

THE PURSUIT OF DULL KNIFE FROM FORT RENO IN
1878-1879

By Peter M. Wright*

After the 1874-75 outbreak, the Southern Plains Indians remained peacefully on their newly assigned reservations while the Sioux of the Northern Plains continued their depredations. The discovery of gold in the Black Hills in 1874 made that area a coveted prize for the white man, which the Sioux refused to yield. In June, 1876, General George Crook engaged the Sioux in the valley of the Rosebud in Southern Montana. The Indians forced him back to await reinforcements. Eight days later, Brevet Major General George Armstrong Custer attacked a large village of Sioux and Northern Cheyennes¹ on the Little Big Horn River, Montana. The elite Seventh Cavalry lost two hundred sixty men that day.²

The Custer defeat cost the Indians a great deal. They won the battle, but lost the war, and this was the last of the Plains Indian wars. The troops harried the Sioux and Cheyennes of the north until they separated into small bands and were hunted down or driven into Canada.³ In the peace that followed, the government decided that the Northern Cheyennes would be removed to the Indian Territory to join their southern kinsmen with whom they had not resided since 1832.⁴

The removal of the northern Indians began on May 28, 1877⁵ with an escort of troops under the command of First Lieutenant Henry W. Lawton, Fourth Cavalry, from Fort Robinson, Nebraska. After seventy days enroute, the Northern Cheyennes

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¹ Northern and Southern designate geographical locations of one tribe—the Cheyennes. They should not be regarded as separate tribes, but bands of the same tribe living in different parts of the country.

² William Brewster, *The American Heritage Book of Indians*, ed. Alvin M. Josephy (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1961), p. 347.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 348.

⁴ George B. Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), pp. 298-300; Donald J. Berthrong, "Federal Indian Policy and the Southern Cheyennes and Arapahoes, 1867-1907," *Ethnohistory*, Vol. III (Spring, 1956), p. 138.

⁵ *Senate Report*, No. 708, 46 Cong., 2 Sess. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), Vol. v. Hereinafter cited as *Senate Report*, No. 708.

arrived at Fort Reno, Indian Territory, on August 5, 1877, where the Post Commander, Major John K. Mizner of the Fourth Cavalry, enrolled them, men by name, women and children by number. The enrollment totalled 937. Fourteen men enlisted for ninety days military service as scouts. The army turned the remainder of the Indians over to the Agent at Darlington on August 7, 1877.⁴

The military escort did not disarm the Northern Cheyennes on their entrance into the Indian Territory. An agreement made when they surrendered guaranteed them their arms and a violation of this agreement would have been a serious breach of faith.⁵ The Agent placed them in camp with the Southern Cheyennes, and a period of feasting and rejoicing followed to celebrate the reuniting of the nation.⁶

Although the Northern Cheyennes accepted their situation on the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation in the Indian Territory, they found that the climate and the food were not like those in the north where buffalo and elk were plentiful. Dull Knife, the leading chief, had not approved of moving south but the apprehension of danger from the band of Sioux led by Spotted Tail, as well as the United States government and aversion to being removed to the Missouri River, led the Northern Cheyennes to accept residence in Indian Territory. Dull Knife insisted that his band had been promised that they might return to Dakota to reside with the band of Sioux led by Red Cloud, if the southern reservation under the Darlington agency were not satisfactory. The Northern Cheyennes found little here to their liking. John Miles, the government agent at Darlington, felt that force was necessary to bring the discontented Northern Cheyennes—about one-half of the band—under control. The Dull Knife faction camped nine miles from the Agency.⁷

Members of the band continually expressed dissatisfaction with their situation and refused to engage in farming. They expressed their desire to return north to their old homes to reside

⁴*Ibid.*: *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1877* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1877), 85; William B. Morrison, *Military Posts and Camps in Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Corp., 1936), p. 140. U. S. War Department, Office of the Adjutant General, *Returns of Military Posts, Fort Reno, Indian Territory*, MSS, August, 1877. Hereinafter cited as *Post Returns*.

⁵*Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1876* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1878), p. 40.

⁶*Report, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1877*, p. 85.

