

The Settlers and the Nez Perce

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THE SETTLERS AN

by REX C. MYERS

Looking Glass, Ollokot, Joseph and White Bird led. O. O. Howard, John Gibbon, Samuel Sturgis and Nelson Miles followed. Nez Perce Indians fled across the breadth of Montana during the summer of 1877 in a futile attempt to find, in the benign protection of Canada, a refuge from malignant United States Indian policy. Caught between were Montana residents—alternately fearful of depredations and derisive of federal military efforts and policy. Rumors flowed across the Territory from June through October of 1877, pushed on by movements of the Nez Perce themselves. Fear billowed as the tribe approached an area, crested and broke quickly when mounted warriors appeared, then dissipated rapidly as the crisis passed. In a west to east direction the pattern repeated itself with diminishing intensity from the Bitterroot Valley, through the Big Hole, Yellowstone and Judith Basins, then across the Missouri until it ended in Nez Perce defeat in the Bear's Paw Mountains, forty-two miles short of the Canadian line. A century of historical aggrandizement began in the popular sympathy which followed those initial waves of panic.



THE NEZ PERCE

"The Idaho Indian War," as Montana's newspapers characterized it in June and early July, began in the lower Salmon River Country when recalcitrant Nez Perce refused to bow before changing Federal policy and take up residence on a reservation not of their own choosing. The difficulty flared into open conflict at the Battle of Whitebird on June 17. Although victorious, the Indians knew military retaliation would follow and they began a slow withdrawal eastward. Before their initial ripples of concern spilled over the Bitterroot Mountains into western Montana.

Panic found fertile soil in the Montana populace. Almost a year to the day before word of the "uprising" reached western Montana, George Armstrong Custer and 300 of his soldiers had met bloody defeat on the Territory's southeastern plains. Fear lingered during the winter months while Montanans, waiting for a decisive army victory, watched as Sitting Bull and his followers fled to Canada, and wondered if formerly peaceful reservation tribes would join the hostile cause. It is not surprising that residents near Missoula and Stevensville saw in the Nez Perce actions the image of another Little Big Horn disaster.



THE CALL TO ARMS

John Martens farmed the Bitterroot Valley in the summer of 1877, and recorded in his diary, as early as June 27, that a military meeting had been called among residents. Settlers formed a militia company, elected officers, then petitioned Montana Governor Benjamin Franklin Potts for arms and aid.

Potts and his Adjutant General, Deer Lodge editor James H. Mills, did anything but counsel calm. Two days after the formation of a Bitterroot militia, Potts telegraphed President Rutherford B. Hayes that the safety of the Valley was in jeopardy. He asked for arms and additional troops, and speculated that peaceful tribes, like the Flatheads, would soon join the hostile Nez Perce.

As restlessness increased among Montanans, newspaper editors like Mills and Missoula's Chauncey Barbour did nothing to stifle it. Yet to Flathead Indian Agent Peter Ronan, there appeared little cause for concern. In early July he, along with Captain Charles C. Rawn, whose 7th Infantry was constructing the rudiments of Fort Missoula, met with chiefs Charlo and Arlee of the Flatheads, and Michelle of the Pend d'Orielle. On July 10, Ronan wrote to Governor Potts chiding him for the "wild stories afloat" about reservation disquiet, and assuring him of "good faith" among Indian leaders under his jurisdiction.

Yet another report of military defeat in Idaho, however, swept Peter Ronan's calming words from the minds of Governor Potts and Bitterroot residents. On July 11, the Nez Perce fought 400 soldiers under General O. O. Howard to a standstill near the Clearwater. Withdrawing from the field, the tribe began a concerted retreat along the Lolo Trail. The route across the mountains terminated in the Bitterroot Valley a few miles south of Missoula. Panic swelled anew.

Skalkaho residents perfected their military organization, receiving rifles and 1,000 rounds of ammunition from Governor Potts to bolster defenses. Under the command of John B. Catlin, a local rancher, they constructed a stockade of green sod blocks and logs. Inside, a log structure provided protection for women and children. When Catlin declared the fortification complete, local settlers hurried to its sanctuary with such dispatch that they literally ran for cover. Thereafter the site became known as "Fort Run."

