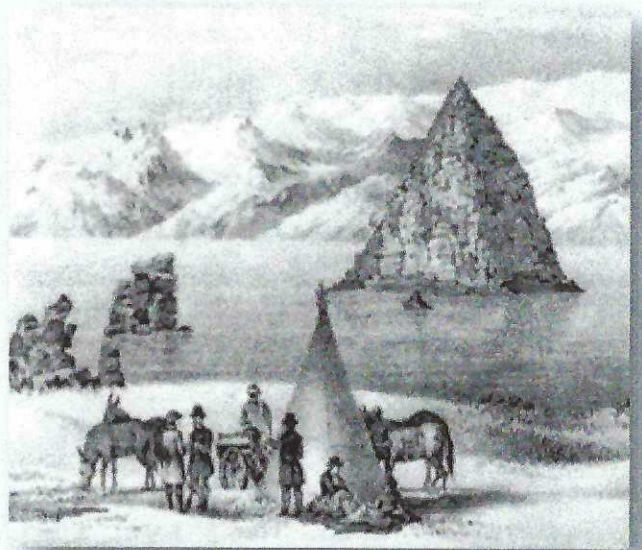


Native—European Contact Timeline before the War

- ◆ In the 1820s fur trappers explored the Great Basin for economic benefits, primarily beaver pelts.
- ◆ John C. Fremont explored the west from 1843-1855. In 1844 he reached Pyramid Lake and the mouth of the Truckee River. Fremont traveled along the Truckee River to Wadsworth then south to the Carson River. Fremont's maps of trails were widely distributed in 1849 when gold strikes occurred in California and Oregon. The maps provided the fastest route to those states.



- ◆ Gold strike in California in 1848 brought miners and emigrants west to find their fortune. They traveled through tribal lands.
- ◆ Silver strikes took place on the Comstock and miners and settlers trekked to Virginia City, and Silver City. The population in those towns grew substantially.

Post-Contact Period



As explorers and pioneers traveled through Nevada, some stayed and established farms and ranches. Paiute hunting and gathering grounds were inundated with white settlers. Livestock ate grasses and traditional food sources such as roots, berries and seeds. Mountains and hills where Pinyon trees grew were being cut down for lumber for houses, fence poles and mining operations. Pine nuts were a major staple in the diet of tribal people. The winter of 1859-1860 was particularly harsh and there were few food sources. Small skirmishes between native and whites took place as tribal people were being pushed out of their ancestral lands. As pressure grew and with few alternatives, tribal bands were forced to take action.



Numaga's initial call for peace:

"You would make war upon the whites. I ask you to pause and reflect. The white men are like the stars over your heads. You have wrongs, great wrongs, and that rise up like those mountains before you; but can you from the mountain tops, reach and blot out those stars? Your enemies are like the sands in the bed of your rivers, when taken away they only give place for more to come and settle there."

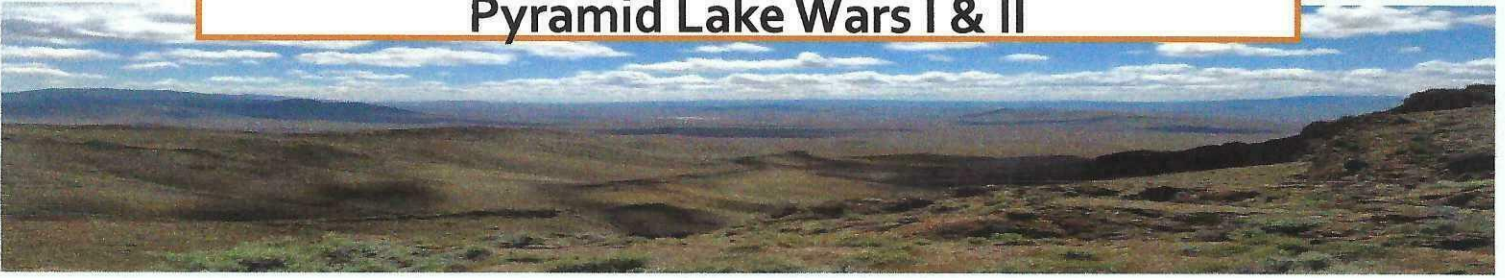
Tribal leaders who took part in Pyramid Lake War I.

