

INDIAN ISLAND MASSACRE:  
A DECADE OF EVENTS LEADING TO GENOCIDE  
AND REMOVAL OF THE WIYOTS  
1850-1860

By

Rex D. Green

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*Genocide: The committing of certain acts with the intent to destroy – wholly or in part – a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such.*

*-United Nations Convention on Genocide  
9 December 1948<sup>1</sup>*

*Humboldt County . . . has been the scene of a great portion of these outrages. The perpetrators seem to have acted with a deliberate design to exterminate the Indian race. Their butchery was confined to women and children, the men being absent at the time.*

*-New York Century 12 May 1860<sup>2</sup>*

*Please request the mothers of bad infants, all over the world, to frighten their bad children to sleep by threatening them with a visit from the great baby-killer.*

*- Anti-Thug<sup>3</sup>*

During the early morning hours of 26 February 1860, the Wiyot people suffered from one of the most violent and brutal attacks ever in American history. Every year, at the end of February the Wiyots held a world renewal ceremony. This was one ring of five sacred dances performed by the Hupa, Yurok, Karuk, and Chilula. During the world renewal ceremony of the Wiyot people, which consisted of several days of dances, five or six white settlers crept upon the island armed with firearms, clubs, hatchets, and knives. For about an hour, the group of men hunted down, killed, and mutilated every human being they could find. Only four or five Wiyots, including a baby, survived when the town folk of Eureka and Union (Arcata) were lured to the island located in the Humboldt Bay by fire and smoke. The majority of the lifeless bodies found were of women and children.

How could such atrocities happen? Even more appalling, how did the perpetrators get away with this crime? Thus, I have focused my research on what were the events leading up to the massacre, including government policies, why did the massacre happen and who were involved. I will also be looking into what reactions were found around Humboldt County, and finally what resulted for the Wiyot people.

The Wiyot people were one of the smallest tribes located in the Northwestern California region, having between 1,500 to 2,000 people before white contact in 1849. Wiyot territory extended along the coast from the north Little River and to the south Bear River, and went east to Berry Summit and Chalk Mountain, containing all of Humboldt Bay. McKinleyville, Arcata, Eureka, Blue Lake, Fortuna, Ferndale, and Loleta are all towns found within the original Wiyot territory.<sup>4</sup> There were 98 different villages within this region, with the majority of villages found along the Eel and Mad rivers and around Humboldt Bay.<sup>5</sup> Since they were a coastal tribe and surrounded by the redwood forest, the Wiyot food base was shellfish, trout, salmon, and eels, as well as seals. The Wiyot people excelled in basketry and skullcap making. Scholars have studied their language extensively, and Albert B. Elsasser acknowledges that “certainly more has been written about the language of the Wiyot than about any other aspect of their culture.”<sup>6</sup> The Wiyot language is very distinct and close to only the Yurok tribe, as both are Algonquian, while neighboring tribes, such as the Chilula, Nongatl, and Whilkut are Athapaskan.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the Wiyot people inhabited the best coastal lands between San Francisco and Portland, which future white settlers would soon learn.

The first non-native contact for the Wiyot people came from an American, Captain Jonathon Winship in May 1806. Winship was under commission by the Russian government to transport one hundred Aleutian Indians for trapping furs along the California coast. When they came upon Humboldt Bay, the company was looking for furs; but with this region not heavily

populated with beavers and sea otters, the company moved on further down the coast.<sup>8</sup> The next contact for the Wiyots was the Hudson's Bay Company fur trappers in 1845 by Major Pierson B. Reading.<sup>9</sup> After the Gold Rush was in full swing in central California, new mining places for the over-flooding of claim-stakers to "strike it rich" were sought. One of the newer places to mine for gold was along the Trinity River, near present day Weaverville.

However, supplies were hard to come by because of rugged, mountainous terrain surrounding the river. An expedition, led by Dr. Josiah Gregg, and encouraged by the US government, was set up to find this bay that Reading had "discovered", and to set up a trade route from the Trinity gold fields.<sup>10</sup> The Gregg's expedition would not have survived at all without the help of Wiyot and Yurok people along the coast. Gregg had planned the journey with only 10 days of rations, believing the bay was only "an eight day journey west".<sup>11</sup> The group celebrated Christmas in 1849 in what would later be founded Union (later to be changed in 1860 to Arcata).<sup>12</sup> A split between the group caused by which route they would use to return developed. One party decided to follow the coast down to San Francisco, while the others agreed to follow the Eel River, hoping it would dump into the Sacramento River. Soon after the travelers made their return to San Francisco, a ship, the *Cameo* in 1850, makes its way to Humboldt County to start plans for settlement, which would be called Trinidad. The first of five settlements around Humboldt Bay was Humboldt City, but that place was soon deserted for the closer trade routes of Eureka and Union (Arcata).<sup>13</sup> Thus, the start of settling the Humboldt Bay region was upon the white settlers, which they had a new question to answer, what to do with Wiyot people around the bay that resided upon the best land.

The newly formed State of California had a solution for what white settlers considered the "Indian problem". The "Indian problem" had three components. First was the theft of cattle to supplement former food sources disseminated by white encroachment. The second problem was the

vagrant Indians in towns from loss of ancestral land. The third problem was Indians fighting amongst white settlers to protect themselves from white afflicted atrocities. The solution was the “Act for Government and Protection of Indians”; the first legislation passed by the California Legislature in April 1850.<sup>14</sup> The act had two specific consequences among the Native people of California. The first was that “in no case shall a white man be convicted of any offense upon the testimony of an Indian”, no matter what the white person did, including raping of Native women and murder. The other consequence of the 1850 act was that a resident could arrest Indians for any complaint, in which case the indigenous person went into indentured servitude. The servitude usually lasted longer than what was allowed by California law, constituting slavery. In an editorial to the *Humboldt Times* of 23 February 1861, a happy supporter of this legislation remarked how “the law works beautifully”, and “what a pity the provisions of this law are not extended to Greasers, Kanaks, and Asiatic”.<sup>15</sup> Numerous Indians were rounded up, included young children, and became free labor and servants for white settlers.<sup>16</sup> Another important article in this act is that if the Indians involved refuse to obey these laws then the tribe or leaders of the tribe could be punished.<sup>17</sup> This legislation had a devastating effect against Native Americans; it passed a political agenda targeting a people, eliminating prosecution powers of Native people, and allowed the Indians to be enslaved to protect the status quo of the white settlers.

The U.S. government’s response to the “Indian problem” throughout America was to set aside land for the Native Americans called reservations. California was no exception. Redick McKee, a special Indian agent from the bureau of Indian Affairs, was sent to Northern California to make treaties with the numerous tribes found in the area. In all, McKee created four different reservations in this region. With the promise of the Native people staying on these reservations, the government was to supply schooling, clothing, and farming equipment, along with guaranteeing rights of hunting and fishing practices. When Redick McKee returned with the signed treaties, the

U.S. Senate refused to ratify them due to extreme protest from the California State assembly. One reason for the protest of these reservations was the placement “upon our most fertile soil the most degraded race of aborigines”.<sup>18</sup> The most disturbing aspect of the dismissal of the treaties is that the Native people who signed the treaties never became aware that they had not been ratified. The treaty documents remained in secrecy and out of the public eyes until 1905.<sup>19</sup> “An Act for Government and Protection of Indians” and the unratified treaties were part of the major government policies in California leading into the massacre of Indian Island.

In 1850, Eureka was established. Humboldt Bay region became the most important port city between San Francisco and Portland during the next decade. It was also a pit stop between the gold laden hills of the Trinity region and San Francisco, where miners stocked up on what they needed. Much tension lingered in the interior forest of the Humboldt Bay region. Encroachment on tribal land by white settlers drove away game and vital food sources, which would lead to starvation of the Indians. Disease brought by the settlers also decimated local Indian population. One of the uses of the land by the white settlers was for cattle grazing. They would allow hundreds of cattle to roam freely on open meadows and hillsides with no fences to keep the cattle within a boundary. Surely, cattle wandering outside the boundaries and coming across a starving Indian village would look like a blessing, especially when their natural food sources were gone. When this happened though, reparations were paid with mass Indian graves. This would sometimes lead to retaliation by the interior tribes, but it is important to note that only two men, Arthur Wigmore and Charles Hicks, were the only lives known to have been taken by the Wiyot people before 1860.<sup>20</sup> Settlers would also take pride in how plentiful the game and wildlife was and kill, not for a food source, but just for count. Grizzly bears, which once roamed the forests in Humboldt County in such massive numbers, became decimated, with their furs put on display by traveling vagabonds. Forcefully stopped from tribal practices, such as brush burning, which cleared overly dense areas to open

meadows and would open pinecones so that the seeds could germinate, led to assimilating away from ancestral ways. Above all else though, the Native people just wanted to be left alone.<sup>21</sup> By 1860, because of pressures from settlement, the majority of the Wiyot tribe living around Humboldt Bay resided on the north end of Indian Island, on the south entrance to Humboldt Bay, and the mouth of Elk River.<sup>22</sup>

The increased presence of settlers on tribal lands eventually led to what A. J. Bledsoe describes in his book as the “Indian Wars of the Northwest”, which went on from 1850 through 1865.<sup>23</sup> Lynwood Carranco, local historian, describes the Indian Wars:

Here in Humboldt County the Indians made but little resistance, yet were frequently killed for the most trivial of causes. Not only were there the occasional killing of small numbers of Indians, but between 1850 and 1873 a considerable number of slaughters, either by state troops or by unauthorized ‘volunteer companies’, occurred on such a scale as to be dignified by the term of ‘Indian Wars.’<sup>24</sup>

Settlers were quickly losing faith in the federal troops stationed at Fort Humboldt. Established in 1853, Fort Humboldt’s primary objective was to protect the white settlers from Indian attacks. More often though the fort and soldiers stationed there were protecting the Indians from the settlers.