Further north, a settlement of ex-Missouri residents, who had fled—"skiddadled"—from their state during the Civil War, built a similar sod and log

Herald Extra.
MONDAY, JULY 16, 1877.

**Howard Overtakes Joseph and
a Bloody Fight Ensues.**

**Two Officers and 11 Soldiers
Killed and 24 Wounded.**

**Thirteen Indians Killed and a
Large Number Wounded.**

**The Hostiles Dispersed and the
Troops Pursuing.**

Fight between General Howard's command, 400 men, and Hostiles under Joseph, 300 strong, discovered in Deep Creek Canyon, mouth of Cottonwood, on South side of Clearwater, took place on the 13th inst. The Indians lost 13 killed and a large number wounded. The military lost Capt. Bancroft and Lieut. Williams, and 11 enlisted men killed and 24 wounded.

The hostiles were finally flanked, and they broke and fled, making for the Snake river country.

The Indian camp and much plunder fell into the hands of the soldiers.

The fighting is represented as most determined on both sides.

Howard is following the fleeing savages and expects soon to capture or kill them all.

defense. Neighbors dubbed it "Fort Skiddadle" in their honor. Closer still to the mouth of Lolo canyon lay Stevensville, and the vestiges of John Owen's trading fort from the 1850's. Crumbling adobe bricks along the front wall hurriedly gave way to green sod, and nearly 260 Valley settlers took refuge inside, among them Henry Buck, his brothers, and the merchandise from their Stevensville general store.

"Indian excitement running high," John Martens penned in his diary during mid-July, but alarm did not confine itself to the Bitterroot Valley. Eastward, newspaper editors in Helena speculated on the Nez Perce's location, while still further east and



BENJAMIN POTTS



JAMES H. MILLS

Independent-Extra.

Sunday, July 29--7 O'clock A. M.

A PROCLAMATION.

Gov. Potts Calls for Volunteers

PROCLAMATION:
IN THE FIELD, MISSOULA, MONTANA,
JULY 26 1877

WHEREAS, Montana Territory is invaded by hostile Indians from Idaho and there and there being less than fifty United States soldiers to oppose said Indians, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the militia, I command that the organized volunteer militia of Missoula and Deer Lodge counties to report forthwith to the Commander-in-Chief at Missoula for temporary duty with the United States forces now serving against the Indians in Western Montana. Said companies will be armed and equipped for service in the field. The undersigned is without authority to bind the United States or the Territory of Montana for supplies furnished volunteer companies while serving in the field, but will use every effort in his power to secure payment for supplies, etc., from the Territory or the United States. Officers will be designated to receive and receipt for supplies furnished.

Witness my hand.

B. F. POTTS,
Governor and Com.-in-Chief M. M.

Attest:

JAS. H. MILLS, Sec'y and Adj.-Gen.

FIGHTING ON LO-LO.

The Indians Below Rawn's Position.

HELP! HELP!!

Volunteers Flocking to the Lo-Lo Trail

MISSOULA, M. T. July 28--4 p. m.—The Indians this afternoon threw a force below Capt. Rawn's position on the Lo-Lo trail and I fear a severe battle will be the result. The Deer Lodge company has gone to open communication with Capt. Rawn. The Philipsburg company of 16 arrived at Lo-Lo today. We need help and it must come soon or it will be too late. Send everybody that can be armed. No information from Gibbon. The Indians appear to be determined to force their way to the buffalo country against all opposition. The situation is very critical and those moving this way must look out for Indians on the road for they may break our lines. A proclamation was issued July 26th, 1877, calling out all of the organized companies in Deer Lodge and Missoula counties.

[Signed.]

B. F. POTTS.

Another letter from Potts says the Flatheads are co-operating with Rawn and Charles has already sent a number of warriors to Rawn's camp.

DEER LODGE, M. T. July 29, 7 a. m.

Capt. Clark's Company from Butte with 69 men, are just leaving for the front. Another Company of the same number are expected by ten o'clock.

The Deer Lodge reserves left last evening at seven, numbering 25 men.

The excitement is intense.

north, Bozeman and Fort Benton newspapers dwelt on the possibility that Sitting Bull would cross into the United States and, with the approaching summer weather, ally himself with the fleeing Nez Perce.

