

## ANOTHER MEMORY OF CUSTER'S DEATH

Lilah Morton Pengra

October 15, 2024

Several years ago, a friend purchased a used copy of the book, Mari Sandoz, *The Battle of the Little Bighorn* (University of Nebraska Press, 1966) through an online bookstore. She sent me scans of the handwritten note she found written in pencil inside the front and back covers. She then donated the book to the archives at Oglala Lakota College, Woksape Tipi Library and Archives, Kyle, SD.

The scans are pictured on the following pages. I transcribed the note as follows:

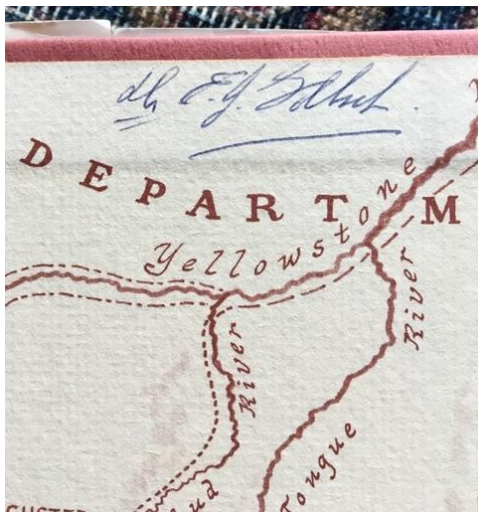
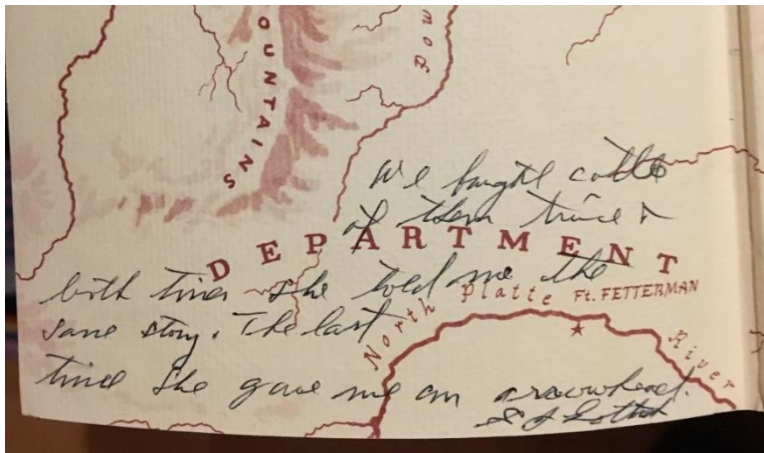
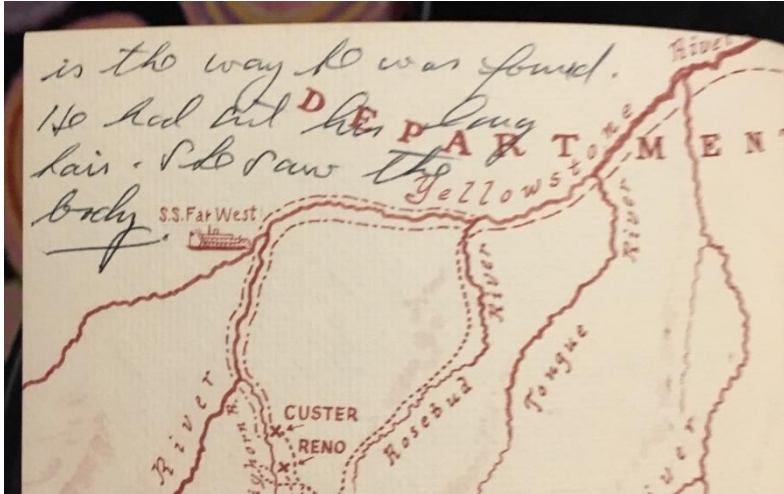
In about 1904 or '05 while buying cattle in the region of Wounded Knee S Dak., my father & I staid [sic] at the small ranch home of a Scotchman who was married to a Sioux woman. She was an excellent horse woman & the first female I had ever seen wearing pants. But more important she was at the Battle of the Little Big Horn in the Indian Village at the age of 15. She related the details of the battle to me & said that Custer was one of the first killed, shot off of his horse while crossing a stream. That after the battle two braves rode into the stream grabbed Custer on either side by his hands & dragged him to the sene [sic] of the battle & threw him on top of his men. And this is the way he was found. He had cut his long hair. She saw the body.

