ENPS Form 10-900-b (Rev. 01/2009) OMB No. 1024-0018 (Expires 5/31/2012)
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items

x New Submission ____ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument – Historic Resources

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

I. **Native American Occupation and Culture on the Northwestern Plains (12,000 B.P – Present)**

II. **American Indian Wars on the Northwestern Plains (1854-1891)**

III. **The War Department at Custer Battlefield National Cemetery (1876-1946)**

IV. **The National Park Service and Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument (1940-Present)**

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.
(_________ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature and title of certifying official | Date

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper | Date of Action

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MPDF Purpose

This Multiple Property Documentation Form provides the context for the historic resources associated with Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. It and the revised 10-900 forms for the two contributing historic districts serve as the current National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) documentation of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. These reports replace the National Register nomination submitted to the Keeper of the NRHP in 1987.

Under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the National Park Service (NPS) nominated the Monument to the NRHP in 1966 as an administrative listing without supporting documentation. Since that time, scattered and incomplete inventories of the battlefield have provided varying degrees of description and historic context. Several surveys for the List of Classified Structures (LCS) have documented buildings and landscape features constructed from 1876 to the present. In 1987, the Monument commissioned a partial inventory of both non-contiguous sections of the battlefield to support their listing on the National Register. The 1987 documentation created a Multiple Resource Assessment (MRA) that included partial inventories of two historic areas, named the Custer Historic District and the Reno-Benteen Battlefield. In 1991, the NPS conducted several archeological surveys of the battlefield and developed an amendment to the MRA. It is not clear why, but the park never submitted the amendment to the Keeper of the National Register.[1]

Recognizing that the 1987 documentation did not meet the needs of the National Monument, in 2010 Little Bighorn Battlefield completed a Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI) that identified an array of resources either not included or inadequately described in the 1987 report. As a result, in May of 2011, the Monument commissioned an update to its National Register documentation. This MPDF and the revised 10-900 forms for two historic districts identified in 1987 replace the 1987 documentation, add new resources, and clarify the descriptions and significance of resources listed on the Register in 1987. The MPD serves as a cover to include the historic context and property types that support the new documentation.

[1] The amendment for archeological sources appears in the administrative files for Little Bighorn National Monument, along with correspondence from the Montana SHPO showing concurrence. However, no record of this submittal exists at the Keeper in Washington, D.C.

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

The following historic contexts are organized thematically in order to understand the various layers of history at work in Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. Contexts frequently overlap and complement one another without repeating information. The first context presenting the histories of American Indian peoples in the lands surrounding the battlefield overlaps with the other three to reveal the constant and long-term influence the various associated tribes have had upon the battlefield's cultural landscape. The context is geographically expansive, placing the site's landscape within the Northwestern Plains and discussing such topics as prehistoric fire use, bison hunting, cattle ranching and reservations. The second context on the American Indian Wars narrows slightly, narrating the building conflict between the Lakota, Cheyenne, and their allies and the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. The third and fourth contexts are more restricted, detailing the War Department's influence on the battlefield into the twentieth century and National Park Service's effects on the landscape from 1940 to the present. Each context presents a particular perspective on the Monument's history and a different layer of resources visible in the landscape.

I. Native American Occupation and Culture on the Northwestern Plains (12,000 B.P. – present)

Perhaps the most prominent influence on the physical and cultural landscape of Little Bighorn Battlefield has been Native American practices that affected both the built and natural environment. Land use among indigenous peoples from first recorded occupation (at least 12,000 B.P.) to the present have created and subsequently transformed the Northern plains environment and have shaped the immediate and surrounding landscape of Little Bighorn Battlefield. However, the term "Native American" must be used carefully as it implies a cultural unity that is largely absent from the historical record until the 1960s. It is important to recognize the nuances among American Indian tribes associated with the battlefield. Tribal histories indicate that the Crow, Lakota, and Cheyenne, the tribes with the most visible influence at the battlefield, migrated to the Plains from the Great Lakes area beginning around the fifteenth century. Archeological evidence suggests that indigenous groups have consistently occupied the Little Bighorn River valley for well over twelve thousand years. Their actions, such as the use of fire, had a marked effect on the vegetation of the Northern plains. By the late fifteenth century, the Crow or Apsáalooke nation pushed westward from the Dakotas into the area around the Bighorn Mountains, unseating the Shoshone inhabitants. The Crow battled the Lakota, Cheyenne and Blackfeet nations for control of the territory into the mid-nineteenth century. As the United States government entered the conflict, the concentration of tribal herds, cavalry troopers, and cattle and the decline of the bison further altered the landscape of the Little Bighorn Valley as did the restriction of American Indian peoples to reservations. As Euro-Americans colonized the Little Bighorn Valley (and the Crow along with it), the landscape surrounding the battlefield shifted again in response to new agricultural activities. The most recent changes to the battlefield have been the placement of markers and monuments to American Indian warriors who fought at the battle in response to increasing pan-Indian efforts in the late-twentieth century. The battlefield retains features from all of these variant historic contexts which solidify the battlefield's importance in Indian history and culture.[2]

The First Occupants (12,000 B.P. – 1700 A.D.)

Archeological sources assert that humans have occupied the Northern plains surrounding Little Bighorn Battlefield since at least the Paleo-Indian period (12,000 – 7,500 B.P.). In this era, the

[2] For a broad discussion of Native American history, see: Colin G. Calloway, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History*, 2nd ed. (Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004); While traditional narratives of migration to the American continents placed the first arrivals at 12,000 B.P., archaeological evidence uncovered over the last three decades has indicated that there were organized societies present in North America well before that time. While estimates vary, they extend the period of habitation from between 15,000 and 30,000 years B.P.

temperature of the continent rose considerably, causing drier climates and drastic seasonal temperature extremes. Loss of moisture and rainfall turned the Northern plains woodland-grassland mosaic into a landscape dominated by grassland and punctuated by stands of trees only along riverbeds and in the isolated hills and mountain ranges of the central continent. Between 11,000 and 10,000 B.P., most of the megafaunal species in North America disappeared due to ecological changes and increased human hunting. The loss of most megafauna forced Plains groups to shift their hunting to bison. The environment these hunters encountered was cool and moist. While sage brush steppe characterized the drier areas in the Plains, the moist conditions allowed forests to extend to lower elevations, to cover foothills, and to grow further upstream along tributaries than present conditions allow.[3]

Evidence from the Plains Archaic period (7,500 – 1,500 B.P) suggests human occupation at the Little Bighorn Battlefield site in that era. In the early part of this period known as the Altithermal (7,500 – 5,000 B.P.), conditions were extremely dry resulting in a recession of forests and an increase in short-grass prairie. Bison adapted to and survived on the higher protein-carbohydrate ratios of short-grasses. Plains hunters adapted their lifestyles into a seasonal pursuit of the large ungulates. During this time, Plains groups likely concentrated in more humid areas such as mountains, foothills, and river valleys. As moister conditions prevailed in the later Archaic, the short-grass plains receded, allowing sagebrush steppe to expand and pine forests to push back into the lower elevations.[4]

The Late Prehistoric period (1,500 – 500 B.P.) coincided with both the dominance of pedestrian bison hunting on the Northern plains and of the northern mixed-grass prairie ecosystem. Seasonal variations in the bison's food supply meant that tribal groups could predict bison movement depending on locations of rich forage. Through spring and summer, the northwestern plains provided abundant forage of mixed-grass and in winter, fescue in the forested highlands. The combination of cool-season grasses such as needle-and-thread (*Stipa comata*) and warm-season grasses like Blue

[3] Reconstructing this early period is problematic due to the tenuous cultural balance between archeological findings and the origin stories of the various Plains peoples. While this narrative inclines toward the archeological verifiable data, it recognizes that for many Plains Indians, archeological evidence competes with their own understanding of the Great Plains environment in which they have lived since their creation stories took place. Calloway, *First Peoples*, 6-9; U.S. Department of the Interior, *Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument – Cultural Sites Inventory*, Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service (Lincoln, NE, January 1994), 4-6; U.S. Department of the Interior, *Uncovering History: The Legacy of Archeological Investigations at the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Montana*, by Douglas D. Scott, Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service, Technical Report No. 124 (Lincoln, NE, 2010), 9; James E. Sherow, *The Grasslands of the United States: An Environmental History* (Denver: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 3-4;Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999), 29-43; Dan Flores, "The Great Contraction: Bison and Indians in Northern plains Environmental History," in *Legacy: New Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn*, Charles E. Rankin, ed. (Helena: Montana Historical Press, 1996), 8.

[4] *Cultural Sites Inventory*, 6-7; Scott, *Uncovering History*, 9-10; Sherow, 8-9, 19-20; Sally T. Greiser, T. Weber Greiser, and Susan M. Vetter, "Middle Prehistoric Period Adaptations and Paleoenvironment in the Northwestern Plains: The Sun River Site," *American Antiquity* 50, no. 4 (October 1985), 870-872; Brian Reeves, "The Concept of an Altithermal Cultural Hiatus in Northern plains Prehistory," *American Anthropologist* 75, no. 5 (October 1973), 1221, 1227-1231; Flores, "The Great Contraction," in *Legacy*, 9.

Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) and buffalo grass (*Bouteloua dactyloides*) provided bison with early cool-season forage in the spring, an abundance of warm-season grazing throughout the summer, and often a second crop of cool-season grasses in the fall. The cool-season plants such as wheatgrass (*Agropyron* sp.) and needle grasses expanded in wet periods and retracted in dry, giving way to the grama and buffalo grasses. Despite winter weather extending into April and May, the earliest cool-season grasses began growing by late March. Small mammals such as the prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) aerated soils, allowing grasses to flourish. As the bison fed on these grasses, they left visible paths along and between watersheds over which thousands of animals passed in a given year. The ubiquitous North American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) had its own effect on the environment, thinning forests by collecting them for dams that decreased stream flow variability, a process that generally favored the rise of sagebrush and fescue grasslands along waterways on the high plains.[5]

Fire allowed Plains inhabitants to control where and how bison grazed. Accounts from Plains tribes and white travelers document consistent fire use as part of Plains Indian culture. On surveying the area around the Little Bighorn in 1859, Capt. W. R. Raynalds observed in early September that the Crow had set fire to the grasslands, in Raynalds' view, to deprive the cavalry mounts of forage. The primary use for burning was to maintain the extent, growing season, and nutritional value of the surrounding grasslands. Firing the prairies increased the overall productivity of most grasses and influenced bison movement. Autumn fires could drive bison to wintering grounds and provide an earlier grass crop in the spring. Burning fescue in the spring pushed bison onto the plains and encouraged abundant growth later in the year. Summer fires extended the growing season, producing higher-quality forage in the lean autumn months. The resulting vegetation was not only more nutritious but inclined towards certain species. Sagebrush (*Artemisia* sp.), trees of all kinds, and the tall grasses typical of the eastern plains remained in unburned patches, especially along river floodplains. More fire-resistant short-grasses dominated in the burned areas.[6]

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[5] Scott, *Uncovering History*, 11; *Cultural Sites Inventory*, 7-8; Theodore Binemma, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 21-28, 33-35, 40; Sherow, 34-36; Douglas Bamforth, *Ecology and Human Organization on the Great Plains* (New York: Plenum Press, 1988), 31-34; Andrew H. Clark, "The Impact of Exotic Invasion on the Remaining New World Mid-latitude Grasslands," in *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth*, William L. Thomas, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 739; George W. Arthur, "An Introduction to the Ecology of Early Historic Communal Bison Hunting Among the Northern plains Indians," PhD diss., University of Calgary, 1974, 13-18; Robert Kelley Schneiders provides a lively discussion about bison highways in *Big Sky Rivers: The Yellowstone & Upper Missouri* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 62-97; Jonathan M. Friedman, Michael L. Scott, and Gregor T. Auble, "Water Management and Cottonwood Forest Dynamics Along Prairie Streams," in *Ecology and Conservation of Great Plains Vertebrates*, Fritz L. Knopf and Fred B. Samson, eds., (New York: Springer, 1997), 65.

[6] For a discussion of human impacts on grasslands through fire, see both Stephen Pyne, *Fire in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982) and Carl Sauer, "A Geographic Sketch of Early Man in America," *Geographical Review*, 34, No. 4 (October 1944), 529-573 and "Grassland Climax, Fire, and Man," *Journal of Range Management*, 3, No.1 (1950), 16-21; Also see U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, *Interpretation and Compendium of Historical Fire Accounts in the Northern Great Plains,* by Kenneth F. Higgins, Resource Publication 161 (Washington D.C., 1986); Conrad Taylor Moore, "Man and Fire in the Central North

The culture and economy of Plains Indian adapted to the annual rhythms of the bison. The animals usually moved from the sheltered mountains and foothills onto the Northern plains in the wet season of early spring, concentrating into small herds. Bison hunters generally remained in winter camp until June where they sheltered from April and May snowstorms and subsisted on winter stores or alternative game. During the summer, tribes split into smaller hunting groups and pursued the small herds, running them on foot or horseback. Into mid-summer, as the cool-season grasses gave way to warm-season grasses like gramas, bison concentrated into fewer, larger herds. As forage declined into autumn, these large herds separated again, moving back to the foothills where fescue grasses, allowed to grow all summer, provided the basis for winter survival. During the winter and early spring, bison-reliant tribes, especially those on the present-day Montana Plains, utilized bison jumps to kill large numbers of bison at once, thus securing sufficient meat to last until the following summer hunts. Limited resources in game and forage meant that survival on the Northern plains necessitated delicate political relationships among competing tribes, involving trade,war, and raiding. Archeological finds reveal that tribes participated in the broad North American trade routes, a network spanning the Rocky Mountains from the Zuni and Pecos pueblos north to the Saskatchewan River. Maintaining access to trade markets was a primary factor in Plains Indian relations into the nineteenth century.[7]

Sometime after 1650, when the Crow or *Apsáalooke* nation arrived in the Little Bighorn Valley along what they called *Iisiaxpúatahcheeaashisee Aliakáate* (the Little Bighorn River) from the Great Lakes area, they joined an expanding American Indian community on the Northern plains. The group that became the Crows eventually settled around the Bighorn and Pryor Mountains and the plains surrounding them. In time, they shared the Northern plains with powerful tribes such as the Cheyenne, or *Tsistsistsas*, and the Lakota, or Teton Sioux. In the late-eighteenth century, the Cheyenne and Lakota began a steady move westward in pursuit of the region's enormous bison herds. The Crow, Cheyenne, and Lakota became intensive pedestrian bison hunters, sending parties as far east as the Black Hills and as far north as Canada, typically conducting their largest hunts in the fall. The low density of resources on the Northern plains may have influenced the band structure of the Crow, Lakota, and Cheyenne. As the Cheyenne acclimated to the Plains, their once-centralized political structure diffused power to band leaders as each began operating more independently. The Lakota boasted seven tribes, including the Hunkpapas, Oglalas, and Minneconjous farthest to the west, the most prominently-represented tribes at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Similar to the

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American Grassland, 1535-1890: A Documentary Historical Geography," (PhD diss., University of California-Los Angeles, 1972), 52-53; Binemma, 33-35, 40; Omer Call Stewart, *Forgotten Fires: Native Americans and the Transient Wilderness*, Edited by Henry T Lewis and Kat Anderson, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 113-15, 177-78, 199-217;James C. Malin, "Factors in Grassland Equilibrium," in *History & Ecology: Studies of the Grassland* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 31-67.

[7]Binemma, 40-52, 56-70; For a discussion of bison jumps in Montana and Wyoming, see U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Survey of Buffalo Jumps in the Northern plains*, by Wesley R. Hurt (Interagency Archeological Services, Denver, 1962).

Cheyenne, the Lakota political structure on the Northern plains was relatively decentralized, providing flexibility in movements and diplomacy for each tribe.[8]

Arrival of Europeans and the Northern plains Environment (1492 – 1900)

As the Crow, Lakota, and Cheyenne settled on the northwestern plains, they encountered two separate but dramatic changes in their environment. First, from the mid-sixteenth century through 1850, a global climatic episode known as the "Little Ice Age" reduced temperatures and increased snow and ice packs. Second, Europeans had begun colonizing the American continents. Both would have drastic ecological effects on the Northern plains. Europeans brought new plant and animal species, technologies and diseases. The reduction in temperatures likely increased summer precipitation and impelled longer winters and shorter growing seasons. Many of the pre-equestrian period practices, such as periodic burning of the grassland, remained, but by the end of the nineteenth century, the cultural ecology of the Northern plains had shifted, and a new industrial agriculture focused on grains and grazing dominated the region.[9]

One of the most renowned invaders of the Northern plains was the horse. The majority of Northern plains tribes traded with the massive equestrian 'empires' of the Southern Plains such as the Comanche, acquiring horses by the mid-eighteenth century. Cheyenne tradition tells that the prophet Sweet Medicine foretold of the horse's arrival, warning of light-colored Earth Men (presumably whites) but encouraging the Cheyenne to use the horse. He claimed that "those far hills that seem only a blue vision in the distance take many days to reach now; but with this animal you can get there in a short time, so fear him not." Plains tribes like the Cheyenne and Lakota adapted quickly to the horse, creating a new model for Plains life. Horses meant more mobility, allowing tribes to conduct raids over longer distances, move more effectively, and hunt bison more efficiently. Though a symbol of political and economic power, horses competed with bison for grassland forage. Although horses generally pastured on a wider variety of grasses than bison, the two grazers both needed the warm-season buffalo grass that provided so much nutritional content on the short-grass plains. In winter, lack of forage for horses became particularly acute, as Northern plains tribes sought limited

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[8] Binemma, 80; Jerome A. Greene (and Paul Fees), Draft Multiple Property Documentation Form, "The Great Sioux War of 1876-1877 in Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, and Nebraska," July 2003 (edits in 2010), E1-4. Little Bighorn College Library, "Timeline of Apsáalooke Chiefs," Little Bighorn College, http://lib.lbhc.edu/about/history/crowchiefs.php (accessed 8-15-2011); Joseph Medicine Crow, "The Crow Indian Buffalo Jump Legends," *Memoir*, Issue 1 (1962), 35-39; David Edward Yarlott, Jr., "Historic Uses of Natural Resources: Transference of Knowledge in the Crow Indian Environment," (PhD diss., Montana State University, 1999), 41-42, 95; Arthur, 62-67.

[9] See Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Chapters 7 and 11, and *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, 30th Anniv ed., (Westport: Praeger, 2003); Also see William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, eds., *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992). Alan J. Osborn, "Ecological Aspects of Equestrian Adaptations in Aboriginal North America," *American Anthropologist*, 85, No. 3 (September 1983), 579-80.

pasture land for winter camps, supplementing this diet with cottonwood bark when necessary. The system of burning and herding bison to different forage areas in different seasons could only sustain a certain number of large ungulates. In the mid-eighteenth century, the explosion of horses onto the Plains contributed to the decline in bison numbers. By the 1840s, bison herds already showed clear signs of decline on both the northern and southern plains due to a demand for bison hides in eastern markets and the subsistence needs of Plains inhabitants. More people on the Plains complicated the situation. In the late-eighteenth century, the Lakota and Arapaho moved onto the plains to find beaver hunting grounds and to access the lucrative trade in horse stock. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the Cheyenne joined them, pushed by losses from disease and pulled by the promise of plentiful food from the bison. Although the initial motivation for relocating to and fighting over these regions of the plains was beaver trapping territory, emphasis shifted to the bison by the mid-1800s.[10]

The dissemination of horses shifted the Plains political balance towards those who could acquire large numbers of horses and lucrative trading networks with whites. As a result, the Crow and Lakota began their rise to prominence on the Northern plains in the early-nineteenth century. The Crow maintained strong economic ties to eastern markets and strengthened their horse supplies through trade from the South. While many of the northern tribes experienced great difficulty in keeping even small horse herds amid severe winters and frequent horse-raiding, the Crow and Lakota navigated the strains effectively. Crow territory in the Yellowstone River area allowed them access to the Rocky Mountain foothills and Wind River basin to protect their stock in the winter. The shelter of Crow country uniquely protected both the horse herds and bison, allowing a higher population to survive with more forage through milder winters. However, by the 1830s, the Lakota began pushing into Crow territory from the southeast, threatening the Crow's horse stock. Relatively isolated from the ravages of smallpox and other European diseases, the Lakota managed an ecological balance between the horse and the bison. The Lakota nation sought to expand its boundaries and did so with the intent of harnessing the potential power of the Northern plains. Remaining pedestrian until the 1780s when they finally acquired sufficient numbers of horses, the Lakota began raiding and pressuring other tribes weakened by disease along the Missouri River--the same tribes that had historically blocked the Lakota from accessing the bison-rich Northern plains. By the early 1800s, the Lakota moved into the central and Northern plains, becoming one of the dominant beaver-trapping tribes. They grew wealthy in horse flesh and pushed farther along the Platte and Missouri

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[10]Quotation of Sweet Medicine in John Stands In Timber and Margot Liberty, *Cheyenne Memories*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 40;For a recent synthesis of bison decline, see Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures," *The Journal of American History* 90, No. 3 (Dec. 2003), 833-41, 859-60; Elliot West, "Called out People: The Cheyennes and the Central Plains," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 48, No. 2 (Summer, 1998), 4-6; Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *The Journal of American History*, 65, No. 2 (September 1978), 321-25; John C. Ewers, *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture, With Comparative material From Other Western Tribes*, Smithsonian Institution – Bureau of American Ethnology: Bulletin 159 (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1969), 40-43; William A. Dobak, "Killing the Canadian Buffalo, 1821-1881," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 27, No. 1 (Spring 1996), 38.

Rivers, challenging the Crow in the Yellowstone basin. The Lakota nation and its allies achieved marked success not only from the weakening of surrounding tribes by disease, but from steady trade with eastern markets and a conscious limitation of horse numbers that ensured sufficient forage for large bison herds.[11]

The conflicts among the Plains tribes resulted from ecological, economic, and political factors linked to the arrival of whites on the continent. Contact with whites brought both the benefits and disruptive effects of increased trade in new technologies. The Crow and Lakota became wealthy traders along the middle Missouri River, exchanging beaver and bison pelts for firearms and other European goods. While the Arikara attempted to maintain these trading relationships as well, factionalism and loss of beaver and bison in their territory led to a significant weakening of their bargaining power in the first half of the nineteenth century. Beginning in the 1820s, American fur trappers maintained a constant interaction with the Crow tribe, establishing multiple (if short-lived) posts along the Yellowstone, Rosebud, and Bighorn rivers to gather beaver pelts. However, by the 1830s, with beaver declining, most Plains Indian traders shifted to the bison hides to sustain their beneficial trading relationships. In so doing, they followed the bison's seasonal migrations, typically settling near a trading post and hunting from that point, dressing skins in camp, and building long-term relationships with traders.[12]

As British and American fur companies vied for control of the lucrative beaver pelt trade, the Little Bighorn Valley became part of a teeming international and imperial economic network. Thousands of keel boats and canoes sent beaver downstream from the Rocky Mountains, flooding furs into eastern and European markets. Like other tribes trading heavily with Europeans, the Lakota obtained modern weaponry and munitions that provided an initial advantage in their conquest of the Central Plains (although by the late-eighteenth century, most Plains tribes had acquired some form of firearms). Making trade alliances with the British and French Canadians as well as Americans, the Crow began trapping beaver in earnest. British and French-Canadian trappers such as Francois-Antoine Larocque fostered relationships with the Crow, providing some of the first records of the environment of the Little Bighorn Valley in the early 1800s. Upon Larocque's crossing of the Little Bighorn River on August 19th, 1805, somewhere near present-day Wyola, he found the "bed of the River here is Rocks a continual rapid, the water clear & cold as Ice, the ground barren and the banks of the river thinly wooded." He also remarked on the fine grass and abundance of ash trees along the river bottom. After the United States purchased much of the Mississippi and Missouri Basins from the French in 1804, Americans Meriwether Lewis and William Clark traveled through the Missouri Basin in 1806, making clear their intent to trade with the Shoshone and Nez Perce, historic enemies of the Blackfeet. Other renowned American trappers such as John Colter and Manuel Lisa made close trading alliances with the Crow, upsetting the Blackfeet's power on the Northern plains and

[11]Hämäläinen, 845-54; Binemma, 44; West, "Called out People," 6-8; Richard White, "The Winning of the West," 321-23, 331.

