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The Flight of the Nez Perce – I

Lead: Faced with an order for their removal, part of the Nez Perce tribe left their reservation in western Idaho and made a break for freedom.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts

Content: From their first contact with Lewis and Clark in 1805, the Nez Perce, who adopted the name pierced nose, given them by French-Canadian traders, had good relations with their white neighbors. They were considered a quiet, civil people and many were converted to Christianity in the 1840s

by American missionaries. Often the Nez Perce were allies with United States forces in subduing other tribal groups.

But like other semi-nomadic tribes they hunted and kept their stock of range horses on vast territory considered valuable by the growing number of white settlers moving west to take up residence in the lands of eastern Oregon and Washington and western Idaho.

Three times after 1855, a part of the Nez Perce had signed treaties agreeing to live on increasingly smaller and smaller reservations. Ominously, several of the clans did not agree to the treaties and came to be known as non-

treaty Nez Perce. One of these clans laid claim to the Wallowa Valley near the Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon. Led by Chief Joseph they continued to live outside the reservation and under growing pressure from settlers and ranchers anxious to take their land.

During the winter and spring of 1877 the government finally insisted that non-treaty clans remove themselves to the reservation across the border in Idaho. Finally, in May, they reluctantly agreed and returned to their homes to prepare to vacate their ancestral homeland. To that point there had been none but isolated acts of violence usually directed at the Indians by white settlers. but that did not mean

the Nez Perce were not disgusted with the re-settlement being forced upon their people, not angry over two dozen years of insult and encroachment by white ranchers and miners, or resentful of the unavenged murder by whites of over thirty Nez Perces in recent memory. On June 13 three young warriors with little thought for the consequences cut loose with a killing spree that would set off the most remarkable campaign of the American Indian Wars. Tomorrow. Nez Perces Unbound.

In Richmond, Virginia, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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