The tribes from Idaho crossed the Bitterroot Mountains on July 21, electing to rest at the hot springs near the head of the creek. Two boys from the Bitterroot, William Silverthorn and Pete Matt, had camped at the side and suddenly found themselves prisoners of the cordial band. What the Indians hoped to avoid by holding the boys came to pass the next day when the youths escaped, made their way to Fort Owen, and spread the alarm. "The Idaho Indian War" had come to Montana.

While the Indians lingered at Lolo Hot Springs, Governor Potts and James Mills wasted little time in renewing the alarm. Remaining Bitterroot residents moved toward stockades or Missoula. Captain Rawn and thirty-five of his regulars positioned themselves in the Lolo canyon narrows above the mouth. Here they constructed a log barricade and called volunteers to their aid, determined to halt the fleeing Indians. The first of the Nez Perce appeared before this hasty fortification on July 25,

and the next day Potts issued a general call for militia. While Rawn negotiated what he hoped would be a peaceful surrender, 200 volunteers flocked to his side behind the logs, including farmer John Martens.

Saturday, July 28, dawned clear and bright, Martens noted as he crouched behind the protection of the "fort" in Lolo canyon. "Expected an attack from the Indians," he wrote later that evening, "but they like sensible falows found a way around us. . . ."

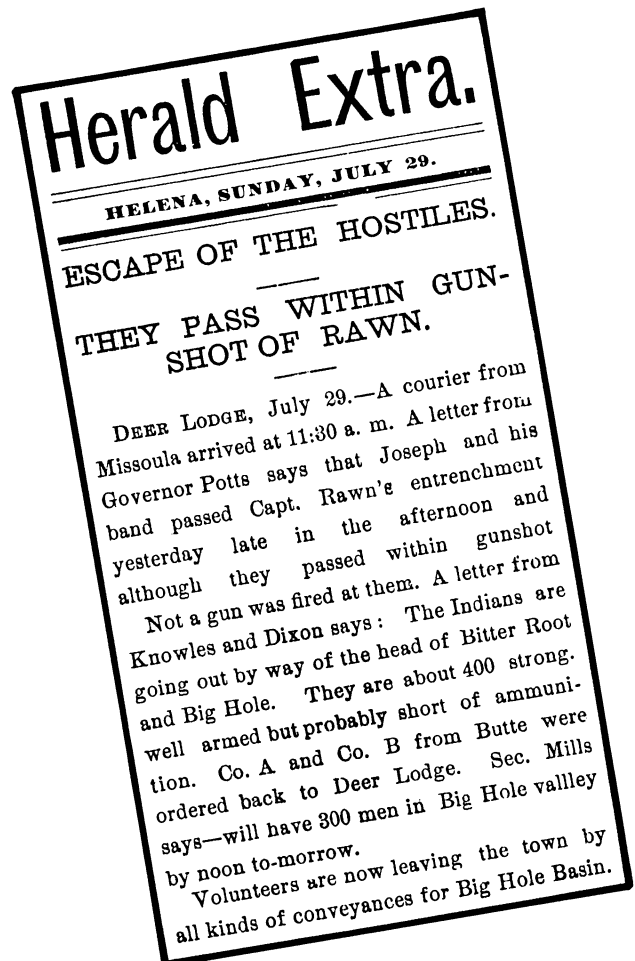
Without bloodshed, the Nez Perce bypassed "Fort Fizzle" via a neighboring ridge, but rumor of a terrible battle moved down the creek, spreading to Fort Owen, Missoula, and all Montana with startling rapidity. Terror reigned, although briefly, in the Bitterroot Valley, while in Helena a special edition of the *Independent* on July 28 conveyed the panic of an afternoon telegram from Governor Potts in Missoula: "FIGHTING ON LO-LO. HELP! HELP!!"

Superintendent of Public Instruction Cornelius Hedges reflected the excitement in Montana's capital through terse entries in his diary: "Exciting news . . . , More Exciting news . . . , War meeting . . ." Helena's residents met at the International Hotel on the afternoon of the 29th, Congressional Delegate Martin Maginnis opening the affair with an address on the necessity for action. Before an hour passed, forty-six of Helena's stalwart citizens formed a company of militia cavalry.