The cattle ranchers and majority of Northern California had a policy of extermination that included women and children. In the *Alta California*, a San Francisco newspaper, an article written appealed that miners realized that “it was absolutely necessary to exterminate the savages before they can labor much longer in the mines with security”.<sup>25</sup> Even in Humboldt County, relocation or extermination was the policy. The *Humboldt Times*, mere weeks before the Indian Island massacre, suggests, “There is only one way to ‘domesticate’ the Indians in this county, and that is to either send them so far away that they will never find their way back, or kill them”.<sup>26</sup> The US troops would not go that far; their policy was that no Indians were fired upon unless they were running

from them, women and children were spared, and prisoners were taken whenever possible.<sup>27</sup> However, this sympathy for Native Americans led to unpopularity of not getting the job done.

Favored over US troops, volunteer companies were vicious and wiped out entire villages and shot any Indian that came across their paths. They were usually easy to form, but their more formidable foe was funding; the state of California funded many volunteer companies. One infamous volunteer company, Captain Jarboe and the Eel River Rangers, mustered into service on 6 September 1859. Jarboe, already well known for his commitment to the extermination of Indians, and warned by Governor Weller that “the women and children under all circumstances must be spared”.<sup>28</sup> Jarboe’s company received payment of \$9,347.39 for their five-month excursion of exterminating hundreds of Indians, paid for by the California Government.<sup>29</sup>

From increases in thieving of cattle and having them driven off, to settlers feeling unsecured in their settlements, the citizens in the Van Duzen and Eel River areas wanted help with their scuffles with the interior tribes. They felt they were not getting it from the federal troops stationed at Fort Humboldt, so they decided to muster into service a volunteer company. Under Captain Seaman Wright, a volunteer company was formed, the “Hydesville Dragoons” as they would be known. The volunteer company had one problem, the funds to supply the campaign. In hopes that the California government would pick up the tab, Hydesville merchants funded the campaign on credit. The group was in the field, hunting Indians for weeks, without receiving authorization from the government; the recognition and funding never came.

In desperation, a secret society was formed, “a league whose members were bound to secrecy”.<sup>30</sup> Containing fifty to seventy-five members, some of them were “prominent men of the county”, with the origins of the group believed to be in the Eel River Valley.<sup>31</sup> They were planning something, having met several times before the 26 February attack, but to what extent unknown.

Every year at the end of February, the Wiyot people celebrate the World Renewal ceremony held at the center of the Wiyot world, Indian Island. The island is located on the north end of Humboldt Bay and is very sacred to the Wiyot tribe. The annual ceremony was in remembrance of a huge earthquake that killed much of the Wiyot population around 1700. The tribe brings balance to the earth by dancing from seven to ten days in the village of Tutulwat on the northern part of the island, to help prevent another large earthquake from happening. Each night, the men would canoe back to the mainland to reload supplies and bring them back the following day. All tribes, including the white settlers, could attend the ceremony.<sup>32</sup> According to Cheryl A. Seidner, Table Bluff Reservation - Wiyot chairwoman and descendent of Jerry James, infant found on the island, the World Renewal Ceremony was one ring of five sacred dances performed by the Hupa, Yurok, Karuk, and Chilula.<sup>33</sup> So there would be other tribes at the dances besides the Wiyots. The Native people on the island were resting peacefully; unaware of the tragedy that was about to fall upon them.

#### INDISCRIMINATE MASSACRE OF INDIANS.

#### WOMEN and CHILDREN BUTCHERED.

A report was brought from Eureka on Sunday morning, that during the night all the Indians camping on Indian Island, including women and children, were killed by parties unknown. A few loaded canoes bringing the dead bodies to Union [Arcata] on the way to the Mad River, where some of the victims belonged, confirmed the report. But when the facts were generally known, it appeared that out of some sixty or seventy killed on the Island, at least fifty or sixty were women and children. Neither age or sex were spared. Little children and old women were mercilessly stabbed and their skulls crushed with axes. When the bodies were landed at Union, a more shocking and revolting spectacle never was exhibited to the eyes of a Christian and civilized people. Old women, wrinkled and decrepit lay weltering in blood, their brains dashed out and dabbled with their long gray hair. Infants scarce a span long, with their faces cloven with hatchets and their bodies ghastly with wounds. . . .

*-Northern Californian, 29 February 1860*

There are many accounts as to the degree of wanton destruction and disrespect of human life that fell upon Indian Island early Sunday morning of 26 February 1860. Five or six white males rowed ashore on the island that night bringing with them their choice of weapons; knives, hatchets, and clubs that was selected to keep the noise down to a minimal. Firearms brought upon the island were used sparingly. The men knew that only the women, children, and elders remained, as the Wiyot males were off the island getting supplies. Many people tried to escape by hiding in the brush or swimming to the mainland, but were cut down violently with swinging hatchets and clubs. Plank houses were set on fire with people inside them. If there were attempts to flee the house out the only opening, an assailant was waiting to take their life. The number of dead is uncertain because other tribes took their dead back to their villages before the settlers got on to the island, but the range is between 40 and 80 lives were taken on the island.<sup>34</sup> Only four or five survivors were present on the island, including an elder woman stuck in the mud and an infant clutched in his mother's dead arms.<sup>35</sup> Several other villages attacked along the mouths of the Eel River and Elk River; the South Spit of Humboldt Bay was also attacked, resulting in entire ranches and houses burnt to the ground with no lives spared. The total death toll to one tribe encompassing a single day was possibly over 250.<sup>36</sup> Of the people that were killed, many were elders with the knowledge of the tribe; keepers of the stories, customs, their religion, and of the sacred dances. They were the medicine women and the visionaries of the tribe. Without the elders, who is to teach the children who they are? From the devastation that this event created, the Indian Island massacre is nothing less than a terrorist act and the attack genocidal.

What could the possible motives be for this tragedy? I believe the perpetrators of this horrendous event were sending a message to the interior tribes (that the cattle ranchers were "warring" with) that this would happen to them if they continued attacking their livestock, even though the Wiyot people had nothing to do with that. This could have been the plan the secret

society was plotting. While some white settlers were observing the ceremony on the island a few days before the massacre, they recognized an Indian that they were searching for, suspected of stealing cattle. The observers approached Captain Jim, assumed leader of the Wiyots by the whites, and told Captain Jim that he must tell that person to leave. However, due to the ceremony, no one is asked to leave because anyone that makes the effort to come was welcome. The white men then warned Captain Jim that because he did not succumb to their wishes something bad could occur. Several days later, the massacre happened.<sup>37</sup> Llewellyn Loud provides a similar account:

About a week before the massacre an Indian supposed to be Sherman George of site 112 [south entrance of Humboldt Bay] was said to have been shot at and wounded in the back while committing thefts on the Bald Hills. Hank Larrabee, a most vicious white man having a cattle ranch on Larrabee creek, came to the bay to claim his victim. The Indian was found at the place of a white man living on Elk river, and by taking off his clothing he proved that he was not the guilty one, as he had never been wounded. About this time several bad characters from among the whites living on the hills are said to have met at a house just east of Red Bluff, it was presumed for the purpose of making plans.<sup>38</sup>

Another assertion was that dried beef was found in the villages along the South Spit of Humboldt Bay, but this turned out to be dried seal meat. No connection linking the Wiyot people to the theft of even one head of cattle has ever been made before 1860.<sup>39</sup> In fact, an anonymous letter printed in the San Francisco Bulletin on 11 May 1860 states that "neither man, woman, nor child would touch beef". The author, signed EXODUS, goes further to say that the Wiyots were "known to have thrown away [cattle] meat given to them". Ammunition and arms dealings with the interior tribes were another assumption for the cause of the attacks upon the Wiyot people. This accusation also found to be false, because the Wiyots did not have good relations with these interior tribes. The Wiyot people often were spies for the settlers to tell if interior tribes were about to attack.<sup>40</sup> In fact, Major G. J. Rains, commander of Fort Humboldt during the massacre, could "find no excuse whatever for the horrid massacres on this [Humboldt] Bay" and "considered [Wiyots] as safeguards to the citizens" by acting as spies.<sup>41</sup>

From the research, it appears that five or six men left from Humboldt Point, adjacent to the opening of Humboldt Bay, with boats belonging to a Captain Buhne. The perpetrators crossed the bay to the South Spit and killed every Indian they could find. Discovering one Indian trying to flee and warn the villages on the Elk River, the white men soon overtook and killed the Indian, and continue back across the bay to the mouth of the Elk River. There are accounts that the Elk River villages were attacked, but there are other accounts that suggested these Wiyots escaped the slaughter, either by fleeing the villages or that the murderers got alarm and moved on to Indian Island.<sup>42</sup> The villains then continued north in Humboldt Bay until they reached Indian Island and continued with their genocidal attacks, and adding to their death toll.

The people of Humboldt County knew the people responsible for the murders around Humboldt Bay, though prosecutions of the guilty parties never happened. Susie Baker Fountain, a well-respected local historian, compiled a list of four names thought to be involved in the Indian Island massacre, though the list is not back with the reasons why they were suspects. This list includes the names of Hank Larrabee, James D. Henry Brown, and the Huestis brothers, Charles A. D. and George W.<sup>43</sup>

Henry P. (Hank) Larrabee, who owned a cattle ranch along Larrabee Creek, is a possible leader of the thugs, the name the party would become known as. His exploits and terrorizing of the Native people in Humboldt County are infamous, to put it nicely. An anonymous letter sent to the *San Francisco Bulletin* in 1 June 1860 paints a vivid picture of Larrabee's brutality and character:

... A man named L----- [Larrabee], who had a stock ranch on Van Dusen [sic] river, had an Indian boy, whose family lived within half a mile of his place. L-----'s boy would occasionally run off and visit his relations. This incensed L----- so much, that he went down one morning and slaughtered the whole family—of about six persons—boy and all. He then made a rude raft of logs, put the victims on it, marked it to W. H. Mills—who was known to be opposed to the indiscriminate slaughter of the Indians—and started the bodies down the river. . . .

The man L----- is the same person who boasted of having killed *sixty infants* with his own hatchet at the different slaughtering grounds. This is the same man who peddled whiskey to the United States soldiers and the Indians...