It is uncertain if the leaders who were in the area were summonsed for a meeting or were simply here to fish during spawning season. Many people believe they were in the area (Nixon) simply to fish. Still, other people believe in April 1860, tribal leaders gathered to discussed white encroachment. The leaders included Qu-da-zo-bo-eat (Shoshone married to a Paiute woman), Sa-wa-da-be-bo (Bannock/Paiute from Powder River), Wa-he (brother of Old Winnemucca), Sa-A-Be (brother-in-law of old Winnemucca (Smoke Creek), No-jo-nudd (Honey Lake); Yur-dy (aka Joaquin, Carson City to Mason Valley), Ha-za-bok (Antelope Valley), Se-quin-a-ta (aka Chiquito or Little Winnemucca, Black Rock county), Mo-guan-no-ga (aka Captain Soo Humboldt Meadows), Poito (old Winnemucca), Numaga.

Numaga initially spoke out for peace. However, upon hearing the news of a kidnapping that same day he changed his stance and said, "There is no longer any use for council; we must prepare for war, for the soldiers will now come here to fight us."



Pyramid Lake Wars I & II

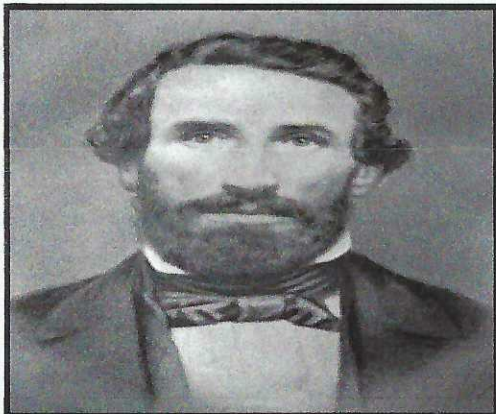


Numaga's speech continued:

Could you defeat the whites in Nevada, from over the mountains in California would come to help them an army of whites men that would cover your country like a blanket...I love my people, let them live; and when their spirits shall be called for the Great Camp in the southern sky, let their bones rest where their fathers were buried."

The Truckee River is one location where Pyramid Lake War II took place. This is one of many locations.

Kidnapping: In early May two Paiute girls left the (present day) Nixon to gather food from areas around the Carson River. When the girls didn't return, a search party was formed on May 6, 1860. The following day, a Paiute man traveled to Williams Station to trade items for bullets; however, the exchange failed and as he rode out of the trading post the young girls began to cry out for help in Paiute. The girls were held in a root cellar inside a barn. When the Paiute man arrived back in the Nixon area he reported what he had heard. On that day, leaders Natchez and Moguannoga formed a party of nine Paiute and Shoshone men to rescue the girls. A fight erupted and four of the five white men were killed and the trading post burned. The tribal men found the girls in the root cellar tied and gagged. On May 8, James Williams, owner of the trading post found the station burned and circulated the news.



News of the incident spread throughout the Comstock, neighboring towns and California. Citizens in those towns wanted revenge. Within a few days a militia was formed of 100 men who had no military training. Major William Ormsby who also had no military experience, led the militia. On May 10, 1860 the militia went to Williams Station where they buried the bodies of the dead men.

The militia continued north on May 11, 1860 to Big Bend along the Truckee River and camped in Wadsworth.

