THE SHOSHONI FRONTIER
AND THE BEAR RIVER MASSACRE

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With a Foreword by
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The California Volunteers Arrive

In the final months before the Bear River Massacre, several developments maintained the tempo of Indian-white conflict. Among these were administrative changes, new gold strikes in Idaho and Montana, poverty among the Indians, and repercussions from Indian violence along the trails and in the settlements and mining camps. New personalities also played a role in the continuing drama of Mormon dissension as Patrick Edward Connor and a new governor, Stephen Harding, tested Brigham Young. The final pieces leading to the massacre at Bear River slowly began to fall into place. In 1862 these particular incidents attracted little national notice, but to the participants—the starving Indians, the harassed Mormon settlers, overlanders, miners, the territories and states involved, and especially to Colonel Connor and the California Volunteers—they were crucial. Conflicts were converging to produce at Bear River one of the most horrible battles in American Indian history, but one which would remain relatively unknown.

The Mormon settlements and the California and Oregon coast metropolises brought a flow of civilization that impinged on the Shoshoni and the austere desert environment. The Trans-Mississippi experience and the westering process conspired with these elements to produce Indian dislocations. In significant ways, “overlanding” was receiving its first real test in terms of Indian relations. A second and admittedly more important scene in this process was played out on the Great Plains after the Civil War. No one was prepared to deal with the problems produced in 1860. Anglo-Americans wished the problems would go away, but the Indians had no place to go and the problems remained and intensified. Altruism, restraint, and the ex-
pedients used during earlier Indian frontiers were unequal to the desert magnitudes of the situation.

Supervision of the native tribes along the Snake River near Fort Boise in the last six months of 1862 had become more inefficient by placing these Indians under a new Washington superintendency in May 1861. The new superintendency, in the territorial capital at Olympia, was even more distant from the Snake River area. The map used by the Washington superintendent in his annual report of 1862 showed a large vacant space with the word “Unexplored” south of the Salmon River, the words “Shoshonis and Snakes” just north of Snake River, and “Mountain Snakes” along the stream. Oregon Superintendent J. M. Kirkpatrick, in his 1862 report, described the Bannock as a “mysterious people, living in rude lodges made of the willow brush. They know but little and are very improvident...” His colleague to the north, Superintendent C. H. Hale of Washington Territory, wrote in 1862 of the Snakes or Digger Indians “who infest the emigrant route... Living amongst the sage brush, hiding in the canons, skulking behind rocks, they are seldom seen until they strike a blow.” Hale presumed that the Snakes resided mostly in his territory. Indian officials of Oregon and Washington knew less about the Shoshoni of the Snake River in 1862 than they had fifteen years earlier.

Volunteer General Benjamin Alvord sent Lieutenant Colonel Reuben F. Maury’s command to guard the Oregon Trail near Salmon Falls in July 1862. Medoret Crawford of Oregon had already left in June with a force of seventy-five men to protect the last of the summer’s emigration from Fort Hall to west of Fort Boise. Alvord ordered Maury to arrest and punish the Snake Indians who had murdered travelers in the fall of 1860.

Superintendent Hale requested additional funds so he could set up an agency east of the Cascades to control the “roving thievish and murderous bands who have frequently in times past imbued their hands in the blood of the unsuspecting emigrants...” but the money was not appropriated. Near the year’s end, the Walla Walla Statesman of November 15, 1862, reported the melancholy news that Snake Indians had driven off the stock of a company of packers near Fort Boise. William Wilson reported to the newspaper that the Indians “manifest a decidedly inhospitable disposition toward the whites...” since the recent opening of the Boise mines. In the new gold district of the Beaverhead country in western Montana, the miners held a council with “about five hundred warriors” to insure peace. The natives expressed approval of the miners’ search for gold and objected “only to having their lands taken up for permanent settlement.” The white reporter stated that as soon as enough whites were in the area they would do as they pleased about Indian lands.

The discovery of gold by John White on July 28, 1862, at Grasshopper Creek in the Beaverhead country led to an immense rush of miners from all over the West. The nearest supply point for the new camps was Salt Lake City, and soon the Montana Trail was crowded with freighters and parties of eager gold hunters hoping to make their fortunes in the diggings. The sudden surge of northerly travel carried gold-seekers right through Northwestern Shoshoni homelands. Shoshoni and Bannock anger began erupting as early as midsummer of 1862 against south-north and east-west travel past Fort Hall.

The Deseret News of August 6, 1862, warned emigrant and mining parties that gold-digging operations in the Salmon River area would have “a great tendency to stir up the natives to war with those they consider intruders...” Anticipating possible depredations by Shoshoni and Bannock, the commissioner of Indian affairs had instructed James Doty and his agent on July 22 to use a recent congressional appropriation of $20,000 to make a treaty with the “Shoshones or Snake Indians.” Doty was not to use the money in extinguishing title to Indian lands but was to distribute goods and annuities “suitable to their wants” to secure the safety of travelers over the Oregon, California, and Montana trails. In the event Doty could not gain the friendship of all the Shoshoni bands by treaty, he was to negotiate only with the tribe most dangerous to settlers and emigrants.

With little likelihood that the scattered bands could be gathered together for a treaty conference, knowledgeable individuals looked ahead to a season of raids and killings. They were not mistaken. On July 18 Martin Moran was killed just west of Green River. In the same general area, E. S. McComas reported, “This is where a great deal of depredations have been committed by the Indians & white Jayhawkers on the emigrants.” He noted, on July 27, the grave of a man killed by Indians as well as a fight in which two more white men were badly wounded. McComas later saw the grave of G. W. Sanders near Raft River. Sanders had lost his horses to Indian raiders, and, in
his efforts to retrieve them, died from exposure on July 27. On August 8 the McComas party met a company of about twelve Californians who had just had a fight with a band of Indians in which fourteen horses were shot and four men were wounded. The next day the McComas group found four white men killed and scalped “with indications of a hard fight.”

Perhaps the most remembered of the Snake River Indian attacks of 1862 were those that occurred on August 9 and 10 at Massacre Rocks west of present American Falls, Idaho. About 150 warriors first attacked the Smart train and then struck a company led by George W. Adams. Five white men were killed in the two assaults. The next morning Captain Kennedy of another train and thirty-five men attempted to retrieve property stolen from the two companies and engaged in a running fight with the Indians for three miles. Four more whites lost their lives. Captain Adams’s daughter Elizabeth died of wounds two days after the attack, bringing the total number of emigrants killed to ten. It was charged that the Indian warriors were led by white men and were armed with good rifles. As Charles M. Harrison of the Smart company explained later, “not one of us had ever been called upon to defend our lives or property by the use of such weapons.”

Throughout the summer accounts poured in of many other Shoshoni attacks on emigrant parties near Fort Hall. Superintendent Doty was told by one traveler that he had seen the bodies of three white men beside two abandoned wagons at the junction of the Salt Lake and California trails. On August 27, 1862, the Deseret News reported the killing and scalping of five men from a Denver company bound for the Salmon mines. The assailants looted the two wagons of groceries and “retired to their wick-i-ups.” The same observer saw many dead cattle and horses lying around, indicating other attacks. The Sacramento Union of August 18, 1862, heard from its Salt Lake City correspondent about the discovery by the P. Lumas Company of three murdered emigrants on the California Trail south of the Snake River. One of the three was identified as a German, Carl Bartlett. Lumas and his five companions decided to give up trying to reach California and hurried to the safety of Salt Lake City instead of traveling along the Humboldt “where there was no immigration.”

In his comprehensive journal, E. S. McComas listed several minor raids and depredations. On August 22 his company lost four cows to a raiding party and became so enraged at all Indians that when one wandered into camp wanting to trade three salmon, “some of us were in favor of shooting and some not.” They finally let him leave in one piece. Four days later Indians stole a pony. At Catherine Creek the McComas emigrants found an encampment of 200 soldiers that looked like a town—tents were pitched, women washed and cooked, children played, and the men were engaged in sundry occupations.

Medorem Crawford also reported a number of scattered attacks. On August 13 one military detachment discovered the body of an unknown man who had been shot in the head with a charge of buck-shot. Charles Brown, a ferry operator at Fort Hall, was seriously wounded and stripped of all his clothes in an attack on August 24. He escaped by feigning death. A man named Phillips was taken prisoner near the Goose Creek Mountains and killed in “a most barbarous manner.” The editor of the Deseret News of September 10, 1862, reported that the Indians on the Snake River were very hostile to emigrants and mountainmen. The newspaperman did not know the reason. He warned the greedy gold-seekers who risked their lives to travel to the Salmon River that “all is not gold that glitters.” The carnage along the trails near Fort Hall was so bad that thirty-two ferriesmen and traders were said to be abandoning their posts and heading for Salt Lake City. The News underscored its warnings by relating the story of an attack on forty emigrants from Iowa who lost most of their cattle and horses and eleven wagons and had to endure two subsequent attacks in which four of their number were killed. The destitute and starving were saved by a rescue party of Mormon settlers from Cache Valley.

James Doty listened to the tales of murder and assault and warned the commissioner of Indian affairs that there was at that time not a single agent from Fort Laramie to California, a distance of one thousand miles. He recommended that one be stationed at either Bear River, Soda Springs, or Fort Hall with a military post being established at the same place. The commissioner finally decided to issue a proclamation to the public on September 19 warning all persons thinking of crossing the plains during the autumn months that many robberies and murders had been committed by the “numerous, powerful, and warlike” Bannock and Shoshoni and that their hostility made any journey over the western trails a perilous one. Newspaper sources supported the announcement by reporting that renegade
whites were involved with the Indians. The Washington Statesman of September 20, 1862, claimed that in the region of Fort Hall and Raft River in one instance alone, a band of Indians and white robbers had taken $15,000 from travelers.

A final large-scale engagement occurred on September 12 near Raft River when a party of fifteen well-armed men under Charles McBride and John Andrews, returning from California to the States, was ambushed by thirty-five or forty Indians after trying to purchase some beef from a herd of about 500 cattle owned by a supposedly friendly band of Shoshoni. In a fight that lasted most of the day, six of the whites were killed. That night the remaining nine men started for the Box Elder settlement and were saved from death after five days without food when they met an emigrant company.20 Although Medotem Crawford wrote in his annual report for the year that only fifteen persons had been positively reported as killed in the Snake River attacks and that the accounts of massacres of emigrants by Indians had "been greatly exaggerated," the evidence now available indicates a much higher casualty rate.21 Indeed the year 1862 turned out to be sanguinary as starving natives indulged in reckless and almost continuous sorties against unwary pilgrims and gold-miners along the trails.

Utah Superintendent of Indian Affairs James Duane Doty had been warned by a message from Little Soldier, chief of the Northwestern Shoshoni in the Weber area, on August 2, 1862, that the Indians north of Great Salt Lake planned an all-out war on travelers and settlers. He reported

that the Shoshoni or snake Indians, and the Bannock Indians, inhabiting the northern part of this Territory and the southern portion of Eastern Washington Territory, have united their forces for the purpose of making war upon, and committing depredations on the property of, the white people, settlers in this Territory, and the Emigrants to the Pacific coast by the Northern route. That for this purpose the Shoshonee Indians have set aside Wash-i-kee, the great Chief of the Nation, because he is a man-of-peace and a friend to the whites, and have chosen in his place, as their leader, Pash-c-go, because he is a man of blood. That they are trying very hard to get the Cum-um-bahs, the Gos-Utes, and Sho-gars or Bannock Diggers, to join them. That they have already killed a number of Emigrants and committed many depreda-

tions on the property of the Settlers and Emigrants, stealing horses, cattle, &c.—That lately they have stolen and run off one hundred and fifty horses & mules at and about Ft. Bridger; a large number in the northern part of the Territory, and three head north of and within fifty miles of Great Salt Lake City. That they are now removing their families to the Salmon River country to get them out of danger—and that when the leaves turn red in the fall is the time they have agreed upon to assemble and when the leaves turn yellow and begin to fall the time they are to fall upon and exterminate all the settlers in the Territory. That all these war movements are instigated and led by War-a-gi-ke, the Great Bannock prophet, in whom the Bannocks, and Sho-sho-ness have unbounded confidence and faith—who lives in the vicinity of Walls Walla, in Oregon, or Washington Territory. Little Soldier, very urgently warns the people of the great danger hanging over them and advises them to have their guns with them at all times, in the Canyons and in their fields.22

Chief Washakie, however, was not "set aside" and remained friendly to whites, but, like many Indian headmen, he could not always control young hot heads, and some of his warriors appear to have been involved with the Fort Hall Indians and Northwestern Shoshoni in raids on the northern roads. Depredations continued due to government neglect of all the Northern Shoshoni tribes. While other Indians had treaties guaranteeing them presents of food and clothing each year, these "left-out" tribes were now throwing off restraint. The swiftest way for them to get the attention of men in authority was by attacking white citizens,23 and it worked. The commissioner of Indian affairs appointed Doty, Luther Mann, and Henry Martin as a special commission to negotiate a treaty with the Northern Shoshoni.24 Henry Martin bombarded Washington with demands for expense money and annuity goods so he could proceed to work with his two colleagues in signing treaties.25 Nothing was accomplished during 1862. The secretary of the interior was finally forced to get involved and on January 13, 1863, made an "urgent" request to Congress for $30,000 for the Indians of Utah Territory to maintain their "goodwill."26 Superintendent Doty wrote Governor James Nye in Nevada Territory asking his support in scheduling a meeting with the Shoshoni and Bannock to conclude treaties.27 Affairs appeared to be coalescing so that council meetings and agreements between government officials and desperate and destitute Indians finally might occur in 1863.

James Doty reinforced his entreaties for more funds for Indian
subsistence by emphasizing the necessity of keeping the mail line open. He wrote on July 30, 1862, “there has been no certainty or safety in the mails from this city Eastward...” He also feared that the Gosiute and the Western Shoshoni were starving and that they too would begin to attack stagecoaches and stations. He had visited these western tribes to distribute presents and wrote:

To say they are “destitute” but feeble describes their situation. They took the wheat... with the utmost avidity and with hearty thanks; and repeatedly I saw their children, lying on their bellies on the margins of the streams, cropping the young grass. I hope I shall receive the goods from the Dept. in time to clothe their nakedness before the snow falls and the winter commences.  

Two weeks after this letter, Doty reported that the Gosiute in Tooele and Rush valleys had declared their intention of robbing the mail line. They had already run off a number of cattle and horses from the Mormon settlements and had become so bold that “they enter the houses of farmers, and in an insolent manner demand food, and that meals shall be cooked for them.”

In his annual report for the year, Doty noted that he had distributed more presents to the Indians along the mail lines than to any other tribes in his district. The Overland Mail Company helped by feeding the starving Gosiute and Western Shoshoni, an action “well appreciated by the Indians” according to Agent T. W. Hatch. Frederick Cook, treasurer of the Overland Mail Company, tried to reassure his customers by dismissing any accounts of the mail being interrupted. This was on September 3, 1862, when he informed the Sacramento Union that mail delivery was on time with seventeen-day service from Placerville to the Missouri River.

Throughout the early summer of 1862, many concerned with Indian affairs in Oregon, Nevada, and Utah waited impatiently for the snows in the Sierras to melt so that Colonel Connor’s California Volunteers could march east. On June 25, 1862, the Deseret News anticipated their movement across the deserts of Nevada: “The Indians will of course be tremendously scared, and horse-thieves, gamblers, and other pests of community wondrously attracted by the gigantic demonstration.” These statements by the Saints’ leading newspaper were a far cry from heroic acclaim and did little to reassure Colonel Connor, who was already hostile and suspicious toward Mormon authorities. Connor finally left Stockton on July 12 with seven infantry companies (apparently companies C, D, and F were temporarily assigned to the Humboldt district). Almost 850 men, fifty wagons loaded with equipment and provisions, three ambulances, several carriages for officers’ families, and a herd of several hundred cattle made an imposing procession for the Indian and white population, which usually saw only stagecoaches and small emigrant parties. The column reached Fort Churchill just east of Carson City, Nevada, by August 3, and three days later Connor took command of the Military District of Utah. He warned all traitors to the Union that they would “receive the punishment they so richly deserved.”

Early in the expedition Connor faced discipline problems within his command with the freebooting Volunteers—a problem that was to recur at the Bear River Massacre. On August 11 Colonel Columbus Sims, commander of the Second Cavalry Troops, brought Captain Samuel P. Smith into Fort Churchill under guard after thirty men deserted on the march from California. Sims’s other officers had threatened to leave him and proceed by themselves declaring that if the companies were left with Sims in command “there will not be thirty of them left in sixty days.” Within nine days, Sims was relieved of his command, and Major Edward McGarry was placed in charge of the cavalry.

Although this may have been the most serious threat of wholesale desertion during the four years of Civil War service by the California Volunteers, the records do show a surprising number of men who just left for adventures elsewhere. Of the four cavalry companies and the one infantry company that fought at Bear River in January 1863, 21 percent, or 238 of the total enlistment of 1,121 men, deserted the ranks sometime during the four years of service. The figures vary from 13 percent, or 27 of the 212 soldiers in Company M, Second Cavalry, to a high of 30 percent, or 82 of the 277 men of Company H, Second Cavalry. After reaching Salt Lake City, for example, Connor was forced to offer a reward of thirty dollars each for eleven deserters in the Deseret News of November 28, 1862.

