

Photo of General Custer, his wife Libbie, his staff and his 2 guidons

Date: 1864

Media: Photographic paper.

Comment: This is a print taken directly from the historic William H. Bowlsby photograph of General George A. Custer with his wife and staff at the M.Y. Mason mansion, Winchester, Virginia, on the 25th of December, 1864. Custer had made this house his headquarters in Winchester. His two guidons are clearly visible in this photo. On the left is his 3rd Personal Guidon ZFC0489 and the 3rd Cavalry Division designating flag ZFC0490.

Shortly after receiving his commission as a brigadier general and closely following the Battle of Gettysburg, George Armstrong Custer had made a swallow-tailed guidon, divided horizontally red over blue with white crossed sabers. This served as his personal guidon to mark his location in the field of battle and in camp. The first one was crude, but it was replaced in the winter of 1863 – 1864 by an elaborate flag of the same design made of silk, fringed, and decorated with battle honors from Custer's 1863 service. In June 1864 this second personal flag was nearly captured; it was saved only by tearing it from its staff. As it was too damaged in the process for further use, in the summer of 1864 Custer's wife made yet a third personal flag, which was his most famous.

Custer's third personal guidon, his most famous, was carried by him through the remaining campaigns of 1864, including the Shenandoah Valley campaign, where Custer was photographed with it, and his 3rd Division guidon, in front of his headquarters.

Provenance: Acquired by Zaricor Flag Collection (ZFC1492) in 1970 by purchase from photographic archival collections of The Little Big Horn Battlefield National Monument, Crow Agency, Montana. www.FlagCollection.com