



JULY AND AUGUST 1974

LT. COL. G. A. CUSTER, 7th CAVALRY.

by
CAPT W. LUDLOW CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Exploring The Black Hills, 1855-1875: Reports of the Government Expeditions

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The expedition of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark began a long series of explorations of the American West sponsored by the United States government. By the 1850s settlers and gold-seekers followed explorers and fur traders across the Great Plains to California, Oregon, and Utah. The Black Hills, centrally located in the northern Plains, potentially strategic for military operations against the Plains Indians, and a rumored source of gold, attracted official and unofficial intruders.

This article concerning Colonel William Ludlow's topographical report of General George A. Custer's 1874 expedition is the fourth in a series on government explorations of the Black Hills preceding the gold rush of 1876. Observations by the government explorers served as a basis for the determination of policy and provided information for future settlers and miners. The published reports are difficult for the general reader to locate and include much extraneous material for any but the avid academic. This series of articles reprints significant excerpts from the journals within a framework of biographical data about the explorers. Much of the material omitted is technical or scientific data such as weather charts and barometric readings. The first three articles discussed the explorations of Lieutenant Gouverneur K. Warren, Captain William Franklin Reynolds, and Doctor Ferdinand Vandiveer Hayden; the sequence will conclude with the expedition of Professor Walter P. Jenney and Henry Newton.

Colonel William Ludlow and the Custer Expedition, 1874

In 1861 the United States Congress created Dakota Territory, which included the present states of North and South Dakota and major areas of Montana and Wyoming. Within its boundaries Indian tribes held a major portion of the land, thus obstructing territorial development by restricting future expansion and discouraging potential settlement. Consequently, Dakota's early promoters sought to acquire Indian lands and to attract settlers. As early as 1862 the Legislative Assembly of Dakota Territory began petitioning Congress for cession of the Black Hills, and during the following decade promoters publicized the natural resources of the area and encouraged rumors concerning its fabulous mineral wealth.¹ For example, Governor John A. Burbank presided over a meeting in Yankton at which Judge W. W. Brookings remarked on the movement to organize Black Hills associations.

The real fundamental idea, as he understood it, was to develop Dakota. . . . Don't let us Humbug the people, let us work honestly. There are other sources of wealth in the Black Hills besides the gold. We want the lumber to build our cities and towns, and the fact that there is an abundance of pine there, will be an additional inducement to stimulate the enterprise. Let us not deceive the public, but let us state the case in such a way that the Government may be induced to remove the obstacles that now undoubtedly are in the way of an immediate exploration of the Black Hills.²

1. Howard Roberts Lamar, *Dakota Territory 1861-1889: A Study of Frontier Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 89. See Chapter 67, "Early Efforts to Open the Black Hills," in George W. Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory*, 5 vols. (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1915), 1:861-76; Harold E. Briggs, "The Black Hills Gold Rush," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (Oct. 1930-July 1931): 77-78; Cleophas C. O'Harra, "Custer's Black Hills Expedition of 1874," *The Black Hills Engineer* 17, no. 4 (Nov. 1929): 225.

2. *Yankton Press*, 13 Mar. 1872.

General W. H. H. Beadle enthusiastically added, "Let us give the truth a gilt edge."³

In 1872 the well-publicized possibility of gold in the Black Hills caused national excitement, which an old-timer explained may have

all originated in a piece of yellow gypsum which was brought in to a trading post by some Indians, and exchanged as gold. Some ignorant charlatan examined it, pronounced it the true metal, found the Indian who had brought it in, and learning from him that there were immeasurable quantities in the Black Hills, began to spread the report far and wide. Adventurers began to flock to Yankton, Fort Laramie, Fort Randall, and other frontier stations, and expedition after expedition was proposed, all of which were stopped by military authority, till finally the excitement died down.⁴

On 24 January 1873 the Legislative Assembly of Dakota Territory requested that Congress authorize a scientific exploration of the Black Hills and on 27 January urged that western Dakota be opened to white settlement.⁵ Such an alteration of government policy would violate the Treaty of 1868, which reserved the Black Hills and surrounding region for the Indians.⁶ Nevertheless, a military reconnaissance was authorized. Lieutenant General P. H. Sheridan, commander of the Military Division of the Missouri, explained that raids by "hostile bands of Sioux" necessitated such an expedition.

In order to better control the Indians making these raids, for two or three years it was recommended to establish a large military post in the country known as the Black Hills, so that by holding an interior point in the heart

3. Ibid.

4. William E. Curtis, dispatch to *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, "Custer's Black Hills Expedition, in Camp at Inyan Kara, July 23, 1874," pp. 2-3, J. Leonard Jennewein Collection, Layne Library, Dakota Wesleyan University, Mitchell, S. Dak. (hereafter cited as Curtis Dispatch).

5. U.S., Congress, Senate, Legislative Assembly of Dakota Territory, *Memorial asking for a Scientific Exploration of that Territory*, S. Misc. Doc. 45, 42d Cong., 3d sess., 1872-1873 (Serial 1546), pp. 1-3; U.S., Congress, House, Legislative Assembly of Dakota Territory, *Memorial in Reference to the Black Hills Country serving as a retreat for hostile Indians*, H. Misc. Doc. 65, 42d Cong., 3d sess. 1872-1873 (Serial 1572), p. 1.

6. Charles J. Kappler, ed. and comp., *Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 2:998-1007.

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of Indian country the troops could threaten the villages and stock of the Indians if the latter raided the settlements. With the consent of the President, the Honorable Secretary of War, the General of the Army and the Honorable Secretary of the Interior, the latter having exclusive control of Indian affairs, the Division Commander was authorized to make a military reconnoissance into the country about which only dreamy stories had hitherto been told. Fort Laramie, Wyoming, about one hundred miles from the Black Hills, was first selected as the point from which to fit out the expedition, but after two visits in person to that post, the Division Commander found the temper of the Indians in that vicinity such that an expedition from there would probably provoke hostilities, so attention was turned to Fort Abraham Lincoln, at the end of the Northern Pacific Railroad, as the next most suitable point of departure, though the distance was much greater than from Fort Laramie. General Terry was directed to organize a strong expedition and place it under the command of Lieutenant Colonel G. A. Custer, 7th Cavalry, who was regarded as especially fitted for such an undertaking.⁷

Custer's official orders authorized an examination of the country in and about the North Fork of the Cheyenne, known on the map as the Belle Fourche; also, the country south of it, in the vicinity of Bear Butte, commonly designated as the Black Hills on the map.

It would be agreeable to the Lieutenant-General if you could send an engineer officer to determine the latitude and longitude of Bear Butte, or any other well-marked feature in the Black Hills, which would serve as a good point of reference for that unknown section of country.⁸

7. Lieutenant General P. H. Sheridan, *Record of Engagements with Hostile Indians within the Military Division of the Missouri, from 1868 to 1882* (Chicago, Ill.: Headquarters Military Division of the Missouri, 1882), p. 43.

8. R. C. Drum, assistant adjutant general, to Brigadier General A. H. Terry, 15 May 1874, printed in H. N. Maguire, *New Map and Guide to Dakota, and the Black Hills* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1877), p. 41. The orders also stated that "Col. Custer should be given full latitude to return, in case he found the performance of this duty unsafe, or the country impracticable for the movement of his column." Frederick Whittaker, in *A Complete Life of Gen. George A. Custer, Major-General of Volunteers, Brevet Major-General U.S. Army, and Lieutenant-Colonel Seventh U.S. Cavalry* (New York: Sheldon & Co., 1876), p. 503, stated that "it was determined to send a strong column to the hills and ascertain whether there was any gold to be found there." LeRoy R. Hafen and Francis Marion Young, in *Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West, 1834-1890* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1938), p. 336, made a similar strong

Brevet Lieutenant Colonel William Ludlow, chief engineer of the Department of Dakota, further explained that

in case, at any future time, complications with the Sioux, or the advancing needs of bordering civilization should make it necessary to establish military posts upon this Indian reservation, indications all pointed to the Black Hills as the suitable point, both on account of their geographical position and of the abundance of wood, water, and grass to be found there. To explain the value of its position, it should be stated that the trails from the camp of the hostile Sioux on the Yellowstone, to the agencies near the Missouri, where live the reservation Indians and whereon the issues of annuities are made, lead by a southeasterly course through the hills, the abundance of game and ample security of which, make them a ready refuge in time of war, and a noble hunting-ground in time of peace.

It was therefore considered desirable to gain positive information regarding them, and to connect them as well by reconnaissance with the posts of Lincoln and Laramie. To accomplish these results was the object of the expedition.⁹

statement on the search for gold. Edgar I. Stewart's classic work, *Custer's Luck* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), pp. 61-63, implied the same motive for the expedition. A more recent, academic study noted that while the army's purpose was to reconnoiter, "to the rest of the world, and more particularly to the residents of all the new little towns on the Missouri River who were aching to push westward, the purpose of the expedition was to look for gold" (Donald Jackson, *Custer's Gold: The United States Cavalry Expedition of 1874* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966], p. 2). Jay Monaghan, in *Custer. The Life of General George Armstrong Custer* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1959), p. 353, ignored the question of gold and stressed the necessity "to find a suitable location for a fort." Frederick F. Van De Water, in *Glory-Hunter: A Life of General Custer* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1934), p. 259, emphasized both the search for gold and a site for a fort.

9. William Ludlow, *Report of a Reconnaissance of the Black Hills of Dakota, made in the Summer of 1874* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875), p. 8. See also U.S., Congress, House, *Report of a Reconnaissance of the Black Hills of Dakota, Made in the Summer of 1874, by Captain William Ludlow, Corps of Engineers*, H. Exec. Doc. 1, 44th Cong., 1st sess., 1875-1876 (Serial 1676), pt. 2: 1113-230. Preliminary reports by Ludlow, Winchell, and Grinnell are in U.S., Congress, House, *Annual Report of Captain William Ludlow, Corps of Engineers for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1874*, H. Exec. Doc. 1, 43d Cong., 2d sess., 1874-1875 (Serial 1637), pt. 2: 626-33. A brief summary of Ludlow's report appears in Captain George M. Wheeler, *Report upon United States Geographical Surveys West of the One Hundredth Meridian* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), pp. 645-46. Excerpts are included in Lloyd McFarling, ed., *Exploring the Northern Plains 1804-1876* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1955), pp. 289-316.

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General Alfred H. Terry responded to criticism that the government's authorization of the reconnaissance violated treaty agreements with the Sioux.

