Historical Research Management Plan

for

BIG HOLE

National Battlefield

&

Bibliography

of the

NEZ PERCE WAR, 1877

By AUBRFY L. HAINES





DIVISION OF HISTORY
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

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NATIONAL PARK SERVIC

U.S. Department of the Interior

HISTORICAL RESEARCH MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR BIG HOLE NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

November 1968

Recommended		
•	Superintendent	Date
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HISTORICAL RESEARCH MANAGEMENT PLAN

For

BIG HOLE NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

I. THE PARK STORY AND PURPOSE

A. The Main Historical Theme

The Indian participants in the Battle of the Big Hole belonged to the five "non-treaty" bands of Nez Perce. They had refused to recognize an earlier treaty, whereby a majority of the tribe had agreed to give up their ancestral lands for a reservation of limited extent; clinging, instead, to their familiar valleys and uplands in that area where the states of Washington, Oregon and Idaho come together.

The non-treaty Nez Perce - crowded upon by settlers and cajoled by government officials - finally agreed to accept a reservation way of life, and were in the act of moving their herds of cattle and horses within the prescribed boundaries when several young men undertook to avenge wrongs suffered by their families at the hands of white settlers. In the tense situation then existing, those irresponsible actions were misinterpreted as a general uprising, and General O.O. Howard

employed his troops in a manner which forced the non-treaty Indians into conflict.

After two major battles and several skirmishes, the hostiles decided to leave their homeland and cross the mountains eastward to the buffalo range, where they hoped to be left alone. Accordingly, they retreated over the tortuous Lolo Trail into Montana Territory. There, after by-passing the ineffectual barricade intended to block their entrance into the Bitterroot Valley, they were allowed an unhindered passage. Thus, upon their arrival in the Big Hole Valley early in August, most of the Nez Perce - though not all - really believed the war had been left behind in Idaho.

While the fugitive Nez Perce were entering Montana, a force hurriedly gathered at Fort Shaw, near the present city of Great Falls, was moving to intercept them. Col. John Gibbon proceeded with three companies (D, F, and K) of his Seventh Infantry by forced marches to the new post then under construction near Missoula. Reinforced by the addition of three more companies of the Seventh (A, G, and I), a detachment of the Second Cavalry, and a mountain howitzer, the command moved rapidly down the Bitterroot Valley in wagons on the trail of the Indians. Near the southern end of the valley a company of civilian volunteers under Capt. John Catlin was added to Gibbon's force, increasing it to 183

effectives - 17 officers, 132 enlisted men and 34 volunteers.

On the evening of August 7, Colonel Gibbon decided to send Lt. James H. Bradley and a small party of soldiers and civilians ahead of his column for the purpose of reconnoitering the encampment of the Nez Perce Indians in the Big Hole Valley. The detachment pushed down Trail Creek during the night and, by the following morning, had reached a point about five miles above that stream's junction with the North Fork of Big Hole River.

There, Bradley halted his men in a conveniently hidden cove while he, with Lt. Joshua Jacobs and Sergeant Williams, moved cautiously forward until they could hear sounds of activity at the Indian encampment. By climbing a tall fir tree on the shoulder of Battle Mountain, Bradley obtained an unrestricted view of the Nez Perce village in the meadow below. He noted the number and arrangement of the tipis, the lay of the land and the fact that new lodge poles were being cut and peeled (evidence the Indians did not intend to move immediately); then he sent a messenger up Trail Creek to inform Colonel Gibbon of the situation.

Gibbon was able to bring the main column down to Bradley's Cove on the evening of August 8, and the wagons were placed

in a defensive position in the care of wagon master Hugh Kirkendall. The troops were allowed to rest until 11:00 pm.

The battle plan called for a night-approach march down Trail Creek almost to the place where it debouches into the Big Hole Valley, then across a spur ridge and northward along an old Indian trail skirting the foot of Battle Mountain to positions opposite the unsuspecting and unguarded Indian encampment. From there, a three-pronged attack, intended to envelop the camp, was to be launched at dawn. The plan also called for the mountain howitzer to be brought up to the vicinity of the attack after daylight.

Lieutenant Bradley led the approach-march and had the companies deployed well before it was light. The force was distributed along a front of about 1200 yards, with Bradley's detachment of soldiers and the Bitterroot Valley citizens on the left (they were to enter the encampment from the northern, or downstream, end). The center of the line was occupied by the companies of Captains Comba and Sanno - D and K - who were to charge their men directly across the swamp and river against the flank of the encampment, while the right of the line was occupied by Captain Logan's Company A, which was to operate against the southern, or

upstream, end of the camp. Two companies, F and I - under Captains Williams and Rawn, were held in reserve.

While the soldiers were nervously awaiting the command to advance on the sleeping village, an equally tense vigil was being kept at the parked wagon train. There, Hugh Kirkendall had done all he could to fortify the position and had posted sentries, one of whom was William Woodcock, a colored servant of Lieutenant Jacobs. On one of his rounds, Hugh challenged Woodcock, and that individual responded by discharging his shotgun at the feet of the wagon master.

The advance on the encampment was begun at 3:30 am. on August 9, when a line of skirmishers moved down into the river bottom and began a slow advance through the intervening swamp. When they were about 200 yards from the tipis, a single Indian left his lodge, mounted a pony, and rode toward the skirmish line with the evident intention of going to the pony herd which was grazing on the hillside above the line where the troops deployed. He was an old man by the name of Natalekin, with notoriously poor vision. So, he rode into the advancing line and was shot down by four civilian volunteers, who thus opened the fight.

The skirmishers dashed forward through brush and water and the companies followed. The soldiers halted at several

places to deliver volley fire into the tipis, and many
Indians were killed where they lay sleeping; others milled
about in panic, or ran into the willows undressed and
unarmed, but some managed to escape with guns and ammunition.

