THE BANNOCK
OF IDAHO

By
Brigham D. Madsen

Illustrated by
Maynard Dixon Stewart

The CAXTON PRINTERS, Ltd.
Caldwell, Idaho
1958
continued to suffer from the raids and depredations of the Bannock. Their hostility to the whites was not effectively checked until 1863, when General Patrick E. Connor defeated them and the Shoshoni at the battle of Bear River.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Battle of Bear River

For a time after the siege at Lemhi River, the Bannock apparently were on friendly terms with the United States troops at Camp Scott. Captain Jesse Gove wrote his wife in May, 1858, that a large camp of Bannock was established near the fort. The chiefs called to pay their respects to Colonel Johnston, and the soldiers returned the compliment by visiting the Indian village. Gove said, "They are fine looking Indians and said to be the best in the mountains." At about the same time, Captain J. H. Simpson was encountering Bannock west of Salt Lake City and was receiving an entirely different impression, recording that they were of "a very thievish, treacherous character."

During the month of May, 1858, while the Bannock were at Camp Scott, Indian Superintendent Jacob Forney of Utah held a conference and arranged peace terms between the Eastern Shoshoni and the Northern Ute. The Bannock chiefs attended the meetings but did not participate in the "talk." Forney

---


discovered to his surprise that the tribe was separate and distinct from the Shoshoni, although the two frequently combined for hunting expeditions. The leading chief and his five hundred Bannock followers accepted the presents Forney gave them and agreed to the home assigned to them within the large area claimed by Chief Washakie. Jim Bridger assured the superintendent that he had been trading with the Bannock for about thirty years, and that they had numbered 1,200 lodges when he first met them. Probably 1,200 people would have been more accurate, but at least Bridger was well acquainted with the Bannock and, no doubt, gave the Indian agent a very good idea of their status among the tribes of the region.\

While the Utah superintendent was taking cognizance of the need for establishing governmental supervision over the Bannock, other officials were warning Washington authorities that it would be necessary to pay the Indians for the right of way of public roads through their lands. Superintendent F. W. Lander of the Fort Kearney, South Pass, and Honey Lake Wagon Road spoke of the absolute necessity of reimbursing the Bannock and Shoshoni in order to forestall possible depredations by the tribes.

---


Hebard says, "The object of this permission [to be in Washakie's territory] was doubtless to put the Bannocks under the watchful eye of Washakie. But it failed to bring the benefits expected, for there was a further increase of depredations against the emigrants." This may have been true, but probably it was merely a recognition on the part of Forney that the Bannock and Shoshoni lived together and inhabited the same area. Grace R. Hebard, Washakie; an Account of Indian Relations to the Covered Wagon and the Union Pacific Railroad Invasion of their Territory (Cleveland, 1900), p. 91.

---

He pointed out that, while the Sioux and Cheyenne had been paid annuities for many years, the Bannock and Shoshoni had never received substantial presents of any kind. A subordinate of Lander, C. H. Miller, wrote in November, 1858, that the emigrants destroyed the grass in the regions where the Indians usually wintered their horses, and that it would be unjust if the government did not pay the tribes for the use of their lands. He further pointed out that annuity payments would tend to settle the uneasiness of the Bannock who were becoming concerned about the destruction of the wild game upon which they depended for food. Most of the mountaineers with whom Miller had talked believed that the Bannock would "inevitably" attack the first emigrant trains that left Fort Hall for Oregon during the next year. Admitting that the Bannock under their chief, Le Grand Coquin, were the most dangerous of all the Indians he had met, the white man made an unusual defense of their code of ethics.

I do not think the term "treacherous," as usually applied to Indian tribes, is always just. We can hardly say that a tribe is treacherous which definitely asserts, through its chief, that it will not permit the passage of white men through their country. It has been in the most manly and direct manner that these Indians have said that if emigrants, as has usually been the case, shoot members of their tribes, they will kill them when they can. 8

On the other hand, Miller also remarked that the Bannock often tried to frighten emigrants into giving

---

them food and were, as a result, sometimes killed by the alarmed travelers.

Except for Superintendent Forney’s brief visit with part of the Bannock in May of 1858, no other agent of the Indian Office met them until the next spring, when John Owen of the Flathead Agency made a short stopover at Fort Hall on his way from Salt Lake City. He saw only a few of the tribe, most of them being away on the summer hunt. Upon reaching his post at Fort Owen, he discovered that only a few days earlier the Bannock had run off one hundred horses belonging to the people of Bitter Root Valley. From this time until October, 1859, the threat of Bannock depredations hung over the heads of the whites near Fort Owen. The agent wrote that the settlers were “measurably helpless” before the expected onslaughts of the Bannock, and indicated that he intended to hold a council meeting with the tribe as soon as he could get to Fort Hall.⁶

Farther to the south, Oregon Trail emigrants were also feeling the lash of Bannock and Shoshoni raiding parties. Samuel Smith of Brigham City, Utah, wrote Superintendent Forney that reports had reached him of an attack on a wagon train on the road two hundred miles north of that community. As later information revealed, the emigrant party was set upon in a canyon of the Goose Creek Mountains, about fifteen miles from Raft River. Seven people were killed and a number wounded. The Indians involved,


Bannock and Shoshoni, attempted to sell their plunder to the citizens of the northern Utah settlements. In retaliation, Forney asked the military at Camp Floyd, near Salt Lake City, to send troops after the marauders. A company of dragoons under Major Isaac Lynde left in early August for Bear River Crossing where a headquarters was set up, and patrols were sent out to scour the country. A few days later, Lieutenant E. Gay, with a small force, left Camp Floyd to investigate the Goose Creek massacre and to apprehend the guilty parties, if he could catch them.⁷

Arriving at Box Elder Valley, Lieutenant Gay was told by the settlers that a band of from one hundred and fifty to two hundred Bannock and Shoshoni was encamped in Devil’s Gate Canyon. From reports, the officer was convinced that these were the Indians he sought and, therefore, he made a surprise attack on them with his force of forty-two men. The troops drove the Indians up a steep mountainside, only to find the pursuit up the precipitous slopes an impossible task. Gay had only six men wounded, and estimated that his soldiers killed about twenty of the Indians. Of some twenty horses captured, one proved to be an animal taken from an emigrant party which had been attacked near Sublette’s Cutoff during the preceding month. In concluding his official report, the lieutenant noted that about two hundred Bannock had just arrived in Cache Valley to join a

Shoshoni group of three hundred. This threatened
danger led the commanding officer at Camp Floyd
to send another company of dragoons to strengthen
the force under Gay; then the combined units headed
for Major Lynde’s post at the Bear River Crossing
of the Oregon Trail.7

While en route to the crossing, Lieutenant Gay
made a prisoner of Chief Pocatello, a Shoshoni leader,
who came to visit the officer in his camp. Major
Lynde released the Indian and explained the action
to his superior on the grounds that nothing could
be proved against Pocatello and that it was dangerous
to antagonize all the Indians in the area.8 The Deseret
News criticized the army for allowing the chief to
goa and asked, “Why was he not securely kept? and
through whose agency was he permitted to escape?”9

Meanwhile, reports of Indian attacks continued to
come in to Lynde at Bear River. F. W. Lander re-
ported to Superintendent Forney, on August 16, that
four whites had been killed in an attack on a wagon
train twenty miles east of the junction of the Fort
Hall and Hedspeth roads. The Bannock and Shos-
shoni leaders of the hostiles were listed as Chief Saw-
with (“The Steam from a Cow’s Belly”), Ah-gutch
in the Path”), Jag-en-up (“The Mist After the
Rain”), and Chief Jag-e-oh (“The Man Who Carries


8 Lynde to Adjutant at Camp Floyd, Bear River Ford, Utah Terr., August 26, 1859. U.S. Congress, Senate, Ex. Doc. 42, 36th Cong., 1st

9 Deseret News, September 14, 1859, p. 220.

the Arrows”). Lander pointed out in his letter that
these subchiefs were renegades from both the Ban-
nock and Shoshoni tribes, and that the principal chiefs
of the two nations wanted an end of the depredations.
Apparently Lander had made some sort of payment
of annuity goods to the Indians because he noted
that, although forty lodges of Bannock came in to
the “payment,” the “Kamas Prairie and Fort Boise
Pannahs” refused to do so.10

A band of Shoshoni attacked a company under
Daniel Beal on August 20 near Marsh Creek and
killed one man. Part of the survivors were cared
for by army doctors at Lynde’s encampment.11 A
more disastrous affair occurred about September 2
some twenty-five miles west of Fort Hall between
Portneuf Bridge and Snake River, in the heart of
the Bannock country, when a party of six men, three
women, and ten children was attacked at sundown
by a band of Indians. Eight Americans were killed,
and the survivors traveled for three days on foot
before meeting a detachment of troops under Lieutenant
Livingston. The soldiers were escorting a party to
Walla Walla, but they stopped to send nine men
back to investigate the scene of the massacre. There
they found evidence typical of the kind that caused
soldier and citizen alike to swear vengeance on all
Indians, hostile or not:

One little girl five years old had both her legs cut off at
the knees; her ears were also cut off and her eyes were

10 F. W. Lander to Forney, Raft River, Washington Terr., August 16,

dug out from their sockets, and to all appearance the girl, after having her legs cut off, had been compelled to walk on the stumps—for the sole purpose of gratifying the hellish propensity of savage barbarity.\textsuperscript{12}

The difficulty of determining which Indians were guilty of such atrocities did not bother most emigrants or settlers. Their answer in most cases was to kill all "redskins." But the Indian Office and the army attempted to ferret out the perpetrators of such massacres, at the same time endeavoring to keep the other Indians from going on the warpath. In a letter to the military authorities at Camp Floyd, Superintendent Forney ascribed most of the forays to the Bannock and to three small bands of Shoshoni located in the Box Elder region of northern Utah. The good Shoshoni had left to join Washakie's band. Later, Forney indicated: "It is quite obvious to me that the Bannock Indians of Oregon have instigated all the northern difficulties; and that the Shoshonies of this Territory are only performing a secondary part."\textsuperscript{13} Judge Eckels of Utah Territory asserted that the Bannock and a few Shoshoni were the principal offenders, but he also was certain that the Indians were sometimes led and abetted by white renegades. He cited the example of an attack on a train commanded by Nelson Miltimore in which some of the attackers spoke English and wore long beards.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., September 21, 1859, p. 227.
\textsuperscript{14}D. R. Eckels to J. Thompson, Camp Floyd, Utah Terr., September 25, 1859, ibid., p. 111.

