

Lolo, Montana, to the Big Hole National Battlefield,
Montana, through the Bitterroot Valley



Discover the
**Nez Perce
Trail**

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AUTO TOUR



The Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail

Designated by Congress in 1986, the entire Nez Perce National Historic Trail stretches 1,170 miles from the Wallowa Valley of eastern Oregon to the plains of north-central Montana.

This segment of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail from Lolo, Montana, to the Big Hole Battlefield, Montana through the Bitterroot Valley is one of five available tours.

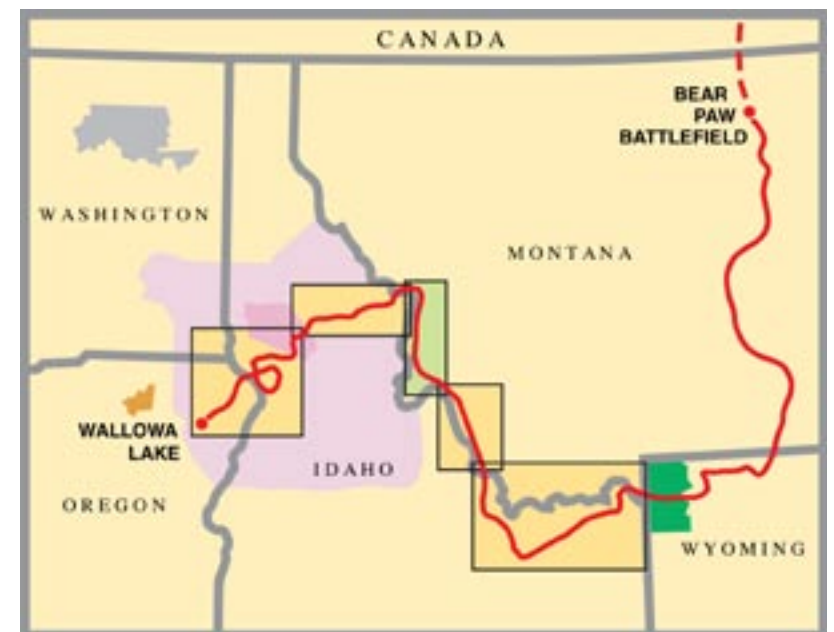
As you travel this historic trail, you will see highway signs marking the official Auto Tour route. Each designated Auto Tour route stays on all-weather roads passable for all types of vehicles. Adventure Routes are an alternative for those seeking the most authentic historic route. They are often on gravel or dirt roads, so plan ahead.



Check weather and road conditions before embarking on your journey.

Current Auto Tour Opportunities

See the available Auto Tour brochure for each trail segment indicated on map below for specific route information.



- Nez Perce National Historic Trail
- Bitterroot Valley Segment
- Trail Segments (Auto Tour brochure available)
- Traditional Nez Perce Tribe Homelands
- Nez Perce Indian Reservation
- Yellowstone National Park
- Colville Indian Reservation
- Umatilla Indian Reservation

Experience the Nez Perce Trail

How do I get there?

Paved highway driving instructions:

From Idaho, go east on U.S. Highway 12 and cross the Bitterroot Mountains into Montana. Proceed to Lolo, Montana, then proceed south on U.S. Highway 93. Take Montana State Highway 43 to Big Hole National Battlefield, Montana.

Hiking:

A trailhead east of U.S. Highway 93 near the Indian Trees Campground is the beginning of a 3.5-mile trail that follows part of the original Nez Perce route. For the ambitious hiker, this gives an idea of the forbidding terrain. Scarred trees and wagon ruts are still visible. Lewis and Clark used this trail in 1806 on their return from the Pacific Ocean.

Backcountry driving:

For the adventurous motorist, there is a tough, one-lane road (Forest Service Road 106) that crosses the Continental Divide at Gibbons Pass and follows Trail Creek to the Big Hole Valley.