⁷*Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1878* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1878), 56-57; *Seneca Report*, No. 708, v; Charles A. Eastman, *Indian Heroes and Great Chiefs* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1924), p. 180.

with the Red Cloud Sioux, and made known the fact that they intended to leave the Darlington agency in the near future.¹⁰ After many of them had died by the summer of 1878 the remainder of the band believed further retention in Indian Territory constituted a real grievance. They complained of the methods of issuing rations on the Reservation, and that the rations were insufficient and of poor quality; that the medical care was unsatisfactory, and that coffee and sugar had been withheld from them.¹¹

The Northern Cheyennes prepared for the flight. The young men reportedly said: "We are sickly and dying here and no one will speak our names when we are gone — We will go north at all hazards and if we die in battle, our names will be remembered and cherished by all our people."¹²

Agent Miles knew of their plan to leave but not when they would leave. The Southern Cheyennes confirmed that members of the northern band were leaving on September 5, 1878. The Agent asked the military commander at Fort Reno to dispatch troops to halt and return the people with Dull Knife, Little Wolf, and Wild Hog, the principal leaders of the Northern Cheyennes. That same day, Major Mizner dispatched a battalion of cavalry composed of Troops G and H, Fourth Cavalry, under Captain Joseph Rendlebrock to carry out the mission. Captain Rendlebrock found the Northern Cheyennes were not in flight. They had only shifted their tipi village to a location farther from the agency. Major Mizner ordered Rendlebrock to set up a camp adjacent to the Dull Knife village, and report any movement away from the Reservation.¹³

Agent Miles ordered the Northern Cheyennes to return to the Agency on September 6, 1878 for re-enrollment. Only two or three Northern Cheyenne men came in and made excuses for the others. They informed Agent Miles that there was sickness among their people, and a few young men were absent hunting

¹⁰ George W. Manypenny, *Our Indian Wars* (Cincinnati: Robert Clark and Co., 1880), 335-37; Dennis Collins, *The Indians Last Stand or the Dull Knife Raid* (Girard: Press of the Appeal to Reason, 1915), p. 220.

¹¹ James W. Corington, "Causes of the Dull Knife Raid - 1878," *Chronicle of Oklahoma*, XXVI (Spring, 1948), pp. 18-19; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1878* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1879), p. 89.

¹² John Miles, September 20, 1878, to John Mizner. Typewritten copy found in Walter S. Campbell (Stanley Vestal) Papers, Box 120, University of Oklahoma Library. Hereinafter this collection is cited as Walter S. Campbell Papers.

¹³ Fort Returns, September, 1878; William C. McFarland, September 6, 1878, to Joseph Rendlebrock. Found in *Report, Secretary of War, 1878*, p. 48.

who had promised they would report to him as soon as their people were all together. These delays continued until Sunday, September 8, when Miles ordered the agency physician, Dr. Lawrence A. E. Hodge, and the agency farmer, John A. Covington, to go to the Northern Cheyenne village to ascertain if sickness actually delayed their coming in for enrollment.

On the afternoon of the same day, Wild Hog, Crow Indian, Little Bear, Major Mizner, Dr. Hodge, and the agency officials met at Darlington. Miles requested that the Northern Cheyennes move their village to the agency for re-enrollment. Until this request was made, he refused to issue them rations or supplies. He asked for ten hostages to assure compliance, but the Indians refused. Denied hostages, Major Mizner and Miles left the meeting with the understanding that the Northern Cheyennes would return to the Agency. The doctor reported that the sickness in the camp would not impede their moving. Reports reached Major Mizner that the Indian women had dug rifle pits and fortified their camp. Apparently he considered this a normal action, since Captain Rendlebrock and his battalion were camped near them.¹⁴

Captain Rendlebrock encamped four to five miles from the Indians. He was ordered not to molest them and to avoid any collision of a hostile nature. Also, his orders were to allow no portion of Dull Knife's camp to move in any direction except toward the Agency. Major Mizner was to inform him of any additional action to be taken. The Captain posted pickets during the early evening and settled down to wait for morning when the Cheyennes were to move into the Agency.¹⁵ In case of non-compliance, he requested that Major Mizner dispatch an artillery piece to him to use in shelling the Indians' position to force a surrender. Mizner did not send the cannon.¹⁶

During the evening of September 9, 1878, the Northern Cheyennes began their move for freedom. The women drove the pony herd into camp and stripped the hides from the supporting poles of the tipis after it was dark. The frames left standing and the camp fires which were kept burning misled the pickets who watched the village from a distance. The Indians abandoned every non-essential item so that they could move out unencumbered.¹⁷ One of the leaders, American Horse, refused

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁵ John Mizner, September 8, 1878, to Joseph Rendlebrock. Found in *Report, Secretary of War, 1878*, p. 40.

