

# The Evolution of the Relationship Between the California Indians and the Settlers

By Larry Mauch

While the events occurred over 140 years ago, many of the mistakes made and the lessons to be learned are still applicable in today's world

# The Process

The goal was to identify the events that transpired using first or second generation sources whenever possible about the Indians of Butte County. Period newspaper articles, reports by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and first-person accounts were primary sources.

In researching the California missions “A Time of Little Choice” by Randall Milliken was the primary source. A college thesis, the book relies on mission records for much of its information.

# A TIME OF LITTLE CHOICE

The Disintegration of Tribal Culture  
in the  
San Francisco Bay Area  
1769-1810



by

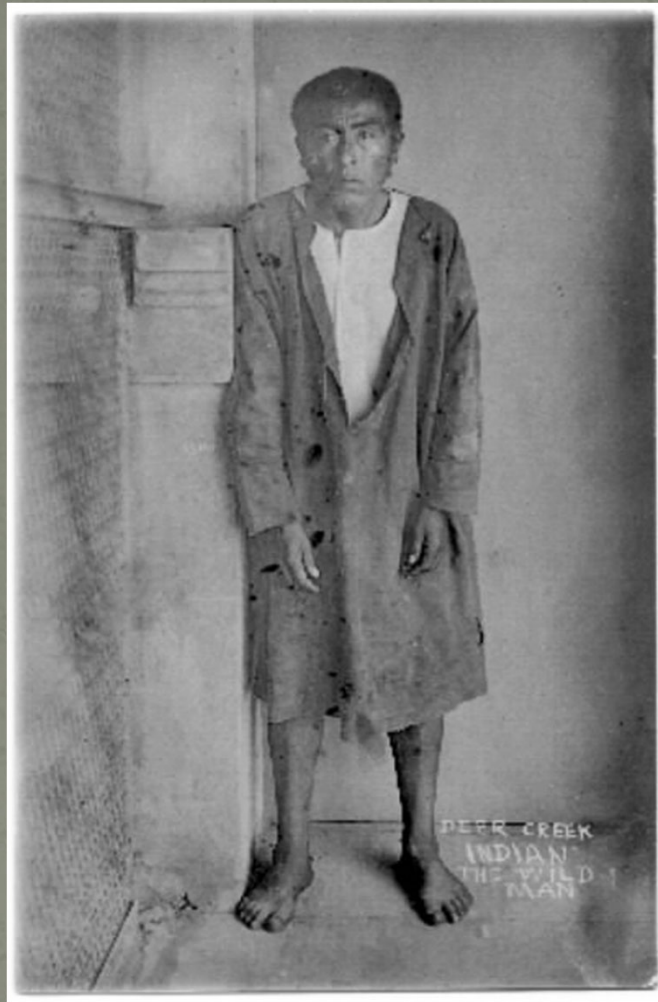
Randall Milliken

College thesis  
published in 1995

Available at Amazon

Now published by  
Malki Museum Press

# Changing Our Perceptions



Ishi 1911 - 1915

# Basic Facts

- Most Indian Villages were organized in communities of 20 to 200 people. When a village became too large or there was a dispute, it is reasonable to assume a faction split off and formed a new village.
- Anthropologists used common language as a guide to determine tribal size. In 1877 Stephen Powers said the Kimshew and Concow were the same tribe because they spoke very similar language. He changed the spelling of the name **Concow** Indians to **Konkau** Indians in his book. In 1978 Francis Riddell changed the spelling to **KonKow** when he redefined the tribe to include most of Butte County.
- **We think more in terms of political affiliation rather than linguistic similarities when we group large quantities of people.** So, looking back, how many KonKow Chiefs were there?
- Each tribe was its own entity, however, larger tribes probably influenced smaller tribes.

