ARTICLE.

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SUBJECT.

White Bird Canon, Battle of,
Battle of White Bird Canyon

by

Major General A.A. Howard

U.S. Army
The treaty of White Bird Canyon.

The Nez Perce Indians, like the Children of Israel under the Son of Solomon were in 1877 hopelessly divided. The cause of the rupture had long existed and had gradually operated in murdering and marring its natural fruits. It was the treaty-making process.

The primary treaty, made years ago, was comprehension enough. It took in all the Nez Perce homes and easily secured the signatures of all the chiefs of the tribe.

The second treaty, made in consequence of newly discovered mines, paid off the original tract of land, and left out Joseph and many of his adherents. The third treaty, secured
as was the second, in the interest of some enterprising frontiersman, cut down the Nez Perce lands to still narrower limits, and left outside not only Joseph's of Walla Walla Band, but too-hul-too-sot's on the Snake river, White Bird on the Salmon and Hush-hush cutes beyond the North border. Joseph, the stern old Champion of opposition died in 1893—his two sons Joseph and Albert in some Indian way succeeded to his authority. Joseph, usually called Young Joseph, when war came, was vested with supreme authority, but his brother kept close to him and was too him as it were a chief of staff. Joseph was at
This period about forty years of age. He was a tall, finely proportioned man of a uniformly serious, stern countenance. He dressed in the wild Indian style, painted his face, braided his hair, and prided himself in his blanket adornment. All of these, though little as they were, was apparently younger of a lively, impulsive turn and much more inclined to fraternize with white men.

The outside Nez Perces were called in order and in the journals and reports "Non-tribal Indians", and within those Nez who had no boundaries were denominated "Treaty Indians" or "Treaty Nez Perce's".
The treaty negotiations were in progress. The white settlers were pressing their ranges and their ranches ever nearer to the small final reservation. White whiskey selling, mutual quarrels, petty fights, the death of an Indian now and then, superstitions, medium demands, spiritualism with wizard performances, such as mild dances and incessant drumming, the killing of cattle, thefts, jumping of fences, a sense of power, repression gambling, periodic horse-racing annoying the neighbors, and other pernicious claims with abundant fault finding from both white and red men's tongues and perpetuated anything but good feeling.
Notwithstanding the reiterated statement that “no Neg.-Peece ever killed a white man,” the settlers were apprehensive of an Indian war. Every annual assemblage of the savages for any alleged purpose created alarm.

At last the government agents insisted that these chronic difficulties should cease and they begged for a commission of men who should have power & influence with the executive & such a commission was organized in the fall of 1876, and sat at Fort Lapowai—a beautiful army post situated in the midst of the present Neg. Peece Reserve, round about the civilized & Christian Indians, both Protestant & Catholic, came to this
Dear [Name],

I hope this letter finds you well. I wanted to express my gratitude for your kind words and support during my recent illness. It was truly comforting to know that you were thinking of me.

Regarding the project we discussed during our last meeting, I have made some progress. I have compiled a list of potential clients and I am currently drafting a proposal that I believe will be attractive to them. I am confident that with your guidance, we will be able to secure a contract soon.

I also wanted to update you on the presentation I gave last week. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and I received many compliments on my delivery and content. I am looking forward to your comments and any suggestions you may have for improving future presentations.

Please let me know if there is anything else I can assist you with. Your continued support and encouragement mean a lot to me.

Thank you once again for your kindness.

Best regards,

[Your Name]
Council; and so did the whole.

Indians also. After many earnest meetings, though no agreement came of them, the commission decided that

the "non-head regiments" must come within the limits last prescribed in the treaty. The

Executive approved the commission's report. The Lapwai Indian

Agent was instructed to carry out the commission's decision. And the Department Commander with his troops was to be at

the call of the Indian Agent to use influence and force if required, to bring the scattered people in and distribute them within the

boundaries to their newly allotted

grounds.
The successive efforts of
the Indian agent, Mr. John
Montfort, and of the commander
of the topographical department
General Howard, seemed as
first during the spring months
of 1849 to be attended with
gratifying success.

Joseph, White Bird, and
Hush-hush-cuts promised
collectively & generally to move
off from the Nez Perce reservation by
the middle of June.

And they all did
approach & encamp
near the edge of the Reservation.

Gen. Howard who arrived at
Fort Lapwai the 14th of June, found
everything as he wrote "peace-like and
happy as home." But toward evening
Col. Perry, the Fort Commander, having recently received a letter from Mr. J. P. Brown from Mt. Idaho—a village seventy miles distant near the Indian camp. Mr. Brown was not yet alarmed but he warned of an apparent preparation to resist any force that should be sent against them.

