# United States Department of the Interior

## National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places

#### Inventory - Nomination Form

**For Federal Properties**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

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**1. Name**

**Common:**

White Bird Battlefield - Site 13

**And/or Historic:**

Nez Perce National Historical Park

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**2. Location**

**Street and Number:**

Off U.S. 95 one mile north

**City or Town:**

White Bird

**State:**

Idaho

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**3. Classification**

**Category (Check One):**

- District
- Site
- Building
- Structure
- Object

**Ownership:**

- Public
- Private
- Structure
- Bath

**Public Acquisition:**

- In Process
- Being Considered

**Status:**

- Occupied
- Unoccupied
- Preservation work in progress

**Accessible to the Public:**

- Yes: Restricted
- No

**Present Use (Check One or More as Appropriate):**

- Agricultural
- Government
- Park
- Transportation
- Comments

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**4. Agency**

National Park Service

**Regional Headquarters (if applicable):**

Pacific Northwest Region

**City or Town:**

Seattle

**State:**

Washington

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**5. Location of Legal Description**

**Courthouse, Registry of Deeds, etc:**

Idaho County Courthouse

**Street and Number:**

- 4th and Pike Building

**State:**

- Washington

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**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

**Title of Survey:**

Land ownership map

**Date of Survey:**

1969

**Depository for Survey Records:**

Denver Service Center - National Park Service

**Street and Number:**

7200 W. Alameda Avenue

**State:**

Colorado

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**Form 10-306 (Oct. 1972)**
The present site is enclosed by a major highway - U.S. 95 - on the west and old U.S. 95 on the east. It has been bisected by farms, highway construction, and pioneer roads, and criss-crossed with barb-wire fences. It is grazed on by sheep and cattle and 300 acres are planted in alfalfa. Lichen covered basaltic rock cliffs and outcrops are scattered throughout the area. There is a life estate farm (30 acres) in the bottom land on the east.

The original site was a natural open grassland covering the hillsides with cottonwood lined creeks along the bottomland.

There are 1900 acres of Class VI lands either owned or placed under scenic easement by the National Park Service.
**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

On June 17, 1877 the first battle of the Nez Perce War was fought. Here some 750 Indians began an 1800 mile trek lasting four months, fighting all the way. Some 2000 American soldiers were engaged during the war, nearly 200 were killed and another 150 wounded. The Indians lost about 120. When it ended in the Bear's Paw Mountains in northern Montana on October 5, 418 Nez Perces surrendered. The remaining Indians escaped, to Canada.

The war started when three young men of White Bird's band raided homes and ranches along White Bird, John Day, and Slate Creeks south of this site. Perhaps 12 white people had been murdered; the atrocities caused the other whites to band together for protection. Also camped here was Chief Joseph and his band of Wallowa Nez Perces. He had been forced to leave his native country in northeast Oregon to move onto the smaller reservation specified in the 1863 treaty.

When reports of these depredations reached General O. O. Howard at Fort Lapwai, he ordered Captain David Perry and two companies of cavalry to investigate. Four officers and 99 troopers started on the night of June 15 and arrived at the Indian encampment here at dawn, two days later. With Perry also were 11 citizen volunteers who had joined him along the way.

Perry hoped to avoid bloodshed; so did most of the Indians. It is not clear as to what actually happened; evidence indicates that one of the volunteers fired at a peace party of Indians from the east side of one of the two buttes which are located at the south end of the battlefield. From that moment a fight could not be averted.

Perry had lined his two companies up on the north side of the buttes but fate interfered with communications; both buglers had misplaced their bugles. The Indians, unseen by the troops, swarmed around both sides of the buttes and nearly engulfed the command.

Outflanked and unable to hear bugle messages or the officer's shouts, the undisciplined army began a retreat which soon became a rout. Many of the men were little more than raw recruits. Fortunately for Perry, most of the soldiers were not completely surrounded and the resulting battle was a running, chasing affair.
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Flight of the Nez Perce, Brown, Mark H., 1967
The Nez Perce and the Opening of the Northwest, Josephy, Alvin M., Jr., 1965
The Nez Perces, Haines, 1955
Forlorn Hope, National Park Service, 1968

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORNER</th>
<th>LATITUDE</th>
<th>LONGITUDE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NW</td>
<td>45° 49' 48&quot;</td>
<td>116° 17' 03&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>45° 49' 48&quot;</td>
<td>116° 15' 00&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>45° 46' 20&quot;</td>
<td>116° 15' 00&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>45° 46' 20&quot;</td>
<td>116° 18' 19&quot;</td>
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LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LATITUDE</th>
<th>LONGITUDE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0° 00' 00&quot;</td>
<td>0° 00' 00&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1900

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
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<td>CODE</td>
<td>COUNTY</td>
<td>CODE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Jack R. Williams, Superintendent and Laurin C. Huffman II

BUSINESS ADDRESS:
P.O. Box 93
Spalding
Idaho

DATE: March 15, 1973

12. CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

State Liaison Officer recommendation:
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] None

Federal Representative Signature

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Liaison Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The recommended level of significance is [X] National [ ] State [ ] Local

State Liaison Officer Signature

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 7/18/74

ATTEST:

Keeper of the National Register

Date: 7/12/74
8. **SIGNIFICANCE**

Statement of Significance: (cont.)

Somehow, most of the troops reached the steep road up White Bird Mountain and made it over the top of Mount Idaho where a stop was made to rest, tend the wounded, and await reinforcements. Perry had 34 men killed; the Indians none, although three or four were wounded.

The Nez Perces wanted no further trouble and attempted to escape. Soon, General Howard, with about 250 reinforcements, was in hot pursuit of the hostiles, but he did not catch up with them until July 11 on the Clearwater River.
**1. NAME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON</th>
<th>AND/OR HISTORIC</th>
<th>NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)</th>
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**2. LOCATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>TOWN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>Whitebird</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One mile north of Whitebird off U.S. 95

**3. PHOTO REFERENCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHOTO CREDIT</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>NEGATIVE FILED AT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J.R. Williams</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Nez Perce Nat. Hist. Park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4. IDENTIFICATION**

Describe View, Direction, ETC.

View of battlefield area looking west