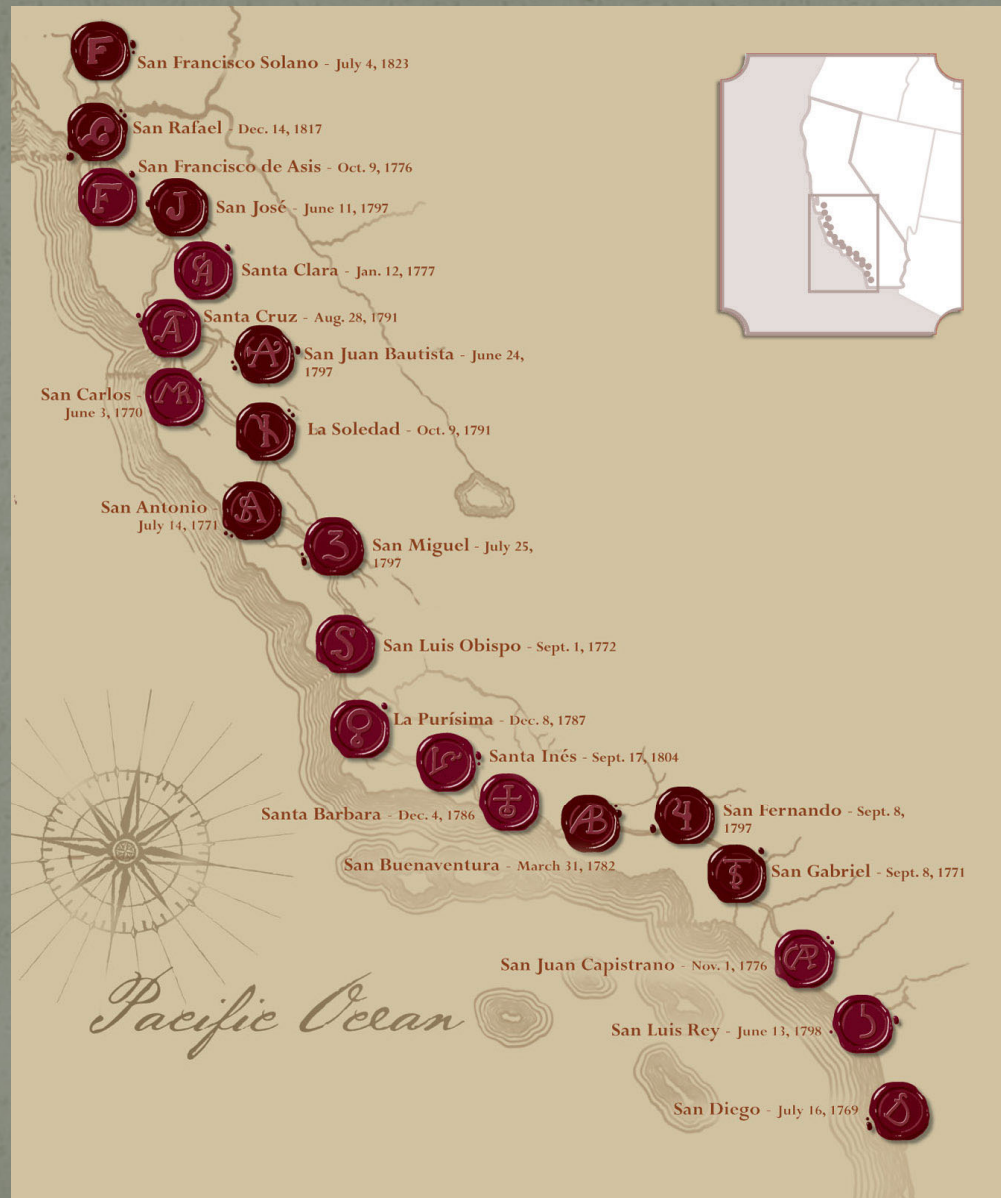
It does appear that tribes from the hills had stronger influence (**strategic advantage because of location?**) over tribes in the valley.

# Southern and Northern California

- 1812 to 1846  
The Trappers  
and Traders
- 1846 to 47  
John Fremont
- 1848 to 1873  
The Western  
Immigration
- 
- 1769 to 1836  
The Mission  
Period



# The 21 Missions





# The Missions and the Rules

- The primary goal of the missions was to enlighten the Indians, baptize them and build **productive farms to sustain the mission and send hides back for trade.**
- **Indians who were baptized** were given blankets, clothing, candles and lived within the Mission compound.
- **Once you were baptized**, you were property of the church and could only leave the church for 2 weeks each year to return home.
- There were many cases where the children were baptized and the parents were not so the parents lived outside the walls of the church and could come and go as they pleased.

