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

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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)
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

Active Landslide Complex

West Cache Canal 1898-1904

Agricultural fields

County Roads

Utah & Northern Rail Road 1877-1890
• Drafted 16 days after attack while recovering from frostbite at Camp Douglas.
SGT. WILLIAM BEACH MAP

• 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)

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

Found in LDS Church archives (Christensen 1999)
• 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.
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

AD 900
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.
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
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