Waves of alarm spread from Potts' telegram. Near Bannack and Virginia City, outlying farmers and ranchers herded families and stock to the safety of established communities. "We are making all possible preparation and getting everything in readiness in the event of the Indians coming in this direction," Bannack's Thomas Watson reported to friends.

His fortification circumvented and useless, C. C. Rawn dismissed volunteers and marched his troops back to Missoula. As men returned to Fort Owen and their homes in the Bitterroot, the initial terror dissipated. Accompanying news of the bloodless confrontation at "Fort Fizzle" came word that the Nez Perce meant no harm, only wishing to pass through the valley unmolested. As quickly as the swell of panic had risen, it deflated. John Martens moved back to his home on the evening of July 28, and the next day his neighbors went to trade with the Indians — who paid in cash for what they bought. Soon thereafter, John Catlin returned to his ranch.

On July 30, Henry Buck sat atop the western wall of Fort Owen and watched the native proces-



sion file past at a slow trot. He took out his pocket watch. For an hour and fifteen minutes the column continued. The next day, as tensions along the length of the Bitterroot began to ease, Henry Buck and his brothers removed supplies from the protection of Fort Owen to reopen their Stevensville store. Other merchants did likewise and the Indians came to trade.

Governor Potts, still in Missoula and still concerned for the safety of his Territory, once more sought federal sanction for his call to arms. Secretary of War George H. McCrary denied it and Missoula residents negated its effectiveness when less than two dozen offered to take up the Governor's standard. "Dreadful," James Mills bemoaned to Martin Maginnis in a letter dated the afternoon of July 31, "the worst thing I have ever known."

Despite Potts' alarms and James Mills' misgivings, the peaceful passage of the Nez Perce through the Bitterroot Valley soothed fears not only there but throughout Montana. True, alarms crescendoed as the tribe approached first one section of the Territory, then another; but the panic never reached the fevered pitch of the last week in July.



CAPT.
C. C. RAWN



PETER
RONAN

HELENA, SUNDAY, JULY 29.

Joseph's Band Escaping by way of Henry's Lake.

DEER LODGE, July 29.—A letter from old Beaverhead Station says: Thirty or forty lodges of Indians are camped forty miles south of that place, on the road from Franklin to Montana.

There are about 125 Indians and are riding large American horses. It is supposed to be the advance guard of Joseph's band escaping by Henry's Lake.

In the west, Peter Ronan, along with Flathead chiefs and Jesuit priests at St. Ignatius and St. Mary's, easily dispelled what Ronan called a "feeling of insecurity" intensified by the Governor and previous newspaper editorials. Yet even as Ronan wrote, editor Barbour moderated his views in the Missoulian, convinced the Nez Perce sought only peace, exemplified by their behavior in the Bitterroot.

Within a week, even James Mills changed his perspective. In his Butte paper, the Miner, he editorialized on August 7 that Gallatin Valley residents would do well to emulate their Bitterroot counterparts with regard to the Nez Perce: "it is best to let them be in peace." Two days later, E. S. Wilkinson of the Bozeman Times echoed the thought.

Parties of Radersburgh and Helena residents felt safe enough to carry out August vacations through Yellowstone National Park as Territorial emotions cooled. One group, headed by Mr. and Mrs. George F. Cowan, spent the night of August 7 in a hotel at Sterling, en route to the Park. Some residents, Emma Cowan remembered later, advised against continuing, "but we did not think it more than an old time Indian scare and when morning

Independent Extra

Big Hole Battle.

Gibbon Makes a Desperate Fight and is Overpowered.

LOGAN & BRADLEY KILLED

Gibbon and three Lieutenants Wounded.

"Help! Help!! Send us all the Relief you. We are Cut off from Supplies."

FIRST DISPATCH.

BIG HOLE, August 9, 1877.

To Governor Potts—
Had a hard fight with the Nez Perces, killing a number and losing a number of officers and men. We need a doctor and everything. Send us such relief as you can.
JOHN GIBBON,
Col. Commanding.

SECOND DISPATCH.

BIG HOLE, August 9, 1877.

To Governor Potts—
We are here near the mouth of Big Hole Pass, with a large number of wounded in want of everything. Food, clothing, medicines and medical attendance. Send us assistance at once.