Hank Larrabee was a hated man amongst the Indian tribes and feared by white settlers as well. If Larrabee saw a Native person near his property, no matter how far away, he would use them as target practice for sighting in his gun.<sup>44</sup> Lieutenant Daniel D. Lynn sends a report back to Fort Humboldt, after visiting Larrabee Valley, which tells more about Hank Larrabee:

. . . Here in this . . . lovely valley lived a man about whose I feel myself impelled to speak. . . I heard no man speak in his favor, or even intimate one redeeming trait in his character. The universal cry was against him. . . Even the woman who was shot and burned to death was condemned for living with such a man. Of most enormities of which he stands accused you are aware. An accomplice and actor in the massacre at Indian Island and South Beach [South Spit]; the murderer of Yo-keel-la-bah; recently engaged in killing unoffending Indians . . . having killed eighteen at one time (eight bucks and ten squaws and children), and now at work imbruing his hands in the blood of slaughtered innocence, I do not think Mr. Larrabee can be too emphatically condemned.<sup>45</sup>

Hank Larrabee was in Eureka at the time of the massacre. He came from the valley to find Sherman George (as told on page 10 of this paper), and to report the theft of cattle belonging to him and his partner, Wallace Hagan, who lived on the ranch.<sup>46</sup> Hagan was involved, with Larrabee, in the torturing of an Indian named Yo-keel-la-bah, tying him to a tree and shooting him in cold blood. This Indian was friendly towards the white settlers and would help the soldiers on occasion.<sup>47</sup> Wallace Hagan is another suspect in the massacres around Humboldt Bay.<sup>48</sup>

In a letter to the San Francisco Bulletin editor, signed by Charles Rossitre, corresponds, "The . . . massacre was headed (as reported by an Indian, and believed by a majority of the people,) by a white man named Brown, and four other savages of the same hue."<sup>49</sup> "Feared by Indians and non-Indians alike", James D. Henry Brown's track record with Indians would put him as a likely third suspect.<sup>50</sup> In 1859, Brown moved into Elk River country, which he would set up a successful cattle ranch. This would put him near the scene of the crime. Brown had been in the middle of many "sharp engagements with the Indians", having had his cattle driven away from his ranch, barns

burned, and his families lives "menaced". Furthermore, "Mr. Brown was always foremost in the avenging party of white men who never failed to follow the trail of the savages and inflict deserved punishment."<sup>51</sup> An Arcata resident, Mr. Preston, also knew the involvement of Brown in the massacres.<sup>52</sup>

Charles A. D. Huestis and George W. Huestis are brothers and considered the other suspects involved in the Indian Island massacre. They were supply packers whose routes went from the bay to the interior. In 1858, the US government employed the Huestis brothers to operate pack trains for transporting war supplies to the soldiers fighting Indians. This work included various engagements with interior tribes along the primary route from Fort Humboldt to Fort Gaston. The Huestis brothers were also the nephews of A. J. Huestis, Humboldt County judge, when the massacre happened.

The part the secret society played in the massacre at Indian Island is uncertain. I have seen no records listing the names involve in this party, so it is hard to link the two together. The "thugs" is possibly the inherited name given to this secret league by the anonymous letters sent to the *San Francisco Bulletin*. The Hydesville Dragoons were blamed in several different accounts and have motive by being angered because of not receiving recognition by the government. Yet, looking at the enlistment rolls for this volunteer company, none of the suspects were members.<sup>53</sup> I do feel the Hydesville Dragoons were responsible for the massacres along the mouth of the Eel River on the Wednesday following the Indian Island incident. The company had been wondering through the Eel River Valley for weeks looking for any sort of Indian engagements.

Another shocking revelation that mounted for Indian people of and around Humboldt County was the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. All available federal troops stationed at Fort Humboldt were relocated back east to fight for the Union. A volunteer company was mustered into service in April of 1861, out of local men. This group became known as the California Battalion of

Mountaineers. They were led by Sergeant Charles A. D. Huestis, and Corporal Henry P. Larrabee. W. Hagans and George W. Huestis were privates of this volunteer company. Four of the five suspects in the Indian Island massacre enlisted in this company to commit more genocidal acts on Indian people.<sup>54</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the massacre, no investigation was conducted, as Sheriff Van Nest hastily left for San Francisco aboard the *Northerner* that same morning after discovering what happened. The first written account of the massacre was by Bret Harte (of fame as editor of the *Overland Monthly*) in the Arcata newspaper, the *Northern Californian*. Harte was acting editor, due to the editor and owner of the paper, S. G. Whipple, departure to San Francisco. After presenting a few thoughts on the possible justifications of why this catastrophe happened, Harte publicly condemned the killing of women and children. Harte goes further and writes, "We can conceive of no palliation for woman and child slaughter. We can conceive of no wrong that a babe's blood can atone for."<sup>55</sup>

Austin Wiley, the editor of the other local paper, the *Humboldt Times*, although condemn the killing of women and children, "shed crocodile tears over the 'poor Indians'".<sup>56</sup> After reporting what happened on the island and the death toll, Wiley tries to give justifications for the destruction of the Wiyots, such as harboring wanted interior tribe members and locating dried beef. Along with the responsibility of the U.S. government to do something about Indian depredations, Wiley upholds the ideals that settlers must take extreme measures to protect their properties. Wiley writes, "If in defense of your property and your all, it becomes necessary to break up these hiding places of your mountain enemies, so be it; but for heavens sake, in doing this, do not forget to what race you belong".<sup>57</sup>

As for other opinions on the massacre, there is evidence that people wanted to bring the perpetrators of this crime to justice. One of the survivors on Indian Island, identified only as

“Hatteway’s squaw”, believed to be an eyewitness to the people that committed the murders, having “saw them distinctly against the sky”.<sup>58</sup> Captain Moore and Robert Gunther, two men that just finished a business transaction for a portion of Indian Island just days before the massacre, discover her on the island early that morning amongst the bloodshed. On the return back to the mainland, the two men wanted to bring the parties to justice. But, as Gunther later addresses during a special banquet at the Old Sequoia Yacht Club years after the massacre, “we soon found that we better keep our mouths shut.”<sup>59</sup>

After Bret Harte’s editorial of condemning the suspects for the horrendous atrocities inflicted on the innocent, his position at the *Northern Californian* came to an abrupt end. Harte left Arcata for San Francisco less than a month after the Indian Island massacre “to reside in the future”.<sup>60</sup> There is much speculation that Bret Harte was forced out of town, with his life threatened, for his expressiveness against the murders. Most people were too afraid for their lives to speak out against the “thugs” that committed the crimes. William Preston, son of Mr. Preston, feared James Brown, one of the suspects in the massacre, “whenever he saw him on the streets of Arcata”.<sup>61</sup> The majority of opposition to the massacres can be located in anonymous letters sent to the *San Francisco Bulletin*, an independent newspaper.

In these anonymous letters to the editor, many contained pseudo names. Anti-Thug, An Eye-Witness, and Exodus were some of the names used. A majority of the letters gave insight and horrific descriptions of the killings, but some contain other important information. In the letter, signed by An Eye-Witness, describes what problems were arising in the town. “The civil authorities here are paralyzed [sic] or divided. Our Sheriff says, ‘Served them right!’ and the tone of a newspaper called *Humboldt Times*, advocated such principles.”<sup>62</sup> Another unsigned letter states, “Society is completely demoralized on Eel river; and the Thugs are largely in the majority, led on by Wiley of the *Humboldt Times*, and by Van Nest the Sheriff. Young men talk and think of nothing

else but hanging and killing young Diggers and their mothers. The pulpit is silent, and the preachers say not a word. In fact they dare not." In fact, this letter goes further and declares, "Men who detest . . . the thugging system, from circumstances which surround them, are silent. Two or three men who were on the last Grand Jury which sat at Eureka, where Thugs".<sup>63</sup>

Many citizens of Humboldt County were afraid to speak out for fear of the "Thugs" and the reasoning for writing the anonymous letters, but even that could be hazardous. Another letter sent to the *San Francisco Bulletin* on 1 June 1860 describes a frightful scene of when the "Thugs" thought citizens were conspiring against them:

Some time after the 18<sup>th</sup> March last, three desperate ruffians, armed with hatchets, entered the hotel at Hydesville, and demanded of the proprietor by what authority he had written a letter to Lieut. Hardcastle . . . at Fort Humboldt; and if he [proprietor] had not convinced said ruffians that the letter was strictly private, and had no allusion to Indian affairs, and no communication to the *Bulletin* [San Francisco], he would have been assassinated on the spot.

Only after leaving Humboldt County did one objector lend his voice, yet still kept his name anonymous. He feared not only for his own life, but also for his few friends that still resided in Humboldt. Thus the author asked the editor to remove his name for he did not "wish that they . . . be molested for any doings" on his part.<sup>64</sup> Yet, another response by Anti-Thug gave an appropriate new name to the town of Eureka, "Murderville".<sup>65</sup>

The Indian Island massacre appeared in San Francisco as a tragedy committed by "the demons of our own race".<sup>66</sup> In the *San Francisco Bulletin*, an editorial read, "We do not remember to have heard or read of any thing in savage warfare quite equaling the infamy of these murders".<sup>67</sup> The editor was most likely spurred on to continue this story by the numerous letters sent to the paper from Humboldt County; or else this event could have been passed over like many other atrocious deeds inflicted upon indigenous people. Although the names of the perpetrators were present in different letters, the editor left them out of the paper for this reason:

We think it better to withhold the names, until we are assured that there is no mistake in the matter. Let parties on the spot supply evidence, and the *Bulletin* will not only do its best to brand the merciless wretches with the ineffaceable mark of public shame and scorn, but drag them to the bar of justice and thence to the scaffold, to die the death they have so richly merited.<sup>68</sup>

The Indian Island massacre made headline all the way across the United States to New York, as printed in the *New York Century* on 12 May 1860.<sup>69</sup>

The *Humboldt Times* did not respond positively to the anonymous letters to their San Francisco counterparts. Many times Wiley's editorials called out those that wrote letters to the *San Francisco Bulletin*. Wiley labeled Anti-Thug "guilty of a willful, malicious, malignant and contemptible lie".<sup>70</sup> As for the reference to "Murderville (formally Eureka)", Wiley calls the author "some skalla-wag, sneaking under the cover of a fictitious signature".<sup>71</sup> Even Sheriff Van Nest describes the anonymous letter writers as "fleas, they bite in the dark and when you put your finger on them, they ain't there".<sup>72</sup>

After a formal inquiry of the massacres, a Grand Jury convened in April of 1860 with the following message:

We cannot close our report without commenting upon the massacre of Indian women and children lately committed in this county. We have endeavored, by summoning before us a number of citizens of this county, whom we supposed could give us some information to enable us to bring to trial the persons engaged in this revolting crime; and after a strict examination of all the witnesses, nothing was elicited to enlighten us as to the perpetrators. We would express our condemnation of the outrage, and regret our investigations of this matter have met with so deplorable a result.<sup>73</sup>

For the survivors of the massacres, failure of justice prevailed. One Wiyot man, known as "Bill" of Mad River, had lost his wife, mother, sister, two brothers, and two little children in one single morning.<sup>74</sup> Sympathy for the remaining Wiyots found in an editorial recommended farmers take a chance and offer farm work. The editorial goes further, discussing the problem that they have been "alienated from their old habits and partly dependent" on white customs.<sup>75</sup> A. J. Huestis, county judge, put into indentured servitude a young Wiyot girl named Silva, orphaned after the massacre.

