

Big Hole

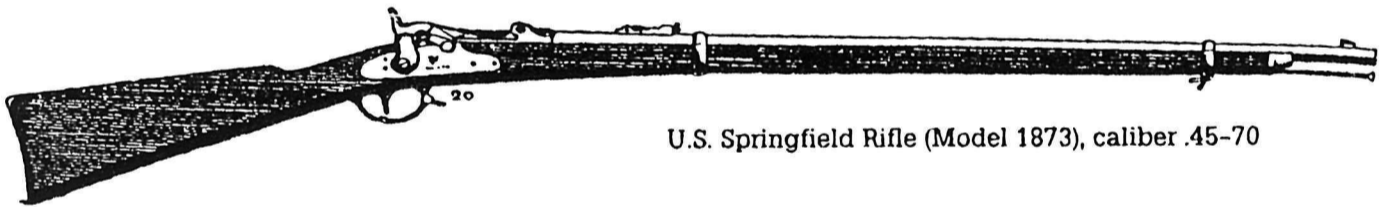
National Battlefield
Wisdom, Montana
(406) 689-3155

THE U.S. 7th INFANTRY SOLDIER in 1877



The soldiers who fought in the Battle of the Big Hole were enlisted men who struggled with poor training, old equipment, and slim rations. The U.S. Army drastically downsized following the Civil War. The draft ceased, and the veterans returned home. The government recruited soldiers heavily from unskilled laborers and recent immigrants to the United States. Literacy or fluency in English weren't required for enlistment until 1891. Most officers were Civil War veterans, but many of the enlisted men were untrained and unprepared for the rigors of military life. Civilian jobs were scarce, pay was low, and many men joined the military because it provided food, shelter, clothing, and a fresh start in life. Even so, desertion rates were high.

The frontier soldier's normal duties centered on a boring routine of construction, maintenance, and protection of a number of scattered military posts. Regiments were often broken up by company, and assigned to numerous isolated posts. This severely limited the opportunities for training, which was conducted on the company or squad level, rather than with the whole regiment participating. Even the soldier's opportunity to improve marksmanship was restricted by budget considerations. For example, soldiers were each issued 100 rounds of ammunition. Rounds used for target practice or hunting had to be paid for by the soldier at a rate of 13 cents per shot--this out of a private's salary of \$13.00 a month! While seasoned Civil War veterans provided experience and backbone to support their younger comrades, the military campaigns in the vast American West often pitted inexperienced troops against highly mobile and extremely skilled American Indian warriors, with sometimes disastrous results.



U.S. Springfield Rifle (Model 1873), caliber .45-70

APPEARANCE

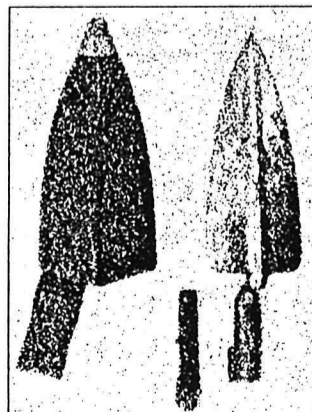
The typical soldier wore a mixture of issued uniform parts and personal gear when on campaign. Attire included a variety of current issue, 1872 issue, and Civil War surplus uniforms.

The following mismatched and ill-fitting items were used by the soldiers on the Nez Perce campaign: Civil War surplus trousers and overcoats, Model 1874 fatigue blouses and gray issue shirts, Model 1876 blue experimental shirts, Model 1872 campaign hats, civilian slouch hats of various colors and types, and the Model 1872 campaign shoes. Bedding consisted of the Model 1851 gray wool blanket with black stripes and "U.S." stitched in the center and the issue rubberized poncho for rain protection and field shelter. Although the men were issued "shelter halves"--half

of a tent issued to each soldier so that two men could join the halves into a single tent--no evidence exists that they carried their tents to the Big Hole. The men expected to capture the Nez Perce at the Big Hole quickly and easily, and left most of their supplies with their wagon train about five miles west.

WEAPONS

The standard issue for the 7th Infantry, was the Model 1873 45/70 (single-shot) Springfield rifle. Companies A and I of the 7th Infantry had received the Rice trowel-bayonet by August, 1877. The trowel-bayonets served the besieged soldiers well as they dug rifle pits and trenches.



