HOWARD'S COMMAND AND CONTROL OF IDAHO'S NEZ PERCE WAR

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

CHARLES K. FORD, MAJ, USA
B.S.E.E., University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho, 1979

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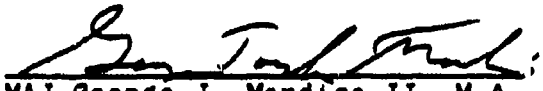

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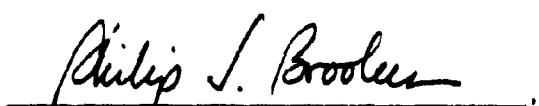

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U. S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

HOWARD'S COMMAND AND CONTROL OF IDAHO'S NEZ PERCE WAR BY MAJ Charles K. Ford, USA, 128 pages.

This study investigates Brigadier General Oliver Otis Howard's command and control of Idaho's Nez Perce War of 1877. The Nez Perce War of 1877 aroused a wide range of emotions in the public and military. While most Easterners labeled the army as being bloodthirsty and inhumane, most Idaho Territory settlers looked at the army as lifesavers. Secretary of War, George W. McCrary, recognized and complimented Howard for his endurance, courage, and skill, but General Sherman thought his former Corps Commander lacked drive and aggressiveness. Should Howard have been relieved of command? The one armed praying Brigadier General O. O. Howard did a very professional job when one considers all the factors. Howard had to work quickly to prevent an Indian coalition uprising while mustering sufficient forces to protect the settler and subdue the hostile Nez Perce. He faced a very experienced foe who had the means to fight a war in very demanding terrain. On the other hand, the army improperly equipped Howard's substandard soldiers. Howard had to prosecute the war over a vast territory which crossed several lines of command. Upon reviewing the whole situation, Howard effectively commanded and controlled his operations to accomplish his missions.

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INTRODUCTION

> A great deal of cheap wit has been wasted . . . over the failure of Gen. Howard's command to catch the lightly mounted Indians in a stern chase, but there is no sort of doubt that Napoleon and Von Moltke, if reduced to the same conditions . . . chasing an Indian raider over hundreds of miles . . . would fail in the task just as signally.[1]
>
> Army and Navy Journal, 8 Sept. 1877

During the quarter century following the Civil War, as greater numbers of Americans headed west, Indian wars took their place of prominence. The waves of emigrants chose either the Oregon Trail, the Santa Fe Trail, or the Smokey Hill Trail as their path to their futures. Following the discovery of gold in Montana and Idaho, many settlers, in a quest for land, gold, commerce, or adventure, now headed northwestward along the Bozeman Trail to Montana and Idaho. As several million people made their homes in the West, a showdown over land ownership was brewing between the settlers and Indians. As a result of these showdowns, 943 engagements occurred between the US Army and the various Indian tribes.[2]

Eleven of these engagements made up the Nez Perce War of 1877. The Nez Perce conflict was only one in a series of Indian struggles in the West that occurred as the country's leaders and citizens fulfilled its Manifest Destiny. Other significant western conflicts included the Sioux in the Northern Plains, the Kiowas and the Commanches in the Southern Plains, and the Apaches in the Southwest. While the Nez Perce War resulted from the culmination of unrest due to the routine practice of uprooting Indians from their homeland, this war is noted as, 'One of the most remarkable and dramatic campaigns in all American history.'[2] The army's pursuit of the heroic Nez Perce flight over the Bitterroot Mountains towards Canada is rich in lessons.

Of the numerous Indian wars that occurred following the Civil War, the Nez Perce War is an excellent illustration of the dynamic interactions between the various players' strengths and weaknesses. These players were the army, the Indians, and the government. Because the Nez Perce war produced voluminous, but extremely biased, first-hand documentation, a modern understanding of the Nez Perce War is a mixture of facts and fiction. This thesis cuts through the myths and focuses on Brigadier General Oliver Otis Howard, the commander of the Military Department of the Columbia.

General William T. Sherman, the Commanding General, greatly influenced the US Army's approach to and the handling of the Indian problem. Sherman desired to see civilization brought to the virgin territories of the West in order to tap the endless resources of the frontier. When the Indians interfered with this process, Sherman believed that the Indians had to be crushed. Yet, Sherman had written the following about the Nez Perce after their surrender:

> The Indians throughout displayed a courage and skill that elicited universal praise; they abstained from scalping, let captive women go free, did not commit indiscriminate murder of peaceful families which is usual [sic], and fought with almost scientific skill, using advance and rear guards, skirmish-lines and field fortifications. Nevertheless, they would not settle down on lands set apart for them ample for their maintenance; and, when commanded by proper authority, they began resistance by murdering persons . . . .[4]

The conduct of the Nez Perce in their war against the government not only engendered American sympathy, but brought about changes in public policy dealing with Indian affairs.

Long known for being peaceful and helpful to both the settlers and the military, the Nez Perce influenced the initial development of the Pacific Northwest by helping the Lewis and Clark Expedition. In 1831, the Nez Perce's request for missionaries stimulated a wave of missionary activity which in turn brought more settlers to the Pacific

Northwest. Yet, their request ultimately led to their conflict over land. The Nez Perce wanted their beloved Wallowa Valley and their life-style as was allowed them by the 1855 Steven's Treaty.

Hostilities started at Slate Creek when wild young warriors murdered settlers who had recently wronged their people. The young braves eventually struck down the innocent along with the guilty before the chiefs gained control of the situation. However, these selected murders escalated into the Slate Creek massacre. From that point on, the warring Nez Perce conducted their engagements according to the recognized rules of civilized warfare as noted by Sherman's comments above. Even though the Nez Perce fought against the army, many citizens in the eastern United States openly approved of these courageous, humane Nez Perce warriors in their futile opposition. In the end, the Nez Perce's conduct during the war and Chief Joseph's post-war visits to the East contributed to the development of a more sympathetic American attitude toward the Indian problem. Their actions also initiated some reforms in the Commission of Indian Affairs, the forerunner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs."

After the Slate Creek massacre occurred, the army used force to get the warring Nez Perce to submit to the government. Not only did Howard have a poorly trained and

ill-equipped force structured for a conventional war, he had to conduct military operations in extremely rugged terrain under very diverse adverse conditions.

During this campaign, every type of climatic hardship was experienced. In the spring, the combatants endured the drenching cold rains which made the rivers swift and the ground too muddy to maintain their footing. Then, as the Indians and soldiers traveled across the rugged land, the summer heat drained their strength. During the autumn, the participants experienced the entire spectrum of temperature extremes. At midday, the summer heat scorched them, while the night brought a cold that in the morning left an inch of ice in their water buckets. At the conclusion of the campaign, the lightly clad soldiers and Indians also had to battle the effects of a blinding snow storm.[6]

A special correspondent from the California Associated Press accompanied Howard's force and provides us with a description of the terrain and the effects the weather had on it:

> The country is most wild and rugged character, precipitous mountains and canyon rendering it extremely difficult for troops to travel. Adding to the natural obstacles, heavy and continuous rains have made the mountains almost impassable.[7]

Howard suffered constant and merciless criticism at the time and has not fared too well in the history that has been recorded since. One military historian described

Howard's performance as 'lethargic' and as an 'embarrassment to the army.'[8]

In spite of the criticism and lack of support from his superiors both during and after the campaign, Howard pushed his men to their limits while pursuing the nontreaty Nez Perce for one hundred and fifteen days and over fifteen hundred miles. This thesis examines the effectiveness of Howard's command and control. To illustrate the further implications of a historical study, it is appropriate to review the United States Army current definition of command and control:

> The process through which the activities of military forces are directed, coordinated, and controlled to accomplish the mission. This process encompasses the personnel, equipment, . . . and procedures necessary to gather and analyze information, to plan for what to be done, and to supervise the execution of operation.[9]

For Howard, effective command and control will be the successful completion of his threefold mission. Upon the outbreak of hostilities, Howard had the mission to calm and protect the settlers, to prevent a general uprising of the alienated Indians, and to rid the area of the hostile Indians.

First, this thesis looks at the frontier army's structure, composition, and characteristics to see what assets Howard had to execute his mission. Secondly, we will look at the Indian's background, structure, and the path

that led to war in order to gain an understanding of Howard's enemy. To understand the atmosphere in which Howard executed this mission, we will review his diplomatic actions to prevent hostilities and his initial response to their outbreak. Lastly, we will look at his campaign to see what he planned and how he supervised its execution. The thesis concludes with an overall analysis.

Howard, as an Indian fighter and as an Indian diplomat, was an important frontier figure. His own views of his frontier career and his written observations about the tribes he encountered make his recollections an important part of any well-rounded history of the American West. Prior to the Nez Perce War, he protected the Indians from the settlers while working on behalf of the Indians. Later, when the situation dictated, Howard attempted to get the nontreaty Nez Perce to accept the government's offers. Upon the outbreak of hostilities, he prosecuted the campaign.[10]

In spite of enormous logistical obstacles, difficult terrain with challenging and changing weather, sheer bad luck, and repeated discouragements, Howard remained on the trail to the bitter end. Did the one-armed general deserve to be relieved? After reviewing all the factors concerned and the situation on hand, one will see that Howard did a professional job and that he was criticized for problems beyond his control.

Endnotes

[1]Army and Navy Journal September 8, 1877, 73.

[2]Russel F. Weigley, History of The United States Army, (New York: McMillan Publishing Company, 1967), 269.

[3]Department of the Army, Center of Military History, American Military History, (Washington DC: Government Printing office, 1989), 311; and John A. Carpenter, Sword and the Olive Branch, 246.

[4]William T. Sherman, "Report of the General of the Army," Headquarter of the Army, Washington DC, November 7, 1877, of the Annual Report of the Secretary of War on the Operations of the Department for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1877 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1877), 15.

[5]Francis D. Haines, "Nez Perce and Shoshoni Influence on Northwest History" 379-93 of Greater America: Essays in Honor of Herbert Eugene Bolton, (Berkeley and Los Angles: University of California Press, 1945), 391-2.

[6]C. E. S. Wood, "Chief Joseph, The Nez Perce," The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine, May 1889, 141.

[7]Army and Navy Journal, 1 September 1877, 62.

[8]Robert Wooster, The Military and United States Indian Policy, 1865-1903, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 69.

[9]Department of the Army, FM 101-5-1, Operational Terms and Symbols (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 1985), 1-16.

[10]Robert M. Utley, Introduction to O. O. Howard's My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians: A Record of Personal Observations, Adventures, and Campaigns Among the Indians of the Great West with Some Accounts of Their Life, Habits, Traits, Religion, Ceremonies, Dress Savage Instincts, and Customs in Peace and War (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), v.

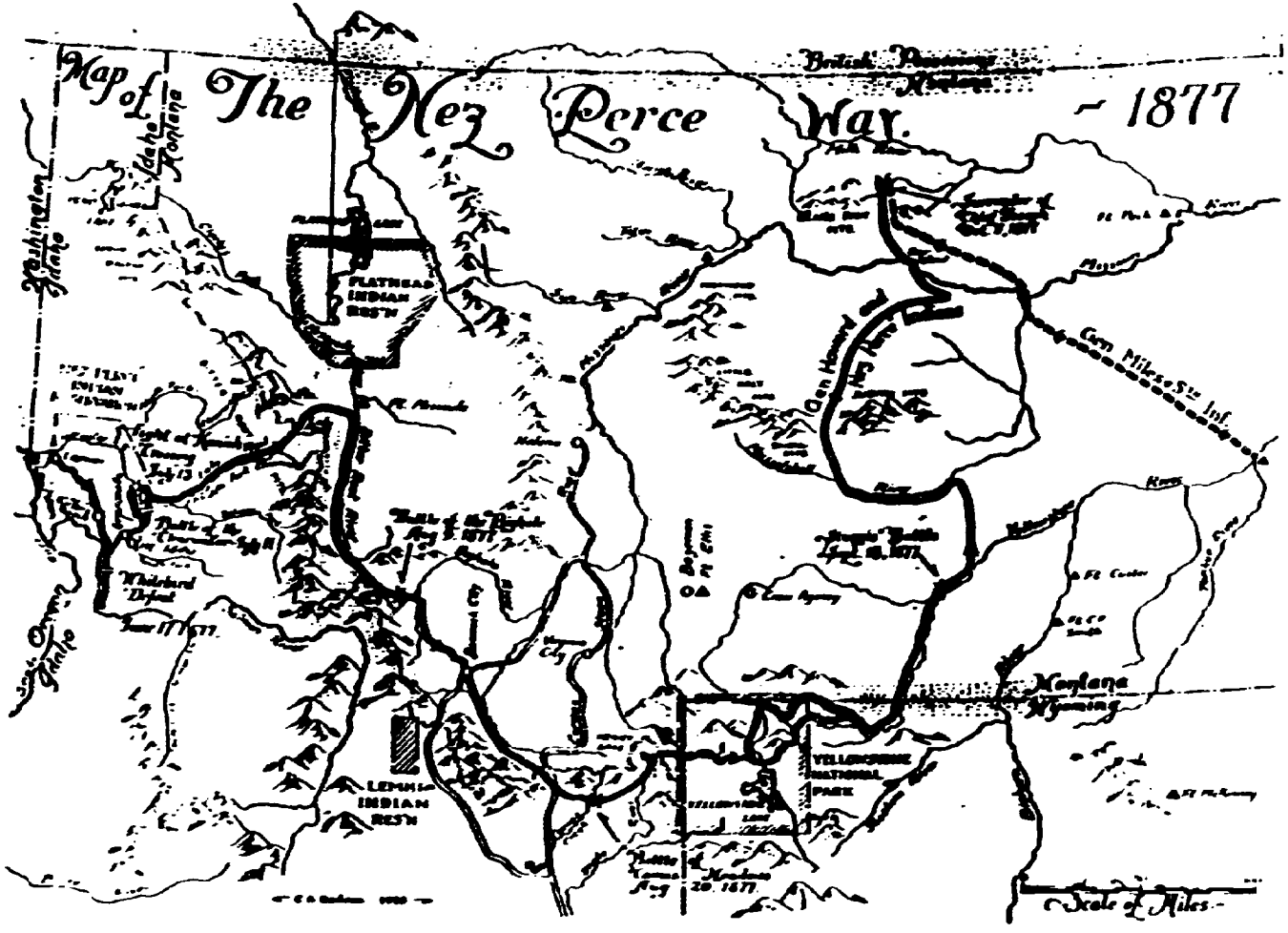

Figure 1, Map of The Nez Perce War

CHAPTER TWO

THE ARMY

> The army's Indian mission merits no consideration in determining its proper strength, organization, and composition.[1]
>
> General Winfield S. Hancock
> 1876 Congressional Testimony

With thousands of uncivilized Indians and only two hundred twenty-six military posts, seventeen arsenals or armories, and four storehouses or depots manned by only 24,581 officers and soldiers scattered throughout the country, the utmost vigilance was needed to protect the lives and properties of our frontier citizens.[2] As commander of the Department of the Columbia, Brigadier General Oliver Otis Howard had only eleven posts to protect the citizens of the state of Oregon and the territories of Idaho and Washington. In addition to limited number of posts and soldiers to protect the settlers from the Indians, the army's senior leaders did not consider the Indian mission when structuring, equipping, and training the army.