Some of the people who traveled this trail in 1877

- **Nez Perce Chiefs:** Chief Joseph, Chief White Bird, Chief Looking Glass
- **Nez Perce Warriors:** Five Wounds, Lone Bird, Natalekin (killed at Big Hole), Lean Elk (Poker Joe), Wahlitits, Yellow Wolf
- **Bitterroot Salish Chief:** Chief Charlo
- **U.S. Military:** Lieutenant James Bradley (killed at Big Hole), Colonel John Gibbon, General Oliver Otis Howard

We were always here, Nature placed us in this land of ours.

—Yellow Wolf
(Hemene Moxmox)



The Nez Perce War

The 1877 Nez Perce War, one of the most studied and debated Indian wars in American history, has been told from as many perspectives as there are people telling the story.

As you encounter this “snapshot in time,” try to understand the fears and feelings of those involved in events of the past. Reflect on the different viewpoints of those who lived in the Bitterroot Valley. History is more than dates and events; it is an encounter with real people from the past. What would you do in their place?

In the Beginning: A Proud People Connected to the Land

Nez Perce believe the Creator molded them from the earth. The Ni mií puu—“the people”—lived for centuries as a loosely knit confederation of small bands.

The Nez Perce depended on the land for their survival. The earth and rivers provided roots and berries, fish and game. Farming and land ownership were foreign to the Nez Perce. They believed the earth was not to be disturbed by hoe and plow. The land was their home, not a commodity to be bought or sold.

It is an outrage that the Nez Perce shall be allowed to pass through our territory.

—J. H. Mills, editor, *New Northwest*

Disputes Intensify: War Erupts

In the mid 1800s, Indian-settler disputes intensified in the West. In the Nez Perce homeland (now southeastern Washington, northeastern Oregon and north-central Idaho), the federal government failed to enforce an 1855 treaty prohibiting unlawful encroachment on Indian reservation land.

In 1863, the U.S. government drafted another treaty that reduced the 7,000,000-acre Nez Perce Indian Reservation to a tenth its original size. After a decade of mistreatment and abuse endured by the Nez Perce, five chiefs refused to sign this treaty. During the 1870s there was increasing pressure to force these remaining non-treaty Nez Perce onto the reduced reservation.

Increasing disputes between the Nez Perce and settlers resulted in the first battle at White Bird Canyon, Idaho, June 17, 1877. Before fleeing eastward over the Buffalo Trail (K'useyneisskit Trail) to Montana, the non-treaty Nez Perce fought several more battles with army units commanded by General Howard and settler volunteers. The Nez Perce believed the army and its volunteers were only chasing them out of Idaho and that they would be safe in Montana. The Nez Perce intended to travel peacefully to a place where they could find peace, someday returning to their homeland.



White Bird Canyon, Idaho

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Nez Perce Flight to Freedom Disturbs Settlers

Fear spread among Montana settlers as reports of increasing unrest in Idaho reached Montana. Newspapers fanned the flames of fear by printing distorted stories. The Nez Perce were heading over the Lolo Trail toward Montana.

Many Montana settlers were accustomed to Nez Perce visits. Some settlers claimed Nez Perce as friends, but panic prevailed. Newspaper editors demanded action by Montana Territorial Governor Benjamin Potts. Telegrams to President Rutherford B. Hayes demanded that the army punish “the hostiles,” ignoring the fact that the Nez Perce were defending their homeland.

Montana settlers formed volunteer militia groups. In Stevensville, Montana, settlers hastily rebuilt Fort Owen, a crumbling, walled trading post. In Corvallis and Skalkaho, Montana, the residents built sod forts to protect their families.

Bitterroot Salish Chief Charlo and his people had been friendly to both settlers and Nez Perce. However, the Salish were also experiencing increasing pressure from settlers to give up their land in the Bitterroot Valley.

Chief Charlo refused to sign the 1872 Garfield Treaty. His name was forged on the document. Chief Charlo and several hundred Salish people remained in the Bitterroot Valley in the face of growing hostility.

Nobody was sure how the Salish would react to the Nez Perce presence. By the time the Nez Perce reached Lolo Pass, Montana residents had been reading about supposed “terrible atrocities” for five weeks. The highly publicized fate of Custer the year before at the Battle of the Little Big Horn magnified the settlers’ fears. While the Nez Perce intended to pass peacefully through Montana, the panic-stricken settlers feared for their lives.

