Document 4: William Drannan's Account

*SOURCE: A part of the memoirs of William F. Drannan entitled Thirty-one Years on the Plains and in the Mountains or, the Last Voice from the Plains. An Authentic Record of a Life Time of Hunting, Trapping, Scouting, and Indian Fighting in the Far West, written and published in 1899. Found at http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5337/pg5337.html [Changed to make it easier to read]*

The captain asked me if I would go with one of his officers that night to see the Indians' fortifications, and I told him I would. After looking about half an hour the Captain asked me what I thought of it, and how I would attack. I told him that I had no idea because I had never seen Indians fortified before. He said it would be a bloody fight. I said yes, but I thought the blood would all be the Indians. "Yes," replied the Captain, "we ought to kill them all without losing ten men." …
When we were about a mile from the canyon General Connor got his men into a line, one half to go on each side of the canyon where the Indians were fortified. The cannons were put at the mouth of the canyon. I did not see any Indians until the general gave the command to fire. When the soldiers started to shoot—there were about twelve hundred [soldiers]—it scared the Indians so that they ran out from under the logs and brush like jack rabbits and were shot down like sheep. In all my experience in the Western lands this was the biggest slaughter I ever saw.

After the battle was over, and the scouts could go wherever they wanted, I rode over the battlefield together with the other scouts. Never in all my life did I see such a mangled up mass as was there. Men, women and children were actually lying in piles, and I think the only ones who got away were a few that hid in the logs and brush. In this battle the Captain told me they did not lose any men, and only had four wounded. He counted over three thousand dead Indians.

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Gen. Connor offered me a position as scout, which I accepted, and on the sixth day after my arrival at Fort Douglas, in company with two other scouts, I struck out in advance of the command. In the forenoon of the eighth day from the fort we found the Indians on a tributary of Cash Valley in a deep canyon and fortified. They had cut logs and rolled them down the hill, piling them on each side of the canyon, several feet high and had intermingled them with brush. This was the first fortification I had ever seen built by Indians. We returned and met the command that night, and when we were making our report to the General he asked me what the fortifications looked like. I told him that I could not think of anything to compare them to, but that I thought they could be swept very easily by a Howitzer from above and below. He asked me if I would accompany one of his commissioned officers that night to see the fortifications, and I told him I would. After supper that evening a Captain came to me, whose name I am sorry to say I have forgotten, and asked me if I was the man that was to accompany him to the Indian fortifications. I told him that I was, and he asked what time we had better start. I told him we had better start at once as there would be a moon in the fore part of the night, but that the after part would be very dark. So we mounted our horses and were off. We rode to within about three-quarters of a mile of the fortifications and there we remained until it was light enough to see, and then the Captain took out his glasses and scanned the whole country as well as the fortifications. After looking about half an hour the Captain asked me what I thought of it, and what would be my plan of attack. I told him that I had no idea, as I had never seen Indians fortified before. He said it would be a bloody fight, I said yes, but I thought the blood would all be on one side. "Yes," replied the Captain, "we ought to clean them out without losing ten men." We went to our horses, mounted, and rode back to the command as quick as we could, meeting it about four miles from the fortifications, piloted by the two scouts that had been out with me the day before.

The Captain and Gen. Connor had a long conversation as we moved along. When within a mile of the mouth of this canyon Gen. Connor formed his men in line, one half to go on each side of the canyon in which the Indians were fortified, and the cannon were placed at the mouth of the canyon.

I did not see any Indians of any account until the command to fire was given. When the soldiers commenced to fire—there being about twelve hundred—it frightened the Indians so that they came running out from under those logs and brush like jack rabbits and were shot down like sheep. In all my experience in the Western wilds I never saw such a slaughtering as there. The Indians had been taught by the Mormons that if they would fortify themselves in that way the

whites could not harm them, teaching them also, that the Lord would protect them, which was a great thing for the white people, for it came so near cleaning the Utes up that there was only a little remnant left, and they never gave the white people any more trouble. Thus white people were enabled to pass through that country unmolested. Heretofore it had been one of the most dangerous parts of the country. For all this I have ever since believed that the Mormons, unintentionally, did the Gentiles a great favor.

After the battle was over, and as scouts are at liberty to go where they please, I rode over the battle-field in company with the other scouts and I never in all my life saw such a mangled up mass as was there. Men, women and children were actually lying in heaps, and I think all that got away were a few that hid among the logs and brush. In this battle the Captain told me they did not lose a man, and had only four wounded, while he counted over three thousand dead Indians. When I returned to Salt Lake City I was astonished to see the manner in which the Salt Lake papers abused Gen. Connor for slaughtering the Indians in the manner he had, when they (the Mormons) had planned the slaughter, although not meaning for it to be a slaughter of Indians. Gen. Connor said that the Mormons had thought that the Indians would fortify themselves, and when attacked by the soldiers, they would wipe them (the soldiers) off the face of the earth. The idea had been so thoroughly instilled into the minds of the Indians by the Mormons that the Lord would protect them if only fortified in this manner that they depended most altogether on the Lord to protect them.