In addition to protecting our frontier settlers and travel routes, the United States Army in 1877 had several

railroad, built roads, and strung telegraph lines on the frontier. They also explored and mapped unsettled frontier areas.[3]

In addition, the congressionally controlled reconstruction army of the South had finally ended its occupation of the defeated Confederate states, but the role of the army in domestic issues continued.[4] The Hayes administration used troops in a dozen states to protect property during a wave of railroad strikes. The governors of these states requested the Federal soldiers to restore order after wage reductions caused the labor riots.[5]

From the end of the Civil War until 1877, the United States essentially had two armies. Congress controlled one army through the reconstruction acts to administer the former Confederate states. The other army, controlled by the President, consisted of the staff and the line. This situation caused the already small army to have even fewer troops available for the defense of the frontier.[6]

Amidst all this turmoil, the soldiers and officers received no pay because the House had not passed the annual army appropriation bill for the new fiscal year that started on 1 July. The House and the Senate could not agree on either the army's size or its properly employment.[7]

Having defined the roles of the army of 1877, the army's organization is examined. For administrative

purposes and to fix responsibility, the War Department divided the country into ten military departments which were commanded by either a brigadier general or the senior colonel in the department. The ten departments were under the three geographic divisions, each commanded by a general officer. The President of the United States appointed and specially empowered the department and division commanders.[8]

Although the War Department had set up geographic departments under the geographic division for command and control as well as administrative support of the forces, the boundaries were changed frequently or simply ignored. The department commanders were situated to gain perspective without losing focus on local conditions and had a large degree of autonomy. They maintained contact with their post commanders and set standards and guidelines. While the department commanders could normally handle local Indian troubles, problems developed when the hostiles crossed department geographic boundaries. In such cases, the division commanders had to coordinate and enforce cooperation between department commanders. When the hostile Indians crossed division geographic boundaries, often the commanding general or the Secretary of War had to make the various division and department commanders cooperate with each other.[9]

The Commanding General, General William T. Sherman, controlled matters pertaining to the discipline and military control of the army. The Secretary of War, the Honorable George W. McCrary, controlled the fiscal, administrative, and logistical matters through his bureaus and staff department. Hence, the commanding general did not have habitual control of these elements. Consequently, the bureaus controlled the distribution and division of their support; thereby, influencing the operational tempo. The bureaus' control of the assets limited the commanding general's control of his territorial commanders.[10]

The War Department staff consisted of ten bureaus or corps: Adjutant General's Office, the Inspector General's Office, the Quartermaster Department, the Judge Advocate General's Office, the Subsistence Department, the Ordnance Department, the Medical Department, the Pay Department, the Corps of Engineers, and the Signal Bureau. Except for the Inspector General and Chief of Signal Officer, which had a colonel as their heads, brigadier generals headed the virtually autonomous staff elements.[11]

The Adjutant General's Bureau, the custodian of records and archives, published the orders and determined which units received replacements without consulting the Commanding General. During the Nez Perce War, General Sherman wanted the 2nd Infantry Regiment transferred from

the Department of the South within the Division of the East to the Department of the Columbia within the Division of the Pacific. Once the Adjutant General got around to publishing the order, the Quartermaster's department had already taken the lead. Hence, the Secretary of War's staff, without being required to consult the commanding general, determined matters that directly influenced the tempo of the military operations.[12]

The Quartermaster of the Army provided transportation and all supplies except rations and ordnance. Therefore, he arranged for the movement of the 2nd Infantry Regiment from Georgia to Idaho. Likewise, the Subsistence Bureau and the Ordnance Bureau had to provide rations and ordnance--arms and ammunitions--for the 2nd Infantry Regiment as well as volunteer units mustered for the crisis. Hence, Howard, McDowell, and Sherman had to rely on two staff elements, which they did not control, for critical reinforcements for the Nez Perce War.[13]

The other departments were the Judge Advocate General's Department, responsible for reviewing military courts and providing the Secretary of War's legal advice; the Medical Department, charged with health and hygiene of the army; the Pay Bureau, whose pay agents traveled endlessly to distribute soldiers' wages; the Corps of Engineers, responsible for conducting surveys and mapping

expeditions plus overseeing coastal and harbor construction; and the Signal Corps, charged with weather forecasting and communications, especially the emerging telegraph network.[14]

Rank heavy and politically in tune with the Washington establishment, bureau chiefs answered only to the Secretary of War and functioned outside of Sherman's authority. Likewise, the division and department staffs, working for their bureau chiefs, functioned outside of their commander's authority. This total separation of the staff from the line gave the bureau chiefs their own mini-armies. While the staff elements answered only to the secretary of war, the division and department commanders answered to Sherman.[15]

The problem was one of control. Sherman had regulatory control over military affairs; McCrary had regulatory control over staff and fiscal matters. While Sherman announced requirements to conduct a campaign, McCrary set priorities for his staff. Furthermore, fiscal and staff control affected troop operations within a department by influencing the distribution or diversion of personnel and supplies. As an example, Sherman's concern was with the Nez Perce War, but the staff assigned some of the few available soldiers to the East to put down the labor riots.[16]

With an understanding of the roles and organization of the army of 1877, let's examine who made up the army. Like the Roman legions or the British expeditionary forces in India, the U. S. Army, although composed of many men, had a personality that displayed distinctive traits and characteristics, which were strongly influenced by the Civil War.[17]

As the reunified country mustered out over a million soldiers from the victorious Union Army, the demographics of the army that Howard had served in for four years changed. The Union offered Confederate prisoners of war freedom in exchange for their service in fighting Indians. Howard would later command some of his former enemies, now known as 'Galvanized Yankees.'[18]

The US Army could easily match the French Foreign Legion for variety of nationalities. In addition to the foreign born that fought in the Civil War, the steady stream of immigrants from Ireland, Germany, France, Russia, and other countries poured into the great melting pot that the United States had become. While finding a cordial home and learning to speak English, these immigrants could reach beyond the teeming eastern port cites where their countrymen often suffered in poverty and despair.[19] The waves of immigrants seeking a better life replaced the ranks of men motivated to merely save the Union. The New York Sun

charged that: '. . . the Regular Army is composed of bummers, loafers, and foreign paupers.'[20]

While there were a few brave-hearted men who enlisted for adventure, many either wanted a means to the gold fields or simply couldn't find any other work. The quality of soldiers did temporarily increase because of the high unemployment during the Panic of 1873. The post Civil War army resembled the European 18th century army that had to be kept away from the townspeople. Utley describes the army as:

> criminals, brutes, perverts, and drunkards, to name a few. But there were also active youths seeking adventure, men of varying ability fleeing misfortune, and foreign paupers who turned out to be excellent soldiers.[21]

The characteristics of the soldiers and officers were a mix of the past and the present. The army was unique in that many of the officers and soldiers were not whole. Many, such as Howard, had lost a limb in the war of the rebellion. Missing a limb was not restricted to the officers. A limping cavalry man was a common sight. A Civil War veteran, while enlisting in a regiment on active service in Montana, was questioned about his limp. 'It's an old wound and it's only so once in a while. I can ride first-rate,' he pleaded, and so was assigned to duty. Missing fingers and toes that were frozen off in winter expeditions were considered only a minor inconvenience.[22]

The enlisted force varied widely in social and economic backgrounds. Although it included some skilled tradesmen, laborers, farmers, and even musicians and schoolteachers, the usual monthly pay of $13 to $22, execrable living conditions, and harsh discipline offered little incentive to attract a more elite caliber of men. Consequently, the civilian populous looked down upon the very men they wanted to protect them from the native savages. Since it appealed to so few, the army had an extraordinarily high turnover rate. Twenty-five to forty percent of the enlisted soldiers either died, deserted, or were discharged each year.[23]

With the harsh living conditions and the lure of instant wealth of gold fields, desertion eroded the manpower of the army. While the Department of the Columbia gained 208 solders in 1877, they lost 326: 173 to discharge, 16 to disability, 67 for other causes, 23 to death, and 47 to desertion.[24] Because the House had not passed the annual army appropriation bill, the issue of rations, clothing, and other provisions to enlisted men continued, but the army received no pay resulting in a decline in morale. The high turnover, especially the desertions, ate away on the morale, discipline, and efficiency of the army.

Poor training further contributed to the problems created by the high loss and poor enlistment rates. Company officers and soldiers were inadequately trained to fight the Indians. The noncommissioned officers (NCO) and officers of the company, in theory, trained the soldiers how to perform their duties. Severe undermanning, however, limited training in the line units. Except for the rudimentary instruction at the recruit depot, troops received little more training than drilling on the post parade grounds. Training deficiencies were most glaring in horsemanship and marksmanship. Due to a lack of funds, only a handful of bullets were supposed to be used for target practice. A recruit could, in fact, complete a five-year enlistment and never fire his weapon.[28]

Predictably, the deficiencies in training would show up in the battlefield. After the terrible showing of 1st Cavalry at the opening battle of the Nez Perce War, CPT Dave Perry, a company commander, underwent a court of inquiry. His defense centered on inadequate mounted training and lack of ammunition. He blamed the unit's unsatisfactory performance on not being well drilled in firing while mounted. Secondly, he testified that he was not at fault since the troops ran out of ammunition. He claimed there was no ammunition available for the operation. The court cleared him of all charges.[29]

The army's embarrassing showing against the Nez Perce, especially Colonel John Gibbon's 7th Infantry surprise attack at Big Hole, helped start a reform movement in the army training program. Four years later, the army formed instructional companies at the recruiting depots. In these companies, recruits receive four months of training before their first assignment.[27]

While some felt that the United States Army was better armed and equipped than anytime in its history, the Indians and some settlers were equitably or better armed and equipped for the time. Due to limited funding and slow procurements, the Department of the Columbia was armed with a variety of weapons. The Ordnance Department had converted 50,000 Civil War vintage Springfield rifled muskets to fire the metallic cartridge. This Allin conversion shortened the rifle barrel and reduced the caliber from .58 to .50. In addition, the Cavalry used a variety of carbines: Spencer, Sharps, and a variety of experimental models. The troops preferred the Spencer, a .50 caliber repeater that was fed from a tube in the stock containing seven rounds. Another popular model was the single-shot Sharps carbine. In addition to the Spencer and Sharps models, the army started procuring and issuing the 1873 Springfield .45 caliber rifle for the infantry and the 1873 Springfield .45 caliber carbine for the cavalry. The cavalry started receiving, as

a sidearm, the 'Peacemaker'; a Colt .45 caliber revolver.[29]

To complement their carbine and revolver, the cavalrymen carried a saber. However, due to its weight and clumsiness, most men commonly carried a sheath knife instead of the saber into the field. The infantryman carried a bayonet to complement his rifle. Both the cavalry and the infantry used the prairie belt, a leather belt with canvas loops sewed on it, to carry their basic load of ammunition.[29]

To finish outfitting the frontier soldier of 1877, the cavalryman tied his gear--picket-pin, canteen, and utensels--to his saddle. The infantryman carried his gear in a blanket roll slung over his shoulder, or in a regulation knapsack.[30]

The soldier's clothing is important because the pursuit of the Nez Perce occurred during the heat of July and the snow of October. Howard's soldiers wore dark blue blouses and light blue trousers trimmed in the distinctive colors of his branch of service. This uniform, made out of only one weight of cloth, caused the soldier to roast in the summer and freeze in the winter. The absence of seasonal clothing inflicted undue hardship on the soldier. Howard's column left Idaho in July with only one uniform with which to endure the severe swings in weather conditions.

During the Nez Perce war, the twelve-pound mountain howitzer, the two-pound Hotchkiss mountain gun, and the Gatling gun supported the campaigning cavalry and infantry. While some hailed them as super weapons that could disperse, repulse, and demoralize Indian concentrations, others deemed them useless in Indian warfare. The 12-pound mountain howitzer originated during the Civil War, but saw less use in the frontier than the Hotchkiss mountain gun or the Gatling gun. All three crew-served weapons were mounted on wheeled carriages, which decreased mobility.

General Miles raved about the effectiveness of the light, compact 1.65 inch, 2-pound Hotchkiss mountain gun, except in timbered country around Yellowstone National Park.[31] Except for the last part of the war, the Nez Perce War was fought entirely in timbered and mountainous terrain. In fact, only at the Battle of Clearwater and the Battle of Bear Paw Mountain did the employment of mountain guns significantly contribute to the defeat of the Nez Perce.[32]

The Gatling gun, a forerunner of the machine gun, could fire 350 rounds per minute, but the range was the same as the rifle. While the Gatling gun was employed during the campaign, it hindered the army's mobility while contributing little to the army's firepower. The guns often jammed as a

result of the refuse of black powder and high heat. Even with a part of an artillery regiment assigned to Howard's command, he had to detail men from the other units to man the Gatling guns and other crew-served weapons.[33]

Mobility of the columns with their wagon and crew-served weapons was the biggest problem the frontier army faced. Since the infantry and cavalry carried their supplies and ammunition in wagons, mountainous or wooded terrain restricted their agility and rate of advance. In addition, their mobility depended on the endurance of their grain-fed horses to sustain themselves on grass. Even when they carried adequate supplies of grain forage, their horses became jaded and exhausted after extended campaigns. Colonel Hazen, of the Sixth Infantry, stated:

> After the fourth day's march of a mixed command, the horse does not march faster than the foot soldier, and after the seventh day, the foot soldier begins to out march the horse, and from that time on the foot soldier has to end his march earlier and earlier each day, to enable the cavalry to reach the camp . . . .[34]

Doctrine called for the cavalry to ride to the battle, then dismount to fight. Since they had lighter weapons than the infantry and had to detail one in four soldier to hold the horses, the cavalry delivered less firepower upon the enemy. Even though the cavalry had poor staying power and poor mounted performance, they were more

likely to close with the Indians in combat. While the cavalry could not match the infantry for endurance on long distance marches, the infantry could not keep up with the highly mobile mounted Indians.[35]

Of the two parts of the army, line and staff, the line manned those 226 military posts with forty regiments: twenty-five infantry regiments composed of ten companies each, and ten calvary and five artillery regiments with twelve companies each. Each artillery regiment had two mounted batteries. A colonel commanded each of the forty regiments with a lieutenant colonel serving as deputy commander or executive officer. Captains commanded, with the assistance of a first lieutenant and a second lieutenant, each of the 430 companies of the regiments. Of the assigned strength of 24,501, only 20,610 officers and men served in the line. As defined by the act of 1866, almost four thousand officers and men manned the War Department staff and its subordinate elements.[36]

After the Civil War, the army became a skeleton force because Congress reduced the total army strength without deactivating any units. As a result, commanders combined two or more companies to perform the work of one. For example, Gibbons fought the Battle of Big Hole with six companies of the Seventh Infantry. Together, the companies

had only 15 officers and 146 enlisted men for an average of 24 men per company. [37]

After the Civil War, one of the challenges for the War Department was to sort out who would get the limited vacancies. Regular officers had brevet rank in volunteer units several grades above regular army grades. In addition, brevet grades had been liberally passed out for wartime service not only to combat soldiers but also to staff members who had never seen any combat. Volunteers applied for the few regular army officer vacancies. This situation caused intense competition and rivalry among the officer corps. Officers would prefer charges against each other for the slightest provocation or seek to steal the glory of a battlefield victory.[38]

The officers dealing with the Nez Perce Indians could count on their age advancing faster than their rank. It was not uncommon for an officer to be a lieutenant for two decades. Overcautiousness and age prevented some from successfully combatting the elusive Indians. Extremely slow advancement--by today's standards--diminished their initiative. Troubled by low pay, extremely slow promotions, and inadequate training, jealous officers often magnified petty quarrels into major controversies instead of seeking self improvement. Besides fragmenting the officer corps into hostile factions, the conditions narrowed the

officers' focus. The post parade ground with its two or three companies defined their intellectual and professional sphere. The geographically scattered companies seldom came together to train as a regiment. As a result, officers had little training for Indian fighting or anything else. An Indian scout told one officer: "You men who fought down South are crazy. They don't know anything about fighting Indians."[37] Whether the officers were a product of West Point or the Civil War, the scout's comment was emphatically true.

What the army needed was not merely more Indian fighters, but officers who were Indian thinkers. Since Halleck's tenure as Commanding General of the United States Army, the army had focused on defending the resources of the home land against foreign aggressors, not dealing with Indian hostilities. While this decade of the 1870's saw the origin of military professionalism in the United States, the focus was on a Napoleonic type war.[38]

The United States Military Academy, for many years, used as their standard military science and art textbook CPT O'Conor's translation of S. F. Gay de Vernon's Treatise on The Science of War And Fortification. In addition, O'Connor translated a summary of Baron de Jomini for the cadets to study European strategic concepts. Jomini's interpretation of Napoleon became the education standard of West Point.

As a result, newly commissioned West Point graduates entered an army which, except for its size and frontier mission, resembled a minute scale Imperial force. Hence, army officers saw their role as to defend the country's resources from European invasion. They did not concern themselves with a military policy that dealt with the Indians or small neighbors such as Mexico and Canada.[41]

Indian campaigns found their way into professional literature as interesting history rather than as case studies. Case studies could have improved the army's organization, doctrine, and officer education. Instead, the army focused on conventional means for their next foreign war. When the 19th century conventional army fought an unconventional enemy like the Indian, the army had to mobilize great numbers of soldiers to defeat the Indians.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the American Army fought like the conventional forces of Europe. American military doctrine came from European experiences and teachings. The United States, as a test of security, measured itself against European military conventional forces. For Indian fighting, however, these tactics would work only if the Indians would stand and give battle. Only rarely did the Indians cooperate. Heavy columns of slow moving troops with the heavy and noisy impediments of wagons and cannons served to alert and scatter the Indians.

Once the Indians scattered, the army was unable to bring the enemy to a battle in which it could use its conventional tactics.[42]

However, during the winter months the Indians lost their mobility when their grass-fed ponies were weakened by the lack of food and the severe weather forced them to stay in their camps and villages. The army would then attack the Indians' winter villages, which were heavily occupied by the warriors' families. While destroying their food stockpiles and possessions, the army inflicted heavy causalities on the surprised warriors. Instead of developing a formal Indian fighting doctrine to deal with the Indian mobility, the military continued to emulate Europe's military.[43]

When an Indian uprising occurred, the depleted companies were too weak to handle it without additional companies. Transporting these additional companies to the crisis was extremely costly and time consuming. Since the under-trained, poorly equipped army had to be able to move quickly in order to implement the vague government policy, command and control of these forces was critical. Movement of the frontier army, however, was seriously hindered by the distinct, confusing chain of command from the post commander to the Commanding General, General William T. Sherman.

In summary, few in the national leadership cared a great deal about Indian affairs until a crisis threatened

the peace on the frontier. When Indian hostilities disturbed the peaceful frontier, the national leaders wanted an immediate end to the disturbance. Yet, because the nation's leaders had previously paid little attention to Indian warfare, high level military officials did not organize or equip the army to perform the dominate mission they were called upon to do. This omission compounded the challenges of Howard's command and control during the Nez Perce war. Beside being tasked for many nondefense roles, Howard commanded units organized and equipped for a conventional war instead of his unconventional enemy, the Nez Perce. The additional burdens of the administrative and the organizational quagmires of the army's command and staff made more difficult for him to command and control the soldiers and equipment needed to prosecute the campaign. While Howard had a difficult task and was pressed to meet the demands placed upon him, he had a force that was not impotent.