[12]Binemma, 181-82; Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 67-72; Thomas F. Schilz, "Robes, Rum, and Rifles: Indian Middlemen in the Northern plains Fur Trade," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 40, No. 1 (Winter, 1990), 8.

providing the Crow, Nez Perce and Shoshone with American trade goods, including guns. However, by the 1830s, beaver were on the decline, and the fashion trends that had made beaver pelts so lucrative had begun to shift. Dwindling beaver numbers affected the environment, raising stream flow variability, allowing for the expansion of cottonwood (*Populous deltoides*), willow (*Salix* sp.), and balsam poplar (*Populous tacamahaca*) along waterways. Trade relationships also brought Eurasian diseases to which Plains Indians had no immunity. Beginning in the 1710s, a series of epidemics through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries began a steady toll on the Northern plains tribes until only a vestige of each tribe's former numbers remained by 1900.[13]

With competition for stock forage, bison herds, and trade access, the upper Yellowstone basin including the Little Bighorn Valley became the center of massive inter-tribal fighting. Great Plains resource limitations and the simultaneous strain imposed by horses, bison, and white encroachment aggravated an already tense political situation that led to the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Bison-hungry Lakota and Cheyenne pressed Crow territory with frequent raiding and occasional battles. Among the critical resources the Lakota and Cheyenne sought were the lush and nutritious grasses growing along the Little Bighorn River and its tributaries. The Cheyenne referred to one of these tributaries, Stillwater Creek, as *Hēkō' mōi'-yohe* or Greasy Grass Creek, the same name that the Lakota applied to the Little Bighorn River flow. The Crow fought a steady retreat towards the Rocky Mountains, regularly raided by Lakota in the Bighorn Valley. By the time the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho met the Seventh Cavalry at Little Bighorn in 1876, they had largely pushed the Crow west of the Bighorn Mountains.[14]

Paralleling these westward movements, a conflict arose between the United States, struggling to become a global economic and political power, and a union of Plains tribes. In 1840, the strongest of the central plains nations--the Lakota, Comanche, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Arapaho, and Plains Apache--made peace, creating an alliance among the strongest equestrian powers of the American West. In the mid-1800s, it became the dominant force on the plains, strong enough to challenge and limit the expansion of the United States into the west. Rivals such as the Crow frequently treated with other tribes as well as the United States, choosing to

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[13]Larocque quotation from Francois-Antoine Larocque, "Yellowstone Journal," in *Early Fur Trade on the Northern plains: Canadian Traders Among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818*, Wood and Thiessen, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 184; Newton Carl Abbott, *Montana in the Making*, revised ed., (Billings, MT: The Gazette Printing Company, 1964), 55, 82-91, 123-24; Eric Jay Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 185; Akim D. Reinhardt, "Native America: The Indigenous West," in *Western Places, American Myths: How We Think About the West*, Gary J. Hausladen, ed. (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2003), 184, 198; Hämäläinen, 859-62; West, "Called out People," 6-8; Richard White, "The Winning of the West," 321-23, 331; For discussion of disease on the Northern plains, see Linea Sundstrom, "Smallpox Used Them Up: References to Epidemic Disease in Northern plains Winter Counts, 1714-1920," *Ethnohistory*, 44, No. 2 (Spring 1997), 305-343; Flores, "The Great Contraction," in *Legacy*, 12-13..

[14] Anthony McGinnis, *Counting Coups and Cutting Horses: Intertribal Warfare on the Northern plains, 1738-1889* (Evergreen, CO: Cordillera Press, Inc., 1990), 9-10, 63-65; George Bird Grinnell, "Cheyenne Stream Names," *American Anthropologist* 8, No. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1906), 19; Binemma, 181-82; Hoxie, 74-78.

focus their energies on resisting this new military pressure. From 1851-57, the Crow and the Lakota effected a brief peace following the 1851 treaty in an effort to provide the Lakota with western hunting lands and the Crow with unmolested access to white trading. However, with whites encroaching from the east, the Lakota put more pressure on the Crow for increased cessions that led to the end of peace in 1857. The prominence of the united Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho created conflict between this alliance and the United States in the 1860s and 70s. These conflicts mark one of the most significant eras in American history. As the United States grew, its need for raw materials to fuel expanding markets sent increasing numbers of white settlers, traders, ranchers, miners, and loggers into the west. While the Plains tribes adapted to these trends and served as powerful trade negotiators for several decades in the 1800s, the end of the Civil War brought a more intense demand for the West's raw materials. Further, federal legislation passed during the war promoted the use of the Plains for agricultural production.[15]

The result was a bloody war that involved Indian tribes, white settlers, and the United States government. Many whites and U.S. political leaders saw settlement as part of an inevitable process of 'civilizing' the West. For most native tribes, the conflict determined their very survival. Weakened tribes such as the Crow and Arikara joined the United States to protect their homelands from the encroachment of the powerful and expanding alliance of the Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho. Later in his life, Crow chief Plenty Coups, a veteran of the wars with the Lakota, claimed that he (and many Crows like him) "fought with the white man against them not because I loved him or because I hated the Sioux and Cheyenne, but because I saw that this was the only way we could keep our lands." The allied central plains tribes, seeking economic power in the American West, resisted persistently. Although peoples such as the Lakota and Cheyenne successfully stalled white encroachment into the west for a time, they eventually succumbed to a federal government that had a stronger military, more resources, and most simply, more people. In the 1870s, economic changes including the increased industrialization of the United States wrought havoc on Plains Indian subsistence strategies. By the end of the 1880s, the stresses of tribal hunting mixed with a flood of white bison hunters who sought to supply factories with bison leather for machine belts pushed the ever-central bison to the brink of extinction. Its decline was a result not only of human over-hunting but of ecological processes as well. Along with drought, competition for grasslands meant little forage and little reproduction. With such a rapid loss of the bison and the constantly increasing pressure of white settlement in the West, tribes on both sides of the conflict -- Crow, Arikara, Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho alike -- no longer had the power to maintain their way of life as they had in the preceding century. By the 1890s, the United States government forced almost all native tribes onto reservations, changing forever the landscape of the American West.[16]

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[15] Kingsley M. Bray, "Lone Horn's Peace: A New View of Sioux Crow Relations," *Nebraska History* 66(1)(Spring 1985), 31-32, 38-39.

[16] Plenty Coups quotation from Frank B. Linderman, *Plenty Coups: Chief of the Crows*, New ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 43; Hämäläinen, 859-62; West, "Called out People," 6-8; Richard White, "The Winning of the West," 321-23, 339-341; McGinnis, 66; Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison,* 93-122; Dobak, "Killing the Canadian Buffalo, 1821-1881," 37-38.

The Native American Landscape after the Battle (1876-1970)

Frequently, histories of American Indians end with the transition to reservations, but doing so ignores the continuous influence indigenous groups have on the landscape of the American West. As a battlefield carved out of the Crow Indian Reservation, Little Bighorn Battlefield especially illustrates how twentieth-century Indian agricultural transitions and Indian Affairs administration shifted the surrounding lands from prairie to grazing and farmland. Furthermore, the frequent inconsistencies in federal Indian policy frustrated many generations of American Indians on the Northern plains, and by the 1970s, this feeling partially motivated calls for Indian commemoration at Little Bighorn Battlefield.

Confinement of indigenous tribes to reservations after the Civil War was part of an economic movement that sought to harness the resources of the American West. Exploiting Western resources inevitably meant access to native lands, and reservations established through treaties provided a means with which to move the tribes out of the way. The Great Sioux War of 1876-77 tested the efficacy of the 1868 Laramie treaty's reservation boundaries, ending with the decision that the U.S. military enforce them. The Crow willingly accepted these boundaries, having allied and fought alongside federal troops in the Great Sioux War. In 1877, after the Little Big Horn battle, military forces escorted those Lakota who remained outside their reservations back to the reservation, with the exception of Sitting Bull's band that escaped to Canada before surrendering in 1881. The War Department incarcerated the Northern Cheyenne in Oklahoma before President Chester Arthur authorized a reservation for them in 1884 that bordered the reserve of their recent Crow enemies. The move to reservations had sweeping effects on the cultures of these tribes, including the Crow and the defeated Lakota and Cheyenne. As Northern plains nations shifted their economies from bison-centered hunting to farming and cattle ranching, they struggled to maintain cultural autonomy against federal Indian policy, to adopt new subsistence strategies, and to maintain the integrity of their reservation boundaries against pressure from white farmers and ranchers.[17]

With reservations enforced, the United States attempted to assimilate American Indian tribes through imposition of the key elements of Euro-American culture including individualized land ownership. Efforts culminated in the Dawes Act (or General Allotment Act) in 1887 in which Congress sought to eliminate tribal commons in favor of individual parcels of land. Bureaucrats and philanthropists hoped that through private property, Plains Indians would eventually abandon their traditional hunting for the more sedentary lifestyle of Euro-American tradition. Represented most prominently by the Indian Rights Association (IRA), both Washington officials and philanthropists hoped to re-create the Crow and Lakota (and later Cheyenne) into the American tradition of the rugged, individualistic yeoman farmer. As part of this new vision for American Indians, white reformers desired massive reductions in tribal reservations to promote more intensive adoption of irrigated agriculture. Despite entreaties from tribal superintendents that the lands of the Northern

[17] Orlan J. Svingen, "Reservation Self-Sufficiency: Stock Raising vs. Farming on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, 1900-1914," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 31, No. 4 (Autumn 1981), 14.

plains were not suited to farming, policy makers in Washington insisted that farming would prevent the Plains Indians from taking up arms again. Further, many federal leaders thought that by educating American Indians in agriculture and providing individual allotments reservations would eventually become obsolete. In fact, many federal officials initially discouraged cattle ranching among the Plains tribes. They associated running cattle with the traditional bison hunting of the recent past. In 1893, Captain Thomas Sharp, the acting agent for the Tongue River Cheyenne, echoed these sentiments to Indian Commissioner Daniel M. Browning, claiming that "herding leads to nomadic life, [and] a nomadic life tends to barbarism, and the more horses the Indian has, the greater savage he is." Ironically, by discouraging cattle ranching, federal Indian officials often undermined the very self-sufficiency they hoped to instill among the Crow, Cheyenne, and Lakota. Wary tribal leaders such as Plenty Coups, Medicine Crow, and Iron Bull of the Crow and Sitting Bull of the Lakota adopted a policy of peaceful non-cooperation with expansive farming on reservations.[18]

Due to radical transitions in culture, subsistence, and territory, the decades from 1880 through 1910 proved the most tumultuous for the Plains tribes associated with the Great Sioux War. As returns from buffalo hunts dwindled into the 1880s and initial attempts to establish farming on reservations generally failed, the Crow, Lakota and Cheyenne relied on rations delivered by agency officials. The subsequent shortage of supplies led to frequent raiding among the tribes. The U.S. Army frequently constructed forts near reservations to enforce boundaries. This included Fort Custer at the mouth of the Little Bighorn River, built in 1877 to enforce peace among the Crow, Assiniboine, and Blackfeet. However, its troops had difficulty ending raiding among the tribes in the area. White ranchers and homesteaders exacerbated the military's policing responsibilities, lobbying for land cessions from the Plains tribes and occasionally squatting on Indian land. The Crow found themselves pressed especially by white ranchers who sought the rich pasture of the Little Bighorn Valley to fatten stock before shipping them to eastern markets. In the early 1880s, the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad through Montana along the Yellowstone River intensified cattle ranching and provided easy transportation for hopeful homesteaders. Acting under the Homestead Act passed in 1862, Euro-Americans came with an expectation that the West was open for settlement and brought with them a culture that emphasized individual land ownership.[19]

The combination of settlement pressure and the desire to reform and 'civilize' American Indian peoples by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) generally led to the loss of large amounts of Indian land and the failure of subsistence agriculture. BIA officials justified large land cessions by emphasizing that they involved selling excess property left over after allotment. Furthermore, the agency claimed that the funds from these sales could be used as capital to start farming among the various Plains tribes. The Crow nation initially gave up small portions of ground but refused

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[18] Sharp quotation from Svingen, 20; Hoxie, 110-125; Svingen, 14-16; James O. Gump, "A Spirit of Resistance: Sioux, Xhosa, and Maori Responses to Western Dominance, 1840-1920," *Pacific Historical Review*, 66, No. 1 (Feb., 1997), 28-29.

[19] Peter Iverson, *When Indians Became Cowboys: Native Peoples and Cattle Ranching in the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 27-28; Hoxie, 63, 98-105, 110, 266-69; Abbott 151-52; Charles C. Bradley, Jr., *After the Buffalo Days: An Account of the First Years of Reservation Life for Crow Indians, based on Official Government Documents from 1880 to 1904 A.D.* (Charles C. Bradley, Jr., 1977), 11-23.

wholesale reductions in its reservation acreage until 1882. In that year, the federal government facilitated the sale of most of the western half of the Crow reservation. Nevertheless, in 1884, with pressures from whites increasing and the BIA convinced that the Little Bighorn Valley presented better opportunities for farming, Agent Henry Armstrong moved the Crow Agency from near Stillwater to just downstream of the Little Bighorn battlefield. As homesteader pressure intensified in the early-twentieth century, the Crow sold much of their northern reservation in 1904. The decision to concentrate Crow settlement in the Little Bighorn Valley in response to homesteading and ranching pressure had sweeping ramifications for the landscape of the battlefield and its surroundings. In retaining reservation land, the Crow fared much better than the Lakota. As part of the Dawes or General Allotment Act of 1887, the federal government desired the sale of much of the Great Sioux reservation in 1888 and 1889. Despite strong resistance by lodges loyal to Red Cloud, a popular vote by tribal members split the reservation into six smaller parcels. All excess land went to the federal government for re-distribution to white homesteaders, ranchers, and other entrepreneurs. The loss of land combined with droughts and inexperience with agriculture left the Lakota tribes increasingly desperate for relief.[20]

Frustration with land cessions and resistance to assimilation reached a climax among the Northern plains tribes between 1887 and 1891. A young leader among the Crow, Cheez-tah-paezh took the name Sword Bearer and, playing off of frustrations with federal management among young Crows, began a resistance movement against Crow Agent Henry Williamson's attempts to settle the tribe. The result was a showdown of power on the reservation in the summer of 1887. With particular animosity over allotment of reservation parcels fanning the flames, the ensuing tension required the deployment of troops from nearby Fort Custer to prevent a general outbreak. By late October, Sword Bearer and his followers had camped along the Little Bighorn River near the Battlefield and faced a cavalry detachment providing security at the Crow Agency just downriver. After an ultimatum for all Crows to meet at the agency on November 4, an engagement broke out the following day. The fight was brief but intense, ending in the retreat of Sword Bearer's followers after his death during the fight. Soon after Sword Bearer's uprising, the Lakota experienced their own form of cultural revival, partially in response to the 1889 land cessions and partition of the Great Sioux Reservation. Influenced by Paiute prophet Wovoka, many Lakota joined what became known as the Ghost Dance movement, an effort to establish a modified form of traditional Lakota culture. Like the Crow, the Lakota found their efforts violently suppressed, culminating in the infamous massacre of a Lakota encampment under Chief Big Foot at Wounded Knee Creek in December, 1891. As these revivalist movements ended, tribes like the Crow, Lakota, and Cheyenne found themselves forced to adapt to significantly smaller reservations, a new culture of individual land ownership, and a modernizing industrial economy.[21]

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[20] Robert W. Larson, "Part II: Red Cloud: The Reservation Years," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History,* 47, No. 2 (Summer, 1997), 21; Hoxie, 110-125.

[21] Hoxie, 129-139; Colin G. Calloway, "Sword Bearer and the 'Crow Outbreak,' 1887," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 36, No. 4 (Autumn 1986), 38-51; Gump, 28; for a comprehensive overview of the Lakota Ghost Dance, see Raymond J. DeMallie, "The Lakota Ghost Dance: An Ethnohistorical Account," *Pacific Historical Review*, 51, No. 4 (Nov., 1982), 385-405.

Adaptation to Euro-American culture rapidly transformed the open prairie to agricultural land on most of these reservations. In the 1880s, a visitor to Custer Battlefield National Cemetery could have stood atop the hill where the Seventh Cavalry Monument stood and seen open prairie in every direction. The only overt sign of occupation may have been a small band of Crow moving in the distance or an oncoming herd of cattle arriving from Texas en route to the stock yards of Chicago. Ten years later, the same visitor would have seen a river valley teeming with the agricultural production of the Crow tribe in the vicinity of Crow Agency. Pastured cattle and wheat fields allotted under the 1887 Dawes Act spanned the valley below, altering the vegetative makeup of the grasslands and curbing the growth of riparian forests. Visible from the battlefield to the north, Crow Agency provided one of many small-scale economic centers along the Little Bighorn River. Irrigation networks diverted water from the river to the fields along it, reducing and regulating the river's flow along the western boundary of the cemetery reservation. Facilitating this development, by 1894 the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroad constructed a line down the Little Bighorn Valley across land over which the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho might have camped in the summer of 1876.[22]

From 1890 to 1920, railroad construction accompanied irrigation projects on Northern plains reservations. Alongside the move to present-day Crow Agency in 1884, Crow Superintendent Armstrong commissioned an engineer to plan and build an irrigation ditch (called the Reno Ditch) that diverted water above Crow Agency and ran eight miles northwards before returning to the river. By the 1890s, this meager network of ditches needed expansion, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs decided to improve the irrigation in the Little Bighorn Valley for increased farming on individual allotments. The result was far beyond expectations. Under the direction of BIA engineer Walter Graves, the Crow tribe began an ambitious plan labeled the Crow Irrigation Project. Tribal crews worked on various sections of the new canal network in the Little Bighorn and Bighorn River valleys, completing it in 1919. The economic returns on this substantial development were negligible at best, with many of the allotted parcels along the river bottom bought up by white settlers moving into the area. Nevertheless, some notable exceptions included Plenty Coups' and Medicine Crow's well-maintained farming operations into the early twentieth century. As a prominent statesman among the Crow, Plenty Coups aided significantly in the BIA's attempts to transition the landscape (and the Crow themselves) from open prairie to managed farmland, characterized by shade trees near homes and irrigated fields, orchards and pasture.[23]

The change to cattle ranching and irrigated farming shifted the region's ecology from northern mixed-grass prairie to a landscape of North American and European biota. Pushing their cattle and sheep onto the range, ranchers sought to eliminate the bison, antelope and wolves and other Plains fauna to make room for the lucrative international commodity of beef. While the

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[22] Abbott, 151-52.
[23] Hoxie, 272-79; National Register of Historic Places, *Chief Plenty Coups Home*, Pryor, Bighorn, Montana, 70000354, 28-29; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, Montana-Wyoming, History Basic Data*, Vol. 1, by Edwin C. Bearss, Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, 1970, 335.

region's aridity limited intensive agriculture to waterways, the extensive networks of railroads, wagon roads, and irrigation canals provided conduits for the expansion of non-native plants into the battlefield landscape. Some of the most prominent invaders included English grass, a combination of white clover (*Trifolium repens*) and the oddly- named Kentucky Bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), the common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) and Saint John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*). By 1900, the Montana College of Agriculture experiment station at Bozeman had identified dozens of non-native weeds and cultivated crops that extend along avenues of Euro-American disturbance. The Montana state legislature banned some of the most noxious weeds, especially plants such as Canada (*Circium arvense*) and Russian (*Salsola kali tragus*) thistle and Scotch Bull (*Circium lanceolatus*) that seemed to erupt along railways and in trash areas. Despite its weed status, by the 1930s, Russian Thistle appears to have become a popular pasture crop for ranchers due to its hardiness during drought periods. Among the more significant introductions to the hay agriculture that supported Montana's beef industry were crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*), alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*), timothy (*Phleum pratense*), sweet clover (*Melilotus alba*), and Hungarian smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*). Almost all of these grew in the Little Bighorn Valley on the lands surrounding the battlefield, and many remnants exist on the battlefield landscape today. The reduction in fire use with agriculture may have increased riparian forest growth along the major rivers leading into the Missouri. Several ecologists and geographers have classified the resulting landscape as a "disclimax" from the bison grazing era. While the term "disclimax" is problematic, it highlights the vegetation change that resulted from new grazing. Ecologists have also linked the expansion of forbs such as sagebrush (*Artemisia* sp.) to environments stressed from drought or over-grazing. Beginning in the 1870s, grazing by the vast horse herds and later cattle and sheep by the 1890s in the Little Bighorn Valley assured the expansion of sagebrush on rangelands by 1900.[24]

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[24] Alfred Crosby explains the Eurasian origins of 'english grass' in *Ecological Imperialism*, 157-58; Montana College of Agriculture, Montana Experiment Station, *Weeds of Montana*, J.W. Blankinship, Bulletin No. 30, (Bozeman, MT, June 1901), 22-23, 35, 36, 53-56; John T. Schlebecker, *Cattle Raising on the Plains, 1900-1961* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 112-13, 131; Clark, "Impact of Invasion on New World Mid-latitude Grasslands," in *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth*, 746-47; for several primary sources relating the limitations of riparian forest by man-made fire, see Schneiders, *Big Sky Rivers,* 5-6; It is important to note that though fire use reduced by 1900, it remained a limited part of agricultural practice even amongst Europeans as a method to renew soil or kill grasshoppers. For a recent study on prairie fire, see Julie Courtwright, *Prairie Fire: A Great Plains History* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2011); Climax ecology has largely been abandoned in recent years due to the variability of influencing factors such as climate, genetic drift, and random colonization of species; John Wade Stafford, "Crow Culture Change: A Geographical Analysis," (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1972), 155-56, 178; U.S. Department of the Interior, *Bighorn Canyon*, 340-45; For a discussion of cattle ranching's impact on Great Plains fauna, see Michael J. Robinson, *Predatory Bureaucracy: The Extermination of Wolves and the Transformation of the West* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005); Some of the more relevant studies include Clark, "Impact of Invasion on New World Mid-latitude Grasslands," in *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth*, 744-45 and Jane H. and Carl E. Bock, "The Effects of Fire on Virgin Northern Mixed Grassland at Custer Battlefield National Monument," Final Report, NPS Contract CX-1200-4-A034, May 1987, 12-13.