¹⁶ U.S., War Department, Office of the Adjutant General, *Medical History of Fort Reno, Indian Territory, 1868, September, 1878*, hereinafter cited as *Medical History*.

¹⁷ Carl Sandes, *Cheyenne Autumn* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1963), pp. 13-15.

to join the flight but a total of 82 men, 120 women, 69 boys, and 72 girls left their encampment at 10:00 p.m. They headed in a direction northwest up the North Fork of the Canadian River. American Horse and an Indian policeman of the Agency carried the news of the flight to John Miles just before 3:00 a.m. on September 10, 1878.¹⁸

PURSUIT OF THE NORTHERN CHEYENNE

Captains Joseph Rendlebrock and Sebastian Gunther set out in pursuit at 8:00 a.m. on September 10 with Troops G and H, Fourth Cavalry. The pursuing force consisted of four officers and eighty-one enlisted men with pack animals and ten days rations. Their orders were to overtake and return the fleeing Cheyennes to the Agency.¹⁹ Rendlebrock's battalion struck the trail of the Cheyennes north of Raven Springs around noon that day and instituted a quick pursuit until dark when a halt was called for the evening meal.²⁰ After eating, the march continued until 10:00 p.m. camp was made again. The battalion made sixty miles the first day. Rendlebrock dispatched couriers to Camp Supply for additional cavalry to join him. He expected to overtake the Indians before they reached the Arkansas River now in flood stage which would delay the Indians in crossing.²¹

Major Migner at Fort Reno notified the Department Commander, General John Pope, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, who telegraphed information of the Cheyenne outbreak to the Division Commander, General Philip H. Sheridan, at Chicago, Illinois.²² General Pope ordered Colonel John W. Davidson at Fort Sill to send cavalry from his post to Fort Reno to re-enforce the garrison there to control the Southern Cheyennes. Troop C, Fourth Cavalry, arrived at Fort Reno on September 16, after

¹⁸ Covington, "Causes of the Bull Knife Raid—1878," 20; *Report, Secretary of War, 1878*, p. 44.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45; Post Returns, September, 1878; *Army and Navy Journal*, XVI (12 October 1878), p. 150.

²⁰ The "Raven Springs" is now known as "Left Hand Springs" in Blaine County, Oklahoma, about four and a half miles east of Orcafield, in the SW ¼ of Sec. 32, T 15 N, R 10 W. This location is about twenty miles northwest of the Darlington Agency (Cheyenne-Arapaho), and on the old military road to Camp Supply.—Ed.

²¹ *Ibid.*; *Report, Secretary of War, 1878*, p. 45.

²² John Pope, 12 September 1878, to the Assistant Adjutant General, Military Division of the Missouri, Chicago, Illinois. Photostatic copy found in Walter S. Campbell Papers, Box 120. This is Major Migner's telegram to General Pope, dated September 11, 1878, and forwarded by Pope to Sheridan.

a three-day march of seventy-five miles.²² The Departments of the Missouri, Platte, and Dakota received the alert that the Indians were out. Plans were quickly developed to intercept and stop the Northern Cheyennes in the event they crossed the Arkansas River without being engaged.

Two points of interception were selected along the Kansas Pacific and Union Pacific, for the railroads gave the troops added mobility, an advantage over the Indians.²³ A detachment of one hundred infantry left Fort Leavenworth on September 12, for Fort Wallace to head off the Indians if they crossed east or west of this fort. Two troops of cavalry left Fort Hayes to take position at two well known Indian crossings on the Kansas Pacific Railroad, between Forts Wallace and Hayes. The troops sealed off any crossing of the Smokey Hill River. One company of infantry from Fort Dodge took a position on the railroad west of this post. Scouts combed the area around Dodge to give the earliest information possible on the location of Cheyennes. As soon as Rendlebrock's battalion came up, Lieutenant Colonel William H. Lewis, Nineteenth Infantry, would take command of the pursuit.

