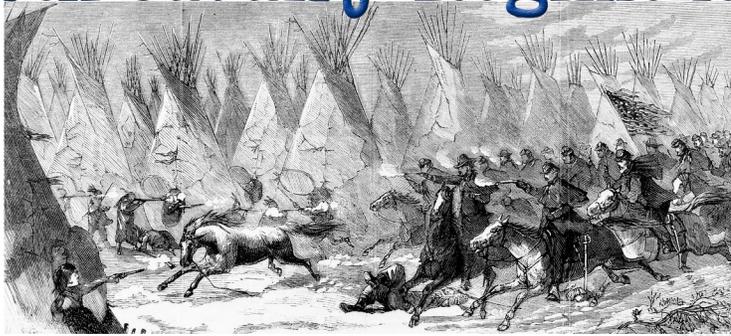


# 7th Cavalry Regiment



## LIVING & FIGHTING IN CUSTER'S CAVALRY

You felt like you were somebody when you were on a good horse, with a carbine dangling from its small leather ring socket on your McClellan saddle, and a Colt army revolver strapped on your hip; and a hundred pounds of ammunition in your web belt and in your saddle pockets. You were a cavalryman of the 7th Regiment. You were part of a proud outfit that had a fighting reputation, and you were ready for a fight or a frolic.

—*Private Charles Windolph*

## Overview

As synonymous with the West as cowboys and Indians, the U.S. Cavalry is the principal extension of Union power beyond the Mississippi River. Instrumental in “taming” the frontier, the cavalry has been used to scout the landscape; protect wagon trails, railroads, and miners; and pacify unruly Indians who lack respect for Manifest Destiny. And among the ten regiments of Union Cavalry, the most famous is the 7th Regiment, constituted in 1866 and currently commanded by General George Armstrong Custer. Although this document focuses primarily on the 7th Cavalry and its leadership, it may be used as a template for all U.S. Cavalry, and even the Confederate Dragoons who patrol the southwestern climes.

## Organization

The United States Cavalry developed from two earlier mounted units, the 1st and 2nd Regiments of Dragoons established in the 1830s, and the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen raised for the Mexican-American War. After the dragoons proved their effectiveness in fighting Indians, in 1855 Congress approved the creation of the 1st and 2nd Regiments of Cavalry. When the Civil War broke out, the government reorganized its mounted forces. The 1st and 2nd Dragoons became the 1st and 2nd Cavalry, the Mounted Rifles became the 3rd Cavalry, the existing 1st and 2nd Cavalry became the 4th and 5th Cavalry, and the 6th Cavalry was raised in Pennsylvania. With the North’s resources committed to the Civil War, defending the Plains was left to various bands of frontiersmen, volunteer irregulars, and rangers. As the Civil War ground on, these volunteer cavalry units underwent a series of fluctuations, with some demobilizing, and others becoming absorbed by various territorial factions. In 1866, the United States recognized its need for additional regular units, and formed the 7th and 8th Cavalry, along with the 9th and 10th Negro Regiments, the so-called “Buffalo Soldiers.”

## Companies

A cavalry regiment is commanded by a colonel or general, and is divided into 8–14 “companies.” Also informally known as a “troop,” each company is designated by a letter, such as “Company C,” or “C Troop.” The letter “J” is omitted, and is reserved for troops of recruits, known as “Johns.” (The Buffalo Soldiers of the 9th and 10th Cavalry refer to their recruits as “Young Soldiers.”) Each company is commanded by a lieutenant, captain, or major, and nominally contains at least sixty men; but the long attrition of the Civil War and the remoteness of the West has whittled most frontier regiments down to forty-odd men per company. A company frequently develops its own culture and *esprit d’corp*, and sometimes acquires a unique nickname. For instance, Company F of the 7th is commanded by Captain George Yates and is known as the “Band Box Troop” on account of their penchant for neatness, while Company E is commanded by Lieutenant Algernon Smith and is known as the “Gray Horse Troop.” This latter name is derived from Custer’s somewhat controversial decision to assign horses of a particular color to each company; not only does this appeal to the General’s sense of aesthetics, but it is intended to make companies more recognizable on the battlefield.

## Tactical Units

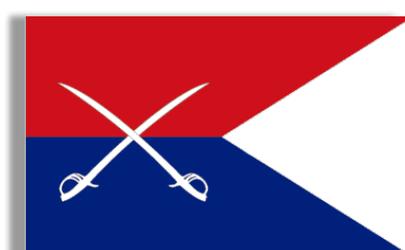
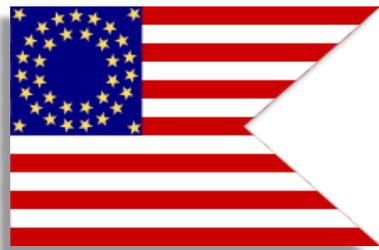
The basic unit of a company is a “squadron,” a four-man team trained to support each other and maneuver as a unit. Squads may be grouped into “platoons” for increased tactical mobility. For larger engagements, the companies of a regiment may be grouped together to form “battalions,” which are usually led by the most senior company commander in that battalion. These battalions may be further subdivided into “wings.”

### *Support*

A fully-mounted and mobile cavalry regiment requires a tremendous amount of support to operate and maneuver freely. This includes the commander’s general staff, which features various strikers, aides-de-camp, and adjutants; but also includes quartermasters, commissaries, surgeons, farriers, saddlers, veterinarians, wagoners, interpreters, guides, scouts, newspaper correspondents, civilian advisors, and even foreign observers. Every regiment is also assigned two chief buglers and sixteen musicians. There’s the pack train to consider, which may number as high as two hundred mules and requires constant supervision. Finally, a cavalry regiment may be charged with escorting companies of infantry, or special detachments such as artillery units or Gatling gun wagons.

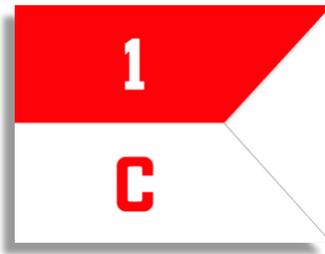
## Guidons

Carrying on a tradition from time immemorial, cavalry regiments are renowned for their bravado and gallantry, their dashing sense of fashion, and their pride in military décor such as pennants and flags. A special type of military flag favored by the cavalry is the “guidon,” a small, swallow-tailed flag carried into battle to distinguish different companies. In 1876, the 7th Cavalry employs two main guidons—the standard stars and stripes, and Custer’s personal guidon, featuring crossed sabers on a field of red-over-blue.