Chief Charlo allowed the Nez Perce to pass through the valley but warned them not to harm the settlers. His warriors assisted in the defense of strongholds like “Fort Fizzle.”

Chronology of the 1877 Flight of the Nez Perce Through the Bitterroot Valley

- July 24–** Two companies of the 7th Infantry with Captain Rawn, supported by over 150 citizen volunteers, construct a log barricade across Lolo Creek at Fort Fizzle. Many Bitterroot women and children are sent to Fort Owen or to two hastily constructed forts near Corvallis and Skalkaho (Grantsdale).
- July 28–** Nez Perce reach the Bitterroot Valley, bypassing Fort Fizzle, and camp on the McClain Ranch north of Carlton Creek.
- July 29–** Nez Perce camp with Chief Charlo on Silverthorn Creek west of Stevensville.
- July 30–** Nez Perce trade for supplies in Stevensville.
- August 1–** Nez Perce camp at Corvallis.
- August 3–** Colonel Gibbon reaches Fort Missoula.
- August 4–** Nez Perce camp near junction of the east and west forks of the Bitterroot River. Colonel Gibbon's command camps north of Pine Hollow southwest of Stevensville.
- August 5–** Nez Perce camp above Ross Hole near Indian Trees Campground. Colonel Gibbon is at Sleeping Child Creek. John Catlin and volunteers agree to join him.
- August 6–** Nez Perce camp at Trail Creek. Colonel Gibbon makes "dry camp" south of Rye Creek on his way up the hills leading to Ross Hole, closing the gap between his command and the unsuspecting Nez Perce. General Howard's command camps at Lolo Hot Springs.
- August 7–** After a difficult climb over the Continental Divide, the Nez Perce camp along the Big Hole River. Colonel Gibbon is now at the Continental Divide. Lieutenant Bradley is sent ahead with volunteers to scout. General Howard is at Lolo Hot Springs.
- August 8–** Nez Perce camp at the Big Hole. Colonel Gibbon crosses crest of the Continental Divide, parks wagons and deploys his command just a few miles from the Nez Perce camp. General Howard enters the Bitterroot Valley, camps north of Pine Hollow.
- August 9–** Just before dawn, Colonel Gibbon and his troops charge the sleeping Nez Perce village at the Big Hole River. Some 90 Nez Perce are lost, many of them women and children. General Howard is near the mouth of Rye Creek.
- August 10–** General Howard goes with his fastest cavalry to Trail Creek, a 53-mile trek. Infantry is now above Stevensville.
- August 11–** General Howard and his men reach Colonel Gibbon.
- August 12–** Remaining cavalry reach the Big Hole Battlefield.

— AS YOU TRAVEL THE TRAIL—

*The trail memorializes not only
those who died during the flight
but also those who survived.*

*Their tragic journey marked the end
of freedom for the Nez Perce
and opened their lands to settlement.*

*As you travel this historic trail
through the Bitterroot Valley,
whether you drive, ride or walk,
you will gain an understanding
and appreciation
for the difficulty of their journey
and the tremendous odds
the Nez Perce had to face and overcome.*

1

Lolo Trail Barricade: “Fort Fizzle”

I had a talk with Chief's Joseph, White Bird and Looking Glass, who proposed if allowed to pass unmolested, to march peaceably through the Bitterroot Valley in western Montana.

—Captain Rawn,
7th Infantry

To block the Nez Perce from entering the Bitterroot Valley, Captain Rawn, 30 enlisted men and four officers from nearby Fort Missoula entrenched themselves behind log breastworks in a small opening along the Lolo Creek drainage adjacent to the Lolo Trail. About 150 settlers joined the soldiers. The 750 Nez Perce, with more than 1,000 horses, were camped about five miles to the west. At a meeting between Nez Perce chiefs and army officers, the Nez Perce made four things very clear: (1) They had no intention of molesting settlers or property. (2) They wanted to travel in peace. (3) They would not surrender their horses, arms and ammunition. (4) They were not ready to return to the hostile environment in Idaho.

