

First Sergeant Frederick Stortz: A Young Soldier, Gone, Not Forgotten

By Joan F. Sullivan

Chapter 1

The beautiful penmanship of a young man wove a story that pulled at my heart strings. In 1873, Frederick Stortz, enlisted in the US Army at Cincinnati, Ohio. He was 21 years old. Fred had traveled from New York to Ohio, leaving his German born father and family in upstate New York. In 1877, Fred wrote to his Father, "I scarcely know how to address you, for in four years, not a line have I received from you. I would barely now come to write to one whom I have so cruelly offended and wronged, were it not for the fact that I am again, in a few days to take to the field against hostils."

1st Sergeant Frederick Stortz was in the infantry, stationed at Fort Shaw, Montana for most of his four years of service. In 1876, his company arrived too late to save General Custer in the infamous "Custer's Last Stand." Now the 7th Infantry, Company K, was heading out to intercept the Nez Perce Indians and Chief Joseph at Big Hole, Montana.

Saving Fred's letters over the years, I would read them again and again, never imagining that they would lead me to a desolate grave in the Montana wilderness. I remember looking at maps, trying to analyze the mysterious places where the Army had dispatched Fred. Of course, when he went to different areas, he would march on foot over all kinds of terrain. He was in the infantry, not the cavalry. When my son and I traced his steps, we would drive a car, and it did

seem forever in a car. How did people travel by foot and endure the hardships? When we buzz along the highway, we take hills and bridges without any effort. Try to imagine the inconvenience, when you came upon a river to cross, only to get cold and wet.

Fred's letters convinced me that I had to go to Montana. My son, Scott, was anxious to accompany me. The letters and photos were treasured and saved by Fred's Father. They were passed down to my Grandfather, who was Frederick's brother, and then to me.

Fort Shaw N.M.
March 12th 77

Father

I scarcely know how to address you. for in four years not a line have I received from you. I would scarcely now dare to write to one whom I have so cruelly offended and wronged, were it not for the fact that I am again in a few days to take the field against Hostiles. You probably think the same as the rest that I had not ought to have entered the army. Yet my excuse is that necessity knows no law. and it seems that I was destined to be a soldier and I glory in my choice of Profession. For as a soldier I can be as the poet says a man for all that. I was probably a little too ambitious in aspiring to a higher position than the one I now occupy. Which fact demonstrated itself on the first of the Month in nearly a complete failure on my part

When Scott and I made our plans, to my surprise we found that the "Battle of Big Hole" was very well known in history. In 1877, approximately 800 Nez Perce Indians began a four month trek from northeastern Oregon and Central Idaho over the Bitterroot Mountains and through Montana. They were trying to reach Canada, and leave behind the United State's demands to live on a reservation. The Battle of Big Hole was one of the major encounters of the flight, with the largest loss of life to both the Army and the Indians.

When my Son and I reached the area of the battle, a portion of Fred's letter about missing his Father kept haunting me. He wrote "Do you not think it would make anyone feel sad out in this God Forsaken Country, not knowing what minute, if your hair may be lifted?" After he was shot, the Indians did not lift his hair. They were too busy engaging in combat and retreating their women and children to safety.

Frederick's few letters to his Father continued until April 1877, when he wrote, "Your welcome letter received. You cannot imagine with what joy I treasured its contents. That letter made me feel emotions that I have not felt in Years." In this last letter, he also said "If I should fall in battle this summer, Dear Father, think kindly of me and forgive my past follies."

yet I had scarcely time to prepare
myself for my Sobriety examination and
hope has not left me yet for I intend to
try them again if I survive the coming
Campaign. As to my Social standing
I suffice to say that I try to be moderate
in my habits I still am a good temper
and now hold the highest office in the gift
of the Lodge. So taking a glance in the past
and comparing it with the present my opinion
is we ought all to thank God for what he
has made me. My mind is fully made
up (if I live) to come home in about a
year from now. If not discharged I will
come on furlough for I long to see you
and all that is near and dear to ^{me} you.
Yet thinking of the past I dread to go
back as a citizen for I don't think that
with all the old rights and associates I could
resist the temptation and I would rather
be in my grave than fall in my old
habits again.

