The Cavalry Journal

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In This Issue

Desperate Stand at Beecher Island
Prelude to the Battle of Beecher Island
The Forsyth Scouts
The Spencer Rifle and Colt Revolver at Beecher Island
The Battle of Beecher Island
Relief Operation Order - Relief After Action Report
The Longest Shot
Cheyenne Dog Soldiers Defeated
Captain Lewis H. Carpenter, Medal of Honor
The “Beecher Island” Forts
Roman Nose – Cheyenne Warrior
The United States Cavalry Association
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The Cavalry Journal Editorial Staff
Col. Samuel R. Young, USA Ret., Editor
journaleditor@uscavalry.org
Karen Tempero, Assistant Editor
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The Cavalry Journal is dedicated to the memory of all Cavalrymen.

Contents
1 Editorial: Desperate Stand at Beecher Island
2 Bibliography
3 The Scouts’ Map
4 1868 Roads and Trails Map
5 Prelude to the Battle of Beecher Island
6 The Forsyth Scouts
8 The Spencer Rifle and Colt Revolver at Beecher Island
9 The Battle of Beecher Island
11 Relief Operation Order
11 Relief After Action Report
12 The Longest Shot
13 Cheyenne Dog Soldiers Defeated
15 Captain Louis H. Carpenter - MOH
17 The “Beecher Island” Forts
18 Book Review: The Battle of Beecher Island and the Indian War of 1867-1869
19 Book Review: Fifty Fearless Men
20 Editor’s Notes
21 USCA Membership Application
21 Roman Nose – Cheyenne Warrior

Join the Cavalry
See page 21

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Desperate Stand at Beecher Island*

The Cavalry Journal features a broad sampling of all things cavalry, but mostly U.S. horse cavalry, in each of its issues. While this issue is no different, its topics relate to one significant event—the Battle of Beecher Island—that occurred in September 1868 in northeastern Colorado Territory. Most of us have grown up with stories and movies about cowboys, soldiers, and Indians; we even played “cowboys and Indians” as kids. Much of what we have seen is fiction centered around historical events. Some of us have even visited the sites of these events and have attempted to imagine what it would have been like to have been a participant in them without the influence of Hollywood directors and comic book writers. Others of us have wondered about and sought the causes leading up to those events and the short-and-long-term effects of the events’ outcomes. This issue of The Cavalry Journal is mostly from the eyes and memories of the participants and those involved with/affected by the “Desperate Stand at Beecher Island.”

Several months ago, while attending presentations leading up to the 150th anniversary of Beecher Island at Fort Hays and the Fort Wallace Museum, the historian in me realized there were more than the usual landmarks in western Kansas, eastern Colorado, and southern Nebraska—trails, rivers, campsites, prominent topographical features, forts, and towns—that Indians, settlers, frontiersmen, soldiers, merchants, and travelers used. There were surveyed/graded roads with bridges. These, along with the westward advancing railroads, played a key role in the battle of Beecher Island.

So, saddle your horse, fill your canteen with water and your saddlebags with food and ammunition, strap on your spurs and Colt revolver, and take up your Spencer carbine. You are about to ride with the Forsyth Scouts and experience Beecher Island. -S.R.Y.

*Painting source: warfarehistorynetwork.com

Clark, Dennis K., Dr. Battle of Beecher Island Presentation. Forts Harker and Hays and Fort Wallace Museum, Spring/Summer 2018,


Lowe, Percival G. *Five Years a Dragoon (’40 to ’54) And Other Adventures on the Great Plains*. University of Oklahoma press. 1965.


Sheridan, Philip H. *Outline of Posts*. Old Army Press. 1972. [Outline Description of the Military Posts in the Division of the Missouri, Chicago, April 15, 1876]


This sectional map of Kansas & Colorado with special emphasis given the Saline Valley area contains many of the locations described in the Scouts biographies.

Source: Fifty Fearless Men
The “Central Corridor” - Western Kansas, Western Nebraska, and Northeastern Colorado 1867-1868
Sites of Key Army Posts and Area of Many Indian Depredations

Map not drawn to scale
Prelude to the
Battle of Beecher Island
By Trooper Sam Young

One-hundred and fifty years ago, fifty experienced frontiersmen and their two Army officer-leaders found, when attacked, the Cheyenne, Sioux, and Arapaho hostile Indians they sought. These Indians, numbering around 750 warriors, were some of those who were creating havoc, rape, and death among the settlers and travelers in northcentral/western Kansas, southcentral/southwestern Nebraska, and eastern Colorado Territory, the area known as the central corridor to points west of Kansas and Nebraska. The corridor designations—northern, central, and southern—resulted from routes being surveyed for railroads to the Pacific coast.

There were numerous significant “happenings” over a period of time that collectively contributed to this battle. In the short space available we will identify the most significant. Let’s start by looking at the Scouts' Map and the 1868 Roads and Trails Map on the preceding two pages.

The Scouts Map is significant in the detail of the rivers—Arkansas, Republican, Saline, Smoky Hill, and Solomon—and their tributaries, where they flowed, and the forts’ and towns’ locations. It also shows the Medicine Lodge Treaty site and the Beecher Island site. What it does not identify is the site on the Pawnee Fork River that flowed just north of Fort Larned and joined the Arkansas River just east of Fort Larned. At that site, about 30 miles west of Fort Larned, in April 1867, was the Cheyenne Indian village ordered burned by Major General Winfield Scott Hancock when the Indians failed to return; they feared another “Sand Creek” massacre. That was one of the “happenings.”

Tying the Scouts’ map with the map of the roads and trails, you can see the towns and forts tied together by an extensive network of roads and trails over which settlers, travelers, soldiers, and merchants, and their merchandise traveled. Several things you don’t see are the Kansas Pacific and Union Pacific railroads slowly moving westward; the former across central Nebraska toward Salt Lake City and the latter through the middle of Kansas toward Denver. You also don’t see the many “end-of-track” towns that remained as growing communities for the settlers. The area between Forts Dodge and Larned to the south, Wallace and Lyon (not shown but located south of Cheyenne Wells in eastern Colorado) in the west, Sedgwick and McPherson to the north, and Riley to the east surrounded centuries-old Indian hunting grounds that were rich with buffalo and other game. The encroachment upon the Indian hunting grounds by the railroads and non-Indian people was another of the “happenings.”

The encroachment was enhanced by two very important “happenings:” the Homestead Act of 1862 and the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862. These acts encouraged the westward migration of many who lived east of the Mississippi River to settle in the unpopulated Great Plains. The Railroad Act, with its 1864 amendment, gave the railroads 20 square miles of land for every mile of track it laid. It sold much of that land to finance building additional miles of railroad. The Homestead Act created 160-acre plots of land for settlement.