As in most armies, Connor’s subordinates varied in their leadership qualities and the discipline they imposed on their troops. Few
matched the iron command of veteran Patrick Edward Connor, but Edward McGarry was soon acknowledged as second only to the colonel in the forcefulness and audacity with which he led his men. His soldiers hardly dared to risk his wrath, but eventually they mustered enough nerve to charge him with being drunk most of the time, even while on duty. In a written complaint from Camp Douglas on October 13, 1864,

the men stated . . . that during the fall of 1862, while the regiment was on a march from Fort Churchill, Nevada, to Camp Douglas, Utah Territory, Colonel McGarry was "drunk" most of the time. They accused him of such nonsense as ordering Company K to dismount on the desert, lie down in the road and go to sleep, saying that he was leaving them to go out and fight Indians. He also threatened, according to the complaint, to shoot an enlisted man of Company K as an example to the other men. On another occasion he suggested tying Captain Smith, of the same company, behind a wagon. Colonel McGarry was at this time so under the influence of liquor, that after ordering his men to dismount and hold their horses, he lay down and slept until morning. The men held their mounts all night and did not reach camp until the following day at sunrise.

Connor usually chose Major McGarry for the most difficult assignments despite this drinking.

By September 1, 1862, three companies of the Second Cavalry joined the Third Infantry and began construction of Fort Ruby. Chaplain Anderson wrote the San Francisco Bulletin on September 24, 1862, and announced the deaths of three soldiers (two from typhoid fever), and expressed dismay about unhealthy conditions at the new post. He hoped that the Volunteers would be sent to Virginia to fight Rebels. This "patriotic desire to serve their country in shooting traitors instead of . . . freezing to death around sage brush fires . . ." partially accounted for the high incidence of desertions and was certainly shared by other members of the Third Infantry. Seven hundred soldiers subscribed $25,420 from their thirteen-dollar-a-month pay to the Union cause and proposed to General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck that they would pay their own passage from San Francisco to Panama "for the privilege of going to the Potomac and agetting shot." The War Department refused their proposal, leaving them to serve out their enlistments in the "abominable deserts" of Nevada and Utah, and this became a contributing factor in their strong desire to win glory by crushing the Indians.

The first chance to gain military distinction in Indian engagements came soon. Reports arrived in mid-September about an attack on emigrants eight miles from Gravelly Ford on the Humboldt River. The commander at Fort Churchill wired Governor Nye that twenty-three emigrants had been killed and citizens along the lower Humboldt were asking for assistance. General G. Wright promised the governor he would aid the residents, but there weren't enough troops at Fort Churchill, and Connor was asked to punish the guilty parties. By this time the number killed had been reduced to twelve. The perpetrators, reportedly Shoshoni Indians perhaps helped by white men, had dumped the bodies into a cold spring to conceal their deed. One newspaper, the Enterprise, was quoted as saying that because "Col. Connor's boys have been spoiling for action" that it "would be a wise plan to let them vent a little of their pent up fighting spirit" on the Indians. The editor made the point that "as winter is the best season to operate against them, the matter should be attended to promptly. . . ." He, of course, understood that by the time Connor could get his troops to Utah and into action against the Indians, the winter snows would prove to be an ally because the Shoshoni warriors would have less mobility.

Connor acted with dispatch. He issued orders to Major McGarry on September 29 to lead Companies H and K in an investigation of the Gravelly Ford attack. If friendly Indians delivered any tribe members implicated in the murders to McGarry, the major was to "immediately hang them, and leave their bodies thus exposed as an example of what evil-doers may expect while I command this district." McGarry was ordered to "destroy every male Indian whom you may encounter in the vicinity of the late massacres. This course may seem harsh and severe, but I desire that the order may be rigidly enforced, as I am satisfied that in the end it will prove the most merciful." The colonel was careful to note, "In no instance will you molest women and children." Chaplain Anderson explained, "No prisoners will be taken. To young ladies in gas lit parlors such measures may seem harsh . . . [but] a rigorous and retributive retaliatory policy is the wisest."

Connor then began to hold "pow-wows" with the neighboring Indians in Ruby Valley and offered various chiefs fifty dollars for each Indian implicated in the Gravelly Ford attack. Connor intended "to hang said live corpses to a tree and leave them as a warning to other
Indians who have a penchant for murdering white men and ravishing emigrant girls.”

In Major McGarry's formal report of his expedition he stated his companies reached Gravelly Ford on October 5 without having sighted any Indians. The soldiers did entice three Indians into camp who were shot by the guard when they ran away. McGarry wrote, "Fearing that they would escape, and not wishing to hazard the lives of my men in recapturing them alive, I ordered the guard to fire, and they were killed on the spot." Subsequently the command left on a scouting trip during which Captain Smith's troops captured fourteen or fifteen Indians. Nine were killed while attempting to escape by jumping into the river. Soon another six Indian men were taken prisoner. Two were released with the understanding that by evening they would bring into camp those who had taken part in the massacre or the other four prisoners would be killed. The next morning, true to his word, McGarry ordered the remaining four Indians shot. He released three Indian women and instructed them to tell their tribesmen that if they did not stop their attacks against emigrants he would return the next summer and "destroy them." The following day a detachment of troops under Lieutenants Darwin Chase and George D. Conrad killed eight more Indians who tried to avoid capture. McGarry's force had the "honor" of killing twenty-four Indians on this hunting expedition.

General Wright, in reporting McGarry's exploits, thought his action was "the only way to deal with those savages." Connor agreed "that the punishment was well merited . . . [and] the lesson taught them will have a salutary effect in checking future massacres on the route." McGarry's ruthless, brutal, and indiscriminate killing was an ominous portent for the California Volunteers.

The Deseret News of November 19, 1862, was critical of the entire expedition. "It was but reasonable to suppose that all the natives found had been killed, whether innocent or guilty," noted the editor. Because McGarry could not "find trees large enough," he had not been able to carry out the colonel's orders to hang the twenty-four Indians and had been forced to shoot them. The News was convinced the Indians killed were innocent of any participation in the Gravelly Ford massacre and that the two natives sent out to bring in the murderers "had not time to do so before the hostages were shot." The editor preferred President Abraham Lincoln's more magnani-

mous decision not to permit the military to hang 300 Sioux for their massacre of 500 settlers in Minnesota. The president had instead said, "Hang some of the ringleaders only. . . ." The News offered the opinion that McGarry's ruthless action on orders from Connor would only incite the Indians to violence, particularly against the northern Mormon settlements.

The California Volunteers remained at Fort Ruby while Colonel Connor traveled to Salt Lake City during September to reconnoiter the road and choose a site for his permanent camp. On September 10, 1862, the Deseret News noted his arrival: "The Colonel took a stroll about town and looked around with an air of familiarity that indicated that after all Salt Lake City was something of a place, and might not be unpleasant notwithstanding its desert surrounding." Back at Fort Ruby Connor wrote his superior that the Mormons were a "community of traitors, murderers, fanatics, and whores," and that the federal officials were powerless to do anything about Brigham Young's despotic control. Connor refused to settle his troops at Fort Crittenden and instead deliberately established Camp Douglas overlooking the city to keep a close watch on the Mormons as well as to police the mail lines. From this point on he waged a cold war with Mormon authorities. Warning his commander that he fully expected Brigham Young's militia to attack him at any time, he made repeated requests for more troops.

Connor and his Volunteers left Fort Ruby in late September and reached Salt Lake City on October 20. Six days later he declared Camp Douglas the headquarters of the Department of Utah. The Deseret News of October 22, 1862, welcomed the soldiers: "The troops looked . . . like a hardy set of fellows capable of performing any service that might be required." The News provided inadvertent evidence of what was expected when it continued, "Some of the horses seemed a little jaded, and not in as good condition as might be desired for an Indian campaign." The 850 men in the expedition settled down to prepare dugouts with tent roofs for winter quarters at the new camp on the benchlands three miles above Great Salt Lake City.

While Connor and his soldiers and Brigham Young and his followers bristled at each other in Salt Lake Valley, Indian-white relations in Cache Valley fluctuated as both groups tried to accommodate
each other. These stopgap measures would ultimately prove insufficient for resolving the deep-seated tensions.

On August 7, 1862, Peter Maughan declared that everything was peaceable in the valley, but settlers just across the mountains in Weber and Box Elder were suffering from the “thieving operations” of the natives. A month later the Deseret News commented on September 10 that the Northwestern Shoshoni of Cache Valley were “inclined of late to be saucy and belligerent in their deportment, and have committed some depredations, and threaten to do more. They are reported to be unusually fond of beef, which, if they cannot get in one way, they will take in another . . . They also . . . require from the inhabitants heavy contributions of flour.” Brigham Young noted growing reluctance among his people in the northern valleys to maintain peace, but he still was insistent that his long-held policy of feeding the Indians be continued. James N. Jones of North Bend, just around the spur of the mountain from Cache Valley, acknowledged this in a letter to the Prophet. “I rec’d your letter an have given the Indians a beef critter as directed . . .” Jones and his fellow Saints also delivered 205 bushels of wheat and 2,000 pounds of flour in addition “to what they get at our houses . . .” Despite these contributions, pioneer James Cantwell of Cache Valley recorded on September 27 “more horses stolen” and on two other occasions mentioned standing guard as a Minute Man because Bannock Indians were threatening to kill the Franklin settlers.

Maughan discussed the troubles at length in a letter to President Young. A band of either Bannock or Shoshoni had stolen between thirty and forty horses from farmers and had gotten a twelve-hour start on the Minute Men who could only recover nine or ten of the animals. Maughan explained further:

6 friendly Indians (if I may be allowed the expression) went along with our men, . . . it does seem to me that the Indians on the North are determined to drive us to hostile measures. I suppose they have taken 100 horses in three weeks, . . . I have never seen them so bold and daring in the Brethrens houses insulting the woman etc and what still makes it worse is, that those that pretend to be friendly will harbour those scamps about their wickiups untill they get their plans laid for stealing. At the same time we have been given them tons of flour and Beef . . .

The Deseret News feared that there would be other incursions into Cache Valley before winter set in.
However, the main hostile action in the autumn of 1862 turned out to be a minor engagement between Chief Bear Hunter’s band of Northwestern Shoshoni and Major Edward McGarry’s cavalry troops. The origin of the fight was entwined with the Otter Massacre on the lower Snake River during the fall of 1860. As already noted, Alexis Van Orman, his wife, and one son had been murdered, while another son and the three daughters of the family were captured by Indians. The three girls had died of starvation leaving the boy, Reuben Van Orman, the only survivor. Strenuous efforts were made to rescue Reuben including missions sent out by Agent John Owen from his Flathead post, a dispatch of three different military expeditions from Oregon, and at least one meeting between Utah Agent Benjamin Davies and Chief Sanpitch of the Northwestern Shoshoni. The Indian leader had announced that he knew that Bannock Indians were holding the four captive children in the Goose Creek Mountains and offered to return them to civilization. Nothing came of this offer, but the Oregon military continued to run ads in territorial newspapers. One as late as July 15, 1862, in the Portland Times requested any information about the identity and location of the guilty Indians.

Zachias Van Orman, the children’s uncle, initiated a personal mission to rescue them. In late 1862, Zachias learned from a relative who traveled to Oregon that he had seen a white boy living with a band of Indians in the Cache Valley area. Zachias arrived in Salt Lake City and asked Connor to help retrieve the ten-year-old Reuben. The colonel was happy to oblige and ordered Major McGarry to march to Cache Valley to meet Zachias Van Orman, who had gone ahead to try to locate Bear Hunter’s camp. Connor also sent an Indian named Jack to take word to the Cache Valley band that if they did not release the white boy immediately he “would wipe everyone of them out.”

McGarry arrived in Cache Valley on November 22, 1862, and was informed that about thirty or forty Indians were encamped near the town of Providence. Early morning of the next day he tried to surprise them by an attack. The Shoshoni, however, left in a hurry for a more defensible position in a canyon about a mile from the settlement. McGarry was able to capture one warrior trying to escape from the Indian camp. Bear Hunter and his men then rode out onto the bench between the mountains and the town and “made a war-like display, such as shouting, riding in a circle, and all sorts of antics known only to their race.” The major accepted the challenge, divided his forces into three attacking units, and ordered the soldiers “to kill every Indian they could see.” After about two hours of fighting, Chief Bear Hunter appeared on a hill with a flag of truce, which McGarry mistook for another war-like demonstration until an interested white spectator, Lee Dees, volunteered to talk to Bear Hunter. Dees then informed the major that the chief “did not want to fight anymore,” claiming “long friendship with the whites and always desiring peace.” McGarry ordered a cease-fire, and Bear Hunter and about twenty of his warriors came in and surrendered.

McGarry then discovered that the white boy had left the Indian camp several days before, so he told Bear Hunter that he would hold him and four of his men hostage until the boy was brought in. Three members of the band returned with Reuben Van Orman the next day, and McGarry released the chief and his warriors. Although in his official account of the battle McGarry claimed to have killed three of the Shoshoni, other accounts agreed with the Desert News report that the results were “federal loss, none—Red skins the same.” McGarry was pleased to report to Connor that he had accomplished his mission “without the loss of scratch of man or horse.”

The ten-year-old boy was now safe with white people at Camp Douglas, where he spent the next winter, but there was doubt that he was really Reuben Van Orman. Indian Tom and other Shoshoni gave positive and reliable information that the boy was the half-breed son of a French mountaineer and a sister of Chief Washakie. Although he had yellow hair and blue eyes, he could not speak any English and was a full member of the Northwestern Shoshoni nation. He had become a pawn in the war game being played out between the California Volunteers and the Cache Valley Shoshoni.

The day after the fight at Providence, Bear Hunter and his band came into the settlement “and abused the people for not helping them to retain the boy, . . . declaring that the settlers were cowards and dared not fight.” In one account Bear Hunter announced he would ambush the next group of soldiers he met and dared them to travel north for a battle. The Indians’ hostile demonstration against the citizens for feeding and sheltering the soldiers resulted in seventy Minute Men being sent from Logan. After a talk they gave the natives two beehives and a large quantity of flour, as the “best and cheapest policy,” with the citizens of Logan supplying the provisions.

The Northwestern Shoshoni, angered when the California Volun-
teers took Wakashie's nephew, soon became further enraged with McGarry. Colonel Connor ordered the major to lead 100 cavalymen to Bear River Ferry west of Brigham City where a large Indian encampment was supposedly holding stolen emigrant stock. The troops left Camp Douglas in the greatest secrecy the evening of December 4. They marched all through the next night and arrived at Empy's Bear River Ferry at dawn prepared "to give them [Indians] a little taste of the fighting qualities of the Volunteers. . . ." Somehow the Indians had learned of the departure of the soldiers and cut the ferry rope. The troops recovered a scow and crossed the river, although they were forced to leave their horses behind. The Indian camp lay in full view on a hill beyond the adjacent Malad River. Four unwary Indians were captured and made prisoner, and McGarry sent a message to the Shoshoni stating that if the stock was not delivered by noon the next day, he would shoot the captives. The chiefs responded by picking up the whole camp and moving north to Cache Valley. McGarry ordered the hostages tied by their hands to the ferry rope and executed. Fifty-one shots were fired before all expired, and the bodies were then "tumbled into the river."66

The Deseret News was critical about the marksmanship of the executioners. At one point the News editor asked why the troops had missed a golden opportunity for attack, forgetting that the cavalymen were unhorsed at the time.67 The News article also mentioned that "the killing of the four prisoners may have a salutary effect upon the natives in that region, but it is feared that it will tend to make them more hostile and vindictive."68 The Sacramento Union, however, came to McGarry's defense at once: "Now here is another nice opportunity for certain papers to become lachrymose and howl piteously over the just vengeance which has fallen upon these human fiends who have too long infested these regions and perpetrated their deeds of cruelty with perfect impunity." The editor attacked newspapers that defended the rights of the natives and pointed out in support of these arguments that one of the Indians executed was wearing pants stolen from an emigrant the previous season.69 Subsequently the editor singled out the Deseret News as one of the newspapers that had made "unfavorable mention" of McGarry's expedition.70

Anticipating a replay of the indecisive efforts of the military in earlier times, the Shoshoni reacted to the killing of their comrades with hostility. On December 24 they stole over twenty head of horses from Box Elder and Cache Valley farms. The Deseret News of December 31, 1862, stated that the Indians had settled on a course of revenge and that they were "mad, and determined to do as much injury as possible to the white race. . . ." The Sacramento Union, on the other hand, cited the approval of Connor's superiors for the tactics he was employing and noted Connor "means to give the redskins all they deserve—if he can catch them, . . . and the first approach of Spring will see the California volunteers on the march in every direction to clean out the Indians."71

Many settlers in Utah as well as travelers along the western trails were pleased to see Connor's troops located in Salt Lake City after the incessant Indian attacks near Fort Hall and along the Humboldt during the last six months of 1862. While Oregon and Washington authorities had sent out military escorts for emigrant parties, there had still been serious attacks at Massacre Rocks on the Smart, Adams, and Kennedy trains, which led the commissioner of Indian affairs to issue a proclamation on September 19 warning all travelers of perils along the roads. Superintendent Doty proposed a congressional appropriation to treat with the Shoshoni, but months slipped away before he could call a council with Washakie and other tribes.

Connor was forced to wait for winter snows to melt in the Sierra Nevada to move his troops east. In early July he marched across Nevada and established Fort Ruby. A month later the Volunteers moved to Salt Lake City to establish Camp Douglas overlooking the Mormon capital. While in Nevada, McGarry's ruthless expedition to punish Indians caught near the site of the Gravelly Ford murders telegraphed a message to the Indians of Utah and Nevada that was repeated later on in his trips north to Cache Valley and Bear River Ferry. The Northwestern Shoshoni were incited to retaliate as a result of McGarry's violence, especially when he killed the four hostages. The Cache Valley settlers were apprehensive about an increase in attacks from neighboring Indians, while Connor's troops, indignant at being denied an opportunity of going to Virginia to shoot Confederate Rebels, became determined to seize other occasions to gain military glory in offensives against the Indians. The increased travel along the Montana Trail directly through Shoshoni homelands only meant more conflict.

