FINDING BIA OGOI

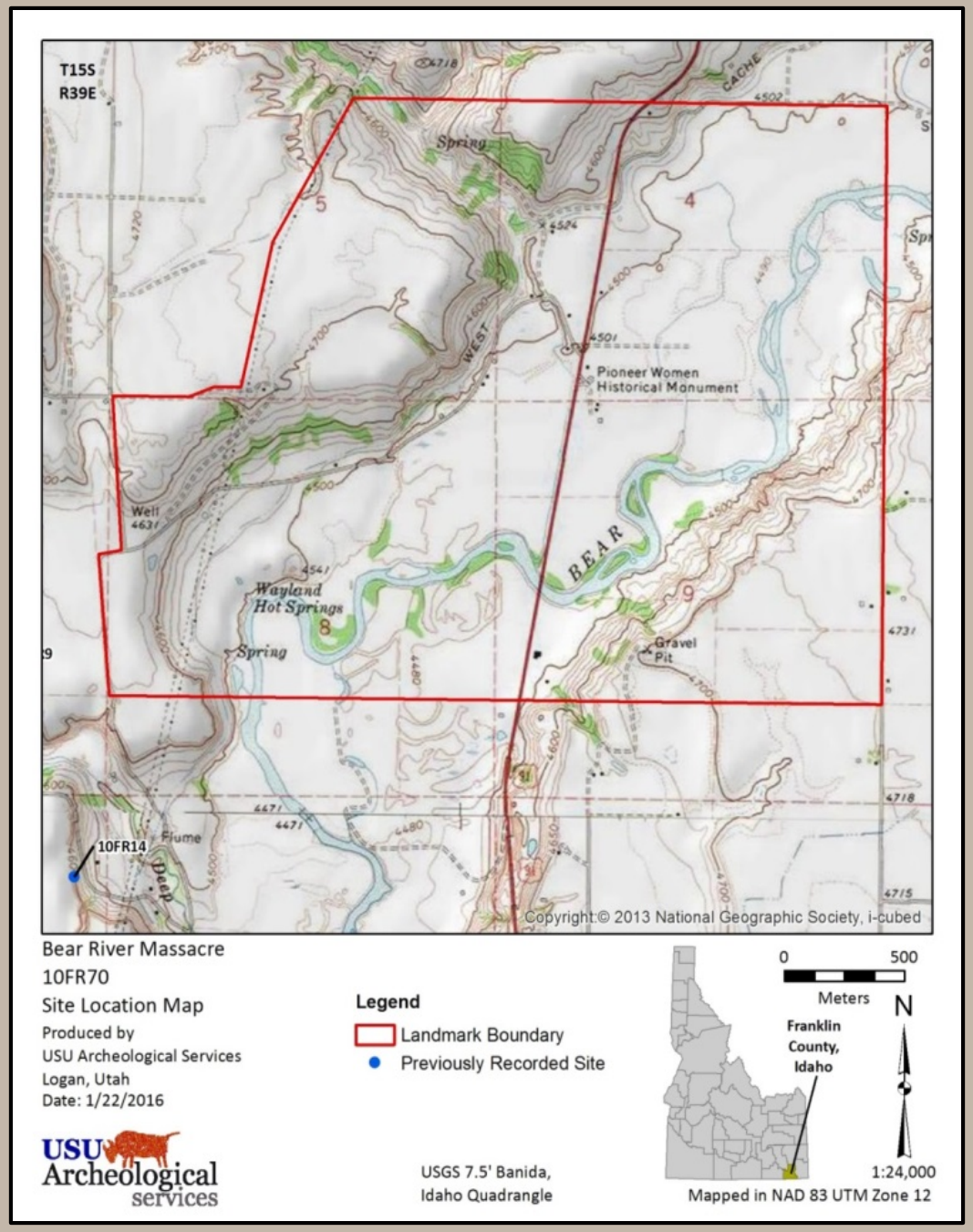
The Application of Historic Documents and Geomorphology to the Understanding of Nineteenth Century Landscape Change of the Bear River Valley, Franklin County, Idaho

Paper presented at the
50th Anniversary Conference on
Historical and Underwater Archaeology
Ft. Worth, Texas
5 January 2017

SOCIETY *for* HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

… the killing of 250 Northwestern Shoshoni at Bear River was a national catastrophe. It deserves to be listed with other massacres in American history, but, even more important, it has significance as the culmination of over twenty years of increasing Indian-white violence on the various western trails.