After maintaining his force at Bear River Crossing for almost three months, in late October Major Lynde moved his command to Camp Floyd. His formal report of the summer operations described the obvious difficulties that any force would meet in trying to run down small and elusive bands of Indian adversaries. The emigration for the year had been great—as many as three hundred wagons per day having passed his camp. Although warned of Indian raids, many of the overland travelers had kept their weapons in the wagons and laughed at the soldiers who tried to warn them of possible attack.\textsuperscript{15} Despite the efforts of the army on Bear River, the Deseret News was caustic in its criticism, describing the "farce" in which companies of soldiers intended to starve out the Indians, "A novel way of conducting an Indian war. . . ." After the troops had returned to Camp Floyd, an editorial sarcastically inquired: "How many officers will be promoted for 'gallant and meritorious conduct' during the campaign?"\textsuperscript{16}

As a result of the army's experience in attempting to protect emigrants who would not protect themselves, Colonel A. S. Johnston summed up Major Lynde's activities and then made specific recommendations to his superior: (1) instead of roving patrols, troops should be stationed at Bear River Crossing, Fort Hall, and Goose Creek Mountains; (2) Indian agents should be appointed for the Bannock and Shoshoni to watch over the tribes and keep them away

\textsuperscript{15}Lynde to Commanding Officer, Camp Floyd, Utah Terr., October 24, 1859, ibid., p. 38.
\textsuperscript{16}Deseret News, August 31, 1859, p. 204; ibid., October 19, 1859, p. 260.
from emigrant roads; (3) troops should have orders to attack all Indians found near roads, on the assumption that they were hostile groups; (4) traders should be kept out of Indian areas; and (5) the Military Department of Utah should be extended to the forty-fourth parallel so that the troops would have jurisdiction in the home areas of the Bannock and Shoshoni.27 The military authorities of Oregon recognized this difficulty of policing the faraway Bear River country, and Captain H. D. Wallan of Oregon advised the necessity of co-operating with the Utah military to patrol the Oregon Trail. His reconnaissance along that road to Salt Lake City, in 1859, gave him some acquaintance with “the athletic...well-armed, and formidable” Bannock and the necessity for a strong force to keep them in check.38

By 1860 the Bannock apparently were divided into two large groups—a southern one of forty-five lodges (about three hundred people), under Chief Mopeah or “Bush of Hair in the Forehead,” and a northern one of sixty lodges under Chief Le Grand Coquin. When F. W. Lander gave an annuity payment (their first) to Chief Mopeah’s band in July, 1859, at Salt River, he did not think that the Bannock were “irreclaimably hostile,” but admitted that their “horse-stealing proclivities” prevented friendly relations with the whites from lasting long. The main obstacle to

---


---

THE BATTLE OF BEAR RIVER

a permanent peace, as all the chiefs pointed out, was the refusal of many of the young men to give up their quest for the honors of battle. Their activities inevitably dragged the rest of the tribe into difficulties with the whites. As Chief Pocatello put it, “there were some things that he could not manage, and among them were the bad thoughts of his young men towards the whites, on account of the deeds of the whites towards his tribe.”39 Certainly the events of 1859 had emphasized the growing friction between the two peoples, and the early 1860’s continued the theme.

During the years 1860 and 1861, sporadic attempts were made by the Indian Office of the Northwest to quiet the Bannock and scattered Shoshoni tribes. Reports were circulated, in February of 1860, that the Bannock had fled to the mountains in fear of retaliation by the troops for depredations committed during the winter in the Green River area.39 Three months later, the Indian Superintendent wrote from Portland, Oregon, to Major John Owen, placing the Snake River Indians under his “temporary supervision” and instructing him to visit the Bannock and Shoshoni at Fort Hall. After distributing presents to the tribes, he was to tell them to cease their depredations and prepare for a council to be held in July of the next year, at which time a special agent appointed by the President of the United States would visit them. This suggestion was in line with Owen’s repeated requests

---


for a council with the Indians. But, as had happened in the past, the supply of presents failed to arrive, and the Owen mission to Fort Hall was a failure.\textsuperscript{21} By September, 1861, the proposed council meeting still had not taken place, and the Indian agent could only report that the Bannock and their allies justified their raids against the whites because the government officials had never "talked with them; have never given them any presents, have not even broke tobacco with them, or smoked with them, while the Blackfeet and other Indian tribes have had presents from our people for the privilege of making roads through their country."\textsuperscript{22}

A good example of the insolence and disdain with which the Bannock regarded the whites at this time was reported by Granville Stuart, who headed a party of traders into the Big Hole country of Montana in late 1860. Under Chief Le Grand Coquin, or "Arro-ka-kee," the Bannock displayed open hostility to the whites and quite brazenly killed one of the herd of cattle belonging to the traders. Stuart's description of Le Grand Coquin might explain the reason for the term "big," as used in reference to the chief, because the Indian leader was six feet two inches in height and weighed about two hundred and seventy-five pounds.\textsuperscript{23}

From the Big Hole River to the Humboldt River, government officials were aware of the Bannock and their depredations, and the great range of the tribe helped to explain the problem faced by the military and the Indian Office in their endeavor to keep the Bannock under control. Lieutenant Colonel Smith of Camp Floyd wrote in May, 1860, that "the Indians, Bannocks principally, intend to plunder every train that passes over the road [Humboldt] this summer..."\textsuperscript{24} Smith indicated that he would send out patrols to guard the roads, a precaution that Colonel Lander also advised in his report on the emigrant roads. Again, the problem of jurisdiction came up, this time because the creation of the new territory of Nevada left its Indian agents with only hazy notions as to whether or not the Bannock and certain Shoshoni were under their charge.\textsuperscript{25}

While there were not as many attacks on emigrant trains during 1860 and 1861 as there had been in 1859, scattered reports indicated that the Bannock and a few Shoshoni bands still had to be watched. In Cache Valley, Utah, a party of citizens arrested an Indian for stealing a horse. Ten more Indians rode up and demanded the release of their comrade. Although the whites warned the arrested man that he would be shot if he tried to escape, he made the attempt anyway and was killed. After a short engagement with the citizens, the rest of the Indians withdrew and, coming upon an unsuspecting group of white men, killed two and wounded three of their number.\textsuperscript{26} A month later, in September of 1860, a


\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs}, 1861, p. 156.

\textsuperscript{23} Granville Stuart, \textit{Forty Years on the Frontier}; ed. by Paul C. Phillips (2 vols.; Cleveland, 1925), I, 155.


\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs}, 1861, p. 109.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Deseret News}, August 1, 1860, p. 173; \textit{ibid.}, October 3, 1860, p. 218.
wagon train near the City of Rocks, west of Fort Hall, was attacked by a band of sixty Indians, but the timely arrival of a patrol of soldiers prevented any loss of life. The emigrants lost all their equipment and were left in a destitute condition.\textsuperscript{27}

During this two-year period, 1860-61, the incident which apparently aroused the most excitement among settlers and government officials was the infamous "Otter Massacre." The forty-four members of this emigrant party fought for their lives in August, 1860, when a band of Snakes or Bannock set upon them as they were traveling along Snake River about twenty miles below Shoshone Falls. Eighteen were killed in the engagement, five died of wounds and were eaten by the starving survivors, four children were taken prisoner, two children were lost in the mountains, and only fifteen escaped. The captive children caused great concern, and every effort was made to find them. Major John Owen was instructed to search for them in his district and, while consenting to do so, could not refrain from pointing out that a share of the burden for such affairs as the Otter massacre rested on the shoulders of the whites:

... These Indians [Bannock and Shoshoni] twelve years ago were the avowed friends of the White Man. I have had their Young Men in My Employment as Hunters Horse Guards Guides &c &c: I have traversed the length & breadth of their Entire Country with large bands of Stock unmolested. Their present hostile attitude can in a great Measure be attributed


Owen instructed his agent, L. L. Blake, to choose two competent Bannock and Shoshoni interpreters and then to visit the two tribes in an endeavor to discover the whereabouts of the lost children. In addition, Blake was to procure all the information possible for transmission to the Military Department of Oregon which intended to send a military expedition against the Fort Hall Indians during 1861.