### *Red-Over-White Company Guidons*

A common color pattern on cavalry flags is the red-over white guidon, dating back to the establishment of the original dragoons in 1833. These flags commonly feature a white regimental number in the upper red half, and a red company designation in the lower white half.



Commonly depicted in imagery associated with the Western cavalry, these guidons were technically not authorized during the period 1862–1885, during which time the stars and stripes served as each company’s guidon. The style nevertheless remained popular, with many officers using a variation of red-over-white for their personal HQ flag. (Of course, this being *Deadlands*, a Marshal is free to include such company guidons in the fictionalized 7th Cavalry—they wouldn’t be the first to include this anachronism!)



*General Custer shown beneath his personal guidon, made by his wife Libby.*

## **History**

Established on September 21, 1866 at Fort Riley, Kansas, the 7th Cavalry was quickly placed under the command of General George Armstrong Custer, the young Civil War hero known for his dashing—and often reckless—behavior. After a year drilling his soldiers and skirmishing with Indians in Kansas and Colorado, Custer was suspended after a court-martial found him neglectful of his duties: not only did he order deserters shot without trial, he had temporarily abandoned his command during a wild, romantic ride to visit his wife, whom he falsely believed was imperiled by cholera. The regiment was placed under the capable hands of Major Joel Elliott, a Quaker from Indiana who had served honorably in the Civil War with Benjamin Grierson.

### *The Return of Custer*

In October 1867, the Medicine Lodge Treaty required the Southern Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Kiowa, and Comanche to vacate the buffalo-rich plains of Kansas and resettle in the more arid Indian Territory of Oklahoma. While most of the Indians relocated peacefully, certain bands of hostiles began raiding white settlements in western Kansas and eastern Colorado. In response, General Phil Sheridan deployed the 7th Cavalry to seek out and destroy the malcontents. Recognizing the need for a daring “Indian fighter,” Sheridan made the controversial decision to recall Custer from exile, and once again placed him in command of the 7th Cavalry.

### **Battle of the Washita: November 27, 1868**

The first major engagement fought by the 7th Cavalry was the infamous Battle of the Washita. As a test of Sheridan’s “winter strategy,” General Custer and the 7th were dispatched to find and destroy hostile Indians when they were more permanently lodged in their winter encampments. Following a trail left by the Indians, Custer came across a Cheyenne village on the Washita River. He charged the encampment at dawn, successfully defeating the sleepy warriors and destroying the village. Regrettably, the village was not the source of the raiders, but belonged to Black Kettle, a “peace chief” who had taken great pains to placate the whites. Despite flying an American flag outside of his teepee, Black Kettle and his wife were shot in the back trying to flee the assault.

Soon discovering the presence of many more Indians camped further along the river, Custer realized that he might have miscalculated the odds. Preparing for a retreat, he ordered his troopers to shoot the Indian ponies, and to capture the surviving women and children to serve as hostages. Unfortunately, Major Elliot and seventeen of his men were nowhere to be found. Frederick Benteen, captain of Company H and a close friend of Major Elliot, vehemently protested Custer’s order to retreat. His pleas were ignored, and the 7th Cavalry departed before the enraged Cheyenne could launch a counter-attack.

### *Controversies*

Although Custer and the newspapers reported the victory in glowing terms, most Indians considered it a massacre, with “Long Hair” leading his bluecoats in the indiscriminate slaughter of a peaceful band. To this day, casualty accounts vary wildly, ranging from Custer’s report of a “few” noncombatants killed to his scouts’ accounts, which range from 40-75 dead women and children.

However, such trivial concerns paled in comparison to the more damning accusations that Custer would soon face over the fate of Major Joel Elliot, a white officer. Several days after the Battle of the Washita, the corpse of Major Elliot was found mutilated along with his men. In an anonymous letter printed in the *Missouri Democrat*, Frederick Benteen accused Custer of “abandoning” Major Elliot during the conflict. Custer vehemently denied the accusation, and was publicly absolved by Sheridan. Many of Custer’s other officers also stepped forward to speak on the General’s behalf, and suggested the anonymous letter was penned by a jealous officer seeking his superior’s command. There was little doubt that the 7th Cavalry had become a fractious regiment, divided into the Custer “clan” or “coterie,” and those who supported Frederick Benteen and the late Joel Elliot.

## **Black Hills Scouting Expedition of 1874**

In 1868, the Treaty of Fort Laramie concluded Red Cloud's War, bringing a momentary end to the hostilities between the U.S. government and the Sioux of the Dakota territory. The treaty granted the Sioux extensive land rights, including the entirety of the Black Hills region. Of course, the ink was barely dry before whites began violating the treaty, especially when they realized they could cut lumber in the Dakota territory and simply float it down the river to Missouri. In 1872 white trespassers began returning with stories about gold. When Grant's government approached Red Cloud to secure lumber concessions and mining rights in the Black Hills, John E. Smith returned with a negative answer, famously responding, "nothing short of their annihilation will get it from them."

Seeking to investigate this potentially lucrative region, Sheridan dispatched Custer and the 7th Cavalry to escort an expedition to the Black Hills. Although nominally charged with scouting the location of a possible fort, the party consisted of nearly one thousand individuals, and included journalists, photographers, and experienced gold miners. It also included Colonel Frederick Dent Grant, the president's oldest son. As expected, the expedition confirmed the presence of gold, and Custer's descriptions portrayed the Black Hills as a paradise. Overnight, the region was swarmed with prospectors and adventurers.



*The Custer Expedition of 1874*

## **The Coming Conflict: The Campaign of 1876**

With the Sioux refusing to sell the Black Hills and the U.S. government refusing to honor the treaty, tensions have reached a breaking point. Thousands of Sioux and Cheyenne have begun gathering in Montana under the leadership of Sitting Bull. These Indians have been declared "hostile" by the Grant Administration. Once again, General Custer and the 7th Cavalry have been tasked with doing what they do best—finding and annihilating hostile Indians.

