

REPORT OF THE EXPEDITION AGAINST THE  
INDIANS IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THIS STATE \*

Wm. C. Kibbe

MESSAGE

State of California, Executive Department  
Sacramento, January 18th, 1860.

To the Honorable the Assembly of the State of California:

I herewith transmit, for the consideration of your Honorable Body, the report of Adjutant-General Kibbe, with other documents, relating to the late expedition commanded by him, in suppressing Indian hostilities in Tehama, and adjoining counties, the aggregate expenses of which, according to the report, amount to the sum of sixty-nine thousand four hundred and sixty-eight dollars and forty-three cents.

While I admit the necessity which led to this expedition, and freely acknowledge the eminent services rendered by the officers and men composing the command, the expenses, so large in amount, would seem to demand a rigid scrutiny.

If it be intended to pay these expenses by direct appropriation of money, a few such will bankrupt the State Treasury. I recommend that the whole subject be referred to a committee, with power to send for persons and papers, with a view to a thorough investigation.

We now have a full treasury, and are enabled to pay all immediate demands upon it in cash. If these appropriations are continued, according to the precedent established at the last session of the Legislature, instead of being able to reduce taxation, as recommended by one of my immediate predecessors, we will have to fall back on the old script basis, which proved so ruinous to the interests of the State.

Expenses of this nature are legally chargeable to the General Government, and it would seem advisable to issue bonds as evidence of indebtedness against the State, instead of a direct appropriation of money.

John G. Downey,  
Governor

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# REPORT

Office Quartermaster and Adjutant-General  
Sacramento, California, January 16, 1860.

To His Excellency,  
John G. Downey,  
Governor of California:

Sir;-- I have the honor to report that in obedience to the orders of one of your Excellency's immediate predecessors, issued on the second of August, A.D. 1859, I proceeded to Tehama County, and on the sixteenth of the same month, organized a company of volunteers, with which I at once took the field in pursuit of those Indians, whose frequent hostilities had given rise to the necessity for such an expedition. Their depredations were chiefly confined to the white population of that tract of country extending from Butte Creek on the south, to the head of Pitt River on the north, embracing an extent of more than one hundred square miles, with rugged and lofty mountains, precipitous defiles, hidden valleys, and secure fastnesses intervening, to which they retreated for security, after having made a sudden and successful foray; driving off the stock, destroying the improvements, and not unfrequently murdering in cold blood the defenseless inhabitants of that sparsely settled region. Indeed, in the tract of country designated, these Indians have recently had almost exclusive occupancy and control, numbering, as they did, from fifteen hundred to two thousand souls in their collected tribes or bands; they became insolent, because they believed themselves formidable, and capable of defending their strongholds against whatever force might be sent against them. This self-confidence was inspired by the inaccessible nature of the country which they inhabited, the great success which had heretofore attended their frequent depredations; the facility with which they always eluded the search of the regular troops and small parties of volunteer citizens; the latter hastily collected together from the surrounding population for mutual defense and protection, and whose limited supply of arms, munitions, and provisions, rendered it impossible for them to pursue and properly chastise an enemy as powerful as he was watchful and ingenious. On the contrary, the Indians were well armed - after their peculiar style of warfare - seemed to be amply supplied with provisions - had a correct topographical knowledge of the country, and were exceedingly expert in the exchange of telegraphic signals, by which, communication was kept up between distant portions of the same tribe; the approach and number of an invading foe discovered; the direction of their march indicated, and such important facts ascertained as to enable them to make good their escape; and thus for a long period of time to avoid that severe punishment which their numerous outrages had richly merited. During the last four years, between thirty and forty persons were killed by these Indians. They had set fire to, and consumed, entire fields of grain and grass, besides pillaging, and afterwards burning, the houses and cabins of the settlers.

Several expeditions, numbering respectively from fifteen to thirty men, although fitted out with an express view to take summary vengeance upon these despoilers of human life and property, had completely failed in their object; and even at the time when the troops under my command took the field, so bold had the Indians become, that they were extending their exploits, rapine, and murder --even into the immediate neighborhood of the camp of the regular troops-- from whom, they appeared to entertain not the slightest apprehension of arrest or punishment. Knowing these facts, and having succeeded in collecting together as brave and effective a company of officers and men as any country could produce, most of them experienced mountaineers and Indian hunters, I entered at once upon the duty, heretofore found so very difficult, of penetrating to the very haunts of the savages, with a view to conquer, and if possible, rid the country forever of their presence.

The command was divided into three detachments, under charge, respectively, of Capt. Byrnes and Lieutenants Bailey and Shull. These separate detachments were directed to approach and enter the Indian country at different points. The plan of moving upon, and attacking, the rancheries of the Indians at night, I had learned by experience, was the best and only one calculated to be attended with happy results. Notwithstanding the great hazard of this mode of warfare, it was willingly and cheerfully acquiesced in by officers and men, who at once entered upon the duty assigned them -- penetrating into every river valley, creek, canon, and gulch; clambering rugged mountain sides; threading their way amid interminable forests of timber; wading through marshes; over swollen streams; encountering snows; surmounting jagged rocks - - in fact, exposing themselves to all kinds of danger and fatigue, with a courage of endurance which cannot be too highly approved and commended.