Also the garrison at Fort Lyon, Colorado, threw out a net east and west of that post. Additional cavalry started for Fort Dodge from Fort Elliott, Texas, under the command of Captain Clarence Mauck, Fourth Cavalry, to bolster the military establishment in Kansas. The War Department turned its full might against the hostiles and ordered all troops to attack them unless they surrendered and agreed to be dismounted and disarmed.²⁴

On September 11, Captain Rendlebrock followed the trail

²² John Pope, September 7, 1878, to Philip H. Sheridan. Photostatic copy found in Walter S. Campbell Papers, Box 120. This troop remained at Fort Reno until November 20, 1878. Davidson had objected to the weakening of his garrison by the removal of this troop on the grounds that he feared an outbreak among the Kiowas and Comanches, but was overruled by General Pope who felt the situation at Reno was critical, calling for the immediate re-enforcement of the depleted garrison with additional cavalry.

²³ Philip H. Sheridan, September 16, 1878, to Edward D. Townsend. Found in *Army and Navy Journal*, XVI (28 September 1878), 118; Bernard A. Wisconsiner, *The Age of Iron and Steel*, Vol. VII of *The Life History of the United States*, ed. Henry F. Graff (New York: Yonkers, Inc., 1954), p. 52. (The Military Map of the Indian Territory 1855—Lieut. Ruffner, Engineer, Dept. of the Missouri—gives the location of Turkey Springs at the head of Turkey Creek in T 28 N. R 18 W. Turkey Creek is now called Houston Creek which heads some 100 miles due north of Freedom in Woods County. General Highway Map of Woods County, 1950,—39.)

²⁴ John Pope, September 11, 1878, to Philip H. Sheridan. Photostatic copy found in Walter S. Campbell Papers, Box 120.

for another fifty miles, resting and continuing on September 12. The following day, the troops made the initial contact with the hostiles who had now doubled back on their trail and were fortifying a position at Turkey Springs, Indian Territory, ten miles north of Dry Cimarron River and thirty-five miles east of the Camp Supply on the Fort Dodge road.¹⁵ The Northern Cheyennes had already begun depredations. On September 12, two young men, believed to be the nephews of Charles Colcord, were killed, and two horses, a mule, and harness were stolen by the Indians. Also, that same day, the Cheyennes killed a herder, John Evans, on Cavalry Creek. On the day that the cavalry units intercepted them, the Cheyennes killed two other men and were waiting for the troops.¹⁶ The soldiers halted and held a parley with the Northern Cheyennes. An Arapaho scout, Chalk, rode forward and delivered Mizner's order for the Northern Cheyennes to return to the reservation. Several times the request to return was made, but the Indians refused to turn back. Chalk rode back toward the troops, and, at the same time, the Indians attempted an encircling movement about the troopers. Men of Troop C opened fire at about 10:00 a.m. and fighting became general. The troopers dug rifle pits to hold their position against the warriors.¹⁷

Captain Rendelbrock held the center with Lieutenants Abram E. Wood and Wilber Wilder, on the right and left respectively. Firing became sporadic in the afternoon, and, at dark, the Indians retired and broke off the action. At 8:00 p.m., seven men attempted to reach fresh water, but the Indians drove them back to their entrenched position. The Cheyennes fired the prairie, but the fire did not reach the position of the troops nor stampede their mounts held in a ravine. On the morning of September 14, Captain Rendelbrock sent out a reconnoitering

¹⁵ Philip H. Sheridan, October 4, 1878, to Edward D. Townsend. Found in *Army and Navy Journal*, Vol. XVI (September 28, 1878), p. 118; E. A. Reishinoul, *Bull Knife* (Hollywood: Privately Printed, 1935), pp. 11-13.

¹⁶ James Van Voast, October 29, 1878, report of Captain William G. Widenmyer on Cheyenne depredations, to the Assistant Adjutant General, Military Department of the Missouri, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Typewritten copy found in Walter M. Campbell Papers, Box 120. This report is divided into two sections: depredations North and South of the Arkansas River. It was made to ascertain the government's responsibility for losses incurred by private citizens from the Bull Knife raid. Max Sandos and George H. Ginnell state that the Indians did not depredate until after being fired on at Turkey Springs. However, this report refutes their view based on the testimony of the Indians. Before contact with the troops on 13 September, depredations had begun, and the Cheyennes actually turned back on their trail to engage the troops.