Another “happening” not seen in the roads and trails map is the surveying, grading, and bridge building on numerous roads in the central corridor that took place in the late 1850s. This was part of a much larger project initiated by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis in 1855 when he established the Pacific Wagon Road Office and Congress began funding road improvements. One such road, known as Bryan’s Road (First Lieutenant Francis T. Bryan surveyed that road in 1856), ran north and south just a few miles from the Beecher Island battle site and passed through Cheyenne Wells, Colorado Territory. That road, identified today as U.S. 385, was well known by the scouts and Army officers of eastern Colorado/western Kansas and was key to the relief of the besieged scouts on Beecher Island.

As you can see, these “happenings” were to the detriment of the Indians. They knew they had two choices: fight to keep their land and way of life, or peacefully let the settlers take what they wanted. Many wanted peace, but some, such as the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers who were prominent at the battle of Beecher Island, were not willing to “go without a fight.”

Simultaneous to these “happenings” were events designed to enhance the U.S. Army's
abilities to have the mobility and firepower necessary to defeat hostile Indians and maintain the peace. One of these was cavalry. The U.S. dragoon regiments created during the Revolutionary War were disbanded along with the rest of the Army, less one battery of artillery, at the end of that war. During the War of 1812 the U.S. again raised two regiments of dragoons, merged them into one then disbanded them at the end of the war as being too expensive to maintain.

Westward expansion saw the need for a mounted force for the Army to cover the vast area west of the Mississippi River. In the 1830s two regiments of dragoons were organized. With the advent of the War with Mexico in 1846, the Regiment of Mounted Rifles was organized. Each of these regiments had specific missions. For example, the Mounted Rifles were originally created to provide security of travelers on the Oregon Trail, but all three mounted regiments successfully fought in the Mexican War.

As westward expansion continued, the U.S. in 1855 created the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Cavalry regiments to give greater mobility and firepower to the U.S. Army. Then, “four months after the start of the Civil War those six horse mounted regiments—1st Dragoons, 2nd Dragoons, Regiment of Mounted Rifles, 1st Cavalry, 2nd Cavalry, and 3rd Cavalry—were reorganized as follows: 1st Dragoons, the oldest mounted regiment in the Army, became the 1st Cavalry; 2nd Dragoons became the 2nd Cavalry; Regiment of Mounted Rifles became the 3rd Cavalry; the 1st Cavalry became the 4th Cavalry; the 2nd Cavalry became the 5th Cavalry; and the 3rd Cavalry became the 6th Cavalry.” [From the June 2018 The Cavalry Journal]

Following the Civil War, the Army was authorized to create four additional cavalry regiments—7th, 8th, 9th and 10th—to help maintain the peace on the western frontier. While these regiments were never at full strength, they each established a very noteworthy reputation for their duty performance. Unfortunately, the territory they had to cover was so vast they could not be everywhere with the necessary number of soldiers to always be successful.

Unfortunately for the settlers in the central corridor, the cavalry was rarely there when they needed them. Settlements and isolated homes along the Republican, Saline, Solomon, Smoky Hill, and other streams and rivers throughout the region were frequent and easy prey for the marauding hostile Indians. Stagecoach stations and railroad survey and tracklaying crews were also targets for those Indians. Even forts and military supply trains were attacked. On 26 June 1867 approximately 300 Indians attacked the Ponds-Creek Stage Station near Fort Wallace to drive off the livestock. Captain Albert Barnitz, Company G 7th Cavalry commander, with approximately 60 troopers rode to the rescue and attacked the Indians. Seven cavalrymen were killed [Bugler Charles Clarke, March 2016 The Cavalry Journal] but the Indians were driven off.

As the situation continued to worsen, Major General Philip H. Sheridan, Commander, Department of the Missouri, did not have enough soldiers in his command to stop the Indians. Thus, he sought and found an unorthodox means to take his fight to the Indians...

The Forsyth Scouts
By Trooper Sam Young

Major General Philip H. Sheridan, Department of the Missouri Commander, seeking a new way to curtail Indian attacks in the territory within his jurisdiction, issued the following order to create a fast-moving, mobile force, of well-armed and experienced frontier scouts to find and punish the hostile Indians:

Headquarters Department of the Missouri
Fort Harker
August 24, 1868

Brevet Colonel George A. Forsyth,
A. A. Inspector-General [A. A. – Acting Assistant] Department of the Missouri

Colonel –

The general commanding directs that you, without delay, employ fifty (50) first class hardy frontiersmen, to be used as scouts against the hostile Indians, to be commanded by yourself, with Lieutenant Beecher Third Infantry, your subordinate. You can enter into such articles of agreement with these men as will compel obedience.
The Scouts were contracted for this mission at Fort Harker [near Ellsworth, Kansas], Fort Hays [near Hays, Kansas], and Fort Wallace [on the Smoky Hill Road in western Kansas near the border with Colorado]. The Army had no authority to enlist them, but they could be contracted by the Quartermaster Department. They were organized into a [provisional] cavalry company with William H. McCall, a Civil War Brevet Brigadier General of Volunteers, as the first sergeant. Their mission was to help counter Arapahoe, Cheyenne and Sioux raids on the Kansas Pacific railroad (whose railhead was near Fort Wallace, Kansas in August 1868), raids on the Solomon and Smoky Hill stage routes to Denver, and raids on settlers in western Kansas, southwestern Nebraska, and northeastern Colorado. Their wages were $50.00 per month with most of the scouts receiving an additional $25.00 per month for furnishing their own horse and saddle. [Due to space limitations the Scouts are not listed here. Recommend the book Fifty Fearless Men by Orvel A. Criqui.]

U.S. Army officers detailed to the Scouts were:


Acting Assistant Surgeon J. H. Mooers, Medical Department, U.S. Army. [J. H. Mooers was a civilian contract surgeon with a Hays City, Kansas practice. His name also appears as Moers, Moore and Moores.]

Each scout was issued the following individual equipment:

Spencer repeating rifle (.56 cal)
Colt’s Army revolver (.44 cal)

140 rounds of rifle ammunition
30 rounds of revolver ammunition
Blanket
Saddle and bridle
Lariat and picket-pin
Canteen
Haversack
Seven days’ cooked rations
Butcher knife
Tin plate and cup

The following equipment, to be carried by four pack mules was issued to the Scouts:

Camp kettles
Picks and shovels (to dig for water)
4,000 rounds of rifle and revolver ammunition
Medical supplies
Extra rations of salt and coffee

Timeline of the Scouts’ service:

25-26 Aug. 1868, Recruiting of scouts begins at Fort Harker.

26 Aug, Scouts departed Fort Harker for Fort Hays arriving 28 Aug where recruiting continues.

30 Aug, Departed Fort Hays for Fort Wallace with orders to scout the headwaters of the Solomon River while en route.

5 Sep, Arrived Fort Wallace where recruiting is completed.

10 Sep, Departed Fort Wallace with orders to counter raids on Kansas Pacific railhead near Sheridan, Kansas (about 13 miles east of Ft. Wallace.)

