



Visitor Guide



Does this look like a battlefield? On August 7, 1877 five bands of Nez Perce people camped along the Big Hole River in southwest Montana. This site was a traditional campsite when traveling to hunt Bison (buffalo) on the plains. The painting was done by Nez Perce artist Nakia Williamson-Cloud. Property of Nez Perce NHP, NPS.

The word 'battlefield' evokes images of two mighty armies seeking to engage each other. Two sites of Nez Perce National Historical Park, Big Hole National Battlefield and the Bear Paw Battlefield, are labeled as battlefields, but could they be something more?

In each case the Nez Perce people (who call themselves Nimiipuu) were not an army but rather groups of families who were forced to flee their homelands as refugees. The Nimiipuu people in these conflicts were mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, children and elders. Each location was not a predetermined place and time but rather a place where the U.S. Army happened upon Nez Perce bands.

The events of Big Hole and Bear Paw did not often play out in the way we typically think of as 'battles'. Each started with a surprise assault on an unprotected group of families. Each event resulted in the heavy loss of life on both sides. At Big Hole the U.S. Army failed in their attempt to stop the Nez Perce, but with the loss of many Nimiipuu lives. Today we call these 'non-combatant' deaths. To the Nez Perce they were mothers, sons, daughters, grandmoth-

ers and grandfathers, aunties and uncles. At Bear Paw the Nez Perce fought the Army to a standstill, despite having very little protection from bullets, cannon, and a heavy snowfall. Only after a five-day siege did the Nimiipuu agree to end the fighting. There were no clear winners during the fighting of 1877.

The Bear Paw and Big Hole landscapes remain sacred and solemn places. Many Nez Perce travel to these sites every year close to the anniversary dates of both conflicts. Ceremonies of recognition and healing are carried out to honor all those who fought and died during these tragic events.

The history of these events, the inspiring landscapes, and the spirituality of Bear Paw and Big Hole Battlefields are why the National Park Service preserves such special places for this and future generations. Core to our mission is to educate all about the conflict of that 1877 summer. We may debate the meaning of the word 'battlefield' but it is easy to understand why such places should to be preserved forever.

Partners in Protection

The National Park Service is proud to partner with the Blaine County Museum. This partnership was established due to our mutual interest in protecting the Bear Paw Battlefield and the related events of 1877. The museum and park service wish to provide accurate and balanced education about Bear Paw Battlefield while preserving the historic and sacred landscape.

Partnerships allow the National Park Service to fulfill our mission and to foster a shared sense of stewardship that is crucial for the future. Our gratitude to the museum cannot be overstated and we encourage all visitors to the Bear Paw Battlefield to enjoy the community of Chinook and the Blaine County Museum.

Museum location and hours are found on the back page of this publication.



The Blaine County, Museum, Chinook Montana

1877 Sites

Nez Perce National Historical Park includes a number of sites that mark important events related to the war of 1877. Some of the sites that associated with Nez Perce National Historical Park are listed below.

Spalding Visitor Center



Ranger programs on Nez Perce history and culture are featured here as well as exhibits, a film, and book store. Information on sites related to 1877 and other park sites associated with the story of the Nimiipuu.

Directions: The visitor center is located ten miles east of Lewiston on US Hwy. 95.

White Bird Battlefield



White Bird battlefield marks the site of the first battle of the war. On the morning of June 17, 1877 soldiers of the First Cavalry Regiment accompanied by a handful of civilian volunteers clashed with the Nimiipuu. In a battle that lasted through the morning, the Nez Perce defeated the cavalry, who

leaving sixty troopers dead; the Nimiipuu had successfully protected their camp with only three slightly wounded warriors. *Directions:* The battlefield is located fifteen miles south of Grangeville on Hwy 95. A hiking trail is accessible two miles north of the town of Whitebird.

Lolo Trail and Pass



Visitors can retrace the route that the Nimiipuu took over the Bitterroot Mountains in 1877 on U.S. Highway 12 or on a primitive dirt road known as the Lolo Motorway (Forest Road 500). A rest area and visitor center are located at Lolo Pass. The rest area is open twenty-four hours a

day. The visitor center is open seven days a week from mid-May through mid-September from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm (PDT). Call (208) 942-1234 for more

information. **PLEASE NOTE:** Forest Road 500 is suitable *only* for high clearance vehicles. Trailers are not recommended. For more information please contact the Lochsa Ranger District office at (208) 926-4274 or the Clearwater National Forest website at www.fs.fed.us/r1/clearwater/

Big Hole National Battlefield



Early in the morning of August 9, 1877, soldiers under the command of Colonel John Gibbon attacked the encampment at Big Hole. Gibbon's attack killed upwards of ninety men, women and children. Despite the carnage, the Nimiipuu rallied, trapping Gibbon's men for 24 hours and allowing

the families to escape. *Directions:* Big Hole National Battlefield is located ten miles west of Wisdom, Montana on state highway 43.