The object of the expedition seems to be misunderstood both by Bishop Hare and by others. Bishop Hare in his telegram to the Secretary of the Interior says: "We are the marauders in this case." I trust that I shall not be considered as wanting in the respect which I know to be due to Bishop Hare, and which none would pay more cheerfully than I, when I say that I think that the term marauders is not happily chosen. A marauder is one who roves in quest of booty or plunder. Plunder is not the object of the expedition. Neither is it sent out for the purpose of ascertaining the mineral or agricultural resources of the Black Hills. It seeks neither gold, timber nor arable land. It does seek routes of communication between the posts on the Missouri and those in the Department of the Platte which are west of the Black Hills and north of the Platte River. Should serious trouble arise, either with the hostile bands of Sioux or with the many semi-hostile Indians who spend a portion of the year on the reservation. . . it will be very important that practicable routes through the Black Hills be known. It is the object of the expedition to find them. With the exception of two geologists, a few—two or three, I think—correspondents of newspapers, and a photographer, no persons, except employes of the Government have been permitted to accompany the troops. The geologists were permitted to go at the request of Professor Marsh of Yale College. It is understood that their special object is the Paleontology of the region in question.¹⁰

The command "consisted of ten companies of the Seventh Cavalry, one each of the Twentieth and Seventeenth Infantry, a detachment of Indian scouts, together with the necessary

10. Alfred H. Terry to Headquarters Military Division of the Missouri, 27 July 1874, pp. 5-7, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, no. 2275, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D. C. Terry made no mention of the miners who accompanied the command. On 15 May 1874 General Sheridan had invited O.C. Marsh to accompany the expedition remarking, "I do not intend to let Gen'l Custer be embarrassed by any outside people except yourself if you should desire to go." Marsh declined, but sent George Bird Grinnell and Luther North in his place (Charles Schuchert and Clara Mae LeVene, *O.C. Marsh: Pioneer in Paleontology* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940], p. 142n.3). Grinnell claimed that Custer "invited me to go along in a scientific capacity and I asked Luther North to go with me as an assistant" (George Bird Grinnell, *Two Great Scouts and Their Pawnee Battalion* [Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1928], p. 239).



*Custer's wagon train on the prairie near the North Dakota—
South Dakota border, enroute to the Black Hills.*

guides, interpreters, and teamsters, in all about one thousand men. The wagon-train consisted of about one hundred and ten wagons and ambulances, while the artillery was represented by three Gatlings and a 3-inch rifle."¹¹ Accompanying civilians included the photographer, William H. Illingworth; newspaper correspondents, William Eleroy Curtis, Samuel J. Barrow, and Nathan H. Knappen; miners, Horatio Nelson Ross and William McKay; and scientists, George Bird Grinnell, Newton H. Winchell, A. B. Donaldson, and Luther North. William H. Wood assisted Colonel Ludlow, who was the topographer responsible

11. Ludlow, *Report*, p. 8. A detailed account of the expedition's equipment and members is contained in *Orders and Circulars of the Black Hills Expedition*, Records of U. S. Army Continental Commands, Department of Dakota, 1874, Record Group 393, National Archives, Washington, D. C. (hereafter cited as *Orders and Circulars*, Record Group 393).

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for preparing the official government report of the reconnaissance.¹²

William Ludlow, born 27 November 1843, on Riverside, Islip, Long Island, entered the United States Military Academy in 1860. He graduated 13 June 1864, eighth in his class, his many minor infractions of regulations making his class standing lower than the rating in his studies.¹³ During the following year he received the brevet of lieutenant colonel for service in the Civil War and served as chief engineer of the Army of Georgia on its march to the sea. Between 1865 and 1872 he was stationed at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri; Staten Island, New York; and Charleston, South Carolina. From November 1872 until May 1876 he was chief engineer of the Department of Dakota with headquarters at Saint Paul, Minnesota, participating in explorations of the Yellowstone, 1873 and 1875, and of the Black Hills, 1874. In the decade following 1876 Colonel Ludlow served in Philadelphia on river and harbor improvements. Between 1883 and 1886, as chief engineer of the Philadelphia Water Department, he attempted to eliminate corruption while improving the city's water pumping plant and distributing mains.

A contractor entered the office shortly after Colonel Ludlow's appointment to see about certain work. After some conversation he said: "Colonel, I suppose some of the boys want to smoke sometimes," and he laid a fifty-dollar bill on the desk. "Ah," said Colonel Ludlow, "you are a smoker. Have a cigar." Handing him one and taking one himself, the Colonel, talking all the while on other subjects, picked up the bill, folded it, lighted it at the open fire and passed it to the contractor. Both cigars were lighted and the remains of the costly lighter tossed into the grate. It is said the contractor's face was a study. But the lesson was effective.¹⁴

After 1886 Ludlow held the positions of engineer commissioner

12. Ludlow, *Report*, pp. 8-9, and Jackson, *Custer's Gold*, pp. 142-44. No mention of the miners is made in *Orders and Circulars*, Record Group 393.

13. The biographical information is taken from the following sources: William M. Black, "William Ludlow," *Annual Reunion* (9 June 1902): 79-97 (hereafter cited as *Annual Reunion*). This document was provided by the United States Military Academy Library, West Point, N. Y. Eugene McAndrews, "Custer's Engineer—William Ludlow," *The Military Engineer*, no. 401 (May-June 1969): 200-202. A copy of this article was received from the Custer Battlefield National Monument.

14. *Annual Reunion*, p. 85.

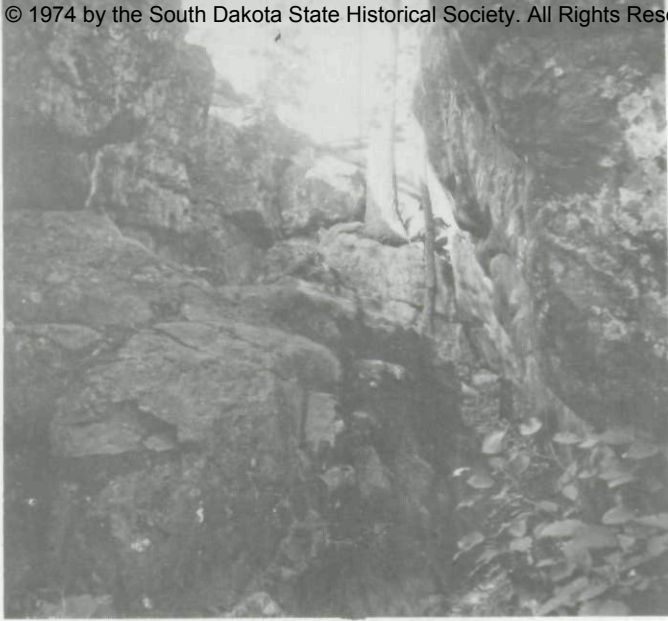
of the District of Columbia, military attache to the United States embassy in London, chairman of the Nicaragua Canal Board, and military governor of Havana. On 21 January 1900 he was appointed brigadier general, and in May he became president of the War College Board in Washington, D.C. Shortly thereafter, he was ordered to active service in the Philippines where his health was badly impaired. Returning home to Convent Station, New Jersey, he died on 30 August 1901. He had been

the beau ideal of a soldier, tall erect and graceful, with strong, clean-cut features. His manner was hearty and genial to all, unless he had reason to believe that the person addressed was unworthy. To such he minced no words and it is safe to say that rarely was he approached a second time by any one advocating an improper scheme, or in any way endeavoring to deceive. . . . In character, his strongest traits were, perhaps, his uprightness and hatred of deceit, though devotion to duty, pureness of mind, hospitality and charity were also markedly his.¹⁵

Colonel Ludlow's reputation for integrity makes his official report an important and credible source concerning the 1874 reconnaissance of the Black Hills.¹⁶

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

16. J. Leonard Jennewein's *Black Hills Booktrails* (Mitchell, S.Dak.: Dakota Territorial Centennial Commission and Dakota Wesleyan University, 1962), is an excellent annotated bibliography of Black Hills literature; see pp. 25-34 for the Custer Expedition of 1874. Secondary sources on Custer's reconnaissance include: Leland D. Case, "History Catches Up," in Roderick Peattie, ed., *The Black Hills* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1952), pp. 75-124. Case aptly noted that in Black Hills literature "B.C. Means Before Custer"; Max E. Gerber, "The Custer Expedition of 1874: A New Look," *North Dakota History* 40, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 4-23; Jackson, *Custer's Gold*; O'Harra, "Custer's Expedition of 1874," pp. 220-99; Frank J. Shidler, "Custer Country: One Hundred Years of Change," *American West* 10, no. 4 (July 1973): 25-31; W.M. Wemett, "Custer's Expedition to the Black Hills in 1874," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (July 1932): 292-301. A book by Herbert Krause and Gary Olson, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, S. Dak., will soon be published. The following newspapers contained detailed coverage of the expedition: *Bismarck Tribune*; *Chicago Inter-Ocean*; *New York Tribune*; *New York World*; *St. Paul Daily Pioneer*; and *Yankton Press and Dakotan*. Standard works on the Black Hills that contain information on the 1874 expedition include: Jesse Brown and A.M. Willard, *The Black Hills Trails* (Rapid City, S. Dak.: Rapid City Journal Co., 1924), pp. 32-41; Robert J. Casey, *The Black Hills and their Incredible Characters* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1949), pp. 125-29; John S. McClintock, *Pioneer Days in the Black Hills* (Deadwood, S. Dak.: John S. McClintock, 1934), pp. 19-22; Thomas E. Odell, *Mato Paha: The Story of Bear Butte* (Spearfish, S. Dak.: Thomas E. Odell, 1942), pp. 80-86; Watson Parker, *Gold in the Black Hills* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), pp. 23-26; Peter Rosen, *Pa-Ha-Sa-Pah, or the Black Hills of South Dakota* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Co., 1895), pp. 274-303; Annie D. Tallent, *The Black Hills; or the Last Hunting Ground of the Dakotahs* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Co., 1899), pp. 13-17.



Mouth of Ludlow's Cave

On 2 July 1874 Ludlow recorded that the Custer Expedition left Fort Abraham Lincoln to explore the Black Hills, the "choisest and most valuable portion" of the Sioux reservation.¹⁷ Colonel Fred Grant, President Grant's son, noted that everyone "celebrated the 4th by going into Camp at 12m., & having the Band play the national airs."¹⁸ Continuing southwesterly, the command crossed the Heart and Cannon Ball rivers, camped in the valley of the North Fork of the Grand River, and explored a cave, which Colonel Ludlow felt possessed "no special interest other than that imparted to it by the superstition of the Indians."¹⁹ Goose, a Sioux guide, nevertheless explained to Curtis, the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* correspondent, that the cave was

the abode of the evil spirits. . . being continually filled with the shrieks and wailings of the tormented damned. On the walls, he says, are carved great inscriptions in some unknown language, in letters as long as his arm, which even the medicine men of the Sioux have been unable to interpret,

17. Ludlow, *Report*, p. 10.

18. Colonel F. D. Grant to Colonel R. C. Drum, 7 Sept. 1874, p. 7, Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, Military Division of the Missouri, no. 4385, Record Group 393, National Archives, Washington, D. C. (hereafter cited as Grant to Drum, Record Group 393).

