

William Jackson

Billy Jackson was a scout with the US Army between 1874 and 1879 under Generals Custer and Miles. Billy Jackson was a Metis/Piegan Blackfoot scout with Major Marcus Reno during the Battle of the Little Bighorn. He was one of the few scouts to survive. He may have been a grandson of fur trader Hugh Munroe who died on the Blackfoot Reserve at Browning, Montana in 1896. George Bird Grinnell interviewed Jackson for his book; *Blackfoot Lodge Tales* (1892) and gives an account of a Metis Buffalo drive.

Metis Buffalo Drive on the Musselshell River:

In connection with the subject of leading or decoying the buffalo, another matter not generally known may be mentioned. Sometimes, as a matter of convenience, a herd was brought from a long distance close up to the camp. This was usually done in the spring of the year, when the horses were thin in flesh and not in condition to stand a long chase.

I myself have never seen this; but my friend, William Jackson, was once present at such a drive by the Red River Half-Breeds, and has described to me the way in which it was done. The camp was on Box Elder Creek near the Musselshell River. It was in the spring of 1881, and the horses were all pretty well run down and thin, so that their owners wished to spare them as much as possible. The buffalo were seven or eight miles distant, and two men were sent out to bring them to the camp. Other men, leading fresh horses, went with them, and hid themselves among the hills at different points along the course that the buffalo were expected to take, at intervals of a mile and a half. They watched the herd, and were on hand to supply the fresh horses to the men who were bringing it. The buffalo were on a wide flat, and the men rode over the hill and

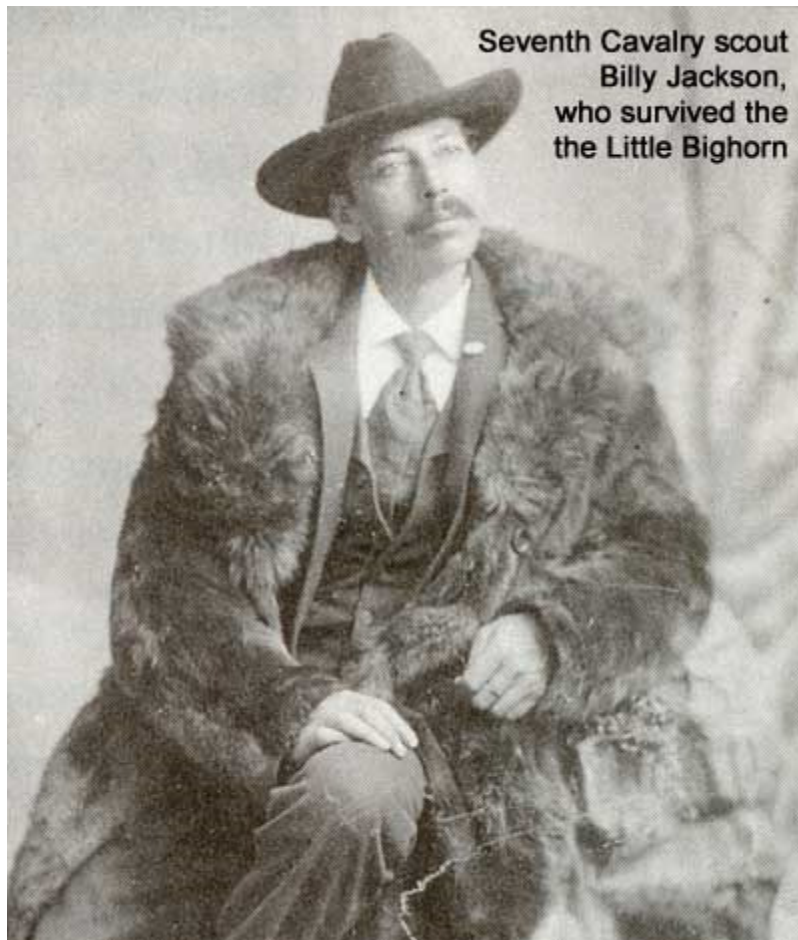


advanced toward the herd at a walk. At length the buffalo noticed them, and began to huddle up together and to walk about, and at length to walk away. Then the men turned, and rode along parallel to the buffalo's course, and at the same gait that these were taking. When the buffalo began to trot, the men trotted, and when the herd began to lope, the men loped, and at length they were all running pretty fast. The men kept about half a mile from the herd, and up even with the leaders. As they ran, the herd kept constantly edging a little toward the riders, as if trying to cross in front of them. This inclination toward the men was least when they were far off, and greatest when they drew nearer to them. At no time were the men nearer to the herd than four hundred yards. If the buffalo edged too much toward the riders, so that the course they were taking would lead them away from camp, the men would drop back and cross over behind the herd to the other side, and then, pushing their horses hard, would come up with the leaders,—but still at a distance from them,—and then the buffalo would begin to edge toward them, and the herd would

be brought back again to the desired course. If necessary, this was repeated, and so the buffalo were kept travelling in a course approximately straight. By the time the buffalo had got pretty near to the camp, they were pretty well winded, and the tongues of many of them were hanging out. This herd was led up among the rolling hills about a mile from the camp, and there the people were waiting for them, and charged them, when the herd broke up, the animals running in every direction.

Reference:

George B. Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales: The Story of a Prairie People*. New York: Scribner, 1892: 158-159.



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