THE ARTILLERY WITH THE REGULAR ARMY

IN THE WEST FROM 1866 TO 1890

by

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PREFACE

Military history is an extremely broad field of study. The amount of information which confronts the historian is voluminous. As a result, military historians, out of self-defense, tend to limit their study to a certain period, region, or facet of warfare, such as the use of cavalry. This allows for some depth to their studies. It precludes too much information and possibly confusion from entering into their written efforts.

The general topic of American military history has fascinated me for many years. However, I have yet to limit my investigations to a particular period, finding each century or war too interesting to omit. I have narrowed my current research to a particular aspect of American warfare. Four years of military service as an artillery officer has created a sensitivity to the role of artillerymen and cannons in battle. In the course of my graduate studies, I have found that military historians have generally succeeded in avoiding the subject of artillery, regardless of era or continent. I can only surmise that the fear of becoming mired in a confusing mass of technical terms explains this historiographical omission. The story of artillerymen and their cannons, especially in American history, has not been adequately told.

This is particularly true of the vast body of works which deal with the frontier army and the Indian wars. An excessive amount of the literature on the Indian-fighting army concerns the cavalry. This is based on the assumption that the cavalry was the principle arm employed

against the Indian tribes of North America. In reality, infantry and artillery units met the Indian in battle on more than one occasion. The infantry story has been told, indirectly, through the biographies of field commanders such as Nelson Miles and George Crook. This study fulfills a need to document the actions of artillerymen who fought in the West from 1866 to 1890.

This has not been an easy task. There are no secondary works which even remotely address the topic of artillerymen or cannons in the Indian wars. Passing reference is made to certain units or cannons, but a detailed analysis does not exist. Personal papers and manuscripts, the fundamental resource of a historian, are maddeningly scarce. The official records, often incomplete in themselves, have been the major source of information.

The completion of this study is largely due to the assistance of many people. The members of my doctoral committee, Drs. David Baird, George Carney, Douglas Hale, H. James Henderson, and James Smallwood, have been extremely patient and understanding toward my efforts on such a specialized topic. My principal adviser, Dr. Joe Stout, has provided invaluable guidance, not only on the dissertation but in my graduate studies in general. Part of the difficulty of this project has been the competition for time due to my teaching duties at South Dakota State University. Dr. Rodney Bell and Dr. Edward Hogan have been most gracious in allowing me time and resources to complete the work.

Without the assistance of several splendid librarians, the research for this study would still be in progress. John and Vicki Phillips of the Oklahoma State University library spent many hours helping me in the early stages of the research. Mrs. Jan Fite of SDSU's Briggs Library.

has processed a vertible mountain of inter-library load requests. Her efforts are certainly appreciated.

I owe the greatest debt to my family. My wife and children have sacrificed a great deal of time and activity for the sake of this dissertation. Between teaching duties and research, my presence at home has been occasional at time. Without the support of my wife, Jan, this work and my graduate program would have been doomed to failure a long time ago.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the close of the Civil War, many officers of the Regular Army looked to their experiences in that contest in order to extract fundamental maxims concerning military operations. They then incorporated these precepts into the tactical doctrine of the army. However, these theorists overlooked a reality concerning the actions of the army in the nation's history. Wars in which organized, massed armies fought on this continent, such as the Civil War, were few in number and comparatively short in duration.

If they had ranked the wars of the United States according to number and duration, the 100 years of intermittent Indian wars would have surpassed all other conflicts to that time. Although more spectacular, the conflict between the North and the South, or between the United States and Great Britain, was only an interruption in the century-long struggle between the Indian and the white man. In addition, the Civil War veterans failed to understand that in the future, the army was more likely to face the American Indian than a foreign army. Because of this myopic view of American military history, the tactical philosophy of the army was concerned with conflict between well-trained, massed, national armies.

If the total experience of the army had been examined, a more operative system of maneuver and logistics would have resulted. Historically, armed forces have achieved success only when they have possessed a

tactical system and appropriate resources for a particular mission and environment. The British colonists ultimately realized that European tactics did not work in America. The heavily wooded environment precluded mass formations of troops, and the Indians did not fight like French Regulars. British and American forces in the Old Northwest in 1812 were defeated more often by logistical problems than by the other side. However, the proscribed system of combat adopted by the army after 1865 did not reflect the nation's diverse historical background. The army's thoughts were shaped exclusively by the experiences of Antietam, Vicksburg, and Cold Harbor.

The mission of the army in the West and the environment in which the army operated rendered the Civil War-system of warfare ineffective. Chasing outlaws and Indians was not the same as laying seige to Petersburg or facing the Confederate line at Shiloh. For a few soldiers, frontier duty prior to the war offered some frame of reference to the western landscape and its native inhabitants. However, those without such exposure could only hope that the price they had to pay for this knowledge was not too high. The parade fields of West Point and the battlefields of northern Virginia were no preparation for the plains of Kansas, the deserts of Arizona, or the mountains of Montana. Lacking a workable methodology, the frontier army floundered in a trial and error approach to operations in the west.

The absence of a practical scheme for fighting Indians was clearly evident in the roles which artillery played in the Indian wars from 1866 to 1890. Occasionally, expeditions took light artillery units with them in pursuit of hostile Indians. In other campaigns, artillery weapons and units were absent. During the Indian wars of the Pacific Northwest,

artillerymen fought, but as infantrymen or cavalrymen. There were instances in the same campaign in which some columns had artillery while others did not. This inconsistency could only have been possible if the conduct of operations was organized according to the whims or philosophy of individual commanders. A tactical doctrine concerning conflict with an irregular enemy, such as the Indian, would have provided general, consistent guidelines on the use of artillery units and cannons.

Through the analysis of the artillery in the Indian wars, it will be shown that a coherent and consistent tactical doctrine for Indian fighting did not exist. The prejudices and inclinations of commanders, along with fundamental resource requirements, explained the assorted artillery experiences in the west. Furthermore, the study will show that an Indian fighting doctrine should have included artillery. The intelligent application of cannons could have altered the outcome of certain important battles. In several instances, the presence of the guns provided the critical measure which brought success.

The army's problems in the West can only be partially explained by its failure to adapt its tactics to the fighting techniques of the American Indian. The physical and cultural landscape of the West contributed to the difficulties of policing the frontier. Military operations, more than any other human endeavor, have been affected by the environment in which they have taken place. The vast, complex milieu of the West demanded that any tactical doctrine be flexible and that the logistical system be regionally tailored. The army had great difficulty meeting those demands.

CHAPTER II

THE ARMY IN THE WEST: A PROBLEM OF SPACE, RESOURCE, AND TIME

A ribbon of blue moved down the streets of Washington, D.C., on May 23, 1865. This was the grand review for the Union army, celebrating the end of the terrible struggle between the North and the South. Although the columns of soldiers numbered almost two hundred thousand, these men represented only part of the more than two million men who had conquered the Confederate armies and destroyed the Confederacy. Most of these troopers were citizen soldiers, who soon would return to farms, shops, and families. For these men, the struggle for life on a battlefield was a thing of the past. The only association they would have with the army in the future would be in the periodic unit reunions held years later. Battle became either a memory or something they read of in the pages of their newspapers. However, a small portion of that procession of soldiers were men whose lives and destinies were intertwined with the profession of arms.

For the regulars, the future held the option of reconstruction duty in the South or hard duty in the West. There would be little glory in these assignments. A small portion of the army would be sent to the coastal fortifications. The shores and borders of the country had to be defended, although the threat of invasion was non-existent. The maintenance of buildings and equipment was the real purpose of these soldiers,

not defense. Some regular units returned to the South to supervise Congressional reconstruction. Their task was to establish law and order and to supervise the emancipation of former slaves. The remaining units journeyed to the frontier. Pacifying the wilderness had been the true mission of the army for the last one hundred years, the various national wars being only interruptions of the daily routine. Providing protection for a growing frontier population and controlling the various wild tribes of the region was the largest and most difficult of the army's three labors. For reasons of space, resource, and time, the frontier regulars experienced failure as often as success in the vast expanse west of the ninety-fifth meridian.[1]

Within the context of the spatial profile of the West, the first imposing reality was the sheer size of the region. That portion of the United States west of the ninety-fifth meridian contained more than two million square miles. It was a region eleven times larger than continental France.[2] Prior to the coming of the railroad and telegraph, ten days were needed for news from the East to reach the West coast via pony express. Although the telegraph did reduce this to a matter of seconds, the wires of the Western Union Telegraph Company could not carry human beings and their assorted worldly possessions. The simple magnitude of the West dictated that the army readjust the tactical philosophy and the logistical systems which had served it in the comparatively limited theaters of the Civil War. The frontier regulars would learn, as Napoleon had, that vast expanses could defeat an army as thoroughly as an enemy force.

The American West was as diverse as it was large. No continuity existed in the topography, climate, biotic environment, or cultural milieu

of the American West. The physiographical landscape included mountains, interior plains, coastal lowlands, interior plateaus, and basins (Figure 1). Virtually every type of landform existed in the West. Climatic variations were also a part of the region. January temperatures ranged from the sixties in the desert southwest to the sub-zero teens in the northern rockies and northern plains (Figure 2). During summer, the mountains remained comparatively cool, while the plains and desert plateaus became virtual ovens (Figure 3). Rainfall amounts ranged from a few inches to more than 150 inches per year (Figure 4).

The topographic and,more important, the climatic extremes, even in a single area affected the soldier's physical condition, his morale, and therefore his effectiveness. General William T. Sherman often told the story of an Arizona soldier who died and went to hell. One night he returned to his barracks at Fort Yuma. His old comrades asked him why he had come back. The late trooper replied that it was cold where he was and he had returned for his blankets.[3] During the Nez Perce campaign, troops from Arizona were sent to the northern rockies. The change in climate required a period of adjustment before the troops were capable of the same exertions as the troops stationed in the Pacific Northwest.

The climatic and topographic diversity had a correstponding affect on the biotic milieu. The region of the Great Plains was dominated by grasses of various heights and densities. Timber in this province was generally confined to the banks of the streams and rivers which crossed the plains from west to east. Cone-bearing trees covered the mountains with pockets of broadleaf hardwoods found in isolated locations. Dwarf shrubs,such as sagebrush, were the dominant vegative types in the arid lands of the southwest and the interior basin. Cacti and mesquite could

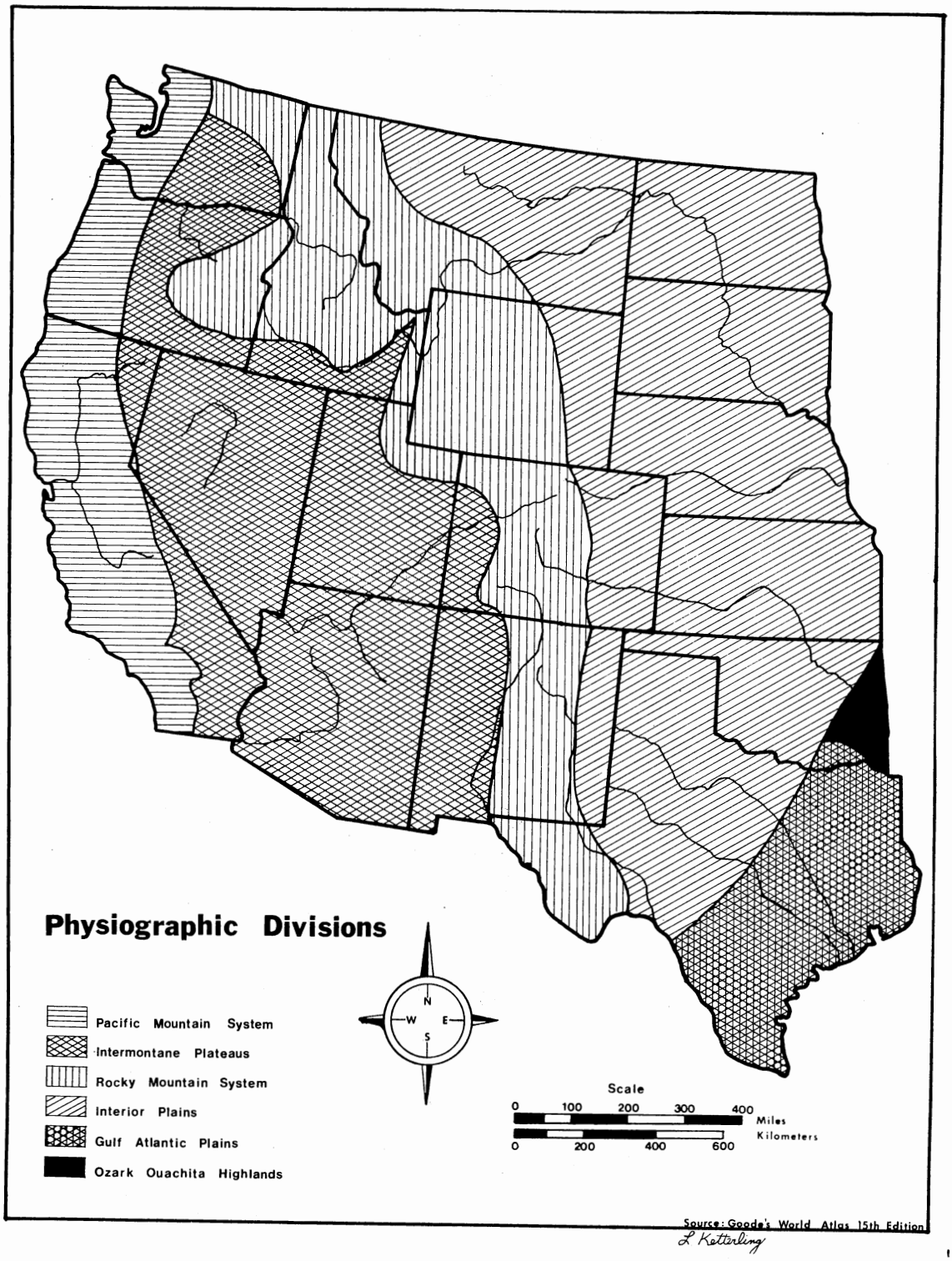

Figure 1. Physiographic Divisions

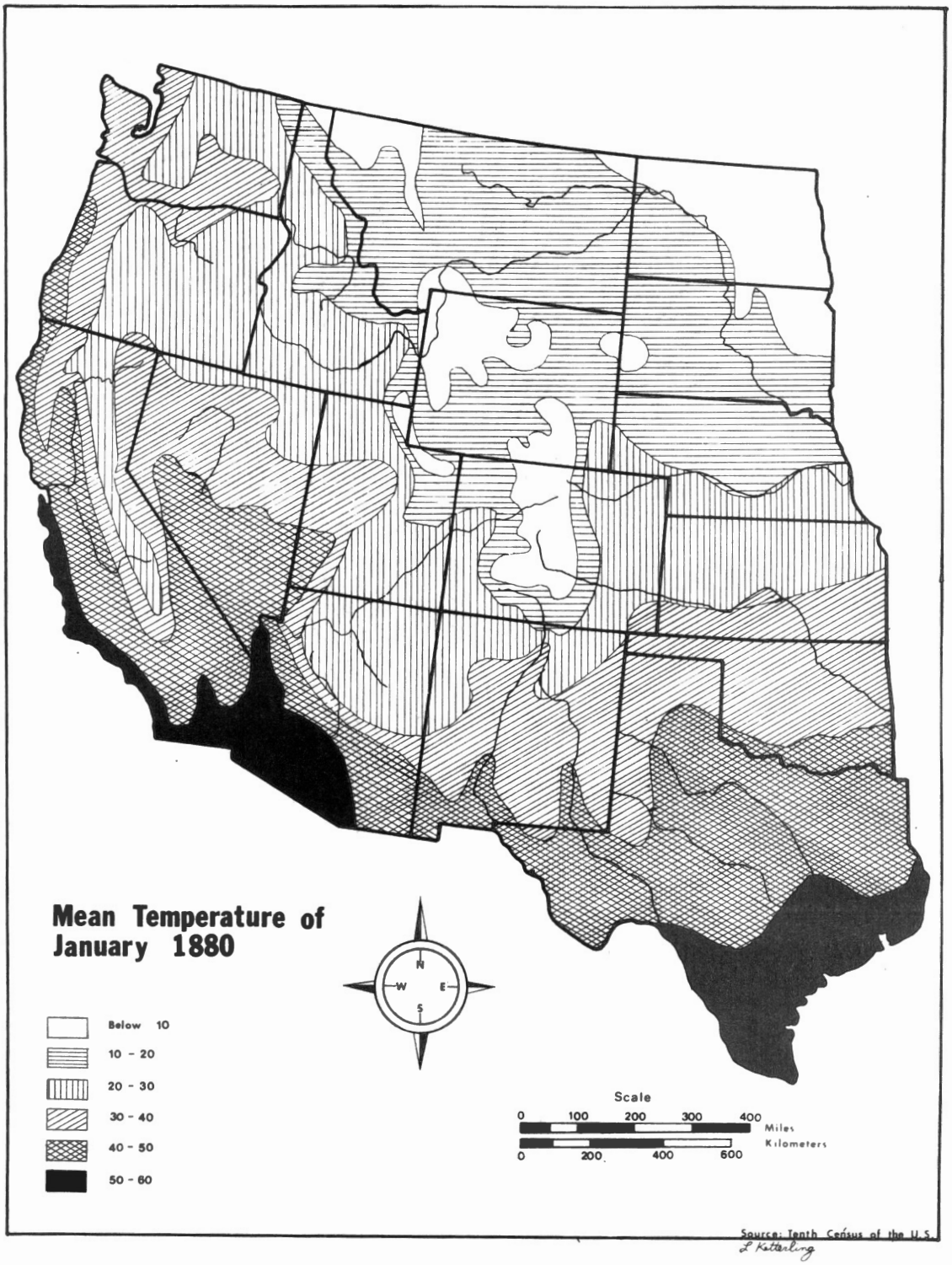

Figure 2. Mean Temperature of January 1880

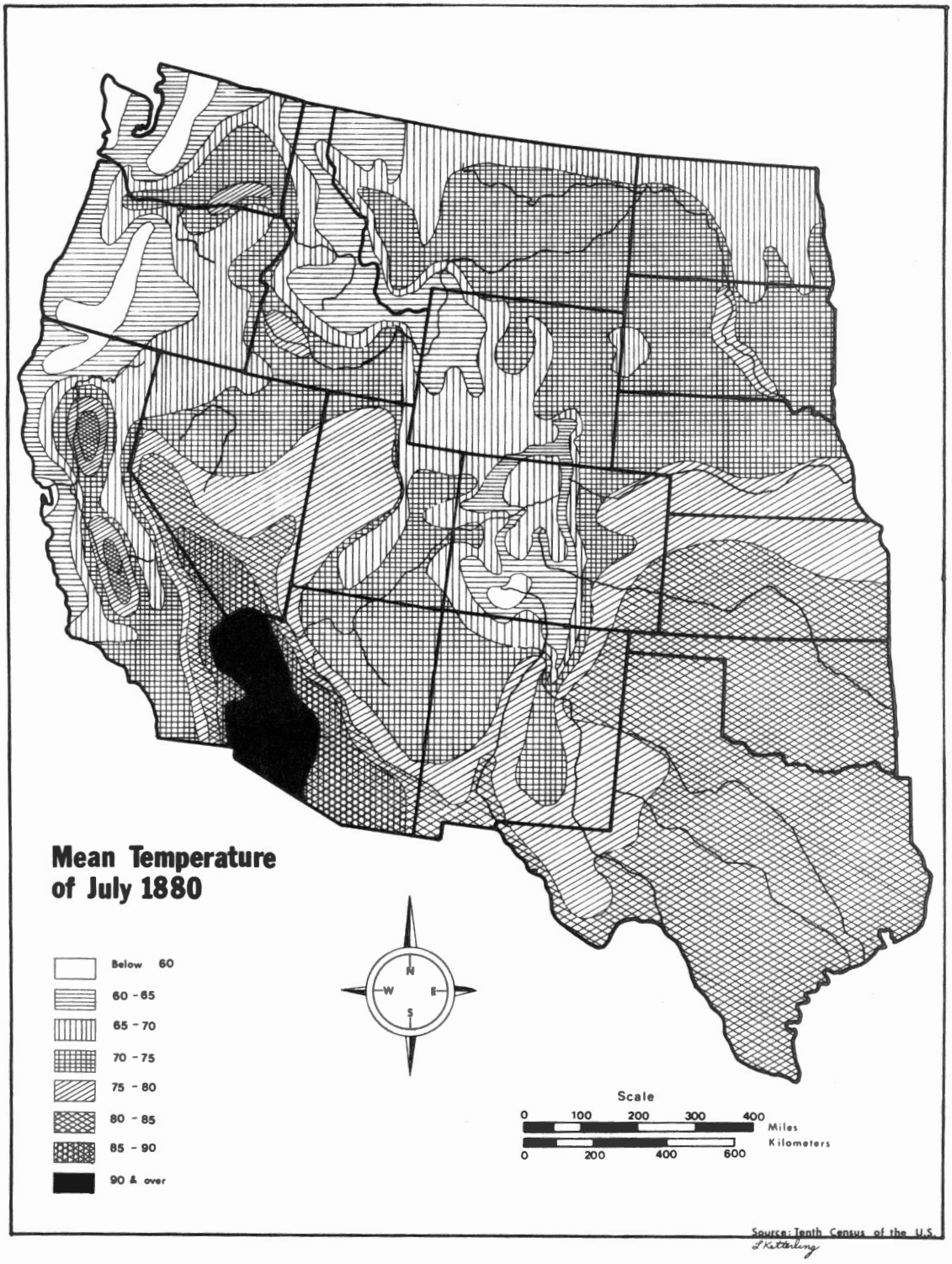

Figure 3. Mean Temperature of July 1880

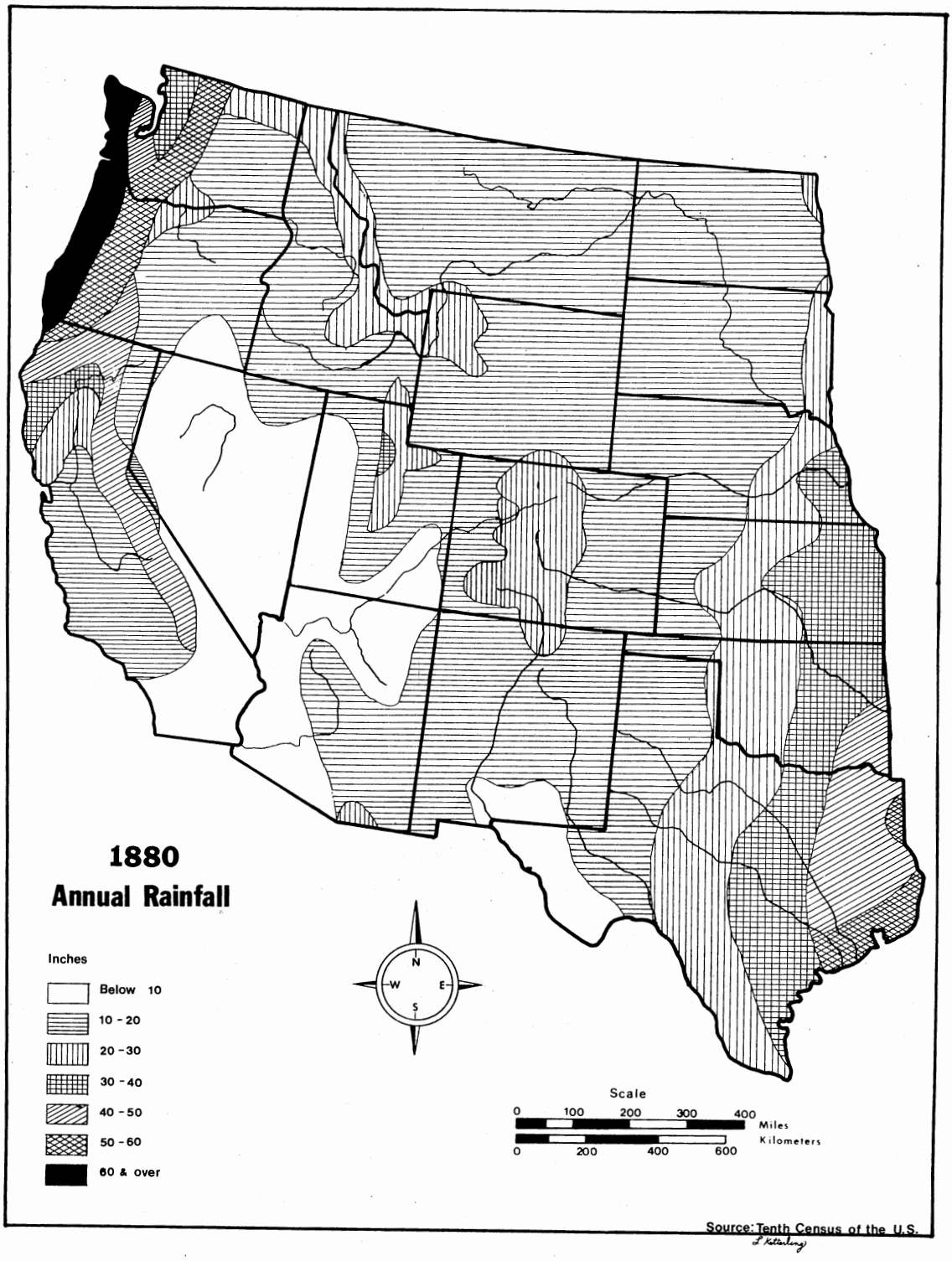

Figure 4. 1880 Annual Rainfall

also be found in these regions.[4]

The vegetative landscape affected frontier garrisons in a logistical sense. Some posts had an abundant supply of hay for animals, but they had to be supplied with timber for buildings or firewood. Other garrisons had to form forage details to go to distant meadows and cut hay. Grain, the staple of all army livestock, was transported to most garrisons because farms were too distant or few in number. For many of the soldiers who were born and raised in the humid, wooded East, the physical and biotic landscape of the West was alien.

The cultural profile which the easterners found was equally diverse and alien. For at least thirty thousand years, the trans-Mississippi West contained the most important of life forms-- man. Migrating from central Asia via the Bering land bridge, the American Indian could be found anywhere on the North American continent by the first century A.D. (Figure 5). The duration of settlement and the region in which they lived influenced cultural differentiation. Unfortunately, the white man failed to appreciate the fact that western Indian cultures were as varied as the physical landscape they occupied. The Plains were the home of nomadic hunters, such as the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Comanche. Hunting and gathering, on a more sedentary basis, characterized the livelihoods of the tribes of the inter-mountain regions and the desert southwest. There were noticeable exceptions to these two generalities. The Mandan of the northern plains, Wichita and Caddo of the southern plains, and Pueblo of the southwest were agriculturalists. In the Pacific Northwest, fishing provided the bulk of the needs of the inhabitants. The Indians of that region supplemented their diets with gathered plants and game. Language, religion, inter and intra-family relationships, and social structure as

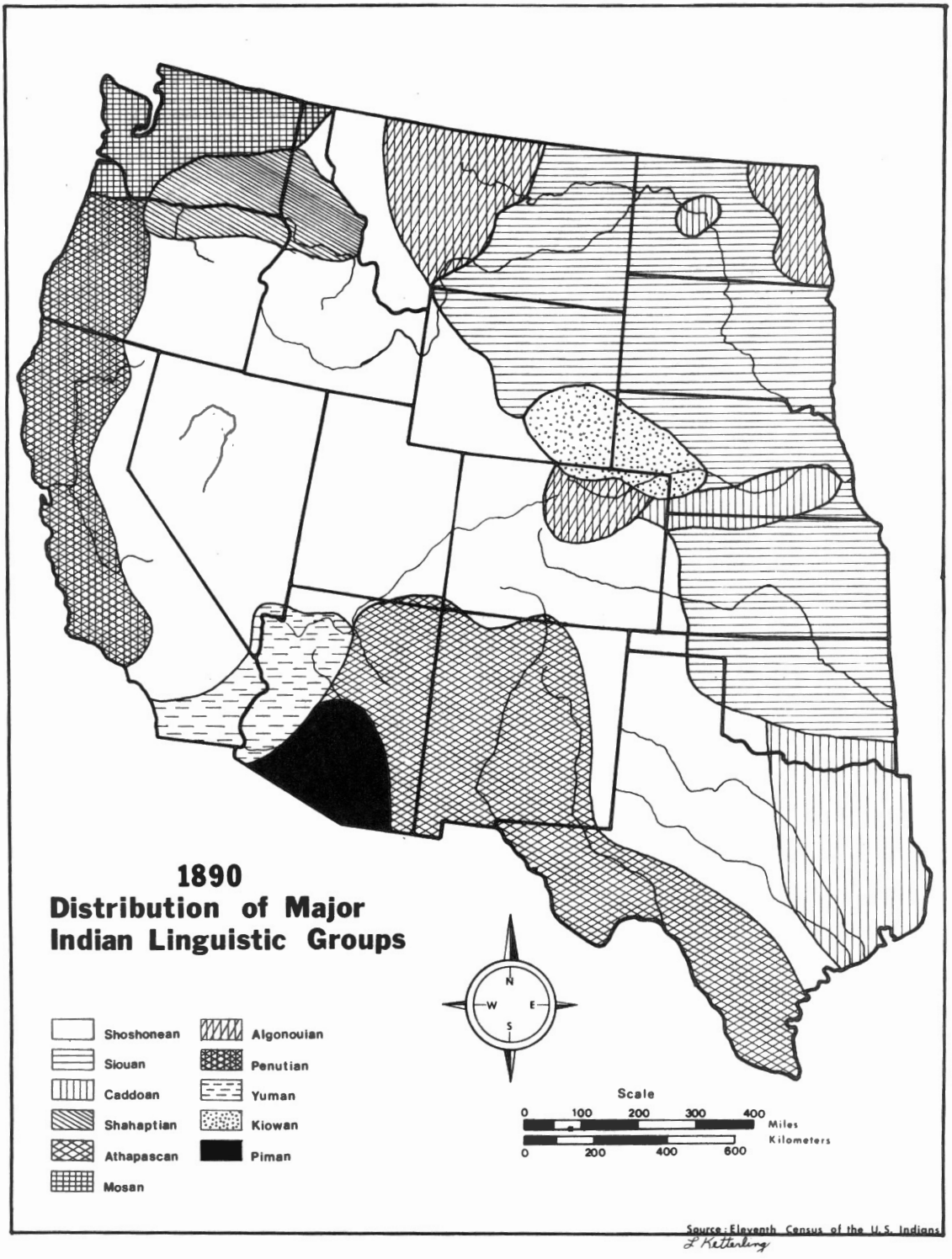

Figure 5. 1890 Distribution of Major Indian Linguistic Groups

well as livelihood, varied between tribes and geographic regions.[5] Warfare was an integral part of most tribal cultures, although the method of waging war differed. Mounted battle characterized those Indians who had incorporated the horse into their way of life. Even this was subject to variation. The Comanche and Sioux fought from horseback. The Apache rode to the battle but generally fought on foot. For many Indian men, war was the principal means of achieving wealth and distinction. The philosophy and techniques of war were engrained by centuries of inter-tribal wars.[6] For the army, this particular facet of Indian cultural dissimiliarity meant that what worked well against one tribe in battle might not work against another tribe.

Although the native populations of the West were differentiated culturally, they did possess one commonality. Generally the Indian was not an agent of major geographic change. Topographic and vegetative modification came with the arrival of the Spanish, French, English, and finally the Americans. The latter group altered the physical and cultural environments of the West as much as the former groups, perhaps more. The American settler was both the reason for the presence of the army on the frontier and the major source of its headaches.

Before the Civil War, most of the Americans who ventured into the region west of the Mississippi were bound for the Pacific coast. In time, however, settlements began in the non-coastal areas of the West. Systematic, regulated expansion which characterized the growth of New England settlements could not be found in the West after 1866.[7] The eruption of settlements in frontier territories certainly did not conform to the symmetrical, orderly plan Thomas Jefferson envisioned. Unfettered by precedent, law, or even logic, the pioneer settled in any

region which supported the simplest of life forms. The banks of rivers, creeks, and streams, regardless of the volume of water flow, were favorite cabin sites. Transportation routes, such as wagon roads and later railroads, also had their share of bordering soddies, dugouts, and clapboard houses. However, driven by the compulsion of "breathing room," many resided far from either of these primary zones of habitation. Distances between individual residences was often five miles or more, and thirty to forty miles separated embryonic towns.

Consequently, there was no true "line of settlement" (Figures 6 and 7). The western landscape was littered with an erratically located series of individual farms and ranches. This demographic pattern defied all army efforts to protect it. There was always a large number of ranches, farms, road houses, mines, and trading posts too far from the nearest garrison to benefit from the security of its soldiers. For many of these scattered clusters of pioneer humanity, the question was not if they would be attacked by Indians or robbed by outlaws, but when, and would they survive. The army also had to patrol the vaguely defined limits of the Indian reservations to prevent the illegal acquisition of Indian land.

To complete these tasks, the army had to possess an operational philosophy and logistical system tailored to the complex physical and cultural landscape of the West. Only a large, well-equipped, mobile army could hope to protect the frontier population from the Indians and protect the Indians from the frontier population. Unfortunately, that type of military force vanished with the last volleys of the Civil War.

The post-war army was severely handicapped by a lack of fundamental resources. Historically, the primary base of any army has been its soldiers. At the end of the War of the Rebellion, the Union army mustered

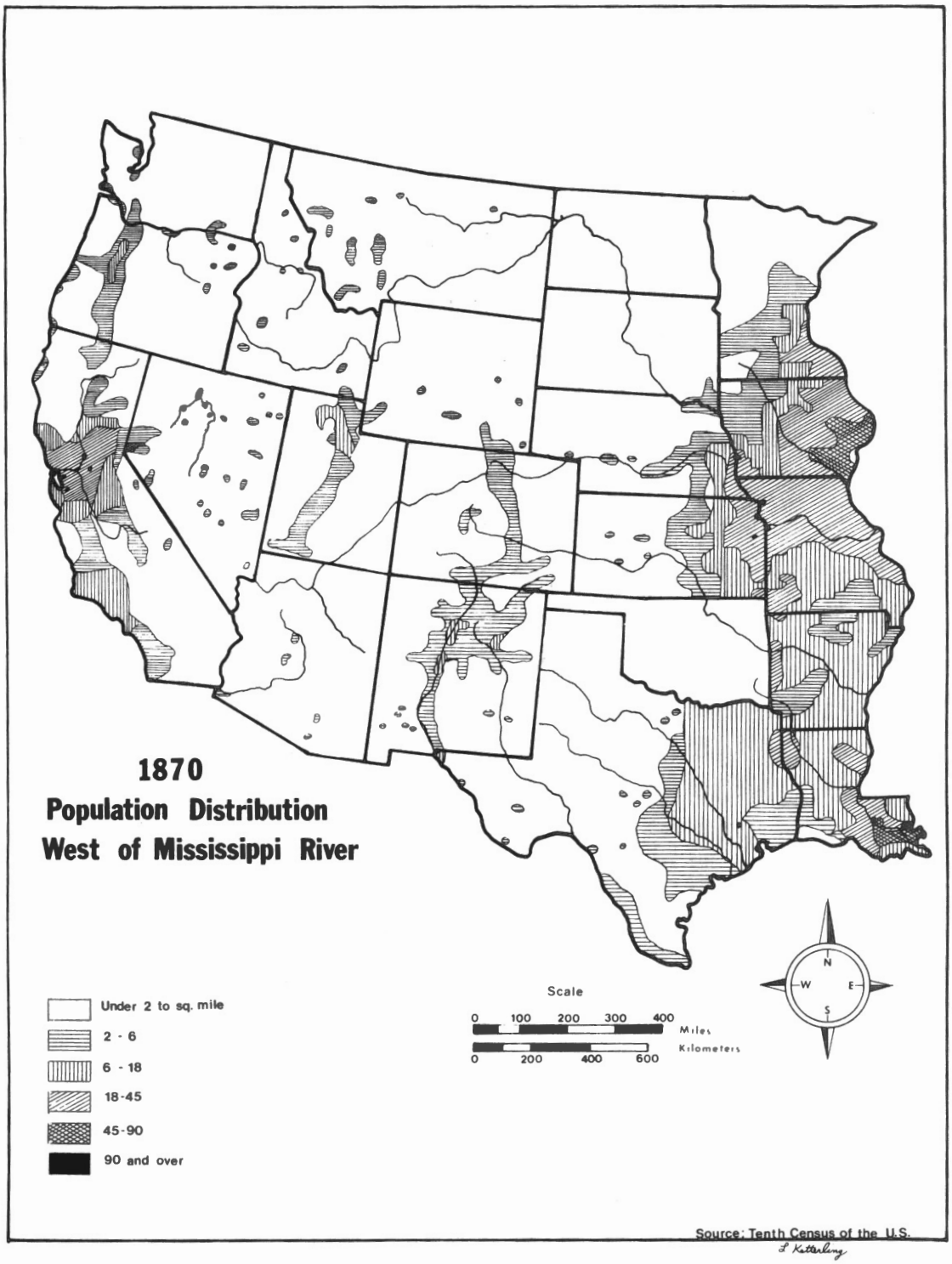

Figure 6. 1870 Population Distribution
West of Mississippi River

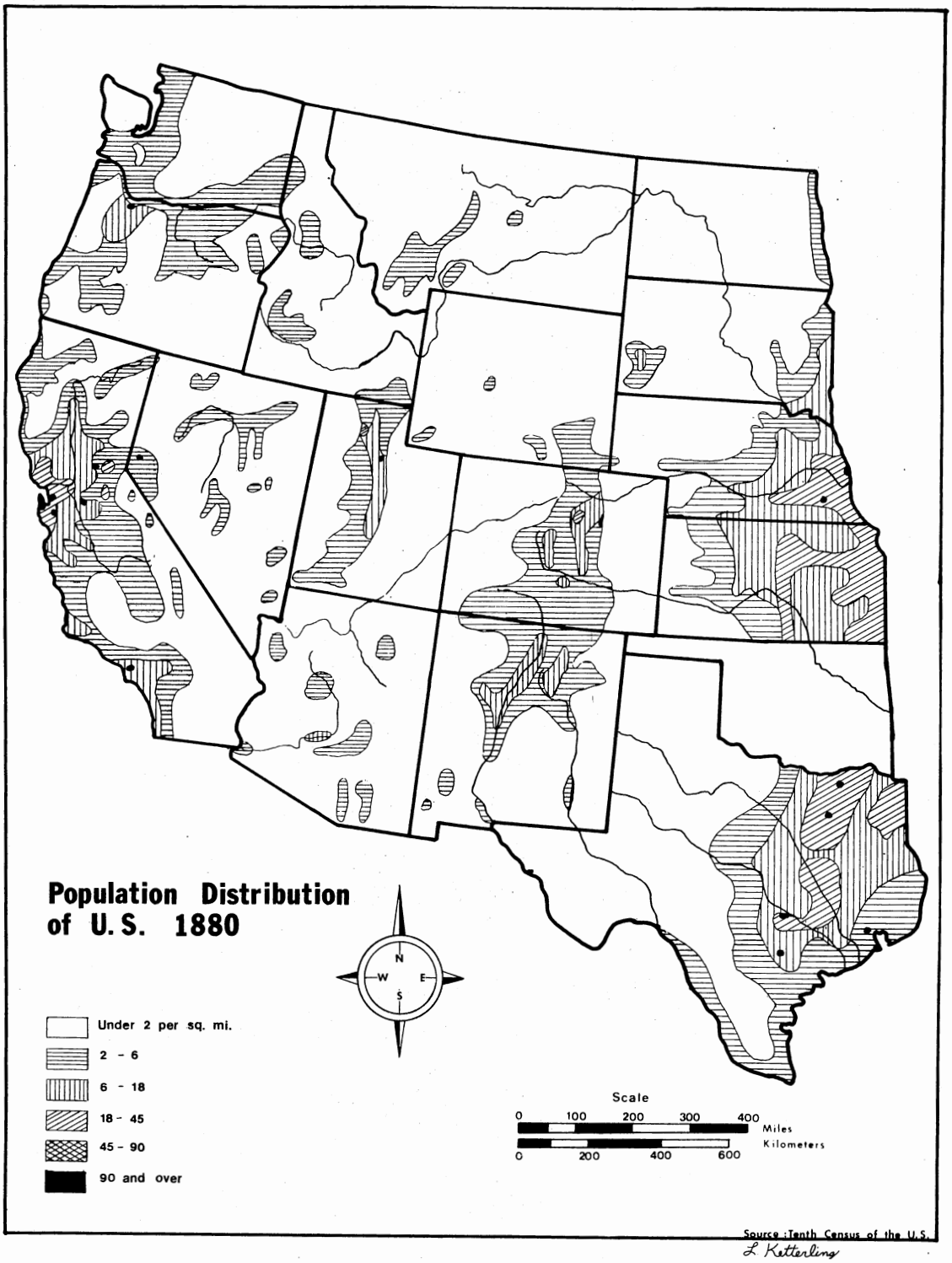

Figure 7. Population Distribution
of the West- 1880

approximately two million men.[8] Within a year of General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomatox, the Army of the United States was reduced to slightly more than fifty-seven thousand men.[9] Congressional reorganization of the army further reduced that number. In the period from 1870 to 1890, the average strength of the regular army seldom exceeded twenty-six thousand officers and men.[10] The lack of manpower alone was sufficient to keep the army from fulfilling its obligations in reconstruction and frontier defense.

The inadequacy of numbers was most pronounced in the West. In 1873, Lieutenant General Philip Sheridan had eight cavalry regiments and eighteen infantry regiments assigned to his Military Division of the Missouri.[11] Extending from Canada to Mexico and from the Mississippi to the Rockies, Sheridan's command encompassed almost 1.5 million square miles. Proportionally, each of Sheridan's troopers was responsible for more than one hundred square miles of territory.[12] As the frontier army was generally employed by cavalry troop or infantry company instead of individually, the ratio was considerably different. Each troop or company had more than fifty-four hundred miles of extremely varied terrain to patrol.

The spatial distribution of this meager force further aggravated the problem of maintaining peace. Sheridan considered his mission to include giving protection to the general line of the frontier, protecting commercial lines of travel, and providing the nuclei for settlement.[13] This required the dispersal of his regulars to more than seventy posts. Although other division commanders did not share Sheridan's particular definition of their tasks, they, too, scattered their garrisons (Figure 8). Each of these garrisons required some manpower to perform certain housekeeping chores, such as cooking, maintenance of facilities, forage details,

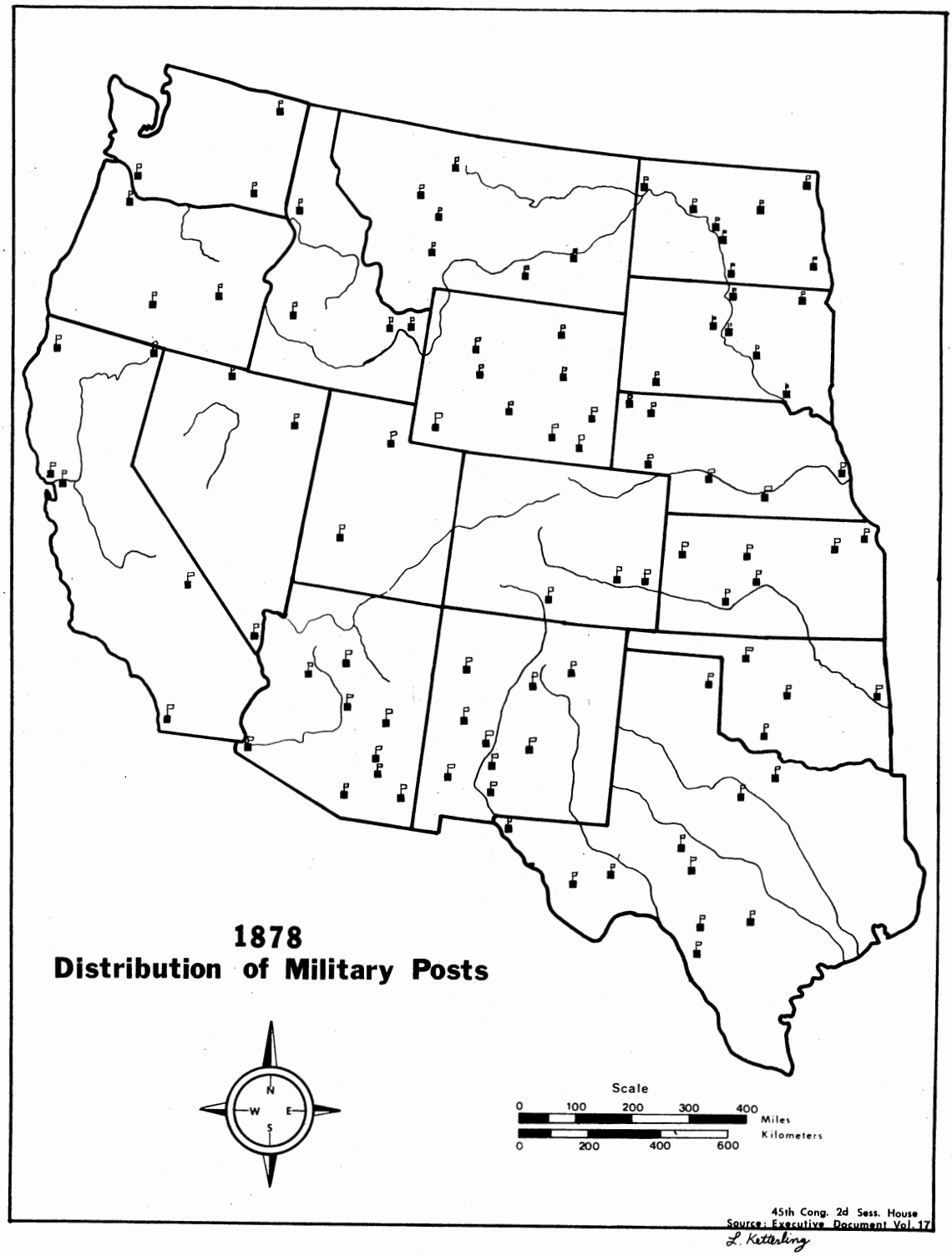

Figure 8. Distribution of Military Post 1878

fuel details, and sentry duty. Consequently, only a portion of each garrison was available for patrolling the area surrounding each fort, or pursuing outlaws or Indians. For example, if only fifteen men were detailed at each post for housekeeping duty, the force available to respond to emergencies within Sheridan's division would be reduced by more than a thousand men.

Many officers felt that the large number of one or two units posts seriously affected morale, discipline, and therefore effectiveness. Brigadier General John Pope advocated the concentration of units at selected posts for the normally quiet winter months and deployment to dispersed temporary camps in the more active summer.[14] However, any talk of abandoning posts normally met a congressional brick wall. An attempt to abandon Fort Ripley, Minnesota, was blocked by the Indian Bureau.[15] Talk of closing Fort Harker, Kansas, brought a petition by the Kansas legislature attesting to that post's importance in protecting the state's frontier. As late as 1878, Secretary of War George W. McCrary observed, "Whenever we attempt to vacate posts for reasons purely military, members of Congress often ask for delay or non-action."[16]

It was conceivable that even the small frontier army could have pacified the West had it possessed the proper resources and adequate mobility. Unfortunately, both were in short supply. One legacy of the war was a stockpile of arms and equipment suitable for that conflict. A Congress bent on military thrift balked at appropriations for new material when warehouses were still full of Civil War accouterments. Units drew Civil War-era uniforms until the early 1880s.[17] For the troops operating in the desert Southwest, the dark blue woolen uniforms could be as deadly as the Apaches. In a similiar fashion, garrisons were often

supplied with processed food left over from the war. The garrison menu generally consisted of hash, hard tack, salt pork, and coffee. Vegetables were a luxury the soldiers had to purchase themselves or raise in unit garden plots. The field rations were not quite as monotonous as those in post for the simple reason that the hash was deleted from the bill of fare.[18] Doubtless the low quality of garrison food was partially responsible for the soldiers' intemperate indulgence in alcohol. Frontier whiskey was known for its ability to kill bacteria or ultimately any other life form.