ACCOUTERMENTS

The Model 1876 prairie belt, with its lacquered canvas ammunition loops, was standard issue by August, 1877. Evidence indicates that the soldiers would also have been equipped with the Model 1874 haversack and canteen. His regimental number, company letter, and soldier I.D. number would have been stenciled on each item. A tin cup and mess kit, knife, fork, and spoon, and ration bags would fill the haversack, along with whatever personal items a man might choose to carry--playing cards, dice, soap or a toothbrush.

STRIPPED DOWN FOR BATTLE

On the night of August 8, 1877, the 7th Infantry prepared for the 5 mile march to the Nez Perce Camp. They thought the mission would be completed quickly, and they expected to return to the wagons by nightfall. Battle participants stated that many of the soldiers left behind their wool-lined fatigue blouses, canteens, and haversacks. Blankets, overcoats, and ponchos were also left at the wagons. Without this gear the soldiers spent a very cold, wet, and hungry night, under Nez Perce fire.

THE MEN OF THE 7TH INFANTRY AT THE BIG HOLE

The 7th Infantry, a regiment* composed of 12 companies**, was headquartered at Fort Shaw but scattered between five posts throughout the Montana Territory in the 1870's. Men of Companies A, B, D, E, F, G, H, I, K, L, and I of the 7th Infantry participated in the Battle of the Big Hole, as well as 8 men from the 2nd Cavalry. Demographic information about these men follows: note their ages and places of birth for a look into the background of the regular Army during the Indian Wars.

