

California of 81
78. New York
June 1st 1853.

B. Oscar Field

Giving a description of the
"Root Digger Indians"
and their country in Cal-
ifornia — .

also Enclo; copy of a
suit against Sara Braden,

New York Oliver Davis A.D.

Recd. ack'd & reff'd
ref'd to Commr. of Indian
Affairs C.G.C. Whiting

Dept. of the Interior
June 21/53

27 Cir

File

Encd F. 91

New York 17th June 1853.

"To His Excellency

Franklin Pierce

President of the

United States of America"

I beg to forward your Excellency this description of the Root Digger Indians and their country in California; viz. all the land from the head of the Sacramento river, to its mouth on the east side of the Sierra Nevada, and east of the San Joaquin river to its southern extremity, thence to the mouth of Kern river including Tulare Valley & Lakes, thence south to the Coast range, and east 150 miles into the Sierra Nevada mountains, which are very much broken at this point, and can be crossed with the greatest of ease. In the summer of 1850 I explored it and know it to be so. This country is about 650 miles in length and 160 in breadth. The plains from the low hills to the rivers average 30 miles. In 1846 Captain Soutter had built a fort at the forks of the American and Sacramento rivers and cultivated some land with Indian labour. Also 45 miles up the American river in 1847 he was building a saw mill with the consent of the Indians. Mr. Marshall while digging the "Race" found the first piece of Gold, its value was \$7. - Up to that time the Indians had always owned and occupied all of the country above described; There were 3 or 4 white persons had settled with them. The Americans never had conquered them although they had resorted to the lowest and meanest acts to destroy them, one was that the small pox had raged amongst the Mexicans,

They collected all the filthy clothes and scattered them on the plains by night, knowing the poor Indians would pick them up, and as soon as the disease spread among them and raged with violence they raised a large force and crossed the San Joaquin river to the east side in the Indian Country, and went to the Loco mountains where there is a high rocky mountain, forming a natural fort, having only one pass to its summit. The Indians had gathered in large numbers not knowing what to do, or what evil had got amongst them it was fearful, some sick, others dying. - The Mexicans attacked them on all sides, the fight lasted 2 days and nights, the Indians put them to flight and they run like cowardly dogs. So said the Chief, many were killed on both sides, the spot was shot down by one of the chiefs over 125 years old, he had kept his age by a week for each year, this was in June 1850 and while he told his tale I saw the tears trickle down his cheeks, no one with a heart and soul and knows how they have been treated, and driven from their lands and living but would pity them. - It cannot be denied, that they owned all the gold lands in California. And what compensation has been given them? There is not an American born, with a proper feeling, but were the truth known to him, would blush to think the Head of our Government suffered it without providing some relief, which might have been done if properly managed and a sufficient sum given to defray the expense of an honorable treaty, and paying them a fair valuation for their gold lands, and then let them occupy their lands on the San Joaquin and Kern rivers Country.

or otherwise move them east of Sierra Nevada mountains, and with a few suitable persons to instruct them they would soon learn to cultivate the soil, for they are not insensible of the great advantage it would be to them as I discovered during the 9 months I lived amongst them. In the Fall of 1851 three Commissioners came to California to make a treaty with the Indians. Their first proceeding was to call for U.S. troops to protect themselves, in a few weeks after there were 100 & 200 soldiers at Stockton en route for the Indian Country and the Commissioners with them - The first Indian station they made at Stanislaus; the next at Tuolumne river, then "Moccasin" river, then Chonohillies or "Frisas" Creek. - As I have not yet seen a correct map of California I am thus particular - The Commissioners then called small parties together and made some terms with them - They were to occupy some lands at the foot of the low hills, at the Stanislaus river running south, a narrow strip, which the Miners had to pass and re-pass; a part of it was occupied by the Whites as farming lands; and those that did remain those had to be fed on Beef which instead of improving their condition they were worse off than in their wild state. But that did not last long. The Commissioners had no money and no more credit; Drafts had been drawn on the Government for what had been expended for clothes and Beef, and came back unpaid. So without either money or credit they could do no more; The result was no Contractors no Beef and Commissioners gone - And what was the consequence? misery and starvation and would have been a Famine if the Indians