The principal shortcoming of the trooper was his weapon. Again surplus wartime equipment made Congress reluctant to spend money on new weapons. Therefore, the army could not take advantage of advances in weapons technology made in the United States and Europe. The existence of thousands of muzzle-loading muskets impeded the adoption of a breech-loading rifle until 1873. The new weapon was extremely accurate, but it was still a single-shot instrument. The soldier's adversary, be he outlaw or Indian, often did business with a repeating rifle, either a Henry or a Winchester.

The army was partially culpable for the absence of a repeating rifle in the ranks until 1893. The design, test, and adoption of weapons was the sole prerogative of the Ordnance Department. However, that branch was not under the control of the commanding general or any other line officer. Consequently, those who primarily used their weapons in combat had no say in the specifications or adoption of rifles or even cannons. The Ordnance Department was extremely reluctant to test a repeating rifle against the Springfield rifle, a product of their own design. They justified this by saying that the Springfield had more penetration at six

hundred yards than any of the repeating rifles.[19] This was indeed ironic as the average soldier was a miserably poor marksman and had difficulty hitting a target at two hundred yards.

Weapons, whether rifles, sabres, or cannons, traditionally have been considered the fundamental resource of the combat soldier. But the weapon is of little value if the soldier is not proficient in its use. Marksmanship training, like other army activities, was seriously impeded by congressional frugality. Rifle instruction for the individual trooper began in 1869. However, the soldier was limited to ten rounds per month for actual practice.[20] The result of such limited practice was poor marksmanship. An anonymous writer described such ability in an average recruit caustically named Private Blob.

> When Blob goes out to target practice he devotes himself solely to getting his gun off, no matter at what or when. He always shuts both eyes, opens his mouth, and pulls away. He will always do so to all eternity. Explanations, suggestions, and even the guardhouse, are utterly lost upon him. However capacious his brain, but one idea swells and fills it to the exclusion of all else, and that is to furiously, blindly tug at the trigger until that awful roar comes and goes and is got rid of. The safety of the company about him, or the spectators on either side, of the watch opposite at the target, are entirely minor considerations: and as for the target itself, Blob ignores that altogether.[21]

For the frontier army, the armed trooper was certainly a questionable resource in battle.

Transportation resources, both for combat and for logistical support, were also seriously limited. Under normal circumstances the frontier trooper either walked to battle or rode on a government horse. The mounted soldiers, the cavalry, were generally considered to be the most mobile. However, their mobility was limited by the dependence of their animals on grain.[22] Indian ponies thrived on prairie grass and cottonwood leaves.

Without grain, cavalry mounts stood little chance of catching the fleet tribes of the plains and Pacific Northwest.[23] The aridity of the Southwest was equally harsh on army and Indian mounts. This might explain why the southwestern tribes never acquired the vast horse herds as the other tribes did.

The inability to move large amounts of freight made the support of far flung posts and expeditions a logistical nightmare. The most efficient means of hauling bulk cargo after the Civil War was the railroad. However, tracks for the iron horse were scarce in the decades after 1865 (Figure 9), Even with the completion of four transcontinental railroads by the 1880s, many garrisons were still many miles from a railhead. The flow of traffic over these lines was primarily east and west. Many years would pass before north-south feeder lines brought rails to the isolated garrisons. Moving posts to the existing tracks meant that the populations between the tracks lost protection. Steamboats provided some logistical support on the northern plains and the Pacific Northwest. However, the seasonal flow of the rivers made traffic on those waterways equally inconsistent. Therefore the frontier army was primarily supported by wagon.

Provisioning the western army by wagon was a time consuming and costly enterprise. Seldom did units have sufficient organic transport to haul provisions to their posts or on campaigns. The only recourse was to hire expensive civilian teamsters. Such wagoneers were often undependable, undisciplined, and unfit for the rigors which might be encountered on the trail. The Quartermaster General of the Army reported in 1871 that the average cost of wagon transport was $1.08 per one hundred pounds per one hundred miles.[24] In that same year, the army transported 1,934

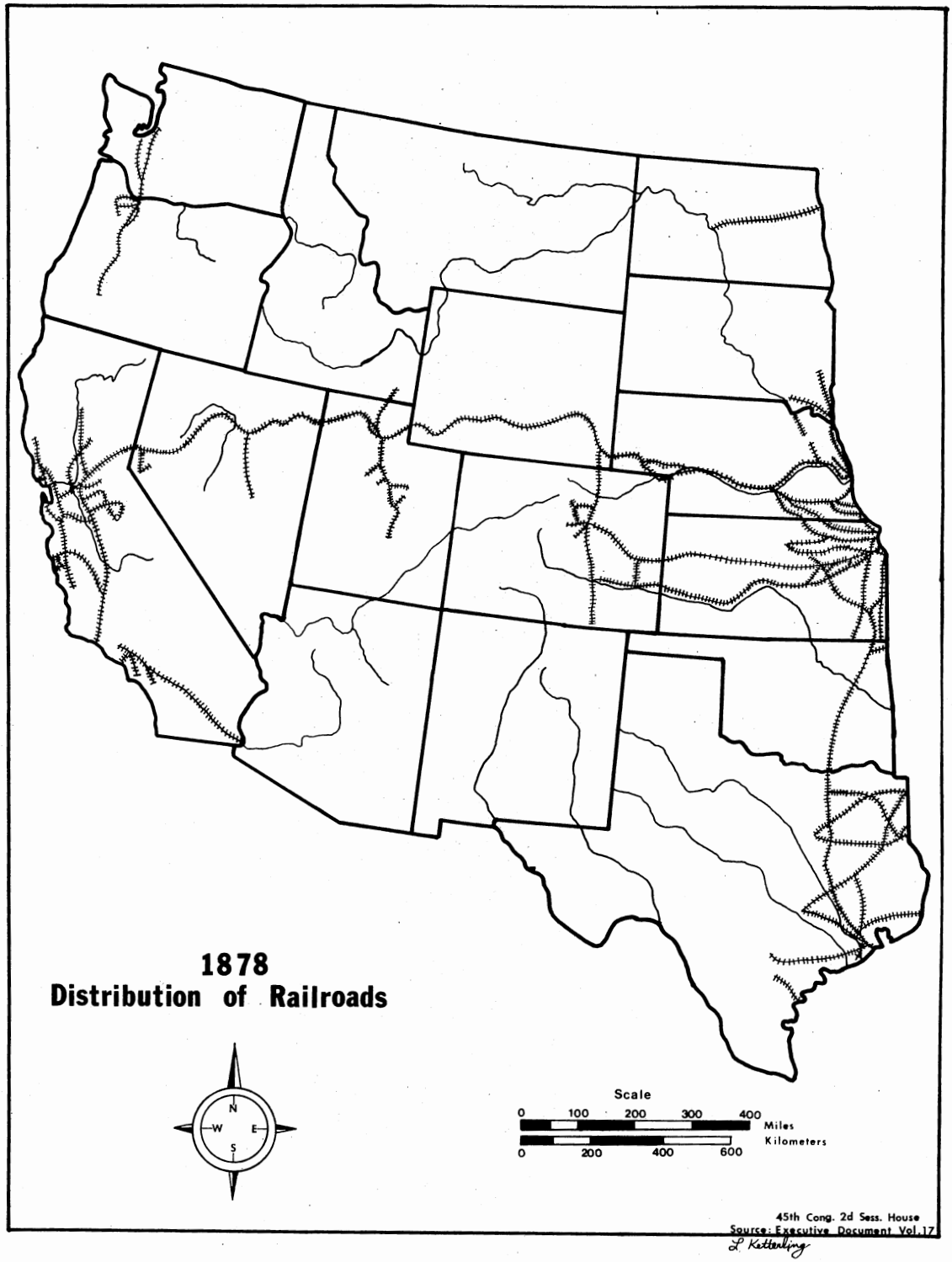

Figure 9. Distribution of Railroads 1878

people and 19,441 tons of supplies by wagon at a cost of $1,036,803. By comparison, the service moved 35,387 people, 5,298 animals, and 30,959 tons of freight by rail at a cost of $1,671,517.[25] The frontier garrisons were responsible for much of the wagon transport cost while the eastern posts generated most of the rail expense. During major Indian campaigns, the wagon transport cost would skyrocket in comparison to that of rail movement.

Within the context of resources, communications, especially in the vast expanses of the American West, were as essential as supplies or transportation. In the West even bad news did not travel fast. Sheridan complained that it took twenty-four hours for his Chicago headquarters to communicate with Fort Totten in the Dakotas. The nearest telegraph terminal in the Dakotas to Totten was in Pembina. A courier was needed to transport dispatches between that point and the garrison.[26] Routine communications from the interior of Oregon or Arizona could take five to six weeks to reach Washington. Hostilities with Indian tribes further obstructed communications by interrupting the courier traffic.

The logical solution to the problem of information flow was the telegraph. However, telegraph lines were as scarce as railroad tracks (Figure 10). The construction of telegraph lines could be expensive with a single strand of wire costing $125 per mile. A double strand cost $40 more. In regions where timber was scarce, the cost could easily double.[27] A miserly Congress seldom appropriated sufficient funds to link widely scattered garrisons with telegraphic communications. The major disadvantage of such laggard communications was that it affected the army's responsiveness. In short, inadequate and delayed information cost the army time.

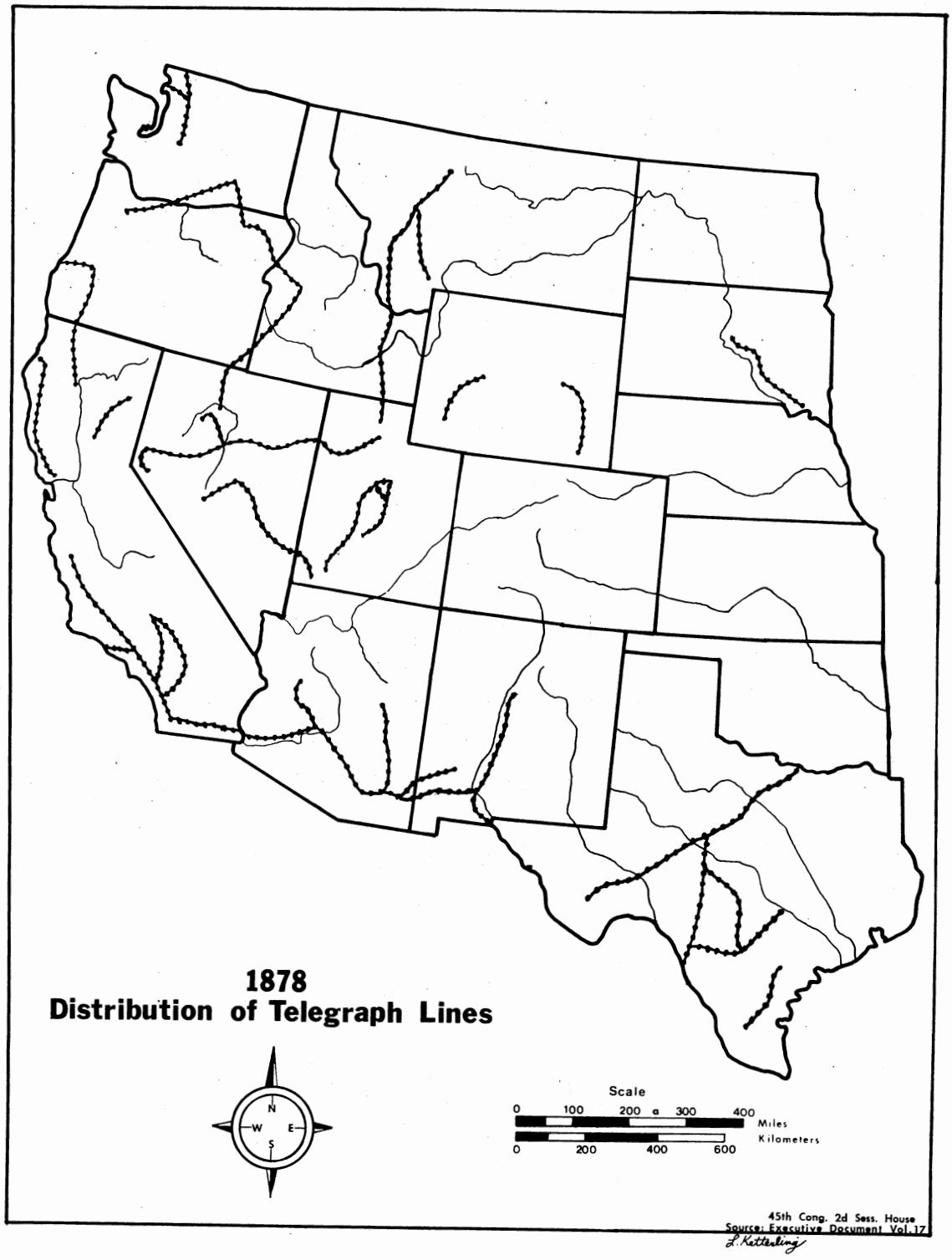

Figure 10. Distribution of Telegraph Lines 1878

It took time for critical intelligence to reach posts and commanding headquarters. It took time to marshal supplies and units for a major expedition. Even a simple pursuit of Indian marauders would succeed or fail primarily on the interval which separated the time of the incident and the time when the nearest garrison learned of the event. If that interval were too long, the Indians would be long gone before a patrol could get to the scent and begin the chase. In dealing with the Indians of the Great Plains, time equated to distance. A Comanche or Cheyenne war party could cover fifty or sixty miles in a single day. Every hour which separated the army's response from the initial attack made punishment or capture problematic at best.

Almost every resource and problem facing the frontier army had some element of chronology. Space affected time both in terms of transit and communications. The distances which separated garrisons prevented prompt interaction. The stockpiling of supplies, especially at remote field depots was a lenghty process as it required many wagon loads to build military stores. The rate of march for cavalry or infantry units, a time-distance phenomenon was much slower than that for the Indians. Movement was also time consuming as wagon trains often had to accompany march columns to carry the needed grain for the expedition's horses.

Considerations of space, resource, and time required the army to develop tactics and logistical systems unique to the West. Since a single column could rarely catch marauding bands, frontier commanders opted for multiple columns. Designated columns would follow the Indians' trail while others attempted to intercept the roving bands. Winter campaigning was also adopted because the harsh weather normally decreased the mobility of the nomadic tribes. However, these adaptations were not enough. The

topographic, cultural, and resource environment of the West demanded more than a different technique for finding the enemy. The composition and equipment of a marching column had to be modified not only to find the enemy, but also to defeat him in battle.

It was no small source of irritation to frontier commanders that they could do little to change the milieu in which they labored. The rate of railroad construction was decided by the rail companies and the economy. The various financial panics of the late nineteenth century halted construction in the West. Telegraphic communications, new supplies, and improved equipment depended on Congress. That body was skeptical of spending money on any item not justified by dire necessity. Even if funds were available, new hardware was developed or procured by army departments totally out of touch with the reality in which the items would be used.

Maintaining peace on the frontier was an extremely difficult assignment for the army. The western landscape was as diverse physically and culturally as it was vast in dimension. Great distances between army posts complicated supply and communication. Widely scattered settlements defied army efforts to protect them. The diverse Indian cultures called for a diplomacy or war unique to each distinctive lifestyle and region. The army, burdened by inadequate, outdated resources, could not fulfill its primary mission of keeping peace between the Indian and the white man. When it did neet the Indian in battle, the army was fettered by a tactical doctrine applicable to a different type of warfare and a distant milieu.

With the end of Reconstruction, some congressmen urged the transfer of all units to the West. This would provide additional manpower for

skeleton western posts. Certain important individuals felt otherwise. In a letter to Sheridan, Sherman wrote that he, Secretary of War McCrary, and President Rutherford B. Hayes had agreed that:

> last summer's experience (labor riots on the east and west coast) demonstrated the absolute necessity of keeping the force, mostly artillery, where it is, nominally guarding the Lake, Atlantic and Gulf coasts but really for use in case of an organized resistence to the Revenue Laws and labor mobs. [28]

In spite of Sherman's statements, the eastern and coastal garrisons were the only accessible manpower resource during periods of Indian hostilities. The manpower siphoned off to man coastal fortifications could effectively augment the scattered garrisons during Indian outbreaks. Coastal troops could garrison frontier forts and thereby release troops for duty with expedition forces.[29] They could also directly participate in the campaigns. On many occasions, troops from the East, Gulf, and West coasts performed these two important functions. Often these supporting units were artillery.

ENDNOTES

[1]Fredrick Jackson Turner maintained that the frontier was the place where civilization met the wilderness. Countless authors have attempted to identify the line of the frontier with varying degrees of success. The line of the 95th meridian approximates the eastern borders of North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. These states by virtue of their population, constituted the frontier. The western frontier, that is the line of settlement west of the Rocky Mountains was almost impossible to estimate.

[2]The exact size is 2,423,626 square miles. Texas alone is larger than France by 57,300 square miles. Edward B. Espenshade, Jr. and Joel L. Morrison, Goode's World Atlas, 15 ed. (Chicago, 1978), p. 230.

[3]Ellen Biddle, Remininscences of a Soldier's Wife (Philadelphia, 1907), p. 148.

[4]Espenshade and Morrison, Goode's World Atlas, pp. 79-83.

[5]Harold E. Driver, Indians of North America (Chicago, 1961), pp. 26-30; Arrell Morgan Gibson, The American Indian: Prehistory to the Present (Lexington, 1980), pp. 71-85.

[6]John C. Ewers, "Inter-Tribal Warfare as the Precursor of Indian-White Warfare on the Northern Great Plains," in The American Indian: Past and Present 2 ed., Roger Nichols editor (New York, 1981), pp. 132-142.

[7]The Mormon colony in Utah certainly was a structured colony socially and spatially. However the expansion of new Mormon settlements was not as rigidly controlled after the Civil War as it had been before.

[8]Marvin A. Kreidberg and Merton G. Henry, History of Military Mobilization in the United States Army 1775-1945 (Washington, 1955), p. 705.

[9]Russel F. Weigley, History of the United States Army (New York, 1967), p. 567.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1873, pp. 39-41.

[12]The Military Division of the Missouri encompassed 1,466,776 square miles. The ratio is based on a troop strength of thirteen thousand men. The average strength of a cavalry unit was approximately seven hundred troopers while the infantry companies were considerably smaller at about

four hundred and fifty soldiers. In addition there were twelve troops in a cavalry regiment and only ten companies in the infantry regiment.

[13]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1871, p. 69.

[14]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1870, pp. 11-12.

[15]43d Cong., 1st sess., House Report 384, p. 219.

[16]45th Cong., 2nd sess., House Exec. Doc. 79, pp. 1-2.

[17]Robert M. Utley, Frontier Regulars (Bloomington, 1977), p. 74.

[18]Don Rickey, Jr., Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay (Norman, 1963), pp. 116, 122, 248.

[19]"Arms For Our Cavalry," Army and Navy Journal 14, August 26, 1876, p. 43.

[20]Annual Report of the Chief of Ordnance- 1883, p. 95.

[21]Army and Navy Journal 10, May 24, 1873, p. 647.

[22]During General Winfield S. Hancock's expedition in 1867, the Seventh Cavalry was almost completely dismounted because the rations for their animals were not available. George Custer to AAG District of the Upper Arkansas, May 4, 1867, Letters Received (Hereinafter LR), Records of the Adjutant General's Office (Hereinafter RAGO), National Archives (Hereinafter NA), Microcopy 619, Reel 563.

[23]Statement of Captain Evan Miles, "Summary of Reports Relative to the Non-Effectiveness of the Cavalry employed in the Nez Perce Campaign," Box 3, Sladen Family Papers, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

[24]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1871, pp. 151-152.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., p. 29.

[27]42nd Cong., 3rd sess., House Exec. Doc. 227, p. 1.

[28]Sherman to Sheridan, November 29, 1877, container 91, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[29]Coastal troops garrisoned frontier posts during the Nevada scare of 1875, the Sioux campaign of 1876, the Texas-Mexico border troubles of 1877-1878, and the Apache outbreak of 1881-1882.

CHAPTER III

THE ARTILLERY OF THE UNITED STATES AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

Since the time of Henry Knox and the seige of Boston during the American Revolution, the armed forces of the United States have had an artillery service. The war between the North and the South was no exception. A portion of the soldiers marching through Washington, D.C., during that grand review were cannoneers. Cannons had been the deciding factor separating victory from defeat on many of the war's battlefields. Always in support of infantry and cavalry, Union and Confederate guns proved devastating in such battles as Gettysburg and Cold Harbor. But the glory and fame gained in those battles did not last long when the nation turned its attention to more peaceful pursuits. For the artillery, more than the infantry or cavalry, the end of the war meant a change of habit.

During the four years of the war, all but four of the Regular Army batteries served as light artillery. That is they were armed with light, mobile, cannons pulled by horses. The cannoneers either were mounted on horses or rode on the gun carriages and caissons when called into service.[1] There was little opportunity for that type of duty after the war ended. Most of the regular batteries returned to the coastal fortifications they had occupied prior to Fort Sumter, although a few units were detailed to the south for reconstruction assignments.

In the two and one-half decades which followed the Civil War, a handful of artillery units were called upon to fight in the Indian wars. This constituted a radical departure both from the routine of post-war garrison life and from the type of war most officers and men knew. The tactical doctrine and day-to-day affairs of the various batteries made Indian fighting a most difficult and deadly affair. Only by appreciating the post-war condition of the artillery service and its customary routine can the significance of its frontier service be seen.

On many occasions, the charges of St.Barbara, the patron saint of artillerymen, have faced battle as infantrymen and cavalrymen.[2] However, the proper tool of war for the artilleryman was the cannon, not the musket or sabre. A confusing, expensive, mass of these "tools" was one legacy of the Civil War. An almost random procurement system and the eagerness of war arms manufacturers to sell their products resulted in a plethora of calibers and types. In February, 1863, the artillery of General William Rosecrans consisted of thirty-two 6-pounder smooth-bores, twenty-four 12-pounder howitzers, eight 12-pounder light Napoleons, twenty-one James rifles, thirty-four 10-pounder Parrotts, two 12-pounder Wiard steel guns, two 6-pounder Wiard steel guns, two 16-pounder Parrotts, and four 3-inch rifle ordnance guns.[3]

Within the impressive but illogical mass of Civil War ordnance, the two most favorite weapons were the Napoleon gun and the 3-inch Ordnance rifle. In 1856, the United States adopted a light gun-howitzer designed by Emperor Louis Napoleon of France. The 12-pounder field gun in use at that time was light-weight, but it did have enough power in the eyes of artillerymen. The 12-pounder howitzer had more than enough punch, but it was too heavy to accompany rapidly moving columns of troops. The Napoleon

gun combined the best traits from these two weapons. Although it was a smooth-bore weapon, the bronze Napoleon was a favorite of both Union and Confederate batteries. With cannister or spherical case-shot, it was particularly lethal against the bayonet charges so common in the war.[4]

The 3-inch Ordnance rifle was significant to the field artillery for two reasons. It was the first, massed produced, light artillery weapon to incorporate cast iron as a gun metal. Prior to 1850, cast iron was not one of the more favorite metals to gun makers. Normally the guns were cast into a mold and later bored out to the appropriate diameter. While in the mold the metal tended to cool from the outside while the core was still quite molten. The contracting outer portion created tremendous strain on the center. After boring, it was not uncommon for cracks to form on the inside of the gun. Such cracks made the gun structrally weak and prone to explode after a comparatively short number of rounds.

An Ordnance officer, Thomas J. Rodman, devised a method whereby the gun cooled from the inside. The outer portion of the gun was packed with hot coals while a water jacket cooled the inside. Therefore, molten iron solidified on already rigid material, making the gun extremely strong. The Rodman gun possessed all the strength of earlier cast iron weapons yet was not as brittle, flawed, and subject to explode. In one test, an old-model cast iron gun was fired 772 times before being declared unsafe. The Rodman gun endured 5,515 rounds without any damage to the gun.[5]

The 3-inch rifle was also important becaused it was a rifled gun and not a smooth-bore like most of the cannons of that time. It had been recognized for some time that rifled guns were more accurate than smooth-bore weapons. The 24-pounder shell had as much as thirty yards of

lateral deviation at 1200 yards. The spin imparted onto a projectile in a rifled cannon prevented this drift. The problem was how to make the projectile spin. Some cannonballs had lugs which fit into grooves in the bore of the gun. However, constant firing often fouled these grooves and the shell could not be loaded from the muzzle. The Rodman gun used a projectile with an expanding ring of soft metal. This metal gripped the rifling of the gun and caused the shell to turn, without wearing the grooves themselves.[6] Some officers felt that the more accurate rifled guns should replace the more erratic smooth-bores, even the Napoleon.[7]

The Napoleon gun and the 3-inch Ordnance rifle were the principal weapons of the armies of Ulysses Grant, Robert E. Lee, William T. Sherman, and Joe Johnson. Consequently, these cannons constituted the largest portion of the field artillery arsenal. However, only a small number of these weapons were in the hands of troops after the war. Of the 1,115 Napoleons owned by the army, only 81 were with troop units. The rest were consigned to storage in armories or arsenals. Only 61 of the 813 Ordnance rifles were with units. Of more than 3,900 field artillery rifles and howitzers available to the army, only 447 were assigned to units or active garrisons.[8] There certainly was no shortage of mobile artillery weapons for the drastically reduced peacetime army.

The Civil War legacy of surplus artillery had a detrimental affect on post-war weapons development. Congress was logically reluctant to spend money for the test and development of new guns when hundreds were still in storage. As early as 1868, a board of army officers recommended the testing of breech-loading, rifled guns.[9] But the board's recommendations had little effect on a Congress bent on military thrift. Eleven years after European armies illustrated the potency of rifled breech-

loading guns in the Franco-Prussian war, the Chief of Ordnance observed:

> The large amount of artillery and its supplies left from the war, and the small appropriations available for such purposes, had deterred the department from entering until now upon the increased expenditures attendant on the introduction of new material. The adoption of steel breech-loading guns in all the armies of Europe calls for experimental actions on our part.[10]

In spite of the obvious superiority of such guns, the Chief of Ordnance could only suggest "experimental action."

Between 1865 and 1890, the bulk of weapons development concerned guns for the coastal forts. A single muzzle-loading, steel gun, purchased for the purposes of experimentation, cost $121,172.51. In the period from 1866 to 1886, the Ordnance Department spent more than $320,000 on guns, such as these, which either burst or were declared unservicable in trials.[11] In that same time period, less than ten percent of the Ordnance budget went toward new field artillery material. As a result, the army did not adopt a completely new field artillery weapon to replace the Napoleon and Ordnance guns until 1885. It took the Ordnance Department another seven years to equip all the light batteries with the new cannon.[12]

In addition to a stockpile of obsolete cannons, the Civil War bequeathed to the artillery branch a somewhat myopic tactical doctrine. The war created a belief among many officers, artillery included, that cannons were only useful against large, massed, enemy formations. The manner in which gunners fired on enemy troops bears this out. A premium was placed on flat trajectory fire. The hope was to send a projectile toward the enemy in such a way that the round was never more than a few feet off the ground. Solid shot could rip through several lines of troops if fired in this manner. Those shells detonated by a time fuze also had to stay relatively close to the ground.[13]

In addition to the method of fire, the material used indicated that artillery was considered appropriate only against large numbers of enemy soldiers. With the exception of solid-shot, artillery ammunition was designed to produce multiple fragments or bullets. The measure of a shell's effeciency was how many fragments it produced within an area approximately the size of a battalion of infantry.[14] In addition, the retention of smooth-bore cannon demonstrated the strength of the Civil War tactical mentality. Because of their inaccuracy, smooth-bore guns were only effective against massed, enemy formations.

Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, the thought that the artillery was limited to conventional wars persisted. In discussing cavalry arms, Colonel Wesley Merritt maintained that the sabre, like artillery, was not useful in the Indian wars but should not be deleted from the army's list of weapons.[15] Some artillery officers also believed that the normal condition of artillery battle required an enemy with disciplined troops.[16] One commentator suggested that light batteries were as useful in the Indian service as a ship-of-the-line on wheels. He went on to say that frontier service was "foreign to the object and unsuitable to the character of artillery duties."[17]

A large part of this attitude toward western duty can be attributed to frustration. The batteries which went west to the Light Artillery School at Fort Riley, Kansas, spent more time patrolling western Kansas than they did practicing artillery tactics. Acting as infantry or cavalry, the batteries augmented the scant resources available to the department commander. The area commander, General John Pope, was reluctant to pull them away from school instruction, but he urgently needed the manpower.[18] Hard duty in a role for which they had no training or experience

caused much bitterness. One officer wrote that one

> pleasant diversion was to make infantry of them; and one company was thus thoroughly undone- by being thrown along the KP railroad in squads of four up, and varying the monotony of living in a dug-out, by acting as mail escorts between infantry posts (coming rather nearer their legitimate duty then, as they did have wheels under them- army wagons).[19]

This frontier service therefore reinforced the contention that artillery was proper in wars between civilized nations only. Massed formations of infantry or cavalry were the appropriate targets for cannons, not a wild band of half-clothed Indians.

Ironically, the schooling and routine of the coastal garrisons provided little more opportunity to function as cannoneers and gunners. The primary source of artillery instruction after the Civil War was the Artillery School at Fortress Monroe, Virginia. Established in 1868, the school was designed to instruct junior officers in mathematics, ordnance and gunnery, military engineering, survey, military, constitutional, and international law.[20] Students endured a daily fare of recitation and blackboard demonstrations. It was hoped that this would instill in the young officer a theoretical and practical appreciation of artillery affairs. The principal focus of the school was heavy coast artillery.[21]

The school received valuable support from many of the army's highest ranking officers. Although General Sherman did not have much faith in schools for officers after they were commissioned, he considered the Artillery School to be an exception. Artillery was "a branch of military art which requires more study and more time than usual for cavalry or infantry."[22] General Winfield S. Hancock considered artillery one of the most important and progressive branches of military service. As commander of the division in which the school was located, Hancock was in a

position to give strong support to artillery instruction. In addition to Fort Monroe, Hancock and other officers believed that a need existed for a light artillery school.[23]

Such a school had been founded by General John Schofield in 1869. A former artillery officer, Schofield established the school at the suggestion of Colonel Henry Hunt, the former Chief of Artillery of the Army of the Potomac. Unfortunately, as has been seen, the need for troops on the frontier resulted in a total disruption of instruction for the light batteries. When Schofield left the Department of the Missouri for another command, the school was dissolved.[24]

The failure of the Light Artillery School was due in large part to a lack of support. The commander of the Military Division of the Missouri, General Philip Sheridan, was a cavalry officer. Sheridan's attitude toward the artillery in the west was reflected by the fact that no batteries, acting as artillery, were incorporated into any Indian expedition in his command. More important, Sherman had little faith in a school for light artillery. He believed that the light batteries should be stationed with their respective regiments, not separately posted to the plains. The regimental commander could rotate his junior officers through the battery and therefore increase the number of officers experienced in the field artillery.[25]

With the disappearance of the school at Fort Riley, Fort Monroe once again became the only school for artillery. The two-year experiement with light artillery instruction on the plains was adjudged a failure by most observers.[26] This reinforced the primacy of coastal artillery over field artillery and reiterated the belief that artillery was a tool of civilized warfare.

After a thorough but tedious education at the Artillery School, junior officers normally joined one of the five regiments. This meant that the young lieutenant was destined to duty either on the East, Gulf, or West coast. During the decades of the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, two regiments were responsible for the eastern coast north of Virginia. Another two regiments protected the southeastern Atlantic and the Gulf coast. Normally only one regiment maintained the posts along the Pacific shores. The day-to-day routine for the scattered batteries could easily discourage even the most enthusiastic young officer.

The newly arrived officer soon found that artillery matters were minor facets of his regiment's or battery's daily affairs. The normal drill routine was in infantry tactics, not artillery tactics. However, at many posts, even drill was a minor consideration. Maintenance of the garrison grounds and facilities consumed the majority of the time. One officer described the lot of a light battery assigned to a post where there was no space for horse drill. Their lot was little more than dull,

> and where locally the hills they have had to level, the dales they have had to fill, and the manuring and compositing and sub-soiling they have had to do for the aesthetical landscape eye of that, has reduced the light artillery soldiers duties practically to those of a navvy and a groom, enliven it may be daily by the exhilarating monotony of standing gun drill.[27]

Often the only relief from the tedium of infantry or gun drill was stable duty.

Occasionally, the units would actually fire the weapons they had to maintain. Practice firing was restricted because the ammunition was expensive. A single 15-inch shot cost the army $63.78.[28] Compounding the problem of expense was the requirement to fire the oldest portion of the ammunition available. For this reason accidents were common.

Major C.M. Morgan reported that when one of his 10-inch Rodman guns was fired the recoil completely upset the chassis. The gun, carriage, and chassis turned a complete somersault, went through the window of a stairway tower, and finally lodged against the brickwork of that tower. A second gun went through the same gyrations when fired and ended up on the parade ground fifty feet below the gun emplacement.[29]

Consequently, the young artillery officer found that practice within his profession could be a source of danger as well as boredom. His principal ordnance was often obsolete and mounted on carriages long out of date. His tool sets were often incomplete and equally antequated. Many an officer was thankful if his unit could return to its barracks after a long, sharp, drill with nothing broken and no injuries to his men.[30] Professionalism and the enthusiasm necessary to acquire it were hard to maintain within the walls of isolated garrisons.

Professional advancement was often as belated as technical competence. Promotion within the army up to the rank of major was within the regiment. A captain could not be promoted to major unless a vacancy was created within his regiment. Vacancies were generated by promotion to higher rank, transfer, retirement, or death. When a vacancy existed, the senior officer of those eligible normally received the appointment. At the end of the war, many of the vacancies existing within the artillery regiments were filled by transfers from infantry and cavalry regiments. This closed off promotion for the junior officers for some time.[31] The interval between promotions was exceptionally long for those commissioned after the Civil War. An officer commissioned in 1861 normally made captain in ten years. If he was commissioned in 1864, he could expect to wait nineteen years for his captaincy. If he entered

the service in 1870, it would be thirty-two years before he pinned on his captain's bars.[32]

There were non-professional and non-military factors which contributed to the low morale of the artillery regiments. Foremost among these was the unhealthy location of many of the garrisons. The southern posts were particularly susceptible to such diseases as yellow fever. In the summer of 1875, the First Artillery Regiment reported sixty-five cases and seven deaths due to an outbreak of the fever.[33] It was the third year in a row that yellow fever had swept the batteries of the First. In August of that year the Army and Navy Journal reported that the disease appeared to have abated, due to the lack of victims.[34]

The regiments which served on the seacoasts were not permanently confined to the unhealthy environment of the coastal plain. Neither were their activities limited to purely military affairs. Batteries and regiments often performed services more properly the responsibility of sheriffs, constables, and federal agents. In 1870, the commander of the Division of the South reported that Federal troops had assisted civilian officers on 200 occasions within the year.[35]

A recurring duty for artillerymen was finding illicit distilleries. Battery F, Second Artillery was especially proficient as revenuers. From September, 1875, to May, 1876, the battery either destroyed or confiscated for government sale, 136 large tubs of beer and mash, 34 complete distilleries, and 21 copper stills. In the same period, the unit arrested 43 distillers. During February of the following year, the unit smashed or confiscated 105 gallons of whiskey, 154 brewing tubs, and 10,660 gallons of beer.[36] The destruction of even moonshine whiskey undoubtedly caused as much regret among the cannoneers as it did the moonshiners.

Such work was not without its hazards. In the same month, a detachment from Battery F was ambushed near Morganton, North Carolina. A sharp skirmish ensued, and one of the battery's privates was seriously wounded. Casualities among the ambushers were unknown.[37] Such incidents, more common than would be expected, seldom found their way into the lists of engagements fought by the army. Many officers and men found the work distastful for the simple reason that it placed them in direct confrontation with their fellow countrymen. However, there were occasions in which confrontation between the regiments and civilians were far more serious.

In 1870, artillery units were particularly active in supporting civilian officials in New York City. On November 2, more than one thousand men from artillery, engineer, and infantry units assembled at the Brooklyn Navy Yard to assist Internal Revenue agents in collecting duties. Five days later, 13 batteries, 10 companies of infantry, and 200 engineers stood ready to prevent rioting during city elections. In January, seven batteries of the First and three infantry companies again assisted revenue agents in assessing duties on foreign imports.[38]

During the labor riots of 1877, artillery units formed a large part of the federal forces attempting to keep the rail lines open. Batteries from every regiment in the east took part in riot control. Some units, such as Light Battery C, of the Third Artillery, were quite effective in maintaining order. The reason for Battery C's effectiveness was due in part to the fact that the unit took its four 3-inch Ordnance rifles with it when it reported for riot duty.[39] When the strikes spread to the West coast, the division commander there recalled three batteries from the Nez Perce expedition to handle the mobs in San Francisco.[40]

More than any other incident, the strikes of 1877 demonstrated that army units, especially artillery batteries, in the east were as active as those in the west. For the most part, the units in the east were being maintained not to defend against a foreign attack, but to assist authorities in preserving law and order. The presence of units and their mission was a fact realized by many. The New York Herald pointed out that a significant shift of forces had been made in 1876 and 1877. In one part of the Northeast, the number of regualr army units was increased from eight units to more than thirty. In the mid-Atlantic states, primarily Pennsylvania and Maryland, army forces had been increased by one artillery regiment, two infantry regiments, and an additional eleven infantry companies.[41] Eastern batteries and companies became, in essence, lawmen in blue.

The decades of the 1870s and 1880s were difficult years for the artillery of the American Army. Laden with antiquated weapons, batteries were not capable of supporting infantry or cavalry columns against any organized power. The tactical doctrine of the branch was based on the Civil War and the conflicts which raged between European states. War with an unconventional foe, such as the American Indian, was a topic worth little time or consideration. Light artillery units, the only batteries capable of serving against the mobile Indian populations, as artillery, suffered from want of appropriate weapons, doctrine, and schooling. The Artillery School at Fortress Monroe and the weapons designed by the Ordnance Department projected coastal artillery as the only viable application of the service.

Service in the artillery was liberally laced with monotony, disease, and often danger. Batteries were frequently assigned the most

disagreeable of military duties, quelling civil disturbances. Breaking strikes and destroying stills placed the batteries in a position of facing the very people whose shoreline the artillery was bound to protect. On occasion, coastal garrisons were sent west to an environment alien to the populated regions of the East. They were set against a foe imperfectly understood even by the units with frontier experience. They were employed as cavalry and infantry, roles for which they had some practice but little experience. Therefore, in addition to revenuers, customs agents, reconstructionists, and strike breakers, artillery became Indian-fighters.

ENDNOTES

[1]William E. Birkhimer, Historical Sketch of the Organization, Administration, Material and Tactics of The Artillery, United States Army (New York, 1884, reprint 1968), p. 70

[2]William L. Haskins, "The Organization and Material of the Field Artillery in the United States before the Civil War," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States 3 (1882), pp. 409-410

[3]In the days before the Civil War, the caliber of weapons was often measured in the weight of the projectile the cannon fired. After the war, the United States began to follow the European practice of expressing caliber in terms of the diameter of the bore of the cannon. The information on Rosecran's artillery is from Birkhimer, Historical Sketch of the Artillery, p. 285.

[4]William F. Barry, "A Few Facts About Artillery," United States Service Magazine 1 (1864), p. 14; J.G. Benton, Ordnance and Gunnery (New York, 1862), p. 182.

[5]Birkhimer, Historical Sketch of the Artillery, p. 284.

[6]John Batchelor and Ian Hogg, Artillery (New York, 1972), p. 5.

[7]Bvt. Major T.T.S. Laidley to Brigadier General George Ramsay, April 12, 1864. In U.S. Ordnance Department, A Collection of Ordnance Reports and Other Important Papers Relating to the Ordnance Department, vol. 4 (Washington, 1890), p. 275.

[8]40th Cong. 2d sess,. House Misc. Doc. 158, pp. 2-3.

[9]"Rifled Field Guns and Rifled Mortars," Army and Navy Journal 9, (October, 21, 1871), p. 3.

[10]Annual Report of the Chief of Ordnance- 1882, p. 10

[11]Ordnance Department, Collection of Ordnance Reports, p. 377.

[12]John Conklin, "Notes on Light Artillery Material," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States 21 (1900), pp. 290-291.

[13]Benton, Ordnance and Gunnery, p. 490.

[14]Ibid., p. 469.

[15]Army and Navy Journal 15, May 4, 1878, p. 628.

[16]R.F. Johnson, "The Arming of Field Artillery," United Service: A Monthly Review of Military and Naval Affairs 1 (1889), p. 601.

[17]Army and Navy Journal 4, September 14, 1867, p. 53.

[18]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1870, p. 7.

[19]"An Artillery Growl," Army and Navy Journal 8, September 3, 1870, p. 3

[20]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1870, p. 29.

[21]Vardell E. Nesmith, Jr., "The Quiet Paradigm Change: The Evolution of the Field Artillery Doctrine of the United States Army, 1861-1905" (unpublished PhD. dissertation, Duke University, 1977), p. 78.

[22]Sherman to Meade, February 24, 1871, container 2, Henry J. Hunt Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[23]Birkhimer, Historical Sketch of the Artillery, p. 140.

[24]John Schofield, Forty-Six Years in the Army (New York, 1897), pp. 426-427.

[25]Sherman to Hancock, October 23, 1878, container 91, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[26]Birkhimer, Historical Sketch of the Artillery, p. 138.

[27]Army and Navy Journal 20, September 2, 1882, p. 2.

[28]James Garfield, "The Army of the United States," North American Review 126 (1878), p. 211.

[29]Major C.M. Morgan to Ag, Washington, D.C., June 7, 1867, Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series), 1861-1870 (Hereinafter LR), Records of the Adjutant General's Office (hereinafter RAGO), National Archives (hereinafter NA), Microcopy 619, Reel 563.

[30]"Our Light Artillery," Journal of the Military Association of the Pacific 1 (1886), p. 206.

[31]Luigi Lomia, "Artillery Promotion," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States 4 (1882), p. 433.

[32]Ibid.

[33]"Southern Artillery Station," Army and Navy Journal 7, August 7, 1875, p. 827.

[34]Army and Navy Journal 7, August 14, 1875, p. 8.

[35]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1870, p. 9.

[36]Army and Navy Journal 13, May 20, 1876, p. 656; Army and Navy Journal 14, (March 10, 1877), p. 492.

[37]Army and Navy Journal 14, February 27, 1877, p. 622.

[38]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1870, pp. 48-49.

[39]New York Herald, July 24, 1877, p. 9.

[40]Lieutenant Joseph Sladen to General Oliver O. Howard, July 24, 1877, Field Records of the Nez Perce Indian Campaign (hereinafter FRNP), Records of the United States Army Commands (hereinafter RUSAC), NA.

[41]Sherman to Sheridan, November 29, 1877, container 91, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[42]New York Herald, August 20, 1877, p. 5.

CHAPTER IV

WAR WITH THE PLAINS INDIANS

The end of the Civil War ushered in a new era of westward expansion. Former soldiers and their families sought a new life in the West rather than try to recreate the lives they enjoyed before the war. In time, lumbering wagons once again plied the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails. The railroads, too, began, their movement west as surveying parties and construction crews marked and altered the landscape. As a result of this new wave of white men, conflict between the races intensified. At first, the immigrants sought only safe passage through Indian lands. Later, other westering groups came to settle and to till the soil. The Indians, nomadic tribes such as the Comanche, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Sioux, contested the white man's passage and fought bitterly against those who wanted to turn their land upside down. Burned-out wagons, abandoned farms, and a landscape littered with bodies, became commonplace.

The army, charged with maintaining peace, mounted three significant expeditions after the Civil War either to pacify, control, or destroy the plains tribes. Countless battles were fought during these campaigns. A detailed narrative of these encounters lies beyond the scope and purpose of this study. The analysis of six major engagements will prove that there was no doctrine for fighting Indians. Each commander developed his own strategy and tactics. A basic scheme for locating warring tribes was

developed on the plains, but battle tactics remained the prerogative of each field commander. This will be shown through the comparison of engagements where artillery was present and those where it was absent. The comparison will also show that artillery was effective against the Plains Indians and should have been included in any tactical doctrine dealing with Indian warfare.

Artillery units generally did not take part in the campaigns on the plains. Light batteries from Fort Riley, Kansas, did patrol the frontier for a short time, but they gained little for their efforts other than worn out horses and sore bodies. Therefore, the analysis of the artillery with the army on the plains will be limited to the use of cannons by cavalry and infantry units. It is logical to assume, however, that the utility of cannon would have been greater if the guns would have been served by trained artillerymen.

In 1867, General Hancock led an impressive column of infantry, cavalry, and artillery onto the plains. His purpose was to separate the hostile factions of the Sioux and Cheyenne from those who wanted peace with the white man.[1] Unfortunately, Hancock's presence tended to drive undecided factions into the hostile camp and therefore increased the tempo of war in western Kansas and Nebraska. A partial reason for this failure was the type of command Hancock led onto the prairies. His army, complete with engineers and a pontoon bridge, was more appropriate for Virginia than for western Kansas. Lacking any appreciation of the plain's environment or the nature of the Plains Indians, Hancock formed his command in compliance with the accepted army tactical philosophy. His plodding column therefore had little affect on the Indians other than as an irritant.

Hancock's actions also infuriated a portion of the eastern establishment who thought that the sword was not the only answer to the lance. One of the prominent members of this group was Nathaniel Taylor, Commissioner of Indian Affairs. After Hancock's soldiers had returned to their posts, Taylor was able to convince Congress that a peace commission was more likely to stop the bloodshed on the frontier than any number of soldiers. Congress agreed, and such a commission was formed. In the fall of 1867, seven commissioners met with the southern tribes at a place called Medicine Lodge in southern Kansas. The subsequent Treaty of Medicine Lodge set aside land for the tribes and at the same time cleared the way for white movement across the plains. Although the treaty removed a major obstacle to the construction of the railroad through Kansas, Congress failed to provide the promised food and implements, and the tribes returned to the plains. Within a year, both sides fought each other in battle.

The task of punishing the marauding tribes and returning them to the reservation fell to Major General Philip H. Sheridan. Disregarding the advice from seasoned frontiersmen, Sheridan decided to wage a winter campaign. Two columns, one from Fort Bascom, New Mexico, and one from Fort Lyons, Colorado, were to move into the Texas Panhandle. Their presence would pry the Indians from their haunts and drive them toward the reservations in western Indian Territory. A third column, operating from a supply point south of Fort Dodge, Kansas, would be waiting for the Indians in the eastern Texas Panhandle. Sheridan wanted to punish the recalcitrant bands as well as force them onto the reservations. By mid-November all three columns were on the move.[2]

Of the two most important engagements of this campaign, the first involved the eastern column. In the early morning hours of November 23, 1868, the Seventh Cavalry rode out of a supply camp located in the northwest corner of Indian Territory. Led by Lieutenant Colonel George Custer, the Seventh was the column which Sheridan hoped would intercept the hostile bands before they could reach their respective agencies. The chances of this happening were good as there were indications that some bands had already reached the Antelope Hills region. For the Seventh, this was their second effort against the Indians. Earlier that fall, they had conducted a fruitless march along the Beaver and Wolf Creeks south of Fort Dodge. Frustrated by a lack of success the first time out, the soldiers and their officers were spoiling for a fight.[3]

Custer led his troopers south from the depot which had been appropriately named Camp Supply. The bitter winter winds and a twelve-inch snow fall made movement difficult at best. Anxious to find the Indians, the young colonel divided his command in hopes of covering more ground. His gamble paid off. Major Joel Elliot and his squadron found an Indian trail. By midnight, the reunited Seventh had followed the trail to a village on the Washita Creek. With the first light of dawn, the regimental band struck up with "Garry Owen" Custer's favorite tune, and the Seventh charged the camp.

Four different columns converged on what turned out to be a Cheyenne village under Chief Black Kettle. A squadron of four troops under Major Elliot struck from the downstream side. Two squadrons of two troops each attacked the village's flanks. Custer led four more troops and a group of sharpshooters into the village from the upstream side. Although Elliot's force had stumbled onto a few Indian sentries who had fled, the

Seventh's attack was a complete surprise.[4]

Custer's battle plan worked extremely well. The Indians who fled his assault ran into Elliot's blocking force. Those who managed to escape did so only after the fight became a disorderly struggle at close quarters. By the end of the day, the village and its contents had been set to the torch. In addition, more than eight hundred Indian ponies were shot to prevent their recapture by the Indians. Black Kettle and a hundred of his followers died in the battle. However,there was a chance that a similiar fate might befall the troopers.