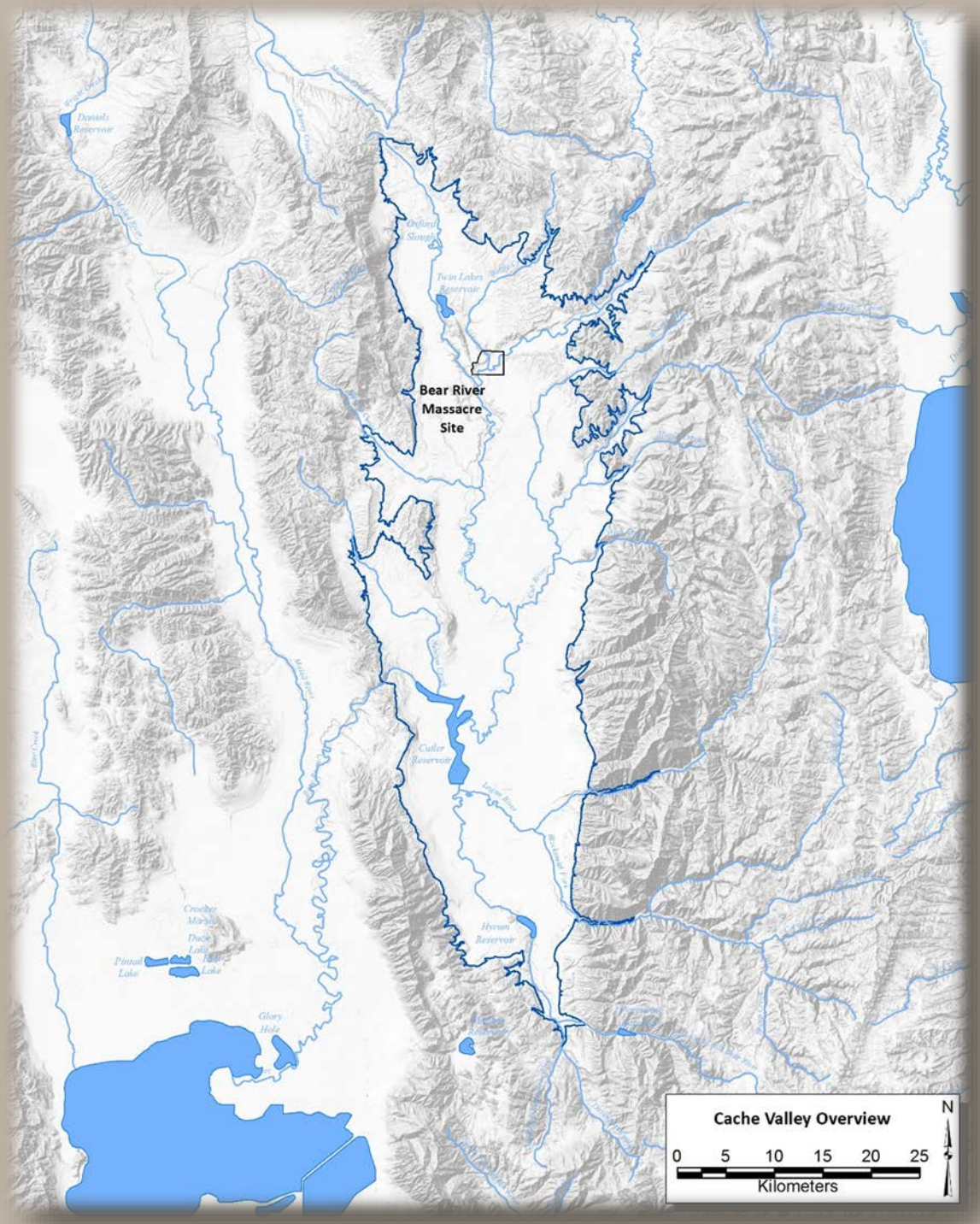
-Brigham D. Madsen (1985)


T15S
R39E
Spring
CACHE
WEST
BEAR
Pioneer Women
Historical Monument
Well
4631
Wayland
Hot Springs
Spring
Gravel
Pit
10FR14
Flume
Deep
Copyright © 2013 National Geographic Society, i-cubed
Bear River Massacre
10FR70
Site Location Map
Produced by
USU Archeological Services
Logan, Utah
Date: 1/22/2016
Legend
Landmark Boundary
Previously Recorded Site
0
500
Meters
N
Franklin
County,
Idaho
USGS 7.5' Banida,
Idaho Quadrangle
1:24,000
Mapped in NAD 83 UTM Zone 12

View to nw across the
Bear River floodplain.

View to north looking up
ravine of Battle Creek.

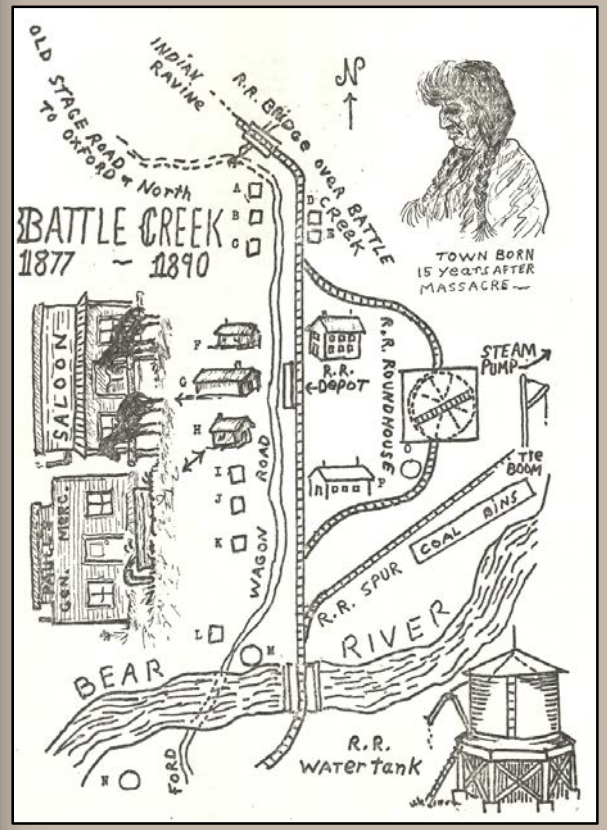
View to SE with Bear River Mountains in Background
Connor's Overlook
Initial Attack & Repulse
Battle Creek Ravine
Shoshone Village
McGarry's Flanking Move