His final letter was written to his brother, "The Indians are breaking out at nearly all of the agencies in this vicinity and there will be two or three companies of us leave this post as soon as the scouts locate the hostile camp. Latest accounts say settlers are leaving their homes and moving to small towns for safety and offense." Less than four weeks after writing this last letter, Fred was killed in battle.

One of the most redeeming thoughts of this real life drama is that after four long years, isolated from home, this young man finally received a letter from his Father, four months before his death. The positive action now gleaned from the battle is the harmony and sincerity of the Indians and local people of Montana to work and live together. There is a Visitor's Center near the battlefield site, managed and maintained by the National Park Service. [Each year they commemorate the battle with a wonderful celebration of peace and harmony.](#)

On a cool clear spring day, Scott and I hiked to the battlefield and across Ruby Creek on a wooden foot bridge. We were chasing a dream, standing on the high crown of land surrounded by water and willows. The snow capped mountains were in the distance. Looking around at the old battlefield with wooden markers and remains of teepees beyond the creek, you could feel the presence of the battle.

I was absorbed in an overwhelming moment, as I found Fred's name on the huge monument. When I called out to Scott to come and take photographs for me, I did not get a response. Complete silence. He was so awe struck, that he

couldn't speak. A huge pregnant moose ran past him and disappeared down the bank into the willows. He took photos of the moose in the willows, and we spent the rest of our time exploring the spectacular area.

yet I had scarcely time to prepare myself for any obtrusive examination and hope has not left me yet for I intend to try them again if I survive the coming Campaign. As to my Social Standing suffice to say that I try to be moderate in my habits I still am a good temple and now hold the highest office in the gift of the Lodge. So taking a glance in the past and comparing it with the present my opinion is we ought all to thank God for what he has made me. My mind is fully made up (if I live) to come home in about a year from now. If not discharged I will come on furlough for I long to see you and all that is near and dear to you^{me}. Yet thinking of the past I dread to go back as a citizen for I don't think that with all the old rights and associates I could resist the temptation and I would rather be in my grave than fall in my old habits again.

If you cannot write it yourself
tell Kate or some one else to do so
for you expressing your mind freely.
Now remember I will be expecting an answer
and will feel greatly disappointed if I
do not get one to state to poor L.S. Country
with me

Not knowing your address
I send it in care of George -
I tried to write in German but made
a failure.

Write for it may be the last
I will have from you forever

Frederick

Chapter 2

Come with me back to the mid 1800's. Put yourself into the life of a young man who was born in an upstate New York and raised to be a proper gentleman. Then he enlisted in the "Regular Army" at the age of 21 years and found himself in another life, based in Montana, as a foot soldier.

Frederick K. Stortz was the middle child of three, born within four years to George and Susan Stortz. They had emigrated from Baden, Germany, the year their first child was born, and took residence in Rochester, New York. George found gainful employment and was prospering quite well. He soon discovered himself at 27 years of age with three young children, a new country and language, and a wife who could not cope. Susan was admitted to an "insane asylum" and labeled a "lunatic". Society was very harsh at that time. She lived the rest of her life confined, and died in 1905, outliving her ex husband and son, Frederick.

Fred lost his mother at age seven, and was raised by his father. His father remarried when Fred was 19 years old. Most of Fred's life was guided by one very strict German parent, who had high expectations for his family. Both of Fred's siblings married and moved away when they were young. These were all indications of a very strict upbringing.

The family atmosphere and George's remarriage must have weighed heavily on Fred as a teenager. One of his jobs was a clerk for "Doyle's Hop Bitters". Whether Fred's encounter with alcohol was one time, or one of many, his

father disapproved of Fred's lifestyle. In an effort to regain his father's trust, Fred enlisted in the Army at Cincinnati, Ohio on April 24, 1873. His statistics at the time of enlistment were: hazel eyes, brown hair, and 5 feet 4 inches tall. Fred's letter collection hints that the reason for enlistment was an effort to gain his father's trust and he apologized for his wayward actions. He was "being a good templar and mending my ways." Fred's father belonged to the Masonic Lodge in Rochester. Being a "templar" was very important to him and seemed to be considered almost a religion for him to live by.

