

Anatomy of A Massacre: Bloody Point, 1852

Thomas H. Hunt
Photographs Dick Ackerman

The exact location of the 1852 Bloody Point massacre, which occurred along the shores of Tule Lake in northern California, is disputed. Two possible sites have been suggested, one by highly-respected trail researchers, Devere and Helen Helfrich, and the other by the U.S. Geological Survey (see map on pages 4 and 5). Recently, Paul and Ruby Tschirky, who own the property below the site preferred by the Helfriches, told Oregon-California Trails Association member Hal Goodyear of some peculiar rock piles on their ranch. They thought the rocks might mark the graves of emigrants killed in the massacre and wondered whether OCTA would be interested in researching them.

Goodyear told OCTA authorities about the Tschirky site, and the project was turned over to the Archaeology Committee, which arranged for archaeologists Roderick Sprague and Michael Rodeffer to examine the rock mounds. Since part of the Oregon-California Trails Association's mission is to identify and mark important historical sites along the western emigrant trails, a great deal of excitement surrounded this archaeological excavation. If the rocks proved to be marking graves—either white or Indian—OCTA would have taken an important first step toward positively identifying the site of the massacre.

The two articles on the following pages concern the Bloody Point massacre and the archaeological excavation. "Anatomy of a Massacre, Bloody Point, 1852" by Thomas H. Hunt tells the story of the massacre. "The Tschirky Site and The Bloody Point Investigation" by Sprague and Rodeffer is a report on the archaeological excavation.

Dick Ackerman's photographs were shot at the site suggested by the Helfrichs, near the Sprague-Rodeffer archaeological excavation.

—Editor

Anyone who has spent any time at all seriously researching the overland emigrant trails knows there are stories aplenty about Indian massacres. These "massacres" have a strong appeal to the imagination and have become a hallowed part of western historic lore. The image of a wagon train surrounded and then annihilated by hostile Indians has assumed a permanent place in the mythology of the West. It is a mythology which has been strongly reinforced by generation after generation of Hollywood movies.

Fortunately, such massacres seldom occurred; and almost

never did they occur in the classic Hollywood formulation of a beleaguered wagon train surrounded by a howling, shooting, wildly-gesticulating horde of Indians circling on horseback. There are, of course, numerous accounts of emigrants being killed by Indians along the trail; but in most cases these were killings of individuals, and they were carried out by means of stealth and ambush rather than by dramatic frontal assaults. Seldom were sufficient numbers of emigrants killed at one time to qualify the event as a true massacre.

In his admirable and scholarly history of the overland trails experience, *The Plains Across*, John Unruh identifies only four pre-Civil War trail massacres which have sufficient historical documentation to substantiate them as being clearly attributable to Indians. These were the Bloody Point massacre of 1852 at Tule Lake, California; the Ward Party massacre near Fort Boise on the Snake River in 1854; the Holloway Party massacre on the Humboldt River in 1857; the

*Thomas H. Hunt is Preservation Officer for the Oregon-California Trails Association and is the Association's past president. He is the author of *Ghost Trails to California* and co-author of *Emigrant Trails West*.*

Otter-Van Orman Party massacre near Salmon Falls on the Snake River in 1860.¹ Many of the other purported Indian attacks and massacres appearing in the historical literature are strongly suspected of being the work of "white Indians."

The present paper is in no way intended as a general study of emigrant-Indian relationships. This topic has been treated in a scholarly way by many historians, including Unruh and the Oregon-California Trails Association's own Robert Munkres.² What this paper does intend to do is bring together all the bits and pieces of information we have concerning the Bloody Point massacre so that a clearer understanding can be achieved of the dynamics involved in this one tragic aspect of the emigrant-Indian relationship. When the facts are assembled, a terrible story emerges. It is a story in which the Bloody Point massacre is not the culminating event but only one chapter in a classic white-Indian confrontation which builds directly—and seemingly inevitably—toward the far greater and more costly tragedy of the Modoc War of 1872-1873.

THE INDIAN FACTOR

It is not possible to understand the dynamics involved in the white-Indian troubles along the southern route into Oregon (the Applegate Trail) without first considering the nature of the Indian tribes that inhabited the lake country which lies along the border of south-central Oregon and north-central and northeastern California (see map).

The Modocs are the major Indian participants in our particular story; but they are merely one of several tribes which, taken together, presented a clear danger and an ongoing challenge to those emigrants who chose to use the Applegate Trail. The Modocs occupied the very center of the border-lake country—the lands south and east of Upper Klamath Lake, south and west of Lower Klamath Lake and the areas around Lost River, Tule Lake and Clear Lake. Located to the east and south of the Modocs were the Pit River Indians; further eastward and to the north, the Northern Paiutes; to the south and west, the Shastas; to the north and east, the Klamaths; and to the north and farther west, the Rogue River tribes.

As all of these tribes were territorial hunter-gatherers, it was imperative for their survival that they establish tribal boundaries and then vigorously defend those boundaries against all outside intrusions. In this regard, the Modocs seem to have had a reputation for being particularly vigilant. They were tough, fierce, brave warriors who needed to claim for themselves all the bounty their own lands would provide during the temperate months of the year so that their people would have a surplus to carry them through the hard, lean winter. The rivers, lakes, marshes and forests of the border-lake country provided rich harvests of fish, fowl and game; but it was a seasonal wealth, and starvation was always a possibility if the winters were particularly harsh or if there was a drought during the growing months.

THE WHITE FACTOR

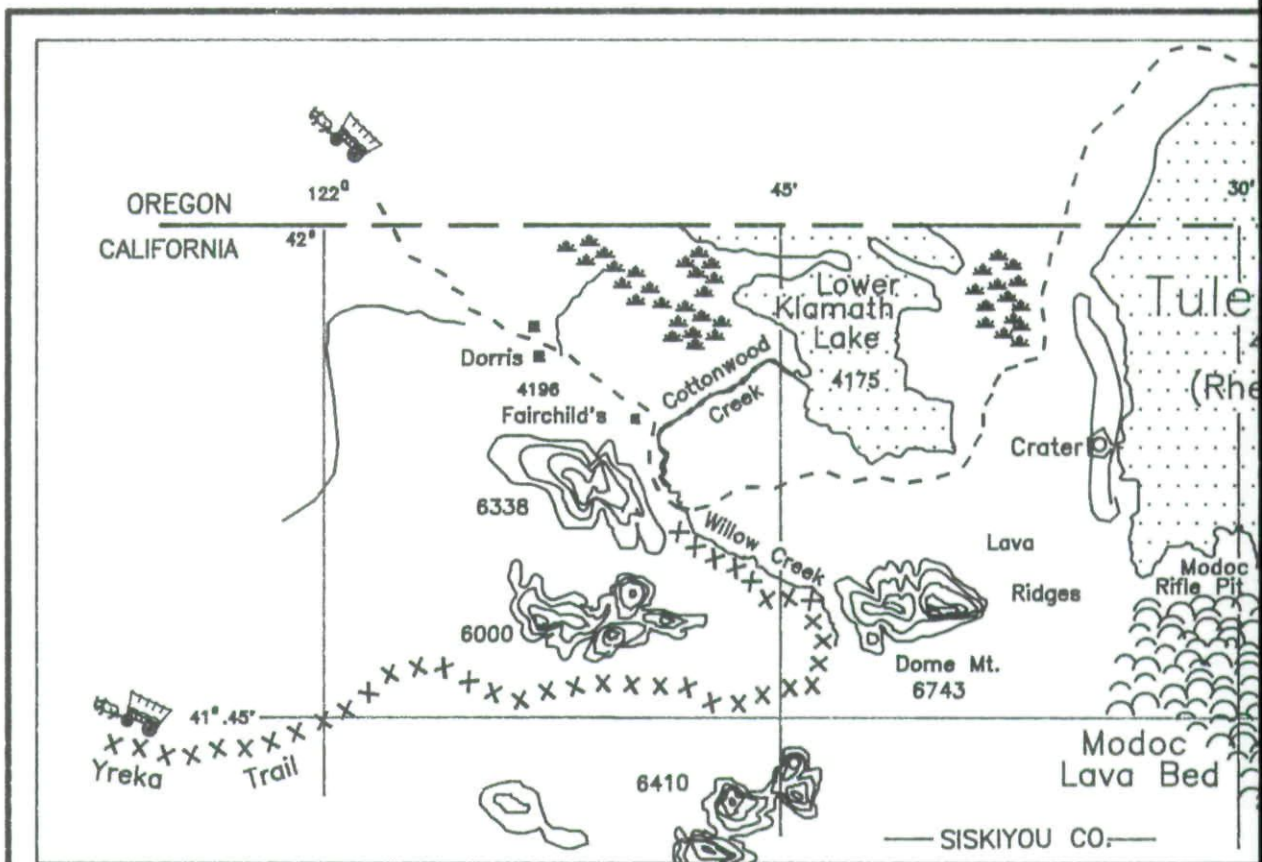
Given this state of affairs, it is not hard to see why any intrusion by the whites would lead to confrontations and hostility from the native populations. After all, any intruder—whether he be merely an itinerant fur trapper, an emigrant passing through or, more threateningly, a settler—was a hunter of game, a competitor for food, a despoiler of habitat for whatever period of time he might be present. Even to pass through the region was to disrupt to some extent the delicate balance of man to nature and to violate jealously guarded tribal territorial rights; to settle was to offer permanent umbrage and threat.

The fur trappers were the first whites to enter this border country, and, from the very first, they had to be on constant guard against Indian depredations.³ These usually consisted of stolen traps and stock, but it was not uncommon to lose a mule or a horse to an arrow fired out of the bushes or tules. As time went on, more and more of these arrows were fired in anger against the trappers themselves.

By the time the emigrants arrived, the Indians had had contact with the white trappers for a number of years; the basic antagonism between whites and Indians was already established and a pattern of hostility in place. From the very beginning, settler Jesse Applegate was mindful of this potential for trouble with these border-lake country tribes. His original 1846 way bill (i.e. trail guide) for the Applegate Trail warned the emigrant to beware of Indian depredations—particularly along that section of trail extending from the Warner Mountains to the Willamette Valley.⁴ There was good cause to issue such a warning. In 1846, the very year Applegate and his companions explored and opened this route as a wagon trail from present-day Rye Patch Reservoir on the Humboldt River in Nevada to the vicinity of Dallas in the Willamette Valley, one of the emigrants, John Newton, was killed by Umpqua Indians.⁵

No Indian tribe along the entire route of the Applegate Trail could be considered completely friendly, but by far the greatest trouble was to come from those tribes that lived in the border-lake country along the California-Oregon border. Lindsay Applegate, in his reminiscences, relates that Peter Skene Ogden warned him before he and his party of exploration set out from the Willamette Valley that "portions of the country through which we would have to travel were infested with fierce and war-like savages, who would attack every party entering their country, steal their traps, waylay and murder the men, and that the Rogue River had, in fact, taken its name from the character of the Indians inhabiting its valleys."⁶

It was not just roguery and thievery that one had to watch out for. These Indians were warriors to be respected for their bravery and fighting abilities. John Charles Fremont, in a letter dated 25 May 1846 to his famous father-in-law, Senator Thomas H. Benton, put it succinctly: "They [the Klamath Indians in this particular instance] are the bravest Indians we have ever seen; our people (my camp, Carson, etc.) consider