Immediately after reaching the north end of the encampment, Lieutenant Bradley was killed while leading his men into some willow brush - the first casualty among the troops. At the opposite end of the village, the company of Captain Logan was soon hard-pressed and the reserve companies had to be sent to his support. There, a see-saw fight developed among the tipis, along the river and in the brush-covered flat beyond its west bank, where Captain Logan was killed.

The troops which entered the center of the encampment attempted to fire the leather tipis, but they were damp with dew and not readily combustible. While they were so engaged, more Indians escaped to stiffen the resistance offered by tribesmen at the two ends of the camp. The troops were soon brought under effective fire from the willows along the river and from snipers on the hillside to the west, as well as from the outskirts of the camp, and casualties began to mount. Among those hit was Lieutenant Woodruff and Colonel Gibbon, the latter being wounded in the thigh while directing his men from horseback.

About 8 o'clock, Gibbon began to realize his troops could not hold their position in the Indian encampment, and he ordered a retreat to the line of original deployment along the base of Battle Mountain. The men of the center and right managed the retrograde movement very well, and, from the base of the hill, they were pulled back along the old Indian trail to a timber-covered bench at the mouth of a prominent draw, where they entrenched among the down-logs. The men on the left, lacking Bradley's leadership, appear not to have made the retreat with the other troops, but straggled in later - after fighting their way to the siege area through the brush at the foot of Battle Mountain. Their retreat was much hampered by the activity of a sniper who had taken his position behind the trunk of one of a pair of large Douglas firs part way up the slope. He killed a number of the men retreating through the brush below, and was finally dislodged by the fire of two marksmen who rested their rifles on the trunk of a partially-fallen tree and fired together, killing him.

On reaching the place selected for their stand, Gibbon's men drove out the few Indians who opposed them and quickly prepared a defensive position by piling up barricades of logs and digging shallow entrenchments with trowel bayonets. The position was reasonably secure on the side toward the

river, for there they were elevated thirty feet above the swamp, but, on the north and west, the Indians were able to find commanding places from which they managed a plunging fire into the breastworks. Several well-situated snipers were quite successful in inflicting casualties on the besieged troops. That, with the lack of food and water, created much suffering and lowered morale rapidly.

The detail which had been given the task of bringing forward the mountain howitzer started at daylight under the guidance of Joe Blodgett, a civilian scout who was familiar with the area. Progress was slow because timber had to be cut to make the route passable, but about noon the gun was seen - by the Indians - on the ridge above the siege area. The crew did the best they could to place the piece in service as the Indians charged, but they managed only two ineffectual shots before being overrun.

The gun crew consisted of six enlisted men - two sergeants, a corporal, and three privates. During the brief defense, Corporal Sale (the only experienced artilleryman among them) was killed, and Sergeants Daly and Frederics were wounded, while the team driver, Private Bennett, was pinioned beneath a wounded animal. The other privates made their escape with Scout Blodgett and Woodcock, the same

colored man who earlier discharged his shotgun in front of the wagon master. Blodgett, Woodcock, the two sergeants, and Private Bennett all made their way back to the corralled wagon train, but Privates McGregory and Gould missed the cove and continued on to the Bitterroot Valley, alarming the settlers there with a tale of disaster.

After capturing the howitzer, the Indians dismounted the barrel and buried it shallowly, then rolled the carriage wheels down the steep slope toward Trail Creek in an effort to destroy the gun. In following the trail of the men who fled toward the wagons, the Indians came upon a pack animal with 2,000 rounds of rifle ammunition, which they appropriated; but they did not find the forted-up wagons.

During the afternoon of that day - August 9, the warriors around the siege area gradually withdrew until there were only about 30 Indians left to pin down the exhausted and suffering soldiers. The other warriors returned to the encampment to assist with the burial of the Nez Perce dead and the gathering of horses and effects, in order to start the non-combatants eastward and out of the battle area. By mid-afternoon they were moving under the direct supervision of Chief Joseph, while control of the fighting was taken from Chief Looking Glass, who had lost face through failure to

anticipate the surprise attack. A capable half-breed known as "Poker Joe" took his place as war leader.

Toward evening, the small force of Nez Perce warriors surrounding the troops made an attempt to fire the grass and underbrush and thus burn them out, but the material on the ground was not sufficiently dry to carry fire well and the flames did no real damage. The number of Indians was further reduced during the night by the withdrawal of other warriors until less than a dozen remained to watch the soldiers, who were, by that time, incapable of aggressive action.

Colonel Gibbon started a messenger out that night with a plea for assistance. He was a civilian by the name of Billy Edwards who started afoot and eventually got to Deer Lodge. Another volunteer, Billy Ryan, was sent to the mining camp on the North Fork of Salmon River, and a party of seven civilians left without authorization, returning to the Bitterroot Valley where their stories spread gloom and dismay.

A rider - Sergeant Oliver Sutherland with a dispatch from General Howard, reached the siege area about dawn on August 10, without being molested by the Nez Perce Indians.

They recognized him as the harbinger of reinforcements which

would soon arrive, and, not long after, they fired two volleys into the entrenchments and left to join their retreating families, thus ending the Battle of the Big Hole.

A detail sent back to the wagon train found it intact and the supplies were moved up to where a camp could be established that evening. General Howard arrived with his advance guard at 10 o'clock on August 11, and doctors, with supplies and ambulances, arrived later to begin the work of evacuating the wounded.

The casualties were officially reported as 83 for the Indians; though that figure may be low; and, for Gibbon's command, 29 dead and 40 wounded, of which 5 dead and 4 wounded were from the civilian volunteers. One officer and one enlisted man died later, raising the total casualties for the whites to 1 killed and 38 wounded - thirty seven percent of those who took part in that 24-hour engagement.