Bear Paw Battlefield



On September 30, 1877, the U.S. Army attacked and besieged the Nimiipuu camp on Snake Creek. After five days of fighting in atrocious weather, Chief Joseph brought hostilities to end, forty miles short of the Canadian border. Some escaped to Canada under White Bird, many remained and were

sent into exile to Oklahoma. *Directions:* The battlefield is located located 15 miles south of Chinook, MT on Highway 240.

Archeological sites, battlefields and artifacts are protected by state and federal law. Anyone who injures, destroys or appropriates artifacts or objects of antiquity on park lands is subject to arrest and prosecution to the maximum extent of the law.

Please call (208) 843-7001 in Idaho and (406) 689-3155 in Montana to report incidents.

Nez Perce National Historical Park - Quick Reference

Nez Perce National Historical Park

39063 US Hwy 95
Spalding, ID 83540

Phone: (208) 843-7001

Fax: (208) 843-7003

E-

Mail: NEPE_Visitor_Information@nps.gov

Website: www.nps.gov/nepe

Spalding Visitor Center

Located ten miles east of Lewiston, Idaho on U.S. Highway 95.

Summer: Memorial Day to Labor Day - Daily, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Rest of the Year: Daily, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

Closed: Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's.

The visitor center offers exhibits, films, and a bookstore on Nez Perce culture and history.

Fees: Free

Restrooms are accessible. Park film has open captions and audio description is available for the park film and museum exhibit.

Big Hole National Battlefield

P.O. Box 237
Wisdom, MT 59761

Phone: (406) 689-3155

Fax: (406) 689-3151

E-Mail:

BIHO_Visitor_Information@nps.gov

Website: www.nps.gov/biho

Visitor Center

Located ten miles west of Wisdom, Montana on State Highway 43.

Summer: May 27 - September 6, 2006
9:00 am to 6:00 pm

Rest of the Year: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

Closed: Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's

The visitor center offers exhibits, a film, and a bookstore on the Nez Perce War of 1877.

Fees: Free

Restrooms and visitor center are accessible.

Bear Paw Battlefield

301 Ohio
Chinook, MT 59523

Phone: (406) 357-3130

Fax: (406) 357-3140

E-Mail: NEPE_Bear_Paw@nps.gov

Website: www.nps.gov/nepe

Visitor Center

Located in the Blaine County Museum
501 Indiana St., Chinook, Montana.

Summer: Memorial Day to Labor Day
Mon. to Sat. 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Closed between noon and 1 pm

Sunday: Noon to 5:00 pm.

Rest of the Year: Monday through Friday, 1pm to 5pm

Located 16 miles south of Chinook, Montana on Route 240. The battlefield is open daily from dawn to dusk with a self guided trail, picnic tables, and vault toilets.

Fees: Free



Comments?

