



# An American Tour: 153



## Montana's Custer Battlefield

The Battle of the Little Bighorn, commonly referred to as Custer's Last Stand, was an armed engagement between combined forces of the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes and the 7th Cavalry Regiment of the United States Army. It took place on June 25–26, 1876, along the Little Bighorn River in the Crow Indian Reservation in southeastern Montana Territory. The fight was an overwhelming victory for the Native Americans. The U.S. 7th Cavalry, a force of 700 men, suffered a major defeat while under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer (formerly a brevetted major general during the American Civil War). Five of the 7th Cavalry's twelve companies were annihilated and Custer was killed, as were two of his brothers, a nephew, and a brother-in-law. The total U.S. casualty count included 268 dead and 55 severely wounded (six died later from their wounds), including four Crow Indian scouts and at least two Arikara Indian scouts.

On January 29, 1879, the Secretary of War first preserved the site as a U.S. National Cemetery, to protect graves of the 7th Cavalry troopers buried there. Custer was reinterred in West Point Cemetery. On December 7, 1886, the site was proclaimed National Cemetery of Custer's Battlefield Reservation to include burials of other campaigns and wars. The name has been shortened to "Custer National Cemetery." The site was redesignated "Custer Battlefield National Monument" on March 22, 1946.

The first memorial on the site was assembled by Captain George K. Sanderson and the 11th Infantry. They buried soldiers' bodies where they were found and removed animal bones. Lieutenant Charles F. Roe and the 2nd Cavalry built the granite memorial in July 1881 that stands today on the top of Last Stand Hill. They also reinterred soldiers' remains near the new memorial, but left stakes in the ground to mark where they had fallen. In 1890 these stakes were replaced with marble markers.

Some 330,000+ people visit the site annually. [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little\\_Bighorn\\_Battlefield\\_National\\_Monument](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Bighorn_Battlefield_National_Monument)]