Historians have failed to take much notice of the Indian raids
along the Snake River and attacks by the California Volunteers under McGarry's leadership in the closing months of 1862. Even at the time, little attention was paid to these incidents because the Civil War captured the attention of the nation. As separate occurrences, these events have importance for western history, but, when placed together, they form a mosaic of discord. The failure of writers about the West to recognize the pattern of Indian hostility and army retaliation that led to the final engagement at Bear River also stems partly from a Mormon tendency to perceive themselves as being isolated from the rest of the nation and its citizens. The movements of army troops and counterattacks by Indian tribes were largely removed from the Saints' preoccupation with establishing the Kingdom of God on earth and surviving in their desert environment. Indian attacks that resulted in the deaths of individual Mormons or losses of stock were certainly keenly felt, but when the army moved in the Saints tended merely to look on as bystanders. Tactically, if not overtly, the Mormons were accomplices in the encounter with Chief Bear Hunter's people about to occur on January 29, 1863.

TEN

From Battle to Massacre

In late 1862 and early 1863 events precipitating the battle at Bear River began to coalesce against the backdrop of military life at Camp Douglas. The California Volunteers were firmly ensconced and Connor kept his troops in shape by ordering drills twice a day. As Corporal Hiram G. Tuttle confided in his diary on January 5, 1863, "Drill and dress parade today. Nothing more but nearly hell." Connor also took steps to keep the noxious whiskey establishments from nestling up against the soldiers' quarters by extending the post boundaries—a step he hoped would change the number of "without leave of absence" incidents. But drills and dress parades could not calm the Volunteers' discontent. They were dissatisfied with camp life and longed for action to win a little glory and bring Connor "what he merits, and what the troops long for—that Brigadier's commission. . . ." In a letter on December 20, 1862, Connor declared that the energetic and aggressive actions of his troops had secured the mail line from Ruby Valley to Ham's Fork. Some soldiers had been sent to Fort Bridger to squash an Indian attack supposedly instigated by Mormons, and, as usual, Connor blamed the Mormons for supplying the Indians and purchasing stolen emigrant equipment from them. The Mormons adamantly responded that unscrupulous traders were responsible for dealing in stolen emigrant goods. Agent Luther Mann and other agents again warned the Indian Office in Washington, D.C., that unless Congress voted money the Indians would continue to make trouble. But these occurrences were insignificant compared to events stemming from increased travel across Northwestern Shoshoni territory as miners journeyed to Grasshopper Creek and the Beaverhead mines.
On January 14, 1863, A. H. Conover, operator of an express service between Salt Lake City and Montana, arrived with news that expressmen George Clayton and Henry Bean had been murdered on the Cache Valley road. Conover reported that the Shoshoni were determined “to avenge the blood of their comrades” killed by McGarry’s soldiers, at Bear River Ferry and that the “spiteful” Indians intended to “kill every white man they should meet with on the north side of Bear River, till they should be fully avenged. . . .” The Deseret News wanted measures taken to “dispose them to peace.”

In another incident on January 5, 1863, ten men coming south from the mines were reported killed by Indian raiders. The next day a party of eight men traveling to Salt Lake City by a new route through Cache Valley missed the main ford near Franklin and ended up on Bear River opposite the village of Richmond. Leaving the others, three of the travelers went to Richmond for help and returned to discover that the Indians had driven off all the stock and robbed the wagons, “behaving very uncourteously to the five men. . . .” The group induced the Indians to return part of the stock and moved three wagons to the east bank of the river. The Indians then gathered on the west side and fired across the river killing John Henry Smith of Walla Walla, Washington Territory. The survivors raced for safety to Richmond, and Mormon Bishop Marriner W. Merrill sent out a party of four men to rescue Smith’s body for burial in the city cemetery.

When William Bevins, one of the miners, arrived in Salt Lake City, he signed an affidavit before Chief Justice John F. Kinney describing Smith’s murder. Kinney immediately issued a warrant for the arrest of Chiefs Bear Hunter, Sanpitch, and Sagwitch of the Northwestern bands and ordered territorial marshal Isaac L. Gibbs to seek assistance from Connor for a military force to “effect the arrest of the guilty Indians,” as the Sacramento Union put it. The colonel had already decided to make an expedition north to chastise the Cache Valley Indians after receiving news of the attacks. He 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.” Gibbs did so and later was commended by Connor for his aid in caring for the wounded soldiers. Connor made it clear that legal documents had nothing to do with his decision: “Being satisfied that they [the Indians] were part of the same band who had been murdering emigrants on the overland mail route for the past fifteen years and [were] the principal actors and leaders in the horrid massacre of the past summer, I determined, although the weather was unfavorable to an expedition, to chastise them if possible.” Connor was also responding to a general order that had been issued by the Department of the Pacific on April 7, 1862, spelling out the action military leaders in the West were to take against hostile natives: “Every Indian captured in this district during the present war who has been engaged in hostilities against whites, present or absent, will be hanged on the spot, women and children in all cases being spared.”

While Connor was making his plans, Chief Sanpitch was in Salt Lake City asking Brigham Young for help in reestablishing peace with the Indians on the northern frontier. “Liberal,” a correspondent for the Sacramento Union, understood that the Prophet had told Sanpitch the Mormon people had suffered enough from the Shoshoni of Cache Valley and that if more blood were spilled the Mormons might just “pitch in” and help the troops.

Fearing that the Shoshoni in their camp on Bear River might leave and deprive the Volunteers of a chance for a little “Indian killing,” Connor determined that secrecy about his troop movements would be necessary so the Indians wouldn’t move before the soldiers arrived. Connor had always considered winter the best time to attack an Indian village because the warriors would be settled and encumbered with their wives and children. As Mormon leader George A. Smith watched the highly mysterious army preparations proceeding at Camp Douglas and heard Connor’s intention to “exterminate” the Indians who had been killing emigrants, he predicted that the expedition would “result in catching some friendly Indians, murdering them, and letting the guilty scamps remain undisturbed in their mountain haunts.” At the soldiers’ quarters, Corporal Tuttle confided to his diary on January 19, “Received orders to be ready to march at any moment.”

Instructions to move came on January 21, 1863. Captain Samuel W. Hoyt of Company K, Third Infantry Regiment, was ordered to leave the next day in command of sixty-nine Volunteers. Fifteen baggage wagons carrying a twenty-day supply of rations and two howitzers with a supply of 100 shells were sent with him. The troops marched out of camp “in a heavy snowstorm” with the ostensible and
widely proclaimed mission to protect wagon trains hauling grain from Cache Valley.18 Connor's next move was to dispatch 220 men of Companies A, H, K, and M, Second Cavalry, under his personal command on January 24. They were to march by night to rendezvous with the infantry and cavalry forces and join a combined attack upon arrival at Bear River. As the San Francisco Bulletin of February 9, 1863, expressed it, Connor's plan of action to deceive the Indians into thinking that only a small force was being sent against them which might appear "to outsiders a queer mode of whipping red-skins..." The editor was convinced that the tactic would prevent the Indians from "skedaddling to the mountains..." and that "fear is the only motive they respect..."

The Sacramento Union of February 7, 1863, agreed that the Shoshoni would probably be "utterly 'used up'" by Connor while the Deseret News of January 28, 1863, chimed in that "with ordinary good luck the volunteers will 'wipe them out.'..."

Captain Hoyt's detachment marched placidly along giving the Shoshoni time to learn that this was just another army patrol coming to escort a wagon train. The command traveled thirteen miles the first day, another twenty-five the next to the Weber River, and then eighteen miles to Willard. They made another march of fourteen miles and, the following day, one of twenty-five miles to Mendon where they "laid over" a day to await the arrival of the cavalry units. On January 28, as Corporal Tuttle recounted, "Left camp 12 at night, went 34 miles to Franklin and camped."19

In his Special Order No. 11, dated January 24, to the companies of the Second Cavalry, Colonel Connor very carefully specified what arms and rations should be taken as well as ammunition. Captain Daniel McLean of Company H, with Lieutenant G. D. Conrad and fifty-five men, were to be "fully equipped for active service, with forty (40) rounds of Carbine ammunition and thirty (30) rounds of Pistol ammunition, per man...for duty in the field." Captain George F. Price and Lieutenant C. D. Clark of Company M with their fifty-five men were to have forty rounds of rifle ammunition and thirty rounds of pistol ammunition for each soldier. Lieutenant Darwin Chase of Company K and his sixty-five men were issued forty rounds of rifle and thirty rounds of pistol ammunition per man. Finally, Lieutenant John Quinn of Company A and his forty-five men received forty rounds of carbine and thirty rounds of pistol ammunition for each dragoon. With almost 16,000 rounds of ammunition, the California Volunteers did not have to worry about running out of shots. The orders concluded, "Each man will take with him the rations drawn and on hand for the balance of this month. Three days rations to be cooked and carried with his Haversacks. The least number of cooking utensils will be taken,"20 Two officer visitors to Camp Douglas accompanied the expedition—Major Patrick A. Gallagher from Ruby Valley and Captain David J. Berry.

The Shoshoni warriors, secure in their camp at Bear River and unaware of the intentions of the hard-charging troops, were obviously not as well supplied with arms and ammunition as the soldiers. The troops were so heavily loaded with ammunition that it was not surprising that Charles E. Middleton of Ogden could find "a cartridge box full of cartridges" in the road on January 28.21 During the engagement the Shoshoni were so short of ammunition that old men and women had to mold bullets in the middle of the fight.22 At least one trooper was wounded by arrows, evidence that not every warrior even had a rifle.23

Despite the armaments carried by Connor's troops, the colonel complained after the fight at Bear River about the Whitney rifles in use by two of his cavalry units "a very unwieldy arm and quite unsuited to cavalry service."24 The other troopers could have been armed with either Burnside, Maynard, or Sharps carbines. Many volunteer regiments were issued the Burnside weapon during the Civil War, and the California Volunteers may have had this gun. The Sharps carbine "was not the best-liked cavalry weapon in the army." There is no indication about the type of pistol used by the California Volunteers from among three in common issue: the 1858 Remington, .44 caliber; the Colt Model 1860, .44 caliber; or the .36 caliber Colt navy Model 1851.25 Connor had also requested some new pistols in his letter of February 26, 1863, noting that the ones in service in his outfit were "out of repair, and some totally unserviceable," which was not surprising after their heavy use at Bear River the month before.26

The march to Franklin was a bitter experience for riflemen and cavalymen, with weather so cold that whiskey rations froze in the canteens. The snow varied from one foot on the Salt Lake Valley floor to four feet on the divide between Brigham City and Cache Valley, and the infantry had a difficult task getting their wagons and
howitzers through. The cavalry units rode sixty-eight miles the first night arriving at Brigham City with feet frozen in the stirrups and “whiskers and moustache ... so chained together by ice that opening the mouth became most difficult.” Of the approximately 275 officers and men, including “Dutch Joe” and five other irregulars who went along, about 75 were lost to the command because of frozen feet. Some had to be left at Brigham City. Fighting Indians in midwinter at about zero temperatures was an unusual experience in United States military history, but Connor never wavered.

Colonel Connor was fortunate in being able to recruit the famed Mormon scout Orrin Porter Rockwell as his guide for the sum of $5 a day. Rockwell was aware of Shoshoni boasts that they would “thrash the soldiers” at the first opportunity and informed the colonel in advance that the Indians were awaiting any attack by the Volunteers and had “thrown up intrenchments” at their camp. It was reported, with evident exaggeration, that there were as many as 600 warriors behind the breastworks and manning the rifle pits to defend the seventy-five lodges of their people. Jim Gamble, a miner from the Grasshopper mines, had spoken to some Cache Valley Shoshoni on his way to Salt Lake City and reported the Indians had told him that they had nothing against the settlers but meant to continue to take revenge on white travelers for the injustices done them by McGarry’s troops.

When Company K of the Third Infantry and the four companies of the Second Cavalry bivouacked at Mendon on January 27, Connor issued very careful orders for the rest of the journey. The infantry marched into Franklin at about 5:00 P.M. on January 28. Just before the soldiers came in sight, William Hull was ordered by Bishop Preston Thomas to sack nine bushels of wheat for three Indians from Bear Hunter’s band who had been sent by the chief for another installment on the tribute the Mormon pioneers were used to paying. Hull later recalled, “We had two of the three horses loaded, having put three bushels on each horse ... when I looked up and saw the Soldiers approaching from the south. I said to the Indian boys, ‘Here comes the Toquather [Indian name for soldiers] maybe, you will all be killed.’ They answered ‘maybe Toquashes be killed too,’ but not waiting for the third horse to be loaded, they quickly jumped upon their horses and led the three horses away, disappearing in the distance.” Alexander Stalker noted in a letter to Peter Maughan that Bear Hunter himself had visited the settlement and “traded for some bread stuff.” The chief was therefore quite aware of the presence of the infantry but probably did not know about the four cavalry units that arrived in Franklin at midnight. The cavalry “fraternized with the infantry” as both units prepared for the assault on the Indian camp the next morning.

To ensure the infantry and cavalry would arrive at the same time at the Indian encampment on Bear River twelve miles away, Connor ordered Captain Hoyt to start at 1:00 A.M. with the wagon train, howitzers, and infantry. Hoyt, however, was delayed while trying to find a local guide who could direct the troops to the ford leading to the Indian camp. Two brothers, Edmond and Joseph S. Nelson, of Franklin, were finally “counselled” by local Mormon leaders to accompany the troops, but the infantry did not start until just after 3:00 A.M. Connor and the cavalry left an hour later and passed Hoyt’s company at a point about four miles from the river. The infantrymen struggled to move the heavy wagons and howitzers through the snow and wished they could have traded their wagons for the sleighs knowledgeable Mormon settlers used for winter transportation in Cache Valley. The howitzers never did reach the scene of battle and remained stuck in a snowdrift six miles back. Their presence would have saved the Volunteers many casualties but would possibly have made the carnage among the Indians even more devastating.

When Major McGarry and the first cavalry units reached the bluffs overlooking Bear River at 6:00 A.M., just as dawn was breaking, they could see smoke rising from early fires lighted at the Indian camp across the stream. The Bear River here meanders through a level flood plain that is a little less then a mile wide, and the river at this point makes a sharp turn to the west deviating from its usual north-south course. The river runs between bluffs two hundred feet high, and the bluffs on the south side are so steep that it would be almost impossible to get a wagon down them; they would even be difficult for men on horseback to negotiate. In winter the river is a rather swift-flowing stream about 175 feet wide and 3 or 4 feet deep. Beaver Creek (ever after called Battle Creek) lies across the river at its western bend. It flows southwest through a small valley to the edge of the western bluffs where it turns abruptly west and flows almost parallel to Bear but also provided an excellent defensive position behind the steep
River for a little under a mile before turning south to empty into the river. Cedar Point, a sharp headland, juts out close to Battle Creek where the stream enters the main valley. At its south end, the creek flows close to what is called today Wayland Hot Springs, one of the reasons the Shoshoni had chosen the site for a winter camp. A flat tableland about three-tenths of a mile wide lies between the river and Battle Creek, although old-time residents believe the river used to flow much closer to the creek before a flood changed its course.37

The only newspaper correspondent actually present at the battle reported for the San Francisco Bulletin. He described the Battle Creek ravine as being six to twelve feet deep and thirty to forty feet wide with an almost vertical bank on the east side. The Indians had cut three exits through this side so they could ride their horses in and out of camp. News writers mistakenly described rifle pits and entrenchments which the Indians had supposedly dug into the side of the bank to provide cover as they awaited the attack. Later observations revealed that these minor excavations were really just steps cut into the bank to afford easy access out of the ravine. Connor wrote, in his official report, that “under the embankments they had constructed artificial covers of willows thickly woven together, from behind which they could fire without being observed.”38 The river ford that the Nelson brothers were to pinpoint for Connor was located just above the mouth of Battle Creek. A dense overgrowth of willows, some twenty feet tall, covered the bed of Battle Creek and extended up and over the west bank across level ground to the steep bluffs stretching south from Cedar Point.

