

AMOS BAD HEART BUFFALO

Sioux Indian Paintings

Plate I

Topographical chart of the battlefield of the Little Big Horn, drawn by Amos Bad Heart Buffalo. The stream with its green banks is indicated, with the camps of the several bands of the Indians denoted by the tipi circles at the lower left. At the right Col. Reno's troop are advancing with flying colors, while on the extreme upper right is shown the entrenched position of the survivors of Reno's charge, from which they were rescued by Terry's troop. At the upper center the advancing column with flags represents General Custer's troop while clouds of mounted warriors swarm upon it from every side. The accompanying inscriptions give the Indian's view of the battle: "In Montana, when Long Hair (i.e. General Custer) came charging on us all of his men were killed. The Indian nation did not wish to fight; it is always they (i.e. the whites) who start shooting first and the Indian who starts last... This is they who started shooting first and surprised the Indian tribes. All those who pretended to be men got their horses and got ready and met them with a shout and charged. The battle followed... The ones who were shot off their horses in the charge upstream were Big Design and Large Wound with Guts. They (the whites) were surrounded on a hill and all of them were killed." The drawing is an admirable illustration of the artist's topographical imagination. This and other examples of Bad Heart Buffalo's art are enlarged approximately one-half from the original ledger-leaf.

Note that Reno advanced in line, while Custer moved in column.

Plate II

Opening of the Battle of the Little Big Horn. The inscription reads: "These (Reno's command) are the ones from up the river. This is the way the Indians met them"--i.e. shot them from their horses. "The three who met them first were Kicking Bear, Hard to Hit, and Bad Heart Buffalo." The latter was the father of the artist; he took a prominent part in the fight. Drawn by Amos Bad Heart Buffalo.

Blue and white bow-spear with feather tassel. I gather that the man with the bow-spear in #2 is apparently the father of the artist with the same name.

Plate III

One of a series of drawings illustrating Reno's retreat before the Indian counter-attack. The pictures indicate a comparatively orderly withdrawal developing rapidly into a disorderly rout. Drawing by Amos Bad Heart Buffalo.