After enlistment, Fred was stationed at Fort Shaw, Montana. He was in the 7th Infantry, Company K, under Captain James M. Sanno and Colonel John Gibbon.

Great Falls is a city on the Missouri River located ten miles south of Fort Shaw, MT. The Fort was built around 1867 on the bank of Sun River, a major tributary of the Missouri River. Fort Shaw was established to guard the route between Fort Benton to the northeast, and Helena, MT to the south, and also to prevent problems between the settlers, miners and the Blackfoot Indians. The Sun River valley is where the first white settlers in the region came to rest along the valley by the fort. Fort Shaw was considered a 'nice fort" with buildings of either stone or adobe brick. The settlers had lots of cattle that roamed about and were a good source of food for the area.

Highlighted are the exact words of the original letters, poor spelling, and all, that Fred wrote home to his father, George Stortz Sr. and to his brother George Jr. Highlighted also are the exact words from other documents pertaining to Fred.

It is my hope, that while you are reading them, you will enjoy and understand how a soldier lived and thought, throughout his tenure, until his death in the willows. I have added some commrntary to help guide you through your journey with Fred.

Fort Shaw, Montana, December 21st, 1873

Dear Father,

I am happy to inform you that I am in ecilant health and sincerely hope that theeze few lines will find you in the same condition as they leave me at present. It is about 9 months since I left home and in all that time I have not received one single word from you. Now I can assure you it makes me feal bad. Do you not think it would make anyone feel sad out in this God Forsaken Country not knowing what minute, if your hair may be lifted, with Father and Family at home and not receiving one encouraging word of a bit of Fathers advise to guide him and cheer him on the loanly path of life he has chosen. Now Father I do not offer this as a chastisement or a rebuke but take the lowest Irishman man in the World who can neither read or write and let him have a runaway son away from home no matter how much he has disgraced his family or injured him if he cannot write himself he will get someone to write for him. Now Father you are gifted with both so for Godsake write and relieve this aching heart which is yearning for a Fathers love and I will with many hopes and wishes for your future prosperity and welfare in life remain (if I may call myself so) Your Son

Fred K Stortz

Fort Shaw Mt

PS I wish you all a Happy New Year and when you are eating your dinner let George eat the part that went over the fence last for me. I hope that before many more of these Holidays pass by you will have me with you.

Excuse scribbling for it was done in a hurray.

HEADQUARTERS, FORT SHAW MT.

January 26th, 1875

Special Order

No. 15

III – Private Frederick Stortz Company K, 7th Infantry will proceed tomorrow morning to the Blackfoot Agency (on the Teton River) MT, with dispatch, and will, if practical, return to this post on the following day.

The commanding Officer of the mounted detachment will furnish the necessary transportation.

By order of Capt CC Rawn,

Levi F Burnett

1st Lt.. Adj. 7th Infantry

My Addition

Please note that in the second paragraph, Fred was to get a horse to ride to the agency. Since he was born and raised in the city it is doubtful that he ever rode horse until he joined the Army.

The Commanding Officer of the Regiment of Company K 7th Infantry

To all who shall see the presents, greeting

September 1, 1875

Know ye that reposing special trust and confidence in the patriotism valor, fidelity, and abilities of Fred K. Stortz, I do hereby appoint him Corporal in Company "K" of the 7th Regiment of Infantry in the service of the United States, to rank as such from the First day of September One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy Five. He is therefore carefully and diligently to discharge the duty of Corporal by doing and performing all manner of things there unto belonging. And I do strictly charge and require all Non Commissioned Officers and Soldiers under his command to be obedient to his orders as Corporal. And he is to observe and follow such orders and directions from time to time as he shall receive from me or the future Commanding Officer of the Regiment, or other Superior Officers and Non Commissioned Officers set over him according to the rules and discipline of War. This warrant to continue in force during the pleasure of the Commanding Officer of the Regiment for the time being.