The Indian encampment was nestled along the bed of Battle Creek beginning south of Cedar Point where the ravine widened out to about seventy feet. Most of the seventy-five lodges were located here, although some extended toward the south where part of the Indian horse herd was tethered next to a large meadow that provided excellent grazing. Estimating an average of six persons for each tipi, there were probably about 450 Shoshoni men, women, and children in the camp. The base of each lodge was built up with stones and earth to keep the dwelling warm. The hot springs at the south edge of the encampment offered more warmth, and the Indians would be very reluctant to leave their snug quarters, “a miniature Sebastopol,” unless an extreme crisis occurred. The camp was chosen for comfort,
banks of the ravine with escape routes at the north by way of Battle Creek valley or at the south through the mouth of the creek.\textsuperscript{39} To the less than two hundred warriors roused from warm beds by early riser Chief Sagwitch the sight of an equal number of troops gathered in the frosty dawn across the river, while disconsoenting, did not dim their confidence in the security of their position behind the banks of Beaver Creek. There was the expectation that the army leaders would follow the usual pattern of demanding that the Indians surrender those guilty of the recent murders or, at most, take some hostages until a parley could resolve any problems between the two forces.\textsuperscript{40} The Shoshoni, with War Chief Bear Hunter in command, failed to realize the intentions of the daring and implacable military commander now facing them.\textsuperscript{41} The bands of Bear Hunter and Sagwitch who occupied the village could have used the strength of Chief Pocatello. Pocatello and his followers apparently had left camp the day before, but the Cache Valley Shoshoni were not overly concerned.\textsuperscript{42} There were no Bannock in the camp, as later reported by some writers; this was to be a wholly Northwestern Shoshoni operation.\textsuperscript{43}

Connor was so afraid that his quarry might escape that he ordered Major McGarry to cross the river “and surround before attacking” the Indians while he remained in the rear for a few minutes to order the infantry to speed up its advance. With Companies K and M in the lead, the cavalrymen started across the ford in water so deep that nearly every man got his feet wet. Private John R. Lee later described the crossing: “That was a bad looking river, half frozen over and swift. The horses did not want to go in it. Two old boys got thrown by their horses.”\textsuperscript{44} On the west bank the troops found open ground about four or five hundred yards from the ravine from whence about fifty warriors “sallied out . . . and with fiendish malignity waived the scalps of white women and challenged the troops to battle. . . .” This was Connor’s description. The accompanying newspaper correspondent wrote: “Here redskins were evidently full of good humor and eager for the fray. One of the chiefs was galloping up and down the bench in front of his warriors, haranguing them and dangling his spear on which was hung a female scalp in the face of the troops, while many of the warriors sang out: ‘Fours right, fours left, Come on, you California sons of b—s.’ . . .”\textsuperscript{45}

This was too much for the combative McGarry. He calculated that it was impossible for him to surround the large camp with his small force because of the difficult terrain, so he ordered his troops to advance a short distance and then to dismount and form a line with Company M on the right and K on the left. Every fourth soldier served as a horse holder, which reduced the number of men who now attacked across the open ground. The Indians fired the first volley wounding one trooper and then quickly retired to their hidden positions behind the east bank of Battle Creek. While the officers remained mounted, the soldiers were ordered to take whatever cover they could from the murderous fire pouring out of the willow-lined bank of the ravine. Companies A and H joined the firing line at about this time. Lieutenant Chase had dressed as a dandy and was an inviting target with his gaily caparisoned horse and uniform. He was struck twice but continued directing his men for about twenty minutes before retiring. Shortly after, Captain McLean was also hit twice and lost his horse. From seven to fourteen troopers were killed and perhaps twenty wounded in this first half-hour exchange. “Men [were] falling fast and thick, . . .” and five horses were killed. McGarry was forced to order a retreat to a point out of reach of the Indian fire, but neither he nor his men meant to give up the battle. The Shoshoni warriors, safe behind their screened trench, dominated the exchange, offering only elusive targets as they bobbed up for quick shots before sinking down behind their protected cover along the high bank of Battle Creek.

By this time Connor was on the scene. Leaving a line of holding fire in front of the Indians, he ordered McGarry to take twenty men to attempt a flanking movement on the Shoshoni left by leading the troopers up and around the north bluffs to the head of Battle Creek ravine. Company K, Third Infantry, had by this time reached the battle and, eager to join the fray, plunged into the icy river but found it impossible to cross the swift stream. Many of the infantrymen suffered terribly when their clothing immediately froze to their bodies. Connor ordered some of the horse holders to take their mounts and ferry the infantry across the river. The foot soldiers joined McGarry’s men and the combined force of about seventy-five men attacked down the ravine covering both sides and the creek bed. To complete the bottling-up process, Lieutenant Clark was ordered to move the remainder of Company K, Second Cavalry, in a holding attack against the Indian right flank. Clark was to control any escape at-
tempts at the mouth of Battle Creek by placing some men astride the
creek bed. Finally, Lieutenant Quinn was dispatched west across
Battle Creek to attack north and east against the Indian village and
cut off any escape to the west over the bluffs.

When McGarry's troops began moving down the ravine with en-
filading fire, this was the signal for all four military units to attack the
Indian camp simultaneously. For the remaining two hours the battle
became hand-to-hand and man-to-man fighting as the troopers
advanced from lodge to lodge against the "dogged obstinacy" of the
Shoshoni warriors. Indeed, the Indians had no choice while the sol-
diers "settled themselves down to the work before them, as a dray
horse would set himself to pull his load up hill." In the fierce contest
at his holding position immediately opposite the Indian camp,
Captain Price lost eight men either killed or mortally wounded. Later
the troopers counted the bodies of forty-eight Indians in one pile as a
result of the effective "execution" by Price's troops.

The slaughter of Indian warriors was immensurably aided by the
pistols and the generous supply of ammunition. The soldiers used
their small arms in the hand-to-hand encounters, and Mormon
Alexander Stalker later reported the troops "found their revolvers of
incalculable value." Some of the officers, at least, were two-
gun men. One eyewitness report noted that "Capt. McLean had a
pistol shot out of his right hand and while drawing another with
the left received a bullet in the groin." The close fighting in the
dense willow thickets was later described by the purple-prose
newsman who accompanied the expedition as a "vomiting volcano,"
punctuated by "the snakish whistle of the bullets." Colonel
Connor and the two visiting soldiers, Major Gallagher
and Captain Berry, were with Price's troops when the remaining
Indian warriors finally broke from what had become a trap in the bed
of Battle Creek. "A wild yell from the troops" alerted Connor, who
sent Lieutenant Conrad and a detachment to regain their mounts
from the horse line and to cut off the Indians racing for Bear River.
Lieutenant Quinn joined the pursuit with his mounted troopers who
helped drive the warriors into the willow-lined river banks. Further
hand-to-hand struggles took place in which Lieutenant Quinn had a
horse shot from under him, Gallagher and Berry were seriously
wounded, and "one of the men close by Colonel Connor was shot
from his horse." The officers dismounted and joined their men in the
close warfare raging up and down the riverbank when they discovered
they were targets for Indian fire. No orders were given, but each man
chose an Indian antagonist and fought to the finish. When some of
the Indians attempted to swim across the river, riflemen standing on
shore picked them off. They either were swept downstream to find
refuge under the ice or a watery grave. A few escaped by clambering
up the west bluffs above Battle Creek.

By ten o'clock, after four hours of fighting, with the first hour of
battle being in predawn darkness, the massacre was over. Surgeon
Reid had established an aid station near the horse line, but the
fighting was so intense and at such close quarters that the wounded
men had been left where they fell. The cold was severe and many of
the soldiers fought with frozen feet and "with fingers so frozen that
they could not tell they had a cartridge in their hands unless they
looked for it there." There were a number of miraculous escapes.
Captain Price received a ball on his left side that fortunately struck a
package of pistol cartridges in his pocket. The captain stopped for a
second expecting to fall, but discovered no blood and "felt much re-
lieved in his feelings." The San Francisco Bulletin reporter accom-
panying the expedition described the scene on the battlefield: "The
carnage presented in the ravine was horrible. Warrior piled on war-
tor, horses mangled and wounded in every conceivable form, with
here and there a squaw and papoose, who had been accidentally
killed." Throughout the engagement, most of the Indian women appar-
etly sought shelter for themselves and their children wherever they
could. Connor had warned his troops against shooting Indian
women and children, but in the constant shower of bullets many
were gunned down. The soldiers probably made little attempt to
discriminate when their own lives were at stake. One observer insisted
that "as soon as the squaws and children ascertained that the soldiers
did not desire to kill them, they came out of the ravine and quietly
walked to our rear. The same writer noted that three women and two
children were accidentally killed. The New York Times correspon-
dent, reporting the battle from other accounts, thought ten women
had been killed; the Indian "Matigan" (Matigund) informed
Samuel Roskelley that up to thirty women were killed "and many
children".
James H. Martineau of the Cache Valley settlers reported
ninety women and children killed; observer William Hull was of the
opinion that about 265 women and children had been killed. The single eyewitness reporter approached the problem from another perspective and announced that 120 women and children had survived the bloodbath, while Connor listed 160 as captives after the battle. It seems probable that a large number of Indian women and children were dead on the field after the close-quarters fighting in the confined and densely grown area of the engagement. Connor’s estimate of the number of surviving women and children may be the most accurate.

The colonel also estimated that his force of slightly less than 200 men had engaged 300 Indian warriors at Bear River, but the latter figure seems inflated by at least 100. Furthermore, while his soldiers were mostly young, physically fit, and vigorous men, at least some of the so-called warriors would have been elderly, and perhaps a few were crippled by disease or accident. The available evidence about the number of Indian men who escaped is surprisingly consistent. Nearly all close observers reported that about twenty got away. Four young warriors rode off on four army horses while the soldiers were picking up their wounded. Chief Sagwitch also escaped when he “tumbled into the River and floated down under some brush and lay there till night, and after dark he and some more warriors... took off two of the soldiers horses and some of their own ponies and went north.” He survived the holocaust with only a wound in his hand. His twelve-year-old son, Yeager Timbimboo, also survived by playing dead on the battlefield. A soldier discovered that the youth was alive but refused to shoot him. Subchief Lehi (spelled Leight by Connor) lost his life, as did Chief Bear Hunter. For some reason the story was circulated after the engagement that Bear Hunter was killed while molding bullets by a campfire. As war chief, it seems doubtful he would have been engaged in this activity in the midst of a firefight. For a total casualty figure, Connor reported, “We found 224 bodies on the field,...” his subordinate, Colonel George S. Evans of the Second Cavalry, recorded that “we succeeded in almost annihilating the band; having killed some two hundred and seventy-five—224 bodies were found on the field and as many as fifty fell in the river. ...” From the Indian point of view, Moroni Timbimboo, grandson of Chief Sagwitch relied on Indian tradition when he told an interviewer “there ain’t no 200 Indians killed. There were less than that.” But writing to the commissioner of Indian affairs just eighteen days after the fight, Agent James Doty, as one of the most responsible figures involved in the entire course of Indian affairs in Utah Territory reported: “The Indians state that there were 255 men, women and children killed in the late engagement on Bear river.” The newspaper correspondents usually adopted Connor’s estimate of Indian deaths, although the eyewitness San Francisco Bulletin correspondent listed the number as between 225 and 267. The Deseret News thought 250 to 300 was a proper guess, and the Union Védéiste, four years after the event, announced that 278 had been killed on the field and 25 were killed while trying to swim the river.

Dismissing the reminiscences of old settlers like 75-year-old Richard J. M. Bee, who recalled that 1,200 Indians and 200 soldiers had been killed and 1,500 horses captured, close observers from Franklin and other towns in Cache Valley also estimated the Indian deaths. John D. Dowdle and Wilford Woodruff apparently accepted Connor’s figure, entering the number 225 in their journals. Henry Ballard reported “about 200” Indians killed. Another Mormon pioneer, William G. Nelson of Franklin, visited the battlefield the day following the massacre. Called by Porter Rockwell on orders from Colonel Connor, Nelson, William Head, James Packer, Isaac Packer, and others were asked to take sleighs to the river to pick up wounded soldiers. Nelson asked Connor for permission to visit the battlefield and was granted it if he promised to touch nothing. He and a friend, Ephraim Ellsworth, saw where “14 soldiers and 5 of their horses had fallen in the snow.” They counted 76 dead Indians in the creek bed but apparently were so sickened by the sight that they did not proceed farther.

Four other Cache Valley residents contributed their accounts of the Indian battle casualties. Samuel Roskelley talked with the Indian “Matigund” on February 8, 1863. Matigund said about 60 warriors were killed and another 30 wounded, “some of which will die.” Adding this to the total of 30 Indian women he had reported as dead, Matigund’s figure was 90 or somewhat more. Alexander Stalker in his letter of January 30, 1863, gave 175 as the most reliable estimate. The man who seems to have established the highest count of Indian dead was the usually accurate Martineau, author of a military history of Cache Valley. He indicated that precisely 368 Indians had been killed but identified his source only as “an eyewitness from Franklin,” and furthermore, he wrote his description twenty years
after the event.79 Also raising a question is the fact that Martineau, just nine days after the battle, reported to his church leaders that from 200 to 250 were killed, a figure which is closer to the incident and probably closer to the facts.74 Careful and accurate Peter Maughan wrote Brigham Young on February 4, 1863, that Israel J. Clark had just returned from an inspection of the battlefield and “as near as we can find out there were about 120 Indians killed and about 90 Squaws & children, several have counted them to about that number.”75 Clark’s total thus came to 210 killed.

Weighing the evidence from these sources and aware that proximity in place and time count heavily in such evaluations, it seems evident that at least three estimates are reliable. Agent Doty talked with Northwestern Shoshoni leaders shortly after the engagement, and surely they had reasonable knowledge of the number slain. Their figure of 255 can be compared with the 210 reported by Peter Maughan, who did not include an estimate of perhaps as many as 25 or 30 who lost their lives in Bear River. And while it has been somewhat fashionable to discount the enumeration made by Connor’s troopers, there was no real reason for the victorious commander either to build up or decrease the actual number. On April 12, 1863, the clerk who was writing Brigham Young’s Manuscript History, a day-to-day account of Young’s activities, noted that “Col. Connor and his men destroyed some 250 men, women and children of the Indians . . . ” Thus, a reasonable estimate of Indian dead from the engagement at Bear River would be 250. It should be noted, however, that Connor did not differentiate among the casualties by sex or age. His detachment to survey the battlefield may not have done so, and perhaps also he had no desire to be labeled as a “squaw killer.”

The mopping up operations by his troops resulted in a lot of booty, which “more than paid all the expenses of the expedition,” as the Union Vedette reporter nicely put it. The salvage operators were gratified to learn that many of the wagon covers they retrieved bore the names of emigrant owners. Blankets, combs, looking glasses, and cooking utensils gave evidence of having been stolen from wagon trains. The soldiers also recovered over 1,000 bushels of wheat and flour, potatoes, beef, and “live chickens stolen from the settlements.” The reporter added, “a portion of the food was left for the women and children . . . ” The troopers also gathered in about 175 horses and used some as infantry mounts for the return to Camp Douglas. As a last gesture, the victors “appropriated to themselves as trophies of the war buffalo robes, gewgaws, beads, pipes, tomahawks, knives, arrows, and all such things.”76

In addition to taking nearly all Indian property, after the battle some soldiers spent the rest of the day in more reprehensible activities. Soldiers reported to Alexander Stalker that wounded Indians who were so incapacitated they could not move “were killed by being hit in the head with an axe.”77 James Martineau wrote of one instance in which a soldier found a dead woman clutching a little infant still alive. The soldier “in mercy to the babe, killed it.”78 Martineau also recorded more barbarity: “Several squaws were killed because they would not submit quietly to be ravished, and other squaws were ravished in the agony of death.”79 “Matigund” told Samuel Roskelley “the way the Soldiers used the Squaws after the battle was shameful . . . .”80 In confirmation of these atrocities, Peter Maughan reported to Brigham Young that about twenty strange Indians had come into Franklin and that “all are familiar with the conduct of the troops towards the Squaws etc. . . . ”81 In another letter, Maughan wrote: “Bro Israel J Clark has just returned from visiting the Battlefield and give the most sickening accounts of the inhuman acts of the Soldiers, as related to him by the squaws that still remain on the ground. . . . They killed the wounded by Knocking them in the head with an axe and then commenced to ravish the Squaws which was done to the very height of brutality they affirm that some were used in the act of dying from their wounds. The above reports are substantiated by others that were present at the time.” Maughan stated that the Indian women were afraid to come into the settlements because the soldiers might return.82 Most of the survivors traveled to the head of Marsh Creek several miles north where Chief Sagwitch had set up a temporary camp after his escape from the conflict.83

The morning after the fight, Bishop Preston Thomas sent some of the men from Franklin to the battlefield to offer assistance to Indian survivors. Matthew P. Fifield found one Shoshoni mother hiding in a “willowy cope” and holding her baby out of the water to save its life. Fifield took her to a campfire and helped get her dry clothes.84 Two women and three children were taken into Franklin where the settlers cared for them. The two women eventually rejoined their tribe, but two little boys were taken into the homes of William Hull and Edwin
Nielson. One died at the age of four and the other at nineteen. Hull also adopted the third child, a little girl, who grew up to marry a white man, Heber Riley, and to raise a large family.89

The bodies of the Shoshoni lay where they had fallen on the field, prey to wolves and magpies. In the fall of 1863, Captain James L. Fisk, on his expedition to the Rocky Mountains, visited the scene and recorded, “Many of the skeletons of the Indians yet remained on the ground, their bones scattered by the wolves.”86 A Deseret News reporter, five years after the event, also saw the site and revealed one Mormon view of the defeat of the Indians by writing, “The bleached skeletons of scores of noble red men still ornament the grounds.” He expressed regret that Pocatello and his “gang” had not been annihilated in the engagement.87

The Mormon settlers of Cache Valley expressed their gratitude for “the movement of Col. Connor as an intervention of the Almighty, . . . ” by placing this statement of approval in the official minutes of the Logan Ward.88 Peter Maughan added a final epitaph for the slain Northwestern Shoshoni, reporting to Brigham Young:

I feel my skirts clear of their blood. They rejected the way of life and salvation which have been pointed out to them from time to time (especially for the last two years) and thus have perished relying on their own strength and wisdom.

We have pretty good reason to believe that if they had gained the victory over the soldiers their intention was to take our Herd and drive it right to the Salmon River Country for their own special benefit.89

There was a mixture of piety and pragmatism in his words.