LEGEND

For Bloody Point Map

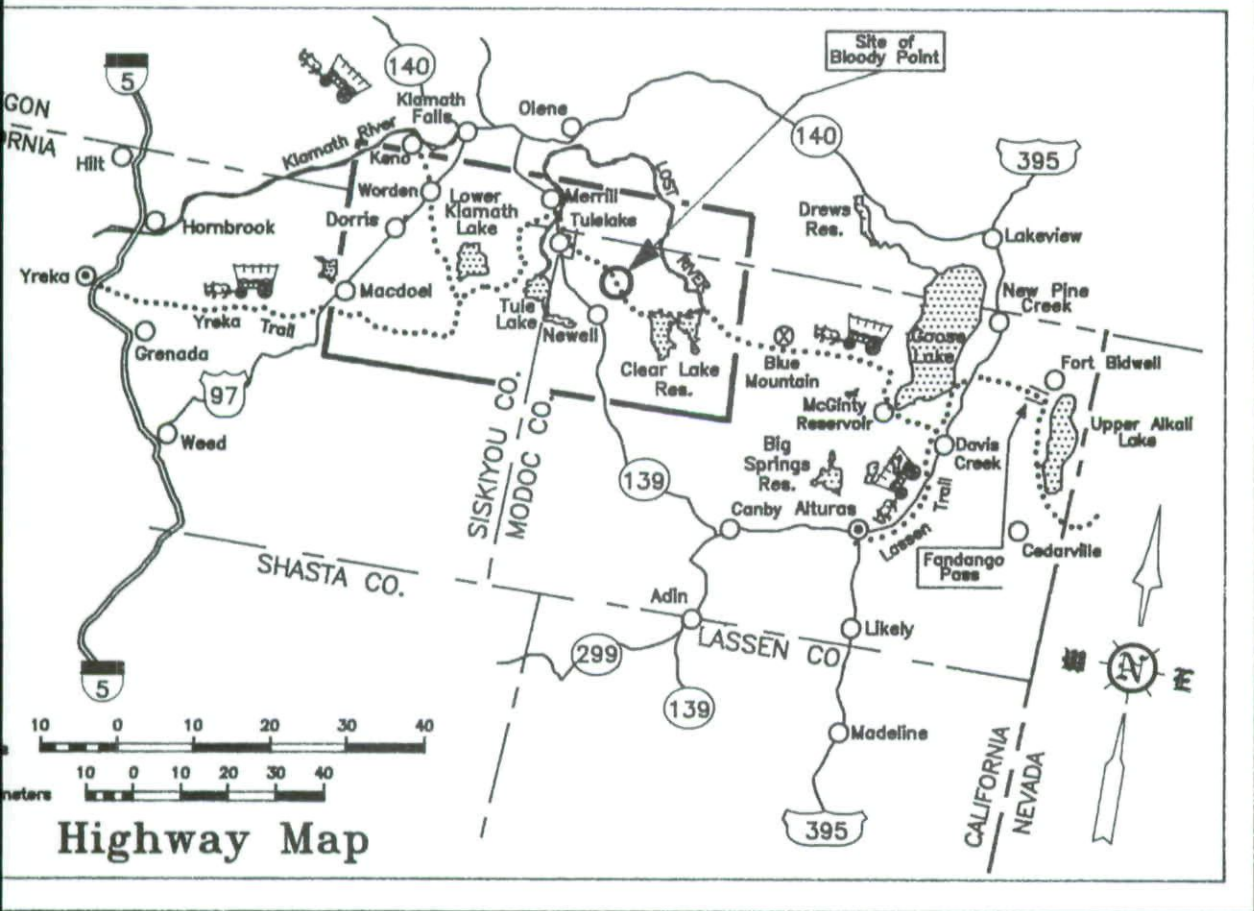
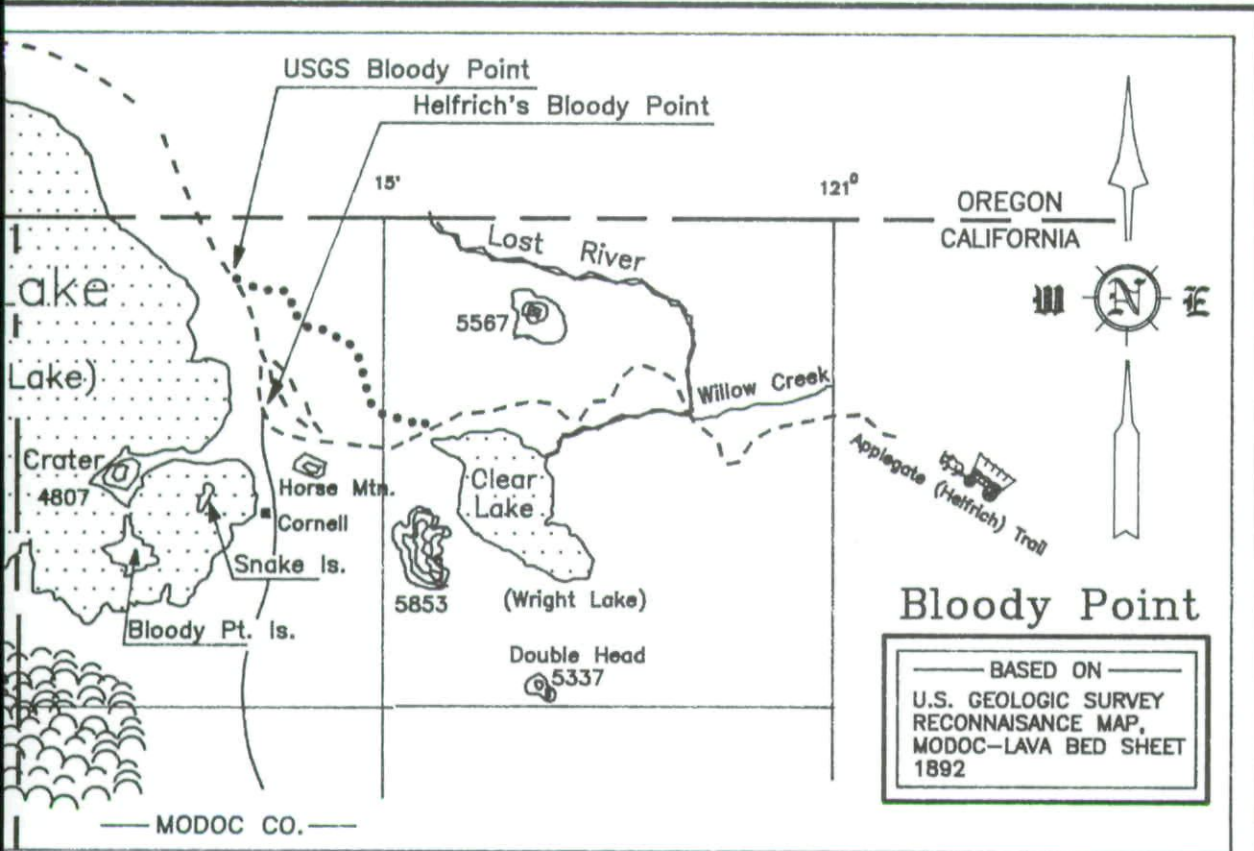
Applegate (Helfrich) Trail	-----
1872 Land Plat Road
1852 Yreka Trail	XXXXXX
Lake	
Lava Field	
Swamp	

For Highway Map

General Trail Location
Interstate Highway	=====
Highway	=====
Interstate Highway Sign	
Federal Highway Sign	
State Highway Sign	
Trail Indicator	



Scale
Scale



Highway Map

them far beyond the Blackfeet, who are by no means so daring."⁷ No mean praise, indeed, coming as it did with the official imprimatur of that seasoned Indian fighter Kit Carson. Army Captain Thomas Jefferson Cram, expands on the same theme:

...This portion of southern Oregon has been the theatre of more Indian troubles than any other part of our Pacific possessions....Notwithstanding all the evidences of danger staring them in the face, the whites underrated several tribes who occupied this district, as was the case in other parts of Oregon, and the first conflicts, as might have been expected, proved disastrous to the Bostons i.e. the whites.⁸

Of course, once the emigrants began to arrive in the Oregon Territory, it would be only a matter of time until Willamette Valley settlers began to spill over the mountains southward into the border-lake country. This was all the more certain after the Applegate Trail was opened and emigrants traveling the trail saw the potential for farming which lay in the rich lake bottoms and along the beautiful river valleys. The writing was on the wall—there would be serious confrontation; it was just a question of how soon it was going to come.

The discovery of gold in the Yreka, California, area and across the Siskiyou Mountains in the Rogue River country in 1851 greatly accelerated the process.⁹ Almost overnight, there was a great influx of gold-seekers into the California-Oregon border country. In 1852, a direct wagon route was opened from the Yreka-Shasta Valley area to a junction with the Applegate Trail at Willow Creek at the southwest corner of Lower Klamath Lake. From this time on, a sizable portion of the emigrant traffic over the Applegate Trail was destined, not for Oregon, but for the gold regions of northern California. Within months, prospectors were pushing into every dry ravine and river course in the region, greatly adding to the chance of contacts between Indians and whites and to those sorts of confrontations and conflicts which were bound to occur as the Indians reacted with hostility to disruptive invasion of their hunting and fishing lands. It is also true that the discovery of gold brought along with it an element of the white population which could only exacerbate the situation. Again we turn to Captain Thomas Jefferson Cram for his candid, first-hand assessment of the situation:

...The discovery of gold in the Rogue River valley attracted, with some well-disposed persons, many of the most unprincipled and ungovernable white men from all countries; with few exceptions, but for these wretches, it is believed that Indians of Oregon would have been the most peaceable, friendly, and easiest-managed, with proper care, of any uncivilized tribes within the bounds of the U.S. It is very true that the Rogue river tribe was one of the few exceptions referred to...but their roguish and stealing propensities afforded no just provocation, more especially when not in the commission of a crime, for the acts of cruelty committed upon them by some of that class of unprincipled whites, such as are always known to lurk on the confines of civilization.¹⁰

All the ingredients were now present for serious white-Indian trouble: brave warrior tribes with a strong sense of territory, settlers and gold-seekers flooding in without regard to native rights or sensibilities, an unstable frontier society containing a sizable element of undesirable and unsavory soldiers-of-fortune.

As we know, history does not occur in a vacuum. There are always antecedents leading up to a particular event and to the historical consequences emanating from that event. The Bloody Point massacre is certainly no exception to this rule. It might be illuminating to consider briefly those incidents, both before and after the massacre, which establish the historical context for that tragic event and help to place it in perspective.

CHRONOLOGY OF INDIAN-WHITE INCIDENTS PRECEDING THE MASSACRE

1826—Jedediah Smith's party of American trappers is attacked by Indians on the Oregon coast. Fifteen trappers are killed. Four, including Smith, escape to the Hudson Bay Company's post at Fort Vancouver. Despite the fact that the Company is anything but pleased to have an American trapping party in the Oregon country and, indeed, had tried to trap out the beaver in southern Oregon so that the Americans would not be tempted to come north in search of pelts, it is firm Company policy never to let any such attacks by the Indians go unanswered. An expedition is immediately mounted to chastise the Indians and recover Smith's pelts, trading goods and horses. Eventually, part of Smith's goods are recovered, and he sells them to the Company at a considerable discount rather than try to get them back to the States.

1837—Two Americans, John Turner and John Gay, kill several Shasta Indians while driving a herd of cattle from California to Oregon. This sort of hostile encounter has become common between the trappers and Indians in the years leading up to the coming of the first emigrants through southern Oregon in 1846.

1846—Fremont's party of exploration is attacked by Klamath Indians on the shores of Upper Klamath Lake. Three of Fremont's men are killed, and, in reprisal, his party attacks and kills 17 Klamaths. On its hurried journey back to California to join the Bear Flag Revolt his party also kills one Pit River Indian.

A party of settlers from the Willamette Valley, under the leadership of Levi Scott and Jesse and Lindsay Applegate, open the Applegate Trail into Oregon.¹¹ From the Willamette Valley to the Rogue River, they follow the pack route developed over the years by the fur trappers, a route which has come to be known as the Siskiyou Trail. Southeast of present-day Medford, the exploration party leaves the route of the Siskiyou Trail and strikes off toward the east and south, eventually to join the already established California Trail near the Sink of the Humboldt River. Jesse Applegate and several other members of the party push ahead of the main group and reach Fort Hall in time to persuade a portion of the emigration

to Oregon to use their newly-opened southern route.¹² Lindsay Applegate reports that a party of about 80 men—some Americans, but mostly Frenchmen, half-breeds and Columbia River Indians—traveling just ahead of them on the eastward journey, have a fight with the Rogue River Indians. He also reports that his party camps on the site of Fremont's fight with the Klamath Indians; but, in this, he is clearly mistaken as that battle took place on Upper Klamath Lake, and his own party is then encamped on the west side of Lower Klamath Lake in the vicinity of Hot Creek. Fremont's party did not visit this lake.

1848—Peter Lassen, leading a very small wagon train, opens the Lassen Trail off of the Applegate Trail at the south end of Goose Lake. News of the discovery of gold in California leads a large party of Oregonians under Peter Burnett to follow the Applegate Trail as far south as Tule Lake or Clear Lake and then drop directly south to join the just-opened Lassen Trail on the Pit River. Burnett's party catches up with Lassen's party, now in great trouble because their provisions are depleted, and it is Burnett's party which finishes opening the Lassen Trail into the Sacramento Valley.

1849—Captain William H. Warner of the U.S. Topographical Engineers and two other members of his railroad survey party are killed by Indians on the eastern side of the Warner Mountains.¹³ The Indians involved were probably Paiutes, but the record is not clear on this.

About one half of the gold rush emigration to California uses the Lassen Trail this year. There are numerous reports in emigrant diaries about Indian depredations, and a number of emigrants and Indians are killed along the Pit River.

1851—Gold is discovered in the Yreka area and across the Siskiyou in the Rogue River country. The influx of gold-seekers begins.

Six whites are killed in the vicinity of Bloody Point (these whites are not to be confused with a report of six whites being killed near the mouth of Coquille River).

Six or seven whites, including Brevet Captain James Stuart, U.S. Army, are killed in Rogue River country. Brevet Major Philip Kearny punishes the Indians for these attacks.

A group of about 35 whites have a pitched battle with Rogue River Indians; the whites are forced to retreat.

A party of about 20 whites, under Captain Samuel Smith and guided by the notorious Indian fighter, Ben Wright, leaves Yreka in search of 200 head of stock stolen by the Modocs. These whites camp with one village of Modocs and then treacherously attack and kill 16 of them. They then go on to kill another 15 or 20 Modocs in the Lost River country. Only two or three whites are wounded, and they return with 34 head of stock.

1852—A wagon road is opened from Yreka to a junction with the Applegate Trail at Willow Creek on the southwest corner of Lower Klamath Lake.

Twelve whites are reported killed by the various border-lake tribes. These are in addition to the whites killed in the Bloody Point massacre.

The Bloody Point Massacre occurs.

THE MASSACRE

No emigrant accounts of either the massacre or the subsequent rescue efforts are known to exist. However, we are fortunate in having an excellent account of it in Harry L. Wells' *History of Siskiyou County*. We also have a number of statements authored soon after the event by various participants in the rescue effort by which we can evaluate the secondary account as put forth by Wells.

