

Subject: **NCO History, First Sergeant John Ryan in the Army**

**SGM Rolling  
R03, 55485**

First John Ryan was born Aug 25 1845, West Newton Mass right out side Boston. His parents had emigrated from Ireland some time before. John Ryan spent nearly 14 years between 1862 and 1876 in the Army taking part in many of the most celebrated military encounter of that era. 1862 He marched off to war with the 28<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts volunteers Infantry regiment, eventually became part of a famous Irish Brigade.

As a Private with 28<sup>th</sup> Mass Volunteer Infantry Regiment, he charged with his comrades at second Bull Run, survived the fiery plans beneath Mary's Height at Fredericksburg and in the Wheatfields at Gettysburg, he was wounded three times by his 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday. He continued to see enormous of action around 43 to 47 battles until his Discharge in July 1865. Most Soldiers (around 90%) where discharge at this time because of down sizing. For a little over a year he just hung out at home and work small jobs, he really loved the army but there was really know Army to serve at the time.

In the after of the War, Congress passed the Army Act of 1866, which reorganized the Regular Army and assign it three Mission:

- Reconstruction of the South
- Protection of the western Frontier
- Defense of the seacoasts

The act expanded the cavalry from Six to Ten regiments, including two black regiments. John Ryan heard the Army was looking for recruits to join, he possessed

“ Army Fever “, something he really never outgrew. During the Civil War Ryan never advance beyond the rank of Private, but now 21 Years old He was appointed to rank of Corporal.

Records offer no hint why he received a promotion so quickly, but Civil War Experience and his age were sure factors in consideration for his quick Promotion.

Despite of his Enlisted status, Ryan enthusiasm for Military life may have only matched by Custer's. This places him in a difficult position where some Officers did not like him, but they respected him as a NCO. He would find out later that they were a lot of jealousies in his ability to influence decisions on the Military battlefield. He was not afraid to give his opinion about the Tactics being used, but he received the final word there was never questioned on his duty and Loyalty. Except One Officer found him Proud and put him on charges for outspoken behavior and his so called cowardly actions.

Ryan found Himself accused of crimes and Facing a court-martial, which convened at Fort Harker, Kan. Fortunately, and the panel of officers, acquitted him. This did not stop his ambition and love for the Army, he was informed he could join a different outfit, but he refused and they reassigned him with 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. Where he continued with other Campaigns Like Washita, where he started to earn more respect for his bold fighting ability, he later Promoted to rank of Sergeant in 1868.

In 1870 John Ryan was assigned to Thomas W. Custer, George Brother Company as First Sergeant. He did not view this new position as the Top-ranking enlisted man as bettering himself, he was recognized for his ability to Lead men at the age of 24. Being a First Sergeant position in the regular Army, especially in a company of cavalry, were a pretty important one, and a Soldier holding that position had to understand the duties of his Position pretty

Thoroughly. Just like in today Army, but they're where some set backs, the NCO would get only so much responsibility as they are where trusted with. Still there was a lot mix attitude about Ryan because his Knowledge and ability to lead, again that other peoples where jealous of his abilities. Later to find himself again on Court martial and again he was acquitted and found to loyal to the army where he resume his old position as First Sergeant. He was unafraid of disciplining his men and he frequently demonstrated how tough he could be in such matter, a trait he evidently shared with Custer Himself. While serving as a First Sergeant, he ran a man out of his company one night for stealing- in Ryan's mind, the ultimate crime a Soldier could commit against his Comrades. Soldiers simply did not steal from one another.

1876 he was now 30 year old and be would be one his most historic eventful in Ryan's Life involving battle of "Little Bighorn". He was now 30 year old and a capable leader within the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. He was known for strong and firm approach to situation, he was just unmoving with only the desire with the mission at hand.