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[28]Downy, Indian Fighting Army, 17; and Utley, Frontier Regulars, 69-71.

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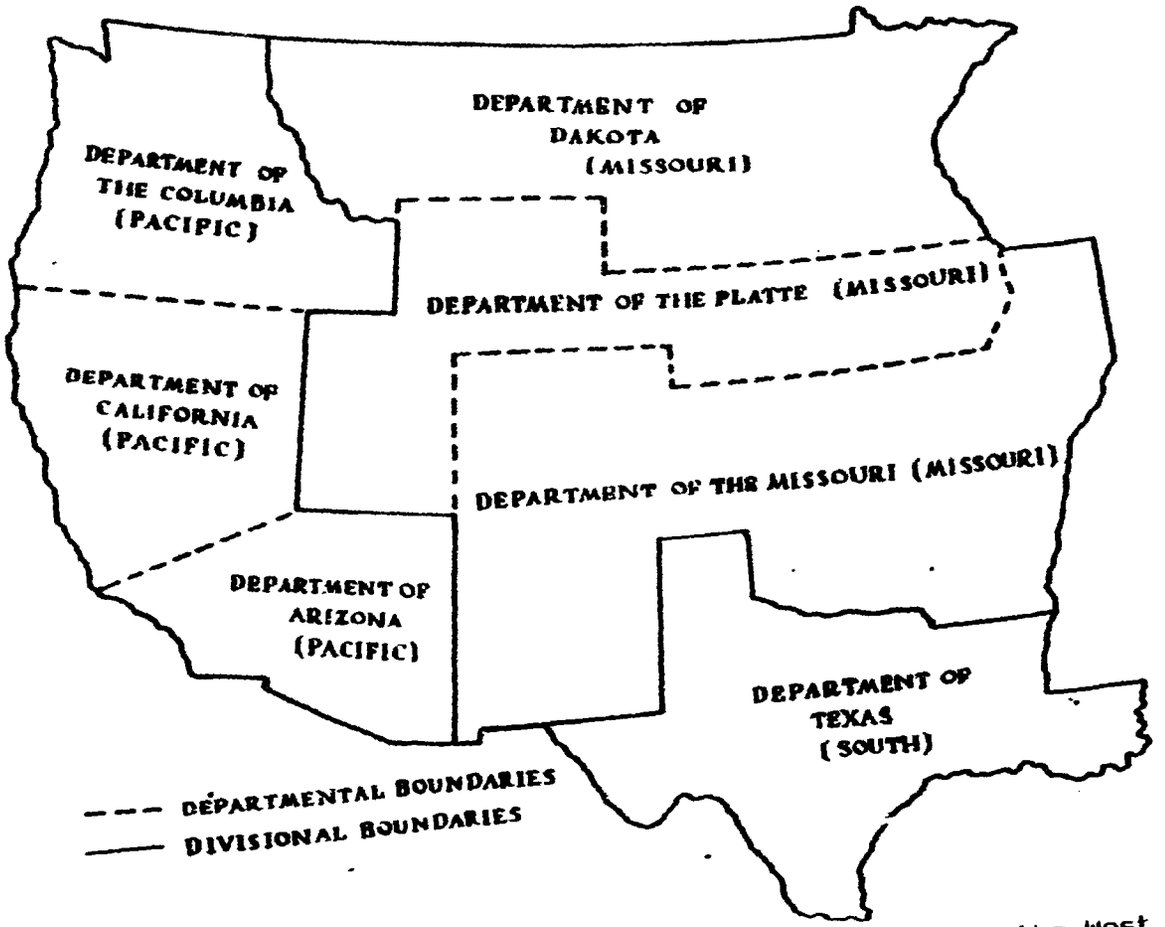

Source: Thian, *Military Geography*

Figure 2, Map of the Military Department and Divisions in the West
Source: Robert Wooster, The Military and United States Indian Policy, 10.

CHAPTER THREE

NEZ PERCE INDIANS

> I have known the Nez Perce tribe since 1843. They were under my charge as Superintendent of Indian Affairs from June 1857 until 1859. They are the finest specimens of the aboriginal race upon this continent and been friendly to the whites from the time of Lewis and Clark.[1]
>
> J. W. Nesmith
> Oregon Senator

The reader should understand the background and ways of the peaceful and helping Nez Perce Indians. To further appreciate Howard's command and control challenges, this chapter will reveal how these peaceful Indians could be such skilled warriors that they almost defeated this country's best generals and soldiers. Finally, the chapter will demonstrate what caused the Nez Perce to take up arms. While archaeologists claim to be able to track the Nez Perce ancestors from the Siberian plains across the Bering Strait to the Pacific Northwest more than 50,000 years ago, the Nez Perce have their own legend about their origins.[2] They believe the Coyote Spirit, Speelyi created them following an epic battle with a monster. After Speelyi slew the monster, he cut the monster's body into pieces, which he promptly threw in all directions. Miraculously, the pieces

of monster became Indian tribes. Speelyi's friend complimented him on a job well done, but asked him who would live in their most beloved valley. For their beautiful valley, Speelyi had saved the monster's heart to make the last and best tribe--the Nez Perce or Nimpaus as they originally called themselves. The Coyote Spirit, Speelyi, reportedly said, "Let this be their homeland forever."[3]

While both the Indian legend of Speelyi and the archaeological findings are intriguing, this Indian legend provides insight about the Nez Perce. The Nez Perce loved the land that they had lived on for so many years. Secondly, the belief that the Nez Perce originated from the monster's heart symbolized their heartfelt kindness. In fact, the Nez Perce are better known for their peaceful achievements in the settlement and development of the Pacific Northwest than they are for massacre of settlers and Indian wars, including the Nez Perce War.[4]

Historians credit the French-Canadian trappers that traded in the area with translating pierced noses into Nez Perce. They called them "Cho punnish" or pierced noses because they wore shells in their noses when the Europeans first made contact with them.

The first recorded encounter with the Nez Perce occurred during the Lewis and Clark Expedition, officially called the Corps of Discovery. This first exposure to the

Nez Perce reinforced the Indian legend that the Nez Perce Indians were warm-hearted people.

After crossing the Lolo trail, the expedition met the Nez Perce Indians. The extremely hungry and tired explorers had just completed a fifty-two days journey traversing the gate of the mountains on the Missouri River in Montana to the crest of the Lolo Pass in the Bitterroot Mountains. While the explorers took fifty-two days, the Nez Perce could cover the same distance in four days. The hungry members of the Lewis and Clark party killed and butchered a Nez Perce horse without permission. Instead of retaliating for this heinous act, the Nez Perce greeted the strangers with open-hearted hospitality and gave them food and shelter.[8]

After the explorers had recovered from their journey, William Clark and Merriwether Lewis held a council with the Nez Perce chiefs. They explained to the Nez Perce that the Great White Father, President Thomas Jefferson, had sent them to explore a route to the Pacific. The expedition leaders asked for the Indians' help. Besides giving them food, the Nez Perce showed them the best route and taught them how to build dugout canoes. They used these canoes on their journey down the rivers toward present day Portland. Before departing, the explorers gave the Indians gifts for their kindness. While the party canoed down the Clearwater, Snake, and Columbia Rivers, the Nez Perce took care of the

expedition's exhausted horses. On the Corps of Discovery's return trip from the Pacific Ocean to St. Louis in 1806, they picked up their rejuvenated horses and enjoyed their new found friends' hospitality again, this time for six weeks. During that time, the snow had melted sufficiently for the explorers to recross the mountainous Lolo Pass.[6]

During their extended time with Nez Perce, the explorers made and recorded numerous observations. Howard and other government officials could have gained great insight and knowledge about the Nez Perce Indians from the Lewis and Clark journals. For example, besides learning great details about the Lolo Trail, the Nez Perce's route of egress during the war, Howard could have also learned about his adversaries' social structure, leadership, and culture.

From the Lewis and Clark journals, we can learn how the Nez Perce organized themselves socially. The journals stated that these Indians consisted of many autonomous individual bands. The Nez Perce Indians, numbering several thousand people, resided in several hundred separate autonomous villages. Each village had a permanent camp site located in a valley. Not surprisingly, the bands claimed ownership of the land near their village. They left their homeland to fish during the annual salmon runs, to dig camas and kouse roots on the prairies, and occasionally to hunt buffalo in Montana.[7]

Each village or small band consisted of several extended families living under the leadership of its own chief and council. Of the ten to fifty adult males within each band, three or four of the older and more respected men, the band's elders or headsmen, and their chiefs would constitute the band's council which was an informal governing body. Frequently, the chief was a blood relative of a majority of the band. Most often, the chief's son would become chief upon his father's death. The chief's primary function in the village was to settle disputes. The various Nez Perce bands seldom quarreled among themselves; they were normally friendly to one another. Interband marriages certainly drew the groups closer.[8] Being extremely individualistic, the Nez Perce recognized no supreme head chieftain because their organization precluded it.

With such a loose social organization there was little authority for the leaders. The chief and the other influential headmen had little authority over their followers. A chief derived his authority mainly from his personality and his support from the other members of the band. In their village, the chief, with the aid of public opinion, could normally keep his young men under control most of the time.[9]

Although the whites considered the Nez Perce a tribe or even a nation, the Nez Perce lacked a distinct tribal organization. The Nez Perce were groups of people with a common language and a common culture.[10] While a language and culture in some ways unified these autonomous individual bands, their culture also polarized them into two different groups--the Upper and Lower Nez Perce. The Upper Nez Perce lived in the region drained by the Salmon and the Clearwater rivers in what is now Idaho. As roamers, they tended to borrow their culture from the far away plains tribes east of the Bitterroot Mountains. On the other hand, the sedentary Lower Nez Perce lived in the Imnaha and Grande Ronde River rivers in present-day northeastern Oregon and southern Washington, until they got horses. The latter group drew their culture from the closer Columbia River and Pacific Coast tribes. Even though a common language and cultural traits aided cohesion, their geographical situations and their travel habits eventually polarized the Nez Perce into two distinct groups.[11]

The common culture and tribal lore that unified the different bands drew upon a colorful past filled with dramatic events. The Nez Perce's cultural ties with their distant neighbors were primarily due to thei considerable communication skills and willingness to travel. The Nez Perce could understand both the sign language of the Plains

Indians and the Chinook dialect of the coast. The Lower Nez Perce, especially, roamed a vast area in their efforts to barter for goods. From the coast, they traded for seashells with which they adorned themselves; from the plains came feathered war bonnets and buffalo horned-headdresses. Throughout history, they wandered over the vast areas of mountains, plains, valleys, and sagebrush plateaus not merely to trade and acquire new things, but also to hunt and to fish.[12]

The Nez Perce first acquired horses from the Shoshonis between 1710 and 1720. Once mounted, their ability to travel increased greatly. Within a generation, they had bred a toughness into these horses to match the rugged terrain in which they lived. Their horses were sound of wind and limb, hard-hoofed, sure footed and incredibly durable. The Indians highly valued these horses for their tremendous endurance. The horse now allowed the Nez Perce to make more frequent seasonal eastward and westward journeys.

On their journeys over Lola Pass to the buffalo country of Montana at the headwaters of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, they took everything with them. Their baggage included their entire families--children and grandparents--animals, horses, dogs and all their portable possessions.[13] Even after the missionaries taught them

cattle raising, the Lower Nez Perce continued their annual buffalo hunts for two reasons. The Indians valued the buffalo robes and the trips were a part of their tradition.[14]

The Nez Perce horses were a focal point for their culture. To the Nez Perce, their horses were a form of wealth, a means of transportation, and an ally on the hunt or on the warpath. Because they had developed their warring capability to protect their prized horse and other possessions, they could safely roam a wide area.

Since their horses expanded their horizons, they guarded and protected them from thieves and hostile Indian war parties. Nez Perce war parties often went on the offensive throughout Idaho and Oregon against the Shoshonis, the Nez Perces' traditional enemies. They also traveled to northern Idaho and Washington to encounter the Spokane and Coeur D'Alene Indian tribes. These two tribes were sometimes friends and at other times, enemies. During their buffalo hunting treks to Montana, they often encountered hostile Crow, Sioux or Blackfeet. Therefore, the Nez Perce developed a fighting capability out of self-defense while traveling and to protect their valuable horses from raiding thieves.[15]

The Hudson Bay Company introduced a new factor into Nez Perce warring capability--the gun. The Blackfeet, one

of their enemies, had guns, so the Nez Perce needed guns to protect their families and horses. The nearest source was in the Dakota country. In 1805, a party of Nez Perce warriors decided to take a bold course of action and travel through hostile land in search of guns in the Dakota country. They traveled over snow choked Lolo Pass and through the open plains of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers. These lands were the homeland of the hostile Blackfeet, Sioux, and Crow. Since these three Indian tribes were already armed with guns, the Nez Perce needed to avoid them to reach the fur traders in the Dakota country to procure guns.

The Nez Perce's successful trek for guns not only increased their lethality, but it gave them an opportunity to rehearse the art of evading an enemy. They chose a shrewd route and did much night riding with the use of fast horses. Having extra horses allowed the Nez Perce to rotate their mounts as the rugged terrain wore them down. The Nez Perce warriors successfully obtained the desired guns and acquired the skills that would serve them well in the 1877 war.[4]

The Nez Perce did not limit their war time leadership to their normal chiefs. In war, only the most capable warriors would assume leadership. A war chief did not have to be a chief from one of the many Indian bands. The

position normally went to that warrior who had most distinguished himself in war or on a buffalo hunt. The young males grew up with the warriors to learn by example about horses, hunting, and sporting. After a young Indian proved himself as a true horseman and a great hunter, he then accompanied the warring parties to learn first hand how to fight. Unlike the army, the Nez Perce changed war chiefs to whoever best represented the council's desire.[17]

Besides acquiring combat experience while raiding other Indian tribes or defending their tribe, the Nez Perce gained experience from fighting along side the army. The Nez Perce had aided the soldiers since the establishment of army posts in the Pacific Northwest. The Indians learned much from these encounters

In 1855, Chief Kamiakin of the Yakima fomented an uprising with a confederation of Pacific Northwest Indian tribes. He wanted a general Indian uprising throughout the region which he believed would drive away all white settlers from the Indian homeland. But, the powerful Nez Perce nation stood with the government and prevented a total uprising. Following this incident, Nez Perce scouts served with an army column of 157 soldiers to end this war which is now known as the Spokane Indian War.[18] In 1858, the Nez Perce again allied with the men in blue against a new coalition of hostile Indian tribes. The coalition consisted

of warriors from the Spokane, Coeur D'Alene, Palouse, and Yakima tribes. These hostile tribes again unsuccessfully tried to drive the whites from the Indian's homeland. The official army dispatches from the 1858 campaign cited the Nez Perce for bravely and professionally serving as spies, guides, guards, and fighters. The army campaign commander asked Nez Perce Chief Lawyer what he desired to be paid for his tribes' services. Chief Lawyer replied, "Peace, plows, and schools." Although a peace-loving people who are against war, the Nez Perce proved to be brave and spirited warriors as well as being industrious workers.

While the cause of the Nez Perce War can easily be attributed to the settlers stealing the Indian's homeland, the introduction of Christianity upon the Nez Perce polarized culture contributed significantly to the problem. Although the Nez Perce society consisted of autonomous bands, the Nez Perce culture polarized them into two fractions--Upper Nez Perce and Lower Nez Perce. The Indians' first exposure to the army started their Christian experience.

During the long stay of Lewis and Clark, the Nez Perce became aware of Christian beliefs and practices. The Indians saw the explorers and subsequent trappers pray, read their Bibles, and discuss their single Great Spirit.[19] The Nez Perce found the whites' religion interesting because

they wanted the whites' power and knowledge. The Indians attributed the whites' superiority to the whites' religion. The Nez Perce believed power equated to their medicine or religion. Since whites' superior power must come from their religion, the Indians wanted whites' religion.[20]

In quest of the whites' religion and power, a Nez Perce and Flathead delegation went to St. Louis in 1831 for religious teachers. The Indians' visit gained great attention. Several church newspapers featured articles about the Indians in search of salvation. Five years later, two missionaries, Marcus Whitman and Henry Harmon Spalding, along with their wives, arrived at the mountain men rendezvous on the Green River in present day Wyoming. Many Nez Perce met the missionaries and escorted them to the Pacific Northwest.[21]

In 1836, Henry and Elisa Spalding started the herculean task of establishing a mission at the mouth of Lapwai Creek. In line with the government's policy of civilizing and Christianizing the Indians, they set out to educate and convert the Nez Perce. To educate the Indians, the missionaries had to translate the Nez Perce language, Shahaptin, to written form in order to teach the Indian children to read and write. Upon receiving a printing press from the American Mission Board in Hawaii, they produced a Shahaptin dictionary and grammar book. They hoped that

literate Indians could survive the changing world of white domination to come.[22]

They could not forget that they also had to develop a mission that could be self-sustaining while coping with Indian needs and customs. From the mission, they provided the Indians with medicines, cloths, metal utensils, guns, and other valuable trading goods.[23] Still, the Spaldings had known that a settled Christianized community centered around farming would best survive the expansion of the pioneer. The old ways of buffalo hunting and salmon fishing conflicted with new settlers moving into their territory. To accomplish this task, Spalding had to be both a foreman and a pastor.[24]

As the missionaries discouraged the tribal traditions of root gathering and buffalo hunting, they encouraged the growing of typical garden vegetables and the raising of domestic livestock--cattle, sheep, and hogs. By removing the need for buffalo hunting, the Nez Perce could have avoided warfare with the Plains Indians.[25]

The missionaries were most successful in making farmers and converts of the more sedentary Upper Nez Perce faction. In contrast, the roaming Lower Nez Perce resisted conversion and the agrarian life style. Noteworthy exceptions to this trend of conversion within the Lower Nez Perce Indians were Chief Old Joseph and his two sons, Young

Joseph and Ollokot. Chief Old Joseph, an intelligent and resourceful leader, led the Wallowa band that lived in their beautiful land until white men began to steal it. Chief Old Joseph's sons, key leaders in the 1877 War, spent their boyhood at the Lapwai Mission until its closure which was due to the Spaldings' departure after the Whitman massacre.[26] The Spaldings' departure left the Christian Nez Perce Indians to their own devices for twenty-four years.[27]

As mentioned earlier, the Spaldings had not converted all the Nez Perce before their departure. Many of them objected to farming and the missionaries' attacks on liquor, gambling, and polygamy. As a result, the Nez Perce Indians separated into a Christian group and a non-Christian or Dreamer's group. The Dreamers believed in a blend of Christianity and Indian pagan beliefs. Chief Too-hul-hul-sote, a Dreamer's religious leader or medicine man, led the Snake River band with 183 Indians which fought in the Nez Perce War.[28]

With the introduction of Christianity to the Nez Perce people, the gap between the two polarized groups enlarged with the signing of treaties by the United States and the Nez Perce. During the twenty-two years before the outbreak of the war, government treaties slowly nurtured the seed of hostility within the Lower Nez Perce Indians. The

first government representative to sow the seed of hostility was the ambitious, newly appointed governor of Washington Territory, Isaac Stevens.