**Historical Note:** In order to avoid confusion, the history above avoids specific dates and events unique to the alternate world of *Deadlands*, and sticks to the "common" history shared between factual and fictional timelines. However, because the *Deadlands* Civil War lasted until 1874, the Marshal may assume that the American West of *Deadlands* 1876 is less "patrolled" than the historical frontier, with certain historical engagements "reassigned" to volunteer regiments. The relocation of the Southern Cheyenne to Indian Territory was a rare joint project with the Confederacy operating in Texas, while Custer and the 7th Cavalry had additional Civil War duties in the early 1870s, and participated in the Battle of Two Waterfalls. Further details of Custer's fictional exploits may be found in the "*Deadlands* Campaign—Timeline" and in Custer's NPC Profile. Additional details of the Black Hills War and the unfolding military campaign may be read in "*Deadlands* Organizations—Sioux Nation."

# Life In the Cavalry

## Composition

Interestingly, for all its associations with the American West, the cavalry is largely composed of city-dwellers, easterners, and foreigners. Indeed, in 1876 over 17% of the troopers are Irish, 12% are German, and 4% are English; with the remainder of foreigners representing a wide variety of nationalities, particularly Italian, Dutch, Russian, and Canadian. The officers tend to be “native” Americans—the contemporary term for whites born in the United States—however, many skilled officers have been transplanted from Germany, Ireland, and the Netherlands. Most of the native Americans are graduates of West Point, which binds them together in a shared fraternity, and keeps them aloof from the men they command. Many officers also served in the Civil War.

## Training

One of the most serious problems affecting the post-War cavalry is the lack of training received by its recruits. Many new troopers can barely ride a horse, and are given little time to master their carbines. This leads to a very difficult first few months, with recruits failing to care for their equipment properly, struggling to control their mounts in battle, or shooting off their firearms indiscriminately. This problem is complicated by a dearth of officers, many of whom have precious little time to drill and train greenhorns. Desertion is quite common, with a 20% desertion rate being the yearly standard. (Notably, this rate is significantly lower among the Buffalo Soldiers, who perhaps have less opportunities to desert *toward*.)

## Work

The daily life of a cavalry trooper is quite difficult, especially when posted to the Plains—known at the time as the “Great American Desert.” Actual combat is exceptionally rare, and most days are filled with work details, whether maintaining the fort or being “lent out” to clear terrain, repair railroads, or lay telegraph wire. One contemporary soldier complained that his time was mostly spent “building quarters, stables, storehouses, bridges, roads and telegraph lines; involving logging, lumbering, quarrying, adobe and brick making, lime-burning, mason-work, plastering, carpentering, painting, teaming, repairing wagons, blacksmithing, and sometimes wood-chopping and hay-making.”

## Pastimes

True to military existence throughout history, life in the cavalry involves long stretches of inaction punctuated by sudden periods of “hurry up and wait,” sometimes leading to a grueling campaign which may or may not culminate in a furious battle. When stationed at a fort or camp, troopers turn to various forms of recreation to stave off the tedium of the Plains. Although the men sometimes form “base-ball” or cricket teams, gambling and card-playing are more typical forms of recreation. Horse-racing is another popular activity, usually conducted along impromptu tracks and attended by much frantic betting. Drinking is common, which leads to the expected varieties of drunk and disorderly behavior, including bragging, brawling, and misdirected gunplay. Some larger outposts maintain a library, which may range from a sturdy bookcase stocked with enriching classics to a circulating collection of newspapers, dime-novels, and pornography. Concerts are not uncommon, whether provided by the official regiment musicians, or organized from within the ranks of the enlisted men. Most men write frequent letters home, and often trade each other’s letters for group readings. And finally, religious services may round off the week, usually organized by the soldiers themselves and quite well-attended.

### *Civilians*

Forts and other long-term outposts also attract the usual species of hangers-on, from traders and sutlers to mountebanks and cardsharps. As one might expect, prostitution is commonplace. While some “sporting women” and “painted cats” openly ply their trade in nearby shacks, many “soiled doves” are nominally employed as nurses, laundresses, seamstresses, and shop assistants. Some camp followers are officially listed as “soldier’s wives,” a designation that permits them to freely operate within the walls of a fort.

### *Hog Ranches*

The more disreputable civilians often congregate in nearby “hog ranches,” the army slang for frontier bordellos that feature drinking and gambling with the usual attendant prostitution. Lieutenant John Gregory Bourke described the infamous “Three-Mile Hog Ranch” outside of Fort Laramie as “tenanted by as hardened and depraved set of witches as could be found on the face of the globe...a rum mill of the worst kind...half a dozen Cyprians, virgins whose lamps were always burning brightly in expectancy of the coming of the bridegroom, and who lured to destruction the soldiers of the garrison. In all my experience I have never seen a lower, more beastly set of people of both sexes.”

## **Crime and Punishment**

A common problem among troopers posted to the Plains is their notorious lack of discipline. Many contemporary sources attributed this misconduct to the men being removed from such “civilizing” influences as churches, civic institutions, and womenfolk. In a place where the only organized law is military discipline, soldiers are at the whim of their commanding officers, and punishment ranges from the usual “toss the drunk in the stockade” to more harsh measures such as flogging. Two exceptionally feared punishments include being hanged by one’s thumbs, and being tossed in a “sweat-box”—a cramped, airless compartment that functions as an oven in the heat of the Plains. A naked man confined to a sweat-box suffers from hunger, dehydration, and hallucinations; and usually expires unless released in a timely fashion.

## **Officers**

The daily life of an officer is significantly better than that of the enlisted man. When posted to a fort, officers occupy better quarters, with some actually living in fully-furnished houses. Officers may be accompanied by their wives and families, and tend to form their own microcosm of “civilized society” away from the enlisted men, complete with dinners, salons, theatrical productions, and dances. It is nevertheless a difficult and trying life, especially for the women. Deprived of the adventure of command and lacking the stimulation afforded by an active social circle, the officer’s wives form a close-knit community that frequently focuses on activities such as prayer meetings, cooking sessions, sewing circles, and quilting bees.

