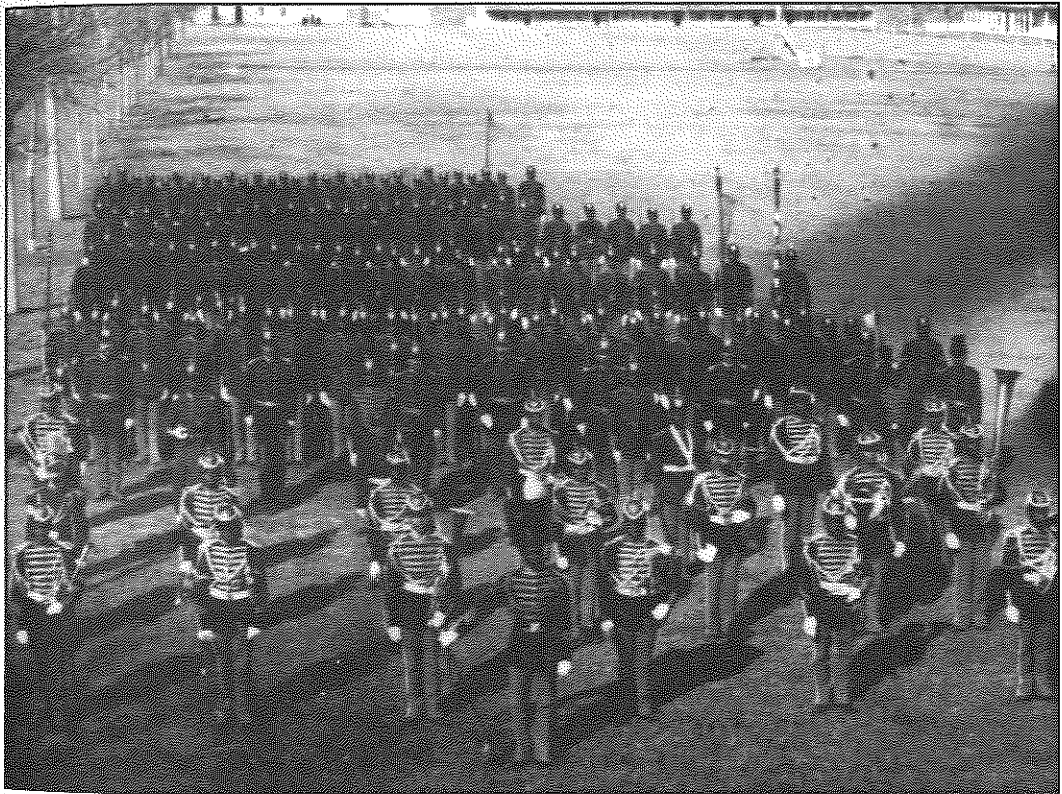
Augustus Meyers was a 14-year-old musician in June 1857 when he joined the Second Infantry, United States Army stationed at Fort Randall.

waiting. The stage coach changed horses at Bon Homme Village and Springfield, and arrived at White Swan across from the fort that evening. He was offered and accepted a job at Fort Randall as Headquarters Driver and abandoned his former plans.

The entire post was now located on the first bench above the river at the same level as the church complex, the "Hollow" having been evacuated. Moran noted that trees on fort grounds were plentiful and good-sized, that the general appearance was good, and that considerable social activity was available. The chapel, IOOF Hall, and library, built in 1875 by soldiers and the government, served as social center. "Christ's Church" was open to all denominations.

Another impressionable first memory was that the Twenty-fifth Infantry, one of four African-American regiments in the Army, which had recently left the post for a new assignment, had left its imprint among the children on the reservation adjacent to White Swan.

Moran's job included driving officers and headquarters team members and families to Yankton and other places. Every second month, he drove an ambulance to Yankton where he picked up the Paymaster, who was entrusted with soldiers' salaries for Fort Randall and several forts upriver. This detail included his ambulance, an escort wagon, two non-commissioned officers and six soldiers. Returning, the Sergeant-in-Charge rode with the Paymaster inside the ambulance, the corporal and a private rode inside the escort wagon with the money, and the remaining soldiers rode alongside.



Soldiers of Company B, Twenty-fifth Infantry, an African American regiment at Fort Randall in the early 1880s, wear newly-adopted uniforms and hats.

Occasionally soldiers on leave accompanied Moran off post. He noted that townspeople and settlers showed considerable prejudice against the mostly young men looking for a good time. The soldier's life was rough. Some were refugees of one sort or another, the majority was illiterate. Although many were good men, the public, because of a few, tended to treat them all badly, particularly in Yankton which was a favorite destination for pleasure.