In 1855, Governor Stevens wanted to calm the Pacific Northwest after the Whitman massacre so he could get a transcontinental railroad route. If he could convince all the various tribes to live on reservations, he could get the next transcontinental railroad built along the northern route. Governor Stevens lobbied Congress for money to negotiate treaties with all the area tribes. When these treaties put the Indians on reservations forever, the land would then be opened to the new settlers.

The five major tribes of the Columbia Basin--Nez Perce, Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Yakima--met in the Walla Walla Valley at an ancient Indian council grounds. With six thousand Indians and one hundred whites, Governor Stevens worked out a treaty.[27] As fifty-eight chiefs, headmen, and delegates, signed the treaty of 1855, they ceded a portion of their land to the United States. According to the Commission of Indian Affairs, the Nez Perce originally inhabited the country in Idaho between the Bitter Root and Blue Mountains. The northern boundary was the Palouse River; the southern boundary was the Salmon River Valley. The treaty ceded only a portion of the Indian land that laid to the west and south. Of the major Indian bands,

Chief Lawyer occupied the Kamiah Valley, Big Thunder the Lapwai, Timothy the Alpowai, Joseph the Wallowa, and Billy the Salmon River Valley.[30]

Before disbanding the conference, the army presented gifts to the various chiefs, headmen, and delegates. As payments for the ceded land, the government promised tribal annuities in the form of schools, teachers, shops, sawmills, and gristmills.[31]

While the loss of land was not a significant event to any of the Nez Perce, two provisions of the 1855 treaty proved to be a precursor of the difficulties to come. First, the treaty attempted to change their culture in the areas of leadership and traveling. The treaty prohibited any white, except government officials, to reside on the Indian reservation without tribal permission. The treaty also took away the Nez Perce aboriginal way of life, specifically buffalo hunting on the plains. The sedentary Upper Nez Perce quickly accepted this restriction since they seldom roamed the buffalo hunting. The Lower Nez Perce simply ignored the travel restriction. This action planted the seeds for the future conflict of 1877.

The second troublesome provisions of the 1855 treaty addressed the Nez Perce's social structure and leadership. Earlier, we noted that the Nez Perce society contained

extended families grouped into autonomous bands. These autonomous bands now identified themselves primarily as either Dreamers or Christians. Previously, a temporary council comprised of the chiefs of the various bands would address any issues applying to all Nez Perce. Now, the treaty provided for a salary for a head chief.[32]

The Nez Perce then had to elect a head chief who would decide for all the Nez Perce, which was inconsistent with their culture and tradition. The tribe also had to elect twelve sub-chiefs who assisted the head chief and worked as a liaison between whites and Indians. Historians have cited the head chief policy as being the leading cause of the 1877 Nez Perce War because it negated traditional and cultural council leadership style.[33]

The discovery of gold by Elias Pierce in the Clearwater District in 1860 changed everything. Miners over ran the Nez Perce Reservation in violation of the 1855 treaty. The Indian agent, A. J. Cain attempted to keep the illegal miners out by blocking all trails with Indian scouts. Surprisingly, the miners were not a cause for worry by the Nez Perce. They believed the miners would eventually leave like the fur trappers had before them. But, the Nez Perce had not counted on the mining economy or the settlers that came with the miners and stayed after the gold and miners had left.[34]

To further aggravate the problem of encroachment on the Nez Perce land, the United States government, preoccupied with its Civil War, continued to disregard their 1855 treaty obligations. A government appointed commission negotiated a new treaty that eased the burden on the war-torn government while further opening the land to settlers. To add some order to the situation, the government ordered four cavalry companies to camp next to the council site as a show of force. As the negotiations became heated over the issue of the Wallowa Valley in Oregon, the Lower Nez Perce Indians simply left the negotiations in protest.

Under the provisions of the 1855 treaty, the government representatives ignored the departure and carried on negotiations with the head chief. The new treaty adjusted the reservation size by ceding ten thousand acres of Nez Perce land to the government. While the Upper Nez Perce lost little land, the Lower Nez Perce lost their beloved Wallowa Valley. Only the forty-seven chiefs and headmen from the Upper Nez Perce signed this new treaty. The four Lower Nez Perce bands seceded and became known, thereafter, as the nontreaty Indians. The previous cultural and religious difference, that had been the crack, would now divide the Nez Perce into two distinct factions.[88]

The government position was that the treaty applied to all Nez Perce Indians since the head chief signed it. The Commission of Indian Affairs instructed the Lapwai Indian agent to inform the nontreaty Indians that the Treaty of 1863 applied to them as well. One more step had been taken toward war.[34]

The nontreaty Nez Perce continued to work through the Indian agents in an attempt to have the treaty reversed. Based upon a Secretary of Interior recommendation, President Grant signed an executive order in 1873 that set aside the Wallowa valley for Chief Joseph's band. However, under pressure from Governor Grover of Oregon, Grant succumbed to political pressure and reversed his earlier executive order. When Chief Joseph learned of the situation, he tore up his Bible over the loss of his homeland. The seed of hostility began to blossom into a conflict.

Since the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Nez Perce had lived in peace with the whites. From the first whites' recordings of interaction with the Nez Perce, they had been friendly and helpful to white settlers. With the arrival of the missionaries, cultural differences between the Upper Nez Perce and Lower Nez Perce sharpened. The treaties with the United States government weakened the unifying aspects of language and common cultural traits. The 1863 Treaty finally divided the Nez Perce into two

distinct factions. One party agreed to all terms and stayed within the fixed boundaries. The dissenting bands of nontreaty Indians refused to accept the treaty and the restrictions.

As the division of the Nez Perce occurred, they continued to develop their keen warrior skills. The Nez Perce had acquired their warring experience by raiding other Indian tribes, defending their own bands, or fighting along side the army. Until now, the Nez Perce boasted that they had never killed a white--that would soon change. When the Nez Perce took up arms against the soldier they had previously fought alongside, they proved to be a formidable enemy. While Howard's forces already lacked proper structure, equipment, training, and motivation, Howard's command and control problems were further challenged by the hostile Nez Perce's superb fighting prowess. Due to the Nez Perce's greater ability, endurance, and agility, the Nez Perce had the initiative and put Howard on a reactionary trend. Having already looked at the frontier army, the next topic is Brigadier General Oliver Otis Howard assuming command of the Military Department of the Columbia.

Endnotes

[1]Idaho Semi-Weekly World, (Idaho City, Idaho Territory), August 1877.

[2]Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., "Origins of the Nez Perce People", Idaho Yesterdays, (Spring Issue, 1962; Volume VI, Number 1) 2-3.

[3]Bill Gulick, Chief Joseph Country, Land of the Nez Perce, (Caldwell Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1981) 6-7.

[4]Francis D. Haines, "Nez Perce and Shoshoni Influence on Northwest History", 379-93, in Greater America, Essays in Honor of Herbert Eugene Bolton, (Berkeley and Los Angles: University of California Press, 1945) 379.

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[6]Ronald K. Fisher, Thunder in the Mountains, The Story of Nez Perce War, (Coeur D'Alene, Idaho: Alpha Omega, 1992) 14-7.

[7]Mark H. Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1982) 20-21.

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[11]Bill Gulick, Chief Joseph Country: Land of the Nez Perce, (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd, 1981), 9-10.

[12]Gulick, Ibid., 11; and Alvin M. Josephy Jr., The Patriot Chiefs, (New York: The Viking Press, 1962) 315.

[13]Bill Gulick, Chief Joseph Country, 17-18.

[14]Lucullus Virgil McWhorter, Yellow Wolf, his Own Story, (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1940) 25-26.

[15]Gulick, Ibid., 48; and Josephy, Patriot Chief 315.

[16]Bill Gulick, Chief Joseph Country 21.

[17]Helen Howard, Saga of Chief Joseph 16

[18]R. Ross Arnold, Indian Wars of Idaho (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, LTD., 1932) 25-7.

[19]Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965) 81.

[20]Brown, Flight of the Nez Perce 21.

[21]Merrill D. Beal, "I Will Fight No More Forever": Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce War, (Seattle: University of Washington Press) 15-16.

[22]Fisher, Thunder in the Mountains 51.

[23]Mark H. Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, 22

[24]Beal, "I Will Fight No More Forever" 16.

[25]Fisher, Thunder in the Mountains 5.

[26]The superstitious Cayuses killed the Whitmans and destroyed their mission because they believed that the Whitmans' "bad medicine" caused the measles out break that killed many of them.

[27]Allen & Eleanor Merrill, "Talmack," 4 in Idaho Yesterday, 1964, Volume 8 Number 3, page 2-14.

[28]Beal, I Will Fight No More Forever, 16; and Fisher, Thunder In The Mountains 50.

[29]Gulick, Chief Joseph Country, 96-101.

[30]Report of the Secretary of the Interior, a part of the Presidential Report to the Forty Fifth Congress, (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1877) 899.

[31]Helen Howard, Saga of Chief Joseph 55-57.

[32]Brown, Flight of the Nez Perce, 23.

[33]Fisher, Thunder in the Mountains 60.

[34]Beal, I Will Fight No More Forever 18-20.

[35]Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, A History of The United States Since The Civil War, (New York: McMillian Company, 1926) 424.

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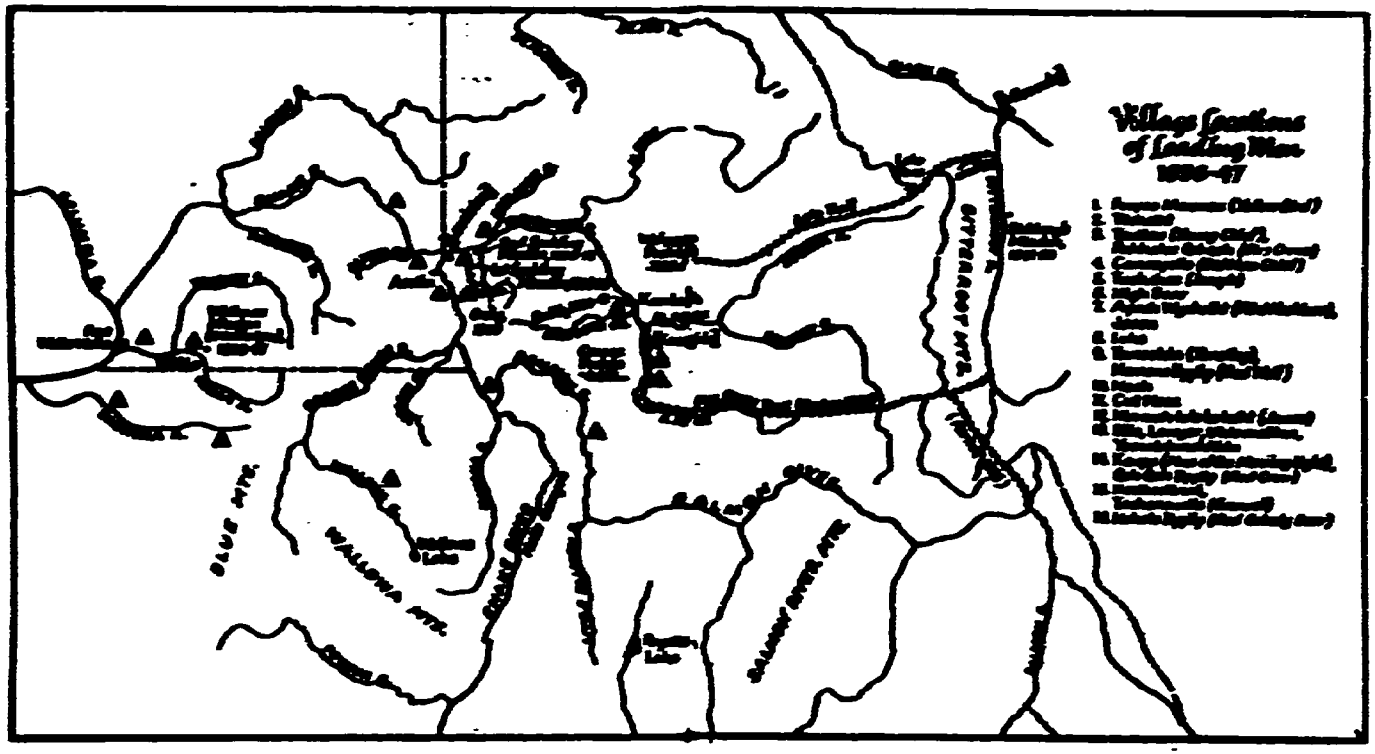

Figure 3, Map of the Nez Perce Bands
Source: Alvin M. Josephy, Jr.., The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest, 162-3.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INDIAN DIPLOMAT

> Howard took with him to his first frontier command, The Department of the Columbia, a reputation as an Indian diplomatist.[1]
>
> Robert M. Utley, Historian

Thus far, we have looked at the Frontier Army of 1877 and the Nez Perce. We have learned something of the capabilities and limitations of the former Frontier Army and have seen how the seed of hostility later developed within the Nez Perce. This chapter will look at Howard's involvement in the Nez Perce War by addressing his role as an Indian diplomat.

To put Howard in proper perspective, it is necessary to know something about him. Howard's role as an Indian diplomat can be viewed in four phases. The first phase consisted of Howard's activities and services as a diplomat for the Nez Perce prior to the peace commission of 1876. The second phase entailed his role as peace commissioner. During this phase, Howard's attitude changed toward the nontreaty Nez Perce. The third phase of Howard's diplomatic life was his role on behalf of the United States

government with the Nez Perce and his associated military activities leading up to the Lapwai conference of 1877. The final phase was Howard's role in the Lapwai conference and the subsequent White Bird Battle.

This chapter begins with Howard's activities during and after the Civil War. The well-educated Oliver Otis Howard was a Civil War leader, a religious fanatic, and a humanitarian. A graduate of Bowdoin College, Howard entered the United States Military Academy in 1846. While some credited his rapid rise through the ranks during the Civil War to his connection with politicians in his home state of Maine, others credit his promotions and selections for various commands to his military talent complemented by his capacity to quickly learn from his experiences which kept him from repeating mistakes.

Competency and bravery, with occasional controversy, characterized Howard's Civil War service. With the help of some influential friends from Maine following seven years as a Regular Army ordnance lieutenant, Howard became the Colonel of the Third Maine Volunteer Regiment. His performance at the Battle of First Bull Run earned him a promotion to brigadier general. This newly promoted brigadier general became a legend at the Battle of Fair Oaks when he continued to lead his brigade even after two minie balls shattered his right arm and another minie ball killed

his horse from under him. Even then, he refused to relinquish command. He received the Medal of Honor for his gallantry in this battle.

After the amputation of his right arm due to his wounds, Howard returned to his brigade in time for the Second Battle of Bull Run. During this battle, he continued to distinguished himself among his fellow officers and soldiers. After the battle, thirty-six officer of his brigade petitioned the commander of Army of the Potomac to give Howard a division command because they felt his qualifications merited it. Howard's subsequent performance as a division commander at Antietam and Fredricksburg won him a promotion to major general and a command of a corps. While Howard's corps' normally sterling performance was not particularly noteworthy at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, he ensured his units learned from their experience. Even though fellow officers criticized Howard, his soldiers gravitated toward him and his superiors praised him.