¹⁷ Sandos, *Cheyenne Autumn*, pp. 38-39; George B. Grinnell, *Fighting Cheyennes*, pp. 464-65.

party which the Indians engaged and drove back. The troopers suffered from lack of water. A detachment made a rally forward against the Cheyennes while the rest of the command led the horses to the rear and mounted preparatory for a retreat toward Camp Supply. The officers then ordered a charge out of the position then held, which drove the hostiles back a mile. After regrouping, a second charge drove off the Northern Cheyennes. The battalion retreated and reached fresh water. The wounded men with an escort set out on September 15 for Camp Supply.²⁸ Losses were three dead and three wounded troopers.²⁹

Captain Rendlebrock split his command and sent Lieutenant Wood and forty men in advance. Lieutenant Wood was ordered to join Captain William C. Hemphill, Fourth Cavalry, in the Sand Creek area in Southern Kansas. Captain William Hemphill left Camp Supply on September 12 after Captain Rendlebrock's distress dispatch arrived, and started east to find Captain Rendlebrock's command. Hemphill picked up the Indians' trail and followed it until September 18. He found the Indians in force in the breaks of Sand Creek and attempted to draw them out without success. He estimated that over one hundred Indians were there, and he had only thirty to thirty-two effectives.³⁰ A brief skirmish ensued which lasted one hour. No troopers were killed but Hemphill withdrew to Bluff Creek and then headed into Fort Dodge where he arrived at 3:00 a.m. on September 19. Colonel Lewis held Hemphill's command at Fort Dodge until further orders could be received from Fort Leavenworth.³¹

Captain Hemphill's troopers and a company under Captain Charles E. Morse, Sixteenth Infantry, left Fort Dodge on September 19 by rail. Their combined commands included Company A, Sixteenth Infantry, and Troop I, Fourth Cavalry, and a party of Dodge City cattlemen.³² They traveled west on the line of the Atchinson, Topeka, and Santa Fe to Cimarron, and then, on to Pierceville, where another force under Colonel Charles E. Smith, Nineteenth Infantry, was located. Since Colonel Smith had no information on the position of the Indians, the troopers returned by rail toward Cimarron and disembarked

²⁸ *Ibid.*: *Army and Navy Journal*, XVI (October 12, 1878), p. 150.

²⁹ *Medical History*, September, 1878. The men killed were Chalk, the Arapaho scout, Corporal Patrick Lynch, and George Snod, rank and unit unknown. The number of Indian dead is not ascertainable.

³⁰ His force apparently numbered about forty men. Every fourth man held his and three other men's mounts in battle, and only three-fourths of the command were able to give actual battle.

³¹ William H. Hemphill, November, 1878, to John P. Hatch. Type-script copy found in Walter R. Campbell Papers, Box 118.

³² The number of civilian cattlemen is estimated at between thirty-five and seventy-five.

seven miles west of that point at 9:00 a.m. on September 20. This force crossed the Arkansas that same day five miles from Cimarron, with the cavalry in advance and with guides and flankers out. The command marched southwest until noon, and then, changed the direction of march to southeast. They arrived at Crooked Creek at 6:15 p.m., and camped for the night.¹³

On September 21, 1878, Hemphill and Morse moved toward Sand Creek, after being informed that the Indians were still in that area. At 11:30 a.m., a guide came up and reported that Rendlebrock and his troops were coming up, and the two forces joined together an hour later. As senior captain, Rendlebrock took command. At 4:30 p.m., the command arrived at Sand Creek, made camp, and prepared dinner, while the cattlemen left camp to scout for the Indians. One-half hour after they left camp, the troopers heard rapid firing in the direction they had gone. Everyone saddled up, and Troop G under Lieutenant Wood moved out first, with Hemphill and Gunther close behind. Rendlebrock remained in camp and ordered Captain Morse to prepare the defense of the camp as Lieutenant Wood joined the cowmen and engaged the Cheyennes. Captain Hemphill moved his company up and formed a skirmish line behind Lieutenant Wood whose detachment, covered by rapid fire from Hemphill's men, pulled back. The engagement ended with the retirement of the troops to their camp. Captain Morse put out "sleeping parties"¹⁴ about the camp at a distance of three to four hundred yards to prevent a surprise attack.