Pyramid Lake Wars I & II



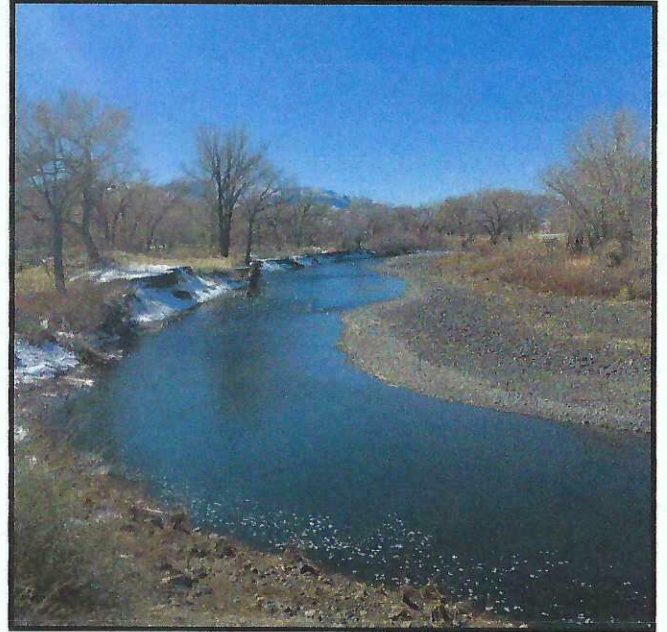
On May 12, Ormsby's militia traveled along the Truckee River to a plateau bordering Black Mountain. The militia continued on to the present day Nixon area, north along the river through the cottonwoods and meadows and suddenly about 100 Paiute men appear on an elevated point. The Indian men were out of gun-shot range.

But as the militia dismounted A.K. Elliot took several shots at the tribal men with no results. Then about 30 militia charged up a wash and the Indians disappeared. Then just out of rifle range a group of mounted warriors appeared. The militia continued on but was met with bullets and arrows. The volunteers sought shelter but was encountered by Chiquito Winnemucca's band. Chiquito's band was reinforced by Numaga's warriors. However, Numaga made one last attempt at peace but Chiquito continued on and rode past Numaga.

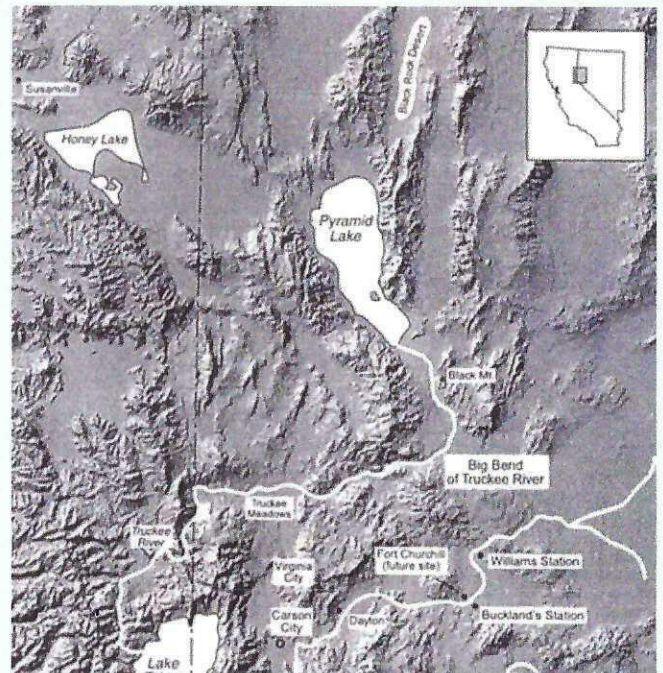
Over powered by native forces, the militia retreated. Some militia volunteers tried to swim across the river but the current was strong and they were swept back. The militia fled between the river and higher grounds as warriors continued overcome the ill prepared militia. Ormsby made a last stand in a grove of cottonwood trees and ordered two of his soldiers to take command of that location but by then many of his men deserted him.

The river terrain was thick with foliage where native forces hid and easily killed the militia. In a meadow below Black Mountain, some scholar's believe Ormsby stood his ground. It is said Ormsby said to a warrior, "I am your friend. I'll go and talk with the whites and make peace." But the tribal man shot an arrow through his stomach and face.

The fight continued until they reached Wadsworth. It was reported 75 militia were killed including Ormsby. Only two native men were wounded. The first battle marked a victory for tribal people but as news spread of the rout, fear struck settlers as they sought retaliation.



Truckee River near Big Bend in Wadsworth.