# The Role of the Military

- Usually, a Mission had a Corporal and 4 to 5 enlisted men. They were primarily used to respond to theft of mission property, which included cattle and acts of violence.
- **They would make a harsh example of thieves** which was supposed to result in few thefts.
- **Indians were used to track down other Indians** that ran away from the mission after they were baptized.
- In extreme cases, the Yerba Buena Presidio forces would respond to acts of violence outside the mission.

# Illness

- In 1804 most of the Indians in the Livermore Valley joined the mission at San Jose because the food supply in the valley was destroyed by the 10,000 head of cattle the mission grazed in the valley. Most of the Livermore Indians, about 200, and their descendants had already died from disease by 1815.
- **In 1806 an epidemic of measles killed many of the Indians at the Bay Area missions** and an unknown quantity of Indians in surrounding tribal villages.
- In general, the death rate was especially high among children under 5 years old, nearly 70%; among women, the death rate was about 50%, men about 20%.
- By 1836 when the mission was secularized and closed, the number of Indians in the area was only a small number. Many went to the Alisal Rancheria near the future Hearst family home in Pleasanton. Now the estate is known as the Castlewood Country Club.

# The End of the Mission System

- In 1836 the Mission system was disbanded. It was financially unsustainable.
- The population of Indians living in the mission areas was reduced to several thousand. The tribal systems had completely collapsed as groups had intermarried.
- By the mid 1830's the tribes 40 miles north and 80 miles east of San Francisco were all gone.
- San Francisco reported 375 whites and 34 Indians in the city in 1847
- In 1869 when the railroads released the Chinese workers, the inability to find work forced many Indians to leave and move into the foothills to work on remote ranches.