Unknown to Custer, other villages of the Kiowa, Arapaho, and Cheyenne filled the Washita valley south of Black Kettle's camp. When the firing began in the morning, warriors from these villages gathered their weapons and rode to the sound of the guns. By afternoon, Custer's command came under increasing pressure from a growing number of braves. Custer had no artillery,and his men were running low on ammunition for their carbines. The destruction of the Seventh, in retaliation for the destruction of the Cheyenne village, was a distinct possibility.

In the late afternoon, Custer began to reassemble his regiment. He then formed them into a column and began marching in the direction of the other Indian villages. Believing their camps to be the next battlefield, the circling Indian warriors departed hastily to defend their famalies and possessions. When darkness came, Custer counter-marched his command and moved to Camp Supply as quickly as his exhausted horses and wounded men would allow. The Seventh reached Camp Supply without being attacked by any of the bands from the Washita.[5]

The Washita battle was a major tactical and strategic success for the army. The Seventh's casualities although severe, twenty-one killed

and fourteen wounded, were considerably less than the Indian losses. In addition, Custer had destroyed tons of provisions which the Indians needed to survive the harsh winter months. Sheridan's strategy of attacking his adversary during inclement weather was vindicated. However, had Custer injudiciously marched on the other villages, the army might have registered a major loss instead of a victory.

While Custer's troopers recuperated from their ordeal, another column was moving toward Indian Territory. They, too, would confirm the idea of winter campaigning. Earlier in November, Major A.W. Evans had led his New Mexico column out of Fort Bascom. This contingent consisted of six troops of the Third Cavalry, Company I of the Thirty-Seventh Infantry, and a detachment of men from Company F of the same regiment. The men from Company F were detailed to man the four mountain howitzers Evans had gathered from other New Mexico garrisons. Seventy-two civilians, acting as guides, teamsters, and packers, accompanied the soldiers.[6]

Following Kit Carson's Adobe Walls' Trail, the soldiers trudged along the Canadian River. Buffeted by cold winds and a howling snow storm, Evans' troopers made slow, painful progress. Finally the half-frozen men and animals halted at the point where Monument Creek meets the Canadian River in the Texas Panhandle. Here Evans began construction of a supply depot. This base would support Evans' cavalry as it scouted the Canadian River Vally and the eastern rim of the Llano Estacado, the Staked Plains.

By the middle of December, Evans was able to leave the depot on his first sortie. With 200 cavalrymen, 137 infantrymen, and four tons of provisions, the major began to search for hostile Indians. Three days east of his base camp, Evans found an Indian trail. Turning south along

the North Fork of the Red River, the troopers followed the trail for another seven days. By Christmas Eve, Evans was on the verge of giving up and turning north toward the Antelope Hills where he and his cold-numbed men hoped to find the enemy.

On Christmas Day, the soldiers began breaking camp after a miserable, waterless, night. But before forming his column, the major ordered his advance troop to chase off a few Indians who had been following his trail. Thinking that Captain E.W. Tarlton's troop was sufficient to dispose of the pesky Indians, Evans ordered his other units onto the trail. However, a short time later Evans learned to his surprise that Tarlton was being pressed by a large number of warriors.[7]

After leaving Evans, Tarlton and his thirty-four men charged the watching Indians, who promptly turned and fled. The cavalrymen scrambled after them. The chase took the troopers into one of the canyons of the stream. There, a large number of mounted warriors descended on the startled troops. The Indian observers had obviously been bait, and Tarlton's men, in pursuing them, had fallen into a trap. Attacked with lances and rifles, Tarlton immediately formed his men into a defensive position. Although pressed on all sides by a superior force, the captain and his men were able to hold their ground. After turning back a charge, Tarlton dispatched a courier to Evans with an urgent request for assistance.

When apprised of the plight of Tarlton's unit by the excited courier, Evans detached Captain Deane Monahan's troop and ordered it to reinforce the beseiged cavalrymen. A short time later, Second Lieutenant J.K. Sullivan followed Monahan with two of the mountain howitzers. Tarlton had stated that he could use artillery to advantage, and Evans sent half of his battery for that reason. Fearing that even these

reinforcements might not be enough, the major counter-marched the rest of his column. His jaded horses, weak from lack of grain, barred any quick dash to Tarlton's rescue.

When Monahan's troop arrived Tarlton attacked. With less than one hundred cavalrymen, he charged his adversaries. Unlike the soldiers, the Indians refused to stand their ground. They bolted the battlefield and raced down the canyon in the direction of the creek. Their flight was further encouraged when Sullivan's guns unlimbered in the rear of Tarlton's combined force and began firing.

Punctuated by an occasional cannon shell, the race across the stream continued for several miles. In time an Indian village came into sight. Sullivan at once ordered his gunners forward and began to fire on the camp. The explosion of one of the first two shells put an abrupt end to efforts by some Indians to gather their possessions. The force of the cavalry advance and the exploding shells forced a complete abandonment of the camp and its contents.

Tarlton did not stop at the Indian encampment, but continued past the village until he reached a wooded ridge overlooking the area. In spite of the urgings of some of his subordinates, he decided to halt his troops and wait for Evans to bring up the rest of the column. A major prize, the village, had been seized, and the cavalry captain was not willing to gamble his men in a effort to achieve anything more.

With Tarlton's forward movement stopped, Evans and the other units were able to catch up. Their progress had been painfully slow. The most the cavalrymen could urge out of their horses was a trot. Yet Evans did arrive in time to prevent one group of warriors from gaining Tarlton's rear and cutting his command off from the main body of soldiers.

With his command united once again, Evans withdrew from the ridge and returned to the abandoned camp.

Fortified by the four cannons, the soldiers spent the night in the Indian village. By 11:00 p.m., the troopers had burned everything they could not use themselves. At dawn the tired men were once again in the saddle. On December 30, four scouts from Fort Cobb overtook the straggling column. After receiving some supplies, including forage for his emaciated mounts, Evans turned toward Monument Creek and his supply base. Eighteen days after the battle of Soldier's Creek, the weary soldiers arrived at the small cantonment.[8]

Evans' Christmas Day fight further upheld the tactic of winter campaigning. Indeed, the Washita and Soldier's Creek established a model for subsequent plains expeditions. In the future, commanders would seek to attack the Indians while their mobility was sapped by the plains' winter. Multiple columns would take the field. Some would act as beaters, while others would seek the Indian's Achilles heel, his village. The Red River war of 1874-1875 and the army's initial actions in the Sioux war of 1876-1877 show the consistency of this strategy. However, this was a method for finding the Indian. The manner in which the soldiers fought after locating a hostile band remained the sole responsibility of the unit commander. This fact and the comparative value of artillery was shown in the Battles of the Washita and Soldier's Creek.

Any comparison of the two battles must first establish the relative sizes of the opposing forces. Custer's Seventh Cavalry had approximately 800 men when he left Camp Supply. Of this number, more than 700 took part in the fight on the Washita. Evans' column was less than half the size of Custer's command. In his report of the battle, Evans maintained

that the bulk of the fighting was done by the two troops of cavalry and the artillery platoon under Tarlton. This feisty little band did not exceed 100 men.[9]

The size of the Indian forces at the Washita and Soldier's Creek is more difficult to establish. Black Kettle's camp contained fifty-one lodges. This would translate to between 250 and 300 warriors. The presence of other villages along the Washita might have raised the total number of warriors to 1,000. The Comanche camp which Tarlton struck, along with a nearby Kiowa camp, probably contained sixty lodges or 300 to 360 braves.[10]

At the opening of the Washita fight, Custer's troopers probably outnumbered the Indian defenders by two to one. During the course of the day, the arrival of other Indian reinforcements changed this ratio. At the peak of fighting, the opposing forces were nearly equal with a slight advantage to the Indians. By comparison, Tarlton was outnumbered throughout most of his fight. Evans' timely arrival not only saved the captain from entrapment, but also evened the odds considerably. As Custer, Evans expected that the forces opposing him would receive heavy reinforcements from other villages. Still, throughout the night and into the morning, the two adversaries on Soldier's Creek were probably of equal size.

The major distinction between the Battle of the Washita and Evans' Soldier's Creek fight was that Evans was able to remain on the field, or more appropriately in the captured village. Custer, after a feint toward the other villages withdrew from the Washita. Fear for the safety of his wagons, the need to replenish his ammunition, the desire to give aid to his wounded, and the growing number of warriors confronting him,

forced the young colonel to leave the village. At least these were the reasons Custer gave in his subsequent writings.[11] However, there were major inconsistencies between Custer's actions and his words.[12] Despite Custer's rationalization, the fact was that Custer lacked the military strength to remain on the battlefield. His casualities and shortage of ammunition coupled with the large number of Indians demanded his withdrawl.

Evans was not forced to terminate his operations. His troopers not only captured the Indian village, but also spent the night in it. Although the Comanche fired into the camp during the night they did not press an attack to regain it. When morning came, Evans left the razed village without opposition from its original occupants. The fact that the New Mexico column suffered only one casuality further attested to the Indians reluctance to challenge seriously the actions of Evans' soldiers.

Evans better showing on Soldier's Creek can not be attributed to the difference between his opposition and the Indians facing Custer. The Nakoni Comanche were every bit as formidable in battle as the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho on the Washita Creek. The difference in the two battles also can not be attributed to the condition of Evans troopers compared to the Seventh Cavalry. The Seventh and its animals were in better shape physically than Evans' column. Custer's command had been in the field only four days before it struck the Cheyenne camp. Evans' men had been in the saddle ten days before they stumbled onto the Comanche camp. Custer fought at the Washita with a homogenous command, while Evans' column was a composite of infantry and cavalry. Custer's soldiers had undergone considerable training before marching out in

search of the enemy. The New Mexico units joined Evans' expedition directly from scouts in New Mexico without any time for resting or refitting. Finally, Custer had the luxury of planning his attack, while Evans had to accept battle without prior reconnaisance or a chance to brief his subordinate commanders.

Evan's greater success could be attributed to a better skill in Indian fighting. It could also be attributed to the presence of cannons with his column. The presence and actions of the four mountain howitzers certainly could explain why Evans' troopers were able to destroy the enemy camp at their leisure, with only one casuality. Two guns participated in Tarlton's initial assault on the village. The shells from these guns reached the panic-stricken villagers well ahead of the cavalrymen. The guns deterred any serious counter-attack as any concentration of Indians would immediately become the likely recipient of a few cannon shells. The guns were extremely valuable when Evans went over to the defensive at the end of the day. Any Indian foolish enough to venture closer than 400 yards ran the risk of being riddled with canister. Kept at such a distance, Indian riflemen stood little chance of inflicting serious casualities on the soldiers.

Since artillery was so useful, why were cannons absent from the ranks of the Seventh Cavalry? There was nothing along the Seventh's line of march to prevent the passage of wheeled artillery. Supply wagons accompanied Custer, and cannon certainly could have been taken where wagons went. Indeed, the topography of Custer's route and the Washita battlefield was very similiar to the trail Evans made to Soldier's Creek. Moreover, cannons were available to Custer. At least one gun was at Camp Supply, and there were others at Fort Dodge, Custer's original

starting point. In addition, Light Battery B, Fourth Artillery, a unit which had accompanied Hancock a year earlier, was still in Kansas. It certainly could have been included in the list of fighting units assigned to the eastern column. The only logical reason for the absence of cannon with the Seventh Cavalry troopers was the personal idiosyncracies of the commander—Custer.

In his fighting on the plains, Custer normally rejected any additions to his regiment, in the terms of units, such as an artillery battery. In a similiar vein, Custer placed little value on cannon or even gatling guns. He forbade his men from even practicing with gatling guns in the days before the Medicine Lodge talks because he felt that such practice would have been a waste of time and ammunition.[13] Seven years later, Custer refused the offer of a gatling gun battery for fear they might "humiliate" his efforts against the Sioux.[14] Custer, like many other cavalry officers, depreciated the value of infantry and artillery. He did not take cannons with him because he felt that the Seventh was equal to any enemy force it might encounter. Lacking a fundamental doctrine for fighting Indians, the major unit commander had the prerogative of assembling and deploying his resources in the manner he desired. Custer exercised that privilege.

The successes of Custer and Evans brought a temporary peace to the southern plains. The fear of an unexpected attack from the pony soldiers convinced the tribes to return to their reservations. Unfortunately, another campaign on the windswept panhandle landscape was needed before the nomadic tribes finally acquiesced to the direction and control of the white man. Although different units fought the next campaign, the nature of their battles was not radically different from Sheridan's

first winter campaign. Some units used artillery while others relied on carbines and pistols in battle. The nature of war on the southern plains was very similiar to the contest between the Indian and the white man on the northern plains.

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When its work was done at Medicine Lodge, the Peace Commission of 1867 moved north to treat with the Sioux nation. Since the early 1860s, the government had wanted to build a wagon road on the Bozeman Trail, connecting the Platte River and Montana. The road would facilitate the movement of supplies to the Montana gold miners. The Sioux strenuously objected to the road through their prime hunting ground. When the army built three forts to protect settlers on the Bozeman, the Sioux went to war.[15] Sioux and Cheyenne warriors were successful in paralyzing traffic heading for Montana or going west to Oregon or California. The garrisons of the three hastily constructed posts existed in a virtual state of siege. In April, 1868, at Fort Laramie, Wyoming, the commissioners were able to conclude a treaty with the Sioux and northern Cheyenne.

The treaty redefined the Sioux domain west of the Missouri River. The United States acknowledged the tribe's ownership of the western half of what is today South Dakota. In addition, they were given hunting rights in the Big Horn Mountain region of Montana. The army agreed to abandon its three posts and stopped construction of the road. The Sioux agreed to keep to the reservation, except when hunting, and not to obstruct the building of railroads.

Ad defined by the treaty, the Sioux's land included the Black Hills. For many years rumors circulated that the hills contained gold. As a result, miners flocked to the Dakotas trying to find the yellow ore

before a Sioux war party found them. The army repeatedly hauled prospective millionaires off the Sioux lands only to have twice as many take their places. A surveying expedition, led by the dauntless Custer in 1874, confirmed, officially, the presence of gold in the Black Hills. After that no force on earth would have been able to stop the wave of humanity which surged toward western Dakota. Government efforts to purchase the hills failed and hundreds of warriors left the reservation to prepare for war. An order by the Indian Department to return to their agencies was ignored by the Indians. The government finally placed the matter in the hands of the War Department.

In addressing the Sioux outbreak, General Sheridan initially foresaw a winter campaign. Multiple columns operating in cold weather had the best chance of corralling the elusive Sioux.[16] Unfortunately, neither General Alfred Terry, commanding the Department of the Dakotas, nor General George Crook, commanding the Department of the Platte, could gather the necessary forces and supplies in time for a winter expedition. Once again, inadequate resources, in terms of supplies and transportation, impeded the army's efforts to fulfill its mission in the West. Crook did manage to take the field in early March. All of his scurrying for supplies and troops was to little avail. Crook's soldiers, operating under Colonel J.J. Reynolds, did attack Crazy Horse's Sioux camp on the Powder River in Montana. Reynolds did little damage to the camp or its defenders. Frustrated at this ineffectual sortie, Crook returned to Fort Fetterman, Wyoming, and prepared for another venture into the Sioux domain.[17] His preparations consumed almost two months.

At midday on May 29, 1876, a long line of blue-coated soldiers marched out of Fetterman. Five troops of the Second Cavalry, ten troops

of the Third Cavalry, and five companies drawn from the Fourth and Ninth Infantry Regiments comprised Crook's second effort against the hostile Indians. By June 2, the column reached the ruins of Fort Reno, one of the three posts abandoned due to the treaty of 1868. Seven days later, on the Tongue River, a small band of Sioux fired into Crook's camp as a way of welcoming the soldiers to the area. Slightly ruffled, the troops pushed on. With the acquisition of a large group of Crow and Shoshone scouts, Crook was ready to search in earnest for the elusive enemy.

At the junction of the Big and Little Goose Creek, Crook circled and fortified the wagons which had carried much of his supplies. His previous experiences in Arizona, chasing Apaches, had taught him that a column supplied from pack mules moved much faster than one encumbered by wagons. To enhance his mobility further, the infantry were obliged to ride the spare mules, much to the disgust of both man and beast. By daylight on June 16, Crook's small army was again on the move. The column marched northwest from the wagon-fort on Goose Creek and entered the area of Rosebud Creek. On the following morning, Crook found what he had been looking for. More accurately, the Sioux found Crook.

The Battle of the Rosebud began with Crook's forces on both sides of the creek. Four troops of the Third Cavalry and four troops of the Second Cavalry were on the right bank. The balance of the Third and the infantry were on the left bank. Crook ordered his battalion commanders to clear the hills which dominated the valley and his position. Instead of meeting the line of charging soldiers, the Sioux withdrew to an adjacent line of ridges. Some of Crook's subordinates continued their advance to the second line of ridges. Their adversaries simply fell back to yet another crest. In a short time, Crook's eleven hundred soldiers

were scattered all over the country bordering the Rosebud.[18]

Where troops were supported by the Crow and Shoshone auxiliaries, Crook's position was not in jeopardy. Unfortunately, there were not enough friendly Indians to go around. Colonel William Royal's battalion, fighting over the roughest part of the battlefield, was hard pressed by the Sioux and Cheyenne braves. Royall's lot worsened when Captain Guy Henry, a well-liked and respected veteran, fell seriously wounded. With Henry out of action, some of the troops lost heart and began to fall back. The disabled Henry narrowly averted capture and certain death through the timely arrival of the dependable Crow and Shoshone.[19] The intensity of fighting was greatest around Royall's men. Most of the casualities sustained that day were among those men. Crook's principal objective was the Indians' village, and he knew that he could not reach it by fighting such a disjointed battle. Consequently he tried to consolidate his command. This proved extremely difficult, especially for Royall's men. They had to yield valuable high ground and withdraw across broken, exposed terrain. When the enemy regained the vacated ridge, they poured a withering fire into the ranks of the cavalrymen.

Dispite his problems, Crook decided to strike out with two battalions toward the expected location of the village. Captains Anson Mills and Henry Noyes broke their battalions from the Rosebud fight and marched through a canyon toward the village. Mills was extremely uncomfortable about the venture as the canyon was a perfect place for an ambush. Timber lined the steep sides and any forced trapped within the canyon stood little chance of escaping. To the relief of many, Crook recalled this force and directed it to rejoin the main body. Marching by a circuitous route, Mills' troopers were able to strike the rear of the enemy's ranks

opposite Royall's shattered command. Undoubtedly, the arrival of the two battalions prevented a portion of Crook's line from collapsing.[20]

This flanking movement was the last major operation of the day. The Sioux withdrew, leaving Crook's soldiers in possession of the battlefield.[21] With his legions somehwat disorganized and with a considerable number of casualities, Crook refused to chase the withdrawing warriors. The rest of the day was spent gathering the wounded and burying the dead. The following day, the column trudged back to Goose Creek and the wagon train.

Upon reaching his camp, Crook dispatched his wagons, loaded with the wounded, to Fort Fetterman. He also sent a message to Sheridan asking for more supplies, more infantry,and more cavalry.Crook had tried to fight the Sioux as he had fought the Apache. His failure to recognize that the two were different and therefore required different tactics almost cost him his command. The Rosebud fight had impressed upon him the power of a united Sioux nation and its Cheyenne allies. After the battle, Crook was overly cautious. Until properly reinforced, he would not sally forth again to meet the enemy. For more than a month, Crook sat and waited.[21]

There were two other columns looking for the Indian army of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. Colonel John Gibbon was in the field by early May with a cavalry/infantry command drawn from the Montana garrisons. General Terry's men began their march from Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory, shortly after Gibbon's command left central Montana. Sheridan fully expedted Crook, Gibbon, and Terry, operating in concert, to bring the Sioux to bay. However, Crook's actions constituted a solo performance which was not coordinated with Gibbon or Terry.

By comparison, Terry planned to cooperate with Gibbon in order to conquer his fleeing opponents. Terry's plan envisioned catching the Indians between Gibbon's soldiers and the Seventh Cavalry under Custer. Custer would march down the Rosebud, where the Indians were thought to be, while Gibbon's Montana column marched up the same creek. The Seventh would strike the main blow and the Montana troops would prevent any escape. Both commands were to be in position by June 26.

On June 22, Custer left Terry's column for the Rosebud.[22] In three days of marching, Custer reached the divide separating the Rosebud and the Little Big Horn River. His scouts told him that a Sioux village was located in the valley of the Little Big Horn. As Gibbon was not due for another twenty-four hours, Custer's first inclination was to wait. However, he believed that he had been seen by Sioux scouts. The village might flee before Gibbon was in position to prevent an escape. Without waiting or determining the exact size and location of the village, Custer decided to attack.

At noon on June 25, Custer split his command into three major groups. Captain Fredrick Benteen and three troops were to veer to the south of the village. Major Marcus Reno with another three troops was to march directly on the camp. Custer with five troops intended to flank the village and cut off any retreat. A variation of this plan had worked well at the Washita. This time, however, the result was disaster.

The village was in fact several villages, comprised primarily of Sioux and Cheyenne. The Seventh actually struck a force that outnumbered it five or six to one. Lacking troop strength, Reno could not make progress on a direct line and had to retreat. His shattered and panic-stricken men received timely and critical support when Benteen brought

his squadron into Reno's small perimeter. Custer's force, 215 men, were overwhelmed by the two to three thousand warriors who streamed from the village. A similiar fate would have befallen Reno's men had not the approach of Gibbon's column prompted the Indians to leave.[23]

News of the Custer debacle shocked a nation congratulating itself on its one-hundredth birthday. More importantly, it made Crook, Terry, and even Sheridan overly cautious. They took no further action until all of the various columns were strong enough to meet even the giant warrior army of the Sioux and Cheyenne.

Between August and October, infantry and cavalry units converged on the Dakotas. Sheridan "stripped every post from the line of Manitoba to Texas. . ." to furnish enough men to his field commanders.[24] Some of the arriving units converged on Fort Fetterman where Crook was assembling his third effort against the Indians. Others, such as the Fifth Infantry, began constructing forts in the heart of Sioux country. Once completed, these forts would serve as depots from which units could conduct the winter campaign Sheridan had initially planned. The only significant encounter during this period was Crook's attack on American Horse's camp at Slim Buttes in August. The battle inflicted some casualities on the Sioux, but the effort turned Crook's soldiers into rag-tag scarecrows who were reduced to eating their horses.

Almost six months elapsed between the Battle of the Rosebud and the beginning of Crook's third expedition against the Sioux. When the Powder River expedition left Fort Fetterman in mid-November, its total strength approached two thousand. This number included more than 350 Indians from eight different tribes. To insure adequate supplies, Crook took along 400 pack mules and 168 wagons. The destination of this

impressive array of soldiers was the valley of the Rosebud, where Crazy Horse was reported to be located. The soldiers' purpose was to conquer the Sioux and avenge the losses on the Little Big Horn. A few days out of Fort Fetterman, however, Crook learned that the Sioux had a camp in the Big Horn Mountains.

Crook sent a cavalry brigade, under Colonel Ranald Mackenzie to investigate.[25] After a numbing night march through drifted snow, Mackenzie and his men found the camp. After a hasty briefing, Mackenzie ordered his men to advance. While some troopers swept through the tipis, others managed to capture the camp' herd of more than 500 ponies. The camp turned out to be Dull Knife's Cheyenne village and not Crazy Horse's. Caught by surprise, The Cheyenne warriors and families abandoned their lodges in a mad rush for safety. Much of the fighting within the village was hand to hand. A large number of warriors did manage to reach rifle pits where they could cover the flight of the women and children.

With the Indian riflemen in well-fortified positions, the battle lapsed into long range sniping. Mackenzie knew that any effort to overwhelm the Indian positions would succeed only at great cost. Consequently, he sent a dispatch to Crook asking that the infantry be sent to him. The longer-range infantry rifles would be much better in an attack on the enemy than the cavalry's carbines. Crook immediately ordered the infantry to Mackenzie's assistance. Unfortunately, the same snow and rough terrain which slowed Mackenzie's cavalry made movement difficult for the foot troops. By the time the reinforcements arrived, the Cheyenne defenders had managed to retreat.

Mackenzie reported twenty-five Indians killed in the camp. His own casualities were seven killed and twenty-five wounded.[26] The losses of

the Indians, however, extended beyond those who fell during the battle. In their mad flight from the village, the Cheyenne had forsaken food and shelter. The freezing Montana night took a dreadful toll, especially among the young.[27] By the time the survivors reached Crazy Horse's camp, Crook's initial target, most were suffering from starvation and exposure. By December, Dull Knife's followers began straggling into the reservations. The winter and Mackenzie's troopers had bled them of the desire to fight.

Even while Crook's third expedition was in the assembly stage, the cantonment on Tongue River, one of the new post in the Sioux domain, was taking form. The soldiers of Colonel Nelson Miles' Fifth Infantry labored furiously to build adequate shelter before the winter descended on them. Other soldiers, principally Lieutenant Colonel E.S. Otis' Twenty-Second Infantry, escorted supply trains to Miles' encampment. These trains were a prime target for Sitting Bull's warriors. On three separate occasions Sioux war parties attacked the supply train, trying to prevent the stockpiling of provisions for the winter. These raids prompted Miles to march out of his half-finished post and seek a confrontation with the fighting men of Sitting Bull.[28]

The two opponents finally came together at the head of Cedar Creek on October 21, 1876. Negotiations, instead of gunfire, marked the first days's activities. Sitting Bull insisted that the soldiers and all other white men must leave the country. He rejected any possibility of going to the reservation as Miles demanded. In a short talk on the second day, the two intractable positions were reaffirmed. Finally, both leaders withdrew to their respective sides and a battle erupted a few minutes later.[29]

Miles' command consisted of 394 infantrymen and one piece of artillery. Sitting Bull deployed almost a thousand warriors. Initially, the Indians fired the dry prairie grass and pressed the soldiers on all sides. Miles formed his command into a hollow square and opened fire with his cannon. The long-range rifle fire kept the Indians from closing to a charge while the 3-inch Ordnance rifle spread havoc among concentrations of Indians. Captain Simon Snyder, who directed the gun, later noted in his diary, "I had charge of the artillery; which did excellent service, as it appeared to completely demoralize the enemy and kept them at a respectable distance."[30] Miles also observed that the Indians could not stand artillery.[31]

With the Indians unable to penetrate his defenses, Miles decided to attack. His sudden advance stampeded the Indians. For the next two days, Miles' infantry pursued the hostiles. Although the soldiers inflicted few casualities in the forty-mile chase, they did force the Indians to abandon large quantities of food and equipment. Finally, part of the exhausted Sioux surrendered and promised to return to their reservations. Taking five chiefs to ensure the compliance of the tribes to their promise, Miles returned to his cantonment.[32]

Miles' half-frozen men were not able to savor the warmth of their camp very long. The energetic colonel paused only long enough to collect fresh supplies before again setting out in search of the enemy. Throughout November, his men marched across the frozen snow-covered landscape of Montana. Unfortunately, blowing snow often obliterated any trail the elusive Indians might have left. Invariably, the soldiers had to return to their huts on Tongue River to replenish their provisions and thaw their frozen bodies.

After a brief respite, the troops were back in the field by the first week in December. Miles' force on this occasion numbered 436 men and two pieces of artillery. The guns, a 12-pounder Napoleon and a 3-inch Ordnance rifle, were disguised as wagons, replete with bows and canvas. Throughout this expedition, the weather was as much an adversary as the Indians. Snyder noted on December 23, that the mercury in their thermometer had frozen.[33] The soldiers' sufferings and perseverance were rewarded on January 8, when they clashed with the Oglala bands under Crazy Horse.

The battle between Miles' infantry and the Sioux took place in a valley within the Wolf Mountains. The Indians generally commanded the high ground which bordered the valley where the troops were. Early in the battle, the Indians tried to charge the troops by riding directly down the valley. However, Miles, commanding his troops from a small rise, directed the cannons against this effort. The two guns, now stripped of their deceptive canvas, opened fire. This initial charge was stopped by the combined fire of the smooth-bore Napoleon and the rifled gun.

The struggle then changed focus as both sides maneuvered for a strategic point on the battlefield. A certain stretch of high ground, held by the Sioux, dominated Miles' command. If the soldiers could wrest this particular piece of terrain from the enemy, the entire Indian attack would collapse. Under supporting fire from the Napoleon and the Ordnance rifle, the infantry assaulted the ridge. Burdened by heavy coats and deep snow, the men made slow progress. As the troopers neared their objective, the gunners shifted their cannons to other targets to avoid hitting their comrades. The infantry finally struggled to the crest of

of the ridge. Without the supporting fire from the cannons, it is doubtful that the troops would have been able to take the key ridge.

This success coupled with the untimely death of a prominent chief broke the Indians' desire to fight. As the warriors fled, cannon shells pursued them and also sought out any hidden pockets of resistance. Miles intentions to pursue were snuffed out by a sudden, blinding, snowstorm. Reluctantly, he called off the battle. His troopers tramped back to a temporary camp and then moved out for their Tongue River post.[34]

The fighting in the Wolf Mountains was a minor skirmish in terms of casualities. However, it was significant for other reasons. Heretofore, the warriors led by Crazy Horse had been victorious in battle. They had stopped Crook on the Rosebud, annihilated Custer's battalion, and mauled the rest of the Seventh under Reno. Miles, with less than half of their numbers had confronted them in battle and ultimately chased them from the battleground. The battle also showed to the Sioux that the winter months brought no respite from the pursuing columns of the blue-coated soldiers. By the middle of May, 1877, many of the hostiles had given up and were moving toward their agencies.

By the end of spring, the Sioux war was over. Although most of the bands had returned to the reservation, some fled north to Canada to avoid punishment. Consequently, there were infrequent skirmishes between the soldiers and these bands whenever they ventured south of the border to hunt buffalo. In time, even these hold-outs turned themselves in to the Indian agents and officers who controlled the Sioux reservations. Sitting Bull was the last of the major chiefs to return. On July 19, 1881, he yielded to the army at Fort Buford, Dakota Territory.

The results of the various expeditions in the Sioux war ranged from unqualified success to absolute disaster. Miles' victories on Cedar Creek and in the Wolf Mountains and Mackenzie's qualified success against Dull Knife's camp can be listed in the victory column. The Custer debacle was a defeat for the army almost unequalled in its history. Crook's battle on the Rosebud must also be considered a defeat. Crook's advance on the Indians' village was effectively checked. More important, he retired from the field for more than a month. His absence on the Rosebud contributed significantly to the disaster on the Little Big Horn eight days later.[35]

The overriding question remains why Miles and, to a lesser extent, Mackenzie succeeded while Crook and Custer failed. As with Soldier's Creek and the Washita, the answer can be found only after an analysis of the battlefield topography, the relative positions of the troops, the size of the opposing forces, and the tactics employed.

The topography of the Rosebud, Little Big Horn, Dull Knife's camp, and Wolf Mountain can not explain why one group failed and another was victorious. Hills of varying slope separated by valleys carved by streams describe the general topography of southern Montana. The four battlefields in question generally had the same physical profile. The elevation extremes in the Wolf Mountains were somewhat greater than the other locations, but not to a significant degree. Nothing in the physical nature of the battlefields can explain defeat or victory.

The locations of the opposing forces on the ground offer little more of an explanation. Custer and Mackenzie attacked villages located in valleys from positions on higher ground. Mackenzie succeeded to a degree; Custer certainly did not. Crook and Miles were attacked while

in valleys and were forced to secure higher ground to defend themselves. Miles continued to press his opponents, while Crook withdrew. The disposition of the various groups does not answer the basic question.

The relative strengths of the opposing sides does explain why Mackenzie achieved a measure of success against Dull Knife's Cheyenne. Custer was outnumbered at least four to one. Crook and Miles faced warrior forces which were twice as large as their own commands. However, Mackenzie probably outnumbered the Cheyenne defenders on the Powder River. Mackenzie's cavalry column exceeded one thousand horsemen while the defending Indians probably numbered only four hundred. Although the soldiers' superiority in numbers allowed them the initial advantage, it did not allow them to complete the capture of the Indian band. Mackenzie lacked the proper resources to make a clean sweep of the battlefield. The size of Mackenzie's force explained his victory, but it did not explain why Miles could beat an enemy which outnumbered him and controlled, at least initially, commanding ground.

One element in Miles' favor might have been the Sioux attitude toward infantry. Generally the plains Indians held the cavalry in contempt. Cavalrymen seldom possessed the ability to fight from horseback. They normally had to dismount to attain any accuracy with their carbines. Even on foot, the cavalryman, due to the short range of his weapon, was not considered a major threat. However, the infantry long rifles could kill an Indian long before he could reach the soldier. The rifles were inherently more accurate because they possessed a greater sight radius than the carbines. The Sioux generally chose to face the cavalry rather than their comrades who fought on foot.

Miles' use of artillery might also explain why he achieved consistent success while his fellow commanders did not. At Cedar Creek, the 3-inch rifle kept the warriors of Sitting Bull from closing with the infantry. The Indians stood no chance of overwhelming the foot soldiers as they had Custer's cavalrymen. At Wolf Mountain, the Napoleon and Rodman cannons stopped the Indians initial charge and swept the high ground of Indian concentrations. With the cannons providing a large measure of the defensive fire, Miles could mass a part of his small force for the attack on the critical part of the Indians' defenses. Artillery was an integral part of Miles' tactical philosophy of Indian fighting.

Although artillery accompanied all of Miles' movements against the Sioux, the young colonel was not particularly enamored with the particular guns he used in his first battles. He considered the Napoleon and the Rodman to be substandard. His major objection to these guns and to the gatling gun was that they were too heavy to haul across the broken ground of the West. The gatling gun had an additional defect in that its bullets were so light that it was difficult to spot their impact at twelve or fifteen hundred yards.[36] Miles knew that lighter, more accurate, cannons existed. The French and British had light steel guns which could easily keep up with the most mobile cavalry formations. Miles constant harassment finally forced the Ordnance Department to send him two light Hotchkiss mountain guns.[37] He used one of these guns against the Nez Perce later in 1877.[38]

Cannons were absent from the ranks of Custer's Seventh and Crook's units because these commanders discounted the value of artillery against Indians. Custer, as has been seen, felt that his regiment was equal to any enemy force it might encounter. He declined Terry's offer of four

gatling guns for fear they would slow him down.[38] However, nothing along Custer's line of march would have prevented gatling guns from accompanying the Seventh.[39] Crook officially stated his belief that artillery was useless against Indians. He even discounted any morale effect the presence of cannons would have on the enemy.[40] The only instance in which Crook ever admitted that artillery would have been useful was when his soldiers physically could not reach the Indians.[41]

The presence or absence of artillery reflected each commander's personal approach to Indian fighting. Each commander relied either on past experiences with the Indian, an understanding of how other units had gained success, or his own philosophy about combat in general. Experience could be the weakest foundation for tactical decisions. If any of the many facets which comprised a battle changed, the tactical lessons from that battle had to be adjusted. Both Crook and Custer fought in 1876 as they had before. The nature of the enemy they faced at the Rosebud and the Little Big Horn was very different from anything they had faced in the past.

Crook, a superb commander in Arizona, was put off-balance by the large numbers of Indians surrounding him on the Rosebud. His past dealings with the Apache and the Paiute were skirmishes between comparatively small units and a handful of Indians. He was not ready for a pitch battle such as was forced upon him by the Sioux and the Cheyenne. Custer, althoughcourageous and bold, was reckless. He attacked the Sioux villages without gauging their size. In this he was at least consistent. His attack at the Little Big Horn was a carbon copy of his assault on the Cheyenne camp on the Washita. If Crook and Custer should have adapted their tactics to the new threat, artillery might have been in their command.

One adaptation would have been the inclusion of artillery. Cannons could have significantly altered the Battles of the Rosebud and the Little Big Horn. At the Rosebud, the accurate fire from two or three guns would have relieved much of the pressure put on Royall's squadron. During the battle, the squadron commanders had the tendency to pursue the Indians from ridge to ridge. Had this continued, Crazy Horse's braves could have defeated Crook's forces in detail as he later did Custer's. Cannons would have eliminated the need to chase the Indians about the battlefield. With an average range of twelve hundred yards, even the small mountain howitzer could have inflicted casualities on distant ridges. The cavalry then would not have had to place themselves in danger of being ambushed. In the same manner, artillery could have altered the outcome on the Little Big Horn. Two good gun crews would have allowed Custer to withdraw from the village and avoid the fate which befell him and more than two hundred of his men. Canister fire would have inflicted grevious casualities on massed formations such as those which swept over the Seventh. Custer might not have won the battle, but he and many more of his men might have survived.

* * *

These six major battles show the army's inconsistent approach to battle on the plains. Although the army opted to fight the Indian in the winter, the tactics used by the various commanders differed in each engagement. Battles were fought according to individual commanders perceptions about Indian warfare. The absence or presence of artillery vividly illustrates this approach to battle on the plains. Lacking a set of tactical guidelines, success or failure hinged on the personality of each particular commander.

These battles have also shown that artillery was effective when used against the Indian on the plains. Cannon could have changed the course of the Sioux war by significantly altering two major battles. As it was, cannons allowed some units either to meet larger Indian forces in battle and emerge victorious or to remain on the battlefield in spite of the enemy which encircled them. It was said of the Colt revolver that it made all men, large and small, equal. The force of cannon fire brought the smaller army columns of Evans and Miles to a par with the massed Indian forces which faced them.

Light, mobile, artillery was valued by Evans and Miles in their plains battles. That type of weapon was essential for a war of pursuit and maneuver. A different type of engagement and environment necessitated an adjustment in artillery. There were campaigns which resembled a war of position. On these occasions soldiers and Indians struggled and died for a piece of ground that neither side particularly wanted.

ENDNOTES

[1]James W. Dixon, "Across the Plains with General Hancock," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States 8 (1886), pp. 195-198. Francis Heitman lists only one encounter between artillery patrols and Indians. Francis Heitman, Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, 2 vols (Washington, 1903), 2, p. 433.

[2]William H. Leckie, The Military Conquest of the Southern Plains (Norman, 1963), pp. 92-93.

[3]George Custer, Wild Life on the Plains and Horrors of Indian Warfare (St. Louis, 1885), p. 171.

[4]Robert Utley, ed. Life in Custer's Cavalry: Dairies and Letters of Albert and Jenny Barnitz (New Haven, 1977), p. 219.

[5]Ibid., pp. 223-227; Custer, Wild Life on the Plains, pp. 221-225; E.S. Godfrey, "Some Reminiscences, Including the Washita Battle," Cavalry Journal 37 (1928), pp. 492-497.

[6]Carl Rister, "Colonel A.W. Evans' Christman Day Indian Fight (1868)," The Chronicles of Oklahoma 15 (1938), p. 285.

[7]Ibid., pp. 292-293.

[8]Ibid., pp. 293-299.

[9]Ibid., p. 294.

[10]Robert Utley, Frontier Regulars (Bloomington, Indiana, 1973), pp. 152, 154.

[11]Custer, Wild Life on the Plains, pp. 223-224.

[12]Utley, Life in Custer's Cavalry, p. 230; Carl Rister, Border Command, General Phil Sheridan in the West (Norman, 1944), p. 114; Phillip A. Sheridan, Personal Memoirs of P.H. Sheridan, 2 vols. (New York, 1888), 2, p. 320.

[13]Don Rickey, Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay (Norman, 1963), p. 219.

[14]General Alfred Terry to Sheridan, July 4, 1876, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 273.

[15]Utley, Frontier Regulars, p. 99.

[16]Sheridan to Sherman, February 9, 1876, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 284.

[17]Utley, Frontier Regulars, p. 249; John Bourke, On the Border with Crook (Lincoln, 1971), pp. 280-281. Reynolds was court-martialled for misconduct during the campaign and was relieved from command for one year.

[18]John Finerty, War-Path and Bivouac (Norman, 1961), p. 86; "Sioux Indian Expedition," Army and Navy Journal 13, (July 22, 1876), p. 801; Crook's Report, June 19, 1876, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 271. Crook's report can also be found in the Army and Navy Journal, July 1, 1876, pp. 753-754. Finerty was a newspaper man who provided one of the most accurate and objective accounts of the Sioux campaign.

[19]Report of Lieutenant Colonel William Royal, June 18, 1876, in Crook's Report, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 271.

[20]Ibid.; Finerty, War-Path and Bivouac, pp. 89-90.

[21]Crook always maintained that his possession of the battlefield constituted a victory. Others, notably Sherman, believed that Crook had been beaten tactically and strategically. Sherman to Sheridan, February 17, 1877, container 91, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[22]Terry to Sheridan, July 3, 1876, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 271.

[23]Report of Major Marcus Reno in Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1876, p. 477; Robert Hughes, " The Campaign Against the Sioux in 1876," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States 18 (1896), pp. 1-44; Finerty, War-Path and Bivouac, pp. 130-132.

[24]Sheridan to Sherman, August 5, 1876, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 278.

[25]Crook to Sheridan, November 26, 1876, Ibid, Reel 279.

[26]Report of Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie, November 26, 1876, Ibid.

[27]Bourke, On the Border with Crook, p. 393.

[28]Nelson A. Miles, Personal Recollections of General Nelson A. Miles (Chicago, 1896), p. 224.

[29]Nelson A. Miles, Serving the Republic (New York, 1911), pp. 225-226; "Campaigning on the Yellowstone," Army and Navy Journal 14, February 10, 1877, p. 431.

[30]Diary of Captain Simon Snyder, Snyder Papers, Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

[31]Miles, Recollections, p. 228.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Diary of Captain Simon Snyder, Snyder Papers, Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

[34]"General Miles Expedition Against Crazy Horse," Army and Navy Journal 15, March 31, 1877, pp. 541-542; Miles, Recollections, pp. 237-238.

[35]Sherman to Sheridan, February 17, 1877, container 91, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[36]Miles to AG, Washington, D.C., September 16, 1876, LR, Deparment of Dakota, RUSAC, NA.

[37]Annual Report of the Chief of Ordnance- 1876, p. xiii.

[38]Terry to Sheridan, July 4, 1876, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 273.

[39]In an appended report to the Engineer's Report- Department of Dakota- 1876, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 281, First Lieutenant George D. Wallace maintained that the only serious obstacle to wagon movement (and logically wheeled artillery) was numerous crossings of the Rosebud. In a similiar tone, Lieutenant Edward J. McClernand, of Gibbon's Montana column, maintained that nothing along Custer's route would have prevented the inclusion of gatling guns in the Seventh's column. Edward J. McClernand, With the Indian and the Buffalo in Montana, 1870-1878 (Glendale, 1969), p. 47.

[40]Crook to AAG, Military Division of the Missouri, May 6, 1880, File 1716, LR, Records of the Office of the Chief of Ordnance, NA.

[41]George Crook, General George Crook: His Autobiography. Edited by Martin Schmitt (Norman, 1960), p. 146.

CHAPTER V

THE MODOC WAR: THE SIEGE OF THE STRONGHOLD

The Modoc war of 1872-1873 was a major exception to the story of the army chasing fleeing Indian tribes across hill and dell. This confrontation between the white man and the American Indian could more accurately be described as seige warfare. Although there was a pursuit phase to the campaign, most of the actual fighting resembled Vicksburg or Petersburg more than the Washita or Soldier's Creek. This campaign is of special importance as artillery units and weapons played prominent and varied roles in the struggle for the lava beds of northern California. The variety of tasks performed by the artillery units would not have existed had the army possessed the resources and doctrine necessary for the frontier.

The Modoc Indians were part of an extremely diverse California Indian population. Of the Penutian language stock, they were predominantly hunters and gatherers.[1] The arrival of the Europeans had a significant impact on the Modocs, as it did other tribes. Diseases which the Spanish brought from the old world devastated the tribe. The survivors quickly found themselves subservient to the whites and a target for Christian conversion.[2] When the power of Spain and its successor, Mexico, waned, the Modocs cast free from the social and legal fetters imposed by their conquerors.

Relations between the Americans and the Modoc, like Spanish and Mexican-Modoc relations, were not particularly amicable. Prior to the Civil War, white wagon trains bound for California's goldfields often fell prey to Modoc attackers. Immigrant trains moving south from the rapidly filling Oregon territory also were likely victims. The primary objects which the Indians sought were horses. Captured children were also valuable as they could be traded for horses.[3] Retaliation by white settlements for such attacks was swift and often severe. In 1852, for example, a young Indian fighter/hater named Ben Wright succeeded in reducing the Modoc population by half as punishment for the massacre of an Oregon wagon train.

The Civil War induced a new tension between the whites and the Modocs. When the war broke out, pro-Union men, scouring the countryside for Confederate sympathizers, often clashed with renegade Indians. Incidental skirmishing between whites, both Union and Confederate, and the Indians was a weekly occurrence. An unusually severe winter and the resulting starvation among the Indian bands did nothing to lessen the hostility between the two races. By 1864, the Modocs had suffered enough with their numbers reduced to a mere handful, they sought a treaty with the government.[4] In return for fifteen years of annuities and the promise of shops, schools, and mills, the Modocs agreed to settle on a portion of the Klamath Indian reservation. The Senate ratified the treaty in 1866, but it took the Executive branch almost four years to sign the document.[5]

The selection of the Klamath agency as the permanent home of the Modocs was unwise. Much of the discontent which resulted in the outbreak in 1872 began here. The larger Klamath tribe made the Modocs' existence miserable. In return for the "privilege" of residing on the Klamath's

agency, the Modocs were forced to pay tribute. Financial abuse was coupled with personal abuse and the Modocs became second-class citizens even on reservation grounds. The resident Indian agent proved either unwilling or unable to protect the smaller tribe from their Indian antagonists. The government was equally unwilling to furnish the Modocs with a reservation of their own.[5] The lack of funds and the absence of the promised schools and shops prompted one band of Modocs to leave the reservation in 1872.

Led by a sub-chief named Kientpoos, or as the whites called him, Captain Jack, these disgruntled Indians returned to their old hunting grounds in the Lost River region of northern California. The arrival of Jack's band upset the settlers who had started farms and ranches on the vacated Modoc land. A clamor for the Indians' removal soon arose. When repeated requests for the Indians to return to the reservation failed, the agent, Thomas B. Odeneal, asked for military assistance.[6]

On November 29, 1872, Captain James A. Jackson and thirty-eight men of Troop B, First Cavalry, arrived at Jack's camp on Lost River. Jackson first tried to convince the chief and his followers to return to the agency peacefully. On the opposite bank of the river, a group of local citizens was attempting the same task with a second Indian camp. When persuasion failed, Jackson ordered the warriors to lay down their weapons. Scarface Charley, one of Captain Jack's more hot-headed followers, refused to yield his rifle. An attempt to disarm him ignited a volley of rifle fire. A general battle at almost point-blank range erupted in Jack's camp and quickly spread across the river. The brief but bloody exchange ended with both sides withdrawing. Several Indians were killed or wounded, including women and children. Jackson had one man killed and seven

wounded. The cavalry retired to a nearby ranch to care for their wounded, and the Modocs made their way to the lava beds south of Tule Lake.[7]

To Jesse Applegate, a local rancher, the Modoc refuge, later dubbed the Stronghold, was "hell with the fire gone out."[8] At first impression the lava beds were a comparatively level sagebrush plain. Further examination revealed that the plains were criss-crossed with lava ridges, pockmarked with sinkholes, and studded with sharp volcanic rock. A survey in 1933 counted 224 caves, 16 lava craters, and 75 mud craters.

The Stronghold was a land of no value except as a battlefield. The terrain of the lava beds decidedly favored the combatant on the defensive. Movement by horse was impossible. Individuals on foot could advance over the rocky ground, but only at a snail's pace. Such movement made them sitting ducks for their adversaries rifles. For the defenders, concealment and protection from enemy fire was excellent. An attacker would pay a very high price for any measure of victory on that barren field. Jackson's abortive attempt at arresting Jack's band had stampeded the Indians to this veritable rock fortress.

The fight between the First Cavalry and the Modocs on Lost River brought the lumbering mechanism of the army into action. The process of gathering troops began on December 2. The first unit to reinforce Jackson at Crawley's ranch was Captain Reuben F. Bernard's Troop G, First Cavalry. By December 11, Captain David Perry's F troop of the same regiment had arrived also. Major John Green of the First reached the ranch the same day and assumed command of the three cavalry units. Major Edward Mason joined the cavalry with Companies B and C, Twenty-First Infantry, on December 21. Lieutenant Colonel Frank Wheaton, the district commander, assumed command of the forces at the ranch the same day.