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Photography Credits

Nez Perce National Historical
Park - NPS

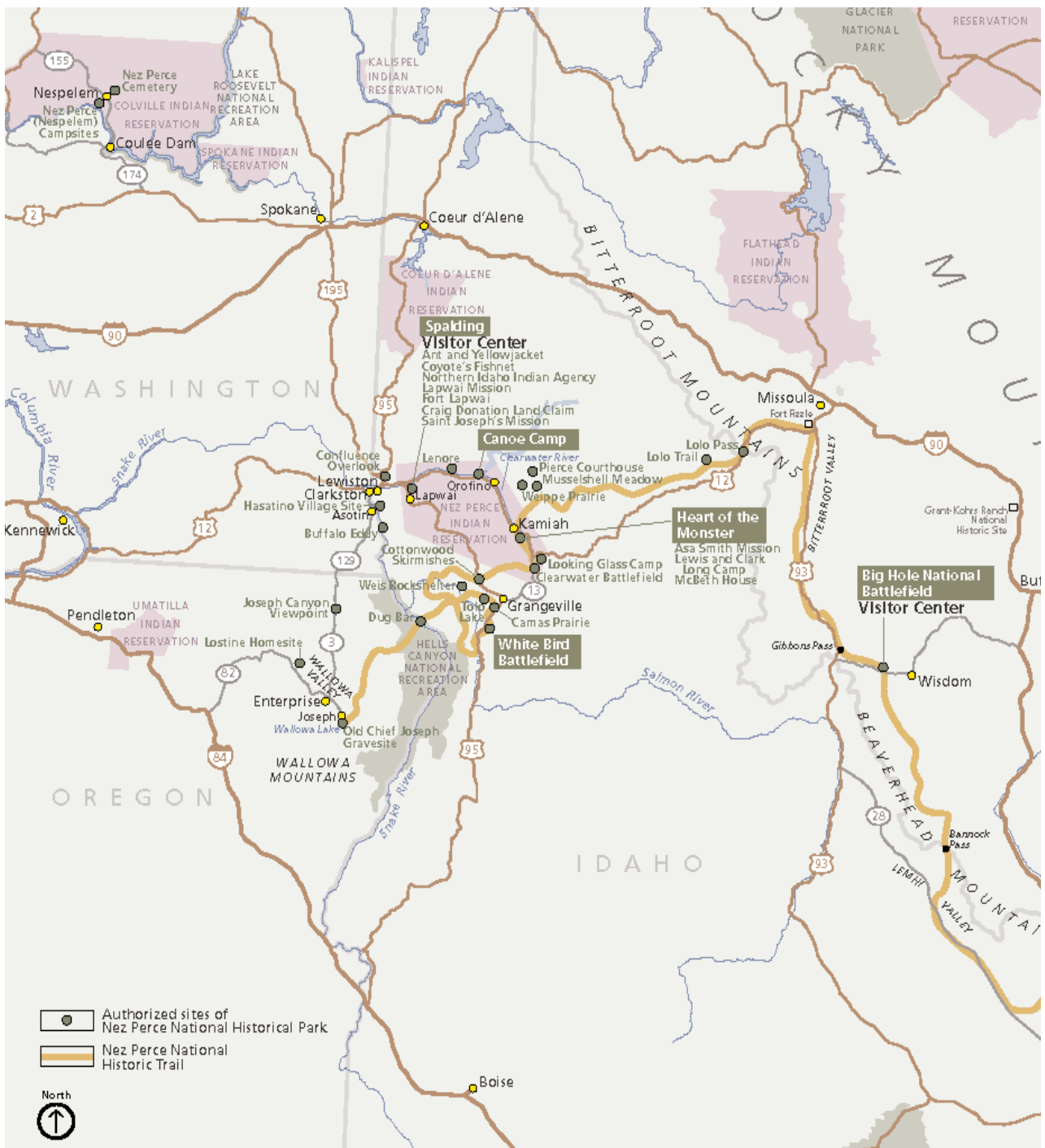
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Northwest Interpretive Association

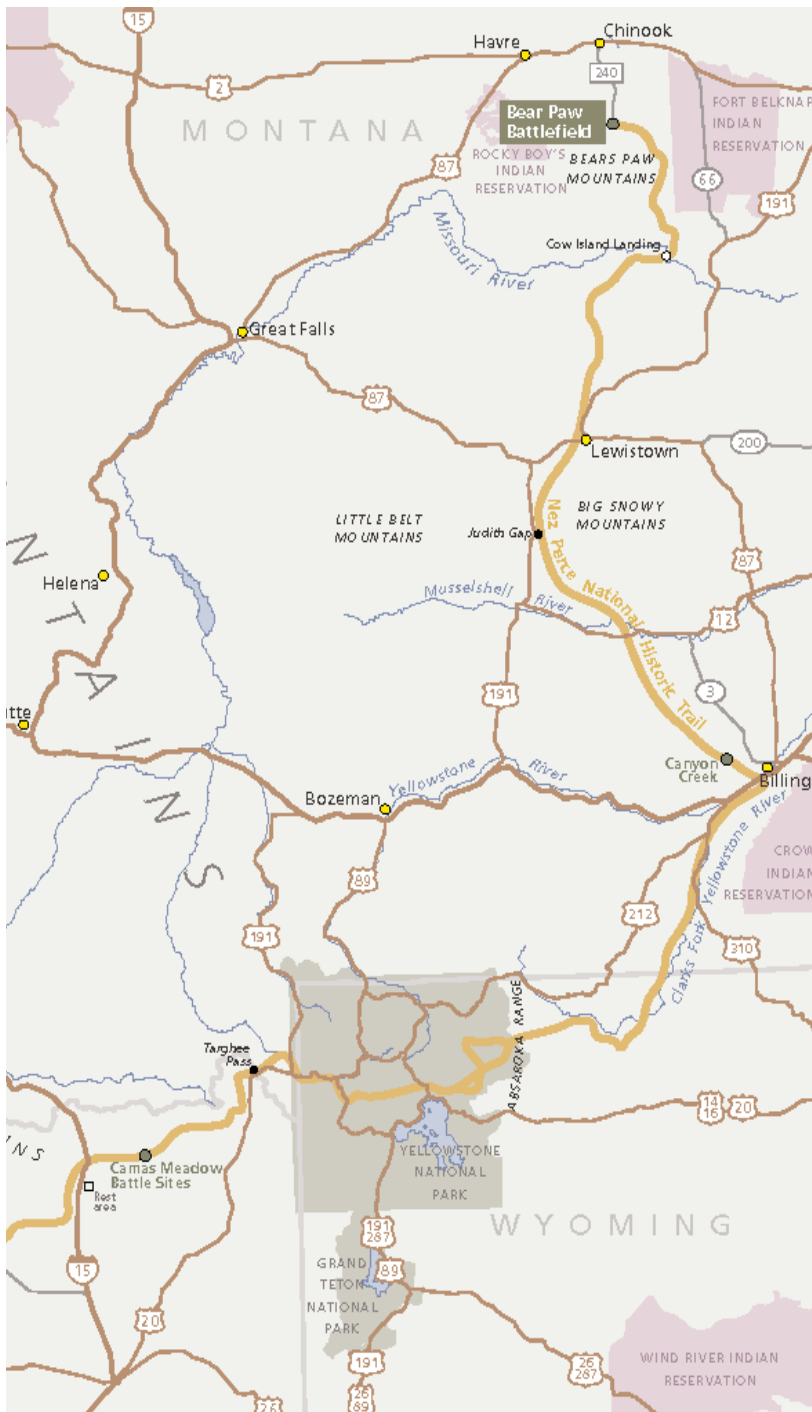
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Glacier Natural Historical Association

