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THE BORDER STAR

A Publication of the CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE of
WESTERN MISSOURI 1209 Skyline Dr. Liberty, MO 64068

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE BATTLE OF LITTLE BIGHORN

by Douglas D. Scott, Richard A. Fox, Jr., Melissa A. Conner, and Dick Harmon. University of Oklahoma Press 1989.

On June 25, 1876, Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer led the Seventh U.S. Cavalry into action against the Sioux and their allies on the Little Bighorn River. The ensuing annihilation of Custer and approximately 210 of his men has entered American folklore, generating heated debate beginning "virtually as the gunsmoke wafted from the field and they have raged ever since."

Hundreds of books have been written on the subject but *ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES* presents a new and exciting approach to a series of events that continues to intrigue historians, scholars, and students of history. It is said that history is written by the victors but most attempts to explain what happened at Little Bighorn have ignored accounts by the victorious Sioux, relying mainly on accounts of survivors of Benteen's and Reno's commands and speculations by those who visited the site after the massacre. The authors of *ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES* submit the proposition that historical archaeology can be of great benefit in helping to explain what happened at Little Bighorn.

An accidental range fire on the Custer battlefield in August, 1983, cleared 107 years of accumulated brush and grass and made possible a thorough examination of the battlefield. A comprehensive historical archaeology program was formulated and implemented by the authors. Their main objective was to try to answer the question, "What happened on the battlefield?"

What follows is a fascinating, but complicated, odyssey through an intriguing event that has perplexed generations of historians. The book answers many questions and asks new ones. Evidence gathered during the two year project substantially confirms Indian accounts of the battle. I was particularly impressed with the progression of the book. The authors clearly state their objectives and methodology, give a concise historical overview, describe the collection of the evidence, and present their case. This book is written in such a manner that general readers as

well as serious historians can enjoy. Devotees of minutiae, graphs, charts, and lists can spend hours poring over artifact descriptions and several specialist reports included in the book. For those whose minds turn to mush with such detailed information (myself included), this book will still provide many hours of enjoyment.

My only real criticism of the book is the omission of a detailed map showing all of the features and details of the battlefield. The authors' previous book, *ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS INTO THE CUSTER BATTLEFIELD*, published in 1987, a progress report on the first year of a two year investigation and presumably superseded by the current book, contains just the sort of maps missing in the current volume. Fortunately I had both books at the same time but considering the difficulty in finding a copy of the present book in a local library (my copy coming by way of an inter-library loan from Hays, Kansas), perhaps any subsequent editions will include all of the maps in one volume.

I found this book an absorbing account of an enduring mystery and recommend it to anyone interested in the subject. Reviewed by Ed Harris.

Due to an important project, Dr. Douglas Scott will be unable to speak at our October meeting. Dr. Scott has been appointed to a special United Nations Security Council team which left on October 2 to research and exume mass graves in Croatia. Dr. Scott offers his apologies and has promised to speak to our group at a later date. The roundtable apologizes for any inconvenience this may cause but we are delighted to get Major George E. Knapp, U.S. Army Ret., who will speak about the Battle of Wilson's Creek. Maj. Knapp has written a battlefield tour book about Wilson's Creek. He is a former history instructor at the Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

Wednesday, Sept. 15, members of the roundtable met at the historic Pharis farm near Missouri City. We were given a tour of the farmhouse, a red brick antebellum house built in 1856 and a restored 1820's log cabin. Mr. Pharis, who died June 11, 1992, willed his farm to Clay County. As this is being written, the Clay County commissioners are deciding whether or not to accept the gift. In addition to the house and the log cabin, Mr. Pharis amassed a wonderful collection of antique furniture, farm implements and tools, arrowheads, barbwire, etc. The 160 acre farm and buildings, if accepted by Clay county, will be operated as a working farm and as a museum. During the Civil War the house was occupied by Union troops and used as a headquarters during anti-guerrilla operations.

REPORT OF STEVEN GAGE ON MEDAL OF HONOR CEREMONY IN IOLA

Sunday, August 22, Sonny Wells, his wife Karen, Gaylen, Dean and I travelled to Iola, Kansas, to perform a Medal of Honor dedication ceremony for William Bradford Stacy. Stacy, who served aboard the U.S.S. Rhode Island in 1864, was offered the M.O.H. in 1866 for saving two men from drowning when his ship was in a collision with another ship. He never recieved the medal because he failed to apply for it. Stacy, 83 at the time, died in 1923 when he was struck by a runaway street car and was buried without military honors.

It was a very emotional ceremony. There was a large crowd and T.V. crews to watch and record the event. Everyone expressed great excitement because for, many of them, it was their first Medal of Honor Ceremony.

Gaylen, Karen, and I were dressed in costumes of the 1860's, which really added to the spirit and flavor of the ceremony. Gaylen was dressed as a Yankee soldier, Karen in her "Southern Belle" dress, and I was in a V.M.I. cadet uniform. We looked exceptionally nice, just like we had stepped out of the past to finish an uncompleted task.

Sonny spoke amid a background of flags from every state and in the foreground, a Navy Color Guard. Mr. Toland gave a brief life story of Stacy and was followed by Capt. Hale, who was dressed in an 1860 Naval officer's uniform. After the speeches, the flag was removed from the M.O.H. memorial stone revealing its gold engraving which read; William Bradford Stacy, Seaman U.S. Navy,

U.S.S. Rhode Island, Peacetime - 1866.

After the flag was passed among the Navy veterans and given to Mr. Toland, the Navy Hymn was played. Karen and I walked slowly to the marker and placed a carnation. It was like filling a space, in the final chapter of Stacy's life, that Father Time had forgotten to write. Gaylen and his consort followed, placing the American Flag. Several in the crowd cried as they watched.

