

Letter from Frank Elliott to "Father," May 1867

Madison Valley
[May 1867]

Dear Father:

. . . I have but little news as I have been writing for several days & my news bag is about empty. We have had a very hard snow & plenty of winter . . . it has been as cold as 57 below zero. In the Salmon river mines of which at present there is little known . . . the snow is so deep they cannot prospect.

I thought some of going over their myself but the darn Indians have to be tended to. They killed one of the most prominent citizens of Galatin Valley a few days ago & wounded another while on their way to fort Smith on the Big Horn river. Mr. Bozeman killed, [Apr. 18, 1867] Tom Cover wounded. . . .

Some of the most prominent citizens in Virginia City are getting up Independent Companys to chastise them in the way of killing every thing in the shape of Indians they meet—besides \$200 a scalp bounty. I am going with them. They take every thing in the shape of plunder [they] can find, ponies. Robes, etc. etc. . . . I care but little but some one has to go & I feel [it] is my duty to go.

If some thing of this kind is not done they will make many a poor white man bite the dust [since] they spare neither women or children. . . .

General Meagher, our [Acting] Governor, is going [so are] Judge Therroman [Thoroughman], Judge Davis & several more.

I have said but little in regard to the Indian question. but there is but one way to treat them & that is extermination. . . . They are a great draw back, in prospecting our rich territory. Many are the hardships & exposures which the pioneer has to undergo on their acct. . . .

Making treaties with Indians will not do. Uncle Sam ought to have found that out by this time. Something has to be done immediately. . . . I tell you we are getting hostile. The Indians have to be chastised & we are going to give them the best in the shop. We have stood it long enough. . . .

Frank

Source: Francis "Frank" Elliott Papers, 1866–1881. Small Collection 660. Montana Historical Society Research Center. Archives. Excerpted in *Not In Precious Metals Alone: A Manuscript History of Montana* (Helena, 1976): 57.