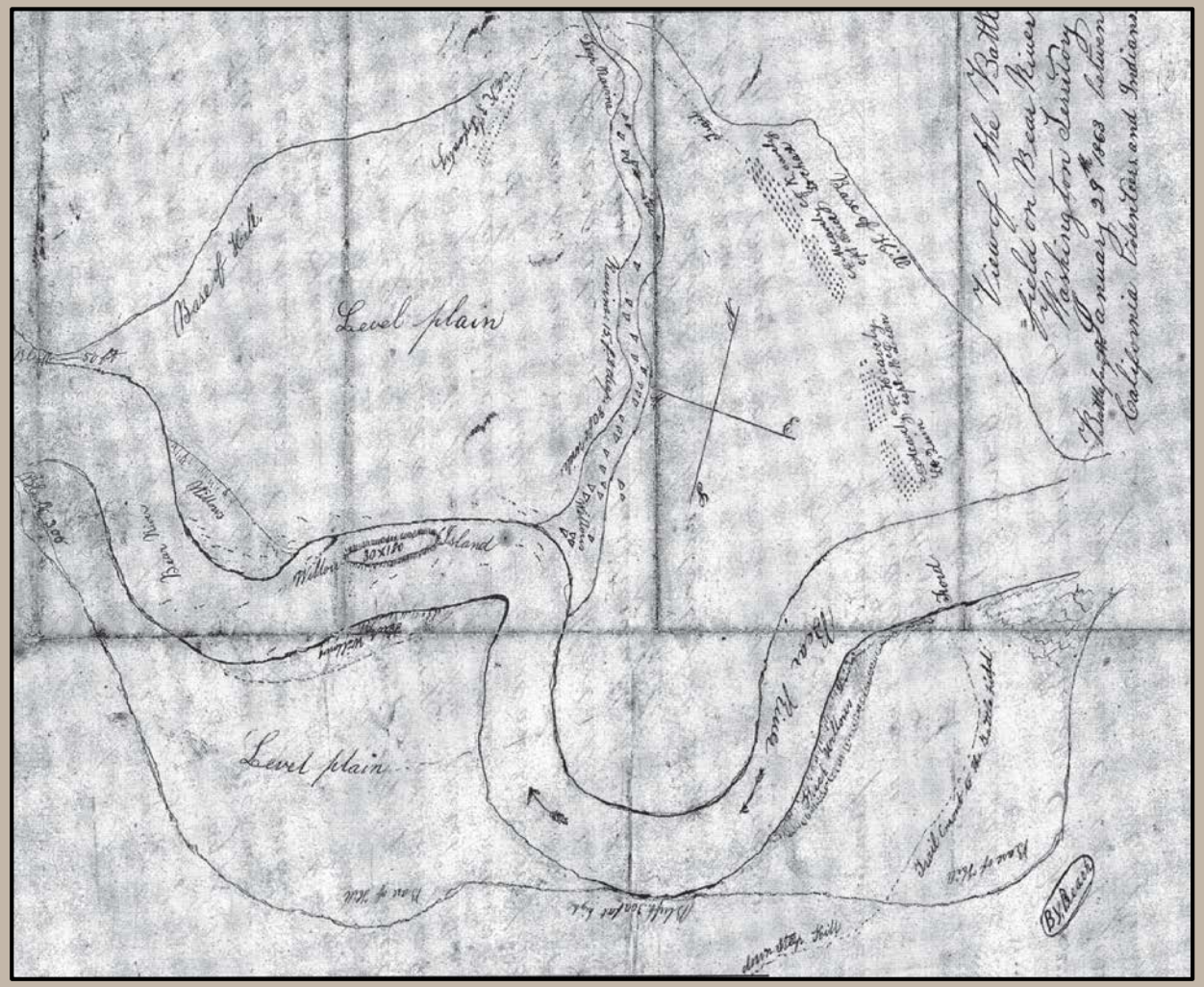
One of the most extensive and beautiful vales of the Rocky Mountain Range …, producing everywhere most excellent grass….

-Warren Ferris 1832

154 YEARS OF IMPACTS



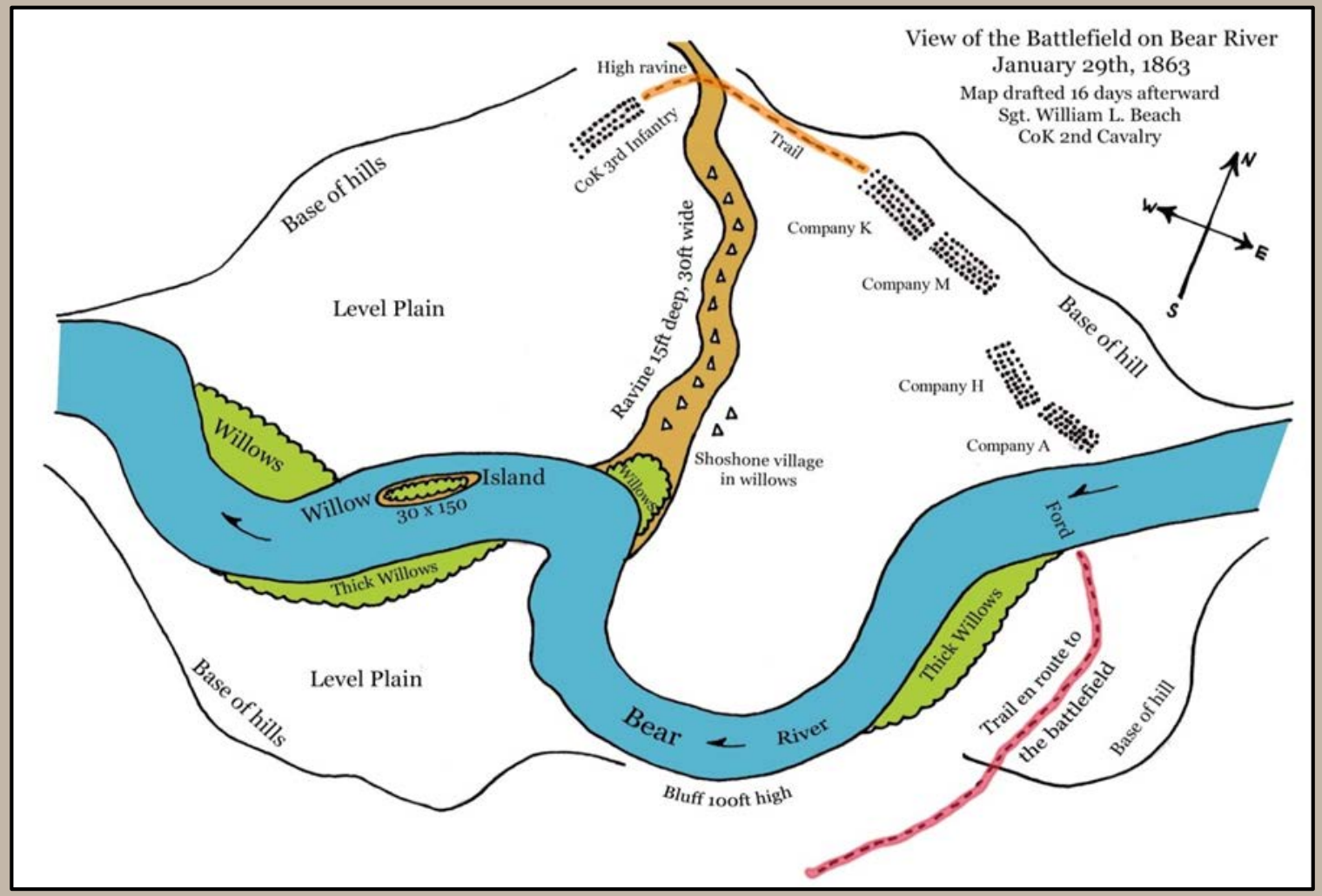
SGT. WILLIAM BEACH MAP



- **Drafted 16 days after attack while recovering from frostbite at Camp Douglas.**