After the mopping up operations, Connor ordered the bodies of the fourteen soldiers killed during the engagement moved south across the river to a camp set up by Lieutenant Honeyman at the base of the bluffs. By nightfall the men were assembled around fires fed by the tentpoles taken from the burned tipis, and the wounded were housed in tents. Because about seventy-five of the soldiers had frozen feet, only twenty-five were fit enough to stand guard that night. Connor dispatched a messenger to Camp Douglas with news of the “victory” and with instructions to Lieutenant Colonel Evans to send a relief expedition to meet the returning troops. With the help of Potter Rockwell, arrangements were made to bring eighteen sleds and teams from Franklin and Richmond to transport the dead and wounded back to Camp Douglas. They and their Mormon drivers arrived at the soldiers’ camp at daybreak on Friday, January 30.90 At the end of the march to Camp Douglas, the military authorities paid the teamsters $42 for the trip plus provisions for their journey home.91 The Sacramento Union reporter approved of the actions of the Mormon guide: “Porter Rockwell . . . is given great praise for the manner he exerted himself in behalf of the soldiers, causing the inhabitants to furnish sheets and contribute such delicacies as the wounded required.”92 It is interesting that Colonel Connors blasted the Mormon settlers for not helping him on the march to Franklin but failed to acknowledge the Saints assistance on the return trip to Camp Douglas.93

The battered expedition spent the night of January 30 at Franklin where the able-bodied men camped in the local Mormon tithing yard.94 Mary Ann Hull remembered how the wounded were cared for. “We fixed up the meeting house with beds and everyone in town were solicited for cloth to make bandages for the wounded. The suffering was terrible. We could hear nothing but moans all night.” She added, “Pey was not thought of in those days.”95 Riding on the eight-foot sleds built with two solid runners “gave a very hard and choppy ride,” which only added to the agony of the wounded.96

At Logan on the night of January 31 the citizens took in the soldiers—as many as fifteen for each household. They provided beds, furnished supper and breakfast, and even got up a few parties for those able to attend.97 Margaret Ballard sent bread, butter, and eggs for the troopers camped on the Mormon “Tabernacle Square.”98 The next day the troops battled snowdrifts in the pass between Wellsville and Brigham City but had to give up and return to Wellsville for the night. Bishop Maughan gathered men and teams the following morning and beat a path over the mountains to Brigham City where the exhausted soldiers spent the night of February 2.

The expedition set up camp at Ogden where a Dr. Williamson and a Dr. Walcott Steele from Dayton, Nevada, helped Dr. Reid care for the wounded. Parson Anderson also showed up to offer spiritual guidance.99 Lieutenant Chase was so weak that he had been left at Brigham City but was taken on the next day to Farmington where he died. Chase had once been a member of the Mormon church and for a time had served a short jail sentence in Missouri with Apostles Parley P. Pratt.100 When he was picked up at the battlefield by William
Nelson, Chase begged Nelson and another Mormon Elder, Fileman Merrill, to perform the religious rite of administering to him to relieve his pain. Nelson answered, "I said I thought it would be the wrong thing to do, so he was not administered to."101

The historical secretary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints wrote on February 4, 1863, "Col. Connor and his horseman passed the office for Camp Douglas about 5:00 P.M." The colonel brought with him fifty-four or seventy or seventy-five frostbitten men, depending on which source is read.102 Another man had died at Farmington, so there were now sixteen bodies to be interred. A funeral for the sixteen servicemen was held on February 5; Lieutenant Chase was buried the next day. The last death occurred on March 24, 1863, when Private William H. Lake finally succumbed to his wounds.103 The church secretary commented, "The Solders that were buried were mostly Catholics."105 The total number who died as a result of the action amounted to twenty-two enlisted men and the one officer, Lieutenant Chase. Within the next five months, even more soldiers were discharged as a result of disabilities stemming from wounds received in the battle. As the list in Appendix A reveals, "The Indians evidently aimed at the belt, as most of the killed and wounded were hit in the lungs or other parts of the trunk."106 Connor reported on February 26, 1863, that he still had ninety men sick in quarters and twenty-two in the hospital, while four had toes amputated and two lost a finger each.107

After the melancholy burial of his dead, Connor complimented his troops and informed his superiors about the battle. He gathered his soldiers in a dress parade on February 6 to praise their courage and endurance during the engagement against the Indians.108 The soldiers were also honored in other ways. Among the many poems that clogged the columns of frontier newspapers was one entitled an "Anniversary Log" by E. P. Kingston. It appeared on February 1, 1864, in the Union Vedette and had one verse that read:

Ten o'clock; the fight is over! Four long hours of Blood and death;
Four long hours of savage conflict—firm lips and bated breath.
Where shall now the great "Bear Hunter"—where shall "Lehigh" now be found.
There! with nearly thrice an hundred, dead upon the battle ground.

There, the foe who knew no pity—who ne'er checked his wrath to save,
Shall have snow flakes for his cereements,
and the ice-drift for his grave!

There were no eulogies for the native side.
In his formal report of the encounter, the colonel singled out Majors McGarry and Gallagher and Surgeon Reid for their "skill, gallantry and bravery. . . ." Brigadier General G. Wright, commanding the Department of the Pacific, announced the "signal victory" by Connor's troops and commended their "heroic conduct . . . in that terrible combat. . . ." Not to be outdone in rhetorical flourishes, California Governor Leland Stanford added his eulogies.113 On March 29 General-in-Chief H. W. Halleck praised Connor's "splendid victory" at Bear River and granted him the longed-for brigadier general's commission.114

In spite of this, all was not commendatory. General Connor came under criticism for losing twenty-three men at Bear River after Captain S. P. Smith led an attack on some Gosiute in May 1863 and killed fifty-three of the Indians with no casualties. A newspaperman reported, "The men render great praise to Captain Smith for his bravery and gallant conduct during these desperate engagements, and regret that he could not have been at the Bear River fight, where he undoubtedly would have mitigated the great loss of life and the number wounded for the small number engaged."115

The Cache Valley settlers were satisfied that Connor's aggressive tactics in the battle with the Northwest Shoshoni meant that they would "never again attempt a fair stand-up fight," and that the engagement had "put a quietus on the Indians."117 Isaac Sorenson was a little more cautious: "This put an end or mostly so to Indian depredations in Cache Valley. . . ."118 Samuel Roskelley reported a different result. The Indians told him they were so angry with the soldiers that they intended to steal all the horses they could and would "kill every white man they could find. . . ." The New York Times chimed in with a common eastern point of view, wondering if Connor's extermination of the Shoshoni might not prove a "dear-bought one," and expressed the thought that conciliation was sometimes better than a fight. The Portland Oregonian used the incident at Bear River to charge that while California had contributed
seven regiments to the Civil War, Oregon had sent only seven companies and asked its patriotic citizens to emulate the California Volunteers by enlisting more troops for the Union cause.  

For fifteen years the Northwestern Shoshoni watched aggressive Mormon pioneers usurp their lands and the large cattle herds destroy the grass seeds that constituted their basic food supply. The natives were compelled to compete with white hunters for dwindling amounts of wild game. The Indians could only choose between begging from their prosperous farm neighbors or raiding well-provisioned emigrant wagons or mail stations, depending on how desperate they were for food and clothing. Furthermore, the introduction of white culture had brought with it a desire among the Indians for white clothing, tools, guns, etc., and emigrant parties offered tempting targets. White incursions reached a breaking point when parties of miners began to trek across Shoshoni homelands to get to the gold mines in Montana.

A new and threatening element was added when United States regular troops established Camp Floyd. The Indians were more familiar with being fed by the Mormons than with fighting, and they were initially unprepared for encounters with soldiers. Attempts to negotiate with the Indians using parleys, truces, and treaties accustomed tribal leaders to expect these solutions. Connor’s Volunteers had very different goals that reflected the prevalent mood of violence and bloodshed gripping America. The Volunteers were adventurers spoiling for a fight and longing for glory. Although disciplined by their colonel, they could go too far in the midst of battle if their commanders turned their backs and gave them tacit permission especially if the enemies were ignoble “savages.” The record of the Volunteers at Gravelly Ford, Cache Valley, and Bear River Ferry demonstrated their ruthless attitude toward the natives. A reporter from the Sacramento Union pointed out on May 30, 1863, that the Volunteers had killed 375 Indians since their arrival in Utah Territory with a loss of only two officers and twenty-two men (twenty-three of these came from the Bear River encounter).

Connor’s intention to take no prisoners at Bear River and his efforts to keep his expedition secret to maintain the element of surprise set the stage for bloodletting. His attack on a camp where there
were women and children ensured the deaths of many who were not even combatants, and, as noted, his official report carefully listed only 224 casualties without any reference to age or sex.

The first hour of the engagement had all the elements of a battle. The Indians were entrenched and prepared for the attack, the troops suffered their greatest casualties in assaulting their foe across open ground, and the soldiers continued at a disadvantage until orders were given to flank the Indian position from the end of the ravine. As the combined infantry and cavalry units advanced down the defile with a devastating enfilading fire, and as other troops were dispatched to command the western bluffs in the rear of the Indian camp and to seal off any escape route at the mouth of the ravine, the next two hours of the fight developed into a massacre. Outgunned, the Indian men, women, and children fell in heaps before the Volunteers. In fact, the close-quarters combat in the thick willows with the several shots each soldier had from his pistol and his store of thirty cartridges meant that the Indians could not compete in the individual duels that took place. The last hour of the four-hour fight degenerated into a brutal slaughter as the soldiers went around with axes or other handy weapons beating wounded Indians in the head to end their suffering “in mercy.” For the Northwestern bands the tragedy was of immense proportions—at first a battle, then a massacre, and finally a wholesale slaughter. Accepting Don Russell’s analysis of “How Many Indians Were Killed?”, as mentioned in the Introduction to this book, the massacre at Bear River was evidently the first major Indian massacre in the Trans-Mississippi West. There were smaller affairs, but Connor’s killing of 250 Northwestern Shoshoni ranks as the most bloodthirsty of the five incidents examined by Russell.

While most Indian massacres in the American West depend on the perspective of white reporters and officials for their telling, the sanguinary killing at Bear River has been reconstructed from traditional accounts passed down from generation to generation. Mae T. Parry, granddaughter of Chief Sagwitch, published an Indian portrayal of the “Massacre at Boa Ogoi” in 1976 (Appendix B). Even though it depends on oral transmission of facts from over a hundred years ago, Mae T. Parry vividly recreates the memories and emotions of the survivors of the massacre.122
thirty-six stolen horses after killing one Indian and wounding another; and one newspaper correspondent exaggeratedly claimed that the Shoshoni had already robbed pack trains of almost 500 animals. When two men were killed on the Snake River in mid-March, their companions and other miners adopted the motto, “Kill every Snake Indian on sight.” The miners demanded protection from the military, and petitions from suffering miners asking for help poured into the office of Governor W. H. Wallace of Idaho Territory.

The perennial troubles with emigrants traversing the Oregon Trail added to the apprehensions of more permanent settlers in the Boise region. Seventeen-year-old Mrs. A. A. Cooper recorded how her train of frightened travelers expected to be massacred at any moment. After several scares the party actually met four Indians who came to sell fish. “Some were for slaying these four Indians right away…,” but good sense prevailed and they were allowed to depart in peace.

Oregon Indian Superintendent J. W. Huntington, in a long letter to the commissioner of Indian affairs on June 1, 1863, revealed the usual ignorance of his office about the Snake River Shoshoni. However, he insisted that part of the $20,000 congressional appropriation of July 2, 1862, be used to treat with the Snake Indians. Huntington felt that an all-out war with the Snake River Shoshoni was inevitable and regretted, as did General Benjamin Alvord, that Oregon troops could not be sent to the area until midsummer.

Alvord finally appointed Colonel Reuben F. Maury to command an expedition against the Snake Indians. In August Maury reported that most of the Shoshoni along the Snake River had traveled to Fort Hall to make a treaty with General Connor, although some of the more hostile warriors were still south of Salmon Falls. At the falls one of Maury’s detachments met about 200 Shoshoni who were so destitute and defenseless that the troops “could not, with any regard for humanity, assault them.” Maury met Captain Modorem Crawford’s military escort near Ross Fork on August 17 and was told by Crawford that there had been no difficulty with the emigration this far on the journey to Oregon. The Indians at Fort Hall looked forward to treaty negotiations with Connor realizing that “any other policy… would lead to extermination.” The Shoshoni Along the Snake River “expressed great desire for peace and a willingness to do anything or go anywhere they might be directed,” but by late fall they were still waiting for Connor and his peace council. It did not arrive until the following spring, and conflict for the Shoshoni of the Boise region did not cease until they moved to the Fort Hall Reservation in early 1869.

Despite their lack of legal responsibility for the Shoshoni and Bannock at Fort Hall, Utah Indian agents continued surveillance of these tribes and attempted to provide presents for them. Agent F. M. Hatch complained in February 1863 that the few goods allotted to Utah usually were given to the Indians who visited Salt Lake City frequently, whereas those two or three hundred miles away received very little. Superintendent Doty also had a gripe since the $20,000 appropriation to be used for negotiating treaties had not arrived in December 1862 as promised. This left the Indians believing “that the President has cast them off, and does not intend to give them any more presents.” When the money was finally sent for treaty negotiations, the commissioner left its distribution to Doty’s discretion, warning that the money should be used as economically as possible. James Duane Doty was so successful as superintendent of Indian affairs that, in June, he was made governor of the Territory of Utah, a position which would enhance his role as peacemaker with the tribes.

Doty seized an opportunity to check up on the Shoshoni and Bannock at Fort Hall by accompanying General Connor on his trip to Soda Springs in the late spring of 1863. The general wanted to follow up on his victory at Bear River by imposing his will on the Indians near the junction of the new Montana Trail with the Oregon and California trails. He planned to garrison a post in the area to guard emigrant parties traveling to the coast and groups headed for the Beaverhead mines. His other purpose was to help found an anti-Mormon settlement next to the new post. During the winter at Camp Douglas he had assisted and protected a group of dissenters from the church, the Morisites, who feared persecution from the Saints.

On May 5 Captain David Black and Company H, Third Infantry, California Volunteers, left Camp Douglas for Soda Springs accompanied by 160 Morisites. The following day Connor left with Company H, Second Cavalry, under the command of Lieutenant Cyrus D. Clark, hoping to surprise the remnants of the hostile bands he had engaged at Bear River in January by making two secret night marches
beyond Brigham City. He encountered only two lodges of friendly Shoshoni in Portneuf Valley and "passed on without molesting these Indians." At Snake River Ferry, near Fort Hall, he and Superintendent Doty held their council with about 300 Shoshoni. The general explained his troops were being stationed in the area to protect both good Indians and white people but would "visit the most summary punishment, even to extermination" on any Indians who attacked emigrants or settlers. He was told that Pocarello, "the great chief of the hostile Shoshoni," was on the lower Snake River, that Sagwitch was in Cache Valley, and that Sanpitch was farther east. Connor then sent Lieutenant Clark and twenty-five men to reconnoiter a new road from the Blackfoot River. On May 20 the infantry arrived at Soda Springs with the anti-Mormon settlers, and Camp Connor was officially established three days later. The town was located just west of the military camp. After six days at the new post, Connor left for Camp Douglas, arriving there May 30.15

In the report to his commander about the trip to Soda Springs and the establishment of Camp Connor, the general also noted that later he had left Salt Lake City on June 3 for Fort Bridger where he talked with about 700 of the Eastern Shoshoni who "are tired of fighting and want to be at peace. . . . The fight of last winter is telling on them." They gave up 150 stolen horses and mules. Connor sent a detachment of troops after two small hostile bands numbering about 100 warriors whom he hoped to "destroy" soon. With this exception and uncertain knowledge about conditions at the Boise mines, he considered the Indian troubles in his district "very near an end."16

After his meeting with the Eastern Shoshoni under Chief Washakie in early June,17 Connor, with Doty, then prepared for negotiations with the tribe to conclude a formal treaty of peace. The Salt Lake City correspondent for the Sacramento Union explained the circumstances behind the preparations. Washakie had always been friendly to the whites. "He never seeks presents—he never begs—but will allow his men to receive presents," but they would not presume to do so in his presence. If he ever decided to go to war with the whites, he would first "send in his 'papers,'" recommendations given him by military and other government officials. According to the reporter, the chief was now a bitter enemy of the Mormons and those "Mormon Indians" who hung around the Utah settlements. The Cache Valley Shoshoni, having been deceived by the Mormons who had helped the soldiers at Bear River, now were "on the war path against the Saints."18 Superintendent Doty carefully explained to the commissioner of Indian affairs that he was proceeding to the treaty council under the original orders of July 22, 1862, and that the commissioner should realize that Washakie's tribe constituted only one-third of all the Shoshoni. It would be necessary to travel to several points and conclude several treaties in order to achieve peace with all the Shoshoni bands.19

The treaty with the Eastern Shoshoni, finalized on July 2, 1863, contained the following provisions: Article 1 reestablished friendly relations; Article 2 required the Indians to help maintain safety for travelers along the trails and to deliver to proper officials of the United States any offenders who committed depredations on emigrants and settlers; Article 3 maintained the right to continue telegraph, stage, and, later, railroad routes through Shoshoni territory; Article 4 outlined the boundaries of Washakie's tribe, which included the Wind River Mountains; Article 5 established that the Eastern Shoshoni were to receive an annuity payment of $10,000 a year for twenty years; Article 6 acknowledged that the tribe had received $6,000 in presents at the time of the signing of the treaty; and Article 7 added a qualification that the Shoshoni could not claim any more land than they had held while their country was under Mexican law. The treaty was ratified by the United States Senate on March 7, 1864.20

General Connor's peaceful forays into Shoshoni country at Fort Hall and Fort Bridger were quite different from his experiences in Utah territory, where serious troubles with the Ute Indians brought sharp clashes with the California Volunteers. The continued expansion of Mormon settlements and the fact that the Utes were not involved in the Bear River affair meant that friction was likely to persist in central Utah. Trouble started when Lieutenant Anthony Ether and twenty-five men were sent on an Indian-hunting expedition to Skull Valley, west of Great Salt Lake. Ether did not sight any natives until he neared Cedar Fort. There he found about 100 peaceful Northern Shoshoni or "Weber Utes," under Little Soldier with their chiefs "riding the war circle." After being fired on he attacked the Indian position twice and wounded one Indian but was forced to withdraw to guard his horses, which were in danger of capture. He moved his men to Fort Crittenden and sent word to Connor that the Mormons in the neighborhood had not only not helped him.
guard his animals but were actually talking treacherously to the Indians in "plain sight of me." 21

The general responded to Ethier's message by dispatching Captain George P. Price and fifty-one men to Fort Crittenden as reinforcements. The combined force then spent three days tracking the fleeing Little Soldier Shoshoni band to Spanish Fork, where, on the evening of April 4, some Ute Indians were discovered at the mouth of Spanish Fork Canyon.