11-16 Sep, Trailed Indian raiding party from Sheridan to vicinity of what is now Beecher Island, Colorado on the “Dry Fork of the Republican River” (reported as “Delaware Creek”, now the Arikaree River).

17-18 Sep, Main battle of Beecher Island between the scouts and a force now estimated to be 750 Cheyenne and Sioux who were encamped on the
Arikaree near Beecher Island. Four Scouts (Beecher, Mooers, Culver, W. Wilson) were killed in action.

19-24 Sep, Scouts under siege on the island waiting relief.


25-26 Sep, A fifth Scout (L. Farley) dies of wounds and is buried on the battlefield with the other four Scouts.

27 Sep, Forsyth Scouts depart for Fort Wallace escorted by the 10th Cavalry.

29 Sep, Scouts arrived back at Fort Wallace.

18 Nov, A sixth Scout (O'Donnell) dies at Fort Wallace of wounds received 17-18 Sept.

31 Dec, The Forsyth Scouts were disbanded.

The Spencer Rifle and Colt Revolver at Beecher Island
By Trooper Sam Young

In late August 1868, as the fifty experienced frontiersmen were being contracted and organized into what would be known as the Forsyth Scouts, they were each issued a Spencer repeating rifle with 140 rounds of ammunition and a Colt revolver with 30 rounds of ammunition. Four thousand additional rounds were carried on a pack mule.

The Spencer is a lever action, falling-block, breech-loading, seven-shot, .52 caliber rifle, or carbine, with a detachable seven-round capacity tube magazine. The Spencer shoots an internally-primed metallic-cased .56-56 rimfire cartridge. Its rate of fire is 14-20 rounds per minute. If a Blakeslee Cartridge Box is issued with the Spencer, a sustained rate of fire can be attained.

Blakeslee Cartridge Boxes were made to hold six, ten, or thirteen metal tubes, each holding seven Spencer cartridges. I do not know if the Forsyth Scouts were issued Blakeslee Cartridge Boxes.

The revolver issued to the scouts was the six-shot Colt cap and ball .44 caliber 1860 Army revolver. It had an eight-inch barrel. The Colt 1860 Army revolver was the standard issue handgun during the Civil War and was much used in the West following the Civil War.

The Spencer's high rate of fire by a small number of men against a much larger foe armed with, in most cases, single-shot rifles and bows and arrows usually put the odds in favor of those armed with the Spencer. Forsyth knew the numerical odds against his fifty scouts could be ten to one or greater. Thus, he chose the Spencer to more closely even those odds.

At this point a side-note is necessary. The Buffalo Soldiers of the 9th and 10th Cavalry regiments usually received inferior uniforms, equipment, and horses compared to the white soldiers in the other U.S. cavalry regiments. There was one exception; they were all issued Spencer carbines.

The Battle of Beecher Island  
By Trooper Sam Young

Brevet Colonel George “Sandy” Forsyth

Following receipt of his orders on 24 August 1868, Colonel Forsyth immediately commenced recruiting experienced frontier scouts at Fort Harker. He continued the recruiting at Fort Hays and completed it at Fort Wallace the first week of September from whence he departed on 10 September. The Forsyth Scouts, as they were known, were organized into a provisional cavalry company and marched such with scouts out, flank and rear guards.

From Fort Wallace they rode east thirteen miles to Sheridan, Kansas in response to reports of an Indian attack against a freighter’s wagon train. There they found the trail of an Indian scouting party, of maybe twenty to twenty-five warriors, and commenced to follow. It was the typical Indian trail; the scouting party, over several miles, shrunk in size as Indians individually left the party such that the trail disappeared to confuse any followers of their intended destination. Since their trail had been to the northwest toward the Republican River the Forsyth Scouts continued in that direction.

After several days of not finding any Indian signs, they by chance found a well-concealed site where two Indians had camped. Further on they found where three more had camped. Continuing on they found a well-defined trail with signs of one or more large Indian villages passing in the direction the Scouts were following. The next day they continued to follow the ever-enlarging trail. At some point this day, 16 September, several Scouts protested to Forsyth about the possibility of overwhelming numbers attacking their small party and the Scouts being killed. Forsyth reminded them that they all joined to find and fight Indians, that he was under the same risk as them, and to advance was probably no less dangerous than to retreat. The protestors were satisfied and returned to their positions in the column.

As the column moved cautiously forward, various discarded pieces of clothing and camp equipment, along with fresh manure, were seen. However, no game had been seen for two days and the Scouts' rations were almost gone save for some coffee and salt.

Around 4:00 pm the Scouts entered a well-grassed valley about two miles long and two miles wide through which the river flowed. They believed it to be the Delaware Creek but later learned it was the Arickaree Fork of the Republican River. Because of the grass Forsyth decided to camp for the night and let the horses graze in anticipation of an early morning start on the 17th. The camp was on the south side of the river opposite a small gravelly island. Due to the time of year the width of the water flow was very small, but there was water.

Fearful of an attack by the Indians at daylight Forsyth had the horses hobbled and securely tied to their picket pins, and sentries posted. He checked the sentries frequently during the night to ensure they were awake and alert. At dawn several Indian-youth attacked prematurely and against orders to capture horses. That awoke the sleeping Scouts. Shots from the Scouts’ rifles repulsed the attack but not before these Indians got the two mules carrying medical supplies and several horses. As the Scouts completed saddling their horses a horde of mounted and dismounted Indians, expecting complete surprise, attacked from the east. Several Scouts automatically went into defensive mode and commenced firing on the attackers. The attacking Indians did not pause from the Scout’s rifle fire. Seeing the island as a spot for, hopefully, a successful defense the Scouts retreated there. Forsyth saw from the terrain around the island he had complete visibility and the Indians could be clearly seen if they attacked in the daylight. The Indians to win would have to either conduct direct attacks against the island or lay siege to it. Fortunately, the Scouts still had the two mules with the 4000 rounds of additional ammunition.

For initial protection the Scouts tied their horses in a circle, dropped to the ground and fired from
began a siege that lasted for several days. During the first three nights of the siege Forsyth selected two volunteer Scouts each night to attempt to pass through the Indian lines and go to Fort Wallace, approximately 100 miles distance, for help. The first and third pair successfully got through and made their way to Fort Wallace. The second pair could not get through the tight Indian encirclement. The stories of their journey to secure help are most interesting and too lengthy for this Journal. Their stories are in Fifty Fearless Men, The Battle of Beecher Island, and The Stalkers [see bibliography on page 2 of this Journal]. One story reveals the knowledge of the Scouts (Jack Donovan and A.J. Pliley) of the countryside. Knowing they were near Bryan’s Road headed south to hit the Smoky Hill stage north of Cheyenne Wells. They stayed away from the road so as not to be spotted by the Indians. The fourth night they arrived at a ranch house on the Smoky Hill Road, about three miles east of Cheyenne Wells, where Donovan caught the east-bound stage to Fort Wallace. He beat by a few hours the first two Scouts (Jack Stillwell and Pierre Trudeau) and alerted the commander at Fort Wallace of the plight of the Forsyth Scouts. Relief was soon on the way.