Let us turn to the Wells account for the basic story:

"...Early in the summer of 1852, John Onsby received a letter at Yreka, by way of Sacramento, from an uncle, stating that he and many others were coming on the old Oregon trail to Yreka, and that great suffering would ensue if they were not met by a supply of provisions. This was the first emigration into Yreka by this route, and as the character of the Modoc Indian was well understood, it was thought necessary to send armed protection as well as provisions....A company was raised in a few minutes, a large quantity of supplies were contributed and then the question was asked who would take charge of the expedition? At this juncture Charles McDermit, the recently-elected sheriff, stepped forward and offered his services which were gladly accepted. As hastily as possible preparations were completed and the expedition started in the direction of Lost River.

"The first train of emigrants they encountered before reaching the Modoc country, and they hastened on. After passing Tule lake they met a party of eight or nine men who had packed across the plains. McDermit and his company went on and the packers continued towards Yreka. When they [the packers] reached Bloody Point they were suddenly attacked by the Modocs. All were killed save one named Coffin who cut the pack from one of his animals, charged through the savages and made his escape. *Bloody Point is a place on the north bank of Tule lake, where a spur of the mountains runs down close to the lake shore. Around this the old emigrant road passed, just beyond being a large open flat covered with tules, wild rye and grass.* [emphasis Hunt's] This was a favorite place for ambuscade.

"When Coffin arrived in Yreka with the news of the massacre the excitement and horror were great. Ben Wright was sent for, and a volunteer company of 27 men was quickly organized and bountifully supplied with arms, horses and provisions by the benevolent citizens of Yreka.

"While this was being done, the work of death still went on in the Modoc country. At Black Rock springs McDermit had met two trains, and had detailed three of his men to guard and guide them. These three men were John Onsby, Thomas H. Coats, and [John] Long. About the last of August, the trains encamped on Clear Lake, and in the morning when all was ready for the start, the three guides road [sic] ahead to pick out a camping place for noon. One of the trains having some repairs to make on their wagons, remained behind, while the other, consisting of thirty men, one woman and a boy, with six wagons, took up the line of march. In this train were David M. Morrison, the captain...and others.



The mountain in the background is Horse Mountain. In front of the mountain is a descent from the first bench level to the lake level. The rock formations on either side of the trail afforded good cover for the Indians.

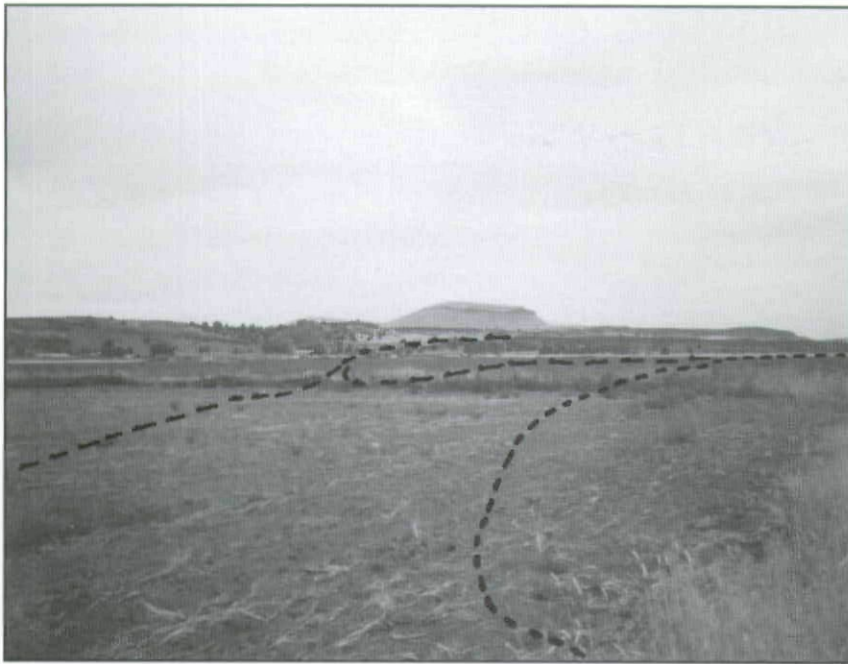


A closer view of the trail described in the picture above (Horse Mountain is beyond the plateau). There is a trail descent from the first rimrock plateau in the center of the photograph. If, as the Helfriches suggest, this is the site of the pioneers' descent, they would have turned to their left near the bottom of the descent to reach the shore of Tule Lake, which has been drained and is now under cultivation.

“As the train came over the divide between Clear and Tule lakes, and saw the road spread out before them, they could plainly see the Indians swarming in the rocks about Bloody Point, while, all unconscious of danger, the three men were riding leisurely into the ambush awaiting them. All efforts to warn the victims were futile, and they soon disappeared around Bloody Point and were never seen again alive. Soon the reports of their rifle shots were born [sic] back to the anxious ears of their friends, who hastened on and reached the fatal point of rock. The Indians had again concealed themselves in the rocks and tules to await their new victims.

“As the train wound along the bank of Tule lake, past

Bloody Point, the Indians on the bluff and in the tules set up a demoniacal yell and poured in a volley of arrows, wounding two men. These were put into the wagons, and the company was divided into a front and rear guard, and with their rifles, of which there were but a few in the train, kept the savages at a respectful distance until they emerged upon the open flat, when they made a corral of their wagons and retired within it for protection. All night they lay behind their defenses surrounded by hundreds of watchful foes, unable even to go a few hundred yards to the lake for water....Once the savages set fire to the tall grass and wild rye that grew thick and high about the camp, intending to rush in under cover of the smoke



This is the descent from the first bench level to the former lake shore level. The trail went around the lake to the left. The right branch went to the lake shore. The old shore went approximately along the dotted line from right center to center foreground. The Helfriches believed that during one of the battles with the Modoc Indians the pioneers circled their wagons in the foreground.



A portion of the trail that led to the shore of Tule Lake.

and take the place by storm, but were frustrated by the building of a counter fire that burned out and met the coming flames, leaving an open space they dared not cross. With yells of rage and disappointment, they retreated to the rocks and tules. The morning light was welcomed with joy by the beleaguered emigrants, who could then see the movements of the foe. About noon they saw the savages again take their station among the rocks and tules at Bloody Point, and by this they knew that the other train was approaching. With this train, however, was an old mountain man who had seen Indians before, and knew better than to walk into the trap he could plainly see was set for him. Roads were nothing to him

and when the emigrants in the corral were listening for the sound of conflict, lo! over the ridge appeared the old trapper and his train. The train entered the corral with the others, leaving the Indians to howl their rage and disappointment.

“As the afternoon wore on the beleaguered emigrants descried a body of horsemen to the westward, riding down upon them at a breakneck speed...It is Ben Wright and his band of brave men rushing to their rescue. Wright’s company knew nothing of the death of Coats, Long and Onsby, but they grasped the situation at a glance, and now, stopping not to speak or draw a breath, on they rushed, passed the corral of terrified men, down towards Bloody Point, between the In-

dians on the bluff and their canoes in the water. Leaping from their saddles and leaving their animals to run where they would, they made a furious onslaught upon the surprised and terrified savages. The Indians also had seen their approach, and from their dress knew them to be Californians who had come to fight. They might fool around a train of emigrants with considerable impunity, but a company of mounted Californians was entirely a different proposition, and when they saw them ride for the point to cut off retreat to the water, instead of going to the corral as they had expected, the savages stampeded for their canoes.

"Then commenced a slaughter, a carnage. The Indians thought of nothing but flight and rushed by the score for their canoes, while rifle, pistol, and knife made havoc among them. The fugitives and fighters were all mixed up together; for a mile up and down the bank of the lake on the edge of the tules, did the battle go on, each man fighting independently....

"The Indians only admitted a loss of twenty in this fight, which is about half of the actual number killed, besides many wounded.

"The next day and for several days thereafter, search was made for remains of the Modoc's victims. Scattered about in the tules they found the mangled bodies of emigrants, whose death had not before been known. Two of these were women and one a child. They were mutilated and disfigured in the most horrible manner, causing even the strong-hearted men to turn away from the ghastly spectacle with a shudder. In reading of the massacre that occurred on Lost river a few months later [referring to Ben Wright's killing of a large number of Modocs by treachery] this horrible sight must be kept in mind. Here were found also portions of wagons, and the Indians were discovered to have in their possession fire-arms, clothing, camp utensils, money and a great variety of domestic articles, showing that some emigrant train had fallen a complete prey to the fiends. It was evident that a whole train of emigrants, how many no one could tell, had been murdered. Twenty-two bodies were found and buried by Wright's company and fourteen a few days later by a company of twenty-two men that went out from Jacksonville under Colonel John E. Ross. Of these last several were women and children, horribly mutilated and disfigured. Ross' company remained but a few days and then returned to Jacksonville.

"After burying the bodies found in the tules, Wright's company escorted the large trains that had collected here as far as Lost river and went back on the trail to Clear lake, where a camp was established. At this point scattered bands of emigrants were collected into large trains and sent on through the hostile country, occasionally having a little encounter with the savages, until, near the last of October, the last train had passed through in safety. By this time the number of men had been reduced to eighteen, Captain McDermit having gone back to Yreka with Judge Irwin's train, as well as most of his men, who had been detailed to the various trains til all had thus returned. These eighteen decided to remain and further punish the Indians for their depredations and to com-

pel them to make a treaty that would insure safety to emigrants in the future. Besides this the savages had stock, property, and money taken from their slaughtered victims which it was thought they could be compelled to disgorge. Actuated by these motives, they established a camp on the peninsula and opened an aggressive campaign against the savages, whose rancheria was upon an island some distance out in the lake. All efforts to bring on an engagement with them were futile for they remained in their secure retreat beyond the reach of the whites. In this way the men exhausted their scanty supply of patience and provisions...."¹⁴

After remaining encamped on the peninsula for weeks, still being unable to coax the wary Indians to come close enough in sufficient numbers to make an attack on them worthwhile, Wright and his men moved up to the vicinity of the natural stone bridge on Lost River and camped near another Modoc village. Wright had been warned by the Modoc mistress of one of his men that the Modocs were planning treachery, so he decided on some treachery of his own. He concealed his men at strategic spots around the neighboring Indian camp, marched into their camp alone early one morning with loaded guns concealed under the Mexican-style poncho he was wearing and issued a demand that the Indians surrender two white women they purportedly had captured. When they refused, he fired from under his poncho and killed the Indian to whom he had just issued his ultimatum. He then dropped flat on the ground. This was the signal for his men to open fire on the rest of the Modocs as they fled in great confusion. The Indians claimed that only five out of the 46 persons in camp escaped. One of those who escaped was Schonchin John, who 20 years later would be second in command to Captain Jack, subchief of the Modocs, in the Modoc War. One account has it that the Indian Wright killed with his first salvo was Captain Jack's father.¹⁵

The whites then proceeded to scalp and mutilate their victims before returning in triumph to Yreka.

Here Wells takes up their story again:

"...The revelers took the town by storm; everything had to give way to them. They exhibited their hirsute trophies, flourished their weapons, and told what deeds of valor they had done, and what they would do to any one who doubted the story. No one durst oppose them, but when they became too violent and demonstrative, their weapons were coaxed from their hands, the bars of the saloon being decorated with them....

"For a week one grand carousal was maintained by a majority of the members of Wright's company and a host of their particular admirers, chiefly the riff-raff and scum of the town....

"It would have been a more pleasant task to have related a different ending to this campaign, but this book deals in facts and facts are sometimes stubborn things."¹⁶

This constitutes the fullest published account of the Bloody Point massacre, an account which we are able to verify independently by turning to the public records of both the U.S. Congress and the California State Legislature. Since

these documents constitute the first-hand testimony of participants in the rescue efforts and are somewhat difficult to obtain, and since they add greatly to the history of the massacre, it is felt that they should be included here in extracted form to complete the record.

The first account is that of Sheriff Charles McDermit, which was submitted to the State of California in support of his request that he and his Yreka volunteers be reimbursed by the state for their rescue efforts in 1852. It was written from Yreka on 19 December 1852, only a few months after the events related.

The day previous to our leaving Yreka, a train of forty packers arrived from the Plains, who informed us that unless assistance and protection was sent out to meet a small train of some three or four families, who were five days' drive in their rear, they would undoubtedly be all murdered by the Indians at the Lake. So we got up a party of thirteen men as speedily as possible, and hastened to the rescue of those families.

When we arrived near a point of rocks which project out near the Tules in the Lakes, affording an excellent ambush for an attack from either side, we discovered a large number of Indians, who afterwards, as we advanced, concealed themselves in the Tules, and would not show fight, or come out so that we could get at them.

The families had arrived at this point before we did, and were all murdered by the Indians. The bodies of two females, two children and three men have since been found off the road. The Indians kept out of our way and we found it impossible to chastise them for the depredations which they had committed. So we came to the conclusion that we could do the emigrants the most service by going ahead and distributing ourselves among the different trains as guides; to point out the camping places, and the points from which danger would be apprehended from the Indians.