Soon after the meeting, many settler volunteers returned home. Some reports say they were convinced that the Nez Perce wanted a peaceful trip through the valley.

Others, “at the sight of so many Indians ... deserted.”

—Corporal Loynes,
7th Infantry

Captain Rawn had clear orders. He said the Nez Perce could not pass. However, the barricade failed when the Nez Perce, with their horses and possessions, climbed a steep ravine behind the ridge to the north and bypassed the soldiers. The previously unnamed barricade became the ridiculed “Fort Fizzle.”

2

Through the Valley: Lolo Creek to Carlton Creek

You are volunteers; you come over to fight us. I could kill you if I wanted to, but I do not. You can go to your homes. I give you my word of honor that I will harm nobody.

—Looking Glass
Wrapped in Wind (Elelimyet'e qenin')

Looking Glass met us and told us he would not harm any persons or property in the valley if allowed to pass in peace and that we could pass through his camp to our homes.

—W. B. Harlan, settler

After avoiding a major conflict on the Lolo Trail, the Nez Perce followed Lolo Creek to the Bitterroot River. Chief White Bird and others wanted to go north to Canada. Chief Looking Glass insisted on traveling south toward the Big Hole Valley where he had led many hunting parties. He knew there were few settlements and many lush meadows for grazing horses. The chiefs made a fateful decision to go south, up the Bitterroot Valley, into the Big Hole Valley, and east to the buffalo country.

The Nez Perce camped on settler J. P. McClain's ranch just north of Carlton Creek, in the vicinity of today's Looking Glass Recreation Area. There were unfounded reports that the Nez Perce stole some of McClain's equipment. The Nez Perce buffalo hunters often left equipment in one of McClain's outbuildings. They were simply reclaiming their own property.

Some Bitterroot volunteers could not return home without passing through the Nez Perce camp. Chief Looking Glass made it clear that they did not wish to fight and permitted the volunteers to pass unharmed through the camp.

3

Through the Valley: Carlton Creek to Stevensville

The Nez Percés were by far the finest looking tribe of Indians I have ever seen.

—Henry Buck,
Stevensville shopkeeper

The Nez Perce moved up the Bitterroot Valley in western Montana on July 29, 1877, in “a cavalcade about five miles long” to the Stevensville area. The main body of Nez Perce spent two of the three days camped along Silverthorn Creek west of Stevensville, Montana, near the home of Chief Charlo, leader of the Bitterroot Salish in an area known today as Indian Prairie.

Howard, whom the Nez Perce Indians nicknamed “General Two-Day Behind,” was back in Idaho. The few soldiers the Nez Perce had encountered on the Lolo Trail had retreated to Fort Missoula. Chief Charlo found himself in an awkward position. He was friendly with both whites and Nez Perce, and he wanted peace. Frequent intermarriage, ongoing trading, shared buffalo hunting and mutual defense had cemented good relationships between the Nez Perce and the Bitterroot Salish. Chief Charlo’s people had lived among the settlers in the Bitterroot Valley in western Montana for many years.

The Bitterroot Salish

Traditionally, the Bitterroot Valley in western Montana was home to the Bitterroot Salish, but they ranged hundreds of miles in all directions to hunt buffalo, fish for salmon, trade and visit neighboring tribes.

The 1855 Hellgate Treaty established a reservation about 75 miles north of Montana’s Bitterroot Valley for several other Salish bands, and they considered the Bitterroot Valley of western Montana a reservation for the Bitterroot Salish. However, white settlers pressured the Federal government to create a second treaty in 1872. This treaty forced the Bitterroot Salish onto the reservation to the north.

Many of the white settlers were friends of the Salish. How could Chief Charlo join one side against the other? When asked to support the army, he said, “We are friendly to the whites, but in your war with the Nez Perce [we] could not take sides.” He remained neutral.

It was my father’s boast that his hand had never in seventy years been bloodied with the white man’s blood, and I am the son of my father. We could not fight against the Nez Perce because they helped me several years ago against my enemy the Blackfeet, but we will not fight with them against the whites.

—Chief Charlo

Crossing the Lolo Trail with their remaining possessions and more than 1,000 hungry horses was a major achievement. The Nez Perce and their stock needed rest.