The California Volunteers now attempted to repeat with the Ute the extermination they had administered on Bear Hunter's Shoshoni at Bear River. Over the next eleven days they engaged in three skirmishes with the Ute during which a Ute warrior was killed as the result of an attack by the troops in Spanish Fork Canyon. On April 12, in what turned out to be a comic opera affair, a small howitzer detachment defended itself against 100 attacking Ute in the Mormon town of Pleasant Grove and drove off the warriors after killing four of their own mules with a misdirected shot. In a final and more serious affair of April 15, a large body of the Volunteers under Lieutenant Colonel George S. Evans, assaulted about 200 Ute in Spanish Fork Canyon and succeeded in killing thirty of the Indians with the loss of one, Lieutenant F. A. Peel, the only other casualty of the California Volunteers in Utah besides the twenty-three killed at Bear River. One hundred and seventy-one of the Volunteers were engaged in the battle. 22 Superintendent Doty was certain that if he had received his $20,000 appropriation the previous December, as promised, the difficulties with the Ute and with Little Soldier's Shoshoni band could have been avoided. 23

General Connor finally undertook to secure peace with Little Soldier by sending William Hickman as a government agent to persuade the chief to come to Camp Douglas for a talk. Little Soldier was understandably distrustful of any council with the Volunteers and refused to budge from his mountain retreat twenty-five miles west of Salt Lake City until Hickman had delivered some presents of blankets "to convince them that he was not talking 'forked,' and trying to entrap them." Even then, the chief only consented to send one of his trusted lieutenants, Weber Jim, to meet with General Connor. On June 24 Connor and Weber Jim concluded a treaty of peace, or "satisfactory understanding," as the general expressed it. There was no formal, written document, only a verbal agreement. With Little Soldier finally convinced of Connor's sincerity, the chief surrendered all the government stock held by his band and came in to confer with the general and Doty. 24 Other presents were delivered to the band at a cost of $3,700 to the Utah superintendent. 25 The Deseret News of July 1, 1863, expressed the hope that the troops would now no longer "fight inoffensive Indians" like Little Soldiers's band.

Of all Indian difficulties faced by the military and Doty's office in 1863, the first priority was protecting the Overland Mail Company stations. Delayed appropriation of the $20,000 for treaties exposed the Indians along the mail line to great hardship and left them with only one alternative—to rob the stations for food supplies. The Overland Mail Company claimed it had spent $12,000 subsidizing the natives along the route the year before (more than the amount supplied by the government), but could no longer afford to do so. 26

The prospect of starvation and the ruthless tactics of the California Volunteers angered the natives west of Salt Lake City, and they began a series of attacks on the mail stations. Word reached the city on March 22 that the stage driver and a passenger had been killed at Deep Creek. The very next day news arrived that two men had been killed and scalped at Eight-Mile Creek and that all the hay at the station had been burned. 27

Connor immediately ordered Major Gallagher, in charge of Fort Ruby, to capture and punish the perpetrators. Gallagher was sure he could keep the road open and safe—"My whole aim has been the detection and punishment of the Indians who have been committing depredations on the Overland Mail Line. . . ." Major Gallagher and General Connor were frustrated, however, by the hit-and-run guerrilla tactics and the Indians' refusal to challenge Connor's troops in open battle. 28

Assaults on the mail stations continued. On March 26 about a dozen Indians attacked Willow Station but were driven off. The warriors then struck Boyd's Station. 29 The next week the stage was set upon near Schell Creek Station and one of the horses killed, but the driver escaped by increasing "the speed of his horses. . . ." Six Indians were driven away from Faust's Station when they tried to drive off stock. 30 In early May Captain Samuel P. Smith went "Indian hunting" and annihilated a band of fifty-three Gosiute who were
"supposed to be the ones that committed depredations on the overland route." No one was sure, but there were now fewer natives to worry about." Captain Smith was an especially ferocious Indian killer and was rewarded for his butcheries by being promoted to major on May 9, 1865.

The savagery of the Indian attacks was emphasized when the stage was riddled with bullets and the driver and a stage company employee were killed and mutilated at Point of the Mountain, twenty-five miles south of Salt Lake City. A few days later at the same spot a second coach was assailed and two more men were murdered. Phoebe Westwood, a non-Mormon resident of Fort Crittenden, who saw the scalps of two of the victims, was exasperated with the Mormon people because they still showed friendship to Indians. She exploded in a letter to a friend, "The Bishop down there treated the Indians with Tobacco, and ordered the people to feed them, and it made me so mad that I pitched into them, and told them what I thought of them, and then I felt better." 33

In a sharp exchange of hostility along the mail line in 1863, Captain Smith in mid-June killed ten Indians at Government Springs. Then, during the first of August, he "discovered a nest of Gosh-Utes" about twenty miles north of Schell Creek Station and killed twelve of them, "only two escaping." 34 Smith's relentless Indian hunting was revenged by Chief Peah-namp, whose wife and child were among those killed by Smith and his troops. 35 Peah-namp and his warriors assaulted Canyon Station, and the stationkeeper, William Riley, was shot and then thrown onto the woodpile, which was set afire. Four soldiers in the barn were either killed outright or while trying to escape on horseback. The last was caught, and "as he was so bald on the top of his head, and a good growth of whiskers on his chin, they scalped that and left him where he fell." The warriors then burned all the buildings. 36 The Deseret News of July 15, 1863, stated that things had gotten undeniably worse along the mail line since the Volunteers had been stationed on the route. The editor thought the soldiers' habit of nailing the scalps of Indian victims to station walls only assured more attacks.

General Connor assuaged his frustration at not being able to stem the Indian onslaughts by assuring his superiors that despite having to patrol 800 miles of road, there was no danger to travelers or stagecoaches. 37 By August 1863 that was more accurate than it had been earlier in the spring and summer. Connor stated that Mormons disguised as Indians were instigating most of the difficulties and asked for two cannon and two field guns with battery wagons and caissons to meet this threat of the subversive Saints. 38

The Deseret News writer also heard that General Connor had given orders to "shoot all Indians ... whether friends or enemies, without distinction" but could not believe he was "thus void of humanity." 39 Four years after the events of 1863, a New York writer by the name of Mark Twain was not so sure that this forgotten general of the West could not have given such a command:

I am waiting patiently to hear that they have ordered General Connor out to polish off those Indians, but the news never comes. He has shown that he knows how to fight the kind of Indians that God made, but I suppose the humanitarians want somebody to fight the Indians that J. Fenimore Cooper made. There is just where the mistake is. The Cooper Indians are dead—died with their creator. The kind that are left are of altogether a different breed, and cannot be successfully fought with poetry, and sentiment, and soft soap, and magnanimity. 40

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Connor's determination to bring all "bad" Indians to justice can especially be seen with reference to Chief Pocatello. After the encounter at Bear River, the colonel had reported that Pocatello and Sanpitch "with their bands of murderers" were still at large but that he hoped "to be able to kill or capture them before spring." 41 There were reports of expeditions against Pocatello and of Connor's desire to find him. 42 On July 6, however, Governor Doty excitedly wired the commissioner of Indian affairs for instructions because Pocatello had sent word that he "wished to treat for peace." 43 More definite news came from Mormon Bishop Alvin Nichols of Brigham City—Pocatello was so in favor of a council of peace that he was willing to give ten horses to prove his sincerity and would grant guarantees for the safety of travelers through his country. He was afraid to come to Salt Lake City though, where the soldiers, not knowing the nature of his mission, might kill him. 44 Connor also heard from Pocatello. In one message, the chief, "begging for peace," and asking for a conference, "says he is tired of war, and has been effectually driven from the Territory with a small remnant of his once powerful band." 45 Pocatello
offered again to treat on Connor’s terms and proposed a meeting with the general at Brigham City on July 30.46

Before the council could be set up, however, other Northwestern Shoshoni in Cache Valley initiated more attacks. The slaughter at Bear River aroused a spirit of revenge instead of leaving the Indians cowering. As Alexander Stalker reported of a meeting with Sagwitch, “He said he saw Mormons help the soldiers to fight and that he will use all the influence he has with other Indians to steal from us.”47 A Cache Valley correspondent to the Deseret News, writing on March 22, reported the theft of a horse by a son of Sagwitch and warned that Indians in from the north “say they will fight the troops should they dare to show themselves in their country.”48

The first overt action by Cache Valley Shoshoni occurred on May 1 when three of the Indians came upon Andrew Morrison and William Howell loading wood in Cub River Canyon above Franklin. Morrison attempted to talk to the warriors but was told that “the white man had killed Indians at Battle Creek and now they are going to kill every white man they could.” Morrison was immediately struck by two arrows in the chest while Howell ran for his life to the town three miles away. A rescue party found Morrison alive, although one of the arrowheads was so close to his heart that the town physician was afraid to remove it and just stuffed some cotton into the open wound. Morrison survived another twenty-seven years carrying the Indian souvenir. The Minute Men were not able to find the three Shoshoni.49

The day after the assault, Sagwitch’s band drove off a herd of horses from Millville twenty-five miles to the south. Captain Franklin Weaver and fifteen Minute Men left immediately to recover the animals and were able to capture Sagwitch, his two sons, a brother-in-law, a woman, and three children. The horses were nowhere in sight. Taking one man hostage, the militia tried to force the return of the horses but was unsuccessful. John Fish Wright reported that “a son of Sagwitch accused his father of being a coward, and grabbed his bow and arrow and tried to shoot Weaver, but I being near him grabbed the arrow as he was letting it fly, the men drew their pistols and would have shot him had not Weaver ordered them not to fire.”50 A couple of weeks later, Indians stole more horses and cattle and a posse of sixteen men unsuccessfully searched the nearby mountains.51

A more serious matter took place on May 9 when members of the Sagwitch band approached two boys in Box Elder Canyon, drove off four horses and an ox, and attempted to steal an entire herd of cattle. A relief party roused by the boys discovered the Indians had killed, mutilated, and stripped William Thorp who was mining coal in the canyon. Thorp left a widow and ten children.52

The raids continued. Indians drove off about a hundred head of horses from neighboring Ogden Valley and two horses from the Bannack City Express Company herd. J. C. Wright, who reported these incidents, was certain the Shoshoni intended to “satisfy their blood-thirsty propensities and traditions of revenge for their defeat . . . in the battle last winter . . . .” For once, the settlers who went in pursuit successfully retrieved 106 of the animals.53

In a very strong letter on May 9, Ezra Taft Benson and Peter Maughan demanded satisfaction from the Indians. The two Mormon leaders wrote that the Shoshoni now threaten to steal some of the Mormon women . . . their intentions . . . is to not only steal but kill us . . . the hostile Indians are the remains of the Bands that were in the fight at Bear River last winter and they say they intend having their pay out of the Mormon as they are afraid to tackle the soldiers . . . . and while they are doing these things they are eating the very flour that has been donated to them by the brethren . . . . we do not wish to kill except we are justified . . . . it seems to us that the ball is fairly open for they have forced it upon us. The Brethren feel tired of bearing their insults and it has been with much persuasion that we have thus far restrained them from wiping them out of existence.54

Peter Maughan elaborated on the Indian troubles in Cache Valley in a letter to Brigham Young on May 23:

We have had some excitement among the Indians . . . . They have stole a great many Horses and tried to kill the Brethren at various times to take horses by force. they have shot at men and boys several times within a week past, but have not succeeded in hurting any one. they are skulking in the brush all over the Valley in small squads 3 or 4 together, watching for a good chance. We sent Sige-a-watch after some horses about two weeks since, he has returned with four and had to steal them to get them away. he reports a great many of our horses at Sanpitches Camp East of Bear River Lake and says that those are the Indians that are doing us the damage as a retaliation for the Mormons helping the Soldiers at Bear River last winter. here I am compelled to admit that they have reason to feel bad . . . . Wash-a-kee is friendly and has an influential Indian traveling in the Mountains teaching his brethren to send the
Mormon horses home and then behave themselves. We expect large
Bands in here soon to trade Buffalo skins and other traps in their line of
business. We are instructing the Brethren to give them a full proof of
our honesty by dealing liberally and thus establish that confidence
and friendship that the signs of the times demand . . . . Connor is expected
in Logan today or tomorrow with his Cavalry . . . . There were 11
soldiers there all the time I was there. They manifested the most filthy
and disgusting code of Civilization I have ever heard.59

It seemed obvious to Saint and Indian official alike that some kind of
treaty arrangements should be negotiated to provide subsistence to
the wandering bands of Northwestern Shoshoni and to bring an end
to their depredations.

Governor Doty finally met with the chiefs of nine bands of the
Northwestern group of Shoshoni at Brigham City on July 30, 1863,
and concluded the Treaty of Box Elder. The leaders present were Pocatello, Toomontso, Sanpitch, Tosowitz, Yahnoway, Weerahsoop,
Pahragoosahd, Tahkwetoonaah, and Omrsee.60 Sagwitch was de-
tained because he was made a prisoner by a detachment of California
Volunteers. Doty sent a messenger to the troop commander asking
that no violence be committed against him and that he be released to
attend the treaty negotiations. Despite the plea, the following night
some “fiend” shot Sagwitch in the chest inflicting a serious wound
from which he, nevertheless, later recovered. The officer in charge of
the troops said the perpetrator of the attack could not be found.61

There were five articles in the Treaty of Box Elder. Article 1 estab-
lished friendly relations between the Shoshoni and the United States;
Article 2 included the provisions of the Treaty of Fort Bridger to
which the assembled chiefs agreed; Article 3 provided for an annuity
of $5,000 and $2,000 in presents at the time of the signing of the
agreements; Article 4 defined the boundaries of the country “claimed
by Pocatello, for himself and his people,” the country between the
Portneuf Mountains on the east and Raft River on the west; and Article
5, added as a later amendment by Congress, stated the Shoshoni
could claim no more land than that which they had occupied formerly
under Mexican law.62 This amendment necessitated another meeting
with the tribes to get their assent which Doty was able to accomplish
in a council of November 13, 1863, again at Box Elder. There were
four or five hundred Indians in attendance who “joyfully partici-
pated” in the annuity goods provided by the treaty. Only five lodges

of a group from the Goose Creek Mountains refused to sign the docu-
ment. Doty hoped to visit them later to encourage them in approving
the agreement. The supposed remnants of Bear Hunter’s band partici-
ipated—just seven individuals who had survived the massacre at
Bear River.63 The Deseret News August 5, 1863, hoped that the peace
terms would prevent any recurrence of the robberies, plundering, and
tragic scenes that had taken place in the northern Utah settlements
over the past decade.

From this time and for the next several years, the Northwestern
bands gathered each fall on the lower Bear River near Brigham City to
receive their annuity presents of blankets, clothing, and food and to
talk to the superintendent of Indian affairs for Utah about mutual
problems. The establishment of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation by
1869 offered them a home to which they were encouraged to go, and
by late 1875 nearly all of them were living at Fort Hall. There was one
exception. About 200 had joined the Mormon church by 1875, and
this group accepted the help of the Mormons to establish themselves
on farms at the Washakie colony in Malad Valley. Today these people
have left Washakie to become a part of the white culture, whereas the
descendants of the other Northwestern Shoshoni still live on the Fort
Hall Reservation. It is ironic that the almost 2,000 Northwestern In-
dians who once roamed Cache and Weber valleys and along the
northern shores of Great Salt Lake have been lost to Utah history and
now reside in “Idaho.”