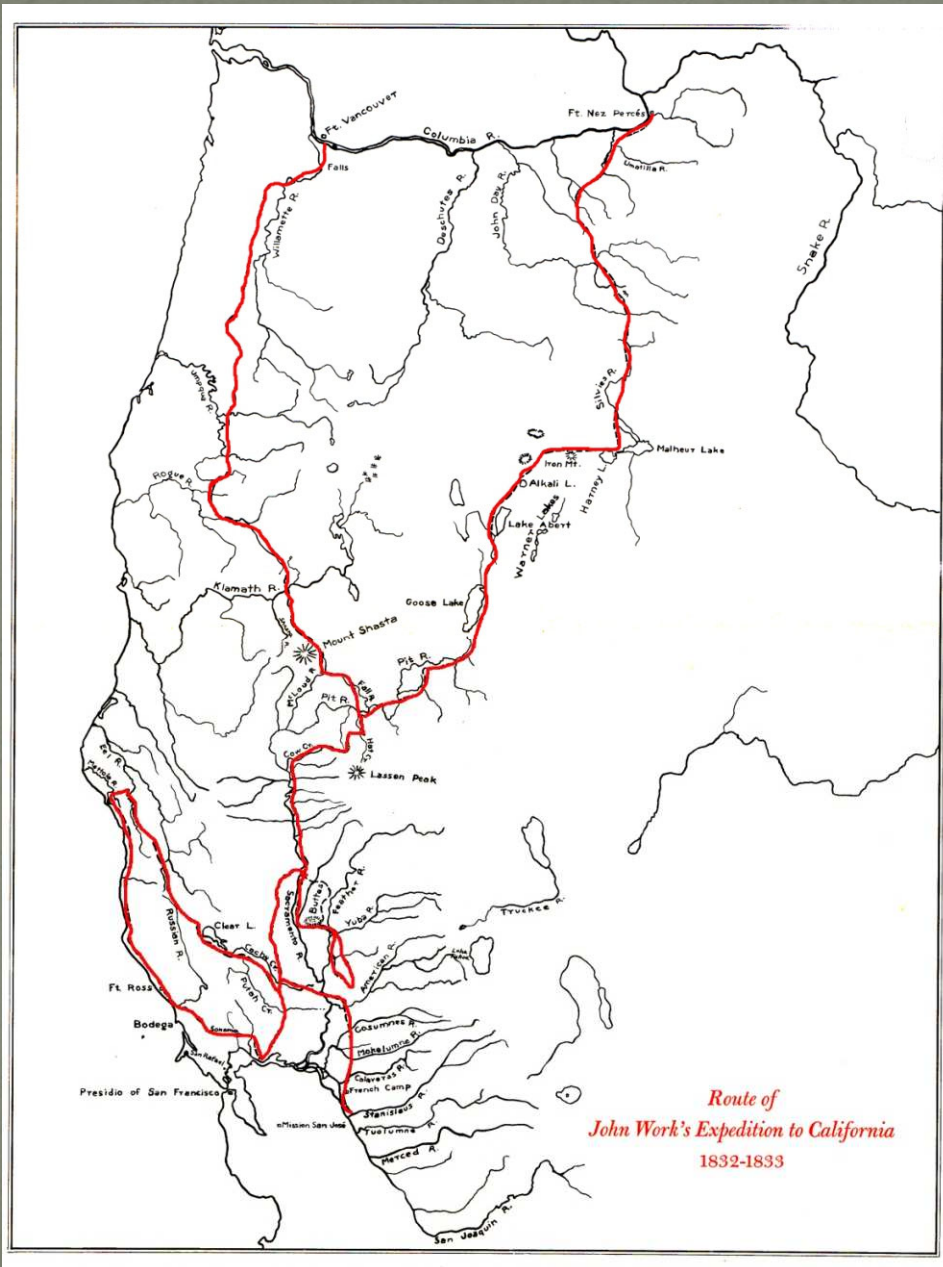
# The Trappers and Traders



Fort Ross 1828

Fort Ross was founded in 1812 by Russian fur traders from Sitka Alaska

# John Work's Travels in 1832 and 33



**Peter Ogden**



**John Work**  
Hudson Bay Company



**Michael Laframboise**

The Hudson  
Bay Company

Dates in  
California

Ogden  
1830

Work  
1832-33

Laframboise  
1837-1839  
Party  
of 27 Trappers

- In 1828 traveling from Mission San Jose, Jedediah Smith, along with 20 trappers, came out of the mountains near Cohasset and was in the Red Bluff, Chico area enroute to Oregon.
- **In 1830** Peter Ogden, a Canadian, also trapped in California, traveling from Oregon to the San Joaquin Valley in California. Some say he was the one who named Mt. Shasta.
- **In 1832** John Work, a trapper for Hudson's Bay Company, reported in his diary that there appeared to be some kind of sickness resembling ague (malaria) prevailing amongst the Indians.
- In 1833 the Hudson Bay Company's fur trappers separate into two groups near Fort Ross. Chief Trader, John Work, would head South. Michael Laframboise, a Canadian trapper, takes a group of men North in the vicinity of Mount Shasta.
- **In August of 1837**, Michael Laframboise returned to the Feather River with 27 trappers. He would return again in 1838 and 1839. **When Laframboise went to the Feather River region, he reported it was because it was the only area with any quantity of beaver left in California.** Laframboise's wages were \$75 per year.
- For sale since 1839, in 1841 the Russians sold Fort Ross to John Sutter for \$30,000.

## Butte County

- John Bidwell related that smallpox broke out several years before his arrival in 1841, probably brought by the Hudson Bay Company trappers, killing large numbers of the Indians. He reported seeing empty villages with bones scattered on the ground because the Indians could not bury their dead as they died so fast.
- It is estimated the population of California Indians was about 130,000 before 1796. Some say it may have been much higher. By the time of the gold rush, it was about 30,000, mostly in Northern California.



# John Fremont 1846/47



- In 1846/47 John Fremont was on his second expedition out west. He was supposed to be surveying rivers in the Rockies. He was not supposed to come to central California, but **he was ambitious and wanted to make a name for himself in California**, so he decided to make a detour.
- He stopped at Peter Lassen's ranch in today's Lassen County where he was told there was a large group of Indians causing trouble in the area. He had about sixty men with him, **they tracked down a large band of Indians and opened fire killing 200 to 500 Indian men, women and children.**
- It was the first mass killing of Indians by US government troops in California.
- Fremont would later incorporate Indian scouts and laborers into his own troops