White and Crow agriculturalists surrounding the battlefield also regularized the stream flow of the Little Bighorn River through irrigation development. By diverting water into several ditches and laterals along the Little Bighorn River watershed, Crow and white developers molded a violent, channel-shifting Little Bighorn River into a slower, calmer river that, while still eroding its banks, did so at a much slower rate. Typical vegetation along seasonally variant Plains waterways included the three dominant species of cottonwood, balsam poplar, and willows, trees that colonized well following flood events often in similarly-aged communities. As irrigation diverted water out of the river, more alluvial bed allowed for these species to expand. Below the battlefield, cottonwoods and willows that had been sparse and intermittent grew thick and lush. However, as reduction in flow from irrigation stabilized the riverbed, the dominant cottonwoods aged and thinned. This could result either in a transition towards grassland or sage steppe or the dominance of more shade-tolerant hardwoods such as Green Ash, box elder, and hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*). Frustrating ecologists in the twentieth century, invasive Russian olive (*Eleagnus angustifolia*) and saltcedar (*Tamarisk ramosissima*) spread as well, aided by periodic droughts in the region (the species can thrive in drought conditions).[25]

During the first decade of 1900s, the end came for open-range ranching and the large cattle herds so typical of 1880s Montana ranching on the Northern plains. Small ranchers usually possessing less than 500 head proliferated and fenced their ranges. Following a congressionally-mandated report by military Inspector James McLaughlin and an executive order in 1900, the Cheyenne found their reservation expanded to include more than 460,000 acres. Under McLaughlin's recommendations, Congress authorized the purchase of forty bulls and 1,000 heifers to help fill this land with tribal cattle. The Crow stocked their ranges with 4,000 head of cattle and 25,000 horses on the range by the early 1900s. By 1920, the Crow tribal herd had over 12,000 head of cattle ranged on federal trust land in the Bighorn and Pryor Mountains. The intensity of cattle and horse grazing in the Little Bighorn Valley and its surrounding lands expanded the growth of non-native forage species on the battlefield and contributed to soil erosion as the ungulates wore paths into hillsides.[26]

The Crow and Cheyenne had vastly different experiences with their cattle operations. Following congressional mandate, BIA agent James C. Clifford divided Cheyenne stock individually among tribal families to suppress the tribe's communal ties in favor of individual property ownership. As part of this process, the Cheyenne established a closed reservation and proceeded to fence their boundaries to discourage trespassing white ranchers and minimize the loss of Cheyenne land by purchase or lease to whites. The Crow, however, retained an open reservation and so found much of their prime grazing land either leased to or purchased by whites. Wealthy Montana stockmen looked to the Crow ranges as an easy and cheap option in raising their cattle for market,

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[25] Aerial photographs from the U.S. Geological Survey indicate significant river-bed alteration due to highly-visible scarring and remnant oxbows. Also see Friedman, et all., "Water Management and Cottonwood Forest Dynamics," in *Ecology and Conservation of Great Plains Vertebrates* and U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, DRAFT *Vegetation Classification and Mapping Project Report, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument*, P. Rice, W. Gustafson, E. W. Schweiger, D. Manier, D. Shorrock, C. Lea and B. Frakes, Natural Resource Technical Report NPS/XXXX/NRTR—20XX/XXX, Fort Collins, Colorado.
[26] Hoxie, 282-294; Svingen, 16-17.

generally finding cooperative Crow agents to give them access. White ranchers often exceeded the limits of their leases and allowed their cattle too close to Crow water sources. They made permanent improvements upon leased parcels while BIA officials turned a blind eye. The steady de facto or legal transfer of land around the battlefield to non-Crow ranchers steadily increased into the twentieth century.[27]

Northern plains tribes struggled for self-sufficiency and autonomy amid ever-changing federal Indian policy, but a consistent pattern of economic instability and poverty on reservations persisted. The Cheyenne and Lakota managed to retain the remnants of their land left after the Great Sioux War. However, lack of capital and supplemental federal funding continuously hampered attempts at economic development. White settlement within the Crow nation's reservation boundaries complicated the traditionally easy divide between Crow land and white land. In 1920, Congress passed the Crow Act which allowed non-Indians to settle on the reservation and encouraged an influx of new white development on the reservation. By 1934, the year Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act (commonly referred to as the Indian New Deal), the BIA had sold or leased over 218,000 acres of allotted land by fee-patent to non-Indians. Even so, the Crow voted to reject the Indian New Deal in favor of continuing allotment that accelerated white ownership of Crow land after 1950. By 1961, nearly a third of the reservation had been sold to non-Indian buyers, local ranchers, and the state of Montana. By the early-1970s, whites owned just under half of the development along the Little Bighorn River, including almost all of the river-front property. The economic and social pressures caused by these patterns after the Second World War pushed many tribal members to begin advocating for increased autonomy and recognition in federal policy.[28]

Native American Commemoration of Little Bighorn (ca. 1870s – present)

The memory of the Little Bighorn battle as a desperate if short-lasting victory over the expanding pressure of white settlement defined American Indians' efforts to shape the battlefield's twentieth-century cultural landscape. During the first half of the twentieth century, Lakota and Cheyenne participation in memorials at the Little Bighorn generally emphasized unity between the tribes and the federal government, as well as what Euro-Americans perceived as the inevitable dominance of the United States over Plains Indian peoples. However, in the decades following the battle, Lakota and Cheyenne veterans of the battle placed stone cairns on locations where native warriors fell or at the site of an important event or action in the battle. Although it is frequently

[27] Debra L. Donahue, *The Western Range Revisited: Removing Livestock from Public Lands to Conserve Native Biodiversity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 13-14; Hoxie, 282-294; Harold E. Briggs, *Frontiers of the Northwest: A History of the Upper Missouri Valley* (New York: Peter Smith, 1950), 304-307; Stafford, 156-164, 179, 180-81, 192; Svingen, 16.
[28] Megan Benson, "The Fight for Crow Water: Part I, the Early Reservation Years through the Indian New Deal," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 57, No. 4 (Winter, 2007), 37; Stafford, 143-155; also see Lawrence C. Kelly, "The Indian Reorganization Act: The Dream and the Reality," *Pacific Historical Review*, 44, No. 3 (Aug., 1975), 291-312.

unclear precisely when family members constructed these cairns, they served (and continue to serve) as an almost subversive commemoration of a perspective not included at the battlefield until the 1990s. American Indian commemoration reached its climax in the early 2000s with the placement of red granite markers for Cheyenne and Lakota warriors and the construction of a memorial to the Indian participants on all sides that fought at the Little Bighorn in 1876.

American Indian demands their perspectives in the commemoration of the Battle of the Little Bighorn began in the 1920s. Northern Cheyenne Mrs. Thomas Beaverheart wrote to the Superintendent of Custer Battlefield National Cemetery requesting the establishment of a monument to her father, Lame White Man, who died in the fight. The War Department refused Mrs. Beaverheart's request. That refusal, and the policy it reflected until the 1980s, stemmed from a growing Euro-American mythology surrounding the battle. At the fortieth anniversary celebrations in 1916, Col. Henry Hall remarked that Custer and the fallen men of the Seventh had "helped win an empire from barbarism and the wilderness" for the benefit of "civilization and progress." Nevertheless, since 1876, descendants of Indian veterans and the slain traveled to the Little Bighorn to honor their family members, leaving gifts and cairns at the location of their deaths. By the mid-twentieth century, significant pressure to include an American Indian perspective at the battlefield arose alongside a broader occurrence of social and civil rights activism by American minorities.[29]

In the 1960s, many Indian nations began advocating for increased autonomy, partially in response to the threat of reservation termination by Congress. The social momentum of this mobilization not only led to vocal activism by pan-Indian organizations, but significantly affected the built environment of Little Bighorn Battlefield. Many younger American Indians found the legislative appeals of their elders too easily dismissed, and they organized a variety of organizations to take concrete action. An increasing trend during this period was the rise of pan-Indian activism as expressed by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and the more activist American Indian Movement (AIM). These groups promoted unified action among the tribes against the federal government. First titled the Indian Patrol, AIM arose out of a concerted effort to end police brutality against American Indians in the Minneapolis metro area. Through actions like the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco and the occupation of the BIA building in Washington D.C. in 1972, AIM brought international attention to native demands for new policies and perspectives. As a protest against the federal government's violation of the 1868 Laramie treaty regarding the Black Hills, a contingent of Lakota and Chippewa occupied the Mount Rushmore Memorial in 1971. At Little Bighorn Battlefield on Columbus Day in 1972, the "Trail of Broken Treaties" caravan that culminated in the BIA occupation left a plaque by the Seventh Cavalry Monument reading "In honor of our heroic warriors who fought for our lives and land against the aggressive hostile U.S. government. Donated by the Trail of Broken Treaties, Oct 12, 1972." These actions reached a climax as Oglala Lakota AIM members faced off against federal authorities at Wounded Knee in 1973. They declared their independence from the United States and delineated their boundaries according to the 1868 Laramie Treaty. Accompanying AIM activism, Indian authors such as Dee Brown and

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[29] Col. Hall quotation from Douglas C. McChristian, "Burying the Hatchet: The Semi-Centennial of the Battle of the Little Bighorn," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 46, No. 2 (Summer, 1996), 56.

Vine Deloria criticized the overt racism and paternalism of U.S. Indian policy. In his noteworthy book *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Vine Deloria claimed that American Indians did not

> …need to be classified as semi-white and have programs and policies made to bleach us further. Nor do we need further studies to see if we are feasible. We need a new policy by Congress acknowledging our right to live in peace, free from arbitrary harassment. We need the public at large to drop the myths in which it has clothed us for so long. We need fewer and fewer 'experts' on Indians.[30]

Although AIM itself lost much of its militaristic momentum in the aftermath of the Wounded Knee siege, its actions precipitated a massive change in the perspectives of the American public towards American Indian issues. Portrayals of Indians shifted as media outlets cast American Indians to portray themselves. New writing on the American West proliferated. The changes in public perception influenced federal policy toward Native Americans that continues to this day..[31]

The residual effect of AIM led to legal action among tribes seeking autonomy in the courtroom. One AIM participant reminisced that:

> The American Indian Movement brought our issues to the national forefront in a way that had never been done before. They could no longer ignore Indians. This taught us to speak up. We could no longer live in poverty, ignorance, and oppression like we had been. Even if you didn't agree with AIM's philosophy, it still brought these issues to the attention of the general public.[32]

AIM remains, but its actions, though activist, are more locally-based than its pan-Indian roots in the 1970s.[33]

Although some tribes made gains and set national precedents, several Supreme Court rulings throughout the 1980s and 90s severely curtailed tribal independence across the country. In 1981, the Crow nation lost the right to regulate hunting and fishing within its reservation boundary on land not

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[30] Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1969), 27.
[31] Calloway, *First Peoples*, 416-421; Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1996), 143-44; Vine Deloria, Jr., "Activism, 1950-1980," and Robert Warrior, "Activism Since 1980," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Indians in Contemporary Society*, vol. 2, Garrick A. Bailey, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2008), 39-43; Michaly D. Segal, "The American Indian Movement: The Potential of a Counter Narrative," PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2000, 5-6.
[32] Unnamed participant interview in Steven L. Couture, "The American Indian Movement: A Historical Perspective," PhD diss., University of St. Thomas, 1996, 73.
[33] Warrior, "Activism Since 1980," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, 52-53.

held by the tribe or a tribe member. In 2001, the Navajo nation could no longer tax non-Indian businesses on fee land within the reservation. While through the 1990s, the BIA drastically reduced its role and gave more autonomy to native peoples, most of the tribes still struggled in the wake of BIA policies that limited royalties from leased lands and constrained tribal economic development.[34]

At Little Bighorn Battlefield, the actions of AIM and other pro-Indian organizations had considerable effects on the cultural landscape of Little Bighorn Battlefield. As they faced losses in the courtroom, many associated tribes grappled with the established mythology surrounding 'Custer's Last Stand.' The image of Custer as a heroic martyr to American progress lay entrenched within the American mainstream public, and Indian organizations rose to challenge that image. They suggested that far from the cavalry hero, Custer was emblematic of "white racism and genocidal expansionism" in the nineteenth-century American West. In 1988, after AIM members led by Russell Means erected a plaque to the fallen Lakota and Cheyenne on the mass grave, native supporters called for a congressional bill to establish an Indian memorial at the battlefield and to change the monument's name to Little Bighorn Battlefield. Spearheaded by several congressional members including Northern Cheyenne and Colorado Representative Ben Nighthorse Campbell, the Indian Memorial represented an acknowledgement of "the Indian perspective and the Indian lives that were lost." In 1990, Campbell and three other congressmen introduced House bill 4660 to authorize a memorial at Custer Battlefield. The bill highlighted the existing Seventh Cavalry Memorial and stated "while many members of the Cheyenne, Sioux, and other Indian Nations gave their lives defending their families and traditional lifestyle and livelihood, nothing stands at the battlefield to commemorate those individuals." In session before the House subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, Fort Peck Assiniboine/Sioux representative Chauncey F. Whitright III stated there was "no absence of memorial within many Indians' hearts" but that it was "time to make that memorial visible to all people of this land and of the world. In doing so, it becomes an accomplishment of all Indian people – and all Indian people are made heir to the values and traditions which gave this memorial birth." In 1991, Congress passed the bill, a legislative measure that significantly altered the cultural, political and physical landscape at the Monument. As Cheyenne/Hodulgee-Muscagee Suzan Shown Harjo, President of the Morning Star Foundation declared that American Indian heroes deserved recognition and that the federal government needed "to remove some of the more egregious areas of racism and dehumanization, and inject dignity for our dead relatives and for our living people and our coming generations." It had the support not only of Congress and the associated tribes of the battle but of the National Park Service. Over the next ten years, the Indian Memorial project struggled from lack of funding. However, with an additional congressional appropriation, the NPS contractor in charge of the memorial's construction completed the structure in 2003.[35]

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[34] Warrior, "Activism Since 1980," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, 52-53.

[35] Quotation of Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Chauncey F. Whitright III, and Suzan Shown Harjo from statements before the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, *Custer Battlefield National Monument Indian Memorial*, 101st Cong., 2nd Sess., Sept. 4, 1990, H.R. 4660, serial 101-48, 2-3, 21, 44; Edward T. Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 131, 141 (quotation).

Alongside the push for a memorial to American Indians at the battlefield, another program arose in the 1990s to provide individual recognition to fallen American Indian warrior. Though slowed by funding, the National Park Service and the associated tribes at the battlefield established a joint program to place markers at verified sites of Lakota and Cheyenne deaths. In the mid-1990s, tribal consultation resulted in red granite markers of the same size and shape as existing white marble markers to Seventh Cavalry troopers. On Memorial Day, 1999, tribal leaders and Park Service officials dedicated the first two markers to Lame White Man and Noisy Walking, whose death locations were well documented. Between that year and 2006, the National Park Service helped place nineteen markers. Additional research and information may lead to the placement of more markers in the future.[36]

[36] John Doerner, "So That the Place Might Be Remembered," *Research and Review – The Journal of the Little Big Horn Associates*, 14, no. 2 (Summer 2000).

II. American Indian Wars on the Northwestern Plains (1854-1891)

Little Bighorn Battlefield's primary significance to American history is its role as the climactic event in not only the Sioux War of 1876-77 but in the American Indian Wars as a whole. The Battle of the Little Bighorn represented the last and largest effort by American Indian tribes to resist white settlement and US Army forces. It involved the single greatest loss of life for the US military in its efforts to conquer the American West during the last major campaign against Northern plains Indians. More than this, it was a clash over environment between the two dominant political forces on the Great Plains: the alliance of Lakota, Cheyenne and other tribes against the United States. Both considered the vast resources of the Northern plains as integral to their political power. Both struggled desperately to seize, maintain and expand control over the wealth they each gained from the enormous grasslands of the West.

Although the American Indian Wars on the Great Plains did not begin in earnest until the latter half of the nineteenth century, they were part of a cultural invasion centuries in the making. Historian Edward T. Linenthal argues that "violence both predated and became intrinsic to American expansion." Along with the decimation in the 1600s from European diseases such as smallpox, North American tribes faced the steady, westward expansion of Europeans in search of new land and resources. As European populations increased in the Americas by the late-eighteenth century, British and American governments pushed their territory westward, forcing out, assimilating, or annihilating the indigenous inhabitants they encountered. Euro-Americans brought with them a particular form of imperialism rooted in the extension of urban networks. As expanding urban centers such as Chicago, New York, Boston and San Francisco demanded resources to fuel their manufacturing centers, the federal government responded with a military effort to control the West's vast mineral and natural resources. Only when met with organized alliances of native tribes did the march of westward American settlement slow. The allied Northern tribes successfully stalled white migration into the Plains for a time, but eventually succumbed to a variety of environmental and military factors. The victory of the United States over the Northern plains tribes had a tremendous influence on the shape the nation took after the conflict. A relatively young United States reliant on western commodities "was built on the bones of those who never wanted it to exist."[37]

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[37] See Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, *Under an Open Sky*; and Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987); 1st quotation from Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 9;2nd quotation from Willam Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, "Becoming West: Toward a New Meaning for Western History," in *Under an Open Sky*, 26; Eugene P. Moehring, *Urbanism and Empire in the Far West, 1840-1890* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), xvii-xxvi.

Environmental Wars – Setting the Stage (1800 – 1860)

American conflicts with tribes on the Northern plains centered upon competition for resources. By the 1840s, with the shift from beaver to bison pelts and the discovery of gold in California and other regions, the Plains became the stage for a clash between the bison-centered equestrian culture of the Lakota, Cheyenne, and their allies and the industrial capitalist culture of the nineteenth-century United States. Ironically, these two cultures relied on one another for success. American markets utilized Plains Indian hunters to slaughter bison and collect hides. Those Plains tribes required trade with the United States (among other European powers) to supply them with industrial trade goods including firearms. The discovery of gold and other high-value minerals in the West brought thousands of whites across the Plains into the Rocky Mountains, including California, Colorado, and Montana. With these discoveries came droves of settlers intent on making their fortunes in the new mines and gold fields of the West. They brought with them more horses, cattle, railroads, steamboats and a propensity for permanent settlements. With roads such as the storied Oregon Trail bringing thousands of travelers and their stock through each year, Americans depleted grazing resources, requiring the establishment of road stations where migrants could purchase wild hay. Nomadic Plains tribes' seasonal bison hunts, horse raiding, and hunting and grazing territorial conflicts presented problems for an ambitious United States. To provide a degree of safety for American miners and ranchers in the west, in 1851, the federal government offered a treaty at Fort Laramie that established reservation boundaries for Plains tribes in the hopes of preventing conflict. However, for Indian peoples who relied on the relative fluidity of boundaries, it was quite clear that these new arrivals "meant land taking, and land taking meant violence."[38]

As American settlers began to exploit the mineral resources of the West, other entrepreneurs sought not only to profit from selling provisions to mining communities but to utilize another vast resource on the Northern plains: the grasslands. The Little Bighorn Valley lay at the confluence of two vast migratory routes. The first included such routes as the Bozeman trail, carved in the 1850s, that sent mineral resources and cattle from mines and ranches in western Montana to eastern markets in Chicago. Second, running from south to north, were the famous cattle-driving trails that rose to prominence by the late 1870s. Texas-based ranchers brought their cattle north to the central and Northern plains and fattened their stock on the abundant buffalo grasses in early winter before shipping them eastward to Chicago and market. As white ranchers brought more and more cattle to the Northern plains ranges, their animals competed with the bison and tribal horse herds already present throughout the region. In the 1880s, the lack of railroad connections stressed local Montana ranchers who possessed growing herds but no easy access to market. For these stockmen, the

[38] Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, "Becoming West," in *Under an Open Sky*, 12-14; Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 47,; Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*, 2nd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 117-23; Elliot West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 116-29; Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, "Becoming West," in *Under an Open Sky*, 15; Briggs, 185-86.

settlement of tribes onto reservations meant the expansion of railroad networks and reliable profits. More settlers on the plains also meant more livestock from oxen and mules to sheep and pigs that ate through the forage already diminished by large horse and bison herds. This competition inevitably led to conflict between Northern plains tribes reliant on the grasslands to sustain the bison and their own horses and cattlemen seeking to exploit what they viewed as 'empty wilderness' ripe for use in a new industrial economy.[39]

By the 1860s, the United States government was in a position to influence the political atmosphere of the Northern plains. A growing alliance of Plains tribes, namely the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho, held significant power on the plains throughout the trapping and mining periods. Against this position of power, the United States government found itself with little military authority in the West until the 1860s. Further, political leaders in Washington possessed little interest in opening western markets and protecting settlers until the late 1840s. Then, with growing mining interests, more settlers, and a northern industrial complex hungry for new resources following the American Civil War, the federal government began sending more troops into frontier posts to provide security for its citizens. The Great Plains remained as the final frontier of the West. Euro-Americans had settled the mountains and coasts but the interior provided a sort of haven for the remaining Plains tribes until the rise of the cattle industry in the 1860s. Cattle ranchers desired more land in the interior with which to fatten their cattle and demanded the protection of the U.S. military. With lingering Civil War enlistments, the federal government had the resources to provide that protection, and it made the Northern plains a target, ultimatelyforcing the various tribes of the Plains to adapt. Some, such as the Crow and Arikara weary of impositions by the powerful alliance between the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho, chose to cooperate with the United States in the hopes of securing their homelands from future loss. Substantial forces of the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho led by Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Gall and Red Cloud chose to defend their position of power and continue to hunt buffalo off reservations.

The Plains Wars Begin – The Lakota and Cheyenne against the United States (1854-1876)

The war between the allied Northern plains tribes and the United States began twenty-two years earlier than the Battle of the Little Big Horn and several hundred miles south of it in southern Wyoming. In the summer of 1854 along the Laramie River (in present-day eastern Wyoming), High Forehead, a Minneconjou Lakota under Brave Bear, killed an ox belonging to a Mormon settler. On August 19, Lt. John L. Grattan of Fort Laramie took a detachment to apprehend the culprit from Brave Bear's camp. When High Forehead refused to surrender, Grattan opened fire. The Lakota retaliated by annihilating Grattan's command. In September, a 600-man force under William Harney responded by attacking the Minneconjou camp at Ash Hollow and massacring scores of inhabitants.

[39] Jeremy Rifkin, *Beyond Beef: The Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture* (New York: Plume, 1992), 68-71; Briggs, 203, 210-11; Elliot West, "Called Out People," 14-15.

Despite Harney's intention to instill fear in the Lakota, his attack engendered anger and resolve among many Lakota tribes. Meeting at Bear Butte in 1855, at least five thousand Lakota resolved to close the western portions of their territory to white encroachment, to refuse cooperation with the United States government, and to renew the war with the Crow tribe over the buffalo herds west of the Powder River. Following Harney's march through Lakota territory, the Cheyenne also contended with encroaching whites. In 1857, a group of three hundred Cheyenne met defeat at the hands of a cavalry command under Edwin V. Sumner along the Solomon River in western Kansas. While Harney's and Sumner's campaigns hardly inflicted lasting defeat, they revealed the brutality between non-treaty bands and the United States that would become endemic to the Plains War. The various tribal leaders set in motion a chain of events that culminated in the Battle of the Little Bighorn.[40]

The stresses building from westward settlement precipitated other conflicts. While the memory of Ash Hollow lessened conflict on the western plains for a time, fighting broke out again when a group of Dakota under Little Crow attacked white settlers in Minnesota in 1862. Little Crow had pursued a policy of accommodation, warning his warriors that they should "count your fingers all day long and white men with guns will come faster than you can count." However, with the federal government failing to make annuity payments and his people on the verge of starvation, Little Crow led the Dakota in a violent attack against white settlements. The United States dispatched troops to the area, forcing the Dakota to seek refuge with the Yankton, Yanktonais, and Lakota farther west. Despite defeats during this campaign, non-treaty bands of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota remained dedicated to resisting white advancements. From 1863-64, both military forces and private militia organizations campaigned against these tribes to quell resistance, regardless of their association with the Minnesota uprising. They mostly succeeded in expanding the conflict farther west. John Pope's expeditions deep into Lakota territory opened hostilities with the powerful Teton, including the Hunkpapa and Oglala. In 1864, the infamous Third Colorado Volunteers under Col. John Chivington massacred over two hundred peaceful Cheyennes at Sand Creek. The result was even more escalation among the Lakota, Dakota, Nakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho as formerly peaceful leaders began advocating and taking part in armed resistance against whites.[41]

Encroachment into the lands of Lakota and other Northern plains tribes resulted from confusion over agreements signed in 1865 at Fort Sully. In the eyes of the U.S. government and its citizens, the tribes had agreed to withdraw from all current and future overland routes. Subsequent events revealed that these provisions were not clear to Lakota and Cheyenne tribes. With the gold boom in Montana, several expeditions charted routes into Lakota territory. In 1865, an expedition under James A. Sawyers traveled through the Little Bighorn Valley seeking a road to Virginia City. Though the road was not used, Sawyers described the area as "rolling, but hard and good to travel

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[40] Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 28-29; 40-42; Robert M. Utley and Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The American Heritage History of the Indian Wars* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1977), 205-206.
[41] Little Crow quotation from *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862*, Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan R. Woolworth, eds., (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), 40-41; Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism,* 42-45; Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., "Indian Policy and the Battle of the Little Bighorn," in *Legacy*, 27-28.

over" with "very fine land, with plenty of timber and grass and the purest water." The 1865 development and use of the Bozeman Trail through northern Lakota territory, including the Little Bighorn Valley, aggravated this tense situation. As whites continued to encroach on Lakota land, the United States constructed Forts Reno, Phil Kearny, and C.F. Smith along the route to protect mining parties on their journey to western Montana. Despite the new arrival of troops, southeastern Montana and northeastern Wyoming remained a territory immersed in violence. Increasingly aggravated by what they interpreted as a violation of the 1851 Laramie Treaty's spirit, Lakota, Arapaho and Cheyenne parties led by Oglala chief Red Cloud attacked whites, both civilian and military as they traveled through the region. Their actions forced the Bozeman Trail's virtual abandonment. The Lakota invited the Crow to join in their opposition to the United States. But, beleaguered by Lakota and Cheyenne invasions of their hunting grounds, the Crow chose instead to support American forces in the hopes of regaining historic hunting grounds. The Lakota and Cheyenne continued their fight in what became known as Red Cloud's War. In 1866, a large group of Lakota lured a detachment under Col. William J. Fetterman into an ambush, killing all 80 men present. The *Wasicu Opawinge Wicaktepi* ("They Killed One Hundred Whites," deemed by the U.S. Army the Fetterman Massacre) led to escalation. The tribes continued to harass Army posts and white settlers throughout the Northern plains, attacking as far south as the South Platte River. Their engagements were often brief but fierce skirmishes such as the Wagon Box and Hayfield fights in 1867. Custer established his reputation as an Indian fighter at the Battle of Washita in 1868, the same year the Seventh Cavalry was formed. These fights slowed the construction of Union Pacific Railroad and forced a war-weary federal government to fully face the issue of security in the West. In 1869, under President Ulysses S. Grant's 'peace policy,' commissioners achieved little success in negotiating with the Northern plains tribes. Hinging their efforts on the cooperation of Lakota Chief Red Cloud, the commissioners found themselves unable to meet his demands for the closure of Forts Phil Kearny and C.F. Smith. It was not until well after the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 that many bands including that of Red Cloud decided to officially cooperate with the United States.[42]

The confusion inherent at the 1868 Fort Laramie meetings played into the continuance of conflict into the 1870s. Although the treaty established clear boundaries for what was now known as the Great Sioux Reservation and the 'unceded' hunting territory in the Powder River area, other treaty articles sought to ensure the success of future white development. The increasing importance of railroads such as the Union and Northern Pacific running near the reservation boundaries guaranteed that settlers would soon push for development and land cessions along these routes. Further, under Article 11, the treaty allowed the United States to develop roads and rail lines through the reservation if the need arose, limiting the degree of sovereignty within the boundary. The treaty contradicted Plains Indians' perceptions of peace and friendship with a reality of U.S. colonialism and pacification. Part of that colonialism meant constructing railroads to facilitate rapid

[42] Sawyers quotation from James A. Sawyers, "Official Report," in *Powder River Campaign and Sawyers Expedition of 1865: A Documentary Account Comprising Official Reports, Diaries, Contemporary Newspaper Accounts, and Personal Narratives* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1961), 264; Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism,* 45-49; Utley and Washburn, 240-241; Hoxie, 88-89; Greene (and Fees), E8.

transportation of western resources into eastern manufacturing centers. Among the lucrative and infamous of these commodities were bison hides. By the 1870s, bison leather became a valuable material to make machine belts for factories. With occasional support and encouragement from U.S. Army officials seeking to weaken native food supplies, white hide hunters flooded the plains, often crossing reservation boundaries to kill thousands of bison and ship the hides eastward on the ever-expanding rail lines. With their main source of subsistence threatened, many Lakota and Yanktonais bands under prominent leaders such as Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull refused to recognize the treaty, convinced it would not halt the white invasion of their territory. Responding to the provisions of the treaty at Fort Rice in 1867, Hunkpapa chief Gall claimed the Lakota:

> "have been taught to hunt and live on the game. You tell us that we must learn to farm, live in one house, and take on your ways. Suppose the people living beyond the great sea should come and tell you that you must stop farming and kill your cattle, and take your houses and lands, what would you do? Would you not fight them?"

