

Major Francis Joseph Ives 9

(1857-1908)

Francis Joseph Ives, a ninth generation descendant of William Ives, the emigrant to Boston in 1635 [Joseph 8, Ansel 7, Asahel 6, Aner 5, Joseph 4, Joseph 3, John 2, William 1] was the son of Col. Joseph Christmas Ives, who had mapped the Grand Canyon country of Arizona when it was uncharted wilderness, performed the office of engineer on the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C. and, remarkably, despite the fact that he was born in the North and was an officer in the United States Army, served as aide-de-camp for Confederate President Jefferson Davis during the Civil War. All his life, his son Francis Joseph Ives lived in the shadow of a father who had traded his officer's commission in the United States Army for one in the army of the secessionist Confederacy. Despite this, Francis, known to his family as "Frank," forged an extraordinary military and medical career that would propel him to the far corners of the globe and allow him to bear witness to some of the key historical events of late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Born on July 19, 1857 in Washington, D.C. - his mother was the former Cora Semmes of Nebraska - Frank Ives spent the first four years of his life in Washington, D.C. where his father served as engineer and architect for the Washington

Monument. He spent the next three at the family home in Richmond, Virginia, nerve center of the Confederacy, where his father served on the staff of Confederate President Davis. Of the war itself, Frank knew little. He was a month short of his eighth birthday when the last shot was fired.

For Joseph Christmas Ives, the outcome of the War was not merely a tragic development for the South but a personal disaster of catastrophic proportions. In tying his fate to that of the South, he had gambled everything, and its defeat would be his undoing. In 1868, miserably disappointed at the way his life had turned out, and by then terminally alcoholic, 38-year-old Joseph Christmas Ives died, probably of cirrhosis of the liver, leaving his wife Cora to raise their three sons by herself. At the time of his father's death, Frank Ives was 11 years old.

In September, 1871, three years after his father's death, Frank entered Georgetown College (later Georgetown University) at the tender age 14, and remained a student there, along with his brother, Edward, until the summer of 1873, at which point the two boys withdrew from the school and accompanied their mother on a religious pilgrimage to Europe. During their stay on the Continent they toured the Benedictine Einsiedeln Abbey, 25 miles southeast of Zurich, and paid a visit to the home of renowned mystic Louise Lateau, whose ecstatic trances and stigmatic bleeding had made her a celebrity. Cora and her sons attended an audience with Pope Pius IX at the Vatican, who blessed the eight foot by five foot silk Georgetown school flag, trimmed with

bullion fringe and ornamented with gold tassels, that the Ives boys had brought with them. The flag on one side was inscribed: "To Our Lady of Lourdes - the Students of Georgetown College, United States of America, June, 1874 - *Filii tui de longe venerunt,*" *O Immaculata,*" ("Sons from afar, O Immaculate One"). On the side opposite was printed a French translation of the same words. In June, 1874, during a visit to Lourdes, where the Virgin Mary was said to have appeared before 14-year-old Marie "Bernadette" Soubirous in 1858, the Ives boys donated the flag in the name of their college to the Church of Notre Dame, an event that Frank, clearly devout, and obviously very moved, described in a letter:

"We reached Lourdes, and the hour was appointed for us to assemble in the quaint stone church standing in the centre of town... Banners of many descriptions had at different times been borne here by the children of Mary, but it was reserved for Georgetown College to hoist the American colors for the first time upon that sacred spot."

The flag would hang in the church for many years before being returned to the university, where it remains today.

While in Europe, Frank was enrolled at Stella Matutina ("Morning Star" - an honorific term for the Virgin Mary)

College, a Jesuit school in Feldkirch, Vorarlberg, Austria, Eugene at a pension at Brussels. How Frank fared at Feldkirch, academically and socially, is not known, but in view of the fact that he was both extremely intelligent and very hard working, he probably fared very well indeed. (Had he remained at the school another year, he would have undoubtedly encountered fellow student, Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes stories, who was enrolled there in 1875.)

At some point before the trip to Europe, Frank had decided to follow in his father's footsteps and pursue a military career, and on the family's return to the United States, he learned, or perhaps already knew, that he had been accepted as a cadet at West Point. For reasons unknown, he remained at West Point only a year, at which point, realizing that he wished to pursue a medical career instead of a military one, he withdrew and was accepted as a student in the "Medical Department" of the University of Virginia. On June 27, 1878, after two years of study, Frank was one of four students who graduated from the university with an "M.D." degree.

Frank's whereabouts and the career that he pursued over the next seven years are a mystery. It seems likely that he engaged in the practice of medicine, possibly in Virginia or Washington, D.C., eventually for some reason found it unsatisfactory, and decided to pursue his original goal, a career in the military. Although the precise circumstances of

the switch are unclear, it would seem that as a medical doctor, the army was more than willing to accept Frank into the service and appoint him “Assistant Surgeon” with the rank of Lieutenant.