The Indians ... are moving very slowly, in fact they have not moved at all since reaching their present camping ground.

—C. P. Higgins,
Missoula banker, July 31, 1877

The Nez Perce had no idea that Colonel John Gibbon and the 7th Infantry were coming from Fort Shaw to join the chase. During their stay across from Stevensville, groups of Indians visited the town for supplies.

They soon made known their wants to us, saying they needed supplies and had money to pay for them, but if we refused to sell, would take them anyway.

—Henry Buck,
Stevensville shopkeeper

The Indians have plenty of gold dust, coin and greenbacks and have been paying exorbitant prices for flour, coffee, sugar and tobacco.

—Washington McCormick,
Missoula businessman

The Bitterroot Valley

During the first half of the 19th century, trappers, traders and missionaries came to the Bitterroot Valley. St. Mary's Mission, built at Stevensville in 1841, was the first Roman Catholic mission in the Northwest. When the Jesuits left in 1850, the St. Mary's Mission was sold to Major John Owen, who established a trading post and built an adobe "fort" on the site.



St. Mary's Mission, Montana

By 1865, the valley had 100 permanent white settlers although the area had not been officially opened to white settlement. Five years later, more than 300 whites inhabited the valley. Most settlers were growing produce to supply food to regional mining camps.

The settlers demanded more land for agriculture. They felt the remaining Bitterroot Salish should be removed from the valley and placed on the Jocko (Flathead) Reservation to the north.



Present-day St. Mary's Mission, Montana

4

Through the Valley: Stevensville to Skalkaho

While he lived, Major Catlin never changed his opinion, always asserting his belief that the (Bitterroot) citizens went into the battle without just cause.

—Will Cave, Bitterroot settler and relative of Major Catlin

Because the Nez Perce traveled slowly up the valley—12 to 14 miles a day—most settlers believed the Indians had no warlike ambitions. However, not all businessmen were willing to deal with the Nez Perce. A Corvallis merchant, P. R. Young, angrily ordered the Nez Perce out of his store and barred it shut. Later, Colonel Gibbon praised the merchant, while he chastised the Stevensville merchants.

Reports of incidents at the Corvallis and Skalkaho sod forts suggest that the settlers would have been safer in their own homes. One historian reports, "The Nez Perce warriors rode up and examined the forts. Their friendliness and amusement reassured the settlers, some of whom were even said to have visited the Indian camp and sold bullets to the warriors." Several warriors reportedly shot arrows at "Fort Run" (Skalkaho). The arrows fell far short of their mark.

The fort at Corvallis was built of green sods for a surrounding wall. This section of the valley was peopled largely by 'Missourians' who, during the Civil War, received warnings often to 'get up and go' to a safer place of refuge ... hence the newly-coined word "skeddale" came into vogue and the stockade was thereupon christened 'Fort Skeddale.'

—Henry Buck, Stevensville shopkeeper and relative of Major Catlin

5

Gibbon Enters the Bitterroot Valley

Colonel Gibbon and his command entered western Montana's Bitterroot Valley on August 4. They camped near the present-day Pine Hollow Road southeast of Stevensville. As Colonel Gibbon moved up the valley, volunteer settlers, who were now manning the sod forts, joined Gibbon in pursuit of the Nez Perce. The settlers elected J. L. Humble of Corvallis and John Catlin of Skalkaho as company "captains." Both were at first hesitant to join the chase. The Nez Perce Indians had kept their word and traveled through the valley without incident.

When we got to Sleeping Child Creek, I told Scott Cherrill that I thought we were doing wrong. The Indians had gone through the valley and had done just as they agreed to. I did not think that we had any right to follow them up and pick a fight ... But what did these same settlers do when General Gibbon came along? They volunteered to go with him after the Indians, who only a few days before had allowed them to pass through their camp to Fort Owen without bloodshed.

—Alex Notes, settler



Bitterroot Valley

6

Over the Continental Divide: Skalkaho to Big Hole

My shaking heart tells me trouble and death will overtake us if we make no hurry through this land! I cannot smother, I cannot hide what I see. I must speak what is revealed to me. Let us be gone to the buffalo country.