19. Ludlow, *Report*, p. 10.

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and to which have come also the wise men of all tribes, but with no better success. Sometimes, says Goose, the letters and figures shine as if they had been rubbed with fire, and then the shrieks and groans are the loudest, the echoes reaching even to the open air. These inscriptions, the Indians think, are the edicts of the Great Spirit against those in torment, and they shine like fire whenever they are renewed.²⁰

Upon reaching the cave Curtis expressed some disappointment with "the curious hieroglyphics that seem to have been formed by some one scratching at random on the porous stone." He was puzzled, however, by the impression of a child's foot "as perfect as if it had been molded by a skillful sculptor." As for a name for the cave "General Custer will probably put it down on the map as the Cave of the Skull or Ludlow's Cave, immortalizing either the poor creature who died so mysteriously there or the chief engineer of this expedition."²¹ Custer explained that "near the cave was found a white man's skull apparently perforated by a bullet, it had been exposed to the atmosphere for several years. As no white men, except those belonging to this expedition are known to have passed any where near the locality the discovery of this skull was regarded with unusual interest. . . . I have named the cave "Ludlow's Cave" in honor of the Engineer Officer of the Expedition."²²

20. Curtis Dispatch, "in Camp at Cannon Ball River, Dakota, July 6, 1874," pp. 3-4. William Eleroy Curtis spent many years as a traveling correspondent for two Chicago newspapers, the *Inter-Ocean* from 1873 to 1886 and the *Record Herald* from 1887 to his death in 1911. He authored over thirty books, many on South American countries; served as director of the Bureau of the American Republics, which became the Pan-American Union; and was chief of the Latin American Department of the Columbian Exposition in 1893 ("William Eleroy Curtis (1850-1911): A Register of His Papers (1877-1912)," pp. 1-2, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio).

21. Curtis Dispatch, "in Camp Near 'The Cave,' Dakota Territory, July 11, 1874," pp. 6-7. W.H. Over, "The Archaeology of Ludlow Cave and its Significance," *American Antiquity* 2, no. 2 (Oct. 1936): 126-29, assumed that "the people who lived on the original floor of the cave carved the figures on its walls and on the cliffs opposite."

22. Dispatch of George A. Custer to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, 15 July 1874, "George A. Custer's order and dispatch book," pp. 29-30, Western Americana Collection, ms. 128, Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn. (hereafter cited as "Custer's order and dispatch book"). This dispatch from Prospect Valley is reprinted in O'Harra, "Custer's Expedition of 1874," pp. 263-67 and in Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory*, 1:885. Elizabeth B. Custer, in "Boots and

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Continuing southwesterly from the cave, Ludlow noted that the expedition camped on a branch of the Little Missouri, which General Custer found so attractive, as compared to the recent landscape, that he named it Prospect Valley. In the distance "the Black Hills loomed up high and dark." On 17 July camp was made "with the Black Hills in full view, fifteen or twenty miles distant, and Bear Butte rising from the prairie forty miles away to the southeast. During the night heavy clouds and lightning appeared, and, toward morning, a severe wind-storm routed us from sleep and covered us with sand."²³ Recovering from the storm, the command reached a small branch of the Belle Fourche the following day.

Captain Reynold's trail of 1859 passed along the crest of the hills in rear of camp. The guides continued to proclaim the uselessness of attempting to take wagons farther, and if they possessed any knowledge which would be valuable to us refused to impart it. They have hitherto supposed we would skirt the hills without seriously attempting an entrance. Finding their monitions falling on deaf ears, they realized our intention to see all we could. . . .

July 20.— The first day's journey was made into the hills. . . . The change from the hot, dry, burned-up landscape north of the Belle Fourche was wonderful. The temperature was delightful; the air laden with sweet wild odors; the grass knee-deep and exceedingly luxuriant and fresh; while wild cherries, blueberries, and gooseberries abounded, as well as many varieties of flowers. All these advantages, combined with that of an abundance of pure cold water, were ours, with rare exceptions, until the final departure from the hills. . . .

Soon after leaving camp next morning, (July 21,) the trail winding southeast among high wooded hills, emerged

Saddles"; or Life in Dakota with General Custer (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1885), p. 191, explained that her husband and his brother Tom had found the bones of a white man in the cave along with a tin cup, button, and musket marked with the initials of a friend she had known as a young girl. They wrote her, "Rather than meet such a fate as awaited him in marrying you, old lady, he has chosen to seek out solitude in a cave and there die." She thought that the story was a fabrication to tease her until they returned with the objects that they had described. The finding of the flint-lock and other artifacts is also mentioned in "Story Told by Strikes Two and Bear's Belly of an Expedition under Custer to the Black Hills in June 1875 [July 1874]," in O.G. Libby, ed., "The Arikara Narrative of the Campaign Against the Hostile Dakotas, June 1876," *North Dakota Historical Collections* 6 (1920): 163-65.

23. Ludlow, *Report*, pp. 10-11.

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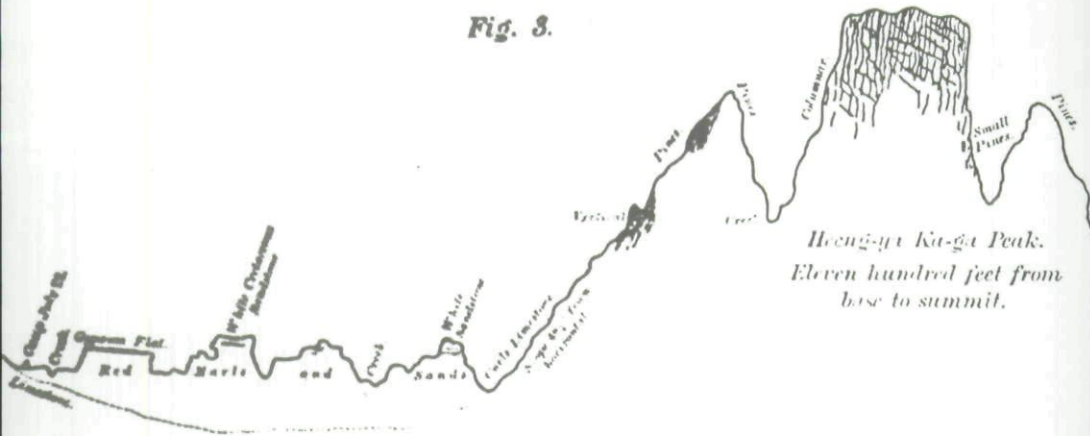
upon the valley of the Redwater, a branch of the Belle Fourche. The valley seemed comparatively level; the soil a bright brick-red in color. . . .Owing to the ravines and cuts the valley was found difficult to travel, and recourse was had to a narrow ridge of hills on the right, finally descending from which we camped in the valley on a small creek issuing from a spring of 45° temperature, and flowing a stream a foot wide and several inches deep. This water, delightful from its clearness and coldness, proved to have been impregnated by the gypsum-veins, and to be endowed with highly medicinal properties.

July 22.— The course led southward up the Redwater valley, which is from four to ten miles in width, and bounded by high hills heavily timbered with pine. The gypsum appeared in enormous quantities. One of the guides took me off to the right to see a huge mass of it, crystallized and shining beautifully in the sun. The Indians, for generations, have, in passing, split off pieces for ornaments, and by degrees cut a shoulder several feet deep on it at the level of the ground. Inyan Kara was in sight all day to the southward, approaching which the trail turned to the left around two igneous-looking peaks, and reached camp on Inyan Kara Creek, so called from flowing west past the foot of that peak. A heavy well-marked pony and lodge trail led up the Redwater valley southeasterly to the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail agencies.²⁴

July 23.— The command remained in camp while a

24. The night of 22 July the command buried John Cunningham, stricken by diarrhea, and Joseph Turner, murdered by another soldier. "The ceremony in the cold, pale light of the moon had an air of weirdness added to its awful significance. . . . The bier was a canvas litter; the hearse an ambulance; the bearers a squad of troopers; the escort the whole command—only mourners were missed. . . .But even the most serious circumstances have their funny side." Sergeant O'Toole, selected to read the service, nearly panicked until Colonel Hale found a prayer book. " 'I've got it now, d-m me, Colonel,' said he. 'Be jazes, I've got it now. I was afraid I'd have to repate it from memory. . . .'" (Curtis Dispatch, "in Camp at Inyan Kara, W.T., July 23, 1874," pp. 5-9). The following sources mentioned the funeral: Circular no. 22, 22 July 1874, *Orders and Circulars*, Record Group 393; Grant to Drum, p.14, Record Group 393; William Zahn, "Scrapbook," p. 4, North Dakota State Historical Society Archives, Bismarck, N. Dak. A typical Zahn entry reads, "Marched 18 miles got in Camp at noon Plenty wood and water"; and Fred S. Snow, "Black Hills Expedition 1874," p. 3, Custer Battlefield National Monument, Crow Agency, Mont.: see also Ernest J. Moyné, ed., "Fred Snow's Account of the Custer Expedition of 1874," *North Dakota History* 27, no. 3 & 4 (Summer and Fall 1960): 146-7. The National Monument copy of Snow's account differs slightly from that published by Moyné. The additional information in Moyné's article indicates that the manuscripts possessed by the National Monument is an earlier version.

Fig. 3.



A section profile of Heeng-ya Ka-ga Peak, eleven hundred feet high, drawn from the camp of 22 July.

Floral Valley, which is located near the head of Spring Creek to the south west of Inyan Kara.



party started out to make the ascent of Inyan Kara, about five miles distant. It resembles a lunar mountain, having a rim in shape of a horseshoe, one and a half miles across, with an elevated peak rising sharply from the center. The rim, 1,142 feet in height above the exterior base, has a sharp edge at the summit, and falls steeply on both sides. The central peak, towering 170 feet above the rim and resembling a formation of basaltic columns, was gained by means of a narrow spur projected from it to the southwest. A small spring flowed from the foot of the peak out northward through the opening in the horseshoe rim. The inner space between peak and rim was heavily wooded with pine and clumps of aspen. In the open places were found in abundance strawberries, raspberries, black and red currants, june-berries, and a small red whortle berry. From the summit an extensive view might have been obtained, but the Sioux had fired the prairie to the south and west. After two hours of waiting, the smoke having only grown denser, we returned to camp.²⁵

Curtis' comments on the results of the expedition to that date were somewhat discouraging.

So far we have seen nothing remarkable; the miners have discovered no gold, the geologists have whacked in vain for the fossil of the "missing link;" the naturalists have emptied their saddle pockets day after day without revealing the existence of any new wonders in life; the soldiers have fought no Indians, and so far the expedition, in a positive sense, has been unsuccessful. Where lie those treasures that contain the roots of the Indian jealousy of this land; where are hidden the glories that the poetic Sioux has painted, of the wonders which his legends have sung, is yet to be discovered; and even the lynx-eyed Custer, the long-haired chief, as the Indians call him, may fail to reveal them to the world.²⁶

Although the journalist felt that the command had not yet found anything remarkable, letters from the men "conceded the adventure into the new wilderness to be one of surprise, pleasure, and much acquired knowledge." Even Curtis

25. Ludlow, *Report*, pp. 11-12.

26. Curtis Dispatch "in Camp at Inyan Kara, W.T., July 23, 1874," p. 1. Custer did note that "Mr. Grinnell of Yale College one of the Geologists accompanying the expedition discovered on yesterday an important fossil, it was a bone about four feet long and twelve inches in diameter and had evidently belonged to an animal larger than an elephant" ("Custer's order and dispatch book," 15 July 1874, p. 31).

