

Greer

In 1877, Dunwell's Ferry was located at the place now called Greer. General Howard had originally planned to have a detachment cross here to go to Weippe and then squeeze the Nez Perce between the force from Weippe and his force from Kamiah. Those plans were foiled when the Nez Perce left Kamiah before a squad of volunteers could reach Weippe. And the volunteers had other problems with getting to Weippe.

The object of the expedition being to get in rear of Joseph on the Lo Lo. trail and to keep him back. On arriving at the river I sent three (3) men down . . . to see if the Ferry boat was in sight, after being gone about two (2) hours, he returned reporting the boat down the river about two (2) miles camped for the night, distance marched twenty (20) miles.

Ed McConville
Colonel of volunteers
July 15, 1877

The ferry house had been burned and the boat cut adrift from its wire. With no way to cross the river, the volunteers returned to Kamiah to rejoin Howard.

At the sign for Greer, turn east on Idaho 11. In 17.7 miles, after climbing to the top of the ridge via a series of switchbacks, you reach Weippe.

Weippe

Weippe was a traditional camas-gathering ground where the Nez Perce congregated in the early summer to dig the bulbs of the blue camas flower. These sweet and nutritious bulbs were as important as meat in the Nez Perce diet.

By 1877, a couple of ranchers had homesteaded here and a trading post marked the beginnings of the town of Weippe. The Nez Perce burned all the ranch buildings and killed some of the cattle. The dried meat would be used for the trek over the Lolo Trail since much of their food supply had been lost at the Battle of the Clearwater and game could be scarce in the high mountain country.

While the women were busy preparing the food supply, the chiefs held a council to decide their next move.

What are we fighting for? Is it for our lives? No. It is for this land where the bones of our fathers lie buried. I do not want to take my women among strangers. I do not want to die in a strange land. Some of you tried to say once that I was afraid of the whites. Stay here with me now and you will have plenty of fighting. We will put our women behind us in these mountains and die on our own land fighting for them. I would rather do that than run I know not where.

Chief Joseph