As Colonel Gibbon reported, it was a "sharp little affair".

B. Subsidiary Historical Themes

There are several subsidiary historical themes involving the Big Hole Battlefield which are not presently being interpreted. They are:

- 1. The relationship of the site to Indian trailways and migration routes, and their use by the Nez Perce Indians in the years preceding the battle in 1877.
- 2. The involvement of the site in mining operations before and after the battle, with particular emphasis on the hydraulic mining known as the "Mormon diggings."
- 3. The use of the site and the surrounding area for cattle ranching and homesteading, including the "Ruby ditch" project.

C. Relationship of Historical Themes to Natural History and Anthropology

The Big Hole Valley is a crescent-shaped, alpine area extending 60 miles from "horn to horn" and having a maximum width of 15 miles (opposite the battlefield). Except on the elevated "benches", water is abundant, so that the character of the valley is predominantly that of a wet meadow. Such a condition exists because a generous precipitation, much of which is in the form of snow, is held near the surface of the relatively flat valley by the impervious nature of the underlying soils. In effect, the valley is a shallow reservoir naturally adapted to the raising of lush grasses.

In earlier times the valley provided a summer range for large numbers of ungulates and that, with the opportunities for fishing, made it a favorite resort of Indians. Prehistoric evidences indicate ancient use of the area, while the Nez Perce name - Iskumlselalik Pah, "place-of-the-ground squirrels" - shows they were sufficiently familiar with it to have need for a designation. It is probable that the Nez Perce use of the Big Hole Valley is a manifestation of their increased mobility after obtaining horses in the Eighteenth Century.

Though the Big Hole Valley has been taken over throughout by cattle ranchers, who cut its wild hay to use as winter feed for their stock, their activities have not intruded noticeably upon the serenity and wild beauty of the landscape. In fact, the location of the battlefield upon the periphery of the ranched lands has spared it almost entirely from inharmonious influences. The view from the new headquarters site is across meadow, serpentining stream and willow swamp to a bald hillside backed by forested ridges and far-off, snow-capped peaks. It is a scene which the eye readily accepts as essentially that of the day of the battle.

The fortunate positioning of the battlefield has also worked to perpetuate the fauna of its past. Elk and bear are occasionally seen on the slope of Battle Mountain, moose and deer browse the willow swamps along the North Fork of Big Hole River, while waterfowl inhabit the beaver ponds below the siege area.

Though not critically important to the historical theme, the natural history resources of the Big Hole National Battlefield do help to reinforce it.

D. Statement of Historical Significance

As a focal point in one of the least justifiable of all our Indian wars, the Big Hole National Battlefield is both a memorial to the courage and tenacity of the men of two disparate cultures, and a reminder of a dark phase in the Indian-White relationship.

In the first sense - as a memorial - this battlefield provides an insight into the purposes and the feelings of the individual participants as much as any other conflict of the Indian wars because it is so well documented from the particular viewpoint of each side, and because there is such a wealth of supporting physical evidence. The strong sense of duty and steadiness of the white soldier is as apparent as

the Indian warrior's resolve to protect his own, and the travail of both, and the Indian non-combatants as well, stands out in bold relief.

In the second sense - as a reminder - the battle of the Big Hole illustrates the bitter end product of misguided policy. Through an arbitrary and unfeeling application of the reservation policy to one of the most upright and progressive Indian tribes in the West (a people who had nearly bridged the gap between their own stone-age culture and the white man's way of life), an unjust war was provoked and an admirable people were treated to such deeds as volley firing into tipis inhabited by families. In few other incidents does the injustice and futility of settling a dispute by force of arms appear more plainly than in this battle.

E. Reasons for Establishment of the Park

Big Hole Battlefield National Monument was established by Executive Order No. 1216, June 23, 1910 under the Antiquities Act by President William H. Taft. President Franklin D. Roosevelt expanded the original five acres to two hundred acres on June 29, 1939, by Proclamation No. 2339. Public Law 8824 (88th Congress S138) May 17, 1963, authorized a further boundary increase to include 666 acres encompassing all the points of historical interest and changed the area's designation from "Monument" to "National Battlefield".

The purpose for the establishment of Big Hole National Battlefield as stated in the master plan accepted July 24, 1964, is as follows:

"To provide for the preservation of historic features and sites associated with the Battle of the Big Hole, to interpret its significance as a part of the Indian and white conflict during the period of westward expansion, and to facilitate the administration of the battlefield for the benefit of present and future visitors."

II. HISTORICAL RESOURCES OF THE BATTLEFIELD

A. Tangible Resources

- 1. Sites and Remains
 - a. Those related to the main park themes

There are seven separate sites of major importance to the story of the Beetle of the Big Hole. All but one of these lie within the compass of the boundaries established for the battlefield; however, the presence of a large inholding leaves an important part of the area under private control. The site which is outside the boundaries has not yet been located with certainty, though it is definitely on Federally owned land. The following are the major sites:

The Siege Area lies on the lip of the alluvial fan which debouches from "Battle Gulch". Its shape is that of a rough paralellogram, oriented with the long axis on a northeast to southwest direction and containing approximately four acres. Upon this ground the concluding third of the battle took place, with evidences yet apparent in the sunken trace of the perimeter entrenchment, some separately fortified positions, and in the sixty odd stumps of trees damaged by combat and relic hunting. This area is ringed by positions known to have been occupied by Indian combatants whose activities are well documented;

within it, in unmarked graves, lie the remains of many of the white casualties, and it also contains three memorials including the six-ton, granite "soldier monument" which inspired the original reservation of five acres in 1910.