Topo map of the first battle

Pyramid Lake War II



Colonel John C. Hayes



View from a butte along the Truckee River.

Following the Paiute's victory, well armed militias were being formed in California. The volunteers met in Virginia City where Colonel John C. Hayes led the Washoe Regiment. This regiment was joined by U.S. troops and included 754 men, eight companies of infantry and six cavalry who left for Wadsworth on May 31 and camped in at Big Bend.

On June 1, the Washoe Regiment marched north and camped eight miles downstream from Big Bend . Earthen berms were constructed to protect supplies and it became known as Fort Storey.

Following an Indian trail north on June 2, 80 cavalry scouts along with Storey and Captain Van Hagan .

The battle between Hayes' forces and warriors took place on a rocky butte along the Truckee River, while Van Hagan's troops headed north to Indian villages.

Troops found elders, women and children along the river, but tribal forces held the army off while the elderly, women and children fled north.

The fighting along the Truckee River continued long into the night. Fighting stopped when the tribal forces moved north. An estimated three natives were killed and six of the Washoe Regiment were killed and several were wounded. Fighting continued after June 2, when the Washoe Regiment followed the Paiute trail north between Pyramid Lake and Winnemucca Lake. On June 5, Army scouts followed Paiute warriors up a canyon.

Aftermath



They tracked tribal men up a hill. When they reached the top, one scout was killed and the native forces were gone.

After June 7, troops under Stewart's command stayed on tribal land and created Fort Haven. It was abandoned in July after Fort Churchill was constructed.

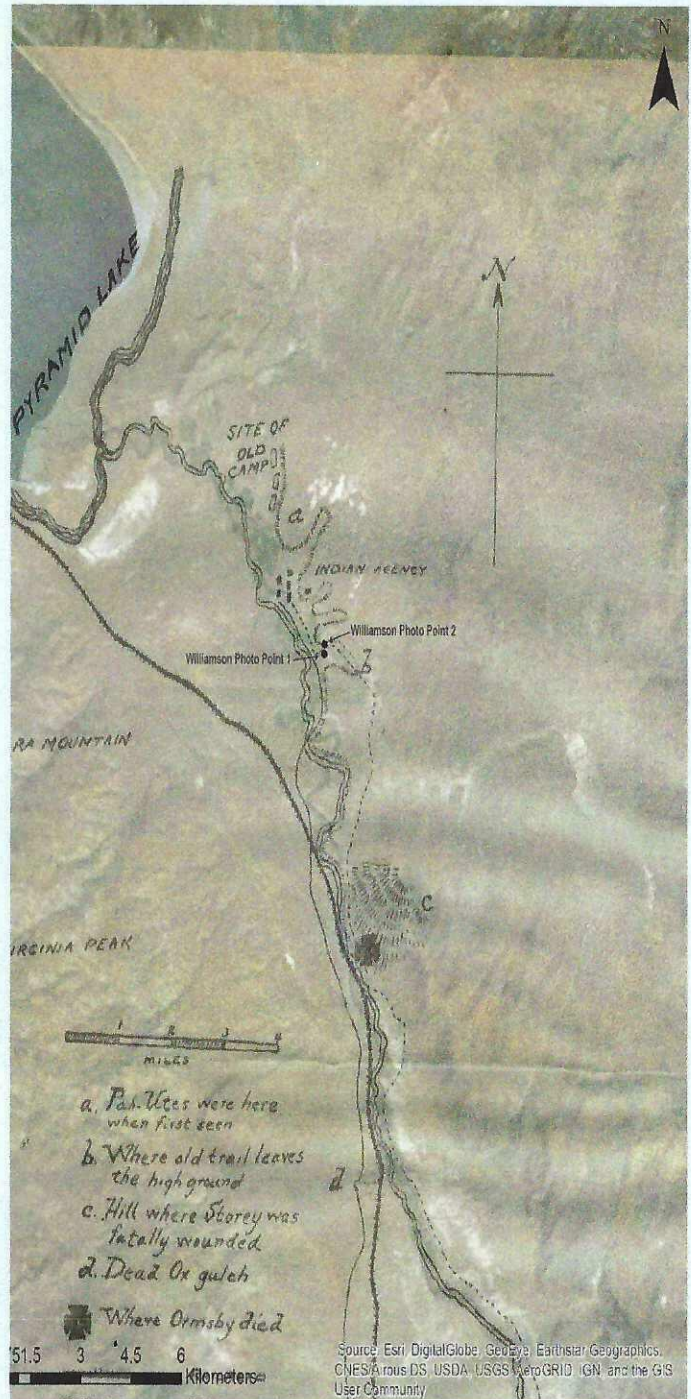
The U.S. Army claimed victory but tribal people say it was a draw.

