

Captain William Logan

Life was really tough on the western frontier for the U.S. soldiers sent there to protect the settlers, and a bullet or an arrow, with your name on it was a constant possibility. Death for the frontier soldier was always permanent, but not so for the final resting place. The soldier killed in battle was usually buried where he fell or in a common grave nearby. One thing the U.S. military has always been good at is taking care of the dead, and whenever possible they always went back to give their soldiers a proper burial. But, not often does one get buried three times, and the first two times the task of burying the body falls to one's son-in-laws. But that is what happened to Captain William Logan.

Logan was born to Scotch-Irish parents in Ardee, County Louth, Ireland on December 9, 1830, though his military records show his birth as 1932. He received a fine education and, one year after graduating from Old Trinity College, he immigrated to the United States. He left behind him his parents and eleven brothers and sisters.

Upon his departure to America he was given a seal ring that had been in the family for many generations. Logan wore this ring, and a Masonic ring that was given him during the Civil War, for the remainder of his life.

Logan's family says that after his arrival in the States, Logan went to work on the railroad in New Orleans, Louisiana until he enlisted as a Private in the 7th U.S. Infantry Regiment for service in the war with Mexico. Military records show he joined the Army in December of 1850, after the Mexican War.

As a member of Company I, 7th Regiment, he was stationed at posts along the Arkansas frontier building bridges and earning promotions until 1858 when he was promoted to First Sergeant. While he was serving on the frontier he met Odelia Furlong, who had immigrated to Texas from France. They were married in Texas in 1854.

In 1858, his unit was sent to Utah as a show of force in the so-called Mormon War, which saw no conflict at all. From there the unit served in New Mexico posts until the Civil War began. On July 27, 1861, at Fort Fillmore, New Mexico, the post commander ordered the fort evacuated in the face of a Confederate force. Later that day, the commander surrendered his force to the Confederates. Logan became a Prisoner of War. Three days later they were paroled.

The parole expired on September 30, 1862, and in October they were ordered to rejoin the 7th Regiment which was then in Virginia. In December of 1862, Logan's unit was engaged in the Battle of Fredericksburg when he suffered a severe shoulder wound.

While Logan was at DeCamp General Hospital in New York City, he began a successful campaign to become a commissioned officer. He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant on June 7, 1864, and again assigned to the 7th Infantry. But, while his unit was assigned to a post in Florida, he was on recruiting duty in Pennsylvania. In September of 1865, he was promoted to First Lieutenant.

In April, 1869. Logan and the 7th Infantry were ordered back to the west where they would be stationed at several posts over the next few years. He was promoted to Captain on the 5th of January, 1875.

1876 was not a good year for the U.S. Army. There were numerous Indian uprisings and Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, and Chief Gall would unite their forces at Little Bighorn. Logan's unit began a march that they expected would join them with Custer's unit. It was not to happen, and they arrived about a day and a half after the battle and all they could do was destroy some Indian property abandoned in their hasty retreat.

A year after Custer's Last Stand, Logan's unit, and several others, were called out to pursue the Nez Perce tribe as they were fleeing for Canada. Scouts from the Army spotted the tribe on August 8, 1877, camped at the Big Hole River near the current site of the town of Wisdom, Montana. On the morning of August 9, the Army moved close in preparation for a dawn attack. A lone Nez Perce brave rode out to check on their herd of horses and died in a hail of bullets. The Battle of the Big Hole was underway and it was to prove costly for the Army. Estimates were that the Army suffered 32 killed and 37 wounded. The Nez Perce estimate was 12 warriors killed and 40 others killed (women, children and old men).

Witnesses believe that Captain Logan was killed when he slew a warrior whose sister was standing by him. She picked up the warrior's pistol and shot the Captain in the head. When the battle was over, the deceased were buried in a shallow grave by Company D. Logan's son-in-law, Captain Richard Comba, was in charge of the detail. In September of 1877, another son-in-law, Lieutenant John T. Van Orsdale of Company D, 7th Infantry that participated in the battle, was a member of a burial party sent to recover the bodies and rebury them at Deer Lodge. In 1892, Captain Logan and the others were moved one more time, to their final resting place inside the Little Big Horn Battlefield National Monument in Montana.

When he was killed. Captain Logan was wearing the two rings, but the rings and the little finger of his were missing when Van Orsdale recovered the body. Despite a concentrated effort to recover the rings, it was 23 years before they were returned.

The story of the rings recovery was told in "*The Big Hole Battlefield*" by Earle R. Forrest as follows: ...some three years after the

Battle of the Big Hole, a Nez Perce killed by Blackfeet... wore the seal ring. It passed from hand to hand among the Blackfeet until it finally came into the possession of a trapper. One day when the latter was in Fort Benton, Billy Todd, who knew the story of the rings and was an old friend of Captain Logan, saw the seal band on the trapper's finger and bought it. Then he sent it to the commanding officer of Cantonment Badlands on the Missouri River (North Dakota), with the request that it be sent to Mrs. Logan. The C.O. sent the missing ring to Mrs. Logan in Helena. For twenty-three years all trace of the Masonic ring was lost until one day in 1900, William R. Logan, a son of Captain Logan, noticed a band ring on a finger of a Piegan squaw who came into his office... Logan recognized the badly worn outlines of Masonic emblems... He purchased the ring and turned it over to his mother.