Because of its association with the soldier monument, this site is the best known and most adequately developed of the major sites. Early marking of specific events connected with this phase of the battle was accomplished by T. C. Sherrill, a white participant, and by several Nez Perce Indians brought back to the area by L. V. McWhorter. Based on that information and the visible evidences of battle, the site has been interpreted in a consistent manner since the early nineteen-twenties. The original development took the form of a loop trail, informational signs and a small log museum housing the mountain howitzer and some battle relics. Since 1960, the informational signs have been replaced by a selfguiding system using a booklet keyed to numbered stations along the trail, and the museum has been overhauled to fit its exhibits into the interpretive scheme.

A discussion of plans for future interpretation of this site will be delayed until all the sites have been described, when the subject will be considered for the battlefield as a whole. The Indian Encampment Area lies in a meadow on the east side of the North Fork of Big Hole River. It is approximately one-half mile northeast of the Siege Area, covering a crescent-shaped site, 900 feet long by 300 feet wide, with the long axis lying north-south. Here the initial attack was made, and in the vicious, hand-to-hand combat which followed, two-thirds of the battle's casualties occurred. Most of the dead, estimated as at least one hundred, were buried on the site; however, ranching activities on this yet privately-owned land have removed the evidences of these burials, except in a single case.

For many years the location of the Indian Encampment was known only very generally from the crude sketch maps made immediately after the battle. In 1937, L.V. McWhorter brought a second group of Nez Perce Indians to the battle-field, using information provided by those Indian informants to set stakes marking important positions. The McWhorter stake locations were later reduced to map form and the knowledge so recorded has recently found support in metal-locator investigations on the site. Such research has been greatly hampered by private ownership, which has also largely excluded the public from the site.

The <u>Howitzer Capture Area</u> is situated on a prominent ridge one-quarter mile southwest of the Siege Area. This site, of only one-half acre extent, was verified by metal-locator research in 1964. There, where tradition had always placed the incident, artifact recoveries indicated a hot small-arms fight and the destruction of artillery ammunition. The site has since been brought into the interpretive program by opening a trail to it and providing an appropriate exhibit panel.

The <u>Twin Trees Area</u> is occupied by two old-growth Douglas fir trees standing upon the steep slope of "Battle Mountain" two thousand feet northeast of the Siege Area. From that vantage point a lone sniper is reputed to have seriously harassed the whites retreating from the Indian Encampment toward the place where they stood siege. This is a well-documented site but it has little to offer beyond an excellent view of the Indian Encampment Area and the intervening swamps. Hence, no attempt has yet been made at on-site interpretation.

The Retreat Area lies between the Indian Encampment
Area and the Siege Area. It is composed of swamps
through which the retrograde movement of the whites was
made as a series of charges followed by a dribble of

individuals and small groups. This site was the scene of sudden confrontations, some of which are documented, and it was the place of the death and burial of a number of combatants.

Because of its jungle-like character, a lack of relation of known owents to places on the ground and private ownership which controls a third of the site, no attempt has yet been made to include it in the interpretive program.

The <u>Wagon Train Area</u> is the only major site associsted with the battle which lies outside the boundaries
most recently established for the battlefield. Since
the location where the wagon train was parked during
the fight may never be identified, and is, in any case,
too far removed from the battle to be readily related
to it - this site should be treated separately in
interpretation, possibly as a wayside exhibit adjacent
to State Highway 43.

In addition to the foregoing major sites, there are a number of sites of lesser significance. The present information on these minor sites is more or less inadequate, introducing an element of doubt concerning the location of

each. The line along which the troops deployed prior to the attack on the Indian Encampment, has been assumed - from documentary sources - to correspond roughly to the alignment of the old Tie Creek Trail between the Siege Area and a point below the Twin Trees; but no confirming evidence has yet been found on the ground (which might be too much to expect). Also, the isolated sniper position in the swamp about 150 yards southeast of the Siege Area, rests solely upon the identification of a white participant. If as many rounds were fired from that location as he indicates, it would seem logical to expect recovery of some cartridge cases there; but metal-locator search has produced nothing.

The place of Natalekin's death, in the swamp between the foot of "Battle Mountain" and the Indian Encampment, remains unknown. Since the shots which killed that aged, and nearly blind, Indian also opened the battle, it would be helpful to relocate the place. The grave of the Indian warrior, Sarp-sis Ilp-pilp, is somewhere upon the hillside above the caretaker's house; and the picket post occupied by Nez Perce warriors to prevent reinforcement of the whites at the Siege Area lies within the margin of the forest just below the place where the howitzer was captured.

Two other sites of minor interest are the tree which

Lt. James Bradley climbed when scouting the Nez Perce

village the day before the battle (this is probably not identifiable because there are too many likely possibilities on the slope of "Battle Mountain"), and the ridge from which General 0.0. Howard viewed the battlefield as he came to the relief of the white survivors. Though this latter point is about one-quarter mile outside the boundary of the battlefield, it provides a magnificent view of the entire locale.

The interpretive plan for the Big Hole National Battlefield proposes, at such time as the acquisition of land and the development of facilities is completed, to introduce the visitor to the area through a visitor center located on the lip of the Ruby Bench and overlooking the battlefield from the east. There, with the entire field of action exposed to view against a backdrop of magnificent mountain scenery, orientation will be accomplished through dioramas which can be compared visually with the present landscape, and by brief audiovisual presentations; both backed up by meaningful exhibits.

From the visitor center, a road terminating at a parking area in the valley below will provide access to the battlefield sites. A footpath from the parking area will link the Siege Area, Retreat Area and Indian Encampment Area, with provision for return from the latter

trails will give access to the <u>Howitzer Capture Area</u> and the <u>Twin Trees Area</u>. Interpretation of the battlefield sites will be by means of a self-guiding publication keyed to numbered trailside markers, on the general plan of the present self-guiding trail in the Siege Area. Supporting literature will be available at the visitor center information desk.

