

bon's command from Montana, and General Terry's troops from Dakota. General Terry, not having heard from Crook when he arrived at the mouth of the Rosebud Creek, decided to send a part of his force southward to prevent the Indians from escaping.

The Seventh Cavalry, consisting of about 700 men under Gen. George A. Custer, was assigned to this duty. Custer located the Indian camp on June 25 and, underestimating the strength of the Indians, decided to attack at once. He divided his regiment into three battalions. Captain Benteen was sent to the left to scout the bluffs; Major Reno was instructed to follow the trail toward the Little Bighorn River; and Custer with his battalion followed Reno a little to his right. Early in the afternoon Custer sent orders orally to Reno to charge the Indian village. Reno crossed the Little Bighorn River and moved down the valley. As it was thought impracticable to charge over the valley, Reno dismounted his troops and fought on foot. Custer, turning to the right, advanced toward

the flank and rear of the Indians. Reno, however, being driven back in disorder, recrossed the river, and took a defensive position on the bluffs. The warriors immediately moved against Custer, whom they had already discovered.

Benteen had swung far to the left, as ordered, but, due to the impassability of the ground, returned to the trail that led toward the Little Bighorn River. About 3 o'clock, a messenger from Custer met him, bringing orders for Captain McDougall to hurry the pack train. Soon after, another messenger arrived with a hastily scrawled message from Lieutenant Cooke, Custer's adjutant: "Benteen—Come on—Big village—Be quick—Bring packs. W. W. Cooke. P. S. Bring pacs." The messenger also informed Benteen that the Indians were "skedaddling" and that Custer was charging the village. Benteen pushed forward and joined forces with Reno, whose command was badly demoralized.

*In their retreat, Reno's troops crossed the Little Bighorn River opposite the gap in the ravine and clambered up the three bluffs in the foreground.*

