

A WHITE EXPLORER MEETS SHOSHONE INDIANS CAMPED AT BEAR RIVER

This is a page from the journal of Howard Stansbury. He was an engineer and he worked for the U.S. Army. In 1849, the army asked Stansbury to lead an expedition to the Great Salt Lake. His job was to map the valley. Stansbury kept a journal on his trip, and on August 20th he met a group of Shoshone Indians camped at Bear River.

How does he describe the Bear River? Does there seem to be a lot of food around?

How does he describe the Shoshone Indians? Do they waste any of their food?

At our encampment on Bear River, near this Butte, abundance of speckled trout were caught, resembling in all respects the brook trout of the States, except that the speckles are black instead of yellow. An ox, which had strayed from some unfortunate emigrant, was found on the bank of the stream, in such capital condition that he was shot for food, and such portions as we could not carry with us were most generously presented to a small encampment of Shoshonee Indians, whose wigwams were erected among the bushes on the opposite side of the stream. It was curious to see how perfectly every portion of the animal was secured by them for food, even the paunch and entrails being thoroughly washed for that purpose. The women acted as the butchers, and displayed familiar acquaintance with the business They had quite a large number of horses and mules, and their encampment betokened comparative comfort and wealth.

The bottom of Bear River is here four or five miles in breadth, and is partially overflowed in the spring: the snow lies upon it to the depth of four feet in the winter, which prevents the Indians from occupying it during that season of the year. . . .

Howard Stansbury, *An Expedition to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, 1855), 77–78.