—Lone Bird (Peopeo Ipsewahk)
Nez Perce warrior

*My brothers, my sisters, I am telling you!
In a dream last night I saw myself killed I will be killed soon!*

—Wahlitits, Nez Perce warrior
killed at the Big Hole Battle

On August 4, the Nez Perce camped near the confluence of the Bitterroot River's east and west forks. Two young warriors, Lone Bird and Wahlitits, told of dreams they had warning that death would follow if they did not hurry. Chief Looking Glass was still convinced they need not hurry.

The war was left in Idaho. The dreams were disregarded. Chief Looking Glass prevailed. Completely unaware of Colonel Gibbon, Yellow Wolf expressed the same belief by proclaiming, "War is quit!"



Chief Looking Glass
Wrapped in Wind (Elelimyete' qenin')

Personal Guardians

The Nez Perce had a strong belief in dreams and visions. Young boys and girls often went alone to remote places, hoping to receive knowledge imparted by a personal guardian spirit. This personal WYAKIN would warn them of danger and give them special powers. In all phases of daily life, the Nez Perce thought of the spirits of the forces and objects around them as supernatural guardians—their WYAKIN.

Camp at Ross Hole

7 On August 5, the Nez Perce traveled up Spring Gulch, across Low Saddle on the north side of Sula Peak, dropped down into Ross Hole and camped near present-day Indian Trees Campground before crossing the Continental Divide.

We traveled through the Bitter Root Valley slowly. The white people were friendly. We did much buying and trading with them. No more fighting! We had left Howard and his war in Idaho.

—Yellow Wolf (Hemene Moxmox)

Nez Perce Reach Big Hole

8 The steep trail over the Continental Divide was familiar but difficult. After the climb, and one night at Trail Creek, the Nez Perce made camp on the banks of a clear, cool stream where the forested mountains meet the green meadows. Horses grazed. Women cut lodge poles and gathered roots. Children played and men hunted game. They had made it to the Iskumkselalik Pah; meaning place of the ground squirrels.

That night the warriors paraded about camp, singing, all making a good time. It was first since war started. Everybody with a good feeling. Going to the buffalo country!

—Yellow Wolf (Hemene Moxmox)

Most of the Nez Perce believed they could relax and savor their freedom. Still, a few questioned Chief Looking Glass's optimism. Several young men wanted to scout back along the trail for signs of trouble. Chief Looking Glass would not agree and said that scouting would violate trust in their peace agreement with the Bitterroot settlers.



Big Hole National Battlefield, Montana

Gibbon at Ross Hole

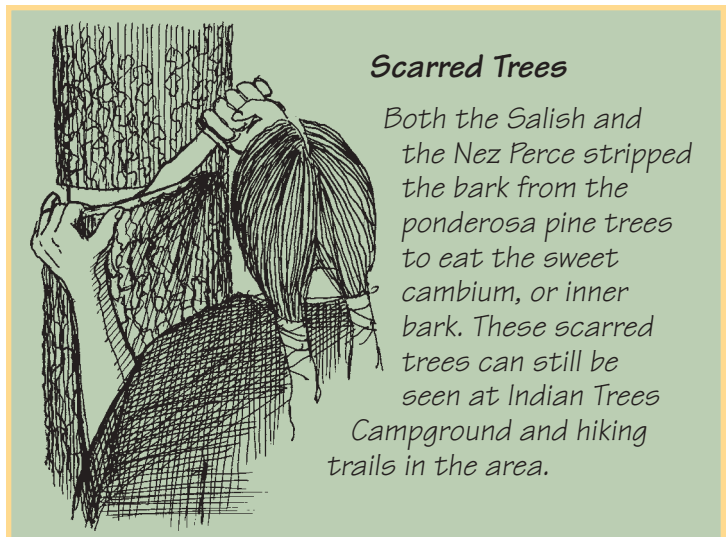
9 *All right, Looking Glass, you are one of the chiefs! I have no wife, no children to be placed fronting the danger that I feel coming to us. Whatever the gains, whatever the loss, it is yours.*