## **Equipment**

### **Clothing**

Cavalry troopers are issued uniforms according to their position, generally featuring trousers with “lemon yellow” piping and some form of coat depicting their station. Double-button front suspenders were standard, along with M-1872 black leather Cavalry Boots, a modification of the M-1851 Artillery Driver’s Boots. Because most troopers modified their outfits extensively, more details on clothing are found in the NPC descriptions below for “Recruit,” “Veteran,” and “Officer.”

## **Kit**

Military kits vary widely through the years, and are usually altered by the soldiers themselves, who make numerous changes to their equipment and supplement their gear with their own possessions. The standard kit issued to a cavalry recruit in 1876 includes an M-1874 haversack of rubberized duck cotton, a metal canteen enshrouded by a canvas outer cover, and a leather pouch for pistol ammunition. In 1876 the military finally adjusted to metal carbine cartridges by sensibly issuing a leather “prairie” belt fitted with a bank of 54 canvas cartridge loops; but most troopers are still using the standard M-1874 belt fitted with Hazen cartridge loops. The rectangular brass belt buckle features the standard “U.S.” engraving, except for officers, whose buckles sport an eagle and wreath design. Troopers may also be issued a rubberized raincoat.

## **Mount & Saddle**

Of course, a trooper’s horse is what truly distinguishes him as a cavalry man! Unlike the Indian’s grass-fed ponies, the horses of the cavalry are fed with grains, which must be carried along in a forage sack. All cavalry horses feature a simple “US” brand on their left shoulder. A trooper’s mount is equipped with a McClellan saddle. Commissioned by General George McClellan after an extensive tour of European cavalries, the McClellan saddle has been in use since 1859, and supports much of the trooper’s gear—his blanket roll, half-tent, overcoat, spare clothing, haversack, and saddlebags full of spare ammunition, cooking utensils, and other personal effects. There is also room for the various equestrian supplies, such as brush and shoe pack, forage bags, and the lariat and picket pin, which are generally strapped to the top of the bedroll. The trooper’s Springfield carbine may be clipped to a ring, or tucked into a side holster.

## **Weapons**

Troopers are issued two firearms—a Model 1873 Springfield “Trapdoor” Carbine, and a Model 1873 Colt Single-Action Army revolver. They are also issued an M-1860 light cavalry saber.

### *Model 1873 Springfield “Trapdoor” Carbine*

Caliber .45-70 Government, Range 40/400/800, Capacity 1, Rate of Fire 1/2, DAM 2d8, STR d6. Note: A roll of Natural 1 results in a stuck casing, requiring one action round to extract.



Issued with a black leather sling and saddle-holster, this weapon is the standard rifle of the Plains cavalry. Despite the popular image of the trooper firing his rifle from horseback, the standard practice is to dismount before firing. A full description of the M-1873 may be found in the *Deadlands Armory*.

*Colt Single-Action Army Revolver, Cavalry Model*

Caliber .45, Range 10/25/100, Capacity 6, Rate of Fire 1, DAM 2d8.



Issued with an M-1874 belt holster made from black bridle-leather, this revolver is meant for close quarters combat. It can also be fired from horseback, although its limited range and accuracy restricts it to the sphere of immediate battle. Cartridges are kept in a leather cartridge pouch fixed to the trooper's belt. A full description of the Colt SAA may be found in the *Deadlands Armory*.

*M-1860 Light Cavalry Saber*

DAM 1d6+STR



Adapted from the Model 1822 French hussar's saber, this curved blade is 41" long and weights a little over two pounds. By 1876, the cavalry saber was considered largely ornamental. Heavy, awkward, and noisy, sabers are often left behind on campaign, stored in wooden boxes on orders of the commanding officer.

## **Tactics**

Despite the image of the charging cavalry popular in dime novels, Hollywood movies, and the public imagination, a full-blown, sabers-raised cavalry charge is surprisingly uncommon in the West. The Plains Indians do not organize themselves along Napoleonic lines, and fight in a fashion more akin to today's guerilla warfare. They prefer ambushes and raiding parties, they attack with little command-level organization, and they withdraw as soon as the tide turns against them. However, they are superior horsemen, and have an unparalleled understanding of the landscape. In order to effectively counter these natural advantages, the U.S. cavalry has developed a strategy best described by the modern phrase "search and destroy."

## **Indian Scouts**

Pioneered by General George Crook, the use of native scouts is an essential tactic of Indian warfare. Indian scouts are instrumental in surveying the land, finding effective pathways through the wilderness, and interpreting the signs left behind by hostile Indians. Although tribal turncoats are preferred, the intense loyalty of the Sioux requires Union forces to employ their enemies, generally the Arikara, the Crow, and the Shoshone—all tribes that were pushed out of the region by the expansionist Sioux and Cheyenne. Custer

himself has a powerful bond with Bloody Knife, an Arikara scout who harbors a personal vendetta against the Hunkpapa war chief Gall. Meanwhile, the half-Polynesian scout Frank Grouard, who works for George Crook and the 3rd Cavalry, was once an intimate of Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull.



*Custer seated with three of his scouts. Bloody Knife is pointing on the far left.*

### **The Cavalry Charge**

Once a hostile encampment is discovered—usually by Indian scouts—the preferred method of attack is the “morning charge,” a blitzkrieg assault on the village. As demonstrated during the Battle of the Washita, Custer’s favorite strategy is to divide his command into battalions, which then encircle an encampment. These detached companies ride into battle to the sound of the band playing the regiment’s official song, the rollicking Irish quickstep, “Garryowen.” This shock and awe approach is timed to catch the warriors while still sleeping. Another tactic is to capture the village’s women and children, which are then employed as human shields, forcing the warriors to retreat or surrender. Meanwhile, another detachment attempts to capture the tribe’s ponies, cutting off a possible avenue of escape and denying the tribe its mobile assets. Indeed, these ponies are often slaughtered by the bluecoats, such as after the Washita, where Custer ordered 675 ponies to be shot in the head and left for dead.

**Historical Note:** Custer employed this same strategy at Little Bighorn, dividing his command into three battalions. Completely failing to apprehend the size of Sitting Bull’s village, Custer’s decision was disastrous, and cost him the battle—and his life. Of course, in *Deadlands 1876*, this fate has yet to be decided...

