

# What Chief Gall Told Us About the Custer Fight on the Battlefield Ten Years After Seventh Cavalry Met Defeat

By D. F. BARRY, Who Took All of the Photographs Illustrating this Article and Who Holds the Copyrights on Them

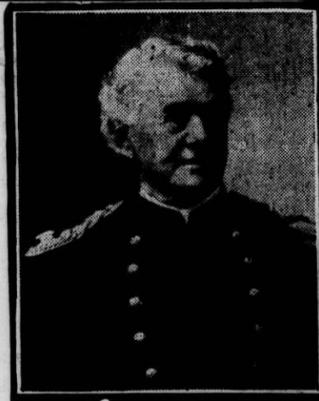
Thirty-five years ago, June 25th, 1886, a reunion of the survivors of Reno's and Benteen's battalions of the Seventh Cavalry in the Custer fight was held on the battlefield on the Little Big Horn on the tenth anniversary of that disaster. I had the good fortune to be there on that occasion. Chief Gall, one of the greatest of the Sioux warriors, was there, too, and told the story of the fight as he saw it. I have heard of a number of writers who have written alleged histories of the Custer fight, who have said they heard Gall tell about the fight on the battlefield that day. For their benefit I might state



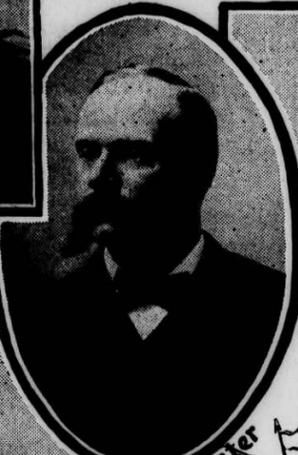
D. F. Barry, author and illustrator of this article.

that Gall did not talk on the 25th of June. He told his story of the fight on the evening of June 24th to a small group out on the battlefield, starting to talk about 7 p. m. It was 10 o'clock when we left the field to go to our camp. Today, of that few who heard Gall tell about the battle—there are but three living. They are General E. S. Godfrey, Colonel Partello and myself. The others are dead.

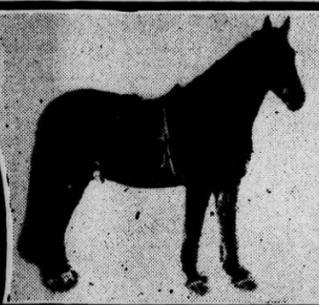
It has been said that the Sioux and Cheyenne village was surprised at the beginning of the fight. Gall told us that the Indians knew where Custer's soldiers camped the night before the fight. He said that early in the morning of the battle the Indians saw the soldiers come out of a pass in the hills, and pointed out the pass. He said they saw the command divide into three groups and watched



GENL. F. W. BENTEN



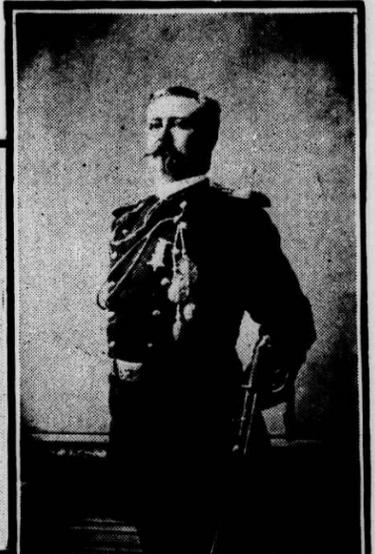
DR. H. R. PORTER



COMMANCHE



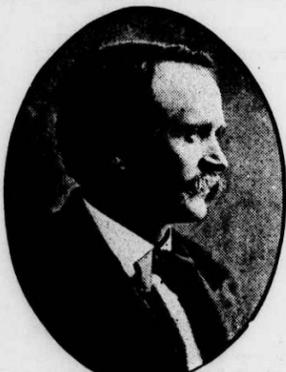
TRUMPETER MARTIN



MAJ. TOM MCDUGALL



Major Tom McDougall was given command of the pack train by Custer before the latter rode into his last fight. He joined Benteen and Reno, and fought through with them until Terry and Gibbon arrived and raised the siege. Trumpeter Martin carried Custer's last orders to Benteen to "come quick and bring the packs." Comanche was the only living thing that survived five troops that Custer led into the fight. He was Captain Keogh's charger. Wounded in seven places, he recovered and died at Fort Riley, Kansas, a dozen years later. Dr. H. R. Porter was the only surgeon that survived the Battle of the Little Big Horn. General F. W. Benteen was a gallant soldier, who had much to do with bringing his and Reno's men through the fight. The steamer shown is the Rosebud, a well known boat in the upper Missouri and Yellowstone trade.