Messrs. Coats, Long, Ownsby [Onsby] were one mile in the advance of Capt. Morrison's train of seven wagons and thirty men, looking out a nooning place, when the Indians attacked them from a concealed position at the point of rocks, shot them full of arrows, capturing their horses, guns, and everything they had. Capt. Morrison hearing the report of several guns, and believing them to be in trouble ahead, sent an emigrant by the name of Felix Martin, who had a fast horse, ahead to ascertain what was going on; the report of his pistol was heard, but he did not return. The train got in close order, every man prepared himself for fight, and moved on cautiously; when they got opposite the point of rocks they discovered blood in the road; but did not see an Indian till a shower of arrows came among them, wounding one man; the fire was returned, the Indians fell back; the train was moved on briskly to a large flat, out of the reach of arrows, either from the rocks or tules. Here the Captain corralled his stock and wagons; the Indians advanced, surrounding them; kept them one day and a half in the same place without water; and the train would undoubtedly have suffered much, and perhaps all have been murdered, had it not been for Capt. Ben Wright's Company making their appearance on the second day, which caused the

Indians to retreat to the lake shore, where they formed the line of battle, advancing and retreating alternately. Capt. Wright advanced with thirty-two men, mounted and well-armed, charged and killed thirty; and the balance got into their canoes and made their escape in the lake.

The day following, I came up with a family train of sixteen wagons, and assisted to bury my friends Mr. Coats, Long, Ownsby, and a number of other bodies which we found near the same place. We have found and buried twenty-six bodies in the vicinity of Rhett, (or, as it is sometimes called, Tule Lake.) A number of men have been wounded, and a large number of stock taken by the Indians, this season, on this new route.

Capt. Wright's Company have had another battle with the Lake Indians, and succeeded in killing forty-three; three of his men were wounded—two seriously—but they are now recovering....¹⁷

(In the same set of documents there is a letter from Ben Wright, dated 22 December 1852, but it consists only of a request for compensation, and it adds nothing to the historical record of the massacre.)

A second piece of correspondence directly related to the Bloody Point massacre is that of Colonel John Ross, the leader of the relief party from Oregon. His account, dated 30 December 1854, and written from Jacksonville, Oregon Territory, was directed to the U.S. Congress:

...Owing to the distance to northern Oregon and middle California by this route, and the hostility of the Sho-shones, Pi-utes, and Modocs, and the many difficulties which the first immigration encountered on this route, but few travelled it from 1846 until the fall of 1852, after the settling of Shasta, and Rogue River valleys. In the fall of 1852 there was a large immigration came this route to California and Oregon, and about the 11th of September news reached this valley that whole trains of immigrants had been massacred on Lost river. A company of twenty-two volunteers were immediately raised in Jacksonville, and they elected me their captain. The whole company left here on the 13th of September, made forced marches, and in a few days arrived at Lost river. We found the bodies of fourteen immigrants and buried them. Several of them were women and children; they were much mutilated. On our arrival at Clear lake, about twenty-two miles beyond this, we found Captain Ben. Wright's company, from Yreka, California, stationed at the lake. He informed me that his men had found and buried eighteen bodies in the vicinity of Bloody Point, at Tule lake, and among the number were Captain Coats and Mr. Orvensby [Onsby], two respectable citizens of Yreka, who went out to assist the immigration.

Captain Wright's company remained out some time after the immigrants had all passed through this country. He found several more bodies of those who had been massacred by these Indians. The precise number that were massacred in a single season by these Indians, between Klamath lake and the Sierra Nevada mountains, probably will never be known to

the whites. Some of these Indians have been killed in battle since these massacres, but not a single murderer has yet been given up by the tribes and brought to justice....¹⁸

The final piece of evidence is a statement by W. T. Kershaw, a Yrekan and a member of Ben Wright's rescue party, given to the U.S. Congress from Yreka and dated 21 November 1857.

...In August, A.D. 1852, immediately after the first train of emigrants had arrived in Yreka, over nearly the same route we had travelled after the stock the year previous, a man [Coffin] came into Yreka from the country of the Modocs, stating that the Indians there were very hostile, and that he was the only one out of a party of eight or nine who had packed across the plains that had escaped the Indians; and that he saved himself only by cutting the pack from one of his horses, mounting him without a saddle or equipments, and charging through the Indian forces. This occurred at a place called "Bloody Point," on the east side of Tule lake, and in the immediate vicinity of Lost river.

Immediately upon the reception of these tidings at Yreka, Captain Ben Wright, since murdered by Indians near the mouth of Rogue river, enrolled a company of volunteers, of which I was chosen first lieutenant. We Left Yreka on the 29th day of August, and, making forced marches, soon arrived in the heart of the hostile country.

On our arrival at Tule lake we met a train of sixteen wagons and somewhere between forty and sixty persons. This party had been attacked by the Indians, and had fought them for several hours near the place where the party of packers were killed, of which we had heard the news at Yreka. The Indians had them completely surrounded, leaving no possible chance for escape.

As soon, however, as our company had got within about a quarter of a mile from where they were then fighting, the Indians withdrew into the lake, which is shallow, full of small islands; its borders and islands thickly covered with tule, affording secure hiding places for them, either when lying in ambush or when pursued.

Captain Wright, seeing the Indians taking to their canoes and pushing out into the lake, ordered a charge, which order was promptly executed. We fought them for about three hours, when, night coming on, we retired. Many of us fought in water to our armpits. In this engagement we must have killed as many as thirty or thirty-five of the enemy. The Indians themselves say we killed twenty. Our company sustained no loss whatever.

On our way to where the train was attacked, and where it still remained, we found the body of a man in the tule, which had evidently been there several days. The cayotes and birds had torn off much of the flesh. We gave it as decent a burial as was in our power to do, and then proceeded on to the train. Here we found the emigrants nearly exhausted from the effects of their recent engagements; and [found] that they

could not possibly have held out much longer, as they had but few guns, and were withal becoming short of ammunition. A man by the name of Freeman Hathorne was severely wounded. I believe there was but one woman with the train. We camped at this place over night, and next morning found the bodies, as we supposed, of the first party of emigrants killed; and also the bodies of Coats, Orvenby [Onsby], and Long, who had left Yreka about three weeks before to meet some friends whom they expected to arrive by this route. With these bodies there was also the body of a packer, who had been dispatched to the settlements to procure supplies for a train that were becoming destitute. [Actually, this was Felix Martin—see McDermitt's account above.]

During this and the next day we found and buried twenty-one bodies, making, with the one found in the tule the day previous, twenty-two. We also found various articles of women's and children's clothing, &c., indicating that entire families had been massacred. We found the body of but one female, however, but we were all of the opinion that more had been killed or taken captives. In one of the Indian rancherias we found the hair from a woman's head, shorn close. A detachment of our company saw an immigrant wagon belonging to some of the murdered party some distance off the road. I saw the tracks of two wagons going in opposite directions, one to the northward and the other to the south, towards the country of the Pitt River Indians.

Our company remained in the hostile country about three months, furnishing each train with a sufficient escort over the most dangerous part of the road until all had passed through safely...

We had only light and occasional skirmishes with the Indians after we relieved the train at "Bloody Point," until the morning we left the Indian country for home, when we had a smart engagement [Ben Wright's treacherous attack on the camp at Lost River], in which we killed about forty of them, impressing upon the minds of the balance, no doubt, the opinion that we had avenged the wrongs their tribes had committed towards the whites, at least during that season. In this affair we had two men, Poland and Saubanch, severely wounded....¹⁹

Allowing for the expected minor discrepancies as to the number of Indians killed, the number of emigrant bodies found and buried, and the precise details of the attack on the emigrant wagon trains at Bloody Point and of the subsequent rescue effort, it is clear that the basic Wells version holds up very well in the light of these few first-hand accounts. It is also clear that, no matter which numbers are used, there were enough emigrant/packers killed at Bloody Point to qualify the incident as being a genuine massacre.

Two final bits of information can be gleaned from the correspondence connected with the massacre which serve to tie up the loose ends. First, we find from the California state documents that the Yreka contingents under McDermitt and Wright filed for compensation from the state for their rescue efforts and, even though those efforts were strictly volunteer

undertakings and had not been authorized by the state, those requests were honored to the tune of \$20,775. Secondly, it appears that the volunteers from Oregon under Captain John Ross made the same request but were not recompensed for their undertaking by either the Oregon Territorial legislature or the federal government. At least this would appear to be the import of this rather sardonic comment included in the following letter from Ross, written to Washington in 1854 in support of the concerted effort by the Oregonian volunteers to be compensated for their efforts toward succoring the emigrants along the trail in 1852.

The California legislature, at its next session thereafter, paid all expenses of Captain Wright's company and liberally rewarded the officers and privates for their services. My company did arduous service, was out some thirty-odd days, returned with the last of the immigration, and received for our services the compliments of the Oregon legislative assembly.²⁰

According to the official count in the California documents, Ben Wright's party was credited with killing a total of 73 Modocs in the various encounters related to Bloody Point in 1852.²¹ If one adds to this number the 30 Modocs reportedly killed by his party during his punitive expedition to Lost River in 1851, one can easily see that the Modocs, who were numbered at only 300 in the tribal census of 1864, were sustaining losses of a catastrophic nature, which, if continued at the same rate, would soon cause their extinction as a tribe. It is not hard to imagine how such losses must have rankled and added to the bitterness which these proud, fierce warriors carried within them until the advent of the Modoc War in 1872. After all, they were not used to losing in their encounters with their enemies, and they certainly weren't used to having one man responsible for wreaking so much havoc upon them.

CHRONOLOGY OF INDIAN-WHITE INCIDENTS AFTER THE MASSACRE

1853—Eight whites are killed in the Rogue River War. Three Indians are hanged in retaliation.

There is general unrest all along emigrant trails and throughout the settlements of the border-lake country.

Patrols to escort and protect emigrants are sent out from both Yreka and Oregon. Oregon volunteers under Governor Joseph Lane are called up. Captain John Miller is placed in charge of the Oregon contingent on the trail. A U.S. Army company of dragoons is also stationed along the trail. The following rare, recently-published diary accounts for 1853 provide us with the emigrant perspective during these very troubled times in the border-lake country:

William Hoffman, Oct. 13. Vicinity of Goose Lake Last night we had a severe frost, and discovered at daylight while changing guards that the Indians had made a descent upon our horses, which were picketed near our wagons, and stole seven

head of horses, five head belonging to Rev. Mr. Taylor, and two head to our train. No trace of their tracks could be seen, and it was considered fruitless to go in pursuit of them. This is a severe loss. Our travel today was very unpleasant being over a rocky road. Travel about 12 miles.

Towards evening we met a company of Rangers. 13 in number, who have come out for the relief of emigrants. They proceeded on towards Goose Lake. Another company with provisions is expected in a day or two, who will perhaps return with us.

The former company had a battle this morning and killed one Indian. We are considered to be in danger of an attack. I have prepared accordingly, our guards doubled tonight.

SH Taylor, Oct. 13. The volunteer force and relief train were at Tule Lake and learning from an express which we had sent on to the valley, that 2 trains were on the road and without bread, a force of twelve men was detached and ordered to hasten on and act as escort until the main body and relief train should come up. The escort met the train Thursday and hastened to the defense of the "Sunday Company," [a company which refused to travel on Sundays] meeting them in time to protect them from a force of Indians living near where they were to encamp and where the train had lost horses. Learning that they were on short allowance of bread, the volunteers shared with them their supply, and thus all had abundance.

JBH Royal, Oct. 14. Everything safe. Commander [Captain Miller] thinks it best for us to catch up with our company that is now 10 miles in advance of us. Accordingly we start pretty soon—have very rocky road on and after traveling late at night come up...There found a warm supper ready for us—all very kind.

Here found about 50 men from Rogue River Valley being out for protection to emigrants...Today we were escorted by 6 volunteers (soldiers) and after night some 12 or more mounted on ponies and mules—they manifested a great deal of interest.

William Hoffman, Oct. 14...The relief party proceeded on to Goose Lake and found our friends Royals and Lakins safely on their way. A portion of the Rangers remained with them and the others overtook us in the Kanyon and will accompany us through. We expect to lie by until the company back get up with us...We feel grateful to an over ruling Providence which has interfered for our relief and safety and hope soon to be on our way to our destined homes.

Since writing the foregoing another party of rangers, numbering about 20 have come in with provisions, for the use of the emigrants.

These Oregonians have noble and generous hearts, and well do they merit our unbounded gratitude. The approach of this relief party was timely for some of the families who were entirely destitute of provisions, and produced emotions not easily described and not easily forgotten.

Ellen Burt, Oct. 16. The soldiers stayed back with the Royals while we came on. I saw the worst sight today that I ever saw and hope that I shall never see again. It was a corpse lying beside the road. A man had been buried about one month and the Indians had dug him up. Whether for revenge to the whites or for the clothes, we can't tell!

William Hoffman, Oct. 16...The body of a man dead apparently 3 weeks had been disinterred by the Indians, for his clothing, and exposed near the grave. The corpse was reinterred by some men bringing up the rear of the train. There is a state of open warfare, between the whites and the Indians, all along this region and emigrants are considered in constant danger, unless in large force or protected by rangers, each kills the other, and no quarters given.

We learn that the Indians in Rogue river valley have been subdued.

JBH Royal, Oct. 19. Over Divide to Tule Lake, on to Lost River, passed in sight of Bloody Point where a train of emigrants were cut off last year. This afternoon, Geo. W. Ebey killed a brant [wild goose] on the Lake. Oh, so good to eat.

