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Sacramento Daily Union, Volume 8, Number 1177, 30 December 1854 — Digger Indians. [ARTICLE]

Digger Indians:

One of Col. Henley's Sub-Indian Agents has recently made a report concerning the tribes of Indians in the northern portion of this State, which contains much interesting statistical information. An abstract of the same is published in the *Times and Transcript*. The district embraced in the report is composed of the counties of Yuba, Nevada, Sierra and Placer. The census of nine tribes is given, with the following as the aggregate:

Total number of Indians in 1849, 10,070; at the present, 3,860. Total males, 1,930; females, 1,930.

Some of these Indians are comfortably clad, while others suffer greatly from exposure and the inclemency of winter weather. Their chief articles of food are acorns, lizards, snails, offal, and such other animals and articles as can be procured when the gnawings of hunger are felt the severest. A great portion of the Indians are opposed to removal, and resist every overture made to them by the charitably disposed officers of the General Government—preferring to roam at freedom, with a precarious subsistence, over the hills and through the forests of their early attachment, to the adoption of the manners and customs of the white man, whom they feel to be infinitely removed above them in native and cultivated superiority.

The chief cause of the decimation of these Indians is said to be the small-pox. Whole tribes have been swept away by it. The report goes on to say:

Sometimes a miner will permit them to take a pan of dirt from his claim from which they get some gold. They scrape up the dirt about the end of the sluice boxes which sometimes pays them very well. On the rivers they obtain gold by scraping out the crevices that have been abandoned by the whites. The mining is done almost exclusively by the squaws. I have known a company of four or five squaws to obtain as much as \$8 in one day. With this they purchase flour and beef and most generally of the worst that there is in the market. Meats that can not be sold to others are sold to them. The men are very indolent, spending their time mostly laying about camp. Formerly they exercised more in search of game. Now there is no game. Since the settlement by the whites the deer, which were in the greatest abundance around their

camps, have been entirely driven off or killed.— They have generally gathered a good quantity of toadstools, a sort of mushroom, upon which they feed and seem to be very fond. They first steam them by covering them in heated dirt,* then roast them, bruise them up in small pieces and make a sort of cake of them. They eat the Buckeye berry. Of these they seem to be very fond after they are roasted.

They are very fond of wheat and prefer it to flour. They prepare it by boiling it to mush, when it is considered a great luxury. Every thing is cooked in their baskets. Their ingenuity manifested in the manufacture of their baskets clearly indicates their ability to learn without difficulty to manufacture all the articles of clothing necessary to make them comfortable. I have no doubt, judging from the articles about their camps, that if wool could be furnished them they would learn in twelve months to weave it into cloth with but little instruction. I make these suggestions for your consideration, believing that you will conclude with me that in a few years they may be made to clothe as well as feed themselves. There is great industry manifested by the squaws—they are always engaged at something—they do all the work of every kind.

The tribes have physicians in whom they place implicit confidence; they give no medicines, but "starve" the disease. They invariably burn their dead. They manifest great grief and anguish during the process of burning. When the corpse has been reduced to ashes, they collect it, and mixing part of it with pitch, obtained from the pine—the female relatives of the deceased, after cutting their hair short, smear it over their face, head, neck and shoulders, and wear it as a badge of mourning until it wears off, which it will do in about six months. The balance of the ashes are then buried. At this time in many of the camps one-half of the squaws are in mourning, in consequence of the death of relatives. There are few barbarous tribes of mankind that approach so near civilization on the subject of marriage. Polygamy is not considered illegal, but seldom practised among them. They universally respect the marital rights of each other. Infidelity to their marital vows on the part of the wife is punishable with death. For the last year, they have in some camps permitted this crime to go unpunished—when committed with whites. Acts of adultery are becoming much more frequent than formerly. In the county of Sierra, during the last fall, a wife who committed adultery with a white man was summarily executed by her husband, by shooting her with his arrows. In the

camps about Nevada, Yankee Jim's, Grass Valley and Auburn, lewdness among the young squaws is becoming very common; in some instances they have suffered much with diseases contracted by such habits.

These Indians are generally comfortably clad. They obtain the clothing that has been thrown away by the whites, or purchase injured clothing at reduced prices, with the gold they pan out in the mines. Some of the young squaws are in the habit of dressing neatly. They have been known to make dresses for themselves after having purchased the materials in the stores.

The great difficulty experienced in removing these tribes is found in the fact that they are employed as servants to whites. One man has had 120,000 pounds of potatoes housed by them this season. The squaws only thief from their employers. The Indians are sometimes permitted by merchants to contract debts, and one near Roses' Bar had been charged with \$4,000 worth of goods since '49. The principal opposition to go on to the Reservation comes from Nevada county. The report concludes as follows:

In the counties of Sierra and Yuba, almost a unanimous disposition exists among the people to assist you in carrying out your designs, and I am persuaded that if Mr. Storms, or some other influential man, were to go among them, some members of those tribes high up on the Yuba would go with him to the Reservation, and be of great assistance in effecting a removal of the other tribes in the spring. The success of the Superintendent's effort to induce them to remove depends much upon the representation of Captain Wiemah and John, (now in the Reservation,) when they return to the tribes again. Several influential Indians have promised me to visit them on their return, to ascertain if the representations they have heard of the country are correct. If they report favorably, I think a large majority of the Indians in Nevada county can be induced to leave for the "Henley House," as they term the Reservation, not otherwise. The industry and energy manifested by Mr. Storms to induce them to remove that he has carried there, is worthy of the highest commendation. He has to work against the united opposition of most of the influential men among the Indians, said opposition arising from reasons already set forth, and for the additional reason that they wish to show their influence over the Indian, and to let you know that their

ence over the Indian, and to let you know that their influence is worth paying for. I must be permitted to say to you, however, that the better class of society, the most intelligent and reflecting portion of our citizens, approve of your plan, and will aid you in the execution thereof by any proper efforts. Unfortunately, but few of them have much influence with the Indians.

DARING OUTRAGE.—Sheriff Garr, of Sutter county, reports that on Thursday, a gentleman by the name of Burson, accompanied by a son of Hugh Lynch, of Marysville, went over to the ranch of Mr. Murdock, about five miles from Yuba City, for the purpose of purchasing stock. On their way they met Mr. Murdock, who told the boy, who knew the stock, to show it to Mr. Burson, and he (Murdock) would be back in a short time. While engaged in collecting the stock, three or four men rode up to them and told them they were prisoners, and to give up what they had. Supposing them to be robbers, Mr. Burson put spurs to his horse and endeavored to escape, when he was fired upon by the party, one shot taking effect in his thigh, another passed through the cover to the saddle and into the horse's neck, and a third ball passed through his hat. The police coming up, he begged them to dispatch him at once, as he had been shot for a thief, and did not desire to live in disgrace. Mr. Burson was brought as far as Yuba City, when the citizens released him. He is represented as being a very worthy man. These particulars are in the *Express* of Friday.

SAN JOAQUIN MINES.—The *Times and Transcript* is informed that in the vicinity of Fort Miller, very extensive mining operations are, at the present time, being conducted on the banks of that stream.

He further states that the high banks or tables would pay from four to five dollars per day with the common long tom, if water in sufficient quantities was obtained as during the rainy season. He