Chief Pocatello continued to receive the most attention from
officials and newspaper writers after the treaty of peace. On July 28,
1864, Peter Maughan was pleased to write that a public dinner had
just been prepared for 200 Shoshoni during which the Indians “old
Bishop . . . . made the tears to flow from some of the Brethren that
were present . . . . [and] Pocatello took dinner at my house . . . .”64
The chief had one more run-in with General Connor, who arrested
him early in November 1864 on complaint of Ben Holladay, the
owner of the Northern Stage Line. Holladay learned that the alleged
offenses were inconsequential and requested Connor to turn the In-
dian leader over to Utah Indian Superintendent O. H. Irish, who im-
mediately released him. The Shoshoni band, when they heard that
Connor intended to hang Pocatello, had gone to the mountains to
prepare for war, which Irish was able to forestall.65 An expenditure of
$2,000 for presents for Pocatello and his people had “a most salutary
effect” and brought peace once again to the Box Elder and Cache Valley areas.\(^6\)

Governor Doyt and General Connor now turned their attention to securing agreements with the Western Shoshoni of Nevada, the Gosiute, and the Fort Hall Shoshoni and Bannock. Arrangements were made so that Governor Nye of Nevada could participate in a council finally held at Fort Ruby on October 1 to treat with the Western Shoshoni.\(^6\) As Nye later pointed out, these Indians had “never received much attention from the government. . . .” The conferees agreed, first, that the boundary between Utah and Nevada territories should run through a valley about fifty miles east of Ruby Valley, and this would define each governor’s responsibilities for the Indian inhabitants of the region.\(^6\) The two main tribes represented at the negotiations were the Tosowitch, or White Knives, and the Unkoabs. Nye estimated that these bands totaled about 2,500 individuals.\(^6\)

The provisions of the Treaty at Ruby Valley finally agreed upon were similar to those for the Eastern and Northwestern Shoshoni. Article 1 established peace and friendship between the contracting parties; Article 2 assured the safety of routes of travel and provided for mail stations and military posts; Article 3 permitted the operation of telegraph, stage, and railroad lines through the area; Article 4 allowed mineral exploration and for the use of timber; Article 5 outlined the boundaries of Western Shoshoni lands; Article 6 set the stage for an eventual reservation to be established for the wandering bands; Article 7 granted the Indians an annuity of $5,000 for a period of twenty years; and Article 8 acknowledged $5,000 in presents distributed during the negotiations. Twelve chiefs, led by Te-moak, signed the treaty.\(^6\) Today, the Western Shoshoni are still scattered in isolated colonies throughout northeastern and central Nevada, although some did consent to move to the Duck Valley Reservation when it was established.

About 350 of the Shoshoni Gosiute bands west of Great Salt Lake met with Governor Doyt in Tooele Valley on October 12, 1863. He noted in his formal report that another 100 from Ibapah, Schell Creek, and “the Desert” would have been present “but for their fear of the soldiers. . . .” These apprehensions were valid—the governor noted that over a hundred Gosiute had been killed by Connor’s troops during the past year and “the survivors beg for peace.” Another 200, not present at the council, ranged along the southern border of their territory. All were to participate in the treaty benefits.\(^6\) The eight articles of the Treaty of Tooele Valley were almost identical to the provisions of the Ruby Valley agreement except that the Gosiute, being fewer in number, were to receive an annuity of only $1,000 for twenty years and $1,000 at the time of the treaty signing. Doyt thought the annuity should be increased to $2,000 if the Gosiute were to become farmers.\(^6\) Article 8 contained the qualifying amendment about making claims to lands beyond what had existed under Mexican law. Chief Tabby and three other leaders attached their marks to the document.\(^6\) The descendants of these Gosiute are farmers and ranchers today at Ibapah in western Utah.

The final Shoshoni agreement was made at Soda Springs on October 14, 1863, between Doyt and Connor and about 150 Bannock under their leaders Toso-kwauberah, the principal chief (also known as Le Grand Coquin), Tahgee, and Matiguond. Doyt estimated the Bannock at 1,000 people. Chief Tendoy of the Lemhi Shoshoni sent word that he could not attend the conference to represent his 1,500 tribal members because they were all away on the annual buffalo hunt in Montana. But Tendoy assured the government officials that he and his followers assented to the treaty and wished to continue their friendly relations with the United States. The Fort Hall Shoshoni no doubt had representatives in attendance, although Doyt did not name any chiefs. The governor estimated the total number of Indians who joined in the Treaty of Soda Springs at 8,650, an exaggerated figure. The actual number would have been closer to 5,000.

The Shoshoni and Bannock agreed to the terms offered to the other Shoshoni groups with one exception. The tribes promised to maintain safe routes of travel between Salt Lake City and the Beaverhead and Boise mining areas. The Indians received presents worth $3,000 and were promised an annuity of $20,000 for twenty years. The boundaries of their country extended from the lower Humboldt and Salmon Falls on the west to the Wind River Mountains on the east.\(^7\)

On March 7, 1864, all five treaties negotiated by Doyt and Connor between July 1 and October 14, 1863, were ratified by the United States Senate, along with the amendment concerning interest in the
Indian lands under Mexican law. four of the Shoshoni groups met in council a second time with Doty and his representative to grant approval of the Mexican amendment. The government officials, however, were never able to assemble the more mobile and independent Fort Hall and Lemhi Shoshoni and Bannock a second time to get their assent to the provision about claims under Mexican law. The inclusion of this amendment was unfortunate for two reasons. Indian homelands lying north of the forty-second parallel were outside Mexican territory and had never been subject to Mexican law so this term was meaningless, and without approving this amendment, the Fort Hall and Lemhi Shoshoni and Bannock were forced to wait another five years before the Treaty of Fort Bridger of July 3, 1868, granted them government recognition, annuity goods, and a home at Fort Hall. As for the approximately 600 Boise and Bruneau Shoshoni, they had an even more difficult time as hostilities continued with the miners and settlers in the Boise region. For this reason, they were the first Indians to be moved to the new reservation at Fort Hall in the spring of 1869.**

The Shoshoni agreements of 1863 made the western trails peaceable and quiet. The commissioner of Indian affairs noted that "these Indians have long been a scourge to the citizens of Utah and Nevada, and a terror to the emigrants and travellers over the routes leading through those territories."** With peace finally achieved, Governors Nye and Doty, the various Indians agents under them, and General Connor and his officers were satisfied about the cessation of hostilities.** The general was sure that the peace secured "from the Snake River on the North to the lower Settlements of Utah, and from the Rocky Mountains of the East to Reese River on the West, . . . " was due to the "indomitable bravery, activity and willingly endured hardships of the California Column under my command . . . . The Indians, one and all, . . . are Evidently Seriously inclined to peace in the future, and after the Severe Experiences of last Winter, Spring and Summer, will hesitate long ere they again provoke hostilities."** Governor Doty agreed that peace had come because of the "presence and efficiency of the United States Troops, and the signal defeat of Bear Hunter and his allies . . . ."** The commissioner of Indian affairs was also impressed that the Indians had sought peace because
the California Volunteers had given the Indians "a wholesome idea of the power of the white man...."

After two years exercising this power over the tribes of Utah, Idaho, and Nevada, there were the beginnings of a reaction. Superintendent Irish of Utah complained to the commissioner, "If the Military Authorities will allow me to manage these Indians without any further interference, I am satisfied that by a judicious use of the appropriations made I can maintain peace." At about the same time, on November 23, 1863, because army units were becoming too free in their indiscriminate killing of Indian captives, the Military Department of the Pacific was forced to issue a general order to all officers barring them from "executing any Indian prisoners on any pretext whatever. . . ." The military could hold Indian prisoners under guard but had to turn them over to civil authorities for trial and punishment. Indians were "amenable to the civil law equally with whites. . . ."

While the ruthless destruction of Shoshoni Indians by the California Volunteers no doubt helped persuade survivors to come to the bargaining table, the promise of a permanent relationship with the government and the distribution of annuity goods were the major factors in bringing peace to the Great Basin and the Snake River plains. As Governor Nye put it, "They are now anxiously expecting presents. . . ." The Indians were understandably uneasy as they watched thousands of miners pour into their country and destroy the native food crops. Agent John C. Burche of Nevada Territory was particularly expressive as he described the destitution of the Indians of his district whose subsistence had now almost completely vanished.

The game of the mountains and valleys is being frightened away by the appearance of the white man in the wild region, and the continued crack of his inquiring rifle. The pine-oat trees are rapidly being cut down and used for building purposes or fuel. The bunch-grasses, the seed of which formerly supplied the Indians with one of their chief articles of food, and which abounds in the Humboldt country, now fails to yield even the most scanty harvest, owing to its being eaten off as fast as it sprouts by the vast amount of stock which has been brought to the country by the settlers and drovers.

The commissioner added a similar assessment of the condition of the Shoshoni:

The scarcity of game in these territories, and the occupation of the most fertile portions thereof by our settlements, have reduced these Indians to a state of extreme destitution, and for several years past they have been almost literally compelled to resort to plunder in order to obtain the necessaries of life. It is not to be expected that a wild and war-like people will tamely submit to the occupation of their country by another race, and to starvation as a consequence thereof.

Both Governor Doty and Superintendent Irish strongly urged establishing reservations for the Indians of Utah, but, as noted, the Northwestern Shoshoni were forced to wait for a reserve at Fort Hall, Idaho, before they could find a home. To help sustain at least one Northwestern band, Irish made arrangements for a chief and his fifteen lodges of people to herd stock in the "northern portion of the Territory. . . ." The Indians received provisions from the Mormon farmers for the winter's employment.

The transition from a food-gathering, nomadic lifeway to a settled existence as herdsmen or farmers and recipients of annual presents from the government had been a long process for the Shoshoni of the Oregon, California, and Montana trails. The terrible tragedy at Bear River was followed by several months of angry retaliation in Cache Valley and along the mail route to the west. But the unceasing pressure from Connor's troops and the indefatigable exertions of Governor Doty led to the series of treaties that, for the first time, gave the Shoshoni hope that some means were at hand to keep them from starvation. Gifts of food, clothing, and utensils when treaties were signed were the first assurances of assistance. The promise of an annual distribution of provisions was also evidence of help, a commitment that the various chiefs were determined to maintain by keeping their followers at peace. Only minor troubles punctuated the next few relatively quiet years in Shoshoni country until in the late 1870s when the inadequacies of reservation life provoked several western tribes into a series of wars, including the Bannock War of 1878.

From 1840 to 1864 Americans coursed the Oregon and California trails and the Overland Mail Line through country peopled by Shoshoni Indians. Near Fort Bridger travelers first met Washakie's friendly Eastern Shoshoni; then the Fort Hall Shoshoni and their neighbors, the Bannock; and finally, on the Oregon Trail, the Boise
and Bruneau Shoshoni. On the road to California, emigrants passed along the edge of Gosiute Shoshoni country and through Western Shoshoni and then Paiute areas to the Carson Valley. The Indians of central interest to this story, the Northwestern Shoshoni of northern Utah, haunted the area at the junction of the Oregon and California trails near the Goose Creek Mountains, but chiefly interacted with Mormon settlers who occupied Indian homelands in Cache and Weber valleys and along the eastern and northern shores of Great Salt Lake.

With such a variety of Shoshoni peoples, speaking the same language and having similar lifestyles, it is understandable that early travelers and settlers, as well as government officials and military officers, had difficulty identifying the Indians who raided camps, settlements, and cattle and horse herds. The modern researcher, too, can often only guess at which Shoshoni band was involved in a particular event.

From 1840 to 1845, there was peaceful coexistence along the western trails between Shoshoni and emigrant, but more and more travelers caused the destruction of traditional Indian food supplies, and some natives struck back. Nefarious traders, bandit groups disguised as Indians, and irresponsible emigrants who took shots at Shoshoni as though they were wild game generated retaliation from a confused and frightened native population. There was a rising incidence of Indian attacks in the late 1840s and during the entire decade of the 1850s, finally culminating in a series of massacres during 1859 and 1860. The Orter Massacre on the lower Snake River was the most brutal. From 1860 until mid-1863, the Overland Mail Line stations offered tempting targets to destitute Indians. Although attacks on emigrant parties aroused the indignation of westerners, it was the interruption of mail service that caused the most national anger, especially among newspaper editors.

Mormon pioneers settling Salt Lake Valley in 1847 introduced a new note in Indian-white relations. Brigham Young chose to keep peace with neighboring Indians by feeding them, and this led to many charges over the years that the Saints were in league with the Shoshoni and were instigating attacks on travelers. The Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857 clinched these arguments for some, but others realized that the Saints suffered from Indian attacks as much as non-Mormon settlers and travelers. Brigham Young acted as superintendent of Indian affairs for Utah Territory during a seven-year period (1850–57) and due to proximity was forced to accept responsibility for the Shoshoni and Bannock in the Fort Hall area as well. Young also supervised the Gosiute and Western Shoshoni bands all the way to the Sierra Nevada, a truly Brobdignagian task, which Congress failed to support with adequate appropriations.

The Utah War stripped Young of his positions as governor and superintendent of Indian affairs and brought Johnston's Army to Camp Floyd south of Salt Lake City. For almost three years this large expedition remained in the territory and patrolled the western roads and engaged in sorties against hostile natives. The Shoshoni learned how ruthless United States troops could be but also learned how to use hit-and-run tactics to frustrate military efforts. The most publicized forays by the troops were those directed at Northwestern Shoshoni bands in the Box Elder and Cache valleys where Mormon farmers, by 1859–60, had taken over some of the choicest sections of Northwestern homelands thus precipitating a new and critical time. The Shoshoni here were particularly incensed by the Mormon refusal to acknowledge Indian land ownership and to offer payment for acres appropriated. This grievance, plus the mounting destitution of the Indians as their traditional food supplies disappeared, led to a major confrontation with military detachments from California.

Troop units from Oregon Territory were also involved in patrolling the Oregon Trail from Boise to Fort Hall, but, like the Camp Floyd contingents, they had difficulty pinning down and capturing Shoshoni marauders. Army and citizen soldiers from Fort Churchill and the Carson Valley area attempted to guard the lower Humboldt road so that it appeared to observers far removed from the scene that the western trails were under careful supervision by the military. The attacks on emigrant trains, attended sometimes by brutality and savage torture and mutilation, aroused extreme hostility toward all Indians, but they were not as numerous, considered against the backdrop of twenty-five years of travel by thousands of emigrants, as some believed. Rumors and fears tended to exaggerate numbers of people killed and wounded; the fictional story of the so-called Almo Massacre of 295 people is the most ludicrous example. It was easy to overlook the number of Indians killed in hostile actions—few were interested in recording Indian losses, only the number of whites killed.

With the rising number of attacks on emigrant trains, and partic-
ularly the assaults on the mail stations west of Salt Lake City, between 1860–62 new military units were assigned to Utah Territory. The Civil War brought abandonment of Camp Floyd, and regular army troops returned east, leaving western roads unprotected. To fill the gap, Colonel Patrick Edward Connor and his California Volunteers were dispatched to Salt Lake City where, late in 1862, they founded Camp Douglas and proceeded on a number of Indian-killing expeditions to secure the roads and settlements and to satisfy their hunger for glory. The killing of Indians at Gravelly Ford and elsewhere in Nevada demonstrated their determination to wipe out recalcitrant Indians. When word came in January of 1863 of the murders of some miners in Cache Valley, Connor seized the opportunity to revenge the deaths by a winter attack on Chief Bear Hunter’s tribe at Battle Creek. The resulting massacre of about 250 Indian men, women, and children made Connor a brigadier general and convinced the Indians of the Great Basin and the Snake River plains that they should not attempt a stand-up fight again with the California soldiers. It did not mean the Shoshoni ceased their guerrilla warfare. To the contrary, attacks continued through midsummer of 1863 against the Mormon settlers who had aided Connor to revenge the Shoshoni deaths.

The importance of the Bear River Massacre has been largely lost to American history because it happened during the Civil War when an obscure engagement with the Indians in far-off Utah became a minor incident compared to battles on the eastern front. If Connor’s attack on Bear Hunter’s village had occurred later, in the 1870s along with the Custer Massacre and army massacres of Indians, Connor might not be the West’s forgotten general, and information about the slaughter of 250 Northwestern Shoshoni might not be relegated to a small and little noticed monument near Battle Creek in southern Idaho. The story of Connor’s destruction of a peaceful village of Shoshoni on January 29, 1863, has few parallels in American western history for rapine and human atrocity. It is perhaps time for Utah historians to revise their bias toward Mormon history to include the Indian troubles in the northern counties and especially the Bear River Massacre so that these events receive more prominence in local studies. It is perhaps also time for national historians to review Indian wars of later years in light of early white-Indian interactions west of South Pass.

In retrospect, the annihilation of the Northwestern Shoshoni at Bear River seems an unnecessary and extremely cruel action. Superintendent James Duane Doty, under orders from the Indian Office in Washington that were almost a year old, was already planning a series of treaties, which he finally negotiated during 1863 and which brought peace to Shoshoni country. There is no doubt that Connor’s “victory” at Bear River and subsequent expeditions to Soda Springs and elsewhere helped convince the tribes that treaties were the best course, but such agreements had been sought for years and the Indians were pleased finally to get some assurance of protection and annuities from the government. Several more years of waiting passed before reservations were established as permanent homes for the Shoshoni of the Great Basin and Idaho, bringing to a final end the nomadic lifeway the Indians had known for centuries before white colonization of the Trans-Mississippi West.
APPENDIX B

Massacre at Boa Ogoi

(Mae T. Parry is a granddaughter of Chief Sagwitch, who fought in the Bear River Massacre at the conflict on Battle Creek.)
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The Shoshone Indians were a large nation of Indians and they lived and traveled over a large territory. The Eastern Shoshones, under Chief Washakie, lived in the Wyoming area. Chief Washakie was known as their head chief. He was known all over the western country as one of the most intelligent and able Indian chiefs.

Chief Washakie had several sub-chiefs under his leadership. The sub-chiefs had between three hundred to four hundred Indians in their bands. Chief Pocatello had the Fort Hall area Shoshones. The Northwestern Shoshones traveled under the leadership of Chief Sagwitch Timbimboo and Chief Bear Hunter. These two leaders saw the entry of President Brigham Young into the Salt Lake valley. They knew from the actions of the pioneers that they wanted to be friends, so they welcomed the pioneers and their leaders into the Shoshone country.