Lacking adequate transportation resources, it had taken three weeks for the army to assemble this small force in northern California.[10]

Although the necessary forces were now at the scene, Wheaton did not immediately attack the Modoc position. After a long, hard look at the Stronghold, Wheaton realized that he needed artillery. His Civil War experience as a division commander led him to believe that cannons could save many lives by eliminating a great deal of skirmishing.[11] The idea of using cannons seemed somewhat absurd to some of the troops who had recently seen action in Arizona.

These troopers knew that once the Indians had been located, the soldiers could simply go in and whip them.[12] These men failed to recognize that the Modocs were not Apaches. The Modocs did not range over several thousand miles of mountains and deserts as the Apache did. As important, the Stronghold was not like the terrain of Arizona. Although the Modoc warriors numbered less than one hundred, the lava fortress they defended more than compensated for their small numbers. Lugging artillery around Arizona might have been a waste of time, but cannons were needed for the Stronghold.

Despite the objections from some of his subordinates, Wheaton stood fast and waited for the battery of mountain howitzers. On January 16, the cannons arrived, escorted by Jesse Applegate and a militia group. Lieutenant William H. Miller was selected to command the guns. Several cavalrymen were detailed to form the gun crews, which Miller put through a short but rigorous period of drill. The resulting efficiency was heartening to Wheaton and encouraging to the volunteers who had joined his command.[13] With his troops and supporting artillery at hand, Wheaton was ready. January 17, was selected as the day of the attack.

According to Wheaton's plan, the soldiers would attack Jack's position from two directions. Major Edward Mason's battalion of the Twenty-First Infantry, a group of Oregon volunteers, Captain Perry with 150 cavalrymen, and Miller's cannons were to advance on the Stronghold from the west. Captain Bernard and two troops of the First Cavalry, supported by a group of Klamath Indians, were ordered to move in from the east. Wheaton hoped that the two groups would join their southern flanks, cutting off any retreat to the south. He doubted that the Indians would venture onto the lake which bordered the Stronghold on the north. After joining south of the Stronghold, the two forces would then sweep across the Stronghold. The attack was to be launched after Miller's guns fired three shells.[14]

Unfortunately, the three cannon blasts from Miller's battery were about the only part of the operation that went according to plan. In moving into position prior to the attack, Perry's command was fired on by Modoc outposts on a bluff to the southwest of the Stronghold. The element of surprise, as far as the western forces were concerned, was lost. Bernard's command, moving through a dense fog, overshot their attack position and moved much closer to the Modocs than had been planned. Part of Bernard's contingent surprised an Indian sentry and a short, crisp firefight followed.[15] The element of surprise by the eastern wing had vanished also. The Indians, therefore, had almost a full day's notice of the troop positions and the direction of attack.

Wheaton's luck did not appreciably change on the day of the attack. The troops awoke on the morning of the seventeenth to find the battlefield completely obscured by a dense fog. In the dim dawn light, Mason's soldiers took six hours to cover the first of the three miles to the

Stronghold. Although the Modocs probably could not see the troops in the fog, their knowledge of the terrain allowed them to guess the general attack route. They began firing well before the soldiers came within effective rifle range. Any casualities the Indian bullets inflicted were more accidental than deliberate. However, the firing did have an affect on the advancing troops. Moving over unfamiliar ground, with wretched visibility, hampered by uncomfortably close bullets, the troops began to waver.

Bernard was having no greater success on the eastern side of the Stronghold. Visibility likewise hampered his attempts to move his men forward. The night that his soldiers had spent among the lava boulders had sapped any enthusiasm they had had about fighting Indians. The Klamath Indians were of no help and could not be found for a part of the battle. Periodic casualities made it even more difficult for Bernard to pry his men away from protective cover and move them toward an enemy they could not see.

By the mid-afternoon the fog had lifted. However, Wheaton's predicament did not correspondingly improve. The Modoc rifle pits were still not visible, but the soldiers were. Casualities began to mount among the soldiers and officers. When Perry was wounded, he men practically refused to advance any further. Even though a junction of sorts had been made on the lake or northern flank, there was still a lot of ground to cover. Frustrated at his luck and the performance of his men, Wheaton decided to call off the attack.[16] The first battle for the Stronghold had been a dismal failure.

In general, the attack failed for several reasons. Troops moved, both on the day preceeding the attack, and on the day of the attack, with

extreme timidity. Bernard, Mason, and Green had tremendous difficulty in getting their men to advance. The fog turned every obscure object into a lurking, deadly Indian. The whiz of bullets or the sharp stacatto report of richochetting shots intensified the troopers apprehensions. The volunteers, who had accompanied the western force, quickly lost the cocky enthusiasm they had prior to the battle. They were among the first to counsel a re-examination of the problem from a safer distance.

By constrast, the Modocs managed their defenses exceptionally well. Having the advantage of interior lines of movement and communications, they could easily shift their few warriors to threatened points. Rock fortifications afforded them excellent protection from the soldiers few random shots. They were probably most vulnerable to the cannons, but the guns did not play the role that had been hoped for.

Most accounts, both eyewitness and historical, maintain that the fog effectively neutralized the mountain howitzers.[17] The three rounds fired to signal the attack, and possibly a few more were all that the cannons contributed to the battle. Wheaton silenced his cannons because he was afraid that they might do more damage to the friendly forces than the enemy. Some participants maintained that cannon shells actually landed in the rear of Bernard's eastern forces.[18]

Undoubtedly, the fog completely eliminated the howitzers as a tool of war on that morning. In the nineteenth century, cannons were still aimed by actually sighting the tube on the target. If the target could not be seen, the guns were useless. The supposition that shells landed in the rear of Bernard's attacking soldiers is more subject to question.

If the shells fell behind Bernard's line, it was only due to a radical quirk of ballistics. All accounts agreed that Miller began firing

from 6:30 to 7:00 in the morning. At this time, the forces were the greatest distance apart. There was a consensus that the cannons fired for only a short time before Wheaton silenced them. Therefore, the two groups could not have advanced a significant distance before the guns stopped firing. Mason's position was at least two and one-half miles west of the Stronghold. Bernard was no closer, in the morning, than a mile from Jack's warriors. For the shells to pass over the Stronghold and Bernard's troops, they would have had to cover more than three miles. The maximum effective range of the mountain howitzer was slightly more than one thousand yards.[19] To achieve the maximum possible range for the cannon, the gun tube would have to be elevated to approximately forty-five degrees. This could be done by burying the trail of the gun or cutting it off. There was no reference to Miller's digging holes in which to lower the trail. Subsequent photographs of the cannons show that the carriage trail was still attached to the guns.[20]

One other point raises doubts that the shells from Miller's guns landed behind Bernard's troopers. The fuzes for the 12-pounder howitzer had a time range of from one to five seconds. The maximum fuze setting for the cannon's shells in most manuals was three and one-half seconds.[21] Even with a five second fuze, the shell would have exploded long before it passed over Bernard's lines three miles away. There is no reason to believe that Miller used an unorthodox fuze setting or altered the elevation of the gun.

Rattled, exhausted, and more than a little frightened, Bernard's men undoubtedly heard the reverberations of the exploding shells. Their minds then interpreted the sounds in the most threatening way, that is falling behind them. Being unfamiliar with artillery, they did not realize that

it was physically impossible for the cannon's shells to be falling behind them. In the first battle for the Stronghold, the cannons were ineffective for the same reason the soldiers were. The gunners had to see the enemy to hit him.

Wheaton and his officers insisted that the ineffectiveness of the cannons was due to the weather, not the guns or the gunners. In this, he was probably trying to protect Miller and his men from any undue criticism. In his report to Brigadier General E.R.S. Canby, the commander of the Department of the Columbia, Wheaton maintained that he could defeat the Modocs if he had more men and "a free use of mortar batteries."[22] Even Bernard, who initially had been skeptical about the artillery, agreed. However, he suggested that the howitzers might be more effectively used from the east side of the Stronghold.[23]

After the battle, Wheaton fully comprehended the difficulties of prying the Indians from their lava fortress. He needed fresh replacements for his injured and shaken soldiers. He also needed artillery which could arch or lob a shell into the Modocs' rifle pits and caves. Unfortunately, Wheaton was never able to use the understanding he had gained. Canby, disgusted at the reverse suffered by his field commander, replaced him with Colonel Alvan C. Gillem. In addition to Canby's actions, Washington interceded to prevent any second attack on the Indian bastion. The decision was made to form a peace commission, which hopefully would be able to talk Jack and his people out of the lava beds without further loss of life.

The idea of a peace commission originated with a group of Oregonians. However, Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano was responsible for its creation. He believed that such a commission could resolve the Modoc

war. With the approval of President Ulysses S. Grant, Delano began to organize the group. The task of the commissioners would be to investigate the causes of the outbreak, stop its spread, and, if possible, relocate the Modocs on their own reservation. Interpersonal squabbles among likely candidates and the Modocs' general distrust of white men made the selection process difficult at best.[24] After two months of discussions and maneuvering, the commission was formed. It was composed of Reverend Eleaser Thomas, a Methodist clergyman from Petaluma, California, Alfred Meacham, who had been the agent to the Modocs in 1869, and Brigadier General E.R.S. Canby.

The army had not been completely inactive during the period when the commission was being created. When Canby learned of Wheaton's repulse at the lava beds, he immediately ordered a company of infantry and a battery of artillery from his Department of the Columbia to proceed to northern California. Two artillery batteries and two infantry companies from Major General John Schofield's Department of California were also dispatched to the troubled area.[25] Once again, inadequate transportation interposed to make the army's job difficult.

For Captain Marcus P. Miller's Battery E, Fourth Artillery, the trip to the lava beds was almost as physically demanding as the subsequent campaign. Miller's battery left Fort Stevens, Oregon, on January 21, 1873. It moved by rail to Roseburg, Oregon, and then walked the remaining 140 miles to reinforce Gillem's command. On the march the men either floundered in the mud, or slept in the snow. The few wagons that accompanied them bogged down in the mud, on the average, once a mile. The troops were constantly unloading the wagons, pushing them out of the mud, and then reloading the supplies and equipment into them. For the

battery, only recently arrived from the east coast, the trek was an unpleasant introduction into Indian warfare.[26]

Other units found the trip to the lava beds equally difficult. Lieutenant Thomas Wright's Company E, Twelfth Infantry fought snow drifts six feet deep to join Gillem's forces.[27] Captain Charles B. Throckmorton, commanding Battery M, Fourth Artillery, described the country he was traversing as the wildest he had seen. He wrote his mother, "I am sure West Virginia is civilization in comparison."[28] In spite of the hardships, the troops were generally anxious to get to the scent of action and fight the Modocs.

In addition to the troops from his department, Schofield sent four Coehorn mortars to the camp that Gillem had established west of the Stronghold. By the time the peace commission began its negotiations with the Indians, the strength and armament of the army in the lava beds had been increased considerably. The artillery, represented by batteries A, E, K, and M, furnished 8 of the 31 officers and 226 of the 609 enlisted men of the expedition.[29] Even though these new units had reinforced the cordon of soldiers surrounding the Indians, the emphasis was still on a peaceful settlement.

For the men who comprised the peace commission, efforts to resolve the Modocs' problems without further fighting were taxing and often unproductive. It was considered a major accomplishment whenever the Modocs agreed even to talk to one of the commissioners. A partial reason for this was that some of the Modocs did not want a settlement. Those who had committed depredations following the Lost River fight feared the white man's justice. Even those who sought peace were always aware of the soldier's presence, and some suspected a conspiracy to wipe them out.

After many minor conferences and an equal number of disappointments, the Modocs agreed to meet with all the commissioners. A conference on neutral ground was scheduled for April 11, Good Friday. The commissioners, now numbering four with the addition of L.S. Dyar, and the interpreters, Frank Riddle and his wife Toby, were to come unarmed.

At about ten o'clock that morning Canby, Meacham, Thomas, Dyar, and the Riddles set out for a council tent which had been erected at the meeting place. Riddle and his wife had learned from some of Jack's followers that the Modoc chief planned to kill the commissioners. When apprised of this information, Canby and Thomas discounted it. Meacham and Dyar did not. However, for these men personal pride compelled them to go to the meeting dispite convictions that they would never return.[30] Many of the officers in Gillem's camp were also apprehensive about a possible Modoc conspiracy.

At 11:00 that morning, the signal station near the camp received a report that Major Mason's camp on the east side of the Stronghold had been attacked. Captain Throckmorton, as well as other officers who were watching the council area, immediately rejoined his unit. Five minutes later, the signal station reported that the commissioners were being fired upon. Gillem order Miller, the senior captain in the camp, to take a force and rescue the commissioners. By the time Miller's group had covered the mile distance to the meeting area, the Indians had fled. Behind, they left the dead, stripped bodies of Canby and Thomas. Meacham was seriously wounded. Dyar and Riddle had fled the council area when the Modocs opened fire. Riddle's wife, a Modoc herself, remained at the council tent but was spared by the conspirators. Her presence probably kept Meacham from being killed as Canby and Thomas had been.

Upon reaching the tent, Miller directed some of his men to tend to the bodies and render all possible medical aid to Meacham. He then pushed part of his men a short distance beyond the meeting area. However, a message of recall was soon issued. Miller knew that he was exceeding his orders in pursuing the Indians and that an actual attack on the enemy required preparation. Returning to the council tent, the soldiers improvised litters and transported the dead and wounded back to camp.[32]

In murdering the commissioners, the Modocs effectively closed any avenue for a peaceful resolution to their problems. Even pro-Indian factions in the east conceded that the Indians should be punished for their treachery. Punishment was a mild term compared with what the army wanted to do to the villanous murders of Canby. The general was respected and liked by most of his peers and subordinates. The bitterness directed at the Modocs was therefore intense and wide spread. Initially Sherman advised Schofield to leave no one alive in the Modoc camp, but he later amended that drastic order. In Gillem's camp, officers and men were calling for the severest retaliation. However, they did not modify their ideas as Sherman had.[33] Three days after the murders of Canby and Thomas, Gillem was ready to dispense justice on those fortified in the Stronghold.

Gillem's plan for taking the Stronghold was a carbon copy of Wheaton's tactics of the previous January. Mason with three companies of the Twenty-First Infantry, two troops of the First Cavalry, the mountain howitzers, and a force of Warm Springs Indians would advance from the east. Major John Green would attack from the west with three batteries of artillery, two companies of the Twelfth Infantry, and Perry's troop of the First Cavalry. Captain Evan Thomas' Battery A, Fourth Artillery, would remain in camp with the Coehorn mortars packed for quick

movement. Ultimately the two forces would form a junction south of the lava fortress, leaving the lake to the north as the only avenue of escape.[34] Gillem's attacking force was twice as large as Wheaton's had been. In addition, it contained the mortars what Wheaton felt were necessary to blast the tenacious defenders from their refuge.

Before morning, Mason advanced as close as possible to the Stronghold. He posted the infantry battalion on his right, with its right flank resting on the lake. The two troops of cavalry, fighting on foot, occupied the center of the line. The Warm Springs Indians, numbering about seventy, were on the exposed left flank. Mason placed the howitzers behind the infantry. Second Lieutenant Edward S. Chapin commanded the gun crews, which came from Thomas' Battery A. Mason's night advance was intended to get close to the Modocs without needessly sacrificing his men.[35] The extreme caution and concern he exhibited in this initial movement characterized his actions in the following days.

As Mason's soldiers were cautiously moving into position, Perry's troopers were quietly securing a high point on the shore of Tule Lake called Hovey Point. Green had ordered Perry to this part of the lake's shore to prevent the Modocs from slipping around the northern flank of his advancing units. At the same time, Green placed Captain Miller in charge of the foot units. In the course of the following battle, Green a cavalry officer, spent most of his time with Perry's unit, while Miller directed the efforts of three artillery batteries and two infantry companies.

When the various units filed out of Gillem's camp on the morning of April 15, Miller's own Battery E, under First Lieutenant Peter Leary, led the way. Miller probably wanted his advanced unit, the one most

likely to hit the Modocs first, to be one upon which he could depend. Under Miller's control, the column moved from Gillem's camp to Perry's position on Hovey Point. From there Miller wheeled it ninety degrees to the south and at the same time began forming it for battle. When the units completed their flanking movement, Miller's line of battle was Battery E on the exposed right flank, Throckmorton's Battery M, Battery K, under Lieutenant George Harris, Company G, commanded by Lieutenant C.P. Eagan, and finally Lieutenant Thomas Wright's Company E. Perry's cavalrymen were on the extreme left at Hovey Point.[36]

Battery E was the first unit to draw fire from Modoc rifles. In fact, the defenders opened up on the western forces before Miller could deploy them into a modified skirmish order. Initially, Miller tried to advance his right flank, but the artillerymen were met by a stiff fire which forced them to pull back. He then shifted his right down the bluff he occupied and was able to advance about one hundred yards without subjecting his soldiers to a hail of bullets. With most of his units firmly engaged, Green ordered the foot soldiers to advance on the Indians' positions. This effort gained a few hundred yards before being checked by a cross-fire from northern and southern positions in the Stronghold.[37]

While the foot troops were playing hide and seek with Modoc bullets, the cavalry at Hovey Point sat munching hardtack and watching the show. They could see individual soldiers jump up, run a few feet, and fling themselves to the ground before one of Captain Jack's riflemen put them down permanently. It was not until mid-afternoon that Green ordered the cavalrymen forward to secure the left flank of Miller's advancing line.

In the early afternoon, Green once again ordered Miller to charge with his infantry and artillery. Miller accordingly directed his men

forward to the first ridge held by the enemy riflemen. The entire line responded. Eagan rushed forward with his company. Wright, waving his hat, cheered on his men. Leary literally led his men into the forward Modoc rifle pits. A reporter for the New York Herald call the attack "the most brillant event of the day."[38] Gillem, similiarly impressed, called it "a beautiful charge."[39]

With the infantry in good forward positions, Thomas brought his battery forward. The battery, its pack animals loaded with the mortars, arrived at Perry's position about 4:30 in the afternoon. Under sporadic sniper fire, the men hurriedly emplaced the 160 pound mortars.[40] The first round fired was more of a threat to the soldiers than to the Indians. Instead of arching high into the sky and landing on the enemy's position, it fell a scant fifteen feet in front of Perry's troops. Perry shouted to his unnerved men to lie flat. When the sputtering shell exploded seconds later, there were fortunately no casualities.[41] The artillerymen reloaded and with the third shell ranged the Indian defenses. Just before dark, Thomas repositioned his weapons and began a nightlong bombardment of the Stronghold. To conserve ammunition, the firing was limited to one shell every fifteen minutes.[42]

For Green's western forces, it had been a long, demanding, dangerous day. This was not the case with the eastern troops under Major Mason. Gillem's plan, as Wheaton's had, called for Mason to extend his line from the lake to a point south of the Stronghold. In the course of the battle, Mason's left was to connect with Green's right. Mason, however, had extended his line only one-half mile. He later claimed that his positions were within four hundred yards of the Modoc camp. Gillem, after the battle, checked this and found the distance to be more like seven hundred

yards in stead of four hundred.[43] Irrespective of the distance, Mason's command was in no position to flank the Stronghold.

While Green's soldiers were scrambling across open ground under Modoc fire, Mason directed Chapin to open fire with his howitzers. The young officer ordered his men into action. The gunner's efforts were to no avail as the guns were too far away to do any good.[44] With a three second fuze, the maximum effective range of Chapin's guns was approximately 800 yards. If Mason's lines were 700 or 800 yards from the enemy's lines, as Gillem contended, then the shells were only reaching the outer edge of the rocky fortress.[45] As Chapin's cannonade was not reaching the Modoc defenses, Mason was certainly farther from the Indians than the 400 yards he claimed.

This brief cannon fire was generally the extent of Mason's participation in the first day's fighting. Later in response to criticism that he had not done his utmost in advancing, he replied that "it was no part of my plan to unnecessarily expose anyone."[46] In fact, his troops were so well protected that the Modocs could not see them. As Mason did not significantly advance his men the first day, and as his cannons were too far away to be effective, his net contribution to any progress made that day was zero.

The following morning, Gillem resumed his efforts to take the Stronghold. That day's main objective was to link Miller's Battery E with Mason's Warm Springs Indians. Thomas' mortars and Chapin's howitzers, which had been relocated during the night, opened fire to support the attempted union. When the mortar shells began arching toward the Modocs, Green directed Miller to reach out with his unit and try to make contact with the other half of the expedition.

Taking personal command of his battery for the dangerous venture, Miller led his men across the rock-strewn ground. Every rock became a potential if temporary shelter for the men from the galling enemy fire. The open spaces between the rocks were the killing zones where life could summarily be snuffed out by an adversary seldom seen. Slowly, Miller's men made their way across the southern flank of the Stronghold. The soldiers did not advance in open skirmish line as they would have had this been the Civil War. Instead, Miller divided his troopers into groups. While one group provided some sort of covering fire, the other group rushed madly forward to a point of comparative safety. The groups then reversed roles and the rear group went sprinting forward while their comrades blazed away with their muskets. In this manner, the artillerymen covered a considerable distance with few casualities.[47]

The frenzied rush made by the artillerymen was in vein. As he had the day before, Mason made no serious effort to make contact with the soldiers of the western contingent. Indeed, Mason was more concerned with trying to affect a junction with Green on the northern or lake flank of the Stronghold instead of the southern side. Mason's failure to fulfill his part of Gillem's game plan almost cost the struggling battery heavy casualities.

In trying to connect with the Warm Springs Indians, Miller had to extend the distance between Battery E and the rest of his foot soldiers. In the noise and confusion of battle, the other units closed their lines thus increasing the distance between them and Battery E. Miller, seeing his flanks totally unprotected, ordered his men to close to the left. A portion of the battery did not hear the order amidst the cracking of the rifles and as a result were cut off by the Modocs.

Seeing their predicament, Miller dodged a storm of bullets which had already killed one soldier and joined the beleagured band. He ordered them to fortify their tiny position as well as possible. Miller probably planned to remain in the shelter of their make-shift fort until the enemy's fare slackened. His plans were quickly changed when the Modoc fire increased and a few stray mortar shells fell uncomfortably close to his position. He ordered his men to make a dash to the safety of Throckmorton's battery. His losses in this frantic bid for security were comparatively light considering the proximity of the enemy. Three of his men were killed and two wounded before the group reached the sanctuary of friendly lines.[48]

At the end of the second day of battle, the two wings of the expedition had not closed off the southern flank of the Stronghold. Ironically, the forces had effected a junction of sorts along the lake, thus cutting the Modocs off from their fresh water supply. As with the first day, the majority of the casualities occurred among the western units. The artillery batteries on the right flank of Green's battle line suffered most of the casualities.

As darkness fell on the battlefield, the mortars and howitzers resumed their nighttime bombardment. The effectiveness of this shelling became a point of considerable controversy. Some participants maintained that the cannonade was virtually worthless. On one occasion, the Indians mockingly pointed their gun into the air and fired, in sarcastic reference to the cannons. Private Charles B. Hardin, who was with Bernard's troops east of the Stronghold, claimed that the cannon fire "did little execution." He suggested that the only beneficial effect the cannons had was to take away the Indians' feeling of security. The

Modocs simply did not understand the "double shooting" guns.[49]

Some observers, however, said that the guns did significant damage to the Stronghold and Jack's defenders. A correspondent for the San Francisco Chronicle wrote, "It is a magnificent sight, the flight and explosion of the shells, and wild consternation to the Modocs."[50] Rancher Jesse Applegate, a sometimes observer of the army's erratic performance, saw one direct hit on the cave where the Modoc camp was situated. After the explosion, the rocks were swarming with wild Indians. A New York Herald reporter told his readers:

> The shells began to play the devil with the Indians. . . after the impact of one shell twenty to thirty Indians ran to the top of the rocks yelling and cussing. One of the harassed defenders made a speech in tolerably good English, calling the soldiers every name in their limited vocabulary.[51]

The exploding shells had more than just a moral effect on Jack's band. One Indian picked up a mortar shell and tried to pry the fuze out with his teeth. The detonation of the shell terminated his attempts, his life, and that of a companion standing beside him. Jack had little difficulty holding the soldiers at bay for some time. The blue-coated whites seemed more and more hesitant to attack his warriors. Even the loss of fresh water was not critical as water could be had from the ice within many of the lava caves. However, he could not protect his people from the cannons. The longer the cannons fired, the more his people suffered. During the night of April 16, Jack decided to abandon the Stronghold.

Keeping some men in his camp to harass the soldiers, Jack led his remaining warriors and women and children south out of the Stronghold. A fusillade of bullets from his rear guard did not hit any soldiers, but it did convince at least some of them that the Modocs were still

barricaded in their lava bastion.[52] When the soldiers warily moved forward on the morning of April 17, they found the Stronghold abandoned. They had taken the formidable fortress, but it was an empty victory as their quarry had fled.

For that small part of the regular army now encamped in Jack's old position, the three day contest for the lava fortress was a bloody but futile effort. Major Green's western command had six men killed and many more wounded. Mason's soldiers, barricaded and therefore useless, had only one casuality. Mason's failure to meet Miller's soldiers in the south allowed the Modocs to escape on the night of the second day.

Thomas' mortars, Chapin's howitzers, and especially the foot batteries of Harris, Throckmorton, and Miller contributed significantly to the effort from the western side of the enemys' bastion. The artillery units had sustained more than their share of the casualities. Three of the six slain were artillerymen. Seven of the thirteen wounded came from the four batteries of the Fourth Artillery.

The foot soldiers under Miller's direction had pressed the Indian defenders. Hesitant, afraid, at times even argumentative, they nevertheless crawled and clawed their way to the enemys' rifle positions. However, it was the mortars and howitzers which forced Jack to yield his fortress. He knew the soldiers would, in time, hesitate, possibly even flee, and if not, die when struck by Indian bullets. The cannons, however, and their killing bullets were impervious to anything he or his warriors could do. When the shells did kill, the spectacle brought pure terror to those who witnessed it. The mortars and howitzers had chased Jack and his band from the Stronghold on the night of April 16.

Only one battery, Thomas' A battery, fought according to the accepted doctrine of the time. The reduction of a fortification by shellfire was properly the duty of the artillery. The fact that the defenders were Indians and not trained professional soldiers was of little importance. The actions of Miller's units were beyond the accepted doctrine. Lacking sufficient manpower, Schofield had converted artillerymen into infantrymen. His actions constituted a temporary solution to what was hoped would be a temporary problem. Fortunately, the batteries under Miller's control performed well in this altered status .

Jack's flight had ended the siege phase of the Modoc war, although Gillem and his troops did not know this. For all the disappointed and discouraged regulars knew, the devilish Indians had fled to a new bastion from which they would have to be evicted. That effort would undeniably cost many lives. The army had captured the ground but not the prey. Jack and his elusive fighters were alive and dangerous. More battles would have to be fought and more lives would have to be spent before the Modoc war was over.

ENDNOTES

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[10]Ibid., p. 160; Murray, The Modocs and Their War, p. 109.

[11]Captain Reuben F. Bernard to Major John Green, January 10, 1873, Letters Relating to the Modoc Expedition- Entry 860 (hereinafter Letter-Modoc), RUSAC, NA.

[12]Richard Dillon, ed., William Henry Boyle's Personal Observations on the Conduct of the Modoc War (Los Angeles, 1959), p. 19.

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[15]Charles B. Hardin, Manuscript on the Modoc War, Hardin Papers, Order of the Indian War Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

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[19]J.G. Benton, Ordnance and Gunnery, pp. 517-518.

[20]Photograph number 111-SC-83686, Still Picture Branch, Audio Visual Archives Division, National Archives and Record Service, Washington, D.C.

[21]Benton, Ordnance and Gunnery, pp. 517-518.

[22]Wheaton to Canby, January 19, 1873, LR, RAGO, Microcopy 666, Reel 20.

[23]43d Cong., 1st sess., House Exec. Doc. 122, p. 63.

[24]Dillon, Burnt-Out Fires, p. 190; Murray, The Modocs and Their War, p. 150.

[25]Canby to AAG, House Exec. Doc. 122, p. 46.

[26]San Francisco Chronicle, February 19, 1873, p. 1; Miller, Report of Operations, June 22, 1873, LR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

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[34]Gillem, Report of Operations since April 11, April 20, 1873, LR, RAGO, NA. Gillem's report was reprinted in the Army and Navy Journal 10, April 26, 1873 , p. 585.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Miller, Report of Operations, June 22, 1873, LR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[37]New York Herald, May 7, 1873, p. 5. The Herald's reporter was with Miller's battery for most of the battle.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Gillem, Report of Operations since April 11, April 20, 1873, LR RAGO, NA.

[40]San Francisco Chronicle, April 17, 1873, p. 3.

[41]FitzGerald, "The Modoc War," p. 514.

[42]44th Cong. Senate Special Session, Senate Exec.Doc. 1, p. 7.

[43]Ibid., p. 8.

[44]Hardin, Manuscript on the Modoc War, Hardin Papers, Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

[45]This is based on a fuze setting of three seconds with shell. The howitzer had a greater range with shot.

[46]Erwin N. Thompson, Modoc War: Its Military History and Topography (Sacremento, 1971), p. 73.

[47]San Francisco Chronicle, April 17, 1873, p. 3; New York Herald, May 7, 1873, p. 5.

[48]Miller, Report of Operations, June 22, 1873, LR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[49]Glassley, Pacific Northwest Indian Wars, p. 194; Hardin, Manuscript on the Modoc War, Hardin Papers, Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

[50]San Francisco Chronicle, April 17, 1873, p. 3.

[51]New York Herald, May 7, 1873, p. 5

[52]Miller, Report of Operations, June 22, 1873, LR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA. Most of the firing was into the lines of the artillery batteries who were on the southern flank and therefore closest to the escape route.

CHAPTER VI

THE MODOC WAR:

PURSUIT

The first phase of the Modoc war had been a seige war. The second part of the struggle was a war of pursuit. In this respect, the campaign fit the usual pattern of conflicts between the red man and his white antagonists. With less than 100 men, the Modocs had performed well in the role of defender. The army's casualities were almost six times their own. The warriors of Captain Jack's fugitive band were equally adept at the game of cat and mouse which best described the second part of the Modoc war. The problem was that it was often difficult to decide who was the cat and who was the mouse.

The first task in search and destroy operations is to find the enemy. To achieve this, Colonel Alvin Gillem sent Perry's cavalry troop on a circuitous scout of the lava flows south of the Stronghold. While First Cavalry troopers cautiously combed the rocks for any sign of Indians, the rest of the expedition was distributed between Gillem's camp and the Stronghold. Gillem had no intention of allowing the Modoc leader to reenter his old fortress. When Jack had been located, these soldiers would once again, reluctantly, march toward the enemy.

Although the new Modoc camp was hard to find, the enemy warriors had no difficulty in finding tempting targets for harassing attacks. One group was able to avoid patrols and pickets and fire into Gillem's camp.

They apparently were trying to lure the soldiers into attacking them. They soon realized that it would take a great deal of prodding to get the regulars to advance over the volcanic landscape into their rifles. Becoming bolder, a few Modocs attacked a supply train travelling between the Stronghold and the main camp. Lieutenant Leary and a handful of men held off their attackers until a relief detachment of twenty men from Battery A came to their rescue. The Indians continued to pester the column despite the reinforcements. A well placed shell from one of Thomas' mortars ended their harassment of the supply train.[1]

Ultimately, David McKay, the leader of the Warm Springs Indians reported that he had located the Modoc camp four miles south of the old Stronghold.[2] With the location of Jack's band now known, Gillem once again planned to move against his opponents. As the country was every bit as rugged as the old battleground, Gillem wanted to know if there were good positions from which the mortars and howitzers could support a new attack. After some consultation with Major Green, a reconaissance of the area was ordered.[3] Captain Evan Thomas, who had commanded the mortars was the logical officer to lead the patrol and make any determination concerning artillery positions. Thomas' mission was not to attack the Indians. If he made contact with the Modocs, he was to withdraw.[4]

On Saturday morning, April 26, Thomas reinforced reconaissance patrol left Gillem's camp. The patrol consisted of Thomas' own Battery A, Battery K under Lieutenant Harris, and Company E, Twelfth Infantry under the command of Lieutenant Thomas Wright. The Warm Springs Indians were ordered to leave their camp at the same time and join with Thomas' patrol in examining the area south of the Stronghold. Lieutenant Arthur Cranston although not a member of any of the units accompanied the patrol. His

recent studies at the Artillery School and his service with mortars gave him a working knowledge of the weapons and their emplacement.[5] The party totalled sixty-four officers and men. Four civilians accompanied the soldiers in the capacities of guides and packers.

The distance from the main camp to the search area, a place called the Sand Buttes, was about four miles. Under normal conditions, the march could be made in about two hours. Not wanting to be caught in a trap, Thomas moved his men at a snail's pace. He had no difficulty in keeping the pace slow. Every man began sweating once the group left the comparative safety of camp. The Modocs were treacherous devils and the men's anxiety grew with every yard placed between them and their camp.

During the march, Wright's company was deployed as skirmishers. The artillery batteries followed in a column of twos. As the morning wore on and the tension mounted, the infantrymen began to cluster together.[6] Any advantage they might have offered in terms of security evaporated. Repeated attempts by Wright and Thomas to get the men to spread out failed. Cranston, at the rear of the column with Bernard Semig, a civilian physician, had similiar luck in keeping flank security. The men tended to close back upon the column and not cover the ridges which paralleled the line of march. By noon Thomas' patrol reached its objective. The men rested and began eating lunch. Thomas struck out to climb the butte and signal Gillem's camp. Security was non-existent.

While Thomas, Harris, and two signal men began climbing the sand butte, Wright ordered two other men to a rock outcropping east of the sand hill to act as sentries. The two men never made it. As they approached the rocks, Modoc riflemen opened fire on them from the very rocks they were to use as their outpost. Within minutes, Thomas' entire

command was under fire from the north, east, and south. Knowing he was to withdraw if attacked, Thomas ordered Wright to secure a ridge to the west and cover their retreat. Cranston volunteered to take five men and dislodge the Indians in the rocks to the north. Thomas and the remaining men began a slow withdrawl in the direction that Wright had been sent.[7]

Wright and seven or eight of his men began moving to the ridge 600 or 700 yards in the distance. At this crucial moment, the bulk of Wright's company panicked and fled toward camp. Casting aside anything that might slow their headlong flight, the terrified infantrymen deserted their commander and those comrades who chose to remain and fight. The sight of the unnerved men fleeing in disorder panicked some of the artillerymen, and a few joined in the senseless scramble. Ironically, these terrified soldiers ran into McKay's Warm Springs Indians who had heard the firing and were also heading for the ridge west of the sand buttes. In their hysteria, the troopers fired on the Indian allies and checked any efforts on McKay's part to join Thomas and his beseiged followers.

Numbering less than ten men, Wright's tiny band was not strong enough to secure the ridge as Thomas ordered. The handful of infantrymen were cut down by a small group of Modocs who had shifted their positions to check any retreat of the soldiers to the west. Thomas, Harris, and what was left of the two batteries finally made it to a hollow at the base of the ridge. When Thomas shouted to locate Wright, he received a volley of rifle fire in reply. Deciding that any dash for safety would result in the piecemeal destruction of his small force, Thomas decided to stand and fight. He told his men that "this was as good a place to die as any."[8] Ultimately surrounded on all sides, the small knot of artillerymen were virtually blasted apart.[9]

Thomas' command had taken almost five hours to march from their camp to the sand buttes. At about one thirty in the afternoon, the hysterical soldiers who had bolted from Wright's company began to straggle into camp. They had covered the same distance in slightly more than an hour. At first, the accounts of Thomas' plight were discounted by Gillem as incoherent ramblings.[10] However, as the firing in the south continued, Gillem grew anxious and finally ordered out relief parties from his camp and Mason's camp in the Stronghold.[11]

Green led the group from Gillem's camp. Along the way he met Miller and Throckmorton who were bringing reinforcements from Mason's camp. Even though time was of the essence, Green did not push his soldiers any faster than Thomas had that morning. By the time the rescuers had arrived in the vicinity of Thomas' fight, the firing had stopped and the sun had long since set in the west. Amazingly, Green decided to fortify his command and await daylight before making a search for survivors.[12] For the wounded of Thomas' patrol that decision meant a night of hell. Hiding in crevices or holes in the rock, the survivors mistook the noise made by Green's troops for Modocs searching for new victims. Not answering calls from the other soldiers for fear it was an Indian trick, the wounded spent a terrifying and painful night among the volcanic rock.

In the morning, search parties emerged from their small rock forts. During the night, a few of Thomas' men, crazed by thirst and pain, wandered into Green's position. They were unable to lead others to their wounded comrades. During the day, most of Thomas' command, or what was left of it was found. Cranston and his small band could not be found. Rescue did not mean relief for those who were wounded, as the relief column had neglected to bring a surgeon with them. Medical aid and stretchers to

bear the dead and wounded were not available until darkness once again descended on the bloodied ground. By evening, in a freezing rain, the soldiers of the relief party were ready to bring out what they could find of the ill-fated patrol.[13]

For the rescued and the rescuer, the trip back to safety was an eleven hour ordeal of cold, pain, and above all fear. The wounded were jostled on the stretchers as the bearers stumbled and staggered through the awesome darkness. The spectre of the Modocs dogged the steps of the soldiers even though the Indians made no attempts to check the soldiers' progress. Lieutenant Frazier Boutelle, who with three others carried the mortally wounded Harris, said that one shot would have resulted in an abandonment of the wounded and a mad flight to the camp.[14] At dawn the column staggered into Mason's camp. After a brief rest, they moved on to Gillem's camp where a field hospital awaited the wounded.[15]

By noon on Sunday, April, 28, Gillem was able to measure the extent of the disaster which had befallen his reconnaissance patrol. A small force of Modocs, probably not more than thirty, had killed twenty-two soldiers and wounded nineteen others. Some of the wounded would not survive their wounds. Harris would linger for sixteen days before finally dying. He died only twenty-four hours after his mother arrived in camp. She had travelled to the camp from Philadelphia when she learned of her son's wounds. Sixty percent of Thomas' command had been killed or wounded in what came to be known as the Thomas-Wright massacre. The Modocs later admitted losing one warrior.

The massacre was a body blow to the Modoc expedition and the army in general. More men were killed in this disaster than in all the expedition's other battles combined. It was particularly devastating to the

artillery. Batteries A and K ceased to exist as coherent fighting units, and for the remainder of the campaign, they would be combined under Captain Edward Field's leadership. In Thomas, Howe, Cranston, and Harris, the artillery lost four promising officers. Thomas, the son of General Lorenzo Thomas, had served with distinction in the Civil War. Lieutenant Albion Howe, was also the son of a general. His father, Brevet Major General A.P. Howe, was a major in the same regiment as his son. Like Thomas, Howe had been brevetted for gallantry in the War of the Rebellion. Only a short time earlier, Howe had married the daughter of Brevet Major General William F. Barry, the commander of the Artillery School. Both Cranston and Harris had joined the army after the war had ended and were considered to be excellent junior officers with bright futures.[17]

Explanations for the debacle came forth almost as fast as the news of the fates of Thomas and his soldiers. In time these explanations were condensed into two main themes. The first version placed most of the responsibility for the defeat on Thomas. The artillery captain, so the story goes, was inexperienced in Indian fighting. He did not take adequate precautions to prevent a surprise by the Modocs. A general lack of security in the form of flankers and outposts allowed the Indians to deliver the first destructive fire.[18] The shattering volleys the Modocs poured into the bewildered troops destroyed any semblance of order and the troops scattered pell-mell.

The troops themselves were considered the second cause of the disasterous loss of life on April 26. Many were considered to be undisciplined, cowardly, rabble. Colonel Jefferson C. Davis, Canby's replacement, called them "cowardly beefeaters." Assuming direct control of operations, Davis planned to keep the men with the expedition and make them fight.[19]

The criticisms of the average soldier in the lava beds were generally accurate. He was often an immigrant who could barely speak English, or a fugitive from a less than honorable past. He performed best when it was in his own interest, especially if his life depended on it. Even a large body of good, dedicated men could be rattled by the defection of a miserable few. Poor marksmanship, however, was not altogether the fault of the individual soldier. Congress allocated enough money to allow twenty rounds of ammunition per soldier per month for target practice. Furthermore, the army did not adopt a uniform system of rifle training until the 1880s.[20] Captain Edward Field later remarked, "our men rarely could see an Indian, and those days, never hit him, except by accident."[21] Repeatedly ordered against an enemy often unseen, with little measurable success, the soldiers in the lava beds increasingly balked, and in the case of the Thomas-Wright massacre, even ran.

The criticisms of Thomas have been somewhat overstated as far as explaining the massacre of the twenty-sixth. That Thomas was inexperienced in Indian fighting was true, but so were Miller and Throckmorton. Those officers had little trouble adjusting their Civil War experience to meet the demands of the frontier. Security from an enemy's attack has always been an essential facet of warfare, be the opponent Confederate cavalry or Modoc Indians. A veteran of such engagements as Gettysburg, Thomas and his officers understood the fundamentals of war. Thomas, Wright, Cranston, and others in leadership positions repeatedly tried to get their reluctant men to spread out. If experience was the key, then Lieutenant Wright, a product of the west and the son of a noted Indian fighter, should have been able to neutralize the shortcomings of his fellow officers. In fact, Wright had no more success in maintaining security

than Thomas or the others.

Inexperience can not be used to explain any of the setbacks the army suffered in northern California in 1873. Majors Green and Mason, as well as Captains Bernard, Jackson, and Perry, were seasoned campaigners. They had tracked, pursued, and skirmished with a wide range of the Indian population of the far west and southwest. Despite that experience, they were no more successful in battle against the Modocs than their bretheren fresh from the east coast. As Lieutenant Boutelle aptly put it many years later: "Nobody on earth had ever had any such experience prior to our first attack with the Indians in the Stronghold."[22] Experience gained fighting one group of Indians was not necessarily applicable to other Indians. A flexible tactical doctrine for Indian fighting would have given every commander a frame of reference. Certainly part of that doctrine would have included maintaining a circle of security in camp and on the march.

Unfamiliarity with the idiosyncracies of Indian warfare did not bring about the bloodletting which occurred near the sand buttes that Saturday afternoon. It certainly was an unfair criticism of Thomas and those who led troops under his command. That the officers were unable to get their men to follow their orders was a valid shortcoming. Their loss of control significantly contributed to the death of those twenty-two men. Harris, Howe, Wright, Cranston, but especially Thomas were certainly guilty of that charge. However, most of the officers who led troops in the Modoc war at one time or another were also culpable in that respect. Thomas and the other officers simply failed at the wrong time.

There was a third facet of that day's events which escaped discussion. That aspect was the questionable performance of Donald McKay's Warm Springs scouts. McKay and his men were to leave their camp and join Thomas in a reconnaissance of the buttes. In spite of the fact that he took almost five hours to cover the distance, Thomas had arrived and the battle had begun before the Indian allies arrived. Ironically, the first soldiers that the scouts met were those who had deserted under the heat of Modoc bullets.

When McKay described his part in the battle, he focused mainly on the activities of his group after the fighting began. He said that Thomas' hysterical soldiers fired at anything which remotely resembled an Indian. His scouts certainly qualified as targets. The Warm Springs Indians tried everything they could think of to let the beseiged soldiers know that they were friendly. This included capturing a bugler and making him blow every bugle call from reveille to choc call.[23] McKay's story of a determined effort on the part of his scouts to aid Thomas' band is somewhat suspect.

It was a known fact that McKay and his Indians were not on the best of terms. Several Indians only accepted McKay as their leader when they learned that they would not be accepted as volunteers unless they did.[24] In addition, some of the soldiers in the lava beds felt that their Indian allies feared the Modocs as much as they did. Sergeant Maurice FitzGerald of K troop First Cavalry believed that the Warm Springs Indians abject fear of the Modocs rendered them useless in such an emergency as Thomas had faced.[25] The final point which raised questions concerning the conduct of McKay's scouts was the one of casualities. One-third of Thomas' command was killed and another third wounded. McKay's fourteen scouts

suffered only one wounded casuality.

As with most historical questions, answers concerning the actions of the friendly Indians will probably never be found. Nevertheless, the questions need to be asked. Why did the Warm Springs Indians take so long getting to the sand buttes? Why did McKay attempt to break through to Thomas' group as he claimed?[26] If the Warm Springs Indians were able to capture a bugler, why were they not able to infiltrate to the hollow where Thomas' men were in desperate need of help? Why were the scouts casualities so light when death and serious injury were so common?[27]

For whatever reasons, cowardice, lack of control, the absence of allies, the Thomas-Wright massacre was a military disaster of the first magnitude. It shattered what little of the espirit which remained among the soldiers. An atmosphere of demoralization hovered over that small segment of the frontier army which had suffered so much and had received so little in return. When Davis arrived, he could feel the gloom and despair which permeated almost every thought and action.

Undoubtedly, the artillerymen were notimmune from this sense of hopelessness. In fact, they might have felt it far more than the infantry or cavalry troops. They had been called from the coastal fortifications for a fight for which they had never trained. Now two batteries, A and K, were virtually wiped out. They were reduced to a collection of survivors stripped of leadership and probably purpose. Years of drill at such places as New York Harbor, Charlestown, and Tampa Bay had not prepared them for this. They were dying trying to catch a small band of Indians and reclaim a hundred square miles of worthless ground.

Davis knew that he needed time to eradicate the malaise which infected his command. Time would help restore some measure of confidence

to the shattered army. He also needed fresh troops. New units would not only replace those who had fallen to the Modoc rifles, but hopefully add a new sense of enthusiasm and drive to the contest. Without these two commodities, time and new blood, the Thomas-Wright massacre would only be the first in a series of nightmares.

The news of another military setback at the hands of the Modocs thoroughly disappointed those across the nation who had hoped for a quick end to the hostilities. There was a rising chorus of old-timers and armchair Napoleons who maintained that the army was unfit for serious Indian fighting. The critics advanced many solutions to the problem. All were guaranteed to bring a quick and justly violent end to the nuisance of the Modocs. Most solutions centered around the use of "seasoned frontier militia," instead of transplanted eastern soldier-boys. Some suggestions reflected a rather cynical but accurate assessment of frontier civilization.

An anonymous contributer to the San Francisco Chronicle offered a unique alternative to more skirmishing. He guaranteed that it would end the trouble in thirty days.

> If the army will certify to the fact of the discovery of rich placer diggings in the lava beds, the miners will clean out the last Indian in the time we have named.[28]

To eliminate the lava beds as a future refuge, the writer suggested:

> Let the government, then, as a reward, scatter half as many twenty dollar pieces as it will cost to carry on an Indian war. . . and our miners will tunnel, sluice, and ground wash the whole hundred square miles to the utter extermination of the last Indian and the last grasshopper.[29]

This approach to the Modoc problem certainly would have been unorthodox, but it might very well have worked. The army, however, rejected any suggestion that it could not ultimately bring Jack and his small group to

justice.

Even as the nation discussed the shocking news of the massacre, Colonel Davis was developing his strategy. Replacing Gillem, and assuming personal direction of the campaign, Davis decided to confine most of his troops to camp. Soldiers who had been scrambling over rocks dodging Modoc bullets were to be relegated to escorting supply trains. The only major sortie which the foot troops were to conduct was a search of the massacre site for the missing Cranston and those who went with him. A mixed force of infantry and artillery finally found the bodies of the young lieutenant and five others about 400 yards nearer to the sand butte than those of Thomas and his men.[30] This indicated that Cranston and his men were killed shortly after leaving Thomas to secure a ridge north of the butte.

Although the bulk of the soldiers were not actively pursuing the Modocs, the Indians found time to take the war to the soldiers. A few warriors decided to attack one of the numerous supply trains travelling between the camps around the lake. They managed to capture the wagons from the escort. In this insignificant skirmish, the army's greatest loss was the comsumption of several kegs of whiskey destined for the main camp.[31] For many of the men, isolated from all social entertainment, this particular bit of Modoc thievery was the unkindest cut of all. Apparently nothing was sacred or safe from the enemy's villainy.

