

Document 3: Patrick Conner's Account

SOURCE: Excerpts from a report written February 6, 1863 by Colonel Patrick Conner, sent to Lieutenant Colonel R. C. Drum and the United States War Department, and published by the U.S. War Department in 1902. This report resulted in Colonel Conner's military promotion to Brigadier-General. [Changed to make it easier to read]

I soon ordered a small group of cavalry [soldiers on horses] to help the infantry [foot soldiers] cross the stream, which they did. When they got to the battlefield I ordered them to help Major McGarry's soldiers who were trying to surround the Shoshone. They were able to get around the Indians from the left. Up to this time, because we were out in the open on a flat and clear plain and the Indians were hidden, they had an advantage over us, fighting as wild as demons. My men fell [wounded or dead] quickly and everywhere around me, but after surrounding them we had the advantage. I ordered the men who had surrounded them to move forward down the ravine on both sides, which gave us a better place for shooting at them. This made some of the Indians run away toward the north side of the ravine. Then I had a group of soldiers in a place so they could shoot them as they ran away. I also ordered a group of cavalry to cross the ravine to stop any Indians who tried to escape that way. Not very many tried to escape, but they kept on fighting, often fighting hand to hand with the troops until they were killed in their hiding places. Most of the Indians who did escape from the ravine were later shot when they tried to swim across the river or they were killed while desperately fighting from behind the thick willow bushes along the river banks. The fight started about 6 o'clock in the morning and continued until 10. ...

We found 224 [Shoshone] bodies on the battlefield. I captured 175 horses and some guns. I destroyed over seventy lodges [tipis] and a lot of wheat and other supplies, which had been given to the Shoshones by the Mormons. I left a little wheat for the 160 captive Indian women and children whom I left.

The enemy had about 300 warriors, mostly with good weapons like rifles and plenty of ammunition... The place where the Indians fought was naturally strong, and if I hadn't been able to surround them, many more of my soldiers would have died.

Document 3: Patrick Conner's Account

SOURCE: Excerpts from report written February 6, 1863 by Colonel Patrick Conner, sent to Lieutenant Colonel R. C. Drum and the United States War Department, and published by the U.S. War Department in 1902. This report resulted in Colonel Conner's military promotion to Brigadier-General

As daylight was approaching I was apprehensive that the Indians would discover the strength of my force and make their escape. I therefore made a rapid march with the cavalry and reached the bank of the river shortly after daylight in full view of the Indian encampment and about 1 mile distant. I immediately ordered Major McGarry to advance with the cavalry and surround before attacking them, while I remained a few minutes in the rear to give orders to the infantry and artillery. On my arrival on the field I found that major McGarry had dismounted the cavalry and was engaged with the Indians, who had sallied out of their hiding places on foot and horseback, and with fiendish malignity waved the scalps of white women and challenged the troops to battle at the same time attacking them....The position of the Indians was one of strong natural defenses, and almost inaccessible to the troops, being in a deep, dry ravine from six to twelve feet deep and from thirty to forty feet wide, with very abrupt banks and running access level table-land, along which they had constructed steps from which they could deliver their fire without being themselves exposed. Under the embankments they had constructed artificial covers of willows thickly woven together from behind which they could fire without being observed. After being engaged about twenty minutes I found it was impossible to dislodge them without great sacrifice of life. I accordingly ordered Major McGarry with twenty men to turn their left flank, which was in the ravine where it entered the mountains. ...

I immediately ordered a detachment of cavalry with led horses to cross the infantry which was done accordingly, and upon their arrival upon the field I ordered them to the support of Major McGarry's flanking party, who shortly afterward succeeded in turning the enemy's flank. Up to this time, in consequence of being exposed on a level and open plan while the Indians were under cover, they had every advantage of us, fighting with the ferocity of demons. My men fell fast and thick around me, but after flanking them we had the advantage and made good use of it. I ordered the flanking party to advance down the ravine on either side, which gave us the advantage of an enfilading fire and caused some of the Indians to give way and run toward the north of the ravine. At this point I had a company stationed, who shot them as they ran out. I also ordered a detachment of cavalry across the ravine to cut off the retreat of any fugitives who might escape the company at the mouth of the ravine. But few tried to escape, however, but continued fighting with unyielding obstinacy, frequently engaging in hand to hand with the troops until killed in their hiding places. The most of those who did escape from the ravine were afterward shot in attempting to swim the river, or killed while desperately fighting under cover of the dense willow thicket which lined the river banks. To give you an idea of the desperate character of the fight, you are respectfully referred to the list of killed and wounded transmitted herewith. The fight commenced about 6 o'clock in the morning and continued until 10. ...

We found 224 bodies on the field, among which were those of the chiefs Bear Hunter, Sagwich, and Leight. How many more were killed than stated I am unable to say, as the condition of the wounded rendered their immediate removal a necessity. I was unable to examine the field. I

captured 175 horses, some arms, destroyed over seventy lodges, a large quantity of wheat and other provisions, which had been furnished them by the Mormons; left a small quantity of wheat for the sustenance of 160 captive squaws and children whom I left in the field. ...

The enemy had about 300 warriors, mostly well armed with rifles and having plenty of ammunition, which rumor says they received from inhabitants of this Territory in exchange for the property of massacred emigrants. The position of the Indians was one of great natural strength, and had I not succeeded in flanking them the mortality in my command would have been terrible. In consequence of the deep snow, the howitzers did not reach the field in time to be used in the action.