This F. Jay Haynes photograph of the Gatling gun and crew has been mislabeled for years…and may date closer to the Battle of the Little Big Horn than previously thought.

On May 17, 1876, **Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and the 7th U.S. Cavalry** marched from Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory, to destiny at Little Big Horn. Not so well-known is the fact that a battery of three .50 caliber Gatling guns accompanied the expedition, mobilized to subjugate the non-reservation, “hostile” Lakota Sioux bands led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse in Montana Territory. **Second Lt. William H. Low** and a detachment of the 20th Infantry had been assigned to the fort to organize this “artillery”

Low’s unit, however, would be denied a role at the Battle of the Little Big Horn, fought that June, when his guns were assigned to Col. John Gibbon’s less mobile “Montana Column” because of a legitimate concern that the Gatlings would impede Custer’s “pursuit of the Indians,” as Custer’s orders of June 22 stated. During a previous cavalry reconnaissance “over very rough ground,” one of Low’s guns had overturned, injuring three men, and was temporarily abandoned, several participants recalled. The four unfit condemned cavalry horses that pulled each gun further justified concerns about the mobility of this precursor to the modern machine gun. Informed that his battery would not march with the 7th Cavalry, Low “wept, almost cried,” remembered Winfield S. Edgerly, a second lieutenant with the 7th Cavalry.
The Montana Column was organized to position troops north of the 7th Cavalry, in order to prevent Indian forces from escaping. The troops instead found Custer and his dead command (263 men out of the approximately 650 troops who fought) when they arrived at the battle site on June 27. The 7th Cavalry survivors had the somber duty of burying their brothers in arms. Approximately 650 troops who fought) when they arrived at the battle site on June 27. The 7th Cavalry survivors had the somber duty of burying their brothers in arms.

After news spread of the disastrous Little Big Horn battle, F. Jay Haynes photographed a Gatling gun and “crew” against the background of the infantry post at Fort Lincoln, near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota. Located on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River to the east and the cavalry barracks to the south, the infantry quarters are readily identified by the blockhouse near the quartermaster’s commissary and by the two-story building that served as the post hospital. Post records establish that Low’s detachment was stationed there prior to the expedition’s departure.

The Gatling gun that Haynes captured for posterity was probably one that accompanied the Dakota Column “for range,” as reported by Capt. Otho E. Michaelis, the expedition’s ordnance officer. Since it is a one-inch caliber, as opposed to the .50 caliber Gatlings in Low’s battery, this is one of two apparently left at the Powder River Supply Depot. The men in the photo, though, probably belonged to Low’s unit.

Details in the photograph and other facts reveal that Haynes erred on his original date. The cap of the soldier in the right foreground establishes these enlisted men were members of the 20th Infantry; post and regimental records confirm that no individuals or units of that regiment were stationed at Fort Lincoln in June 1877. Two companies of the 20th Infantry detailed to the fort during the expedition had returned to their normal stations in November 1876.

Moreover, the handmade leather cartridge belt illustrated in this image was typically used during campaigns before the U.S. Army adopted a standard issue, cotton canvas looped belt produced at Watervliet Arsenal in the wake of the Custer disaster. In April 1877, Capt. Michaelis reported that nearly 600 of the new cartridge belts had arrived at Fort Lincoln “in abundant time” for use by the troops in the field that summer.

Finally, some of Low’s detachment remained on duty at the post in the fall of 1876, including Sgt. Peter Monaghan and possibly Cpl. Thomas Tully. The sergeant at the rear left, for example, might be Monaghan. The other non-commissioned officer in front of him bears a resemblance to Hugh Hynds, the battery’s acting first sergeant.

In effect, photographic and historical evidence indicates that members of the Gatling gun battery posed for Haynes in October 1876, soon after the expedition returned to Fort Lincoln.

The image also testifies to the Indian-fighting Army’s diverse uniforms. The sergeant in the foreground wears a four-button sack fatigue coat and stripes, documenting the continued use of Civil War clothing into the 1870s. The private to his right is dressed in the five-button 1874 regulation blouse (albeit modified). His cartridge belt, however, has the 1851 “eagle” belt plate, instead of the simple “US” version adopted in 1872. The dress of the Frontier Regulars was far from “uniform.”

Minutes of the last meeting of The Calgary Military Historical Society
Meeting held on May 16, 2017 at the Petty Officer’s Mess, HMCS Tecumseh

1. Meeting called to order by President Allan R. at 7:00 PM. 22 members in attendance.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting: No omissions or corrections. Member Bob M. moves that the Previous Meeting Minutes be accepted. Seconded by David G. Approved.

3. Newsletter.
   Late mailing, no issues or concerns.

   Report by Floyd S. Lists of monies collected from book auctions, donations etc. Listing of expenditures. Member Bob M moves that the Treasures report be accepted as reported. Seconded by Barry E. Approved.

   Report by Floyd S. Total 46 members (2 Life, 1 Hon., 43 Regular). Member Mike C. moves that the Membership report be accepted as reported. Seconded by Member John E Approved.

6. Correspondence:
   Info request - Grandfather - 2nd Regiment Bengal Lancers - Comment, Indian Army members medals were engraved not impressed.

7. Announcements:
   - The Military Museums event Thursday May 18 at 7:00 pm - “Post Vimy” by Jeff Jackson.
   - Kensington Legion holding non-military items auction clearance in prep for new building.

8. Old Business.
   None.

9. New Business:
   - Call for magazines and books for ticket auction

BREAK

10. Ticket book auction, conducted by David G

12. Show and Tell:

Floyd S. - Austrian order Iron Crown 3rd class 1908, guilt over silver, WWI issued.
Alan R. - WWI Bavarian Order of Merit, US DSCC & Legion of Merit.
David G. - Misc. Medical Corp insignia, Canadian, British and USSR.
Frank C. - Selection of WWII and post war Fort Garry Horse cap badges.
Al D. - discusses a RCN White Ensign from the HMCS Ottawa I (H60) given to him.
Bob M. - Selection of Belgian medals - Leopold III and Albert I.
Darrell K. - Army Laundry bag 1970’s, USMC bonnie cap.
John E. - Selection of bayonets: 1907 Short Enfield by Vickers; Jungle carbine, Enfield Mark #4 triangular (not round) with 1 handle screw (Rare), Sten gun, US Johnson used by FSSF, Can FAL 1954.

Adjournment:
President Allan R. calls for motion to adjourn. Member Barry E. moves to adjourn. Seconded by Mike C. Approved.

Meeting Adjourned. 20:10
Hi Dave. Here is the cleaning solution Frank used on his bugle. Thought it might be a nice little tip to put in the news letter. Credit to go to Frank for contributing it. Brian H.

Hi Brian. I was a little off with the receipt. Here is the one I used.

-1 teaspoon of salt.
-dissolve in 1/2 cup of vinegar, add flour until paste.
-Rub in, leave for 10 –15 mins.
-Rinse with warm water.
-Buff
-There is also one with baking soda but I didn’t try that one.
Hope that works. Bye for now. Best Frank G.