With their perspective clearly set, these Lakota and Cheyenne leaders continued a policy of violent resistance against white encroachment.[43]

These non-treaty bands continued to harass Army outposts and travel routes along the Missouri River basin. However, by 1871, these tribes including the Lakota and Cheyenne decided to pursue a defensive strategy, moving into Crow Reservation grounds along the Yellowstone River and beating back encroachment from white settlers and prospectors. At this point, a unified alliance of Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho non-treaty bands inhabited the Yellowstone Basin, where, they presented formidable opposition to American settlers with designs on the area and to Crows intent on wresting back their homelands. This imposition led to frequent large scale battles between the Lakota and the Crow and cooperation between the Crow and the United States, despite the federal government's failure to enforce Crow reservation boundaries. Although the political structure of these non-treaty bands remained decentralized and difficult to control, Sitting Bull became an influential leader over the Yanktonais, Sihasapas, Minneconjous, and his own Hunkpapas. Gall emerged as a significant chief, and many Oglala, Cheyenne and Arapaho considered Crazy Horse a leader. The power and resistance of these arrayed forces required the U.S. Army to provide armed escort for railroad crews wishing to extend the Northern Pacific through the Yellowstone Valley. These various tribes had cause to perceive themselves as strong. They had occupied one of the last remaining areas with rich bison herds. They had muscled their way into Crow territory. They were well-armed and while not always victorious, had a history of checking American encroachment.[44]

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[43] Gall quotation from Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*, 2nd ed., (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1990), 293; Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism,* 49-51; David D. Smits, "The Frontier Army and the Destruction of the Buffalo: 1865-1883," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 25, No. 3 (Autumn 1994), 313-338; William A. Dobak, "The Army and the Buffalo: A Demur"," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 26, No. 2 (Summer 1995), 197-202; Calloway, *First Peoples*, 270-71.
[44] Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism,* 51-53; Hoxie, 96-98, 110.

An economic panic in 1873 further aggravated the situation between the Northern plains tribes and the United States. Stories of gold in the Black Hills (in the heartland of the 1868 Lakota reservation) just as Americans encountered a struggling economy. To verify the rumors, in 1874, a military expedition under Lt. Col. George A. Custer moved onto the reservation to survey the situation. Custer's discovery of gold set off a mining boom that went unchecked by the federal government, despite its treaty obligations. By 1875, eager to gain access and finally subdue the Lakota and their Arapaho and Cheyenne allies, the United States ordered all Lakota to report to agencies in South Dakota by the end of January, 1876. The predictable resistance on the part of non-treaty bands provided the United States a pretext for the campaigns against these 'hostile' tribes in 1876-77. Events in the Black Hills accompanied a broader intellectual shift in the United States that had significant effects on Indian policy. Weary of fiscal excesses imposed by Southern Reconstruction and impelled by the Panic of 1873, many reformers moved towards conservatism. For Indian policy, this meant swifter results with less long-term costs. Resolve hardened, both sides readied for war.[45]

The Sioux War of 1876-77: Leading up to the Little Bighorn (1876)

The Sioux War of 1876-77 decided the conflict between the Lakota and Cheyenne and their allies who resisted white encroachment and the United States military. The Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho fought for their survival and for the maintenance of their cultural traditions. They undertook their campaign while sustaining these traditions, hunting for bison and remaining mobile in the warm summers of the Northern plains. Their main supply base was around them in the wildlife and plants of the grasslands and river bottoms, supplemented only slightly by provisions from Indian agencies. Their adversaries, the U.S. Army, fought for the economic stability and expansion of the nation and for the promise of new territory into which Americans could rush to farm, ranch and mine. They advanced their campaign at the front end of long supply lines that received eastern manufactured provisions first transported by railroads then steamships up the Yellowstone River to meet troops in the field. Although a simple dichotomy, it embodies the cultural conflict between the industrializing United States and the long-established lifeways of the non-treaty Plains Indian bands.

Almost immediately following the deadline, General Philip Sheridan, then commander of operations in the West, organized a campaign to force the non-treaty bands onto their tribes' respective reservations. Sheridan's soldiers augmented their numbers with auxiliary scouts from the Crow and Arikara tribes. For both these peoples, fighting with the United States against the Lakota and Cheyenne meant defending their homelands from further invasion by the expanding Plains powers. At a meeting between Col. John Gibbon and the Crow in 1876, Chief Blackfoot declared Crow motivations for fighting that were eerily similar to those of the Lakota and Cheyenne:

> "The land we tread belongs to us, and we want our children always to dwell in it. All other Indian tribes do evil to the whites, but I

[45] Calloway, *First Peoples*, 271-73; Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism,* 53-62.

> and my people hold fast to them with love. We want our reservation to be large, we want to go on eating buffalo, and so we hold fast to the whites."[46]

Blackfoot's words rang true for many Crows as well as the Arikara, who allied with the United States in the hopes of preserving a vestige of their territory from Lakota and Cheyenne encroachment. The Arikara particularly had lost much of their trading power and territory in the early 1800s as the Lakota moved onto the Plains.

With his columns bolstered with Crow and Arikara scouts, Sheridan planned an extensive campaign against the non-treaty bands of the Lakota and Cheyenne. Favoring winter campaigns, Sheridan ordered a column under Custer west from Fort Abraham Lincoln in North Dakota and a column under Brig. Gen. George Crook north out of Fort Fetterman, Wyoming. He hoped to end the conflict swiftly by March. But Custer found himself delayed by heavy snows. When Crook managed to locate a camp of Oglallas and Cheyennes, he was turned back at the Battle of Powder River and returned to Fort Fetterman to resupply. His plans for a winter campaign thwarted, Sheridan prepared for a larger summer campaign to converge on the swelling numbers of Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho assembling in the Yellowstone area. Alfred Terry commanded troops including Custer's Seventh Cavalry from Fort Abraham Lincoln in the east. Col. John Gibbon led a column heading southeast from Forts Ellis and Shaw in Montana. The movements were logistically supported by steamboats that could easily ascend the river systems of the Yellowstone when they were swollen in the spring and supply the northern columns quickly in the field. With a large force supplemented by over 250 Crow and Shoshone scouts, Crook pushed north once more from Fort Fetterman. In early June along Rosebud Creek, Sitting Bull received a vision foretelling of a great victory for the Lakota. On June 17th, they engaged Crook's men at the Battle of the Rosebud. Though ultimately withdrawing, the Indians forced Crook to return to Fort Fetterman once more. The combined camp under Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse moved north along the Little Bighorn River (which they called the Greasy Grass), growing as more bands arrived from the agencies. Frustrated with the opening of the Black Hills, these new arrivals swelled the allied camp to between seven and ten thousand people with thousands of warriors ready for battle.[47]

Unaware of Crook's defeat or the growing size of the camp, on June 21,Terry and Gibbon met at the mouth of the Rosebud and developed a strategy to engage the Indians. Custer was to move up the Rosebud, cross to the Little Bighorn, and move down the valley, driving any Indian camp northwards. Terry and Gibbon would proceed up the Yellowstone to the Bighorn River, posting at the mouth of the Little Bighorn to block any attempt at escape. By June 24, Custer had fallen upon the trail of the Indian camp and made ready to attack and drive them north along the Little Bighorn. Expecting his command to be, at best, evenly matched with any enemy force, Custer pressed on

[46] Chief Blackfoot as recorded by Lt. James H. Bradley, April 9, 1876, Folder 1-5, "handwritten copies, Book 4, Journal of the Sioux Campaigns of the Yellowstone, 1876," Box 1, James H. Bradley papers – Collection 49, Montana State Historical Society.
[47] Utley and Washburn, 265-69; William E. Lass, *Navigating the Missouri: Steamboating on Nature's Highway, 1819-1935* (Norman, OK: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2008), 304-05; Abbott, 128-129.

quickly in the hopes of catching the village before it disbanded. Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull's camp had expected a fight although they were unsure when it would occur. Their scouts kept the leaders of the combined camp regularly informed about Custer's movements. Due to the proximity of U.S. soldiers, warrior societies stood on guard to both defend and control the camp and ensure appropriate response if an Army force arrived. Aware of the likelihood of a fight, several Lakota and Cheyenne boys took a suicide vow, pledging that in the next battle, they would fight to the death to defend the village. Among the Cheyenne were Little Whirlwind, Cut Belly, Closed Hand and Noisy Walking.[48]

The Battle of the Little Bighorn: June 25th and 26th, 1876

The battle itself, if not its outcome, appeared as a surprise to most of those involved. Custer's men did not expect a unified village of such size and magnitude. Concurrently, many in the camp, though aware of Custer's approach, felt assured that they would not dare attack. Oglala chief Low Dog related that he "did not believe it…I did not think it possible that any white man would attack us, so strong as we were." Nevertheless, for reasons that scholars still debate, Custer attacked.[49]

On the morning of the 25th, realizing he had been observed by Lakota scouts, Custer made ready to attack the camp. However, even though the camp's leaders had been aware of Custer's approach, they made no preparations for defense or flight beyond observing the Army's movements. The morning of Custer's attack, the village held a parade in honor of those boys taking the suicide vow the night before. As the Seventh Cavalry crossed the divide of the Rosebud and Little Bighorn rivers, Custer sent three companies under Capt. Frederick Benteen to the south and west to ensure that no tribal forces stood above his position on the Little Bighorn. As he peered off the bluffs towards the Indian encampment, Custer ordered Maj. Marcus Reno to advance up the valley and attack the southern end of the village, stating he would support Reno's attack. Custer then moved the remaining five companies to the north into Medicine Tail Coulee and made ready to attack on the village's east flank.[50]

As Reno proceeded up the valley around 3 p.m., several members of the Lakota and Cheyenne saw his approach and warned the camp. Some horse herds, including those of the Hunkpapas, stampeded to the north at Reno's approach, although some riders managed to stop them so they could be used to fight against the Seventh. The Lakota and Cheyenne and their various allies made ready to defend against Reno's move and formed at the southern end of the camp, firing into Reno's troopers. Reno's men dismounted and returned fire, deploying as skirmishers. Their fire fell most heavily on the Hunkpapa camp and killed several women and children fleeing from the attack, including two wives and three children of Hunkpapa chief Gall. Responding warriors, mostly Hunkpapas urged on by Sitting Bull and White Bull, threatened to outflank Reno's men. Reno redeployed his three companies at right angles in a horseshoe bend along the river, using the cottonwoods and underbrush for cover. Oglala warriors under Crazy Horse arrived and with the

[48] Utley and Washburn, 269-72; Stands in Timber and Liberty, 191-194.
[49] Low Dog quotation from Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee,* 292.
[50] Utley and Washburn, 272.

assistance of Gall, the Lakota and some Cheyenne charged and attempted overrun Reno's command, compelling them to retreat across the river to the east. Moving Robe Woman of the Hunkpapa remembered that as the troopers rode towards the river, "their horses had to swim to get across" and some Lakota "rode into the water and tomahawked the soldiers." In the ensuing route, Reno's companies lost nearly half their strength as Lakota and Cheyenne pursued them up the hillside. As Black Elk of the Oglala recalled, "men and horses were all mixed up and fighting in the water, and it was like hail falling in the river." Some twenty survivors of Reno's command remained hidden in the underbrush along the river, not reuniting with the command until the evening of the 26th. Sometime on the 25th, Lakota warriors set fire to the timber below Benteen Hill in an effort to drive out these stragglers but it appears these efforts were unsuccessful. Within an hour, Indian warriors had beaten Reno's command back out of the valley where they reformed on the bluffs above. After soundly repulsing Reno's men, most of the warriors moved north as Custer attached the camp farther north.[51]

Many Lakota and Cheyenne stories about the remainder of the battle refer to the confusion caused by so many warriors and troopers and horses fighting in such a confined space. Many such as Philip Risingsun (Cheyenne) recalled that "Indians and troopers were everywhere, and clouds of dust made it difficult to tell friends from enemies." As corroborated by archeological evidence, Red Horse (Minneconjou) among many other Lakota and Cheyenne claimed that Custer's men "became foolish" and "discharged their guns but little."[52]

Throughout the 25th and 26th, families of killed warriors scoured the field looking for fallen family members. They gathered the dead, up to 100 warriors, and wounded on travois and carried them back to the village. It is not clear where American Indian families buried their bodies. From accounts on both sides, families took most of their dead into the nearby mountains to perform funerary ceremonies. On the evening of June 26th, Terry and Gibbon's columns reached the present-day location of Crow Agency. They found "hundreds of Indians on horseback" and made camp with sentinels at the ready. The combined camp separated and dispersed, taking their wounded into the Wolf and Bighorn mountains. The bodies of two hundred and sixty two slain cavalry troopers, Indian scouts and civilians remained on the field. The U.S. troops on hand buried most of them on the field

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[51] While the presence of Crazy Horse during this phase seems undisputed, many Lakota veterans were unsure of Sitting Bull's role in the battle. Black Elk quotation from Nicholas Black Elk, ed., *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, 21st Century ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 85; Moving Robe Woman quotation from Richard G. Hardorff, *Lakota Recollections of the Custer Fight: New Sources of Indian-Military History* (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1991), ; Kingsley M. Bray, *Crazy Horse: A Lakota Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 218; Stands in Timber and Liberty, 195-98, 200; Black Elk, *Black Elk Speaks,* 91; Robert W. Larson, *Gall: Lakota War Chief*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 119-27; Robert M. Utley, *Sitting Bull: The Life and Times of an American Patriot* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 150-158; chronology taken from John S. Gray, *Custer's Last Campaign: Mitch Boyer and the Little Bighorn Reconstructed* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 290.

[52] Story of Philip Risingsun, told through his grandson Eugene Russell and great-grandson Matthew Two Moons, Sr., and story of Red Horse, interpreted through Lt. William P. Clark of 2nd U.S. Cavalry, both in Herman J. Viola, *Little Bighorn Remembered: The Untold Indian Story of Custer's Last Stand* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 41.

where they fell. They transported the wounded troopers to the mouth of the Little Bighorn where they, and the news of the defeat, traveled downstream on the Missouri.[53]

The Aftermath of the Little Bighorn: The End of the Indian Wars (1876-1891)

The victory at the Little Bighorn signified the zenith of the non-treaty Plains Indians' power. Such a spectacular victory bore consequences from a United States unwilling to admit defeat in the matter of westward expansion. Following the Little Big Horn, the U.S. Army pressed more and more troops into service on the Northern plains to subdue the remaining non-treaty bands and force them onto the diminishing Lakota and Cheyenne reservations in South Dakota and Wyoming. Col. Nelson A. Miles conducted ultimately unsuccessful efforts to force Minneconjou and Sans Arc tribes to report to the Cheyenne River agency. Crook completed a much more successful campaign against the resisting Lakota and Cheyenne tribes using Lakota and Cheyenne scouts to compliment his forces. Attempting to avoid removal to Indian Territory farther south, these scouts hoped that by cooperating they could secure homes in their traditional territory on the Northern plains. Crook's forces operated in the same area as Custer had along the Little Bighorn River, clashing with a Cheyenne camp under Dull Knife in November of 1876. Defeated, the Cheyenne retreated north to the safety of Crazy Horse's camp near the battlefield where Custer had met defeat earlier that year. They found a Lakota alliance under Crazy Horse split over the issue of how to meet the Army forces. Some, mainly Minneconjou and Sans Arc, favored surrender (although Lame Deer and Spotted Eagle were notable exceptions). Others, Crazy Horse included, favored continuing the fight and remained skeptical of federal entreaties for favorable terms after Crow scouts ambushed their delegation to the Cheyenne River Agency. The inspiration of a new medicine man named Long Hair bolstered their resolve, frustrating the Army's efforts to bring an end to the war.[54]

Facing this situation, Col. Miles pressed Crazy Horse's camp in the winter of 1876, clashing at Wolf Mountain on January 8th, 1877. The fight proved inconclusive and disappointed both sides. Crazy Horse had sought a victory to parallel the Little Bighorn, and Miles had sought a conclusive end to the Great Sioux War; neither was successful. With supplies running low and Army efforts frustrating Lakota and Cheyenne attempts to make winter camp, Sitting Bull departed for Canada. Crazy Horse chose to remain. However, the unity of the remaining Lakota and Cheyenne fractured as low food supplies and persistent efforts by the United States military convinced more and more militants to depart camp for the agencies in the east. While these conditions eventually forced Crazy Horse and other non-treaty bands to surrender, the lack of a convincing defeat meant they secured important cessions in the diplomatic process. After much deliberation and failure to reach a decision, the Cheyenne allowed families to surrender to the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail agencies. In May of 1877, Crazy Horse and his followers turned themselves in at Red Cloud agency. Later that summer, a cavalry detachment under Lt. Col. George Buell constructed Fort Custer at the confluence of the

[53] William H. White, "Two Days After the Custer Battle," in Thomas B. Marquis, *Custer on the Little Bighorn* (Lodi, CA: End-Kian Publishing, 1969), 10.
[54]Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism,* 62-74; Utley and Washburn, 302.

Bighorn and Little Bighorn Rivers. The military intended its presence to deter hunting off the reservation and a signal (however fleeting) to the Crow that the federal government was finally dedicated to ensuring the security of Crow territory. With the U.S. military's growing power and the confinement of most tribes to reservations by the end of the year, the Great Sioux War came to a close. With the defeat of the Nez Perce to the north the same year, the wars for the Northwestern Plains were effectively over.[55]

The loss of Custer and his men in 1876 represented more than a crushing blow to military designs on Plains pacification. It occurred at a time when the United States still struggled to define itself amid the vast landscape it had so recently acquired and the celebration of the nation's centennial. The loss of five companies of the Seventh Cavalry resonated with an American public that viewed the event both as a tragic loss and a heroic sacrifice. Writer Michael Elliot posited that the Little Bighorn provided the United States with a symbol with which to grapple with its own identity. It at once furnished "a hero defeated in spectacular fashion – and defeated not just by anyone but by the American Indians considered to be the last holdout of savagery on a continent otherwise secured for civilization." It became representative of the late nineteenth-century tension between the image of the noble cavalrymen securing the frontier and the noble Indian giving one last breath to defending their way of life. While neither represented the realities of the situation in the American West, Custer's defeat at the Little Bighorn gave new energy to these images, making that battle, above all others, emblematic of the American Indian Wars.[56]

Violence between the tribes and whites on the Plains continued into the 1890s. Cultural differences between the various tribes and the United States, the slaying of Crazy Horse, and the tension between traditional lifeways and the directives of the Bureau of Indian Affairs ensured that conflict remained. Skirmishes and smaller campaigns against the various plains tribes constantly aggravated negotiations. Even members of the Crow, historic allies of the United States, delivered armed resistance to the federal government's efforts to assimilate their tribe. As the Ghost Dance movement began in the 1880s, it came to symbolize this continuing tension and the yearning for the return of the buffalo and a traditional equestrian hunting life. Fearful of large-scale uprisings similar to that of Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, the United States government suppressed expansive gatherings of the tribes. Lakota recalcitrance persisted into the 1890s, spurred by the words of Kicking Bear and Short Bull who seemed to advocate violence. Nelson Miles, now a Major General, took Army trrops to subdue the Ghost Dancers on Pine Ridge and Rosebud Agencies. In December of 1891, this campaign culminated in a fight along Wounded Knee Creek in which soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry massacred 300 Lakota at a camp under Big Foot. For many, the Lakota included, this atrocity signaled the end of significant resistance to government authority on the Plains. Reminiscing on the aftermath of Wounded Knee, Oglala Black Elk lamented that "I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody

[55]Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism,* 74-83; Hoxie, 108-109.
[56] Michael A. Elliot, *Custerology: The Enduring Legacy of the Indian Wars and George Armstrong Custer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); 28-29.

mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there." Through the attack on Big Foot's camp, the United States won the war for the Northern plains. As a rising international power, the United States government had displayed authority over its interior lands and peoples. Although these tribes again challenged the federal government's authority in the late 20th century, they largely did so as scholars and lawyers rather than warriors.[57]

[57] Black Elk quotation from Black Elk, *Black Elk Speaks*, 207; Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism,* 338-345, 361-62 and "'They Regard Their Passing as Wakan': Interpreting Western Sioux Explanations for the Bison's Decline," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 30, No. 4 (Winter 1999), 482-497; Utley and Washburn, 304-5, 335-341.

III. The War Department at Custer Battlefield National Cemetery (1876-1946)

Within weeks of the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876, private citizens began to commemorate the conflict, and in doing so, transformed much of the battlefield's landscape. With the markers and headstones placed at the locations where Seventh Cavalry troopers fell and a monument to the Seventh Cavalry, Congress originally intended the site only as a memorial to those US Army soldiers killed there in 1876. However, with the establishment of a National Cemetery on the site, the battlefield became a repository to which frontier forts sent soldiers' remains when the military abandoned western posts in the 1890s. The War Department focused on these funerary and memorial duties, allowing the addition of new monuments, managing the accurate placement of markers on the field, and operating the cemetery as a part of the National Cemetery System. Despite the limitations of the arid landscape and frequent funding and staff shortages, by 1940, the War Department had altered significant portions of the Custer Battlefield landscape. The changes included grading, road construction, and landscaping within the cemetery as well as the construction of a roadway and various structures to aid the management staff. These occurred alongside (and frequently reacted to) a transformation of the surrounding landscape as a result of Crow tribal interactions with Euro-Americans in the years following the American Indian Wars. After President Roosevelt transferred the site to the National Park Service in 1940, the unit retained its designation as a cemetery until 1946 when President Truman declared the battlefield a national monument.