**Given under my hand at the Head Quarters of the Regiment at Fort Shaw
MT this twenty second day of Sept in the year of our Lord one thousand
eight hundred and 75.**

By the Commanding Officer	John Gibbon
Levi Frank Burnett	Colonel 7th Infantry
First Lieu 7th Infantry	Commanding the
Adjutant of the Regiment	Regiment

My Addition

“Frederick Stortz's involvement in "Custers Last Stand"

Late in 1875, President Grant issued an order to various hostile Indian tribes that they were to report to reservations and Indian Agencies no later than January 31, 1876.

On May 17, 1876, Fred and the soldiers under the command of Colonel Gibbon left Fort Shaw and marched to Fort Ellis. The march was a difficult 183 miles. Roads were covered with mud and slush and there was a heavy snow. They reached Fort Ellis on May 22nd. At the fort, they joined forces with Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry and marched to join Lt. Colonel Custer. On the way they stopped at a crow agency and engaged 25 of the crows as scouts. They marched through snow and sleet and it was a tedious and difficult time.

Everywhere Fred and his infantry comrades went, they marched. Times were different then. In 1876, an infantryman's full field equipment was:

ITEM	POUNDS
60 roundsammunition and belt	5.4
Overcoat	5.25
Blanket (grey wool)	5.13
Rubber blanket (ground cover)	3.0
Springfield rifle and sling	8.4
Extra clothes	2.0
Full canteen (one quart)	3.84
5 days camp rations (3/4 lb. meat and 1 lb. hardtack per day)	8.75
Total	41.77 lbs.

How many of us can carry 42 pounds and march all day in mostly unfavorable weather conditions?

The US Infantry soldier of that time struggled with many shortcomings. They had poor training, sub standard equipment and few rations that were nutritious. This was after the Civil War and the army was downsized and the draft was stopped. Most volunteers were immigrants because civilian jobs were scarce, and the army was a fresh start for many. They were unprepared for the difficult conditions of the West. A great number of officers were Civil War veterans.

Soldier's tasks were a boring routine of construction, maintaining, and protecting military posts. Their presence was also needed to protect the settlers against intruders and Indians.

The monthly pay of a Private was approximately \$13.00, and if he wanted to improve his shooting skills, he had to pay 13 cents per shot for ammunition. These inexperienced soldiers were not a match for skilled Indian warriors.

The soldier's uniforms were a variety of Civil War surplus and some current issues. Their equipment was basic.

There has been an enormous amount of facts, fiction, and speculation written about "Custers Last Stand" and/or "The Battle of Little Big Horn." In all of my research, I am only going to follow 1st Sgt. Frederick Stortz's role in this encounter, but some explanation of the confrontation is needed to understand Fred's small part in the battle and the impact that was made on Fred and his comrades.

The Indians had been ordered to reservations and agencies by January 31st 1876. This order was mostly ignored. On March 17, 1876, an Indian village on Powder River was attacked by Colonel Reynolds and his forces. The Indians were starting their spring hunting and fishing as was customary, and they considered the attack a declaration of war. Little by little word spread among the Indians and they gathered to be prepared for a conflict, as they hunted buffalo and fattened their ponies on spring grasses. They were angry over the government's attempt to seize their land.

The clash between Custer and the Indians occurred in June 1876. All of his men, numbering around 260 were killed. General Custer with about 260 men attacked an Indian village containing as many as 10,000 people including about 3000 warriors. His scouts had told him it was the largest group they saw in 30 years, and he would be outnumbered 10 to 1.

The Sioux and Cheyenne Indians were heavily armed, having twice as many guns as the soldiers. 45 types of different Indian weapons were later uncovered at the battle site. Indian women moved through the fighting field and mutilated and robbed the dead soldiers.

Two more days of fighting ensued after the battle, involving Major Reno and Captain Benteen in separate areas from Custer's battlefield.

Early in the morning of June 27, 1876, General Terry and Colonel Gibbon's forces marched up the Little Big Horn River. The Terry-Gibbon column bivouacked on the flats immediately west of the river, where they were joined by survivors of the Seventh Cavalry, plus the civilian packers and guides. On June 28th, the dead were counted, identified, and hurriedly buried. Litters were rigged for the seriously wounded and the entire force moved slowly back down the river to its mouth. A steamer, "Far West", awaited them. The badly wounded men were placed on board for transport to Fort Abraham Lincoln.