Charlie Reynolds, who knew that defeat and death would result from the attack on the Sioux village, and who died bravely with Reno's command on the river bottom.

their progress toward the Little Big Horn, where the Indian village was. They even decided that the "big Chief," meaning Custer, must be with the command that was marching to the left of them, which was correct. Asked why they thought Custer was with that group, Gall replied "because they made the most dust." That also was undoubtedly true, because Custer had five cavalry troops



Major Reno, about whose head a storm of controversy beat after the Custer fight. He was dishonorably discharged from the army in 1880 as the result of a drunken brawl. Reno had a brilliant Civil War record.

with him, while Reno and Benteen had three each, and McDougall only the one in charge of the pack train. Gall said further that he, Crazy Horse, Crow King, and Rain-in-the-Face went out to fight Custer's five companies because they "wanted to



General George Armstrong Custer

fight the big chief." The reasoning of the Indians, their generalship and their fighting ability have never been excelled in Indian warfare.

Gall said he took no part in fighting Reno's command after Custer had been wiped out.

One very modern Montana historian recently claimed he watched the fight early in the morning from a high hill nearby and saw the finish. I might state for his benefit that the fight took place in the afternoon and that there is no high hill near the Custer field. This man even has the nerve to say he begged Sitting Bull not to mutilate Custer's body. When Sitting Bull came on the field the fight was all over and so was the work of scalping and mutilation.

Sitting Bull, when he arrived, made a talk, praising the Indians for killing all of Custer's men. He said: "We will go to our camp and dance. We have lost only a few people. When the other soldiers find out we have killed all of these soldiers, they will be glad to go away."

Many writers about the Custer fight have said that Rain-in-the-Face was wounded in that battle. He was not, but his horse was shot and killed just as he came out of the timber. In 1887, 11 years later, Rain-in-the-Face was on a buffalo hunt, and when his horse stumbled his Colt's revolver—which he had picked up in the Custer fight—was accidentally discharged, wounding him in the knee. He always limped after that.

Most historians of the fight say that Rain-in-the-Face cut Captain Tom Custer's heart out, as he hated that officer for treatment he had received at Fort Lincoln while a pris-



Chief Gall a great fighter and Indian general, whose strategy and leadership at the Little Big Horn had much to do with Custer's defeat. This was the first photograph ever taken of Gall.

oner. Dr. H. R. Porter, the only one of the three surgeons who survived the fight, who examined the bodies after the battle, denies this and says the heart was not removed. I have a letter from General Benteen in which he said he would make oath to that. It is true, however, that

Captain Tom Custer was terribly mutilated. I am sorry to say that I am afraid my friend, Rain-in-the-Face, was a bad Indian. Major James McLaughlin, who has been in the Indian service for 50 years and the greatest man in that service today, who had

charge of Gall, Rain-in-the-Face, Sitting Bull, Crow King and other noted Indians, said he believed Rain-in-the-Face would kill a man for me if I asked him to do so—and that no one would be the wiser. He was a crafty, treacherous warrior.

I have gone over the field many times. Chief Gall pointed out to us where Crazy Horse was stationed with about 400 Indians in his bunch, fighting General Custer. The chiefs told with pride of the charge Crow King made on Custer in that fight.

The last order General Custer sent was to Benteen to bring the packs. That order was given to Trumpeter Martin to deliver to General Benteen. Martin reached Benteen and delivered the order, but by that time there were too many Indians between Benteen and Custer for Martin to be able to return.

When the men of the Seventh Cavalry first saw the Sioux and Cheyenne village off in the distance, they were eager to fight. Lonesome Charlie Reynolds, the famous scout, said: "Boys, if we attack that village, we will get more fight than we want." He was right about it. Poor Charlie. He was killed in the valley with Reno.

That brave old fighter, General Benteen summed up the cause for defeat this way: "Too many Indians; good riders, good shots and the best fighters the sun ever shone on."

Sitting Bull was a medicine man and undoubtedly had power in that line. Officers and newspaper men always wanted to interview him—that was his long suit. Gall, Crazy Horse, Crow King and other real warriors, would refuse to talk. John F. Finnerty, James Creelman and the other newspaper men who were on the old frontier in those days made Sitting Bull famous.

Some writers have said that Custer reached and even crossed the Little Big Horn before he was driven back. Gall said Custer never reached the river. He said he never saw men fight so hard. He said it took about 35 minutes to wipe out Custer's command. He said some of the men



Rain-in-the-Face, a fierce and crafty fighter, who took credit for killing Captain Tom Custer and mutilating his body. He hated this brother of the general, and rejoiced in the opportunity for revenge.

started toward the timber along the river at the last, but they were met by Rain-in-the-Face and his band and were all killed before they could get back to where Custer was fighting in skirmish line.

This historic battle will be written and rewritten by hot air historians until the end of time. Probably more lies have been written about this fight than any other that ever took place. Most of the men who rode out that morning with Custer and Reno and Benteen are sleeping the sleep that knows no waking, and what is written now cannot hurt them. But it is a pity that a true story of the fight cannot be written and generally accepted, so that future generations will know the facts.



Where Reno Crossed the Little Big Horn