

Massacre at Bia Ogoi

By Mae Timbimboo Parry

Chief Sagwitch, being an early riser, got up just as usual on the morning of January 29, 1863. He left his teepee and stood outside surveying the area around the camp. The hills to the east of their camp were covered with a steaming mist. The mist crept lower down the hill and all of the sudden Chief Sagwitch realized what was happening. The soldiers from Camp Douglas from Salt Lake City had arrived. The chief was not surprised. He started calling to the sleeping Indians. They quickly gathered their bows and arrows, tomahawks and a few rifles. Some of the Indians were so excited that they gathered up whatever was in sight to fight with. Some picked up their woven willow winnow pans and baskets and stuck their few rifles through them...

Chief Sagwitch shouted to his people not to shoot first. He thought that perhaps this military man was a just and wise man. He thought that the colonel would ask for the guilty men, whom he would have immediately turned over to the soldiers. He felt that the rest of them would be saved by doing this. He told his people to be brave and calm. Many of the Indians ran toward the river and dropped into the snow. They knew that they were not all guilty but they had no choice but to fight for their lives if attacked. Some had dropped into the holes the children had dug along the river bank. Never did the grown men realize they would be using the children's play fox holes to await real military soldiers.

Without so much as asking the Indians for the guilty party, the colonel and his men began to fire on the Indians. But what was an arrow compared to the muskets of the army? The Indians were being slaughtered left and right. No butcher could have murdered any better than Colonel Connor and his vicious California volunteers....

The massacre started early in the morning, according to the Indians, and lasted all day. The Bear River that was solid a few moments before was now starting to flow. The

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Northwestern Shoshones were jumping into the river and trying to escape by swimming across the river. The blazing white snow was now brilliant red with blood...

Many Indian women also jumped into the river and swam with babies on their backs. Most of them died. One Indian lady, Anzie Chee was being chased by soldiers. She jumped into the river and went under an overhanging bank. By keeping her head up under the bank she was saved...

The Indians who were still alive were calling to their chief to escape so he could be saved. Chief Sagwitch escaped with a wound in his hand, after having two horses shot from under him. Another Indian escaped by holding onto the tail of the horse Chief Sagwitch rode across the Bear River.

Source: Excerpts taken from *The Bear River Massacre* by Newell Hart