On September 22, the command left camp at 7:00 a.m., and moved west until 9:30 a.m., when Rendlebrock halted on a plateau and ordered the infantry to the front. Groups of ten infantry and ten cavalry men were sent to the right flank, left flank, and rear. Skirmishing began with the Northern Cheyennes and the soldiers concentrated their fire on a stone work occupied by the Indians from which they were driven. The line of infantry advanced, occupied the former position of the Indians, a regularly laid stone structure about forty feet long and four and one-half feet high and engaged the Indians from noon until 4:30 p.m. Rendlebrock then moved the entire command to a new location near wood and water with Captain Morse's company acting as flankers for the withdrawal. As soon as the cavalry and wagon train moved off, the troopers in the skirmish line marched to the rear and then the right flank into camp.

¹³ William H. Hemphill, November, 1878, to John P. Hated; Charles E. Morse, September 27, 1878, to the Post Adjutant, Fort Dodge, Kansas. Typewritten copy found in the Walter E. Campbell Papers, Boxes 118 and 120.

¹⁴ Pickets of eighteen men.

Pickets were placed for the night and the days engagement ended.

Rations and ammunition reached the troops in the field the next day and they continued to pursue the Indians. Marching northwest to the Arkansas River, the troops reached the river after the Indians made their unopposed crossing on September 23. At 4:00 p.m. the same day, Lieutenant Colonel William Lewis arrived and took immediate command of the troops in the field. Since several of the wagons were now unusable, Captain Morse and his company went back to Fort Dodge. Lewis' command consisted of two companies of cavalry from Fort Elliott, Texas, and Captain James H. Bradford's company of the Nineteenth Infantry. After joining Rendlebrock's two troops of cavalry, and Hemphill's Troop I, Fourth Cavalry, Lewis moved off in a rapid pursuit of the hostiles with the intention of overtaking them and ending their flight.¹⁵

Colonel Lewis, an efficient and capable officer,¹⁶ continued the pursuit of the hostiles so rapidly that the Northern Cheyennes selected a defensive position to stand off his attack. The last good place for the Indians to turn and make a stand was on the Punished Woman's Fork of the Smoky Hill River in central Kansas. The Cheyennes left their trail well marked to draw the troopers into a narrow canyon, between almost perpendicular walls of seventy-five to one hundred feet in height. A few well hidden rifle pits were placed just inside the entrance to the canyon. The Cheyennes planned to allow Lewis' command to enter the canyon, where it would be met by a volley of rifle fire from the rear, and Lewis would be caught in a cross fire and defeated.¹⁷

On September 27, the troops advanced toward the canyon, cavalry units in the lead, followed by the infantry in wagons, and baggage and supply wagons in the rear. The scouts with the column were about three hundred yards in advance of Colonel Lewis and the main column. No flankers were out, and the troops moved rapidly up the west side of Punished Woman's Fork, between the water and a marshy area. Lewis halted the cavalry and dismounted short of the advanced rifle pits of the Indians. The scouts pushed ahead, and, in the excitement, an Indian in

¹⁵ Charles E. Morse, September 27, 1878, to Post Adjutant, Fort Dodge, Kansas; William H. Hemphill, November, 1878, to John P. Hatch. Typescript copies found in Walter S. Campbell Papers, Boxes 118 and 120; *Army and Navy Journal*, Vol. XVI (October 12, 1878), p. 160. The troops arrived at the crossing place of the Indians on the 25th; however, the Cheyennes had crossed two days before.

¹⁶ John Pope, October 10, 1878, to William D. Whipple. Typescript copy found in Walter S. Campbell Papers, Box 121.

¹⁷ Grinnell, *Fighting Cheyennes*, p. 408; Soudas, *Cheyenne Antiquary*, pp. 71-77.

the advanced rifle pits fired at the scouts before they were in range. The troops now warned of the trap immediately ahead, mounted and fell back, seeking places to climb out of the river bottom and onto the open plain.

The troopers returned the fire and forced the Cheyennes in the first pit to abandon their position. The Indians retreated into the canyon where the remainder of the warriors were entrenched in a horseshoe shape around its edges. The wagons carrying the infantry and baggage rolled out of the river bottom and circled into a corral on the open prairie to avoid the possibility of an attack. At 5:00 p.m., the cavalry was ordered to dismount and continue a general fire, while the infantry moved in a skirmish line out around and above the Indians to find their horse herd. The soldiers discovered and fired into the herd, scattering the horses. As the afternoon lengthened, Colonel Lewis maneuvered his troops around the canyon, almost surrounded the Indian men, women and children in the trap planned for him. Colonel Lewis personally joined his troops to direct their firing.¹⁴