**The 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry had several weapons during this period of time they are of following:**

<sup>4</sup>The Webley Bulldog Pistol -was the subject of a cheap Belgian copy, First Ryan love to carry- t



This awesome weapon because it easy to reload, know for it's fast reloading ability!

Rolling 4

**The 1860 Henry Rifle** fired 15 shots and had 24" barrel, (The manufacturers claim 16 shots, but you have to load a round under the hammer, before filling the loading tube, which is of course potentially dangerous to the loader.) it was commonly used by scouts and some cavalry units after the Civil War.



**Sharps .50 caliber** as the 3rd most common shoulder arm at the battle. Some of these weapons may have belonged to white scouts or officers but the sheer number of rounds found means that it must have been an Indian weapon. It would have been a good choice for buffalo hunters and army scouts with long range and considerable stopping power.



The army had selected the Springfield single shot, breech-loading carbine as the standard weapon for cavalry troops in 1873. Although there were some problems noted with the weapon and its .45-70-caliber cartridge, the troops and officers had been satisfied overall. The Springfield was a very accurate weapon and had a longer range than many repeating rifles of the day. The issue of defective firearms was raised almost immediately after the battle. They had Six Galting guns per RGT.



#### **SMOOTHBORE MUSKET**

Probably the most common Indian weapon at the Little Bighorn was a cap-lock trading smoothbore musket or sometimes rifled muzzle-loaders of around .52 caliber.

#### **Tactics and Formation of Cavalry**

Cavalry had many uses in the late nineteenth century. It was highly effective in a reconnaissance role and for screening the movement of infantry forces. Cavalry was also useful for raiding

enemy supply lines and disrupting communications. Used as a shock force, mounted troops in column formation could penetrate an enemy line, which could then be followed up by infantry troops. On the frontier, this penetration tactic did not work against Indians. They would not stand up to a charge but would instead retreat out of range. Army tactics of the time called for envelopment. One force would fight a holding action against the Indians, while a highly mobile cavalry unit would swing around for an offensive on the flank or rear of the Indian warriors. This tactic was particularly effective against an Indian village. It was also an army practice to engage the Indians in a firefight since the Indians were not known to charge volley fire. In this way a smaller force could hold off the Indians and keep them from attempting to penetrate the line. The basic cavalry unit was the four-man squad. When cavalry deployed into line from a column, part of the force was held in reserve, and the others moved into line with a five-yard interval between each man and fifteen yards between squads. This formation allowed the men to accurately mass their firepower. The dispersed line meant that the men were less likely to be lost to return fire than if they were bunched together.

**Uniforms-** Note Suspenders although most troopers were issued with their uniform most would rather wear a belt instead. The belt would also be used to carry an extra pistol or knife.



June 25, Custer sent his Crow scout forward to learn more of what was going on; they reported a Sioux camp nearby. Custer went back there with them to only see a valley of early morning fog. Custer was eager to find his new opponent, days prior he released the Gatling guns because it was slowing his travel. Custer ordered his unit to move out, they spotted some Indians. Custer thought at the time the Indians were scattered and that would be difficult for cavalry to control.

Reno Bn to put the pressure on. First Ryan was a Brave a loyal man where nobody stand in his shoes, He took a small group of guys (combat patrol) with Custer to act as a link between lead and main element. The Gen. move to far away from rest of the main element to receive support, he was almost surrounded when pursuing the Indians. He was only able to set the perimeter and defends. First Sergeant volunteers to go back along the ridgeline for reinforcements. He rode by his self because they need every man to defend and Custer belief he would not make it back, Ryan fought his way back intensely—to the point the Indian had great respect for him. They back off from this fierce warrior, where he finally made it back. To find that Reno said he had his own problem at the time to worry about and Custer can handle it. The rest was History and First Sergeant Ryan later Lefted of the Military for these Officer not wanted to help no matter who the warrior maybe. Ryan was a highly regarded man and warrior, things where terrible to the point after “Little Big Horn” he ended getting out of the Military and went on with his life.



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