had not left and gone to the mountains and
valleys, and there lived on what nature had
provided. The whole country almost is occupied
by the whites either mining or farming, and the
Indian forced to seek his living on the barren mountains
and to remain there in the winter months to
~~extremities.~~ And when they come down to the
low mountains and plains the whites and them
can't agree, next there is a murder or a theft, and
the Indians are off to the high broken mountains.
War is declared the whites pursue, and often the
innocent suffer. So it has been and so it will
be until something is done to relieve them. some-
times one side to blame and sometimes the other.
God made the Indians, he made them to enjoy
the bright sunny light, pure air, free soil,
and woods, God has not made them or any
thing in vain. They have as much rights to live
as any other, God furnished them their own food
He gave them all they possessed they had a right
a right from God to live; And His Just
Judgment and divine wrath we must
expect sooner or later to fall upon us as a
nation and as individuals, if in selfish
cruelty and avariciousness we are the cause
of taking the life that God alone can
give, my only motive in troubling your
Excellency with the foregoing simple state-
ments of facts mostly under my own ^{eye} is
that the poor Indians wretched state may
perhaps be served by it, and his distresses
alleviated, I am Your Excellency's
Most Obedt & Humble Servt
to Command.

B. Ascar Field

To Col. Adam Johnston

Suk. Agent of the Indians in
California, and in particular for the Valley of the San
Joaquin River.

Sir,

In the month of December A. D. 1849 I went into the Territory of the "Root Digger Indians" on Kings River, in California, for the purpose of Mining, and also with a view of establishing at some point on the River, a Ferry in order to meet the wants of the large emigration then on the route from Los Angeles, and other places, to the Mining Districts in California; and finding the country possessed by these Indians, I called the chiefs together, viz: Pascal, Antonio & San Francisco, who were the Chiefs over the Indians inhabiting this portion of country, and I then stated to them my wishes, and intentions of coming there to Mine, and also to establish a Ferry, on Kings River, in order to meet the demands of the numerous trains, that were expected by that Route. The chiefs above mentioned, were pleased with the proposition, and promised me the protection of themselves and the Indians under them, in case I would come.

I then returned to Stockton a distance of over two hundred miles, in order to purchase Goods, Provisions, Boots & other articles necessary to carry out the enterprise, which I did, and then returned to Kings River, and arrived there in about fifty days after my interview with the chiefs.

On my return I was met by the Chiefs at the River, with great apparent friendship & by them conducted down the River about twelve miles, to a point which they gave me, saying, this was the place for the emigration to cross & that here I could locate & establish a Ferry. In return I gave them some presents which they received with protestations of friendship & assurance of protection. Nothing occurred to disturb the friendship existing between us until the night of May 5th 1850, when the Indians came to my place, and entered my premises & forcibly carried away the following Property, for which the said Indians are now indebted to me, to wit:

The Root Digger Indians to Oscar Field Dr
To fortyseven hundred dollars in Gold dust coin &
U. S. Treasury notes \$4700.00

To two Gold watches & other property consisting of flour
Pork, other Provisions, to wit, Sugar, Dried apples & Tea,
Calicoes Domestic 2300.00

amounting in all to seven thousand dollars \$7000.00

State of California
Mariposa County May 5. 1850

Subscribed & sworn to before me this 23rd day of December A. D. 1851

Adam Johnson U. S. Ind. Agent

You will take notice that I claim the foregoing account against the said "Root Digger Indians" who are under your charge, and also that I shall apply to the Government of the United States for that amount and interest, to be paid out of any moneys, that may be appropriated to said Indians, and I have now witnesses here to prove that they stole this property from me, & pray you to take proof of the same, as you are empowered to do under the 17th and 18th sections, of the last act of the U. S. Congress, approved June 30th 1834

December 22nd A. D. 1851.

To Col. A. Johnston.

Sub Indian Agt. to.