Controversy continued to cloud Howard's image when Lieutenant General William T. Sherman chose Howard over other senior officers to command the Army of the Tennessee during Sherman's march to the sea. Howard's fellow officers credited his selection to political connections; Sherman, however, stated that Howard got the position because he could better get along with the other

commanders. With the end of the Civil War, the reunified country rewarded the heroic, one-armed, praying general for his military leadership and tactical ability by appointing him a brigadier general in the Regular Army.[2]

Howard's prevailing religious outlook gave him strength, courage, a strong resolve, and compassion that helped him accomplish the many things he did while others criticized him. Yet, when Howard displayed, like a conquering banner, his strong religious resolve, he often irritated those around him--subordinates and superiors alike.[3] Howard admitted that he was a religious fanatic. Being an excellent speaker with an eloquent voice, Howard was known to preach or lead a religious meeting anywhere at anytime. His often perceived destructive religious tendencies caused him to be unpopular among his officers. Sherman declared on one occasion, 'Well, that Christian soldier business is all right, but he needn't put on airs [sic] when we are among ourselves.'[4]

Howard's religious zeal generated a social consciousness within him that led to his lifelong crusade to elevate the disadvantaged and minorities. Based on Howard's humanitarian tendencies, President Lincoln had recommended that Howard be appointed Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Land, also known as the Freedmen's Bureau. This was a Congressional instrument for

the caring of freed slaves and whites disturbed by the war.[9]

While heading the Freedmen's Bureau, Howard helped found the present-day Howard University in Washington D.C. in 1867. From 1869 to 1874, he simultaneously served as the head of the Freedmen's Bureau and the President of Howard University. However, the demands of holding these two positions along with his other charitable works caused him to neglect his duties as Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau. In addition to a Congressional investigation, his neglect led to a severe scandal that involved several military courts of inquiry and civil suits from 1870 to 1879--which included his tenure as commander of the Military Department of the Columbia. Despite his eventual vindications, the Freedmen's Bureau scandals not only ruined Howard's reputation with charges of corruption, inefficiency, and fanaticism, but devastated his financial affairs. A series of poorly chosen investments and a nationwide depression further aggravated his financial difficulties. To revive his slumping finances while serving as Commander of the Columbia, Howard had written articles for periodicals, lectured, and also had written a book about his boyhood experiences. All these problems and the additional endeavors to alleviate his financial

situation must have added a tremendous additional burden to Howard for many years.[6]

In 1872, while the Congressional investigations were in process, President Grant twice sent Howard on two very notable and successful trips to Arizona as a peace emissary to the warring Apaches. Consequently, Howard had proven himself to be an able Indian diplomat in addition to being a humanitarian. After his last Military Court of Inquiry, Howard wanted a change of environment from Washington and hoped to exercise some of his options. He believed his rank and previous hard service entitled him to have his choice of assignments. Sherman, the Commanding General of the Army, also knew that Howard needed a change of environment, but he felt that Howard had been in possession of an easy and desirable job for far too long. Sherman concluded that Howard would be well-suited to command the fast settling Military Department of the Columbia. While Howard only admired the fact that it was the farthest corner of the country from Washington, his assignment gave him an opportunity to get some recognition for his soldiering ability again.[7]

In July 1874, Howard assumed command of the Military Department of Columbia. To better acquaint himself with his new command, Howard soon visited all the military posts and Indian agencies located within his command. During his

tour, a messenger from Chief Joseph requested a meeting with the new commander to discuss the nontreaty Nez Perce's problems. While the department was still recovering from the nasty Modoc War of 1873, Howard found other Indian problems. He discovered the previously described Nez Perce treaty problem, plus a scattering of groups of Indians with an assortment of grievances.[8]

The scholarly Howard directed his very talented department adjutant, Major H. Clay Woods, to review the various claims and to prepare a study to determine the root of the Nez Perce treaty problems. After interviewing all parties concerned and reviewing all official records and newspaper files, Woods' final concise written report supported the nontreaty Nez Perce stand. Woods declared that the nontreaty Nez Perce could not be legally bound by the treaty of 1863 and that the nontreaty Nez Perce had a right to occupy the Wallowa Valley. Howard admitted that the United States government and Oregon had done an injustice to Chief Joseph's band.[9]

While working through proper channels to resolve the situation, Howard positioned two cavalry companies in the Wallowa Valley to pacify both the Indians and the settlers. Howard finally got the government to authorize a Nez Perce commission after he secured the endorsement of his division commander, Major General Irwin McDowell. The Nez Perce

commission consisted of Howard, Woods, a representative of the Board of Indian Commissioners, and two Eastern businessmen. As the Nez Perce commission met with the nontreaty Nez Perce in November of 1876, Howard championed the rights of Chief Joseph and his band. The Nez Perce commission labored to cause the nontreaty Nez Perce to agree to compromise on the issues at hand.[10]

After several days of meetings, Howard's previously sympathetic approach towards the nontreaty Nez Perce changed into one of animosity, primarily because of the Indians' attitudes. Howard, a deeply religious man who risked his life to enforce the authority of the federal government over states' rights, did not approve of the nontreaty Nez Perce Dreamer religion and their defiance of the government.

Now, instead of being a diplomat, Howard began acting like an officer who would tolerate no question of his authority--right or wrong. Two factors contributed to Howard's change in outlook of the nontreaty Nez Perce. Since he had proposed the Nez Perce commission, its failure to get the nontreaty Nez Perce to negotiate an acceptable deal wounded his pride. Secondly, his personal reputation, which had already been severely damaged, was under substantial strain and tension which added to his professional and personal life by his experiences with the

Freedmen's Bureau. One more controversy or scandal could have ruined Howard's military career.[11]

At the Department of the Interior in Washington DC, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs quickly acted on the Nez Perce Commission's recommendation by directing the Lapwai Indian Agent, John B. Monteith, to persuade the nontreaty Nez Perce to move onto the Lapwai Indian Reservation. In addition, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs worked through the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of War, the Commanding General of the Army, and the Commander of the Military Division of the Pacific to have Howard support Monteith with force, if necessary. While Monteith sent treaty Indians to act as messengers and as good-will ambassadors to the nontreaty Nez Perce, he requested Howard to again send two companies of soldiers to the Wallowa Valley to aid him.

Instead of sending troops to pacify both the Indians and the settlers, Howard now developed contingency plans to protect the settlers if the nontreaty Nez Perce disobeyed Monteith. Howard let his concern for the settlers be known to the nontreaty Nez Perce. On the second day of the Nez Perce Commission, Howard openly challenged the nontreaty Nez Perce. He told them that if trouble came to the Wallowa, he would send two soldiers to deal with each nontreaty Nez Perce warrior.[12]

Yet, when the official tasking to support the Indian Agent arrived in January of 1877, McDowell had his adjutant add an emphatic restrictive endorsement for Howard:

> The division commander has examined the various papers transmitted from the headquarters of the Army, hereinbefore [sic] referred to, and it seems to him that the Indian Bureau anticipate possible, not to say probable, resistance to the demand on Joseph to remove to the reservation. In fact the case seems not unlike that of the recent difficulty with the Sioux, which resulted in the war of last year against these Indians.
> It is therefore of paramount importance that none of the responsibility of any step which may be made shall be initiated by the military authorities. You are to occupy Wallowa Valley in the interest of peace. You are to comply with the request of the Department of the Interior, as set forth in the papers sent you, to the extent only of merely protecting and aiding them in the execution of their instructions.[13]

During the next four months, Howard could not initiate any actions. When asked, Howard could only assist Monteith, which amounted to conducting several interviews and meetings with Chief Joseph or his representatives. During these meetings, Howard attempted to explain the government's instructions and that the nontreaty Nez Perce had no other options. The decision of when to move the nontreaty Nez Perce onto the Lapwai reservation belonged to the Indian Agent and not to Howard. While Howard wanted to take charge of the situation and put the nontreaty Nez Perce on the reservation, he had no say in regard to the approach or time table in resolving the nontreaty Nez Perce problem.

For a professional and experienced officer who had served gallantly in the Civil War and successfully as a Presidential peace emissary with the warring Apaches, Sherman had put Howard in an awkward and inappropriate position. Howard had to implement a policy he had no say in nor did he necessarily agree with.

Interestingly, a local newspaper, The Idaho Statesman, criticized Howard instead of Monteith for allowing the nontreaty Nez Perce to roam freely for too long. Also, they criticized Howard for not having sufficient force to immediately compel the renegade bands to move onto the reservation.[14]

Following his work with the Nez Perce Commission and the associated damage to his pride, Howard wanted to show the nontreaty Nez Perce that the United States government had authority over the defiant Indians. Yet, McDowell's guidance prohibited him from taking charge of the situation. Also, since Howard had other discontented Indians that he had to watch throughout his command, he could not concentrate his forces merely around the Lapwai Reservation. The Secretary of War, George W. McCrary, had only a total of twenty-five thousand troops to handle labor riots in the East, Reconstruction in the South, the Sioux and Apache disturbances in the West and Southwest, and other routine taskings that the army handled. In his 1877 annual

report to Congress, Secretary McCrary cited the Division of the Pacific as an example of insufficient troop strength to handle the local Indian problems. Even though Howard did not control the amount of troops available in the area nor the time table of when the nontreaty Nez Perce would go onto the Lapwai Reservation, he nevertheless received the blame.[18]

Finally, Monteith gave the nontreaty Nez Perce a deadline of 1 April 1877 for them to move onto the Lapwai Reservation. After the April Fool's Day deadline passed and no new Nez Perce bands occupied the reservation, Monteith requested Howard's assistance. If Howard could not persuade them into following the government instructions, Monteith then wanted Howard to take military action

On 20 April 1877, while Howard met with Monteith at Fort Walla Walla to make plans for the proposed occupation of the Wallowa Valley, Chief Joseph and a small delegation requested a meeting with Howard. Besides offering assurances that the nontreaty Nez Perce were peaceful, the delegation discussed the government instructions with Howard. Howard stressed that the nontreaty Nez Perce must comply with the government instructions. Howard and Joseph agreed to a conference of all the nontreaty Nez Perce at the Lapwai reservation in two weeks. At this point, Howard was planning for the noncompliance of the nontreaty Nez Perce.

He did not believe progress was being made with the nontreaty Nez Perce.

During the two weeks before the Lapwai conference, Howard made preparation for the worst--a repeat of the previous year's Sioux uprising or another Canby Massacre during the late Modoc War.[16] Howard met with the volatile Columbia River Renegades and with Father Cataldo, who had a significant amount of influence with Indians living around the Spokane Plains. Besides trying to prevent a coalition of Indian tribes, Howard wanted his troops positioned for war. Howard sent two companies, E and L, of the 1st Cavalry Regiment to the Wallowa Valley. He had these companies prepared for possible war. These two cavalry companies went with two Gatling guns, an ambulance, two government six-mule teams, five citizen teams, and twelve pack mules. He also sent H company of the 1st Cavalry to Lewiston and H company of the 21st Infantry Regiment to Fort Walla Walla.

To avoid a recurrence of the Canby Massacre, he had a big pitch-tent set up with the walls rolled up. Howard did not want the proceedings closed in. Besides doubling the visible guards, Howard also had the two companies of soldiers armed and staged in their barracks throughout the conference. In summary, Howard was clearly prepared for any eventuality.[17]

On 7 May 1877, all of the nontreaty Nez Perce gradually and ceremoniously arrived at the Lapwai Indian reservation. Monteith read the government's orders while someone translated them for the Indians. The instructions specified that Howard and Monteith had to stay and listen to all that the Indians had to say no matter how long it might take. However, the nontreaty Nez Perce had to understand that the decisions of the government would be enforced.[18]

For two days, the nontreaty Nez Perce explained why they should not have to abide by the 1863 treaty. Chief Joseph explained his views with this story:

> If we ever owned the land we own it [sic] still, for we never sold. In the treaty councils the commissioners have claimed that our country had been sold to the Government. Suppose a white man should come to me and say, 'Joseph, I like your horses, and I want to buy them'. I say to him, 'No, my horses suit me, I will not sell them'. Then he goes to my neighbor, and says to him: 'Joseph has some good horses. I want to buy them, but he refuses to sell'. My neighbor answers, 'Pay me the money, and I will sell you Joseph's horses.' The white man returns to me, and says, 'Joseph, I have bought your horses, and you must let me have them.' If we sold our lands to the Government, this is the way they were bought.'[19]

Chief Joseph remembered Howard saying, 'The law says you shall go upon the reservation to live, and I want you to do so, but you persist in disobeying the law.' The discussions became very heated, so Howard adjourned the conference with a day off for all. Howard wanted the situation to calm down and he wanted to insure that his troops had arrived in the Wallowa Valley.

During the break, a nontreaty Nez Perce runner returned from the Wallowa Valley and informed Chief Joseph that the soldiers had occupied their homeland. Chief Joseph then knew that Howard had meant what he had said. When the conference continued, Too-hul-hul-sote, the Dreamer Medicine Man, addressed the group. He openly challenged Howard's authority and ability to put him on the reservation. Fearing that the hostile spirit of the Medicine Man would spread, Howard arrested him. Armed guards put the defiant Too-hul-hul-sote into the post stockade. Howard's risky approach caused the crisis to pass since Chief Joseph knew that Howard was prepared to back up his words with war.[20]

The nontreaty Nez Perce finally agreed to come on the reservation. When Howard's diplomacy started to falter, he displayed the courage that won him the Medal of Honor during the Battle of Fair Oaks. Howard continued to work with the nontreaty Nez Perce by personally escorting Chief Joseph, Chief Looking Glass, and Chief Whitebird around the Lapwai Indian Reservation so they could select sites for their camps. Furthermore, he offered to remove some white settlers from the reservation so the Indians could have exclusive ownership and use of the area.[21]

The general did give some concessions to the nontreaty Nez Perce. Howard originally granted the nontreaty Nez Perce only two weeks to move their families,

possessions, and livestock from the Wallowa Valley to the Lapwai Indian Reservation. After substantial arguments, Howard allowed them thirty days for the move, but he told the nontreaty chief that he would use his soldiers if they were late. Chief Joseph petitioned Howard to release Too-hul-hul-sote from the post stockade. Howard complied. In retrospect, the decision to release the hostile Medicine Man was Howard's biggest mistake, but he probably thought that the other nontreaty chiefs could control him.[22]

Upon Chief Joseph's return to the Wallowa Valley, he had to convince the rest of his band that it was time to move onto the Lapwai Reservation. While Too-hul-hul-sote talked about war and aroused the passions of some of the young warriors to the point of war, Chief Joseph urged his people to be calm instead. Responding to Joseph's convincing arguments, the Wallowa band of the nontreaty Nez Perce gathered their belongings and their livestock and headed towards Lapwai. After the treacherous crossing of the over-flowing Snake River, the various bands of nontreaty Nez Perce gathered for their last couple days of freedom at Tepahlewam, an ancient camping ground near the boundary of the Lapwai Reservation. During the festive time, the nontreaty Nez Perce, and even some treaty Nez Perce from the reservation, visited, danced, gambled, and raced horses while their women dug camas roots. Yet, the fun time

turned sour when Chief Joseph went off to slaughter some cattle back in the Wallowa Valley. A group of allegedly drunk young warriors revenged some smoldering discontent when they murdered several whites at Slate Creek. The nontreaty Nez Perce knew Howard would hold them all accountable for the killings, so they quickly moved their lodges to Whitebird Canyon.[23]

Expecting the outbreak of hostilities to occur in the Wallowa Valley, Howard had positioned his forces there. When the Indians left their homeland without any resistance, he thought the crisis was over. Howard would have alarmed and irritated the nontreaty Nez Perce by assembling forces while everything progressed smoothly. The presence of the soldiers could have forced the nontreaty Nez Perce to react with violence to save their pride.[24]

Howard responded to the crisis by sending Captain Perry with ninety-nine men of the 1st Cavalry and eleven treaty Nez Perce. After a two days' ride with only a few hours rest, Perry, with eleven citizen volunteers from Mt. Idaho, attempted to bring the nontreaty Nez Perce to the Lapwai. On 17 June, the sixty warriors from the normally peaceful nontreaty Nez Perce met Perry's outfit with a peace party under a white flag. Perry's chief scout, Arthur Chapman, fired upon the truce party and a sharp fight erupted. The hostile Nez Perce routed and almost

annihilated their opponents. Then they pursued the shocked troops, treaty Nez Perce, and citizen volunteers almost to Mt. Idaho. While the hostiles suffered only two wounded warriors, Perry had suffered thirty-four dead. As Perry first rode off, Howard had started planning for a conflict. When Howard received word of the disaster, he immediately started preparing for a sustained campaign.[28]

Prior to taking command of the Military Department of the Columbia, Howard had demonstrated great bravery and superb diplomacy. Yet, his humanitarian activities had caused him personal and financial problems that followed him to his command. After his arrival at the department, Howard worked on behalf of the nontreaty Nez Perce to resolve the government injustices to them, but he failed. He did not foresee the ability of the young nontreaty Nez Perce to instigate problems. As a result, Howard sent Perry out with a force to bring nontreaty Nez Perce to the Lapwai Reservation. The hostile Nez Perce routed Perry's force. The war that no one wanted was on and Howard would take charge of it.

Endnotes

[1]Robert M. Utley, introduction to My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians: A Record of Personal Observations, Adventures, and Campaigns Among the Indians of the Great West by Oliver O. Howard (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973) x.

[2]John A. Carpenter, Sword and Olive Branch: Oliver Otis Howard (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964) 23-77.

[3]Robert M. Utley, introduction to My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians by Oliver O. Howard, viii

[4]Lloyd Lewis, Sherman, Fighting Prophet (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1932) 349.

