

and H, Second Cavalry; A, D, and K, Seventh Cavalry, and Companies B, F, G, I, and K, Fifth Infantry (mounted), two pieces of light artillery, and a detachment of white and Indian scouts; he decided to push for the gap between the northern end of the Little Rocky and the Bear Paw Mountains. On September 23, the Nez Perces crossed the Missouri at Cow Island, destroying the public and private stores there. A detachment of twelve men, under Sergeant Molchert, Seventh Infantry, was stationed at this point, in a slight intrenchment; they were repeatedly charged by the Nez Perces, who were, however, as often repulsed by the little garrison consisting of but four citizens and Sergeant Molchert's detachment; two of the citizens were wounded.

Major Ilges, Seventh Infantry, commanding at Fort Benton, received information, on September 21, that the Nez Perces were approaching Fort Claggett; he immediately started with his single weak company of the Seventh Infantry and a party of thirty-six citizen volunteers, and reached Claggett the next day. On September 26, a skirmish ensued, lasting two hours, one of the volunteers being killed. Major Ilges feeling that his force was not strong enough to continue the pursuit, he withdrew to Cow Island.

On September 24, Colonel Miles received, through the citizens who had escaped from Cow Island, information that the Indians had crossed the Missouri, so he began very rapid forced marches, which brought his command to the Bear Paw range on September 29.

On September 30, at seven o'clock in the morning, after a march of two hundred and sixty-seven miles, Colonel Miles' command was upon the trail of the Nez Perces, and their village was reported only a few miles away. It was located within the curve of a crescent-shaped cut bank in the valley of Snake Creek, and this, with the position of