On the muster roll for the 7th Infantry, Company K, Cpl. Frederick Stortz was listed with special duty on the gatling gun. It is doubtful that he got to use it.

This was Corporal Stortz's involvement in "Custers Last Stand". He and his comrades arrived after the battle, only to bury the dead men and tend to the wounded. They engaged only a few Indians during this period. How these soldiers must have felt about the Indian conflicts at this time, after performing burial and clean up duties?

**The Commanding Officer of the Regiment
of Company K, 7th Infantry**

To all who shall see the presents, greeting

October 13, 1876

The document of this date evidences the promotion that Fred received on September 1, 1875. This time the promotion was from Corporal to Sergeant. The document was signed by the same people indicating that there was no change of command or personnel. The promotion to Sergeant came after he returned from "Custers Last Stand". Fred seemed to be performing very well and his Father would be quite proud of him.

Fort Shaw, Mt.

March 12th, 1877

Father

I scarcely know how to address you for in four years not a line have I received from you. I would scarcely now come to write to one whom I have so cruely offended and wronged, were it not for the fact that I am again in a

few days to take the field against hostiles. You probably think the same as the rest that I had not ought to have entered the army. Yet my excuse is that necessity knows no law. And it seems that I was destined to be a soldier and I glory in my choice of professions for as a soldier I can be as the Poet says a man for all that. I was probably a little too ambitious in aspiring to a higher position than the one I now occupy which fact demonstrated to itself on the first of the month in nearly a complete failure on my part yet I had scarcely time to prepare myself for any elaborate examination and hope has not left me yet for I intend to try them again if I survive the coming campaign. As to my social standing suffice to say that I try to be moderate in my habits. I still am a good templar and now hold the highest office in the gift of the lode, so taking a glance in the past and comparing it with the present my opinion is we ought all to thank God for what he has made me. My mind is fully made up (if I live) to come home in about a year from now. If not discharged I will come on furlough for I long to see you and all that is near and dear to me. Yet thinking of the past I dread to go back as a citizen for I don't think that with all the old sights and associates I could resist the temptation and I would rather be in my grave than fall in my old habits again.

If I should fall in battle this summer Dear Father think kindly of me and forgive my past follies and believe as I do that my lot is cast for the best.

So by excepting my whole souled love and by giving my regards to Kate — and all friends I will close this missel.

By signing myself

Your repenting Son

Fred

PS

I hope you will favor me with a letter. No matter if written in German which if received by me will be treasured as sacred. I would also like a photograph of yourself and Kate which I hope you will send. If this letter is promptly answered it will reach me before leaving Crow Agency. A letter directed to Fred K. Stortz 1st Sergeant Co K 7th Infantry Fort Shaw Mt. will always find me. If you cannot write it yourself tell Kate or someone else to do so for you expressing your mind freely. Now remember I will be expecting an answer and will feel greatly disappointed if I do not get one to take to poor Lo Lo Country with me. Not knowing your address I send it in care of George. I tried to write in German but made a failure.

Write for it may be the last I will hear from you forever.

Fred.

My Addition

The previous and following letters are written as if Fred can see the future. His predictions all came true within five months. Every time I read these letters, I get a strange feeling about his insight.

Fort Shaw, Mt — April 16th 1877

Dear Father

Your very welcome letter received Thanks

You cannot imagine with what joy I treasured its contents. That letter made me feel emotions that I have not felt for years. Well may you say that I probably have learned much in my rambles that I did not understand in my younger days. While at school I learned the theorie but the world taught me the practice. I am enjoying excellent health and I am kept so constantly busy that the time slips around so fast that I do not feel it. You express a desire to see me again and as I like my present life so well I will serve my time out if nothing better turns up.

By next Spring I will be entitled to four months leave of absence and then I will apply for a furlough and again visit my Native home.

We are kept constantly busy keeping Indians on their Reservations and we are disarming and dismounting them nearly every day. An Indian is too lazy to walk and if you take his gun and horse from him he will have to stay at his agency or starve. I am rather pressed for time now so I will close. Dear Father accept my love and extend my kind regards to all friends and believe me I am not the rafigrace I once was.

