NDIA International Small Arms Symposium, Exhibition & Firing Demo 2005

“A Bold Initiative: Colonel Miles and The Lee Magazine Rifle in 1879”

By Stephen C. Small, Ph.D.

As of 1500 hrs
9 May 05
Briefing Outline

- The Life and Times of Nelson Appleton Miles
- Late 19th Century
- U.S. Army Small Arms
- Indian Small Arms
- The Fight For Lee Rifles 1879
- Postscript
Nelson Appleton Miles
(1839 – 1925)
Northern Plains Campaign
(1874 – 1880)
Colonel Miles
Commander
5th Infantry Regiment
5th Infantry Company Grade Officers

Captain Mason Carter

Second Lieutenant Oscar F. Long

First Lieutenant Henry Romeyn, Company G

Captain Snider, Company F

1st Lieutenant Baird
5th Infantry Artillery

12-pound Napoleon cannon
Model 1841

Three-inch Rifled Cannon
1877 – Infantryman’s Full Field Equipment Load

- Springfield Rifle • 8.40 lbs.
- 60 rounds of ammunition and belt • 5.40 lbs.
- Overcoat, rain and wool blankets, extra clothes • 15.38 lbs.
- Full canteen • 3.84 lbs.
- Five rations: ¾ lbs. meat & 1lbs. hardtack • 8.75 lbs.

- TOTAL • 41.77 lbs.
Battle of Wolf Mountains
Montana
January 8, 1877
“Miles’ Scouts”

Luther
“Yellowstone”
Kelly

Two Moon,
Cheyenne

Hump, Minneconjou Lakota
Battle of Wolf Mountains
Crazy Horse
Defeated
Late 19th Century
U.S. Army Small Arms
The Importance of the Service Rifle
During the years 1865 and 1891
Army Expenditures Declined
from $1,031,323,000 to $48,720,000

95% Reduction
1866 Peabody Rifle

1863 Springfield Rifled Musket
The Service Rifle and Carbine
1873
45-70 Caliber
Personal Defense Weapon
Model 1873 Single-Action Colt .45

- Caliber .45” 250-255 gram lead ball
- Capacity six
- Muzzle Vel 860 Muzzle
- Sights Fixed – 25 yards
Indian Small Arms
Indian Shoulder-Fired Small Arms

Spencer repeaters
Sharps breechloaders
Henry Rifles
Springfield Breechloaders
Winchester lever actions
Miscellaneous muzzle-loaders
Shotguns
Bows and Arrows
Clubs and Axes
The Fight For Lee Rifles in 1879
James
Paris Lee
Small Arms
Inventor
The Model 1879 Lee Rifle
Lee’s Detachable Box Magazine

- Magazine for Model 1882 Remington Lee Rifle
  Caliber .45/70
The Letter
The Sherman Brothers

U.S. Senator John Sherman

Commanding General William Tecumseh Sherman
Chief of Ordnance,
Brigadier General Stephen Vincent Benet
(June 1874 – January 1891)
Miles’ Commanding Officer…

Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry
The State Army
Navy Building
Washington DC

George W. McCrary
Secretary of War
(March 1877 – December 1879)
Postscript
1882 - The Navy Buys Lee Rifles
Commanding General Miles
Miles Died in 1925
The Lee Rifle

- Adopted as British Service Rifle December 1888
- In various versions, the Lee rifle would successfully serve in World War I and II
- It was the fastest-cycling bolt-action ever made for military use
Questions?