

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

Dr. W. S. Campbell,
University of Oklahoma,
Norman, Oklahoma.

Dear Dr. Campbell:


A few years ago the U.S. National Museum received as a gift a Winchester Model 1866, .44 caliber, rimfire carbine said to have been the one surrendered to Major Brotherton by Sitting Bull in 1881. As you know objects attributed to Sitting Bull are a dime a dozen in museum collections. However, there is very good reason to believe that this piece is authentic. It is from the personal collection of the late Brotherton himself, acquired through his descendants.

The Winchester people, on the basis of the serial number which I provided them, have informed me that the gun was made in 1875 and shipped November 5, 1875, but have stated that they have no record of the firm or person to which this piece was sold.

I am considering writing a brief article on this specimen. The big question, of course, would be - How did Sitting Bull get possession of this gun? Judging from what I have read there are a number of possibilities to be considered - Fort Peck, Red Cloud Agency, traders on the Platte etc. Perhaps Fort Peck, which the Army considered in 1873 to be a "center of iniquity in Indian affairs" where Winchester's were traded to Indians, is the most probable.

I should be very much interested to receive your opinion in this matter. Of some interest too is the fact that this gun was made and shipped in ample time for an Indian to have acquired it before the Custer Battle.

Sincerely,


John C. Ewers,
Associate Curator of Ethnology.

Indians
Re Sitting Bull
D-11
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