I will sign myself

Your son

Fred

Fort Shaw Mt. — July 12 1877

George (Fred's older brother);

For some God Dammed reason or other you are again playing lazy. I made up my mind sometime ago not to write you only in answering your letters. My reasons for not complying to my resolutions are these. The Indians are breaking out at nearly all of the agencies in this vicinity and there will be two or three companies of us leave this post as soon as our Scouts can locate the hostile camp. We are hourly expecting him back and before you get this we hope to have a sit to with them. So if we fare as bad as those two companies in Washington Territory did, the chances are in case this will be my last. You plead want of time but you cannot imagine how a First Sergeant is pushed getting things ready for an expedition and in the face of all this I let my thoughts wander to you folks at home and I am sure I could not rest easy tonight did I not write. It is now past midnight and still I find time to write when you are probably resting in your bed with not one thought for your brother so far away. Is this just? Do you ever feel as if you were doing Justice by me?

I will cease this reproaching for my eyes are aching and I can scarcely see the lines on the paper. So I will close with much love to you and all Friends and George if you never should hear from me again don't forget.

In Haste

Fred

PS

Latest accounts say settlers are leaving their homes in the upper valleys and moving to the small towns in their immediate vicinitys where they are organizing into companys for mutual safety and defence. You may write and address the same as before and if I am above ground I will get your letters sometime. If I get a chance and we do not move out early in the morning I will write to Lottie, but if you see her let her know how things stand In haste.

Fred

Chapter 3

On August 7, 1877, Chief Looking Glass ordered the Nez Perce bands or Indians to make camp in the Big Hole Valley of Montana. He believed they were far enough ahead of the pursuing General Oliver O. Howard and troops to be out of danger. Unknown to the Indians, a second military force consisting of Colonel John Gibbon and 162 men of the 7th Infantry was advancing up the valley. The battle began August 9th when the soldiers engaged in a surprise attack on the Indian village. The Indians rallied and took up sniper positions and forced Gibbon's men back across the river. The Indians also captured the U.S. Army howitzer gun after only two rounds were fired. The siege continued while Chief Joseph and the Indians cared for the injured, buried the dead, gathered their horses and broke camp. Finally after two days, the remaining warriors left to join their people heading for Canada. Colonel Gibbon suffered casualties of 29 killed and 40 wounded, including himself. The Nez Perce lost between 60 to 90, which included warriors, women and some children.

First Sgt. Stortz was shot in the abdomen while crossing the river in the first charge. His gun and knife were taken by the Indians, but he was not otherwise mutilated. There is a monument erected to honor the soldiers and the Indians who fought in this battle. It was built on a high circle of ground with Ruby Creek and a stand of willows just below it. The willows are where Fred died.

Office Acting Commissary of Subsistence

Fort Shaw Mt. — August 14, 1877

Postmaster

Rochester, NY

Sir

Please hand the enclosed to either of the gentlemen to whom it is addressed. It contains the sad news of the death of a young man from Rochester and the only papers I can find are recommendations from them. His name is Frederick Stortz.

Respectfully,

J. C. Budd — Com. Sergt.

The enclosed card may also give some trace of his family if you know them please act yourself instead of handling the enclosed to address. JCB

Office Acting Commissary of Substence

Fort Shaw Mt — August 16, 1877

Geo Stortz & Bro.

No 8 West Avenue

Rochester

Sir

I found your address in a Book belonging to the late Frederick Stortz 1 Sergt Co K 7th Infantry who was killed in action with Joseph's Band of Indians at Big Hole Basin, Montana. He was under command of Genl. Gibbon. How, will doubtless be accounts in the papers.

I have written to the Postmaster Rochester in closing a letter addressed to John D Doyle, Geo E Mc Gonegal or E. H. Griffin whose letters of recommendations were the only papers I could find. I have some pictures (family ones I presume), memorandum book and papers which will be sent on application

Respectfully,

J. C. Budd

Address J. C. Budd

Commissary Sergeant

Fort Shaw, Mt.