SGT. WILLIAM BEACH MAP

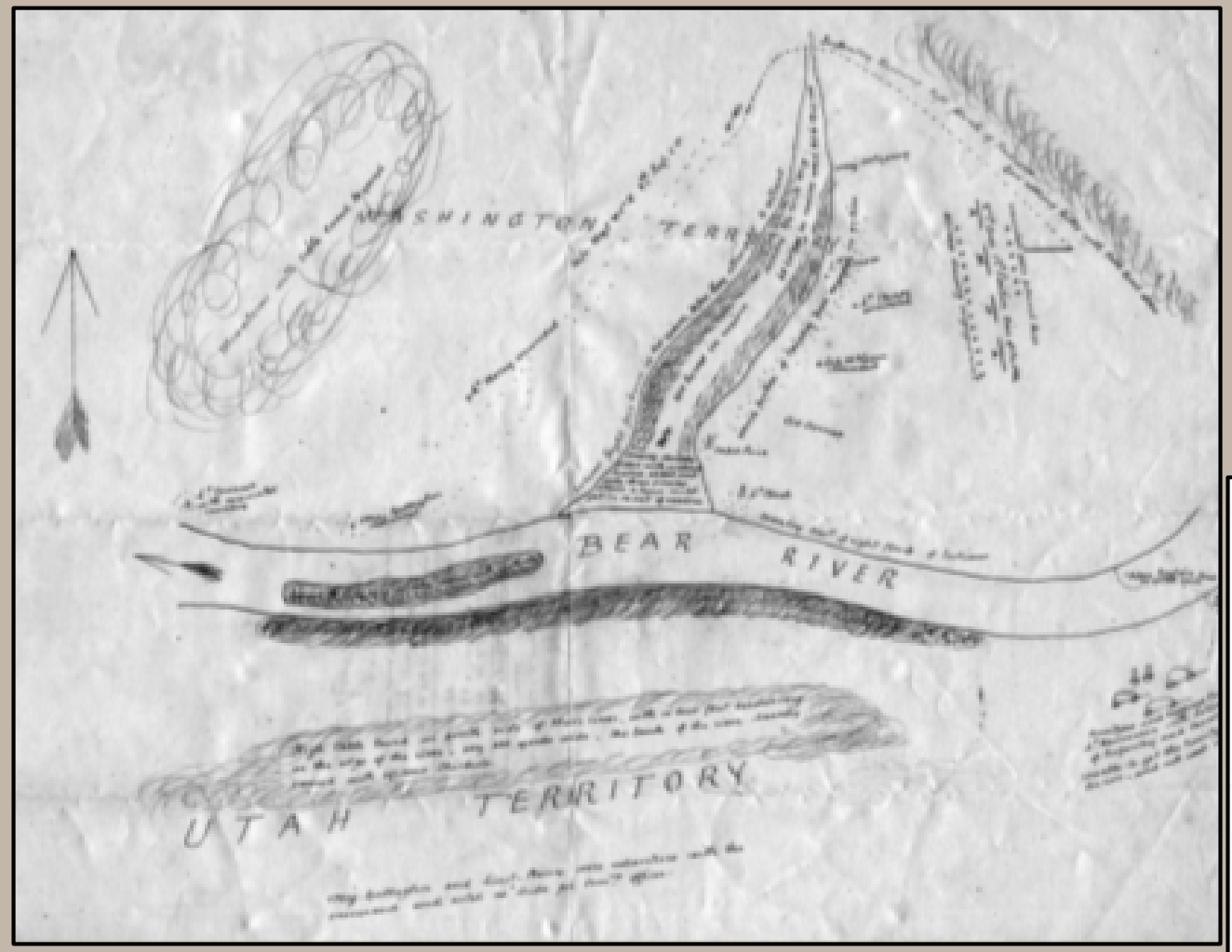
(*redrafted*)



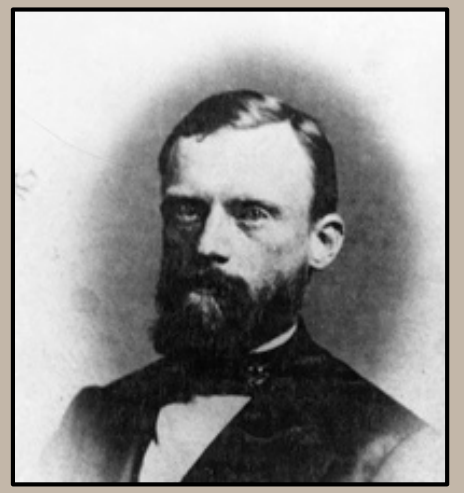
- Gives the depth and width of the ravine, but not its length.
- Shows Shoshone village along the length of the ravine.
- Focus is on the location of the military units before the attack.
- Temporal code: present tense, 2-hour duration

PRICE-MARTINEAU MAP

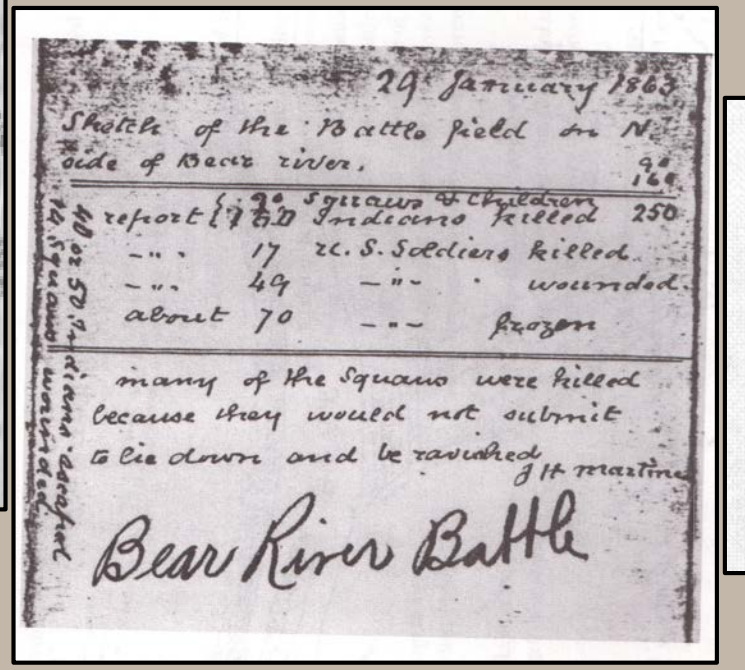
(1863)

