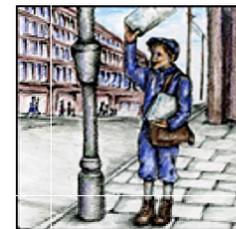


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LETTER FROM SONOMA.

Political Prospects in the County--Early Settlement of Sonoma--The Indians of the Valley.

Sonoma, July 19, 1853.

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While in Sonoma I made a number of inquiries about the probable result in the county at the next gubernatorial election, and it appears to be the general opinion that Waldo will have a decisive majority. The county is strongly Democratic, but the people have no confidence in many of the caucus leaders, and some of them are so lost to the doctrine of the divine right of loafers to the spoils, that they would rather vote for an honest Whig than a dishonest Democrat. This is, no doubt, a mournful state of affairs—but the times are so degenerate! Reading carried the county against Bigler two years ago, because many of the pioneers knew Reading and—Bigler too! A number of Democrats assured me that they would vote for Waldo, who has made his residence for some time in the county. To say the least, Bigler is not popular in Sonoma and Waldo is. The Biglerish assemblymen, who voted for Extension at the last session, cannot be re-elected.

Sonoma, for a long time the nucleus of the American settlements on the north side of the Bay, has been the point from which a number of expeditions of various kinds have started out. It was here that the Bear flag was raised early in June, 1846, before anything was known in California of the war on the Rio Grande.

In the spring of '48, most of the men went to the mines, and nearly all were successful. Some of them discovered important diggings. The brothers Kelsey, a trio of Missourians, who crossed the mountains, two with families in 1845, were among the first prospectors in '48. They discovered Kelsey's Dry Diggings and the mines of Trinity, which were very rich. They still made their residence in Sonoma, and in the winter of '49 and '50, the youngest brother went with a partner to a ranch on Clear Lake, where they had a large number of cattle. There are a great many Indians about this lake, and during the winter they murdered Kelsey and his partner. The winter being very wet and the lake being among the mountains and difficult of access, nothing was known of the murder until spring. A company of the troops, at that time stationed in Sonoma, went up to the lake and inflicted a wholesome chastisement. The slain were numbered by hundreds, nobody knew how many. Since then the Indians at the lake have remained in

Since then the Indians at the lake have remained in peace.

The expedition which established the towns on Humboldt Bay, started from Sonoma, and during the summer of last year several parties started out from the County to explore the country about Cape Mendocino, where there are now a number of settlers.

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The land about Clear Lake was reserved for the Indians by the Indian Commissioners, but the people are talking of squatting on it, and it will probably be but a short time before the unfortunate red man will be deprived of this, his favorite home.

The Indians were once very numerous in Sonoma, as all that district of country was called which is now known as the valleys of Petaluma, Sonoma and Napa, with their hills and mountains. There is one old Indian yet living, named Carlos, who had arrived at manhood before the Catholic *padres* had established the Mission at Sonoma in 1824, and he says that there were then thousands of Indians in the valley. The Mission was very wealthy in horses and cattle, having more than 15,000 of each, besides extensive grain fields, vineyards, gardens and peach orchards; but since 1834, when the Missions were declared the property of the government, nearly all their improvements have disappeared. Occasionally a forlorn Indian may be seen, who calls himself *Christiano*, and thinks himself far better than the *gentiles* (*pagans*) who never had any instruction of the *padres*. There are likewise the crumbling walls and the tiled roofs of the Mission buildings, and a superannuated peach orchard that owes its existence to the Mission. The Indians speak of the period when the Mission flourished as the golden age of Sonoma. *Ah Dios mio, say they cuan bues nos al pobre indio eran los padres*; Good Heavens, how kind were the old fathers to the poor Indians, far different from the Spanish *rancheros* and the Americans. The Indians in the valley now are generally a lazy, filthy, drunken, unhealthy set, and a long existence can neither be hoped nor expected for them. The Squaws are very few have seldom more than one child, and that one is almost invariably a boy; though the most of them have no children. In the upper part of the country, where the Indians live more to themselves, there are more children, and some of them are girls.

The Indians of Clear Lake sometimes come down into the vallies in parties of five or ten to work in the harvest fields or in making adobes. The pay is five dollars per month and as much beef as they can eat, which is no small quantity. Making adobes with Indians is nearly abandoned, but I will describe the Spanish process. A piece of suitable clayey ground near the water is chosen for the place of operation; a half dozen Indians then begin with pick and hoe to dig up and pulverize a few cubic feet of ground upon which water is poured with buckets; one or two Indians stir the mass a little with their hoes and then jump in with their feet and tread it to a stiff mud, mixing in a little grass or barley straw; the mud is then placed on hand barrows, (made of poles and raw hide,) carried to the yard, previously smoothed off, and thrown in the moulds, without top or bottom. After the Indians have smoothed off the top of the mud with his hand, he raises the mould, leaving the adobe there to dry, and then proceeds to make another. Thus an Indian will make thirty or forty adobes in a day but

an Indian will make thirty or forty adobes in a day, but these adobes are sometimes two feet long, a foot wide and a half a foot thick. By that method all the old adobes in Sonoma were made.

The saw mill and the brick machine, the reaper and the thrasher, now ply the trade of the red man in Sonoma, and he wanders disconsolate over the land which shall soon know him no more. **HASTA LUEGO.**