—Five Wounds (Pahkatos Owyeen)
Nez Perce warrior

On August 6, Colonel Gibbon, commanding the 7th Infantry and the volunteer army, crossed the hills south of Rye Creek. The crude wagon “road” was so slow and difficult that they had to make a “dry camp” before reaching the summit. They crossed into Ross Hole the next day, making camp just a few miles below the spot where the Nez Perce had camped two nights before. Here, near the confluence of Waugh and Camp Creeks, Captain Humble and many of the volunteers returned home, fulfilling their obligation to accompany the soldiers as far as Ross Hole. Thirty-four settler volunteers, enticed by Colonel Gibbon's offer of captured Nez Perce horses, continued the chase.

Now some have accused us of going out just to steal the horses; that gives the wrong impression, as we did not think of that until the general made us the offer. He told us that we could have all the horses except enough to mount his command, if we could whip the Indians.

—Tom Sherrill, settler



Scarred Trees

Both the Salish and the Nez Perce stripped the bark from the ponderosa pine trees to eat the sweet cambium, or inner bark. These scarred trees can still be seen at Indian Trees Campground and hiking trails in the area.

10 Crossing the Continental Divide

Colonel Gibbon dispatched Lieutenant Bradley and Captain Catlin with some of their men and a couple volunteers to locate the Nez Perce. Early on August 8, Gibbon and his men started over the Continental Divide. It required many laborious hours using double teams and men with drag ropes to get the wagons up the steep slope.

The road was excellent until we commenced to climb the divide separating us from Ross Hole at the extreme upper end of the Bitter Root Valley. Here the ascent that we were compelled to halt at nightfall and make a dry camp before reaching the summit.

—Colonel John Gibbon



General Oliver Otis Howard

Before reaching the top, Bradley's messenger arrived with news that the Nez Perce camp had been located. Leaving the wagon train to follow later, Colonel Gibbon and his men pushed on. They reached Lieutenant Bradley and his scouts about sunset. Meanwhile, General Howard was still playing catch-up. He had camped near Lolo Hot

Springs before moving up the Bitterroot Valley.

On August 9, he camped near the mouth of Rye Creek. When he learned from a relay of military messengers and the settlers that Gibbon was not far behind the Nez Perce, General Howard selected 20 of his best calvary and began a forced march to reach Colonel Gibbon.

11 Gibbon Attacks

The same day, the dawn's silence was shattered when Colonel Gibbon's 7th Infantry and Captain John Catlin's Bitterroot volunteers attacked the unsuspecting, sleeping Nez Perce at their camp beside the Big Hole River. This is the site of the present Big Hole National Battlefield.

Thundering gunfire from the willows along the creek ended the tranquil dawn. A cry of "we are attacked" aroused the sleeping Nez Perce warriors to battle. The war was "not quit." The Big Hole Battle had begun. Years afterward, an elder Nez Perce



General John Gibbon

woman expressed the heartfelt Nez Perce distress:

We were fools and the white man's lies made us more foolish.

White Bird's sentiments were similar,

A white man must have no respect for himself. It makes no difference how well he is treated by the Indians, he will take the advantage.