She ran away to be with her people after a week in servitude. Huestis relocated her and gave an ultimatum; come back with him to be cared for, or starve on the reservation with her people. Silva chose the life of a slave; and after Huestis died many years later, his eldest daughter inherited Silva as property, where she lived the remainder of her years as her slave.<sup>76</sup>

Many Wiyots learned some English after contact, as well as many mixed blood children. For the protection from any future attacks upon the Humboldt Bay Indians that survived, the Wiyots were round up and taken to Fort Humboldt. The Wiyots received no shelter during the wettest months of the year. Discussion amongst the town folk since the massacre roused the idea of removing the Indians from Fort Humboldt, as government funds were feeding them. Still, the Wiyots “didn’t want to go” and leave their homeland for the Klamath Reservation.<sup>77</sup> This outlook of the government spending money feeding and protecting the Indians and not sponsoring a volunteer company spread angered towards Major G. J. Rains and the federal troops at Fort Humboldt. A drunk young man from Hydesville declared, “not only [was] the intention of the ‘Thugs’ to clean out the Indians, but to clean out Uncle Sam’s small batch of soldiers including officers and all.”<sup>78</sup>

After recommendations by Colonel D. E. Buel, Indian agent for the Klamath Reservation, the county decided that the removal was in the Indians best intentions. During the month of April, four hundred and fifty Native Americans were forcefully marched to the Klamath reservation under protection by federal troops, which was to be their new permanent home.<sup>79</sup> The Wiyots destroyed all their property that they could not pack to the reservation, refusing all offers from the settlers for their canoes.<sup>80</sup> After the forced removal, Austin Wiley declared, “We are truly glad that we are at last rid of these troublesome diggers.”<sup>81</sup>

Once at the reservation, Wiyots had to deal with more starvation and “squaw men”, white settlers trying to take Indian women for their sexual pleasures. The Indians became free

agricultural laborers on the reservation. Many Wiyots ventured back to their homelands and hid away from public eye. The *Humboldt Times* encouraged all citizens to be on the lookout for those stray Indians that leave the reservation. Furthermore, “let an example be made of the first [Indian] that find their way back, and this will end the matter” of Indians leaving the reservation.<sup>82</sup> Others chose to assimilate into the white customs to protect themselves from further white atrocities. To protect their children, parents no longer taught the Wiyot language or customs.

The Wiyot people lost almost all their lands and much of their culture. There are only a few small rancherias left upon their ancestral lands. There are no fluent speakers of their language left. The World Renewal ceremonies are danced no longer. In a 1910 Census, only 100 full-blooded Wiyots existed.<sup>83</sup> Yet, after all of these atrocities inflicted upon them, the Wiyots are still alive. Basketry is again taught to the children. Although the dances are gone, they are trying to be recovered to bring the world back into balance again. The Sacred Sites Fund holds auctions and fundraisers to buy back their sacred sites and portions of their ancestral lands. Most important of all, the last Saturday of February is dedicated every year to remember what happened to the Wiyot people. The candlelight vigil is open to all, and important, not only for remembrance, but for healing our hearts as well.

For the Wiyot people, the Indian Island massacre is their September 11, their Pearl Harbor, the day that will always be that day of infamy for them. During the process of one single night, their culture and ancestral way of living was forever changed. As for Humboldt County, the innocence of a small port city will always be tainted with the screams of justice; for the tragedy of this event and the injustices that ensued can no longer be kept locked away as that lingering dark secret. Eureka has earned the name “Murderville”. In order to heal from this ghastly wound in our heart, remembering our history, no matter how bleak it is, and understanding it is the key. Ending

with a quote from Cheryl Seidner: *"I try to make sure people understand. If you know your history, hopefully you won't repeat history."*

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 Reference Notes

- <sup>1</sup> As reprinted in Jack Norton, *Genocide in Northwest California*, (San Francisco: The Indian Historical Press, 1979), 154.
- <sup>2</sup> Reprinted in San Francisco Bulletin, 18 June 1860.
- <sup>3</sup> San Francisco Bulletin, 13 March 1860. The baby-killer is a reference to Hank Larrabee, one of the murderers of Indian Island.
- <sup>4</sup> See Appendix.
- <sup>5</sup> Llewellyn L. Loud, "Ethnogeography and Archaeology of the Wiyot Territory." *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology*. Vol. 13, No. 3. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 23 December 1918), 256. These are Loud's modern village sites and do not include his archaeological sites, which would raise the total sites to 172.
- <sup>6</sup> William C. Sturtevant, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 8, *California*, by Albert B. Elsasser (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 155.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 155, 190.
- <sup>8</sup> Loud, 245-247.
- <sup>9</sup> Theodore H. Hittel, *History of California Volume 3*. (San Francisco: N. J. Stone & Co., 1897), 816.
- <sup>10</sup> Oscar Lewis. *The Quest for Qual-A-Wa-Loo [Humboldt Bay]*. (San Francisco: publisher unknown, 1943), 107-110.
- <sup>11</sup> Chad L. Hoopes, *The Lure of Humboldt Bay Region*. (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Book Co., 1971), 19.
- <sup>12</sup> Hoopes, 27.
- <sup>13</sup> Hoopes, 33-35, 45.
- <sup>14</sup> Indian Canyon, *An Act for the Government and Protection of Indians*, 1995, <<http://www.indiancanyon.org/ACTof1850.html>>. This site gives the entire Act for the Government and Protection of Indians.
- <sup>15</sup> Jack Norton, *Genocide in Northwest California*, (San Francisco: The Indian Historical Press, 1979), 44. A list of Humboldt County citizens that owned indentured servants are found on pages 61-63.
- <sup>16</sup> Indian Canyon, *Who's Illegal?: Government and Public Policy, Failure and Genocide in California*, 1995, <<http://www.indiancanyon.org/GenocideandEconomics.html>>.
- <sup>17</sup> Indian Canyon, *An Act for the Government and Protection of Indians*, 1995, <<http://www.indiancanyon.org/ACTof1850.html>>. Article 9.
- <sup>18</sup> Ray Raphael, *Little White Father: Redick McKee on the California Frontier* (Eureka: Humboldt County Historical Society, 1993), 108. To find out more about the 18 unratified treaties this is a great source by a local author. Also check out R. F. Heizer, "The Eighteen Unratified Treaties of 1851-1852 Between the California Indians and the United States Government." (Berkeley: Archaeological Research Facility, University of California, 1972).
- <sup>19</sup> Gayle Olson-Raymer, *Indians in Northern California: A Case Study of Federal, State and Vigilante Intervention, 1850-1860*. <<http://sorrel.humboldt.edu/~gol/kellogg/northerncalifornia.html>>.

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<sup>20</sup> Loud, 323.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Loud, 323.

<sup>23</sup> A. J. Bledsoe, *Indian Wars of the Northwest*, (Oakland: Biobooks, 1956). This book is extremely bias as a military point of view versus Native Americans and suggest it to get some understanding of the local Indian conflicts with the whites.

<sup>24</sup> Lynwood Carranco, *The Redwood Country* (Dubuque: Kendell / Hunt Publishing Company, 1971), 77.

<sup>25</sup> Pratap Chatterjee. *Gold, Greed and Genocide*. (Berkeley: Project Underground, 1998), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Humboldt Times, 4 February 1860.

<sup>27</sup> Michael J. Kellogg, "Treatment of Minority Groups in Humboldt County: A History." (M.A. Thesis, Humboldt State University, 1972), 15.

<sup>28</sup> Lynwood Carranco and Estle Beard, *Genocide and Vendetta*. (Nofman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 90-91.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 97. To read more about Jarboe and the Eel River Rangers, check pages 84-97.

<sup>30</sup> Bledsoe, 168.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>32</sup> Olson-Raymer, <<http://sorrel.humboldt.edu/~go1/kellogg/northerncalifornia.html>>. Indian Canyon. *News, events, and information about the Wiyot Indian Table Bluff Tribe and Community*, 1995, <<http://indiancanyon.org/wiyot1.html> > (3 March 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Cheryl Seidner, Table Bluff Rancheria Chairperson, interview by author, 12 September 2002, Arcata, videotape recording.

<sup>34</sup> Kellogg, 39. Kellogg gives a very extensive look at the different tabulation of deaths in the footnotes on this page.

<sup>35</sup> Chag Lowry. *Original Voices*, <<http://www.originalvoices.org/PriceOfGoldEight.htm>>, (3 March 2002).

<sup>36</sup> Loud, 332. Loud contends that this number is too high, but also goes on to say, "the facts as they have been presented are bad enough, without attempting to make them appear worse".

<sup>37</sup> Seidner, 2002.

<sup>38</sup> Loud, 333.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 334.

<sup>41</sup> San Francisco Bulletin, 24 May 1860.

<sup>42</sup> Loud, 332-333.

<sup>43</sup> Susie Baker Fountain Papers, Vol. XCIII, 41.

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<sup>44</sup> Chag Lowry. *Original Voices*, <<http://www.originalvoices.org/PriceOfGoldEight.htm>> (3 March 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Secretary of War. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series L, Vol. 1, Part 1. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 10-11.

<sup>46</sup> Secretary of War, 7.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>48</sup> Chag Lowry. *Original Voices*, <<http://www.originalvoices.org/PriceOfGoldEight.htm>> (3 March 2002).

<sup>49</sup> San Francisco Bulletin, 2 March 1860.