Although the foot soldiers were generally kept in camp, Davis had every intention of carrying the fight to the enemy. Offered additional troops, he chose to wage the campaign with the units on hand and those due to arrive shortly. Within two days of the massacre of Thomas' command, two additional batteries of the Fourth arrived at Gillem's camp.

Captain John Mendenhall had brought his Battery G and Captain Henry C. Hasbrouck's Light Battery B from the Department of California.[32] Hasbrouck's battery was mounted and equipped as cavalry, there being no need for a mounted artillery battery.

With his foot soldiers recuperating physically and mentally, Davis decided to use his cavalry to scout for the enemy. He formed a three-unit squadron with Light Battery B as the nucleus and Hasbrouck as the commander. Two troops of the First under Captain Jackson and Lieutenant Boutelle supported the battery. Davis was gambling that Hasbrouck's newly arrived battery, untainted by defeat, could find the Modocs and beat them.

On May 9, Hasbrouck and his three units set out to patrol the area around an alkali lake southeast of the Stronghold. The Warm Springs Indians had reported the enemy near the small body of water which had the uncomplimentary name of Sorass Lake. Not wanting to fall into a Modoc trap lake Thomas, Hasbrouck's column took most of the day getting to the lake. However, there were no Indians at the lake when the patrol arrived late in the afternoon.

With no enemy to fight, Hasbrouck turned his thoughts to other matters. The water in the lake was generally unfit for man or beast so Hasbrouck ordered his men to dig for water. After several hours of back-breaking and unsuccessful effort, not to mention a liberal amount of profanity, the digging ceased. Hasbrouck concluded that he could not continue the search without water. He decided to send part of his command back to camp the following day. The other would remain and continue the search. In posting his command for the night, Hasbrouck, for some reason, split Battery B from the two cavalry troops by a distance of about a mile. The

horses were turned loose with a herd guard which also acted as a picket line.[33] Hasbrouck had not found the Modocs, but they certainly had found him.

Early in the morning the brassy notes of First Call awoke the soldiers but failed to rouse them from their bedrolls. A volley of lead from the Modoc riflemen, which punctuated the bugle call, achieved what the bugler had failed to do. Once again, the army had been surprised by a furtive, determined opponent. Almost instantly men began to fall and the spectre of another massacre gripped the hearts of those under fire.

Another stampede was in the making. Receiving fire from the north and west, some of the cavalrymen fled to the lake. Many of those wounded were hit in the back trying to find some measure of protection in the lake waters. Hasbrouck did not stand by and watch his command be cut to pieces. He immediately gathered his officers and began issuing orders. Boutelle was dispatched to the artillery camp for assistance. Lieutenant Kyle was ordered to recover the stampeded mounts. Jackson and Lieutenant Henry Moss managed to form the shaken troopers into two skirmish lines. Hasbrouck fully intended to attack his enemy as he had been attacked.

Not waiting for orders, some of the men initiated their own charge. Months of pent-up frustration was unleashed and the screaming, howling troopers charged the Modoc riflemen. Not wanting to be left behind, the officers sprinted to catch their spirited men. The first mad dash carried the soldiers almost two hundred yards. Gaining a low ridge to their north, the men paused briefly and then repeated their frenzied rush toward their antagonists. Charles Hardin, a trooper in the First, later recalled: "It was a beautiful charge with Troop B and G all moving together and as fine a man as ever lived of the Fourth Artillery leading."[34]

This time pandemonium reigned over the Modocs.

For the first time in months the Modocs were confronted with a howling mob which seemed intent upon annihilating them. Jack, wearing Canby' uniform, watched as his warriors first wavered and then finally broke. The yelling blue-coats just kept coming. To compound the chaos, the Warm Springs Indians had managed to get behind Jack's warriors. The cross-fire was too much and the Modocs fled faster than the Warm Springs and the troops could pursue. In fact, the Modocs literally ran over the scouts in their bid for safety. A small detachment of troopers who had caught their stampeded mounts were unable to overtake the fleeing Indians.[35]

Hasbrouck finally recalled his men and took stock of his command. He found that eight of his troopers had been wounded, three mortally. Two Warm Springs Indins had been killed. The Modocs had suffered at least two killed and several wounded. More important, the troopers and scouts had managed to capture twenty-four pack animals that belonged to Jack's band. The animals bore the majority of the Modocs' ammunition and supplies. Knowing that his wounded required immediate attention and that his entire command was desparately short of water, Hasbrouck chose to break off the pursuit and return to Boyle's camp southeast of Tule Lake.[36]

The battle at Sorass Lake was the decisive battle of the Modoc war. It was the army's first clear victory in the five months it had been in northern California. Davis reported that "The troops have had, all things considered, a very square fight and whipped the Modocs for the first time."[37] Equally important, the victory removed the cloud which hung over the army in the lava beds. A sense of enthusiasm replaced one of

gloom or despair. In addition to rescuing morale from an emotional cellar, the battle impressed the Modocs with the likelihood of their capture or death. Their confidence in Jack shaken, the band began to split up. The end of the campaign was in sight.

After spending May 11 in camp, Hasbrouck once again moved out in search of the enemy. At his suggestion, Davis ordered the cavalry column out to locate the Indians and the artillery and infantry to be prepared to support them in any fight.[38] Hasbrouck believed that the most likely area to search for the Modocs' sign was in the hills west of Sorass Lake. His group, now on foot as their horses were worn out, moved on this area from the east. Major Mason with three batteries of artillery and three companies of the Twenty-First Infantry approached the same point from the west. The hope was of course that the Modocs would be caught in the middle. None of the troop commanders knew yet that Jack's band had split into at least two different groups.

Hasbrouck's hunch on the Modocs' location was right and the converging columns found the enemy atop the sand butte. Mason's men could see Modoc sentinels moving around on the crest of the 400 foot escarpment. Finding their prey had been comparatively easy, but attacking them in such a naturally strong position would not be so easy. Both Mason and Hasbrouck knew that any attack would be costly in terms of casualities. They also knew that they lacked sufficient force to surround the new fortress and cut off any escape. Lacking cannons which could sweep the ridge, the two commanders decided to wait for additional troops with which they could seal off the new bastion.[39]

The troops of Mason and Hasbrouck had established positions south, north, and east of the butte. They hoped that additional units from

Gillem's camp would close the circle by sealing off any western escape route. Unfortunately, the Modocs moved before the troops got into position. As Jack watched the blue-coated soldiers slowly circle the base of his hill, he undoubtedly knew that he did not have enough warriors to fight them. With the defection of part of his group, his fighting force was effectively cut in half. That night he led his people through the open western approach to the buttes.[40] Once again the Modocs had become elusive foes which had to be found before they could be fought.

Mason was the first to suspect that the quarry had alluded the pursuers. The only way to find out for sure was to send in a patrol. A group of twenty-six men led by First Lieutenant J.B. Hazelton of Hasbrouck's battery volunteered for the hazardous task. That so many men volunteered for what could have been certain death well illustrated the reverse in morale and espirit caused by the Battle of Sorass Lake. Late in the afternoon, the patrol returned with the disappointing news that the lava fields and sand buttes were devoid of life.[41] The foot soldiers packed up and returned to the main camp. Hasbrouck, two batteries, his own and Captain Field's Battery A, plus a few Warm Springs Indians resumed their search for the enemy. On Thursday, he concluded that the enemy had fled to the mountains west of Tule Lake.[42]

Davis once again reorganized his small army in an effort to locate his adversary. Two cavalry commands were to scour the lava fields for signs of the enemy. If they made contact and needed assistance, the foot soldiers would march to their relief. The tireless Hasbrouck led one of the squadrons.

On May 18, at the head of his own battery and two cavalry troops, Hasbrouck once again cut the Indians' trail. This time the prey was west

of Van Bremer's ranch. Following a trail down a valley, Hasbrouck placed two dismounted units on the ridges bordering the valley and one mounted unit in the valley itself. The hunters were able to flush their quarry and a running skirmish of from seven to eight miles followed. Although the warriors evaded his net, Hasbrouck was able to capture five Modoc women and five children.[43] For the first time, Hasbrouck, and ultimately Davis, had positive evidence that Captain Jack's group of fugitives had split into two or more bands. The ten Modocs that Hasbroucks' men had captured belonged to one of the splintered factions.[44]

Directing Captain Jackson to move the captives to Van Bremer's ranch, Hasbrouck and the remaining men continued their scout. When their efforts proved futile, Hasbrouck returned his foot-weary troopers to Fairchild's ranch. Two days later, the artillery captain remounted his men and prepared to move out and comb the hills and valleys west of the Stronghold.

Before he had left camp, Hasbrouck received a message that the Modoc men might surrender if they were promised that they would not be summarily shot. He reluctantly consented to letting some of the captive women go into the hills with the promise that any who surrendered would be treated as prisoners of war. The gamble worked. In a few days, Hooker Jim's band, consisting of about twenty-five Indians surrendered at Fairchild's ranch. Hasbrouck's continuous pursuit had driven Jim's followers to exhaustion, desperation, and ultimately surrender.[45]

Within two weeks, Jack and most of the fugitive Modocs were in the hands of Davis' soldiers. The capture of the remaining Indians was facilitated by using captured Modocs to track their compatriots. With Jack's capture, one of the most frustrating and costly Indian campaigns in the army's history ended. Less than one hundred Indians had checked

a force ten times their numbers and had inflicted casualities far out of proportion to those they had suffered.

* * *

The artillery's service did not end with the capture of the last of the fugitives. The five batteries performed most of the guard duties in camp even though the infantry and cavalry outnumbered them two to one. Guarding the Indians was a particularly difficult task as the camp was soon crowded with spectators and curiosity seekers who harrassed the soldiers and annoyed the Indians. Batteries B and E were part of the contingent which escorted the captives to Fort Klamath, where their destinies were decided.[46] The rest of the batteries remained in the lava beds, turning in equipment and supplies.

The most welcomed part of any campaign to the soldier was going home. Throckmorton and Fields were luckier than their companion commanders in that they returned to their stations much sooner than the other units. In the interest of thrift, Miller's Battery E and part of the infantry battalion were ordered to return to their home posts, approximately 600 miles, on foot.[47] Battery B would be the last unit home as it had to await the outcome of a military commission which was to try the Modoc leaders.

Davis had wanted to exercise a little hemp justice in the case of Captain Jack and certain of his followers. The names of those who had participated in the murders of Canby and Reverend Thomas were well known. However, Davis' summary justice was halted by orders from Washington. Ultimately, it was decided that a military commission would try six of the Modoc leaders. Jack and five of his cohorts were charged with the violation of the rules of war in that they murdered Canby and Thomas under

a flag of truce. All six were subsequently found guilty. Jack and three others were hung, but two were spared because they had helped locate their hiding companions.

The rest of the Modocs were to be sent to Indian Territory. Battery B was given the mission of escorting them at least part of the way. On October 29, 1873, Hasbrouck signed over his prisoners to the commander of Fort McPherson, Nebraska. With that act, the artillery's participation in the Modoc war ended. They were the last members of the expedition to return to their families and a somewhat welcomed dose of garrison monotony.

An analysis of the role of the artillery in the Modoc war can be broken into two parts. First the weapons, mortars and howitzers, and their effectiveness can be examined. Second, the performance of the units and their leaders can be scrutinized. Because the ordnance was generally manned and served by trained artillerymen, the Modoc war is a useful point of comparison with other campaigns where cannons were absent or served by non-artillery soldiers.

In his analysis of the Modocs' positions prior to the first battle for the Stronghold, Colonel Wheaton saw the need for cannon. Even if the cannons could not kill the enemy, they might at least keep their heads down while his soldiers crossed the rocky ground. Wheaton's estimates were ridiculed by those whose experiences with other tribes convinced them cannons a waste of time. This inconsistent attitude toward the value of artillery against Indians again illustrated the lack of a fundamental approach to Indian warfare. As it turned out, the fog which enveloped the battlefield during much of the attack did render the cannons worthless in supporting the ground forces.

Whether the guns would have been of value had visibility been acceptable is certainly open to question. Wheaton noted that Lieutenant William Miller had drilled his gun crews to a high state of proficiency.[48] Proficiency at drill, however, meant that the men understood and could perform the sequence of operations necessary to fire the cannon. It was generally conceded that the average soldier could load, aim and fire his individual weapon. The problem was that he could not hit what he was aiming at due to a woeful lack of practice. In the artillery of the nineteenth century, an accurate range estimation, a fundamental understanding of ballistics, and a basic knowledge of the weapon were intrinsic elements in accurate artillery fire. In addition, practice with the cannon, as with the rifle, sharpened and refined the crew's expertise. Miller's crews might have understood gun drill, but they did not understand the technical employment of the guns. The make-shift crews might have wrecked havoc on the enemy's gun pits, but they were just as likely to spread the same havoc among their own troops. The effectiveness of the howitzers in the first battle for the Stronghold is an undeterminable point.

The repulse that Wheaton suffered at the hands of Jack and his followers convinced the army commander that he needed more artillery and more men. More important, Wheaton realized that he needed a different type of artillery than the one he had. Unfortunately, Wheaton was relieved before he was able to correct the mistakes he had made. Colonel Alvan Gillem fell heir to the additional weapons and soldiers that Wheaton had requested. The only difference between Gillem's basic strategy and Wheaton's was that the howitzers went to the eastern side of the

Stronghold. It is very possible that Gillem made this shift at the recommendation of Bernard. Bernard may have wanted the guns on his side of the battlefield to prevent any possibility of a shell overshooting the Stronghold and landing in his lap. This indicates that Bernard understood little about howitzers or their capabilities.

In the course of the second battle for the Stronghold, both mortars and howitzers were used when maneuvering ceased. There was some mortar firing when Miller tried to turn the Modocs' southern flank and link up with Mason's entrenched troops. The principal purpose of the artillery weapons was to harass and hopefully kill a few of the Indians during the night as the troops rested. Gillen did not want his adversary to spend a comfortable night contemplating the following day's activities. There can be no doubt that Thomas' mortars did create consternation and some casualities among the Stronghold's defenders, which is something the infantry and cavalry rifles had failed to do. Jack's inability to protect his people from those shells which landed in his camp forced him to abandon the Stronghold.

Gillem was convinced that the guns and mortars had prevented a great many unnecessary casualities. In this conclusion he was joined by other officers. Captain James Biddle told the Chronicle's reporter that good artillery practice actually dislodged the Indians.[49] Gillem was pleased with the performance of the guns and included them in his plans for future operations. That Thomas' patrol was sent out to find new artillery positions prepatory to new movements substantiates this conclusion.

After the second battle for the Stronghold, the campaign became one of search and destroy. In this type of warfare, especially when the number of Indians was small, the utility of cannons and mortars depreciated.

Any opinions Davis had concerning the practicality of packing his mortars and howitzers around the lava beds are not known. The artillery weapons could have been used to good effect had Jack remained atop the sand buttes after the Battle of Sorass Lake. After that point, the guns were generally of little value to the pursuit columns. The firepower of the pursuing forces, notwithstanding accuracy, was far greater than that of their adversaries.

A comparison of the effectiveness of the two artillery weapons used during the campaign also can be made. Both weapons could be transported on pack animals.[50] As the first phase of the war saw very little movement, this capability was of no value. However, subsequent deployment of the guns after the Indians had fled the Stronghold would have been impossible on anything other than pack animals. The terrain of the lava beds precluded draft teams pulling wheeled artillery.

Both weapons were smooth-bore.[51] They were therefore inconsistent in terms of accuracy. The rifling of a gun imparts a stabilizing spin to the projectile. With some compensation the rifled gun would hit what it was pointed at. The chances of that happening for the smooth-bore weapons were somewhat remote. Seldom would two howitzer or mortar shells land in the same general spot even if they were fired with the same elevation and powder charge. When Miller attempted to turn the Modocs' flank, he came close to being hit by his own mortars. By the second day, Thomas' gunners certainly had the range of the Stronghold. Any inaccuracies in firing were probably due to the weapon rather than the men who aimed and fired it.

The mountain howitzer and the Coehorn mortar possessed the same range capabilities. The Coehorn, with the maximum powder charge could

achieve a range of 1,200 yards. The howitzer's range was about 100 yards short of that distance.[52] Both shells were detonated with time fuzes. Both weapons fired shell exclusively during the campaign. The howitzer could fire solid shot and canister, but these rounds were inappropriate due to the nature of the target and the firing ranges.

There were some significant differences. The howitzer fired a shell weighing twelve pounds. The mortal shell was twice as heavy.[53] The howitzer varied its range by changing the amount of propelling powder or altering the elevation of the tube. The mortar fired at a fixed elevation of forty-five degrees. The different ranges were acquired by adjusting the amount of powder. The major difference, and the one most important in the lava beds, was one of trajectory.

The mountain howitzer fired a shell with a comparatively flat trajectory. It possessed more arch than the path of the rifled shell, but it still lacked significant curvature. To inflict casualities, the howitzer shell had to explode either directly over the target as an airburst, or on the ground near the target as a ground burst. Because the Modocs were generally behind rock barriers, in rifle pits, or in caves, the ground burst had little effect. Thus, the airburst was the only way to wound or kill the Indians. In this case, the fuze had to be set so that the shell exploded as it passed over the enemy. Because the trajectory was so flat, the margin of error for the fuze setting was extremely small. The random shot-pattern for the smooth-bore cannon coupled with the need for a precise fuze setting made any casualities by shell fire a matter of chance.

By comparison, the mortar had a much higher trajectory. The steeper angle of descent for the shell increased the possibility of the round

landing in the rifle pits or in the cave which served as Jack's headquarters. Observers reported that this did in fact happen on several occasions. Consequently, even a ground burst from the mortar had the capability of injuring the Modocs. The curved trajectory made the fuze setting less critical. The shell, due to its steep descent, was "overhead" for a longer period of time. Even if the shell did not explode in the air, it could still be deadly, as shown by the deaths of the two Indians who tried to disassemble one. A twenty-four pound bomb bouncing around inside a cave was every bit as devastating as an airburst at the mouth of the cave. It is clear that Wheaton realized this when he wrote Canby that he could take the Stronghold with "a free use of mortar batteries."[54]

There was one major disadvantage to the use of cannons and mortars against Jack's band. The fragments from an artillery shell did not respect gender or age. Artillery is an area-fire weapon. Anyone in the vicinity of the shell when it explodes is subject to injury. Some of the deaths and injuries among the Modoc women and children were probably caused by shellfire. Because Indian women and children were with the warriors through the duration of the campaign, their lives were in jeopardy every time a cannon or mortar shell crossed the sky destined for the Stronghold.

One final point can be made concerning ordnance material in the Modoc war. Artillery could have played an even more effective role against the Indians. A rifled howitzer, firing a shell which would detonate on impact with the ground,would have been far more damaging to those who sought refuge in Jack's lava bastion. The rifling would have increased accuracy. With some adjustments, the trajectory of the howitzer would have provided

some chance of placing a round in the caves or at least on the protected side of the rock fortifications. The point detonating shell would have eliminated the problem of fuze setting.

Unfortunately, the army did not possess a weapon of this type. It did possess the technology to produce such a weapon. The 3-inch Ordnance gun, a rifled gun, had been in the army's inventory since 1861. It fired a shell with a point detonating fuze. Because its tube could be elevated more than the mountain howitzer's, it could fire a shell with a somewhat curved path. The major drawback to the weapon was weight. It weighed too much to be packed on animals. Even if the Ordnance Department did not have a weapon suitable for Indian warfare, they had the technical ability to produce one. Unfortunately, the Ordnance Department's preoccupation with coastal guns prevented it from developing cannons which would be effective even in the lava beds.

The second major point of analysis concerning the artillery in the Modoc war deals with the men who repeatedly charged the enemy's rifles and the officers who led them. In all probability, artillery units were dispatched to the lava beds because there were no other available infantry or cavalry units. A large number of troops were serving with George Crook in Arizona. Some troops were required to monitor the discontented tribes of the Pacific northwest. Others were maintaining order in far-off Alaska. Major General John Schofield, who commanded the Military Division of the Pacific, simply did not have sufficient infantry and cavalry units to go around. When Canby requested reinforcements after the first clash with the Modocs, Schofield had to turn to the Fourth Artillery Regiment.

Indian fighting was a form of battle for which neither enlisted men nor officers had trained. The accepted tactical doctrine called for the artillery to counter enemy artillery, destroy his massed infantry and cavalry columns, and reduce his fortifications. Indian fighting was a far cry from this war of massed armies. In that respect, the doctrine of the army as a whole did not include battle with an unconventional enemy, although the army had been fighting the native Americans for more than one hundred years. The gap between the realities of war in the West and the accepted doctrine of the army was greatest for the artillery. Garrison drill in no way prepared the men for scrambling over volcanic rock under Modoc rifle fire. In spite of the absence of any formal or informal training, the batteries generally fought well in the lava beds.

In the second battle for the Stronghold, the batteries constituted a major portion of the western forces. Captain Marcus Miller commanded all of the foot troops for the duration of the three-day battle. Miller's task was an extremely difficult one. He had to direct five different units over difficult ground under enemy fire. To add to the obvious problems, the troopers were not too enthusiastic about the whole affair. The general lack of officers in all of the units further complicated Miller's job. When Lieutenant Eagan was wounded during the battle, Miller assigned Green's only staff officer, Second Lieutenant Sidney Taylor, Fourth Artillery, to command the company. The following day, Lieutenant Wright twisted his ankle and Taylor took over Wright's company as well. Despite the enemy and the complications which dogged his footsteps, Miller was able to advance his five units. In this, he was more successful than any troop commander in the campaign.

Miller's success was attributable to two things. First instead of advancing as a skirmish line, he moved his men in small groups. This kept casualities low. The second reason is that Miller personally led his men. He usually placed himself where there was the most danger. When part of his battery was cut off on the second day, Miller joined the isolated detachment. He was able to bring out sixteen of the seventeen beseiged soldiers. The soldiers responded to officers who showed no reluctance in sharing the same perils that they had to face. Miller certainly was that type of officer.

When the Modocs fled the Stronghold and pursuit became the order of the day, another artillery officer came to the forefront--Captain Henry Hasbrouck. Colonel Davis probably selected Hasbrouck's battery as a pursuit unit because the commander and his men were fresh, both physically and mentally. Hasbrouck justified this confidence first at Sorass Lake and in the subsequent skirmish west of Van Bremer's ranch. The only questionable aspect of Hasbrouck's service was the fact that he split his forces at Sorass Lake. In dividing his command in hostile country, he was courting disaster. His repulse of the Modoc attack tended to overshadow what could have been a serious tactical mistake.

Despite this one error, Hasbrouck was Davis' most energetic commander. His constant searching prevented the Modocs from reconsolidating their bands after the defeat at Sorass Lake. Always on the move, the Modocs did not have the time to rejoin or plan their next effort. One account suggested that Hasbrouck was the first man the Modocs wanted to see after they surrendered.[55] He had hunted them and defeated them when the two groups finally met. Few commanders in the Modoc campaign could make a similiar claim.

Of course, one battery actually served as artillery during part of the campaign. The gunners of Battery A, under the supervision of Thomas, Howe, and Cranston, did considerable damage to the enemy and their lava refuge. The mortar and howitzer shells inflicted as many casualities as the rifle bullets of the infantry and cavalry. Chapin's gunners on the eastern side of the Stronghold probably would have been more effective had Mason shown any desire to press an attack on the enemy.

It was sad that Thomas and his men were never able to enjoy the laurels that their service had justly earned. The obliteration of Batteries A and K in the Thomas-Wright massacre was the only blemish on the record of the Fourth Artillery in the Modoc war. The flight of some of the men, following the infantry's rout, was cowardice. The fact that the artillerymen were unaccustomed to Indian fighting did not justify their desertion of their fellow soldiers and leaders. A considerable number of soldiers, however, chose to remain with Thomas and the other officers. It was a gallant, but fatal decision.

The batteries of the Fourth did a commendable job in the Modoc war. To say that they performed as well as the infantry and cavalry, in itself, is not much of a compliment. However, they served as well as units which had combat experience against Indians, and that is a compliment. They had performed a variety of duties, such as cannoneers, infantrymen, cavalrymen, and even prison guards. Their roles were so diverse because there was no accepted place for them in Indian service. In fact, no service, infantry, cavalry, or artillery, possessed a clear definition of its duties in battle against an unconventional enemy. Every campaign was directed according to the perception of the major field commander. The different plans and actions of Wheaton, Gillem, and Davis support

this idea.

When the batteries of the Fourth returned to their coastal garrisons, there were many stories to tell. The Fourth Artillery had acquired a small group of Indian fighters. The Modoc war was their baptism into the conflict between the Indian and the white man. The men of the Fourth spent most of their time scrambling over a rugged landscape against a small, fortified enemy. However, the next campaign for these soldiers would have few similarities to the war in the lava beds.

ENDNOTES

[1]Dillon, Burnt-Out Fires, p. 265.

[2]44th Cong., Senate Special Session, Senate Exec. Doc. 1, p. 11.

[3]Gillem to Sherman, April 28, 1873, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 20.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Army and Navy Journal 10, May 17, 1873, p. 629.

[6]44th Cong., Senate Special Session, Senate Exec. Doc. 1, p. 12. In his final report of the campaign, Gillem included Surgeon Semig's account of the massacre. Semig was the only officer who survived the battle.

[7]Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[8]Ibid; San Francisco Chronicle, May 5, 1873, p. 3 and May 10, 1873, p. 3.

[9]Ironically Thomas was not physically surrounded. To his north was the Warm Springs Indians. He apparently confused them with Modocs due to the firing between the deserting soldiers and the scouts.

[10]Gillem to Sherman, April 28, 1873, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 20; FitzGerald, "The Modoc War," p. 519.

[11]44th Cong., Senate Special Session, Senate Exec. Doc. 1, p. 11; Miller, Report of Operations, June 22, 1873, LR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA; F.A. Boutelle, "The Disaster to Thomas' Command," in Cyrus Brady's Northwestern Fights and Fighters, pp. 305-313.

[12]Boutelle, "The Disaster to Thomas' Command," pp. 306-307; FitzGerald, "The Modoc War," p. 519.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Boutelle, "The Disaster to Thomas' Command," p. 311.

[15]Miller, Report of Operations, June 22, 1873, LR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[16]Murray, The Modocs and Their War, p. 238.

[17]Harpers Weekly, May 17, 1873, pp. 416-417.

[18]43d Cong., 3d sess., House Exec. Doc. 122, pp. 82-83; Hardin, Manuscript of the Modoc War, Hardin Papers, Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania; Dillon, Boyle's Observations, pp. 52-54.

[19]43d Cong., 3d sess., House Exec Doc. 122, p. 84.

[20]Army and Navy Journal 10, May 10, 1873, p. 616.

[21]Edward Fields, "No Footsteps But Some Glances Backward," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States 6 (1885), p. 248.

[22]Boutelle, "The Disaster to Thomas' Command," p. 308.

[23]San Francisco Chronicle, May 3, 1873, p. 2.

[24]Murray, The Modocs and Their War, p. 103.

[25]FitzGerald, "The Modoc War," p. 520.

[26]In the battle of Sorass Lake two weeks later, the army camp was struck by Modocs. The Warm Springs scouts made no effort to join the soldiers but attack the Modocs from behind.

[27]The scouts had only one wounded in the affray. Gillem to Sherman, April 28, 1873, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 20.

[28]San Francisco Chronicle, May 8, 1873, p. 3

[29]Ibid.

[30]Charles B. Throckmorton to his mother, May 19, 1873, Throckmorton Papers, United States Military Academy Library, West Point, New York.

[31]Murray, The Modocs and Their War, p. 245.

[32]New York Herald, May 4, 1873, p. 8.

[33]This account is based primarily on Henry C. Hasbrouck's "The Last Fight of the Campaign," in Brady's Northwestern Fights and Fighters, pp. 320-328; See also Hardin, Manuscript on the Modoc War, Hardin Papers, Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

[34]Hardin, Manuscript on the Modoc War, Hardin Papers, Military History Insititute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

[35]Hasbrouck, "The Last Fight of the Campaign," pp. 320-328.

[37]43d Cong., 3d sess., House Exec Doc. 122, p. 109.

[38]Murray, The Modocs and Their War, p. 252.

[39]Charles B. Throckmorton to his mother, May 19, 1873, Throckmorton Papers, United States Military Academy Library, West Point, New York.

[40]Ibid. Even though Throckmorton had no way of knowing, he told his mother that he feared the Indians would break up into small groups and thus be harder to find.

[41]Murray, The Modocs and Their War, p. 256.

[42]Hasbrouck to E.V. Sumner, May 15, 1873, Letters, Orders, Charges, and Notes- File 718, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[43]43d Cong., 3d sess., House Exec. Doc. 122, p. 110.

[44]Hooker Jim's group had fled west after Sorass Lake. Hasbrouck's patrols kept them re re-uniting with Captain Jack.

[45]Dillon, Burnt-Out Fires, p. 292.

[46]Charles B. Throckmorton to his wife, June 14, 1873, Throckmorton Papers, United States Military Academy Library, West Point, New York.

[47]Murray, The Modocs and Their War, p. 281.

[48]Wheaton to Canby, January 15, 1873, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 20.

[49]San Francisco Chronicle, April 22, 1873, p. 3.

[50]Benton, Ordnance and Gunnery, pp. 183, 188.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid. The Coehorn's use during the Civil War is briefly described in Francis A. Lord's, "The Coehorn Mortar," Civil War Times Illustrated 5 (1966), pp. 18-19

[53]Benton, Ordnance and Gunnery, pp. 183, 188.

[54]Wheaton to Canby, January 19, 1873, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 20.

[55]Dillon, Burnt-Out Fires, p. 292.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEZ PERCE CAMPAIGN: THE ROAD TO THE CLEARWATER

Merriwether Lewis and William Clark encountered many diverse Indian tribes on their trek to the Pacific Northwest in 1803. They found one group to be particularly congenial, proud, and dependable.[1] These people were a Shahaptin tribe known as the Nez Percé. From the time of the Lewis and Clark expedition to today, the American people and government have been a part of the Nez Percé world. For many years after the first contact, relations between the races were good. The Nez Percé provided a receptive audience for white missionaries. As long as white settlements were few in number and small in size, there was little conflict over the land. However, the discovery of gold in northern Idaho altered this peaceful co-existence. Competition for land and friction between two cultures eventually turned friendship into enmity. Ultimately, the Nez Percé and the whites went to war in 1877.

The Nez Percé war of 1877 was one of the most fascinating Indian campaigns in American history. Under excellent leadership, the Nez Percé warriors severely handled American soldiers on more than one occasion. When the army grew too large to defeat, the Indians led army columns fifteen hundred miles before being subdued. The tribe's flight captured the attention of the nation and the respect of those who engaged them in battle.

As with the Modoc war several years prior, the Nez Percé campaign is of particular importance to this study. A major portion of the pursuing column of General Oliver Otis Howard was comprised of artillery. These units performed a variety of services during the conflict. They guarded supply camps, served as infantry and cavalry, and manned the cannon Howard included in his expedition. This multifaceted participation was due to the inadequate manpower resources of the frontier army. The prominent role that artillery weapons played in this campaign, when compared to other wars in which they were absent, further illustrated the absence of even a tentative tactical doctrine of Indian war. Even within the Nez Percé story the effectiveness of artillery varied due to the dissimiliar attitudes toward cannons in battle against the American Indian.

The fertile soils of the Columbia River Valley were known to explorers many years before the first caravan of farmers arrived from the agricultural east. For many whose farms had been exhausted after years of constant use, the Pacific Northwest and particularly the Willamette Valley were there for the taking. By the late 1840s, white-topped wagons with milk cows in tow were common seasonal sights along the Oregon Trail. For many years this farming immigration posed little threat to the Nez Percé. Many of the easterners passed through the valleys of the Salmon and Clearwater Rivers bound for the Willamette.

The real threat to Nez Percé tenure in the mountain valleys came in the early 1860s with the discovery of gold. As with the Sioux on the Great Plains, the Nez Percé were cursed with the discovery of the yellow ore on their land. The news of the discovery unleashed a stampede of adventurers, miners, bandits, and others of equal social value. This

was a different kind of immigration. The opportunists came to the Nez Percé lands to dig for the precious metal. They would leave only when the mountains had been washed away, a panful at a time, in the clear streams and rivers. The Indians could relate to the farmers, for many of the Nez Percé had been converted to Christianity and the farmers were often kindred spirit. For the miners, however, the gospel was found in the words of the miners' court, and salvation was loaded rifle. The struggle for the land became intense.[2]

Religion, which had been a force of assimilation, turned into a source of suspicion and distrust. The Nez Percé, in 1831, actually sought missionaries to teach them about the white man's god. Missionaries in the personages of Henry Spalding and Marcus Whitman answered the call.[3] By the mid-1840s, the religious zeal of some of the Indians had soured. Spalding and his colleagues insisted that their converts adopt a sedentary livelihood, specifically farming. Horse racing, gambling, and annual buffalo hunts did not fit the eastern picture of Christian life. Although some Indians made the conversion, others rejected both agriculture and the white man's god. The Cayuse War of 1848 and the Whitman massacre were largely a reaction to the efforts of the missionaries.[4]

Throughout the period of growing tensions, the government tried to prevent any serious hostilities through the vehicle of the treaty. Successive treaties maintained the peace, but they also reduced the extent of the Nez Percé domain. By 1863, some of the bands, those called the Lower Nez Percé, were tired of giving away land. During the negiotations for a new treaty, these bands walked out of the council meeting rather than cede more land to the whites. But the government designated head chief, Chief Lawyer, signed the agreement. Ironically, the lands ceded to

the government belonged to the Lower Nez Percé, now called the Non-Treaty Nez Percé, while the lands of Lawyer and the Upper Nez Percé were included in the new reservation.[5] The government's contention that the lower bands were bound by a treaty they did not sign was the chief irritant between the races.

After thirteen years of arguing over the disputed land, the Secretary of the Interior formed a commission to settle the matter. Three eastern businessmen and two army officers met with the recalcitrant bands in the fall of 1876. Chief Joseph and his brother, Ollokot, represented the bands who were still living on the disputed lands. In the course of the meetings, General Howard, who commanded the Department of the Columbia, generally sided with the Indians. The other military member of the commission, Major H. Clay Woods also supported the Nez Percé position. Wood had studied the matter thoroughly and determined that the government was wrong.[6] Despite Wood's findings, the commission decided that the non-treaty bands had to leave their lands and move to the reservation. A refusal would justify the use of force by the government.[7]

The following spring, Joseph and other leaders of the lower bands tried to change the decision of the commission. In a council with General Howard, they again maintained their just title to the land. Howard reversed his previous position and insisted that they move to the existing reservation. His patience with the non-Christian, non-treaty Indians was exhausted.[8] Faced with the alternative of war, the chiefs finally yielded to Howard's demands. Although Howard could have been magnaminous in allowing ample time to complete their move, he gave Joseph and the others only thirty days to reach the Lapwai reservation.[9] The rain swollen rivers of the region made this a virtually impossible task.

The news of their pending move to the Lapwai agency brought sorrow, anxiety, and much bitterness to the camps of the non-treaty bands. Their land had been taken, and they had suffered legally and even physically at the hands of the whites. Despite this, they had resisted the urge for retaliation. For some young men, the move could not be made until certain whites had been punished for past injustices, which included murder.[10] As the Indians prepared to move their villages, a few young warriors set out to dispense Indian justice where the white man's justice had failed. The murders they committed prompted the initial outbreak. The Indians fearing retaliation by the whites decided to flee.

At noon on June 15, 1877, Howard received word of the first killings. He was at Fort Lapwai where he was waiting for the non-treaty Indians to come in. The news of the outbreak came in the form of two urgent pleas for help from the settlement of Mt. Idaho, sixty miles from the fort. The general immediately dispatched two troops of the First Cavalry, under Captain David Perry, to relieve the beseiged town. Perry and about one hundred men left the fort that evening. As he departed, Howard cautioned him against "getting whipped." Perry replied that there was no chance of that happening.[11]

While Perry's troopers were preparing for their trek, Howard notified his superior, Major General Irwin McDowell, that the Nez Perce were committing depredations. He added that Perry was being dispatched to the troubled area. Howard also alerted his own headquarters at Portland of the conditions in western Idaho.[12] In the first messages to McDowell, Howard appeared confident that two troops of cavalry were sufficient to put down the small uprising. There was no request for additional troops or anything else which might indicate a protracted campaign.[13]

Leaving Fort Lapwai at dusk, Perry and his command rode most of the night. At dawn the two troops halted about twenty miles from the Mt. Idaho community. After a brief rest, the soldiers, many of whom were recruits, were back in the saddle. By sundown the exhausted cavalry reached Grangerville in west central Idaho. Fearing the Indians might flee beyond the Salmon River, Perry pushed his worn-out animals and men on to the rim of White Bird Canyon. There the command practically collapsed. A few hours later at dawn, Perry led his physically drained troopers into the canyon.[14]

Perry's unsuspecting soldiers rode into a hasty but effective Nez Percé ambush. A group of mounted warriors barred access to the village located further down the canyon. Other groups were posed on the flanks of the soldiers. Within minutes Perry was subjected to accurate and deadly fire from three sides. With his trumpeter among the first casualities, Perry had to rely on his voice and hand signals to deploy his scattered command in the confusion of battle.

When the firing began Perry tried to order the rear troop forward to form a skirmish line with his own unit. A group of volunteers who had joined Perry's column rode off to the left of Perry's men to gain a low ridge. Unable to consolidate his units, Perry found his position becoming desperate. Mounted warriors were able to ride beyond his flanks and fire on his men from behind. When the volunteers were unable to hold their ridge, Nez Percé riflemen seized it and poured fire into the soldiers' ranks. Under a storm of bullets, many of the green recruits broke ranks and fled the battlefield.

Perry began a slow retreat with his remaining men. The pressure of the advancing Indians converted this retreat into a mad, confusing stampede.

Ultimately, five troops of the First Cavalry would also join Howard's expedition against the malcontents. Other units were being directed to Boise City. Under the command of Major John Green, these troops were to intercept any movement of the Nez Perce toward the south.

Howard did not hesitate to include artillery weapons in his initial call for support. He directed his adjutant to request four mountain howitzers, and two 6-pounders, complete for field duty with plenty of ammunition. Later that day, Major Woods notified McDowell's headquarters that one field gun, one howitzer, and two gatling guns had been ordered from Vancouver Arsenal. Howard asked McDowell to equip the Boise troops with the lightest artillery or mortars. This request apparently miffed McDowell. In his reply two days later he said, "What artillery?" Apparently all the ordnance from Benicia Arsenal, California, was dispatched to Oregon. McDowell relented somewhat and said that he would inquire as to the availability of mortars.[20]

It is clear from these and other messages that Howard was operating under two, ultimately mistaken, assumptions. First he expected the Indians to fortify themselves in the mountains, ala Modoc. He told Perry via courier:

> He (Joseph) expects to make his final stand about the mouth of Salmon between the Salmon and the Snake in some bluffs there and some narrow ravines and steep trails. Artillery alone will help us out of this.[21]

To keep Joseph from leaving his current position and reaching this "stronghold," Howard intended to reinforce Perry with two infantry companies, a cavalry detachment and a mountain howitzer.[22]

Howard's second misconception was that the campaign would be brief and not too difficult. He informed his headquarters that, we "shall collect enough force to make sure work before pushing final Indian position."

Perry, Lieutenant William Parnell, and a handful of men fought a stubborn rear guard action for more than ten miles. The shattered command, in a dozen driblets, finally reconsolidated itself at Grangerville.[15] Dead and wounded troopers littered the trail from White Bird Canyon.

Later that day, Howard received the news of the rout of Perry's command. A force of about seventy warriors had devastated the cavalry troops, killing more than one third and chasing the others thirteen miles.[16] The news of the defeat was sent to McDowell on the following day, and he notified Sherman on the nineteenth.[17] Corraling the Nez Perce would take more than two troops filled with green recruits. The outbreak was not a full-blown war.

In Portland, Howard's headquarters began alerting units for movement to Fort Lapwai. There were some troops already moving toward the northwest Pacific coast from Alaska. By 1877, the United States government had decided to withdraw its military forces from Alaska. The territory had been under occupation since its acquisition from Russia in 1867. Sparce population and the lack of significant hostilities in the region convinced Washington that the troops there would be better used elsewhere. By June 16, the steamer California was enroute south with three batteries of the Fourth Artillery. Veterans of the Modoc war, Batteries A, G, and M, were redirected to Howard's temporary headquarters at Lapwai.[18]

The Alaskan troops were only part of the force being directed to western Idaho. Captain Marcus P. Miller's Battery E, Fourth Artillery, from Fort Stevens, Oregon, and Captain George B. Rodney's Battery D from Fort Canby, Washington, were also dispatched to Howard. Three companies, B, E, and K, of the Twenty-First Infantry, were enroute from Wallula.[19]

He told McDowell that he intended to make short work of the Nez Perce.[23] Since the Nez Perce were not particularly known as fighters, Howard was confident that he could subdue them with the appropriate number of troops and cannons.

Howard failed to understand that the Nez Perce were not the Modocs. The non-treaty bands possessed vast pony herds which they used on their annual buffalo hunts to the plains. Their range of movement and mobility was more like the Sioux than the Modocs. Lacking experience in fighting Indians, Howard assembled a force appropriate for the type of war he was accustomed to-- a conventional war. The inclusion of foot troops in his plans fully illustrated that Howard had no conception of the Nez Perces' ability to move.

Irrespective of his optimistic predictions, Howard was massing a considerable force for the coming campaign. McDowell reported to Sherman that the Nez Perce expedition would total 960 men. This included 617 cavalrymen in ten troops, 177 infantrymen in six companies, and five batteries totalling 166 men.[24] Two other units, a cavalry troop and Hasbrouck's Light Battery B of the Fourth, were being alerted for movement should Howard require them.

Due to inadequate transportation, the process of amassing these units was agonizingly slow. Howard could not afford to await the arrival of all the units before moving to the rescue of Perry. At noon on June 22, Howard and those troops which had arrived at Fort Lapwai departed the post for Perry's battlefield. This contingent consisted of one battery of artillery, two cavalry troops, and five infantry companies. Howard's ordnance included a "mountain howitzer, old and worn, but 'fixed up'for the occasion" and two gatling guns.[25] These troops actually constituted

the relief force Howard told McDowell he was sending to Perry four days earlier.

In direct command of the troops was Captain Marcus P. Miller of the Fourth Artillery. Howard described him as "a graduate of West Point, class of 1856." He had "served with distinction" in the Rebellion and had "heightened his reputation by his brave work in the Modoc War." The artillery captain was of "middling height, well knit for toughness, light beard and lightish hair- handsome forehead, somewhat arched, blue eyes and a pleasant speaking face." He was an officer "who takes a sincere pleasure in loyal duty."[26]

Although Howard's public statements indicated confidence, he warned Miller "to take special pains to guard against any surprise and to be particularly careful in approaching or passing the narrow ravines and steep trails."[27] Even though Howard expected a quick campaign, he did not intend to fall into the same trap as Perry had. Perry's debacle and Howard's imprecise understanding of the earlier Modoc war created an unwarranted concern about exposing his men.

The march to White Bird's Canyon and nearby Mt. Idaho was uneventful. Howard, riding far in advance of his men, reached the settlement first. On June 24, at a burned out ranch later called Cottonwood House, Perry reported to the general. He related the specifics of the battle which destroyed his command and told Howard that the Indians were still in the area of the canyon. After Perry's report, Howard decided to reconnoiter the canyon before crossing the Salmon River. This would give him an opportunaty to recover the bodies of Perry's fallen soldiers. Under Miller's immediate supervision, the small column reached the rim of the canyon on June 26. Heavy and continuous rains had made the march

almost impossible, but the units arrived with enough daylight left to begin their search of the battlefield.

Miller's foot troops searched the ground for the fallen soldiers while Howard and Perry watched from a nearby ridge. At the head of the trail leading into the canyon, Captain Stephen Whipple stood watch with his cavalry troop and the three artillery pieces. With the enemy still in the vicinity, Miller took the precaution of keeping skirmishers and flankers out to avoid another ambush.[28] The search parties were able to locate seventeen bodies on the first day. Exposed to the elements for ten days, the bodies were in an advanced stage of decomposition. Hasty graves were dug for those found, and by afternoon the grisly task was abandoned. The search for the missing men was resumed the following day with the results that most of the army's dead were located and given at least a rudimentary burial.

While Miller's burial details were interring their fallen comrades, the Alaskan troops arrived in Howard's camp. The soldiers, under the command of Captain Charles B. Throckmorton, had taken more than three days to reach Howard from Fort Lapwai. They were delayed by the same weather which had made Howard's march so difficult. Howard was extremely upset that the new units had not joined his column earlier, and promptly relieved Throckmorton of the command. The Alaskan contingent was added to Miller's command.[29]

The fairness of Howard's action was doubtful. Throckmorton had taken slightly more time getting to the battlefield than had Howard. The Alaskan troops, fresh from garrison duty in an often inhospitable climate, were probably unused to marching fifteen miles a day or more. The torrential rains and the damnable mud did not make the journey any

easier. It was ironical, in light of subsequent events, that Howard relieved Throckmorton for moving too slow.

His reconnaissance completed, Howard issued orders for crossing the Salmon River. Miller, in charge of all the foot troops, was instructed to secure the right bank of the river with skirmishers. He was also to position the artillery to cover the crossing. The cavalry would screen the movement and hopefully deceive the enemy.[30] These directions had the distinct flavor of the Civil War. Indians rarely contested river crossings, choosing to outrun their adversaries rather than face them in a pitch battle. The American cavalry was seldom able to deceive the Indians about anything, especially the location and movement of troops. Clearly, Howard did not understand his opponent.

While his men were arduously moving across the Salmon, Howard made one of the most serious blunders of the campaign. He ordered Captain Whipple to take his cavalry and a group of volunteers to the camp of Chief Looking Glass. The general suspected that Looking Glass, a non-treaty chief, was aiding the fugitive bands. Whipple was ordered to arrest the chief and his people and take them to Grangerville.

On the morning of July 1, the cavalrymen were ready to execute their orders. An initial attempt at talking the Indians into surrendering evaporated when the citizens fired on the Indian village. After a brief skirmish, the Nez Percé fled, and their abandoned camp was burned by the soldiers.[31] Whipple did not pursue the Indians, but chose to move his soldiers and citizens into camp at the nearby Cottonwood House. Looking Glass' warriors were not long in revenging the unprovoked assault on their people. Three days after the attack, they ambushed a detachment of ten men from Whipple's troop and wiped them out.[32]

The army now had suffered two considerable setbacks. By comparison, the forces of their adversary were not only intact, but now reinforced by Looking Glass' braves. There was growing talk that Howard was not equal to the task which had been assigned to him. So far he had failed to catch the fugitive Indians. McDowell, feeling that more troops might help his plodding subordinate, stripped his department of troops. He was able to dispatch three additional batteries, B, C, and L, and two infantry companies to Idaho.[33]

By July 10, Howard had crossed the Clearwater River. With his scattered units now consolidated once again, Howard intended to move north along the Clearwater in hopes of locating the Nez Perce trail. It was possible that he could catch the Indians between his forces on the east bank of the river and a group of volunteers on the west side. He knew that Joseph and the other chiefs had brought their followers to this area, but Howard did not know exactly where the Indians were.

From a camp on the south fork of the Clearwater, Howard's troops marched north on the morning of July 11. Captain Joel Trimble's cavalry troop was in the advance. Four batteries of the artillery, formed into a battalion under Miller, followed the cavalry. A pack train was next in the column while the infantry units brought the rear. Two howitzers served by crews from Battery E and two gatling guns with cavalry crews constituted the ordnance of the column.[34]

After a five hour march the column halted. Trimble had seen Indian herders hurrying toward the river valley several hundred yards to the west. Riding to the bluffs of the river, Trimble saw the Nez Perce camp in the valley below. Howard immediately ordered Miller to send the howitzers to a nearby bluff and fire on the camp. The shells from the

cannons fell short and only succeeded in alerting the Nez Percé to the presence of their pursuers.[35] Like countless battles in the military history of man, two adversaries had joined battle on ground neither had chosen.