Frederick Stortz



George Stortz SR.
and 2nd wife
Katherine



George Stortz JR.

Office Acting Commissary of Subsistence

Fort Shaw Mt. — September 14, 1877

George Stortz Esq.

Rochester, N. Y.

Dear Sir

Your letter of the 1st was received yesterday. I send by registered mail a package containing a memorandum book, his warrants as Corporal and Sergeant, letters of recommendations and pictures, some of his family, others of his comrades.

As I do not belong to his (or any other) regiment, being Post Commissary Sergeant I did not accompany the battalion, but from what I can hear, Fred received a wound in the right side of the stomach when his company charged the Indian village. They held the village about half an hour, when the Indians (who had been surprised in their tents) rallied and drove them back across Ruby Creek. In returning, the men found Fred, and a couple of them tried to carry him off, but it caused such pain that he asked to be left in the willows. His request and the fact that any men going slow and trying to help any one off made them a target for the Indians, made them comply. Afterwards when the Indians had gone, parties were sent out to bury the dead and help in any wounded they found. Fred was found about twenty or thirty yards from where they had left him, showing that he must have died before the Indians found him. He was not mutilated

but they had skipped him as they did Capt. Logan and Lieutenant Bradley and others. If he could have been taken off the field his men would have done it, but I have been told by several that they tried to help others off, but the bullets came so thick and close they had to drop them.

He was buried as the others were on the field.

I am told that my Lodge and other Masonic Lodges in Helena are going to bring in the body of Capt. Logan who was a Mason in high standing to be buried, but I do not know if any one else will be brought from the field. All clothing or other personal property belonging to deceased soldiers are sold at auction and the proceeds together with all amounts due him by the government are sent to the Adjutant General. I think his accounts will show over \$100 due him, which can be obtained by his nearest relative applying to the Adjutant General Office, Washington, D.C. He enlisted April 24th 1873 at Cincinnati, Ohio for 5 years. He was for several years a member of Crown Butte Lodge and served a term as Chief of the Lodge Any further information I can give I will be glad to do so.

Respectfully

J. C. Budd Com. Sergt.

Fred died at Big Hole Basin, Montana Thursday Aug. 9th

Office Acting Commissary of Subsistence.

Fort Shaw Mo. T. September 1877.

George Stortz Esq
Rochester N. Y.

Dear Sir

Your letter of the 1st inst. received yesterday. I send by registered mail a package containing a memorandum book his warrants as Corporal and Sergeant, letters of recommendation and pictures, some of his family, others of his comrades. -

As I do not belong to his (or any other) regiment, being Post Commissary Sergeant I did not accompany the battalion, but from what I can hear, Fred received a wound in the right side of the stomach when his company charged the Indian village - they held the village about half an hour, when the Indians (who had been surprised in their tents) rallied and drove them back across Ruby Creek. In returning the men found Fred, and a couple of them tried to carry him off, but it caused such pain that he asked to be left in the willows, his request and the fact that any man going slow & trying to help any one off, made them a target for the Indians, made the men comply. Afterwards when the Indians had gone parties were sent out to bury the dead & help in any wounded they found, Fred

was found about twenty or thirty yards from where they had left him. He had no other wound about him, showing that ~~he~~ he must have died before the Indians found him, he was not mutilated but they had stripped him as they did Capt. Hogan, Willkum Bradley & others. - If he could have been taken off the field his men would have done it, but I have been told by several that they tried to help others off, but the bullets came so thick & close they had to drop them.

He was buried as the others were, on the field. - I am told that my Lodge ^{and} other Masonic Lodges in Helena are going to bring in the body of Capt. Hogan who was a Mason in high standing to be buried but I do not know if any one else will be brought from the field. -

All clothing or other personal property belonging to deceased soldiers are sold at auction and the proceeds together with all amounts due him by the government are sent to the Adjutant General I think his accounts will show over \$100 due him, which can be obtained by his nearest relative applying to the Adjutant General U.S., Washington D.C.

He enlisted April 24th '43 at Cincinnati Ohio for 5 years. He was for several years a member of Crown Butte Lodge I.O.G.F. & had served a term as Chief of the Lodge.