<sup>50</sup> Chag Lowry. *Original Voices*, <<http://www.originalvoices.org/PriceOfGoldEight.htm>> (3 March 2002).

<sup>51</sup> Leigh H. Irvine, *History of Humboldt County with Biographical Sketches*. (Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1915), 770.

<sup>52</sup> Kellogg, 47-48.

<sup>53</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>54</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>55</sup> Northern Californian, 29 February 1860.

<sup>56</sup> Humboldt Times, 3 March 1860.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Norton, 87.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>60</sup> Northern Californian, 28 March 1860.

<sup>61</sup> Kellogg, 48.

<sup>62</sup> San Francisco Bulletin, 13 March 1860.

<sup>63</sup> San Francisco Bulletin, 1 June 1860.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> San Francisco Bulletin, 28 March, 1860.

<sup>66</sup> San Francisco Bulletin, 14 March 1860.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

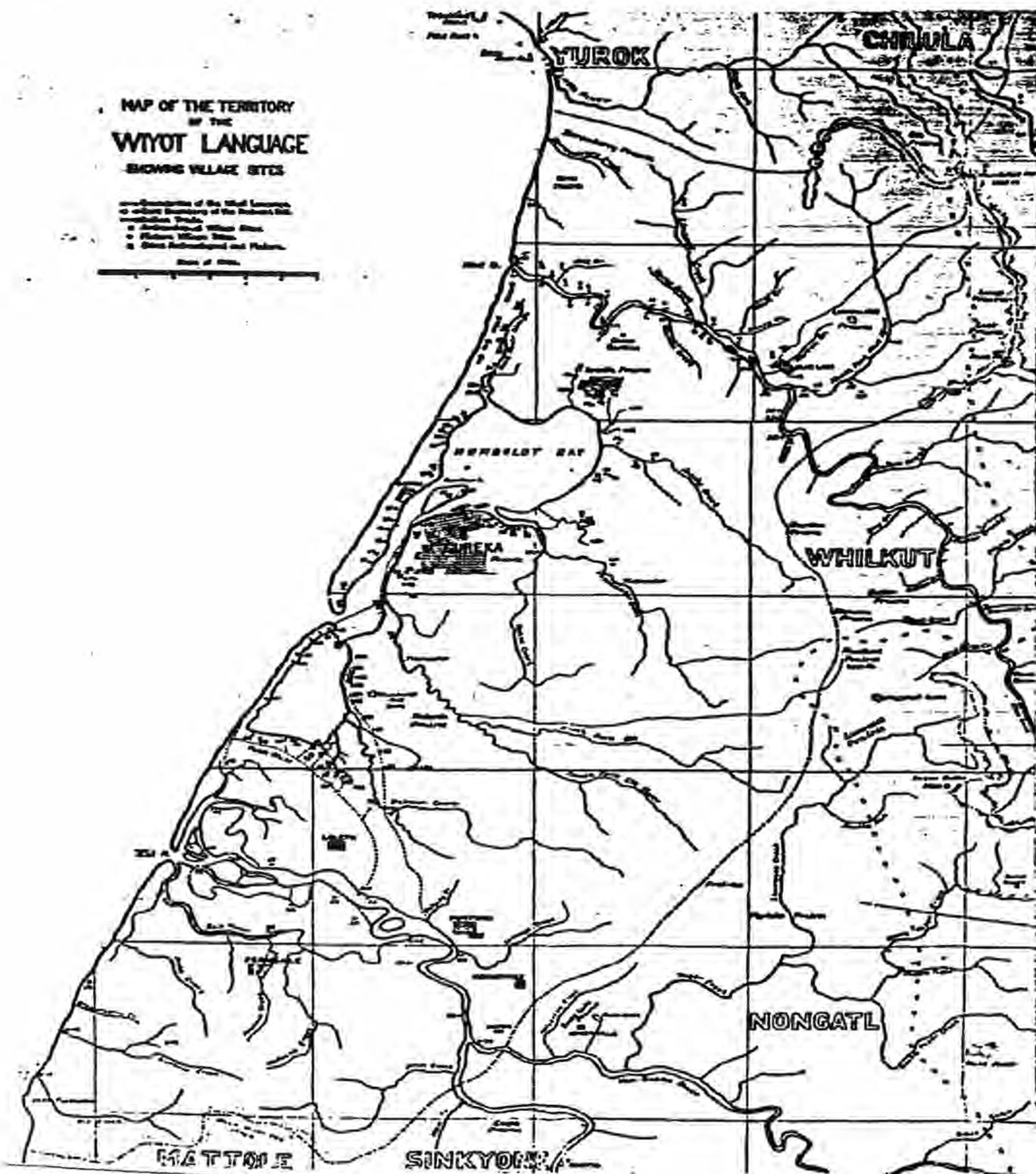
<sup>68</sup> San Francisco Bulletin, 13 March 1860.

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- <sup>69</sup> Reprinted in San Francisco Bulletin, 18 June 1860.
- <sup>70</sup> Humboldt Times, 24 March 1860.
- <sup>71</sup> Humboldt Times, 7 April 1860.
- <sup>72</sup> Humboldt Times, 28 April 1860.
- <sup>73</sup> Northern Californian, 18 April 1860.
- <sup>74</sup> Northern Californian, 29 February 1860.
- <sup>75</sup> Northern Californian, 7 March 1860.
- <sup>76</sup> Susie Baker Fountain Papers Vol. 26, 50.
- <sup>77</sup> Humboldt Times, 14 April 1860.
- <sup>78</sup> San Francisco Bulletin, 28 March 1860.
- <sup>79</sup> Norton, 90.
- <sup>80</sup> Humboldt Times, 14 April 1860.
- <sup>81</sup> Humboldt Times, 21 April 1860.
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>83</sup> Four Directions Institute. *Wiyot*, <<http://www.fourdir.com/wiyot.htm>> (3 March 2002).

MAP OF THE TERRITORY  
OF THE  
WIYOT LANGUAGE  
SHOWING VILLAGE SITES

- Boundaries of the Wiyot Territory  
 - Village Sites of the Wiyot  
 - Indian Trails  
 - Indian Villages  
 - Indian Sites  
 - Indian Burial Sites

Scale of Miles



Source: Llewellyn L. Loud, "Ethnogeography and Archaeology of the Wiyot Territory." *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology*. Vol. 13, No. 3. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 23 December 1918), 403.



## "Hydesville Dragoons"

### MUSTER ROLL OF CAPTAIN SEAMAN WRIGHT'S COMPANY OF HUMBOLDT CAVALRY SECOND BRIGADE - 6th DIV. CALIFORNIA MILITIA.

NO.	NAME	RANK	PERIOD OF SERVICE		MONTHS	DAYS
			FROM 1860	to 1860		
1	Seaman Wright	Captain	Feby 6	April 21	2	14
2	E.D. Holland	1st Luint.	"	April 20	2	14
3	Henry Robinson	2nd Luint.	"	April 6	2	-
4	Wm. C. McMarana	3rd Luint.	"	Mch 20	1	14
5	Eli Davis	1st Sgt.	"	" "	1	14
6	Nat. Stansbury	2nd Sgt.	"	April 6	2	-
7	Geo. H. Gray	3rd Sgt.	"	April 20	2	14
8	James O. Coder	4th Sgt.	"	Feby 6	-	-
9	Thos. P. Wyatt	1st Copt.	"	Mch 20	1	14
10	S. Furgison	2nd Copt.	"	" "	1	14
11	Thomas McCormic	Ferrier	"	" 15	1	-
12	P. Smith	Drumlar	"	April 6	2	-
13	Brackett George	Private	"	" "	2	-
14	Connor Samuel	do	"	Mch 20	1	14
15	Collins Jarvis	do	"	" "	1	14
16	Cook W.S.	do	"	April "	2	14
17	Cuddiback Henry	do	"	" "	2	14
18	Closs, J.C.	do	"	Mch 6	1	-
19	Donnelly Peter	do	"	April 20	-	14
20	David William	do	"	Mch 20	1	-
21	Davis Henry J.	do	"	Feby 6	-	-
22	Everett, John	do	"	Mch 15	1	14
23	Fraze, A.L.	do	"	April 20	2	14
24	Foster J.N.	do	"	Mch 20	1	14
25	Francher, Geo. B.	do	"	April 20	2	14
26	Gartman Henry	do	15	Mch 20	1	-
27	Hughes Charles	do	"	April 15	2	14
28	Henley J.C.	do	"	Mch 29	1	14
29	Kirkpatrick Andrew	do	"	" "	1	14
30	King David	do	6	April 20	2	14
31	McKenzie D.G.	do	"	" "	2	14
32	Marshall D.L.	do	"	Mch 20	1	14
33	Mast Stephen	do	"	" "	1	-
34	Pharier George	do	15	" 15	1	-
35	Posey Andrew	do	6	April 6	2	-
36	Sharp William R.	do	6	" "	2	14
37	Stocker R.M.	do	6	Mch 20	1	-
38	Stocking Clark V.	do	6	April 6	2	14
39	Spears Egbert	do	6	April 20	2	-
40	Stamperburg Geo.	do	6	April 6	2	14
41	Stone Oliver	do	6	April 20	2	-
42	Seawig Oliver	do	6	Mch 6	1	-
43	Thacker Wilburn	do	15	" 15	1	14
44	White Henry	do	"	" 29	1	14
45	Walsh John	do	6	" 20	1	14
46	Wilkerson Green	do	"	April "	2	-

Source: Jack Norton, *Genocide in Northwestern California*. (San Francisco: The Indian Historian Press, 1979), 175.

**California Battalion of Mountaineers  
Volunteer Company  
April 1861**

**Sergeants**

\*Charles A. D. Huestis  
S. E. Phillips

**Corporals**

\*Henry P. Larrabee  
Green Wilkinson

**Privates**

\*W. M. Hagans  
Leroy B. Weaver  
E. D. Holland  
Wm. A. Peasley  
B. F. Janes  
John Dean  
John D. Skilling  
J. W. Shoemaker  
M. W. Markham  
John C. Neece  
Pryor N. Davis  
Cornelius Wasgatt  
Wm. Bradford

E. E. Turk  
Mannon Taylor  
\*George W. Huestis  
Stephen Robbins  
Thos. P. Wyatt  
Henry Rodgers  
C. H. Hedee  
John Everett  
John Tewksbury  
Lewis Taylor  
Wm. Barnett  
Edwin B. Hagans  
Thomas Griffith

\*Suspects in the Indian Island Massacre

Source: Susie Baker Fountain Papers Vol.32, 552-553.