In the spring of 1884, Moran's mother, who had been living at Yankton, married J.H. McLaughlin, civilian employee at the fort. She, her three children, and McLaughlin lived there as long as soldiers remained. That year Moran "squatted" near Pease Creek above Fort Randall and married Louise Barbier, according to a tongue-in-cheek friend, "so that Moran could leave his home and stock in good hands while he went about his other businesses." Their marriage lasted more than 55 years! Because Louise's father Charles P. Barbier was Transportation and Forage Officer at the fort, Moran could and did use his influence to run cattle on the lush grasses of the Military Reservation.

One of Moran's several entrepreneurial occupations was contracting wood supplies for heat, etc., at the fort. His wood came from a little-known grove located less than a mile away. Two employees whom he housed in a dugout cave near the timber assisted him, an arrangement that resulted in satisfactory financial rewards for all three.

Moran believed that "Bosung's Station" which appears on early maps on the opposite side of the river from the fort, was in reality or became White Swan (Village). The log post office and community store served the neighborhood. Both it and the ferry landing were named for Chief White Swan who with his people camped along the Missouri west of the village.

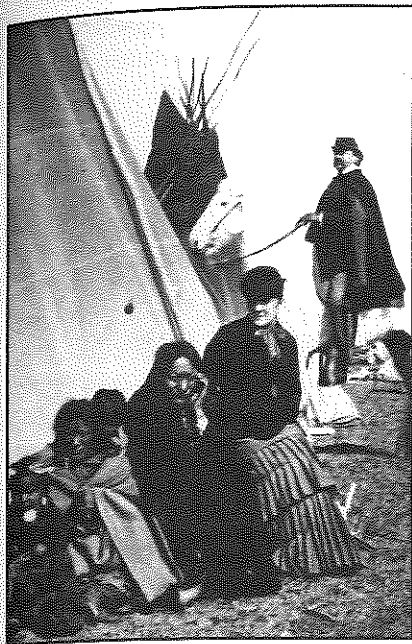
When the Messiah Craze began in 1890, the government formed and enlisted a company of Sioux Indians, attaching the mostly Sioux but with some Brules to the Fifteenth Infantry. When events quieted down and the regulars returned from the Lower Brule area, they left the fort for good. In 1892, the Indian company, last to remain on fort grounds, was transferred to Sidney, Nebraska.

One of Moran's last experiences involved directly with the military was fulfilling a contract to remove and ship tombstones from soldiers' graves in the camp cemetery. Another contractor disinterred the bodies, hermetically sealing in boxes those that included more than bones and placing bones alone in smaller containers. It was not surprising to find that some remains were not marked by tombstones. The two men recorded what they believed to be correct names on matching containers. Moran spoke of the difficulty he encountered in transporting burial boxes and tombstones across the river in his flat boat in the June rise, then delivering them to Armour in Douglas County where they were placed for shipment by train to Fort Leavenworth.

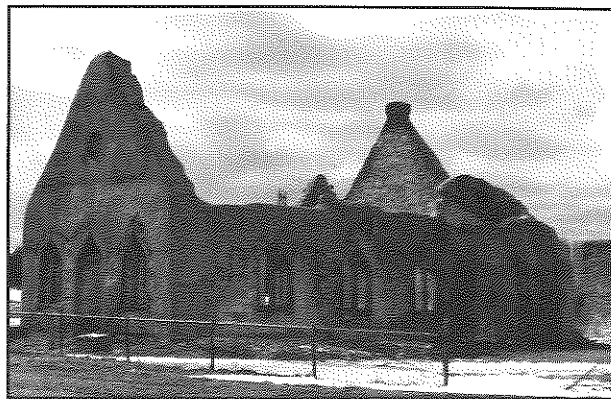
So ended the interview of Danny Moran by Will G. Robinson.

It was during the last decade of the fort's existence that Chief Sitting Bull, his family and faithful tribal members spent months in protective custody on post grounds following their dispirited return to Dakota Territory in 1881 from Canada. The federal government felt a cooling off period was necessary to avoid strong feelings among tribesmen who remained restless. On April 23, 1883, following the twenty month internment, Sitting Bull and his followers were escorted to the Standing Rock Reservation, which straddles the North Dakota-South Dakota border.

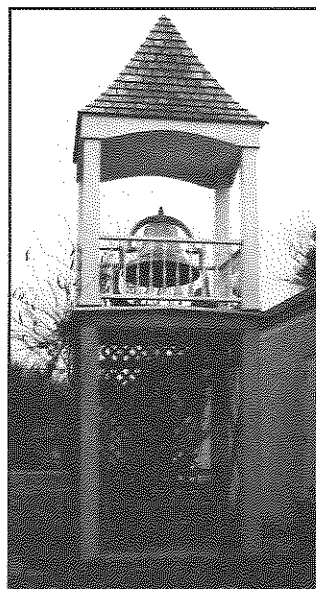
When Fort Randall was abandoned, the chapel quickly fell into disuse. It had not been built as a church but by soldiers with aid from the government as an Odd Fellows Lodge. The lodge



Chief Sitting Bull and his loyal entourage were temporarily detained at Fort Randall upon return to Dakota from Canada in 1881 as a precautionary measure. He sits as if in deep thought with his wife and two small daughters beside an officer's wife.