The Northwestern Shoshones traveled with the changing seasons. They looked upon the earth not just as a place to live, but they called the earth their mother. She was the provider of their livelihood. The mountains, streams and plains stood forever they said, but the seasons walked around annually. All things in nature were fixed for the Indian. In the early fall the Northwesterns moved into the general area of Salmon, Idaho, to fish. After the fishing was over and the fish had been prepared for winter use, they moved into Wyoming to hunt buffalo, elk, moose and antelope. It was very important to get the big game for it meant food, clothing and shelter to them. In the spring and summer most of their time was spent traveling about Utah. Here they gathered seeds, berries, roots and also hunted smaller game. In late October a move was made into western Utah and parts of Nevada for the gathering of pine nuts. Most of the food was gathered and dried for their winter camping site, an area near Franklin, Idaho. Little did they realize that in 1863 this area would be a blood bath for them.

The river northwest of Franklin was a natural place for the Indians to go every winter.

The land along the Bear River had a natural depression and thousands of willows and brush covered the area. This was also an ideal winter spot for
the Northwestern Shoshones because of the natural hot springs that was around this area. They were sheltered from the winter blizzards by the willows and brush. Their tepee was warm and they were content. Franklin was also centrally located in the Shoshone country. Another of their wintering areas was around Promontory, Utah, because the winters were milder and the water was plentiful there.

The Northwestern Shoshones gathered in the Franklin area for meetings and winter sports as well as for summer fun. They took part in foot races, horse races, hockey, dancing and just general all-around fun. In the winter they used dried deer hides for sleighs. In the summer the children would dig make-believe fox holes along the banks of the Bear River and play Indians at war. Over the years the holes got larger as the children dug deeper. They would also sit in the dug outs and fish in the Bear River. (White history has it that these holes were rifle pits dug out quickly by the Indians as Connor was descending upon them. This was nearly impossible within an hour’s time because the ground was frozen with ice and snow.) The Indians from the Eastern Shoshone band and Chief Pocatello’s band always came and joined in the fun. They competed against each other for prizes.

A few weeks before the massacre of January 29, 1863, the Shoshones all gathered together near Bear River, at the Indian camping ground, and held what is referred to as the Warm Dance. This certain dance was to bring in the warm weather and drive out the cold. If Colonel Patrick E. Connor had only known the ways of the Red Man, he would have been able to kill thousands of Indians instead of hundreds. If the settlers had only known the nature and customs of the Indians, they would have sent for Col. Connor and his men the first week of January.

As the Northwestern Shoshones were settling down from the visiting and reminiscing, a few Indian trouble makers decided to go and steal some horses and cattle. They went into a nearby farmer’s corral, drove the animals out, and headed north. Along the way they killed the cattle and ate them. The three men involved were One-Eyed Tom, Zee coo chee (Chimpunk) and Qua ha da do coo wat (Lean or Skinny Antelope). About the same time some miners and Indians got into a fight and the miners were killed. These Indians were not from the Northwestern Shoshone group but had come from Chief Pocatello’s band. The miners’ horses and belongings were taken into their part of the country. The third incident the Indians believe led to the massacre was another fight between some white boys and some Indians, in which two white boys and two Indian boys were killed. Again, they were not Northwestern Shoshones involved in this incident. Because they were Indians, everything was blamed on them.

Because of these three incidents, most of the Indians were getting restless. They could feel that trouble was going to start soon. The people around Franklin were starting to call the Indians “stealing savages” and “beggars.” They did not understand that the Indians were also human with feelings like every one else. Several Indians were becoming bitter and defensive and were starting to feel that what was theirs was being taken away little by little. Their seat that extended from coast to coast was being invaded by the Whites and they felt that shortly there would be no place to pitch their tepees. They were starting to feel like prisoners in their own country. Many began to feel like trapped animals who would fight for their lives up to the end.

On the night of January 27, 1863, one of the older men by the name of Tin dup, forewarned the calamity which was about to take place. In his dream he saw his people being killed by the pony soldiers. He told the Indians of his dream and told them to move out of the area. “Do it now, tonight!” he said. Some families believed Tin dup’s dream and moved, thus sparing their lives.

In the meantime a white friend of the Indians came to the camp and told them that the settlers of Cache Valley had made plans to get rid of the Northwestern Shoshones and that they had sent an appeal to Colonel Connor to come and settle the Indian affairs once and for all. Because of this, the Indians knew for days that Col. Connor was going to come after them. They did not know however, that the Colonel would fire first and not ask any questions.

Chief Sagwitch, being an early riser, got up just as usual on the morning of January 29, 1863. He left his tepee and stood outside surveying the area around the camp. The hills to the east of their camp were covered with a steaming mist. The mist crept lower down the hill and all of a sudden Chief Sagwitch realized what was happening. The soldiers from Camp Douglas from Salt Lake City had arrived. The Chief was not surprised. He started calling to the sleeping Indians. They quickly gathered their bows and arrows, tomahawks and a few rifles. Some of the Indians were so excited that they gathered up whatever was in sight to fight with. Some picked up their woven willow winnow pans and baskets and stuck their rifles through them. It appeared as though they had shields for protection.

Chief Sagwitch shouted to his people not to shoot first. He thought that perhaps this military man was a just and wise man. He thought that the Colonel would ask for the guilty men, whom he would have immediately turned over to the soldiers. He felt that the rest of them would be saved by doing this. He told his people to be brave and calm. Many of the Indians ran toward the river and dropped into the snow. They knew that they were not all guilty but they had no choice but to fight for their lives if attacked. Some had dropped into the holes the children had dug along the river bank. Never did the grown men realize that they would be using the children’s play foxholes to await real military soldiers.

Without much as asking the Indians for the guilty party, the Colonel and his men began to fire on the Indians. But what was an arrow compared to the muskets of the army. The Indians were being slaughtered like wild rabbits. Indian men, women, children and babies were being slaughtered left and right. No butcher could have murdered any better than Colonel Connor and his vicious California volunteers. Most of the action took place along the river banks and among the willows.
APPENDIX B

The massacre started early in the morning, according to the Indians, and lasted all day. The Bear River that was frozen solid a few moments before was now starting to flow. The Northwestern Shoshones were jumping into the river and trying to escape by swimming across the river. The blazing white snow was now brilliant red with blood. The willow trees that were used for protection were now bent down as if in defeat. The old dry leaves which had been clinging to the willows were now flying through the air like whizzing bullets.

Ray Diamond, a nephew of Chief Sagwitch, was successful in his escape attempt. He swam across the river and found shelter away from the battle. He lived to be over one hundred years old. He told and re-told the massacre of the Battle of Bear River to the younger generations until the time he died. Many Indian women also jumped into the river and swam with babies upon their backs. Most of them died. One Indian lady, Anzee chee, was being chased by the soldiers. She jumped into the river and went under an overhanging bank. By keeping her head up under the bank she was saved. She watched the battle from her hiding place at the same tree trying to nurse the shoulder and breast wounds she received. Anzee chee carried the scars from her wounds for the rest of her life. She would show them to the young Indian children as she told of the massacre of their people. She also told of throwing her own small baby into the river where the child drowned and floated down the river with the other dead bodies and bloody red ice. Another man swam with his buffalo robe upon his back. The soldiers shot and shot at him but their bullets could not penetrate the buffalo robe.

The Indians which were still alive were calling to their chief to escape so he could be saved. Chief Sagwitch escaped with a wound in his hand, after having two horses shot from under him. Another Indian escaped by holding onto the tail of the horse Chief Sagwitch rode across the Bear River.

The very cruelest and meanest killing was that of Chief Bear Hunter. Perhaps it was the cruelest death in the White-Indian struggle. Knowing that he was one of the leaders, the soldiers shot Bear Hunter; they whipped him, kicked him and tried several means of torture on him. Through all of this the old chief did not utter a word, as crying and carrying on was the sign of a coward. Because he would not die or cry for mercy, the soldiers became very angry. One of the military men took his-rifle, stepped to a burning campfire and heated his bayonet until it was glowing red. He then ran the burning hot metal through the chief’s ears. Chief Bear Hunter went to his maker a man of honor. He left a wife and children behind.

Yeager Timbimboo or Da boo zee (cotton tail rabbit) a son of Chief Sagwitch, was about twelve years old and remembered the fight very well. He re-told the story several times a year and re-lived the scene in his memory. He told his story over the years to friends, relatives and grandchildren until the story became imprinted upon their minds. The grandchildren memorized the story and could repeat it by heart. Yeager Timbimboo told of feeling excited as any young boy would have during the fighting. He felt as if he was flying around. He dashed in and out among the whizzing bullets but was not hit. He heard cries of pain and saw death all around him. The little Indian boy kept running around until he came upon a little grass teepee that was so full of people that it was actually moving along the ground. Inside the grass hut Da boo zee found his grandmother. Que he gup. She suggested they go outside and lie among the dead. She feared the soldiers were going to set the teepee on fire any moment. The boy obeyed and pretended to be dead. “Keep your eyes closed at all times,” his grandmother whispered. “Maybe in this way our lives may be saved.” Yeager Timbimboo and his grandmother lay on the freezing battlefield all day. At the end of the day the soldiers were moving among the Indians in search of the wounded to put them out of their misery. Yeager, being a curious boy, wanted to watch the fighting once more. This nearly cost him his life. A soldier came upon him and saw that he was alive and looking around. The military man stood over Yeager, his gun pointing at the young boy’s head ready to fire. The soldier stared at the boy and the boy at the soldier. The second time the soldier raised his rifle the little boy knew his time to die was near. The soldier then lowered his gun and a moment later raised it again. For some reason he could not complete his task. He took his rifle down and walked away. What went through this soldier’s mind will never be known. Perhaps a power beyond our comprehension stopped this soldier from killing young Yeager so that the story of this massacre could be written. Yeager Timbimboo got the scolding of his young life. His grandmother reminded him that he was supposed to remain motionless at all times, keep his eyes closed and play dead. He had disobeyed and this had nearly cost him his life.

Soquitch (Lot of Buffalo) Timbimboo, at this time was a grown man. He was the oldest of Chief Sagwitch’s children. He remembered many things about the massacre. He escaped on a horse with his girl friend behind him. Again bullets were flying in their direction as they tried to escape to the hills. One of the bullets found its mark and the Indian girl fell off the horse. She was dead. Soquitch kept going and reached safety. He dismounted from his horse and sat down by an old cedar tree which was concealed by some bushes. He proceeded to watch what the white settlers and Colonel Connor called the Battle of Bear River. To this young man this was the cruelest turn of events he had ever witnessed. The Little Indian camp was vanishing right before his eyes. Toward evening the field of massacre was silent, except for the cries of the wounded soldiers being carried away. The Northwestern Shoshones who had escaped watched as the wagons left the camp. As they drove off, the wagon wheels made a very mournful sound as they squeaked along the snow. Blood drippings could be seen along the trail they left. The Indians had done some damage to the military with the little they had. The Indians fought mostly by hand.

By nightfall the Indians who had escaped were cold, wet and hungry. There was no food to be found, for the soldiers had done a good job of scattering their food on the ground and setting fire to it. All of the teepees were burnt to the ground except one. The lone standing teepee looked as if it were made of net. This was the teepee of Chief Sagwitch and his family.
After the soldiers had left, Chief Sagwitch made his way to his teepee. He opened the flap and found his wife lying there dead, beside her was an infant daughter who was still alive. Sagwitch ordered some others that had come with him to take the baby girl from her mother, put her into her cradle board (kono) and hang her on the branch of a nearby tree. He hoped that some kind hearted settler would pick up the infant girl and raise her. He knew that without nourishment from her mother the baby girl would die anyway. His orders were carried out.

The Indians could not believe what had just taken place. Sagwitch was a very stunned and shocked man, stricken and sad at heart. He stood idly and mournfully gazed at the scene. He was remembering that just the day before their camp had been a happy place. He remembered the many seasons the Northwestern Shoshones had spent in and around Battle Creek on the Bear River. He sighed and turned away. Dead Indian bodies were everywhere. The Indians realized they could not hold proper funeral services for their dead, so many were thrown into the still flowing Bear River. A water burial was better than having animals eat their bodies. At this time old Chief Sagwitch realized that there were two different worlds in which different people lived. One group was greedy and wanted everything. The other group only wanted to live and travel around their land as before. One group made their wishes and dreams come true by making themselves the conqueror and the other almost became a vanishing American.

As darkness fell upon the camp a large fire was seen at a distance and a voice was heard to say, "If there are any more survivors, come over to my camp fire and get dry and warm." The Indians that were able to walk hurriedly went to the raging fire. They were tattered and torn in body and in mind. Almost every one of them had suffered one or more wounds. Each man, woman and child was in a dazed condition. Their eyes were sunken and glazed; their faces looked hollow. They were just starting to realize what had taken place. An old medicine man moved among the wounded and sick trying to heal them without much success. Their stories of escape were sad indeed. One Northwestern Shoshone chief had escaped and another chief had suffered one of the cruelest deaths in American history.

A little Indian boy by the name of Bishop (Red clay), told of his survival. He had chosen to remain in the little wheat grass teepee that was moving along the frozen ground. When he came out of the teepee he was scared and cold and he wandered around in a dazed condition until he was found by a relative. In his cold little hand he carried a bowl of frozen pine nut gravy. Food was so precious to this little boy of six years that he clung to this bowl all day. His father told him that his mother was dead and his baby sister was left hanging in her kono in hopes that someone would pick her up. The little boy could not utter a word or cry. His grief was too much. He was frozen and in deep shock.

A few years after the massacre at Bear River, Chief Sagwitch's people begged him and his cousin Ejupie (Coyote) Moemberg to go and ask President Brigham Young for assistance as they were starving to death. While they were gone, an uncle that was left in charge, sold Little Bishop to a Mormon family for a Mormon quilt, bag of beans, sheep and a sack of flour. The Mormons raised him and gave him the name of Frank Timpimboo Warner. He was sent to school and quickly learned the English language among other things. He graduated from the old Brigham Young College in Logan and taught penmanship and reading to farm families. He drove his horse and buggy from farm to farm, town to town, up and down the Cache Valley. This man was converted to the Latter-Day Saint Church and served two missions to Vermont. How proud his people were of his accomplishments. Proudest of all were the children of old Chief Sagwitch. Their father's dream had come true. The Chief always knew that if an Indian child was taught young he could really make something of himself.

Word of the Battle of Bear River spread quickly to other Indians. Some Northwestern Shoshones living near Brigham City, Utah, heard the story. Two women decided to ride to Promontory, Utah, and tell the news to some other Northwestern members. They had gone into mourning for their dead friends and relatives. Poe be hup Moemberg and her friends cut their long braids and slashed their arms and legs. This was the custom after someone's death. Crying and wailing as loud as they could, the two women rode fast to Promontory and told of the massacre.

A few days after the battle, because Sagwitch was a great man of honor, he sent his oldest son Soquitch, a cousin Hyrum Wgo go saw, and Ray Diamond to bring back the horses which were stolen before the battle. They rode into the Pocatello area and returned the horses, but the cattle had been killed and eaten. These three men returned the horses to the settlers.

The Indians that survived the battle said that the soldiers stole their buffalo robes and anything else they could take for souvenirs. They took such things as pelts of small animals to trade with traveling white men who were seeking gold. They took such things as tomahawks, stone axes, willow baskets, Indian head dresses, bows and arrows and much more. Perhaps somewhere at Camp Fort Douglas is stored a great collection of Northwestern Shoshone artifacts.

The morning after the massacre, the few Indians that remained looked at their destroyed village in horror and disbelief. They now saw things they had not noticed the night before. The ground was covered in various colors, red from blood, black from the fires of their teepees and food, and brown from the many seeds and nuts which had been scattered. There were also blue and purple areas made up of their dried berries. They noticed pieces of the teepee poles which the soldiers had burned to keep themselves warm. After looking at the depressing scene, the Indians decided to move to Promontory where the remainder of the Northwestern Shoshones were wintering.

Approximately thirteen people remembered and told various experiences of the massacre. They were:

Chief Sagwitch Timpimboo
Soquitch Timpimboo
Yeager (Da boo zee) Timpimboo
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Ray Diamond
Peter Ottogary
Hyrum Wo go saw
Bishop (Frank Timbimboo Warner)
Tin dup and family
Chief Bear Hunter’s widow
Twenge Timbimboo (Soquitch’s wife, married after battle)
Anzie or Anzie chee
Tecka me da key
Mo jo guitich

The massacre at Bear River added to the extermination of the Northwestern Shoshone Indians. To the Northwestern Shoshone Indians, Colonel Patrick E. Connor was not a great Indian fighter nor a great hero. He was not fair in his dealings with the Indians. He shot first and did not give the Indians a chance to explain. To the Northwestern Shoshone Indians he was an unjust man and a coward. For years after the attack Indians were heard to say that Colonel Connor was the meanest and the most cruel man they had ever seen or met. Perhaps his motto was, “The only good Indian is a dead Indian.” The U.S. Army under Colonel Patrick E. Connor had humiliated the Northwestern Shoshones. All Col. Connor wanted was promotion after promotion and that is what he got—Brigadier General Patrick E. Connor.

The American Indian believing he was a proud race was humbled and put to shame. But like all growing things, he sprang up from the humiliation. He did not hang his head down but he still looked up and forward.

Today a monument stands near Battle Creek. The plaque should read:

The massacre of Bear River was fought in this vicinity January 29, 1863. Colonel P. E. Connor and his California volunteers from Camp Douglas, Utah, all but annihilated the Northwestern Shoshone Tribe. Chief Sawatch Timbimboo escaped the massacre. Chief Bear Hunter was tortured to death. No Bannocks were present, only Northwestern Shoshones of the Great Shoshone Nation.

Notes

CHAPTER ONE NOTES

10. NA, “Western Shoshone Agency.” Of the many estimates over the years of all these Shoshoni groups, the U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1868, is fairly accurate. See pp. 148-49.
20. Fred B. Rogers, Soldiers of the Overland, p. 41.