The existing knowledge of the battle field is so extensive in terms of the actual locations and the nature of the
particular actions - that the Battle of the Big Hole is
probably the best documented major Indian fight in the
West. A combination of on-the-ground identification by
battle participants with artifact recovery and documentary
corroboration has answered all the major questions except
where the wagon train was parked (a question of relatively
minor importance since the site is well outside the boundaires of the battlefield). In addition to the clear
understanding of the battle in its broad outlines, a wealth
of minor detail makes it possible to fill in many lesser
events of a dramatic nature.

II. HISTORICAL RESOURCES OF THE BATTLEFIELD

A. <u>Tangible Resources</u>

1. Sites and Remains

b. Those related to subsidiary themes

The Big Hole National Battlefield area includes four sites which are concerned with access, mining, and homesteading. These are:

Monument" placed in the Siege Area in 1883 was transported from the railroad at Dillon, Montana, by ox-drawn wagon for 80 miles through a country then without formal roads. The track of that vehicle provided the first road into the battlefield - a route which remained in use until about 1915. Traces of the old road remain visible from the point where it crossed the North Fork of Big Hole River for a half mile through the swamp to the edge of the Siege Area, providing an interesting view of the nature of the early roads of the Big Hole Valley.

The Mormon Diggings on the Ruby Bench. The scars left
by the unproductive effort of Mormon miners to extract gold from
bentonitic clays by hydraulic mining in the last years of the nineteenth century are a prominent feature of the landscape near the new
visitor center. Vestiges of the miner's cabins were lost in the course
of recent development work but the "diggings" - those great pits now

partially filled with well established trees - remain as a sufficient reminder of a very destructive activity. Use of those pleasantly-shaded recesses as picnic areas (they are readily accessible) will probably be the most important purpose they can serve, and it does not exclude minimal interpretation.

The <u>Ruby Ditch</u> on the slope below the visitor center. It is a sad reminder of a rather unrealistic effort to bring water from Lost Trail Creek onto the Ruby Bench (a sagebrush covered fan projecting from the mountains into the Big Hole Valley). A company formed locally spent a large sum of money on the ditch and a high trestle which carried a flume across the Valley of the North Fork of Big Hole River, but the venture failed in the first decade of this century, bringing financial ruin to its backers who were mainly small homesteaders. The lands thus lost were quickly absorbed into a few large cattle ranches. It would seem unnecessary to do more, in interpretation, than to provide a brief explanation of the project at the point where the battlefield trail will cross the abandoned ditch on the return to the visitor center.

Two Battlefield Homesteads: one which was occupied briefly at the Siege Area, and one of greater permanence in the meadow at the Indian Encampment Site. The first is now evident only by its residual of domestic rubbish, while the other has been nearly obliterated by subsequent hay-ranching and stock handling. Since both sites impinge upon the battle scene proper, they should be entirely ignored in the area's interpretive plan.

II. HISTORICAL RESOURCES OF THE BATTLEFIELD

A. Tangible Resources

2. Historic Structures

The Big Hole National Battlefield does not include any structures which can be so classed.

B. Intangible Resources

The Nez Perce Indians had amassed considerable geographical knowledge concerning the northern Rocky Mountains, and the contiguous plains, from the tribal hunting excursions which were a feature of their life after the introduction of the horse. Two trans-montane trails identified with their name attest to their free roving nature, and are of subsidiary interest since the existence of these routes provided the Nez Perce Indians with an apparent alternative to submission when the impossibility of a successful defense of their homeland became apparent early in the War of 1877.

The Big Hole Valley is an anachronism in being much closer to "frontier" conditions and attitudes than is generally the case in Montana and the West. Not only is it a large area of rudimentary development in such socializing influences as schools (as yet without a high school), roads

(the first paved road in the last decade), electric power (also within the past decade), and modern telephone service (since 1965); but also peculiarly primitive - for these times - in terms of attitudes. It is essentially a land of cattle baronies, wherein the viewpoints of the pre-1900 cattle rancher continue to predominate. Other early Western attitudes, including the usual antipathies to Indians and Indian culture are yet apparent, of course with a concurrent glorification of white activities. This "Western" provincialism must be taken into account for its remaining colorful aspects (cattle ranching) and for its influence on the interpretive activities at Big Hole National Battlefield.

C. Other Resources

The Big Hole National Battlefield does not have notable collections requiring historical research.

III. STATUS OF RESEARCH

A. Research Accomplished

The earliest work at the Big Hole National Battlefield which can be considered research was the marking of certain points of interest in the Siege Area by T.C. Sherrill in 1917-1918. At that time the Forest Supervisor encouraged Sherrill (then a caretaker at the battlefield) to perpetuate his knowledge, as a battle participant, by placing stakes and recording the action at such points. This information was the original basis for a self-guiding trail established by the Forest Service during the nineteen-twenties. Inadequate mapping of the sites, with the loss of some of the signs over the years, left some of the Sherrill data in disrepute, but enough remained to form a substantial part of the information presently incorporated into the Trail Guide to the Siege Area (a publication keyed to numbered trailside stations). Sherrill's data is obviously egocentric, and probably exaggerated, but it does have considerable human interest value.

In 1928, L.V. McWhorter, a Yakima, Washington, lawyer interested in the Yakima and Nez Perce Indian peoples, brought several aged Nez Perce Indians to the battlefield. With the help of those warriors - Indian participants in the battle of August 9, 1877 - information representing events as seen from the Indian viewpoint was recorded and the locations were staked. Another visit in September 1937 resulted in the staking of other significant

locations (particularly in the Indian Encampment Area). The results of both visits were perpetuated in McWhorter's "Historical Stake Tabulation of the Indian Campsite", and a supplement dated 8/31/38; 6 pp., typed. The staked locations are shown on Floyd A. Henderson's map "Big Hole Battlefield National Monument and Proposed Additions"; one sheet, drawn at the scale of 1 inch equals 2 chains, August 11, 1938. McWhorter's data also provides much of the framework for his two books, Yellow Wolf: His Own Story (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1940), 324 pp., and Hear Me, My Chiefs! (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers 1952), 640 pp.