Monuments and Burials

As news spread of Custer's defeat, late nineteenth-century Euro-Americans commonly considered the fallen Seventh Cavalry troopers as pseudo-martyrs for their sacrifices in the cause of westward expansion. The battle captivated Americans' imaginations like no other encounter between the United States military and the native occupants of the continent. The attention Little Bighorn garnered led to multiple attempts on the part of veterans and private citizens to memorialize the troopers killed at the battle.

In the days following the Battle of the Little Bighorn and the siege of Reno and Benteen's companies, soldiers from the Seventh Cavalry's surviving companies and from Terry's and Gibbon's columns buried most of the dead where they lay. Many of those burials were partial, with men throwing dirt and sagebrush over the bodies to provide some degree of cover. The slain officers received a modicum of attention. Stakes marked their locations, and grave diggers recorded their names and placed them inside a cartridge casing driven into the stake. Although it had its practical purposes (Custer and his men laid in the sun for several days by the time of their burial and Reno's wounded needed evacuation), the decision not to gather the bodies in a mass grave affected the memorial landscape of the battlefield in future decades.[58]

[58] Don Rickey, Jr., *History of Custer Battlefield* (Fort Collins: Old Army Press: 2005 [orig. 1967]), 25, 28; Jerome

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In subsequent years, the remains and markers of the men killed in the battle moved and changed frequently. In July of 1877, a cavalry detachment under the command of Lt. Col. Michael V. Sheridan arrived to re-bury the enlisted men of the Seventh and transport the officers' bodies to their families. At the positions where officers had been buried and enlisted men remained, Sheridan's men placed cedar stakes so that the men could be identified and moved to a cemetery or mass grave in the future. However, complaints about the horrible conditions of the remaining enlisted bodies soon pressed the War Department to provide some kind of permanent resting place for the dead of the Seventh Cavalry. Finally, in 1881, Army officials erected a memorial to the fallen and re-interred the remains of enlisted men in a mass grave beneath the new Seventh Cavalry Monument.[59]

Plans for memorializing the losses of the Seventh Cavalry began within three weeks following the 1876 battle. Editorials and private organizations from Montana to New York called for a monument to remember the sacrifices of the cavalry troopers at the hands of their Cheyenne, Lakota and Arapaho foes. Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs moved on these sentiments, recommending to the War Secretary that a monument be constructed and all those buried on the field be reinterred in a mass grave beneath it. A cavalry detachment established a small cordwood monument in 1879, the same year that contractors completed a granite monument for the Seventh Cavalry. Although Mount Auburn Marble and Granite Works of Massachusetts completed the granite obelisk that year, lack of effective transportation routes into the area delayed installation of the bulky monument until 1881. In that year, builders dug a trench around the base of the monument in which they placed all those known bodies (around 220) still on the battlefield. With vandalism a constant source of damage, War Department officials erected an iron fence surrounding the Seventh Cavalry Monument in 1884. After the mass burial of the dead troopers, the custom among War Department officials when more remains were discovered at the battlefield was to remove and re-inter them in the national cemetery. The last known body on the field within Monument boundaries was that of Lt. Crittenden, which lay along the ridge line south of the Seventh Cavalry Monument until 1932. While the National Park Service discovered other remains after that point, it quickly moved them to the national cemetery.[60]

In 1890, the battlefield witnessed a rare occasion of individual recognition of fallen warriors. While most U.S. soldiers by this time received an individual headstone within a cemetery, almost none had markers placed at the location where they fell on the battlefield. In the military's efforts to recognize the fallen men of the Seventh, they found their options limited by the transforming environment around them. While prairie fires had always been (and continue to be) a concern on the Plains, the intense grazing of the battlefield by Crow and white cattle herds required the use of durable materials in the creation of markers to the Seventh Cavalry. In an inspection of the battlefield in 1882, Maj. William W. Sanders remarked that "iron posts" would be needed to replace the cedar stakes marking individual soldier's locations as "these sticks are destroyed by prairie fires and cattle." Further elaborating the unique nature of these markers, Sanders' supervisor, Nelson H. Davis,

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A. Greene, *Stricken Field: The Little Bighorn Since 1876* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 19-20.
[59] Greene, *Stricken Field*, 21-29
[60] Rickey, *History of Custer Battlefield*, 27-31, 40-43, 51-53, 60, 65-66; Greene, *Stricken Field*, 38.

noted that "to mark the spot where individuals fell would be a change of the course followed by the Gov't heretofore in similar cases." The markers were, in part, a response to the observations of Lt. Col. George Dandy from the Army quartermaster's office who claimed the area lacked the formality expected of a national cemetery, including clear boundaries and a superintendent to maintain the grounds. The year after Senate approval in 1889, Little Bighorn Battlefield witnessed the erection of marble markers where Seventh Cavalry troopers had been buried in 187, roughly where Terry, Gibbon and Reno's men discovered their bodies in the days following the battle.[61]

The monument to Custer and his fallen troopers and the national cemetery came to bear important meanings for the American public. For some, the monument and the cemetery were a tribute to fallen soldiers who died under Congressional orders from the American Indian Wars to the World Wars and beyond. However, for many Americans, the monument in particular came to symbolize the eventual success of Manifest Destiny, if at a tragic cost. The monument signified order in the form of a prominent and singular memorial to the war dead. The cemetery that the military later designed added to this image of order in the West, defined by its symmetrical, rational design seeming to rise from the chaos of the American Indian Wars on the wild prairie. Together, the monument and cemetery symbolized progress for an American public that searched hopefully for heroic figures amid the increasing industrialization of the nation. When Quartermaster General Meigs recommended the Seventh Cavalry Monument, he clarified that the monument be "massive and heavy enough to remain for ages where placed – a landmark of the conflict between civilization and barbarism."[62]

However, no active stewardship existed at the battlefield until 1893. After deliberation in the War Department, military officials planned to hire a superintendent to live on site and to construct a house for him. Staff in the War Department hoped that a full-time watchman could maintain the fences and gates and keep livestock and vandals from trespassing on the cemetery reservation. The first superintendent, Andrew Grover, was a veteran of the Seventh Cavalry and began providing what tours he could along with his cemetery management duties. Over the winter of 1893-94, Grover and his family lived in a hastily-constructed log cabin within the reservation along the Little Bighorn River. Some white observers claimed that the neighboring Crows viewed the superintendent as a "ghost herder," who kept the spirits of the fallen troopers within the bounds of the cemetery. Yet Grover spent most of his time struggling to maintain the efficacy of the cemetery's boundaries and the integrity of its monuments. Crow and white ranchers frequently drove their cattle through the Little Bighorn Valley, trespassing on cemetery land especially along the river bottoms.[63]

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[61] Sanders and Nelson quotations from Sanders to AAG, Department of Dakota, May 30, 1882, with endorsements, National Archives Record Group 92 in Greene, *Stricken Field*, 33;Rickey, *History of Custer Battlefield*, 65-66, 68; Greene, *Stricken Field*, 39-41.
[62] QM General Meigs quotation from Meigs to Secretary of War, October 16, 1878, National Archives Record Group 94 in Greene, *Stricken Field*, 31;James M. Mayo, *War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 150-51.
[63] Rickey, *History of Custer Battlefield*, 46-48; The "ghost herder" reference arises in correspondence between Julia Taft-Bayne and Elizabeth Custer dated July 16, 1916 regarding Mrs. Taft-Bayne's 1912 visit to the battlefield, cited in Rickey, 48; Greene, *Stricken Field*, 42-46, 48-49.

By the 1910s and 20s, Americans grew increasingly fascinated with the battle. At the battle's fiftieth anniversary in 1926, many visitors wished to erect a new monument that honored the efforts of those under Maj. Reno and Capt. Benteen to the south of the Seventh Cavalry Monument. That same year, Congress authorized the purchase of 162 acres and construction of the monument but did not provide funds for it until 1928. The cemetery superintendent did not receive stewardship of the land until 1930, after which the War Department cut a rough road from the cemetery to the Reno-Benteen site. Ever-increasing tourism to the site demanded the construction of an improved road, a project undertaken from 1938-1941. The gravel road spanned the distance over allotted Crow land, requiring the construction of two culverts and the rechanneling of Medicine Tail Creek.[64]

Designing Custer Battlefield National Cemetery (1879 – 1967)

Although the Little Bighorn Valley transformed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a result of Crow land use and agricultural development, the land within the boundaries of Custer Battlefield National Cemetery changed as a result of related but distinct colonization. Gen. Philip Sheridan first suggested the designation of the Little Bighorn Battlefield as a national cemetery following his inspection of the area in 1877. In 1879, the War Secretary acted on these recommendations and declared a portion of the battlefield a National Cemetery of the Fourth Class. He assigned maintenance duties to the post commander at nearby Fort Custer. However, the declaration did not clarify the boundaries of the cemetery reservation, instead stating a survey would be necessary to delineate them. In military correspondence, its size varied from one square mile to a parcel three by six miles. However, land allotments to Crow tribal members limited the expansive proposals. It took until 1889 for a detachment under Sgt. Herman W. Vance to survey a square mile parcel constituting the present boundaries of the Monument and to place iron markers at the corners. Lack of clarity about the boundaries continued to cause land use conflicts between the cemetery superintendent, neighboring Crows, and grazing lessees into the National Park Service's stewardship of the cemetery. Although the surveyed land lay completely within the boundaries of the Crow Reservation (as it still does), the War Department did not reimburse the Crows and clarify land ownership until 1930.[65]

Custer Battlefield National Cemetery was part of a broader trend by the United States Government to provide a resting place for veterans of the armed services. During the American Civil War, the United States government realized the necessity for a federal solution to the issue of where to bury war dead. Congress and the War Department initially intended Custer Battlefield Cemetery to be a memorial reservation solely for the Seventh U.S. Cavalry troopers who fell from June 25th-26th,

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[64] Rickey, *History of Custer Battlefield*, 36; Greene, *Stricken Field*, 68-69. At the time of establishment, the War Department did not differentiate between the National Cemetery itself and its full land reservation. While the reservation established by Vance's survey established much of what is the present boundary, the cemetery grounds are very limited and have not expanded since 1967.

[65] Rickey, *History of Custer Battlefield*, 29-31; Greene, *Stricken Field*, 39, 48-49.

1876. However, as American settlers seized greater control over the West and frontier posts closed, this site became a regional repository for remains from nearby forts. When American war dead streamed in during conflicts from the First World War to Vietnam, Custer Cemetery expanded to accommodate them. Although after 1946, the use of the battlefield primarily as a memorial and cemetery became limited due to the transfer of the site to the National Park Service, the National Cemetery continues to receive the remains of veterans and their spouses in reserved spaces.[66]

Custer Battlefield National Cemetery was part of a movement to establish historic monuments and memorials at battlefields important to national history. In 1862, Congress created the National Cemetery System as a response to the enormous numbers of war dead during the American Civil War. In July of that year, Congress authorized the President to purchase grounds and maintain national cemeteries for those who died in the service of their country. The War Department typically created national cemeteries on battlegrounds such as Gettysburg (1863) to eliminate massive transportation costs for remains. The burials in these cemeteries were initially hasty and frequently involved mass burial. However, with death tallies rising towards the end of the war, the War Department attempted individual recognition with wooden headboards. It was not until the re-interment efforts following the war that white marble or granite headstones became standard. These actions set a precedent for later decades and for Little Big Horn Battlefield where they were necessary due to its remote location.[67]

After the Civil War, the national cemeteries expanded into the west, steadily abandoning their association with Civil War battlefields as the focus shifted to casualties of Indian conflicts. Congress codified this change in 1872 when it allowed burials of Civil War veterans in all national cemeteries, forcing many of them to expand. After the prominent and devastating loss of several companies of the Seventh U.S. Cavalry at the Little Bighorn, War Department officials sought to designate the battlefield as a national cemetery. Much like the Civil War battlefields, the high number of casualties and site's isolation made the removal of remains en masse impractical. In 1879, the War Department declared the site Custer Battlefield National Cemetery as a resting place for the over 200 officers and troopers that fell at the battle.[68]

Custer Battlefield National Cemetery's aesthetic combined the contemporary styles of the romanticized pastoral with an attempt to establish a democratic atmosphere, in the process creating a landscape unique to the national cemeteries. A leader in national cemetery design, William Saunders, stated the spaces should contain "winding roads, graveled paths, decorative trees and shrubs, and a broad expanse of green carpeting over the graves." "Simple grandeur," not a "meretricious display of ornament," should reign, Saunders claimed, with a visitor's eye led "gradually from one object to another, in easy harmony, avoiding abrupt contrasts and unexpected features." Renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted further advised Quartermaster General Meigs that national

[66]MonroMacCloskey, Brig. Gen. USAF (ret.), *Hallowed Ground: Our National Cemeteries* (New York: Richard Rosen Press, Inc., 1968), 19-20.
[67]MacCloskey, 20-25, 39; David Charles Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 113-14.
[68]MacCloskey, 37-43.

cemeteries should be "studiously simple," guarding against the "ambitious efforts of ignorant…landscape gardeners." In 1893, a *Washington Star* article praised the War Department for its attention to the common soldier, claiming that "all civilized nations have taken pains to inter the bones of their military chiefs and high officers, but to the remains of the common soldier they have been content to allot only the hasty ditch or trench." This attention to enlisted troops within the military led to a further influence on the designs of Olmsted and Saunders. While all cemeteries tended to follow a pattern of rows, national cemeteries took this design and militarized it. Developing in earnest in the late-nineteenth century, national cemeteries retreated from the very Romantic sentimentality from which they had been conceived. While the Romantic tended to celebrate simplicity, it also extolled individuality, a feature noticeably absent in a cemetery filled with identical gravestones. They were arrayed in nearly perfect symmetry of neat columns and rows, contrasting with the normally smooth, curving lines of the late nineteenth-century pastoral park. This "orderly pattern of markers" stood against a landscape of "uniform greenness and openness," similar to soldiers in formation on a parade ground. Frequently, this uniformity was fragmented when soldiers killed in a particular engagement rested together around a monument to the dead of that battle.[69]

The importance of the Custer Battlefield cemetery landscape appearing serene and picturesque had great importance for the American public. As with the Seventh Cavalry Monument, the orderly arrangement of the cemetery represented what white Americans believed to be the inevitable victory of ordered civilization over savage wilderness. The cemetery seemed the appropriate place for those who gave their lives for this cause. As frontier posts closed amid budget cuts and successful settlement in the American West, Custer Battlefield National Cemetery became a repository for military remains from other outposts including the dead of relatively important battles in the American Indian Wars. The first among these arrived from Fort Phil Kearny in 1888, and they included the men dead in the 1866 Fetterman fight. Grave diggers placed them just to the south of Seventh Cavalry Monument (the War Department moved these to the cemetery after 1926). In 1892, War Department officials transferred the remains of men killed in the Hay Field fight at Fort C.F. Smith and their accompanying monument to the cemetery. Throughout the 1890s and early 1900s, Superintendent Grover and his successors oversaw the transport of remains from throughout the northwest, from Forts Totten, Rice, Buford, Sisseton, Pembina, Assiniboine and others. The bodies included those of men killed in some of the more famous fights of the American Indian Wars in the northwest, from the Fetterman fight to the Battle of the Big Hole and of Bear Paw Mountain. The geographic spread of these engagements displayed the national importance of the cemetery as a representation of the conquest of the American West.[70]

However, the design ethic and the militaristic principles of the national cemeteries clashed with the western environment in which the War Department established Custer Battlefield National

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[69] Saunders quotation from *Revised Report Made to the Legislature of Pennsylvania, Relative to the Soldiers National Cemetery at Gettysburg* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1867), 158-159 in Sloane, 114-115; Olmsted quotation from Olmsted to General M.C. Meigs, 2 August 1870 in Sloane, 115; MacCloskey, 43-44; Kenneth T. Jackson and Camilo José Vergara, *Silent Cities: The Evolution of the American Cemetery* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1989), 24-25.

[70] Rickey, *History of Custer Battlefield*, 51-53

Cemetery. Athough the War Department fenced the cemetery reservation in 1891, providing the landscape with some isolation from the grazing and farming beyond, the boundary was still permeable and the Plains environment frustrated military efforts to develop the cemetery. Like many military outposts in the West, Custer Battlefield National Cemetery operated an ad-hoc operation, making do with the environment and materials on hand. Beginning with Andrew Grover, battlefield superintendents struggled to carve out a national cemetery in Saunders' and Olmsted's vision amid an arid environment dominated by short-grasses and sagebrush. This order and its underlying significance to American settlers took the War Department decades of deliberate action to produce. Superintendent Grover oversaw many of the initial cemetery developments. Crews finished his home, the Stone House, by 1894. That spring, Grover received clarification on the cemetery plots within the reservation, marking the cemetery's extent roughly where it exists today (The National Park Service added sections G and H in 1967). The following year laborers added a maintenance shed behind the dwelling. A 1932 project provided living quarters for a maintenance man in a matching stone house and garage attached to the shop. In 1896, Grover oversaw the erection of a flagstaff in the middle of the cemetery. Although Grover continued to press for a pressurized water system and other developments, the War Department did not undertake many of these projects until the New Deal Era.[71]

Frustration, environmental limitations, and increased tourism all characterized Custer Battlefield National Cemetery before the 1930s. Changes during the era were relatively minor. In 1907, the cemetery added a new iron flagpole and iron gates for the cemetery. Superintendent Eugene Wessinger administered the installation of a gasoline water pump, but this proved insufficient to properly irrigate the mostly bare national cemetery. Wessinger also supervised the grading of the wagon road to the Seventh Cavalry Monument and the road into the cemetery. These small improvements could not handle the increasing amount of traffic the cemetery received. By the 1910s and 20s, auto-tourists called for a proper road and better interpretation of the entire battle. By 1920, private organizations lobbied with several states to designate the Custer Battlefield Highway, a route that brought thousands of tourists to the battlefield and other western attractions. However, significant development did not occur until the following decades.[72]

Many of the most significant landscape developments under the cemetery's War Department era came under the supervision of Superintendent Victor Bolsius, who began work at the cemetery in 1930. That year, the War Department installed iron fences around both the Reno-Benteen Monument and the so-called "Last Stand" markers below the Seventh Cavalry Monument to prevent them from being vandalized. By 1933, a similar iron fence bounded the national cemetery grounds. Bolsius oversaw the arrival of electricity to the Stone House in 1931, as well as many infrastructural improvements to the cemetery area. Although the War Department constructed the first pump-house

[71] Alison K. Hoagland, *Army Architecture in the West: Forts Laramie, Bridger, and D.A. Russell, 1849-1912* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 3-10; Rickey, *History of Custer Battlefield*, 56; Greene, *Stricken Field*, 48.
[72] Greene, *Stricken Field*, 51, 55; Iowa Department of Transportation, "Custer Battlefield Highway," Historic Auto Trails, http://www.iowadot.gov/autotrails/custerbattlefieldhighway.html (accessed September 16, 2011).

to supply water in 1912, it was insufficient for irrigation. Not until 1938 when cemetery staff installed a more powerful pump in a small house along the river did the cemetery receive sufficient water for grass and trees. As the capacity of the irrigation system increased, throughout the 1930s, Bolsius supervised the planting of trees along the cemetery edges. In 1931, a modest assortment of 13 trees joined the Douglas Firs planted around the Stone House. Two years later, the cemetery landscape drastically changed as laborers under Bolsius planted 150 Red Cedar and Blue Spruce trees which replicated the design traditions of eastern national cemeteries. However, Bolsius also supervised the erection of modest public facilities. In 1932, he directed the construction of a comfort station west of the cemetery. In 1934, crews added a rostrum for ceremonies to the northeast corner of Section F. Most significantly, throughout the 1930s, the superintendent planted several trees along the cemetery drive, established a hedge of Tartarian Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tartarica*), and begun grading and seeding the cemetery plot. Despite cemetery improvement, the battlefield grounds were still not subject to the same care as other national cemeteries. Beginning in 1937, the War Department leased lands along the Little Bighorn River to grazing lessees (whether they were Crow or non-Indian is not clear). Superintendents from the War Department and the National Park Service occasionally complained about trespassing by cattle despite the barbed wire fence that surrounded most of the cemetery.[73]

The increasing demand for historical interpretation at the battlefield forced the War Department to place some emphasis on guiding visitors. In the 1920s, Elizabeth Custer and others drew up plans for a museum, but the funding authorization did not come until the early 1950s after the cemetery had been re-designated as part of a National Monument.[74]

IV. The National Park Service and Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument (1940-present)

Following the transfer of the military reservation to the National Park Service in 1940, site administrators took new steps to emphasize historical interpretation at Little Bighorn. As historian Edward T. Linenthal has described, from this point into the present, the National Park Service engaged in a protracted effort to “transform a shrine into a historic site.” During this period, park planners focused on the infrastructure and features necessary to adequately interpret the story of the site to its increasing number of visitors. The majority of these developments occurred during the NPS’s Mission 66 program, the post-World War II development plan of NPS Director Conrad Wirth. Mission 66 again transformed the landscape with improved roadways for modern cars, parking and trails for visitors, a museum for interpretation, and an administrative complex for park staff. Mission 66 has proven a contentious program as some viewed it as intruding upon park resources, namely the landscape itself. Service-wide and at Little Bighorn, Mission 66-associated developments effectively ended in 1972. After this, congressional legislation such as the Environmental Protection Act altered

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[73] Rickey, *History of Custer Battlefield*, 57-59, 111; Greene, *Stricken Field*, 59-60.
[74] Rickey, *History of Custer Battlefield*, 31-36; Greene, *Stricken Field*, 67-69.

the way government agencies managed their resources. In 1972, Custer Battlefield National Monument released a new Master Plan, re-focusing itsfuture direction beyond Mission 66.[75]

Memorialization to Interpretation (1940 – 1956)

On June 3, 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt transferred Custer Battlefield National Cemetery from the War Department to the National Park Service. The move itself resulted in little change in management of the area. When Superintendent Edward S. Luce assumed stewardship of the site, his duties consisted mainly of continuing to improve and maintain the cemetery. Although most of the National Park Service experienced significant downsizing and infrastructural decay throughout the 1940s when the nation entered Second World War, Custer Battlefield had already operated on a fairly limited budget and scope of work. Although in the 1940s and early 1950s Luce attempted to establish a meager set of interpretive facilities, the majority of work completed during this period related to the cemetery grounds landscape. In June 1941, Luce oversaw the gravelling of the last 2.8 miles of the access road to the Reno-Benteen monument. To complete the landscaping of the cemetery, Luce arranged for the removal of all sagebrush from the cemetery grounds, the sodding of the cemetery, and the planting of 140 evergreen trees, both Blue Spruce and Rocky Mountain Juniper. To maintain the landscape projects initiated by the War Department and continued by himself, Luce secured a modest water supply at the cemetery. The new pump house constructed in 1938 aided in this, but faulty water lines necessitated the installation of Transite cement-asbestos pipes in 1955 to ensure the irrigation of the cemetery.[76]

As post-war visitation sky-rocketed in the late-1940s into the 50s, Luce found his staff and resources inadequate to maintain and interpret the battlefield. With more auto-tourists visiting the battlefield in the post-war era than ever before, it became clear to Park Service officials and Luce alike that the park required serious redevelopment. Luce had those plans already prepared. In 1944, he had drafted an ambitious cemetery plan that included the provision of a museum and comfort station for visitors as well as residences for an expanded cemetery staff. Wartime needs had kept most of Luce's plans from being implemented. However, in March 1946, Congress passed legislation re-designating the battlefield as Custer Battlefield National Monument. Within 5 years, construction had finally begun on a museum at the battlefield to interpret the history of the engagement to the increasing number of visitors. While the transition to Park Service interpretation was relatively slow in the first two decades of NPS management, a new program for the agency was on the horizon that had sweeping ramifications for the battlefield's landscape.

[75]Quotation from Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, 131.
[76]Greene, *Stricken Field*, 76-77.