# California in 1846/47

- Sept 19, 1846 - Article states the Walla Walla Indians and some of the Chiefs of the Spokanes have come to California to trade. They were well mounted, and the **Chiefs clad in English costume** and the rest in skins. The journey was of seven or eight hundred miles. **The chiefs spoke English.** There was a verbal conflict between the Indians and the Spanish over the ownership of their horses.
- **A second article places the number of Walla Walla Indians at about 36 men plus their wives and children.** The Walla Walla's agreed to give up the horses that were not theirs but wanted property taken from them returned.
- Jan 9, 1847 – The first issue of the California Star was published in San Francisco. The issue reports on Col Fremont, the conquest of Mexico and the question of what laws are we governed by?

## In 1847 a Series of Ordinances are Issued Regarding Indians

- Mar 6, 1847 - It has come to the Commander in Chief in the district that certain persons have been and are still imposing and holding to service Indians against their will and without any legal contract, and without due regard to their rights as free men when not under legal contract for service. **All persons holding Indians without contract must let them return to their homes. The Indians must not be regarded as slaves.** All Indians must be required to obtain service and not be allowed to wander about the country in idle and dissolute manner. If they are found doing so they will be liable to arrest and punishment by labor on the public works at the direction of the Magistrate.
- Sept 18, 1847 - **Governor directs those hiring Indians to give them certificates so they can tell the good Indians from those causing trouble.** Indians without passes outside the town or rancho in which he may be employed will be subject to arrest as horse thieves. If they cannot supply a satisfactory account of themselves, they will be subject to trial and punishment.
- Dec 8, 1847 - **From this day forward any person who sells, exchanges or gives spirituous liquor to an Indian shall be subject to a fine of not less than \$50 and not more than \$100 and be imprisoned for not less than three months and not more than six months; 1/2 of the fine goes to the informer and the rest to benefit of the town.**

# The Gold Rush



WHERE THE GOLD COMES FROM.

# 1848 and the Discovery of Gold

- There was a large demand for Indian labor after the discovery of gold in the spring of 1848 at Sutter's mill.
- Bidwell used approximately 20 Indians to pan for gold at Bidwell Bar from 1848 to 1849, realizing about \$100,000. He used the profits to buy Bidwell Ranch.
- Samuel Neal also had about 20 Indians working his claim. He took out about \$110,000 during the same time. Neal's Indians were instructed to bring him \$100 per day, then they could quit for the day. Sometimes they would complete their task by 10:00 am. Bidwell and Neal paid the Indians with scarves and clothing.
- After 1849 Bidwell housed and employed about 60 Indians at his ranch in Chico, mostly Mechoopda Indians.

## In 1850 Troubles Escalated

- In early 1850, General Bidwell, assisted by Michael Nye, then a well-known Indian fighter and a popular man among the Whites, joined the Indians of the Bidwell Rancheria in pursuing a band of mountain Indians who had attacked the Bidwell Indians.
- April 1850 - Deer Creek, 12 men attacked a party of Indians whom they accused of stealing animals. They killed four or five Indians and one squaw. After running some time, the Indians turned to fight gaining a strong hold in a rocky part of the mountains. The Indians wounded two of the whites. The siege lasted two days during which the Indians lost 17 men and one squaw besides those before mentioned. A party of 200 was organized at Deer Creek and is expected to start a pursuit of the remaining Indians.

# A New Law

- April 1850 - Assemblyman Brown introduced Assembly Bill # 129, "An Act for the Government and Protection of Indians". This bill talked about punishment of Indians as well as authorized the indenture of vagrant Indians by whites. Indian children could be indentured until they reached the age of 18 for males and 15 for females. Adults could be indentured by whites who were owed fines incurred by Indians levied by the Justice of the Peace until the fines were paid back in full. The whites were only required to provide proper food and clothing.
- This law was abused by some trappers who fought with Indians. The parents would be killed and the children sold into indentured slavery for \$25 to \$75 each. **The law also stated Indians could not testify against whites in trials, although they could register complaints with a Justice of the Peace.**
- An Indian was defined in 1850 as anyone with 50% Indian blood; in 1851 it was modified to anyone with 25% Indian blood.