### *The Dismount*

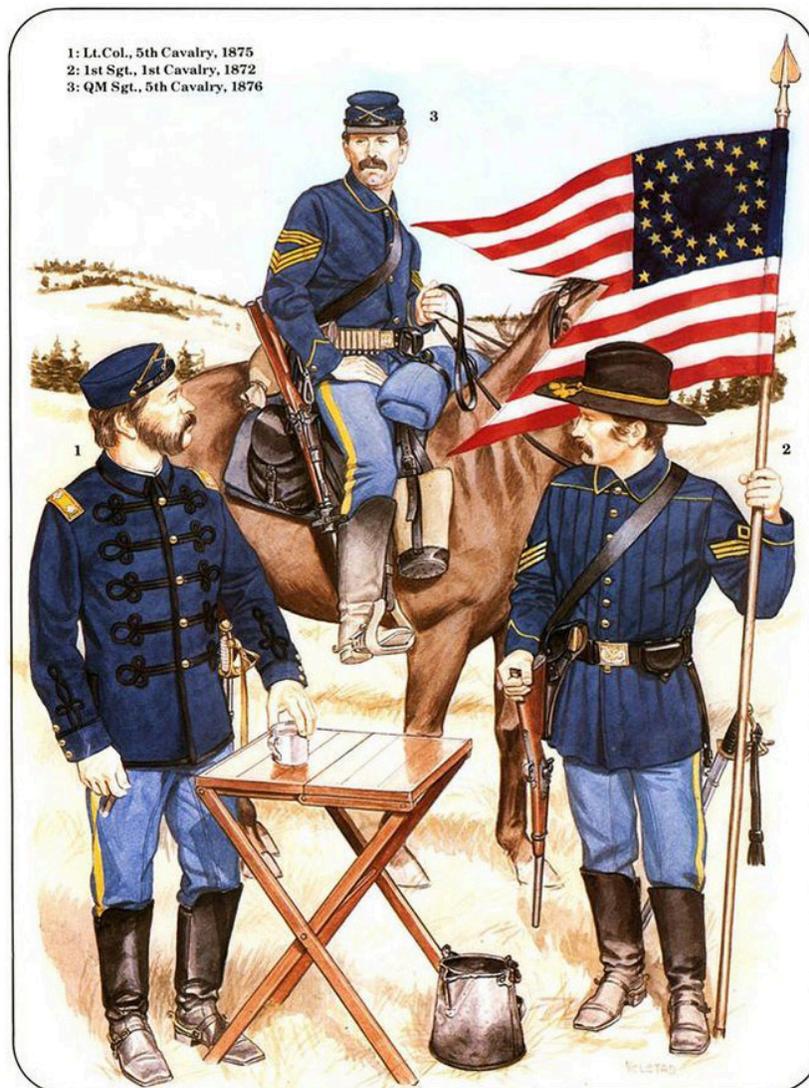
Cavalry troopers rarely fire their carbines from horseback. During standard battle conditions, the usual tactic is to dismount by squadrons, with three troopers dismounting and handing their reins to the fourth. These active troopers then fire their carbines from an appropriate position, advancing *en masse* when the opportunity presents itself. If the tide of battle turns against them, they may use their horses—living or dead!—as cover.

## NPC Profiles and Statistics

The men of the command were, for the most part, young, but well seasoned, and in their blue shirts, broad felt hats, cavalry boots and blue, or buckskin, pantaloons, for on an Indian campaign little attention is paid to uniform, looked both athletic and warlike. Their arms were bright as hard rubbing could make them, and around the waist of every stalwart trooper was a belt filled with sixty rounds of fixed ammunition for the Springfield carbine. Each man carried also a supply of revolver cartridges.

—John F. Finerty, *War-path and Bivouac*

The following pages offer general statistics and descriptions for three classes of cavalry trooper: “Recruits,” “Veterans,” and “Officers.” Recruits may be considered Extras, Veterans are Face Cards, and Officers are usually Wild Cards. These templates may be adjusted as necessary, and may also be used to represent Volunteer regiments, Confederate Dragoons, Colorado Rangers, or any such contemporary mounted soldier. These templates are followed by NPC profiles for the regiment’s most notable officers.



*Ronald Volstad's illustration of three troopers from the 1870s*



### **Cavalry Recruit**

AGL d6, SMT d4, SPT d6, STR d6, VIG d6, PAR 5, TGH 5. Fighting d6, Intimidate d4, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Survival d4, Throw d6, Tracking d4.

Attack: 1873 Trapdoor Springfield, Cal .45, Cap 1, RoF 1/2, DAM 2d8; Colt 1873 SAA “Cavalry” revolver, Cal .45, Cap 6, RoF 1, DAM 2d8; Cavalry saber, 1d6+d6 STR.

Signing on for a five-year enlistment, cavalry troopers are a mixed lot, often drawn from the ranks of immigrants, the impoverished, the down-on-their-luck, and sometimes even the criminal class. Many lack formal training, and a few of the greener recruits still can’t control their own mount!

Recruits are issued the standard light blue trousers with “lemon yellow” piping, a dark blue blouse with brass buttons and branch-of-service colored piping, suspenders, black cavalry boots, an ammunition belt, and a carbine sling. Although a grey flannel shirt is standard issue, many troopers—even recruits—often wear civilian shirts, whether simple calico or “hickory-checked” in black and white, or sometimes red and black, squares. The standard issue headgear is the M-1872 dark blue forager hat, or “kepi.” Troopers are also issued a foldable “campaign hat,” but its ugly appearance and shoddy quality make this the first official item of clothing to get discarded. A yellow-piped blue overcoat completes the picture, although these are usually tied to saddles during summer months.



*Trooper of the 6th Regiment in Mexico, 1880s*



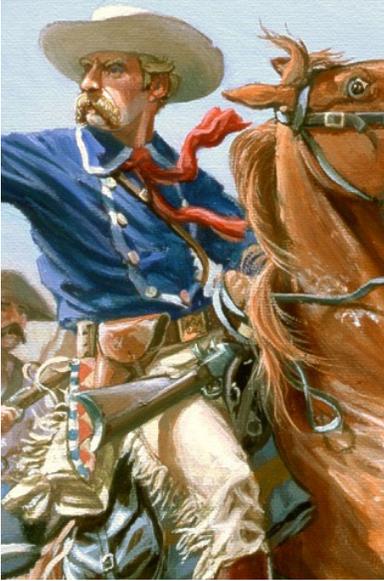
### **Cavalry Veteran ♠**

AGL d6, SMT d6, SPT d8, STR d8, VIG d8, PAR 6, TGH 6. Wounds 3/I. Fighting d8, Intimidate d6, Notice d8, Riding d8, Shooting d10, Survival d6, Throw d6, Tracking d6, Taunt d6, Swimming d4. Hindrance: Vow. Edge: Marksman, Soldier, Steady Hands.

