

2445 East Broad St.  
Columbus 9, Ohio  
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Dr. Walter S. Campbell  
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The University of Oklahoma  
Norman, Oklahoma

Dear Dr. Campbell:

I imagine that everyone, writing to you for the first time, begins by telling you how much they have enjoyed your numerous books on the Old West. Your wonderful skill in picturing what frontier days were really like has been sung often by fellows far better qualified than I to give your writings the praise they deserve. Still I hope that you will accept some very enthusiastic applause from one sitting far toward the rear of the hall. I treasure and mean to keep always quite a number of your books as part of a modest collection of literature concerning the West.

I am writing you in the hope that you may be able to give me a bit of assistance. I guess the best way to begin is to say that one day in July of 1955, as part of a trip to Custer Battlefield National Monument in Montana, I travelled far up the South Fork of Reno Creek. There, in the shadow of the Wolf Mountains, I came upon a fortified campsite occupied by the members of the Yellowstone Wagon-Road & Prospecting Expedition (or, for short, "the Bozeman Party") on April 11-12, 1874.

Arranged along the slopes of a fairly high, round hill, lying mostly just under the crest, I counted thirty-nine rifle-pits, many of them still fairly deep, some having breastworks thrown up in front of them. It was clear that whoever was in charge of laying out this position had plenty of experience in such matters. Every rifle-pit was sited so as to give its occupants an excellent field of fire. Every approach to the hill was covered. The hill is bounded on east and west by two intermittent water-courses, "feeders" of Reno Creek. A draw divides in two the eastern slope of the hill, leading down to one of the little streams. Down this draw, from the crest of the hill for about three-quarters of the route to water, was laid out an especially heavy line of rifle-pits, quite deep and each one roomy enough to hold five or six riflemen.

I spent the better part of two days looking over this site (it is entirely unmarked) and was so much impressed that I determined to learn everything that I could about the expedition that camped there eighty-two years ago. Since then a good deal of my spare time has been devoted to digging for information regarding this outfit--obtaining copies of articles reporting on the expedition that appeared in the Bozeman newspaper of that day, searching out books that deal in some measure with the doings of the Bozeman Party or with individuals who had one thing or another to do with it. A few weeks ago, in Montana again, I was fortunate to locate another of the expedition's fortified campsites. This site, still fairly well preserved, lies in the valley of the Rosebud, on the right bank of the stream itself, thirty-two miles south by road from the Rosebud's junction with the Yellowstone River. Both of the fortified campsites that have been located, their locations, topography, etc., conform to the letter to descriptions found in narratives written, some soon after the close of the expedition, by men who were there.