William Hoffman, Oct. 20. Started this morning in good season and traveled toward Klamath Lake where we arrived at 8 o'clock, traveling some 6 miles. Part of the train had preceded us to enable Dr. Owens' company to kill a beef at the Lake as their subsistence is wholly upon that diet. Other families are in the same circumstances. We still have some flour, etc., sufficient, as we hope, to carry us through. We hope to reach the settlement in six days time. After spending some 2 hours grazing our cattle, we continued our journey 8 miles farther, or 2 miles beyond the forks of the road leading to Shasta or Rogue River Valley and encamped for the night in the vicinity of the mountains, having good grass but no water. Our travel today was in the vicinity of Klamath Lake, tho seldom on its borders. This region has heretofore been the scene of Indian hostilities but the excursions of the Rangers have kept them at a distance this season. After leaving the lake, which we expect to do tomorrow, we are considered to be out of danger from Indians. Our desire to reach the settlements is intense, and with the blessing of Providence, a few more days will bring us there.²²

1854—Seven whites are killed by Indians in the border-lake country. Volunteer detachments from both Yreka and Oregon are on the trail to aid and escort emigrants. The volunteers from Oregon are under command of Captain Jesse Walker and Lieutenants Westfeldt and Miller. Lieutenant Westfeldt goes as far as Lassen Meadows [today's Rye Patch Reservoir] on the Humboldt River to organize wagon trains and send them on under escort. Captain Walker ends the season by undertaking a punitive campaign against the Paiutes in the country east of the Warner Mountains. There are several pitched battles, and a number of Paiutes are killed.

Twenty other whites are killed on the trails to Oregon.

This number includes the 19 killed in the Ward massacre near Fort Boise.

1855—Ten whites are killed by Indians in the border-lake country.

1856—Twenty-four whites, including Ben Wright, are killed by Indians near the mouth of the Rogue River.

Seventeen whites are killed by the Cascade Indians.

Two whites are killed by the Shasta Indians.

Numerous Indians are killed in a general campaign undertaken by the whites from Yreka under the command of General John D. Cosby. These forces claim to have killed over 200 hostile Indians before the campaign concludes. Wells ridicules both this claim and the campaign itself, saying that it was a case of an army made up entirely of self-proclaimed "generals" and "colonels" and no privates, and that, if all the claims made by the participants and sensationalized in the California press were to be credited with being true, there would have been no live Indians left in the entire Northwest.

Nevertheless, at the end of this campaign, an unofficial "treaty" is concluded with the Modocs, which holds until the Modoc War of 1872-1873.

1857—Four whites are killed by the Pit River Indians. (Nathaniel Todd, Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs for the Oregon Territorial Legislature, as a part of the effort by the Oregonians to get federal compensation for their volunteer activities on behalf of the emigrants, provided the U.S. Congress with an admittedly incomplete listing of whites killed by Indians within the Territory between the years 1834 and 1857. In most cases, he provides not only the numbers but also the names and the circumstances of the killings. Since this type of hard statistic is very difficult to come by, Todd's summary is included below):

Killed in 1834.....	30
Killed in 1835.....	4
Killed in 1846.....	1
Killed in 1847.....	16
Killed in 1850.....	6
Killed in 1851.....	6
Killed in 1852.....	47
Killed in 1853.....	8
Killed in 1854.....	27
Killed in 1855.....	51
Killed in 1856.....	43
Killed in 1857.....	5
Total.....	242

Of this total of 242 killings, Todd assigns approximately two-thirds of the killings since the year 1851 to the border and lakes tribes.²³

1858-1862—This is a generally quiet period in the border-lake country. Tensions continue to grow between whites and Indians as the settlements expand and there is more and more pressure from the whites to settle the Indian problem by moving them onto reservations.

1862—John A. Fairfield settles in the Cottonwood Creek area to the west of Lower Klamath Lake and concludes a private agreement with the Modocs to allow him to ranch the area.

1864—A formal treaty is signed between the U.S. Government and the Modocs and Klamaths. Both Old Chief Schonchin and Captain Jack signed on behalf of the Modocs. The treaty provides that:

1. Title to all Indian lands is to pass to the U.S.
2. The Indians are to live on a reservation to be established around Upper Klamath Lake.
3. All past Indian offenses are to be forgiven.
4. Indian agent is to distribute certain stipulated monies and goods yearly to the tribes.

The treaty is slightly revised by Congress in 1866; the revisions are agreed to by the Indians in 1869; the President proclaims the treaty in 1870.

For a brief description of what occurred while the treaty was going through this six-year ratification process, we turn again to Wells:

“Annually the Indians were called together at the agency and a distribution of annuity goods made until 1867, when, in consideration of the rapidly increasing settlement of people along Lost River and vicinity, it was thought best to locate them permanently on the reservation. They were accordingly collected there, but trouble ensued between Klamaths and Modocs. The reservation was in Klamath country, and they acted very insolently towards the Modocs, taunting them with being interlopers. Capt. Jack and his immediate followers left, and once more took up their residence on Lost River while Schonchin and his band, being more than half the tribe were removed from the vicinity of the inhospitable Klamaths, and located at Yainax near the southern extremity of the reservation.

“Thus matters stood until the fall of 1869, when Alfred Meacham, Superintendent, gathered them all upon the reservation again.”²⁴

1869—A census is conducted of the various tribes gathered in the reservation. There are 800 Klamaths, 350 Snakes and 300 Modocs.

1870—In the spring, Captain Jack again leads his followers off of the reservation and back to the Lost River country, saying that he could not live with the Klamaths, that he had been misled and lied to about the terms of the 1864 treaty, that the Indian agent was cheating the Modocs and that his people were starving on the reservation.

Some of the whites who are sympathetic to the plight of the Modocs—Elijah Steele and Judge A. M. Rosborough of Yreka and Alfred Meacham, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Oregon Territory—attempt to help them. There is an effort to get Washington to allow the Modocs in Captain Jack’s band to homestead a quarter section apiece in the Lost River area or to allot them their own reservation; but, after

first indicating that approval might be forthcoming, Washington changes its position under heavy pressure from the settlers and insists that Captain Jack and his followers return to the Klamath reservation to live. (It should be pointed out here that Old Chief Schonchin and his Modoc followers remained peaceably on the reservation and did not make the same claims that Captain Jack was making about being tricked into signing the Treaty of 1864 or of having been cheated and abused by the Indian agent on the reservation.)

1872—Troops are sent to compel Captain Jack and his band to return to the reservation. They refuse, fire on and kill a number of the troops, then flee to the lava beds south of Tule Lake. The Modoc War of 1872-1873 is underway.

THE MODOC WAR

The Modoc War, the only major Indian conflict ever fought within the state of California, began in Oregon with what was to become known as the Battle of Lost River, 29 November 1872, and concluded with the capture of Captain Jack on 1 June 1873. Hostilities began when a U.S. Army patrol, under orders to return all Modocs to the Klamath Reservation, attempted to capture Captain Jack and his followers in their traditional encampment on Lost River north of Tule Lake. In the ensuing skirmishes, the Modocs were forced from their camps on Lost River and fled by various routes to the Lava Beds south of Tule Lake. During this retreat, a number of isolated white settlers were attacked and killed.

Outnumbered by at least 10 to one in the subsequent engagements but having the advantage of the natural fortifications formed by the lava flows and caves as well as an intimate knowledge of the countryside, the Modocs were able to hold off the U.S. military and avoid capture for six months.

The most notorious event of the war—and the event which was to lose the Modocs the sympathy and admiration which their bravery and defiance had won for them with large segments of the American public—was the murder of Brigadier General Edward Canby and Reverend Eleazer Thomas while they were parlaying with the Modocs under a flag of truce. Badly wounded in this same attack was Alfred Meacham, former Commissioner of Indian Affairs for Oregon and a man who had always been and was to continue to be a champion of Indian causes. The other members of the Peace Commission escaped. Captain Jack, himself, was responsible for killing General Canby.

The best estimate places the number of Modoc warriors at between 55 and 70. Of this number, approximately 16 were killed in battle, murdered after capture, hanged or chose to commit suicide. Several Modoc women also were killed. The number of men under U.S. Army command at the conclusion of hostilities (including regulars and Indian scouts) was 1055. Sixty-eight were killed and 75 wounded on the U.S. side. These figures do not reflect civilian casualties during the hostilities. As Keith Murray states in his preface

to Erwin Thompson's *Modoc War*, this conflict proved to be "the most expensive war in American history considering the shortness of the war and the number of Indians involved."

Captain Jack and three of the other Modoc leaders were tried by military tribunal and hanged. (The heads of these four leaders were later sent to Washington, D.C., purportedly for scientific research reasons!) The other two Modoc leaders were sent to Alcatraz. The rest of the captured Modocs were sent into poverty and exile in Kansas. After 1900, a few were allowed to return to the Klamath reservation.²⁵

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR

No mere recitation of historical facts, as has been presented above, can be truly understood if equal attention is not paid to the psychological and emotional context of the times. In the various documents relating to the Bloody Point massacre there are expressions not only of the classic confrontation between whites and Indians but also of that other basic conflict which has always been a concomitant part of white-Indian confrontation: the conflicts between whites and whites over the Indian question. On the one hand there was that ever-present conflict between a frontier population in day-to-day contact with the Indians, demanding workable, pragmatic solutions to the problems arising from that contact. On the other hand, there was the liberal-intellectual establishment back East that could and very often did assume the position of being critical of Indian policy on the basis of morality. On the other hand, there was the conflict between those frontier whites who sympathized with the Indians' plight and treatment and their white neighbors and compatriots who felt that such sympathy was tantamount to betrayal.

Much has been written and much soul searching has been done about the way in which the U.S. has, over the years, treated the Indian. The morality involved in our system of treaties and removal and establishment of reservations has been endlessly analyzed and criticized, defended and debated, and it is certainly beyond the scope of this present paper to take up that matter once again. However, it must be remembered that this great debate was anything but an abstraction to our frontier populations. They very much needed and demanded workable solutions from the federal government so they could get on with the work of settling the West. The debate over the morality of the situation raged on—often to the great annoyance and resentment of the settlers to whom a solution was frequently a life-and-death proposition. In the end, it was the frontier pragmatists who were to win the day. The ascendancy of the white settlers over the native populations was ever to remain public policy.

To look into the historical literature surrounding the Bloody Point massacre is to see the entire question of white versus Indian as well as white versus white presented to us in microcosm.

For the classic Indian point of view on the threat presented by the coming of the whites we have to look no farther than

the following account of the words spoken by two Modoc chiefs in a Modoc council:

"...Captain Jack's father [a Modoc chief] in his opening speech said, in part: 'My people, we was born in this country; this is our land. God put our fathers and mothers here. We have lived here in peace. Our fathers had some troubles with the Pit River Indians and some other tribes. We always best them. Now, my people, I see we cannot get along with the white people. They come along and kill my people for nothing. Not only my men, but they kill our wives and children. I did not give the white men any cause to commit these murders. Now, what shall I do? Shall I run every time I see white people? If I do, they will chase us from valley to mountain, and from mountain to valley, and kill us all. They will hunt us like we hunt the deer and antelope. Shall we defend our wives and our children and our country? I am not afraid to die. If I die in war against the white people, I will die for a good cause. Is there any one present that can say I am lost, or is there any one here that can say I am not saying what my heart tells me to say?'

"After he said his last words, he stood like one in a dream. Legugyakes [chief of a closely allied tribe] got up. He looked at every face before he said anything. Finally he commenced by saying: 'I am a Combutwaush. I am a leader of my people. My people are only a handful. I have listened to the chosen words of the Modoc Chief. He predicts the truth; we shall all be killed in time by the white men if we run every time we see them. I am not going to run. I am going to fight. I will get some of them before they get me. I say, fight! I am going to lead my men to the first white man's camp I see. I will see what they will do when they see their women and children killed, lying around dead, food for the coyotes, bugs, ravens and buzzards. My heart bleeds to know that we have been treated bad by the white man. If any of our people had stolen their horses or killed any of their people, then they would kill some of us. I would [not] say that they are wrong. I say, as a leader among my people, I intend to kill the first white people I see. There is no one here that can turn my mind. I am going to do what I say.'"²⁶

Contrast this with the sentiment expressed by C. S. Drew, Quartermaster General, Oregon Militia, in this statement addressed to Congress in 1854:

...The treacherous conduct of the Indian has at all times, and on all occasions, since the organization of the first American settlements in the Territory, been such as is calculated to deprive them of the sympathy of every true man having the cause of humanity at heart, and to convince the most peaceable of the necessity of their subjugation. The history of the country since the landing of the Pilgrims to the present time proves them wholly unworthy of confidence, and consequent subjects of governmental policy. The most humane cannot but acknowledge that it is time for vigorous action, and that sickly sentimentality should cease. "Lo! the poor Indian," is the exclamation of our modern philanthropists and love-sick novel writers. "Lo! the defenseless men, women, and children, who have fallen victims and suffered even more than

On 28 June 1873 Harper's Weekly published this drawing of a cave which served as Captain Jack's headquarters in the lava beds during the Modoc War. Lava Beds National Monument is now located in the lava beds.



death itself at their hands," is the immediate response of the surviving witnesses of the inhuman butcheries perpetrated by this God-accursed race...