Both sides raced to gain the first advantage. The infantry troops in the rear of the column and nearest the village immediately deployed as skirmishers. Rushing to the bluffs, they intended to descend to the river, cross it, and then attack the camp. Miller dispatched two of his batteries to reinforce the infantry's advance. One battery was designated to guard the pack train while the remaining unit held the line of march.[36]

On the west bank of the river, the exploding shells created instant pandemonium. As women and children scurried for cover, the warriors stripped for battle, and grabbed rifles and ammunition belts. A group of about twenty crossed the river and scaled the steep bluffs. They were able to prevent the infantry from descending the bluffs and attacking the camp. Other groups of Indians also crossed the Clearwater and took up positions in ravines north and south of the infantry. Some mounted braves were able to circle the entire column and attack the pack train.[37]

Seeing his forces flanked, Howard withdrew his howitzers to positions further south. He ordered Miller's batteries to protect the infantry's flanks and finally dismounted his cavalry. Howard began to bend his lines to keep the Nez Percé from flanking him completely and attacking from the rear. Ultimately his battle line conformed to an ellipse with a slight oppening in the rear. Rodney's Battery D and Trimble's cavalry troop were able to defend the pack train until it could be moved into the circle of soldiers. The Indians managed to kill two of the civilian

packers and capture a pack mule carrying shells for the howitzer.[38] Amidst whizzing bullets and roaring cannons, units had to be repeatedly shifted to meet the movements of the Indians.

Looking across the generally flat ground they occupied, Miller saw that the howitzers were in danger of being overrun. He quickly sent eleven men, under Lieutenant Charles Humphrey,to support the endangered cannons. Humphrey and his had to sprint 700 yards across open ground to reach the guns.[39] His small band made to the howitzers without suffering a single casuality. Humphrey found that Lieutenant Harrison Otis, the battery commander, had returned to the pack train for more shells, having only canister. In his absence the infantry had withdrawn leaving the gun crew in an extremely exposed and dangerous position. Hauling the guns to the rear, Humphrey opened fire with canister on Indians who were firing from a deep ravine on their right flank. The canister decreased the fusilade of bullets coming from that location.

Humphrey then reformed the available infantry and artillery to support the guns. Otis returned with a supply of shell and case shot and began shelling the Nez Perce riflemen.[40] Despite the cannonade, the Indians continued to press the guns. At one point, due to the intense enemy fire, Otis and his men had to load from under the guns. On one occasion, Private William S. LeMoy pulled the lanyard and blasted some Indians only forty feet from the muzzle. Undoubtedly, the sharpest fighting of the first day was on the southern flank where the cannons held the line.

Tactically, that part of the battlefield was no more important to either side than any other part of Howard's position. The intense Indian activity on the south shows that they considered Howard's cannon dangerous

and something which had to be silenced at all cost.

The position Howard chose to defend was a comparatively flat area bordered on the north and south by ravines, on the west by the river bluffs, and on the east by gently rolling plains. The Nez Percé in the timbered ravines could easily rake the soldiers whose only concealment or cover was tall grass. Most of the army's casualities occurred under these conditions. Captain Eugene Bancroft, commanding Battery A, received a serious chest wound when he rose momentarily to survey the battlefield.[42] Later Bancroft wrote his father that more had happened to him in the four weeks since he had left Alaska than in the entire four years of the Civil War.[43]

Knowing that the pressure of the enemy's fire must be relieved, Miller gathered every available soldier and charged the enemy's emplacements. A reporter for the New York Herald described Miller's actions.

> While in this condition, with a few soldiers killed and several wounded, the hero of the battle showed himself in the person of Colonel Miller of the Fourth Artillery. It was this officer who ordered and conducted the first charge, being himself foremost in the line . . . The words Colonel Miller used were these: 'Men, get up and go for them; if we don't do something they will kill us all.' At this every man in that part of the line sprang to his feet and all made one impetuous irrestible charge.[44]

A short time after the charge, the Indians counterattacked. Fortunately, Miller's hasty assault had given the soldiers time to entrench. Using their bayonets, the men were able to gain some shelter from the deadly fire of the Nez Percé.[45] As darkness approached, both sides ceased maneuvering for new positions. When darkness came, the firing tapered off.

It had been a grueling day for Howard's troops. The rains which had plagued the march to the Clearwater had given way to a blistering sun. The temperature on the treeless plateau exceeded one hundred degrees during

the height of the battle. Without water for most of the day, the troops suffered throughout the night. Some endured more than thirst. In Miller's battalion alone, six men were wounded while three had been killed. One man was listed as missing in action. He had gone for water and had failed to return.[46]

During the battle of July 11, 1877, the Nez Perce had fought the army to a standstill. Instead of the hit and run tactics which typified Indian warfare, the warriors stood the charges of the troops and even counterattacked despite being outnumbered. The Nez Perce fighting force numbered about 250 while Howard directed more than 400 men in the battle.[47] The Indians had made excellent use of the terrain to check the movements of the soldiers. What was even more significant was that when the sun rose on the next day, the Indians were still there and ready for another day's battle.

Howard's first and most critical task on that second morning was to get water for his parched command. When Miller called his attention to a spring at the mouth of one of the ravines, the general ordered its capture. Rodney's battery and Perry's cavalry were assigned the task. Covered by Otis's howitzers, the mixed force secured the water hole without resistance.[48] By 11:00 a.m. most of the men had been given at least a cursory breakfast and some coffee. The prospects for the rest of the day, in spite of the supply of water, did not seem promising. A second day of incessant skirmishing and sniping appeared probable.

At this point, Miller approached Howard with a plan. He knew that continued skirmishing would only lead to a growing list of casualities. The artillery captain asked Howard for permission to lead a battalion-strength movement on the enemy's flank.[49] The idea was to swing around

the left of the howitzers and attack the Indians' right flank. If successful, the artillery batteries would be able to move on down the southern ravine to the river. Howard approved and the attack was scheduled for the late afternoon.

Massing the artillery batteries required their withdrawl from the skirmish line. Much of the early afternoon was spent moving the batteries to the area of Howard's headquarters and redistributing the cavalry and infantry units to cover the gaps. It was a daring plan. If the Nez Percé attacked while the outer lines were so thin, they could roll up Howard's entire command. By 4:00 p.m. the shifting and adjusting was completed. Miller and his battalion were ready to go.

At this moment a cloud of dust to the south served notice that others were approaching the battlefield.[50] In time, it was decided that the dust belonged to Captain James Jackson's First Cavalry troop which was escorting a large pack train. The cavalrymen were in considerable danger as the Indians had also seen the dust and were moving to intercept the pack train. Howard ordered Miller to take his battalion and bring the train safely into camp. With Batteries A, D, and G, Miller covered the three miles to Jackson's column before the Nez Percé could strike the small cavalry contingent. The artillerymen then screened the train as it slowly moved to the safety of Howard's lines. When the cavalry passed through the entrenched troops, Miller realized that his battalion was on the enemy's flank. He wheeled his batteries into a battle line and charged.[51]

The warriors were surprised by the sudden assault on their flanks. They apparently thought that Miller's units would return to their original position at the center of the circle of troopers. Instead, a blue line of soldiers was scrambling toward them yelling and firing. Supported

by a gatling gun and a howitzer, Miller's units virtually merged with the Indians. The shooting was almost point blank. Miller, who had served with Sheridan's cavalry in the Civil War and in the lava beds, said that he had never seen such severe close skirmish fighting.[52] Ironically, only one soldier fell in the mad rush on the Indian positions. The braves wavered and then broke.

When the infantry and cavalry saw the enemy break, they unleashed their own charge on the fleeing Indians. The warriors were subjected to a withering fire from the gatlings and cannons as they fled down the ravine.[53] The battle quickly degenerated into a foot race for the river below. At times Miller's men were so close to the enemy that they ran into their own cannon fire. Sensing victory, the men sprinted after the Indians. At one point, they requested a charge on a nearby ridge held by a few Indians.[54]. When it was approved, the screaming artillerymen stormed the ridge. The defenders joined the other Indians who were trying to beat the soldiers to the river.

When the batteries reached the water's edge, they clamored for permission to cross and attack the Indian's village. Lieutenant Humphrey, who had taken over Battery A from the wounded Bancroft, held his men in check. He wanted specific orders from Miller before trying to ford the river.[55] Humphrey never received that permission. The cavalry was selected to pursue the fleeing enemy.

Unfortunately, the cavalrymen could not fulfill the assignment. Their horses, worn and without water for twenty-four hours, lacked the strength for a vigorous chase. In addition, precious minutes were wasted as the troopers, who had fought on foot, rounded up their mounts. By the time Perry crossed his cavalry, most of the Nez Percé were gone. Once

in the Indian camp, the cavalry commander halted his men instead of taking up the chase of the still disorganized Indians. Undoubtedly, Perry's memories of his confident march into White Bird Canyon caused him to proceed with more than a measure of caution. Frustrated at the hesitating movements of his cavalry, Howard called off the pursuit. The cavalry was ordered to return and begin ferrying the other units across the river.[56]

By 7:30 that evening, Howard's tired army was on the western bank of the Clearwater.[57] At this point, Howard still had enough daylight to continue after the Indians. He might have gotten close enough to the Nez Percé to attack them the following morning. However, he chose to bivouac amid the ruins of the hastily abandoned camp.

The two day engagement on the Clearwater marked the turning point of the Nez Percé campaign. Heretofore, the Nez Percé had bested the soldiers thrown against them. They had mauled Perry's troops at White Bird Canyon and inflicted grievous casualities on the soldiers and volunteers at Cottonwood House. However, the warriors could not stand against the sustained charges and the cannonade of Howard's small army. Over confident due to their earlier victories, the Nez Percé narrowly averted the capture of their camp. By the morning of the second day, the Indian camp had not prepared for movement. When Miller's three batteries fractured the Indians' line, the women and children fled leaving much behind.

The Clearwater action also changed the nature of the campaign. Before the fight, the Indian fighting men never hesitated to give battle. Because of their large pony herds, they could have put many miles between them and the slow-moving soldiers. Instead, they stayed in the general vicinity of the Salmon and Clearwater Rivers for almost two weeks. After

the battle, Joseph, Looking Glass, and the other chiefs began their people on a trek to the buffalo plains east of the mountains. Their object became survival and escape, not victory.[58] Never again would Howard be able to deploy his entire command against the fugitive Nez Percé. The subsequent battles were instances where other forces caught the fleeing Indians momentarialy off-guard.

The two-day engagement corrected at least one misconception on Howard's part. The tenacity of the Indians and their willingness to fight surprised him. Originally, he expected a short,simple campaign. The reverses which Perry and Whipple suffered apparently did not impress him. His losses at the Clearwater, eleven killed and twenty-threewounded, clearly indicated that the subjugation of the non-treaty bands would not be easy. Howard had to hedge on his earlier remark to "make short work" of the hostiles. After the battle, he wrote McDowell that he would "push him (Joseph) a little further on this line, either to defeat him utterly or to secure the country against his return."[59]

Howard's mountain howitzers played a very important role in the victory on the Clearwater River. The guns opened the affray when they fired on the enemy camp from the eastern bluffs. The fact that the shells fell short can be attributed to Howard. He personally selected their firing positions.[60] The stubby little cannons simply could not reach the Nez Percé village.

However, the guns became more effective as the battle progressed. After the first cannonade, Otis shifted his pieces further south and was able to range the lodges on the western bank of the river. He was also able to provide defensive fire when the Nez Percé warriors began flanking Howard's troops. Canister from the guns kept the Indians from breaching

the exposed lines of the southern flank. Quick action on the part of the gunners prevented Howard's own command post from being overrun.

In a short time, the guns became the focal point for the warriors' offensive efforts. The cannons could slay the Indians and destroy their camp far quicker than the rifles of the soldiers. The Indians' respect for the power of the guns can be seen in their concerted efforts to take or at least silence the cannons. Those who manned the pieces came in for more than their share of Nez Percé bullets. Two of the three artillerymen killed on the first day were serving the guns. Batteries E and A, the units either serving the guns or protecting a flank, claimed all of the casualities except one.

The importance of the cannons was simply that they equalized the killing power of the two sides. The average soldier was a notoriously poor marksman. Lacking practice, he often hit his target only by accident. That criticism could not be made of the Nez Percé. The warriors could perforate anything which was exposed to their fire. Cannon fire, in its explosive force and fragmentation, made up for the inaccuracies of the individual soldier. With canister and exploding shell, getting close to the target was good enough.

A weapon, be it a rifle or a cannon, is only as good as the men using it. The potency of the small mountain guns was dependent on the crews. The gun crews comprised of artillerymen knew how to use their weapon to good advantage. Artillerymen traditionally have an affinity for the guns they take into battle. That bond precluded deserting the guns. When Humphrey dashed across the battlefield to support the southern flank, he found that the infantry had withdrawn in the face of intense fire. The cannoneers, however, were still with their exposed gun. By

comparison, a cavalry crew abandoned their gatling gun when the Indians counter-attacked late on the first day. Humphrey and his versatile band of men assumed the mission of pulling the deserted gun to the rear.

The large majority of artillerymen fought as infantry during the two day battle. Their contribution to the ultimate victory was no less important than their brethren on the guns. Through most of the first day, they and some infantry held the southern portion of Howard's position. This was the hottest part of the battlefield in terms of flying bullets. The major contribution of the artillery battalion, however, came on the second day of battle.

It must be remembered that Howard chose Miller's battalion to make the crucial charge on the enemy's flank, not the cavalry or the infantry. In spite of the accuracy and volume of enemy fire, the men made a spirited assault on the Indian positions. There was no reference in any official or unofficial report which suggests that the men held back or refused to advance. It should also be credited to the soldiers of the batteries that they made their attack,after rescuing Jackson's pack train, without readjusting their line. There was certainly no repetition of the disaster which befell Captain Evan Thomas' command four years earlier in the lava beds. At the Clearwater, the men performed admirably and on two occasions even sought further battle with the enemy.

A large measure of the soldiers' performance can be explained by the fact that they were well led. As with the Modoc war, Captain Marcus Miller displayed the talents of an excellent combat commander. His quick action on the afternoon of the eleventh probably averted a collapse on the southern portion of the army's line. His charge later that afternoon gained enough time for the men to entrench. Miller's attack on the

twelfth was the best tactical maneuver of the battle and possibly the campaign. Miller certainly benefitted from having capable subordinate commanders.

Captain Rodney and his battery, along with Trimble's troop, kept Howard's supply train from falling into the hands of the Indians. Battery D, again in conjunction with cavalry, captured the important water springs on the morning of the twelfth. During the artillery battalion's charge that afternoon, Rodney and his men outflanked some warriors trying to get behind Miller's advancing line.

Lieutenant Charles Humphrey was certainly one of the brightest stars of the Clearwater fight. He commanded Miller's Battery E while Miller directed the battalion. His timely support of Otis' howitzers probably saved them from being captured by the Indians. He volunteered to go forward and bring back the gatling gun which the cavalry had deserted. His determination and leadership on July 11 earned him the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Second Lieutenant Harrison G. Otis, the young officer who directed the guns, exhibited remarkable fortitude during the battle. His cannoneers might not have withstood the Indians' fire had Otis wavered. Miller remarked that Otis endured more personal danger than any other man in the command. Otis' behavior might have surprised those who considered him a green lieutenant. The fact was that Otis was a veteran of the Sioux war. He was with Colonel Ranald Mackenzie's Fourth Cavalry in the attack on Dull Knife's camp on Powder River.[61]

This analysis of the artillery's participation is not meant to depreciate the actions of the infantry and cavalry during the Clearwater fight. Miller's soldiers could not have defeated the Nez Perce braves

without the other units. However, Indian fighting was the normally expected job of infantry and cavalry. The daily maintenance of coastal fortifications and gun drill with heavy coastal ordnance in no way prepared these batteries to encounter hostile Indians. The performance of the batteries is so laudatory because their daily routine was so alien compared to the conditions of the Clearwater battlefield.

According to the army's doctrine, the artillery was to destroy enemy artillery and fortifications. The artillery's role in Indian warfare was never defined because the army considered each campaign to be an interruption of the daily routine. With no formally adopted approach to Indian fighting, the army fought each campaign as if there would be no others. Under these conditions, the artillery played a multitude of roles.

The battle of the Clearwater was the high point of the campaign for the batteries of the Fourth. There would be other battles, but the artillerymen would not participate. Their fate would be to march along the Nez Perce trail while others tried to intercept the fleeing Indians. Other commands, however, would carry cannon into their encounters with the warriors of the non-treaty bands.

ENDNOTES

[1]John Bartlet Brebner, The Explorers of North America 1492-1806 (Cleveland, 1968), pp. 399-401

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[3]Beal, "I Will Fight No More Forever," p. 15; Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, p. 21.

[4]Alvin Josephy, Jr. The Nez Perce and the Opening of the Northwest (New Haven, 1965), p. 157.

[5]Beal, "I Will Fight No More Forever," p. 31; Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, p. 35.

[6]Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, pp. 68-69.

[7]Ibid., p. 75.

[8]Oliver Otis Howard, "The Nez Perce Campaign of 1877," The Advance 12, January 17, 1878, p. 345.

[9]Cyrus Townsend Brady, "Chief Joseph's Own Story," Northwestern Fights and Fighters (Williamstown, Mass, 1974), pp. 44-75. Joseph maintained that the thirty day deadline was impossible and a major factor in starting the war.

[10]John McDermott, Forlorn Hope: The Battle of White Bird Canyon and the Beginning of the Nez Perce War (Boise, Idaho, 1978), pp. 3-11.

[11]Howard, "The Nez Perce Campaign of 1877," The Advance 12, June 27, 1878, p. 403.

[12]Howard to McDowell, June 16, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 336; Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, p. 131.

[13]Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, p. 144.

[14]Ibid., pp. 132-133.

[15]McDermott, Forlorn Hope, pp. 85-96. McDermott's book contains the proceeding of the Court of Inquiry held to investigate the humiliating defeat at White Bird Canyon.

[16]Howard, "The Nez Perce Campaign of 1877," The Advance 12,July 18, 1878, p. 451.

[17]McDowell to Sherman, June 19, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 358.

[18]Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, p. 145.

[19]H. Clay Wood to Lieutenant J.C. Kelton, June 19, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 338.

[20]Howard to Wood, June 19, 1877, Letters, Orders, and Field Orders reference to Joseph, Entry 721 (hereinafter LOFO-NP), Department of the Columbia (hereinafter DC), RUSAC, NA; Wood to Kelton, June 19, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 338; Howard to McDowell, June 20, 1877 and McDowell to Howard, June 22, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 338.

[21]Howard to Perry, June 18, 1877, LOFO-NP, DC, RUSAC, NA.

[22]Howard to McDowell, June 18, 1877, LOFO-NP, DC, RUSAC, NA.

[23]Howard to AAG, Department of the Columbia, June 20, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 338; Howard to McDowell, June 15, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 333

[24]McDowell to AG, Washington D.C., July 3, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 338.

[25]Howard, "The Nez Perce Campaign of 1877," The Advance 12, August 15, 1878, p. 515

[26]Ibid., August 22, 1878, p. 530

[27]Field Order Number 13, June 22, 1877, LOFO-NP, DC, RUSAC, NA.

[28]Howard, "The Nez Perce Campaign of 1877," The Advance 12, September 5, 1878, p. 563.

[29]Howard to AAG, Military Division of the Pacific, June 26, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 336.

[30]Field Order Number 18, June 27, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 338.

[31]Beal, "I Will Fight No More Forever," p. 67.

[32]David Perry, "The Affair at Cottonwood," in Northwestern Fights and Fighters, ed. Cyrus T. Brady (Williamstown, Mass, 1974), p. 123.

[33]Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, p. 149; Kelton to Hasbrouck, June 29, 1877, Hasbrouck Papers, United States Military Academy Library, West Point, New York.

[34]Report of Captain Marcus Miller, July 20, 1877, Ltr 4138, LR, Appointments, Commission, and Personnel Branch (hereinafter ACP), RAGO, NA. Miller's report also included the reports of his subordinate commanders.

[35]San Francisco Chronicle, July 22, 1877.

[36]Miller's Report, July 20, 1877, LR, ACP,RAGO,NA.

[37]Josephy, The Nez Perce, pp. 547-548; J.G. Trimble, "The Battle of the Clearwater," in Brady's Northwestern Fights and Fighters (Williamstown, Mass, 1974), pp. 143-144.

[38]Trimble, "The Battle of the Clearwater," pp. 143-144; Report of Captain George B. Rodney in Miller's Report, July 20, 1877, LR, ACP, RAGO, NA.

[39]Report of First Lieutenant Charles Humphrey in Miller's Report, July 20, 1877, LR, ACP, RAGO, NA.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Miller's Report, Ibid; Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1877, p. 660.

[42]Miller's Report, July 20, 1877, LR, ACP, RAGO, NA.

[43]Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, p. 198.

[44]New York Herald, September 10, 1877, p. 5.

[45]Miller's Report, July 20, 1877, LR, ACP, RAGO, NA.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, p. 168.

[48]Miller's Report, July 20, 1877, LR, ACP, RAGO, NA.

[49]Edward Field, "No Footsteps But Some Glances Backward," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States 7 (1885), p. 249.

[50]Howard to McDowell, July 12, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 336.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Miller's Report, July 20, 1877, LR, ACP, RAGO, NA.

[53]W. R. Parnell, "The Salmon River Expedition," in Brady's Northwestern Fights and Fighters (Williamstown, Mass, 1974), p. 131.

[54]Report of Lieutenant Charles Humphrey in Miller's Report, July 20, 1877, LR, ACP, RAGO, NA.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Thomas Sutherland, Howard's Campaign Against the Nez Perce, 1877 (Portland, 1878), pp. 7-8.

[57]Howard to McDowell, July 12, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 336.

[58]Sutherland, Howard's Campaign, p. 8.

[59]Howard to McDowell, July 12, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 336.

[60]Miller's Report, July 20, 1877, LR, ACP, RAGO, NA.

[61]Army and Navy Journal 14, December 16, 1877, p. 293.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEZ PERCE CAMPAIGN: THE LONG TREK TO THE BEAR PAW MOUNTAINS

After the battle of the Clearwater, the nature of the Nez Perce campaign changed. The Indian leaders, led primarily by Looking Glass, decided to leave their traditional homes. They would travel east toward their traditional allies, the Crow. If for some reason the Crow could not or would not join their struggle against the whites, they would journey north into Canada. The Sioux had taken refuge in Canada the year before. For many, such as Joseph, the thought of leaving their homes, possibly forever, was too bitter to contemplate. In spite of his pleas, the council had decreed that the bands would go to the land east of the Bitterroot Mountains.[1]

In contrast, Howard made few momentous decisions in the hours after the battle. The fatigued general was relishing his success. His victory had checked much of the criticism and gossip about his ability to beat the Indians. Now the newspapers and, more important, one of McDowell's aides praised his determination. Captain Birney B. Keeler, an officer sent by McDowell to observe Howard's actions, reported that "nothing can match the vigor of General Howard's pursuit."[2] Later, the captain maintained that the significance of the victory was not fully disclosed in Howard's dispatch.[3] The "praying general's" star certainly shone

brighter as a result of the two day engagement.

For several days after crossing the Clearwater, Howard tried to determine where the Nez Perce´ would go. The Indians had fled to the west after the battle. This suggested that they might be returning to the Wallowa Valley. However, the non-treaty bands turned north a short distance from their abandoned camp and recrossed the Clearwater at the Kamiah sub-agency. On the fifteenth, Howard, some cavalry, plus Otis´ howitzers caught up with the fleeing hostiles.

The skirmish which followed was something of a repeat of the fighting of July 11. The main Indian camp had already forded the river before the soldiers could reach them. The most Howard and his small force could do was to fire into the village. Bringing up the gatling and a howitzer, the soldiers began shelling the camp. Because Howard made no effort to cross, the Indians simply moved their belongings out of artillery range.[4]

Failing to catch his enemy for a second time, Howard resorted to deception. He moved his small force to the west away from the river and the Indians. When he was out of sight, he turned the men north. He hoped to cross the Clearwater downstream and get behind the Indians. Miller, in charge of the rest of the expedition, would ferry the foot troops across the river at the agency. Captain Throckmorton would follow Miller to Kamiah, but not cross the river. He would garrison the agency and prevent the Indians from back-tracking on their trail.[5] Howard was forced to change these plans when word reached him that the Nez Perce´ might want to surrender.

When Howard was told that Chief Joseph wanted to end the fighting, the general returned to Kamiah. He sent a message to the Nez Perce´

chief saying that he and his people would be treated with justice if they surrendered. He also promised that a military court would investigate their actions and their complaints. In effect, however, the surrender would have to be unconditional. If Chief Joseph chose to accept these terms, he could surrender to Captain Miller.[6]

In mentioning a court, Howard might have exceeded his authority as a department commander. A civilian commission had settled the fate of the Non-Treaty Nez Perce and a review of its decisions by a military court would undoubtedly cause some furor. To prevent this, Howard sent a dispatch to McDowell informing him that the hostiles might surrender. In his message Howard told McDowell he and others believed that Looking Glass was the principle force behind the Indians' movements after the Clearwater fight. Joseph and other chiefs were being pressured into remaining on the warpath.[7] For once Howard had accurate information. Unfortunately for both sides, the surrender never materialized. Some Indians did give themselves up, but the bulk of the bands continued their eastward journey.

The rumor of a surrender caused a change in plans for the expedition. Instead of two crossings, all of Howard's units forded the river at the Kamiah agency. As the foot troops made camp, Major Mason struck out with a cavalry force to locate the retreating Indians. On July 17, he intercepted the Nez Perce and had a short crisp fight with the band's rear guard. Instead of continuing the fight or at least shadowing the moving camp, Mason returned to Howard's main encampment.[8] The only benefit gained by his sortie was the knowledge that the Nez Perce were definitely headed east across the Lolo Trail.

Despite this intelligence, Howard remained in his camp for more

than a week. While his soldiers found ways to occupy their time, the one-arm general pondered his next move. The idleness of so many soldiers angered McDowell. The division commander had stripped every department in his command in order to provide sufficient forces for Howard. Now those soldiers were sitting instead of marching. In mid-July McDowell felt that he needed at least some of the troops more than his subordinate.

In the summer of 1877, the eastern third of the country was wracked by labor strikes. Railroad workers walked off their jobs and closed down thousands of miles of track. The strikers often resorted to violence to keep the railroads from operating without them. When local authorities failed to control the rioting laborers, President Rutherford B. Hayes ordered out Federal troops. Artillery batteries from forts along the eastern seaboard marched to Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Indeed, the artillery regiments on the East and Gulf coast furnished most of the troops used to restore order. The West coast was not immune to labor unrest.[9]

In the West, the railroads were not the primary point of controversy. Cheap labor from the Asian countries kept wages extremely low to the disgust and anger of the white population. The riots in California had a racial basis as much as an economic one. For whatever reason, the cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles convulsed in riots. When the local authorities and militia proved unwilling or unable to control the mobs, the people sought help from McDowell. The general considered the unrest to be a sympathetic response to the communistic plots in the east and was determined to put them down.[10] To do that he needed troops.

On July 23, Lieutenant Joseph Sladen, one of Howard's staff officers

at the Portland headquarters, sent an urgent message to the commander at Fort Boise. In the telegram he directed that officer to send the fastest possible messenger to overtake Major John Green's column. Green was to send Hasbrouck's Light Battery B back to San Francisco. The following day, Sladen informed Howard that the labor turmoil was responsible for Hasbrouck's recall. McDowell cabled Howard directly to return Batteries C and L to California.[11] These three units had been stationed in San Francisco prior to being ordered to Idaho. McDowell undoubtedly wanted units which had been stationed in San Francisco.

The change of orders created some hardship to the batteries ordered to return to California. Hasbrouck's battery arrived in Boise City on the 17th of July after a two hundred and seventy mile march from Winnemucca.[12] Along with Green's column the battery had covered another eighty miles before the recall order reached them. Hasbrouck's men reached Boise City on the 31st after marching three hundred and fifty miles without a day's rest. They still had almost three hundred miles to march to reach the rail station at Winnemucca. The San Francisco Chronicle reported that

> His men are all well, and hope that the object for which they are ordered to return may bring them as much business as the prospect they had before them in Idaho.[13]

Hasbrouck's battery probably would have seen little action, especially mounted as they were on old worn-out artillery draft horses.[14] The same, however, could not be said for Batteries C and L.

Under Captains Harry Cushing and Edward Fields, the batteries already had joined Howard's expedition. When orders for their return arrived, the two units reluctantly began preparations for the trip back to San Francisco.[15] However, Howard wanted to retain the units. He

felt their presence was critical to the success of his small army. McDowell grumbled but relented. He believed that at best Howard's movements would only be a military promenade. The division commander warned his subordinate that he would have to justify the remark that the loss of the two units would jeopardize the expedition.[16]

Stung by insinuations in the press and from his superiors that he could not catch the hostiles, Howard began his long delayed pursuit. His new plan provided for three columns. The right column, commanded by himself, would follow the Indian's trail. The column would include the artillery and infantry battalions, and a cavalry squadron. The left column, commanded by Colonel Frank Wheaton, would move to northern Idaho to prevent other Indians from supporting the fugitive Nez Perce. A reserve column under Major John Green would patrol the area of the Salmon and Clearwater Rivers. Green's troops would keep any hostiles from backtracking to their old haunts.[17]

Howard's plan effectively sealed western Idaho from the Nez Perce who were headed east. However, the long delay in beginning the pursuit made the likelihood of catching the non-treaty bands remote at best. Although most of the soldiers were eager for a fight, many knew that another Clearwater was unlikely. Captain Jenkins A. FitzGerald reflected this skepticism in a letter to his wife. He wrote:

> ...I don't think we shall see a hostile. I said to Colonel (Captain) Miller, "Colonel, what are we going to do over there?" He replied, "Oh, we will have a big mountain picnic with no Indians to bother us."[18]

Howard's troopers would not come to grips with the Nez Perce but others would.

When Howard concluded that Joseph was taking his people to the

Buffalo Plains, he asked McDowell and Sherman to have troops east of the Bitterroot Mountains intercept them. Sherman ordered General Sheridan to give every assistance possible to Howard. Sheridan was also informed that Howard had been instructed to disregard department and divisional boundaries and pursue the hostiles to the end. Sheridan, in turn, directed General Alfred Terry, commanding the Department of the Dakotas, to cooperate with Howard.[19] Toward that end, Colonel John Gibbon, one of Terry's subordinate commanders, began to gather troops east of the Lolo Trail. By the fifth of August, Gibbon had amassed a force of about two hundred fighters. This number included one hundred and fifty soldiers and forty-five volunteers. On the eighth, Gibbon's scouts found Joseph's camp in the basin of the Big Hole River.

Shortly before midnight on August 8, Gibbon and his small force moved out for a dawn attack on the hostiles' camp. His tiny group totalled one hundred and eighty-two men. Gibbon did have a mountain howitzer with him, but he left it with his wagons several miles from the Indian village. Gibbon did not want the noise of the gun's wheels to alert the enemy inadvertently. By dawn, the soldiers had reached the village without being detected. In a short time they were ready to charge.

A Nez Percé warrior walking to the pony herd in the early morning light stumbled upon the anxious troops. Before he could alarm his people, a volley of gunfire snuffed out his life. Those shots caused an eruption of fire all along Gibbon's line. Caught completely by surprise, pandemonium reigned over the Indian lodges as Gibbon's soldiers rushed forward. There was no organized resistance. The camp's inhabitants scattered pell mell, seeking any protection from the soldiers' bullets. Many women and children, caught in the crossfire between soldier

and warrior, never made it out of the camp. Within twenty minutes, the spirited troops were standing among the enemy's abandoned lodges.[21]

Gibbon's stay in the camp was brief. The war chiefs quickly summoned their braves with the purpose of retaking their village. Like a grizzly bear abruptly awaken from a sleep, the Nez Perce braves counter-attacked with a vengeance. Efforts to destroy the camp and its contents had to be abandoned as the Colonel was forced to order a retreat. Incensed at the attack on their women and children, the warriors forced the soldiers out of the camp and across the creek from which the attack had been launched.

The infantry commander was finally able to rally his hard pressed troops on a wooded hill about a mile from the village. There he ordered his men to entrench and conserve their ammunition. Gibbon knew that his position was critical. He had suffered many casualties in the attack, and the accuracy of the Nez Perce rifles was increasing that number every minute. Howard was too far away for any assistance, and the small party he had left with his wagons would be of no help whatsoever. They were probably under attack themselves. The only option available to the wounded Colonel was to wait and hope that his small band could turn away any attack.[22]

Shortly after the infantrymen rallied on the wooded knoll, they heard two cannon shells explode nearby. The howitzer crew, two sergeants, a corporal, four enlisted men, and a guide had arrived on the scene. The Indians, however, had taken steps to prevent the cannon from reaching the beseiged soldiers. The two shells fired from the small brass cannon were defensive fire against attacking Indians. The struggle between the small crew and their enemy did not last long. Instead of

continuing to fire the cannon, the crew took up their rifles and tried to defend themselves. Knowing that their lives were in danger, two privates abandoned the gun and their comrades.

Seeing that their position was hopeless, the sergeants pushed the two hundred pound gun off its carriage and fled to the brush. A colored servant, the guide, and the driver of the draft team managed to join them in the bushes and avoid detection by the Indians. The corporal, however, was killed defending the gun.

When the Indians reached the abandoned gun, they further disabled it by taking off the wheels. They hid these in some brush at the base of the hill. The carriage was pushed over an embankment. Gibbon knew that the gun had been taken when he heard no more firing from that direction. For some time he was plagued by the uncomfortable thought that the Indians might turn the gun on his soldiers.[23]

By afternoon the fighting was reduced to intermittent sniping. Indian and soldier marksmen spent the rest of the day trying to pick each other off. By evening the firing died altogether. Darkness allowed Gibbon to dispatch couriers to nearby Deer Lodge with a preliminary report of the battle and a request for aid. Without medical supplies, food, or water, the men on the small knoll suffered, especially the wounded. Casualties would become fatalities unless some sort of help arrived soon. To increase his chances of rescue, Gibbon also sent a messenger to Howard, who was somewhere in the Bitterroot Valley.

At noon on the following day, the small handful of warriors who had kept the soldiers pinned down rode off to rejoin their village. Gibbon then sent a few of his men to find his wagons. In a short time the wagons, which had not been attacked by the Indians, arrived at the

fortified knoll. The exhausted soldiers now had food and water, but the wounded still suffered from a lack of medical supplies. Some soldiers tried to comfort the injured while others began burying the dead. Help was still twenty-four hours away for the wounded.[24]

Howard learned of Gibbon's fight from a few volunteers who had deserted during the battle. The general immediately set forth with twenty men for the battlefield. He reached it on the morning of August 11. Mason was directed to move forward as fast as possible with his cavalry and the surgeons. Mason then sent messengers to the infantry column two days behind.[25]

Mason's couriers reported to Captain Miller, who was in charge of all the foot troops in Howard's absence. The message instructed Miller to load Humphrey's battery and Captain James Wells' company of infantry into wagons and send them forward at once. The two units were to be assigned additional men so that each had at least twenty-five troopers. Miller was instructed to go into camp with the rest of the column where the message reached him.[26] Undoubtedly, Mason, skeptical of the value of the cavalry, wanted foot soldiers with him in case the Nez Perce were cornered.

On August 12, Mason's surgeons arrived at the Big Hole battlefield and began tending the wounded. Mason and the cavalry arrived later that day. The doctors had their work cut out for them. Gibbon listed sixty men as killed or wounded. This included seven officers and fifty-three enlisted men.[27] In addition, nine volunteers were either killed or wounded during the battle. The Indian casualties were more difficult to determine.

Accounts of the Indian wounded and killed vary greatly. The number

of warriors killed ranged from fifteen to thirty-three. Caught in the crossfire in the camp, the casualties among the women and children were considerably greater. The estimates of slain non-combatants range from fifty to seventy.[28] If the battle of Big Hole was an Indian victory, it was a pyrrhic success. Virtually every lodge was in mourning due to the loss of a family member. During the first night of seige on the knoll, the wail of sorrow from the camp was clearly audible to the troopers.

The battle can hardly be claimed as a victory for the army. Correspondent Thomas Sutherland concluded that "Looking at this fight impartially, General Gibbon got worsted."[29] Gibbon, usually a competent commander, mishandled the battle on two points. He should not have attacked Joseph's bands in the first place. When Howard sent messages east of the Bitterroot, he asked that the area commanders delay the Indians until he could catch up. He possessed a force which had fought the hostiles and had beaten them. Gibbon's approach to the village was undetected. He could easily have shadowed the village or better yet, blocked its movement to the east. There were indications that the Indians would have spent several days in the Big Hole basin had not Gibbon attacked them.[30] Again this would have allowed Howard to bring up his forces and, together with Gibbon, could have ended the campaign at that point. As it was, Gibbon's brash attack cost him heavy casualties without stopping the Indians' flight.

Gibbon's use of artillery was the second facet of the battle which he botched. Even though he had only one gun, Gibbon could have used it to advantage had he not violated a fundamental principle of nineteenth century warfare. Artillery must be supported by cavalry or infantry when in close contact with the enemy. Twenty-four years earlier,

Captain John Gibbon, in his book, The Artillerist's Manual wrote:

> Artillery cannot defend itself when hard pressed, and should always be sustained by either infantry or cavalry. The proposition made to arm the cannoneers with small arms, such as revolvers, short rifles, etc., is calculated to do more harm than good. They should be taught to look upon their gun as their proper arm of defense... Let the rifles be given to the infantry, and the sabres and revolvers to the cavalry; guard the artillery with these arms (cavalry and infantry), and teach them (the artillery) that their salvation is sticking to their pieces.[31]

In allowing eight men to bring the gun forward independently at dawn, Gibbon implied that these men could both serve the gun and support it with small arms fire. That was impossible.

Gibbon should not have left the brass gun behind when he and his men set out for the Indian camp on the night of the eighth. With his wagons left behind, two of the draft animals certainly could have been spared to pack the mountain howitzer. The wooded knoll would have been an excellent position from which the gun could have supported the attack. As it was, Gibbon lost the gun and its explosive potential, a corporal was killed, and several men were wounded for nothing. Indeed, there was some possibility the Indians could have turned the cannon on the entrenched soldiers. The Big Hole easily could have become another Little Bighorn.

Howard spent a day and two nights at Gibbon's battlefield. His surgeons treated the wounded as well as they could and prepared them for movement to Deer Lodge. When the wounded left the battlefield, Howard resumed his pursuit. Gibbon was able to attach a company to Howard's command to reinforce the general in case the Nez Perce attacked him.[32] The general reached Bannock City five days after the Big Hole fight, but his main column was many miles behind. Humphrey's battery

and Wells' company, called forward by Mason, were able to reach the advance party by August 15.

At Camas Meadows, about twenty-five miles northeast of the Camas stage station, Howard cut the Nez Perce trail. His advance party had travelled parallel and a little to the north of the fleeing Indians. This allowed him to make up much of the distance separating his soldiers from the Indians. Howard wanted either to get close to the Nez Perce or, better yet, to get in front of them. He planned to fight a defensive battle with his advanced cavalry squadron while the infantry column closed the distance. When Miller's troops arrived, he would go on the offensive. While the cavalry and Howard shadowed the Indians, Mason sent repeated messages urging Miller to move as fast as possible.[34]

When Howard reached the Camas prairie, he found that his quarry was only sixteen miles away. Mason and the other officers suggested that the exhausted men and animals be given a night's rest. They could attack the Indian camp in the morning. Howard reluctantly agreed to their suggestions. However, when morning came, it was Howard's camp which was attacked.

In the pre-dawn darkness, Nez Perce braves infiltrated Howard's sentry posts and picket lines. Their primary purpose was to cut the ropes holding the soldiers' horses and mules. Another group of mounted Indians would stampede the animals, leaving the troopers afoot. The possibility existed for a major attack of the then strangled party. A sentry's challenge and a warrior's accidental rifle shot alerted the camp to the Indians' presence. In the melee which followed, the Nez Perce were able to stampede almost two hundred horses and mules. Fortunately for the army, not all of the retaining ropes had been cut.

Hastily gathering his troopers, Major George Sanford dashed off in pursuit of the Indians and the captive animals. Sanford was able to catch up with the Indians and retrieve a few of the mules in a running skirmish. During the fight Captain Randolph Norwood's troop was temporarily cut off when Sanford ordered the other troops back to camp. A relief column of foot soldiers led by Howard prevented any serious losses when it came to Norwood's rescue.[35] The principal reason for the Indian attack was to delay Howard's pursuit.[36] Their dawn raid more than succeeded in this respect.

With his pack mules gone, Howard lost most of the mobility which had allowed him to close the gap on the fleeing Indians. Instead of pushing his cavalry the remaining distance to the Indians' camp, Howard returned to his camp, tended his casualties, and waited for his infantry to join him. The Camas Meadows skirmish confirmed in many minds the utter worthlessness of the cavalry. The mounted soldiers had been badly mauled at White Bird Canyon. Under Perry, they had been unable to pursue the Indians after the fighting on the Clearwater. Now, they had been surprised and had lost most of their pack animals. Some officers considered the cavalry troops with the expedition to be a disgrace to the service.[37]

When notified of the fight on Camas Meadows, Miller put his foot soldiers in wagons and hurried them to Howard's camp. The artillery captain and his men covered forty-six miles in a single move and arrived at Howard's position in the afternoon.[38] That march was one of the few bright spots in the campaign. Few cavalry units could move forty miles or more in a single day. With the arrival of the foot soldiers, the expedition was united once more. However, it had lost a full day's march

to its illusive opponents. After Camas Meadows, Howard's soldiers would never again be within effective striking distance of the Nez Perce. Fortunately for the army, other units were being posted to intercept the fugitive Indians.

After Sheridan learned of the Camas Meadows skirmish, he began positioning units to intercept the fleeing Indians. Colonel Samuel Sturgis and six troops of his Seventh Cavalry took station on Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone. Colonel Wesley Merritt with nine troops of the Fifth Cavalry at his disposal could cover any movement south into Wyoming. Major Verling Hart and five troops of the Fifth Cavalry were at the head of the Tongue River in case the Nez Perce went as far west as the Big Horn Mountains. Sheridan felt that Sturgis was best situated to meet the hostiles when they crossed the Absaroka Mountains.[39]

While Sheridan was moving his units, Howard stopped his. At Heart's Lake, east of the Camas battlefield, Howard's column halted. The men and horses were physically worn out. The surgeons reported that thirty men were unfit for duty due to simple exhaustion. With their uniforms in rags and their shoes showing the wear of a thousand mile march, the men could not go any further without a rest and a refitting. Complying with the requests of his battalion commanders, Howard halted the column for several days.[40] He knew that Sturgis' cavalry and other units were west of the Yellowstone Park. This put the fugitive Nez Perce in between eastern and western armies.

By the first week of September, the Indians were clear of the Yellowstone Park. Behind them, they left a trail of dead miners, trappers, and tourists. Even though the park had been in existence only five years, sightseers were common by the summer of 1877. Some who

came to the park while the Nez Perce were traversing it saw more than geysers and bears. For some, an encounter with the hostiles was fatal. Wanting to avoid detection at all costs, the warriors were not hesitant to kill any who might tell of their presence.

When the Indians emerged from the park area, they were confronted with the Absaroka Mountains. Their scouts learned that Sturgis' Seventh Cavalry blocked the Clark Fork pass through which they must travel. Behind them, Howard's revitalized soldiers once again had taken up the chase. The fugitives' only hope was to trick Sturgis into abandoning the pass. To do this the main Indian camp veered to the south after reaching the bend in Clark's Fork. They then circled around Dead Indian hill, and screened by high bluffs and timber, returned to the pass.

Sturgis knew of no passage through the mountains south of Clark's Fork. However, when his scouts confirmed the southerly movement of the Indians, the colonel felt compelled to move. It was possible that the Indians could find some unknown passageway and avoid his troopers. Mounting his command, the colonel moved out along the eastern side of the Absarokas. He travelled more than twenty miles before he learned that he had been deceived. By the time he returned to his original position, he found that Howard's troops were also in front of him.[41]

After a bone-grinding twenty mile ride, Sturgis overtook Howard's advance party. Because Howard was the ranking officer, he incorporated the Seventh into his expedition. The cavalry colonel, incensed at the Indians' trickery, was determined to repay the Nez Perce for the humiliation he felt. He suggested to Howard that the Seventh make forced marches of fifty to sixty miles a day for several days. At this rate he could overtake the fleeing Indians in a few days. Recognizing that

Sturgis' mounts were fresher than his own jaded stock, Howard approved the plan. He added Captain Charles Bendire's troop of the First Cavalry and Otis' mountain howitzers to Sturgis' command.[42]

Two days after leaving Howard, Sturgis' troopers finally caught up with the Nez Percé. The scene of battle was a river valley north of the junction of the Yellowstone River and Clark's Fork. The valley itself was surrounded by steep cliffs several hundred feet high. The north fork of Canyon Creek, which flows into the valley, contained a causeway which led to the prairie expanses of the Buffalo plains. This was the avenue of retreat the Nez Percé intended to use.

After riding several miles on the morning of September 13, Sturgis' column made contact with the Indians' rear guard. The colonel immediately ordered Major Lewis Merrill's battalion to attack the Indians on a direct line. Merrill's soldiers were reinforced by the troopers of the First. Otis' guns also went with this wing of Sturgis' command. Captain Fredrick Benteen's battalion swung off to the left almost at right angles to the other unit. Benteen was trying to head several gullies and beat the fleeing Indians to the causeway leading to the plains.[43]

The Nez Percé rear guard tried to slow Merrill's attack and give their camp time to escape up Canyon Creek. Taking positions high on the bluffs, Indian marksmen compelled the major to dismount his men and attack on foot. This effectively cancelled any possibility of Merrill's men forming a junction with Benteen's troops. Indeed, Merrill's progress was so slow under intense fire that he provided no support whatsoever to the flanking movement.[44]

Benteen and his men knew that the first group to reach the exit

canyon would win the day. However, as they approached the prize, they received a hail of bullets from the canyon walls. The Nez Perce advance guard had beaten them to the canyon. The rain of bullets increased as the Indians stampeded through the gap. With no support from the other battalion, Benteen could not stop the flow of Indians and their ponies into the canyon.[45]

At this point, Otis' Howitzer was brought to the front. His gunners immediately began shelling the retreating enemy. His efforts brought mixed reviews. Ultimately, Merrill's battalion regained their mounts and moved forward to Benteen's assistance. By that time the Indians had passed up the canyon. The horses of the command, drained by a sixty mile march in two day's time, could not be urged on.[46] Sturgis sounded recall and began looking after those who had fallen under the Indians' rifles. The companies of the Seventh spent the night in the vicinity of the battlefield.

On the following morning, some effort was made to continue the pursuit. Crow scouts, attached to Sturgis' column, succeeded in capturing several hundred ponies from the retreating Nez Perce. Although this did affect the hostiles' ability to move, the jaded cavalry mounts could not be made to move any faster than a walk. In the fighting in Canyon Creek, Sturgis suffered fourteen casualties, three of them killed. The number of Nez Perce reported killed ranged from six to twenty-one.[47]

The value of Otis' participation in the battle is a point of debate. S. G. Fisher, a civilian scout for Sturgis, maintained that the gun was of no value. The highly excited Otis posted his gun, contrary to Fisher's advice, in a ravine, which rendered it useless.[48] Sturgis' report stated that "In spite of energetic efforts of Otis, the officer

was unable to make the gun available as the animals were totally worn out."[49] These statements were contradicted by Lieutenant Theodore Goldin of Benteen's battalion. Goldin said that Otis' gun was pushed well out to the front of the lines, opened on the enemy, and did considerable damage.[50]

The disparity of evaluations was probably due to personal perspectives. Fisher's account of a highly excitable Otis is hard to accept at face value. It is difficult to believe that an officer who had fought the Sioux, maintained his guns under extreme danger at the Clearwater, and stood the skirmish at Camas Meadow would lose control in such a mobile engagement as Canyon Creek. Fisher's accuracy is also suspect because he reported that Otis had two guns. Sturgis and Goldin both stated that one of Otis' guns was lost in crossing the Yellowstone. With less understanding of artillery than the average soldier, Fisher's remarks have little value.

It is the discrepancy between Sturgis and Goldin which is harder to resolve. Again perspective is probably the answer. Sturgis, wanting a large volume of accurate artillery fire, would probably depreciate anything less. Goldin, on the other hand, would probably overstate anything Otis accomplished. The cavalry lieutenant knew that the cannon possessed much more power than the carbines of his troopers.