Mission 66 (1945-1970)

The Mission 66 program represented the second of two major development periods in the history of the National Park Service. The first period occurred after the foundation of the Service in 1916 as park planners moved to organize and develop a National Parks system following the design precepts of the Rustic. Akin to the log cabins of early white settlers, the Rustic style relied on simple form and vernacular materials and styles for its image. Taking advantage of New Deal programs, this era combined the popular styles of the Rustic with the labor force of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to develop an image of the national parks as designed wilderness. Rustic lodges and museums blended their materials, if not their structures, into the landscape and presented an image of the recently vanished frontier. The Park Service became a leader in park design, development, and management, organizing a system of national recreation sites and heavily influencing the shape of state park systems. However, Little Bighorn experienced little of this design influence. While the War Department transferred most of its national cemeteries to the Department of the Interior in 1930, Custer Battlefield National Cemetery was one of several cemeteries the War Department retained until 1940. Consequently, the cemetery did not receive the major attention to design and development that other historic sites in the Park Service did in the 1920s and 30s.[77]

With the entrance of the United States into the Second World War, the National Park Service found itself reduced to a skeleton of its former structure. Custer Battlefield National Cemetery had already possessed a relatively small staff (a superintendent and a handful of guides) prior to its transfer and experienced little downsizing or loss of staff during the conflict. Although Custer Battlefield was lucky, other parks lost many of their park rangers to war service, and lost much of their funding to maintain infrastructures and facilities. Additionally, like in many park units, Superintendent Luce leased limited sections of the battlefield to grazers raising beef for the war effort. Newton Drury had initially resisted attempts to open parks to grazing but under heavy pressure, consented to grazing in "areas of lesser importance" where the damage would not be "irreparable." Luce issued a grazing permit to local rancher Vincent Nipper along the river bottom, presumably under the assumption that the riparian forest was of 'lesser importance' to the battlefield.[78]

Following the Second World War, the National Park Service system, including Little Bighorn Battlefield, found itself deluged by a massive increase in visitation. As visitation rose in the 1950s, NPS Director Conrad Wirth proposed Mission 66, an ambitious program to repair infrastructure, redesign interpretive programs, and provide adequate maintenance and housing facilities for park staff. As approved by President Dwight Eisenhower, Wirth's plan sought to make national park sites symbols of patriotic pride by the Service's 50th Anniversary in 1966. In so doing, Wirth reshaped the

[77] Ethan Carr, Elaine Jackson-Retondo, and Len Warner.Draft Multiple Property Documentation Form, "National Park Service Mission 66 Resources," (Version A/Opt1) January 2006, E-3.
[78] Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 154-55.

landscape of nearly every National Park Service unit and opened a new era in design and development in the agency.

Although Mission 66 was a comprehensive overhaul of the park system, it concentrated on three main areas: interpretation and access, utilities and infrastructure, and housing for the expanded park staffs needed to sustain the redeveloped parks. In the Mission 66 plan, Wirth estimated that the Service needed 1,000 new family quarters and 400 seasonal housing units by 1961 to adequately supply the parks. He proposed new roads and trails to enhance visitor use and appreciation of the national park units. He also intended to construct "447 storage sheds and buildings" to aid in "the storage of cars and trucks, snowplows, and other equipment" throughout the National Park System. While the NPS could contract some needs, Wirth insisted that the Service provide "storage facilities for equipment used on park roads and buildings, on the job repair and maintenance facilities, and supply services, and a great many kinds of facilitating structures."[79]

At Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument (then called Custer Battlefield National Monument), administrators followed Wirth's concepts closely, expanding housing, interpretive facilities, and infrastructure in the 1950s and 60s. The first NPS superintendent, Edward S. Luce, presided over the first of these projects in the years during and immediately following the Second World War. Luce conceived of new trails and facilities, but the Monument did not realize his plans until the release of the Monument's Mission 66 prospectus in 1956. During Mission 66, park staff and contractors added a new visitor center, a housing complex, a utility building and garage, new water utilities, several interpretive trails, and several road improvements along the central Battlefield Tour Road.[80]

The collective result was that by the end of Mission 66 in 1966, the program had remade the National Monument, developed significant portions of the battlefield, and altered nearly every aspect of NPS management at the site. At the Reno-Benteen area, where once a meager road and parking lot led to a solitary monument, a paved road and parking lot, interpretive signs, and a paved trail enhanced visitor experiences. Southwest of Custer Battlefield National Cemetery, the residential area added three houses, an apartment building, a road, and a comprehensive landscape transition from grassland to irrigated lawns and regional trees to shade the complex. A utility building south of the cemetery provided several garage bays to store cemetery maintenance vehicles. A visitor center below Last Stand Hill offered interpretive facilities on the battlefield along with a short access trail and interpretive markers. The NPS paved and improved the Battlefield Tour Road with interpretive

[79] U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Mission 66,* 104-05, 110; and Carr, Jackson-Retondo, and Warner, (Version B/Opt2), F-18; and Ethan Carr, *Mission 66,* 166-67.

[80] U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *The Master Plan*, Custer Battlefield National Cemetery, 1944, D.O. 2009-7; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Mission 66 for Custer Battlefield National Monument," no date, 3rd page, Folder A98 "Book #1 Mission 66," and *Mission 66 Prospectus – Custer Battlefield National Monument*, April 20, 1956, 7,13 Folder A98 "Book #1 Mission 66," both in Box A31, General Files; Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, National Archives and Records Administration – Midwest Region (Kansas City); and Greene, 86, 167; "Sign and Wayside Plan," 1967; Development drawings of the area show plans for both a fourth and fifth residential structure in the residential area, all clustered around the residential area road; "Planting Plan – Headquarters Area," Drawing 3014-B, 1.

turnouts and moved its entrance into the Monument several hundred yards to the north. At the end of the Mission 66 period in 1967, with urging from World War II and Korean War veterans, park staff expanded the cemetery with sections G and H. Since the Mission 66 era, park staff have modified, expanded or removed many of the features of Mission 66. Nevertheless, the sweeping landscape changes are still highly visible and reflect an important developmental chapter in the history of the National Park Service and Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

Balancing Interpretations: Little Bighorn after Mission 66 (1970 – present)

After Mission 66 development and until the 2000s, only relatively minor landscape changes occurred at Custer Battlefield National Monument, consisting of piecemeal projects to meet immediate needs for the battlefield's rising visitor count. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, the park resurfaced Reno-Benteen and Custer Hill trails, added new and additional interpretive signs along Battlefield Road, and expanded the maintenance infrastructure.

Though the site's physical environment remained mostly static in this period, the park's historic interpretation underwent a significant transformation. Of primary importance following Mission 66 was the increasing pressure from tribal organizations to incorporate a stronger native voice in the battlefield's interpretation. National perspectives on Indians changed drastically, as authors such as Dee Brown and Vine Deloria published works highlighting the brutality and incongruity of United States Indian policy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both the American Indian Movement (AIM) and Indians for Equality urged Custer Battlefield staff to establish a monument for the non-treaty Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho who fought at Little Bighorn that equaled the Seventh Cavalry's obelisk . The activists also pushed the National Park Service to alter the battlefield's interpretive programs that they felt lionized Custer and the Seventh at the expense of American Indians. However, park administrators initially resisted these attempts in favor of preserving the landscape's historic integrity following the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966.[81]

Political and media attention from AIM and other organizations eventually compelled the Monument staff, the National Park Service, and the federal government to reconsider their interpretive policy. In the years preceding the battle's centennial, AIM actions throughout the country forced Park Service administrators to recognize that there were "cultural memories in conflict, struggling to protect, revise, or overturn patriotic orthodoxy." In 1972, the Trail of Broken Treaties caravan made its way to Washington D.C., leaving an inscribed plaque at the base of Seventh Cavalry Monument in memoriam to the fallen Lakota and Cheyenne warriors. The placement of this small plaque was the first action in a string of increasingly bold maneuvers by American Indian advocates demanding inclusion of the Indian resisters' perspectives to battlefield history. Custer Battlefield National Monument found itself in the middle of a culture war between Americans who valued an orthodox patriotism that celebrated Seventh Cavalry troopers as tragic heroes and an

[81]Greene, *Stricken Field*, 227.

American Indian perspective that saw the Seventh as part of a broader policy of genocide against the continent's native inhabitants. Facing recalcitrant monument administrators intent on preserving the battlefield, native proponents led by Russell Means installed a plaque next to the Seventh Cavalry Monument at the battle's anniversary in 1988. The following year, the National Park Service buckled to the winds of change; it formed a task force to design and locate a memorial to the fallen Indian warriors.[82]

Part of the impetus for the task force came with significant changes at the battlefield and within the National Park Service. In 1989, Barbara Booher, a Ute-Cherokee, became the first woman and first Indian superintendent at Custer Battlefield National Monument. Along with her appointment came recognition in the NPS's upper echelons that the agency needed more prominent acknowledgment of the native role in the battle. Testifying before the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, Associate Director for Cultural Resources Jerry Rogers stated that "as the Seventh Cavalry monument records commemorative sentiment of earlier generations, so a memorial to the Indian participants is needed to record a later generation's recognition."[83]

At the same time that Pan-Indian groups and their political allies began advocating for an Indian monument at the battlefield, pressure for an inclusive name-change increased. In 1971, Superintendent William A. Harris raised a proposal to switch the monument's name to Little Bighorn National Battlefield to demonstrate that "the National Park Service, the Federal Government, and the American public recognized both sides of the issue equally." Altering the name meant shifting the monument's focus on the personality of George Custer to one centered on the significance of the battle as an historic event. Proponents faced significant opposition from traditional organizations that lionized Custer as a military hero. Nevertheless, popular sentiment drifted more towards the pro-Indian perspective, lending credibility to arguments that since the federal government had reneged on its responsibilities, a name change and Indian memorial would aid in the restitution of memory. National Park and Conservation Association (NPCA) Cultural Resources Coordinator Bruce Craig labeled the name change not only an important symbolic step but a chance to re-designate the Monument "using a geographic name followed by standardized battlefield nomenclature."[84]

With sentiment building, in 1991 Congress authorized the new name--Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument--and the construction of an Indian Memorial. However, plagued by funding and input issues, the committee did not select a design until 1997. The National Park Service contracted with Roybal Corporation of Denver, Colorado to draft drawings of the winning design from John Collins and Allison Towers of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Echoing the statements of past Cheyenne and Lakota leaders who emphasized peace between their tribes and the United States, the unifying theme of the Memorial was "Peace Through Unity." The final design featured earthen walls with openings at the four cardinal directions. An additional opening called the 'Spirit Gate' allowed

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[82]Greene, *Stricken Field*, 228-29; Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, 142 (quotation), 160-161.
[83]Statement of Jerry Rogers before House Subcommittee, *Custer Battlefield National Monument Indian Memorial*, 9.
[84] Harris quotation from Memorandum, December 12, 1971, in Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, 146; Greene, *Stricken Field*, 228-229;Craig quotation from statement before House Subcommittee, *Custer Battlefield National Monument Indian Memorial*, 15.

those within the Memorial to look southward towards the Seventh Cavalry Monument. Despite the project's prominence and the debates surrounding it, Congress failed to authorize funds for the Memorial, instead relying on private donations. That fundraising proved scanty, raising only $70,000 of the $2 million needed by mid-2001. That fall, Superintendent Neil Mangum pleaded to the Montana congressional delegation for federal funds to make up the difference, citing the federal government's history of broken promises to the tribes as his justification. Mangum's plan worked, and Congress authorized $2.3 million for the Memorial project in the Department of Interior's 2002 budget. In April of 2002, the Monument contracted with Cain Construction Management, Inc. of Billings, Montana to construct the Memorial, completing it the following year. The Monument also selected Colleen Cutschall, an Oglala Lakota artist teaching at Brandon University in Manitoba, to produce the bronze "Spirit Warriors" sculpture, ensuring the inclusion of a native hand in the memorial's construction. However, frequent confusion delayed the completion of the Memorial until April 2003.[85]

When finished, the Indian Memorial stood as an architectural fusion between Modern design elements, traditional proto-historic Plains Indian features, and National park Service visual desires. Modern Amerindian architecture arose out of an internal tension typified by the AIM phenomenon. Glorifying the traditional, AIM often found itself opposing tribal officials who the activists viewed as corrupt and bending to the whims of non-Indian business owners. Hidden within these conflicts was a cultural tension between those who sought to modernize reservations and those who wanted to preserve traditional tribal practices. Much like the National Park Service's Mission 66 program, the resulting building design incorporated elements of both oppositional perspectives. Though drawing on tribes' traditional structural designs, Indian architecture included modern, streamlined features and concrete and steel construction. For the Plains Indians who looked to the Little Bighorn as a symbol of resistance, the Indian Memorial's appearance needed to reflect both the traditional values of the Lakota, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow and Arikara who fought at the battle and the tribes' determination to remain relevant and vibrant in a changing world.[86]

In the design process, several unifying elements of Plains Indians architecture became a part of the Memorial. Perhaps the most basic was shape. The circle was an important and central symbol for many Plains Indians, even if its particular meaning changed from tribe to tribe. It appeared in ceremonial medicine wheels, earth lodge floor plans, and Plains Indian tipis. From the Crow to the Lakota, dwellings faced to the east, representing the cultural importance of the rising sun and the practical need to shelter from the prevailing west winds. Although originally the design team included certain parts of the tipi, including tall poles at the Spirit Gate, they did not remain in the final design. The Hidatsa (ancestors of the Crow) and Arikara maintained earth lodges along the Missouri River Basin for much of the period before horses arrived in the eighteenth century. These

[85] Greene, *Stricken Field*, 229-34.
[86] For a discussion of Modern Amerindian architecture, see Carol Herselle Krinsky, *Contemporary Native American Architecture: Cultural Regeneration and Creativity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996);

structures frequently incorporated grass into their walls, often to preserve stability. Through its allusions to these old dwellings, the Memorial returned to an older tradition for its inspiration.[87]

Perhaps more than any other event, the Indian Memorial's dedication ceremony represented the national significance of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. National dignitaries from the Monument's associated tribes and heads of government agencies including Secretary of Interior Gale Norton attended the celebration. They recognized a fundamental shift in park policy; with a new name, more American Indians on monument staff, and greater accountability to the tribes, the park entered a new era. For many attendees, native and white, the final dedication meant that the Park Service had finally included American Indian memory on equal terms with that of the Seventh Cavalry.[88]

[87]Krinksy, 69; Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton, *Native American Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 122-43.
[88]Greene, *Stricken Field*, 234-38.

F. Associated Property Types

The associated property types for Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument are categorized by the historic contexts outlined in Section E. For the purpose of this MPDF, a property type is a resource (or group of resources) with similar design characteristics that relate to the same historic context. The majority of these property types appear in the two historic districts at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. These districts encompass two areas of the battlefield where some of the most intense fighting took place. Historic District West (formerly referred to as the Custer Battlefield Historic District) includes the main section of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument and centers on the area around the so-called "Last Stand Hill" and the Seventh Cavalry Monument. Historic District East (formerly referred to as Reno-Benteen Battlefield) includes the area surrounding the Reno-Benteen Defense Site. The boundaries of both districts align with the current boundaries of National Park Service ownership at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. This section will clarify the significance of each property type within the two districts and provide guidelines for the consideration of resources not nominated by the 1987 Multiple Resource Assessment (MRA). Should the Monument acquire new lands, this section of the nomination can serve as a guideline for the evaluation of new resources. Resources outside the boundary of Park Service management could be nominated under this MPDF and the following property types, subject to the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act. The property types have been based on both the types listed in the 2010 Cultural Landscapes Inventory of the battlefield and the above contexts. They incorporate the built environment and natural landscape features of the battlefield comprehensively.

The four criteria for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places are: A.) association "with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history," B.) association "with the lives of persons significant in our past," C.) properties that "embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction," and D.) properties "that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history." Because of the battlefield area's diverse array of features, some resources could be potentially eligible under multiple criteria and areas of significance. However, in the interests of simplification, the significance of each resource has been narrowed to one historic context and one to two areas of significance. Furthermore, although the battlefield is primarily significant at the national level for its association with the American Indian Wars, some resources may be significant at the local or state level.[89]

[89] *Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms, Part A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, National Register Bulletin 16A (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 1997), 37.

Property Types of the "Native American Occupation and Culture on the Northwestern Plains" Context

Property Type: Native American – Pre- and Proto-Historic Archeological Sites

Description

Archeological resources at Little Bighorn battlefield can include artifacts (such as projectile points), features (such as hearths or maintenance sites), and ecological evidence (such as pollen remains that indicate the presence of vegetation during the resource's period of significance). Several sites and areas within the battlefield contain archeological resources dating to before the Battle of the Little Bighorn. In a major archeological inventory conducted after a major grassfire in 1983, researchers discovered several lithic scatters and isolated finds relating to pre-historic occupation of the grasslands above the Little Bighorn River. These scatters and finds generally consist of isolated projectile points and flaking from projectile maintenance. Materials found included basalt, agate, porcellanite, chert and quartzite.

In 1989, an archeological team under Douglas D. Scott evaluated the pre-battle archeological resources within the National Monument. Although the team found two sites and several isolated finds in Historic District West, they did not find any pre-battle resources in the Historic District East. The team concluded that the two sites in Historic District West were not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places due to the minimal amount of materials at the site.[90]

Significance

Archeological resources at Little Bighorn Battlefield dating prior to the battle illuminate the region's pre-history and proto-history. At present, no known archeological resources in this category qualify for the National Register. If future archeological discoveries are found within district boundaries covered by the MPD, their significance should be assessed relative to other pre-historic and proto-historic archeological finds in the Little Bighorn Valley. Any resources that significantly contribute to the understanding of the area's pre-historic and proto-historic occupation should be considered under the context "Indian Occupation and Culture on the Northwestern Plains" in this MPD. They would be eligible for the National Register at the national, state or local level under Criterion D in the area of Archeology, either Pre-Historic Aboriginal or Historic Aboriginal.

Guidelines for Determination of Eligibility

As discussed in National Register Bulletin 36 "Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Archeological Properties," integrity depends on the site's significance but can include all seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. For

[90] Scott, *Uncovering History*, 14-16.

archeological resources to be eligible under this MPDF, they should provide insight into the lives of pre- and proto-historic American Indian peoples in the Little Bighorn valley and the environment in which they lived. They should also retain the necessary integrity to convey that significance.

Property Type: Native American – Monuments and Markers

Dedication of "Unknown Sioux" warrior marker on Wooden Leg Hill, 2003, Little Bighorn Battlefield (left) and Indian Memorial viewed from the Tour Road looking north, 2009, Bob Reece, (right).

Description

Indian monuments and markers are a diverse set of potentially eligible resources at the battlefield including three property subtypes: stone cairns, warrior markers, and memorials. This property type includes all commemorative monuments and markers at the battlefield constructed and/or established by American Indians.

Following their victory in 1876, many Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho returned to the battlefield to commemorate the warriors of their tribes who fought at Little Bighorn. They left markers of various forms to their deceased comrades and family members. The earliest markers were sandstone cairns laid roughly where the associated warrior fell in battle or possibly locations of important events during the battle. John Stands in Timber claimed to have placed markers at key points in the battle from his own memory, including the location of a Lakota casualty at the Reno fight and where Lakota Low Dog and Cheyenne Little Sun killed a cavalry trooper near Medicine Tail Coulee. These stone cairns are typically stacks of Parkman's sandstone or other local stone convincingly collected and placed by human hands. The concurrence of an archeologist may be necessary to determine the provenance of stone features on the battlefield. They are frequently small, only several inches in height. They represent efforts by tribal members to memorialize the Cheyenne, Lakota, and Arapaho battle participants and were the first material efforts to that end. Documentation on stone cairns is both culturally and archeologically sensitive. Family members are often reluctant to share information on where and when they placed a cairn and for whom. Important historical information is frequently only passed down orally from generation to generation. These resources are

classed as archeologically-sensitive. Therefore, their locations are not generally available to the public. It is possible that the majority of cairns represent Cheyenne casualties due to the geographic proximity of the Northern Cheyenne reservation. At present there are seven confirmed cairns on the battlefield.[91]

In 1999, the associated tribes of the battle and the National Park Service began cooperating on a project to place red granite markers at locations where reasonable evidence indicated an American Indian warrior fell. Since that time, the National Park Service has overseen the placement of 19 markers throughout the battlefield. The information for each cairn placement came from both oral tradition, native accounts of the battle and occasionally, rock cairns placed in tribute to the fallen warriors. The dimensions of the markers approximate that of the Seventh Cavalry markers: a 4" by 10" face and height of 16-20" above grade.

The most significant monument was the Indian Memorial, dedicated in 2003 in memory of all the Indian battle participants, most notably the Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho but also Crow and Arikara fighting as scouts for the Seventh U.S. Cavalry. To date, it is the only collective monument to Native American efforts at the battle and one of the only modern monuments to Native American war casualties in the United States.[92]

Significance

Indian Monuments and Markers should be considered under the "Indian Occupation and Culture on the Northwestern Plains" context, although they could also fall under the "National Park Service at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument" context. They are significant under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage / Native American.

Guidelines for Determination of Eligibility

To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the monument or marker should be a clear reflection of the property type and relate to the contexts identified above. The National Register requires resources that are primarily commemorative in nature meet Criteria Consideration F to be individually eligible. To do so, a resource must be invested with its own historic significance through "design, age, tradition or symbolic value." However, if a commemorative property is a contributing resource in a non-commemorative historic district, it is exempt from Criteria Consideration F. Monument resources nominated under this property type will generally be contributing resources in a historic district and therefore exempt from this requirement. Should a resource be nominated individually, it can meet this requirement if it has symbolic value as a representation of Plains Indian commemoration or American Indian activism in the late-twentieth century, or reflects a shift in historical perspective on the Battle of the Little Bighorn and the American Indian Wars in general.

The National Register also requires properties achieving significance within the last fifty years to have "exceptional importance" to meet Criteria Consideration G. This requirement is waived

[91] E-mail correspondence with Park Ranger Jerry Jasmer, October 21, 2011.
[92] Stands in Timber and Liberty, 207.

if the resource is determined contributing to a district where the majority and most important of the district's resources achieved significance more than fifty years ago. Indian Monuments and Markers considered as part of an historic district under this MPDF do not need to meet Criteria Consideration G. However, the historic district's period of significance must extend to include the dates of significance of the newest monuments and markers. Resources less than fifty years old considered individually would need to qualify as exceptionally important. Indian Monuments and Markers nominated under this MPDF meet this requirement if they represent a nationally-recognized shift in historical perspective regarding the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the American Indian Wars, and/or the relationship between the United States Government and the Indian tribes residing within its borders.

Property Types of the "American Indian Wars" Context

Property Type: American Indian Wars – Battle Sites

The Battle Sites property type is the resource from which Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument attains its primary significance. Battle sites should be considered under the "American Indian Wars on the Northwestern Plains" context. They are significant at the national level under Criteria A, B and D. Under these three criteria, battle sites are significant in the area of Military for their association with the Battle of the Little Bighorn and its primary personalities, George A. Custer, Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, and Gall. This battle is the most recognized engagement between the United States military and American Indian tribes in American history. Perhaps the only other battle of this conflict comparable for its place in American memory is the 1891 fight at Wounded Knee Creek where the Seventh U.S. Cavalry killed nearly 300 Lakota, mostly women and children.

At present, two battle sites exist under this MDP, both of which consist of limited areas within the broader battlefield landscape. The first comprised a roughly square 760-acre parcel of land on the east bank of the Little Bighorn River area where Lakota and Cheyenne forces annihilated Custer and five companies of the Seventh. This site includes a portion of the area where Companies C, E, F, I, and L of the Seventh Cavalry engaged elements of the Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho camp on the afternoon of June 25th, 1876. Fierce fighting in the ravines and coulees and along the ridges and hilltops ultimately ended with the combined American Indian force destroying the five companies of the Seventh. The second battle site comprises a limited 162-acre portion of the area where forces under Maj. Marcus A. Reno retreated after the initial engagement and entrenched as Lakota and Cheyenne warriors besieged seven companies of the Seventh. With the assistance of reinforcements under the command of Capt. Frederick W. Benteen and Capt. Thomas M. McDougall, Reno's men held off attacking allied Indian forces through the evening of the 26th.[93]

Description

This property type includes sites and archeological resources within Little Bighorn Battlefield where Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho warriors under the leadership of Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull and others clashed with Seventh U.S. Cavalry troops under the command of Lt. Col. George A. Custer from June 25th-26th, 1876. The Battle Sites property type incorporates the comprehensive landscape in which the Battle of the Little Bighorn took place, including terrain, vegetation, water features, entrenchments, and archeological resources. These contributing elements

[93] For discussion of battlefield resources in relation to the National Register of Historic Places, see *Guidelines for Identifying, Evaluating and Registering America's Historic Battlefields*, National Register Bulletin 40 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 1999); Utley, *Little Bighorn Battlefield*, 52.

include the archeological resources and the Northwestern Great Plains Mixed-Grass Prairie, Western Great Plains Wooded Draw and Ravine, and Northwestern Great Plains Floodplain ecosystems.[94]

Little Bighorn River – Northwestern Great Plains Floodplain

Little Bighorn River from east bank looking northwest, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument (left), and Little Bighorn River from east bank near west boundary marker, 2011, Jim Bertolini (right).