[5]Oliver O. Howard, My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians with introduction by Robert M. Utley (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973) 120, 226.

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[7]Oliver O. Howard, My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians, 226-27.

[8]Oliver O. Howard, Nez Perce Joseph: An Account of His Ancestors, His Lands, His Confederates, His Enemies, His Murders, His War, His Pursuit, and Capture (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972; repr. of first edition, Boston, 1881) 30-31.

[9]Alvin M. Joseph Jr., The Patriot Chief: A Chronicle of American Leadership (New York: Viking Press, 1961), 431-32.

[10]Howard, Nez Perce Joseph 30-1.

[11]Mark H. Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1982; repr., New York: Capricorn Books, 1971) 73-5.

[12]Ibid., 76.

[13]General William T. Sherman, "Report of the General of the Army" (Washington, D. C.: Headquarters of the Army, November 7, 1877) 3-15 Annual Report Of the

Secretary of War on the Operations of the Department for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1877 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1877) 9.

[16]Idaho Statesmen, (Boise City), 30 June 1877.

[17]George W. McCrary, "Report of the Secretary of War," War Department, November 19, 1877, III-XXVII, Annual Report of the Secretary of War on the Operations of the Department for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1877 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1877), IV.

[18]As a result of Little Big Horn, Congress appropriated funds for two new forts in the area and twenty-five hundred additional cavalry privates to counter the Northern Plains Coalition of Oglalas, Hunkpapas, Sans Arc, Blackfeet, and Cheyene. During the Modoc Indian War in southwestern Oregon in 1872, the hostile Indian murdered General Edward S. Canby during a similar council.

[19]Brown, Ibid., 80-2.

[20]Charles Erskine, "Chief Joseph, the Nez Perce," with introduction by William H. Hare, 136-41, The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine XXVII (May 1884): 136

[21]Young (Chief) Joseph, "An Indians's View of Indian Affairs," 412-33, The North American Review CXXVIII (April 1879) 419-20.

[22]Brown, Ibid., 80-2.

[23]Howard, My Life and Experience Among Our Hostile Indians, 253-7.

[24]Young Joseph, 423-4.

[25]Francis Haines, The Nez Perce: Tribesmen of the Columbia Plateau (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 221.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Alvin Josephy, The Patriot Chief, 326-7.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE INDIAN FIGHTER

> Had not General Howard, by his judicious disposition of his troops, and by his rapid pursuit, guarded the passes of mountains so as to prevent Joseph's return, the new settlement in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho would had been raided and destroyed, and probably years would have elapsed before they could have recovered. It would have been necessary to abandon that whole fertile region, and a blow would have been felt throughout the whole northwest.[1]
>
> Oregonian 25 October 1877

Howard's problems continued to plague him when he took command of the Military Department of the Columbia. He had originally labored on behalf of the nontreaty Nez Perce until they refused to recognize the federal authority or negotiate a new agreement or treaty. At that time, Howard worked with Indian Agent Monteith during a series of meetings and conferences to convince the nontreaty Nez Perce to abide by the 1873 Treaty and move on to the Lapwai reservation. After the last council with the nontreaty Nez Perce, Howard and everyone involved with the proceedings thought they had resolved the nontreaty Nez Perce issue until word of the Mount Idaho atrocities reached them on 15 June 1877.

This chapter addresses Howard's role as protector of immigrants, his prosecutor of the Idaho Campaign of the Nez Perce War, and finally, pursuer of the Nez Perce until their capture at Cow Island on 4 October 1877.

While publicly displaying great confidence that the troubles with the nontreaty Nez Perce would soon be under control, Howard started planning and organizing for a substantial campaign, not just one battle. As Perry and his two companies rode off, Howard sent Captain Wilkinson to Walla Walla with dispatches warning of a possible war. He directed four more companies and an army surgeon under his command to Lewiston. He also requested thirty days of supplies needed to sustain his troops in the area of operation. Howard sent another dispatch to San Francisco, where his superior, McDowell, commanded the Military Division of the Pacific. This dispatch informed McDowell of the Nez Perce s murder of several white men and requested the authority to hire twenty-five scouts to help him in the campaign. Upon receiving word of Perry's terrible defeat, Howard informed McDowell of the thirty-four deaths at the White Bird Canyon Battle and the possibility of an Indian movement that could unite the disaffected Indians in the region.[8]

Howard's planning focused on three points: to protect and calm the settler; to prevent a general Indian

uprising of the alienated tribes; and to bring the hostile nontreaty Nez Perce to justice.[3]

Although Howard left the remnants of Perry's command at Grangeville to calm and protect the settlers, his biggest challenge was preventing of confederation of hostile Indian tribes. Since Howard's first tour of his command, he had been aware of many disaffected tribes that could be easily persuaded to take up arms against the whites. In southern Idaho, he had seen two such tribes: Chief Winnemuca's Paiute tribe and the Weiser tribe.[4]

The tribes of the Spokane Plain had held a council a few days before the Slate Creek massacres where some drunken young warriors revenged the smoldering discontent when they murdered numerous whites. During the council, the Coeur D'Alenes, Spokanes, Yakimas, and Palouses considered the possibility of joining the hostile Nez Perce party. The general sentiment was that the disaffected Indians would go on the warpath if the warring Nez Perce had another victory. If all the regional tribes joined the hostiles, the destruction would be tremendous.[5]

Following the men in blue's disastrous showing at White Bird Canyon, Howard had to proceed cautiously even though the settlers clamored for immediate protection and then revenge. The White Bird Canyon battle proved that the hostile Nez Perce were more courageous and better fighters

than the army had originally thought. Also, the soldiers of the frontier army were not as skilled or experienced as the soldiers of the Civil War. The overconfidence of the whites changed to wholesome respect for the prowess of their foe.

In addition to Perry's defeat, Howard also had two recent battles to remind him of the fighting skills of the Indians. Surpassed only by Custer's massacre at Little Big Horn and a mere year before the White Bird Canyon battle, the United States Army suffered the second most disastrous defeat ever suffered at the hands of Indians. When Howard assumed command of the Military Department of the Columbia, everyone--settlers, soldiers, and Indians alike--were recovering from the Modoc Rebellion. General Edward Canby, Department Commander, had sent four hundred soldiers in two columns against seventy-five Modoc warriors with one hundred and fifty women and children. The Modocs repelled the two column attack; the soldiers suffered sixteen dead and fifty-three wounded. Only after enlarging the army's force to one thousand soldiers, was the government able to defeat the Modoc warriors at the expense of eighty-two dead troopers. The Modoc War still haunted many of the soldiers of the Department of the Columbia. Several of Howard's officers fought in the Modoc War: Lieutenant William H. Boyle, Major Edward C. Mason, Colonel Frank Wheaton, and Captain Dave Perry.[4]

With Howard's appreciation of Nez Perce fighting ability and a keen sense of the volatile situations at hand, one can understand why he aggressively collected the necessary manpower and equipment before prosecuting the war. Howard wanted to position forces in Southern Idaho to counter the possible threats by the Paiute and Weiser and troops in the Spokane Plains to counter the possible threat from the tribes living in that vicinity.

In response to Howard's requests, reinforcements came from all quarters. As he had redirected troops within his department, he also had requested reinforcements from the other two military departments within the Military Division of the Pacific. Men came from Vancouver, Stevens, Canby, Townsend, Klamath, Harney, San Diego, San Francisco, and as far away as Yuma, Arizona. By 20 June 1877, Howard had in the Lewiston-Lapwai area four companies of cavalry and three of infantry. Howard's decisive actions also guaranteed fourteen companies of either cavalry, infantry, or artillery were enroute from the other two departments to either Lewiston, Boise, or the Weiser River areas.[7]

Additional units followed. For example, after Howard had led his column around the rugged countryside of the Salmon River, he realized that he had an inadequate force to simultaneously pursue the hostiles and protect the settlers. Therefore, on June 30, Howard requested an

infantry regiment from the East. With the approval of the Secretary of War and the President, General Sherman permanently assigned the 2nd Infantry Regiment from Georgia to Howard's department. While waiting for the soldiers to arrive, Howard's quartermaster arranged for scouts, subsistence and transportation.

Since Howard was the senior commander in his department working for one boss, he was arranging for the decisive application of all available combat power he could muster. Within his department and his boss's division, he had unity of effort so he could get the sufficient number of soldiers with adequate supplies and equipment to defeat the Nez Perce.

Howard's original request for scouts met with resistance due to Congress' failure to pass an army appropriation bill for the upcoming fiscal year. At first, Sherman told McDowell that he would have to release scouts in Arizona if he acquired scouts for the Nez Perce campaign. Eventually, however, Sherman authorized Howard to hire twenty-five scouts for his campaign. Prior to the Clearwater Battle, Sherman authorized McDowell and Howard to increase the number of scouts up to eighty. While the additional scouts aided the campaign, more scouts would have greatly helped the army.[8]

Howard designated Lewiston as his field depot and his base of operation. Since he knew the Napoleonic axiom that an army marches on its stomach, he directed the rapid procurement and the prepositioning of food before the assembled troops could march. Major George H. Weeks, Chief Quartermaster of the Department of the Columbia, forwarded what subsistence he had on hand to Lieutenant Peter S. Bomus, Howard's Post Quartermaster. In addition, Lieutenants E. F. Ebstein, John Q. Adams, and Peter Leary, Jr. searched the countryside of Idaho, and later Montana, for the soldiers' various necessities.[9]

Due to the extremely rugged terrain, Bomus had the difficult and time consuming task of hiring packers and mules instead of wagons to transport all the necessities to sustain the soldiers. Starting with eighty mules, Bomus eventually hired an additional 426 civilian pack mules. Bomus had a difficult time hiring so many mules and packers because he had to pay for them with government vouchers--a promise to pay. Bomus had no money, either greenbacks or coins, since Congress had not yet passed the new fiscal year army appropriation bill. Even with only a promise of payment, which drew a higher rate, the numerous miners in the area had to stop searching for their fortunes. The miners were put out of work because of the tremendous number of mules needed to support Howard's campaign.[10]

While Howard waited for the logistical preparations to be completed, he spent the time drilling the garrison soldiers and planning the campaign. Since he did not want to repeat the White Bird incident by taking undue risks, he waited until he had superior troop strength over the hostile Nez Perce bands. Howard had already received reports from treaty Nez Perce that the hostile Nez Perce bands numbered three hundred warriors.[11]

The reader should not mistake Howard's caution for fear. He had repeatedly displayed great bravery throughout the Civil War. A Medal of Honor recipient, he simply did not want to take unnecessary risks. After the sound defeat of Perry, no one doubted the Nez Perce were at least equal to, if not superior to his best troops. The Nez Perce warriors may have lacked drill and discipline, but they were accurate sharpshooters. Howard recognized that he had to exercise skill and caution to avoid a defeat much as Custer had at the Little Big Horn the previous year. Another Nez Perce victory could incite the other tribes in the region to take the war path.

While Howard was initially more concerned about preventing a nontreaty Nez Perce victory than obtaining a military victory, he had a threefold task before him. First, Howard had to protect the settlers in the area. Second, he had to prevent the spread of hostilities to other

Indian tribes within his department. Third, he had to subjugate the warring Nez Perce. As his requested force began to assemble at Lewiston, he planned to find the enemy and defeat them. Because of the great hysteria among the settlers caused by the Indian threat and the scarcity of soldiers in the area, Howard had coordinated with his superiors, the Chief of the Ordnance Bureau, and Vancouver Arsenal for the issue of arms. Eventually the government issued one thousand stands of arms to Oregon, five hundred to Idaho, and five hundred to Montana to help with the civilian self defense.[12]

Howard sent friendly Indians to the various tribes to discourage them from joining the hostile Nez Perce. Howard planned to prevent the Indians in southern Idaho from joining the hostile Nez Perce and to prevent the renegade Nez Perce from escaping to the south. He directed a force under Major John Green from Fort Boise to move toward Weiser Valley and then to join him. Howard would eventually depart from Lewiston with three objectives: he wanted to assure and restore confidence among the settlers with the Army's presence; he wanted to protect them; and he wanted to subdue the hostile Nez Perce.[13]

By his and his subordinates' prompt and decisive actions, Howard had assembled a force of 237 cavalry, infantry, and artillery troops plus scouts and packers that

were properly equipped for an Indian campaign in a rugged terrain. The time for preparation had come and gone. Arms, ammunition, provision, and transportation were ready.[14]

By noon of 22 June 1877, as Howard prepared to lead his column out, he commented:

> Our whole force numbered less that one-fifth of a full regiment as such as those we took into the rebellion. Still this body of resolute men [sic] made a fine appearance. The cavalry men sat on their horses waiting the word; the infantry firmly grasping their rifles, ready to move; the artillery, who were really foot soldiers with a bright uniforms, presented their perfect ranks, slightly retired from the rest.[15]

Howard's mile-long column of twos, with a mountain gun, two Gatling guns, and eighty mules with packers advanced cautiously. Scouts and skirmishers covered the forces as they traced the same route to the Salmon River that Perry had taken earlier.[16]

On the first day's march, Howard reached the Norton Ranch where he observed, first-hand, the pillage of the renegade Nez Perce. During the second day's march, he contemplated lessons learned from Perry's actions:

> If Colonel Perry could have anticipated the results were to follow his haste to White Bird Canyon, and halt here at Norton's and stood on the defensive till I came up, it would have been a good thing, in a military point of view; but that would not have the effect, like his bold advance, of stopping the Indian murders.[17]

During Howard's second day of operations, he sent troops to Grangeville and picked up the remnants of Perry's shattered

command, which raised his strength to over three hundred soldiers.

On Sunday, 24 June 1877, Howard halted to send out scouting parties and to wait for reinforcements from Boise. As we have already seen, Howard avoided repeating mistakes. Therefore, he wanted to know where the hostile Nez Perce were before he proceeded. He also sent Trimble's cavalry company to Slate Creek to protect the settlers and to guard his left flank. Howard feared that if the whole column moved at once, it would stir up the hostile Indians to attack the settlers again.[18]

During the next four days, Howard marched to White Bird Canyon to find and bury his dead. After caring for their fallen comrades, the troops scouted the canyon. As the column reached the bottom of White Bird Canyon, the soldiers could see the hostile band moving around on the other side of the river. The band consisted of the warriors with their women, children, and baggage. The soldiers tried to engage the few renegade Nez Perce that were on the near side of the river. Before a significant engagement could occur, the renegade warriors retreated to the other side of the river. Howard paused while boats or rafts were collected to continue his pursuit. His attention, however, was diverted to a new crisis.[19]

Chief Looking Glass' Nez Perce band was living on the Lapwai Reservation, but had been accused of plundering a settler's home between the middle and south fork of the Clearwater River. In response, Howard sent Captain Whipple's cavalry company, along with Captain Randall's Mount Idaho Volunteer Company, to investigate the incident. Whipple's subsequent conference on 2 July 1877 with Chief Looking Glass erupted into a fight. Besides one dead and two wounded Nez Perce warriors, Whipple's force destroyed Chief Looking Glass' village and captured 750 Indian horses. However, the warring Nez Perce gained forty warriors when Looking Glass and his band joined them. Whipple returned to Cottonwood to continue guarding the settlers.[20]

What Howard did not know was that nontreaty Nez Perce had conducted a ruse while they evacuated their families and belongings. The nontreaty Nez Perce, also gained some warriors who had just returned from the buffalo country, now held a council of chiefs to choose a course of action. Two notable warriors who had just joined the group, Five Wounds and Rainbow, advised them to wait near the river to entice Howard to cross it. They had wanted Howard and his troopers to cross the swift flowing Salmon so the warring Nez Perce could move downstream and cross back over

the river. Then, the hostile Nez Perce could easily move to the Wallowa Valley or buffalo country in Montana.[21]

While Whipple was dealing with Looking Glass, Howard had obtained boats and cables to construct a ferry to get his forces across the swift Salmon River. As the soldiers continued to cross, the volunteer units led the long line of troops up a wet winding steep trail as they pursued their foe.[22]

For days Howard's column plodded through the rain and mud as they went up and down the steep, soggy, winding trails in pursuit of their foe. During the process, Howard lost several pack mules along the treacherous trails. The mules lost their footing and fell into the ravines. As they tracked the Indians, their trail led the troopers back down to the river's edge near Craig's crossing where the hostile Nez Perce crossed again. After losing a raft filled with equipment and several horses while attempting to cross the swift current, Howard turned his column around and retraced the trail they had just traveled.[23]

While Captain Ed McConville and his Lewiston Volunteer Company bravely fought the nontreaty Nez Perce at the Battle of Cottonwood, Howard's column crossed the Salmon River for a second time and started searching for the nontreaty Nez Perce again. On 11 July, with a reinforced force of 440 soldiers and 180 scouts, packers, and

teamsters, Howard once again pursued the warring Nez Perce. As the column descended the right bank of the Clearwater River, they sighted the hostile's camp below them on the opposite bank. After positioning the two Gatling guns and the mountain howitzer for a plunging bombardment, Howard ordered his men to open fire. While the indirect fire continued, Howard prepared for an attack.[24]

Although Howard had taken the hostile Nez Perce by surprise, Too-hul-hul-sote, the Dreamer Medicine Man, led twenty-four warriors across the river where they scaled a bluff to the level of the soldiers. There, they took shelter behind boulders, and engaged the soldiers with fierce and accurate gun fire that held them up until more Indians could join them. As more Indians continued to appear, Howard ordered his men to dig in with their trowel/bayonets. Howard eventually counter attacked the hostile force. Although Howard had over four hundred men, he could not immediately overcome the approximately three hundred Nez Perce warriors.[25]

Howard personally led and directed the two-day battle that took place on the South Fork of the Clearwater River. On the first day, 11 July, neither side was able to inflict much damage on the other. To reduce vulnerability, Howard placed his supply train behind a semicircular battle line with hastily erected barricades and trenches, while

the Nez Perce engaged him from behind large boulders. On the second day, Howard tried another tactic. Using his artillery gunners as infantry, Howard had them charge through the Nez Perce lines. The spirited attack caused the Indians to rapidly retreat across the river. Corporal John P. Schorr, 1st Cavalry, wrote in his diary about the battle:

> We had 40 men killed and wounded, and it always remained a mystery why they [Nez Perce] did not pick off General Howard, who was always at the front line giving orders and at the same time sacrificed [sic] as few lives as possible.[26]

The soldiers immediately pursued the fleeing Nez Perce as far as Kamiah. Private Mayer wrote in his diary on July 13:

> Commenced firing at daybreak and kept it up until 2 p.m. At that time the order for a charge was given. We routed them out of their Stronghould [sic] and followed them across the Clearwater, the Cavalry crossing with the 1st 2 Co's deployed in skirmish line and the other followed in them across the Clearwater . . . .[27]

Howard sent Captain E. C. Mason, his chief of staff, with his available cavalry to further press the hostile's rear guard as they headed for the Lolo pass.