As he had only one gun, Otis' role in the battle is hard to assess. With exhausted pack mules, he would have been unable to move his gun around the field to maximize its effectiveness. The exhausted condition of the ammunition mules would have contributed to the lieutenant's problems. The significance of Otis' actions on Canyon Creek, taken in the context of the Indian wars in general, was that he was even present at

all.

The major excuse for not taking artillery with pursuing columns in the American west was that they could not keep up. The argument ran that the gun slowed the movements of the cavalry troops.[51] Otis' mere presence at Canyon Creek shows the remarkable mobility of pack artillery. The mountain guns had been a part of the Nez Perce campaign from its inception. Whenever Howard and his cavalry went ahead of the foot soldiers, Otis' guns and gunners normally went along. Otis' small battery had maintained its place along side the cavalry over some of the most rugged terrain on the North American continent. The lieutenant's men and animals also had kept pace with the rapid march of Sturgis' troopers to Canyon Creek. The performance of Otis' small band invalidated the idea that guns could not keep up with wide-ranging cavalry columns.

The fighting on Canyon Creek, like so many of the previous engagements, settled nothing. The Nez Perce Indians were still in flight, and the army was still obliged to dog their trail. Knowing that Sturgis might not stop the hostiles, Howard searched for other troops to check the movement of the fugitive Indians toward the north. On September 12, he sent a messenger to Colonel Nelson Appleton Miles in hopes that Miles could block the path of the fleeing Indians.[52]

When Howard joined Sturgis at the Canyon Creek battlefield, he knew that neither his men nor Sturgis' command could overtake the Nez Perce. He also knew that Miles needed time to gather his forces and move them into a position between the Indians and the Canadian border. After consultation with Sturgis, Howard decided to slow the pace of his pursuit. He felt that the Indians would then slow the speed of their movements. Hopefully this would buy enough time for Miles to take the

field.[53]

When Miles received Howard's request for help, the young infantry colonel lost little time gathering his troops. His command would include six companies of his own Fifth Infantry regiment, three troops of the Second Cavalry, and another three troops of the Seventh Cavalry. These units would be supported by a Napoleon gun and a Hotchkiss Mountain Gun. By noon of September 18, Miles and his men were on the move.[54]

The Napoleon gun rumbling along with Miles' troopers had undoubtedly seen many campaigns before this one. Adopted in 1856, the French-designed cannon was a favorite of many who had fought in the Civil War. The small Hotchkiss gun, however, was an experiment. During the previous year, Miles had asked the Ordnance Department for a small steel gun to accompany troops in the west. Miles believed that the brass mountain gun was obsolete. In reply to the request, the Ordnance Department purchased the Hotchkiss gun and sent it to the Department of the Dakotas for testing.[56] Miles was impressed with the small, breech-loading, steel gun. Its exceptional accuracy more than offset its small caliber of 1.65 inches. Miles concluded that it was the best cannon for fighting Indians that the country had.[56]

From his cantonment on Tongue River, Miles marched west north-west. He intended striking the hostiles before they arrived at Cow Island, at the junction of the Musselshell and the Missouri Rivers. Miles' soldiers were able to make excellent time on the march. The infantry companies were mounted on Indian ponies captured during the Sioux campaign. In seven days marching, the column reached the mouth of the Musselshell and finally the Missouri. Even with hard marching, Miles found that the Nez Perce already had crossed the Missouri River.[57]

Miles immediately turned his column north.

Instead of following directly on the Indians' trail, Miles kept his units to the east. The Little Rockies and, to an extent, the Bear Paw Mountains screened his movements from Indian observers. The terrain, the weather, and possibly providence allowed his troops to approach the Nez Percé encampment in the Bear Paws undetected.

Forty miles from Canada, the Nez Percé had stopped to rest their weary animals and exhausted people. Howard's men were many miles behind, and the chiefs saw little need in pushing their people so hard. The idea to halt was principally Looking Glass'. It had been at his insistence that the bands had stopped in the Big Hole basin. The attack by Gibbon had removed him from any position of influence. By the end of September, sufficient time had passed and his words once again carried strength. The bands had made camp in a bend of Snake Creek. The first warning the villagers had of the soldiers' arrival was the thunder of hooves as the cavalry charged the camp.[58]

In attacking the enemy's lodges, Miles divided his forces into three wings. One detachment swung to the west of the camp in an attempt to disperse the pony herd. Captain Owen Hale's battalion of the Seventh attacked the southern flank of the camp. Ultimately,this battalion would shift to the east and attempt a charge on the Indians from that direction. Captain Simon Snyder's mounted infantry moved directly on the camp from the south, following Hales' battalion.

Caught by surprise, the Nez Percé's response was disjointed. Some warriors were able to mount a portion of the women and children. They then escorted this group beyond the reach of the soldiers. Other warriors herded the remaining non-combatants into the shelter of cullees

that traversed their camp. Yet other warriors grabbed their weapons and met the charge of the cavalry with a wall of fire.[59]

Hale's advancing Seventh was riddled with small arms fire. The initial fusilade prompted Hale to shift his attack to the east. Troopers mounted and dismounted scurried to follow their officers and return the Nez Percé fire at the same time. Within minutes the effective strength of the battalion of the Seventh had been reduced by half. Hale and Lieutenant Jonathan Biddle were among the first officers to fall mortally wounded in the battle. In a short time, Captains Myles Moylan and Edward Godfrey were also casualties. Non-commissioned officers were also targets for Nez Percé bullets. All of the troop first sergeants were killed in the initial part of the battle. Apparently the warriors paid particular attention to anyone in a leadership position.[60]

While the troopers of Hale's battalion were struggling on the eastern side of the village, Snyder's mounted infantry moved up from the south. Dismounting and then firing from prone positions, the infantry could fire on those braves who were sweeping the Seventh ranks. The long rifles of the soldiers finally forced the Indians back into the camp proper. The attempt at cutting off the pony herd had been partially successful, and the Indians in the camp were now without any means of escape.[61]

The heavy casualties he had suffered in the first hour of the battle convinced Miles to discard any thoughts of storming the camp. He decided to beseige those Nez Percé who had not been able to flee in the first minutes of the fight. At this point Miles brought up his Hotchkiss gun. Unfortunately, the gun was deployed too close to the front lines. The gun crew immediately came under enemy fire and had to abandon the

gun for a time. Later, it was withdrawn a short distance and began firing into the camp. Its fire was generally ineffective due to its flat trajectory. In many instances the gunners were unable to depress the tube enough to shell the braves' rifle pits. By the end of the day, the two sides gradually tapered off their firing. When darkness came, thought turned from fighting to keeping warm in the cold October night.[62]

On the following morning, a sporadic sniping characterized much of the battle. Miles added to his firepower by bringing up the Napoleon gun. At first the gun had little more success in hurting the entrenched Indians than the steel breech-loader. The Napoleon gun possessed a trajectory much like that of the steel mountain gun. However, the gun crew remedied that somewhat by digging a hole and lowering the trail into it. In this configuration, the gun became something of a mortar. The gunners were then able to lob shells into the ravines and rifle pits which had sheltered the Indians. Several Indians, including women and children, were killed when the exploding shells caved in their temporary shelters.[63]

In many respects the battle in the Bear Paw Mountains ended on the second day. For the next three days, between sporadic shelling, Miles tried to talk the Indians into surrendering. Escape was unlikely at best, and Howard's soldiers were within a few days march of the battlefield. Miles had dispatched a courier asking for assistance on the first day of battle.

With many of their leaders dead, the decision to fight or surrender was difficult to make. Many warriors wanted to continue the fight. Emissaries had been sent to Canada asking the Sioux to come to their aid.[64] However, continued existence meant more casualties both from

the soldiers' big guns and the freezing nights. When Howard arrived at Miles' headquarters with an advanced party, the Nez Perce leaders knew their fate was sealed. Howard's army could keep the Sioux away even if they did leave Canada to help them. After six grim days, Joseph surrendered his rifle and his people.

The credit for cornering the illusive Nez Perce certainly belongs to Miles. However, the ultimate victory over the non-treaty bands was not the exclusive property of the young colonel from Tongue River. The Indians had inflicted as many casualties as they had sustained. Miles lost twenty-three officers and men and had another forty-five wounded. Twenty-five Nez Perce died on the battlefield, most on the first day. Miles reported forty-six wounded Indians.[65] Miles had enough force to hold the Indians, but it was the proximity of Howard's column which compelled the Nez Perce to surrender.

When Joseph surrendered, Howard's column was only twenty-five miles from Snake Creek. Miles' request for assistance had prompted Howard to load his artillery and infantry battalions on a steamer and head down the Missouri. Sturgis' cavalry was with the foot troops. Sanford's spent First Cavalry had been sent home. Therefore, an additional three hundred soldiers were within a day's march of the battle. The veterans from Idaho undoubtedly would have relished an assault on an enemy that they had been chasing for fifteen hundred miles. The cold, hungry, and exhausted warriors could not stand against the new army.

Miles' success on Snake Creek was due to two factors. First, he had a comparatively fresh command. His troops were in the field less than two weeks before their battle. His command was also fresh in spirit. They had not trudged hundreds of miles only to see their foe elude them.

Miles' second advantage was size. His attacking force was slightly smaller than Howard's had been at the Clearwater. The Nez Perce, due to the losses at the Big Hole and Canyon Creek, were weaker than when they had fought in Idaho. Had Gibbon marshalled a striking force equal in strength to Miles', the Big Hole battle might very well have been the last battle of the campaign. The same can be said for Sturgis' efforts at Canyon Creek.

Miles' cannons were an important, but not decisive, ingredient in his victory. The Hotchkiss gun did little damage on the first day of battle. The Napoleon gun, once converted to a howitzer, was more effective. The twelve pound shell was six times heavier than that of the steel mountain gun. As with other cannon in other battles, the weapons represented a threat to the Indians that they could not assail. The warriors could not seize Miles' guns as they had Gibbon's two months before. Properly supported, the twelve pounder caused casualties with little exposure or risk to the soldiers. In all probability, however, Miles could have won the battle without them.

Artillerymen and cannons were a conspicuous part of the campaign against the Nez Perce. Both men and weapons at one time or another provided a key to the few successes which the army enjoyed. Certainly the importance of both were far out of proportion to their numbers.

The beginning of the campaign witnessed the largest massing of cannons and machine guns in the Indian wars. At one time, Howard had no less than six cannons, of varying calibers, a battery of mortars, and several gatling guns at his disposal. The Nez Perce at one time or another were under fire from mountain howitzers, gatling guns, a steel breech-loading gun, and a Napoleon gun. As the Army had no

fundamental guidelines for Indian fighting expeditions, Howard, out of civil war habit, incorporated cannon into his column. Although Howard began the campaign with this arsenal, he ultimately came to depend on the packable, brass, mountain gun.

The effectiveness of these cannons varied according to who employed them. At the Clearwater, Marcus Miller's gunners repulsed the Indians' attack more than once. Some of the Nez Perce later claimed that without the cannons the Clearwater might have been another White Bird Canyon, but on a larger scale. The big guns alone drove back the pressing warriors.[62] By comparison, the gatling guns were of little value. They were too heavy to accompany the column across rugged terrain. However, the timidity of their cavalry crews was the main source of their ineffectiveness.

At the Big Hole, Gibbon's mountain howitzer was captured too soon in the battle to do any good. Gibbon's failure to provide adequate support to the gun enabled the Indians to overwhelm the small crew. Had the gun been properly supported, it could have relieved some of the pressure on the infantry on the wooded knoll.[66] The Nez Perce experience with the cannons at the Clearwater might have made them less aggressive in their response to the dawn attack.

At Canyon Creek, Otis made every effort to shell the fleeing Indians. The condition of his pack animals cancelled the battlefield mobility he needed so desperately. The cannon certainly could have cleared the bluffs of Nez Perce riflemen. This might have allowed Benteen's battalion to block the escape exit from the valley. At Canyon Creek, as with Big Hole, there was simply not enough artillery. The guns at the Clearwater equalized the fighting power of the soldiers

and the Indians. The single gun of Gibbon and Sturgis was not enough to neutralize the superior fire power of the Nez Percé.

The cannon used by Miles were important in that they augmented the fire of his badly battered command. Both the Napoleon gun and the steel Hotchkiss had sufficient range to shell the Indians' positions without endangering the gunners. Miles' gunners handled their pieces well with one exception. On the first day the Hotchkiss gun came too close to the enemy, and the crew suffered as a result. With a range approaching sixteen hundred yards, there was no reason for the gun to be within rifle range of the Nez Percé.

It is unfortunate that the distribution for the small steel gun had not included Howard's Department of the Columbia. Because it was a breech-loading gun, the Hotchkiss had a higher rate of fire than the old muzzle-loaders. It was also more accurate due to the rifling in the barrel. The Napoleon gun and mountain howitzer were smooth-bore cannons. The lighter weight of the Hotchkiss shell, about two pounds, would have allowed the pack animals to carry more ammunition.

For the artillery units, Otis' battery being the exception, the climax of the campaign was the battle of the Clearwater. After that their task was to hound the Nez Percé for more than a thousand miles. Indeed, the artillerymen marched more than fifteen hundred miles in three and one-half months. This constituted one of the longest pursuits in American military history.

For many of the men who trudged along the Nez Percé trail, this was their second campaign against the American Indian. Batteries A, E, G, and M were veterans of the exasperating Modoc war four years earlier. Some of these batteries had also been involved in minor skirmishing with

some of the Indians in Alaska. For the other units, the Nez Perce war was their baptism into Indian fighting. All of these units acquitted themselves well, in spite of the fact that they were used to a garrison life totally alien to the frontier.

Several artillery officers deserve special praise for their actions in the campaign. As noted, Marcus Miller directed the crucial attack at the Clearwater. After the campaign became one of pursuit, Miller was placed in command of all the foot troops in Howard's absence, which was most of the time. At one point, the artillery captain commanded seven artillery batteries and eight infantry companies, a regimental-size force. In his supplementary report of the campaign, Howard singled Miller out for special mention. Howard recommended Miller for a brevet for special gallantry at the Clearwater. The general stated that Miller was "equal to any service or command the government may devolve on him."[67]

There were of course other artillery officers who served with distinction during the three and one-half month campaign. Lieutenant Charles Humphrey eventually received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroism at the Clearwater. Captain Harry Cushing received special commendation from Howard for his initiative in supplying the pursuit column in spite of conflicting orders and considerable danger. Certainly Lieutenant Otis, who saw more actual fighting than any other officer, can not be omitted. It is ironic that Otis left the service only a few years after Joseph surrendered to Miles.

In their futile bid for freedom, the Nez Perce encountered almost two thousand troops from ten separate commands. Encumbered by women and children, the warriors of Looking Glass, Ollokot, Joseph, and White

bird, lost only two of the six engagements they had with the army. The campaign was certainly one of the most fascinating in the history of the Indian wars. Ultimately, however, the power of the government, expressed in its soldiers, compelled them to surrender. Most of those who survived the hardships of the journey and death in battle would never again see their own homeland.

Of the more than two thousand soldiers who participated in the Nez Perce war of 1877, the artillery certainly constituted a small portion. The soldiers of the batteries, in many cases, were a part of the campaign from its beginnings in western Idaho to its ending in northern Montana. Their assignments during the campaign were occasioned more by need than by any understanding of their role in irregular warfare. It would not be unfair to the other units to say that a large measure of the army's success in the war was due to the men from the Fourth Regiment of Artillery. They had proven themselves effective in battle. When fighting between the races erupted a year later in northern Nevada, many of the same men would once again go to war. In many respects, the coming conflict with the Bannocks of Idaho and Nevada would be very familiar to the artillery with the regular army in the west.

ENDNOTES

[1]Josephy, The Nez Perce Indians, pp. 555-556.

[2]Keeler to McDowell, July 12, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 336.

[3]Keeler to McDowell, July 18, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 336.

[4]San Francisco Chronicle, July 16, 1877, p. 3

[5]Department of the Columbia, Special Field Order 31, July 18, 1877, FRNP, DC, RUSAC, NA.

[6]Howard to McDowell, July 15, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 336.

[7]Ibid.

[8]New York Herald, July 19, 1877, p. 6; San Francisco Chronicle, July 21, 1877, p. 3. Howard had also received reports that the Nez Perce had in fact returned to Kamiah. He received a dispatch from Throckmorton which said that the Indians had only stolen a few horses.

[9]New York Herald, July 24, 1877, p. 1.

[10]McDowell to Howard, July 23, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 338. The reference to communistic movements was a marginal note in the letterbook which contained McDowell's correspondence.

[11]Sladen to Commander at Fort Boise, July 23, 1877, Sladen to Howard, July 24, 1877, FRNP, DC, RUSAC, NA; McDowell to Howard, July 23, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 338.

[12]New York Herald, July 18, 1877, p. 6.

[13]San Francisco Chronicle, August 1, 1877, p. 3

[14]AAG, Department of the Columbia, to Howard, July 20, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 338.

[15]Cushing to McDowell, August 3, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 338.

[16]Kelton to Howard, August 9, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 337.

[17]Headquarters Department of the Columbia, General Field Order 3, July 23, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 337.

[18]Abe Laufe, ed. An Army Doctor's Wife on the Frontier (Pittsburgh, 1962), p. 284

[19]Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, pp. 213, 378.

[20]John Gibbon, "The Battle of the Big Hole," Harpers Weekly 39, December 28, 1895, p. 1236.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Gibbon, Report of the Big Hole Battle, August 11, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 338.

[25]Sheridan to AAG, Washington, August 13, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 337; Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, p. 263.

[26]Mason to Miller, August 9, 1877, FRNP, DC, RUSAC, NA.

[27]Sheridan to AAG, Washington, August 13, 1877, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 337.

[28]Ibid; Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, pp. 264-265; Beal, "I Will Fight No More Forever," pp. 128-129.

[29]Sutherland, Howard's Campaign, p. 25.

[30]Ibid., pp. 25-26.

[31]John Gibbon, The Artillerist's Manual (New York, 1863), p. 491.

[32]Gibbon to Terry, August 15, 1877, as reprinted in the Army and Navy Journal 15, August 25, 1877, p. 42.

[33]Sutherland, Howard's Campaign, p. 26.

[34]Mason to Miller, August 18, 1877, FRNP, DC, RUSAC, NA.

[35]Oliver Otis Howard, My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians (New York, 1972), p. 293.

[36]Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, pp. 294-297.

[37]San Francisco Chronicle, August 9, 1877, p. 3

[38]McDowell to AG, Washington, August 20, 1877, as reprinted in the Army and Navy Journal 15, August 25, 1877, p. 42; Sutherland, Howard's Campaign, p. 31; Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, p. 299.

[39]Brown, The Flight of the Nez Percé, p. 312.

[40]New York Herald, August 29, 1877, p. 6.

[41]Brown, The Flight of the Nez Percé, pp. 350-354; Beal, "I Will Fight No More Forever, p. 188.

[42]Sturgis' Report of Operations, as reprinted in the Army and Navy Journal 15, April 20, 1878, p. 595.

[43]Ibid; Theodore W. Goldin, "The Seventh Cavalry at Canon Creek," in Brady's Northwestern Fights and Fighters (Williamstown, Mass, 1974), p. 216.

[44]Goldin, "The Seventy Cavalry at Canon Creek," p. 217.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Sturgis' Report, Army and Navy Journal, p. 595.

[47]Brown, The Flight of the Nez Percé, p. 363.

[48]S. G. Fisher, "Journal of S. G. Fisher," Montana Historical Society Contributions 2, p. 279.

[49]Sturgis' Report, Army and Navy Journal, p. 595.

[50]Goldin, "The Seventh Cavalry at Canon Creek," p. 217.

[51]Many cavalry officers made this claim. Custer disliked ordnance of any type except the carbine, revolver, and sabre. Wesley Merritt considered artillery useless on the plains. Crook saw no use in using cannon against Indians, due to the fact that they were not easily transported.

[52]Howard, My Life and Experiences, p. 297.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Edward J. McClernand, With the Indian and the Buffalo in Montana 1870-1878 (Glendale, California, 1969), p. 103.

[55]Annual Report of the Chief of Ordnance- 1877, p. xiii

[56]Miles to Brisbin, July 22, 1877, as reprinted in the Army and Navy Journal 15, September 1, 1877, p. 62.

[57]Beal, "I Will Fight No More Forever," p. 210; Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce, pp. 383-384.

[58]Brady, "Chief Joseph's Own Story," p. 67.

[59]Nelson Appleton Miles, Personal Recollections (Chicago, 1896), p. 271.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Josephy, The Nez Perce Indians, p. 619.

[63]Ibid., p. 625; McClernand, With the Indian and the Buffalo in Montana, p. 107

[64]Josephy, The Nez Perce Indians, p. 621.

[65]Beal, "I Will Fight No More Forever," pp. 233-234.

[66]Gibbon's ammunition for the mountain gun might have been comparatively little in quantity. However, the moral affect of the howitzer's presence on both the soldiers and the Indians would have been significant by itself.

[67]Supplemental Report of Brigadier General O.O. Howard, January 26, 1878, LR, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 666, Reel 337.

CHAPTER IX

THE BANNOCK WAR

For many of the men who had marched along the Nez Perce trail, the winter of 1877-1878 was a time to rest and recuperate. Clothing and equipment which had been worn out was mended or in many cases replaced. The following spring brought both a time of routine and training. Field maneuvers were becoming popular in European armies and the Pacific coast troops were in stride with the military times. In May, a combined force of artillery and cavalry staged a mock attack on a fortified position held by two infantry companies.[1] Ironically, the artillery batteries performed as infantry during the exercise. The spectacle was interesting and entertaining. Less than a month later, many of these same units would be ordered eastward to fight Indians. Their enemies, the Bannocks, had been allies during a part of the Nez Perce campaign.

It was during that campaign that tension between the Bannocks and the whites reached the danger point. The civilian and military authorities had kept many of the neighboring tribes in tight reign. The agents and soldiers wanted to prevent any sympathetic outbreaks or overt support for the non-treaty Nez Perce. Rigid control was especially the case on the Bannock and Paiute reservations in northern Nevada, southern Oregon, and southern Idaho. The Indians were incensed at the suspicion of their agents because a group of Bannock scouts were working for Howard. However galling the close supervision of the agents was to the

reservation warriors, it was not the principal cause of animosity between the two races.

For centuries Indians of the northern rockies and the Pacific northwest journeyed to the Camas Prairies of southern Idaho and northern Oregon. The camas roots were an integral part of the diet of many of the Indians of the region. The camas meadows in southern Idaho had been verbally promised to the Bannocks in a treaty signed in 1868. Unfortunately, a clerical error identified the region as the Kansas Prairie instead of the Camas Prairie. The Bannocks had claimed the ground ever since and had become restless when ranchers moved their stock onto the prairies for grazing.[2]

This irritation coupled with the Nez Perce outbreak created a milieu in which a mere incident could ignite an Indian war. In August, 1877, a Bannock warrior armed with a Winchester and fortified with considerable whiskey attacked a couple of teamsters, seriously wounding them both. The attack might have been in retaliation for the rape of an Indian girl by two unidentified white men several months earlier. During the arrest of the Indian a short time later, a cattle hand named Alexander Rhoden was shot and killed. An Indian named Tambiago was arrested for the murder of Rhoden.[3]

The arrest of Tambiago and the death of Rhoden caused considerable excitement among the Bannock on the Fort Hall Indian reservation in southern Idaho. Agent W. H. Danielson, fearing a violent reaction to the arrest of the brave, asked for military aid. A militia unit responded to the request by seizing two Bannock villages. Fifty-three braves, about two score weapons, and three hundred ponies were taken into custody. Ultimately, the warriors were released and the ponies

were returned. The authorities, however, did not give back the weapons.[4]

The summary behavior of the militia and the conviction and pending execution of Tambiago for murder brought matters to a head. Many Bannocks, especially those led by Buffalo Horn, the same chief who had scouted for Howard, took up arms. Peaceful co-existence had been tried and had been found wanting. In May, the Bannocks began ordering ranchers off of the Camas Prairie on threat of death. They also sent runners to the equally disaffected Paiutes asking for concerted action against the whites.[5] Less than two weeks later General Oliver Otis Howard, the nearest department commander, received confirmation that the Bannock had broken out.[6]

As with the Nez Percé hostilities the year before, army units from across the far west were alerted for movement to the troubled region. Once again soldiers of the 4th Artillery regiment marched to fight the American Indian. Many of the units ordered to join Howard had served under the one-arm general against Joseph's warriors. In many respects, the Bannock war was similar to the previous Nez Percé campaign. The campaign would be one of pursuit across hundreds of miles of wilderness. Several battles would be fought, but the final victory would be achieved by exhausting the quarry. Finally, the Bannock campaign was another conflict in which the artillery played an important role.

Throughout the late winter and spring, Howard had watched the developments among the Bannocks and Paiutes. The Fort Hall reservation, where many of the discontented Bannocks lived, was actually outside Howard's jurisdiction. Affairs at the reservation were properly the responsibility of General George Crook's Department of the Platte. However, if hostilities broke out, soldiers from Howard's department and

the other Pacific commands were in a far better position to fight the Indians. Crook's troops were too far away, and logistical support across the mountains would have been a nightmare. Realizing the direction in which the growing friction between the races was headed, Howard began moving troops toward Idaho.

The closest troops to the troubled area were the troopers of Captain Reuben F. Bernard's Troop G. 1st Cavalry. Howard placed a great deal of faith in the abilities of Bernard, who was a seasoned commander with many campaigns under his belt. On the first of June, Bernard's troops, under orders from Howard, began patrolling the camas grounds. They found King Hill station abandoned and partially destroyed. From that point Bernard followed a path of destruction which marked the Indian's trail. On the third, Bernard found Glenn's ferry cut loose from its moorings. After crossing the river, they found a number of burned freight wagons and the bodies of two teamsters.[7] Bernard's discoveries provided conclusive proof that the Bannocks were on the warpath.

As Bernard followed the Indian trail toward the Snake River to the west, Howard began moving into the field. The commander of the Department of the Columbia informed his superior, General Irwin McDowell, that he wanted five hundred soldiers to throw against the hostiles.[8] Howard believed that many of the problems of the Nez Percé campaign could be attributed to an insufficient number of soldiers. Therefore, he wanted to concentrate an adequate force before he moved against the malcontents.[9] From such posts as Fort Canby, the Presidios at San Francisco, Vancouver, and Bidwell, units moved to join Howard's expedition.

In the opening phase of the campaign, Howard had five distinct groups of soldiers entering his sphere of operations. Bernard was

already in the field and marching along the Indians' trail. Major Joseph Stewart of the 4th Artillery was moving south from the Columbia river with two artillery batteries and five companies of the 21st Infantry. Major George Sanford and several troops of the 1st Cavalry were west of Boise, Idaho. Two more artillery batteries, H and K, were enroute to Winnemucca, Nevada with an ultimate destination of Camp McDermitt. Finally, Captain Harry Egbert's five companies of the 12th Infantry were also heading for Camp McDermitt from their post in northern California.[10]

Howard's marching instructions for these units was based on a belief that the hostiles were still on the Camas Prairie. He intended moving his columns to the east and forcing the Indians back onto the Fort Hall reservation. Hopefully Crook could have some troops available at that place to ensnare the renegades. If for some reason the Bannocks and their fellow hostiles the Paiutes continued to move to the east, Howard was fully prepared to follow in spite of departmental boundaries.[11] He had done this very thing the year before in his long pursuit of Joseph's people. However, when Howard finally joined Bernard's cavalry on the twelfth, he realized that his carefully laid plans would have to be scrapped.

In Bernard's report to his commander, he indicated that the Bannocks and some Paiutes were in fact moving to the west instead of to the east. Bernard had learned of a skirmish between Buffalo Horn's band and some civilians near South Mountain in western Idaho. The story of the fight was confirmed when Bernard reached Silver City on the ninth.[12] Every bit of information Bernard received indicated that the Bannocks, minus Buffalo Horn who was killed in the skirmish, were moving west. That theory was confirmed shortly after Howard arrived in the cavalry camp.

One of the Paiutes travelling with the renegade Bannocks was chief Winnemucca. The old chief and many others of his tribe wanted no part of a war with the whites. However, Oytes, a Paiute medicine man, and Egan, the Paiute war chief, were generally in control of the assembled bands. Winnemucca's refusal to lead the warriors therefore placed his life in jeopardy. Ultimately, Winnemucca and other Paiutes escaped the hostile camp through the efforts of his daughter Sarah. After securing her father's release, Sarah rode nearly two hundred miles to inform Howard of the renegades' intentions.[13]

Now privy to new information, Howard changed his plans. He sent his wide spread units to Stein's Mountains fifty miles west of Sheep's Ranch. In issuing the new orders,Howard reorganized the troops he had on hand. Howard created three pursuit columns. The right column was composed of Major Stewart's two artillery batteries and the five infantry companies. Bernard's cavalry were designated the left column. Colonel Cuvier Grover,with Sanford's command enroute to Fort Hall, was ordered to reverse their course and were designated as the center column.[14]

This new game plan caused a considerable amount of hardship and irritation to some of the units involved. For Stewart's foot soldiers, these instructions constituted the third change of direction in less than a week. At the beginning of the campaign,Stewart's destination was Boise City. Two days later, Stewart received instructions from Howard to take the most direct route to Sheep's Ranch. Three days later, orders directed the artillery major to Steins Mountain. These confusing changes of directions did nothing to help the already strained relations between the general and the major.[15]

Stewart had problems covering the dusty roads of Oregon as fast as his superior wanted or expected. Howard, miffed at the slow progress of the column, only three miles on one day, ordered the men placed in wagons in an effort to speed their arrival. He chided Stewart with the remark that his mission was to move men not supplies. Stewart defended his slow progress by claiming that his men were exhausted and had to stop and rest.[16] Howard's experiences in the spasmodic chase of Joseph had not lessened the demands he placed on his subordinate commanders.[17]

In addition to the three pursuit columns, other units were entering the field in an attempt to head off the fleeing Indians. Captain Charles Throckmorton's battery and Captain George Burton's company of the 21st Infantry were ordered to report to Colonel Frank Wheaton at Wallula. Ultimately, Throckmorton and the units attached to him were given the responsibility of patrolling the Columbia and watching for any unrest among the Indians of southern Washington. Captain Marcus Miller, who had played a prominent role in the early part of the Nez Perce campaign, also joined the effort against the hostiles in Oregon. Miller's battery, along with Captain Henry Hasbrouck's Light Battery B and a detachment from Battery F, moved to Winnemucca in June. Miller's small command was to escort supplies to Howard's pursuit columns.[18]

Throckmorton's tiny command was struck by a small tragedy before they were even close to the combat zone. On the boat trip down the Columbia, one of Throckmorton's men, probably intoxicated, fell overboard. In doing so he pulled another man into the water with him. A third soldier dove into the river in a futile attempt to rescue his comrades. All three drowned.[19] The artillery had suffered three fatalities before the first shot was fired between Indian and soldier.

In eastern Oregon, Howard was having problems of his own. He desperately wanted one of his columns to make contact with the Bannocks. However, no amount of desire could move his men any faster than the primitive Oregon roads would permit. Administrative matters complicated the tactical situation. On the sixteenth, he left Bernard's units and moved toward Malheur City. Enroute, he joined Stewart's column. On the twenty-third Howard's column entered the Malheur agency. He found the agency to be in shambles. This complicated his plans to establish a supply point at the agency. Finally, he detached Major Stewart and one company of infantry to reorganize the agency and prepare it as a supply depot.[20] Captain George Rodney of the 4th replaced Stewart as the column commander and immediately put his men on the march. However, the distinction of drawing first blood fell to Bernard's cavalrymen.

Upon leaving Howard, Bernard's troopers embarked on an incredible ride. In slightly less than seven days, the troopers of the 1st covered one hundred and ninety miles. Their route lay across Barren Valley, through the mountains to Harney Lake and finally to Silver Creek. At a point about forty-five miles west of Camp Harney, Bernard's advance troop found the Indians' camp.

Leaving Captain Stephen Whipple's troop with his pack train, Bernard moved out with the rest of his cavalry. One mile from the village, he put his units into a column of troops. When they were only a few hundred yards from the camp, the troopers drew their pistols and charged. Three successive waves of mounted soldiers swept through the village. Their surprise was complete. The force of Bernard's assault had the effect of driving the Indians to a high rocky bluff which overlooked the village. Seeing that he could not dislodge his enemy from the heights without

severe losses, Bernard ordered his men to withdraw.

The troops dismounted and began moving back out of the village. All the while they kept up a vigorous exchange of fire with the Bannocks and Paiutes. Bernard finally reformed his men on a rocky ridge near the right of the camp. At this point, pistols were holstered and the troopers began using their carbines. During the fight, Whipple had succeeded in bringing up the pack train and replenished the soldiers' exhausted cartridge belts.

At mid-day the Indians gave up any hope of re-capturing their village and withdrew. The exhausted troopers then moved into the forsaken village. After taking what they could use from the camp in the way of supplies, the soldiers destroyed the camp. Bernard then moved his tired but victorious soldiers three miles and went into camp at a spot known as old Camp Curry.[21]

In the battle on Silver Creek Bernard had two hundred and twenty-six officers and men. This included four cavalry troops, sixteen civilian scouts and a small pack train. His losses were four men killed and five wounded. In addition, nine cavalry horses were killed and six others wounded.[22] The casualties on the Indian side were unknown. However, the Indians probably suffered few casualties. After Bernard's troops swept through the camp, the Indians were able to take up strong defensive positions. These positions would have kept their losses to a minimum.

Bernard's fight was inconclusive. Neither side had sustained serious casualties. More important, the Indians were able to leave the battlefield without being pursued by the cavalry. Bernard's exhausted mounts simply could not be urged to move.[23] Lacking adequate forage and water, the animals were simply played out. This was only one of

countless instances in which the large cavalry horse lacked the endurance of the smaller Indian mount. Furthermore it is a case of a battle in which artillery could have materially affected the outcome.

The utility of artillery in this battle is based on two points. First, artillery weapons could have been carried to the scene of the engagement. The trail to Silver Creek was not difficult enough to prevent Bernard from moving a two wheel horse wagon with his pack train. If a horse wagon could traverse the Bannock's trail, wheeled artillery could have. A mountain howitzer or light steel gun certainly would not have weighed more than a loaded two-wheel wagon. The second point deals with the nature of the battle and the battlefield.

In his report of the fight, Bernard stated that a slough and a cliff of rocks prevented his men from closing with the hostiles. His troops would have been slaughtered attacking an enemy they could not reach. A mountain howitzer or steel gun such as the Hotchkiss gun certainly could have shelled the Indians. The cannons, especially the accurate Hotchkiss, could have inflicted casualties without needlessly exposing the soldiers. Because the Hotchkiss was a breech-loading cannon, it could have attained a high enough rate of fire to assist a ground attack. The Indians could not have delivered an effective fire against the attacking soldiers without exposing themselves to the cannons. However, Bernard had no artillery, even though the ordnance, at least the mountain howitzer, was available to him.

When Howard was informed of Bernard's fight, he moved quickly to reinforce the cavalry captain. Other than Captain Evan Miles' two companies at Camp Harney, the nearest troops were the foot soldiers of Rodney's command. Howard ordered Rodney to proceed to Camp Curry

without delay. Howard, riding well ahead of his soldiers as was his custom, arrived in Bernard's camp on the twenty-fifth. The foot troops, riding in wagons, joined the following day.[24]

After a lengthy discussion with the cavalry commander, Howard decided that his adversaries had once again changed direction. The Bannocks, Paiutes, some Klamaths, and a few Columbia River Indians were moving north. This new change of direction had ominous possibilities. If the hostiles made contact with the discontented Indians of southern Washington, the entire Pacific northwest would convulse in an Indian war. That junction had to be prevented at all costs. To accomplish this, Howard once again reorganized his resources.

Bernard and Miles, now commanding the foot troops, were to cooperate in a direct pursuit of the Indians. Other troops would be moved to the line of the Columbia River to intercept the enemy. Still other units would patrol the region around Baker City to prevent the hostiles from turning east.[25] Hopefully, someone would make contact with the renegades and hold them long enough for the other units to move up and settle the matter. Howard's only problem was to find enough troops to meet all of his requirements. The Baker City facet of the expedition could be managed by Sanford's cavalry. Troops to patrol the many miles of the Columbia River Valley were not so easy to obtain.

Many of the troops assigned to the expedition were far to the rear of the fleeing Bannocks and Paiutes. Sanford was near Baker City. Miller and Hasbrouck's batteries were at Winnemucca. The most that these batteries could do was escort supply trains first to Camp McDermitt and then Baker City. Stewart and his attached infantry company had moved to Camp Harney to ease the fear among the soldiers' dependents still at

that post. Throckmorton's small command was the only force available to intercept the hostiles as they emerged from John Day Valley. However, the three understrength units Throckmorton controlled simply were not enough to cover all the crossings of the Columbia.

Realizing the need for additional forces along the Columbia, Howard's staff in Portland scurried to find any means to patrol the twists and bend of the river. Captain John A. Kress, one of Howard's Ordnance officers, came up with a partial solution to the dilemma. With ten Ordnance soldiers, ten men of the 21st Infantry, a howitzer, and a gatling gun, Kress converted a river steamer into a gun boat.[26] With this vessel, Kress could patrol the crossing points of the river much easier than troops marching along the banks. Kress' idea would bear fruit in a short time.

As Howard's soldiers continued to press the Indians, settlements in the Columbia River Valley became increasingly concerned for their welfare. Most of the small hamlets were fortified in one manner or another in anticipation of what everyone knew was an imminent Indian attack. Urgent pleas for assistance from these scattered settlements reached military commanders in every corner of the territory. At times, these hysterical alarms from panic-stricken settlers caused extensive trouble, as many soldiers soon learned.

One of these life-or-death calls for help found Captain Throckmorton's small group. Throckmorton and his soldiers had been ordered to move from Walla Walla to Wallula via steamer. His mission was to prevent any Indians from crossing the river. When he reached Wallula, he was ordered to return to Walla Walla and then march to Pendleton, Oregon. Indians had been seen in the area and the citizenry

had issued a call for help. At Walla Walla, Throckmorton found the citizens excited and apprehensive. He left that town and made an arduous night march to Pendleton arriving at four o'clock in the morning.

In the small Oregon town pandemonium reigned supreme. Throckmorton reported that he had "witnessed stampedes but never anything to equal the terror of the citizens of this section." No two people gave the artillery captain the same information concerning the whereabouts of the hostiles. Trying to restore some measure of order and establish defensive works was impossible. Just as he would get the citizens calmed down and organized, a new courier would arrive and pandemonium would break out afresh. Exasperated, he finally gave up.[27] He did manage to send scouts out in an effort to locate the illusive renegades.

On the sixth of July, Throckmorton learned that a group of citizens had taken it upon themselves to find and whip the Indians. The army certainly was having little success. With Batteries A and M, Company E of the 21st Infantry, and William Winters troop of the 1st Cavalry, he set out to investigate a report of a battle. His soldiers met the surviving citizens about four miles from the battlefield. After rendering what medical aid he could, Throckmorton decided to return to Pendleton. Ironically, some reports of the skirmish replaced the decimated citizen army with Throckmorton's own command. Howard's headquarters at Portland relayed an unofficial account of the battle to McDowell's headquarters at San Francisco. In that account, Throckmorton's men had been repulsed by the Indians with loss, though the number of Indians killed exceeded his own casualties.[28] Fortunately, this erroneous report was corrected by events within forty-eight hours.

By the end of the first week of July, Howard and his columns had

reached the Camas Prairie in northern Oregon. On the seventh, Throckmorton met Howard and Bernard at a spot south of Pendleton named Pilot Rock.[29] Howard decided to split his expedition in an attempt to cover two routes which the Bannocks might take. Throckmorton with A and M of the 4th, C of the 21st, and ten volunteers were directed to Butter Creek. The artillery captain was to watch the crossings of the Columbia at the point where the creek junctioned with the river. Seven companies of cavalry, with Bernard in tactical command, were to move along the high ground between Butter Creek and Birch Creek. Due to the incompetence of a civilian guide, Throckmorton emerged from the creek nine miles from his intended destination. The error was of little actual importance as it was Bernard's troops who found the enemy.

Only a few miles from Pilot Rock, Bernard's advance guard observed Indians in the rocky heights before them. The cavalry captain deployed his men on line and began moving over the foothills which separated him from his adversary. The soldiers came under fire when they reached the base of the hill the Indians occupied. Keeping his troopers in the saddle, Bernard charged the heights. Soldiers and their horses scrambled, stumbled, and fell on the side of the rock hill. Undaunted, they recovered their footing and continued the ascent, firing as they climbed. As the cavalry scaled the rocks in the face of enemy fire, a detached gatling gun began firing on the enemy.

Throughout the battle, Howard observed, leaving the direction of the attack to the experienced Bernard. His point of observation during the battle was the gatling gun position. The gun crew was doing everything possible to bring fire on the Indians. Although they had enough range, they could not elevate the gun high enough to sweep the high

ground. Consequently, the gatling expended considerable ammunition and made ample noise with little result.

In spite of the difficult ground and the ineffective support from the gatling gun, Bernard's troopers managed to seize the crest of the hill. They found, to their chagrin, that the Bannocks had retreated to still higher ground a short distance away. After a brief rest for the winded horses, the troopers renewed their charge. Declining to come to close combat with the soldiers, the Indians fled from the battlefield through the pine forest to the southeast of the ridge.[30] Once again the jaded government horses could not be forced to follow the flight of the Indians. For a second time in the campaign, Howard's men had found the enemy, fought and beat him, but failed to make the final capture.

The same problem which hampered the gatling gun might have neutralized any artillery Howard could have employed. The mountain howitzer and the Hotchkiss gun were limited to only a few degrees of elevation. The three-inch Ordnance gun was the only weapon in the army's inventory which could have fired on the enemy's lofty positions. Unfortunately, the three-inch gun was far too heavy to be pulled over the rocky and often steep mountain trails. For light artillery, such as the mountain howitzer or Hotchkiss gun, to have been used, one of two things had to happen. First the guns would have had to be re-positioned. A new position on higher ground might have allowed the gun crew to bring the Indians under fire. Second, the guns could have been altered to give them a higher elevation. In the battle of Apache Pass in 1864, a howitzer crew hacked off part of the trail of the gun, thus allowing greater elevation. In the battle of the Bear Paws in 1877, Miles' gun crew dug a trench and lowered the trail of their Napoleon gun into it, giving it

a higher elevation. An imaginative gun crew might have used one of these means to bring shell fire onto the Indians. However, without some adjustment, artillery probably would have been of little value.

Although the Bannocks and Paiutes had escaped Bernard's troopers, Howard's general disposition of units insured another engagement. Throckmorton was northwest of the Birch Creek battlefield ready to move along the Columbia. Captain Kress' gunboat was plying the water of the river watching for any crossings by the hostiles. Major George Sanford and his troopers were in the Grande Ronde Valley to the east. He could block any efforts by the renegades to move into the old Nez Perce hunting grounds. Captain Evan Miles with two battalions of foot troops was posted in the camas meadows to the south. Ultimately, two of the commands mentioned eventually made contact with the fleeing Indians.

On the same day that Bernard's troopers were fighting on Birch Creek, Kress' gunboat found an Indian encampment on the south bank of the Columbia. In all probability it was the village of the warriors fighting the cavalry to the south. The Ordnance captain immediately opened fire with his howitzer and gatling gun. For the most part, the Indians fled to the south away from the river. A few stout-hearted warriors tried to force a pony herd of several hundred across the river. Kress' gunners prevented most from crossing, but a few made it to the north bank. Kress' prompt water-borne attack not only managed to thwart the crossing of a large number of Indians, but destroyed a considerable amount of camp equipment in the process.[31] The gunboat's attack had damaged the camp, but Evan Miles foot soldiers were able to bring the Indian fighting men to battle.

After Birch Creek, Howard dispatched a troop of cavalry under

Captain Charles Bendire with a message to Miles. The infantry captain had the option of continuing the pursuit on any promising trail or joining Howard. Miles opted for continuing the chase. Bendire found Miles on the Pendleton road, and after deciding to retain his independence, Miles continued up the road toward the Umatilla agency. In the early morning hours of the thirteenth, Miles' column was three miles from the reservation. At that point the Indian agent N. A. Cornyer joined the column. He informed Miles that the hostiles were threatening the agency and those Indians who had chosen to remain at peace.[32] Miles immediately moved his tired troops the remaining distance and went into camp on the agency grounds.[33]

After a few hours rest, the men were awakened and they began preparing breakfast. Their repast was rudely interrupted by the approach of a large number of Bannocks and Paiutes. The hostiles had been joined during the night by about fifty agency Indians, and the group obviously intended to raze the agency buildings and steal supplies. The discourteousness of the Indians irritated the hungry soldiers,who were quickly formed in line of battle.

Miles placed Captain Rodney's two-battery battalion on a line facing south. The infantry were placed on Rodney's right,and their line curved so that the far right unit faced west. Captain Bendire's cavalry was posted to the extreme left of Rodney's batteries. A small reserve guarded the wagons and pack mules which were placed in a protected ravine. Miles placed two howitzers near the left center of his line, supported by companies G and H of the 21st Infantry.

Shortly after the soldiers formed their skirmish lines, the Indians opened a desultory fire from long range. The soldiers responded with

sporadic sniping. As the Bannocks, much like their soldier opponents, were not noted for their marksmanship, there were few casualties. This senseless waste of ammunition consumed several hours.

By early afternoon, Miles and his men were tired of the meaningless exchange of fire. He ordered Rodney's two batteries to sweep the ravine which faced their part of the line. To do this, the artillery first moved by the right flank to the east. He then ordered his men to swing around one hundred and eighty degrees and charge into the depression. As Rodney's soldiers plunged into the ravine, Miles ordered the remainder of the line to advance. This sudden change in the nature of the battle caught the Indians by surprise. They began falling back before the charging troopers. In a short time, Indian resistance ended completely and the Bannocks and Paiutes fled.

Encouraged by their success, the soldiers chased their opponents over the rocky ground west of the agency. After covering about three miles, Miles halted his troopers. His men, with scant rest and even less to eat, had reached the limit of their endurance. Miles decided to camp where his men had stopped in their chase of the hostiles. He planned to resume the venture on the following morning. However, Agent Cornyer persuaded Miles to change his mind. The agent pleaded with Miles to return to the agency as there were rumors that the Bannocks would return and burn it to the ground. Reluctantly, Miles consented. The weary soldiers slowly moved back to the agency, arriving shortly before midnight.[34]

When Miles assumed the responsibility of protecting the agency, he effectively gave up any chance for a march on the hostiles. He did, however, sanction an attempt by some of the reservation Umatillas to

strike the fleeing Bannocks and Paiutes. The Umatillas had not taken part in the battle of the thirteenth. They sat on a nearby hillside and watched the spectacle much like the Roman spectators in the Coliseum. Miles' rout of the Bannocks and Paiutes prompted the Umatillas to declare their support for the soldiers. The Umatillas achieved some measure of success in their subsequent sortie against the hostiles. In addition to recapturing some stock, they managed to kill Egan, the war chief of the renegades.[35]

The battle of the Umatilla agency was the last significant clash between the hostile Bannocks and Paiutes and the army. Until Rodney initiated his assault on the ravine, the battle was largely an ineffectual exchange of poor marksmanship. The battle does pose intriguing questions with respect to artillery. Miles had two howitzers with him. They were placed within the infantry's line of operations. Why did he put them there? Why did he not use them? Rodney's batteries should have had the howitzers. If center of his defensive line was the most critical point, then Rodney should have been placed at that point. Even the proudest infantryman or cavalryman would admit that artillerymen knew how to serve and employ the guns better than they. In Miles' report there was little mention of the guns and no explanation why they were not used. The twelve-pounders certainly could have discouraged the Indians from anything more than few furtive pot-shots. Consequently, the Umatilla fight, like the fight on Silver Creek, must be classified as a missed opportunity. It was another instance in which properly served cannons could have altered the course of the battle.

After the battle with Miles' troops, the hostile bands fragmented. The death of Egan at the hand of the Umatillas created a vacuum of

leadership. Oytes, the medicine man, lacked the ability and prestige to lead the young men in battle. With this last major clash between the two sides, the campaign became a series of running skirmishes with the widely scattered remnants of the hostile camp.