Early the 15th a small detachment with an interpreter set out toward the Indian camp to gather information. At half past five the same day the detachment returned bringing in Mr. West a halfbreed and the brother of talking glass, a positive friend of the white man. The messenger put into our hands
The text on the page is handwritten and not legible. It appears to be a page from a notebook or a letter written in cursive.
a second letter from Mr. Brown.

The startling news it contained was glanced at by the Commanding Officer and then read aloud to the company. A group of friends, who had been watching his face, he read as follows:

Mount Idaho & Co. M.:
Friday, June 15, 1877.

Commanding Officer,
First Lieut.: Ensign.

Just now we started a messenger to you who reached Cottonwood House, where he was wounded and driven back by the Indians. The people of Cottonwood [18 miles from Mrs. Idaho] understood to come here during the night; were intercepted, all wounded or killed. Parties this morning found some of them on the prairie. The wounded will be here shortly, when we will get full particulars. The whites are
Sung up about forty of them in getting the wounded. One thing is certain: we are in the midst of an Indian war. Every family is here, and we will have taken all the precautions we can, but are poorly armed. We want arms ammunition and help at once. Don't delay a moment. We have a report that some whites were killed yesterday on Salmon river. No later word from them; fear that the people are all killed, as a party of Indians were seen going that way last night. Send to Lewiston and hasten up. You cannot imagine people in a worse condition than they are here. Mr West has volunteered to go to Lapwai; rely on his statements. Yours truly,

E. P. Brown

Then followed a post script:
The wounded names were:

- Mr. Day mortally; Mrs. Norton with both legs broken; Moore shot through the hip; Norton killed and left in the road five miles from here. Teams were attacked on the road and abandoned. The Indians have possession of the prairie and threaten Mount Idaho. All our people are here and we will do the best we can. Hurry me! Hurry! Reli on Win.

Indians' State men; I have known him for a long time; he is with us.

S. P. Brown

Peace had now fled: Man had

came. General Howard wrote

Mr. Brown as follows:

"Dear Sir:

Your two dispatches are received.

I have sent for two companies of cavalry to your relief. They

deleave tonight. Other help will be in route as soon as it can be brought up. I am glad you are so cool and
ready. Cheer the people. Help shall be prompt and complete. Hewston has been notified.

Yours truly,

O.O. Howard

Taking with him three hundred of the Infantry, Colonel Perry with his ninety enlisted men all well mounted set out at that very night. The 18th of June for the route - while General Howard at Savannah remained to gather up his scattered garrisons bringing them to the front.

The murder and maimings of citizens were incalculable, almost for it is all. The outrages committed beggar description. The stories, which in youth have seemed but unreal tales of horror, while innumerable have seized and.maimed helpless families and innocent children, men at this time around Munich 9 days portrayed in actual life. The draft before the troops arrived was
for the survivors one of indescribable terror and anguish. Perry pressed forward his horses, long unused to such forced marches. Before noon of the 16th he reached the deserted Cottonwood House, whence the Norton family had issued in the night for safety toward Mount Graham; by sundown he was at Greengrassville, a small settlement near to a few miles north of Mount Graham. A number of citizens had come out to meet the troops. The horses were very tired and the men had their fatigue aggravated as is always the case by the jaded animals. Yet the citizens pleaded for an immediate advance. They feared that the Indians would get away. They predicted an easy victory.
Wish the savages

Declares they were not for

Capt. Perry had his every judgment
overborne and again sounded
his advance. About a
dozen citizens, as many as
could arm themselves accompanied
the little squadron. While
Perry's command are tumbling
on through an almost sheer
place of miles, let us see what they
are doing. Too deeply for
conceive a deep river, perhaps
a thousand feet across, plunging
along like a mountain torrent,
with its bed filled with boulders
and its banks jagged with
precipitate cliffs and broken rocks;
such as the famous salmon
almon.