Meanwhile, back at the island, conditions that were not good continued to deteriorate. The Scouts, out of rations, were finally giving up trying to eat the rotting horse flesh, and there were only coyotes that could be found—one small one was killed and provided a little food. Days were hot and nights were cold with a dusting of snow one morning. The wounded were suffering terribly as they remained untreated since there were no medical supplies and the doctor was dead. Forsyth, when he found the wound in his thigh filled with maggots and being extremely painful, decided the bullet needed to come out. Using his razor, he carefully cut out the bullet lodged near the artery as none of his fellow Scouts would cut it out for fear of cutting the artery. Thankfully the Indians lifted their siege on the fifth day, but there was still no relief in sight.

On the ninth day some of the Scouts were exploring the area around the island. Two Scouts (Eli Ziegler and Fletcher Vilott) decided to go for a walk. They stopped at a big rock slightly northwest
of the island and sat down to rest. They were only there a few minutes when they saw something on the far hill to the south. Was it the Indians returning or the relief from Fort Wallace? Fear soon turned to joy as Captain Carpenter, with some of his buffalo soldiers, an ambulance with a doctor, and Scout Jack Donovon arrived.

Relief Operation Order

Orders were dispatched to Lt. Col. Carpenter from Ft. Wallace after Scouts Donavan and Piley arrived. (Note: Scouts Donavan and Piley arrived at Fort Wallace Sept. 22 an hour ahead of Scouts Trudeau and Stillwell who left Beecher Island two nights before them on Sept 17th.)

Hd. Qtrs. Fort Wallace, Kansas
Sept. 22, 1868, 11 PM

10th US Cavalry on Scout

Colonel: The commanding officer directs you to proceed at once to a point on the Dry Fork of the Republican about seventy-five or eighty miles north from this point, 30 or 40 miles west by a little south from the forks of the Republican, with all possible dispatch.

Two scouts from Col. Forsyth's command arrived here this evening and bring word that Col. Forsyth was attacked on the morning of Thursday last by an overpowering force of Indians (700) who killed all the animals, broke Col. Forsyth's left leg with a rifle ball, severely wounded him in the groin, wounded Doctor in the head and wounded Lt. Beecher in several places, his back is supposed to be broken. Two men of the command were killed and eighteen or twenty wounded.

The men bringing the word crawled on hands and knees two miles and then traveled only by night on account of the Indians which they saw daily.

Forsyth was well entrenched in the dry bed of the Creek, with a well in the trench, but had only horse flesh to eat and only sixty rounds of ammunition.

General Sheridan orders that the greatest dispatch be used and every means employed to save Forsyth at once. Col. Bradley with six companies is now supposed by General Sheridan to be at the forks of the Republican. Colonel Bankhead will leave here in an hour with one hundred men and two mountain howitzers. Bring all your scouts with you. Order Doctor Fitzgerald at once to this post to replace Doctor Turner who accompanies Col. Bankhead for the purpose of dressing the wounded of Forsyth's party.

I am, Colonel, Very Respectfully Your Obedient Servant

(Signed)
Hugh Johnson
1st Lieut. 4th Infantry
Actg. Post Adjutant

Relief After-Action Report

Captain (Brevet Lt. Col.) Carpenter

Ft. Wallace, Kansas
October 2nd, 1868

1st Lt. Granville Lewis
5th Inf. Post Adjutant

Sir:

I have the honor to report that in pursuance to instructions received from headquarters Ft. Wallace, Kansas, on the 21st of September 1868, I left the Fort with 2 officers and 69 enlisted men, the available force in Company H 10th Cavalry and 17 Scouts and a number of wagons. The Command was supplied with 30 days rations and forage and my orders were to proceed west as far as Kiowa [Colorado], scouting the country and keeping the Denver Road [modern day U.S. 40] clear of Indians.

Having reached Fitche's Meadows, 17 miles from Ft. Wallace, I camped finding good water and grass. On the 22nd, marched to Big Timbers and hearing that Indians had been seen lately to the north of that point, moved to the Lakes and scouted in the vicinity but discovered no signs.
23rd marched towards Cheyenne Wells on the Denver Road and when about five miles west of Big Timbers received a dispatch [see below] from headquarters Fort Wallace, Kansas informing me that two scouts [A. J. Piley and Jack Donovan] had arrived from Bvt. Col. Forsyth’s Camp asking for assistance stating that he was surrounded by Indians. I was directed to proceed with all possible dispatch to his aid to a point on the "Dry Fork of the Republican" about 75 or 80 miles, North-Northwest from Wallace.

Without delay, I started to the Northward, taking all of my wagons so as to be able to supply Col. Forsyth’s party should they reach them, and progressed forward until a dark and rainy night prevented further progress. I then bivouacked, having made about 35 miles to the North, 10 degrees West. The next day about 2:00 PM, I arrived at the mouth of Whitestone Creek on the South Branch or Fork of the Republican, finding that it was a dry sandy stream, supposed that I had reached the right locality, and spent the entire afternoon scouting the country for several miles around. I here discovered the signs and trail of a very large force of Indians, who had encamped the previous night and for several days past in the bed of the Republican. Several dead warriors were buried in the hills close by on scaffoldings. On examination I found that they had been recently killed. One of those was a Cheyenne Chief. Not far distant in the valley a buffalo skin lodge stood, covering the body of one of their medicine men, with his drum, shield and medicine stone.

In the morning, a party of five men, sent out from Ft. Wallace to overtake Bvt. Col. Bankhead’s expedition, very fortunately stumbled by accident into my camp. One of these proved to be one of Col. Forsyth’s men [Jack Donovan], who had escaped from his camp. By his direction, I was able to push forward with about 30 men, leaving the wagons to follow slowly but also taking with me the ambulance and a surgeon, Dr. Fitzgerald. We passed over 20 miles to the Northward, as rapidly as possible, and about 10 o’clock AM reached Col. Forsyth’s Command on the dry fork of the Republican, known generally as the "Bob Tailed Deer Creek" or Arikaree Fork.

We found the men living in sand holes, scooped deep enough to keep each from hostile bullets with 47 dead horses and mules laying around them in a semi-circle. In a large square excavation, Col. Forsyth and two badly wounded men had lain since the 17th, inhaling the foul stench, arising from the carcasses around and being covered continually by the loose sand. Lt. Beecher of the 3rd Infantry and A.A. Surgeon Moores were both dead and buried with 2 others close by. 17 of the men were wounded, some severely.

I immediately selected a camp a few hundred yards distant and moved the wounded to a more desirable locality and placed them in tents. Dr. Fitzgerald exerted himself to the utmost in his efforts to relieve the suffering of the wounded as did every officer and soldier of the command. 26 hours after my arrival the command of Bvt. Col. Bankhead, Capt. 5th Inf. appeared and shortly after 2 companies of the 2nd Cavalry under Bvt. Col. Brisbin [from Fort Sedgwick].