# California Indian Treaty

- August 1851 - Meeting at Bidwell's Ranch in Chico to sign "Treaty of Friendship" with the local Indians; 10 tribes, 300 Indians, met with representatives of the Federal Government (O.M. Wozencraft, Indian Agent, Edward Fitzgerald, Brevet Major First Dragoons, George Stoneman, Lt. First Dragoons, Thomas Wright, 2nd Lt. Second Infantry were present)
- Bidwell stated that the Chiefs were not very much different from the other Indians. The Federal Government never ratified the treaty.





**Maidu Headmen with California treaty commission  
July or August 1851,  
Oliver M. Wozencraft seated front and center.**

# Indian Reservation System

- Oct 1852 - \$250,000 set aside by the Federal Government to establish 5 California Indian Reservations---each to contain 25,000 acres. The first was established at Tejon (1853), in Southern California. The theory was that the reservations would eventually become self sufficient like the missions had been.
- Sept 1854 - Nome Lackee Indian Reservation, the second of five reservations in California, was founded in Tehama County in September. It was located 60 miles northeast of Round Valley and southwest of Red Bluff. The Indian population at Nome Lackee was 800 in Oct 1854 and 1000 in Aug 1865, consisting of Pit River, Trinity and Nevada Indians. (In 1859 some of the Concow Indians that were captured were held there for a brief period).
- 1858 - There was an investigation against Indian Agent Geiger who assumed control in 1857, resulting in his being relieved of duty in 1859. There was no serious management of the reservation after that. By 1862, the reservation was in serious decline with most of the Indians gone by the end of 1864.

## Indian Reservation System - Continued

- Those remaining were sent to Nome Cult Farm in Round Valley. (Nome Cult Farm established in 1856 consisted of 15,000 acres in a valley of 25,000 acres and its purpose was to supply food to the other reservations). The Concow Indians were among those transferred to Round Valley in 1859. The Round Valley Reservation shut down in 1899 and a portion of the land was given to those living on the reservation (10 acres for men and 5 acres for women; 152 Concow descendants were given land).
- Mendocino Reservation, the third of five reservations in California was surveyed in Oct. 1855 and consisted of 25,000 acres near present day Fort Bragg. The reservation was established in Spring, 1856. The reservation closed in March 1886.

# Mendocino Reservation (Fort Bragg) 1856-1866

REMINISCENCES OF MENDOCINO.



THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE MENDOCINO RESERVATION. DISTRIBUTION OF RATIONS TO THE INDIANS.

Circa 1857

# The Reservation System Was a Dismal Failure

- Sept 1857 - M.R. Morgan 1st Lt, 3rd artillery writes report to Major W.W. Mackall in San Francisco. The Indians from Yuba County are not satisfied on the reservation. **Every now and then they run away in squads. Some are caught and brought back, others escape to their old homes.**
- In Oroville and on the Feather River where they formerly lived, some worked for farmers, others in the mines. They got money and found out its uses. There was an abundance of fish and other things that are not available on the reservation. On the reservation they are furnished with flour and clothes and nothing else. **Living with the whites they understand the value of money. Some will work on the reservation, others will not.**
- The number of Indians on the reservation at this time is about 800. There is sickness in every cabin and among the whites; the Physician is also sick and unable to make his rounds.

## Trouble between Ranchers, Miners and the Military

- May 1858 - Six head of cattle were stolen from the ranch of Mr. Bacon of Antelope Creek. A party was raised to find the Indians. They found seven Indians on the ridge but were not able to get close enough to shoot them.

The Indians stated they were keeping the horses. Later, Jack Wiatt, was able to shoot one Indian and take him captive. **In plain English, he said they were Inskip Indians and there were many Indians taking part in the stealing. He also said he learned English at Cold Spring Valley.**

- In a separate article about Capt. Deyer camped at Antelope Mill, the Captain states his objective is to round up the Indians at Battle Creek, Deer Creek, Antelope, Salt and Mill Creeks. Writer states these areas are infested with hostile Indians, aided by whites. He hopes the Captain will hang the first paleface digger thief he finds, as the white Indians are regarded inferior in all respects to the red ones.