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expounded at length on the botanist A. B. Donaldson whose "heartly enjoyment of everything make him a favorite everywhere, and, notwithstanding his pedantry, it cannot but seem that he is a great child, enjoying a summer's holiday."²⁷ Before leaving Fort Abraham Lincoln, Custer had invited his friend Lawrence Barrett, a New York actor, to "devote two months to health, pleasure and a different life" and to share "the comradeship of my camp and cot during my ramble to the Black Hills."²⁸ Sergeant Charles Windolph recalled the "fun in the long evenings. . . We'd make great campfires and almost every evening there'd be a band concert. . . it was something to stretch out before a big open log fire and listen to the music. Soldiering wasn't half bad those times." Apparently, the members of the expedition were enjoying the "long picnic party."²⁹

The command moved only ten miles on 24 July and the next day entered a valley that "was a nosegay. . . Our eyes were opened then to the beauties of the Black Hills. Twenty days in a purgatory of bare plains, saline water, and alkali dust made us appreciate a paradise, and every man in the expedition stood silently to enjoy and admire."³⁰ Professor Donaldson was enraptured by "the gaudy sunflower and the delicate harebell, the fair lily and the bright blue daisy, the coarse elecampane and the modest violet, the gay lark-spur and the fragrant peppermint, roses and pinks, asters and phlox, bell-flower and caropsis, geraniums, golden rod, purple cone-flower."³¹ Custer exclaimed, "In no private or public park have I ever seen such a

27. Katherine Gibson Fougera, *With Custer's Cavalry* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1940), p. 189; Curtis Dispatch, "in Camp at Inyan Kara, W.T., July 23, 1874," p. 5.

28. "Custer to Barrett: Come Join Our Fun in the Black Hills," *Pacific Historian* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1968): 40, 43.

29. Frazier and Robert Hunt, *I Fought with Custer: The Story of Sergeant Windolph* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), p. 38; Whittaker, *Complete Life of Custer*, p. 513.

30. Curtis Dispatch, "in Camp at Castle Valley, Dakota Territory, July 27, 1874," pp. 1-2.

31. Professor A. B. Donaldson, "The Black Hills Expedition," *South Dakota Historical Collections* 7 (1914): 564.

profuse display of flowers. . . . So luxuriant in growth were they that men plucked them without dismounting from the saddle. . . . It was a strange sight to glance back at the advancing columns of Cavalry and behold the men with beautiful bouquets in their hands while the head gear of their horses were decorated with wreaths of flowers fit to crown a Queen of May. Deeming it a most fitting appellation I named this Floral Valley."³² Even Colonel Ludlow shared in the enthusiasm for the valley

filled with the greatest profusion of wild flowers, in almost incredible numbers and variety. . . . An old and deeply cut lodge-trail ran up the valley, and, halting the command, the valleys leading out of Floral Valley were explored. The trail is said by one of the guides to be the old voyageur pack-trail, and is one of the regular routes between the hostile camp on Tongue River and the agencies. Near the highest point many old camps and abandoned lodge-poles were seen. Pursuing the lodge-trail a spring was reached, the waters of which flowed north and east. The fog, which had been sweeping up from the eastward, became very dense. The flowers were if anything more abundant than in the morning, the hills but 30' or 40 feet in height, covered with pine and aspen, tamarack and spruce. The wood and open seemed to share the country about equally. All vegetation was luxuriant and fresh, and we had no doubt that a portion, at least, of the park country we were in search of had been reached. The valleys radiated in all directions, connecting with each other, and a more beautiful wild country could not be imagined. Signs of bear and deer were abundant and the woods frequently resounded with the clangorous cry of the crane.³³

32. "Custer's order and dispatch book," 2 Aug. 1874, p. 34. This description appeared in Custer's report, which was printed as U.S., Congress, Senate, *Letter from the Secretary of War*, S. Exec. Doc. 32, 43d Cong., 2d sess., 1874-1875 (Serial 1629), pp. 1-6 (hereafter cited as S. Exec. Doc. 32). It is also published in Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory*, 1:885-88; McFarling, *Exploring the Northern Plains*, pp. 317-25; O'Hara, "Custer's Expedition of 1874," pp. 268-81; and G.A. Custer, "Opening the Black Hills, Custer's Report," *South Dakota Historical Collections* 7 (1914): 583-91.

33. In his zoological report George Bird Grinnell discussed the capture of a young crane in Floral Valley. "The female parent was not seen, but the male manifested much attachment for his young, and remained on the ground not far from the nest, croaking and displaying much anxiety. He was finally shot by General Custer. The young bird was brought into camp, and kept alive for two days, but died, probably from want of proper food" (Grinnell, "Zoological Report," in Ludlow, *Report*, p. 100). The Custer Battlefield National Monument possesses manuscripts of Grinnell's preliminary reports on the zoology and palaeontology of the region traversed by the reconnaissance.

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July 26.— Still ascending Floral Valley, the divide was reached, and we almost insensibly passed into the valley of another stream, falling rapidly to the southeast. The hills became gradually higher and the valley wider. The beaver had made frequent dams, and their labors occasionally added to those of the pioneers in making a road for the wagons. In the afternoon occurred the first rencontre with Indians. A village of seven lodges, containing twenty-seven souls, was found in the valley.³⁴

Custer reported that

two of Bloody Knives young men came galloping back and informed me that they had discovered five Indian lodges a few miles down the Valley and that Bloody Knife as directed had concealed his party in a wooded ravine where they awaited further orders. Taking "E" company with me, which was afterwards reinforced by the remainder of the scouts; and Col. Hart's Company, I proceeded to the ravine where Bloody Knife and his party lay concealed and from the Camp beyond obtained a full view of the five Indian Lodges about which a considerable number of horses were grazing. I was enabled to place my command still nearer to the lodges undiscovered. I then dispatched L. Agard the interpreter with a flag of truce, accompanied by two of our Sioux Scouts to acquaint the occupants of the lodges that we were friendly disposed and desired to communicate with them to prevent either treachery or flight I galloped the remaining portion of my advance and surrounded the lodges, this was accomplished almost before they were aware of our presence. I then entered the little village and shook hands with the occupants assuring them through the interpreter that they had no cause to fear as we were not there to molest them.³⁵

Colonel Ludlow observed that "the men were away peacefully engaged in hunting; the squaws in camp drying meat, cooking, and other camp avocations. Red Cloud's daughter was the wife of the head-man, whose name was 'One Stab'." According to Professor Donaldson, "some of them seemed reserved and timid and showed some fear of the Rees, their bitter enemies; others seemed social and anxious for further acquaintance."³⁶ Custer invited them to visit the expedition's

34. Ludlow, *Report*, pp. 12-13.

35. "Custer's order and dispatch book," 2 Aug. 1874, pp. 35-36.

36. Ludlow, *Report*, p. 13; and Donaldson, "Black Hills Expedition," pp. 267-68.

camp and offered rations in exchange for information concerning the country.

Later in the afternoon four of the men including the Chief 'One Stab' visited our camp and desired the promised rations saying the entire party would come up and favor us. The following morning as agreed upon, I ordered presents of Sugar, Coffee and bacon to be given them and to relieve them of their pretended anxiety for the safety of their village, during the night I ordered a party of fifteen of my command to return with them and protect them during the night.³⁷ But from their great disinclinations to wait a few moments until the party could saddle up and from the fact that two of the four had already slipped away I was of the opinion that they were not actually in good faith, —in this I was confirmed when the two remaining ones set off at a gallop in the direction of the village. I sent a party of men (Scouts) to overtake them and requested their return, not complying with the request I sent a second party with orders to repeat the request and if not complied with to take hold of the bridles of their ponies and lead them back but to offer no violence, when overtaken by our scouts one of the two included seized the musket of one of the scouts and endeavored to wrest it from him failing in this he released his hold after the Scout became dismounted in the struggle and set off as fast as his pony could carry him but not before the musket of the Scout was discharged, from blood discovered afterwards, it was evident that either the Indian or his pony was wounded, I hope that neither was seriously hurt although the Indians had thus their bad faith as the sole ground for the collision. One Stab the Chief was brought back to camp, the Scouts galloped down the valley to the side of the village, when it was discovered that the entire party had packed up their lodges and fled and the visit of the four Indians to our camp was not only to obtain rations promised them in return for future services but to cover the

37. Ludlow, in his *Report*, p. 13, noted that "the presence among our scouts of a party of Rees, with whom the Sioux wage constant war, rendered them very uneasy." The Oglala had reason to fear the Arikara scouts as the latter wanted revenge for the attack on Fort Berthold during which Bloody Knife's son had been killed. As the expedition had first approached the Sioux camp, the Rees "unbraided their hair, rubbed vermilion on their faces, wrapped towels and white cloths around their heads, putting bunches of feathers in for a crest. . . and hummed the dreary monotone of their war-song, Um, ahaum, ahaum, um um um ahaum Yah yah ahaum, yah yah ahaum, ahaum Um um-m-m ahaum, eu! eu!" (Curtis Dispatch, "in camp at Castle Valley, Dakota Territory, July 27, 1874," p.6)

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flight of their lodges.³⁸ I have effected arrangements, by which the Chief One Stab remains with us as a guide three days longer when he will take his departure and rejoin his band.³⁹

Colonel Ludlow's report for 26 July included both the encounter with One Stab's band and a description of the camp site.

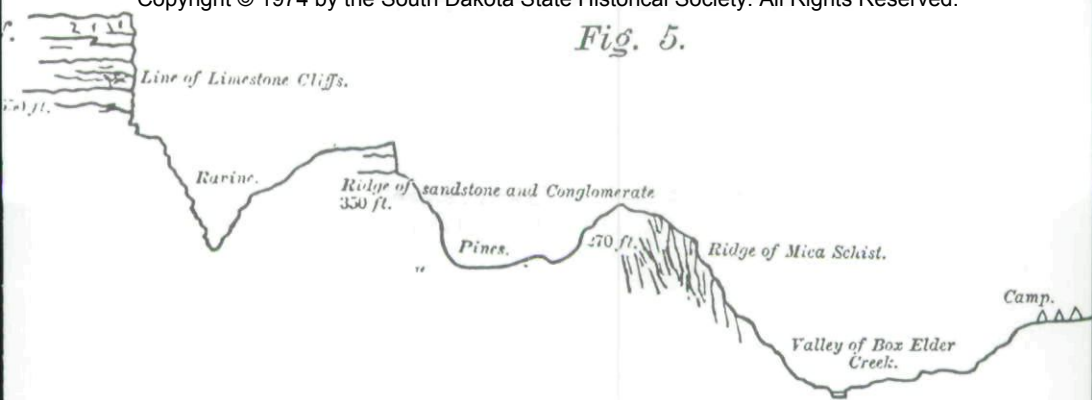
From a high hill near camp, the first well-defined view was gained of Harney's Peak, twenty miles to the southeast. The position of this peak, on the southeast slope of the hills, was known from Warren's map. We were nearly in the heart of the unexplored portion of the hills, and the results of energy and good management had been shown in the entire success of the expedition.

The high limestone ridges surrounding the camp had weathered into castellated forms of considerable grandeur and beauty, and suggested the name of Castle Valley. The valley itself was luxuriantly rich and grassy, a fine stream meandering through it. Just below camp was seen a mica schist on the bank of the creek, in bed with a nearly vertical tilt, indicating the geological depth we had reached, while pebbles and boulders of quartz were scattered over the surface in great numbers. . . .