On the 27th, we moved 20 miles to the Republican. 28th, marched 28 miles to the headwaters of Beaver Creek. 29th, marched 40 miles and returned to Ft. Wallace, the remainder of the command reaching the post on the following morning. Total distance marched, 204 miles.

I am, Sir, Very Respectfully, Your Obedient Servant,

(Signed)
L. H. Carpenter
Bvt. Lt. Col. USA
Commanding Company "H"

The Longest Shot
By Trooper Sam Young

In the book The Beecher Island Battle, the author writes that Colonel George A. Forsyth, in his account of the battle of Beecher island—"A Frontier Fight"—that appeared in the June 1895 Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, told the story of what was probably the longest shot of the battle:

"On the third day a large and very fleshy Indian, having, as he thought, placed himself just out of range, taunted and insulted us in every possible way. He was perfectly naked, and his gestures especially were exceedingly exasperating. Not being in a happy frame of mind, the man’s actions..."
annoyed me excessively. Now we had in our command three Springfield breech-loading rifles which I knew would carry several hundred yards more than our Spencer rifles. I accordingly directed that the men using these guns should sight them at their limit—1200 yards—and aim well over the sight and see if by chance we might stop the antics of this outrageously insulting savage. At the crack of the three rifles he sprang into the air with a yell of seemingly both surprise and anguish, and rolled over dead, while the Indians in his vicinity scattered in every direction, and this almost unexpected result of our small volley was a matter of intense satisfaction to all of us.”

In the book Fifty Fearless Men, the author in the section on Scout Barney Day tells the story as follows:

“An unidentified story about buffalo hunters included this passage praising Day’s marksmanship [Barney Day was positioned near the east end of the Island]: At the Battle of Beecher’s Island after things had reached a stalemate and the Indians had started to withdraw, a big fat Indian rode his horse onto one of the hills, out of range of the Spencer Carbines [rifles]. There in sign language he heaped every insult known on those on the island. Day got tired of this, so he took his shooting sticks and rifle to a good position, threw up some grass, took careful aim and shot. He ejected the cartridge, blew through the barrel as ‘Mr. Lo’ was torn off his pony. The rescue party later measured the distance—it was 1,280 yards.”

“This story could be true, certainly the story was reported by Major Forsyth but he did not identify the marksman. It certainly is possible because Day was a buffalo hunter and had considerable military experience....”

George Bird Grinnell, in his book The Fighting Cheyennes, tells the story of the last Indian to die: “The last man killed in this fight was ‘Killed by a Bull.’ He was a Cheyenne Dog Soldier, and the Indians say he was shot on the hill at a considerable distance from the breastworks while helping to carry the body of Dry Throat. General Forsyth describes this death in detail, and says that on being hit, the Indian sprang into the air with a yell ‘of surprise and anguish and rolled over stone-dead.’ This yell must have been heard at a distance of two-thirds of a mile—a long way. Killed by a Bull was buried in the lodge found by the troops that came to rescue Forsyth, and on him a much imagination and many adjectives were expended, under the impression that he was Roman Nose.”

References:
Werner, Fred H. The Beecher Island Battle. Werner Publications. 1989. pg. 72

Cheyenne Dog Soldiers
Defeated
By Trooper Sam Young

From the Beecher Island battle Sheridan realized it was not an Army victory, for the Scouts as a fighting unit were no longer effective. He also realized small mobile units such as the Scouts to keep the Indians on the run was not the answer. He thus devised and directed his plan for a larger presence of cavalry units in order to force peace on the southern and central plains. He tasked Custer and the 7th Cavalry with patrolling south of the Arkansas River while 5th and 10th Cavalry units under Major Eugene Carr patrolled the area between the Republican and Smoky Hill rivers.

During October 1868 several skirmishes occurred between the cavalry and the Indians. Dog Soldiers on 13 October struck settlements in the Solomon Valley, killing four settlers and kidnapping Anna Belle Morgan while on 14 October Major William Royall led a large 5th Cavalry patrol from Fort Harker into northwestern Kansas where it fought Indians near Prairie Dog Creek. On the same day, Carr with an escort of two companies from the 10th Cavalry departed Fort Wallace to join his new command, the 5th Cavalry, in northwest Kansas. It was attacked by Indians near Beaver Creek on 18 October. Taking a defensive position on a small hilltop, Carr’s force was assaulted all day until the evening when the Indians departed. Carr’s men captured one wounded Indian who revealed the location of a large Dog Soldier village.
Carr returned to Fort Wallace and on 23 October departed with five companies of the 5th Cavalry and the Forsyth Scout’s company, now commanded by Lieutenant Louis Peepoon, and resumed scouting to the north. His objective was the large Cheyenne encampment. On 25 October Carr’s force was attacked by Tall Bull’s Dog Soldiers, who, even after several days of skirmishing, were successful in preventing Carr from finding the retreating village. Unfortunately, Carr was forced to return to Fort Wallace for supplies and the Indians broke into smaller groups and resumed attacking stage stations on the Smoky Hill Road west of Fort Hays. Meanwhile, the Dog Soldiers and Sioux decided not to join the Southern Cheyenne in Oklahoma for the winter as was normal and to resume their attacks in northern Kansas as they intended to keep their lands in the Republican River valley.

At this point let’s briefly digress and look at the advantages and disadvantages of both the Indians and the Army.

The Indians held the advantage during spring, summer, and fall and could attack anywhere they pleased since they knew the territory, could live off the land, had a strong desire to retain their nomadic way of life, and, most importantly, their horses fared very well grazing on the prairie grass. Additionally, the Indians relied totally on horses, usually had more than one horse per warrior, always knew where to find horses even if they had to steal them if they needed more horses and kept one of their best horses near their lodge day and night. Unfortunately, during the winter, the Indians were extremely challenged as there was little food for their horses, travel was almost impossible, and even food for them grew harder to obtain the longer they stayed in the same location. Also, remaining in one location made it somewhat easier to find them.

The Army also relied on horses, and mules, to move men and supplies, but they also had the steadily westward advancing railroads that could move massive amounts of supplies closer to the points of greatest need. The Army had fixed locations, their forts, in which to stockpile supplies and from which to obtain them. These could be within a few days of the point of need. Since the Army fed its horses and mules grain on a regular schedule that included watering when in a garrison environment, they were stronger but not as fleet or have the endurance as the Indian horses. But once these horses and mules had to subsist on prairie grass they rapidly lost that strength. So, the wagon trains had to carry, in addition to supplies for the soldiers, grain for the horses and mules that pulled the wagons. But when doing so, they had year-round mobility only hampered by terrain and weather. Also, each cavalryman had one horse, and if he did not properly care for it or it got hurt or died, he was afoot. Thus, in the summer, patrols were shorter and the Indians usually got away. Thus the cavalry had to hunt for them again.