## Indiscriminate Massacre of Indians.

### Women and Children Butchered.

A report was brought from Eureka on Sunday morning that during the night nearly all the Indians camping on Indian Island, including women and children, were killed by parties unknown. A few loaded canoes brining the dead bodies down to Union [Arcata] on their way to the Mad River, where some of the victims belonged, confirmed the report. But where the facts were generally known, it appeared that out of some sixty or seventy killed on the Island, at least fifty of sixty were women or children. Neither age or sex had been spared. Little children and old women were mercilessly stabbed and their skulls crushed with axes. When the bodies were landed at Union, a more shocking and revolting spectacle never was exhibited to the eyes of Christian and civilized people. Old women, wrinkled and decrepit lay weltering in blood, their brains bashed out and dabbled with their long grey hair. Infants scarce a span long, with their faces cloven with hatchets and their bodies ghastly with wounds. We gather from survivors that four or five white men attacked the ranches at 4 o'clock in the morning, which statement is corroborated by people at Eureka who heard pistol shots at about that time, although no knowledge of the attack was public. With the Indians who lived on the Island, some thirty from the mouth of the Mad river were staying, having attended a dance on the evening previous. They were all killed with the exception of some few who hid themselves during the massacre. No resistance was made, it is said, to the butchers who did the work, but as they ran or huddled together for protection like sheep, they were struck down with hatchets. Very little shooting was done, most of the bodies having wounds in the head. The Bucks were mostly absent, which accounts for the predominance of female victims.

On Monday, we received a statement from our Senior, at Eureka *en route* for San Francisco. He says: "About 9 o'clock, I visited the Island and there a horrible scene was presented. The bodies of 36 women and children, recently killed, lay in and near the several ranches—they were of all ages, from the child of but two or three years to the old skeleton squaw.

From appearance the most of them must have been killed with axes or hatchets—as the heads and bodies of many were gashed with such an instrument. It was a sickening and pitiful site. Some 5 or 6 were still alive and one old woman was able to talk, though dreadfully wounded. Dr. Lee who visited them and dressed the wounds of those alive, says that "some will recover if properly cared for." It is not generally known that more than three bucks were killed—though it is supposed that there must have been 15 to 20. It is thought that the bodies of the men were take away by Indians early this morning as four canoes were seen to leave the Island.

On the beach south of the entrance it is reported that from thirty to fifty people were killed. It is also reported that at Bucksport, all were killed that were there. I passed in sight of them about 11 o'clock and saw the ranches on fire. It is also said that the same has been done at the several ranches on Eel River.

No one seems to know who was engaged in this slaughter, but is supposed to have been men who have suffered from depredations so long on Eel river and vicinity."

It is said that some jerked beef, about 100 lbs. was found in one of the Indian ranches on Indian Island and on south beach.

Indian Island is scarcely one mile from Eureka the county seat of Humboldt county. With the exception of the conjectures that the Indians on this Island offer aid and assistance to mountain Indians, they are peaceful and industrious, and seem to have perfect faith in the good will of the whites. Many of them are familiar to our citizens. "Bill" of Mad river, a well known and rather intelligent fellow, has proven a faithful ally to the white men on several occasions and—has had his wife, mother, sister, two brothers and two little children cruelly butchered by men of that race whom he had learned to respect and esteem.

Some of the victims lived a few hours after have been brought up to Union. A number of citizens visited the scene where the canoes were unloaded; and it is but justice to the community to say that the general expression was one of deep sympathy with the miserable sufferers, and honest, deep and utter abhorrence of the act of wonton brutality and its perpetrators.

Bret Harte  
February 29, 1860

Bret Harte's Editorial  
Northern Californian  
29 February 1860

Page 2

Our Indian troubles have reached a crisis. To day we record acts of Indian aggression and white retaliation. It is a humiliating fact that the parties who may be supposed to represent white civilization have committed the greater barbarity. But before we review the causes that led to this crowning act of reckless desperation, let us remind the public at a distance from this savage-ridden district, that the secrecy of this indiscriminate massacre is an evidence of its disavowal and detestation by the community. The perpetrators are yet unknown.

The people of this country have been long-suffering and patient. They have had homes plundered, property destroyed, and the lives of friends sacrificed. The protection of a Federal force has been found inadequate, and --(word unknown)-- volunteer forces have been raised and the captured savages placed on reservations, by some defective screw in the Federal machinery they have escaped. They have returned to their old homes. Old outrages have been renewed. The friendly Indians about the Bay have been charged with conveying arms and ammunition to the mountain tribes, and receiving slaughtered beef as a reward. A class of hard-working men who derive their subsistence by cattle raising have been the greatest sufferers, and if in the blind fury of retaliation they spare neither age or sex, though they cannot be excused, a part of the blame should fall upon that government which places the responsibility of self-defense on the injured party. If the government says, virtually, "Protect yourselves" it cannot consistently find fault with the manner.

Justice demands that we should show thus much in explanation. We do not extenuate. If the deed was committed by responsible parties, we will give place to any argument that may be offered in justification. But we can conceive of no palliation for woman and child slaughter. We can conceive of no wrong that a babe's blood can atone for. Perhaps we do not rightly understand the doctrine of "extermination." How a human being with the faculty of memory, who could recall his own mother's grey hairs, who could remember how he had been taught to respect age and decrepitude, who had ever looked upon a helpless infant with a father's eye—could with cruel unpitying hand carry out the "extermination" that his brain had conceived—who could smite the mother and a child wantonly and cruelly—few men can understand. What amount of suffering it takes to make a man a babe killer, is a question for future moralists. What will justify it, should be a question of present LAIR?

It is the 'beginning of the end.' It will not be strange if these separate tribes are gathered into a burning focus on every trail. It will not be safe for the white man to travel alone. Every tree may hide some wretched and revengeful father. A spirit has been raised that nothing but blood will appease. An "irrepressible conflict," is really here. Knowing this, was it policy to commence the work of extermination with the most peaceful! And what assistance can be expected from a Legislature already perplexed with doubts and suspicion, in the face of the bloody record we today publish?

New York Century Article  
Reprinted in San Francisco Bulletin  
18 June 1860

### Indian Butcheries in California

The New York *Century* of 12<sup>th</sup> May has the following observations upon a matter which has often laid, in all its terrible details, before the readers of the *Bulletin*.

We have been informed through the papers, of the murderous outrages committed on the aboriginal inhabitants of California by men with white skins. We regret to say that there is no exaggeration in these accounts. On the contrary, after conversing with a number of individuals who, to some extent, witnessed the transactions, we can bring to light no circumstances to palliate or extenuate them in the slightest degree. In the Atlantic and Western States, the Indians have suffered wrongs and cruelties at the hands of the stronger race. But history has no parallel to the recent atrocities perpetrated in California. Even the record of Spanish butcheries in Mexico and Peru has nothing so diabolical.

Humboldt County, in the northern section of the State, has been the scene of a great portion of these outrages. The perpetrators seem to have acted with a deliberate design to exterminate the Indian race. Their butchery was confined to women and children, the men being absent at the time. They were of the bigger tribes, known as friendly Indians, the most degraded and defenseless of the race, entirely destitute of the bold and murderous spirit which characterizes other tribes of red men. They were charged with stealing cattle and other property from the whites, and with selling firearms and ammunition to the hostile tribes. The attack was made in the night, when they were collected in their little settlements or villages at some sort of merry-making. The men were known to be absent—they had possibly fled on suspicion of danger. Under these circumstances, bands of white men, armed with hatchets—small bands, but sufficiently numerous for the purpose—fell on the women and children, and deliberately slaughtered them, one and all. Simultaneous attacks were made on the different rancherias or encampments. Fire-arms were scarcely used, the work being done with hatchets.

In one of the settlements an aged and feeble chief collected the women around him, when they were about dying on the approach of the human bloodhounds, assuring them that white men did not kill squaws and that they would be safe. But they all perished together. One of our informants saw twenty-six bodies of women and children collected in one spot by the more humane citizens, preparatory to burial. Some of them were infants at the breast, whose skulls had been cleft again and again. The whole number slaughtered in a single night was about two hundred and forty.

We have spoken of the authors of this butchery as men—white men. So they were. We can invent no logic that will segregate them from our own species. Would that it were possible to do so. The whole number engaged was probably not over fifty or sixty. They were the lowest and most brutal of the border population, such as hang on the outskirts of civilization, and possess nothing of humanity but the form and the bestial instincts.

Mendocino County, within a few days' travel of San Francisco, has been the theatre of atrocities nearly parallel, under cover of martial authority. Regularly organized bodies of armed men attacked the settlements of friendly Indians charged with stealing cattle, and murdered them in like manner, except that the fire-arms were used and not hatchets. In this case men, as well as women and children were massacred. To defray the expenses of this heroic work, enormous claims were presented to the Legislature.

A gentleman who has spent much time in Mendocino County, informs us that the intercourse of the whites with the Clear Lake Indians, as they are called, has laid the foundation for the ultimate extermination of the race by disease, in the manner of the Sandwich Islands. Of five or six hundred squaws, from *ten years old* and upwards, he was assured not a solitary individual was exempt! Civilized humanity will scarcely believe it possible for human beings to be degraded so far below savages, as are the filthy wretches who infest the frontier settlements, and commit such deeds of rapine and blood as we have here but inadequately described.

Account by Charles Rossitre  
*San Francisco Bulletin*  
2 March 1860

**More of the Humboldt Bay Butchery**  
Eureka, Humboldt Bay  
February 26, 1860.

To the Editor of the San Francisco Bulletin—Knowing that the *Bulletin* is an independent and influential paper, I hasten to lay the following particulars before the public through its columns, in regard to one of the most cruel and inhuman massacres that has ever occurred in this county—I may say, in California. The atrocity was perpetrated by white friends, not because the victims had committed any depredation whatever, but simply because the whites thought they were supplying the Indians in the Bald Hills with ammunition, etc. The white men (miscalled men!) who committed this butchery were encouraged and quickened on to this bloody work of destruction by a majority of the citizens and stock-owners, who say that nothing less than an extermination of an innocent, starving and degraded race will quench their thirst for blood and diabolical designs.