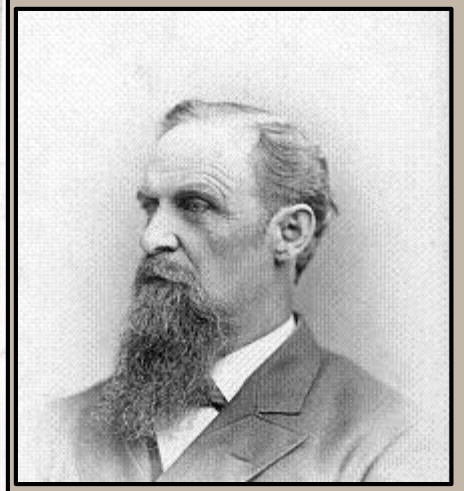


Found in LDS Church archives
(Christensen 1999)



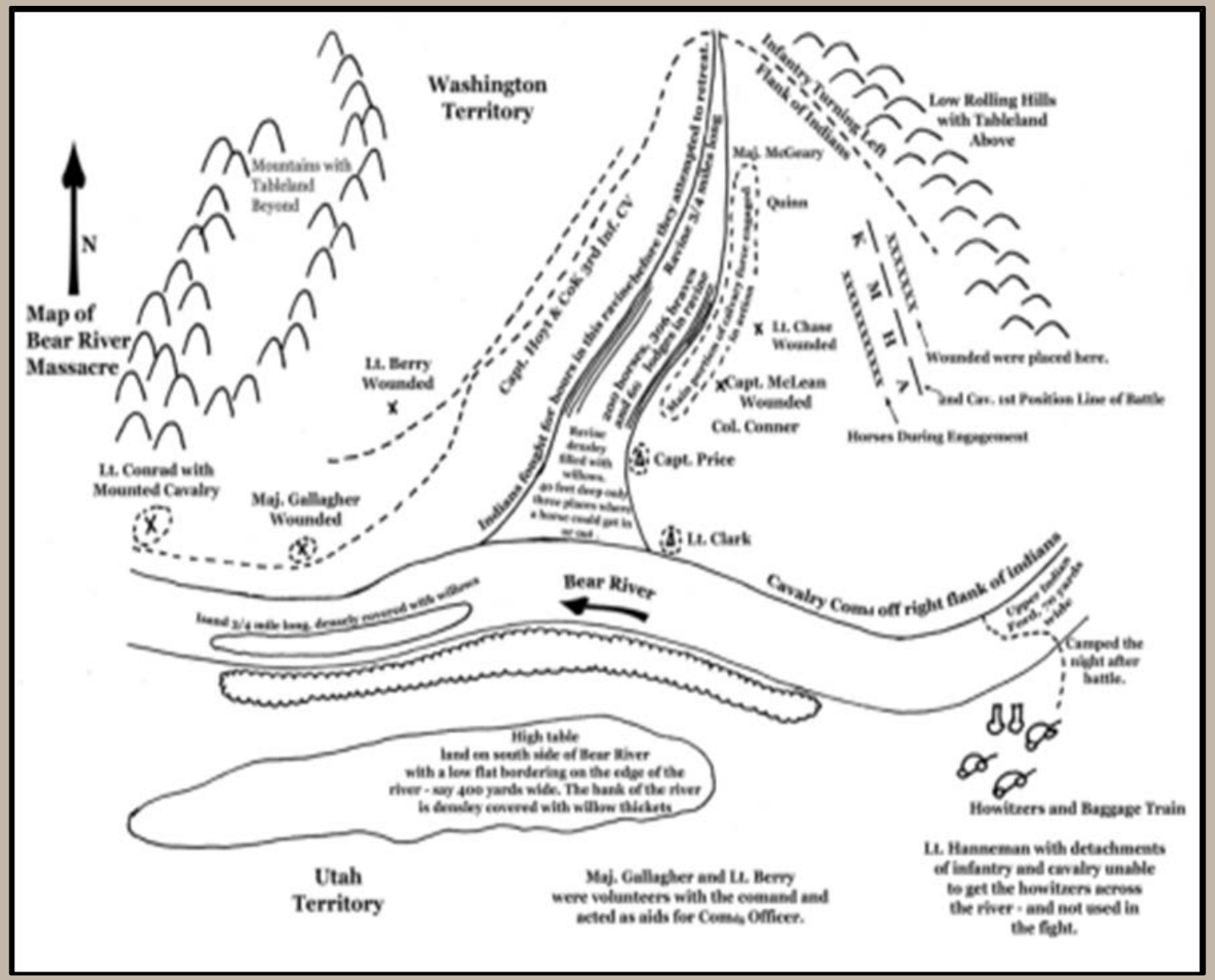
Captain George Price's "diagram" of the Bear River battle (with verso notes on the casualties by John Henry Martineau)?