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<p>Idaho</p> <p>Confluence Overlook Donald MacKenzie established a trading post near the confluence of the Clearwater River in September 1812. The Nez Perce were not interested in the fur trade and MacKenzie sold out to the British.</p> <p>Coyote's Fishnet Coyote and Black Bear got into an argument. In frustration, Coyote threw his fishing net on a hill and tossed Black Bear on another, turning him into stone. Both features are visible today.</p> <p>Ant and Yellowjacket Ant and Yellowjacket were arguing over who had the right to fish for Salmon when they got into an argument. Coyote asked them to stop. They continued to fight, whereby Coyote turned them into a stone arch that is visible today.</p> <p>Spalding The Spalding site has seen many uses by the Nez Perce and was the location of Henry and Eliza Spalding's mission. The park's visitor center and museum is located here as well. Nearby is where the Spalding's first settled in 1836.</p>	<p>Northern Idaho Indian Agency As part of the treaty process, the U.S. Government set up an agency to oversee the implementation of the terms of the treaties.</p> <p>Fort Lapwai In 1862, a detachment of volunteers chose this location for their fort. The 1883 officers' quarters at the southwest end of the parade ground is one of the few original buildings to have survived.</p> <p>Craig Donation Land Claim This is the site of the claim by the first Euro-American settler in Idaho. William Craig was a mountain man, an interpreter, and friend of the Nez Perce.</p> <p>St. Joseph's Mission This was the first Roman Catholic mission among the Nez Perce. It was dedicated in Sept. 1874 by Father Joseph Cataldo, who had built it. <i>The church and grounds are currently closed.</i></p> <p>Cottonwood Skirmishes Skirmishes with the U.S. Army and volunteers occurred near here on July 3 and 5, 1877.</p>	<p>Weis Rockshelter More than 8,000 years ago humans first made this home and continuously inhabited the area until about 600 years ago.</p> <p>Camas Prairie Where wheat fields stretch to the horizon today, camas once grew. Camas bulbs were a major food source for the Nez Perce. They gathered here in late summer and early fall to dig them.</p> <p>Tolo Lake In 1877, the non-treaty bands congregated at this ancient council site, known as Tephalewam, before moving onto the reservation. Frustrated by injustices against the Nez Perce, three Nez Perce warriors raided homesteads on the Salmon River from this site.</p> <p>White Bird Battlefield On June 17, 1877, the first battle of the Nez Perce War was fought here. The U.S. cavalry was defeated with heavy losses and the Nez Perce began their long journey to find safety and sanctuary. A self-guided walking tour of the battlefield is available at the trailhead.</p>
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Montana

Big Hole National Battlefield

On the morning of August 9, 1877, U.S. troops surprised the Nez Perce who crossed the Bitterroots trying to evade capture. Between 60 and 90 Nez Perce men, women, and children were killed. The Army lost 29 soldiers and 40 wounded.