This morning, Sunday, between 3 and 4 o'clock, the people residing on the Bay were aroused from their slumbers by the reports of pistols, etc., which proceeded from Indian island, about three-quarters of a mile distant, opposite the town of Eureka. A small boat started from the city wharf for the scene of this bloody tragedy, and returned with the intelligence that the bodies of about forty Indians lay stretched on the Island dead; and it is supposed that when the full particulars are known, the number will not fall short of one hundred and twenty in all. The aforementioned massacre was headed (as reported by an Indian, and believed by a majority of the people,) by a white man named Brown, and four other savages of the same hue. A gentleman returned from the scene of the massacre, says that it is the most disgusting sight he ever witnessed.

Since the above was written, it has been reported that similar attacks have been made at Bucksport, Humboldt Point, and Elk River. The number of Indians that have been butchered are as yet unknown. While I am writing, the Indians have kindled a fire on the Island, and are at present burning the dead.

CHARLES ROSSITRE

Anonymous Account by "An Eye-Witness"  
*San Francisco Bulletin*  
13 March 1860

**The Massacres of Indians on Humboldt Bay**  
Eureka, Humboldt Bay, Cal.  
March 12, 1860

To the Editor of the San Francisco Bulletin—In the columns of your paper, permit an eye-witness of the late events on Humboldt Bay, to give a plain, unvarnished tale, to correct some false impressions which have gone forth, deceiving the public, though language is inadequate fairly to describe events finding no parallel in history, ancient or modern, where the remorseless cruelty of a set of beings, putting at defiance all human laws, and the opinion of mankind, have perpetrated acts so atrocious and diabolical, in cold blood, that the Arch-Fiend himself would recoil in amazement at being so outdone.

More than one hundred and fifty innocent Indian women and children were barbarously murdered on Humboldt Bay and its vicinity, on the Sabbath, 20<sup>th</sup> February, A.D. 1860, by lawless white men belonging to a Christian community, without cause or provocation, calling themselves volunteers of Capt. Wright's company—surpassing the atrocious deeds of the sepoy of India, for which they were blown to pieces from the mouths of a British cannon. Who could believe that in this age of civilization, in this land of liberty and law, boasting of its enlightenment and cultivation, of the teacher, the preacher, and the Bible—that men could be found brave enough to murder women and children?—for it requires courage of a certain kind, though otherwise the acme of all cowardice, the most consummate pusillanimity! Strange, that for no other cause alleged than for the sets of the acts of the starving mountain Indians, at variance with them, killing cattle for subsistence, (350 of whom last season were carried to Mendocino, and returned, they say, because they had nothing to eat,) these poor down-trodden and most inoffensive human creatures on Humboldt Bay have been sacrificed.

Those on Indian Island, where they had been holding an annual festival, were in deep sleep, reposing in fancied security under the protecting arm of civilization and the white man; when, at 6 o'clock on a Sabbath morning, while it was yet dark, fresh from a scene of slaughter on the South Beach, the assassins stealthily approached the shore and landed. They had learned from a spy, who attended their festival previously, their defenseless condition—without a gun or bow and arrow. Silently they approached a lodge some little distance from the main settlement, and there gave evidence, by firing upon and killing three men asleep therein, that they had no desire to encounter Indian men, who, thus aroused, of course would and did immediately flee from the other lodges, and left them free for their bloody work. Some persons had gone there before to kill the men, but did not succeed, nor troubled the women and children!

They now penetrate each lodge; one holds the light to show where to strike, and while the faces of the poor women and children lying down, are innocently turned up in wonder and amazement, they begin their work of death with axes, hatchets, and knives. Amidst the wailing of mutilated infants, the cries of agony of children, the shrieks and groans of mothers in death, the savage blows are given, cutting through bone and brain. The cries for mercy are met by joke and libidinous remark, while the bloody ax descends

with un pitying stroke, again and again, doing its work of death, the hatchet and knife finishing what the ax left undone. A few escaped—a child under the body of its dead mother, a young woman wounded, and another who hid in the bushes. In an hour they had accomplished their work and were gone, laden with the *spoil of Indian blankets*, leaving their victims strewn around, weltering in their gore—some dead, some dying, some writhing in pain and anguish, exhibiting a scene such as no tongue can tell, and no eye had ever seen before on our continent, even though savages practiced in cruelty were the perpetrators.

Reader, this is no fancied sketch, nor exaggerated tale; it falls short of the stern reality. But a short time after, the writer was upon the ground with feet treading in human blood, horrified with the awful and sickening sights which met the eye wherever it turned. Here was a mother fatally wounded hugging the mutilated carcass of her dying infant to her bosom; there, a poor child of two years old, with its ear and scalp tore from the side of its little head. Here, a father frantic with grief over the bloody corpses of his four little children and wife; there, a brother and sister bitterly weeping, and trying to soothe with cold water, the pallid face of a dying relative. Here, an aged female still living and sitting up, though covered with ghastly wounds, and dyed in her own blood; there, a living infant by its dead mother, desirous of drawing some nourishment from a source that had ceased to flow.

The wounded, dead and dying were found all around, and in every lodge the skulls and frames of women and children cleft with axes and hatchets, and stabbed with knives, and the brains of an infant oozing from its broken head to the ground. But five men were killed on Indian Island, and but few elsewhere, they generally having been thus severed from every tie, and turned loose in maddened fury to take revenge upon the innocent and unsuspecting, and create a war which will coast more than fifty or a hundred times as much as all the cattle lost were worth. So, where is the good to come from these murders of 55 on Indian Island, 68 on South Beach, 40 on South Fork of Eel River previously, and 35 subsequently on Eagle Prairie—1188 lives of human beings in all?

If not a great mistake current, Capt. Wright's Company of Volunteers have been acting not only without State authority, but in defiance thereof, and the perpetration of the sanguinary deeds were done by a few, the many thereof looking upon such deeds with horror. The civil authorities here are paralyzed or divided. Our Sheriff says, "Served them right!" and the tone of a newspaper called Humboldt Times, advocates such principles. United States soldiers had been sent into the field to protect citizens and property, but were withdrawn from co-operating with men murdering women and children.

AN EYE-WITNESS.

Anonymous Account by "Anti-Thug"  
*San Francisco Bulletin*  
28 March 1860

**The Humboldt Bay Massacre of Indians**  
MURDERVILLE, (formerly Eureka,)  
Humboldt County, March 23, 1860.

EDITOR BULLETIN:--Nothing worthy of notice has transpired hereabouts since my last, [see *Bulletin* of 13<sup>th</sup> March.] We hear of no more slaughters of defenseless Indian women and children, though the hellish work may be going on in the upper and remote settlements, and the people of this place none the wiser. Capt. Wright's volunteers still keep the field on the Yager Hills. Since my last, our place has been favored with a visit from a young man from Hydeville, styling himself a boss packer, which said young man is very fond of whisky, and withal very noisy and talkative, especially when a little tight from the public grog-shop. From statements by this gassy young man, we learn that it is not only the intention of the "Thugs" to clean out the Indians, but to clean out Uncle Sam's small batch of soldiers including the officers and all. This young man stayed about a week among us. He let the whole cat out of the bag—he gave the names of nearly all the band of Thugs, and bid defiance to law and gospel, especially to the U.S. soldiers and officers. In fact, in his furious moments, he threatened openly to whip out the garrison under Maj. Raines, "single-handed." So you see it is a godsend that the late reinforcement was sent up on the last steamer, and now Maj. Raines may breathe more freely.

Capt. Wright's company will doubtless disband now, wince they have lost all hope of being called out by the Governor. Well, it serves them right; they all voted the regular Democratic ticket. The gallant volunteers must now be short of grab, and people are tired of furnishing. It is said that the merchants of Hydeville have heretofore furnished them with the hope that they would be eventually called out.

ANTI-THUG.

## Anonymous Account by "Exodus"

*San Francisco Bulletin*

11 May 1860

**The Expatriation of Guiltless Indians at  
Humboldt Bay**

EUREKA, Cal., April 23, 1860.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BULLETIN:—The last act in the tragic drama of murder and oppression, which began on Humboldt Bay on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February last, has just been performed. The friendly aborigines, in number 150, have been removed from Humboldt county. Those on Mad river, about 120 in number, were first forcibly expelled from their residences, herded like cattle, and all, under fear of death, had to leave their homes, as dear to them as ours are to us. These Indians are not of the bands of Diggers roving from hill to hill, to whom it would be but a matter of indifference on which they were, as the Humboldt Times might lead people at a distance to think, but are measurably civilized. Some of them speak our language, they have mingled with the whites, and were accustomed to aid in their domestic concerns. Printed accounts show plainly a violation of section 2d, chapter 133, of the statutes of the State of California, in the removal of the Indians from Mad river, which reads: "*Nor shall they (the Indians) be forced to abandon their homes in villages where they have resided for a number of years.*" This act was passed on April 22, 1850. It would have moved a heart of stone, to have seen these poor creatures grieving, burning up their boats and houses, and then driven from their homes—their "sacred hearths"—from the graves of their murdered relatives, from the land of their forefathers—a land still their own, for it has never been purchased, nor have they received one jota as *quid pro quo* for all this country.

It becomes us now to correct false impressions which have gone abroad (mainly propagated by a mendacious print here—probably pandering for votes,) by giving a statement easily verified by any disinterested person, proving that the objections to this population were without foundation. In many cases these Indians were useful. They were divers and hands at the fisheries; they were harvesters, aiding the whites in getting in their grain, and bringing them berries, fish and clams; they were packers and guides to mountain trains; while their wives were of much service to the ladies of Eureka on their washdays and in other household duties.