Name	age	birthplace	unit	notes	Name	age	birthplace	unit	notes
Abbott, Cpl. John	26	Switzerland,	7 D	1 w	Keys, Pvt. James	25	Elkhart, IN	7 D	0 w
Alberts, Pvt. Charles	36	San Francisco, CA	7 A	0 w	King, Pvt. Edward C	27	Baltimore, MD	7 G	0
Andrews, Mus. Peter	19	Ireland	7 K	0	King, Pvt. Habern R	30	Milford, IA	7 G	0
Baughart, Pvt. George	23	Patterson, NJ	7 G	0 w	Kleis, Art. John	28	Germany	7 K	0 k
Bell, Sgt. James 2nd	35	Ireland	7 E*	2 w	Lane, Sgt. Riley R	39	Paxensia, OH	7 D	1 A
Bender, Pvt. August W	25	Germany	7 K	0	Lay, Pvt. John	?	?	2 L	?
Bennet, Pvt. John	56	Masalus, NY	7 B	7 M A	Lefferty, Pvt. Thomas	?	?	2 L	?
Bensinger, Sgt. Robert	28	Germany	7 G	1 w	Lehmer, Pvt. James C	36	Rome, NY	7 A	0 A w
Brandt, Sgt. Frank	32	Germany	7 D	0	Leher, Pvt. George	27	Germany	7 A	1 w
Brietenstein, Cpl. August	32	France	7 E*	0	Loveland, Pvt. Seth D	32	New York, NY	7 G	0
Broetz, Pvt. Herman	23	Germany	7 I	0 k	Loynes, Cpl. Charles N	24	Pittsfield, MA	7 I	0
Brown, Pvt. Lorenzo D	25	Davidson Co, NY	7 A	0 h w	Ludke, Pvt. Charles	24	Buffalo, NY	7 E*	0
Bundy, Pvt. Thomas	30	New Harmony, IN	7 F	0 c	Lutman, Cpl. Christian	39	Germany	7 F	2 A w
Burk, Pvt. James	25	Ireland	7 G	0 w	Malley, Pvt. James E	30	Ireland	7 F	0
Burke, Sgt. Joseph	25	Natick, MA	7 K	0	Mantz, Pvt. Gottlieb	23	Germany	7 G	0 k
Burns, Cpl. John	29	Dover, OH	7 E*	0 w	Martin, Sgt. William H	33	Trenton, NJ	7 G	1 k
Butterly, Pvt. Mathew	36	Ireland	7 E*	1 k	Matthews, Pvt. William W	38	Jefferson Co, IN	7 G	1 A
Buty, Sgt. William	28	Germany	7 F	1	Maurer, Pvt. George	28	Germany	7 F	0 w
Carpenter, Mus. Robert L	30	New York, NY	7 H	0	McCaffery, Cpl. Daniel	24	Canada	7 I	0 k
Carson, Pvt. William	27	Franklin, IN	7 I	0	McCaffery, Sgt. Francis Jr	29	Scotland	7 D	2
Clark, Sgt. Howard	27	Charleston, WV	7 K	0	McGregor, Pvt. Malcolm	31	Scotland	7 G	1 A
Clark, Pvt. Wilfred	?	Philadelphia, PA	2 L	?	McGuire, Pvt. James	37	Ireland	7 F	0 k
Clark, Pvt. Washington	30	Washington, DC	7 I	1 w	McHenry, Pvt. John	?	?	7 K	?
Clarke, Pvt. George	23	Troy, NY	7 I	1	McLaughlin, 1 Sgt. Thomas	27	Canada	7 D	2
Collins, Pvt. Thomas	29	Ireland	7 I	0	McLennon, Mus. John W	25	Ft. Bellknap, TX	7 A	1 k
Connor, Pvt. John J	24	New York, NY	7 G	0 w	Meinart, Pvt. Charles	47	Germany	7 I	3
Coon, Pvt. Holmes L	26	Cleveland, OH	7 G	0	Molloy, Pvt. James	25	Bedford Co, TN	7 K	0
Crogan, Pvt. James	30	Ireland	7 D	0	Monaghan, Sgt. Thomas	35	Ireland	7 G	2
Cronan, Mus. Timothy	29	Ireland	7 D	0 w	Moore, Pvt. John G	?	?	2 L	?
Cumminskey, Pvt. Joseph	24	Bucks Co, PA	7 F	0	Moran, Pvt. William	37	Ireland	7 H	1 A
Cunliffe, Cpl. Richard N	24	Lakers, NY	7 I	0 w	Morton, Pvt. David B	27	Gibson Co, IN	7 G	0
Daly, Sgt. Patrick C	44	Ireland	7 D	3 w	Murphy, Pvt. Frank	23	Providence, RI	7 K	0
Dauth, Pvt. Adolph	24	Germany	7 G	0	Murphy, Pvt. John A	24	Boston, MA	7 D	0
Devine, Pvt. Mathew	23	Carell Co, VA	7 K	0 w	Murphy, Cpl. John D	23	Ireland	7 D	2
Devoss, Pvt. Joseph	30	Waverly, OH	7 I	1 w	Murphy, Pvt. Nicholas	23	Ireland	7 I	0
Drake, Pvt. McKindra L	23	Choseakton Co, OH	7 H	0 k	O'Brien, Pvt. F. John	?	?	7 G	1 k
Drummon, Cpl. Socrates	28	Ross Co, OH	7 K	2 A	O'Connor, Cpl. Dominick	29	Ireland	7 G	1 k
Edgeworth, 1 Sgt. Robert L	29	Ireland	7 G	1 k	Page, Sgt. Edward	?	?	2 L	?
Edwards, 1 Sgt. William D	26	Brooklyn, NY	7 F	1 k	Payne, Cpl. William H	27	Scotland	7 D	1 k
Eisenhut, Cpl. Jacob	31	Switzerland	7 D	2 k	Pomeroy, Cpl. Noah G	23	Winston, NJ	7 K	0
Elmore, Pvt. James	27	Philadelphia, PA	7 F	0	Pomeroy, Pvt. William D	36	England	7 F	2 k