38. Curtis Dispatch, "in camp at Castle Valley, Dakota Territory, July 27, 1874, *ibid.*, p. 10, reported that after discovering the Oglala camp had escaped, the Rees trailed them for "five hours or more, but returned scalpell. . . and there were howls of disappointment and anger." As Major Forsyth explained, the Sioux had successfully played a "Double Game." ("Letter and Dairy of Maj. Forsyth," printed in Maguire, *New Map and Guide*, pp. 59-60 [hereafter cited as "Forsyth Diary"]). The letter from General P.H. Sheridan directing Forsyth to keep a diary appears in Marguerite Merington, ed., *The Custer Story: The Life and Letters of George A. Custer and His Wife Elizabeth* (New York: Devin-Adair Co., 1950), pp. 271-72. See also "Grant to Drum," pp. 16-18, Records Group 393.

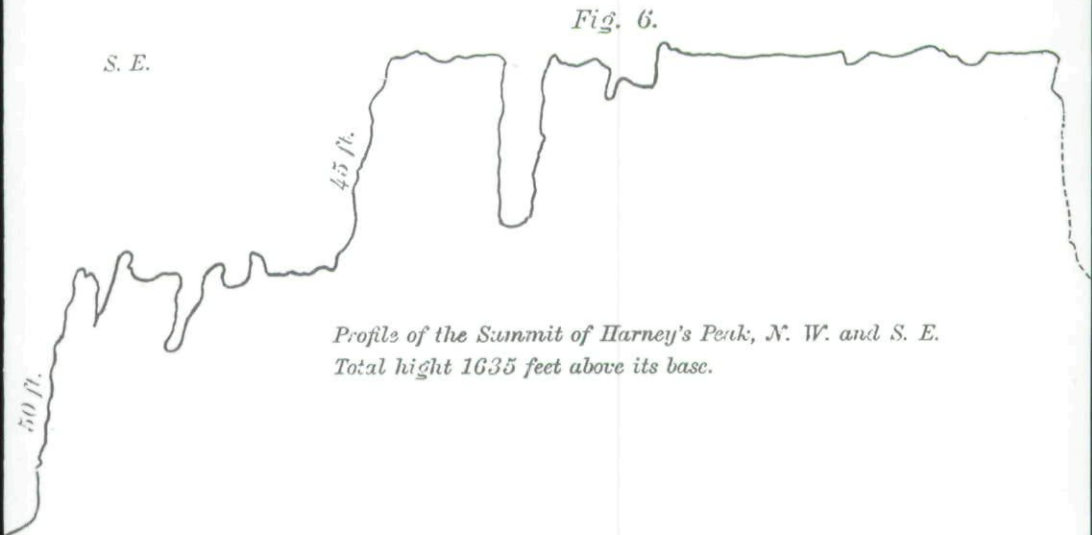
39. "Custer's order and dispatch book," 2 Aug. 1874, pp. 36-37. Ludlow, in *Report*, p. 13, explained that One Stab was "retained as guide and hostage"; while Donaldson, in "Black Hills Expedition," pp. 268-70, described the chief as a "captive" who was "treated very kindly" and seemed "contented, though stolid." Curtis' Dispatch, "in Camp at Castle Valley, Dakota Territory, July 27, 1874," p. 10, noted that General Custer placed One Stab under guard and told him that "he would be kept a hostage until we were out of the Hills, and must show us a good road. He was evidently quite relieved to know that he wasn't to be tortured and shot." Strikes Two and Bear's Belly remembered finding "the old Dakota tied outside to an iron picket pin. His feet were hobbled, he had a string around his waist and his leg was bandaged but his hands were not tied. Custer. . . made signs that he at first planned to have them kill this Dakota captive but that now he was to be guide." Later Custer "gave the Dakota a good suit, hat, and other things, and thought the Arikara planned to kill him. Custer got him off in the night and they never saw him again." "Story Told by Strikes Two and Bear's Belly," in Libby, "Narrative," pp. 168-69; See also Ben Innis, *Bloody Knife! Custer's Favorite Scout* (Fort Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1973), pp. 104-5.

Fig. 5.



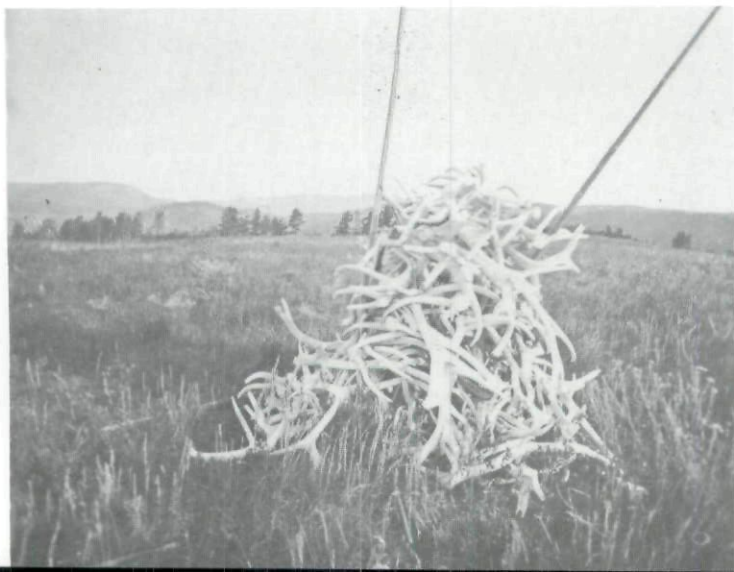
General section of the left bank of Box Elder Creek at the 26 July camp.

Fig. 6.



*Profile of the Summit of Harney's Peak, N. W. and S. E.
Total height 1635 feet above its base.*

Elkhorns on Reynolds Prairie



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July 27.— The command remained in camp, to give time to examine the neighboring country, and the gold-hunters were very busy all day with shovel and pan exploring the streams. Several surveying-parties were sent out in various directions. Each tributary valley had its springs and little streams; was heavily grassed and often filled with flowers. The grass in places was as high as a horse's shoulder. This portion of the Black Hills evidently never suffers from drought. No arid places are seen except on the summits of the limestone ledges. Springs are numerous and very cold and pure. The soil is everywhere moist, and vegetation marvelously luxuriant and fresh. The altitude is great, as compared with that of the prairie, and is sufficient to materially lower the average temperature. The warm currents of air from the plains condense as they ascend the slope of the hills and are robbed of their moisture in fog, rain, and heavy dews which occur nightly. The clouds almost invariably formed in the afternoon and interfered greatly with astronomical observations.

July 28.— The valley below us was rather too marshy for the wagons, and the easterly course lay up the hills to the left out upon a high rolling prairie. . . .

A huge pile of elk-horns of ancient date, and of which the Indians disclaimed any share in the construction, was found on the northeast part of this prairie, and suggested the name for it. No camp could be made there, and partly retracing our steps, we camped again on Castle Valley Creek, a few miles below the camp of the day before. Another creek coming in from the south, promised a road for the next day. The following note is given: "After dinner made a reconnaissance with General Custer up the creek below camp. . . ."

Harney's Peak was visible from the top of a high, bare hill, and the sun having just set, we were in a few minutes well rewarded for the ride of five miles. The moon was rising just over the southern shoulder of Harney, and masked by heavy clouds. A patch of bright blood-red flame was first seen, looking like a brilliant fire, and soon after another so far from the first that it was difficult to connect the two. A portion of the moon's mass looked enormous and blood-red, with only portions of its surface visible, while the clouds just above and to the left, colored by the flame, resembled smoke drifting from an immense conflagration. The moon soon buried herself completely in the clouds, and under a rapidly darkening sky we returned to camp.

July 29.—The course led southeasterly up the valley examined the evening before, finding heavy grass with wild oats and barley and many flowers. An old, deeply-worn

Indian trail led up the creek, following which took us across a high prairie exhibiting boulders of quartz. . . .

July 30.— We traveled all day through a beautiful pastoral and agricultural country, half wood, half glade, full of deer and abundantly grassed. Harney's Peak was passed eight or nine miles on the left. A few high hills were scattered about, but most of them were low. Granite appeared for the first time, and the range of which Harney is the chief, appeared granitic and very rugged. Our proximity to the outer plains in the east was evident as camp was neared. The air was milder, the grass drier, and the streams contained less water. Grasshoppers appeared, and a rattlesnake was captured in camp. All strong indications of the vicinity of the prairie.⁴⁰

July 31.— The command remained in camp, while surveying-parties were sent out, and the gold-hunters redoubled their efforts. General Custer and myself, with Professors Winchell and Donaldson and Mr. Wood, escorted by a company of cavalry, set out to ascend Harney. A rough ride of eight or nine miles over high hills and heavily-timbered ravines, in some of which birch was seen for the first time, brought us to the foot of a granite elevation with a creek flowing eastward. Wild raspberries, unexcelled in size and flavor, abounded; and in the dark wet bottoms the june-berry bushes grew to a height of 10 or 12 feet, and hung full of fruit. Leaving the horses at the foot of the clear granite, the ascent was made on foot.⁴¹ Halting to rest and lunch, another summit, two or three miles west, was seen, rising higher than the one we were on.⁴² Reaching the

40. Professor Winchell stated in his journal for 30 July that "the gold-seekers who accompany the expedition report the finding of gold in the gravel and sand along the valley" (Winchell, "Geological Report," in Ludlow, *Report*, p. 42).

41. Wood later criticized Custer for taking his horse higher up the mountain because the animal "had a hard time getting down the steep peak-it was cruel, the horse's knees were bleeding, and he had a hard time to make the grade" (Recollections of W. R. [H.] Wood of Saint Paul," p. 11, manuscript of an interview, North Dakota State Historical Society Archives, Bismarck, N. Dak. [hereafter cited as "Wood Recollections"]. A copy is in the Deadwood Public Library, Deadwood, S. Dak.)

42. Upon reaching the first summit "General Custer fired a salute of three shots and the party drank to General Harney's health from canteens of cold coffee." Winchell, "Geological Report," in Ludlow, *Report*, p. 44; Donaldson, "Black Hills Expedition," p. 575; "Forsyth Dairy," pp. 61-62. Custer, disregarding the failure to reach the highest point of Harney Peak, reported that "with a small party, I proceeded to Harney's Peak, and after great difficulty made the ascent to the Crest. . . . we were amply repaid for our labor by the magnificence of the views obtained. While on the highest point we drank the health of the veteran, out of compliment to whom the peak was named" ("Custer's order and dispatch book," 2 Aug. 1874, pp. 38-39).