# Citizens of Red Bluff Take Matters Into Their Own Hands



Red Bluff 1868

Note: Redding did not exist until 1870, making Red Bluff and Oroville the major cities in this area of Northern Calif. in the 1860s

# Antelope Rangers

- June 1858 - Red Bluff Beacon - People of Antelope Valley form a group called the Antelope Rangers at meeting on June 5<sup>th</sup>; issue a number of resolutions regarding the Indians. Because of Indian issues the last two years, they will form a group to stand ready to assist any other group in removing from existence or to a reservation, all the tribes that belong to Tehama and Shasta Counties, also, the northwest portion of the Counties of Butte and Colusa.
- Indians living with white families since infancy under the age of 14, will be allowed to stay with their white family as guardians. J.D. Hopper-Captain, R.W. Morgan-1st Lt, P. Mooney- 2nd do, J.E. Eels-3rd do, H.C. Dougherty, Chairman, W.H. Bahnny, Secretary.



# Scalping

- April 1859 – Red Bluff Beacon, Hunting Indians – “A new plan has been adopted by our neighbors opposite this place, to chastise the Indians for their many depredations during the past winter. **Some men are hired to hunt them down, who are compensated by receiving so much for each scalp, or some other satisfactory evidence that they have been killed.** The money has been made up by subscription.”

# California Gets Involved

## The Roundups in Northern California in 1859

- July 1859 Walter Jarboe forms a group at Round Valley to round up Indians. It is estimated he killed 300 Indians and took 500 prisoners. Citizens financed the operation
- The City of Red Bluff wants the Governor of California to take responsibility and provide troops or money for these expeditions. “The Federal troops have proven to be of little value.”
- August 1859 General Kibbe of the California Guard is appointed by Governor Weller to Round up Indians in Northern California. Three companies were formed. One company rounded up 200 to 300 Concow Indians along with Kimsheew and Tiger Indians. The three Chiefs were captured. The Concow Chief spoke perfect English and said there were about 1,000 in the tribe. He stated, “now that you have me they will follow,” that did not happen. In total all three companies rounded up about 1500 Indians in Northern California, killing many in the Pit River area. The “Pit River Massacre” was hotly debated in the newspapers. Kibbe reported costs of \$70,000.

# California Bonds

- Bonds were sold by California to pay for the expenses of these expeditions. The bonds were later resold at \$.35 to \$.50 on the dollar because the state could not redeem them, they were waiting on reimbursement by the Federal Government.
- It would be six years before the bonds were redeemed and they brought about \$.35 on the dollar.

# The Civil War

- In 1863 the head of the California Reservation System requested \$215,000 from Congress. They were awarded \$70,000.
- The request for additional troops was also denied.
- The reservations could not feed the Indians. In Sept 1862, 400 Concow and Hat Creek Indians led by the Concow Chief left the reservation and returned to the Chico area. The head of Indian affairs in San Francisco could not stop them and agreed to let them stay one year near Bidwell's ranch.

# Mill Creek Indians

- Many of the confrontations causing the 1859 Indian roundup were because of the Indians from the Mill Creek area. They were led by an Indian named Shave Head with about 60 warriors.
- In 1863 attacks were made against families that included killing children. It is now believed these raids were also carried out by Indians from Mill Creek area. They were led by an Indian named Big Foot and he also had about 60 warriors.
- The killing of children in 1863 brought the Indian issue to a head in Butte County. The truth was that Indian children had been killed in raids for years by whites, but it was never reported in the papers.
- Many people felt local Indians were supporting these raids with intelligence.

# The 1863 Roundup – Trail of Tears

- Sept 1863 – 461 Indians were taken from the Chico area to the reservation at Round Valley, about 120 miles. Many were already sick with chills and starving. They started the journey with 14 wagons supplied by Bidwell. But the wagons were only offered for part of the trip; the wagons that were supposed to meet them halfway never showed up. (It is surmised that the Government did not have the money to pay for additional wagons). Consequently, they were required to walk the rest of the way, about 50 miles; 150 sick and elderly Concow Indians were scattered along the trail dying at a rate of 2 to 3 per day. Several sources reported the Indians were treated badly (whipped or even shot) along the way, especially those slowing the progress due to sickness or their young age. At least 32 Indians died on the journey although the count could be much higher.
- A large number of Indians from the Big Bend area were included in this roundup. They had avoided the roundup in 1859. Michael Wells, a merchant and Justice of the Peace in Yankee Hill and Alfred Clark, a miner from Yankee Hill and the husband of Yohema (the daughter of a Concow Chief) played a role in trying to protect these Indians. Ultimately Wells felt it was in the Yankee Hill Indian's best interest to voluntarily join the round up. On Wells' advice half the tribe, about 200, Yankee Hill Indians did make the march to Round Valley.