JOHN GIBBON,
Colonel U. S. A.

To Governor Potts:

We had a hard fight and took the village, but was finally driven back with heavy loss. Captain Logan and Lieutenant Bradley are killed. General Gibbon and Lieutenants Cooledge, English and Woodruff are wounded—English seriously the others slightly. The troops are entrenched and the Indians leaving.

came, bright and beautiful, we decided to go on our way."

West of the Radersburgh party, just over the ridge from the headwaters of the Bitterroot Valley, events took place that "bright and beautiful" morning which would have upset Mrs. Cowan's confidence. Colonel John Gibbon, commanding 163 army regulars from Fort Shaw and 35 volunteers gathered along the way, struck the Nez Perce camp in the Big Hole Basin. The battle proved indecisive



MR. AND MRS. GEORGE COWAN

HELENA, MONDAY, AUGUST 27.

MASSACRES IN THE NATIONAL PARK.

The Number of Killed,

Mrs. Cowan, Sister and Brother Taken Prisoners

They are Afterwards Released.

FT. ELLIS, August 27. 1877.

To: General John Gibbon:

Lieutenant Schofield reports that he was on top of Mount Washburne yesterday. Indians appeared in the Geyser Basin on the 24th inst. They struck the Helena and Radersburg party, killing seven men and taking two women and one man prisoners. Just as he left Mount Washburne yesterday the Indians attacked another party, killing nine of them. One escaped.

The Indians released Mrs. Cowan, her sister and brother, who reached camp yesterday. The main camp crossed the Yellowstone on the 25th. The warriors went back to fight Howard. White Bird and Looking Glass remained with the camp. Joseph went with the warriors.

They say they are going to Wind river and Camp Brown to get supplies. Schofield thinks they are going to the Lower Yellowstone via Clark's Fork. They crossed the river between Mt. Washburn and the Lakes.

Schofield does not say just where. Will send courier to Sturgis.

Signed

BENHAM,
Capt. 7th Inf.

FROM THE GEYSERS.

Charley Kenck's Body Found and Buried.

Dietrich's Body Also Buried.

Indians Reported Moving Towards the Geysers

BOZEMAN, September 3, 1877

[SPECIAL TO THE INDEPENDENT.]
Kenck's body was found and buried.

Dietrich was buried yesterday.

The Clark's Fork miners are all right. Last Wednesday they were on the lookout for Indians.

No danger here.

The Indians are reported moving towards the Geysers.

LANGHORNE.

Independent Extra

COWAN ALIVE.

He is with General Howard's Command.

Whereabouts of Howard.

[SPECIAL TO THE INDEPENDENT]
BOZEMAN, September 5.

Two scouts just in from Howard's command say that Cowan is with Howard and is doing well and will recover.

He is shot through the thigh and in the side and wounded in the head.

Howard was fourteen miles this side of Yellowstone lake. This news is reliable.

LANGHORNE.

and costly for both sides, but once more the Indians eluded defeat.

Hurriedly, the Nez Perce moved south and east toward Bannack and Yellowstone Park. On August 13, Walter C. Hopkins wrote to the editor of the *Virginia City Madisonian* that all Bannack's valuables, women, and children had been gathered in the new brick court house awaiting attack.

In Helena, on the evening of August 16, Elizabeth Fisk, wife of *Herald* editor Robert Fisk, sat at her desk and penned words of reassurance to her mother in Connecticut. The family was safe, Elizabeth began, but the children had taken a great interest in recent events — five-year-old Robbie in particular:

“Robbie has found in the garret an old sword, which he wears almost constantly, and with which he fancies himself able to meet and fight any number of Indians,” Elizabeth wrote. “His sword loses something in his estimation from the fact that it is not sharp enough to cut anything, but he assures all his friends that the point would ‘stick in to any Indian and kill him *quicker!*’ You can perhaps imagine the turn of the head with which he makes this statement.”

Robbie did not find his Indians, and neither did Bannack residents, fortified in their courthouse. Harried by additional military units, the Nez Perce moved east, skirmished with soldiers at Camas Creek on August 20, and proceeded on toward Yellowstone National Park. There they avoided capture once again, but encountered several groups of tourists, including the Cowan party.