Now to consider the objections: They were "Indians." Well, that is true: and God forbid that color should be a criterion of merit in this country. They killed nobody—neither women, children nor cattle: they troubled nobody, and nobody's property: they never were drunk nor drank liquor, and really were the most inoffensive and harmless Indians, perhaps, the world ever saw. But, says that newspaper, "They had beef—it was seen at Eel river, and on Indian Island: and they supplied the mountain tribes with 'ammunition' to kill men and cattle." Now the "beef" seen on Eel river was part of a seal. In its smoked condition it looked like beef, but it was not. And for what purpose they had beef on

Indian Island it is strange, as there neither man, woman nor child would touch beef. It is well known to families in Eureka that they have a superstitious antipathy to eating that kind of food, and are known to have thrown away meat given them. Well, the "ammunition". Now, who should have been punished for the supply, if furnished to the mountain tribes? But we hear nothing of that now, since it has been ascertained that these latter killed the cattle with bows and arrows. A man whose business gives him an opportunity to know, says that the last cow shot with a gun was nine months ago: and poor Ellison, the last man killed, (a year since,) was rashly following up some twenty Indians—seen carrying off beef—with his party of about four men, firing into them, and had actually killed two Indians before, in a return fire of arrows, one wounded him in the groin, from which he died a few days subsequently.

Facts also disprove all friendship between those poor creatures of the bay and the mountain tribes, for not one of them fled to them to succor, but took to the bush and elsewhere, when their wives and children were butchered, and they hunted for their precious lives. Some six years past a party of them went to the mountains to pick acorns, and carried fish to purchase the privilege; but the mountain Indians scattered their fish along the road, and killed two of them. They have never been there since. These mountain tribes would murder them all if they could, and I blush for my color when remembering their allies. These unhappy Indians were killed for no crime whatever. They were slain on account of a false military *prestige*, or restless whites into service; and the survivors have been driven from their homes to convey a false impression.

Individuals constitute a community, and the acts of each member make up the common character of the whole body. It must be expected that villains will grumble and snarl; but it is the duty of the Press, the Bench, the Pulpit, and of every honest man, to denounce crime. This is a duty which we owe to Heaven and the society in which we live—not merely a passive duty, for their villainies must go unpunished, and each good citizen will be victimized in his turn—but an active, zealous duty, bringing to justice especially those who out-savage the savage. We must not lay the flattering unction to our souls that in the great day of account and retribution, when the catalogue of human frailties and crime is read out, we have disapproved sufficiently by our silence alone, lest the Mene Tekel—"thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting"—be pronounced against us, and "thou shouldst not follow a multitude to do evil."

EXODUS

Anonymous Account  
*San Francisco Bulletin*  
1 June 1860

**Atrocities by White Men on Indians in Humboldt County—Record of a Baby-Killer**  
San Francisco, June 1, 1860

To the Editor of the San Francisco Bulletin:--Having lately arrived here from Humboldt Bay, I take the opportunity to inform the public, through your columns, of a few of the recent instances of shameful and horrible crime committed upon the Indians in Humboldt County by white men.

Some time in February last, a man named L-----, who has a stock ranch on Van Dusen river, had an Indian boy, whose family lived within half a mile of his place. L-----'s boy would occasionally run off to visit his relations. This incensed L----- so much, that he went down one morning and slaughtered the whole family—of about six persons—boy and all. He then made a rude raft of logs, put the victims on it, marked it to W. H. Mills—who was known to be opposed to indiscriminate slaughter of the Indians—and started the bodies down the river.

Messrs. Neil and Hood, two good men, who have a stock ranch on the outside and adjoining L----- had about their premises, for the last two years, an old Indian called 'Ukillaboy.' He acted as a faithful guardian to the ranch, always giving timely warning of the approach of thieving Indians, and always being ready to assist in tracking them up, while he was ready to assist about the place, to the best of his abilities. Well, about the 20<sup>th</sup> of April last, the old Indian, feeling perfectly secure, paid L----- a friendly visit, and was immediately tied up and shot in cold blood without any explanation. This so incensed Mr. Neil, that he drove off his cattle to the Matole, leaving L----- on the outside; since which time the Indians have literally feasted on L-----'s cattle.

Some time about the 18<sup>th</sup> March last, three desperate ruffians, armed with hatchets, entered the hotel at Hydesville, and demanded of the proprietor by what authority he had written a letter to Lieut. Hardcastle, of the U.S.A., at Fort Humboldt; and if he had not convinced said ruffians that the letter was strictly private, and had no allusion to the Indian affairs, and no communications for the *Bulletin*, he would have been assassinated on the spot. The names of these ruffians I shall withhold for the present.

Society is completely demoralized on Eel river; and the Thugs are largely in the majority, led on by Wiley of the *Humboldt Times*, and by Van Nest the Sheriff. Young men talk and think of nothing else but hanging and killing young Diggers and their mothers. The pulpit is silent, and the preachers say not a word. In fact, they dare not. It finally amounts to this—that where the Indians killed a "beef" occasionally, before the late grand massacre at Eureka, they now kill ten. All of the bucks who formerly lived around Eureka with their families, having ties that bound them to the bay and the settlements here, have dispersed to the mountains, and are now seeking vengeance as thieves, for their kindred slain. It will cost not less than half a million dollars to dislodge the 300 thieving Indians from the Bald Hills. Men who detest and abhor the thugging system, from circumstances which surround them, are silent. Two or three men who were on the last Grand Jury which sat at Eureka, were Thugs.

The man L----- is the same person who boasted of having killed sixty infants with his own hatchet at the different slaughter grounds. This is the same man who peddled whisky to the United States soldiers and the Indians not 18 months ago, and on the same ground that is now annoyed by the thieving savages. The Indians, since the recent grand massacre at Eureka, have done damage to L----- of not less than \$1,000; in fact, he will be compelled to leave for some other range for his stock.

I append my name, privately, to this record of some of the atrocious deeds thus have recently been perpetrated in Humboldt County. I have left that quarter for good; but as I have a few friends in the place, I do not wish that they should be molested for any doings of mine, and you had better, theretofore, not communicate my name, except under such circumstances as you may consider necessary or proper for the public good.

Sheriff Van Nest's Reaction to Anonymous Letters  
*Humboldt Times* 28 April 1860

**Sheriff Van Nest and the S.F. Bulletin's Anonymous Correspondents.**

—Eureka, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1860

EDITOR TIMES: Through your columns, I would beg permission to speak, of and to those sneaking anonymous correspondents of the S.F. *Bulletin*, who have not the man-manliness to make themselves known to those whom they would sneakingly misrepresent to the public. I would also allude to that sneaking editor, who sneakingly refuses to give the names of his fellow sneaks, when called upon by me to do so: after assuring him by private note, that his fictitious correspondent from our county—"Eye witness."—when he made use of the phrase, -our Sheriff says served them right" was guilty of perpetrating a most diabolical lie. He has not only refused to give me the true name of "Eye witness," but in a subsequent number of the *Bulletin* the same falsehood appears in a communication from another action, fictitiously calling himself "Justice," and that, too, after having justified to an unjustifiable false hood.

I have never sought for a newspaper controversy—especially with anonymous writers; they are like the flea, they bite in the dark. And when you put your finger on them, they ain't there.

But when I see a persistent determination on the part of that class of writers to make false statements regarding the sentiments and sayings of others. I cannot refrain from stamping upon them, the indelible stain of falsehood—they are leeches to the vitals of society, and a stench to the nostrils of all honest men.

"Eye witness" made false statements. The *Humboldt Times* published him as a liar, for the purpose as I understand of bringing him out, and putting him on the left with the goats. He did not come out, but to this day remains unknown—perhaps he is an affected friend to those whom he would wrong—"ah, there's the truth."

Well, we will go a little further. He does not come out and prove his assertions like a man, but went, as it appears, to another of his kind, and says to him, "sir, the *Times* has pronounced me a liar, but is not generous enough to enumerate my lies; you must help me out of this. The editor of the *Bulletin* thinks I am *some*, and I would have him continue to think so; you must write to the *Bulletin*, call every word of mine truth and be sure to make mention of my lies alluding to persons. —Our Sheriff 'may attack me.' But if he finds that I have a witness by whom to prove them, he will remain hushed; this will enable me to give him another stab in the dark, which will perhaps prove more fatal"

From the writings of that dark lantern clique who do willfully, persistingly, and underhandedly misrepresent others for the purpose of self-emulation. In the estimation of him who is ready to use his paper for the promulgation of falsehood. It would appear that they had started out to do something; and I would direct the public mind to the pusillanimity of these pusillanimous anonymous writers who, in the light, present the hand of friendship and stab in the dark.

**"Our Sheriff."**

*San Francisco Bulletin's Stance on Massacre*  
*San Francisco Bulletin*  
14 March 1860

**The Humboldt Bay Massacre**

Murder holds her SATURNALIS in Humboldt County. The sickening details of the last massacre were given in our columns yesterday. We know not how to speak of this crime. Perhaps no comment is needed. Words of censure cannot darken the picture presented by the narratives of facts supplied by eye-witnesses of this atrocity. "More than a hundred and fifty innocent Indians, women and children, were barbarously murdered on Humboldt Bay and its vicinity, on the Sabbath day, the 26<sup>th</sup> of February last." The place where the most numerous of these murders were committed, is an island separated but a few hundred yards from Eureka, the county seat of Humboldt county, and, as may be supposed, the center of whatever civilization and enlightenment exist in the district. Of sixty or seventy persons slain on this island, all but three or four, it is stated, were women and children. Three or four other butcheries, marked by similar circumstances of brutality, were perpetrated upon settlements of Indians in the vicinity of Eureka. Concerning these massacres the *Humboldt Times* says: "These simultaneous attacks, at different points, show clearly that this new plan of operations against Indians, has been adopted by a large number of people in this county, and that they act in concert."

We do not remember to have heard or read of any thing in savage warfare quite equaling the infamy of these murders. They more resemble the sudden incursion of hungry beasts upon a sleeping African village, than the worst excesses of human malignity heretofore recorded. Savages, in the wildest triumph of their successes in war, most commonly spare females and infants. The demons of our own race engaged in these horrible transactions, make of these innocent and defenseless beings a favorite prey. But it is useless to denounce such villains. Epithets of reproach and contempt can but elevate them above the order of brutes to which they belong. We call upon the Executive and Legislature for vengeance and punishment. Those merciless wretches should be seized in their dens, and dragged from the depraved community in which the jury box will be crammed with sympathizers and accomplices, and subjected to trial before some tribunal in which the laws against assassins can be enforced.

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