Howard had achieved a much needed success. To accomplish his success on the battlefield, he employed all the features of a conventional Civil War battle: troop movements, flanking operations, use of artillery and Gatling Guns, and sharpshooters.[28]

Howard's well-earned victory possibly prevented his relief from command. Just prior to the Clearwater Battle, President Hayes's cabinet had proposed Howard's removal, but his timely victory stopped the initiative. Howard owed some thanks to his adjutant, Major H. Clay Wood, and to McDowell's aide, Major B. Keeler, who had observed the victory. Wood telegraphed the news of Howard's victory directly to President Hayes, while Keeler telegraphed what he called "a most important success," and stated that "Nothing can surpass the vigor of General Howard's movements and action." Howard's boss, McDowell, also passed Keller's comments to the President.[29]

The Clearwater Battle was an important milestone in the Nez Perce War. It ended the danger to residents of the Idaho Territory. The warring Nez Perce had finally suffered. Besides losing prestige, they had also lost manpower and a considerable amount of supplies, but the war was not over.

Howard now returned to Fort Lapwai to refit his command before heading for Spokane country. Enroute, he received word that Chief Joseph wanted to surrender. Upon meeting with Chief Joseph, he laid down terms that surrender would be unconditional and that the Indian leaders would be tried by a military court. During the negotiations, a hostile Nez Perce rear guard fired upon the troops, abruptly

ending the proceedings. The Lewiston Teller reported that Chiefs White Bird and Looking Glass threatened to kill Chief Joseph and his band if they surrendered. The threats against Joseph were because he went against an earlier agreement. During an earlier nontreaty Nez Perce council meeting, they had agreed to flee to buffalo country. These threats indicated serious dissention among the hostile Nez Perce ranks.[30]

Howard sent Major Mason with a battalion of cavalry, McConville's Volunteer Company, and group of treaty Nez Perce scouts to pursue the nontreaty Nez Perce. Mason's objective was to see if the hostile Nez Perce were headed for the Lolo Trail or elsewhere. Unfortunately, the Nez Perce laid an ambush for the column at Kamiah crossing, the narrow entrance of Lolo Trail. When the hostiles opened fire on the advance guard, the soldiers dismounted and deployed in a skirmish line among the fallen trees and thick brush. The soldiers' quick actions limited their losses to one dead and two wounded Indian scouts. They also determined the route and condition of the route of the fleeing Nez Perce. The escape route, the Lolo Trail, would be impossible for cavalry to effectively travel. Thus, Howard planned to pursue the nontreaty Nez Perce over the Mullan Road, a more efficient route for cavalry.[31]

Since Howard knew that the hostile Nez Perce were heading towards the rough Lolo Pass, he knew the settlers were safe. Therefore, he turned to an old problem of preventing the escalation of hostilities to the other Indian tribes on the Spokane Plains. He planned to go to Spokane country with Indian Inspector E. C. Watkins, Indian Agent Monteith, and sufficient troops to enforce the government instruction. After completing that task, he would go to Missoula by way of Mullan Road. This plan would prevent the hostiles' return by leaving forces at Kamiah.[33]

The out cry from the local settlers and guidance from McDowell changed his plans as shown by his new plan published as Field Order #3. While leaving a small force to protect Kamiah, Howard led the main force over the Lolo Trail and sent Colonel Wheaton to the left flank with a secondary force to calm the Indians of the Spokane Plains and to help prevent the hostile Nez Perce from returning. Howard directed Wheaton to maintain contact with him so their movements could be coordinated.[34]

Before Howard could put his plan in action, he had to delay his departure for the arrival of Major Green from Boise and until his quartermasters had obtained sufficient mules. Howard could take only horses and pack mules over the Lolo Trail; it was too rugged for wagons. Even without wagons, Howard directed Captain William F. Spurgin,

Twenty-first Infantry, to hire citizens to work as an engineering company. These civilian engineers, armed and mounted, worked to clear the trails for Howard's column. The civilian engineers took with them the necessary axes, picks, and shovels. With the aid of Spurgin's engineering crew, Howard's force showed great stamina and tremendous drive by traveling over this tough pass of the Bitterroot Mountains in a mere ten days. Owing to the character of the trail, this citizen group also used pack mules to haul their supplies. While the swift-footed warring Nez Perce took nine days to cross the rugged Lolo Pass, Howard's six mile-long column only took one more day.[34]

As directed by Sherman, Howard had telegraphed the news of his victory over the nontreaty Nez Perce at Clearwater and of the fleeing Nez Perce egress route to Montana. Howard's message went to Captain Charles C. Rawn, Seventh Infantry, who was building a new post at Missoula. At first, Rawn took no actions until induced to do so. Howard's boss, McDowell, advised the adjutant general that the warring Nez Perce were headed toward Montana over the Lolo trail. This advisory prompted Sheridan, the Commander of the Military Division of Missouri, to order Colonel John Gibbon, commander of the Seventh Infantry, to put his troops in the field and to have Rawn block the trail.[35]

The stage was set with Howard coming across the Lolo Trail and Wheaton coming by the left flank over the Mullan Road. Rawn simply had to delay the hostile Nez Perce. He moved sixteen miles up the Lolo Canyon to a point where the floor of the canyon narrowed to approximately a quarter of a mile in width. On the South side of the canyon, the mountains were precipitous and densely covered with standing and fallen timber. While the south side was impassable, the north side was a grassy, steep sloping ridge that would allow passage in any direction. Rawn had thirty regular soldiers, two hundred citizen volunteers, and fifteen or twenty Flathead warriors to oppose between one and two hundred warriors of the six hundred fleeing Nez Perce. Rawn had his men build a log and earthen barricade which apparently reached from one side of the canyon to the other.[36]

Rawn's official report, which was written two months later, stated that the citizen volunteers deserted their posts because the nontreaty Nez Perce promised to pass peacefully through Montana.[37] In contrast, Chauncey Barbour, the editor of The Weekly Missoulian and a member of Captain E. A. Kennedy's company of volunteers, observed and meticulously chronicled the whole event. While the renegade Nez Perce passed within rifle range of the entrenched soldiers and volunteers, Rawn prevented anyone from firing

on them. Barbour then wrote the Territorial Governor and requested him to take command of the Montana militia so that good men would not be humiliated by another imbecile or coward. "Wipe out the disgrace that has been put upon us, [sic] and never let any regular officer again command Montana Militia."[30] The relations between the local militias and the regular army varied greatly depending the players and the situation. While Howard had a working relationship with the Idaho Militias, Perry was always at odds with them.

Rawn requested a court of inquiry, but Gibbon declined because he felt that no vindication was necessary. In contrast, Howard allowed two courts of inquiry to meet so that Perry could clear his name due to his actions during the Nez Perce war. It seems that Gibbons did not want the inquiry because he was afraid of the possible outcome.

Howard's requests for assistance now resulted in several army columns searching for the hostile Nez Perce. On 4 August, Gibbon had assembled 160 regular troops at Fort Missoula for the pursuit of the hostile Nez Perce. By 9 August, Gibbon had caught up to the fleeing Indians and launched a surprise attack at Big Hole. After driving the Nez Perce from their camp, Gibbon's men started to finish the rout by burning their teepees. Suddenly, the surprised

Nez Perce recovered and launched a strong counterattack on the soldiers. Both sides suffered heavy losses.[39]

Howard received a courier-delivered message on the day of the battle that Gibbon's column had been attacked and needed help for his numerous wounded. Gibbon's message closed with these words: "Hope you will hurry to our relief." As Howard arrived at Big Hole, the warring Nez Perce stopped the battle and quickly withdrew. Howard aided the wounded, including Gibbon, and assumed command of the remnants of Gibbon's column.[40]

Six days after leaving the scene of the Big Hole battle, the hostile Nez Perce attacked Howard's column at Camas Meadows and captured many of his horses and mules. After skirmishing with the hostiles, Howard succeeded in recovering most of the mules and again setting the enemy in rapid motion. The warring Nez Perce headed to the Yellowstone Basin.[41]

After this battle, Howard continued his pursuit to Henry Lake where he halted to resupply. During this time, he mistakenly sent a telegram to General Sherman with the wrong message that his column was returning to Idaho since he had more than done his share. Howard felt that the troops of other departments could complete what his soldiers had so well begun. Nevertheless, Sherman directed him to continue unless he was too old to handle it. In that case,

Sherman directed Howard to give his command to a younger officer with more energy. Howard quickly telegraphed Sherman that he had plenty of pluck. Howard, once more, barely maintained his command.[42]

Howard took his aides-de-camp and went seventy-five miles to Virginia City for supplies. After riding day and night, he bought almost everything that the small mining village could furnish: provisions, clothing, fresh horses, and mules. Within three days, he had returned with the necessary provisions and had his command back in pursuit of the fleeing Nez Perce. While Howard pursued his foe, he was being pursued in turn by Lieutenant Colonel Charles C. Gilbert.[43]

Howard described the situation as:

> Thinking I was too tired or too old for such an extraordinary march, General Sherman dispatched [sic] Lieutenant Colonel Gilbert, an officer much older than I, though of less rank, with a body of cavalry from Fort Ellis to overtake me, relieve me from duty, and take my place; but it was not to be. The stern chase was so hard that after ten days' trial Gilbert and his worn-out horses gave up the chase and returned to the fort."[44]

General Sherman had sent Gilbert with a letter inviting Howard to relinquish his command to Gilbert and go to Sherman to discuss the situation. Even though Sherman had the title of General of the Army, the President appointed Department Commanders. Therefore, Sherman could not fire Howard, so Howard could only give up his command

voluntarily. But, his standing with his superiors remained shakey.

In addition to sending telegraph messages to Sherman and McDowell, Howard also telegraphed messages to Colonel Samuel D. Sturgis. Sturgis commanded the Seventh Cavalry Regiment that had suffered extremely heavy losses at the battle of the Little Big Horn, but he was not with the Seventh when Custer led it to disaster. Sturgis' objective was to cut off the fleeing Nez Perce. The Seventh Cavalry, with some wily Crow scouts, attempted to find the illusive warring Nez Perce. Eventually, Sturgis caught up to them and conducted a running fight between his Crow scouts and the fleeing Nez Perce's rear guard. After completing a twenty-five mile march, Howard received a request for additional assistance from Sturgis. With only three hours rest, Howard took fifty cavalrymen and rode all night to support Sturgis's column. By ten o'clock the next morning, Howard's formation reached the battlefield where the nontreaty Nez Perce had again fought and fled suffering only a few losses.[48]

After the warring Nez Perce chiefs had decided to head for Canada, they skillfully went through the mountainous wilderness to avoid Colonel Sturgis's Seventh Cavalry. On 13 September, Sturgis's column started a furious fight with the hostiles at Canyon Creek. Meanwhile

the Nez Perce women and children took all their belongings and drove away their herd of horses to protect their main camp. Sturgis had three dead and eleven wounded while the Indians had only three wounded. While the Nez Perce suffered few casualties from the battle, they suffered heavily from the constant flight without an opportunity to rest.[46]

As the hostile Nez Perce traveled toward Musselshell country around the Missouri River, Howard had his Crow scouts harass the Nez Perce. Howard was able to get inside of his enemy's decision cycle. Howard knew the Nez Perce would continue to out distance the army column. He feared that the warring Nez Perce would escape to British Territory, Canada. Therefore, he sent a message to Colonel Nelson A. Miles, Commander of the Fifth Infantry, mounted on captured Indian horses. Howard wanted Miles to cut off the fleeing Nez Perce as they headed north. Realizing that the nontreaty Nez Perce traveled only fast enough to stay ahead of him, Howard slowed his rate of march so Miles could have time to overtake the enemy.[47]

Thirty miles from Canada, at Bear Paw Mountain, Miles overtook the fleeing Indians. He surrounded their camp and captured almost all of the Indian horses. After several days of intense fighting, Miles started to negotiate a surrender. During the surrender negotiations, over half

of the hostile Nez Perce escaped to Canada, the rest were trapped by the increasing force of the soldiers. As Chief Joseph prepared to surrender, Howard arrived with an advance party.

From the first indications of problems, Howard effectively commanded and controlled the forces and equipment under his command. While displaying great confidence that the hostile Nez Perce would be quickly subdued, Howard started gathering and analyzing the available information of the Indians. From his analysis, Howard mobilized the forces under his control while requesting more troops from the other two departments within the Division of the Pacific. While his forces were enroute to Lewiston-Lapwai area, Howard had his department staff buy locally or order the necessary equipment to sustain his troops from the department depot.

From his knowledge of the Nez Perce, the area, and the settlers, he knew he had to take action to satisfy the settlers. But, he could not successfully engage his foe without an adequate sized force. Howard envisioned the desired end state and what actions he must take to get there. As stated earlier, Howard had a plan and executed it.

Endnotes

[1]Lewiston (Idaho) Teller, November 3, 1877, 2.

[2]Mark H. Brown, The flight of the Nez Perce (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1982; repr., New York: Capricorn Books, 1971), 125-6, 131; and Oliver Otis Howard, Nez Perce Joseph: An Account of His Ancestors, His Lands, His Confederates, His Enemies, His Murders, His Pursuit, and Capture (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972; repr, of first edition, Boston, 1881), 119-29.

[3]Brown, Flight, 138.

[4]The Idahoan, Boise City, Idaho Territory, 20 June 1877.

[5]The Lewiston Teller, 7 July 1877.

[6]Brown, Flight, 89; David Effenberger, A Dictionary of Battles, (New York: Cromwell Company, 1967) 233; and Helen Addison Howard, Saga of Chief Joseph, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971) 176.

[7]Brown, Flight, 142-47.

[8]Ibid., 149.

[9]Ibid., 152.

[10]Ibid., 152.

[11]Francis Haines, The Nez Perce: Tribesmen of the Columbia Plateau, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1955), 229-30.

[12]Army and Navy Journal, 30 June 1877, 758.

[13]John A. Carpenter, Sword and Olive Branch: Oliver Otis Howard, (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh, 1972) 250.

[14]Oliver O. Howard, Nez Perce Joseph: An Account of His Ancestors, His Lands, His confederates, His Enemies, His Murders, His War, His Pursuit, and Capture, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972; repr. of first edition, Boston, 1881), 93; and Haines, The Nez Perce, 230.

[15]Howard, Nez Perce Joseph, 129-30.

[16]Haines, The Nez Perce, 230.

[17]Howard, Nez Perce Joseph, 136.

[18]Ibid., 135.

[19]Ibid., 145.

[20]H. Howard, Saga of Chief Joseph, 184-87.

[21]Oliver O. Howard, My Life and Experiences among our Hostile Indians, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 287.

[22]Howard, Nez Perce Joseph, 159.

[23]Haines, The Nez Perces, 231.

[24]Alvin M. Josephy, The Patriot Chiefs, (New York: The Viking Press, 1962), 330.

[25]Brown, Flight, 188.

[26]Idaho Statesmen, 13 May 1931.

[27]Chicago Daily News, 3 May 1941.

[28]Carpenter, Sword and Olive Branch, 249.

[29]Ibid., 251.

[30]H. Howard, Saga of Chief Joseph, 215-6.

[31]Ibid., 217-20.

[32]Brown, Flight of the Nez Perce, 205.

[33]Annual Report of the Secretary of War on the Operations of the Department for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1877. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1877), 125-6.

[34]Carpenter, Sword and Olive Branch, 253; and O. Howard, My Life and Experiences Among our Hostile Indians, 290-1.

[35]H. Howard, Saga of Chief Joseph, 215-19; and Brown, Flight of the Nez Perce, 225.

[36]H. Howard, 219-30; and Brown, 222.

[37]Annual Report of the Secretary of War on the Operation of the department for the Fiscal year Ending June 30, 1877, 501.