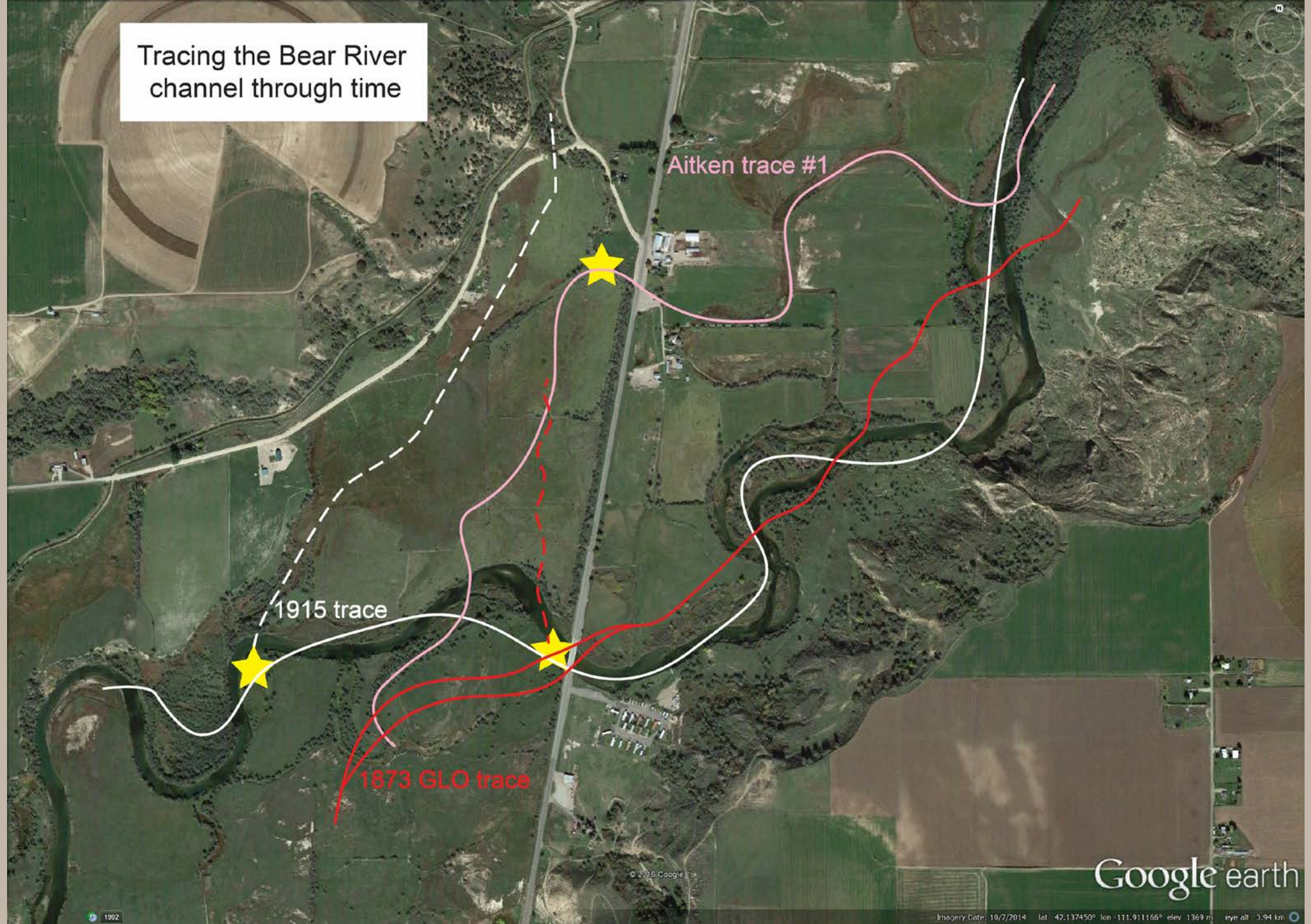


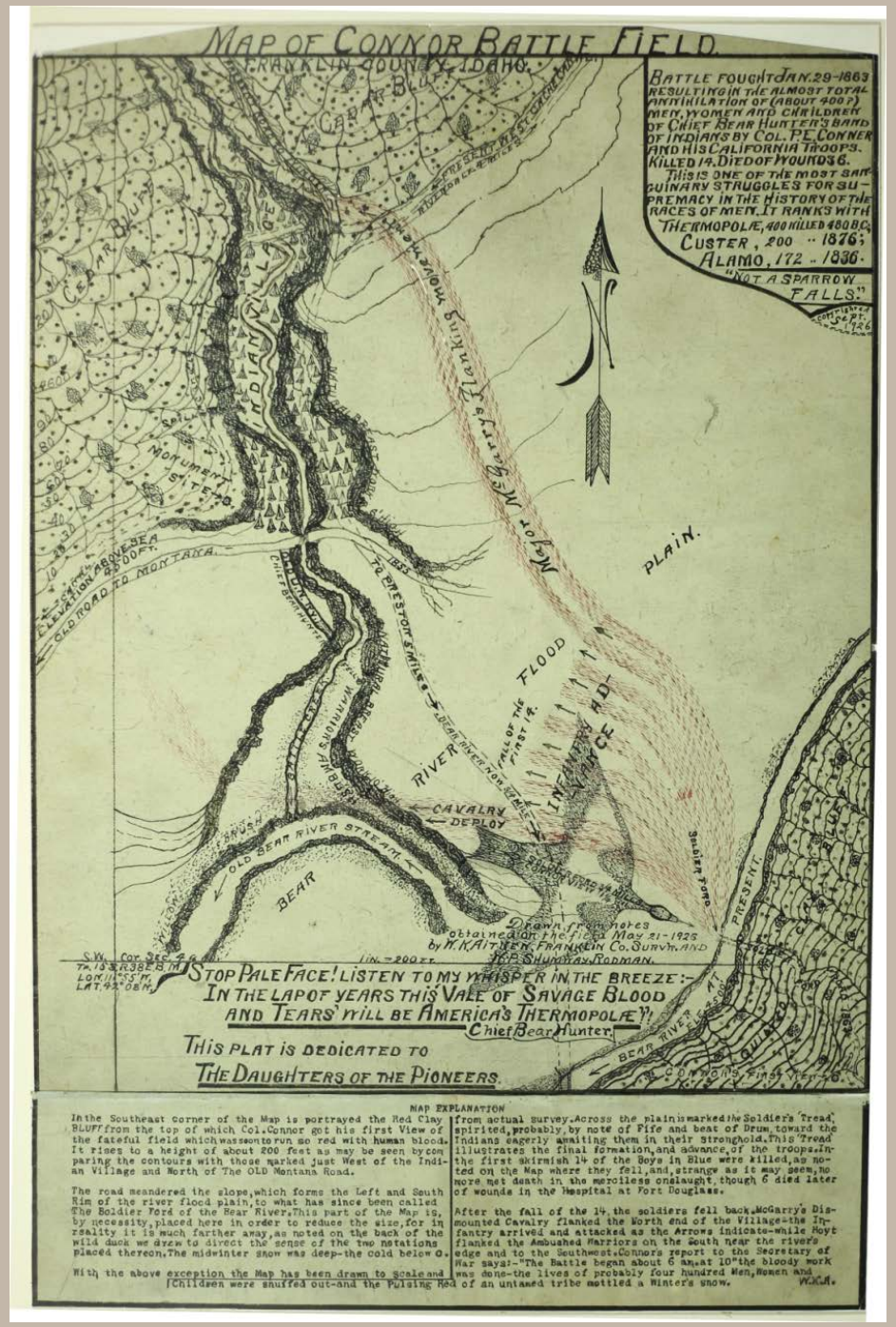
PRICE-MARTINEAU MAP

(redrafted)