Because Sheridan understood these advantages and disadvantages, he decided to take the fight to the Indians while they were winter-bound and his Army was only slowed down. Since the Cheyenne and Arapaho wintered in the Indian Territory of western Oklahoma they were his first target. [That fight will not be covered in this Journal but may be at a later date.] Consequently, Carr took his 5th Cavalry along with four companies of the 10th Cavalry and one company of the 7th Cavalry from Fort Lyon to south of the Arkansas to join that fight. While this significantly reduced the number of cavalrmen to fight Indians in the Republican River valley, those Indians were mostly inactive due to winter.

In April 1869 Sheridan’s winter campaign ended below the Arkansas River and many of the Cheyenne there had surrendered while the Dog Soldiers who were there rejoined their brethren in the Republican River Valley. Kansas was again threatened with a new season of Indian raids. The raids resumed with a vengeance. Carr was ordered from Fort Lyon to Fort McPherson to hunt for the Indians. He skirmished with the Indians at Elephant Rock and Spring Creek before arriving at Fort McPherson. After resupplying and resting his horses, he resumed hunting the Dog Soldiers on 9 June. In the meantime, Indian raids along the Saline River in northwest Kansas resulted in male settlers being killed and women taken prisoner. One of the women was Susan Alderdice, wife of Forsyth Scout Tom Alderdice. While Company G 7th Cavalry gave chase, they soon lost the trail. The Indians also tore up two miles of railroad track causing a passenger train to derail.
After resupplying and resting his horses, Carr resumed hunting the Dog Soldiers on 9 June. His command was led by scouts Major Frank North and Captain Luther North with their 150 Pawnee Scouts. In July they were advancing north along Bryan’s road [today’s U.S. 385] seeking the Indians. On the night of 8 July Carr’s camp was on the high ground just east of where Bryan’s Road crossed the Arikaree. The Norths commented they were just downstream from Beecher Island and were within view of it.

Carr’s scouts continued searching for the Indians and on the morning of 11 July Carr’s force followed a faint trail for a few hours before finding the village and attacking it. The Indians were not expecting the attack and were not prepared to defend it. The defeat of the Indians was decisive with Tall Bull and numerous other Dog Soldiers killed. The survivors, less the captured women and children, fled to the northern plains to live with the Sioux or their Northern Cheyenne relatives. Unfortunately, of the two white-women captives Susan Alderdice was found dead and the other one was alive. The Indian war in the central plains of Kansas and the adjacent parts of Nebraska and Colorado was over.

Citation

Was gallant and meritorious throughout the campaigns, especially in the [1868] combat of October 15 [Beaver Creek] and in the forced march on September 23, 24 and 25 to the relief of Forsyth’s Scouts, who were known to be in danger of annihilation by largely superior forces of Indians.

Louis Henry Carpenter was born on 11 February 1839, in Glassboro, NY, and grew up in Philadelphia. He dropped out of college in July of 1861 and joined the 6th U.S. Cavalry Regiment as a private. On 17 July 1862, for meritorious service and leadership, he received a Regular Army commission as a second lieutenant in the 6th U.S. Cavalry.

At Gettysburg, Carpenter commanded Company H, 6th Cavalry, which was part of the Reserve Brigade in Brigadier General John Buford’s First Cavalry Division. Due to losses the 6th sustained at Fairfield, Pennsylvania [The Cavalry Journal, September 2017, 6th Cavalry Fights for its Life at Fairfield], and because of his actions there, Carpenter was brevetted first lieutenant and became Executive Officer of the regiment on 3 July, 1863.

On 5 April 1864, Carpenter became aide-de-camp to Major General Phillip Sheridan, the new commander of the Cavalry Corps, Army of the Potomac. On 28 September 1864, Carpenter was promoted to First Lieutenant in the Regular Army, transferred to the District of Kentucky,
commissioned lieutenant colonel of Volunteers, and assigned as executive officer, 5th U.S. Colored Cavalry (USCC).

The 5th USCC fought in southwestern Virginia in the fall and winter of 1864, with Carpenter taking command of the 5th in February 1865. Following the Civil War, the 5th had Reconstruction duties in Kentucky and Arkansas. Carpenter was commissioned a colonel of Volunteers in November 1865. In March 1866, the 5th was mustered out of service and its members were discharged. Colonel Carpenter reverted to his Regular Army rank of first lieutenant.

On 28 July 1866, Carpenter was promoted to captain in the Regular Army and took command of Company D, 10th U.S. Cavalry. His experience organizing and training the 5th USCC was vital to his work in the new 10th Cavalry. Through his exemplary recruiting efforts, the 10th obtained many literate soldiers who quickly assumed many of the non-commissioned officer leadership positions. On 21 July 1867, he took command of Company H, 10th Cavalry which he held for thirteen years.

“Carpenter’s men respected him, and his company had the lowest documented desertion rate of the Regular Army during his charge. He was known as being fair, firm, and consistent. He learned, saw and understood the hardships and racial bigotry his men faced. After his service with the 10th, he campaigned and defended what his Buffalo Soldiers had done and could do. His ability to train and lead was notable and set a standard for all cavalry units.” [From Samuel Carpenter and his Descendants, by Edward Carpenter and General Louis H. Carpenter, 1912.]

The 10th Cavalry, during its first 20 years of service, was heavily involved in Indian warfare. From 1868 to 1875, Carpenter and his buffalo soldiers were involved in the Indian wars in the central plains (western Kansas, western Nebraska, and eastern Colorado), helped build Fort Sill, and fought Comanche and Kiowa Indians in the Oklahoma and Texas Indian wars. From 1875 to the early 1880s, Carpenter and the 10th Cavalry fought Apaches in western Texas and New Mexico along their border with Mexico. The regiment was heavily involved in the Victorio Campaign. From January to May of 1880, Carpenter conducted numerous scouting missions into the territory of Victorio’s operations and created detailed maps that included waterholes and trails. These maps and the tenacity of the 10th Cavalry drove Victorio and his followers to Mexico, where he was killed by a Mexican Army sharpshooter. In 1898 Carpenter received the Medal of Honor for his relief of the besieged scouts at Beecher’s Island and subsequent fight with the Indians at Beaver Creek, thus making him one of seven 10th Cavalry soldiers to be awarded the Medal of Honor for their service on the frontier.

During his service Carpenter served in the 2nd, 5th, 6th, 7th (which he commanded in the mid-1890s), and 10th U.S. Cavalry regiments, and commanded Fort Davis, TX, Fort Robinson, NE, Fort Sam Houston, TX, and Fort Myer, VA. He was the first Director of the Cavalry and Light Artillery School at Fort Riley and served as President of the Board to Revise Cavalry Tactics for the United States Army. On 4 May 1898, he was commissioned a brigadier general of Volunteers at the onset of the Spanish-American War. In the United States, he commanded the 1st Division, 3rd Corps and the 3rd Division, 4th Corps. He commanded troops in the Cuban Province of Puerto Principe and was Military Governor of the province. On 12 June 1899, he was honorably discharged from the Volunteers and reverted to his Regular Army rank of colonel. He was promoted on 18 October 1899 to brigadier general in the Regular Army and, at his own request, retired the next day.