We bought cattle of them twice & both times she told me the same story. The last time she gave me an arrowhead.

Dr. E. J. Gotthelf

NOTE: Dr. E. J. Gotthelf, Jr. died in 1964 so cannot be the writer of the note. He might have told the story to his wife Jean (Anderson) Gotthelf (1910-2001) whom he married in 1940. She might then have entered the note on the book after his death.

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I have identified the “Sioux woman” as Mary (Conroy) Williams, wife of “Scotchman” Alexander “Sandy” Williams. They married in 1882 at Fort Robinson where Mary, her brothers John and Frank and their mother, Spotted Horse (aka Eulala Conroy, wife of Thomas Conroy), surrendered in 1877 with Crazy Horse.



Spotted Horse, daughter of Smoke and Yellow Woman and mother of John, Mary and Frank Conroy, photographed ca. 1890. Another of her children by Capt. Thomas Conroy at Fort Laramie was taken to California by him when he deserted her.

According to an entry on the Free Pages at RootsWeb, “She was listed in the Crazy Horse Surrender Ledger of November 8th, 1876, as a head of a household . . . arrived with the Oglala . . . She was again listed on the February 16th, 1877, register as part of the American Horse Band.”





Mary (Conroy) Williams, aka Wasicuwin, daughter of Spotted Horse and Thomas Conroy, born 1861 at Fort Laramie. Photograph courtesy of her Great Grandson, Dale Young.

### **MRS. MARY WILLIAMS**

Mrs. Mary Williams died at her home at LaCreek, September 26, at the age of 90 years. She was the wife of 'Sandy' Williams, one of the earliest pioneers of this section of the country. Services were held Saturday, at the Grace Episcopal Church, with the Rev. Vine DeLoris officiating. Burial was made in the Grace Cemetery.

*The Gordon Journal, Oct 3, 1946*

Alexander Williams served in Company I, U.S. 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. He was born in Nova Scotia, of French & Scots descent.

Detail	Source
Name	Alexanda Williams
Age	71
Birth Year	1844
Gender	Male
Race	White
Birth Place	Canada
Nationality	Scotch French
Marital Status	Married
Marriage Year	1884
Arrival Year in Country	1870
Arrival Year in State	1882
Arrival State	South Dakota
Arrival Country	USA
Religion	Episcopal
Father's Birth Place	Canada
Mother's Birth Place	Canada
FHL Film Number	2368057
Sheet Number	449
Residence in 1915	South Dakota, United States

At left: 1915 South Dakota Census entry for Alexander Williams. US Census entries in 1900 and 1910 in Shannon County, South Dakota, verify this information and his marriage to Mary in 1882.

Below: Mary Williams' application for a Widow's pension, based on her husband's service in Company I, U.S. 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. He died on November 29, 1917, in Martin, South Dakota and was buried at the Grace Cemetery there.

DEAD.		INDIAN WARS				
NAME OF SOLDIER:	<i>Williams, Alexander</i>					
NAME AND CLASS OF DEPENDENT:	<i>Williams, Mary (Widow)</i>					
SERVICE:	RANK	ENLISTED	DISCHARGED			
	<i>I 4 U.S. Cav.</i>					
ADDITIONAL SERVICE:						
DATE OF FILING	CLASS	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	FILE NO.	ACT	STATE
<i>1931 Aug. 3</i>	<i>Wid.</i>	<i>1699737</i>			<i>Mar. 3-27</i>	<i>S. Dak.</i>
BOUNTY LAND:						
REMARKS:	<i>Died Nov. 29 1917. Martin, S. Dak.</i>					
	<i>W. H. - mrm</i>					