Some of the Indians moved toward the Grande Ronde Valley and the Wallowa Valley. Sanford's troops skirmished with these fugitives on the fifteenth. Others turned south backtracking on the trail which had led them to the Columbia. Lieutenant Colonel James Forsyth, now in command of Bernard's units, had a brisk running skirmish with this group in a canyon on the John Day River. Wherever the Indians went, Howard was intent on running them to ground. His cavalry would follow any trail, no matter how small. The infantry and artillery would move to the various reservations. There they could scout the surrounding area, be in a position to support any cavalry engagement, and finally receive those hostile Indians tired of their flight.

Throckmorton took charge of affairs at the Umatilla agency. His duties often placed him on the middle ground between the Indians and the whites. On one occasion, a group of whites from Pendleton killed an Indian within a mile of the agency and stole almost five hundred horses. Throckmorton went into Pendleton and "after a great deal of abuse on the part of the thieves" succeeded in getting most of the horses back.[36] He also had a warrant issued for the murderer of the Indian. The local citizens had helped the culprit escape, and Throckmorton doubted that the local deputy U.S. marshal would ever serve the warrant.[37]

On another occasion, Throckmorton investigated the killing of a white citizen named George Coggan. Three Indians were arrested and

charged with the murder. Throckmorton acted as defense council and succeeded in obtaining their release. He ultimately gathered sufficient evidence to indict six agency Indians for the crime. Three were found guilty and subsequently hanged.

The disparity between the justice meted out for the whites and that administered to the Indians disturbed the captain. On one hand, a white had killed and had blatantly defied punishment. When the Indians killed, every effort was made to insure the strictest justice. The fact of guilt or innocence was of little consequence. Throckmorton failed to see how the Indians could ever trust and accept a system of laws so obviously prejudiced against them.[38]

While Throckmorton was trying to maintain some semblance of order on the Umatilla agency, Captain Marcus Miller was directing matters at the Malheur agency. Miller, with his own Battery E and two cavalry troops, had problems of a different sort. Hostile groups were still in the vicinity of the reservation. Never idle, the artillery captain had his cavalry troops in constant motion trying to find the hiding Indians. Often accompanying his patrols, Miller scoured the trails leading into Stein's Mountain, a favorite refuge of the Bannocks and Paiutes.

On August the fourth, his efforts were rewarded. Two Indians approached Miller's outpost under a white flag. They told Miller that they wanted to surrender. He promised them that they would be treated as prisoners of war. Two days later, twenty-seven warriors and seventy-two women and children surrendered at the agency. On the twelfth, Oytes with seventeen warriors and fifty-seven women and children also surrendered to Miller. Eighty-two more surrendered the following day. There would be other isolated skirmishes with isolated groups, but the Bannock

war was effectively over by the first of September.[39]

In the course of the Bannock campaign, artillery weapons for the most part were not used. Kress' use of his howitzer against the hostiles on the Columbia river was the single notable exception. A gatling was used by Bernard's cavalry, but gatlings are not a part of the ordnance studied in this work. The only explanation for the absence of cannons in the various phases of the campaign was personal inclination or disinclination. The guns were available. Vancouver and Benicia Arsenals could have provided ample cannon and ammunition. In addition to this, most posts possessed at least one gun for morning reveille and evening retreat ceremonies. The mountain howitzer or steel gun, if one were available, certainly could have been packed on mules over the rugged terrain of Oregon. However, the various commanders decided to omit cannon from their list of campaign essentials.

The explosive force of cannon fire could have materially affected all of the major engagements of the campaign. The guns could have provided covering fire which would have enabled Bernard's men to storm the Indians' positions on Silver Creek. As it occurred, the battle was an even draw. Cannon fire certainly would have had more effect than that of the gatlings on Birch Creek. This is assuming that the limitation of elevation could have been overcome. Even partially accurate shellfire would have prevented the ineffective and wasteful exchange between the soldiers and Indians at the Umatilla agency. Miles' cannons could have supported Rodney's flanking action in the same way they had Miller's maneuvers at the battle of the Clearwater.

After the Umatilla fight, cannons would have been of questionable value. In the skirmishes which characterized the last days of the

campaign, rough terrain often separated the army from the Indians when the two met. Cannons could have immediately opened on the enemy while the cavalry occupied the terrain separating the two sides. However, the small size of the Indian bands might have made artillery inefficient in terms of cost and effort. The guns would have required pack animals for their transport and the movement of their ammunition. The animals and their forage were expensive. Because the cavalry could outgun the small bands, the power of the cannons would not have been critical to achieve victory.

Some officers recognized the utility of cannon against the Bannocks and the Paiutes. Major L. S. Babbit, one of Howard's Ordnance officers, considered the mountain howitzer a practical weapon for Indian fighting. Carried on pack animals, it could go anywhere cavalry or infantry could go. However, Babbit felt that better cannons could be found. He suggested a light steel gun which could be transported by mule be adopted for frontier service. In effect, the major was describing the Hotchkiss gun. Babbit did recognize one problem with using artillery against the Indians. Much of the ammunition in storage in the various arsenals across the country was of Civil War vintage. A large quantity of this ammunition was unserviceable. He often found cartridge bags so rotten that the ammunition literally fell apart when taken over rough terrain. Because of the huge stockpiles of ammunition left over from the war, serviceable ammunition could fortunately be found to replace that which was deteriorating.[40]

Although artillery weapons were little used in the campaign, artillery units saw extensive service in the summer expedition against the hostiles. Much of that service was routine, demanding, with little

recognition. Rodney's two batteries were the only company-sized artillery organizations which fought the Indian. Of the seven complete batteries and a portion of an eighth, all but two spent their time guarding agencies, escorting supply trains, and patrolling countless mountain and desert trails. It was necessary but agonizingly boring duty.

Artillery captains Miller and Throckmorton spent a large part of the campaign tending the Malheur and Umatilla agencies. This added an administrative responsibility to their already complicated military duties. Consequently, artillery units and officers were decisively involved in every facet of the campaign. Batteries D and G, under Rodney met the Bannocks and Paiutes in battle. Batteries E, M, and a portion of F spent much of their time supervising the agencies. Light Battery B, and Batteries H and K, spent most of the campaign escorting supplies or marching from one trouble spot to another. The experience of the last two batteries well illustrated the fact that in Indian fighting more time was spent marching than fighting.

The two batteries initially took the field on June 12.[41] They were at Camp McDermitt on July 1, when Captain Miller arrived. When the hostiles turned north to the Columbia River the two batteries were ordered to return to San Francisco as quickly as possible. That required a forced march from McDermitt to the railhead at Winnemucca and a long train ride to San Francisco. On the coast they joined Major Mizner's two companies of the 21st Infantry. Mizner took his command first to Portland and then down river to Umatilla by steamer. The four units then patrolled the region until the end of the hostilities.[42] Captains John Egan and Franklin Smith had moved their batteries from one side of the battleground to the other via a long circuitous route. All

that effort went unrewarded by a confrontation with the enemy.

Although Indian fighting was beyond the normal scope of their duties, many of the batteries of the 4th had developed a certain espirit as Indian fighters. Three Indian campaigns in a five year period brought a sense of professional worth. Even though they generally fought and marched as infantry instead of artillery, they were functioning as soldiers. They met their country's enemies in combat, the principal mission of all men of arms. Countless months of drilling in fortifications never threatened by enemy ships sapped the enthusiasm of even the most spirited man. The Indian campaigns gave them the opportunity to fulfill their roles as soldiers.

Compared to the Nez Percé war and the expeditions of the plains, the Bannock campaign was certainly of a lesser magnitude. However, even the most insignificant skirmish between the races warrants citation as they represented a milieu which characterized the American West for two hundred years. The Bannock war certainly merits more study than the superficial works which are available today.

In a similar way, the participation of the artillery must be recognized as an integral part of the campaign. The men who marched from the coastal forts of California, Oregon, and Washington were a major part of Howard's expedition. They supervised Indian reservations, established and maintained supply depots, and marched hundreds of miles in search of the enemy. The fact that other units met the hostiles in battle can only be explained as the fates of war.

By the early 1880s, the major Indian wars were over. However, one final campaign remained. The last clash between the Army and the American Indian occurred in a region well known to both sides, the

Northern Plains. The protagonists, the Sioux and the 7th Cavalry, knew each other well. However, this time the 7th was supported by cannon. The absence of artillery in the Bannock war exists in sharp contrast to the performance of artillerymen and their guns in the last Indian campaign.

ENDNOTES

[1]"Field Maneuvers," Army and Navy Journal 15, May 18, 1878, p. 658. The artillery units participating were Batteries B, C, E, and L, Under Captains Hasbrouck, Cushing, Miller, and Fields. Miller commanded the batteries as a battalion. One troop of the First Cavalry and two companies of the Twelfth Infantry also took part.

[2]George Brimlow, The Bannock Indian War of 1878 (Caldwell, Idaho, 1938), pp. 42-45.

[3]Brigham Madsen, The Bannock of Idaho (Caldwell, Idaho, 1958), pp. 102-106.

[4]Brimlow, The Bannock War, p. 68.

[5]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1878, p. 127.

[6]Captain George Downey to Howard, June 13, 1878, Correspondence Relating to the Bannock Campaign (hereinafter BC), Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[7]Report of Captain Reuben F. Bernard, August 28, 1878, Reports of the Bannock Expedition (hereinafter BR), Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[8]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1878, p. 133.

[9]Oliver Otis Howard, "Indian War Papers- The Bannock Campaign," The Overland Monthly 10 (July, 1887), p. 95

[10]AG, Military Division of the Pacific to Howard, June 12, 1878, BC, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[11]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1878, p. 129. Sherman ordered Howard, through McDowell to pursue the Indians regardless of departmental boundaries. These were the same instructions Howard had received a year earlier during the Nez Perce campaign.

[12]Bernard's Report, August 28, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[13]Howard, "The Bannock Campaign," p. 100.

[14]Ibid., pp. 100-101.

[15]Report of Major Joseph Steward, October 5, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[16]Howard to Stewart, June 10, 1878, BC, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA; Stewart's Report, October 5, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[17]Howard had relieved Captain Charles Throckmorton from the command of a combined infantry/artillery battalion because of slow movement. Stewart would ultimately share the same fate.

[18]Report of Captain Charles B. Throckmorton, September 22, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA; Report of Captain Marcus P. Miller, October 3, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[19]Throckmorton's Report, September 22, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[20]This was Stewart's punishment for being too slow on the march. Ironically, Stewart was one of a very few field grade artillery officers who participated in any way in an Indian campaign.

[21]Bernard to AAG, Department of the Columbia, June 25, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA. This report was appended to Bernard's report of his operations during the campaign.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Oliver Otis Howard, "Indian War Papers- Battle of Old Camp Curry," The Overland Monthly 10 (August, 1887), p. 122.

[24]Bernard's Report, August 28, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[25]Oliver Otis Howard, "Indian War Papers- A Mountain Chase," The Overland Monthly 10 (September, 1887), p. 311.

[26]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1878, p. 165.

[27]Throckmorton's Report, September 22, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[28]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1878, p. 165.

[29]Throckmorton's Report, September 22, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[30]Bernard's Report, August 28, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[31]Annual Report of the Secretary of War- 1878, p. 169.

[32]Clarence Hines, "Indian Agent's Letter-Book, I, The Piute-Bannock Raid of July, 1878," Oregon Historical Quarterly 39 (1938), p. 3.

[33]Report of Captain Evan Miles, August 17, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA. Miles' men marched thirty-five miles in twenty-four hours.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Hines, "Indian Agent's Letter-Book," p. 12.

[36]Throckmorton's Report, September 22, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Miller's Report, Octover 3, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[40]Annual Report of the Chief of Ordnance, Department of the Columbia, October, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[41]Kelton to Howard, June 12, 1878, BC, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

[42]Report of Major Henry Mizner, October 1, 1878, BR, Department of the Columbia, RUSAC, NA.

CHAPTER X

THE LAST CAMPAIGN

By 1889, the Indian wars of the American West were mostly memories. Some of the first battles between the races fought after the Civil War were more than twenty years in the past. The Wagon Box fight and Custer's Washita were now only stories to be told to young soldiers around campfires. However, one final chapter remained in the story of the conflict between the white man and the red man -- the Sioux uprising of 1890. The army's efforts in the Dakotas in 1890 were different than previous confrontations with the Indian. The major objective of the soldiers was to prevent an outbreak rather than seek the Indian in battle after hostilities had begun. It was hoped that a show of force along with attempts to keep the various bands apart would prevent a conflagration. Unfortunately, all efforts to avoid conflict were futile.

The Sioux campaign was also unique in that artillery units were equipped and actually served as cannon batteries. Light artillery batteries had not marched in an Indian campaign on the plains for more than twenty years. Artillerymen who had exchanged rifle shots with the American Indian normally did so as infantrymen or cavalrymen. Of the two light batteries which were sent to the Dakotas, one played a significant role in the two engagements which occurred during the campaign. This chapter will focus primarily on the actions of this battery. Many histor-

ians who have written of the last Sioux war have inaccurately portrayed the artillery. It is indeed ironic that the role of the cannons and the cannoneers in the west is generally overlooked, and when they are discussed, the narrative is distorted.

In the fall of 1889, eleven Sioux from the Dakota reservations journeyed to Nevada to investigate the story of an Indian Messiah. The Messiah, a Paiute named Wovoka, claimed to be a chosen messenger from God. His doctrine proclaimed the return of the buffalo and of long deceased Indians to a land devoid of white men. The Sioux emissaries eagerly accepted this message and upon their return to the Dakotas spread it among their respective bands. Hunger due to inadequate rations and frustration due to broken promises created a fertile ground for the message of Wovoka. There was one significant modification of the Sioux version of the Messiah's gospel. The inevitable demise of the white man would be a violent one, according to the Sioux, and not the peaceful withdrawal which Wovoka had described.[1]

The intensity with which the Sioux adopted the Messiah's movement and the furor with which they danced the Ghost Dance alarmed the various Indian agents on the reservations. The coming Indian millenium and the inevitable disappearance of the whites made some of the Sioux less than receptive to the guidance of their white guardians. By the fall of 1890, the agents' control over the reservations was deteriorating. Soon the Ghost Dancers were openly disregarding the agents' directives and defying the Indian police. In November, the agent at the Cheyenne River agency reported that the Sioux were armed and that an outbreak was inevitable. Agent E.B. Reynolds reported similar information from the Rosebud agency.

However, tension appeared greatest at the Pine Ridge agency in south-

west South Dakota. This was unfortunate as agent D.F. Royer, a recent appointment of the new Republican administration, had been at the agency only a short time. Although he was inexperienced, Royer knew that the situation at Pine Ridge was quickly getting out of control. Special Indian Agent James Cooper, who had been sent to Pine Ridge to investigate the distrubance, concurred that an outbreak was a distinct probability.[2]

On November 14, 1890, the Interior Department asked the War Department to prevent the Sioux from leaving the reservation. The Secretary of War in turn directed the Commanding General of the Army, Major General John Schofield, to prevent an outbreak. Schofield considered the situation to be critical. There would be tremendous loss of life if the Sioux broke into a general uprising. If other tribes joined them, the whole army would not be able to contain the wave of devastation which would sweep the plains.[3] Schofield moved quickly to thwart such an event. Within a week, Army units began moving toward the Sioux reservations. Ultimately, half of the cavalry and infantry regiments in the Regular Army and two light artillery batteries marched to the northern plains.

Once in the region of the Dakotas, the massive concentrations of troops came under the control of Major General Nelson A. Miles. A veteran Indian fighter, Miles commanded the Division of the Missouri, formerly the Military Division of the Missouri. Miles major subordinates in the troubled area were Brigadier Generals John Brooke and Thomas Ruger. Although the affected reservations belonged to Ruger, the closest troops were those of Brooke's Department of the Platte. Brooke, at Miles direction, took personal charge of the troops converging on the Pine Ridge reservation. Miles ultimately left his headquarters in Chicago and took charge of all the units on the northern plains. Miles'

principal objective was to "anticipate the movement of the hostile Indians and arrest or overpower them in detail before they had time to concentrate in one large body."[4]

During the latter part of November, Schofield began identifying those units destined for service in the Dakotas. In light of subsequent events, the most important orders for movement went to Fort Riley, Kansas. Brigadier General Wesley Merritt alerted the Seventh Cavalry to prepare for movement to the north. The same orders reached Battery E of the First Artillery and Battery F of the Fourth Artillery. Miles wanted cannons in addition to cavalry and infantry.[5]

In most of his campaigns against the American Indian, General Miles used some form of artillery. He understood and appreciated the effectiveness of artillery, particularly the little Hotchkiss mountain gun. For the coming campaign, Miles planned to have at least one mountain gun with every squadron in the field. Artillerymen would man the guns instead of detached infantrymen or cavalrymen.[6] The three light batteries at Fort Riley could provide gun detachments for as many as twelve squadrons. Miles problem was finding enough mountain guns.

The Fort Riley batteries had recently acquired the new 3.2 inch steel field gun. Prior to this they used old Civil War - era 3 inch rifles which had been re-bored to accomodate the 3.2 inch ammunition. Unfortunately, the new steel rifles were heavy, too heavy to keep up with the fast moving squadrons which Miles planned to use to intercept the roving Sioux bands. However, there were only two of the much lighter mountain guns in Brooke's department, and only another twelve in Miles' entire command. Consequently, Miles requested and received guns from Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois, Benicia Arsenal in California, and Fort

Monroe in Virginia.[7] The artillery would use the light mountain guns and not the heavier but more powerful field guns.

In the early morning hours of November 24, the Seventh Cavalry regiment entrained at Fort Riley for Pine Ridge. Captain Allyn Capton's Battery E, First Artillery was attached to the Seventh for the move. Captain George Bridges Rodney's Battery F, Fourth Artillery was also going north. Rodney's unit was destined for Ruger's Department of Dakota. Half of Battery F was being sent to Fort Snelling, Minnesota. The other half was ordered to Fort Meade.[8] Although both batteries took their new rifled field guns, neither took ammunition. Schofield subsequently ordered one thousand shells to be sent to Miles for guns.[9] Counting the Hotchkiss guns, the 3.2 inch rifles, and the ammunition ordered for these weapons, more artillery was massed for the Sioux campaign of 1890 than any other expedition in the history of the Indian wars.

The troop train carrying the Seventh and Battery E pulled into Rushville, Nebraska, in the early morning hours of November 26. Much of the morning and part of the afternoon was spent unloading troops and supplies. Evening found the command in camp on White Clay Creek about ten miles from Rushville. A march of fifteen miles the following day brought the soldiers to Pine Ridge.[10] Their arrival swelled the ranks of the troops which Brooke would use to control the restless Sioux.[11]

In addition to surrounding the affected reservations with a cordon of soldiers, Miles wanted to arrest those Indian leaders who were inciting their followers to break out. Principal among this group were Little Wound of the Oglalla, Four Strike of the Brulé, Big Foot of the Minneconjou, and especially the Hunkpapa's aging leader, Sitting Bull. Ultimately, Little Wound and Two Strike were persuaded by Brooke to come in to Pine

Ridge. However, an attempt by Indian police to arrest Sitting Bull ended in disaster. A dozen Indians, including six Indian policemen and Sitting Bull, died in a chaotic but brief exchange of gunfire at Sitting Bull's lodgings on Grand River. The great chief's death subsequently complicated the capture of Big Foot.

The Minneconjou band of Sioux were located on the bank of the Cheyenne River near the Cheyenne River agency. The news of Sitting Bull's death created a sense of anxiety and apprehension. Matters were made worse with the arrival of a cavalry detachment under Lieutenant Colonel E.V. Sumner. After a talk with Sumner, Big Foot agreed to accompany him to the agency. On the night of December 23, Big Foot changed his mind and quietly led his people out of their camp. At daylight an embarrassed Sumner alerted Miles that the Minneconjou had fled.[12]

The escape infuriated Miles. He quickly dispatched columns to prevent the fugitives from reaching the Sioux stronghold in the badlands north of Pine Ridge. Major Guy Henry's battalion of the Ninth Cavalry left Pine Ridge on Christmas Day. The buffalo soldiers were to patrol the White Clay Creek area. Three days later, Major Samuel Whitside and a battalion of the Seventh also left the agency in search of the elusive Indians. Artillery detachments, as per Miles instructions, accompanied both detachments.

When Henry's troopers left the agency, they took a detachment of Battery E with them. Lieutenant John Hayden commanded the Hotchkiss gun crew with the Ninth. Lieutenant Harry Hawthorne commanded the two gun crews which rode out with Whitside's battalion. The balance of Battery E, under Capron, remained at the agency. They would move out if the second battalion of the Seventh were required to take the field.[13]

Whitside's troopers, after only one day's search, found Big Foot's band near Porcupine Butte. After a few tense moments, Big Foot agreed to allow the soldiers to escort his band to a camp on Wounded Knee Creek about twelve miles northeast of Pine Ridge. During the night the rest of the Seventh, under the command of Colonel James Forsyth, and Capron's two guns joined Whitside. Forsyth intended to disarm the warriors the following day. Brooke informed Forsyth before his departure that if the Indians resisted, the Seventh was to destroy them.[14]

On the morning of December 29, the various unit commanders positioned their troops around the Indian village. Their mission was to disarm the Indians and prevent another escape. Then Forsyth summoned all of the braves to a council on the north side of the village. Forming them in a semicircle, the Colonel informed them that their weapons would have to be surrendered. This caused considerable discussion and some movement from the circle to the village and vice versa. Forsyth redeployed two troops of cavalry between the council and village to stop this movement. Capron and his men watched the proceedings from a hill a short distance to the north-west. During the night their guns had been trained on the village. Now Capron ordered his gunners to re-sight their weapons on the assembled warriors.

Forsyth's order to surrender the weapons met with little success. Only a few obsolete, worn-out rifles were brought forward. The cavalry colonel then ordered a search of the village. Combing through the lodges, amidst the loud protest of the women, soldiers found another forty weapons. Forsyth finally concluded that the braves themselves would have to be physically searched.

This last action intensified the anxiety among the warriors. As the

first braves stepped forward to be searched, a medicine man rose and began dancing. He criticized the warriors for allowing the soldiers to dominate them. He told them to resist, for their sacred ghost shirts would keep the soldiers' guns from harming them. Forsyth, exasperated at this harangue, ordered two soldiers to silence the man. A scuffle resulted, and the medicine man's rifle went off. Immediately, a group of warriors cast off their blankets, raised their rifles and fired. The soldiers, some not more than twenty feet away, returned the point-blank fire.

With these first volleys between the Indians and the soldiers, the immediate area became enveloped in a haze of smoke and dust. Both sides merged in a desperate struggle at close quarters. Knives and clubs became effective tools of death. The Indian bullets were doubly destructive. Those that failed to strike a soldier passed into the village where the women and children were fleeing from their tipis.

On the high ground to the northwest, Capron held his fire. He knew that shell fire at that time would be fatal to friend as well as to foe. He directed one nervous gunner to remove the friction primer from his gun lest an inadvertant shell be sent into the confused, tangled mass of bodies below the hill. When the Indians finally broke through the line of K Troop and the remnants of B and K troop withdrew to the cavalry camp, the battery began firing by platoon.[15]

Capton opened fire with his two guns on a group of Indians fleeing southwest along the agency road. Hawthorne's platoon engaged the warriors who had fled to the village and were firing at the cavalry from there. As the fighting continued, the warriors, now mixed with the women and children, scattered to the west, south and east. Consequently, the dis-

tances between the battery and some of the fleeing clusters of Indians approached two thousand yards.[16]

As Capron fired at any group of Indians firing at the cavalry, Hawthorne shelled the ravine south of the Indian village. The warriors who had taken refuge there were pouring a galling fire on the troopers. For the most part, this group was safe from the mountain guns. Because of the extremely flat trajectory of the guns, few shells landed in the ravine. Some landed uncomfortably close to A and I troops who were located south of the ravine.[17] Those shells that did hit in the ravine spent most of their fragmentation on the far bank.

Hawthrone saw that it would be necessary to take a gun closer to the ravine. In the process of moving one of his two guns, he was struck by a bullet which shattered his watch, driving parts of the mechanism into his body. Command of the gun then fell to a twenty-one year old Corporal, Paul H. Weinert. With one of his men carrying the wounded Hawthrone to safety, Weinert and the other crewman maneuvered the gun into the mouth of the ravine. Although their clothes and the gun were riddled with bullets, the two artillerymen persisted and eventually the firing from the ravine ceased.[18]

While the gunners fired on pockets of resistance, the troopers chased the scattering Indians. Miles' and Brooke's instructions forbade an escape, and Forsyth tried to round up the fleeing Sioux. One detachment of troopers ran into an unexpected obstacle. When the firing began, some of the Indians at Pine Ridge mounted their ponies and rode toward the sound of battle. They inadvertantly intercepted one of the detachments searching the foothills for fugitives. A brisk exchange of gun fire forced the troopers to beat a hasty retreat to the main body.[19]

In the space of an hour the fighting was over. By the early afternoon a tragic, somber silence prevailed at Wounded Knee Creek. Stretcher-bearers criss-crossed the battlefield searching for those who were injured, Indian and white. The Seventh, especially B and K troop, bore the brunt of the soldier casualities. Three officers and more than sixty men were killed or wounded in the flight. Hawthrone was the only artilleryman seriously injured. Corporal Weinert and Private Geogre Green miraculously escaped injury amidst the flying lead in the ravine.

Big Foot's band suffered staggering losses. Eighty-five warriors died either on the battlefield or later of wounds they received during their struggle with the soldiers. Tragically, sixty-eight women and children perished as a result of the fighting. Forsyth managed to evacuate twenty-nine wounded Indians to medical facilities at Pine Ridge. Seven of these died, primarily because the wounded Indians refused to be treated by the army surgeons.[20]

Forsyth led his battered command away from the battlefield in the early afternoon. His casualities and the Indian wounded required immediate medical attention. He was also aware that the Indians at Pine Ridge might sally forth and attack his crippled command. Low on ammunition and medical supplies, the troops could only sustain more casualities. It was dark when the Seventh trudged into the agency. Their reception committee consisted only of the infantry guarding the buildings. Most of the Indians had fled.

The battle on Wounded Knee Creek seemed to insure the very thing the army had hoped to prevent, an Indian uprising. Many of the bands at Pine Ridge fled to the stronghold when news of the fighting reached them. On other reservations, Indians solemnly weighed the consequences

of an all-out war on the whites. Some refused to take up the rifle, while others demanded some degree of revenge for the women and children cut down by the pony soldiers. Sensing the last possibility, the troops at Pine Ridge dug trenches in anticipation of a massive retaliatory attack by the enraged Sioux.

A verification of the impending clash came the next day when a supply train belonging to the Ninth Cavalry was attacked near the agency. Troops from the Seventh and the Ninth rode to the rescue of their comrades. For Henry's black cavalrymen, the effort was almost more than they could handle. They had marched more than fifty miles the previous day in response to the news of the fighting between the Sioux and the Seventh. Consequently, the horses and the men who rode them were worn out.[21]

Later the same morning, Brooke noticed smoke in the direction of the Catholic mission five miles north of the agency. Brooke feared that the Indians might be venting their revenge on the missionaries. Consequently, he dispatched the Seventh to rescue the mission if it was in fact under attack.[22] Without even pausing to eat a meager breakfast, Forsyth's troopers took to the saddle for the second time in as many hours. Initially, Forsyth directed Henry battalion to accompany him. He changed his mind when Henry asked to remain behind due to the jaded condition of his men and horses.

After a short ride, Forsyth, all eight troops of the Seventh, and Capron's battery reached the mission. Although the mission itself was not under attack, three adjacent log buildings were ablaze. A small band of Sioux had fired the buildings earlier that morning and then fled down the valley in which the mission was situated. At this point, Forsyth decided to return to the agency. However, he changed his mind

when his scouts reported firing down the valley. Thinking that other army units might be engaged with the hostiles, Forsyth pushed his troopers in the direction of the firing. A short distance past the mission, Whitside's battalion made contact with a group of braves numbering between fifty and seventy. A charge by the troopers routed the Indians from their positions on the high ground bordering the valley.[23]

Forsyth did not want to pursue the Indians. He knew that Brooke did not want to excite the Indians.[24] The approach of a cavalry column, Forsyth reasoned, could drive the Indians further away from the reservation. Therefore, he began to withdraw his regiment from the valley. The retrograde had only begun when the Indians began a long-distance fire for the hills bordering the valley. Forsyth was forced to deploy his men in a difficult effort to clear the distant hills of the harassing braves. However, he continued to move in the direction of the agency, using one battalion to cover the withdrawal of the other.

Convinced that the Indians still on the reservation would move to block his path of retreat, Forsyth dispatched a courier with orders for Henry to join him at once. It took the buffalo soldiers more than thirty minutes to cover the five miles separating Forsyth from Pine Ridge. Upon reaching the scene, Henry deployed his men and Hayden's mountain gun on a ridge dominating Forsyth's line of retreat. The boom of Hayden's Hotchkiss gun and the arrival of more pony soldiers prompted the warriors to give up their efforts to surround Forsyth's men. With the Indians returning to their villages, the soldiers took up the march to Pine Ridge.[25]

The fighting at Drexel's Mission was a skirmish by comparison with other battles such as the Rosebud, the Clearwater, and the Little Big

Horn. Two soldiers, one an officer, were killed and only six were wounded.[26] The Indian casualities, if any, were unknown. Its significance to the Sioux campaign of 1890 was that it was the last clash between the Indians and the soldiers. A combination of diplomacy and subtle military pressure finally forced the fugitive Indians to their agencies.

By the second week of January, 1891, the Sioux campaign, the last campaign of the Indian wars, was over. After a grand review, held mostly for the benefit of General Miles, the regiments and separate units began the return trip to their home posts. On January 24, Capron's battery, along with the Seventh Cavalry, boarded a train at Rushville for the return trip to Fort Riley. Although the fighting was over, the campaign in the Dakotas had one final tragic consequence for Battery E. Enroute to Kansas, the troop train on which the battery was riding collided with a passenger train. One sergeant was killed and another enlisted man from Battery E was injured.[27]

The campaign of 1890 was different from previous attempts to subdue the American Indian in two respects. First, the major field commander, General Miles, amassed a considerable amount of artillery. Miles' arsenal included rifled steel field guns, light mountain guns, and gatling guns. Where possible, artillery detachments served the guns instead of details from infantry or cavalry units. Second, the army's initial plan was to prevent hostilities by keeping the tribes separate. A display of superior force was intended to convince the isolated bands that resistance was futile.

Within the framework of this second point, there is some question as to the need for artillery at the first confrontation on Wounded Knee Creek. Forsyth's orders, primarily, were to disarm the Indians and then

take them to a railhead for movement to Omaha. He had more than four hundred troops to accomplish this task. This gave him a four-to-one superiority over the braves of Big Foot's band. There was little chance that Big Foot's band could best the Seventh in battle. Capron's battery, therefore, went to Wounded Knee Creek to prevent a battle, not to fight one.

Undoubtedly, Forsyth wanted the mountain guns present to dispel any notion of escape the Indians might have. Resistance to the four hundred troopers surrounding the camp and to the guns on the hill would be suicide. The presence of Battery E and the troop dispositions clearly show that Forsyth's object was to disarm the Indians and prevent flight. Unfortunately, Forsyth reasoned as a man not caught up in the fervor of the Ghost Dance. The warriors took up the gauntlet with the assurance that their ghost shirts would protect them from the soldiers' rifles and cannons. Therefore, misconceptions on both sides caused the battle and the tragedy of Wounded Knee.

Once the fighting began, the guns of Captain Capron became tools of war, and not tools of intimidation. When Capron saw that the troops were no longer mingled with the Indians, he opened fire. The guns were effective in engaging Indian positions which the cavalrymen could not physically attack. The accuracy of the mountain gun allowed the gunners to fire on targets more than a mile away. Indeed the gunners could cover more ground in a shorter time than the Seventh's troopers.

The nature of the battle, however, made casualities among the women and children inevitable. It was impossible to distinguish men from women, as both were wrapped in heavy winter clothing. Children mixed with the adults often caught those bullets meant for the braves. This

explains the losses among women and to a degree children far better than the notion that the troopers and the artillerymen intentionally fired at non-combatants.

Father Francis Kraft, a witness and casuality of the battle, testified:

> It is possible that by this fire (the cannon fire) some women and children were killed. If so, the killing was unavoidable as the soldiers could hardly have distinguished them from the men among whom they were who were firing backward as they ran.[28]

Capron admitted that his guns probably caused injuries among the non-combatants. He, like Kraft, maintained that it was impossible to avoid hitting them.[29] Even if the braves could have been distinguished from the others, it would have been equally impossible to fire at them without inflicting casualities among those around them. Flying shrapnel from exploding shells does not discriminate in bringing pain or death. Capron's gunners undoubtedly wounded or killed non-combatants, but it was an unfortunate circumstance of their firing on an enemy, which was their duty as soldiers.

By contrast, the role of the artillery at Drexel's Mission was obscure at best. Forsyth made no mention of the battery in his initial report or his subsequent statements. However, Henry singled out Hayden for praise. Hayden's gun "drove the Indians from the ravines and houses and scattered many collecting groups." According to Henry, each shot was followed by cheers which completely demoralized the Indians.[30] Ironically, Forsyth made no mention of Hayden's actions in his report. Forsyth's silence on Capron's activities might be due to the perception he had of the skirmish.

General Miles severely censured Forsyth for the Drexel's Mission fight. Miles maintained that Forsyth was surrounded and the Seventh

was saved only by the timely arrival of the Ninth. Forsyth contended that his men were never in serious danger. He insisted that the Seventh was successfully withdrawing down the valley with no major pressure from the Indians.[31] If Miles' analysis was correct, Forsyth's predicament said little for Capron's guns. His mountain guns should have been more than able to sweep the ridges and therefore cover the withdrawal. If Forsyth could have been believed, then his silence concerning the guns is understandable. There would be no reason to comment on the effectiveness of the guns if the skirmish was of little consequence. The true value of the artillery at Drexel's Mission will largely remain unknown.

The last part of the examination of the artillery in the final Sioux campaign concerns certain gross inaccuracies in the standard portrayal of Wounded Knee. The fighting between the Seventh and Big Foot's band and the tragic loss of Indian lives has come to epitomize the general injustice done to the American Indian. The death and injury of many women and children has been used to characterize the army's actions in the Indian wars as a malicious effort to exterminate the red man. The destruction credited to the cannons has often been cited to support this last point. Generally, the guns are portrayed as firing almost fifty rounds a minute and therefore obliterating the field of battle.[32] In reality, the battery was physically incapable of the first point and doubtfully successful on the second.

With respect to the battery's volume of fire, the first point of doubt rests on the characteristics of the gun. The Hotchkiss gun, designed in the 1870's, had no true recoil system. Therefore, it did not have a mechanism which absorbed the recoil from firing and returned the gun to the initial firing position. This meant that every time the weapon was

fired, the gun and carriage move backward.

Capron testified after the battle that his first targets were approximately three hundred yards from his position.[33] At such a range the tube of the weapon would have been at zero degrees elevation or less. The recoil from firing and the resulting backward movement would be greatest when the tube was in this position. During firing trials conducted in 1885, the gun recoiled eighteen feet at an elevation of three degrees.[34] Therefore, firing the gun without returning it to a primary firing or aiming position would have resulted in the battery's gradual withdrawal from the field of battle. Repositioning the weapon along with loading and sighting took time -- too much time for the battery to achieve anything approaching fifty rounds a minute.[35]

A second consideration which cast doubts on the high rate of fire concerned the amount of ammunition available at Wounded Knee. Colonel Forsyth, overall commander of troops, estimated that the most intense part of the battle lasted twenty minutes.[36] The entire battle lasted less than an hour. If the battery had fired fifty rounds a minute, it would have expended almost one thousand rounds in twenty minutes. There is no reason to assume that Capron carried this much ammunition with him to Wounded Knee. Capron's understanding of the battery's role in the coming operation would have reflected the attitude of the senior commander. As Forsyth did not anticipate trouble, it was doubtful that Capron would have carried more than the normal ammunition load, which was approximately four hundred rounds.[37] Accepting this number of shells as the maximum Capron would have, and the claimed rate of fire, the guns would have participated in only eight minutes of a battle which lasted more than an hour.[38]

A realistic estimate of the battery's volume of fire has been difficult to ascertain, for there was no mention of the total number of rounds fired in any battle account. Many variables, such as the battery's state of training, the condition of the guns, and the location of the ammunition mules, would affect the volume of fire. It must also be remembered that cannons were limited in their rate of fire due to the heat generated within the weapon. Modern cannons are restricted to ten rounds a minute for the first three minutes and three rounds a minute thereafter.[39] A consistently high volume of fire could damage or even destroy the gun. If a reasonable volume of fire was needed to complete an accurate picture of the fighting at Wounded Knee, then a total of from eight to twelve rounda a minute would have been used. This is speculative, but it is based an understanding of what both the men and the guns could and could not do in battle.

The second major point of contention with the standard intrepretation concerned the destructiveness of the guns. Aside from the obvious difference made by accepting a reasonable rate of fire, the caliber of the gun should be considered. Most accounts of the battle accurately describe the mountain gun as being of 1.65 inches in caliber and firing a shell weighing slightly more than two pounds. However, authors have failed to provide any appreciation of the effectiveness or destructive capability of the shell. The bursting charge of the shell contained only 1.76 ounces of powder. The impacting shell, including the bursting charge, weighed a little more than one pound.[40] The total explosive force of the shell would be less than that of a modern hand grenade. It is therefore difficult to accept that the first volley of the battery (four shells) inflicted half of the total Indian casualities as has been

claimed.[41] It is not argued that the guns on the hill did not inflict casualities. It is argued that the gunners of Capron's battery did not obliterate the village and decimate the Indians with a hurricane of shells coming at the rate of fifty a minute.

Four days after Christmas, 1890, on a cold windswept field in South Dakota, Battery E, First Artillery opened fire in support of the Seventh Cavalry. Any Indian who fired at the troopers brought himself to the attention of the gunners on the hill. Minutes later he received fire from the small mountain guns. The exploding Hotchkiss shells brought injury and death to the Indians, combatant and non-combatant alike. The only way the battery could have avoided hurting women and children would have been to remain silent, letting the burden of battle rest solely on the cavalrymen. As soldiers, the artillerymen could not do this. Wounded Knee was not an act of revenge on the part of Capron's men any more than it was for Forsyth's Seventh. It was combat with an enemy often barely visible. For the soldiers of Battery E, Wounded Knee was neither a point of honor nor a point of shame.

ENDNOTES

[1]Robert M. Utley, The Last Days of the Sioux Nation (New Haven, 1960), p. 73.

[2]51st Dong., 2nd sess., Senate Exec Doc. 9, pp. 13, 16, 19.

[3]Report of the Secretary of War- 1891, p. 56.

[4]Ibid., p. 145.

[5]Adjutant General, Washington, to Miles, November 22, 1890, Reports and Correspondence Relating to the Army Investigations of the Battle at Wounded Knee and to the Sioux Campaign of 1890-1891 (hereinafter- Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign), NA, Microcopy 983.

[6]Miles to Adjutant General, Washington, November 21, 1890, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[7]Miles to Adjutant General, Washington, November 21, 1890; Miles to Adjutant General, Washington, November 23, 1890; Merritt to War Department, November 25, 1890; Captain J.C. Ayres, "Report of the Operations of the Ordnance Department- Department of the Platte," March 6, 1890, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[8]War Department to Merritt, November 24, 1890; Merritt to War Department, November 24, 1890, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[9]Schofield to Miles, November 25, 1890, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[10]Monthly Return- November, Battery E, First Artillery, Returns from Regular Army Artillery Regiments, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 727, Reel 8.

[11]Army and Navy Journal 28, December 6, 1890, p. 243; Army and Navy Journal 28, December 13, 1890, p. 267. By the middle of December, Brooke had eight troops of the Seventh Cavalry, four troops of the Ninth Cavalry, eight companies of the Third Infantry, eight companies of the Seventeenth Infantry, and Battery E, First Artillery at his disposal. His forces totalled 63 officers and 1,082 men.

[12]Sumner to Miles, November 24, 1890, Records and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[13]Monthly Return- December, Battery E, First Artillery, Returns from Regular Army Artillery Regiments, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 727, Reel 8.

[14]Testimony of Brigadier General John Brooke, Proceedings of an Investigation made Pursant to the Following Orders; Headquarters Division of Missouri in the Field, Pine Ridge, SD January 4, 1891, Special Order Number 8 (Hereinafter- Investigation Proceedings), Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[15]Testimony of Colonel James Forsyth, Investigation Proceedings, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[16]Testimony of Captain Allyn Capron, Investigation Proceedings, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[17]Testimony of Captain Edwin S. Godfrey, Investigation Proceedings, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[18]Harry L. Hawthorne, "The Sioux Campaign of 1890-1891," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States 19 (1896), pp. 185-187; Frazer Arnold, "Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee," The Cavalry Journal 43 (1934), pp. 19-20; Fredric Remington, "The Sioux Outbreak in South Dakota," Harpers Weekly 35, January 24, 1891, p. 61.

[19]Testimony of Captain Henry Jackson, Investigation Proceedings, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[20]Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs- 1891, p. 130.

[21]Henry to Lt. Roe (ADC to General Brooke), January 17, 1891, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983

[22]Statement of General Brooke to Colonel Edward M. Heyl, January 25, 1891, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983. Miles appointed Heyl, his Inspector General, to investigate Forsyth's management of the Drexel Mission fight.

[23]Forsyth to AAG, Department of the Platte, December 31, 1890, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[24]Statement of Brigadier General James W. Forsyth, concerning the fight with Sioux Indians at the Drexel Mission, December 21, 1896, p. 10, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983. This was Forsyth's official response to Miles' various investigations.

[25]Forsyth to AAG, Department of the Platte, December 31, 1890; Henry to Roe, January 17, 1890, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[26]Forsyth to AAG, Department of the Platte, December 31, 1890, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[27]Monthly Returns- January, Battery E, First Artillery, Returns from Regular Army Artillery Regiments, RAGO, NA, Microcopy 727, Reel 8.

[28]Testimony of Father Francis J. Kraft, Investigation Proceedings, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[29]Testimony of Captain Allyn Capton, Investigation Proceedings, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[30]Henry to Roe, January 17, 1891, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[31]Statement of Brigadier General James W. Forsyth, December 21, 1896, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[32]James Mooney, The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890, Seventeenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington, 1896), p. 118; Dee Alexander Brown, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (New York, 1972), p. 417; Ralph Andrist, The Long Death (New York, 1964), p. 351; Robert M. Utley, Frontier Regulars, p. 406.

[33]Testimony of Captain Allyn Capton, Investigation Proceedings, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[34]Annual Report of the Chief of Ordnance- 1885, p. 88.

[35]Even though the guns were fired from the downhill side, the recoil would still have been severe and would have required considerable repositioning.

[36]Testimony of Colonel James Forsyth, Investigation Proceedings, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983.

[37]Headquarters, Division of Missouri, to Headquarters, Department of Dakota, November 17, 1890, Reports and Correspondence- Sioux Campaign, NA, Microcopy 983. Miles directed that every squadron be supported by one gun with one hundred rounds of ammunition.

[38]This is based on Forsyth's estimate of twenty minutes of intense fighting. The soldiers left the field while there was still some warriors firing.

[39]Department of the Army, The Field Artillery Cannon Battery (Washington, 1976), Appendix A.

[40]Report of the Secretary of War- 1880, pp. 132-133.

[41]Herbert Schell, History of South Dakota (Lincoln, 1961), p. 323.

CHAPTER XI

THE ARTILLERY IN THE WEST

In the days that followed the fall of the Confederacy the Regular Army was given an almost insurmountable task. A portion of the army was to apply a punitive reconstruction to a restive but conquered South. The remaining regiments were to protect the nation's citizens not only from foreign attack but also from the tribes of the West. Its strength reduced to a mere handful, its equipment outdated, the army labored under both burdens. The end of Reconstruction brought no relief. The stirrings of social unrest in the east and far west mandated the presence of an organized force to preserve federal law. That portion of the army in the west faced the greatest challenge.

The small garrisons of the West were ordered to protect settlements scattered across several thousand miles of western landscape. Railroad and wagon road construction parties also clamored for security. The army faced a diverse, complex set of cultures in the western tribes they were to control. The Indians of the west often possessed a mobility and a knowledge of the West which the army could not match. Hindered by a laggard communications system and a logistics nightmare, the army found little success in even catching the elusive tribes. The absence of a tactical doctrine for Indian fighting made success in battle uncertain even when the army managed to catch its adversary.

A major limitation to the frontier army was the lack of manpower. Frontier garrisons frequently had to be reinforced when major hostilities erupted between the races. Quite often the troops moving to support the western posts were artillerymen. Generally, artillery was considered unsuited for Indian warfare. The accepted role for artillery limited it to conflicts between organized, national armies. Cannon fire was considered appropriate for massed formations, seldom for small groups, and never for individuals. In addition, the mounted batteries were armed with weapons, the Napoleon and Rodman guns, considered too heavy for frontier service. Therefore, the batteries which went west and fought the Indian normally did so as infantry or cavalry. The presence and role of artillery units was the prerogative of the major army commander. Lacking a tactical doctrine which specified artillery duties, the batteries' roles varied from campaign to campaign.

Those who omitted artillery from the Indian service robbed the western commands of a valuable resource. Subsequent events disproved most of the "limitations" attributed to organized artillery units. Although some cannons were too heavy for mountains and plains, there were guns light enough to accompany the fastest column. The march of Otis' battery in the Nez Perce war proved that pack artillery was durable and mobile. Otis' men and guns kept pace with the cavalry across truly forbidding ground. Many of the major expeditions in the 1860s and 1870s were supplied by wagon trains. Wheeled cannons certainly moved as fast and as easily as four-wheeled freight wagons.

In battle against small bands of Indians, artillery probably did constitute overkill. However, the Indian army which confronted Crook at the Rosebud and destroyed Custer at the Little Big Horn was not small.

On several notable occasions, Indians either attacked an expedition or column or stood to face it in battle. The Rosebud was certainly an example of the former, and the Clearwater an example of the latter. In many of the major battles, the army actually fought on the defensive. Miles' actions at Cedar Creek and Wolf Mountain more than prove the value of artillery in defense against attacking Indians.

However, cannons at western posts usually performed the critical task of signalling the beginning and the end of the work day. The condition of the guns normally suffered due to simple neglect. Make-shift crews of infantry and cavalry served the weapons when they chanced to take the field. Disaster often resulted from the crew's attempts to use a weapon they did not understand. The folly of the Big Hole howitzer fully illustrated this. When temporary gun crews were effective, such as at Soldier's Creek, it was often due to the fact that they were comprised of ex-artillerymen.

Infrequently, trained artillerymen manned the guns against the Indians. The results were destructive to the Indian. Thomas' mortars converted Captain Jack's Stronghold into a death trap. Jack fled his refuge rather than endure an evil he could not defend against. Humphrey's guns kept the Nez Percé from routing Howard's line at the Clearwater. Capron's Hotchkiss guns disproved the invulnerability of the Ghost Shirts on the frozen ground of Wounded Knee. There might have been more instances such these had the army adopted a flexible doctrine and resources suitable to the conditions and adversaries it faced in the West.

Even when doctrinal myopia converted batteries into infantry companies and cavalry troops, artillerymen served well. Captain Marcus Miller commanded admirably during the Modoc, Nez Percé, and Bannock campaigns.

He was twice brevetted for gallantry in action against the Indians. Captain Henry Hasbrouck's men hounded Captain Jack's band until the majority surrendered to him. He, too, was brevetted for meritorous conduct and gallantry in action. Lieutenants Hawthorne and Humphrey were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for heroism at Wounded Knee and the Clearwater battles respectively.

For artillery regiments after the Civil War, routine was typified by monotonous drill at a coastal fortification with the infrequent firing of an obsolete cannon. With no serious threat of invasion, coastal garrisons became a mobile constabulary. For these men danger came more often from desperate criminals or enraged mobs, rather than Indians. Western duty was a diversion, a demanding and sometimes disastrous change in pastime. Their service in that capacity, however, deserves notice and accolade. The hardships and perils faced by the men called from the coastal garrisons certainly entitle them to membership in the Indian fighting army.

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