I doubt not that the executive of the Territory has rendered to the proper department a true and concise statement of each particular hostile act in the order in which it occurred, and that the representatives of the interests of Oregon have as often brought the subject to the notice of the powers that be. Yet, owing to the false statements of persons whose sympathy is wholly enlisted in behalf of the Indians, and who are ready and eager whenever an Indian outrage is committed, however criminal or heart-rending it may be, to proclaim to the world the borrowed and oft repeated phrase "the whites are the first aggressors," legislators have been led no doubt to believe that the perpetrators of these foul deeds are, in fact, the injured party. But a calm, dispassionate investigation of the subject, and an unbiased perusal of a compiled history of the various massacres of unoffending citizens, with all their attendant circumstances, that have occurred during the few years past, cannot fail to convince those who entertain such views of the error into which they have fallen, and to satisfy the federal government that unless active and rigorous measures are taken to prevent it a general war is inevitable. The sooner justice is meted out to the aggressor the less will be the cost, and the smaller the number of lives sacrificed. Procrastination, in this emergency, is dangerous in the extreme; for the Indians not only become more deeply impressed with the idea that they can plunder and murder our citizens with impunity, but become familiar with the use of fire-arms and our mode of warfare...

These suggestions, I am aware, will meet opposition on the part of the pseudo-philanthropists, a few of whom have, unluckily, found their way to Oregon, where their presence is so little needed. However, as I have before alluded to this

class of fanatics, I now respectfully leave them to their own reflections, with a faint hope that they may soon see themselves as others see them....²⁷

Elijah Steele, who lived in Yreka, would undoubtedly have to be considered among those "pseudo-philanthropists" upon whom Drew showers so much contempt. A lawyer, judge, sometime Indian agent, Steele was one of those settlers who was considered by the whites to be sympathetic to the Indians and was accepted by the Indians as a friend and defender. He was one of the earliest settlers of the Yreka area, having come there in search of gold in 1851. He made efforts to ensure peace between the whites and Indians and to see to it that the Indians got a fair shake. The Modocs came to him for aid and legal advice, and he was willing to give it to them.²⁸

The kind of pressure that Steele must have lived under can only be imagined. A friend and defender of the hated Indian in unquestionably bloody times, he must have suffered greatly at the hands and tongues of the many who thought and spoke as Drew did. We get an insight into his inner emotional turmoil in the following remarkable letter which he wrote to his brother. It is undated, but the internal evidence clearly indicates that it was sent sometime after the conclusion of the Modoc War. This would be more than 20 years after he settled in Yreka—20 years of having to swallow abuse and calumny for doing what he thought was only right:

...As to the charge through the Oregon papers and reports of Superintendent Odeneal [T. B. Odeneal had succeeded Meacham as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Oregon], that I advised them [the Modocs] to leave the reservation, or to resist the authorities in trying to take them back, or that I at any time gave them encouragement of being able to cope with the soldiers; or that by any word or act of mine they had been

induced to commence or continue the war, or that I am or have been a squaw man, or that I have or had half-breed children in the Lava Beds or elsewhere, or that I have had intercourse with squaws, or that I was a spy in favor of the Indians, advising them of the movement of troops, or that I advised them or encouraged General Canby, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Meacham, or others to go in the Lava Beds to meet Captain Jack and tribe in council, or that I have written letters to Captain Jack or other Indians, or that I ever proposed to marry Queen Mary, or that I ever wrote any letters of the kind certified to by Mrs. Lehira, or that she ever saw any letters from me of the import of the one she certified to, is simply and unequivocally false, severally and collectively, and the authors of these several charges, whoever they are or may be, are low, contemptible cowards, spending time in secret, in trying to traduce the character of one they do not know and would not if they should meet him on the street; and further, here, where I have been known for twenty years, they could not find one respectable witness that would make either of these charges, and much less swear to them or any one of them....²⁹

Drew may also have been directing his ire at the likes of the remarkable Applegate clan, who were interested in Indian culture, sympathetic to the Indian cause, and defenders of Indian rights.³⁰ In any case, by the beginning of 1872, even those most inclined to be sympathetic to the Indian cause had concluded that, as far as the Captain Jack contingent of the Modocs was concerned, it was time for tough and pragmatic treatment. Thus we find Alfred Meacham, still, at that time, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Oregon and the person who had been petitioning the federal government to establish a Modoc reservation separate from the Klamaths, now urging Washington to arrest Captain Jack and the other leaders of the break-away band and forcibly return all Modocs to the Klamath reservation. In support of his urgent recommendation to this effect, we find Meacham forwarding this letter, dated 1 February 1872, which had been written to him by Jesse Applegate from Yoncalla, Oregon:

Dear Sir: I presume upon the urgency of the case as my excuse for again troubling you about the Modoc Indians now living on Modoc Lake.

I am, as you know, much in favor of treating Indians with forbearance and humanity, and as there were some just grounds for the discontent of this band of Modocs, I fully approved of your purpose last summer to place these Indians on a reservation to themselves. But it seems such an arrangement has even more difficulties in and objections to its execution than was then considered. If these Indians were of the quiet, orderly disposition that the majority of Oregon Indians are, these difficulties would not exist; there would be less opposition to the measure from the white settlers of that country, and they would in the end become reconciled to it.

But that they are not obedient, quiet, and orderly, is proven by their absence from the reservation assigned them.

Having broken away from the reservation, in defiance of the agent and the military, and conciliatory means alone resorted to induce them to return, they have misunderstood your forbearance and humanity, and think your policy dictated by weakness and fear, and the impunity with which they commit aggressions and levy "blackmail" upon the settlers, encourages and confirms that belief.

From advices from that quarter, their arrogance and impudence have been greater than ever before, and the patience and forbearance of the settlers most inclined to peace is well-nigh exhausted.

The Indians help themselves to what they want when, by intimidation, they fail to obtain permission. Instead of a more friendly feeling growing up between the races, the hatred of the one and the assurance of the other is by this conduct continually intensified, and open hostilities may, any day, commence between them. This state of things discourages new settlers, and keeps those in the country in a feverish state of uneasiness and alarm, and instead of their increased numbers driving the Indians into better behavior, the numbers of Indians are constantly recruited by the bad and discontented flung to them from the neighboring reservations, and they being concentrated in a body, they actually hold the settlements on Lost and Link River at their mercy, and, being perfectly aware of this fact, they use it to their own advantage. These Indians sold the country they now forcibly occupy, and years ago received their part of the payment. If the humanitarians who now control Indian affairs have no regard for the lives of white men, women, and children, there are reasons for the removal of these Indians to their reservation which may be in accordance with their tender sympathy for the welfare of the Indians themselves. While a body of independent and defiant Indians makes a "city of refuge" within a few day's travel of two reservations, it will scarcely be possible to introduce or enforce the discipline so necessary and proper a preliminary to the pious and innocent life the Indians are to live under their auspices.

"Moral suasion" may not be a sufficient restraint upon the vicious red any more than upon the vicious white man; some kind of physical punishment must be the penalty of crime, at least until the moral lessons have had time to bear fruit; such impious characters, until they learn to be "meek under chastening," will fly to the "city of refuge," rather than quietly submit to be hanged, whipped, or otherwise punished for their crimes; hence those most in need of the lessons of the moral teacher will be out of his reach.

Poets and moralists agree that the "untutored savage" is also a "wild man," and like other wild animals they chafe and fret under any kind of restraint; they will prefer the liberty and license of the "city of refuge" to even the mild restraints of a pious life on the reservation; and the consequence will be that the "city of refuge" will overflow with inhabitants and the reservation be desolate.

The people of the "city of refuge," like those of other cities, must be fed and clothed. The white settlers in its vicinity, having by their stock and farming operations diminished the

spontaneous productions of the land, will have to pay tribute to the city.

The collectors of the taxes may be rude, rough men, (red though they be) who are not likely to observe those formalities which reconcile "tame" people to be robbed in the name of the law. Some settlers, not having the fear of God before their eyes, nor appreciating the just right of the red man to rob them, may try to prevent the tax-collector from driving off their horses or butchering their cattle. This will cause strife between the red man and the white, and both wicked white and innocent red men also may come to grief in the scuffle.

In tenderness, therefore, to the poor Indian, they had better be removed out of harm's way, and the "city of refuge" on Modoc Lake broken up.

If this is not done before spring opens it cannot be done this year. As well expect to collect the coyotes out of that region of rock, mountain, and morass, as the Indians in the summer season.

No kind of force can pursue as fast as they can retreat, and the military force on the Pacific is insufficient to hunt them out and rout them from their fastnesses. And as it would be with the red men a struggle for life and liberty, many of their valuable lives might be unavoidably taken in the struggle, and some white men may be killed, who [while] not as deserving of our sympathy, are in as much need of being under the benign influence of the gospel of peace as the Indians themselves.

Very respectfully yours,
Jesse Applegate³¹

There is one additional document which should be entered in the record because it clearly indicates an economic reality which largely explains how both the whites and the Indians could look at the same situation and each be convinced that their "rights" were being violated. It is a letter from Brigadier General Edward R. S. Canby, later to be killed under a flag of truce in the Lava Beds during the Modoc War. Dated 17 February 1872, it is written to the commanding officer at Camp Warner, Oregon:

Sir: Although you are probably aware of the general facts, I think it proper to invite your attention to the complications in the affairs of the Modoc and Klamath Indians, growing out of the attempts that have been or will be made to secure a portion of the lands reserved for them under claims for settlement, grants for military and railroads, or as swamp-lands. The treaty was made on the 14th of October, 1864, but was not finally ratified until the 10th of December, 1869, and proclaimed by the President on the 17th of January, 1870. In this interval a portion of the reservation (in Sprague River Valley) was surveyed, opened for sale and settlement, and grants for military and railroad purposes were made by Congress. It is claimed that these are operative within the limits of the reservation as well as elsewhere, because the grants

were made before the final ratification of the treaty. It is also understood that draining operations are in contemplation, which, although they are to be carried on outside of its limits, will have the effect of destroying the value of large portions of the reservation for the purposes for which it was reserved.

The determination of these questions does not, in any way, belong to the military authorities, and they are brought to your notice as giving a possible motive for some of the complaints against these Indians, and as an additional reason for careful investigation before taking any positive action against them.

It appears to be conceded that the Modocs and Klamaths cannot live together in peace, and the superintendent has suggested a new location for the Modocs. Pending the action upon this suggestion, this difficulty has come up, and while, it is clearly the duty of the military to protect the settlers from the depredations or hostilities of the Indians, it is equally their duty to avert any collision that may prevent or delay the quiet and peaceful settlement of this question.

Our duty is, if possible, to keep the peace until it is settled.³²

It is small wonder that the resentful and discontented contingent under Captain Jack, already fully convinced that they had been misled about the terms of the 1864 treaty and had been cheated by the Indian agent while on the reservation, would have their hostility and suspicions toward the whites bolstered and reinforced by these developments. After all, they had signed a treaty with the U.S. Government and yet *six* years were to pass before it was even official—six years in which some of those lands which they had thought were promised to them under the terms of the treaty were being usurped for settlement by the whites and, apparently, with the connivance of the government. The subtleties of the democratic system and the delays inherent in the legislative process back in Washington were obviously something they had not been brought up to comprehend and which they could not be expected to understand.

On the other hand, the white settler, to whom nothing was more important than his right to land, saw the opportunity present in those legislative delays to settle on lands promised to the Indians and to do so on the basis of legal technicalities which might be comprehensible to him but certainly not to the Indian.

BEN WRIGHT AND CAPTAIN JACK

In the figure of Ben Wright, one has a classic example of a certain genre of frontier white—the Indian fighter.³³ He was, of course, loathed and feared by the Indians because of his well-earned reputation for treachery and cruelty and, above all, one suspects, for his successes in fighting them. He was a hero to many whites, despised by others and probably considered by the majority of respectable settlers to be a necessary if not exactly a savory or welcome commodity. He was certainly a good man to have around when Indian troubles were at hand, and the settlers were always quick to

turn to him for leadership in time of need. By the time he appeared in Yreka in 1852, he had already established his reputation as an Indian fighter though he was only then in his very early twenties. Although supposedly of Quaker (some say Presbyterian) background, he knew how to kill, and he seemed particularly to savor killing Indians. He also savored his notoriety and did his very best to look the part of the mountain man cum Indian fighter. As often seems to be the case with such men, even while he went about the business of killing Indians, he enjoyed living like one and was, in the parlance of the day, a squaw man.

Wells perhaps best articulates the ambivalence with which Wright was viewed by his contemporaries and by those who have had to assess his role in the Indian-white troubles of this period:

"We are met at the outset by a controversy about the character and service of Ben Wright, the central figure in the Modoc Campaign. That he rendered good service in protecting immigrants in the fall of 1852, is granted by all; but the nature of his dealings with the Indians before and after that time, and alleged acts of treachery and cruelty during the campaign, are matters of great dispute, in regard to which great care has been taken to learn the truth, that the name of a brave man may be handed down to posterity crowned with all the honor justly due, and unsullied by any stain that malice or ignorance might seek to fasten against it."³⁴

Having thus draped himself in the robes of historical impartiality, Wells goes on to intimate that Wright was not all that admirable a person—that there was cruelty and treachery in his character, that he was a complicated character, that he was a hard man to put into historical perspective because of the many contradictory facets of his personality. He then succeeds in summing him up probably as well as any man can be summed up in two short sentences: "He fought Indians because he loved the excitement of it. It suited his nature."