Reports quickly spread that dozens of tourists had been killed, and once more rumor ran rife. Shortly thereafter came more substantial dispatches; only two or three had actually been killed. The remainder found safety with army units scouring the area. Reflecting on the incident, Elizabeth Fisk, Cornelius Hedges, and even Mrs. Cowan, sensed that bad handling and even injustice against the Nez Perce had contributed to the confrontation.

Residents of the Upper Missouri Valley near Canton and Deep Creek panicked for a few days at the end of August. Some built, then abandoned, a log stockade. Others fled to Helena, like Elizabeth Fisk's in-laws, who invaded her home, “thinking, or pretending to think that there was danger” nearby. To the north, Fort Benton's *Record* issued an extra on August 19, speculating that Sitting Bull had moved south into the United States to assist the Nez Perce to freedom. Within a few days, however, even the *Record's* editor admitted the stories proved unfounded.

Bozeman's *Avant Courier* did not rise to the threat of Indian troubles even as the Nez Perce circumvented the area. Details of the Big Hole Battle received substantial coverage, but reports of deaths or depredations in Yellowstone National Park made only third page news. Similarly, excitement in Virginia City and the columns of its *Madisonian* rose briefly and died away.

Once more a Montana Indian agent — this time George W. Frost from the Crow Agency east of Bozeman — quieted apprehensions that his charges would join their traditional allies in war. In letters to Indian Commissioner J. Q. Smith on August 30, and to Matt Alderson of the *Courier* two weeks later, Frost reaffirmed Crow support for the White position. They wanted to continue receiving government annuities, he explained, and hoped to steal valuable Nez Perce ponies as the tribe passed through Crow country. Frost and the Crows kept their word.

On September 13, the Nez Perce confronted the U.S. Army once more in the person of Colonel Samuel Sturgis and his contingent of the 7th Cavalry at Canyon Creek. Again the Indians escaped. From their successes in avoiding or frustrating the Army, and their generally peaceful deportment among settlers with whom they came in contact, the Nez Perce began to develop an almost heroic aura among many Montanans.

As early as August 24, James Mills saw in their actions behavior “of the highest characteristics recognized by civilized nations. . . . Their valor,” Mills went on, “hides many a fault, and wrong in the outset may not have been wholly theirs. . . .”

Writing to her mother once more on September 11, Elizabeth Fisk likened Nez Perce behavior to that of Confederate gentlemen during the Civil War: “The Nez Perce warriors seem civilized in a measure, and, like the South in the days of the Rebellion, only ask to be let alone.”

Let alone they were not. From Canyon Creek they moved north with tiring effort, harassed continually by the Crows. As they neared the Missouri River, alarm spread to Fort Benton. The *Record* of September 7 expressed premature concern that Indians had raided wagon trains and attacked Fort Claggett. A hurriedly assembled group of regulars and volunteers under Major Guido Ilges moved down river, but found nothing.

On the 21st, the *Record* renewed its cry, this time with more substance as the Nez Perce approached a crossing of the Missouri. For the second time Ilges marched soldiers and citizens out from Fort Benton, this time to encounter hostilities as

SNAKE CREEK BATTLE.

The Most Remarkable Indian Fight on Record.

Gen. Miles' Rapid March From Tongue River.

Graphic Description of the Battlefield.

Valorous Conduct of the Troops.

Powder-Burnt At the Brink of the Ravine.

160 Rifle Pits---Bomb Proof Fortifications.

Five Days' Siege--Surrender Of Joseph.

Finding Of White Bird--Unearthing the Caches.

The Reconno's enterprising representative, Mr. J. J. Healy, arrived from Gen. Miles command at 2 o'clock on Monday morning, bringing full particulars of the fight and surrender at Snake creek, and



CHIEF JOSEPH

Big Battle Near Bear Paw Mountains.

Gen. Miles Attacks the Nez Perces, and Kills 17, Including Looking Glass, Joseph's Brother and Three Other Chiefs.

600 Ponies Captured.

Miles Loss in Killed two Officers and 22 Men.

The Indians Closely Invested.

(From the Herald Extra of Sunday.)
[SPECIAL TO THE HERALD.]

FOUR SHAW, M. T., October 6, 1877.