Any further information you can give will be glad to do so.

done at Big Hole Basin
Montana Thursday Aug. 9th

Respectfully
J. C. Budds
Com. Secy.

Company K Infantry

Fort Shaw, Mt. — September 20, 1877

Dear Sir, (George Stortz Jr., Fred's brother);

Your telegram relating to Frederick Stortz, late 1st Sergeant of my company was received. We were returning to our station from the battlefield of Big Hole. I answered it at once, intending to write you the particulars of his death.

On the morning of Aug. 9th, during the advance we attacked the Indians and just as we had charged across the stream and formed our line in the village we opened fire at close range. 1st Sergeant Stortz received a mortal wound through the abdomen. The shot was fired from one of the lodges within a few yards of our line. The Sergeant called to me that he was shot. I was about fifteen feet from him. I directed him to sit down on the bank of the stream under the willows until we fell back. I saw him again shortly afterward and found him walking around and wandering in his mind. I saw that his wound was mortal, although I thought so from the first. He then went to the stream in our party with some other slightly wounded men, at which point he died. His body was found by the burial party sent out on the 11th and buried on the spot, he was in no wise mutilated, in fact strange as it may seem, the Indians did not mutilate any of the dead.

Your brother was an exceptional soldier and his death is universally regretted. For a young man holding such a responsible position, he far

exceeded any expectations. He is a great loss to the service and other companys over whose interests matched with the ultimate zeal and fidelity.

Sympathy with you, I remain very respectfully

J. M. Sano

Capt 7 Infantry

To George Stortz

8 West Avenue

Rochester, N. Y.

PS Any information or services that I can render, command my services –

ARMY AND NAVY JOURNAL

New York, Saturday, October 6, 1877

The Army

7th Infantry, Col John Gibbon – Headquarters, Fort Shaw, MT.

In memoriam — At a regular meeting of Crown Butte Lodge No. 80 I. O. G. T, held in their hall at Fort Shaw, MT, on the evening of September 6, 1877, being their first meeting after the sad intelligence had been received of the death of Brother Frederick Stortz, Past Worthy Chief Templar and Lodge Deputy of this Lodge, who was killed in the action with the Nez Perce Indians, at Big Hole, MT, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, It has pleased Almighty God in his great wisdom to strike with

the hand of death our beloved brother, Frederick Stortz, late 1st Sergeant Co. K, 7th Infantry, therefore, be it resolved that we bow humbly in submission to the Divine Will we cannot refrain from expressing our appreciation of the upright, manly character of our deceased brother and our deep sense the loss our Lodge has sustained by the death of one of its best workers. Resolved that in sacred memory of the deceased the hall be draped in mourning for thirty days and the usual badge of mourning be worn by the members during lodge session.

Resolved that a copy of these proceedings be forwarded to the Army and Navy Journal, Rochester Democrat (Rochester, NY), and the Rocky Mountain Husbandman (Diamond City, MT.) for publication. Noah G. Pomeroy, John C. Budds, Henry Jones. Com.

My Addition

This would have made Fred's father very proud.

Where was Frederick Stortz's final resting place? Several accounts were written following the battle, but nothing is conclusive. It is said that one fragmentary shoe found in the willows belonged to Fred. Also found, was a suspender grip set and several blouse buttons, which appeared to be a temporary post battle burial. Other accounts state that the bodies were removed from their original burial places and given a proper burial elsewhere. The Nez Perce Warrior, Yellow Wolf, has said that he saw Fred upright in the willows with his eyes open, and he did not move as if in death. Wherever Fred may be, he can rest assured that his father and family

are proud of him.

These letters weave a story, and we can read between the lines to conjure up a sense of understanding . Fred was a very impressionable young man and truly believed that he was fighting for a worthy cause. It seems as if Fred and the other soldiers believed that controlling the Indians would solve all of their country's problems. "Their Country" was also the Indians country. They knew one side of the story. Communications were so poor at that time, they hardly had an opportunity to see why the Indians were upset. The Indians were also fighting for their homeland.

Thankfully, we can each back into our history, to make today a much better place for all of us to live together in peace.

Fred is at peace.