As usual, the movement against the tribes was not made. In fact, Owen found it impossible to visit them in late 1861 because the annuity goods did not arrive at Fort Owen. In a council held during the spring of the year, the few Bannock and Shoshoni who attended denied any complicity in the Otter massacre and ascribed it to the Indians of the Humboldt Sink area.\textsuperscript{29} On the other hand, Chief San Pitch, of a Utah Shoshoni band, reported to Utah Agent Benjamin Davies that the Bannock were holding the four captive children in the Goose Creek Mountains. San Pitch offered to aid in locating the children, and also promised to "commit no more murders or robberies on emigrants." Despite Davies' belief that this leader would "faithfully observe" his pledge, the Sho-

\textsuperscript{29} Owen to George, Flathead Agency, Washington Terr., February 13, 1861, Owen, \textit{op. cit.}, II, 243.

shoni's offer of eternal friendship was evidently only following the Indian pattern of promising anything and of throwing the blame for depredations onto another group.  

A good barometer of the mounting tempo of Indian opposition was the overland mail. The various concerns engaged in the cross-country postal business noted a definite rise in the number of attacks by Indians on the mail carriers. Beginning in 1851, the troubles had increased until, by 1862, they had become chronic. They continued until the Indian Peace Commission of 1867 succeeded in quieting most of the tribes. Indeed, the year 1862 provided the newspapers and Indian agents with so many stories of depredations that the accounts tended to become almost repetitious.

The Bannock started the year early by attacking their old friends, the Flathead, in the Hell Gate Defile in Montana country. Besides killing two of the defenders, the Bannock destroyed the equipment of the Flathead and ran off their horses. Major Owen could not understand the changed attitude and wrote that the two tribes had been on friendly terms for many years. Later in the spring, several small white companies that left Salt Lake City for the new Salmon River mines found the Indians so hostile that they were forced to fortify themselves in a good defensive position, and were afraid to leave until reinforcements arrived. A pack train, traveling in the other direction from Salmon River, was raided by a band of Indians and lost eight men in the fight.

As early as the first part of August, which traditionally marked the beginning of intensive Indian depredations, the Deseret News remarked that “The immigration for the last fifteen years, has hardly ever been freed from their [Indian] attentions; but for the last few months the Red Skins, especially the Snakes and Bannocks, appear to have unreservedly seceded from ‘the rest of mankind.’” The editor seemed to think that the mining operation on Salmon River was the chief cause of the unrest. But James D. Doty of the Utah Indian Superintendency became convinced that the two tribes were determined to wage “war” on the United States. Chief Little Soldier of the Utah Diggers was his informant and, according to the story, the Bannock and Shoshoni had formed an alliance for the purpose of annihilating all settlers and emigrants in their country. To achieve this end they had set aside the great “peace” chief, Washakie, and had elected Pash-e-go, a Bannock chief and “man of blood,” as his successor. Anticipating a general uprising against the whites in late fall, the warriors were then taking their families to the Salmon River Mountains to remove them from danger. All these movements and preparations were instigated by War-i-gika,
the great Bannock prophet in whom the Bannock and Shoshoni had unbounded confidence.36

Conditions had become so bad in the general Snake River area by August and September that it was necessary for public notices to be posted, warning emigrants. On Blackfoot River, the heart of the Bannock homeland, one traveler found a notice advising all small parties to combine into large wagon trains before proceeding any farther.37 The situation was so serious that Indian Commissioner Charles E. Mix published the following proclamation:

TO THE PUBLIC: From information received at this department, deemed sufficiently reliable to warrant me in so doing, I consider it my duty to warn all persons contemplating the crossing of the plains this fall, to Utah or the Pacific Coast, that there is good reason to apprehend hostilities on the part of the Bannock and Shoshone or Snake Indians, as well as the Indians upon the plains and along the Platte river.

The Indians referred to, have, during the past summer, committed several robberies and murders; they are numerous, powerful, and warlike, and should they generally assume a hostile attitude are capable of rendering the emigrant routes across the plains extremely perilous; hence this warning.38

Superintendent Doty of Utah was able to underscore these warnings by compiling a long list of depredations that had been reported to him. In June

36 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1862, p. 219. The prophet, War-i-gika, was no doubt the same prophet referred to by C. H. Miller in 1859. Both accounts spoke of him as residing in the Walla Walla country.

a group of Californians headed toward the States was attacked by "Eastern Bannocks," and all but two killed. Three emigrant trains were plundered near Soda Springs and all the people killed. During the following month, several trains were attacked; and, as Doty suggested, there were many depredations which were never reported. Another party of Californians was attacked in September while on its way east, six men being killed. The Indians involved in this affair had American horses and carried a new American flag.39

Fort Bridger felt the wrath of the Indians when two hundred horses were stolen from the post. A long chase by sixty-two volunteers resulted in the recapture of only about forty of the animals. A company bound for Salmon River had five men killed and two badly wounded. Six or seven members of an Iowa company were killed when they were attacked on Sublette's Cutoff. The survivors lost all their equipment and supplies and were forced to spend the winter in the northern Utah settlements. The Deseret News reported that "emigrants, ferrymen and mountaineers were abandoning the route entirely, afraid to continue longer in the country."40

No longer was the raiding being done by small bands of renegades, but as many as three hundred warriors gathered to harass and destroy the emigrant trains. This fact was emphasized in the incident that

39 Ibid., pp. 210-11; Sacramento Union, October 2, 1862, p. 2; Deseret News, September 24, 1862, p. 100.
40 Deseret News, September 17, 1862, p. 92; ibid., August 13, 1862, p. 52; ibid., August 27, 1862, p. 69; Sacramento Union, September 22, 1862, p. 5.
came to be known as "Massacre Rocks." West of the American Falls of Snake River, a small party of eleven wagons was attacked by about one hundred Indians and, by the time a larger wagon train appeared, most of the men in the small group had been killed. The next morning a force of forty well-armed whites took the trail of the Indians to recover the stolen stock; but when three hundred mounted warriors descended upon them, the travelers retreated immediately, three more men having been killed. Fearing to proceed to California until reinforcements came along, the whites waited until they numbered almost seven hundred people, with two hundred wagons, before heading west. The group was harassed by Indians all the way to the Humboldt and had constantly to be on guard.\textsuperscript{41}

Also suffering from the general Indian disturbance were the Mormon settlements of northern Utah. The Utah Shoshoni bands and their Bannock friends stole horses at every opportunity, and they became so bold and insistent that, in many instances, the Mormon policy of "it is easier to feed than to fight them" was fast becoming outright blackmail as the settlers' supplies of beef and flour disappeared into the hands of the Indians.\textsuperscript{43}

It is little wonder that the citizens of Utah looked with expectancy upon the coming of Colonel Patrick E. Connor and his California Volunteers on September 10 as an assurance at last that the government intend-

\textsuperscript{41} Deseret News, November 26, 1862, p. 173; Byron Defenbach, Idaho, the Place and Its People (3 vols.; Chicago and New York, 1939), I, 405-6.

\textsuperscript{43} Deseret News, September 10, 1862, p. 85; ibid., October 8, 1862, p. 116.

ed to stop the Indian assaults in the territory.\textsuperscript{48} Connor's military force was sent to Salt Lake City to afford protection to the mail routes and, as some people suspected, also to keep an eye on the Mormons while the Civil War was in progress. Opportunity soon came for the troops to display their ability as Indian fighters. Major Edward McGarry, with two companies of soldiers, was instructed to rescue a white boy who had been captured by Chief Bear Hunter of a Shoshoni band. In a dawn attack upon Bear Hunter and about forty of his people in Cache Valley, the troops surrounded the Indian village but captured only two squaws and one brave, the other warriors having escaped to a near-by hill. After a short battle the Indians asked for a parley, and the whites held Bear Hunter and four others as hostages until the boy was brought in. Three Indians had been killed during the engagement.\textsuperscript{44}

A second expedition under Major McGarry left Salt Lake City on December 4 to attempt to recover some of the stock taken from emigrants during the preceding fall, and "to give them [Indians] a little taste of the fighting qualities of the Volunteers, should opportunity present."\textsuperscript{45} Near Bear River the troops captured four Indians and then sent an Indian boy to the encampment of the Shoshoni and Bannock with the message that the four prisoners would be exe-
cuted unless the stolen stock was brought into the army camp by the next day at noon. Upon receipt of the information, the Indians packed up and started into Bear River Canyon, making no attempt to return the cattle and horses. Living up to his promise, the major had the four prisoners shot the next day. The Deseret News believed that the execution would make the Indians more hostile than ever, and reports soon came in substantiating this belief. The Indians held several councils in the vicinity of Bear River and determined to avenge the killing of their four men, being "mad, and determined to do as much injury as possible to the white race. . . ."45

The animosity of the Indians along Bear River soon became evident. George Clayton and Henry Bean, dispatch carriers from Bannock City, were killed shortly after McGarry’s meeting with the Shoshoni bands, and friendly Indians reported that the hostile bands were determined to kill every white man they should meet north of Bear River until the deaths of their comrades had been avenged.46 On January 3 a group of ten men, en route from the mines to Salt Lake City, was annihilated by the Indians. Only three days later, a party of eight men coming in from the Salmon River mines was attacked at Bear River and one, John Smith, was killed.47

As a result of the death of John Smith, William Bevins, one of the survivors of the party, filed an affidavit before Chief Justice John F. Kinney of Utah Ter-

---

45 Ibid., December 17, 1862, p. 197; ibid., December 31, 1862, p. 212.
46 Ibid., January 14, 1863, p. 239.

---

ritory concerning the death of his partner. The justice issued a warrant for the arrest of Bear Hunter, San Pitch, and Sagwitch, the Shoshoni chiefs accused of the crime, and assigned service of the warrant to Marshal Isaac L. Gibbs. The marshal, under Kinney’s direction, requested military assistance from Colonel Patrick E. Connor and his California Volunteers. But Connor reported: "I informed the marshal that my arrangements for our expedition against the Indians were made, and that it was not my intention to take any prisoners, but that he could accompany me."48 Thus, the colonel had already decided upon a full-scale punitive expedition against the whole group of Northern Utah Indians "to chastize them if possible" for their depredations upon travelers.