Above: Preservation efforts had been made prior to 1996 when this photo was taken to prevent further deterioration of the IOOF Hall and Chapel on Fort Randall grounds.



Right: J.H. McLaughlin, former soldier and later caretaker of the abandoned fort offered the IOOF Lodge Hall bell to Springfield where it was used for many years as fire bell. Later the Springfield Historical Society constructed a bell tower alongside its museum.

occupied the back room, a library was available to all, and various church congregations utilized a public meeting room in the front portion. The federal government retained J.H. McLaughlin as caretaker, but when he could no longer prevent people from removing furnishings from "Christ's Chapel" almost at will, he encouraged the IOOF Lodge at Springfield to rescue the bell which hung in the meeting room belfry. The weighty bell served the Springfield community as fire bell for many years and now is in protective custody of the Springfield Historical Society.

First Dakota Cavalry, Companies A and B

In 1862, men from settlements in the Yankton-Vermillion-Elk Point area responded to the nation's call for volunteers by forming Companies A and B of the First Dakota Cavalry. Company A was organized in Yankton in January 1862, mustered in regular service of the United States Army for three years (or duration of the war) on April 3, 1862, and into the United States Volunteer Service on May 9, 1862. The unit of about 100 men served a three-year enlistment and was mustered out on May 9, 1865, at Vermillion. First officers included Captain Nelson Miner, Vermillion native; First Lieutenant J.K. Fowler; Second Lieutenant Frederick Plughoff, a seasoned army vet-

eran; 23 non-commissioned officers, one of which was Sergeant A.M. English; and 66 privates. Of the latter number, some had joined late and were transferred to Company B to complete their enlistment term.

Company B, also composed of about 100 men, was led by Captain Wm. Tripp, a Yankton native originally from Maine; First Lieutenant John R. Wood from Elk Point; and Second Lieutenant T. Elwood Clark.

In 1899 Honourable A.M. English, who had served as First Sergeant in Company A, wrote a lengthy history of the First Dakota Cavalry which appeared in issues of the *Monthly South Dakotan* in 1900 and 1901. Complete rosters of both Companies A and B which appeared in July and August 1899 issues of the *Monthly South Dakotan* are listed in Appendixes A and B. English's history was republished in *SDHC, Volume IX*, beginning on page 240, and is referred to extensively in pages that follow. Although his reminiscences are concerned predominately with activities of Company A, those of Company B are mentioned as well.

At first Company A, First Dakota Cavalry was quartered in three buildings in Yankton. A fourth served as cook house, dining hall, and commissary. Lieutenant Plughoff was a strict drill master and the new soldiers quickly "shaped up."

One of the company's first duties came about in response to a problem which occurred during the nascent Legislative Session held in Yankton in March 1862. The controversial Speaker of the House, George M. Pinney, forced delay after delay in pursuit of his support for Vermillion rather than Yankton as permanent Dakota Territorial capital. When opponents sought to remove him as speaker, he appealed to Acting Governor John Hutchinson for protection who then called on Captain Miner and Lieutenant Plughoff to bring in soldiers to help keep order. Pinney was removed as speaker, the soldiers left, and the proposed bill citing Yankton as capital was passed.

In April 1862, Company A was ordered to Fort Randall, to remain there until late July, except for Miner and twenty-five men who were sent to Sioux Falls. Plughoff resigned shortly and was replaced by J.M. Bacon, who then relieved Miner who was ordered to Vermillion. At that time English was in command of twenty men at Yankton.

That summer the cavalry received clothing, horse equipment, arms including old Hall's carbines, French revolvers, and regulation cavalry saber. Thankfully, Sharps Carbines and Colts Revolvers soon replaced the outmoded and dangerous fire arms.

The Santee Indian Insurrection in Minnesota in September 1862 called for immediate protection from hostiles who soon spread into the Missouri River area. Most settlers from Sioux Falls to the village of Bon Homme sought shelter in Yankton or Sioux City, many never to return, and some who did to find their homesteads plundered.

Companies A and B, First Dakota Cavalry, were ordered to remain in the area and provide protection from hostiles. Company B was to base at Yankton and conduct overnight patrols as far north as Turkey Ridge and west to Fort Randall. Company A would base at Vermillion and perform patrol duty to the Brule Creek and Big Sioux River areas. Incidents requiring intervention by the Dakota Cavalry occurred frequently at ferry crossings and isolated homesteads, occasionally with loss of life. The Indians appeared to be most interested in stealing horses, followed by plundering.