Canyon Creek

After emerging from Yellowstone National Park, the Nez Perce were pursued by the cavalry. In a rearguard action the Nez Perce were able to gain time by successfully stopping the pursuing troops.

Bear Paw Battlefield

Just 40 miles short of the Canadian border, the Nez Perce were besieged by the Army. With losses mounting, Joseph gave his rifle to General Howard, ending the siege on October 5, 1877. They had traveled 1,170 miles in the nearly four months since the first skirmishes.

Oregon

Dug Bar

At this traditional crossing of the Snake River, Joseph and his band crossed in May, 1877 as they left their homes in Oregon for the reservation in Idaho. Located in Hell's Canyon National Recreation Area, the site is accessible by either boat or a high clearance vehicle.

Joseph Canyon Viewpoint

The canyon seen from the overlook was one of the winter homes of the Nez Perce. Tradition holds that Chief Joseph was born in a cave along the east bank of the creek. Restrooms are available.

Old Chief Joseph's Gravesite

The remains of the elder Chief Joseph were reburied here in 1926. Nearby are the graves of other Nez Perce and some settlers.

Lostine Campsite

At the junction of the Lostine and Wallowa Rivers is a traditional Nez Perce summer campsite where Old Chief Joseph died in 1871. This landscape has changed little from the days before the area was settled. **Not a developed site.**

Washington

Burial Site of Chief Joseph the Younger

In 1885 Chief Joseph and his band were allowed to return to the Northwest from Indian Territory in Oklahoma. Joseph spent his remaining years on the Colville Reservation and died here in 1904. **The cemetery is private property and a sacred place.**

Nez Perce Campsites at Nespelem

Chief Joseph's band continued their traditional way of life while living on the Colville Reservation. These were their winter and summer homes and were the last places where Joseph lived. **Not a developed site.**

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



In 1986, Congress established the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail to commemorate the 1877 War. The trail begins at Wallowa Lake in Oregon and extends 1,170 miles to the Bear Paw Battlefield in Montana. The trail is managed by the U.S. Forest Service in cooperation with other partners, including the National Park Service. Further information on sites to see and special events along the trail can be found on the web at: www.fs.fed.us/npnht/.

Clearwater Battlefield

On July 11, 1877 Gen. Oliver O. Howard crossed the Clearwater River and hoped to take the Nez Perce by surprise. His hopes came to naught and the fighting ended with the Nez Perce withdrawing.

Heart of the Monster

This is the location of the Heart of the Monster, where Coyote defeated a monster and, in turn, created the Nez Perce people. Audio stations tell the story in English and in the Nez Perce languages.

Asa Smith Mission

In April 1839, Rev. and Mrs. Asa Smith established a mission in the Kamiah area. Unsited to the demands of such work, the Smiths left in 1841.

Lewis and Clark Long Camp

Near here Lewis and Clark camped in the spring of 1806 for nearly a month.

Canoe Camp

In the early fall of 1805, the Lewis and Clark expedition rested here and built canoes of hollowed-out logs for the final leg of their trip to the Pacific Ocean.

Lenore

For thousands of years, this village site was used by the Nez Perce and their ancestors.

Weippe Prairie

This was a root-gathering place for the Nez Perce and it was here on September 20, 1805, that Lewis and Clark first met the Nez Perce. During the 1877 War, the Nez Perce came here after the Battle of the Clearwater.

Pierce

In September 1860, gold was found on the Nez Perce reservation, triggering another treaty that reduced the size of the reservation. The other site of interest is the old Shoshone County courthouse, completed in 1862 and the oldest public building in Idaho.

Musselshell Meadow

For many generations, Nez Perce have come here to dig for camas. General Howard camped here at the end of July, 1877 while pursuing the Nez Perce over the Lolo Trail.

Lolo Pass and Trail

This historic Nez Perce trail was used by Lewis and Clark in 1805 and 1806. During the 1877 War the Nez Perce followed

the trail on into Montana. The U.S. Forest Service maintains a visitor center at Lolo Pass.

Looking Glass' 1877 Campsite

The Looking Glass Band tried to remain neutral in the conflict between the non-treaty Nez Perce. The Army attacked the village. Looking Glass regarded this as treachery and joined the others against the Army.

Buffalo Eddy

The unique petroglyphs of this area are evidence of the longevity of the Nez Perce occupation of the area. Defacing federal archeological sites is a criminal offense.

Hasotino

Hasotino was a site used until the end of the 19th century and was located near an important eel fishery.

Camas Meadow Battle Site

After the tragedy at Big Hole, the Nez Perce gained time by stealing more than 200 of the Army's pack mules and horses, halting their advance.