The Henderson map, noted above and hereafter called the "McWhorter Stake Map," was based on compass directions and paced distances which introduced inconsistencies difficult to reconcile with later surveys. However, both Sherrill's and McWhorter's locations were successfully added to the base map prepared by transit and tape surveys in 1964-65 (See NB-BIHO 8812, 8813, 8814).

Another compass and pacing map purporting to show the locations identified by Sherrill and McWhorter in the Siege Area was prepared in 1940 by M. Sedar, but it should be ignored as the accuracy is demonstrably low.

No further research was accomplished for almost two decades; then, Don Rickey, Jr., Historian at Custer Battlefield, was assigned to make a reconnaissance of the Big Hole Battlefield with

his metal detector. The work accomplished July 16-22, 1959, was very fruitful, resulting in the recovery of a large number of significant artifacts. Rickey's accomplishment was reported in "Field Research, Big Hole Battlefield National Monument, July 16-22, 1959"; 9 pp. typed, including 2 sketch maps. Ranger Robert Burns made some additional finds that fall and the following summer, but many of his "finds" were lost through inadequate recording.

The most important result of this initial metal-locator investigation (Rickey's) was the location of a troop firing line from which at least three volleys were fired into the Indian Encampment at close range. This line is now known to mark the center of the attack force - the companies of Capts. Sanno and Comba - at the onset, or opening of the battle.

On July 21, 1961, Yellowstone Park historian, Aubrey Haines discovered the site of a blacksmith shop in the Indian Encampment area, near the east end of the bridge by which the first road to the battlefield crossed the North Fork of Big Hole River. This evidence of the homestead which briefly occupied what is now the Indian Encampment site, was reported in a memorandum of July 26, 1961, "Discovery of a Blacksmith Shop Site in the Indian Encampment", 2 pp., typed, and a sketch map.

A metal-locator search by O.W. (Bill) Judge, a historical writer from Casper, Wyoming, made in the Indian Encampment area late

in August 1961, led to additional information which was given to the National Park Service, with the artifacts recovered. This work was reported by Jack R. Williams (see, 'Metal Locator Search - Nez Perce Indian Camp Area Adjacent to Big Hole Battlefield National Monument August 21, 22, and 25, 1961" - O.W. (Bill) Judge; 3 pp. typed, with 2 pp. of photographs and a sketch map). As a result of this investigation, and some follow-up work by seasonal historian Cecil Williamson, the knowledge of the center attack force was greatly improved.

Reminiscent accounts obtained by Haines and Williams in 1961 also added somewhat to current knowledge of the battlefield area. These accounts are recorded as: "Cloyd Wampler Interview, July 20, 1961," 10 pp., typed, recorded by Haines; "Interview - Mrs. Bernice Ramsey - November 7, 1961", 2 pp., typed, recorded by Williams; and "Interview" [with George Minnick, of Wisdom, September 23 and October 18, 1961], 3 pp., typed, recorded by Williams.

During the 1961 and 1962 seasons the Acting Management
Assistant, Jack R. Williams, launched a program of marking the
locations of all known artifact finds with large, iron bolts stamped
with identifying numbers. These were later compiled as a "Master
List - Metal Locator Artifact Finds - Siege Area", by Jack Williams,
November 26, 1962; 3 pp., typed, and 3 maps.

A research contract between the National Park Service and

Idaho State College (Agreement No. 14-10-243-342, dated 5/21/58), which was intended to provide a definitive historical study of the battle of the Big Hole, was completed by Dr. Merrill D. Beal in 1962. Unfortunately, the result was a general study of the Nez Perce Campaign as a whole, with the battle given only chapter treatment. Very little new knowledge of either the battle or the campaign was presented and the work did not accomplish the intended purpose.

No important research was accomplished during 1963, but a chance discovery by seasonal historian Kermit M. Edmonds during the construction of a trail to an interpretive exhibit led to several important recoveries that summer and fall. Thus, the site of the howitzer episode was located and authenticated beyond any doubt (See "Field Research Project Report, Big Hole National Battlefield, June, July, August 1964," 25 pp., typed, with 2 maps).

The need to tie down Kermit Edmond's various "finds" led Yellowstone Park Historian Haines to establish coordinate grids (surveyed by transit and steel tape) at the Siege Area and the Howitzer Capture Site. These local grid systems were oriented on the cardinal directions and consisted of 50-foot squares with their corners marked by 2 by 2-inch wooden hubs (See NB-BIHO 8813, sheets 1-4, and NB-BIHO 8814, one sheet; all at the scale of 1 inch equals 10 feet). Details were filled in by plane table survey methods to provide a record of the "location of artifact finds and physical

features significant to the interpretation of the Siege Area and Howitzer Capture Sites."

From late fall of 1964 through the spring of 1966, Historian Haines was assigned to the Big Hole National Battlefield as acting management assistant. Thus, an opportunity was provided to complete the series of base maps begun in 1964. The Indian Encampment Area was surveyed on a scale of 1 inch equals 40 feet and all artifact "finds" and McWhorter stake locations were tied in (See NB-BIHO 8812, 1 sheet). The north-south base-line from which this survey originated was monumented with iron pipe driven flush with the ground at the 400, 600, 800, 1000 and 1200 foot stations. In the Siege Area, an east-west base-line was monumented by brass NPS markers set in concrete at 100-foot intervals.