To forestall the possibility that the Indians might run for the mountains if they saw a large body of troops approaching, Connor determined upon the greatest possible secrecy and started his infantry on the march from Salt Lake City on the night of January 22, 1863. The cavalry left two days later, both detachments traveling by night and resting by day. News of the approach of the troops soon reached Franklin, Idaho, however. Chief Bear Hunter and some of his braves came into the settlement and did a war dance around the house of Preston Thomas, the Mormon bishop, demanding more gifts of wheat. Bear Hunter returned the next day and was informed by the Mormons that the soldiers were only a short distance away and that he might be killed; whereupon he rejoined, "May-be-so soldiers get killed too." But

the chief immediately left for camp to warn his people.\textsuperscript{59}

Early on the morning of January 29, Colonel Connor moved his cavalry in advance of the infantry in order to ensure that the Indians would not get away. At daybreak the encampment was sighted on the north side of Bear River, and the troops swam their horses across the ice-laden stream to begin the attack. The Indian position was well selected, being in a deep ravine about one mile from the river. A treeless plain in front gave them a clear field of fire on the troops. To the right, the mouth of the ravine on Bear River, and to the left, the head of the ravine near some low hills afforded them two avenues of escape. They had intertwined the thick willows in the gulch to form a chain of natural fortifications, and they had dug holes in the side of the ravine to afford firing positions. The women and children were in the tipis at the bottom of the defile.\textsuperscript{61}

As soon as the troops had crossed Bear River and approached the mile-long plain leading to the Indian position, one of the chiefs came out from the ravine and rode up and down in front of his men dangling a spear on which hung a scalp. The warriors, meanwhile, shouted to the approaching troops, “Fours right, fours left; come on you California sons of b——!” The Indians began to shoot as soon as the soldiers were in range, and the effectiveness of their fire

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 186; Franklin County (Idaho) Historical Society, The Passing of the Redman (Preston, Idaho, 1917); Fred B. Rogers, Soldiers of the Overland (San Francisco, 1936), p. 70.

\textsuperscript{61} War of the Rebellion, op. cit., p. 186; Rogers, op. cit., p. 71; Deseret News, February 11, 1863, p. 260.
soon forced the army men to dismount and take up positions as skirmishers. In fact, the principal white casualties of the fight occurred during this first exchange. As soon as the infantry arrived, Colonel Connor sent a detachment of cavalry to aid them in crossing the river, so that finally over two hundred men were in combat with the Indians. After the first frontal attack, the commanding officer sent detachments to either flank of the ravine. Their enfilading fire soon converted the Indian avenues of escape into death traps. The battle lasted over four hours, and the Indians fought courageously, as indeed they must, with no possible means of escape in sight. Toward the end of the engagement, the affair became almost a massacre as the Indians broke from the ravine and attempted to escape.\(^{53}\)

The list of casualties suffered by both sides depicted graphically the intensity of the struggle. The most careful account of casualties placed the soldier losses at twenty-three dead, forty-four wounded, and seventy-nine disabled by freezing. Estimates of the number of Indians killed ranged from the Connor report of two hundred and twenty-four known dead to nearly four hundred, as noted by Corporal Tuttle of the attacking force. The Indian casualties were at least three hundred. In his official report, Connor mentioned that he left a small quantity of wheat for the “160 captive squaws and children” that survived the battle, but did not say how many of these non-combatants were killed. The correspondent of the


Sacramento Union wrote that “In the melee among the willows, several women and children were wounded, which was unavoidable under the circumstances.”\(^{54}\)

William Hull, one of three Mormons sent by Bishop Thomas the next day to search for Indian survivors, has left a graphic description of the battleground:

Never will I forget the scene, dead bodies were everywhere. I counted eight deep in one place and in several places they were three to five deep; all in all we counted nearly four hundred; two-thirds of this number being women and children.

We found two Indian women alive whose thighs had been broken by the bullets. Two little boys and one little girl about three years of age were still living. The little girl was badly wounded having eight flesh wounds in her body. They were very willing to go with us. We took them on our horses to the sleigh, and made them as comfortable as possible.\(^{54}\)

Various reports indicated that perhaps as many as one hundred warriors escaped by swimming the river or by means of the hills to the left of the ravine. The chiefs Pocatello and Sagwitch missed the battle, having left the day before. Chief Bear Hunter was killed while making bullets at a campfire. After the fight Connor’s forces destroyed the seventy tipis found hidden in the willows and captured one hundred and seventy-five horses, over one thousand bushels of

\(^{54}\) Sacramento Union, February 12, 1863, p. 3.
wheat, and much plunder that undoubtedly had been taken from emigrant trains.\textsuperscript{55}

Although some criticisms were made of Connor’s ruthless tactics of taking no prisoners, and of his near-massacre methods in the final stages of the battle, most Westerners would have agreed with the members of the Mormon Church branch at Logan that the action of Colonel Connor was the “intervention of the Almighty, in subduing the Indians of the Bear River area.”\textsuperscript{56}

The battle did have far-reaching significance as far as the Bannock were concerned. From 1863 to the present, most accounts of the engagement list the Indians who took part as “Bannock and Shoshone.” It should be pointed out, however, that all the chiefs involved were Shoshoni, the leaders of Northern Utah Shoshoni bands. Undoubtedly some Bannock warriors did participate in the fight, but the affair was mainly directed and fought by the Shoshoni of the Bear River country. The significance to the Bannock of the battle of Bear River did not lie in the number of their warriors who may have been slain there, but in the effective and merciless manner in which the troops of the United States could and did check the resistance of a hostile tribe. The lesson struck home to the Bannock and to many of the other Indians along the western reaches of the Oregon and

---

\textsuperscript{55} War of the Rebellion, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 186-87; Rogers, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 74-76; Deseret News, February 11, 1863, p. 261.

\textsuperscript{56} Edward W. Tullidge, \textit{History of Salt Lake City} (Salt Lake City, 1886), p. 76.

The battle with the Shoshones . . . on Bear River was the severest and most bloody of any which has ever occurred with the Indians west of the Mississippi. . . . It struck terror into the hearts of the savages hundreds of miles away from the battle field.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{58} Hebard marveled at the “re recuperative powers” of the Bannock as a result of the battle of Bear River, assuming, as have many writers, that the major portion of the Indians involved were Bannock: “On the word of James P. Beckwourth they were ‘annihilated’ by the trappers in 1828, and on the word of Joseph L. Meek again in 1836. The latter event . . . was not, however, an annihilation, though it was a defeat sufficiently decisive to keep them fairly peaceful for many years. But it was again necessary to chastise them during the Civil War and Colonel . . . Patrick E. Connor did the job with great thoroughness in the famous Bear River fight of January 29, 1863.” Hebard, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 357.

TREATY PERIOD, 1863-1869

The salutary effects of the battle at Bear River permeated the entire Snake River area and lasted until well into the 1870’s. From 1863 to 1869, newspaper accounts and letters of Indian agents carried fewer reports of depredations. In March of 1863, a correspondent of the San Francisco Bulletin suggested that the whites might expect more trouble from the “meanest Indians out” (the Bannock) when spring came.1 Despite these expectations, the Deseret News, a month later, could record only that the Indians were far from friendly and desired vengeance for their defeat at Bear River.2 Near Brigham City, a band of Indians did mistreat a boy herding cattle and, although prevented from driving off the herd, they succeeded in killing one white during their flight from the scene.3 Emigrants to Oregon reported seeing Indians on Camas Prairie, but indicated that the natives were quite peaceful. The travelers passed on a rumor that a wagon train had been attacked about forty miles west of Fort Hall.4

---

1 San Francisco Bulletin, May 5, 1863, p. 3.
2 Deseret News, April 22, 1863, p. 341.
3 Ibid., May 13, 1863, p. 364.

---

We are of that class of philanthropists who do not believe in waging a war of extermination against the Indian. We rather incline to the more Christian-like mode of making treaties for the establishment of peaceful relations with them. This would be our plan of establishing friendship upon an eternal basis with our Indians: Let all the hostile bands of Idaho Territory be called in (they will not be caught in any other manner) to attend a grand treaty; plenty of blankets and nice little trinkets distributed among them; plenty of

grub on hand; have a real jolly time with them; then just
before the big feast put strychnine in their meat and poison
to death the last mother's son of them. 8

With such an attitude on the part of the whites,
and with their ability to back up their promises of
avenging depredations by calling on United States
troops, it was little wonder that, after the Bear River
battle, the Indians preferred to spend their time in
the buffalo country away from the danger of troubles
with the other race.