After a moment of prayer taps was played, followed by a volley of fire from the Honor Guard. The Color Guard marched in groups of three to retire their colors. It was a grand site to behold.

William Bradford Stacy has finally received his richly deserved military honors and the final chapter of his life is now complete, thanks to the efforts of The Medal Of Honor Society and Sonny Wells.

ANSWERS TO LAST MONTHS TRIVIA

- 1) Gallinippers were mosquitoes.
- 2) Gen. John S. Marmaduke of Missouri and Gen. Lucius M. Walker of Tennessee. Walker was killed.
- 3) St. Louis headquarters, Aug. 30, 1861, by Gen. John C. Freemont. Lincoln was outraged and revoked it as dictatorial.
- 4) Iuka.

INFORMATION WANTED

Last year, while at the Lone Jack Museum, I saw William Gaw listed under Quantrill men. My Great Grandfather was Irby Gaw from Tennessee. However, this month while at the museum, I see someone has marked through Gaw, and written in pencil, "Gauth".

Does anyone have knowledge about this or know where I can research for information? Call Charlotte Tindall, 254-8696, or Harriett Lionberger, 471-3079.

The Jackson County Archives Library has purchased a limited number of Dr. Scott's two books about the Custer Battlefield. These books will be available for sale at the October meeting. If you wish to purchase either of these books you can call Kathleen Halcro, 252-7454, at the Jackson County Archives. These books will be available on a first come, first served basis. Also available is **ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY, AND CUSTER'S LAST BATTLE**, written by Richard A. Fox, (co-author with Dr. Scott) which reconstructs the Custer battle using archaeological evidence uncovered at the battlefield.

**The Civil War Round
Table of Western
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Membership

Total Membership - 83!!

Annual Dues

Individual membership -- \$15
Family membership -- \$22.50
Student membership -- \$5

The newsletter staff

welcomes suggestions and
contributions of material to
the newsletter.

CLASSIFIEDS

The items in this section
should deal with pertinent
historical subjects such as
books, re-enactment attire
research assistance, metal
detecting, genealogy, etc.
The prices are as follows:
\$3 for 15 words for
members, \$5 for 15 words
for non-members. Deadline
is the 20th of each month.

Have you read an excellent book
recently on the Civil War? (or a
really bad one?) Let the
newsletter staff know. Call Ed at
number above.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

An overflow crowd, including six of our members, jammed the commissioners hearing room at the Clay County Courthouse September 22 for the Pharis farm hearing. In the end the big crowd at an early afternoon hearing must have made an impression on the Commissioners. Presiding Commissioner Shull was ready to make a motion to accept the farm. Eastern Commissioner Carson had some legal questions but agreed to meet with the Estate attorney to work them out. It now appears that the Commissioners will accept the farm as Don Pharis willed it, a living history farm.

My thanks to all who went with us on the special tour to the farm and to those who took time to appear at the hearing. Gieselle Fest, Director of Clay County Historic Sites said to be sure to thank everyone for their interest.

UPDATE ON THE V.M.I. CADET

I have been in contact with his descendants living in Roanoke, VA. According to a relative, his remains were returned to Roanoke from "St. Louis, where he died." Also, his father, Capt. Wm. H. Fry, 1st VA Cav under Col. R. E. Lee, is buried at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond VA, according to the relative, "with all of the Generals." The family put a marker on cadet Fry's grave only five or six years ago! The Elmwood Cemetery records do not show any transfer of cadet Fry's remains! Stay tuned, family tradition and actual written records may be going in different directions.

I was just finishing loading the van for the trip to the St. Charles event when Doug Scott called to say that his departure date for his trip to Croatia had been moved up. He requested a postponement until the spring. This delay will give us time to read his book and familiarise ourselves with its content. (See page one for more info. Ed.) I look forward to his program, probably in March.

The October general meeting will be October 13, at 7:00 PM, at the Truman High School Library, 3301 S. Noland Road. Major George E. Knapp, a military historian, will speak about the Battle of Wilson's Creek. (See announcement on pg. 1.)

CAVALRY CROSSING A FORD

by Walt Whitman

A line in long array where they wind betwixt green islands,
They take a serpentine course, their arms flash in the sun
--hark to the musical clank,
Behold the silvery river, in it the splashing horses
loitering stop to drink,
Behold the brown faced men, each group, each person a
picture, the negligent rest on the saddles,
Some emerge on the opposite bank, others are just entering
the ford--while
Scarlet and blue and snowy white,
The guidon flags flutter gaily in the wind.

SOME OF THE NAMES USED FOR THE CIVIL WAR

War Between The States
The War Of The Rebellion
The War For Separation
The War Of The Sections
The War For Constitutional Liberty
The Confederate War
Mr. Davis' War
Mr. Lincolns' War
The Southern Rebellion
The Great Rebellion
The War For Southern Rights
The War Of Southern Agression
The War Of Northern Agression
The Reb Time
The Late Unpleasantness
The War For Abolition
The War For Southern Liberty
The Second American Revolution
The War Of Yankee Arrogance
The War Of Southern Arrogance
The War Of The 1860's

Last months newsletter included a telegram from Pleasanton to Rosecrans. In it he reported the death of General Fagan. Fagan wasn't killed at Mine Creek but the Official Records mention a Gen. Graham as being killed. I can find no other reference to Graham other than in the Official Records, Series 1, Vol. 41, pt. 1, page 496. Does anyone have any information that might clear up this mystery? Please contact me at (913)345-1853 or at our monthly meetings. Ed Harris.

The CWRTWM is planning a Christmas party for our December meeting. We would welcome volunteers to help with food, decorations, etc. Contact Fred George if you are willing to help. Also, the December meeting will have an election for the officers and board.

Trivia will resume in next month's newsletter.