Stress induced by frightening events occasionally created incidents with ludicrous results. One example occurred in the Smutty Bear Bottoms a few miles west of Yankton.

Settlers Washington Reed and sons Matt and Tom refused to abandon their property during the Santee scare and left for the hills near their home to seek good building lumber. When they did not return that evening, Reed's wife called for help. Miner and ten men responded, and it being very warm in the ravines and gulches through which they were searching, removed their outer shirts. Their red undershirts alarmed two neighbors who fled into brush, believing the squad to be Indians, while the cavalrymen, believing the neighbors to be Indians began chasing them. Luckily the war story ended without loss of life, and also luckily, the Reed men had already safely returned home.

In November the Dakotans were ordered to Fort Randall for winter quarters. While there, Company A accompanied Captain Pattee's command upriver toward Fort Pierre to help in the rescue of several female captives taken during the Minnesota Massacre. Following their return to the fort, Company A and other soldiers stationed there gathered together a purse of several hundred dollars for the destitute freed captives, who had lost everything.

Boring garrison duty at the fort was broken with news of trouble at Platte Creek. Lieutenant Bacon with a detachment of "Dakota boys" approached an Indian camp from two directions in 31 degrees below zero weather. One hundred hungry Indian men, women and children surrendered, allowing themselves to be marched to Fort Randall where the men were imprisoned and the women and children happily spent a comfortable winter. Restless in the spring, however, the captives in the guard house secretly cut through planks in the floor and escaped, never to be seen again.

Other less-noble activities included chasing and indiscriminately killing buffalo on an unsuccessful search for Indians sighted in the vicinity of Firesteel Creek below today's Mitchell, and decimating a camp of seven Indians who had stolen a horse. Cavalrymen also investigated the Wiseman Massacre near St. James in Nebraska, but lost the trail of the marauders near Sioux Falls.

In the spring of 1863, Miner and Company A assisted in relocating several hundred Santees and Winnebagos evicted from Minnesota to a location on the Missouri River which would be named Crow Creek Reservation and where the soldiers helped construct and garrison Fort Thompson.

Mr. English's history included descriptions of military actions performed in 1863 in unknown territory with the Sully Expedition commanded by General Alfred Sully.

Although many endeavors were brave and noble, one may have blemished General Sully's reputation. Captain Miner and his men were allowed to break ranks and capture in any manner they desired three Indians who had killed a topographical engineer attached to the expedition. The duty successfully completed, the heads of the victims were removed and taken to camp, where the General then ordered Sergeant English to hang the grisly trophies on posts as warnings.

In the winter of 1863-1864 while at winter quarters at Fort Randall, members of Company A crossed to the Dakota side and camped in a grove of oaks called Black Timber near Seven-Mile Creek. There they worked out the details of and manually built the "Dugway" shortcut through chalkstone bluffs to Greenwood, saving several miles between the fort and the Indian Agency. Companies A and B were then divided into detachments, one assigned to the Yankton Agency, another to White Swan, and a third upriver to duty at the Felicia Fallas Ranch. Assigned duties included performing escort missions and delivering mail and special dispatches.

An amusing incident led to the name of "Kiote," later "Coyote," latched onto the Dakota boys. Two cavalrymen had bought a horse from a Nebraskan and matched it in competition at Fort

Randall with a horse owned by an Iowan. The Iowa horse was badly beaten, prompting its owner to remark that the Dakota horse "ran like a kite." Soon the name applied to the entire company and eventually to the entire state of South Dakota.

During the slow winter of 1863-1864 spent in Vermillion, Miner and men of Company A built Vermillion's first schoolhouse (and the first permanent school in Dakota Territory) in a ravine leading

up from the town then located at river level. Miner, native of Vermillion, himself paid for lumber and supplies and hired Amos Shaw, a non-com in his company, to teach.

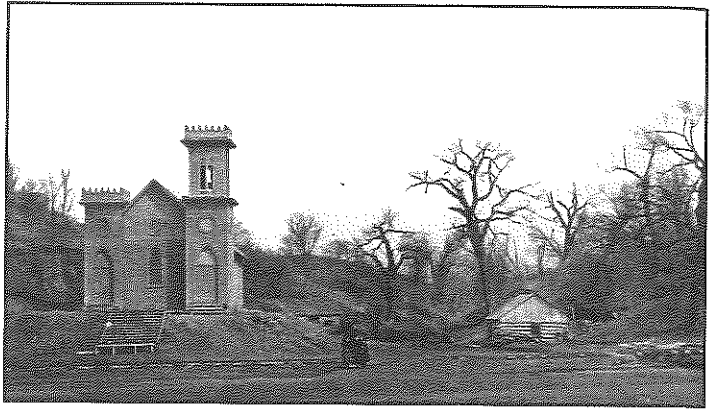
From June 28 to October 14, 1864, Company A under Captain Miner and Company B under Captain Tripp quartered at Fort Randall. They had performed their duties with honor and diligence, but now it was time for those eligible for discharge to return to Yankton and Vermillion. The companies parted at Greenwood, never to work together again as an organization.