Except for certain intertribal difficulties, the Ban-
nock and Shoshoni were inclined to be quiet and
peaceful during the later 1860's. One overland travel-
er noted that he expected little trouble from the two
tribes and, upon meeting with a group of Bannock
hunters, found them to be friendly and also talkative
as far as he could understand their "'chinook,' a
sort of gibberish made up of French, English, and
Indian." 7 In a defense of their previous warlike atti-
tude, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs argued that
the scarcity of game and the settlement of the whites
in their country had reduced these Indians to ex-
treme destitution and had compelled them to resort
to plundering activities in order to get the necessaries
of life. Said he, "It is not to be expected that a wild
and warlike people will tamely submit to the occu-
pation of their country by another race, and to starva-
tion as a consequence thereof. . . ." 8 Agent John

8 Idaho Statesman, October 6, 1867, p. 2.
7 Lewis F. Crawford (ed.), Rekindling Camp Fires, The Exploits of
Ben Arnold (Connor) [Cedar Rapids, 1926], pp. 66, 79.
8 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1864, p. 155.

Burche of Nevada reported that the tendency of all
the tribes, after the battle of Bear River, was to keep
away from the emigrant roads during the summer
in order to lessen the chance of trouble with the
whites. Chief Winnemucca of the Nevada Paiute met
Burche in council in May, 1863, and promised to
persuade Chief Pas-se-quah (Pas-ego) of the "Pannakes
of Nevada and Idaho" to come in to a conference. At
Humboldt River the agent met the two chiefs, and
Pasego promised that no depredations would be com-
mitted by the Bannock if the whites refrained from
aggressive acts. To ensure peace, the chief said he
intended to keep his people away from the Humboldt
Road and away from the courses of overland travel.
The promise was kept, and no accounts of murders
or robberies reached the ears of the Nevada Indian
agent. He characterized the Bannock as the "most
powerful and warlike tribe that dwell between the
Rocky Mountains and the Pacific," and described in
detail their magnificent horses and large stores of rifles
and ammunition. 9

In great part, as far as the regions traversed by the
Oregon and California trails were concerned, the con-
ditions of peace after the battle of Bear River came
as a result of the various treaties which were negoti-
ated by representatives of the Indian Office with the
different bands of Shoshoni and the Bannock during
1863. General Connor's victory, and his later demon-
strations of force in the Snake River Valley, convinced
the Indians of the necessity of coming to terms with

9 Ibid., pp. 289-92.
the government if they wished to escape the wrath of the troops.

Rumors came in to the army at Camp Douglas, during April of 1863, that the Shoshoni chief, Pocatello, who had escaped the Bear River slaughter, was eager for a fight with General Connor. Although the Bannock had left for the vicinity of the Wind River Mountains, Connor determined to visit the Fort Hall area anyway, in the hope that he could complete the job of subduing all the Shoshoni bands. Another purpose of his northern expedition was to establish a military post at Soda Springs for the protection of the overland emigration to Oregon and California. In early June Connor left Salt Lake City with a large force of cavalry, proceeding at night and resting by day, in the hope of surprising the “bloodthirsty redskins.” The command was disappointed in its attempt to “scare up a few hundred wild Shoshones or Bannocks,” and presently began to march by day. At Snake River Ferry, General Connor came upon seventeen lodges of Shoshoni, whose male occupants left at the approach of the “Black Coats.” The warriors came back into camp when they learned that the general merely wished to talk to them. Eventually, about three hundred Shoshoni gathered for a “pow wow,” and Connor and Superintendent Doty attempted to impress on them that their attacks must cease or they would be given the same treatment that their friends had received in the previous January. Presents were then distributed to them. The chiefs Pocatello,

Sagwitch, and San Pitch were never found, having left for safer areas.

Agent Doty left the military force at Snake River Ferry and traveled on to Camas Prairie. En route, and at the prairie, he met only scattered bands of Indians, all of whom professed the greatest friendliness toward the whites and the United States government. The council meeting at Snake River and the show of force by the troops accomplished immediate results—evidenced by Jacob Meeks’ appearance at Salt Lake City early in August with twelve or fifteen stolen horses which the Indians had given up at the suggestion of General Connor. Four Bannock chiefs accompanied Meeks and had an interview with Doty. They indicated that their people were in a destitute condition and that they desired peace with the whites and aid from the government. The Superintendent of Indian Affairs supplied them with three thousand pounds of flour and six or eight beef cattle, with the understanding that he and General Connor would meet them in five or six weeks at Snake River for the purpose of signing a treaty of peace.

The visit of the four Indian leaders to Salt Lake City was, no doubt, motivated by the fact that two treaties had already been signed between the government and two of the Shoshoni tribes. Doty and Agent Mann had negotiated a treaty with Chief Washakie and the Eastern Shoshoni at Fort Bridger on July 2, and Doty and Connor had signed a treaty with the

---

20 *Deseret News*, April 22, 1863, p. 341.
24 *Deseret News*, August 5, 1863, p. 29.
Northwestern Shoshoni under Chief Pocatello at Box Elder on July 30. The agreements provided for terms of amity and peace, the government agreeing to supply a certain amount of annuity goods each year in recognition of the fact that the white settlers and emigrants had destroyed the grass and the wild game which had formerly provided the living for these Indians. On October 1 the Western Shoshoni at Ruby Valley, Nevada, assented to a similar pact, and the Gosiute Shoshoni of "Tuilla Valley," west of Salt Lake City, signed a treaty on October 12.16

Two days later, Superintendent Doty, accompanied by General Connor, kept his promise to the Bannock by coming to terms with them at the Treaty of Soda Springs. These "mixed bands of Bannocks and Shoshones," one hundred and fifty men with their families, were under the principal Bannock chief, "Tosokwauberhah" (Le Grand Coquin), and two subchiefs, "Tagbee" and "Matigund." Doty estimated the total population of the tribe to be about one thousand.

After terms of friendship had been agreed upon, Doty, in behalf of the government, agreed to pay the Bannock five thousand dollars a year in annuity goods to compensate them for damages done to their pasture lands and hunting grounds and to aid in their subsistence. The peculiar thing about this financial settle-

\footnote{Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1864, p. 155; Charles J. Kappler (ed.), \emph{Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties} (2 vols.; Washington, 1903), II, 649-52.}

\footnote{A correspondent of the \emph{Sacramento Union} reported that, during the "talk" preceding the treaty at Fort Bridger, the Shoshoni were forced to acknowledge Washakie as their chief again, and they claimed that "they had been induced to act badly by the Bannocks" but would be good in the future. \emph{Sacramento Union}, July 19, 1863, p. 1.}

\footnote{Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1864, pp. 317-19; Report . . . 1865, p. 143; Report . . . 1867, p. 185; U.S. National Archives, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, "Unratified Treaty of October 14, 1863, between the United States and the Mixed Bands of Shoshone and Bannock," Record Group 75.}

\footnote{ \emph{TREATY PERIOD, 1863-1869}
the United States. It was then necessary to hold conferences with the five groups to get their consent to the revised treaties. During 1864 the Shoshoni of Ruby Valley, Box Elder County, and Tooele Valley were met and gave consent to the new agreements. But the Eastern Shoshoni and Bannock had left for their fall buffalo hunt before Doty could get them together in another council. Eventually, the Eastern Shoshoni assented to their treaty, and along with those for the other Shoshoni groups, it was ratified. The Soda Springs Treaty was ratified by the United States Senate "upon condition that a section be added, defining the character of the Indian title to the land, recognized by the Government." The treaty was never formally proclaimed, perhaps because the Bannock refused their acquiescence to the added section or because the agreement abrogated the terms of the Fort Bridger Treaty of 1863. At any rate, it remained as a de facto agreement during the next five years, until the Great Treaty of 1868 replaced it.  

The establishment of Idaho Territory in 1863 led to more direct control of the Indians of Snake River by the government. By the summer of 1865 the initial steps of government had been accomplished; and Governor Caleb Lyon of Lyonsdale, as ex officio Superintendent of Indian Affairs, was ready to turn his attention to this urgent problem. He and other Idaho officials had been constantly reminded of the necessity for action by the petty depredations of a few loose bands of Shoshoni near the capital city of Boise. The Idaho Statesman day after day reiterated its demands that something be done about the situation, and the editor expressed the prevailing sentiment in July of 1865:

Now what we want is more cavalry. Not for protection, but for chastisement of the Indians. We have had protection enough. It is now time that protection were made superfluous by at once removing the necessity for protection. We must either whip those Indians into peaceful behavior or kill them off.  