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summit of this, still another, several hundred feet higher, and a mile or more west, showed that we had more work to do. A stiff climb brought us to the top, whence nothing more lofty could be seen, and we stood on the most elevated portion of the hills some 9,700 feet above the sea, except that alongside us rose a mass of granite 40 feet in height, with perpendicular sides that forbade an attempt to scale them without the aid of ropes and ladders.⁴³ A stunted spruce was growing under its protection, and a few ferns and harebells obtained sustenance near by. The view was superb, extending over the intervening peaks and hills to a broad expanse of prairie from north by east round to southwest. The course of the Forks of the Cheyenne could be distinctly traced, and a dim line visible to the southeast was even thought to be the hills of White River, fifty or sixty miles distant. Bear Butte, forty-odd miles to the north, was again seen over the wooded ranges; and all but Inyan Kara of the principal peaks were in view. Two of the prominent ones I have named for General Terry and General Custer.

The return to camp was a struggle against almost every possible obstacle—rocks, creeks, marshes, willow and aspen thickets, pine timber, dead and fallen trees, steep hillsides and precipitous ravines. Every difficulty multiplied by the darkness, and only the stars for a guide, camp was finally reached at 1.30 in the morning.⁴⁴

Professor Donaldson provided a far more vivid description of the hardships encountered during the return to camp.

On we go again! through forests and thickets, along the mountain sides, and over ridges. The rocks strike fire from the horses' shoes. . . . We sometimes halt to see which is the north star. At length the clouds hide that from view, and occasionally a match is struck to take our bearing by the compass.

We came to a bog, overgrown with bushes, twelve or fifteen feet high. . . . In the middle of the miry bog was a ditch. I felt, or rather stumbled my way into it, and out again. Dobbin did no better than his leader. He may have

43. Professor Donaldson noted that "the rarified air, the exertion and the excitement run Prof. Winchell's pulse up to 136 and Gen. Custer's to 112 per minute" (Donaldson, "Black Hills Expedition," p. 576).

44. Ludlow, *Report*, pp. 12-14. Before descending Harney Peak an empty copper cartridge containing the following memorandum was wedged in the seam of a rock. "Gen. G.A. Custer, Gen. G.A. Forsyth, Col. Wm. Ludlow, W.H. Wood, A.B. Donaldson, N.H. Winchell, Script. July 31, 1874" (Donaldson, "Black Hills Expedition," p. 576 and Winchell, "Geological Report," in Ludlow, *Report*, p. 46).

seen something; I am sure I saw nothing except when the bushes switched across my eyes there were showers of falling stars. Just as he floundered through the first ditch I sloughed down in a second one, and in trying to pull out I fell and was afraid of being run over by him and the balance of the column. With more vehemence than euphony I called wo! wo! and he halted. Then woe was me. Well fertilized with a coat of black muck I crawled out from between his forefeet and paddled my way out to terra firma, soiled but sound.⁴⁵

No wonder camp was moved only a short distance on 1 August to find "fresh pasturage."

While Custer and his party were climbing Harney Peak, some of the troops organized a ball game that ended "Actives 11, Athletes 6." After the game Colonel Joseph G. Tilford hosted a champagne supper that was serenaded by the glee club from Company H. Lieutenant Thomas W. McDougall then escorted the singers to the tent of Samuel J. Barrows, correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, who rewarded their musical efforts with two bottles of whiskey. Private Theodore Ewert recalled that Fred Grant was "one of the boozy ones" during the party.⁴⁶ Apparently Grant's condition at the gathering was not unusual. According to Wood, Grant "was drunk nearly all the time. . . .The sutler had a wagon with liquor which he sold to the soldiers and everybody who wanted to buy it."⁴⁷ In letters to his wife Custer failed to acknowledge the drunkenness of Colonel Grant and others. Instead, he expressed his gratitude that the expedition's enjoyments did not include "a single drunken officer. . . .But I know that did I play cards and invite the officers to join there would be playing every night."⁴⁸

45. Donaldson, "Black Hills Expedition," p. 578.

46. Jackson, *Custer's Gold*, p. 84. This account is based on the journal of Private Theodore Ewert, 2 July to 30 August 1874, pp. 37-38, which is privately owned by Melma Huckleby Ewert, Jacksonville, Ill.

47. "Wood Recollections," p. 12. Sergeant Windolph remembered that Colonel Grant "used to get a little tipsy. But that didn't do anybody any harm" (Hunt, *I Fought with Custer*, p. 38). According to Wemett, Custer "had occasion and did not hesitate to arrest Colonel Fred Grant for drunkenness, an incident which may have had some influence in the General's being reduced in rank soon afterwards" (Wemett, "Custer's Expedition," p. 296).

48. Merington, *Custer Story*, p. 273.

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Early on the morning of 2 August, Winchell, Grinnell, and North, with an escort of two companies, departed on a reconnaissance to the mouth of French Creek. They returned 5 August; the accomplishment of their task being defeated by an impassable canyon.⁴⁹ During their absence gold excitement infected the camp.

August 2.—Command still in camp. There is much talk of gold, and industrious search for it is making. I saw in General Custer's tent what the miner said he had obtained during the day. Under a strong reading-glass it resembled small pin-heads, and fine scales of irregular shape, perhaps thirty in number. The miners expressed themselves quite confident that if they could reach bed-rock in the valleys at a favorable place, plenty could be obtained by use of the pan.⁵⁰

Custer's dispatch on 2 August also reported the discovery of gold.

As there are scientific parties accompanying the expedition who are examining into the mineral resources of this region,—the result of whose researches will accompany my detailed report,—I omit all present reference to that portion of our explorations until the return of the Expedition, except to state what will appear in any event in the public prints, that gold has been found at several places and it is the belief of those who are giving their attention to this subject that it will be found in paying quantities.—

I have upon my table forty or fifty small particles of pure gold in size averaging that of a small pinhead and most of it obtained to-day from one pan full of earth.⁵¹

Two weeks later the general added:

On some of the water courses almost every pan full of earth produced gold in small yet paying quantities. Our brief halts and rapid marching prevented anything but a very hasty examination of the country in this respect, but in one

49. Winchell, "Geological Report," in Ludlow, *Report*, pp. 46-49.

50. Ludlow, *Report*, p. 14. Sergeant Windolph and his friend Everett Edward "got the cook of 'H' company to loan us a pan, and we found a pick and shovel. . . . And we found gold too. We panned out a number of tiny specks. . . . We knew you couldn't keep white men out of these hills once word of the gold discovery got out to the world." Windolph further remarked that Curtis "had a good deal to do with what happened later, when they let the cat out of the bag" (Hunt, *I Fought with Custer*, pp. 42, 36). For a discussion concerning the discovery of gold by Ross and McKay, see O'Harra, "The Discovery of Gold in the Black Hills," in "Custer's Expedition of 1874," pp. 286-98.

51. "Custer's order and dispatch book," 2 Aug. 1874, pp. 40-41.

place and the only one within my Knowledge where so great a depth was reached,—A hole was dug eight feet in depth. The miners report that they found gold among the roots of the grass and from that point, to the lowest point reached. Gold was found in paying quantities.

It has not required an expert to find gold in the Black Hills as men without former experience in mining have discovered it at an expense of but little time or labor.⁵²

Major Forsyth apparently shared this confidence as he claimed that "the very roots of the grass would pan five cents to the pan in our camp near Harney's Peak."⁵³ Fred Grant, however, more cautiously noted that "some more gold and silver said to have been found—but to me they looked like the same pieces that were shown to me yesterday and the day before yesterday."⁵⁴ The story by the Arikara scouts, told thirty-eight years later, was far more exuberant. They recalled that "Red Angry Bear found some gold in a spring" and sent word to the others "to come and get some of the pretty yellow stuff to trim their bridles with. They all got some and their arms were sparkling with the golden dust." When they showed Custer where they got the gold, "he sounded a bugle and called the soldiers and put pickets out to keep all others away." Then, approaching them with gold in a cloth, Custer said, "You scouts have found this which is money and you shall have your share," and, throwing down gold by the handfuls, he repeated, "you shall have it like this." He continued explaining that "this land would be marked" and "piles of stones were put up and the soldiers went about putting marks or signs."⁵⁵ This placement of markers may have related directly to the organization of the

52. Ibid., 15 Aug. 1874, p. 45. For this report written at Bear Butte see also S. Exec. Doc. 32, pp. 6-7; Kingsbury, *History of Dakota Territory*, 1:888-90; McFarling, *Exploring the Northern Plains*, pp. 325-29; O'Harra, "Custer's Expedition of 1874," pp. 281-86; Custer, "Opening the Black Hills," pp. 591-94. Colonel Charles Francis Bates' conclusion that "General Custer in his report was very guarded in his statements as to whether the gold was in paying quantities" indicates the general inaccuracy of his article "The Red Man and the Black Hills," *The Outlook. An Illustrated Weekly of Current Life* 146 (27 July 1927): 408-11.

53. "Forsyth Diary," p. 52.

54. "Grant to Drum," p. 19, Record Group 393.

55. "Story Told by Strikes Two and Bear's Belly," in Libby, "Narrative," p. 169.

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Custer Park Mining Company by members of the expedition who located their claims "in accordance with the laws of Dakota Territory governing mining districts" and intended "to work the same as soon as peaceable possession can be had of this portion of Dakota Territory by the General Government."⁵⁶

While the miners prospected for gold, Custer and five companies of cavalry rapidly reconnoitered the country between camp and the South Fork of the Cheyenne River. Late in the night of 3 August Charley Reynolds left the party carrying mail to Fort Laramie. For his horse he "made some muffled shoes of leather and sponge that would make no sound and leave no trail" and the adjutant labeled the mail bag, "Black hills Express. Charley Reynolds, Manager. Connecting with All Points East, West, North, South. Cheap Rates; Quick Transit; Safe Passage. We are protected by the Seventh Cavalry." While Reynolds was enroute to Fort Laramie to telegraph "the golden tidings" to the *Inter-Ocean*, Custer's party continued to the South Fork and then returned to the main camp about noon on 5 August.⁵⁷

56. Curtis Dispatch, "in Camp at Custer's Park, Dakota Territory, Aug. 7, 1874," pp. 1-6.

57. The quotations are from Curtis Dispatch, "in Camp at Custer Park, Dakota, Aug. 3, 1874," pp. 3-5; the general movements of the party are taken from Ludlow, *Report*, p. 15. Charley Reynolds' orders are in Special Orders, no. 26, 2 Aug. 1874, *Orders and Circulars*, Record Group 393, and in "Custer's order and dispatch book, 2 and 3 Aug. 1874, pp. 39, 42. Fred Snow, who drove Custer's private ambulance, recalled that Reynolds took "the precaution to blind his trail by putting leather boots upon his Horses Feet." Snow, "Black Hill Expedition," p. 8 and Moyne, "Fred Snow's Account," p. 149. Carl H. Loocke in *Scouting in the Black Hills* (Custer, S.Dak.: Chronical Shop, 1935), p. 16, recorded a popular myth, "But before preparing for the journey, Dan Newell, the troop blacksmith, shod the horse that Reynolds was to ride by placing the shoes on the horses feet backwards, for the purpose of deceiving the Indians as to the direction the rider was taking." Monaghan, in *Custer*, p. 356, repeated this myth. Elizabeth Custer, in "Boots and Saddles", pp. 241-42, recalled that Reynolds reached Fort Laramie with his lips "so parched and his throat so swollen that he could not close his mouth." This account and biographical information on Reynolds are in the following sources: E.A. Brininstool, "Charley Reynolds—Hunter and Scout," *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (Oct. 1932-July 1933): 73-81 and *A Trooper with Custer* (Columbus, Ohio: Hunter-Trader-Trapper Co., 1926), pp. 191-214; John E. and George J. Remsburg, *Charley Reynolds. Soldier, Hunter, Scout and Guide* (Kansas City, Mo.: H.M. Sender, 1931).