Company A camped the first night at Choteau Creek and the second at Dr. Walter Burleigh's Bon Homme County ranch, where the men were royally entertained. The following day the soldiers received a rousing homecoming in Yankton.

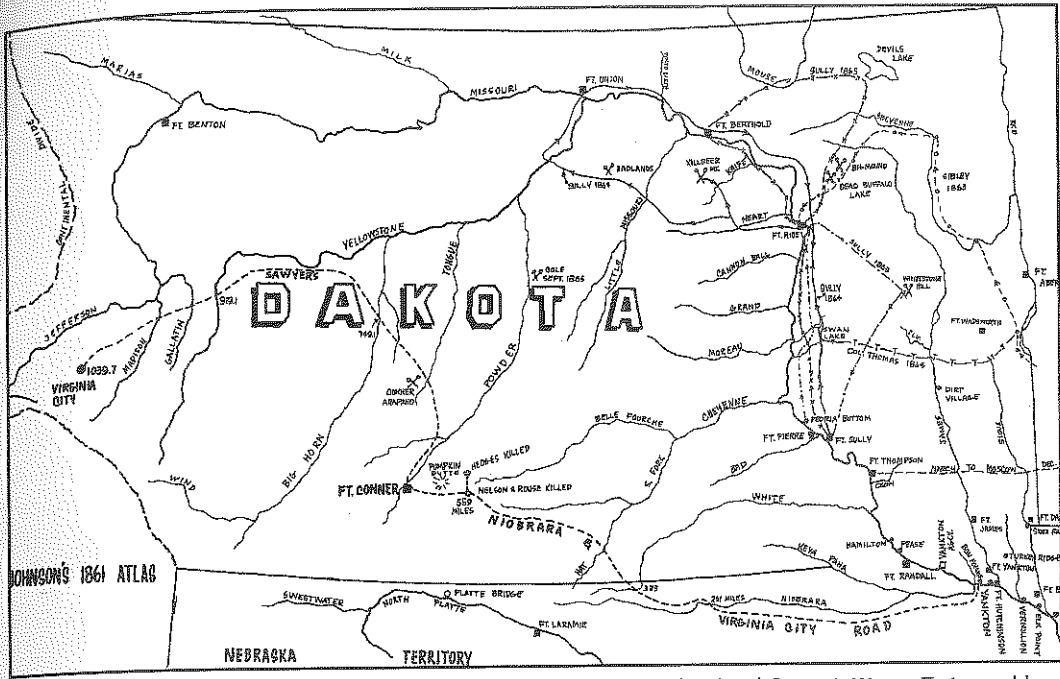
Company B went into winter quarters with one detachment serving Tackett's Station and the Choteau Creek area. In May 1865, the entire Company B accompanied General Sully on his final expedition, returning with the army to Sioux City in the fall. A detachment of 25 soldiers not yet eligible for retirement were assigned in the spring of 1866 for escort duty with Colonel Sawyer's Wagon Road Expedition to Virginia City.

Colonel James A. Sawyers, frontier army veteran and ferry operator from Sioux City, was named Superintendent of the Niobrara Wagon Road Expedition in 1865. A military escort was to support the wagon train which included 36 freight wagons owned by Sioux City merchants, each drawn by six yoke of oxen, 26 mule wagons belonging to the military, as well as an immigrant train consisting of five wagons. For four hard months the expedition traveled many miles along the Niobrara River and northward through the Cheyenne River Valley, to the Powder River and Bozeman Trail, thence to Virginia City. In Powder River country, Sioux Indians harassed and killed several men, among them at least one Company B Cavalry escort.

Private John Rouse, 22, from Santa Fe, New Mexico, who, one record says, homesteaded in Bon Homme County with the Shober Colony and enlisted on September 8, 1862, at Yankton under Captain Ziebach. He was said to have been killed in an Indian skirmish while on escort duty with the Sawyer Wagon Road Expedition in 1866. A Rouse family who currently lives in Bon Homme County on a Rouse homestead, where coincidentally ruts from the original Sioux City to Fort Randall Military Road are plainly visible in a natural prairie, is unaware of a relationship. Another



Soldiers from Dakota Cavalry, Company A helped build Dakota Territory's first permanent school in Vermillion during the winter of 1863-1864. A newly built Baptist Church shares space in the ravine leading up to where the town would relocate after the Flood of 1881.



