

Fetterman went Captain Brown, just promoted, with two citizens, frontiersmen and hunters, as volunteers. These two civilians, Wheatley and Wisher, were both armed with the new breach loading rapid fire Henry rifle, with which they were anxious to experiment on the hostiles. Wheatley left his wife and children in the fort.

"Captain Frederick Brown, a veteran of the civil war, had been promoted, had received orders, and was simply waiting a favorable opportunity to leave. He was a man of the most undaunted courage. His position as quartermaster had kept him on the watch for Indians all the time and he announced on the day before the battle that he, 'Must have one more chance at the Indians before he left.' It is believed, however, that his impetuous council and his good luck in many a brush with assailing parties, which he had several times pursued almost alone, largely precipitated the final disaster.

"The total force, therefore, including officers and citizens, under Fetterman's command, was eighty-one. Just the number with which he had agreed to ride through the whole Sioux nation. No one in the command seemed to have the least idea that any force of Indians, however great, could overcome them. Captain Fetterman, instead of leading his men directly to the wood train on the south side of Sullivant hill, doubled quicked toward the Peno valley, on the north side. Perhaps he hoped that he could take the Indians in reverse, when he rounded the western end of the hills, and exterminate them between his own troops and the guard of the wood train, which all told comprised some ninety men. This movement was noticed from the fort, but as it involved no disobedience of orders and as it might be considered good tactical maneuver no apprehension was felt because of it.

"The Indians surrounding the wood train were well served by their scouts, and when they found that Fetterman's force was advancing on the other side of the hill, they immediately withdrew from the wood train, which presently broke corral and made its way to the Piney, some seven miles to the west of the fort, unmolested. As Fetterman's troops disappeared down the valley a number of Indians were