Attack: 1873 Trapdoor Springfield, Cal .45, Cap 1, RoF 1/2, DAM 2d8; Spencer carbine, Cal .56-50, Cap 7, RoF 1, DAM 2d10; Winchester Model 1873, Cal .44, Cap 16, RoF 1, DAM 2d6; Colt 1873 SAA “cavalry” revolver, Cal .45, Cap 6, RoF 1, DAM 2d8; Cavalry saber, 1d6+d8 STR.

As campaigns progress, standard uniforms begin to fade and fray. The most experienced cavalry veterans supplement their uniforms with distinctive accoutrements and personal accessories. Articles of civilian clothing are combined with items of regulation uniform, and extra pockets are often stitched onto shirts. Slouch hats replace forager caps, while during the summer months, straw hats become the norm. Taking a cue from their Napoleonic forbearers, many troopers sew canvas or leather reinforcements into the seat and inner thighs of their regulation trousers, while some simply trade them for new trousers made from buckskin or white sailcloth. Another European addition is a pair of canvas leggings, buckled over the boots and rising up to the knee. Most veterans wear leather gauntlets, purchased privately and sometimes decorated with beadwork. White and yellow are the preferred colors.

Non-standard firearms are also common, with Sharps carbines being particularly valued. Some units raise the funds to equip themselves with better firearms, usually Spencer carbines or Winchester repeaters. Colt revolvers may be replaced with Remingtons or Smith & Wesson No. 3 “Schofield” revolvers, nine thousand of which were ordered by the Army Ordinance board in 1875.



### **Cavalry Officer** ☩

AGL d6, SMT d8, SPT d10, STR d8, VIG d8, PAR 7, TGH 6. Wounds 3/I, Fate Chips: 2. Fighting d10, Intimidate d8, Knowledge (Military History) d8, Knowledge (Strategy) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Survival d6, Taunt d6, Throw d6, Tracking d6, Swimming d6. Hindrance: Vow. Edges: Born on Horseback, Command, Leadership, Marksman, Soldier, Steady Hands.

Attack: 1873 Trapdoor Springfield, Cal .45, Cap 1, RoF 1/2, DAM 2d8; Spencer carbine, Cal .56-50, Cap 7, RoF 1, DAM 2d10; Winchester Model 1873, Cal .44, Cap 16, RoF 1, DAM 2d6; Colt 1873 SAA “cavalry” revolver, Cal .45, Cap 6, RoF 1, DAM 2d8; Cavalry saber, d6+d8 STR.

Most Union cavalry officers were educated at West Point, and many first gained experience during the Civil War. Their standard uniform bears the insignia of their rank, usually found on the shoulder boards. Officer’s uniforms are similar to the enlisted men’s, but are often decorated with elaborate stitching, frogging, and other fine details. Officers are also issued a frock coat known as a “surtout.” Of course, in the field, dress varies extensively; some officers take pride in their distinctive appearance, while others look as shabby as their men. Many officers sport customized clothing tailored to suit their needs—or egos! General Crook is known for his casual attire, often being mistaken for an enlisted man; while Custer sports a double-breasted “fireman’s shirt,” its blue wool trimmed in yellow cloth tape and embroidered with crossed sabers on the collars. Custer and his “coterie” of officers are also famous for wearing buckskin coats, buckskin trousers, and flamboyant red scarves. Some officers favor even more colorful buckskin shirts, tanned with buffalo brains and elaborately beaded by the wives of their Arikara scouts. Headwear varies wildly. Many officers carry personal firearms, such as Custer’s famous .440 Webley “Bulldog” Royal Irish Constabulary revolver and his .50-70 Remington “rolling block” rifle.

#### *Officer Ranks*

Being a branch of the Army, the U.S. Cavalry follows the same system of rank as the Infantry. The lowest rank for an officer is second lieutenant, followed by first lieutenant. Aside from assisting superior officers, lieutenants are usually placed in charge of particular functions within the regiment, such as overseeing the scouts or managing the pack train. A first lieutenant may also command a company. The next rank is captain, followed by major; both are likely to serve as company commanders, with majors usually leading battalions. This is followed by lieutenant colonels and colonels, which are surprisingly rare in the cavalry—conditions being as they are, many capable officers are given “brevet,” or temporary war-time, promotions to serve as generals in the field. For instance, “Major General” George Custer is actually a lieutenant colonel.

## Commanders: The 7th Cavalry in 1876

As of 1876, the 7th Cavalry is commanded by General George “Autie” Armstrong Custer. His second-in-command is Major Marcus Reno, followed by Captain Frederick Benteen. Sadly, the regiment is woefully divided; its three principal officers distrust each other, and the companies are splintered into cliques based on loyalty. General Custer is detailed in a separate NPC profile; the other major figures of the 7th Cavalry are introduced here.

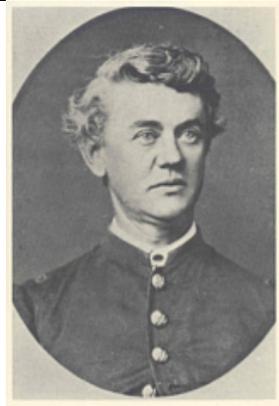


### **Major Marcus Reno (b. 1834)**

A sullen, dislikable man with a smoldering temper, Major Reno saw his first military service in the 1850s, fighting the Snake Indians in the Pacific Northwest. He served as a cavalry captain during the War and fought at Antietam, Gettysburg, and Cold Harbor. In 1866 he was transferred to the West and joined the 7th Cavalry, but the death of his wife in 1874 precipitated an extended leave, during which time he missed the Black Hills Expedition and most of Custer’s rise to prominence. Arrogant and resentful, he is constantly eclipsed by Custer, and feels that he should be the rightful leader of the 7th—a belief shared by few others.