Gen. Miles surprised the Nez Perce camp near the Bear Paw Mountains, on the 30th of September, killing 17, including Looking Glass, Joseph's brother, and three other Chiefs, and wounded 40. He also captured 600 ponies. He has the Indians now closely invested in ravines.

General Miles' loss in killed are Captain Hale and Lieut. Biddle 7th cavalry, and 22 men. The wounded are Captain Mayhew, Captain Godfrey 7th cavalry, Lieutenants Baird and Romeyn 5th infantry, and 40 men. None of the officers wounded are dangerously so.

Miles says these Indians fight more desperately.

the fatigued Indians struck wagons and the supply depot at Cow Island to replenish stores.

Agents for the Fort Benton transportation and merchandise firm of T. C. Power and Brother dispatched communications to wagon masters ordering unity and combination for strength against attack. Attacks came, wagons burned, and freighters lost supplies. At Cow Island, the Nez Perce negotiated unsuccessfully for food, then raided government supplies in frustration. An outnumbered contingent of thirteen men could only stand and watch.

Sgt. Michael Foley reflected on the futility of his position in a hurried note: "Rifle Pit, at Cow Island, September 23, 1877, 10 a.m.: Chief Joseph is here, and says he will surrender for two hundred bags of sugar. I told him to surrender without the sugar. He took the sugar and will not surrender. What shall I do?"

T. C. Power and Company did not share the sergeant's concern for supplies. In a telegram later that day, the Fort Benton agent assured an absent Mr. Power that "Indians burnt fifty tons frt [freight] at Cow Island. Mostly Government. None Ours." Power's company did lose wagon freight in the area, but in their view it was an insignificant amount.

From Cow Island the Nez Perce moved agonizingly close to Canada. By late September, residents in Fort Benton assumed they had made it, and breathed a sigh of relief. Feeling much the same relief, the Nez Perce paused to rest in the Bear's

Paw Mountains where Colonel Nelson A. Miles and nearly 600 troops from Fort Keogh surprised and defeated them. On October 5, it ended as the bulk of the tribe surrendered.

In Helena, sixteen-year-old W. E. Sanders recorded the statistics in his diary: "A telegram says that the Nez Perce have surrendered with all their families to the amount of about 350 men, women & children. . . . It has been a very pleasant day; all day."

Except for Colonel Miles' final victory in the Bear's Paw Mountains, the summer of 1877 produced a continued military debacle in the minds of many Montana residents. The Territorial press, without exception, expressed consternation and disgust at repeated failures to capture or defeat the Nez Perce. This, and what early became public sympathy for the Nez Perce cause, combined to produce an heroic image of the Indian flight. Newspaper editors, presagers of conflict during the last weeks of July, became defenders — almost well-wishers — for the Nez Perce cause.

Beyond the alarm of uncertainty in the Bitterroot Valley between July 11 and July 31, Montanans expressed surprisingly amicable views of the Nez Perce in private correspondence and editorial response. True, a wave of panic rolled across Montana immediately in front of the Indian column, but as quickly as it appeared, it subsided when warriors and families passed, creating at most only minor disturbances.

THE BEAR-PAW BATTLE

Graphic Account of General Miles' Engagement.

SURPRISE AND ATTACK.

Rapid March Through the Snow Storm.

A White Flag and a Desperate Fight.

Special Correspondence Independent.

BENTON, October 7th, 1877.

On the morning of September 28th Major Liges sent a courier from Cow Island (a citizen volunteer named Chas. Buckrum) towards the supposed route of General Miles who was reported to have crossed the Missouri on the 25th ult. at the mouth of the Muscleshell. The courier proceeded along the southern base of the Little Rocky Mountains, passing around the eastern end of the mountains, and discovered the command on the 29th. General Miles being informed of the direction the Indians had taken, moved rapidly to the upper or northern side of the Bear Paw Mountains, and struck the Nez Perce camp on the 30th on a tributary of Snake creek, which is, itself, a tributary of Milk river. It was snowing at the time, and he got within two miles of the camp before the Indians saw him or he saw them. Immediately on the discovery (the country be-



GEN. O. O. HOWARD

JOSEPH SURRENDERS.

Three Hundred and Fifty Nez Perces Prisoners Taken.