Presently, the Little Bighorn River and its surrounding floodplain consist of a meandering channel with variant seasonal flow. Sharp cut banks on bends and frequent re-channeling from floods have scarred much of the river bed. Although the river's western bank gently slopes upward across the Little Bighorn Valley, its east bank cuts into the bluffs, creating steep cutaways with sparser vegetation. Wetland forests such as these typically act as "sponges, absorbing floodwaters, buffering nutrients, improving water quality, and serving as nurseries."[95]

An ecotone from the bluffs and the river extends between the Western Great Plains Wooded Draw and Ravine and the Northwestern Great Plains Floodplain ecosystems. The draws and ravines contain thick growths of western snowberry (*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), and silver buffaloberry (*Shepherdia argentea*). As the draws and ravines empty onto the floodplain, the ecotone comprises shrubs listed above intermixed with silver sagebrush (*Artemesia cana*), western wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*) and green needlegrass (*Stipa viridula*). In the sandy soils along the stream bed, lush growths of Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) dominate although Eastern Cottonwood (*Populous deltoides*) and Box Elder (*Acer negundo*) and some sandbar willow (*Salix exigua*) are present in significant numbers. The invasive Russian olive (*Eleagnus*

[94] U.S. Department of the Interior, DRAFT *Vegetation Classification and Mapping Project Report, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument*, viii.
[95] Nancy Langston, *Where Land & Water Meet: A Western Landscape Transformed* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 3.

augustifolia) and salt cedar (*Tamarisk ramosissima*) have colonized the river bed in limited numbers.[96]

Historically, the Little Bighorn River was a deep and swift-moving river during the early summer, around the time of the battle. Accounts indicate that the bed was deep enough to require the horses of Reno's detachment to swim across the river during their flight from the woods into the valley. The riparian woodland through which warriors of the allied Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho camps crossed to attack Custer's five companies consisted of limited stands of Eastern Cottonwood intermixed with Green Ash and tall, thick riparian grasses. Frequent Crow, Lakota and Cheyenne encampments along the Little Bighorn River culled the understory of the river bottoms by using underbrush for firewood, trampling new growth, and feeding cottonwood bark to their horse herds in winter. She Walks with Her Shawl (Hunkpapa) also mentioned that the water below where Reno crossed was much lower because of a beaver dam between the two battle sites.[97]

Col. John Gibbon provided a valuable description of the Little Bighorn upon his column's arrival to the battlefield on the morning of June 27th:

> It winds through its valley in a very crooked bed, bordered in many places with high precipitous banks, and is generally through this part of its course very sluggish, and wherever this is the case the water is deep enough to swim a horse. At various intervals between these sluggish parts the water becomes shallow enough to admit of fording, and goes rippling along to form the next deep spot below… On our right is the wooded bank of the river, the intervening space between the cottonwood trees being filled up with brushwood. On our left the valley opens out into a grass-covered prairie, fringed on its southern side, and again on its western side, where the stream curves to the north again, with timber and brushwood.[98]

Lt. Edward J. McClernand also described the mouth of the river as "about 20 yards wide and 2 ½ feet deep, and there were beautiful groves of cottonwood and ash along its banks." The willow trees along the banks not only provided shelter for wounded warriors after the battle, but may have been cut and used to help the Cheyenne and Lakota count the dead cavalry troopers.[99]

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[96] U.S. Department of the Interior, DRAFT *Vegetation Classification and Mapping Project Report, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument*, 22.

[97] Several accounts describe the river as deep and swift with thick grass and undergrowth at the time of the battle, including Moving Robe Woman (Hunkpapa), Eagle Elk (Oglala), from Hardorff, *Lakota Recollections of the Custer Fight*, 95, 102-103; She Walks with Her Shawl interview appears in Jerome A. Greene, *Lakota and Cheyenne: Indian Views of the Great Sioux War, 1876-77* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 45.

[98] Taken from John Gibbon, *Gibbon on the Sioux Campaign of 1876* (Bellevue, NE: Old Army Press, 1970), 38-39.

[99] Taken from Edward J. McClernand, *With the Indian and the Buffalo in Montana, 1870-1878* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1969), 55; Significance of willow documented in accounts from Two Moons in *Lakota Recollections of the Custer Fight*, 133.

Uplands – Mixed-Grass Prairie and Wooded Draws

Keogh sector looking northwest, 2011, Jim Bertolini (left), typical coulee and draw vegetation, 2010, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, (right).

The battle sites of Little Bighorn mostly comprised these vegetation types, more specifically Northwestern Great Plains Mixed-Grass Prairie and Western Great Plains Wooded Draw and Ravine. The drier uplands are mostly mixed-grass prairie, dominated by western wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*) and bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum*) intermixed with patches of sagebrush (*Artemisia* sp. *cana* or *tridentata*). Also very common but patchy in distribution are needle and thread grass (*Stipa comata*), green needlegrass (*Stipa viridula*), prairie sand reedgrass (*Calamovilfa longifolia*), Soapweed Yucca (*Yucca glauca*), and Plains Prickly Pear (*Opuntia polyacantha*) Several common but sparse grasses include threadleaf sedge (*Carex filifolia*), sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), and blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*).[100]

In the ravines and coulees on the battlefield, water collects and allows for the establishment of Great Plains Wooded Draw vegetation. This includes a variety of fescue and shortgrasses listed above mixed with shrubs including Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*). Accounts from battle survivors and historic photographs help to identify the vegetation at the battlefield from 1876 onward. Many Lakota and Cheyenne participants described the use of sagebrush, especially in and around the ravines, for cover as they moved in on Seventh Cavalry positions at both battle sites.[101]

Since the battle, the upland environment of Little Bighorn Battlefield has changed significantly due to factors including climate, agricultural development, and recent fires. In the last

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[100] Vegetation classifications taken from U.S. Department of the Interior, DRAFT *Vegetation Classification and Mapping Project Report, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument*; also description of species from p22.
[101]Nearly every published account of the Lakota and Cheyenne warriors in the battle reference the use of sage and other brush as cover. For examples, see Hardorff, *Lakota Recollections of the Custer Fight*, and Greene, *Lakota and Cheyenne*.

several decades (most notably in 1983), fire destroyed the vast majority of sagebrush within the historic district boundaries. While yucca and prickly pear remain, the dominant grasses have shifted to Bluebunch Wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum*), Western Wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*) and Green Needlegrass (*Nassella viridula*). Several non-native grasses, most prominently Kentucky Bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), Japanese Brome (*Bromus japonicus*) and Cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*), have established themselves in stands throughout the district, mostly along developed areas such as the trails and road.[102]

Significance

Significance Under Criterion A

The historical significance of Little Bighorn Battlefield has been well-established in the context "American Indian Wars on the Northwestern Plains." The battle was the climax of the conflict between the Lakota and Cheyenne tribes and the United States. That information will not be repeated here.

Significance Under Criterion B

Five significant persons render the Battle of Little Bighorn significant under Criterion B. Representing the Lakota and Cheyenne leaders during the conflict, Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse and Gall all rose to prominence among the Lakota in the aftermath of the 1868 treaty signed at Fort Laramie. While Red Cloud attempted to negotiate peace, these three young leaders viewed the treaty violations and encroachments by whites as grounds for armed resistance.

Sitting Bull

[102] U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Draft *Vegetation Classification and Mapping Project Report, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument*, P. Rice, W. Gustafson, E. W. Schweiger, D. Manier, D. Shorrock, C. Lea and B. Frakes, Natural Resource Technical Report NPS/XXXX/NRTR—20XX/XXX, Fort Collins, Colorado, 2011, 20-21, 26-29.

Sitting Bull, ca. 1885. Photo by William Notman Studios. Photo from Library of Congress.

An outspoken critic of reservations, Sitting Bull became one of the unifying leaders among his own Hunkpapa Lakota as well the Oglalas, Minneconjous, Northern Cheyennes, Yanktonais, and Santees (among many others) who followed the bison on the unceded lands of eastern Wyoming and Montana. Sitting Bull became a legend among whites for his constant raiding and harassing of white settlers and army posts throughout the Northern plains from the 1850s. Recognized among many tribes as the most accomplished political, religious and military leader of the Northern plains, he continued to resist reservation life even after his surrender to the U.S. military in 1881. He became a tribal war chief in 1857 and the recognized supreme chief of most non-treaty bands of the Northern plains after a ceremony in 1869. During the Battle of the Little Bighorn, he attempted to orchestrate defense, often remaining back from the main lines and ensuring the defense of the women and children fleeing the fighting. Following the battle, he retreated with his followers to Canada, refusing to surrender until the summer of 1881.[103]

Crazy Horse

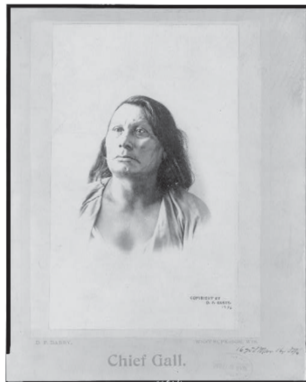
Americans of all backgrounds widely regard Crazy Horse as the quintessential Indian war hero. Still a symbol of resistance for many tribes including his own Oglala Lakota, he was among the most formidable military leaders of the Northern plains Indians. Along with Hunkpapa Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse led a powerful resistance against the encroachment of whites throughout the mid-nineteenth century, earning respect from friend and foe alike. Born in 1840, Crazy Horse allied himself with other Lakota who chose non-cooperation with the United States from the outset of interaction. Convinced of Lakota power, he fought ruthlessly against the enemies of his tribe, whether other Plains tribes or the United States. During the Great Sioux War, he and Sitting Bull were the principal leaders in the allied non-treaty encampment and aided in rallying so many warriors into one group. At the Battle of the Little Bighorn, he led forces against both Reno's men in the Valley and against Custer's troops atop Calhoun Hill and Battle Ridge. However, by 1877 he saw no

[103] Robert M. Utley and Wilcomb E. Washburn, T*he Indian Wars*, (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1977), 265-66; Utley, *Sitting Bull*, 86-87.

other option but to surrender to the Red Cloud Agency in South Dakota. He was killed in custody in September of 1877, destined to become a continuing symbol of autonomy for Indian peoples.[104]

[104] See Bray, *Crazy Horse*, xv-xviii, 389-90.

Gall



Gall. Photograph by O.S. Goff (Orlando Scott), ca. 1896. Photo from Library of Congress.

Gall was a prominent leader among the Hunkpapa Lakota and a formidable war leader known among his own people and U.S. cavalry commanders as a skilled and vicious tactician. He was a comrade of Sitting Bull's in many fights and earned the nickname, the "Fighting Cock of the Sioux," among cavalry troopers. However, his personality is not as easy to reconstruct as Sitting Bull's or Crazy Horse's. Gall eventually ratified the 1868 Laramie Treaty in exchange for gifts for his band of Hunkpapas. He abandoned Sitting Bull in Canada in 1881 to surrender to the reservation. Upon his surrender at the Battle of Poplar River, he became a leader in reservation life, participating in tribal government and agricultural education. In so doing he became reviled by Sitting Bull and others who resisted reservation policy even after they had surrendered.[105]

[105] See Larson, *Gall: Lakota War Chief.*

George A. Custer

George A. Custer, ca. 1860-65, photographer unknown. Photograph from Library of Congress.

George Armstrong Custer remains perhaps one of the most well-known historical figures in American history, in large part, due to his actions at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Although in 1861, Custer graduated from the United States Military Academy last in his class, his displays of courage and meritorious actions during the Civil War quickly attracted the attention of his superiors. By the age of 23, Custer had become a Brigadier General, making him one of the youngest men ever to hold that rank in the history of the United States Army. Custer led cavalry troops during Gen. Philip Sheridan's 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaigns, after Union commanders adopted a policy of total war on southern civilians as well as soldiers. These tactics later influenced Custer and his colleagues in their campaigns against Plains Indians. Rapid promotions and brash behavior did not endear the general to all his colleagues. After Congress disbanded the large volunteer Army in 1866, the War Department assigned General Custer to the newly formed Seventh Cavalry as its lieutenant colonel. He served in the Hancock Expedition on the Northern plains in 1867. However, under scrutiny for his leadership decisions, the War Department conducted a court martial and suspended Custer from rank and command for one year.

Upon his return to duty in 1868, Custer established a reputation as an able commander against Lakota and Cheyenne tribes on the central and northern plains. In one of many 'scorched earth' campaigns against resistant Indian tribes, Custer led troops in the attack on the Southern Cheyennes at Washita River in 1868. He also led the Seventh U.S. Cavalry during the 1873 expedition through the Yellowstone River valley and during the 1874 Black Hills expedition. After the Lakota and Northern Cheyenne refused to comply with Commanding General William T. Sherman's order to return to their reservations in the winter of 1875, Custer and the Seventh Cavalry became an integral component of Gen. Sheridan's 1876 campaign. For reasons that still engage

historians and enthusiasts, Custer's column met disaster upon meeting Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull at Little Bighorn on June 25th of that year.

His performance and subsequent death at Little Bighorn Battlefield have made George A. Custer the dynamic and quintessential icon of the American West. Both reviled as a genocidal implement of U.S. colonialism and revered as an example of heroic sacrifice in the cause of Manifest Destiny, Custer's image has morphed far beyond the realities of his life. His action at Little Bighorn remains the subject of debate among both Indian Wars historians and amateur Little Bighorn enthusiasts.

Marcus A. Reno

Marcus A. Reno. Date and photographer unknown. Photo from Friends of the Little Bighorn.

While Custer's personal history has gained much more prominence than that of Maj. Marcus Reno, Reno's actions at the battle have become historically significant as well. Military officials, historians, and history buffs have debated the efficacy of Reno's leadership at the Battle of the Little Bighorn since the fight's completion. Of concern was whether Reno's command decisions led to Custer's demise or if they indeed saved the lives of the men under his and Capt. Frederick Benteen command. Graduating from the U.S. Military Academy in 1857, Reno took the route of many mid-century graduates. He began his career in the early American Indian Wars on the Plains before turning to service in the U.S. Army during the Civil War. Rising to the rank of colonel, Reno returned to the U.S. Cavalry following the war and served in the West. Assigned to the Seventh Cavalry, Reno took command of three companies at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Reno remains a controversial character with many Custer enthusiasts believing Reno could have prevented the Colonel's demise with more aggressive action. Although a court martial held after the battle cleared Reno of any wrongdoing, other officers repudiated him and eventually forced him from the military. Finally, in1967, officials returned Reno's remains to the battlefield, buried in Custer Battlefield National Cemetery with full military honors.

Guidelines for Determination of Eligibility

Battle sites nominated under this MPDF should be sections of land over which members of either the Seventh Cavalry or the combined Plains Indian camp traveled or fought during the Battle of the Little Bighorn on June 25-27th, 1876. According to the National Register of Historic Places, sites within battlefields should be defined as the largest extent in which an engagement took place. Non-contiguous sites within a single battlefield are justified where the combat between both forces took place at two non-contiguous points and the lands in between those points are not important in defining the battlefield. As a property type, a battle site should be a collection of battle-related features including archeological resources and entrenchments, terrain, and vegetation in which fighting took place.

For battle sites to be eligible for the National Register, they must be directly associated with the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Generally, battle sites should be considered as districts containing at least one battle site as well as other associated property types (see below). The district boundaries should enclose landscapes over which people of the allied Indian encampment or the Seventh U.S. Cavalry moved or fought on either June 25th or 26th, 1876. Examples of sites associated with the battle include Reno's Crossing, Reno's Defense site, the Medicine Tail Coulee, the Indian encampment site, and Last Stand Hill. Archeological resources within the site should portray clusters of activity during the engagement.

Battle sites fall under the definition of cultural landscapes as historic sites. Cultural landscapes inevitably include biotic elements as significant resources due to their influence on the battle's outcome. Consequently, the seven aspects which battle sites must retain to have integrity are somewhat different than a typical property type. Integrity of setting, feeling, association and location apply normally. However, biotic elements require the evaluation of community organization and structure (to replace design), species composition (to replace materials), and management techniques (to replace workmanship). For discussion of landscape integrity (notably community organization and structure, species composition, and management techniques), refer to the above historic contexts. For integrity of management techniques, the reader can reference the "American Indian Occupation and Culture on the Northwestern Plains" context which details environmental history and landscape change in and around the battlefield prior to and since 1876. Integrity of species composition and community organization and structure should reference the "American Indian Wars on the Northwestern Plains" context as they will depend on how accurately the landscape reflects the ecology and historic uses in place in 1876. These processes may include frequent horse grazing in the valley, sporadic bison grazing on the uplands, seasonal burning in grassland areas, and seasonal flow of the Little Bighorn River.

Property Type: American Indian Wars – Archeological Site

Little Bighorn Battlefield contains a wealth of battle-related archeological resources from remains of equipment to in-situ ballistics. Although knowledge of archeological resources has been well-established since the creation of Custer Battlefield National Cemetery, scholars did not undertake serious archeological inquiry there until 1958. At that time, NPS archeologist Robert Bray conducted a limited investigation of entrenchments in Historic District East, including the excavation and restoration of entrenchments constructed by Maj. Reno and his men as they defended the hilltops. The most significant archeological research took place in the mid-1980s under the direction of NPS archeologists Douglas Scott and Richard Fox among others. Study of the battle through archeology has been a constant since that time.

Description

Archeological resources at Little Bighorn Battlefield include bullets, cavalry equipment, weaponry, and other combat and field equipment utilized by the Seventh Cavalry, Crow and Arikara scouts, and Lakota, Cheyenne and other warriors. Due to the expanse and intensity of fighting, these resources are scattered throughout the battlefield with relatively high density. Clusters of resources retained in-situ are generally present where the most intense fighting took place or on terrain over which significant bodies of soldiers on either side moved during the fight. While relic-hunting has been an issue since the 1890s when the War Department first actively supervised the battlefield, the parcels presently managed by the National Park Service retain a relatively high level of integrity and ability to yield information.

Significance

Archeological materials relating to the Battle of the Little Bighorn are one of the most significant historic resources at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. While visitors frequently collected relics throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, serious archeological study began in the 1940s under Park Service Superintendent Edward S. Luce. He and his fellow researchers used archeological evidence to augment their contemporary understandings of the battle. This involved not only uncovering artifacts but recording their location and relationship to the topography, white marble soldier markers, oral and written accounts, and other archeological resources found on the battlefield. In-depth archeological research of the village location in the valley has not yet been undertaken.

Archeological resources relating to the Battle of Little Bighorn are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the national level under Criterion A in the Military area of significance for their association with the Battle of the Little Bighorn. These resources are also eligible at the national level under Criterion D in the Military area of significance for their potential to yield further information about the battle. Most archeological resources remain on the battlefield in-situ, and the

majority of these have not been actively surveyed. These archeological resources have clarified several issues related to the battle as detailed below.[106]

Clarification of Soldier Marker Locations: Historians have long assumed that the white marble markers dotting the landscape at the battlefield marked locations where individual Seventh Cavalry troopers fell. Archeological research completed in the past has both verified and undermined the veracity of different markers. For example, although only 210 Seventh Cavalry troopers died in the area around District One, 252 markers rest on the landscape. In Historic District Two, only six markers designate a battlefield where over 50 troopers died. The search for archeological resources to further evaluate these markers is ongoing.

Osteo-biology of the Seventh Cavalry: Excavation of Seventh Cavalry trooper remains left on the field has provided information about the social history of the U.S. Cavalry soldiers during the American Indian Wars, including average weight, height, diet and health of individuals at the time of death. Battlefield remains have also served to correct the historical record.

Clarification of Battle Positions: Ballistic archeological research focusing on cartridge casings and incoming bullets discovered seven firing positions (six in District One, one in District Two) previously unknown to scholars of the battle. These discoveries have augmented the record of known troop movements and battle positions during the engagement.

Clarification of Soldier Equipment: Systematic archeological research has answered questions regarding the equipage, clothing and weaponry of the Seventh Cavalry troopers during the battle. Such artifacts indicate that the troopers generally carried earlier-issue equipment rather than the latest weaponry and technology.

Clarification of Armament Questions: Comparative archeological research conducted at the battlefield has answered several questions about both side’s use of weapons. Various studies have shown that the Native American warriors carried a broad array of weapons from trade muskets to state-of-the-art magazine-fed Winchester rifles. Although many scholars have cited cartridge extraction failure as a factor in Custer’s defeat, archeological evidence has revealed that extraction failure was insignificant. Ballistic

[106] The following areas of contribution have been paraphrased from a draft amendment to the 1987 nomination of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, completed by the Rocky Mountain Regional Office in 1991. The draft amendment was never completed nor filed with the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places.

investigations have also helped identify specific weapons and their actions in the battle, linking them to particular troop or warrior positions.

Clarification of the Historic Record/Tradition: Several archeological studies, most notably those of Richard Fox (1989), have revealed the reliability of many Native American warrior accounts of the battle. They have uncovered several errors in white narratives that necessitated re-interpretation of the battle's events.

Development of the Battlefield Pattern within the Anthropology of War Theory: The original draft amendment covering archeological resources cited the lack of battlefield archeology relating directly to anthropological theory on warfare. Due to the intensive archeological study of Little Bighorn Battlefield, the draft amendment argued that the Little Bighorn could serve as a significant case study in the general analysis of battlefield behavior. Significant headway in this field has not been made, and thus, the battlefield retains its significance in regard to this theory and could provide important implications for the international study of battlefield archeology.[107]

These statements were based on archeological investigations completed in 1984 and 1985 that inventoried approximately 35% of the available resources at the battlefield. Although the park has continued studies since that time, park staff has not yet surveyed all of the archeological resources at the battlefield. They have the potential to yield information about the Indian encampment in the valley, including late-nineteenth century tribal practices, non-treaty band conditions in the American Indian Wars, and response patterns by American Indian warriors during the fight. Based on the preceding contributions, the battlefield resources of the Battle of the Little Bighorn are significant under Criterion D for their potential to yield future information and Criterion A for their association with the battle.

Guidelines for Determination of Eligibility

Archeological resources at Little Bighorn Battlefield should be considered under the "American Indian Wars on the Northwestern Plains" context and are eligible under Criteria A and D of the National Register. They are eligible under Criterion A at the national level for their association with the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Under Criterion D, they are also eligible at the national level for their ability to yield information about the American Indian Wars, late-nineteenth century Plains Indian tactics and armament, battle tactics and psychology in modern warfare, and specifically about troop movements and armament at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Although some loss of integrity

[107] All areas paraphrased from: "Draft Amendment to Custer Battlefield National Monument," Folder H-32 "National Register of Historic Places," Administrative Files, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

can be expected due to relic-hunting at the battlefield, archeological resources should be capable of representing patterns of troop and warrior activity during the battle.

Property Types of the "War Department" Context

Property Type: War Department – Monuments and Markers

Seventh Cavalry Monument, 2011, Jim Bertolini (left), Seventh Cavalry markers, 2005, Bob Reece (right).

Description

The War Department Monuments and Markers property type includes all physical evidence laid by Seventh Cavalry patrons and supporters and the federal government to commemorate U.S. Cavalry troops at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Markers are generally small, white marble headstones placed where Seventh Cavalry troopers are believed to have fallen. Placed by veterans of the American Indian Wars, monuments are generally granite and mark a central location in the progress of the battle. There are two monuments memorializing the Seventh Cavalry at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. The first, in Historic District East, is the Seventh Cavalry Memorial, erected in 1881 to replace an existence cordwood monument and inscribed with the names of two hundred and sixty-one troopers who fell at the battle in 1876. The second is the Reno-Benteen Monument erected in 1929 to remember the actions of Seventh Cavalry troopers under the commands of Maj. Marcus A. Reno and Capt. Frederick Benteen.

