

veracity has been questioned by other writers as well as De Land, it's likely that Belden "stole" from Balch.

Anyway, a Major Gordon is the authority cited in both accounts. Who was he? ✓

He was undoubtedly Maj. David Stuart Gordon, who died January 28, 1930 at the age of 97. Obituary notices printed at the time (in my collection of clippings) state that "in the relief of Fort Phil Kearney he marched his men hundreds of miles in the dead of winter with temperatures 10 to 20 degrees below zero, attaining his goal without the loss of a man, although every horse in the outfit was sacrificed".

This evidently refers to the arrival of Lt. Col. H.W. Henssels of the 18th. Infantry with two companies of cavalry and two companies of infantry at Phil Kearney soon after New Year's Day, 1867. (See Carrington "Ab-Sa-Ra-Ka" - Sixth edition of Mrs. Carrington's Narrative, 1890. p. 226). Gordon was evidently the captain of one of these cavalry companies since Heitman's "Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army" states he was a captain in the Second cavalry from April 25, 1863 to June 25, 1877 when he was promoted to major, and we know that some of the Second cavalry troops were at Phil Kearney at that time.

Heitman gives Belden's record as follows: Musician, First Nebraska infantry, June 15, 1861 to March 21, 1863; sergeant First Nebraska Veteran Cavalry, November 3, 1863; second lieutenant, June 7, 1864; honorably mustered out, July 1, 1866. second lieutenant, Second Cavalry, June 10, 1867; first lieutenant, November 3, 1868; cashiered November 4, 1869.

Balch states (in Northrop "Indian Massacres", p. 316) that he was adjutant of the his regiment, the First Nebraska Volunteer cavalry at Fort Cottonwood in 1865. Northrop p. 416 refers to him as Capt. W.R. Balch of the Second cavalry in the Sioux war of 1877 but he is not listed in Heitman.

Obviously Belden and Balch were brother officers in two regiments: First Nebraska cavalry (volunteers) and Second cavalry (regulars) and as lieutenants in the latter were at Fort Phil Kearney in 1867, where both heard the story of the bugler from Major (then captain) Gordon.