### **Current Role**

Simply put, Custer’s junior officer is not well liked. He always seems to be absent during the regiment’s finest moments, such as the Battle of the Washita and the Black Hills expedition. Even General Alfred Terry—who served with Reno on the government board that selected the 1873 Springfield as the Army’s official rifle—has frequently snubbed the Major, denying Reno’s initial request for leave after the death of his wife! Indeed, the fact that Terry has placed that braggart Custer in charge of the 7th only stirs the embers of Reno’s smoldering wrath. In addition to this resentment, Reno has been struggling with depression since the death of his wife, and has taken to the bottle, even to the point of riding drunk into battle.



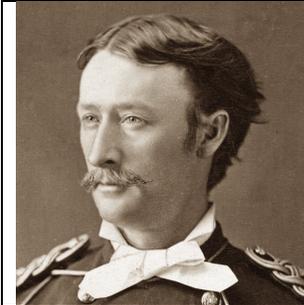
### **Captain Frederick Benteen (b. 1834)**

Prematurely gray with sparkling blue eyes, Fred Benteen is a native Virginian who broke his father’s heart by enlisting in the Northern ranks. He served the early years of the War as a lieutenant in the Missouri cavalry, riding against the South in such engagements as Pea Ridge and Vicksburg. In 1865, Benteen was placed in charge of the 138th U.S. Colored Volunteers, being transferred to the 7th Cavalry in late 1866. Since then, Benteen has found himself at odds with Custer time and time again. After the Battle of the Washita, Benteen wrote an anonymous letter published in the *St. Louis Democrat*, damning Custer for “abandoning” Major Joel Elliot to certain death and mutilation.

### **Current Role**

A self-styled intellectual, Custer’s junior officer resents his superior, whom he sees as an irresponsible braggart, a vainglorious popinjay, and a feckless commander likely to get his troops killed. Still holding a torch for Major Elliot—the capable leader of the 7th “wrongfully usurped” by Custer after he took command before the Washita—Benteen remains convinced that Custer deliberately left the Major behind, where Elliot was

captured, killed, and mutilated by the Cheyenne. In turn, Custer claims that Benteen has no compunction against killing “boys,” a reference to a young Cheyenne gunned down by Benteen when the lad refused to drop his pistol. This enmity persists to this day, and Benteen’s troops are often at the receiving end of Custer’s more irksome assignments. As of late, Benteen’s passive-aggressive loathing has crept dangerously close to mutiny, and he’s taken to openly calling out his commander’s braggadocio.



### **Captain Thomas Ward Custer (b. 1845)**

George Armstrong Custer’s younger brother, Tom Custer is a distinguished officer in his own right, and is famous for winning the Medal of Honor twice during the Civil War—the first soldier to ever achieve that distinction. In 1864 he mustered out of the Infantry and joined the 6th Michigan Cavalry, becoming his brother’s aide-de-camp in the “Wolverines.” Tom followed his brother into the 7th Cavalry, and is now the commanding officer of Company C.

### **Current Role**

Tom Custer is General Custer’s most loyal supporter, and has accompanied his older brother on every significant action taken by the regiment. Although he’s decidedly less reckless than his brother, Tom has a similar reputation for high spirits. In 1875, he helped arrest Rain-In-The-Face for the murder of an Army veterinarian. The Hunkpapa warrior escaped imprisonment at Fort Abraham Lincoln, and has vowed to kill Tom Custer and devour his heart.



### **Bloody Knife (b. 1840)**

Born to a Hunkpapa father and an Arikara mother, the young Bloody Knife grew up in his father’s tribe, where he was bullied and mistreated—especially by Gall. Leaving at the age of fifteen, he joined the Arikara, eventually becoming a mail runner for the American Fur Company. While visiting his father, he was ambushed by Gall, whose followers stripped, beat, and humiliated the young scout. Although he was released, in 1862 his two brothers were killed by a Sioux raid led by Gall, who left their scalped bodies to be consumed by wolves. Bloody Knife began serving the Union as a scout, and despite problems with alcoholism, became a lance corporal in 1872. The next year he met George Armstrong Custer, and Bloody Knife became a permanent fixture in the 7th Cavalry.

### **Current Role**

Bloody Knife is Custer’s most loyal and trusted scout. The two have a curious relationship, one that reflects their shared temperaments. Custer has actually fired upon Bloody Knife on more than one occasion, while the Indian has threatened to murder the General; yet both seem bound by mutual admiration, respect, and necessity. Bloody Knife loathes the Sioux, and his heart burns with a hatred for Gall, who has become something of his “white whale,” the source of all Bloody Knife’s personal tragedies.

**Historical Note:** Killed in the historical Battle of Little Bighorn, modern scholarship suggests that first blood was actually drawn by Bloody Knife, who may have sneaked into Gall’s teepee prior to the battle and murdered his enemy’s wives and children.

## **Companies of the 7th Regiment**

As of the summer of 1876, the 7th Cavalry has 670 troopers organized into twelve companies. One company is commanded by Custer's brother Tom, and another by Custer's brother-in-law James Calhoun. Just prior to the Battle of Little Bighorn, Custer divided his command into three battalions. Although each Marshal is free to alter history as he sees fit, for the sake of convenience, the twelve companies of the 7th Cavalry are organized below in terms of these fateful battalions. It should be noted that this arrangement also reflects the divided loyalties of the regiment. The companies are:

### **Custer's Battalion**

Company C, Captain Thomas Custer (Custer's brother)  
Company E: First Lieutenant Algernon Emory "Fresh" Smith  
Company F: Captain George Yates  
Company I: Captain Myles Keogh  
Company L: First Lieutenant James Calhoun (Custer's brother-in-law)

### **Reno's Battalion**

Company A: Captain Myles Moylan  
Company G: First Lieutenant Donald McIntosh  
Company M: Captain Thomas French

### **Benteen's Battalion**

Company D: Captain Thomas Weir  
Company H: Captain Frederick Benteen  
Company K: First Lieutenant Edward Settle Godfrey

### **Pack Train**

First Lieutenant Edward Gustave Mathey  
Company B: Captain Thomas McDougall  
Civilian contractor: Boston Custer (Custer's brother)  
Civilian contractor: Henry Armstrong "Autie" Reed (Custer's nephew)

### **Scouts and Interpreters**

Second Lieutenant Charles Varnum, Chief of Scouts

### **Other Notables**

#### *Band Director*

Felix Vinatieri (b. 1837)

Standing only five-foot two-inches tall, Felix Vinatieri is a graduate of Naples Conservatory of Music. After hearing his "sophisticated" musicianship in Yankton, Custer offered Vinatieri a post as the Band Director of the 7th Cavalry. The spry Italian suits his commander's operatic sense of flair, whether playing spirited quadrilles for Libby and the other officers' wives, or leading the regiment into battle to the sounds of "Garryowen."