Respectfully Yours

B. Oscar Field

Joseph T. Hamm states that about the 9th of May A.D. 1850, I was present at Maj B. Oscar Field's place on Kings River in California, and then saw the "Root Digger Indian" chiefs Antonio and San Francisco, who delivered to Maj Field in presence of Lewis Sharp, who was Interpreter, some of Maj Field's wearing apparel, and some other small articles which they said were taken on the night of May 5th 1850, together with the other articles which are mentioned in the account of Maj Field against the "Root Digger Indians" attached hereto.

Subscribed & sworn to before me this 21st day of December A. D. 1851

Adam Johnson, Indian Agent.

Lewis Sharp states that he was at Maj Field's place on Kings River in California May 9th 1850 and that the chiefs of the "Root Digger Indians" Antonio & San Francisco, were there, & I acted as Interpreter on this occasion, & they gave up to Maj Field some of his wearing apparel & a few other articles which were taken, with the articles named, by Maj Field, in his foregoing account against said Indians, & taken by them on the night of May 5th A. D. 1850, and they said that these were all they could get of the other Indians at the time, as the rest had been taken off or destroyed by them, Joseph T. Hamm was also present at the same time.

Lewis Sharp

Subscribed & sworn to before me this 23rd day of December A. D. 1851

Adam Johnson

Indian S. Ague Valley of
San Joaquin, Cal.

Post Office Washington City
April 12. 1853

Dear Sir

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs has a box appropriated to the use of that office. Every thing reaching this office to his address is placed in it. His letters and papers are taken from the office by his own messenger. Nothing to the address of the Govt. remains in this office.

Very respectfully
Yours very truly

C. Fred
Fletcher

Geo. W. Jenkins Esq.
P. O. New York

Department of the Interior,
Office Indian Affairs.
May 5th 1853.

Sir:

In reply to your letter of the 3rd instant, asking if a certain original document belonging to you (being a claim of \$7000 against the Root Digger Indians of California) and said to have been inclosed to this Bureau by Geo. W. Soule, Esq., on the 15th February last, had been received. I have to state that there is no evidence in this office showing that any such paper has ever reached here.

Very respectfully
Your obt. Servt.
W. H. Maupin
Commissioner

P. Oscar Field, Esq.,
Lovejoy's Hotel
Park Row
New York.

New York 17th June 1853.

His Excellency

Franklin Pierce

President of the U. S.

Sir,

I humbly beg
to submit for your Excellency's examination
and opinion, the enclosed documents, for
the purpose of ascertaining whether the Testimony
embodied in them is sufficient to establish
my claim; I had other additional Testimony
taken in 1852 (March) by sub Agent Johnson
in "San Francisco", which was mailed in
this City by "Geo. W. Bush" for Washington on
the 16th February last for the purpose of being put
on file at the Department, but never was
received, the date of Testimony may appear
of a recent date compared with the time of
deputation, the reason was, the Agent could
not give me any information how to act,
nor could I get my witnesses and him together
for such a long time afterwards; The Indians
do not deny committing the depredation
and their chiefs signified their willingness to
indemnify me if they were able, which
they were not. If your Excellency and the
Department Consider more Testimony required
to establish my claim I can obtain it, But
it will put me to a great deal of expense
if even to procure the same as that last
through the Post office - You will also receive
a description of the "Root Digger Indians,"
which I trust may not be altogether un-
interesting to your Excellency, Should

it please you, I shall take pleasure in giving you a general description of the Apaches and their country, as I spent six months in the spring and summer of 1851 among them; in fact I have been among the various Indian tribes off and on for the last 25 years; and if my ideas are not expressed in learned and flowery language my being brought up on a "Frontier Country" I hope will be an ample excuse. Moreover my being an old Bachelor and this my first visit to New York of which I am quite tired and intending to leave shortly for California and the Apache Country again is my principal reason for submitting my claim to your Excellency, as I shall consider your reply in the affirmative or negative final for me. an _____ answer in a few days if convenient will much oblige,

Your most Obedt and
Humble servant to
Command

J. B. Greenfield

Please address
Terry's Hotel
Park Row,
New York