The infantry was above the Cheyennes and able to fire directly down on them. The troopers drove the Northern Cheyennes back to their last position, deep within the canyon. At one hundred fifty yards from the hostiles, Colonel Lewis' mount was shot in the flank, and his men urged him not to expose himself, but he continued to direct the firing from the midst of the hottest battle. He urged his men to the front until an Indian's bullet hit him about six inches below the groin on the left hand side of the leg, and came out the large muscle behind, nearly severing the general (femoral) artery. He bled profusely, and a strap was taken from his saddle, tied above the wound, and tightened with a pistol. A doctor and ambulance came up and carried him to the rear. After losing their commanding officer, the troopers ceased their offensive and pulled back. Colonel Lewis and his adjutant, Second Lieutenant Cornelius Gardener, Nineteenth Infantry, set out in an ambulance for Fort Wallace the next day. At 8:30 p.m., September 28, 1878, Colonel Lewis, already weak from a two week's siege of dysentery, died of excessive bleeding. Captain Clarence Mauck succeeded Lewis in command as the senior officer present.¹⁵ This

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-80; *Army and Navy Journal*, Vol. XVI (October 18, 1878), p. 102.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 100; Cornelius [Gardener] 10 October 1878, to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Missouri, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Typescript copy found in Walter S. Campbell Papers, Box 120; *Harpers' Weekly Magazine*, Vol. XXII (October 18, 1878), p. 827. See also death notice in the *New York Tribune*, September 30, 1878, p. 1.

was the last engagement between Northern Cheyennes and units from Fort Reno.

Captain Mauck continued to trail the Indians. He and his command, on September 28, moved north across the Smoky Hill River at Russel Springs, then turned east and crossed the Kansas Pacific railroad the next day. At this place, Mauck received forage, rations, and telegrams. Dull Knife's band was able to slip the net laid for them in the Department of the Missouri by traveling without rest for three days. They were sighted but not engaged on the North Fork of the Republican River in southern Nebraska.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, General George Crook ordered Major Thomas T. Thornburgh, Fourth Infantry, to send out scouts toward the South Platte from Fort Sidney, Nebraska. Ranchmen were notified that the hostiles were in the area and that, "... liberal compensation would be paid for reliable information concerning the Cheyennes."⁴¹ As the Northern Cheyennes moved through northern Kansas they depredated the entire country side. All whites encountered along the Sappa and Beaver creeks were killed, a repetition of the Heney massacre of 1875, but with different victims. Estimates of the number killed ran as high as forty people, and all property and livestock in the area was either taken, destroyed or run off. Many women were reported ravished though young children were spared. The people of Kansas had this raid burned into their minds and it engendered a fear of the Cheyennes that lasted for years.⁴²

Conflicting reports locating the Northern Cheyennes reached Fort Sidney. They were placed somewhere between Julesburg, Colorado, and Ogallala, Nebraska, in the first days of October. At 10:30 a.m., on October 4, 1878, the Northern Cheyennes crossed the Union Pacific railroad five miles west of Ogallala. One hundred fifty troops moved east from Sidney, Nebraska, by train, and arrived at 4:00 p.m., at the Indiana' crossing place and set out in pursuit at once, followed two hours later by Cap-

⁴⁰ Grinnell, *Fighting Cheyennes*, p. 409; William H. Herndill, November, 1878, to John P. Hatch, Typescript copy found in Walter S. Campbell Papers, Box 120.

⁴¹ John J. Bourke, October 16, 1878, to the Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Platte, Omaha Barracks, Nebraska. Typescript copy found in Walter S. Campbell Papers, Box 120.

⁴² U.S., Army, Military Division of the Missouri, *Record of Engagements with Hostile Indians within the Department of the Missouri, 1860-1892* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892), 70; W. C. Rimmons, "An Address Made Before the Old Settlers' Association of Lawrence, Kansas, September 15, 1924," *Kansas Historical Collections*, Vol. XVI (1928-29), p. 521; George W. Martin, "Early Days in Kansas," *Kansas Historical Collections*, Vol. IX (1906-07), p. 120a.

tain Mauck and his command. Mauck had sighted the Indians on October 3, when, on the Frenchmen's Creek, Mauck and his officers saw them through their field glasses at a distance of ten miles. Mauck followed Thornburgh for two days to a point on the South Platte where he received a dispatch from Lieutenant General Sheridan. The dispatch diverted him to Fort Sidney since Thornburgh's fresh troops were already in close pursuit. Captain Mauck and his command arrived at Fort Sidney on October 10, 1878, ending the pursuit of the Northern Cheyennes for Fort Reno troopers.⁴¹

