



Campsite No. 1: Heart River Flat, Photo taken May, 2015

The information about the individual campsites located between Mandan and Dickinson was drawn from the book "Following the Custer Trail" by Laudie Chorne, as are the map illustrations. Chorne notes that the trail depicted in the maps is approximate, and intended for the reader to gain an understanding of the terrain through which the soldiers traveled. Many of the landmarks seen by the troops traveling the Custer Trail are visible from Old Highway 10 and Interstate 94.

The Map Locations of the campsites were documented by Mr. Frank Anders between 1930 and 1950. Mr. John Carroll compiled Anders' work into a book entitled "The Custer Trail of 1876." The longitude and latitude coordinates are derived from the Map Location descriptions. Keep in mind that each camp was approximately one-half mile square to accommodate the large number of troops and animals that traversed the trail in the spring of 1876.

Most of the campsites are on private property. Anyone wishing to visit them must obtain appropriate permission from the landowners.

Campsite No. 1: Heart River Flat

May 17, 1876

Map Location:

Morton County

T138 R82W

Sec. 4 and 5

From Fort Abraham Lincoln, take Highway 1806 north for approximately 2 ½ miles to County Road 138. Follow the gravel road west, crossing State Highway 6, continuing on west 5 miles. Turn north 1 mile, west 1 mile, north ½ mile. A gate crosses the road

making it necessary to hike approximately 1 mile northwest, following a gravel trail. (Laudie Chorne, "Following the Custer Trail," p10)

A heavy fog lay in the valley on the morning of departure from Fort Abraham Lincoln. The ground was wet from rains the night before and everything was damp and cold. The column left the fort at about 7:00 a.m. As the march continued, the sun came out, the fog dissipated, and the air became hot and humid. The first day's trek was not over rough terrain, but the ground was muddy from recent rains making the going difficult. At about 2:30 p.m., after traveling 13 ½ miles, they arrived at their first campsite on the Heart River. The wagon train arrived much later. This campsite was flat and level, and had adequate dry wood along the river and plenty of water. Custer had used this campsite both on his return trip from the Black Hills Expedition in 1874 and while on the Yellowstone Expedition in 1873. The site was, however, infested with rattlesnakes which had to be cleared out before the soldiers could settle in. Then, in the middle of the night, a prairie fire erupted which took the troops about two hours to put out.



Aerial View of Campsite No. 1