In retirement, he updated and completed the book his father Edward Carpenter started on his family’s immigrant ancestor Samuel Carpenter, wrote about his Civil War and Indian Wars service, and gave talks and wrote articles for the Grand Army of the Republic. He never married. He died on 21 January 1916 was buried in Swedesboro, New Jersey.
The “Beecher Island” Forts

This title is not to mislead you. There were no forts on or near Beecher Island; only the individual defensive/fighting positions dug into the sand and gravel by the Scouts.

There were forts scattered through and around the area bordered by the Republican River and the Arkansas River. These forts had three purposes: protect settlers, travelers, Indians, and roads and railroads; store and provide supplies for military forces and other distant forts; and provide soldiers for military operations. They were connected to each other via military roads.

Most of these old forts are gone and only one is still used by the Army in the twenty-first century. Of the others, some are on private land, some have been “consumed” by the local community, several are national cemeteries, and some are either state or national parks. While some are designated National Historic Sites, they are all historic sites with interesting histories. Let’s take a look at them.

Fort Sedgwick was located about a mile from Julesburg, Colorado Territory, near several river crossings of the Overland Trail and other migrant trails. It protected citizens of Julesburg when it was attacked and destroyed by the Cheyenne and Sioux in revenge for the Sand Creek Massacre. Unfortunately, it did not have a sufficient military force to protect Julesburg. With additional troops being added it protected wagon trains on the emigrant trails and crews building the Union Pacific Railroad. It was named after Major General John Sedgwick who was killed in 1864 during the battle of Spotsylvania Court House. It was abandoned by the Army in May 1871 and all that remains of the fort is its flagpole which is in front of the Julesburg library. Cavalrymen from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment were part of the relief force at Beecher Island.

Fort McPherson was built in 1862 on the bank of the North Platte River at the mouth of Cottonwood Canyon, a strategic location near the junction of the North and South Platte rivers. Soldiers from the fort protected travelers on the California and Oregon trails. Initially named Fort McKeen, it was renamed Fort McPherson for Major General James B. McPherson who was killed during the battle for Atlanta. Fort McPherson soldiers were extensively involved in the 1867-1869 Indian War with the 5th Cavalry under Major Eugene Carr and the Pawnee Scouts under Major Luther North ending that war when they defeated the Indians at the Battle of Summit Springs. In 1873 a cemetery, now known as the Fort McPherson National Cemetery, was established. The fort was closed in 1880.

Fort Wallace was built as a cavalry post in 1865 to protect settlers and the stage stations along its portion of the Smoky Hill Trail. For over ten years it was one of the most important military posts in the west, with more fights with the Indians than any other fort. It earned the nickname the “Fightin’est Fort in the West.” It was named after Major General William H. L. Wallace who was killed during the Battle of Shiloh. Its soldiers and civilians were significant participants in the events surrounding the Battle of Beecher Island. The fort was closed on 31 May 1882 and the buildings soon disappeared as the settlers wanted the materials for building. Only the military cemetery remains with most of the soldiers buried there removed to the Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery. There is a very good Fort Wallace Museum located in Wallace, Kansas.

Fort Hays was built in 1865 to protect the stage line and wagon trains passing on the Smoky Hill Trail from Indian attacks. Soon it was protecting railroad crews building the Kansas Pacific Railroad. The fort was named after Brigadier General Alexander Hays who was killed during the Battle of the Wilderness. With the nearby railroad, Fort Hays became a post to provide supplies and soldiers to help protect those threatened during the Indian wars. It was actively involved with the Forsyth Scouts’ enrollment. And, like other forts of its time, the town of Hays grew from an “end-of-track” town to a prosperous community. Over its lifetime the fort was occupied at various times by many different cavalry and infantry units—both white soldiers and buffalo soldiers. The Army closed Fort Hays in 1889 and the grounds later became an agricultural research station and home of Fort Hays State University. Some of the property and a few of the remaining buildings are part of the Fort Hays State Historic Site.
Fort Riley is the only active duty military post in western Kansas. It was established in 1853 at the junction of the Republican and the Smoky Hill rivers to protect travelers on the California, Oregon, and Santa Fe trails. It was named after Major General Bennett C. Riley who led the first military escort on the Santa Fe Trail. It was initially occupied by the 6th Infantry. In 1855 the first Kansas territorial legislature met there and the fort’s soldiers were soon involved with trying to keep the peace between the pro- and anti-slavery factions trying to gain control of the territory. Like other western forts established prior to the Civil War, it was manned by militia units from Kansas and other states while the Regular Army soldiers were fighting “back east.” Since the Civil War, Fort Riley’s soldiers have been involved in all wars fought by U.S. soldiers. During World War I over 50,000 soldiers trained there and Fort Riley is considered the source of the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic that spread worldwide. It has been the major U.S. Cavalry training site, and was formerly the home of the U.S. Cavalry School. Today it is the home of the 1st Infantry Division. It has the fantastic U.S. Cavalry Museum which focuses primarily on horse cavalry.

There were other forts within the central corridor with very interesting histories, but not covered here due to limited space. They were Fort Dodge, Fort Larned, Fort Lyon, and Fort Zarah.

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**Book Review**

**The Battle of Beecher Island and the Indian War of 1867-1869**

John H. Monnett

University Press of Colorado. 1992

Reviewed by: Trooper Sam Young

Mr. Monnett selected a moment in time, the Battle of Beecher Island, and encompassed it within the significant events of the Indian War of 1867-1869 that impacted the areas of western Kansas, southwestern Nebraska, and eastern Colorado Territory between the Platte River in the north and the Arkansas River in the south, an area known as the “central plains corridor.” The news of that period focused on the Indian attacks and atrocities on the ever-increasing migration of settlers into and through Indian lands that had sustained them for centuries, the crews surveying and building the Union Pacific and Kansas Pacific railroads as well as improving existing trails into roads, fortune seekers, and the soldiers attempting to protect them from those Indians.

The author begins by addressing the events that led to these specific Indian wars; the Homestead Act of 1862 and the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862. The significance of the former is the subdivision of the remaining frontier into 160-acre plots while the latter facilitated the massive westward migration into and through what was known as Indian lands. Naturally the Indians fought to keep their land and those migrating westward fought to possess it.