SIXTY OR SEVENTY INDIANS ESCAPE.

The List of Killed and Wounded.

From the Benton Record Extra.

FORT BENTON, Oct. 8, 2 A. M. Mr. J. J. Healy arrived from Miles' command this morning, with official advice to General Terry, announcing the surrender of Joseph and his band, numbering about 350 men, women and children, on the 5th inst. at 2 p. m.

The following is a list of the killed and wounded soldiers:

KILLED.

Captain Owen Hale, Co. K, 7th Cav.
Lieut. J. W. Biddle, do.
Company K, 7th Cavalry—1st Sergeant, O. Wilde; Sergeants Max Weilke, G. W. Rachele.
Privates—Wm. Whitlow, Francis Post, Geo. Hurdick and Frank Knapp.
Company D, 7th Cavalry—1st Sergeant Michael Martin; Sergeant James W. Alberts.
Privates—Pander and Dauscy.
Company A, 7th Cavalry—1st Sergeant Geo. McDermott; Sergeant O. H. Desler.
Privates—John E. Cleveland, J. Kelly, S. McIntyre.
Privates Irving, Company G, 2d Cavalry
Richard W. Pashall, Co. G, 5th Infantry;
Joseph Kohler, Co. I, 5th Infantry; Georgekan, Co. C, 5th Infantry; Corporal John

Major Edwin Mason, whose personal frustrations as General Howard's aide during the campaign are dealt with extensively elsewhere in this issue, captured the alternate moods of civilian panic and sympathy which swept the countryside as the tribes moved eastward. Early in the campaign, he recounted to his wife the instance of a man and his family who fled their homestead when they first heard of the Nez Perce approach, "leaving everything in the house — doors open — leaving his cattle in the barn and his gates Open — in short, started within 10 minutes. . . ." A few days later the settler resolved to return. To his surprise he

found "a party of six Indians camped on his place taking care of it! Nothing lost or out of place." The Nez Perce had come along, and, seeing the abandoned farm, stopped to take care of stock and buildings until the farmer came back. "This man went back for his family, a good deal ashamed of himself," Mason observed.

For a populace nurtured on Indian scares and wars during the summer of 1876, the ambivalent reactions in 1877 proved unique, certainly unanticipated. From this sympathetic response grew a popular legacy of Nez Perce greatness — now a century old and almost epic in proportion.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Rex C. Myers, Research Librarian at the Montana Historical Society, provides interested readers with the following bibliographic information.

The Society holds a large number of diaries, letters, and reminiscences relating to the Nez Perce War. Assistant Archivist Jeffrey Cunniff has been most helpful in ferreting out particular citations.

Items include diaries by John Martens (Microfilm 77), Cornelius Hedges (MS 33, Box 4), and W. E. Sanders (MS 47, Box 2). Letters reflecting on events of 1877 are to be found in the Fisk Family Papers (MS 31, Box 7), Martin Maginnis Papers (MS 50, Box 3), the T. C. Power Papers (MS 55, Box 181), a letter Lt. Thomas Mayhew Woodruff wrote after the Bear's Paw Battle, dated October 15, 1877 (SC 18), Major Edwin Mason's correspondence (Microfilm 80), and the Subject Files, 1863-1888, of the Executive Office of Montana Territory (Record Series 40, Box 3). In addition, several Montanans recorded recollections of

events after the War. Notable are materials by Henry Buck (SC 492), John B. Catlin (SC 520), and Emma C. Cowan (SC 576).

War Department Records in the National Archives contain not only telegrams and reports from military participants during the summer, but also letters from Governor B. F. Potts, Flathead Indian Agent Peter Ronan, and Crow Agent George Frost. These have been microfilmed and are on deposit at the Historical Society Library. Finally, contemporary newspapers have dispatches, editorials, letters, and articles which mirror the rise and fall of public sentiment in a community or the Territory as a whole. Newspapers published during the summer of 1877 include the *Missoulian*, *Deer Lodge's New Northwest*, *The Butte Miner*, the *Herald and Independent* in Helena, Bozeman's two papers — the *Avant Courier* and the *Times*, *The Madisonian* in Virginia City, Diamond City's *Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, and the *Fort Benton Record*.