- Gives the length (.75 mile) but not the width or depth of the ravine.
- Does not show location of the Shoshone village.
- Shoshone defensive position is about 1600 feet long, beginning about 800 feet above the confluence.
- Temporal code: past tense, 24-hour duration.


Tracing the Bear River channel through time
Aitken trace #1
1915 trace
1873 GLO trace
© 2016 Google
Google earth
1992
Imagery Date: 10/2/2014 lat 42.137450° lon -111.911166° elev 1369 m eye alt 3.94 km



W.H. Aitkin's map of 1926:

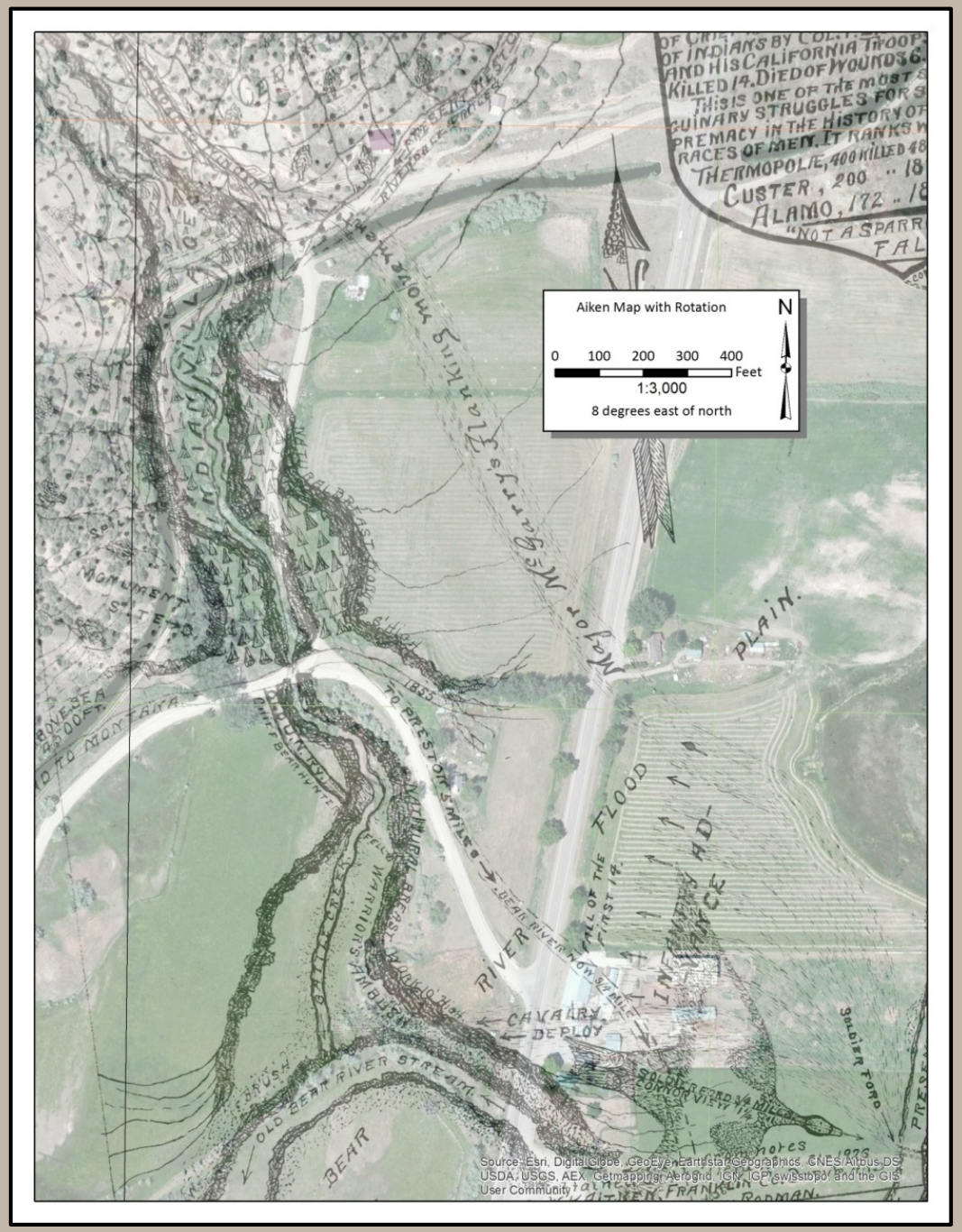
anchored to Public Land Survey

incorporates local knowledge of Shoshone village

identifies 1863 channel of Bear River

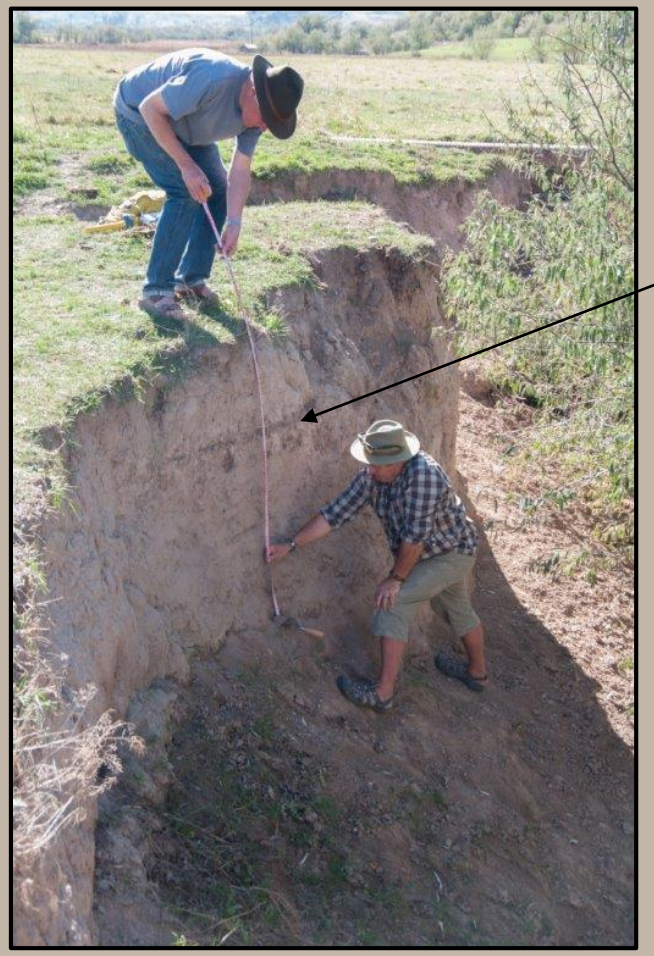
Temporal Code

- Present tense
- 4 hour duration for the battle
- 63 year duration for the river

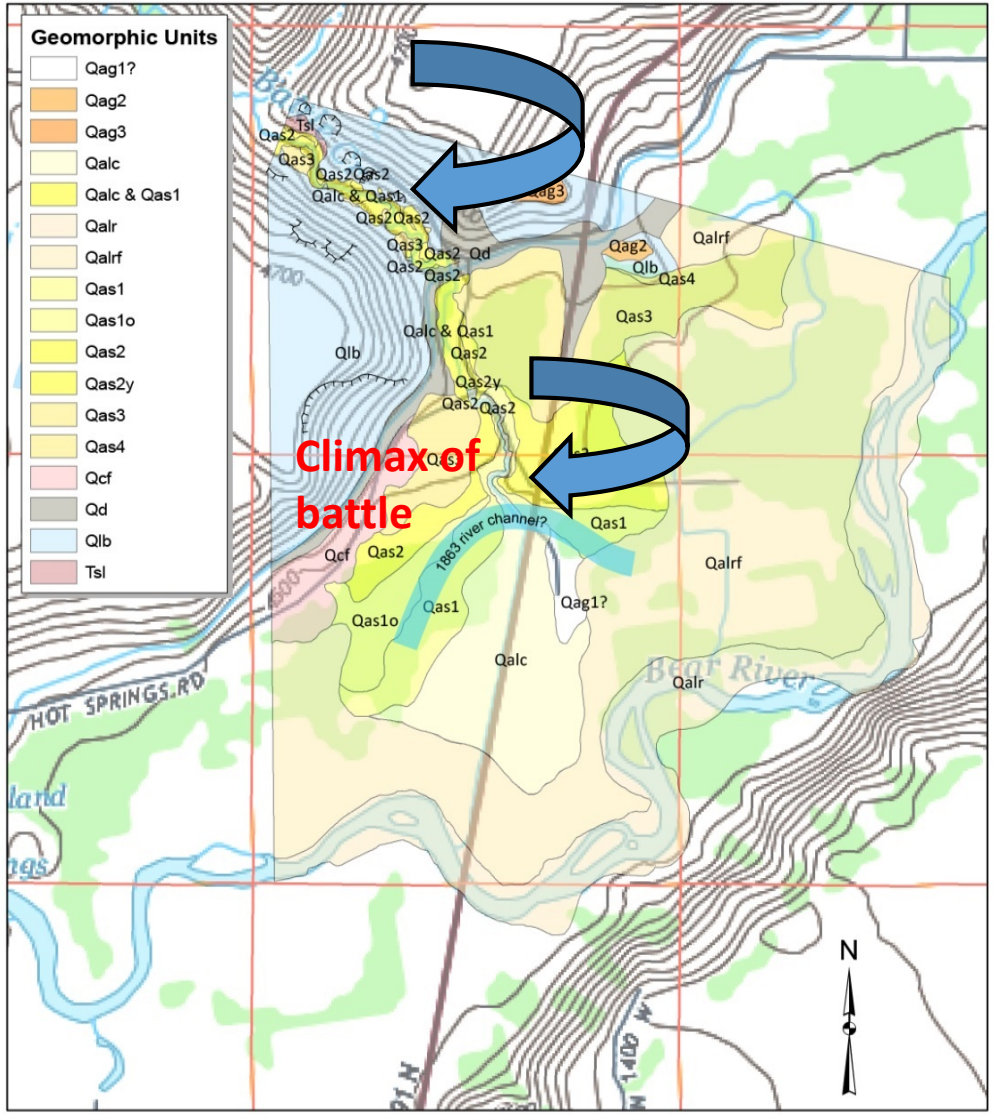


- **Superimpose Aitken on Google Earth.**
- **Not a perfect match, but close.**
- **Matched with Pederson's terrace sequence—ah hah!**

^{14}C DATING THE SECOND TERRACE



Quaternary geologic map of the Bear River Massacre area
1:12,000 scale



Three Inset Terraces

- **T1: <300 years. Small remnant in the Middle Ravine, more extensive fan lobes south of T2. Probable site of village, battle, massacre.**
- **T2: three ^{14}C dates from 330 – 2130 rcybp; hearth feature dated to ~A.D. 900**

  T3: late mid-Holocene in age, but not dated
- **HYPOTHESIS: The 1863 channel produced a toe-cut terrace sequence ~700 m north of the present channel.**

Future Goals

The Massacre of the 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 Sagwitch Timbimboo escaped the massacre. Chief Bear Hunter was tortured to death. No Bannocks were present, only Northwestern Shoshones of the Great Shoshone Nation.

-Mae T. Parry (1976),
Granddaughter of Sagwitch

Chief Sagwitch and Bear Hunters' wife.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation:

Darren Parry, Patty Timbimboo-Madsen

American Battlefield Protection Program

Idaho Heritage Trust

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USUAS Staff:
Jon Peart, Houston Martin, Paul Santarone, John Blong, Sara Shults, Aaron Larsen, Brandi Allred

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Katrina Larsen, Terresa Casort, Luke Trout