One cannot conclude the story of the Bloody Point massacre without noting how ironic it is that two of the great fighters of the period were on the scene at the same time. We have Ben Wright, the fighter of Indians, and Captain Jack, the Indian who fought the whites. We have Ben Wright in his early twenties and already notorious as an Indian fighter; we have Captain Jack a young boy and still 20 years away from achieving his lasting place in the history of white-Indian conflicts in the West. It is even possible that the two could have seen each other, perhaps even sat across the same campfire from each other. If we give credence to Riddle's account, we have a direct link between the two as he has Ben Wright treacherously killing Captain Jack's father at Lost River in the final chapter of the 1852 Bloody Point massacre. As for Captain Jack, little is known about his life prior to the Modoc War aside from what has been accounted in this article. However, because of the immense publicity surrounding that conflict his name became a household word almost over night. His death by hanging at the conclusion of the war effectively ended his moment in the limelight.

There is perhaps an even greater irony to be found in the story of Captain Jack. Captain Jack, the war leader, was, according to Riddle also young Captain Jack, the pleader for peace. In Riddle's account of the previously cited Modoc council when Captain Jack's father and Chief Lugugyakes of the Combutwaush spoke out in favor of killing the whites Jack, no more than a boy of 14, stood up and challenged the two of them thusly:

"I am a Modoc; I am not afraid to die, but that is not it. We have not killed any white people yet, so let us not kill any. I know they have killed some of our people, but we cannot blame them. The white men that killed our people was attacked by Indians, while they were sleeping. A few of them got hurt. That was done in our country. These men thought the Indians that attacked them was Modocs. None of you has told the white people that it was the Pit River Indians who made the attack. For my part I cannot blame the white people for firing on our people. If I was a man today, I would not plot against the white people. The next white people that comes through our country with their families won't be responsible for the act of the white men that killed our people many moons ago. Why should we kill the innocent women and children? It is wrong to take life when not in war. I see that the white people are many. If we value our lives or love our country we must not fight the white man.

"Now I want to say to you. Legugyakes, if you kill any white people, I will see that my father shall not help you. My word I will make good even if I am a boy.

"Jack's father came forward and said, 'My people, you have heard what my son said. You all know that he is nothing but a baby. He is afraid to fight. He is afraid of death, but he has spoken some good words. I think I see in him a wise man and a good leader of our people when he becomes a man. I cannot take the words of my baby son; I am like Legugyakes. I shall fight for my country that God gave me.'"³⁵

We do not know how much fighting Captain Jack's father did for the country that God gave him; he was not to be one of the main characters in the recorded history of the border-lake country. We do know what the words of the father were to come to mean when echoed in the mouth of the "baby son" some 20 years later. They were to bring war. They were to bring forth again that old familiar acquaintance, treachery. They were to bring bravery and audacity and defiance. They were to bring death, and suffering, and pain, and final defeat to a brave people caught up in a fight which they could not win.

"I shall fight for the country that God gave me." Perhaps no more fitting words could be found to serve as an epitaph to an anatomy of a massacre.

SOME QUESTIONS CONCERNING BLOODY POINT

As pointed out in the editor's note at the beginning of this article, OCTA's interest in preserving trail-related sites led to the commissioning of the Sprague and Rodeffer team to

conduct an investigation of the numerous rock piles at "Bloody Point" for the purpose of determining whether or not those piles might be emigrant graves associated with 1852 massacre.

The initial work has clearly determined that the rock piles studied are not graves. The Sprague and Rodeffer report offers some possible explanations as to the origin of these curious piles. It is possible that they are related to the Modoc War campaign. Federal troupes are known to have camped in this vicinity.³⁶

The findings of the survey were disappointing because it had been hoped that the discovery of a sizable number of graves at this site would aid in settling the dispute as to the actual location of the historic Bloody Point as well as in establishing more convincingly the route of the original Applegate Trail as it entered the Tule Lake basin. A careful reading of the literature leads this author, for one, to conclude that OCTA needs to resolve some very substantial questions concerning these two points in dispute before committing ourselves to an official position under our Mapping the Emigrant Trails (MET) program.

The original work of locating the route of the Applegate Trail and of establishing the location of Bloody Point in the immediate vicinity of Horse Mountain was done by two of the most revered and respected of trail historians, the late Devere and Helen Helfrich. Meticulous researchers, dedicated and indefatigable field workers, the Helfrichs set the standards for all subsequent trail historians. Their published research dealing with the route and the physical remains of the Applegate Trail constitutes that basic body of knowledge upon which all trail researchers depend when undertaking to study this important emigrant trail.³⁷

However, notwithstanding their incomparable contributions to our knowledge of the Applegate Trail—and indeed to our knowledge of all overland trails—some puzzling questions have arisen from a close inspection of the historical material.

Being the careful trail historians that they were, the Helfriches themselves clearly indicate in their published research that they continued to have some serious reservations

about this particular section of the Applegate Trail. Not only do they indicate that there are possibly three different routes in the immediate vicinity of Horse Mountain by which the trail could have dropped down into the bottomlands of the Tule Lake basin, but they go on to express puzzlement as to why the Applegate Trail did not follow a much easier route further to the north. They then offer this caveat concerning their own identification of Bloody Point: "Much depends upon which branch or branches [of the trails] were used by the early emigrants to determine the location of Bloody Point." This is followed by the observation that "the name 'Bloody Point' as now applied by the U.S.G.S. [the U.S. Geological Survey] places the site some two miles north, and would seem to be an erroneous location."

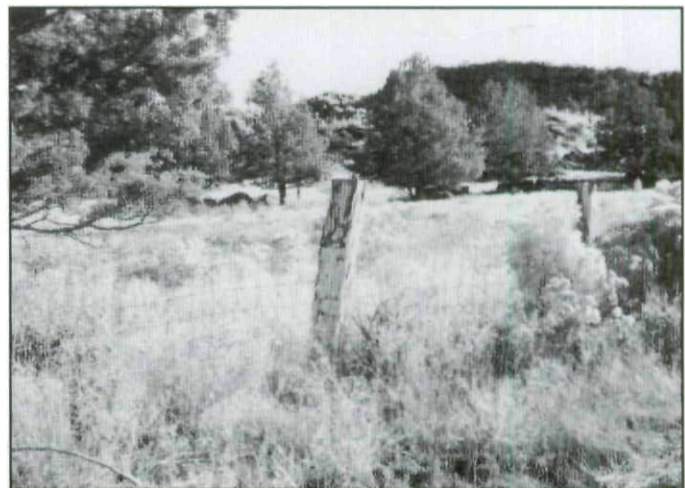
There is evidence, based on the earliest emigrant diaries as well as from both the Wells account of the 1852 massacre and the accounts of the members of the various rescue parties, which would seem to indicate that the U.S.G.S.'s Bloody Point may, indeed, be the historic Bloody Point.

The Helfriches base their identification of Bloody Point entirely on two pieces of information:

1. a photograph of Oliver C. Applegate, one of the sons of Lindsay Applegate, in which he is "pointing out the high, sharp promontory near the middle trail branch and immediately south of the old Meyer ranch as being Bloody Point," and
2. the following short passage in the Abbot-Williamson Railroad Survey Report of 1855:

Aug. 12. We then found ourselves on the edge of an abrupt descent of 200 feet, which conducted to the shores of Rhett lake [Tule Lake]. This lake was about fourteen miles long and eight miles broad. It was bordered by a wide belt of tule, the home of vast numbers of water fowl, which rose in clouds at our approach.

On the bluff our trail joined an emigrant road, which followed down a narrow ravine to the level of the lake. This ravine was once the scene of a bloody massacre. A Party of Indians lay in ambush, until an emigrant train reached the middle of the



At one time there was a sign on this fence post which said, "Bloody Point." It was thought to have been placed there by Oliver Cromwell Applegate. The sign disappeared several years ago.

descent, and then attacked and killed nearly the whole party. Rhett lake is a secure retreat, where the savages can escape among the tule, in their light canoes, and defy a greatly superior force.³⁸

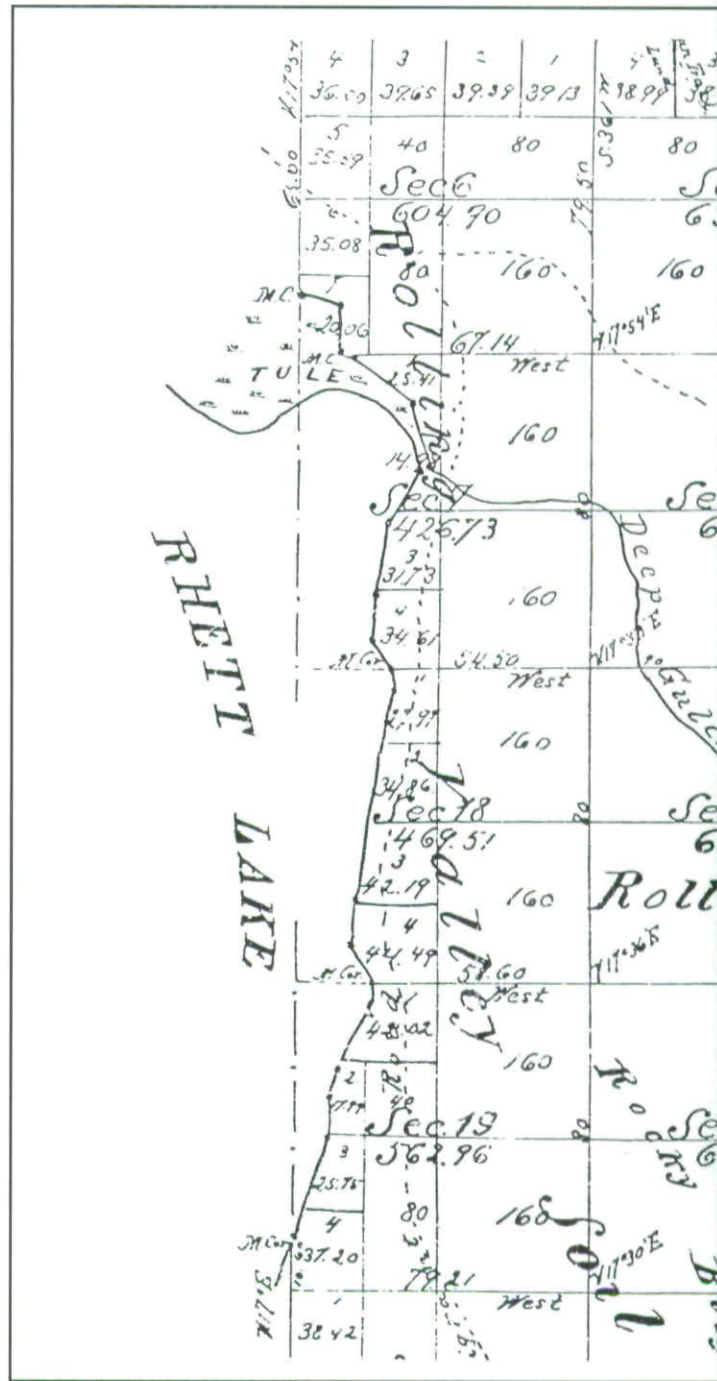
This 1855 account is apparently the origin of the idea that the Bloody Point massacre took place in a ravine as the emigrants descended into Tule Lake basin. It is not known where Lieutenant Henry L. Abbot, Topographical Engineers, got this information, but it is clearly at odds with the Wells account and with those accounts given by members of the various rescue parties. It would appear from these accounts that most of the bodies of the massacre victims were found in the general vicinity of the besieged wagon train and in the tules along the border of the lake, and that would seem to argue rather strongly for the massacre taking place down in the flatlands. No specific reference is to be found anywhere of finding bodies in a ravine.

The Oliver Applegate photograph can, of course, not be dismissed lightly—he was very familiar with the area—but there is certainly no way for today's historian to determine if the Applegate attribution is correct. The Abbott-Williamson report, however, is an entirely different matter because there is a map accompanying the written report, and this map clearly shows Horse Mountain and indicates that the route of the surveying party does not drop down to Tule Lake in the vicinity of that landmark but continues considerably farther to the north before joining the old emigrant road and dropping into the basin.

A further corroboration of this more northerly routing for the original trail is to be found in the earliest General Land Office Survey Plat for this area. This 1872 plat shows an "old road" entering the Tule Lake basin well to the north of Horse Mountain and almost precisely at the point at which the Abbott-Williamson map indicates the junction to have been located. Surveyor W. F. Ingalls, in the accompanying survey notes, specifically refers to it as the "old immigrant trail."

While this evidence may not conclusively prove that the U.S.G.S.'s Bloody Point is the historic Bloody Point, it certainly does raise questions that will require some serious work in the field to resolve.

