The People of Bear Hunter Speak: Oral Histories of the Cache Valley Shoshones Regarding the Bear River Massacre

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Date of Award:
5-2007

Document Type:
Thesis

Degree Name:
Master of Arts (MA)

Department:
English

Advisor/Chair:
Jeannie Thomas

Abstract

The Cache Valley Shoshone are the survivors of the Bear River Massacre, where a battle between a group of US. volunteer troops from California and a Shoshone village degenerated into the worst Indian massacre in US. history, resulting in the deaths of over 200 Shoshones. The massacre occurred due to increasing tensions over land use between the Shoshones and the Mormon settlers. Following the massacre, the Shoshones attempted settling in several different locations in Box Elder County, eventually finding a home in Washakie, Utah. However, the LDS Church sold the land where the city of Washakie sat, forcing the Shoshones to adapt quickly.

Much of our knowledge of the massacre stems from either white American sources or the oral histories that circulate among one Shoshone family group. This leaves the information incomplete. Adding the voices of more individuals expands our knowledge of the massacre itself and the adaptations the Shoshones continue to make in order to survive.

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Recommended Citation