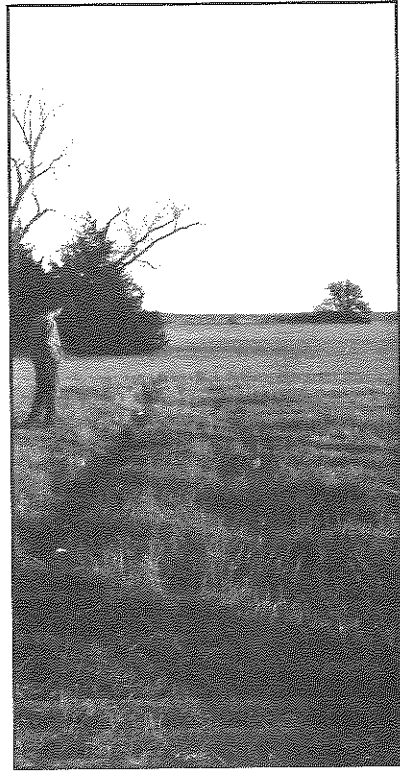
Johnson's 1861 Map of Dakota identifies military routes as well as the trail Colonel Sawyer's Wagon Train would follow to Virginia City. The map, which appeared in *Johnson's Universal Atlas*, was considered remarkable for its accuracy even though only one percent of land area had been surveyed.

John Rouse, 26, as reported in *SDHC, vol. 10*, p402, was born in New York, worked in Sioux Falls in 1858 with the Western Land Company of Dubuque, Iowa, joined Dakota Militia Company A in 1862, and subsequently Company B as his three years of service had not expired. He was reported killed in a skirmish. The mystery remains.

When the Sawyer Expedition reached Crow Indian Country, the Colonel excused the Company B "Coyotes" for return to Sioux City and mustering out.

Deaths inevitably occurred on the Sioux City to Fort Randall Military Road and its branches. On September 16, 1859, Fort Randall soldiers driving an ox team were overtaken by prairie fire three miles north of Yankton on the Military Trail en route to the Government Ferry on the Jim River. One soldier did not survive severe burns.

Wagon wheel ruts marked by flags in native prairie remain on Rouse's land in Bon Homme County on the original Sioux City to Fort Randall Military Road. The Rouse family currently living on the heritage farm is unaware of a relationship to Private John Rouse, Company B, Dakota Cavalry, killed in action on Colonel Sawyer's Expedition.



Sergeant Eugene E. Trask of the Fourteenth Iowa Infantry was killed at Tackett's Station at Choteau Creek while riding a stage. Four marauding Indians stole the horses and Trask's clothing but left young John Bruguier, son of Theophile Bruguier, and the driver, who had safely fled pursuing arrows. Company B under Captain Tripp recovered mail sacks and some legal papers but lost the thieves.

In another incident, Indians killed J.A. Jacobson, one of two freight haulers who had camped overnight near Greenway's James River Ferry on their return from Fort Randall. Thomas W. Thompson of Vermillion was wounded but escaped. Lieutenant Fowler of Company A unsuccessfully pursued the hostiles.

In the winter of 1864-1865, Company A soldier John Tallman, who had assisted in building the log schoolhouse in Vermillion, froze to death while hunting in Nebraska across the river from Vermillion. He was buried in an unmarked grave above the ravine where the schoolhouse was built.

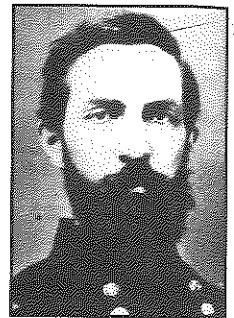
General Alfred Sully

Prominent among marching armies that traveled the Military Trail were those led by General Alfred Sully in 1863 and 1864 and General George A. Custer and his Seventh Cavalry in 1873. Local volunteers would join their ranks.

Alfred Sully was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1821 to an immigrant artist and his wife. After graduating from West Point in 1841, Sully earned distinction in the Mexican and Indian Wars, and more recently the Civil War. Because of his experience and reputation, the Army sent him to Sioux City early in 1863 to "quell the hostiles." He was, according to some detractors, already too old (43), too sick (he suffered from rheumatism and malaria) and said to have an attraction to alcohol.

Sully's command left Sioux City on June 20, 1863, for its destination of Bismarck, North Dakota, and sites upriver. The expedition included twelve cavalry companies, three infantry companies, one eight-gun battery, 200 army wagons, 1,200 mules, 200 civil employees, and a large herd of beef cattle. Four additional companies of infantry accompanied four steamboats loaded with supplies. Very little rainfall that summer resulted in limited forage for animals and slow travel for steamboats, but gradually the Sully contingent reached Fort Randall, too late for the expected consolidation of forces at Bismarck with General Sibley.