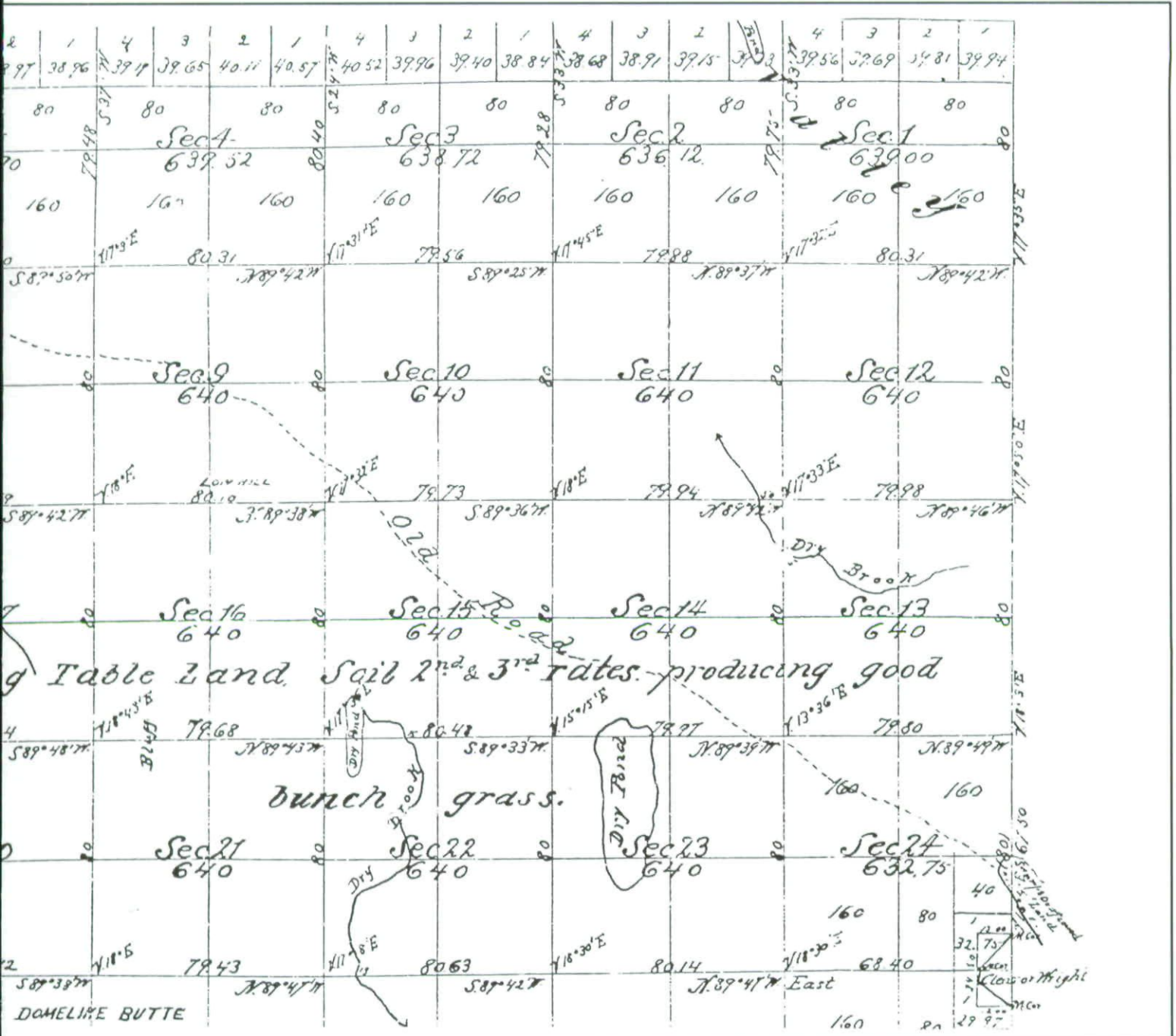
And that, after all, is what OCTA is all about.



NOTES

1. John D. Unruh, Jr., *The Plains Across* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979).
2. Robert L. Munkres, "Indian-White Contact before 1870: Cultural Factors in Conflict." *Journal of the West*, No. 10, July 1971. Also "The Plains Indian Threat on the Oregon Trail Before 1860," *Annals of Wyoming*, No. 40, October 1968.
3. Our best firsthand account of the trapper-Indian relationship in southern Oregon comes from Peter Skene Ogden, who trapped the border-lake country on his third expedition of 1826-1827. See Richard Dillon, *Siskiyou Trail*, The American Trail Series (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975). See also Archie Binns,

- Peter Skene Ogden: Fur Trader* (Portland, Oregon: Binfords and Mort, 1967).
4. Jesse Applegate's "Way Bill from Fort Hall to Willamette Valley," as printed in *The Oregon Spectator*, 6 April 1848, can be found in Appendix VIII of Volume II, Georgia Willis Read and Ruth Gains, *Gold Rush* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944).
5. For accounts of the death of John Newton, see the Thomas Holt diary in Dale Morgan, *Overland in 1846*, 2 vols. (Georgetown, Calif.: The Talisman Press, 1963). Also see J. Quinn



Detail from 1872 General Land Office Survey Plat showing the area between the eastern margin of Tule Lake (Rhett Lake) and the western margin of Clear Lake (Wright Lake). Note the "Old Road" running diagonally across the map between Section 24 in the lower right-hand—the northwest corner of Clear Lake—to Section 6 in the upper left-hand corner—the northeast margin of Tule Lake. (The "Dry Pond" in Section 23 is the present Soda Lake.) Note also the emigrant road (dashed line) running north and south along the eastern margin of the Tule Lake to a junction with the above road in Section 6. This is the road from Linkville to Pit River—possibility the route followed by Peter Burnett's party of gold-seekers from Oregon to California in 1848. The "Domelike Butte" indicated at the bottom, left center of the map is present Horse Mountain. There is no indication anywhere across the plat of a road or trail leading from Clear Lake (Section 24) westward to pass north of Horse Mountain in Sections 20 and 21. The Helfrich's Bloody Point would lie in Section 18. The U.S.G.S.'s Bloody Point contiguous to the northwest corner of Section 6. The route of the railroad survey party, as indicated in the Williamson-Abbot map, intersects their "Emigrant Road" in the approximate area of Section 6 and not in Section 18 just to the northwest of Horse Mountain. This evidence would tend to support the conclusion that the U.S.G.S. Bloody Point is the historic Bloody Point.

- Thornton, *Oregon and California in 1848*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1849).
6. Lindsay Applegate, "Notes and Reminiscences of Laying Out and Establishing the Old Emigrant Road into Southern Oregon in the Year 1846." *Oregon Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 22, March 1921. Also Maude Applegate Rucker, *The Oregon Trail and Some of Its Blazers* (New York: Walter Neale, 1930).
 7. Letter 28, Fremont to Thomas H. Benton, in Mary Lee Spence and Donald Jackson, *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont*, Vol. II (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973).
 8. Thomas Jefferson Cram, "Topographical Memoirs of the Department of the Pacific." 35th Congress, 2nd Session, House Executive Document No. 114, Serial No. 1014.
 9. Harry L. Wells, *History of Siskiyou County, California*. (Oakland, Calif., 1881). Often county histories of this period are very uneven as to quality and historical credibility. This work is an example of the best of this genre, giving excellent coverage for the Yreka and Siskiyou County area. Also see Hubert H. Bancroft, *The History of Oregon*, 2 vols. (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886).
 10. Cram, "Topographical Memoirs."
 11. Lindsay Applegate's narrative of the opening of the Applegate Trail in 1846 (written in 1874) is our best account of this historic event. (See note 6 above).
 12. There were two principal reasons for the Applegate party's desire to open a southern route into Oregon. First, they wished to find a safer and perhaps shorter route into the Willamette Valley which would avoid the dangers of the old route down the Columbia River. When Jesse and Lindsay Applegate came to Oregon in 1843, they each lost a son to drowning when rafting their wagons down the Columbia. Second, they wanted to open a route between the American settlements in the Willamette Valley and the States which could not be threatened or closed by the Hudson's Bay Company in case of war with Great Britain. Many thought the two countries would be going to war in 1846 over boundary disputes. Instead, the United States and Great Britain negotiated a settlement, and the United States went to war with Mexico.
 13. The official account of Captain Warner's death is contained in the Report of Lieutenant R. S. Williamson, dated 14 February 1850, Sonoma, California. This report is to be found in 31st Congress, 1st Session, Senate Executive Document No. 47, Serial No. 558.
 14. Wells, *Siskiyou County*.
 15. Jeff C. Riddle, *The Indian History of the Modoc War* (D. L. Moses, 1914). Reprinted (Medford, Oregon: Pine Cone Publishers, 1973). Riddle's book is a curious and interesting document, hopelessly confused as to dates, names and chronology of historical events during the earliest white-Modoc encounters. Nevertheless, many of the stories that Riddle relates—purportedly from the Modoc point of view—clearly are recognizable on the basis of the historical record. One of his accounts (not included here) may very well be the Modoc account of the actual Bloody Point massacre, and this author, while recognizing the serious shortcomings of this source, still hesitates to dismiss those accounts related directly to the 1852 massacre simply because they exhibit those sorts of weaknesses usually found in the oral story-telling tradition. Riddle was the son of Frank Riddle, a white man from Yreka, and Winema (also known as Toby), a cousin of Captain Jack and one of the official Indian translators for the U.S. Government during the Modoc War (she was credited with saving the life of Alfred Meacham when General Canby was set upon and murdered by Captain Jack). Riddle was himself married to a Modoc and had largely been raised on the reservation. Thus he was certainly in a position to have heard the Modoc version of their first encounters with the whites as that version was passed on from one generation to the next through the oral tradition. Riddle is not quoted here for his historical accuracy, but he might very well have his basic story lines correct. The reader is alerted to his possible shortcomings. Other sources for information on the Modocs and the Modoc War are Keith A. Murray, *The Modocs and Their War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959) and Doris Palmer Payne, *Captain Jack, Modoc Renegade* (Portland, Oregon: Binforde and Mort, Publishers, 1958).
 16. Wells, *Siskiyou County*
 17. Letter from Charles McDermit to Governor John Bigler, State of California, dated 19 December 1852, in "Correspondence in Relation to the Claims of Wright and McDermit's Command," Journal of the (California) Senate, 4th Session, 1853, Appendix Document No. 21.
 18. Letter of John Ross to Governor George Curry, Oregon Territory, dated 10 November 1854, in "Oregon and Washington Volunteers." 35th Congress, 2nd Session, House Miscellaneous Document No. 47, Serial No. 1016. See also John E. Ross, "Narrative of an Indian Fighter," Jacksonville, Oregon, 1878, manuscript in Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.
 19. Statement of W. T. Kershaw, dated 21 November 1857, "Oregon and Washington Volunteers." 35th Congress, 2nd Session, House Executive Document No. 47, Serial No. 1016.
 20. Ross, *Indian Fighter*.
 21. Report of Committee on Indian Affairs. Journal of (California) Senate and Appended, 4th Session, 1853, Document No. 67.
 22. It is always a happy occasion when previously unpublished material appears in the literature. All of these 1853 diary accounts are to be found in Violet Coe Mumford, *The Royal Way West, Volume II, Crossing the Plains, 1853* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1988). Book orders should be addressed to: The Royal Family Association, Inc., 1900 Generals Highway, Annapolis, MD 21401.
 23. Statement of Nathaniel Todd, 3 February 1858, in "Oregon and Washington Volunteers." 35th Congress, 2nd Session, House Executive Document No. 47, Serial No. 1016.26. Riddle, *Indian History*.
 24. Wells, *Siskiyou County*.
 25. Erwin N. Thompson, *Modoc War, It's Military History and Topography* (Sacramento: Argus Books, 1971) Thompson's scholarship has provided us with the statistics concerning the Modoc War. This work is also notable for the fine maps of the various campaigns.

26. Riddle, *Indian History*.
27. Letter of C. S. Drew to Governor George L. Curry, Oregon Territory, dated 30 December 1854 in "Oregon and Washington Volunteers." 35th Congress, 2nd Session, House Miscellaneous Document 47, Serial No. 1016.
28. Elijah Steele, from Kenosha, Wisconsin, and an overland gold-seeker to California in 1849, unfortunately did not leave a diary. However, his law and business partner in Yreka for a time was Lucius Fairchild, overland forty-niner, future governor of the State of Wisconsin and Civil War hero; Fairchild often mentions Steele in his published letters. See *California Letters of Lucius Fairchild, Wisconsin Historical Publications Collections*, Vol. XXXI (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1931).
29. Riddle, *Indian History*.
30. For background material relating to the Applegate family, see Rucker, *Oregon Trail*. (See note 6 above). Also see Shannon Applegate, *Skookum—An Oregon Pioneer Family's History and Lore* (New York: William Morrow, 1988).
31. Letter of Jesse Applegate to Alfred Leacham, dated 1 February 1872, in "Modoc War." 43rd Congress, 1st Session, House Executive Document No. 122, Serial No. 1607.
32. Letter of General Edward Canby to Commanding Officer, Camp Warner, Oregon, dated 17 February 1871, in "Modoc War." 43rd Congress, 1st Session, House Executive Document No. 122, Serial No. 1607.
33. Wells, *Siskiyou County*. For further information on Ben Wright, see Don C. Fisher, "Ben Wright," unpublished manuscript, Lava Beds National Monument, Tulelake, California. There is also a typescript of Fisher's manuscript at the Siskiyou County Historical Society.
34. Wells, *Siskiyou County*.
35. Riddle, *Indian History*.
36. Thompson, *Modoc War*. See especially maps of the Modoc War campaigns.
37. Devere Helfrich. "The Applegate Trail," *Klamath Echoes*, No. 9, 1971 (Klamath Falls, Oregon: Klamath County Historical Society) "The Applegate Trail II," *Klamath Echoes*, No. 14, 1976 (Klamath Falls, Oregon: Klamath County Historical Society).
38. Henry L. Abbot, "Pacific Railroad Reports." 33rd Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Executive Document No. 78, Serial No. 763.

THE ARTHUR H. CLARK CO.

"The West in Words"

Publishers & Booksellers since 1902

The finest in
rare & out-of-print books
Specializing in WESTERN AMERICANA



For free catalog write:

P.O. Box 230
Glendale, Calif. 91209

Copyright of Overland Journal is the property of Oregon-California Trails Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.