In September, therefore, Governor Lyon held councils with the Boise Shoshoni and the Shoshoni and Bannock at Camas Prairie. His investigations, as a result of the conferences, led him to propose to the Indian Commissioner that an agency be located at Camas Prairie for the winter, and that a reservation be established on Snake River to care for the Indians of "southern Idaho" during the summer months. He suggested that the reserve include about forty thousand acres and he emphasized the necessity of a permanent home for the Indians. Following this suggestion, the Indian Commissioner directed Lyon to appoint agents where needed and to conclude a treaty with "the great Kammas Indians and the Indians of southern Idaho" providing for a reservation on Snake River which would include the fishing grounds.  

Meanwhile, the government was failing to keep its promises to the Bannock under the treaty of 1863 and,

---


in November of 1865, head Chief Taghee asked M. A. Carter of Soda Springs to write the Idaho executive. Carter explained that the tribe had not received any supplies for over a year, and that Taghee would have his people back at Fort Hall the next spring to learn the intentions of the government toward the Bannock.29

Under the prompting of government official and Indian leader alike, Governor Lyon called a council meeting with “certain bands of Bannocks and Snake Indians” of southeastern Idaho in the early spring of 1866 and signed a treaty with them in which they agreed to go on a reservation provided for them by the government. Shortly after, Lyon left the governorship, and the Indian Commissioner withheld action on the treaty until Lyon’s successor had had an opportunity to acquire further information concerning the Indian situation in Idaho.21

The new executive, D. W. Ballard, received the assistance of a special Indian agent sent from Washington, D.C. This man, George C. Hough, left Washington in the early summer of 1866 and reached San Francisco via New York City and Nicaragua. Intending to travel to Boise by way of Portland, he changed his route through Chico, California, to investigate rumors that “Bannocks and other Indians . . . were committing depredations along the stage road.” He became convinced that Nevada Paiutes were responsible for the attacks, and finally affirmed: “I feel assured

---

31 Treaties Period, 1863-1869

---

that if the Bannocks & Shoshones in this section of Idaho were provided with a reservation and some food & clothing that they would be peaceable & cease stealing from the settlers.”22

From this August, 1866, report of Agent Hough, Governor Ballard learned that the Bruneau Shoshoni, numbering four hundred people, and the Boise and Canas bands of Shoshoni were quite willing to move to a reservation. Hough favored the establishment of a single reserve at Fort Hall large enough to accommodate all the Indians of southern Idaho, instead of several smaller reservations scattered along Snake River.23 Governor Ballard thereupon reported to the Indian Commissioner that although the Boise and Bruneau Shoshoni were so loosely organized that it would be almost impossible to negotiate a formal treaty with them, he was in favor of placing them upon a reservation because, first of all, they desired such a course; and secondly, they were at the mercy of white volunteers who habitually went on scalphunting expeditions, “under the stimulus of rewards offered at public meetings of $25 to $100 per scalp.”24

Acting upon the advice of Governor Ballard, the Indian Commissioner instructed him on October 1, 1866, to set aside two reservations in Idaho, one for the Boise and Bruneau Shoshoni in southern Idaho, and one for the Coeur d’Alene and other Indians in northern Idaho. Ballard chose a reservation in the

22 George C. Hough to D. W. Ballard, Boise City, August 3, 1866, U.S. National Archives, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Idaho Superintendency, Letters Received, 1866-1880, Record Group 75.
23 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866, p. 189.
24 Ibid., p. 88.
Fort Hall region for the Shoshoni bands. He pointed out that its location as a permanent home for these Indians was dependent upon the acquiescence of Washakie’s Eastern Shoshoni in the proposed arrangements because the government, in the treaty at Fort Bridger, had included the Fort Hall area within the hunting range of the Eastern Shoshoni. The governor was evidently convinced that these Indians would not protest the loss of the Fort Hall area, which was on the extreme western limits of their home country.26

The boundaries of the proposed “Boise and Bruneau bands of Shoshones and Bannock Reservation” were defined by the Idaho agents as follows:

Commencing on the south bank of Snake River at the junction of the Port Neuf River with said Snake River; then south 25 miles to the summit of the mountains dividing the waters of Bear River from those of Snake River, thence easterly along the summit of said range of mountains 70 miles to a point where Sublette road crosses said divide; thence north about 50 miles to Blackfoot River; thence down said stream to its junction with Snake River; thence down Snake River to the place of beginning.26

The total area amounted to approximately 1,800,000 acres and included Fort Hall within its limits. At the time, the nearest white settlement was on the Malad River about seventy miles distant, although “6 or 8” people had located within the reservation limits.

A telegraph line ran through the new reserve from Salt Lake City to Montana, along the road to the mines. These evidences of encroaching civilization led Governor Ballard to urge prompt action on the part of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to legalize the new home for the Indians of southern Idaho. By executive order of June 14, 1867, President Andrew Johnson finally established Fort Hall as defined above.

While the governmental machinery in Washington slowly ground out the legislation establishing a reservation, Governor Ballard and his agents were faced with the problem of providing some kind of home for the Indians of southern Idaho, so that they and their white neighbors would not become involved in a war. Agent Charles F. Powell was instructed in July, 1866, to take charge of the Boise and Bruneau Shoshoni and a band of Bannock, all of whom were encamped near the city of Boise. Powell chose a spot at the forks of the Boise River, thirty miles from the city, and moved the Indians there. He characterized the Shoshoni as indolent beings who exerted themselves only when hungry. The Bannock, he noted,

... are more enterprising and restless, given to athletic exercises and to the chase. They seem very anxious to get away from the present restraint, and indulge the wild freedom they have hereto enjoyed; they are given to martial displays, dancing, beating drums, etc.27

Their chief, Bannock John, had good control over his people, although Powell reported many “bad, vicious young men” among them. According to a census

27 D. W. Ballard to D. N. Cooley, Boise City, November 18, 1866, U.S. National Archives, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Idaho Superintendency, Letters Received, 1866-1880, Record Group 75.
27 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1867, p. 252.
taken by the agent, he had under his charge 283 Boise Shoshoni, 300 Bruneau Shoshoni, and 100 Bannock.

At the request of the leaders of this portion of the Bannock tribe, a military escort was provided to conduct them to Boise for an interview with Governor Ballard in June of 1867. The chief executive reported that the head men, Bannock John and his brother Bannock Jim, were both married to sisters of "Tar-gee, the Head Chief of the Bannock tribe." Ballard's conversation with these two gave Idaho authorities firsthand information about the tribe:

Q. Who is the Head Chief of all the Bannacks?
A. "Tar-gee" (Hard sound of "g").

Q. What other Chiefs have the Bannacks?
A. "Koo-ser-gun" is second chief—no more—

Q. How many of Bannack Indians are there?
A. I do not know—from sixty to one hundred lodges.

Q. How many will a lodge average?
A. From eight to eleven.

Q. Did you ever hear of General Connor?
A. Yes.

Q. Did "Tar-gee" and "Koo-ser-gun" have a talk with General Connor?
A. Yes, four years ago.

Q. What was their understanding at this talk?
A. That the Bannacks were to hunt Buffalo, and go into the Boise country whenever they choose as long as they remain friendly.

Q. Are the Boise Bruneaus and Bannacks friendly?
A. Yes and have always been.

Q. Could they live together in peace?
A. Yes.

Q. Would [you] like to live on a reservation? provided we build you houses, teach you to farm etc.?
A. We want to hunt Buffalo and fish.

Q. But if allowed to hunt Buffalo and to fish at proper times?

As the fall of 1867 approached, this small Bannock group became restless and demanded to be allowed to go on their annual buffalo hunt, if the government did not take some action to subsist them for the winter. They were finally allowed to go, but returned to the charge of Agent Powell at Boise River, even though he had reported to his superiors that the area was not suited as a wintering ground for the Indians. In August of 1868, these three bands were still being administered by Powell in the Boise region.28 The action of Governor Ballard in setting up this temporary reservation met with the approval of most citizens of the territory, and the Idaho Statesman summed up the general attitude:

Governor Ballard, without waiting for the red tape at Washington to confirm his recommendations in regard to the Fort Hall reservation, where all the Indians in this portion of the Territory could be sustained, has instituted a temporary reservation, and all the Indians disposed to be friendly are gathering there, while General Crook is after the rest. When he gets near enough to them to talk, the reservation will be proposed to their chiefs, and if they refuse they will be killed or put on the reservation by force, and certainly shot if they don't stay there.29

28 D. W. Ballard to Charles E. Mix, Boise City, August 3, 1866, U.S. National Archives, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Idaho Superintendency, Letters Received, 1866-1880, Record Group 75.

Idaho Statesman, July 20, 1867, p. 2.
During the long and slow process involved in establishing the Fort Hall Reservation, the principal tribe of the Bannock, numbering some eight hundred people, was still being nominally supervised by the Indian Office under the Treaty of Soda Springs of 1863. The Bannock showed up at the Fort Bridger agency in the summer of 1864 to receive the presents promised them under the agreement. Unfortunately, some of the goods were burned en route to the agency and the remainder arrived so late that the tribe was not at hand to receive them, having gone after a winter’s supply of buffalo meat. Again, in 1865, the presents were so delayed that the majority of the able Indians left for the buffalo country, afraid that they would again be disappointed and so suffer from lack of food supplies. The following year, Agent Mann met the Bannock when they appeared at the agency in company with the Eastern Shoshoni. The latter received ten thousand dollars in annuity goods in which the Bannock were not allowed to share. Mann, however, was so moved by the Bannock report that they had never received any presents from the government that he supplied enough food for their immediate wants, paying for it himself. The tribe was at this time under the competent leadership of Chief Taghee, who had taken control at the death of Le Grand Coquin. Mann described the new chief as a leader in whom “I fully repose confidence.”