It seems almost incredible that a body of ninety men, operating in different detachments, over so wide a space of broken and difficult country, could accomplish so much as those under my command have done, in so short a time. As fast as a particular locality was cleared of Indians, a detachment was left for a limited period, instructed to scout continually, with the view of discovering and preventing any attempt at return. In every instance the object designed by this precautionary measure was effectually secured. From time to time small parties of Indians were captured, until the southern portion of the country operated in contained not a warrior to offer resistance. The intermediate section was next visited, and the Indians occupying it, after several severe skirmishes, compelled to flee for safety to the country occupied by the Pitt River and Hat Creek Indians, with whom they were intimately connected, and where they doubtless felt themselves secure from further pursuit. In the meantime Callahan, McElroy, Wells, and others, had been murdered by them.

The Pitt River and Hat Creek country was regarded by the Indians as impregnable. There was a fastness here from which those who defended it had never been driven. Many attempts at dislodgment were made by bands of citizen soldiers and the regular troops. None of these proved successful. At, or

near, this point I succeeded, after seven or eight days of hard scouting, in capturing two Indians. My intention being to obtain an interview with the principal chief, make known to him the object of the expedition, (which was not to kill if the Indians would surrender,) to propose the terms of such surrender, and, if possible, ascertain the motive which actuated him and his people in their hostile proceedings. The desired interview was had, and resulted favorably to my expectations. The principal chief promised, with his whole tribe, to meet me the next day and proceed at once to one of the reservations. The consequences of a failure to comply with his promise were fully represented to him, notwithstanding which his pledge was broken.

Two nights afterward I attacked the Indian stronghold with forty men, completely routing those who defended it, killing several of their number and taking others prisoners; those who escaped were pursued. A number of engagements subsequently occurred with them, in which a great number were killed and captured.

After a vigorous pursuit of five weeks this chief sent in eight of his tribe, who said they had fought long enough, and that they desired to become reconciled to, and accept, the terms proposed to them. They came in to the number of four hundred and fifty, and were received in a spirit of kindness. To revert to all the different skirmishes and scouts which took place would occupy too much space for my present purpose. Although justice to the gallant volunteers might seem to demand that this data should be given; suffice it to say, that the enemy were routed from every position, whether taken to elude their pursuers or for the purpose of defense, and were finally compelled unconditionally to surrender. Out of the whole number of Indians fought about two hundred warriors were killed, and twelve hundred taken prisoners. No children were killed, and but one woman, during the whole campaign. As an evidence of the intrepid bravery of these Indians I would state that on one occasion some fifteen or twenty of their warriors ensconced themselves in an almost inaccessible canon among rocks, and dared an equal number of my command to fight them. The challenge was at once accepted, and the engagement commenced. It continued for upwards of an hour, by which time all of the enemy were killed, excepting one, who effected his escape. Not a man of the volunteers was killed, and but two wounded. During this fight, as in all the others, an interpreter was present, who called upon the Indians to surrender, with the understanding that they were to be kindly dealt with; but they refused to accept the conditions proffered.

It gives me pleasure to be able to report to your Excellency that this war has been brought to a successful termination. The tribes of Indians engaged in it, whose frequent acts of violence and atrocity had rendered them a terror to the region of country over which they roamed, are completely vanquished and subdued.

A permanent peace I hope has been secured, a peace which was conquered and which has for its tenure a much more enduring and reliable basis than the mere forms of treaty stipulations, too often misunderstood by the wily savages, and when understood, as frequently violated to suit their own designs and convenience.

Twelve hundred of these Indians were captured, and are at the present time comfortably provided for at one of the government reservations, where by good conduct and a moderate degree of industry, it is hoped the blessings of civilized life may forever be secured to them and their posterity.

There is reason for gratulation, when the immediate benefits resulting from a conclusion of this war are considered, and its remoter favorable influences should also be taken into the account. It is a salutary lesson to the tribes occupying territory contiguous to the scene of action, which they will not be likely soon to forget. It has taught them the certainty of the punishment which must sooner or later overtake them, for their hostile visitations upon the persons and property of the whites; the irrevocable nature of the destiny which awaits them in their uncivilized condition; how utterly unable they are to cope with the great nation of people who are daily taking possession of the soil, and converting it from a wilderness into vineyards and fields of waving grain; the immense superiority of this people in numbers, energy, and intelligence; the fatal and unerring precision of their improved implements of warfare; their sleepless vigilance in pursuit of a foe; their indomitable bravery in battle; their exalted magnanimity in exempting women and children from slaughter; in fine, it has taught them, that by laying down their arms and submitting to the terms proposed by the whites - who must eventually become their conquerors, if not their destroyers - their condition is greatly improved; and the alternative offered, if not precisely in accordance with their natural tastes and habits, is at least calculated to secure their comfortable nourishment and protection, with the superadded probability of elevating them in the scale of moral and intellectual greatness. I am happy in being able to bear testimony to the prompt, skillful, and fearless manner, in which the officers and men under my command, separately and collectively, discharged the dangerous, arduous, and responsible duties devolving upon them. Captain Byrnes was an experienced and accomplished Indian fighter, with courage and discretion equal to every emergency. I was particularly fortunate in having his support at the head of one of the detachments throughout the entire campaign. I was also ably sustained by Lieuts. Bailey, Shull, McCarty, and Longley. Between these highly capable and efficient officers, it would be injustice to discriminate. There was no exposure, no peril, which each and all were not willing cheerfully to encounter - - no service from which they shrank. At all hours of the day and night, with the brave men under their command, they were ready either for a march, a skirmish, or a battle, and never, for a single instant, did they falter in the hour of trial, whether on a difficult and dangerous pursuit, fording swollen streams, wading to their waist through snows, encountering chaparral swamps, overcoming broken declivities, penetrating secret defiles, struggling among jagged and crumbling rocks, or encountering the enemy in a hand-to-hand conflict.