Grizzly bear killed by General Custer near Nahant, south of Custer Peak.

August 6.— Camp was broken for the return trip. General Custer determined, instead of going eastward upon the prairie, to partly retrace his steps, and examine into the practicability of a route northward through the hills, emerging somewhere near Bear Butte, and so complete the examination of them. The old trail was accordingly run back with some slight divergence, and camp was reached just beyond the high prairie passed over July 29. A heavy thunder-storm came up during the night, and the echoes among the hills were exceedingly grand.

August 7.— The storm of the night before had swelled the brooks, but the old trail furnished a good road. Crossing Castle Valley we passed over Elk Horn Prairie again, and bearing north and west crossed a creek and ascended a small valley in which the beaver had been at work, thence through a heavily wooded tract into the valley of another creek

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flowing eastward. Passing down this for a few miles, further progress was barred by a canon, and turning sharply to the left over a slight ridge we camped on the bank of another creek. Two grizzly bears were killed near this camp, and the first grasshoppers seen in the hills in any numbers were swarming in both creek valleys.⁵⁸

Custer proudly exclaimed to his wife, Elizabeth, "I have reached the hunter's highest round of fame. . . I have killed my Grizzly." Winchell, however, noted that Custer and Ludlow killed the bear, while Forsyth explained that both Ludlow and Bloody Knife assisted and that "it took five shots to bring him down." Grinnell remembered that Custer "distributed the meat freely to different messes, but probably little of it was eaten, for it was an aged animal, very tough and very strong."⁵⁹

August 8.— The morning opened with thick fog, which cleared about 10 a.m. The course was north and east, crossing several creeks leading eastwardly. One deep valley gave considerable trouble to the wagons, crossing which, we traveled over a high, rocky ridge, with schist projecting from the surface nearly vertically, and made a fine camp in the next valley.⁶⁰

58. Ludlow, *Report*, pp. 14-15.

59. Merington, *Custer Story*, p. 275; Winchell, "Geological Report," in Ludlow, *Report*, p. 50; "Forsyth Dairy," p. 64; Grinnell, *Two Great Scouts*, p. 242. Fred Snow recorded that "General Custer, Colonel Forsyth, Bloody Knife and Noonan the Generals orderly killed a very large Grizzly Bear while hunting in advance of the comd. Illingworth the Photographer of the Expedition photographed the animal and group of hunters" (Moynes, "Fred Snow's Account," p. 149). The reprinting of this photograph has made the incident famous. Luther North, however, sardonically commented on Custer's shooting ability.

On the return trip. . . we came to a small pond of water near which a duck had nested. . . The General got off his horse saying, "I will knock the heads off a few of them."

Mr. Grinnell looked at me and made a gesture. I dismounted and sat down on the ground behind the General. He shot and missed; then I shot and cut the head off one of the birds.

He shot again and missed, and I cut the head off another. He looked at me, then shot again and missed, and I cut the head off a third one.

Just then an officer rode up. . . and said that our bullets after skipping off the water were singing over the heads of his troops. The General said, "We had better stop shooting," and got on his horse and rode away without saying a word to me; but I don't think he liked it very well. (Donald F. Danker, ed., *Man of the Plains: Recollections of Luther North, 1856-1882* [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961], p. 187). See also Grinnell, *Two Great Scouts*, pp. 241-42.

60. Winchell explained that the quartz ridge that coincided "with the bedding of the schist" was the object of "very industrious 'prospecting' . . . by gold-seekers, who accompany the expedition" (Winchell, "Geological Report," in Ludlow, *Report*, p. 51).

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August 9.— The course lay down the valley, which was in possession of the beaver, for several miles, then turned to the left over a ridge. The hills were high and wooded; and from an occasional open spot glimpses of the open prairie a few miles away were caught. The creeks flowed eastward, and in piercing through the outward range of hills had cut deep canons, which were often blocked by boulders and fallen trees. Several were explored, but none affording a practicable route for wagons was discovered. Springs were abundant, of clear, cold water, with a temperature of 46°. The heavy pine forests on the hill-sides were full of deer. In all the open glades grass was luxuriant.

August 10.— The route was southerly, crossing a low ridge, and taking the head of a creek flowing a little east of south. It is remarkable and characteristic of the hills that, in whatever direction we have wished to go, a creek-valley had always furnished a road. Following down the valley, we found it enlarging to a broad fertile meadow luxuriantly grassed, through which wound the creek, a fine rapid stream 10 feet to 12 feet wide, flowing over a rocky bed. We were continually looking for trout in these streams, which seemed as though made expressly for that fish, which requires an unfailling flow of cold pure water. There could be no finer trout-streams in the world than these where they once stocked. As it was, we found nothing but some small chub, and a species of sucker of perhaps a pound weight. . . .

August 11.— Taking advantage of the command remaining in camp while General Custer made exploration for a road eastwardly, I returned to the camp of the day before with a surveying party, for the purpose of measuring a base line and locating with the transit the important elevations. A base of 3,200 feet was carefully laid out, whence two hills were located, from the summits of which Bear Butte, Harney, Terry, and Custer Peaks, and many minor hills could be seen, and their aximuths determined. Lieutenant Warren spent a week in camp in 1859 near Bear Butte. Regarding that as properly located, Harney, on Warren's map, is too far east by six or seven miles. Returning to camp, I found that several elk had been killed during the day by the hunters.

August 12.— Camp was moved down the creek a few miles into a very pretty and luxuriant valley, at a point where another large creek joined it from the westward. Judging from its size and direction, this must be the Castle Valley Creek, upon which we twice encamped, (July 26-'7 and July 28,) and the hills portion of what is called Box Elder on Warren's map.

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August 13.— Lieutenant Godfrey, with an escort, was dispatched down the creek, to determine its course and ascertain his position from bearings to Bear Butte and Harney when clear of the hills. The main trail turned north across the creek, and, following a narrow ravine for a few miles, then turning east and south through open timber and a second growth of pine, emerged upon an open, rolling park of great extent, where camp was made. The open prairie was visible, separated from us by a wooded ridge, which, though not high, was deeply cut by ravines. Elm trees were seen in the vicinity of camp, and a plantation of hops was reported.

August 14.— A favorable road was found through the intervening ridge by making several abrupt turns among ravines filled with oak and hills covered with pine, and early in the day we suddenly emerged from the hills into the encircling red clay valley, which at this point is closely bordered by the open prairie. The scorching suns and hot, dry breath of the prairie, covered with yellow grass, bore instant witness to the change in our surroundings, recalling vividly the coolness of air and freshness of vegetation, the abundance of pure, cold water, the noble camp-fires, and quantities of game, which had made our stay in the hills a daily delight, and compelling us to contrast with them the dry, dusty journeys, the warm alkaline water, and scanty wood which awaited us on the return march of over three hundred and eighty miles. The course lay up the red clay valley to the north and west. The numerous creeks in the hills reaching the prairie sunk beneath the gravel and shingle of their beds and disappeared; some of them reappeared briefly in the form of springs in the red clay valley, which was from two to three miles in width. On account of these springs and the occasional marshy ground, the trail broke through the low hills separating the valley from the prairie on the east, and bore straight for Bear Butte. Camp was made on a creek named for the butte, and six or seven miles south of it.

August 15.— The command remained in camp reloading and refitting for the return journey. During the day a party made the ascent of the butte, which is an igneous-looking elevation, rising out of the rolling prairie 750 feet in height and 1,200 feet above the camp. Standing clear of the hills as it does, it is a well-known landmark, and its summit affords a wide prospect, notwithstanding its inferior height. The principal peaks were visible from it, as well as the buttes rising from the prairies northeast and southeast.

August 16.— The course lay northward, to the right of Bear Butte, over a rolling prairie and across some small creeks. We found the Belle Fourche, when crossed, to be a rapid

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stream, in a shaly and gravelly bed, 80 feet wide and a foot deep, the banks low, and cottonwood abundant. Four Cheyenne Indians were met en route to the agencies from the hostile camp on Tongue River, and reported that Sitting Bull, five thousand strong, was preparing to intercept us at the Short Pine Hills. Camp was made near the headwaters of Crow Creek, with good water and grass, but no wood.⁶¹

From Crow Creek the expedition moved north passing Prospect Valley and crossing the Grand River and a "rolling prairie, which the Indians, to embarrass our march, had thoroughly burned."⁶² Continuing in a northerly direction, the expedition camped near the Big Bend of the Little Missouri and on the headwaters of the Heart and Knife rivers.

Fort Lincoln was reached at 4.30 p.m. of August 30, the sixtieth day of the trip. The wagon-train had traveled eight hundred and eighty-three miles, and, adding the various reconnaissances, the total number of miles surveyed was twelve hundred and five.⁶³

Whatever may ultimately be determined as to the existence of large amounts of precious metal in the Black Hills—and the evidence gathered on the trip I conclude was on the whole discouraging to that supposition—the real wealth and value of the country are, beyond doubt, very great. Utterly dissimilar in character to the remaining portion of the territory in which it lies, its fertility and freshness, its variety of resource and delightful climate, the protection it affords both against the torrid heats and arctic storms of the neighboring prairies will eventually make it the home of a thronging population. To this, however, the final solution of the Indian question is an indispensable preliminary. The region is cherished by the owners both as hunting-grounds and asylum. The more far-sighted, anticipating the time when hunting the buffalo, which is now the main subsistence of the wild tribes, will no longer suffice to that end, have looked

61. Ludlow, *Report*, pp. 15-17.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 17. Lewis F. Crawford, in *Ranching Days in Dakota and Custer's Black Hills Expedition of 1874* (Baltimore: Wirth Brothers, 1950), p. 106, wrote: "Up to this time the Sioux had offered no resistance to the passage of the troops, but now they showed their resentment by starting a prairie fire which consumed the grass and edible vegetation over an area of almost a hundred miles square, a region through which the expedition had to pass. In consequence, the line of march veered to the west."

63. The Sioux called Custer "the Chief of all the Thieves" and his trail to the Hills "the Thieves' Trail" (George E. Hyde, *Red Cloud's Folk* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937], p. 218).

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forward to settling in and about the Black Hills as their future permanent home, and there awaiting the gradual extinction which is their fate. For these reasons, no occupation of this region by whites will be tolerated; nor, so long as the majority of the Indians live beyond the control of the United States Government, can any treaty be made with them looking to the relinquishment of their rights of ownership which will command observance by the hostile tribes. Even if, under the authority of reservation Indians, occupation of the Black Hills should become possible, settlements there could only be protected by force and the presence of a considerable military power. Hostile incursions would not be unfrequent nor an occasional massacre unlikely, and these are conditions unfavorable to a rapid and permanent increase of population. The Indians have no country farther west to which they can migrate, and only the Saskatchewan country north of the United States boundary, offers them a possible home. It is probable that the best use to be made of the Black Hills for the next fifty years would be as the permanent reservation of the Sioux, where they could be taught occupations of a pastoral character, which of all semi-civilized means of subsistence would be most natural and easy for them, and result in relieving the United States Government of the burden of their support.⁶⁴

Custer disagreed with Ludlow's conclusions concerning the quantity of gold and the future of the Black Hills.