Two hundred and sixty-five white marble markers scatter throughout the battlefield at places where Seventh Cavalry troopers, civilian attaches and U.S. Army Scouts are believed to have fallen. Rooted in a marble base, the markers are white marble tablets with a face approximately 10" wide and 4" thick. They have a rounded top and stand approximately 16-20" above grade. They have a

raised inscription on the face placed within a sunken shield. Typically indicating officers, some markers name the soldier that the marker represents. For most enlisted troops, the face of the marker reads:

U.S. SOLDIER
Seventh CAVALRY
FELL HERE.
JUNE 25th, 1876

The first known markers were cedar stakes where the remains of Seventh Cavalry troopers and scouts lay. In 1890, War Department officials replaced them with white marble markers following the authorization of the Custer Battlefield National Cemetery reservation in 1879. Later, military officials oversaw the placement of several other markers throughout the battlefield, both within and outside of the reservation boundary. In 1881, U.S. Army officials moved the bodies of most of the troopers into a mass grave beneath the Seventh Cavalry Monument on "Last Stand Hill." Consequently, the white marble markers represent an approximation of where Seventh Cavalry troopers fell on the battlefield. Archeological investigations have shown that War Department officials misplaced some tablets. Although there are two hundred and fifty-two markers in and around District One, only two hundred and ten troopers fell in that sector. Although there are only six markers in District Two, over fifty troopers died under Reno and Benteen in the area.

Significance

The 1987 nomination listed both the Seventh Cavalry Monument and Reno-Benteen monuments as contributing to each historic area and described the white marble Seventh Cavalry markers, but it is unclear if it nominated them to the National Register of Historic Places. This MPDF clarifies their significance to Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. The markers should be considered under the context "The War Department at Custer Battlefield National Cemetery." The monuments are eligible for the National Register at the national level under Criterion A in the area of Military as they reflect the efforts of the Seventh Cavalry in the Great Sioux War of 1876-77 and the importance of battlefield preservation and memorialization in the late-nineteenth century United States. Furthermore, the white marble markers are unique examples of the military recognizing the deaths of individual troopers. Such individual recognition represented "a change of the course followed by the Government heretofore in similar cases" of after-action interment of fallen soldiers. The spatial organization of the markers serves to augment the understanding of troop movements and the course of events during the battle.[108]

The primary significance of this property type is commemorative. The National Register of Historic Places requires that commemorative resources meet Criteria Consideration F, which states

[108] Quotation from Col. Nelson H. Davis, Division of the Missouri inspector general, from endorsements of Sanders to AAG, Department of Dakota, May 30, 1882 in Greene, *Stricken Field*, 33.

that any “property primarily commemorative in intent” can only be eligible if “design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance.”[109]

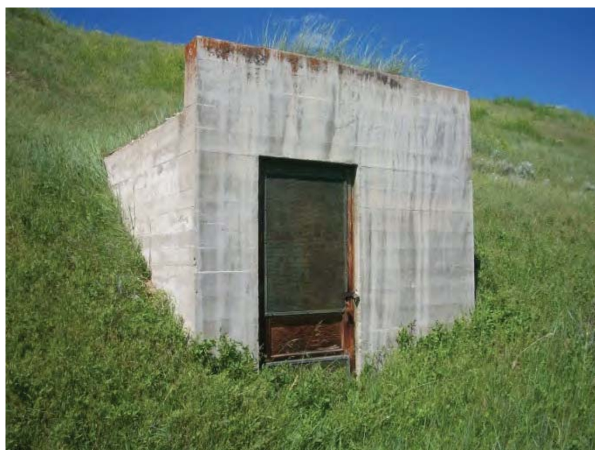
The Seventh Cavalry markers and monuments are exempt from Criteria Consideration F. National Register Bulletin 15 clarifies that commemorative resources nominated as part of a non-commemorative historic district do not have to meet Consideration F. Both historic districts at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument are primarily significant as the site of the Battle of the Little Bighorn from June 25th to 26th, 1876.

Guidelines for Determination of Eligibility

War Department-Era markers and monuments within the boundaries of both historic districts are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the 1987 nomination for Custer Battlefield National Monument. This document provides a description and clarifies significance. Markers not currently listed as eligible (markers outside the boundaries of the two existing historic districts) need be an accurate representation of the property type and retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Due to land use changes in unlisted areas of the battlefield, a marker’s surrounding environment may no longer retain integrity of setting. Loss of integrity in this area does not detract from a marker’s association to the battle, and therefore it is not crucial for a marker to retain integrity of association to its context. Markers also need to meet Criteria Consideration F as outlined above.

[109] Consideration F quotation from National Register Bulletin 16A, 37; Exemption quotation from *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, National Register Bulletin 15 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 1997), 39.

Property Type: War Department – Buildings and Structures



1938 Pump house, 2011, Jim Bertolini (left); Stone House, 2010, Cultural Landscapes Inventory (right).

Description

The War Department buildings and structures covers all construction completed by the War Department during its stewardship of the battlefield from 1876 to 1940. The property type includes the stone Superintendent's House (also called the Stone House) along with other structures and features related to cemetery maintenance. After the War Department designated Custer Battlefield National Cemetery in 1879, the need for some form of on-site stewardship became apparent. By the 1890s, relic hunters, cattle and fire threatened the landscape and sanctity of a place considered a shrine by many Americans. So the War Department transitioned Custer Battlefield National Cemetery from a reserve in name only to a recognizable example of military management. Perhaps the most significant development during War Department stewardship was the completion of the stone house in 1894 to accommodate the first superintendent of the national cemetery, Andrew Grover. The following year, Superintendent Grover oversaw the construction of a maintenance building to the rear of the Stone House, to which military officials added an adjacent garage in 1934.

To support the War Department's goal of creating a national cemetery similar to those in the humid eastern United States, military officials erected several structures associated with irrigating the cemetery. In 1911, the War Department constructed a 20,000 gallon wooden cistern on the northern slope of Last Stand Hill and, the following year, a pump house along the Little Bighorn River. As visitation increased into the twentieth century, in 1932 cemetery officials added a comfort station along the cemetery's southern edge. With the need for water becoming more urgent, the War Department built a new concrete pump house into the bluffs along the Little Bighorn floodplain near the position of the first pump house.

War Department buildings typically revolved around providing controlled access to the cemetery and battlefield. In 1879, the Army Corps of Engineers installed the first boundary markers

demarcating an area of eighteen square miles. However, these corner posts had no fence to enforce the boundary. In 1882, after inspecting the site, Maj. William W. Sanders reported that relic hunters had chipped away at the Seventh Cavalry Monument erected the year before and that cattle and prairie fires had damaged the sticks marking the places officers and men had fallen. By 1884, military officials constructed an iron fence around the Seventh Cavalry Monument to protect it from souvenir takers. In 1889, a detail under Sgt. Herman Vance surveyed a one square mile boundary and established iron boundary markers at its corners. In 1891, the War Department fenced the cemetery boundaries to protect the landscape from trespassers and cattle grazers. Following the erection of the Superintendent's house, the War Department slowly added several additional features including an iron fence around the Last Stand markers in 1930. At some undetermined date, the cemetery superintendent constructed an iron fence around the Reno-Benteen monument, presumably around the time of the monument's construction in 1929.

Significance

The 1987 nomination listed the Stone House as contributing to Custer Historic District, now referred to as Historic District West. This entry clarifies the significance of the Stone House and other War Department buildings to Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. Buildings constructed during the War Department's administration of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument should be considered under the "War Department at Custer Battlefield National Cemetery" context. They may be significant at the local or state level under Criterion A in the areas of Politics & Government for their representation of national cemetery administration on the Northern plains and of Social History for their representation of the importance of commemorating fallen war dead in the American West. They may also be significant at the local level under Criterion C in the area of architecture as examples of permanent military architecture in southeast Montana.

The boundary features of Custer Battlefield National Cemetery should be considered under the "War Department at Custer Battlefield National Cemetery" context. They are significant at the national level under Criterion A in the area of Politics & Government for their representation of national cemetery administration at the battlefield. In the process of clarifying and establishing boundaries for the national cemetery and regulating visitor traffic within those boundaries, these fences and posts served as a reminder of the War Department's presence at the site. Boundaries proved necessary because both neighboring Crow land owners and local ranchers frequently (and illegally) grazed their cattle there in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. For the Crow at least, resistance to the continuous diminishment of their reservation lands despite treaty agreements motivated their trespasses. These transgressions frequently strained the historical friendship between the Crows and the U.S. government and military.

Guidelines for the Determination of Eligibility

Resources nominated under this property type should reflect significant construction activities by the War Department during its stewardship of the cemetery. These include provisioning on-site visitor services, constructing a Superintendent's House, and developing a sufficient water system to irrigate the national cemetery. Consequently, the Stone House and major water system

features should be considered under this nomination. To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, resources must retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Resources nominated under this property type should reflect the War Department's efforts to establish boundaries for the national cemetery reservation and limit the trespass of relic hunters, grazers, and timber cutters. They include the boundary posts placed by Sgt. Vance's detail in 1889 and protective iron fences around the monuments and markers of the battlefield. To be eligible for the national register, resources should retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Property Type: War Department – Roads and Trails

Old entrance road looking towards Hwy 212 (left) and Keogh/Crazy Horse trail looking east (right). Photographs by Jim Bertolini, June 2011.

Description

War Department roads and trails property type includes public and restricted access roads and official and unofficial paths and their historic routes developed during the War Department's stewardship of the battlefield. The National Park Service re-developed most of these resources following the transfer of the battlefield to the NPS in 1940. As visitation increased with the automobile's popularity in the early twentieth century, the development of roads became a necessity for the national cemetery. Frequent visitors varied from friends of the interred to tourists wanting to visit the place where Custer made his famous "last stand." With this need for infrastructure, the War Department oversaw the construction of a modest network of roads from 1910 through the end of military management in 1940.

The roads throughout the battlefield began as little more than wagon tracks. By 1910, the War Department had laid out a single-lane wagon road that traversed the ridge top from the Seventh Cavalry Monument to Calhoun Hill near Lt. Crittenden's grave. By 1915, to accommodate automobiles, cemetery staff had widened and graded the road from the valley to the terminus with a loop at Calhoun hill. Impelled by ever-increasing visitation and desire to unearth all aspects of the battle, military officials commenced a survey project for an extended road in 1924. Awaiting permission from the Crow nation to construct the improved road, the War Department cut a rough road from the Custer site to the Reno Battlefield site and through to the county road opposite Reno

Creek. Beginning in 1938, the War Department began work on the present route, completing the project in 1941.[110]

While many of the active trails including Deep Ravine and Keogh/Crazy Horse date to before 1940, little documentation can be found that establishes any improvements prior to the 1950s after the National Park Service took over the Monument. Many of the trails in question are simple dirt paths created as much by foot traffic as intentional improvement.

Significance

Roads and trails associated with Custer Battlefield National Cemetery should be considered under the "War Department at Custer Battlefield National Cemetery" context as part of an historic district. They are significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Politics & Government for their representation of national cemetery administration at the battlefield.

Guidelines for Determination of Eligibility

Resources nominated under this property type should reflect significant development of infrastructure under the War Department. These resources can include both existing and abandoned roadways as well as trails within districts nominated under this documentation form. Historic routes of roads or trails can also be nominated if their establishment can be confirmed in the historic record. Examples include the abandoned entrance road leading from the valley near the junction of Interstate 90 and U.S. Highway 212, the Battlefield Tour Road, the road to the abandoned pump house, the abandoned road leading south out of Historic District East, and the abandoned road spur heading southeast out of the Historic District West. Trails should have accompanying documentation linking their initial development (designed or social) to the War Department period. To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, resources must retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

[110] Greene, *Stricken Field*, 53, 68-69; Rickey, *History of Custer Battlefield*, 111.

Property Type: War Department – The National Cemetery

Clockwise from upper-right: Aerial view of Custer Battlefield National Cemetery, ca. 1952, photographer unknown, Photo #16215, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM Archives; Cemetery from southwest corner of Section H; Cemetery Road looking northwest to flagpole; West entrance and gateposts. Color photographs by Jim Bertolini, June, 2011.

Description

The "National Cemetery" property type exists for the inclusion of the National Cemetery within Historic District West at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. The War Department designated Custer Battlefield National Cemetery in 1879. However, only after 1888 did the cemetery begin to receive bodies of soldiers who died in engagements other than the Battle of the Little Bighorn. In that year, the War Department moved 111 bodies of soldiers killed at the Fetterman Fight from abandoned Fort Phil Kearny to Custer Battlefield, laying them in three rows just south of Last Stand Hill and placing markers in 1889. Beginning in 1890, burials commenced on a plateau to the northwest of the Seventh Cavalry Monument. By 1891, workers erected a central flagpole. The

following year, remains from abandoned frontier posts began to arrive and were buried in sections A and B of the cemetery. In 1895, laborers removed sagebrush and cactus from the site in an effort to create a more befitting landscape for a national cemetery. However, it took until 1915 for staff to construct an irrigation system that allowed for the effective landscaping of the cemetery in the military tradition. During that year as part of broader roadway improvements, crews graded the roads through the cemetery, and by 1917, they had laid concrete walkways around the Stone House and along the cemetery walkway. Sometime in the early 1930s, the War Department installed a set of stone gateposts and an iron gate at the cemetery's main entrance.

In 1928, the superintendent began an ambitious plan for re-designing the cemetery landscape including planting Rocky Mountain Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* v. *glauca*) trees around the Stone House. In 1931, thirteen Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) and Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) trees joined them. One of the most significant features of War Department improvements in the cemetery were 25 Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) and 150 Blue Spruce (*Picea pungens*) trees planted in 1933. More than any other, this project refashioned the cemetery from an embattled patch of irrigated grass to the traditional image of a national cemetery. As one of the final War Department efforts, staff planted a hedge of Tartarian Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tartarica*) around the edges of the property. Introduced in America in 1752 from southern Russia, gardeners have praised Tartarian Honeysuckle as "one of the best of all the hardy ornamental woody shrubs for garden planting because of its vigorous growth and tidy appearance at all times" as well as its beautiful flowers.[111]

With the gates in place and the honeysuckle hedge growing around the borders of cemetery sections A through D, staff achieved its goal of creating a traditional national cemetery landscape. With the boundaries clarified, the ground well irrigated, and the terrain re-graded, the cemetery represented a softened, nearly pastoral image befitting of the nation's war dead. As veterans continued to make burial requests at Custer Battlefield National Cemetery, in 1967 the National Park Service expanded the cemetery, adding two new sections to the southern edge of the cemetery, labeled Sections G and H.

Significance

The 1987 nomination lists the National Cemetery on the National Register of Historic Places. This entry clarifies the cemetery's significance and determines which features within it are contributing as representative of the property type. The national cemetery should be considered under the "American Indian Wars on the Northwestern Plains" and "War Department at Custer Battlefield National Cemetery" contexts. It is significant at the national level under Criterion A in the area of Military. It has Military significance for its monuments and graves of soldiers killed in famous engagements of the American Indian Wars on the Northwestern Plains, including the Fetterman Fight, Wagon Box Fight, the Hayfield Battle, the Battle of the Big Hole, and the Battle of Bear Paw Mountain. Furthermore, Custer Battlefield National Cemetery is significant for its use by the War Department

[111] Donald Wyman, *Shrubs and Vines for American Gardens* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1949), 207.

as a repository for military remains from many former frontier posts on the Northwestern Plains in the late-nineteenth century, including Fort Custer, Fort C.F. Smith, Fort Buford and Fort Assiniboine.

The national cemetery is also significant at the state level under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture as the only example of national cemetery design in the Northwestern Plains. Its gentle grades of irrigated lawn combine with the trimmed borders of Blue Spruce and Rocky Mountain Juniper to create an image of pastoral tranquility amid the rough prairie environment. Emulating the national cemeteries of the Civil War Era, Custer Battlefield provides a rare example of this design ethic in the surrounding region.[112]

The National Register requires that cemeteries meet Criteria Consideration D. However, Custer Battlefield National Cemetery is exempted from Consideration D because it is “a cemetery that is nominated as part of a district but is not the focal point of the district.”[113]

Guidelines for Determination of Eligibility

The 1987 nomination for Custer Battlefield National Monument listed the National Cemetery as contributing to Custer Historic District, now called Historic District West. These guidelines clarify what elements within the National Cemetery are contributing to the property type.

This property type encompasses the comprehensive landscape of the national cemetery. Therefore resources within this property type should be related to the establishment and maintenance of the national cemetery as a resting place for U.S. military officers and enlisted personnel and their spouses. The property type includes landscape features such as vegetation, monuments, gravestones, walkways, interpretive signs and minor utility features. To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, resources must retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The biotic resources of the cemetery must retain integrity of species composition, management techniques, and community organization and structure. Loss of minor landscaping features (for example, the honeysuckle hedge) may not render the cemetery ineligible if its pastoral character remains intact.

[112] There are no open national cemeteries in Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota or Idaho.
[113] Consideration D exemption quotation from National Register Bulletin 15, 34.

Property Types of the "National Park Service" Context

Property Type: National Park Service – Public Use features

Left: Battlefield Tour Road, photographer and date unknown, Photo #381-700, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM Archives. Right: Visitor Center, parking, and trail, ca. 1960s, photographer unknown, Photo #13479, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM Archives.

Description

National Park Service public use features include all resources related to public administration, interpretation, and visitor services. They exhibit multiple styles and building types, with the defining characteristic that all are intended for interaction with Monument visitors. Following the battlefield's transition from a National Cemetery to a National Monument in 1946, the purpose and landscape of Little Bighorn Battlefield changed drastically. During Mission 66, the Park Service laid out what can be considered an interpretive corridor through the Monument for streamlined access to all of the battlefield's relevant features. To provide interpretation, in 1952 Monument staff commissioned a new visitor's center to the west of The Seventh Cavalry Monument. Contractors moved the entrance from the monument's northwest corner to the northeast, with the road entering directly from U.S. Highway 212 rather than from the valley. In the same project, crews added an entrance station to greet and direct visitors as they entered the Monument. As early as 1947, park staff placed interpretive markers featuring historical information throughout the landscape. Road improvements and short interpretive trails also characterized Park Service development at the Monument.

Significance

Resources in this property type should be considered under the "National Park Service at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument" context. They are significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development as they represent a shift in the

management of the Monument from a national cemetery to an interpretive site after the Second World War. They may also be significant at the local level under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture as examples of National Park Service design principles during their period of significance.

Guidelines for Determination of Eligibility

To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, resources within this property type should reflect significant interpretive development at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. To be eligible under Criterion C, they should reflect the characteristics of a particular mode or style of construction utilized by the National Park Service during the resource's period of significance. They should also retain integrity in all seven aspects: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Property Type: National Park Service – Maintenance features

Left: Utility Building. Right: Pump House. Photos by Jim Bertolini, June 2011.

Description

The National Park Service erected numerous maintenance features within Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. They are usually small sheds or garage-type buildings designed to store and shelter equipment. They can be of wood or concrete block construction and follow standard plans. Most relate to garage facilities for equipment and utility features that enhance the water supply of the Monument. Immediately following the Second World War, the Park Service completed two Quonset huts for needed garage and storage space on the grasslands below the national cemetery. However, like most Park Service units by the early 1950s, Custer Battlefield National Monument found its piecemeal efforts to repair and enhance its installations unsatisfactory. NPS Director Conrad Wirth proposed a service-wide program to correct these changes titled Mission 66. At the Monument, Mission 66 budgeted funds to resolve many of the battlefield's infrastructural shortcomings. Under the program, park staff added a new utility building and pump house to the existing landscape, both of which remain operational. Since the end of Mission 66, the Monument has erected several other utility and maintenance features including a graded terrace below the main Utility Building supporting a shed, yard space, and an additional pump house.

Significance

Resources under this property type should be considered under the "National Park Service at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument" context. They are significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development as an example of infrastructural development under the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument's Mission 66 program. They

may also be significant under Criterion C as a reflection of NPS architecture during key periods of development.

Guidelines for Determination of Eligibility

Resources under this property type should represent a significant development in maintenance or utilities at the Monument and retain integrity to the period of significance. The seven criteria for integrity are location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Property Type: National Park Service – Residential features

Left: Apartment Building. Left: Mission 66 Residential Area. Photographs by Jim Bertolini, 6-15-2011.

Description

Park Service residential features adhere to NPS design guidelines and typically follow standardized plans that include vegetation planted to shield 'un-natural' elements from public view. The National Park Service was responsible for the construction of a residential complex at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. It included three residences, an apartment building for seasonal staff, and a landscaped cul-de-sac modeled after the Ranch-style neighborhoods ubiquitous in 1950s suburban life in the United States. Completed in 1961, these structures still form the core of the Monument's residential accommodations.

Significance

Resources under this property type should be considered under the "National Park Service at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument" context. They are significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development as an example of residential

development under the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument's Mission 66 program. They may also be significant under Criterion C as a reflection of NPS architecture during key periods of development.

Guidelines for Determination of Eligibility

Resources under this property type should represent a significant development in residential construction at the Monument and retain integrity to the period of significance. The seven criteria for integrity are location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

G. Geographical Data

Properties eligible under this MPDF include districts, sites, structures and objects related to the Battle of the Little Bighorn from the initial actions of the Seventh U.S. Cavalry on the morning of June 25th, 1876 to the conclusion of action on the morning of June 27th, 1876. Due to lack of clarity in battlefield archeology, a boundary for potentially eligible properties is difficult to define. The battlefield is roughly bounded by the Crow's Nest site to the south, to the east by the ridges east of Horse-Holder's Ravine, to the west by the extent of the Little Bighorn River's west floodplain, and to the north by the boundary of the town of Crow Agency. Further field survey outside the boundary of the National Monument is necessary to clearly delineate a battlefield boundary. At present, this nomination only lists those resources owned by the National Park Service to the National Register of Historic Places.

Properties within this boundary can be nominated under the MPDF provided they meet the property type guidelines described above and meet the standards for the National Register of Historic Places. This MPDF does not nominate these resources, but does provide an umbrella under which battle-related historic resources can be considered and nominated by their owners and/or interested parties.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

This Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) is a revision of the original National Register of Historic Places Multiple Resource Assessment for Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument (then called Custer Battlefield National Monument). It is intended to replace, not amend, the documentation submitted to the Keeper in 1987 and is designed to integrate new historical scholarship, reports, and methods developed and adopted since that time. This MPDF draws on the new perspectives from environmental history and Indian history and the cultural landscapes approach refined over the past twenty years. As well, it incorporates an updated archeological record and Cultural Landscapes Inventory for the Monument. By assimilating these new tools, this nomination provides a broad and flexible framework for considering historic resources within Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

As part of that framework, the historic contexts identified in this nomination are multi-faceted and dynamic. Using National Register Bulletin 16b as a reference, they explain the broad patterns of history that had visible and vestigial effects on the battlefield. The influence of Indian groups on the cultural landscape has been constant. Occupation by native peoples in the Bighorn River Basin began in the Paleo-Indian period 12,000 years ago and continues to the present. The influence of the National Park Service as a management agency has also continued from 1940 when it began its supervision of the site to the present. The American Indian Wars and the War Department's stewardship of the battlefield left their own visible marks on the area, but the processes that created these effects have ended.

This MPD provides both historic context and guidelines for evaluating existing and future resources at Little Bighorn Battlefield. The property types listed in Section F include all known potential historic resources, references to their related historic contexts from Section E, descriptions, and clarification of how to list eligible resources on the National Register of Historic Places. Much of the context and property types specifically related to the American Indian Wars were based loosely on Jerome Greene's 2003 MPD for Great Sioux War battlefields.

The structure of this MPD and its accompanying revised submissions have been designed to clarify what resources are listed under the MPD, to establish criteria for Section 106 evaluation, and to provide a framework for the inclusion of unlisted resources in the future, either by amendment to existing listings or by new nomination forms. The MPD document does not nominate any resources but contains pertinent information to the entire battlefield or information specific to a resource type as in Section F. All information relevant to a specific historic district or individual resource has been relegated to the revised submission forms. In this case, battle narratives and listed or ineligible/non-contributing resources have been delineated in three attached forms, namely the revised Historic District East and Historic District West forms and a new submission that individually nominates the 2003 Indian Memorial.

I. Major Bibliographical References

(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

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