Metal locator research accomplished during 1965 consisted of rechecks of the Siege Area and the Howitzer Capture Site, and a very productive investigation of two previously untouched portions of the Indian Encampment Area. This later work resulted in establishment of both the left wing (Bradley's force) and the right wing (Logan-Rawn) of the attacking troops. The work of the 1965 season resulted in recovery of 96 items associated with the battle and discovery of a probable battlefield burial. These results are listed in a "Report on Historical Research Accomplished at Big Hole National Battlefield During 1965," 20 pp., typed, and 6 maps. A listing of

all battle artifacts recovered by previous investigations, with pertinent information on them, is included as Appendix A., of the report.

No systematic research has been accomplished or reported since the above work was completed.

III. STATUS OF RESEARCH

B. Research in Progress

There are no research projects presently authorized for the Big Hole National Battlefield and no work has been reported during the past two seasons.

C. Cooperation with Non-Service Institutions

Currently, the Big Hole National Battlefield has no research agreements or contracts with outside organizations; however, the Montana State University system, the Montana State Historical Society, the Montana Archaeological Society and local libraries have all been helpful in the past and, presumably, will remain so in the future.

IV. RESEARCH NEEDS

While there are no major questions concerning the battle of the Big Hole for which answers must be sought through research, some work of a purely supporting nature remains to be accomplished. Of this, priority should be given to those investigations which will be immediately helpful to development of the area interpretive program, which is now in a formative stage.

Unfortunately, the area where field research is most needed is the Indian Encampment and its environs - a site which is privately owned at present. The fact that relic hunters frequently work over the Indian Encampment area with a considerable annual loss of historical information, gives a particular urgency to the minor research needed there. If there is no prospect that the land can be acquired in the immediate future, an agreement should be made with the owner which will allow the essential research to be done at once.

A. Site Identification and Evaluation Studies

As indicated in the preliminary statement, it is in the Indian Encampment Area that field research is most needed. The following is a priority listing of the research needed there:

1. Complete the metal-locator search of the location occupied by the right wing of the attack force (the companies

of Logan and Rawn) at the opening of the battle. This firing line, which lies roughly between the coordinate positions N 900, E 900 and N 600 E 750 (NB BIHO 8812), is thickly overgrown with willows which have limited the effectiveness of previous searches. The apparent alignment of this firing line is preserved by iron bolts driven into the ground at the ends of the swath along which cartridge cases were recovered in the spring of 1966.

- 2. Check the presumed burial depression found at coordinate position N 1080, E 820 (NB BIHO 8812). This should be done by excavation in accordance with proper archaeological procedures.
- 3. Make a metal-locator search of the north half of the Indian village proper, which includes most of the area north from grid 900 to 1500, and east from 1000 to 1300. Particular emphasis should be placed on a search in the vicinity of coordinate position N 1460, E 1230 (NB BIHO 8812), where Lt. Bradley is presumed to have been killed and buried.
- 4. Test excavations should be made by archaeological methods to determine the extent to which agricultural use has affected the Indian Encampment Area. If, as is

plowed by the homesteader who later occupied the site, then it is likely that much battle evidence has been turned under and lies too deep for metal-locator recovery. Test excavation will determine this, and establish the advisability of archaeological investigation to recover particular tipi locations by the hearth charr and other debris. If the area has been plowed, many battle artifacts may remain at a depth of eight inches to a foot; if it has not been plowed, the battle artifacts are likely gone, but individual tipi locations would probably be recoverable.

The needs of the area interpretive plan can be met by re-staking the three firing lines, and the important events recorded by L. V. McWhorter, through survey based on the positions recorded on NB BIHO 8812. Such a re-establishment by surveying methods is not strictly research, but it could be efficiently combined with the research suggested under Items 1 to 4 above.

5. Make a metal-locator search between grids N 1300 and N 1500, from the North Fork of Big Hole River westward nearly to the foot of Battle Mountain, to locate, if possible, the place where the old Indian, Natalekin, was killed by the volley of shots which opened the battle.

Because of the human interest value associated with this event, a knowledge of the location would be helpful in interpreting the initial phase of the battle.

At the Siege Area the only research needed is an archeological-type investigation to determine the original outline of the intrenchments and, if possible, the location of a number of burials made in the trenches and near the present memorial to Chief Joseph (a footpath may have been built over the graves at the latter place). This research does not warrant a high priority since it will have little influence upon the existing body of knowledge, but it should be accomplished prior to any major changes in the interpretation of the Siege Area (particularly, it should preceed any re-routing of the trail or shifting of structures).

While the desirability of locating the place where the wagon train was parked has been mentioned, it is doubtful if research toward that end is justified since the site is well outside the battlefield boundaries and little more could be done there than to place a monument or plaque. In any case such research would pose a very difficult problem as there are no adequate clues to the possible location.

IV. RESEARCH NEEDS

B. General Background Studies and Survey Histories

No research of this class is required.

C. Studies for Interpretive Development

The presently available information provides an adequate basis for the preparation of the audiovisual script for use at the new visitor center. A trail guide leaflet and the marking of important locations in the Indian Encampment Area can also be accomplished from the data now in hand. As mentioned under part A of this section, the suggested site research could enrich the interpretive plan, but the items listed only support the plan - - they are not of critical importance.

D. Development Studies

None are needed at this time.

E. Park Histories

An administrative history of Big Hole National Battlefield has not yet been undertaken as a project, and probably cannot be until the area has a qualified historian on its staff.

V. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS

No research study proposals have yet been submitted for Big Hole National Battlefield, and none can logically be presented until the status of the Indian Encampment Area is resolved by purchase of the site from its private owner.

APPENDIX I

Bibliography

The library at Big Hole National Battlefield is entirely inadequate, but this will cause no particular inconvenience until the area staff is enlarged to include a professional historian. At present the collection contains only seven books dealing with the central theme of the area, and, of those, only one is concerned predominantely with the battle.