While I regard the gold discoveries as very important and of promising richness, I do not think they have been prosecuted to the extent, or that sufficient information has been obtained concerning them, to warrant an immense influx of gold hunters into that region in advance of a more thorough and deliberate examination. I leave out all consideration of the fact that as yet no one has the legal right to go to that region with a purpose of settlement, as there is no doubt that nearly all our discoveries were made within the limits of the Sioux reservation. Men going to the Black Hills to engage in agricultural or stock-raising pursuits need not fear disappointment.

The country possesses

EVERY CHARACTERISTIC AND QUALITY

calculated to fit it for the home of a dense population. The title of the Indian should be extinguished as soon as practicable. Not that I would recommend that land which was being made useful or necessary to the Indian should be taken

64. Ludlow, *Report*, pp. 17-18.

away, but it is a mistaken idea that the Indian occupies any portion of the Black Hills to any considerable extent. In much of the country we visited, Indians had not been for years, and in no portion of the interior of this rich region did we find indications of their recent presence in any large numbers.

Their policy regarding the Black Hills is somewhat similar to that of the dog in the manger—they neither occupy nor make use of the Black Hills, nor are they willing that others should. The Black Hills country is convenient to the Indians in this respect: it is along the northern and southern bases of the Hills that the routes of communication lie, between the hostile camps located in the Powder and Yellowstone river country and the large agencies of semi-hostile, semi-peaceable Indians on the Missouri river. And it is along these routes that all illicit traffic in arms and ammunition is kept up between the two forces. Young men belonging to the agencies who desire to reap the benefit of the agency system, and at the same time to take part with the hostiles in their wars with the whites, pass and repass over these routes, and when pursued, hide or take temporary refuge in the Black Hills. We intercepted two parties of this character whose admissions agree with this theory. If the Black Hills were thrown open to settlement,

AS THEY OUGHT TO BE

or if simply occupied by the military, as they must be at an early day, this illicit traffic in arms and ammunition would be broken up, a barrier would be imposed between the hostile camps and the agencies, and the well-disposed Indians of the latter would be separated from the evil influences and warlike tendencies of the hostiles, and the control of the Government over the Indian Agencies on the Missouri river greatly increased, the result of which in time would be to bring about a satisfactory solution of the Indian question, so far as it relates to this section of country. ⁶⁵

The general even more strongly disagreed with Professor Winchell over the discovery of gold.

I regret that Prof. H. N. Winchell, who accompanied the expedition as geologist, and who labored industriously and, I believe, efficiently, to discharge his duties regarding other points, should have permitted what I cannot but believe was a bit of professional pique to stand between him and the determination of a very important fact, viz., the existence of gold in the Black Hills. Prof. Winchell, as geologist of the

65. Custer, "Preliminary Report," 8 Sept. 1874, printed in Maguire, *New Map and Guide*, pp. 48-49. The general further observed that neither nuggets nor gold-bearing quartz were found (*Ibid.*, p. 47).

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expedition, no doubt felt that all questions pertaining to mineral discoveries should be referred to him for final decision— and all questionable points relating to geology were so referred. But when gold was discovered, as it surely was at various points, it was in such form and quantity as to be readily recognized as gold without referring the matter for decision to an expert. The specimens I saw, and which scores of officers and other persons of intelligence saw, and which were taken from the earth from time to time, near our camps, consisted of small particles of pure gold,

EASILY RECOGNIZABLE AS SUCH

by any person who had ever seen gold before. Had Prof. Winchell not been influenced by the feeling I have attributed to him; had he not waited for some person to bring specimens of the gold to his tent and formally request his professional opinion upon it; but had he instead, gone—as he might often have done by a walk of a few hundred yards, or at most of a few miles—and examined the places from which the gold had been taken, watched the miners and others while prospecting—as I and others did—he would have been qualified by an experience added to a scientific knowledge, for which I have the highest respect, to have given an opinion on the matter which would have been entitled to great weight. As it is, he simply says what he might have said without accompanying the expedition, and what every one who did not accompany the expedition can say, viz.: that “He saw none of the gold.” That he did not see it was wholly due to his inaction in the matter, as persons with whom he was brought in contact every day had specimens of the gold in their possession—a fact of which I hardly believe he was ignorant. I regard the discoveries made as

EXCEEDINGLY PROMISING.⁶⁶

Custer’s attack on Winchell did not remain unanswered. Colonel Ludlow stated that “with regard to the geology of the Black Hills, Prof. Winchell’s report will be nearly exhaustive. Both Mr. Grinnell and he were as industrious as possible in collecting information, and I can only regret that the want of time prevented much opportunity for study.”⁶⁷ In his report E. P. Smith, the commissioner of Indian affairs, defended Winchell.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48. In light of this disagreement Stewart’s statement, in *Custer’s Luck*, p. 64, that “the scientists made rather extensive tests for minerals and found evidence of their existence in great abundance, not only ‘gold at the roots of the grass’ but in gravel bars on French Creek as well, and indications that there were extensive deposits of lead, copper, and silver” is somewhat misleading.

67. *Army and Navy Journal*, 19 Sept. 1874.

The exaggerated accounts of rich mines and agricultural lands given in the despatches of the commander and explorers and correspondents of the expedition intensified the eagerness of the people all along the border to take possession of this country. Notwithstanding the subsequent correction of these exaggerations by statements on reliable information that no indications of mineral wealth were found, and that the lands were undesirable for white settlements... It is not improbable, however, that legislation will be sought meanwhile procuring the opening of this country to settlement. Such a course cannot be too strongly deprecated, and should be opposed in every form. Scarcely a greater evil could come to the Sioux people than the disturbance and demoralization incident to an attempt to dispossess them of their country.⁶⁸

Custer publicly replied to the commissioner, "If instead of assailing representatives of other departments of the Government upon false grounds supported by false accusations, the same time and attention were devoted to his own department, which, by the way, is a glass house of huge dimensions, great benefit might result to the Indians."⁶⁹ Fred Grant, nevertheless, closed his report with the following statement on the gold discoveries in the Black Hills.

We had several Miners along who had nothing to lose and everything to gain; they all lived together and could concoct any plan they wished. After we got near Harney's Peak they said they found gold. Now the country in that region is full of Mica Schist and a very coarse feldsparthic granite. I have been in and around a great many gold and silver mines in my life and have never Seen this class of stone on mining grounds. Also they came each day and showed specimens and would say "I got this from one pan of earth to-day" and I noticed that they showed the same pieces every day. Then they told about what could be produced saying that one man could get from 10 to 100 dollars a day. I saw about all the gold that was produced in the hands of the different miners, and I don't believe there was two dollars all put together and that they took out there with them. I washed for gold once myself and could not get a color. There is a small extent of country around Harney's Peak in which there is reason to believe there could be some gold found though there could not be much. It is in the Indian

68. *New York World*, 18 Nov. 1874.

69. *Army and Navy Journal*, 9 Jan. 1875.

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country where it would be dangerous for white people to go. I don't believe that any gold was found at all.⁷⁰

Despite disagreement among the members of the expedition, newspaper accounts of the gold discovery closely reflected comments made by General Custer.

Such excitement over gold obscured the basic purpose of the 1874 expedition, which was to make a general reconnaissance to locate military wagon routes and possible sites for a fort. Colonel Ludlow's report and General Custer's dispatches, however, emphasized events during the expedition, descriptions of the country and its resources, and the area's future for white settlement. Previous reports by Lieutenant Gouverneur Kemble Warren and Captain William Franklin Reynolds stressed the strategic military value of the Black Hills, suggested possible wagon routes, and recommended Bear Butte as the location for a fort.⁷¹ Ludlow's conclusions did not include such military information and Custer limited his remarks to a brief paragraph.

From the fact that all our principal marches through the Black Hills we have taken without serious obstacle a heavily laden train of over one hundred wagons, it may be inferred that the Black Hills do not constitute the impenetrable region heretofore represented. In entering the Black Hills from any direction the most serious if not the only obstacles are encountered at once near the outer base. This probably accounts for the mystery which has so long existed regarding the character of the interior.⁷²

Custer did recommend "a more thorough examination of the country," not for military purposes, but to ascertain information concerning gold "in view of the widespread attention already directed to the Black Hills by prospective mining companies."⁷³

70. "Grant to Drum," pp. 25-27, Record Group 393. For a discussion of Winchell's and Grant's statements and the reaction to them, see Jackson, *Custer's Gold*, pp. 108-11. The section is entitled "Professor Winchell's Bombshell."

71. Hyde, in *Red Cloud's Folk*, p. 218, discussed this discrepancy when comparing the Reynolds and Custer reports. See also James D. McLaird and Lesta V. Turchen, "The Dakota Explorations of Lieutenant Gouverneur Kemble Warren, 1855-1856-1857," *South Dakota History* 3, no. 4 (Fall 1973): 359-89 and "The Explorations of Captain William Franklin Reynolds, 1859-1860," *ibid.* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 18-62.

72. "Custer's order and dispatch book, 15 Aug. 1874, p. 44.

73. Custer, "Preliminary Report," printed in Maguire, *New Map and Guide*, p. 48.

In 1875 the Government sent an expedition under Henry Newton and Walter P. Jenney for the primary purpose of examining "the mineral resources of the country."⁷⁴

Thus, the 1874 reconnaissance of the Black Hills provided a major indication that government policy regarding Indian lands was changing. The advance of a military expedition into the heart of the Sioux reservation served as a logical basis for the assumption that it was merely a matter of time before the Black Hills would be opened to white settlement. Although the army initially attempted to prevent an invasion of miners, by 1876 the United States government acquired control of the Black Hills and launched a military campaign against the Indians.⁷⁵ As the English journalist Edwin A. Curley observed, "Why were Custer's expeditions allowed, and if allowed, why did the government permit information, thus obtained, to be given to the world in such a way as largely to excite both the thirst for riches and the love of adventure which are innate in the human breast? Is it not true that in practical effect the officers of the government were sent to pluck the forbidden fruit, and to show it to the people, saying, 'This is most excellent food?'"⁷⁶

74. Henry Newton and Walter P. Jenney, *Report on the Geology and Resources of the Black Hills of Dakota with Atlas* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880), p. 4.

75. For a discussion of the government's changing policy see: Doane Robinson, "A History of the Dakota or Sioux Indians," *South Dakota Historical Collections* 2 (1904): 414-24; Stewart, *Custer's Luck*, pp. 65-71; Stanley Vestal, *Sitting Bull: Champion of the Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), pp. 132-33; and the sources discussed in footnote 16.

76. Edwin A. Curley, *Edwin A. Curley's Guide to the Black Hills*, eds, James D. McLaird and Lesta V. Turchen (1877; reprint ed., Mitchell, S. Dak.: Dakota Wesleyan University Press, 1973), p. 104.

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