Captain Rendlebrock returned south to Fort Reno by train via Omaha, Nebraska, Council Bluffs, and Kansas City,⁴² reaching Fort Reno on October 20.⁴³ After resting at Fort Sidney, the detachment of Troops G and H of the Fourth Cavalry returned to Fort Reno as the escort to another band of Northern Cheyennes being held at that point and arrived on December 9, 1878.⁴⁴

Captains Joseph Rendlebrock and Sebastian Gunther from Fort Reno were questioned about their conduct while at Turkey Springs. Major Mizner placed Captain Rendlebrock in arrest on February 1, 1879, and the arrest of Captain Gunther followed on February 23.⁴⁵ Troopers conveyed both officers to Camp Supply, where General Courts Martial convened to hear their cases the following month.⁴⁶

Captain Gunther's trial began March 14, 1879, with Colonel Jefferson C. Davis of the Twenty-Third United States Infantry acting as presiding officer. The first accusation made against Gunther was that when his command charged and fought the hostiles on his direct orders, he fell back, abandoning his troops, and took refuge in the rear. The second charge specified that on the night of September 14, 1878, when the Indians fired a shot into camp and alarm given, he behaved in a cowardly manner and hid in the grass and bushes until the cause of the commotion was ascertained by his junior officers. The court martial found that he ordered the charge, but due to poor physical condition, turned the command over to a junior and retired to the rear, leaving the command, ". . . did not show any zeal that day."⁴⁷

⁴¹ (New York) *Tribune*, October 5, 1878, p. 1; William H. Humphill, November, 1878, to John P. Hatch. Typewritten copy found in Walter S. Campbell Papers, Box 121; *Army and Navy Journal*, XVI (October 26, 1878), p. 185.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Medical History*, October, 1878.

⁴⁴ *Senate Report*, No. 708, 130; *Post Returns*, December, 1878.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, February, 1879.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, March, 1879.

⁴⁷ *Army and Navy Journal*, XVII (April 15, 1879), p. 652.

The court acquitted him of the second charge, and he resumed command of his troop at Fort Reno on April 11, 1879.⁵⁰

Captain Hendlebrock's trial followed that of Gunther. The army charged him with misbehavior before the enemy, disobedience to the lawful orders of his commanding officer, neglect of duty, and drunkenness on duty. The court found him guilty and sentenced him to be dismissed from the service of the United States. President Rutherford B. Hayes remitted the sentence on the recommendation of the members of the court, the General of the Army, and the Judge Advocate General. The reason was Hendlebrock's age, his long and creditable service, and the fact that the defense showed in evidence that his physical condition made him unfit for the duties of an active campaign.⁵¹ A retiring board summoned him to Fort Leavenworth and placed him on the retired list as of July 29, 1879. He left Fort Reno for the last time on August 2, 1879 for the Bush Hotel in Hoboken, New Jersey.⁵²

The Dull Knife raid alarmed Kansas settlers. They insisted on the establishment of an additional military post in the Cheyenne and Arapaho country, and that larger military forces be maintained in the Indian Territory to restrain these Indians in the future. Governor George T. Anthony of Kansas, backed by the citizens of his state, pressed the military to act. On March 6, 1879, Colonel Richard I. Dodge and a detachment of the Twenty-Third Infantry arrived at Sheridan's roost from Camp Supply and, after crossing the river, established the desired encampment. The site became known as "Cantonment on the Canadian." Its geographical location was sixty miles up the North Fork of the Canadian River from Fort Reno on the south side of the river, and midway between Fort Reno and Camp Supply. The garrisoning of this site by six companies gave the Indian Territory an additional military post. The Cheyenne and Arapaho country now had a trichotomy of military establishments to contain the hostiles: Fort Reno, Cantonment, and Camp Supply.⁵³

⁵⁰ Post Returns, April, 1879.

⁵¹ *Army and Navy Journal*, XVII (July 12, 1879), p. 844.

⁵² Post Returns, August, 1879.

⁵³ *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the Year 1879* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1879), 84; (Dodge City) *Times*, January 4, 1879. Typescript copy found in Walter S. Campbell Papers, Box 120.