In the following year, 1885, General Nelson A. Miles was dispatched to Arizona with orders to capture Apache chief Geronimo and his small band of followers. As a result, on his first posting, Frank Ives found himself assigned to medical duty with the 4th cavalry at Fort Huachuca, about 70 miles southeast of Tucson. Although Frank’s exact whereabouts at any particular point in the Geronimo campaign are unknown, it does not seem unlikely that he was present, or close by, on the day the renegade Apache chief and his band, who had surrendered on September 4, 1886, were escorted as prisoners to Fort Bowie.

In November, 1886, Frank was ordered to report for duty at Fort D.A. Russell, near Cheyenne, Wyoming, a site that would go down in history as being home to the three African-American regiments who would come to be known as the “Buffalo Soldiers.” It was during his posting at the fort that Frank was introduced Mildred Elizabeth Megeath, whom he married the following year. Their first child, Mildred, was born in February, 1889. In December of that year, Frank was ordered to report for duty at Fort Sill, Indian Territory (present-day Lawton, Oklahoma.) There, on July 25, 1890, Frank Ives was awarded the rank of Captain and two days later his daughter, Judith Carter Ives, was born.

By the time baby Judith came into the world, Major General Nelson A. Miles had been appointed Commander of the Military Division of the Missouri, which brought all the U.S. military units west of the Mississippi under his leadership. It may be the case that Miles had been impressed with Lieutenant Ives' work in Arizona and for that reason, in the winter of 1890, arranged for Frank to join his command. Lieutenant Ives was ordered to appear for duty at the Lakota Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, created the previous year in the southwest corner of South Dakota, adjacent to the Nebraska border.

On December 29, 1890, Frank was present at the "Massacre of Wounded Knee" during which more than 200 Lakota men, women, and children were shot dead and another 50 wounded by U.S. troops. Two days after the event a disgusted General Miles, who had not been directly involved in the incident, wrote to his wife and described the killings as the "most abominable criminal military blunder and a horrible massacre of women and children." Frank was one of the physicians who treated the wounded. Horrified at the senseless slaughter, he recorded the names of the wounded, the manner in which they had been injured, and, ultimately, whether they did, or did not, survive:

"Has-a-dog, age 17. Gunshot wound upper lobe of left lung. Jan. 5 - Hemorrhage - died.

Mrs Big-foot. Two flesh wounds upper third left thigh... Both suppurating. Died of Pneumonia.

Squaw [name indecipherable]. Flesh wounds, right thigh. Wound right side penetrating abdomen... Died Jan. 19th, 6:45 A.M.

Child, female - [age] 6. "Holy bone" Comp'd fracture upper third left thigh.

Child, [age] 5. "Steals a running horse." Gun shot injury over left scapular dorsum. Left side of neck & lower floor of mouth carrying away part of inferior maxilla [lower jaw bone] right side.

Baby-male-1 year, with Mother... Gunshot wounded left buttocks... Gunshot wound through scrotum. Both wounds made by same ball. Jan. 5 Suppuration in both-hernia left testicle dresses. [Jan.] 9 Transferred to Indian camp."

After a much-needed leave of absence, Capt. Ives was ordered to report for duty at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, on Lake Michigan, about 25 miles north of Chicago. In September, 1893, he was assigned temporary duty, presumably as a public relations officer, at the "Medical Section" of the War Department exhibit at the "World's Columbia Exposition" at Chicago. Greeting visitors to the fair no doubt offered a sharp contrast to the horrifying experiences he had undergone at Wounded Knee.

It may be the case that Frank thought that in “returning East,” he had left violence and bloodshed behind. If that was so, it must have come as a shock when in the following year mounting labor unrest culminated in the Pullman Strike, which began in Chicago - an action in which 4,000 deeply disgruntled workers walked off the job in response to pay cuts. President Cleveland intervened, ordered in Federal marshals, and violence erupted. Overall, at least 30 strikers were killed and about 60 seriously injured. Captain Frank Ives, along with colleagues, was delegated to provide medical attention to the wounded.

In 1894, Frank was transferred and ordered to report for duty at the U.S. Army Barracks at Plattsburg, New York, on the western shore of Lake Champlain, and there he remained for the next two years, until April, 1896, when he was transferred to St. Francis Barracks at St. Augustine, Florida. In August, his third child and first son, Joseph Semmes Ives was born. After a year and a half in Florida, Frank was ordered to report to Fort Wingate, New Mexico, about 80 miles west of Albuquerque, where disputes between white settlers and the Navajo were being settled by United States officials. It must have been strange for Frank to find himself back in the Southwest, where his career as a military physician had begun.