A tributary of the endless Snake.
The path near the lodges of
The hostile Indians were flowing westly. From this river's bank toward the north White Bird Canyon opens back like a broad place from a city avenue. The canyon is deep. White Bird Creek quietly comes along in its bottom. At the canyon's head there is a narrower ravine that ascends to the lofty table land down this ravine is a smaller stream trickling along among the roots of small trees. Beside this stream a narrow roadway - rather a horse trail - makes a mean road finds its way to the lower ground embraced in the broad canyon. This trail
While left

suddenly at the lower
level and mires off past
several detached hillyck, or
"buttes", till near the large
White Air Creek, it changed
again to the south. I reut
Siouxert lodge with
beyond the head, two more
"buttes", a few rods apart. The
smaller is only a rounded hill
perhaps forty feet high
with gentle slopes. The other
was irregular, somewhat
parallel with the creek
and having an abrupt face
facing the approach and covered
with broken rocks of considerable
size. Behind these "buttes"
the sun was setting or dawn
to the east. The sun was ascending from
the Indian lodges. Three or morning
fathers and men went to wash bowed.
As day began to descend on the trail, Joseph and his warriors who were watching for him, detected the advance of the soldiers. They were not without hesitation, many counseled flight down the canyon and across the Swift Salamon, but leaders like Joseph and White Bird felt confident in their superior numbers against the few women who could be horse holders and helpers in a hundred ways.

They knew the fearlessness of the newness of the Indian horses which they brought to the field. They saw the advantage of their position. They could hold the ridge of "Battle" and send to their left sufficient force...
no run for around Perry's squadron, ascend one of the
Transverse ravines & get to the high land below the soldiers
and cut off completely their retreat; meanwhile the main
Indians could stand by the ridge and do all they could.
The Indians were already well armed with the best of rifles.
It was said that one of their number who had avowed
he had descended to herd cattle on the slopes & ravines of the
Schlock & its tributaries had furnished the common treasury
with a money chest of several
 thousand dollars. However that
may be, they did not lack in this
battle for ammunition nor for
well trained, powis.
As soon informed Joseph & Oliend
stayed at the center while the
promised or White Bird asked us to assault Perry's flank.

Drum. Thayer preceded the column with a small advance-guard.

Capt. Perry, with the Citizen-allies and his troops, came next.

Major Sibley, after an interval, with his own troop completed the little column as it marched along steadily toward the future field.

Suddenly the men were startled, mostly hidden by rocks, trees in

the ground or ravines began their work. It was an irregular but

a deadly fire, for remember these

Savages were "practiced shot."

As saddlemen were emptied of horses
getting colder, hundreds of these wild
The butter and swarming lines of men with no apparent order to get away our soldiers and filling up all favorable crevices and ravines.

In a time Perry's handful of men did not fall in.
Shelley covered them by most strenuous line.
The citizen volunteers ran to the east butter and getting as good shelter as they could began to fire. They could see a hand or head of their foes for a mark.

Perry's hoop formed in line next to the volunteers westward.

And then without closing the interval scrumble down on "forward into line" and held the entire left west of all.
The rattling of the carbines and rifles, the falling of the killed and wounded, the cries.
Soon becoming madness of the horses which were not well trained and never good at a stand up fight. Who shall describe the noise and resulting confusion? Who shall tell just what was done or not done? Lieutenant Parnell saw a throng of indians suddenly paw their limbs rushing for the highest rocky points. The sea

f...
ran back & surrender their "cutter." Both flanks were now already enveloped and the line was broken when Perry & Parshall came together and exchanged a word.

"Can't go to Salmon River Indians:"
"No, 'Mob's anihilation."

First Perry undertook an orderly retreat to a new & stronger position, but it could not be sustained. The panic-stricken men blinded & cried out anything in their distress & urged their comrades to run for their lives & faster & faster the Indians came on. Baldes now, 

heavily covering themselves mounted & dismounted. They pressed forward, killing the wounded and chasing individuals.
who strayed from the body—

or who were thrown from
disabled horses. Fieut. Thelma
was discovered—Powell & friends
saw that he was released and
again mounted.

No guns without saying it was
the battle was really over. A panic
and rout ensued. Consequently, for
the mild Indians were relentless.

Yet the splendid American horses
of their good
dbale a few to outstrip White
Bird’s flanks by taking a shorter
way to the heights above. Perry
& Powell then organized a rearguard
and caused by repeated charges
& firings all who had passed them.

But many, many, & the bravest
Thelma among them refused to flee
they could struggle on the sides of
the bloody White Bird Canyon.

Subsequently the history of their
[Handwritten text not legible]
Courageous struggle for life would be traced by the shots where...
memorized. Mr. Perry's hand
men rumors of a hostile
advance inspired them with
terror.
Imagine the feelings of the officers
families at Fort Saffair, when
the news doubly exaggerated by
malign messengers began to
come in—then Colonel Perry's
first letter made it worse
than the Butler massacre.
He begged them not to read the
dreadful tidings of her husband's
death to Mrs. Kelley. When he
easily made his way to her
quarters she asked him if the
worst. She did not have to be
told for she read the unwelcome
truth in his face. The shock
between was greater than one
could describe.
Such was General Howard's introduction
to the famous Vee Parce Campaign.