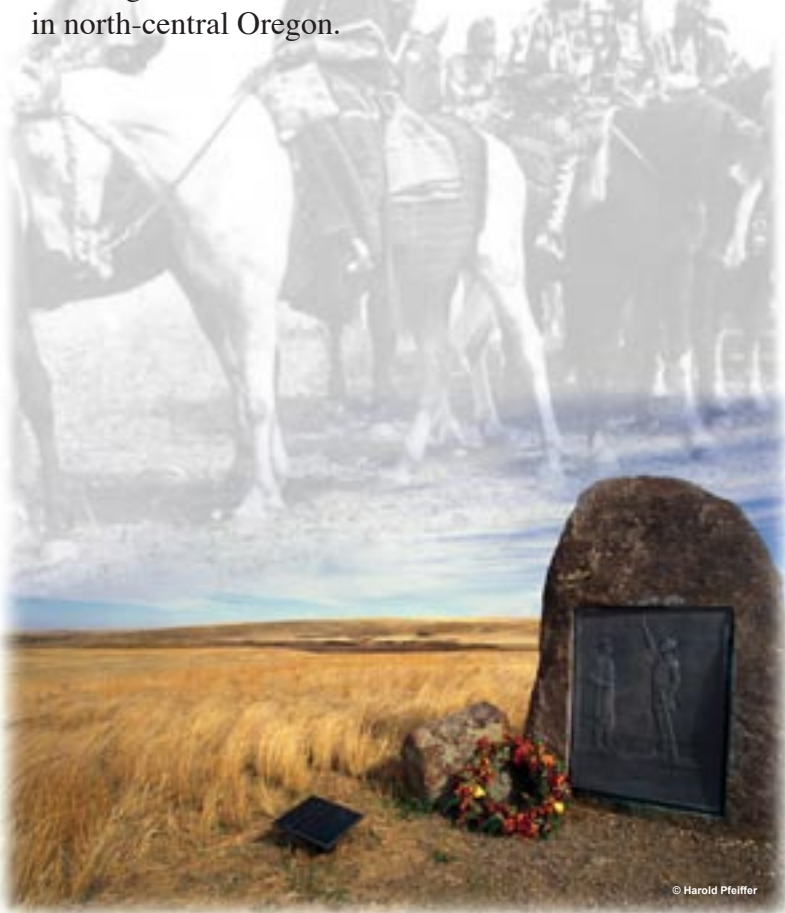


Big Hole National Battlefield, Montana

Epilogue: The Struggle Continues

The Nez Perce eventually surrendered in the Bear Paw Mountains, near today's Chinook, Montana, where Chief Joseph made his memorable speech. White Bird and one-third of the Nez Perce escaped to Canada. The war was finally "quit," but human suffering was not.

The captive Nez Perce were imprisoned in Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. There, more Nez Perce died than were killed in all the fighting. Some Nez Perce were eventually allowed to return to the Nez Perce Indian Reservation in Lapwai, Idaho, but Chief Joseph and others were forced to settle on the Colville Indian Reservation in northeastern Washington State and the Umatilla Indian Reservation in north-central Oregon.



Bear Paw Battlefield Memorial, Montana

The Beginning of the End

The Nez Perce trip through the area was not the end of Indian strife in western Montana's Bitterroot Valley. Just 14 years later, in 1891, Chief Charlo sadly agreed to move the remaining Salish people to the Jocko (Flathead) Indian Reservation.

Henry Buck, Stevensville settler, merchant and war participant, reflected on the situation:

It was this same high-handed dictatorial policy of our government in Idaho that fired Chief Joseph to wrath in defense of his birthright and forced us, as innocent citizens, to seek our own protection, and which, only a few years later, demand of Charlo and his tribe, our defenders, the surrender of his heritage in exchange for a home not of his choice.



Chief Joseph
Thunder Traveling to Higher Areas (Hinmatoowyalahq'it)

This Trail Is a Sacred Trust for All Americans.

“We, the surviving Nez Perces, want to leave our hearts, memories, hallowed presence as a never ending revelation to the story of the event of 1877. These trails will live in our hearts.

... We want to thank all who visit these sacred trails, that they will share our innermost feelings. Because their journey makes this an important time for the present, past and future.”

—Frank B. Andrews, Nez Perce descendant

For more information on the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail visit on the Web at www.fs.fed.us/npnht or contact:

Nez Perce National Historic Trail
12730 Highway 12
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Missoula, MT 59801
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www.fs.fed.us/r1/lolo

Missoula Ranger District
Building 24, Fort Missoula
Missoula, MT 59804
406.329.3750

Bitterroot National Forest
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Hamilton, MT 59840
406.363.7100
www.fs.fed.us/r1/bitterroot

Stevensville Ranger District
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406.777.7423

Darby Ranger District
712 N. Main
Darby, MT 59829
406.821.3913

West Fork Ranger District
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Darby, MT 59829
406.821.3269

Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
420 Barrett Street
Dillon, MT 59725
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www.fs.fed.us/r1/b-d

Dillon Ranger District
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Wisdom, MT 59761
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Big Hole National Battlefield
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