On February 15, 1898 the U.S. armored cruiser *USS Maine* exploded at Havana harbor, Cuba. Shortly thereafter, the United States, blaming Spain for the sinking of the ship, launched the country into the short-lived, disastrous, and

stunningly violent, Spanish-American War. Frank was assigned to duty in Cuba and was in the country during the Battles of Las Guasimas on June 24 and El Caney on July 1. He may have been present at San Juan Hill on July 1, the day on which Theodore Roosevelt led his “Rough Riders” in an attack on a Spanish entrenched position. As a medical officer and surgeon, it fell to Frank and his fellow doctors to sew up the wounded, heal them when healing was possible, and jot down the names and ranks of those who could not be saved.

At the conclusion of the hostilities, Captain Ives was ordered to report to Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn, New York, and was shortly thereafter dispatched to the army base at Fort Totten, Willets Point, Queens, New York. One can only wonder that if at that point in his military career, he believed that his adventures on foreign soil had come to an end. They had not.

In August, 1899, the anti-imperialist militia uprising, known as the “Boxer Rebellion” erupted in China and would continue for two years. In September, 1900, shortly after the “Battle of Peking,” Frank was ordered to report to the 150 bed “General Hospital” at Tientsin, 86 miles southeast of Peking. To say that he was stunned by the conditions prevailing in the town would amount to an understatement. There was no running water, the public wells were contaminated by human and animal waste, garbage was habitually thrown into the street, and “night soil” was gathered by collectors from overflowing privies to be

transported to fields and gardens, to be used as fertilizer on crops that were then consumed, only summarily washed, by members of the populace. As Frank phrased it in a letter: "Owing to the apparently total lack of all sanitation on the part of the Chinese, and the indescribably filthy condition of their towns and cities, the sanitary environments at first presented a discouraging outlook." Discouraging indeed.

In February, 1901, even before the end of his assignment in China, Frank was promoted to the rank of Major. In April he was ordered to report for duty at Fort Sheridan, near Chicago, where he had been posted earlier in his career. What the effect of his frequent absences and postings abroad may have had on his marriage is unclear, but it would seem that by 1904, his wife Cora, his daughters and son were living in Europe, where the children were being educated.

It may be that Frank's experience in China had left him with no great yearning to return to the benighted continent of Asia. If that was so, it may not have been entirely pleasing to him when, in July, 1906, he found himself assigned to the Division Hospital at Fort Santiago, Manila, the Philippines. Although the surviving records are few, it would seem that while stationed in the Philippines, Major Ives was injured in some fashion - perhaps in the back - that would in future prevent him from riding horseback. If that was the case, it was not the only physical challenge that he was forced to endure. It seems likely that at some point during his posting in Cuba, he probably developed yellow fever, from which he eventually recovered, albeit with a severely damaged liver.

Whatever his medical issues may have amounted to, in June, 1907, just short of his 50th birthday, Frank was ordered to report for duty at the Presidio Military Hospital in San Francisco, perched on a hill not far from the narrow “Golden Gate” entry to San Francisco Bay. After a short, temporary posting at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, he returned to the Presidio at San Francisco, and was, almost immediately, transferred to the Army base in San Diego.

Sometime in 1907, President Roosevelt in one of his blustering schoolboy moods, decided that all U.S. Army officers who, for one reason or another were unable to ride a horse, ought to be retired. Because of his injury, or perhaps because of his damaged liver, Frank found himself among that number. In December, he was summoned to appear before a “Retiring Board” in Washington, D.C. At that meeting it was decided that his retirement would take place the following April.

By the end of March, 1908, having taken advantage of a leave of absence, Frank and his family were living in Coronado, a community near San Diego. According to an article in the *San Diego Evening Tribune*, Frank had “taken the Kirby House on Adella Avenue at Coronado for the next six months... Mrs. Ives and the Misses Ives joined the major and son from Paris after an absence of three years abroad where the daughters have been attending finishing school.” At last, with his family around him, Major Ives could rest.

In September, Frank, Cora, and their two daughters traveled to the East Coast by train for a vacation with the intention of returning to Coronado the following Spring. In Washington, D.C., Frank rented lodging at the brand new Beaux Arts style Toronto Building in the Dupont Circle area. By then, however, Frank was very ill. His liver was shutting down, and on November 27, 1908, he died. He was 51 years old. Ironically, the cause of death, "cirrhosis of the liver," was the same illness that had killed his father - though for a different reason. Having long made up for his father's treason via a distinguished career in the Army, Frank was buried at Arlington Cemetery. On her death in 1916, Cora would be buried next to him.