#### *Newspaper Reporter*

Mark Kellogg (b. 1833)

A newspaper correspondent for the *Bismarck Tribune*, Kellogg is embedded with the 7th Cavalry, and have been documenting the campaign as it unfolds.

# The 7th Cavalry After 1876

## The Battle of Little Bighorn

Although *Deadlands 1876* is set before the Battle of Little Bighorn, the historical 7th Cavalry survived this monumental defeat, in which the regiment lost half its men and officers. General Custer was killed, along with every man in his battalion, including his brothers, his brother-in-law, his nephew, Bloody Knife, and Mark Kellogg. The battalions of Benteen and Reno suffered heavy casualties, but both commanders and the majority of their troopers survived.

Custer's defeat shocked the nation, and resulted in a draconian crackdown on all Indians in U.S. territory, whether hostile or peaceful. Custer was initially viewed as a martyred hero, charging heroically into battle and betrayed by his subordinate officers. Of course, Reno and Benteen had their own stories to tell, and recriminations and accusations rocked the army for the next decade. Accused of cowardice and drunkenness by Custer's supporters, the remainder of Reno's career was marked by alcoholism, scandal, and disgrace. Frederick Benteen fared considerably better, remaining with the regiment and earning a promotion to major. He continued to serve with the 7th Cavalry, leading them against the Nez Perce under General Samuel D. Sturgis.

## *The Regiment from 1876–1890*

After their stunning losses at Little Bighorn, the 7th Cavalry was reorganized into eight companies and provided with temporary officers. It joined the Terry expedition, reinforcing Gibbons and Crook until the bitter end of that ill-starred campaign. Considered to be something of a "cursed" regiment, the 7th was formally reconstituted back at Fort Abraham Lincoln. After regaining some honor during the Nez Perce War, the regiment was scattered for most of the period between 1879–1888, with different companies taking various roles during the numerous engagements of the Indian Wars. In 1888, the regiment was finally reunited, where it went on to participate in the suppression of the Ghost Dance movement, the campaign that culminated in the infamous Battle of Wounded Knee. It is widely believed that the savagery visited upon the Sioux by the cavalry was in part revenge for their defeat at Little Bighorn. With the Indian Wars at an end, the regiment adapted to the changing times, and went on to fight in all of America's military engagements, from the Spanish-American War to present-day Afghanistan.



# Sources & Notes

## Sources

The following books were instrumental in creating this resource: [\*Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars\*](#) by Don Rickley, Jr., [\*The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846–1890\*](#) by Robert Utley, [\*War-Path and Bivouac: The Conquest of the Sioux\*](#) by John F. Finerty, [\*Crazy Horse and General Custer\*](#) by Stephen Ambrose, and [\*The Last Stand\*](#) by Nathaniel Philbrick. Osprey Publishing has several fine books about the U.S. cavalry, with Philip Katcher's [\*Union Cavalryman 1861–1865\*](#) and [\*US Cavalry on the Plains 1850–90\*](#) being particularly useful. Dan Gagliasso's article "[Strange Hats and Buckskin Coats](#)" for *True West* magazine helped me flesh out the details on the troopers' clothing. Some excellent online resources include the [Indian Wars US Army/Cavalry Uniform Gear & Weapons Pictorial Guide](#), published by the [Arizona Civil War Council](#); the [pages on cavalry gear at GermanMilitaria](#), the enthusiastic [Custer Lives!](#) site, [CavHooah](#), the [7th U.S. Cavalry Association homepage](#), and the [Friends of the Little Bighorn](#) site, which features a PDF listing [every single member](#) of the 7th Cavalry to fight in that fateful battle! I should also credit the 1991 movie [\*Son of the Morning Star\*](#). Despite its wooden script, implausible wigs, and prematurely-aged Sitting Bull, the film brought a surprising amount of authenticity to its portrayal of life in a nineteenth-century cavalry regiment.

## Images

The images used in this document were all found on the Web, as there is no shortage of Custer resources. The main banner is adapted from a contemporary woodcut by J.E. Taylor entitled, "Gen. Custer's Surprise of an Indian Camp of Over Two Thousand Warriors," and depicts the charge of the 7th Cavalry at the Battle of Washita. The images of guidons are from Wikipedia and the [CavHooah](#) site. The painting of Custer's "Last Stand" was found on Pinterest, but was unfortunately unattributed, and I can't seem to find the artist. The photographs of the Black Hills Expedition and Custer's scouts are historical. The photographs of weapons are from the [Rock Island Auction Company](#). The first image I used for the "Recruit" profile is actually a painted miniature from [Andrea Europe Miniatures](#). Their stuff kicks ass; visit the site. I used it because it perfectly captures Finerty's description. The photo of the trooper in Mexico comes from the National Park Service, and was found on [Sean McLachlan's blog](#). The sketch used for the "Veteran" profile was borrowed from Dan Gagliasso's article "[Strange Hats and Buckskin Coats](#)" for *True West* magazine, which is my main source for that description itself. The image of Custer for the "Officer" profile was clipped from Mark Churms' painting, [\*Custer's Last Ride\*](#). Note the buckskin trousers, the fireman's shirt, and the red scarf. The illustration of the three 1870s troopers is lifted wholesale from Osprey's [\*US Cavalry on the Plains 1850–90\*](#), and was drawn by Ronald Volstad. The photographs of Custer's contemporaries are all historical. I decided to conclude this piece with the great Frederic Remington painting, [\*On the Southern Plains\*](#), from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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