These gallant soldiers deserve well of the State. They volunteered in her service, not with the hope of pecuniary gain --that idea is forestalled

by the paltry amount offered for their services--but because a demand was made upon their patriotism, to which they instantly and cheerfully responded, forsaking their profitable avocations, and in many instances, their comfortable homes, to undertake the trials, hardships, and hazards of an Indian campaign. Having nobly and satisfactorily performed their duties, and ended the war in a manner which promises to be of lasting benefit to the State, it gives me pleasure to commend them to the generous consideration of the present Legislature.

In this connection of praise, the Surgeon of my command, Dr. A. W. Taliaferro, deserves to be especially noticed. Under all circumstances, and at all times, requiring the exercise of his skill, he was found to be more than equal to the delicate and responsible duties of his profession. His efforts were in every case, attended with eminent success, which is, perhaps, the highest compliment that could be paid to his acknowledged scientific talents and attainments.

The expedition was singularly fortunate in its exemption from casualties. Not a single life was lost, and the wounded all recovered.

The Commissary Department was under the management of S. D. Johnson, who was found to be a very efficient officer, and who, by the practice of a rigid economy, kept down the expenses of that branch of the expedition, to the lowest possible figure, besides rendering valuable and effective service in the field.

The expenses of the expedition will be found to be exceedingly moderate, when all the circumstances are considered and compared with similar expeditions, heretofore called out on this coast, extremely low. They are therefore submitted to your Excellency and the Legislature, in the full belief that they will prove entirely satisfactory.

Every article of supply purchased, however, was procured with the understanding that the State would promptly pay the bills, which fact, it is hoped your Excellency will not fail to make known, with a view of having a sufficient appropriation passed for their liquidation.

The aggregate expenses of the expedition, exclusive of the pay of men, is fifty-eight thousand four hundred and fifty-eight dollars, from which, is to be deducted, for clothing and articles stopped against the pay of the men, the sum of eight thousand nine hundred and eight-nine dollars and fifty-seven cents, which leaves forty-nine thousand four hundred and sixty-eight dollars and forty-three cents (\$49,468.43) as the total expense incurred, exclusive of the pay of the men. The amount of their pay, using the schedule adopted by the act making the appropriation for the expedition in Humboldt and Klamath counties, A.D. 1858-9, called into service under similar auspices,

would amount in round numbers to twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) and leave as the total expense of the expedition the sum of sixty-nine thousand four hundred and sixty-eight dollars and forty-three cents (\$69,468.43).

It will be ascertained upon consulting the vouchers on file in my office, and should be borne in mind, that nearly one-fourth of this whole amount of expenses was incurred in the subsistence and transportation of Indian prisoners captured by the command. These prisoners numbered over twelve hundred, and were transported a distance of from two hundred and fifty to seven hundred miles, the cost of which was fourteen thousand and thirty dollars and forty-five cents.

This campaign has been accomplished in the brief period of four months, which, when the smallness of the force employed, the wide and difficult nature of the country explored, and the success attending the expedition are considered, must be regarded as a result which none but accomplished mountaineers and brave soldiers could accomplish.

The region traversed, is probably the roughest and most difficult for a white man to traverse of any on the Pacific coast, and affords the best and greatest number of hiding places for the Indians. It is not only mountainous, rugged, precipitous, and broken, but is also interspersed with hundreds of valleys and lakes, in which head the numerous streams emptying into the Sacramento River, from Butte Creek to Pitt River. These valleys produce the finest qualities of grass, sufficient to sustain, annually, at least one hundred thousand head of stock, and will, I predict, be rapidly settled by our enterprising citizens.

Some twenty-five families of this year's immigration, have already taken up claims in these valleys. And this is the country which has been hitherto almost exclusively occupied by Indians, through which runs the great thoroughfare from the Sacramento Valley, to the extreme north, and over which millions of dollars worth of merchandize is annually transported; from a statement of which facts, the importance, utility, and necessity, of the expedition can, I trust, be readily comprehended by citizens of all portions of the State.

It affords me pleasure to state, also, that the citizens, generally, residing near the field of operations have co-operated with the expedition.

Respectfully submitted.

I have the honor to be,

Your ob't servant,

WM. C. KIBBE,  
Q.M. and Adj. Gen., State of Cal., Comd'g Expedition