August 1865,

## The Last Major Butte County Confrontation

- The last major incident in Butte County was when a group of 9 Indians with rifles raided the house of Robert Workman, a miner by trade living in Concow. They killed and mutilated his wife's sister visiting from Australia and a ranch hand. Mrs. Workman was beaten but did not die. She was pregnant at the time and gave birth 2 months later. Mrs. Workman died 2 weeks after the birth and the child one week after that.
- A group from the area went to Mill Creek to track down Big Foot and his warriors.

## By 1868 things finally come to a close in Butte Co

- Robert Workman, whose wife and sister in-law was killed in Concow, married Susan Belden, a Pulga Indian. The town of Belden was named after her by her sons.
- A majority of the descendants from the Concow Valley area Indians are from families where an Indian woman married a miner in the 1850's.
- One young white girl was adopted by the John Clark family in the 1940's. They are a prominent Indian family from Yankee Hill. She has spent many years researching her family's Indian heritage. Much of what I know about the family came from her remarkable research she shared with me.



# Indians at Cherokee circa 1899



# Round Valley - Covelo

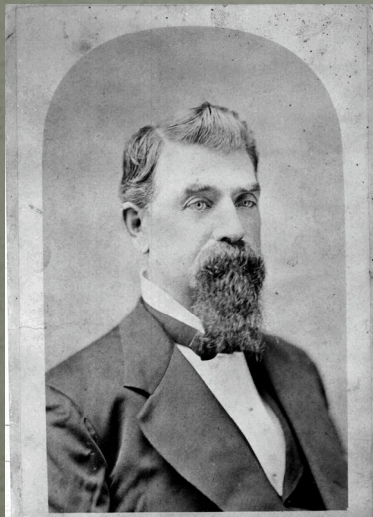


Round Valley Circa 1850's



Flora Clark at Round Valley

Flora Clark 1855 - 1957 wife of Walter Clark



Left - George White, powerful land owner in Round Valley who financed many of the raids against the Indians



Circa 1910?

# Modoc Indian Wars 1872 to 1873

- The Modoc Indian wars were fought in both Oregon and California. Captain Jack and about 200 warriors eluded capture for nearly seven months.
- The details of this war can be found in “The Indian History of the Modoc War”. It is one of the few books written by someone of Indian descent, it was published in 1914 by Jeff Riddle. Copies are still available today.
- This was the last major Indian/settler confrontation in California.

# 1884 Concow Indian Chief Interview

- In July 1884 The Overland Monthly printed an interview with the Concow Indian Chief, Tome-ya-nem, that was taken at Round Valley by Capt Tassin in 1874.
- Part of that interview has to do with his organizing the Concow, Yukas and Pit River Indians at Round Valley to participate with the military stationed at Camp Wright in a raid on the Wylackie Indians in Round Valley which resulted in many deaths and his later regrets for participating.
- He talks about leading the Concow and Hat Creek Indians back to Chico after they left the Round Valley Reservation in 1862. He mentions the Yankee Hill Indians as well.

At one point he stated during the interview  
“My past is dead; the present is passing;  
and I have no future”

The information supporting this presentation as well as additional facts about the Butte and Tehama County Indian history can be found in the California Indian section under RESEARCH on this website. It contains over 800 newspaper articles from 1846 to 2021 and has a 75-page PDF index. There is also a 30-page article that goes into more depth about the Northern California Indian history.

### Suggested Reading:

*A Time of Little Choice* by Randall Milliken. It discusses in great detail the San Jose Mission Indians based on researching the mission records for his college thesis. It currently has limited availability but can be ordered from Amazon.

*California Standoff* by Michele Shover. It covers Northern California Indian history. It can be ordered from this website in the online bookstore.