Sully and his army continued upriver, and in September fought the bloody but successful Battle of White Stone Hills near today's Ellendale, North Dakota. Following the decisive victory, the soldiers returned to the Farm Island area near Fort Pierre and built winter quarters that served that year and the next.



General Alfred Sully utilized the Military Road from Sioux City to Fort Randall and upriver on military expeditions against the hostiles.

Vaclav Ployhart, Iowa Sixth Regiment, Cavalry

An account of General Sully's expedition remembered when an old man by one of his soldiers provides a personal interpretation. Vaclav Ployhart emigrated from Dobrec, Bohemia, with his family in 1856 when he was twelve years old. The family endured eleven months on a sailboat before arriving at Quebec, Canada. To reach their destination of a Czech community at Spillville,

Iowa, the penniless family traveled through Buffalo, New York; Detroit, Michigan; and Chicago, Illinois.

At age eighteen, Ployhart responded to the federal government's plea for volunteers. He and several Bohemian friends trained at Davenport, Iowa, from October 8, 1862, until March 16, 1863, at which time the Iowa battalion set out on horses and wagons for the Big Sioux River and Camp Cook located in Dakota just west of Pacquette's Ferry. When General Sully and his soldiers and artillery arrived in mid-May, the organized brigade headed for Yankton, where a large government warehouse was located, and on to Fort Randall. Upon arrival there, Ployhart noted the absence of white men in the vicinity except for half-breeds and Frenchmen with Indian wives.

Sully's army marched to Fort Pierre, expecting to come upon hostiles at any time. On September 4, 1863, scouts reported that a large encampment of Indians was holding another army battalion under siege. After surrounding the enemy at a site six miles west of Merricourt, North Dakota, the soldiers fought to a stalemate an hour-long stationary battle with cannon, carbines and pistols. At 8:00 p.m. the command ordered an attack and, in the darkening evening, confusion reigned as 2,000 infantry and cavalymen and 18,000 Indians intermingled with fists, gun butts, and tomahawks. Three hundred seventy-six hostiles were killed and two hundred eighty-six taken captive. A monument honoring the Sixth Regiment of Iowa Cavalry was later erected to mark the site.

In 1864, the army marched to Fort Abraham Lincoln, then the Badlands, arriving on July 28 for a confrontation at the Little Missouri. This battle, which Ployhart called "Tak-kot-okuty," repelled the Indians with great losses. On August 8 and 9, after a twelve mile march and crossing the Yellowstone River, the soldiers again confronted Indians near the Badlands. On the army's return trip, many horses and mules drowned while crossing the Missouri River en route to Fort Buford and finally, Fort Randall. The Civil War had ended and the Iowa soldiers marched via Devils Lake, North Dakota, to Sioux City, Iowa, arriving on October 17, 1865, for pay and discharge.

Vaclav Ployhart returned to Spillville, Iowa, married Marie Kostka in 1867, settled in Brule County, Dakota Territory in 1879, farmed until drought in 1890 drove him to abandon his land and moved to Olivia, Minnesota, where he became an implement dealer. His memoirs appear in Josef A. Dvorak's *History of the Czechs in the State of South Dakota*, copyright 1920, republished in 1980 by the Czech Heritage Preservation Society, Inc., Tabor, South Dakota.

Fort Randall had dual meanings for General Sully. It was there that his native bride Susan, fifteen-year-old daughter of Francois des Lauriers (Deloria) lived with him and became pregnant with his child, whom they named Miriam. He would die in 1879 before his military career would allow him to return to his wife and child on the reservation as he had promised.

But it was also there that he and Dr. Walter Burleigh found their policies to distance the former acquaintances from each other, to the discomfiture of Sully. Because the information included in this paragraph and those which immediately follow are told from the "Indian" perspective, it is helpful to know the source. Respected author Renee Sansom-Flood prefaced her book *Lessons from Chouteau Creek; Yankton Memories of Dakota Territorial Intrigue*, copyright 1986, with the words "This is for our people. This is History, by Henry Hare Sr., Yankton Dakota."

Burleigh eventually besmirched Sully's reputation, at least temporarily, to the point that Congress ordered a military investigation into conditions and treatment of Indians by the general and

his men. Sully was ordered in 1864 to allow Burleigh to form a Yankton Scout group numbering 50 natives from the Yankton Reservation, and later was accused of improperly mustering them into the Army. Scout numbers increased as cousins and brothers from Minnesota sought refuge on the Yankton Reservation, and Sully was ordered to remove them. He did so reluctantly and with limited success.

