

THE INDIANS IN THE 1879 SHEEPEATER CAMPAIGN
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The war fought by the army against the Tukudika, or Sheepeater band of the Northern Shoshone has been written about extensively from a military standpoint, but an examination of the information recorded about the Tukudika needs to be reviewed separately to reveal what little first-hand knowledge and observations about the Sheepeater's mountain homeland was recorded at that time in private diaries and military journals. The following entries are were written by military personnel during the 1879 Sheepeater Campaign:

"August 7: (Pvt. Edgar Hoffner)...passing through a burning forest, fired by the Sheepeaters...After getting through the fire we came to the headwaters of the South Fork of the Salmon River, only a few miles from a hot lake [Warm Lake]. We followed the river a mile and camped on a small flat...We passed a number of wickiups, old ones. There were no signs of the noble Red Men here" (Carrey & Conley 1980).

Later as the troops moved along Big Creek Col. Brown noted:
"About every five miles a clear space with a few abandoned wickiups and a supply of winter fuel would be found and occasionally relative fresh Indian signs, which became more plentiful as we proceeded down the canyon" (Brown 1926).

"August 17: (Brown) They [troops] reached the caves...and proceeded about three miles further, finding salmon traps and plenty of fresh sign."

"August 18: (Brown)...visited and examined the hostile position on the south bank of Big Creek [Vinegar Hill] and at the opposite (north) bank. The hostiles had built a wall of loose rock, where they were perfectly protected and fire through the loopholes in the wall."

(Hoffner) "There is a fish trap here in the creek, constructed by making abutments similar to a bridge, then laying poles across, then stakes are driven in the creek three or four inches across leaning across the poles fastened by withs [sic]."

"August 19: (Brown) There were ten wickiups here which had been abandoned the day before. This place is now known as Soldier Bar. In the rocks above the scouts found a number of caches with loot galore, including much which the Sheepeaters had taken at Vinegar Hill...They [troops] camped at Soldier Bar, destroying the Indian Village, while Farrow (minus his pack train) turned south up the mountain on the

trail of the hostiles, finding more caches containing welcome food supplies. The hostiles were evidently lightening up to facilitate their escape."

(Hoffner) "The Umatillas [scouts for Lt. Farrow] had surprised the Sheepeaters and had them on the run about two miles in advance of us...After marching a short distance we came to the camp where the Hostiles were surprised, at the base of a rocky hill near a spring. Finding the Umatillas (four of them) with a lot of plunder which they had captured, such as buckskin, beads, blankets, pots, and pans. There are ten wickiups, four being an average village. This makes the band about 40, the Umatillas say that they saw but 18 bucks [males], no squaws nor papooses, nor ponies. Being without ponies at this point, it was an easy thing for them to escape, as they could climb the hill...[The soldiers] Gathered up every thing that we could find and consigned it to the flames...They [the Indians] are throwing away their blankets and all other articles that can hamper their flight."

"August 23: (Brown) Marched...over an old trail down a long bunch grass slope to the Middle Fork [Salmon River], where we found an old winter camp of six lodges. This is just above what we then regard as an Impassable canyon."

"September 23: (Brown, near Papoose Gulch) We discovered in route a lake to the north of us. Two camps, each several days old and each containing four to six lodges, were found."

By October 1, 1879, as winter was closing around them and most of their camps and supplies destroyed, a total of fifty-one Sheepeaters, Bannocks, Weisers and an Indian who was part Nez Perce and Bannock, surrendered. Their arms consisted of two Henry carbines, one Sharp's carbine, one Springfield carbine, calibre .45; one Springfield breech-loading rifle, calibre .50; two muzzle-loading rifles and one double barrel shot gun. The captured Indians were removed to Vancouver Barracks in Washington. The following year they were transferred to the Fort Hall and Lemhi Reservations in Idaho.

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Wilderness Archaeologists are currently working to preserve, protect and understand the prehistory of the ancient peoples who lived in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. As this prehistory is discovered and understood, they will share it with the public through educational monographs and other publications. You can help in this effort by leaving artifacts where they lie, and informing Forest Service Wilderness managers of your discovery.

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