Document 2: Henry Woonsook's Account

SOURCE: Part of an interview of Henry Woonsook, the grandson of two Shoshone survivors of the Bear River Massacre. The interview was conducted by a University of Utah historian, February 29, 1968.

Long ago in 1863 at a place on the Bear River where a lot of Indians were living there was a battle where many Indians were killed. The Indians were spending the winter there. A white man from Preston, maybe a Mormon bishop,…told the Indians they were going to be killed. "You could all run away to safety," the white man told them. But the chief said, "No. We will not run away." The men of the group said, "We don't have to worry. We can handle the soldiers."…

Then the soldiers, a hundred or more, came over the hill. The soldiers went down the hill toward the camp, saying to themselves as they came that they could kill the Indians right in their camp…Then they began to battle with the Indians…The Indians were fighting back and they were killing some of the soldiers.

The Indians fought back but there wasn't much they could do because the white men had guns and the Indians only had bows and arrows. One little boy, whose relatives were killed, lay there on the cold ground among the dead ones. As the soldiers came through they checked and any of the Indians who were still alive they shot. The little boy lay still and they passed him by…After the soldiers had killed all the Indians who were still alive, they left. Some of the Indians had escaped across the river on the ice in the winter and had come north…With the Indians who escaped [was] my grandfather Cikuci…That Cikuci was the one who caused it all…

The man Cikuci was the one who caused this trouble. He and two other men had raided a wagon train going to California and that is why the soldiers killed those people. That was the cause of the Bear River Battle that I have been telling you about.

Document 2: Henry Woonsook's Account

Source: Interview of Henry Woonsook, grandson of an eye-witness to the Bear River Massacre. Conducted by Loren Gardner at Fort Hall, Idaho on February 29, 1968. Interview no. 352. American West Center Dorris Duke American Indian Oral History Project, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah.

Long ago in 1863 at a place on the Bear River where a lot of Indians were living there was a battle where many Indians were killed. The Indians were wintering there. A white man from Preston, I don't know what kind of white man, maybe a bishop, maybe a stake president, told the Indians that they were going to be killed. "You could all run away to safety," the white man told them. But the chief said, "No. We will not run away." The men of the group said, "We don't have to worry. We can handle the soldiers." The young men were feeling good and were throwing rocks at a target and throwing spears. "We can handle the soldiers," they said. "We don't have to run away."

Then the soldiers, a hundred or more, came over the hill. The soldiers descended the hill toward the camp, saying to themselves as they came that they could kill the Indians right in their camp. The soldiers forded a stream near the camp but did not begin to kill the Indians until they were right up to them. Then they began to battle with the Indians. When the battle began, the chiefs said to the women and young people, "You must stay with us because if you leave the rest will leave." Then those Indians who lived there in that place began to battle with the soldiers. My maternal grandmother said that the place where they lived was a place of many willows and when the soldiers began to shoot, the willows began to fall as if they were being moved by a scythe. The Indians were fighting back and they were killing some of the soldiers.

The Indians fought back but there wasn't much they could do because the white men had guns and the Indians had only bows and arrows. One little boy, whose relatives were killed, lay there on the cold ground among the dead ones. As the soldiers came through they checked and any of the Indians who were still alive they shot. The little boy lay still and they passed him by. The little boy lay there and pretended to be dead and they passed him by. That is the way he saved his life. After the soldiers had killed all the Indians who were still alive, they left. Some of the Indians had escaped across the river on the ice in the winter and had come north. When the Indians were away from the scene of the battle, they stopped along the river bank and my grandmother, who had a shoulder wound herself, doctored the other wounded Indians. With the Indians who escaped were my maternal grandfather Cikuci, One-Eyed Tom and another man whose name I don't know. That Cikuci was the one who caused it all.

The little boy who pretended to be dead and who escaped was suffering from the cold there on the river bank, and Cikuci, who had a buffalo robe wrapped around himself, refused to share it with the little boy. He just ignored the little boy. When they had rested

they got up and came on up the river farther until finally they stopped and build another fire and warmed themselves.

The man Cikuci was the one who caused this trouble, He and two other men had raided a California-bound wagon train and had killed immigrants. They had taken the horses and the belongings from the wagon train and that is why the soldiers killed those people. That was the cause of the Bear River Battle that I have been telling you about.

The little boy who was called Taaboci, “Brush Rabbit,” was the son of Sewici, “Little Buddy Boy.”