The Indian Scouts were each to be paid \$300 by the government for nine months service. The first in a series of payments between 1864 and 1867 was lost. In 1869, the federal government appropriated \$10,000 (for which Burleigh managed to have himself assigned as distributor), but again none reached the Indians. Finally, in 1892, after two other appropriations had disappeared, a final payment to the Scouts was attached to the Agreement of 1892, in which the Secretary of Interior negotiated with the Yanktons for cession of surplus, unallotted lands. (By the 1920s more than two-thirds of land allotments were lost to the tribe by sale, sometimes the bargaining price being nothing more than a bag of groceries for a hungry Yankton family.) But the surviving Indian Scouts were finally paid, amount unrecorded!

General George Armstrong Custer

General George Armstrong Custer was born December 5, 1839, at New Rumley, Ohio, son of a farmer, and died in Montana on June 25, 1876, at the Battle of Little Big Horn. After graduating from West Point in 1861, he rose rapidly on the military ladder from First Lieutenant to Brigadier General to Major General of Volunteers before age 26. He was mustered out of volunteer service into the regular army in May 1866. From that date, his career was almost entirely spent in Indian combat on the frontier, first as Lieutenant Colonel and then as Brevet Major General.

Custer came to the Northwest in 1873 primarily to command escort troops whose task was to protect engineers and surveyors working for the Northern Pacific Railway as they explored Yellowstone Valley and the mountains beyond. He and his men were assigned to Fort Abraham Lincoln, Department of Dakota, at Bismarck, Dakota Territory, 546 river miles from Yankton, Dakota Territory.

On April 9, 1873, parts of Custer's regiment began arriving by train to Yankton, at that time the end of the railroad line. Other trainloads arrived, unloading to form a mile-square tent city adjacent to east Yankton. Camp Sturgis, as it was called, consisted of 800 men, 140 women (officers' wives and laundresses), 700 horses, 200 mules, many dogs, a beef herd, and considerable supplies. Much of the above would be loaded onto steamboats which the Seventh Cavalry would escort to Fort Randall and above.

A dangerous three-day blizzard descended on the Yankton area and paralyzed Camp Sturgis. General Custer succumbed to illness, as did many of his retinue, and the encampment was detained for nearly a month to allow recovery. Finally, on May 10, the Seventh departed in style, marching down 3rd Street behind local musician and composer Felix Vinatieri and his band.

The Seventh stopped at Lakeport in Yankton County along the Sioux City to Fort Randall Road that night where the men received pay. It was said that with money in their pockets, some may have succeeded in deserting. On May 11, the Seventh proceeded to Snatch Creek in Bon Homme County but rushing water prevented their crossing and they encamped there briefly till the waters receded. In the meantime the steamboat *Miner* moored at nearby Bon Homme Village to pick up the sick for delivery to Fort Rice, located at the mouth of Cannon Ball River in North Dakota.



Officers' wives accompanying Custer's march through Bon Homme County lodged at Bridget Cogan's hotel in Bon Homme Village, a short distance south of the military camp at Snatch Creek.

Warm-hearted women of the Bon Homme community baked "Johnny cake" for the soldiers, and welcomed some of the women into their homes. Libby Custer, the general's wife, and other officers' wives stayed at the well-known Cogan House, in front of which the flamboyant Custer performed a sharp shooting exhibition, targeting unseen items behind his back.

Illness accompanied the cavalymen. Six or perhaps seven men died during the stay at Snatch Creek and were buried along the Fort Randall Road in two graves north of the camp on the slope of a hill. Six enlisted men were said to share one grave and supposedly an officer was interred in the other. Custer kept poor records and names of the soldiers have remained unknown despite diligent research.

In 1893, a committee of five members of the Bon Homme National Cemetery Association was delegated to exhume the remains of all soldiers buried outside the cemetery and reburial them in four assigned lots within its borders. William Thomas Harrison, descendent of original settlers of the Bon Homme community, constructed a homemade monument in 1922 on which he inscribed "In Memory of Six Unknown Soldiers Buried Here." Six Civil War metal grave spikes, three on each side, flank the monument.

A historical sign once standing along today's Highway 52 marking the former camp site at Snatch Creek stated the following: (sic)

CLUSTER CAMP SITE

May 7-11, 1873

Gen. Geo. A. Custer with 800 men of the 7th Cavalry, 800 horses, 202 mules, en-route from Yankton to Ft. Abraham Lincoln camped at Owen's Ranch along Snatch Creek south and west of here for three days, awaiting the subsidence of Emanuel & Choteau Creek then in flood.

The Seventh continued on the Military Trail, crossing Emanuel Creek, then Choteau Creek onto the Yankton Reservation, reaching Mosquito Creek for an overnight camp on May 13. The terminus of the Sioux City to Fort Randall Road, destination Fort Randall, was apparently reached on May 14.



Inscribed on a home-made monument in Bon Homme National Cemetery are the words "In Memory of Six Unknown Soldiers Buried Here." Six metal GAR spikes flanking the monument mark the final locations of six cavalymen said to have died from illness while camped at nearby Snatch Creek.