Fully realizing the inequality of distributing ten thousand dollars’ worth of annuity goods to the Eastern Shoshoni while their neighbors received nothing, Agent Mann wrote his superiors, in 1867, recommending that a like sum be assigned for annuity goods to the Bannock. The Indian Commissioner followed the suggestion and asked the Secretary of the Interior for an increased appropriation ($5,000) to take care of a Bannock annuity, explaining that while it was unjust to expect the Eastern Shoshoni to give up half of the annuity guaranteed them under their treaty, it was likewise unjust to abrogate the agreement with the Bannock. Mann had attempted to get the Eastern Shoshoni to share their presents with the Bannock, but Chief Washakie peremptorily refused to do so. Chief Taghee informed the agent that his people felt very much hurt because the government distributed goods to all the Indians around them, while they received none. Taghee emphasized that the tribe was friendly and peaceable and entitled to some compensation for the losses sustained from white encroachments on their hunting lands. They were being forced to travel farther each year in pursuit of the buffalo and suffered constant raids and battles with hostile tribes in the plains area.

In addition to the efforts of Agent Mann in behalf of the Bannock, the Idaho Indian Superintendent was also doing everything in his power to get them settled in a permanent home. Word came to the Bannock in August of 1867 that Superintendent Ballard wished to meet them in council. Although the agent had not called such a conference nor even authorized any-

---

81 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1865, p. 145.
84 Ibid., p. 189.
one else to hold one, he thought it best to meet with
the Indians, now that they had gathered together.
On August 21 the meeting began with an address by
Ballard in which he went over the familiar arguments
for the settlement of the Indians on a reservation.
He informed the Bannock that during the previous
year he had selected a tract of country at Fort Hall
for them and other tribes and that through unofficial
channels he had heard of the approval of the reser-
vation.

Now, [said Ballard,] are you willing to relinquish your
title to all the country you have ever claimed . . . provided
the government of the United States secures to you and your
children, and to such other friendly Indians as may be in-
duced to go thereon, the sole ownership of said reservation
forever, supply you with subsistence till you can raise sufficient
for yourselves and furnish you an agent, teachers, books,
implements of husbandry, etc.

Chief Taghee answered:

I thought when the white people came to Soda Springs
and built houses and put soldiers in them, it was to pro-
tect my people, but now they are all gone, and I do not
know where to go nor what to do.
The white people have come into my country, and have
not asked my consent. Why is this? And why have no persons
talked to me before? I have never known what the white
people wanted me to do. I have never killed white people who
were passing into my country. What you say to me I shall
never forget. All the Bannock Indians will obey me and
be good, but the Sheep-eaters are not my people . . . and I can-
not be responsible for them. I will answer for the Bannocks.
The Boise and Bruneaus are poor; they cannot travel far;
they have no horses to hunt the buffalo, but they are good
Indians, and are my friends. The buffalo do not come so
far south now as formerly, so we must go further to the
north to hunt them. The white people have scared them away.

I am willing to go upon a reservation, but I want the privilege of hunting the buffalo for a few years. When they are all gone far away we hunt no more; perhaps one year, perhaps two or three years; then we stay on the reservation all the time. I want a reservation large enough for all my people, and no white man on it, except the agent and other officers and employes of the government. I want the right of way for my people to travel when going to or coming from the buffalo country, and when going to sell our furs and skins. I want the right to camp and dig roots on Cañon prairie when coming to Boise City to trade. Some of my people have no horses. They can remain at Camas prairie and dig roots while others go on. Our hunting is not so good as it used to be, nor my people so numerous.

I will go from here to the buffalo country, where I will meet all my tribe, and will tell them of this talk and of the arrangements we may make.

I am willing to go on to a reservation as you propose, but when will you want me to go? We can go next spring.\footnote{\textit{Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs}, 1868, pp. 657-58.}

For the first time since the Treaty of Soda Springs in 1863, the Bannock thus had an opportunity to present to official ears their hopes and desires, and Chief Taghee made the most of the occasion. Ballard replied that he could not be certain when the Bannock would be allowed to move onto the Fort Hall Reservation, but he hoped that such an event could take place by the spring of 1868. In the formal agreement that followed, both parties agreed that the Bannock would move to the reservation by June 1, 1868. The other provisions of the agreement signed at Long Tom Creek on August 26, 1867, were as outlined by Superintendent Ballard in his opening remarks to the Indians. The Bannock chiefs signing the pact were: "Tygse, Peter, To-so-copy-notey, Pah Vissigin, McKay, and Jim." The agreement never became effective and, on June 1, 1868, the Bannock were still in search of a home.

During the spring and summer, Ballard and other officials continued to receive letters from the white settlers in the Fort Hall region, and one from Taghee himself, all inquiring about how long it would be before the Indians could settle on the reservation.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 658-59.} M. A. Carter of Soda Springs expressed the consensus of the group:

They [Bannock] have been and are now on the most friendly terms with the whites, and have manifested this disposition notwithstanding there were many circumstances which would have aggravated Indians of less kind feeling to open hostility. Namely the neglect of the Gov't. to provide them an agent and to thereby establish trading posts where they could dispose of their furs and skins and provide themselves in return with blankets provisions and ammunition.

At a treaty over two years ago between Gen'l Connor and the Bannack Indians many obligations were undertaken, which have never in any degree been carried into effect leaving the Indians much cause to be dissatisfied. For if we bind ourselves in certain treaties [sic], and then wilfully neglect to perform the functions of each treaty, we can expect but little better from the untutored red man, who have only discrimination sufficient to know that they have not received what has been so solemnly promised to them.\footnote{M. A. Carter to J. M. Ashley, Soda Springs, July 19, 1868, U.S. National Archives, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Idaho Superintendence, Letters Received, 1866-1880, Record Group 75.}

The constant requests of the agents at Boise and Fort Bridger for a formal treaty with the Bannock,
and their assignment to a reservation, finally brought results when the Indian Peace Commission of 1867 sent representatives to treat with the tribe and the Eastern Shoshoni. Agent Luther Mann was directed on the first of May, 1868, to gather the two peoples at Fort Bridger in preparation for a council meeting with the commissioners, who expected to arrive June 4. Chief Taghee displayed his control over the Bannock by having eight hundred members of the tribe assembled at the agency by May 15. Mann had been authorized to provide subsistence for the Indians until the arrival of the Commission, but the poor condition of the roads delayed the wagon trains. In disgust, about half of the Bannock left for their summer fishing resorts. The Shoshoni under Washakie gathered more slowly, but stayed when they were finally assembled. General C. C. Augur, heading the representatives of the government, arrived June 15 and held informal conferences with Taghee and Washakie and the other leading men until the supplies came. In this initial period Augur learned what lands were claimed by the two peoples. Taghee wanted the country around Soda Springs, Portneuf River, and Camas Prairie. Augur expressed his desire that the Bannock should agree to settle with the Shoshoni for the time being. Finally, the supply wagons having arrived, the great council got underway.88

General Augur opened the meeting by telling the Indians that the government wished them to be at

---

88 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1868, p. 617; Grace R. Hébard, Washakie; an Account of Indian Resistance to the Covered Wagon and the Union Pacific Railroad Invasion of their Territory (Cleveland, 1930), pp. 119, 120.

peace with the whites and so wanted them to go on a reservation where they would have a permanent home and could receive subsistence aid from the Indian Office. He said:

In a few years the game will become scarce and you will not find sufficient to support your people. You will then have to live in some other way than by hunting and fishing. [The government] . . . wishes you, therefore, to go to this reservation now and commence to grow wheat and corn and raise cattle and horses, so that when the game is gone, you will be prepared to live independently of it. . . . Your Great Father desires . . . that you should remain at peace, not only with white men but with all other Indian tribes . . . . He wishes the Shoshones and Bannocks to be together where you can have one agent to attend to you.89

Chief Washakie then addressed the council and said he would be satisfied with the Wind River country for the Shoshoni reservation. When Chief Taghee was questioned concerning the territory he claimed, he answered, “As far away as Virginia City our tribe has roamed. But I want the Port-Neuf country and Kamas plains.”

General Augur asked Chief Taghee why the Bannock could not live in peaceful relations with the Shoshoni on the same reserve. The Indian leader said: “We are friends with the Shoshones, and like to hunt with them; but we want a home for ourselves.”

The commissioner then asked, “If you have a separate home, can you and the Shoshones get along with one agency and come to the Shoshone reservation for your annuities, etc.?”

89 Hébard, op. cit., p. 120.
“We want,” replied Taghee, “to receive anything that is for us on our own ground.”

Augur said he did not know the country well enough to locate a reservation for the Bannock but, when they were ready to go on a reserve, someone would be sent to survey it for them.40

As a result of the meeting, Augur was able to report to the president of the Peace Commission that there was no such thing as the “mixed bands of Bannock and Shoshones.” The Bannock were a distinct and separate tribe and, from this time on, the Indian Office treated them as such.