[38]Brown, Flight of the Nez Perce, 227.

[39]Carpenter, Sword and Olive Branch, 253-4.

[40]H. Howard, My Life and Experience Among our Hostile Indians, 291-2.

[41]Chief Joseph, "An Indian's View of Indian Affairs," 133-42 The North American Review, (May 1884, Vol XXVII, No. 1), 139.

[42]O. Howard, My Life and Experiences Among our Hostile Indians, 292-3.

[43]Ibid., 293-5.

[44]H. Howard, My Life and Experiences Among our Hostile Indians, 295; and Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, 339-40, 342, 352.

[45]H. Howard, My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians, 295-6.

[46]A. Josephy, The Patriot Chiefs, 336.

[47]Ibid., 337.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

> General Howard wore out his command--men and horses--in the pursuit; making unprecedented forced marches. He and his men enduring every specis [sic] of hardship and privation: and that when he had driven the Indians to Yellowstone; the work was virtually taken out of his hands by other officers with fresh well equipped troops, for whom the capture was made comparatively easy.[1]
>
> Milton Kelly
> Editor, Idaho Statesman
> October 16, 1877

This study looked at Brigadier General Oliver Otis Howard's command and control during the Nez Perce war. This chapter will briefly review the key points of the earlier chapters and further analyze some issues of the campaign.

We have looked at the frontier army's structure, composition, and characteristics to see what assets Howard had to execute his mission. It described an army structured to fight an European conventional force, but it was tasked to do a multitude of other tasks.

Of its many roles in 1877, the conventionally structured United States Army had the challenging job of battling the highly motivated, but normally peaceful,

nontreaty Nez Perce. Due to the army's senior leaders failure to address the frontier mission of fighting hostile Indians, the War Department developed the army's strength, organization, and composition for a conventional war. The army's European style "stand and fight battle" tactics were ineffective against the highly mobile Nez Perce traveling in very difficult terrain. The army was hindered by political bickering, inadequate funding, and low public opinion. Additionally, the soldiers were poorly trained and supplied. The hindered army struggled against a considerably smaller, but a very brave, skilled, and equally equipped enemy. As a result, these factors compounded Howard's tasks of directing, coordinating, controlling the personnel and logistical activities to accomplish his mission.

The army's failure to understand the Nez Perce psyche, culture, and war-time organization allowed the Indians to continually out maneuver and out perform the army. This situation ultimately prolonged what could have been a quick and decisive campaign because the Indians out performed and responded quicker than Howard's forces. After the army's poor showing at Whitebird Canyon, Howard's mobilization and preparations were slowed by the organizational and administrative quagmires imposed by the bureaus, departments, and divisions in the hierarchical

structure of the army. However, instead of the army s senior leaders acknowledging the problems and shortcomings of their conventional force fighting an unconventional enemy, the army merely blamed Brigadier General Oliver Otis Howard.

An examination of the Nez Perce cut through the myths and presented their background, structure, and the path that led them to war. Since the army's first recorded encounters with the Nez Perce, we had known the Nez Perce to be peaceful, family oriented group, that loved for their land. After their exposure to Christianity during the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Nez Perce sent a delegation to St. Louis seeking missionaries.

From the Nez Perce's background we find some skills that aided them in their war. The Nez Perce were excellent horsemen and hunters. They were very wealthy due to the large herd of horses they owned. Being able to change horses during their flight from Idaho helped them stay just out of Howard's reach. The Nez Perce had also fought along side of the soldier in several Indian wars, which gave them an understanding of the ways of the cavalry. Hence, the Nez Perce were experienced warriors, horsemen, and marksmen who knew the army's tactics.

While the whites considered the Nez Perce a tribe, the Nez Perce considered themselves a society centered on

the village or bands which were lead by a chief and a band council consisting of the senior men or headsmen. While the Nez Perce had a common language and a common culture, they identified with bands. Therefore, the headchief provision of the 1855 Steven's Treaty ran countered to their cultural structure. During the negotiation of the 1863 Treaty, the government relied upon the headchief to come up with a consensus on a treaty. The dissenting faction ignored the headchief and the government's representatives.

From our review of Howard's background and his diplomatic action before the outbreak of hostilities, we found basis for Howard's praise and criticism during his campaign. Competency and bravery, with an occasional controversy, characterized Howard's Civil War service. But, even when controversy surrounded Howard, his soldiers gravitated toward him, and his superiors still praised him. At the conclusion of the war, Howard received the regular army rank of Brigadier General for his heroic service. Besides becoming known for bravery, Howard's strong religious outlook became his trademark.

While Howard's prevailing religious outlook gave him strength, courage, strong resolve, and a compassion that helped him in difficult times, his religious resolve also irritated those around him. Yet, his compassion got him the job of heading the Freedmen Bureau. While this job gave

Howard great personal satisfaction, it destroyed his reputation and his standing with his peers and his superiors. Furthermore, the situation caused him lengthy and costly litigations and investigations. These problems and his additional endeavors to alleviate his financial problems were also a burden to Howard during the prosecution of his campaign during the Nez Perce War.

Upon taking command of the Military Department of the Columbia, Howard continued his pursuit of help for the deprived by working on behalf of the Nez Perce. After having his department assistant adjutant general thoroughly investigate the problem, Howard took an unpopular position of taking land away from the settlers and giving it back to the Nez Perce. After his long fight for a peace commission, Howard changed his previously sympathetic approach towards the nontreaty Nez Perce for two reasons. Howard had to get the Indians to compromise because the local government wanted to continue the development of the area. Second, Howard feared that a failure to resolve the issue would severely hurt his already turbulent career. After several days of meetings, the commission recommended that the nontreaty move onto Lapwai reservation, by force if needed.

After this commission, McDowell directed Howard to only aid the Indian agents and to initiate no actions. McDowell directed, "It is therefore of paramount importance

that none of the responsibility of any step which may be made shall be initiated by the military authority."[2] Howard carefully planned and executed a meeting with the nontreaty Nez Perce which convinced them to relocate. Yet, Howard's actions before the war created conditions from which his problems during the campaign developed.

During Howard's pursuit of the Nez Perce, McDowell wrote a confidential letter about Howard's performance to Sherman:

> who whilt [sic] doing his best was hounded by the press and had all manners of abuse heaped on him. But orders seem addressed to another audience as well as to his troops, and he cannot quite confine himself rigidly to his mere soldier work. I think it is to this, in dealing with Joseph's case in the beginning, that largely caused the attack on him in the papers when the effort to put Joseph on the reservation failed' Both your orders and mine required this work to be left absolutely to the Indian Dept., he merely aiding with his military force in case of need. But he could not keep in the background and hence received the stings of the press when the efforts failed.[3]

As we have seen, Howard's roles in the Nez Perce War were as a protector of immigrants, as a prosecutor of the campaign of the Nez Perce War in Idaho, and as a pursuer of the Nez Perce until their capture. In spite of criticism and lack of support from his superiors, Howard did all three roles professionally especially when we consider the conditions he had to operate in.

While displaying great confidence that the Indian troubles would soon be under control, Howard started planning for an extended operation. He visualized the conditions that must be created to safeguard the settlers while defeating the hostile Nez Perce. Howard rapidly mobilized forces under his control and requested more troops in order to have a sufficient force to subdue his enemy. Simultaneously, he requested the necessary supplies and equipment to sustain the force. Howard also directed his efforts to prevent the possibility of an Indian movement that could unite the disaffected Indians in the region.

While the press and President Hayes' Cabinet criticized his slowness to take the field, no one can argue with his results. He successfully protected and calmed the settlers while preventing the spread of hostilities to other Indians. Howard did defeat the hostile Nez Perce at the Clearwater Battle and drove them out of his area of responsibility. He could not satisfy the unrealistic expectations of the press and the government concerning time and expense.

After the defeat of the hostile Nez Perce at the Clearwater Battle, Howard planned to refurbish his forces at his temporary supply depot at Lewiston and then move out. Howard planned to take the northern route over the Mullan trail because he knew he had a chance of meeting his enemy

as they came off the Lolo trail. He changed his plans to protect the settlers from reported Indian raids. Howard's revised plans continued to support his initial three objectives: protect and calm the settler, prevent further hostilities, and defeat the hostile Nez Perce.

As he prepared to travel the Lolo trail to Montana, Howard's command and control of all military operation in the Nez Perce War greatly diminished. Before, Howard could effectively direct, coordinate, and control the forces to accomplish the mission. Howard was about to enter the Military Division of the Missouri where his command and control was limited to his forces. Previously, Howard effectively controlled and coordinated for the necessary resources to restore peace in his area of operations. During Howard's pursuit of the fleeing Nez Perce, he lacked command and control of the various columns attempting to block the Nez Perce as they headed for Canada.

Had conditions permitted Howard to head north over the Mullan trail, he could have ended the war. Instead, Captain Charles C. Rawn did not engage the Nez Perce as they came off the Lolo trail because he felt he had an insufficient number of men to battle them. When Howard reached Rawn's abandoned fortification at the east end of Lolo trail, he saw and appreciated its strength. At that time, he probably realized that Rawn could have safely

engaged and delayed the fleeing Nez Perce. Had Rawn taken actions before receiving directions from the Adjutant General, Rawn could have mustered sufficient forces to stop the Nez Perce.

While Rawn hesitated to engage the Nez Perce, his boss, Colonel John Gibbon, did not wait for Howard to reinforce his 160 men. Whether Gibbon was overconfident or merely seeking the glory of defeating the Nez Perce by himself, many deaths and injuries could have been prevented. The Nez Perce had slowed their pace and dropped their rear guards because they believed they had left Howard in Idaho.

Historians often focused on a series of dispatches between Howard and his bosses, McDowell and Sherman, and his delay at Henry Lake to rest his forces and replenish their supplies. While traveling 1256 miles, Howard had led his column for twenty-six days without a stop. If the units to the east had cooperated, the hostile Nez Perce could have been stopped twice. Howard and his troops were discouraged and exhausted. Unfortunately, Howard's state of mind was reflected in his dispatches to McDowell and Sherman.

Howard made two mistakes in his dispatches to his bosses. He requested guidance when he had earlier been directed to pursue the Nez Perce without boundaries.

Second, he implied a lack of cooperation from the departments to the east--a valid point.[4]

In his annual report, Sherman acknowledged that Howard needed to stop for two reasons. Howard had to rest his men and animals and to collect food and clothing. Sherman further commented:

> I recognized the full measure of the labors, exposure, fatigue, and fighting of General Howard and his command, having personally seen much of the route over which he passed and knowing the great difficulty of procuring food for men and horses in that mountain region. It is simply impossible for infantry, or even cavalry with their single horses to overtake Indians, who drive along a herd, changing from a tired horse to one comparatively fresh at pleasure, knowing the country perfectly, ready to hide in the many rocky canons [sic], ravines, and dense woods in which that country abound, and able with a small rear-guard to hold at bay any number in pursuit, who often for miles must follow trails in single file.[5]

Sherman's report seemingly counters his dispatch, dated August 24. Sherman's dispatch directed Howard to give up his command if he was too tired to continue. Yet, Sherman's report explained why Howard would be tired. Sherman addressed the earlier dispatches:

> Several dispatches passed between General Howard and myself, which I insert here entire [sic], because they explain themselves. They have never heretofore been published in full, while garbled parts of them have somehow without authority reached the press and were misconstrued . . . .[6]

Sherman's report conflicts with the letter he gave to Lieutenant Colonel Charles C. Gilbert to give to Howard.

In his letter, Sherman says:

> I would like to consult with you and feel your absence much . . . see no reason for your commanding a department after having driven the hostile Indians out of your department . . . I authorize you to transfer your command, in the field, to . . . Gilbert . . . .[7]

After two weeks on Howard's trail, Gilbert was unable to catch up and deliver the letter to Howard. Obviously, Howard and his men had plenty of pluck after receiving Sherman's dispatch. Even though Howard continued the pursuit in vain, his pursuit aided in the hostile Nez Perce's capture.

Howard had continued to send dispatches in hopes of activating other units to close in on the fleeing Nez Perce. Colonel Nelson A. Miles started out to intercept the Nez Perce before they could reach Canada. Howard slowed his march because he knew the hostile Indians would slow their pace if he slowed his rate of march. Howard got into his enemy's decision cycle when he knew what factors affected the enemy's decision process.[8]

When Howard received word that Miles had the nontreaty Nez Perce surrounded, Howard took a portion of his force and rushed to the scene. Instead of taking command of the operations because he was the senior officer, Howard allowed Miles to accept Chief Joseph's surrender. After the

end of the campaign, the question of the surrender would cause a great rift between Howard and Miles and between Howard and Sheridan. Howard wanted his troops, who had suffered so much hardship, to get a share of the praise. Therefore, he wrote a congratulatory order to his soldiers. No one reading his report would take exception to it except the over ambitious and very sensitive Miles who wanted to be a brigadier general. The conflict continued until Sherman stopped it. This conflict caused Howard's critics to look only at part of the facts.

While the critics illuminated only part of the facts, Howard's forces and his enemy impacted on his ability to command and control the campaign. Since the military leaders did not focus on their primary threat, hostile Indians, the army's structure, equipment, and training hindered Howard's ability to command and control his forces. When attempting to compensate for inadequate forces by bringing additional forces from other areas, the administrative quagmires compounded Howard's ability to gather the forces he need to accomplished his missions. Howard did not have a command structure in existence prior to the start of the conflict. Howard developed it prior to him taking his column into the field after the hostile Nez Perce. In addition to Howard's command and control problems with his organization, the Nez Perce's excellent warrior

abilities further compounded it. The Nez Perce warrior easily out maneuvered Howard's ability to command and control his frontier forces.

In spite of all these challenges and hindrances, Howard's command and control was effective enough for him to accomplish his mission. Howard calmed and protected the settlers in his department from harm of the warring Nez Perce. By Howard gathering and analyzing the available information on the disaffected Indians, he directed forces to prevent a general uprising in his department. Finally, Howard also brought together the necessary troops, subsistence, and equipment to bring the hostile Nez Perce to battle that drove them from his department. Hence, Howard effectively commanded and controlled his operations to accomplish his mission.

Upon reviewing the whole situation, Howard clearly did a commendable job during the Nez Perce War. The problems of the nineteenth century frontier army are lessons learned for the Defense Department of the post Cold War military. As the military force structure becomes smaller, the military planner must focus on having a force designed, equipped, and trained to do the mission the country wants them to perform. In the 1990's the citizens may want the military to perform disaster relief or fight forest fires.

If the citizens want their military to perform these functions, the military planner must accept it and plan for it.

For example, if the country wants the military to supply disaster relief, the Defense Department should prepare contingency plans in coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Then, the services should exercise those plans. The lessons learned should be incorporated into the Joint Strategic Planning System so the military is geared to perform the mission they have been assigned. Otherwise, the military of the twenty-first century will still be focussed on the Soviet threat, but fighting a different enemy.

Endnotes

[4]Milton Kelly, "The Nez Perce," Idaho Statesman, Tuesday Morning, October 16, 1877.

[5]William T. Sherman, "Report of the General of Army," Headquarters of the Army, Washington DC, November 7, 1877, of the Annual Report of the Secretary of War on the Operations of the Department for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1877 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1877), 9.

[6]Irwin McDowell, "Confidential Letter from McDowell to William T. Sherman, July 31, 1877, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress, vol 46, quoted in Robert M. Utley, introduction to My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians: A record of Personal Observations, Adventure, and Campaigns Among the Indians of the Great West by Oliver O. Howard, (New York: Da Capo Pres, 1973), xiv.

[7]John A. Carpenter, Sword and Olive Branch: Oliver Otis Howard (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964), 225.

[8]Sherman, Ibid., 12.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Mark H. Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 340.

[11]Oliver O. Howard, My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 297.

The decision making cycle is a dynamic process which allow decisions about current operation to occur simultaneously with decisions and planning about future operations. Howard knew what factors the enemy considered when they made they plans about how far to travel each day. The fleeing Nez Perce were moving just fast enough to stay ahead of Howard.

APPENDIX

ORDER OF BATTLE

Whitebird Canyon Battle
Captain David Perry, Commander
Companies F & G, 1st Cavalry Regiment
Mount Idaho Volunteer Company

Clearwater Battle
Brigadier General Oliver Otis Howard, Commander
Captain Norwood's Cavalry Battalion consisted of Companies B, E, F, G, L, 1st Cavalry Regiment
Captain Miller's Artillery Battalion consisted of Companies A, D, E, G, & M 4th Artillery Regiment
Captain Miles Battalion consisted of Companies B, C, D, E, H, & I of 21st Infantry Regiment
Idaho Volunteer Battalion (The volunteers called themselves Idaho's 2nd Volunteer Regiment) consisted of three volunteer companies: Lewiston Volunteer Company, Dayton (WT) Volunteer Company, Mount Idaho Volunteer Company

Kamiah Crossing Skirmish
Same units except Company E, 1st Cavalry, which buried the dead and escorted the wounded to Grangeville.

Big Hole Battle
Companies A, D, F, G, I, & K 7th Infantry Regiment
Stevensville Volunteer Company

Bear Mountain Battle
Companies B, F, G, & I of 5th Infantry Regiment
Companies A, D, & K of 1st Cavalry Regiment
Companies F, G, & H of 2nd Cavalry Regiment

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