Erickson, Mus. John	19	Hudson City, NJ	7 F	0 w	Raferty, Sgt. John	37	Ft. Hamilton, NY	7 A	3
Evans, Pvt. James	32	Manchester, NH	7 I	0	Renz, Pvt. George	31	Germany	7 D	1
Fallon, Pvt. Patrick	43	Ireland	7 I	2 A w	Robbecke, Pvt. Charles A	25	Germany	7 G	0 w
Ferris, Pvt. Charles	28	Fairfax Ct Hs, VA	7 F	1	Rodgers, Pvt. Seldom M	22	Yontville, IN	7 I	0
Frankenfield, Pvt. Isaac	27	Doylestown, PA	7 D	1	Rogan, 1 Sgt. Patrick	30	Ireland	7 A	2 k
Frederick, Sgt. John W H	30	Cincinnati, OH	7 G	1 N w	Sale, Cpl. Robert E	29	Nashville, TN	7 G	0 k
Frost, Pvt. Peter M	32	Hamilton Co, OH	7 K	2 N	Sanderer, Pvt. George	29	Pittsburgh, PA	7 G	0
Gallagher, Pvt. Francis	30	Philadelphia, PA	7 P	0	Sanford, Pvt. Joseph	28	Canada	7 K	0 A
Gallagher, Mus. Michael	25	New York, NY	7 D	0 k	Schairer, Pvt. Albert	28	Switzerland	7 F	0
Geant, Pvt. Eugene	24	Germany	7 H	0	Schlept, Pvt. George	?	?	2 L	?
Goale, Pvt. John H	26	Cincinnati, OH	7 G	0 J	Schohn, Pvt. Antoine	34	France	7 D	1
Goff, Pvt. Peter	26	Canada	7 A	0	Sipfel, Cpl. Christian W	37	Germany	7 A	1
Goldberg, Pvt. Jacob	25	Germany	7 K	0	Smith, Pvt. Alexander A	?	?	2 L	?
Gould, Pvt. Charles B	?	?	2 F	?	Smith, Pvt. Calvin	34	Lancaster, PA	7 I	0
Grace, Pvt. Gerald J	25	Munroe Co, OH	7 G	0	Smith, Pvt. George	31	Germany	7 K	1
Groff, Pvt. Henry S	28	Cincinnati, OH	7 H	1	Smith, Pvt. John B	?	?	7 A	?
Hamilton, Pvt. Price	25	Bath, VA	7 F	0	Spayd, Cpl. Isaac H	26	Lebanon, PA	7 G	0
Harryman, Pvt. Byron	26	Morgan Co, IN	7 K	2	Stillwell, Pvt. William	24	Conneautville, PA	7 D	0
Heaton, Pvt. Davis	27	Ireland	7 K	1 A w	Stinebaker, Mus. George W	19	New York, NY	7 G	0
Heider, Cpl. Levi	28	Germany	7 A	1	Stinebaker, Mus. Thomas P	?	New York, NY	7 K	0 k
Heinze, Pvt. Charles	29	Germany	7 G	0	Stortz, 1 Sgt. Frederick	26	Rochester, NY	7 K	1 k
Heinzman, Cpl. Adolph	36	Germany	7 A	1	Stretten, Cpl. Michael	?	?	7 K	?
Herdmerton, Pvt. Carl	29	Germany	7 G	0	Stumpf, Pvt. Edward	30	Germany	7 A	0
Hexter, Pvt. Nehm	25	Cleveland, OH	7 F	0	Sullivan, Pvt. Martin	24	Milwaukee, WI	7 G	0
Hogan, Sgt. Michael	25	Ireland	7 I	0 k	Thompson, Pvt. William	23	Pittsburgh, PA	7 I	0 w
Hunter, Pvt. Edward D	29	Columbus, IN	7 F	0	Wachtel, Pvt. Daniel V	26	Frederick Co, MD	7 F	0
Hurlburt, Pvt. Philo O	24	Allegheny Co, NY	7 K	0 w	Watson, Sgt. William W	?	?	7 F	?
Jacklin, Pvt. George	24	Ann Arbor, MI	7 G	0	Welch, Pvt. Edward	25	England	7 G	0
Johnson, Pvt. Oliver	28	Walworth Co, WI	7 F	1	Whalen, Sgt. Patrick	43	Ireland	7 F	2 A
					Williams, Pvt. Robert F	31	Greene Co, NY	7 D	0
					Wilson, Sgt. Mildon H	30	Huron Co, OH	7 I	1 A k
					Woodward, Pvt. Benjamin F	36	Spencer Co, IN	7 D	0
					Wright, Sgt. William	34	Richmond, VA	7 E*	0 w

* Attached to Co. "D". 0-7 Number of prior enlistments in 7th Infantry. M Mexican War veteran.
 A Civil War (Army). N Civil War (Navy). B Awarded Congressional Medal of Honor.
 C Awarded Certificate of Merit. d Deserted Aug. 9, 1877. k Killed. w Wounded.

*Regiments, usually numbered, are composed of Companies, usually named with a letter. During this time period, there were generally no more the 12 companies to a regiment.

**Companies are composed of men, or troops. At this time, companies had been down-sized from their Civil War size, and contained 60 to 80 men, with a limit of 100 per company.

For information about the Bitterroot volunteers who served with the Regular Army soldiers, ask for the site bulletin entitled "The Bitterroot Civilian Volunteers".