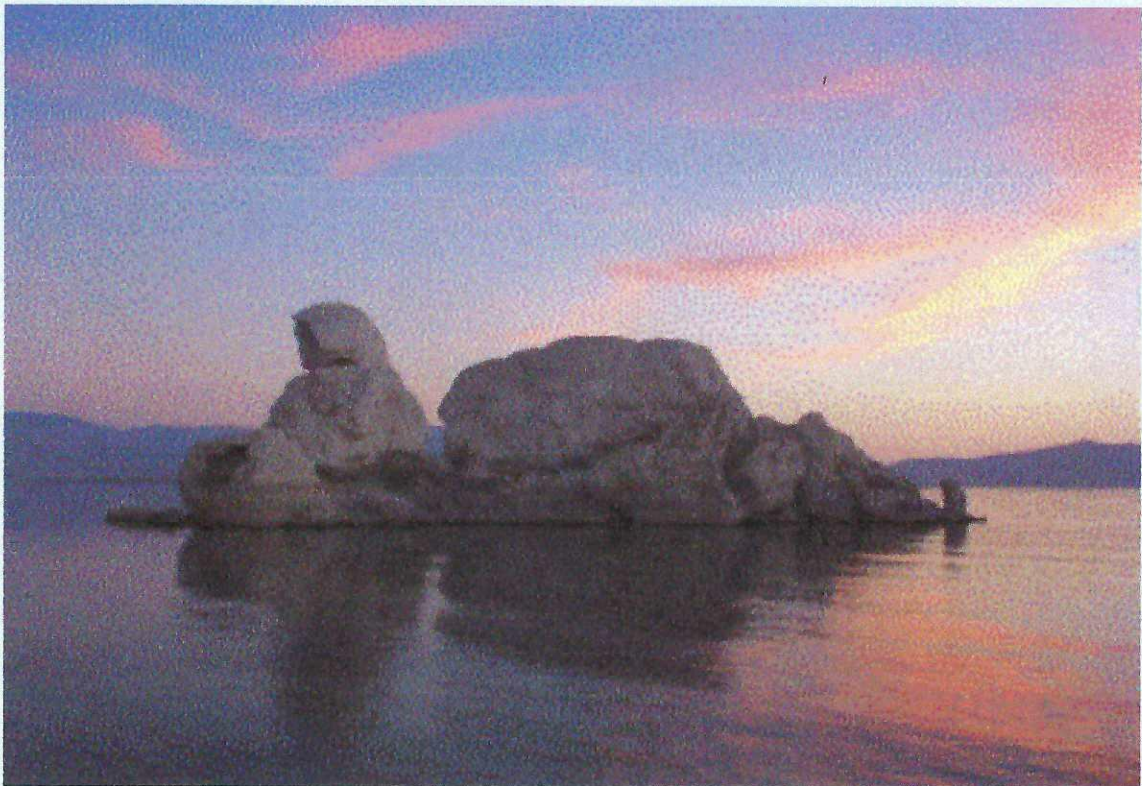
In August of that year, Colonel Fredrick Lander and Numaga negotiated a peace treaty, but it was never signed.

Paiute people were under the watchful eye of the army and food supply and use of ancestral lands was often denied or limited.

Despite the struggles and battles our ancestors have endured.

These two confrontations demonstrate our resistance, our resilience and our victories.





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