After the conferences had been completed, General Augur assembled the Indian leaders on July 3 and had the terms of the treaty explained to them so that all understood. After the reading of the treaty, the chiefs assented to it and signed their marks in the presence of the commissioners. Presents were then given out, the Bannock receiving a particularly valuable lot because of their having been overlooked for so many years.

The significant portions of the Treaty of Fort Bridger relating to the Bannock may be summarized as follows: Article 1 provided for the arrest and arraignment of Shoshoni and Bannock accused of crimes. Article 2 agreed that, when the Bannock desired a reservation or when the President of the United States thought it best that they be put on a reservation, a tract should be selected for them “in their present country, which shall embrace reasonable portions of the ‘Port Neuf’ and ‘Kansas Prairie’

countries.” Article 3 provided for the construction of certain buildings (including a school) on the reservations proposed for the Eastern Shoshoni and the Bannock, and also listed the employees which the government would hire to maintain the agencies. Article 4 stated that the Indians would make their homes on the reservation but that they would still have the right to hunt on the unoccupied lands of the United States. Article 5 provided that the agent for the Indians would make his home on the Eastern Shoshoni reservation “but shall direct and supervise affairs on the Bannock reservation.” Article 6 outlined the procedure whereby a head of a family could be allotted not over 320 acres of farming land on the reservation, and a person over eighteen years of age but not the head of a family could receive at least 80 acres of land; the individual was to choose his own land which was to be guaranteed to him. Article 7 established compulsory education for all Indian children between the ages of six and sixteen. Article 8 provided that an individual who had taken up an allotment of land was to receive $100 worth of seeds and agricultural implements the first year and $25.00 worth of seeds and implements for the next three years. Article 9 listed the annuity goods which the government promised to deliver to the Indians by September 1 of each year, for a period of thirty years; in addition to clothing, each “Indian roaming” was to receive ten dollars a year, and each “Indian engaged in agriculture” was to have twenty dollars a year. Article 10 provided for the employment of certain agency employees, including a physician. Article

11 stipulated that all treaties for the cessions of reservation lands had to be signed by a majority of the adult male Indians on the reserve. Article 12 provided prizes in money to the best Indian farmers during the initial three years of farming operations. Article 13 provided that annuity goods should be paid to the Bannock and Shoshoni each year at Fort Bridger until the Wind River Agency was established.  

Six Bannock chiefs signed the treaty: Taghee, Tay-to-ba, We-rat-ze-won-a-gen, Coo-sha-gan, Pan-sook-a-motse, and A-wite-etse. The United States Senate finally confirmed the Treaty of Fort Bridger, and it was proclaimed February 24, 1869.  

Contrary to expectations, many of the citizens of Idaho looked upon the treaty with some disapproval. Their chief grievance was that the fifteen thousand dollars' worth of presents and the twenty dollars apiece in money which was distributed to the Bannock by General Augur aroused the envy and anger of the Boise and Bruneau Shoshoni. Governor Ballard and Agent Powell had to hold a special council to quiet these peoples. The Boise Democrat, commenting on this turn of affairs, said, "We do not want any child's play in regard to Indian affairs." The newspaper pointed out that Agent Powell, rather than Augur, should have negotiated with the Bannock.  

With the exception of other Indians who were jealous of presents given to the Bannock, the treaty was well received. On April 13, 1869, Agent Powell arrived at Fort Hall Reservation and took charge of the agency. His journey from Boise had turned into quite a trek for, in addition to the 300 Boise Shoshoni, 850 Bruneau Shoshoni, and 150 Bannock whom he chaperoned to the new station, he picked up a great number of Indians on the way. He immediately began to erect buildings to care for the supplies which he expected would arrive shortly.  

Meanwhile, the Bannock were on a buffalo hunt with the Eastern Shoshoni in the region of the Wind River Mountains. On their way back to the Fort Hall area they stopped at Fort Bridger and there received from Agent Mann the four thousand dollars in presents which the Peace Commission had authorized for distribution to them. Mann paid tribute to Chief Taghee as a "most reliable and excellent Indian, and to his prudent counsels the moderation and patient endurance of broken faith by this tribe is due." Governor J. A. Campbell of the new Wyoming Territory also noted that "during the entire period, from the fall of 1863 up to the present, the Bannocks have observed the treaty stipulations strictly."  

When the Bannock reached Fort Hall, Chief Taghee met with Powell and told the agent that he and his people wanted the Fort Hall Reservation for their home. Governor Ballard endorsed Powell's recom-
mandation that the Bannock be allowed to make their home on the new reserve and passed it on to the Indian Commissioner. As explained by the commissioner, the Fort Hall Reservation embraced a portion of the "Port Neuf and Kansas prairie" country which Article 2 of the Treaty of Fort Bridger had assigned to the Bannock. Therefore, by executive order of President U. S. Grant, on July 30, 1869, the Bannock were granted a home on the Fort Hall reservation.47

It was during the treaty period, also, that reports began to reach officials of the Office of Indian Affairs concerning another tribe of "Bannock" that inhabited the headwaters of the Yellowstone, Gallatin, Madison, and Snake rivers, often wintering in the Salmon River Mountains near Lemhi River. At the Treaty of Soda Springs in 1868, Chief "Tindoob" (Tendoy) sent word to Superintendent Doty that he was unable to attend the council but assented to the terms of the treaty.48 This is the same chief that C. H. Miller had praised so highly in 1859. The white man had at that time presented Tendoy with a fine rifle in token of governmental appreciation for his service and friendship to the Americans.49 Tendoy was leader of a mixed band of Shoshoni and a few Bannock who ranged in the Beaverhead country of Montana and west, across the mountains, into Idaho.

Governor Thomas F. Meagher of Montana Territory reported in April, 1866, that a tribe made up of "Shoshones (or Snake) and Bannocks" lived in the area along the southwestern boundary of the territory. According to him the misery, filth, and dire want revealed by their lodges were "exceeded only by the huts of the Terra del Fuegans."50 He listed them as numbering 110 Shoshoni and 500 Bannock, an estimate much too high. As a result of this report, the Indian Commissioner instructed Agent Mann of Fort Bridger to investigate the status and numbers of the tribe. Mann's information indicated that there were one hundred lodges of Bannock, plus a few lodges of Shoshoni, in the group which lived in the same area occupied by a tribe of Too-ree-reka, or Sheepeaters.51 The Sheepeaters were later mentioned by Agent Powell in August, 1868, as among those Indians which were jealous of the presents given the Bannock at the Fort Bridger Treaty.52

The inaccuracies and lack of information about this northern tribe were somewhat dispelled by Agent Alfred Sully of Montana Territory in September, 1869. Although he still called them by the general name of "Bannocks," he correctly estimated their numbers as being "not . . . over five hundred souls." His description of their poverty and of the country through which they ranged stamped them as the Indian tribe that was shortly to be known as the Lemhi tribe, from their home on Lemhi River. As later information revealed, Chief Tendoy had gradually been able to amalgamate into one tribe the Sheep-

48 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1864, p. 920.
50 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866, pp. 199-200.
51 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1867, p. 189.
52 Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1868, p. 663.
catters and other scattered Shoshoni and a small number of Bannock. The Bannock members of the Lemhi rarely numbered over one hundred and came originally from the main Bannock tribe at Fort Hall. Agent Sully was one of the first to record that the Lemhi boasted that not one of them had ever shed the blood of a white man. This characteristic became almost traditional with the tribe and was due, for the most part, to the firm control exercised by Tendoy. For the first time, also, Sully learned that these Indians did not want to go on the reservation at Fort Hall; "they expressed the greatest aversion to that place; for what reason I could not learn."53 From this time until the early 1900's, the Lemhi obstinately refused to move to Fort Hall and were successful for a time in gaining a reservation of their own.


The similarity of language of the Northern Paiute and the Bannock often led observers to confuse the two peoples. In 1866, Agents H. G. Parker and Franklin Campbell of Nevada recited certain troubles they were having with the "Bannock," but an investigation of their reports indicates that the people they called Bannock ranged in the southeastern corner of Oregon and southwestern Idaho, the home of the Northern Paiute. It is entirely possible that a few Bannock may have been involved in the troubles listed by the agents, but these "fifteen hundred . . . Bannocks" were not the true Bannock tribe which made its home around the Fort Hall area. Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866, pp. 114-20.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Hunting for Subsistence, 1870-1877

With the movement of Agent Powell and the Boise and Bruneau Shoshoni to Fort Hall in 1869, the reservation began its active life as an agency. At this time President Ulysses S. Grant was interested in improving the Indian Office and in reducing the number of unscrupulous agents who had become entrenched in the service. For this reason he delegated the nomination of the agents to the religious organizations interested in Indian welfare. The Quakers, therefore, were given the selection of agents in the Plains areas. The other agencies, except those in Oregon, were manned by army officers. In Idaho Territory, Colonel L. DeFloyd Jones became the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and First Lieutenant W. H. Danilson was appointed to command the Fort Hall Agency. Their tenure was short-lived, however, because the Army Appropriation Act of July 15, 1870, provided that any officer on the active list who accepted a civil appointment must first give up his commission. The nomination of agents for those posts so vacated was then divided among the several religious bodies. The agent at Fort Hall was nominated by the Methodist missionary organization but, by the