Mr. Monnett explains how “the Battle of Beecher Island had an emotional impact on policymaking that went beyond what most histories reveal” as it “became obvious that current treaty efforts had failed.” The treaties, rarely ever ratified by the United States Senate, were violated by both the whites and the Indians. Unfortunately, the struggle of whites for the rich lands in the central plains corridor and the Indians’ fight to keep their nomadic lifestyle in these, their homelands, was also affected by the “extreme prejudices and racial hatred held by the majority of westerners...which ran the gamut from advocating removal of recalcitrant Indians to reservations to their total extermination.”

The author also looked at the understanding of the Battle of Beecher Island from the eyes of the white participants and by referencing the interviews of many of the old Indian warriors by George Bird Grinnell (contained in his book The Fighting Cheyennes, 1915) and comparing them with the views of the whites. “Grinnell states that for the plains Indians “fights such as this were of frequent occurrence. Sometimes they were successful, sometimes they lost men, were beaten, and ran away...They manifested neither special triumph in success, nor mortification at failure.” To the Indians the Battle of Beecher Island was an ordinary event. They remembered it as the fight where Roman Nose was killed. The whites saw it as a glorious battle by surrounded “good guys” who were vastly out-numbered by murdering savages.

The book follows chronologically the significant events of the Indian War of 1867-1869 with
chapter titles reflecting those events: The Settlers’ War, Hancock’s War and the Battle of Prairie Dog Creek, Steel Rails and a Failed Peace; The Cheyenne’s War, The Trail to the Arickaree, Forsyth’s War: The Battle of Beecher Island, The Scout’s War, Relief and Retribution, and concludes with The Last Days of the Dog Soldiers. Heavily involved in these events were elements of the 2nd Cavalry, 5th Cavalry, 7th Cavalry, 9th Cavalry, 10th Cavalry, 18th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, 19th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, and the Forsyth Scouts.

The details about the battle, before, during, and after were enticing for me to keep on reading without breaks. What was especially interesting were the quoted conversations with them tied to end-notes.

The book is extensively end-noted and includes a very thorough bibliography—a researcher’s dream!

The only negative comment I have about this book is the lack of maps. The author goes to great lengths to tie events with locations. But then the reader has to use modern road maps and search libraries or the internet for historic maps.

However, as an historian, the lack of maps does not keep me from recommending this book for either the serious student of history or anyone who enjoys reading of the Indian Wars and the westward expansion of the United States.

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Book Review

Fifty Fearless Men
Orvel A. Criqui
Walsworth Publishing Company. 1993
Reviewed by: Trooper Sam Young

In the early days of 2018 I learned from a member of my Sunday School Class that he was soon speaking at Fort Hays and Fort Wallace, two of the three old U.S. Army forts in west central Kansas (Forts Harker, Hays, and Wallace). The topic was the Battle of Beecher Island that was to be commemorated in September 2018—the 150th anniversary of the battle. Since I had already decided the September 2018 issue of The Cavalry Journal would focus on that battle, I attended the two meetings.

The speaker, Dr. Dennis K. Clark, gave very detailed and interesting presentations as to how these two forts were involved in the Battle of Beecher Island. But what I found most interesting were the individual members of the Forsyth Scouts who fought in that battle. At this point in my life it is harder for me to take notes while listening to presentations, but I was fortunate to find the book Fifty Fearless Men at the Fort Wallace Museum. It contains the biographies of the five officers and staff members and the fifty U.S. Army Quartermaster contracted scouts.

Many of the biographies are very detailed and most beneficial in knowing and understanding why those individuals had joined the Forsyth Scouts, their actions during the battle, and what they did with the remaining years of their lives. Some lived very interesting lives, good and bad, which made their bios very interesting. And like all such groups of individuals, there are those who seemed to appear from nowhere and then pass into oblivion after the battle.

Most helpful was the Introduction, which contained a detailed synopsis of the cause of the creation of the Forsyth Scouts and what happened before, during, and after the battle, as well as to how this book came to be written. It provided the appropriate framework and background for understanding the biographies.

Major Forsyth, 9th U.S. Cavalry, and commander of the Forsyth Scouts, said of them in his own account of the battle:

“The soldiers as a class were wonderfully good men; many of them had been soldiers in either the [US] regular, [US] volunteer or Confederate service and their individual histories, drifting as they had to the frontier after our civil war, must have been worth hearing and recording. They were of many different occupations, trades and professions, and among them were farmers, drovers, teachers, lawyers, mechanics, and merchants, with, as I have said before, a large percentage of old soldiers, and with one or two exceptions they were accustomed to the use of firearms and good average marksmen, some few of them being exceedingly good shots.”

Forsyth further noted, the “individual histories” of these men “must have been worth hearing and recording,” but, with few exceptions, that was not achieved until publication of this book. As I read
The Editor's Notes

As I write this, another issue of The Cavalry Journal is almost ready to go to the printer. While this Journal was being prepared, the weather was extremely hot and humid until it got cool and dry—interesting eastern Kansas weather. The former was not much fun at this age to be out in, but the latter was great! That weather brought back my living history memories of portraying a cavalry trumpeter in 1868 in western Kansas—very hot days wearing a wool Army uniform and cavalry boots while sweating profusely followed by cool-cold nights when the wool light-blue overcoat felt good, except my clothes were still wet with the day’s sweat, so I really was still cold. It was easy to imagine what the Forsyth Scouts were going through on Beecher Island, except they did not have overcoats, and they were being shot at, with little to nothing to eat and hardly any water to drink. Then there were the smells of death—men and horses—and the cries of the wounded. Let’s come back to the present.

Unpublished manuscripts—the USCA’s Cavalry Memorial Research Library has some, and several more are being added this summer. Some are masters and doctorate degree research papers and others are individual diaries, stories, or reports. Unfortunately, they are too long to publish in The Cavalry Journal. Recently, while reading several of them, the idea of writing reviews of manuscripts and putting the reviews in the Journal would highlight some of the Library’s holdings. That may lead to reviews of other non-book holdings in the Library. Working there is like discovering new treasures and knowing there are more, the deeper one digs!

The Library has tremendous potential for articles and research. Efforts are underway by the volunteer Library archivist to update the lists of the Library’s non-book contents. She is working with the USCA webmaster to get them added to the USCA website—it’s exciting.

Enjoy this Journal, and please send your letters and article ideas to me at journaleditor@uscavalry.org or to my home address: Samuel Young, 712 Englewood Street, Lansing, KS 66043. They are always appreciated!

S.R.Y
At the Sioux camp prior to the Beecher Island fight, he was served food with a metal fork. He did not know a fork had been used nor did the others at the meal. Shortly after, a Dog Soldier saw the Sioux woman cooking with the metal fork. When told, Roman Nose knew his medicine was broken, and he had to go through a purification ritual to restore his medicine. Unfortunately, the Forsyth Scouts were discovered, and he could not do the ritual before he went into battle. His medicine could not protect him, and he was killed in the Battle at Beecher Island.
2018 Bivouac & National Cavalry Competition
Wednesday, 26 September – Saturday, 29 September
Fort Reno, Oklahoma