There is an unorganized collection of pamphlets, newspaper items, reminiscences and photographs gathered over the years, with some copies of primary manuscript materials. The impoverished nature of the collection is a direct result of past failure to provide adequately for the area in terms of finances, office facilities, and trained personnel.

While there is no bibliographic card file - one is hardly necessary where so few materials are concerned - , the basis for such a file is in existence in the form of "A List of Published and Manuscript Sources Relating to the History of the Nez Perce War of 1877," compiled by A. L. Haines, April 1964; 36 pp., typed. This contains 253 entries covering all phases of the Nez Perce Campaign, and 108 entries concerned particularly with the Battle of the Big Hole.

- 1. Books Dealing With the General Period of History
- Andew Garcia, <u>Tough Trip Through Paradise</u>, edited by Bennett Stein (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967). A contemporary account indicative of frontier life in Montana.
- Jay Monaghan, editor, The Book of the American West

 (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1963).

 An illustrated compendium on early Western life and conditions.
- Alva J. Noyes, The Story of Ajax (Helena, Mont.: State Publishing Company, 1914).

 An account of life in the Big Hole Valley during the period of settlement.
- Published Materials Concerning the Park Story:

Books

Merrill D. Beal, <u>I Will Fight No More Forever</u> (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963).

This book is the published result of a National Park Service financed study which was intended to be a definitive study of the Nez Perce Campaign. The book is merely a stereotyped treatment of already known facts, with the Battle of the Big Hole receiving a much too brief treatment.

Cyrus Townsend Brady, American Fights and Fighters

(New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1907).

A collection of reprints from newspapers, magazines and official reports, with some personal and explanatory material.

Mark H. Brown, The Flight of the Nez Perce

(New York: G. B. Putnam's Sons, 1967).

Another work covering the Nez Perce Campaign, but one with the merit of presenting considerable new material.

Oliver O. Howard, Nez Perce Joseph

(Boston: Lee and Shepard, Publishers, 1881).

An appologia presented by an unsuccessful commander of the military.

Alvin Josephy, The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

The best available work on the Nez Perce Indians as a people.

Lucullus V. McWhorter, Yellow Wolf - His Own Story

(Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Press, 1940).

The Nez Perce Campaign from the viewpoint of an Indian participant.

Lucullus V. McWhorter, Hear Me, My Chiefs!

(Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Press, 1952).

A general work on the Nez Perce people, with a considerable treatment of the Nez Perce campaign as the Indians saw it.

Pamphlets

- Will Cave, Nez Perce Way of 1817 and the Battle of the Big Hole
 (Missoula, Montana: Missoulian, 1926).
 - A brief account of some events of the Nez Perce Campaign prior to the Battle of the Big Hole
- Ella C. Hathaway, <u>Battle of the Big Hole in August 1877</u>, as told by T.C. Sherrill (1919). An egocentric and biased account by a white participant.
- Paul C. Phillips, The Battle of the Big Hole, Historical Reprint

 No. 8, from Frontier and Midland, Vol. X (1926), pp. 63-80.

 A collection of contemporary letters discussing the Nez

 Perce threat in Montana Territory and the manner in which

 it should be met.

Magazines

Earle R. Forrest, "Big Hole Battlefield", in <u>Frontier Times</u>
Vol. 39, No. 5 (September 1965)

A discussion of the battle is concluded with a description of the battlefield as it appeared in 1913.

Newspapers

Amede Bessette, "Amede Bessette Tells of a Visit to the Gibbons Battleground Shortly After the Fight", in <u>Dillon Examiner</u> (Montana), Sept. 27, 1902.

An eyewitness account of the appearance of the Big Hole battlefield soon after the fight.

Henry Buck, 'Nez Perce Campaign, 1877," serially in Great Falls Tribune (Montana), Dec. 24, 1944, to Feb. 18, 1945.

An account by a white volunteer in the Nez Perce Campaign

of Nez Perce survivors who reached Sitting Bull's camp of

Duncan McDonald, "Nez Perce War of 1877 - Indian History from
Indian Sources," serially in Deer Lodge (Montana)

New Northwest, Apr. 26, 1878 to Jan. 10, 1879.

An account by a Nez Perce half-breed based on the stories

APPENDIX II

A LIST OF PUBLISHED AND MANUSCRIPT SOURCES RELATING TO THE HISTORY
OF THE NEZ PERCE WAR OF 1877

Compiled by Aubrey L. Haines, Park Historian, Yellowstone National Park, April 1964.

This list of published and manuscript sources relating to the history of the Nez Perce War of 1877 has been compiled as an immediate aid to the development of an interpretive program for Big Hole National Battlefield, and as a future research and administrative tool for that area. Thus, the scope has been deliberately expanded beyond the strict limits set by the above title on the assumption that an understanding of the event to be interpreted at the Big Hole Battlefield—the Nez Perce War of 1877, rather than an isolated battle—requires access to information covering the Nez Perce people from prehistoric times to the present.

The addenda (Appendix III) to the source list are intended to make some of the references more useful by an indication of the phases of the Nez Perce story they present. As a matter of convenience, the following phases are recognized here:

- A. Nez Perce Indian tribal background
- B. Nez Perce-White contact, before settlement
- C. Government policies and actions
- D. Opening of the Nez Perce War
- E. The Battle of the Big Hole
- F. Retreat from the Big Hole
- G. Surrender of the Nez Perce
- H. Captivity and return of the exiles

The source list and the addenda were prepared from the resources of the Yellowstone Park Reference Library--from its holdings and such bibliographies as were available there. Entries originating in such bibliographies are often unverified; hence, this compilation should be regarded only as a "finding list." It should not be used directly in the preparation of citations or bibliographies.

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APPENDIX III

A. Some References to the Tribal Background of the Nez Perce Indians, Including Their Origin, Customs and Cultural Attainments.

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