

Historical Background and Setting

In 1850 Luke Lea, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, recommended compression of tribal territories by assigning the western tribes to reservations away from settlements and immigrant highways. He stipulates that each reservation should have precise boundaries and that all resident tribes be required to remain thereon, under threat of prompt military action against those who disobeyed. Lea justified the appropriation of tribal lands by the position that only by forcing the Indians to "cease their wandering ways" and settling them on reservations where closer bureaucratic oversight was possible "could the great work of regenerating the Indian race be accomplished". According to Lea's plan tribes would be required to remain on these reservations until their "good conduct may supersede the necessity of such restrictions". Federal agents assigned to duty on these reservations were expected to transform the peripatetic buffalo hunters into sedentary farmers and stock raisers through vocational education.

Lea's reservation plan marked a departure from the established federal policy for eastern Indians of "removal" from territories and states occupied by Anglo-Americans and their concentration in an "Indian Country". Removal for a time at least gave way to resettlement on reservations, "islands of land usually within the larger area they once possessed". Lea's plan was not fulfilled until after the Civil War.²

During the decade of the 1850s the western tribes were greatly reduced. The main causes for this were: (1) military action, and (2) diseases like measles, smallpox, and Asiatic cholera. The rapid sweep of the mining frontier was a causal agent in the Indian reduction; through their carelessness, they destroyed the homeland of the Indian. Forests disappeared and game animals became less apparent. Indian life patterns were disturbed and their very lives

²Arrell Morgan Gibson, The American Indian, p. 354.

were threatened. Firearms, whiskey, and disease greatly reduced the population of the Indian.

The Anglo-American had no respect for the Indian and denounced them as heathen savages, due no more consideration than cornered beasts. The Indians were obstacles to be removed as quickly as possible so the business of western development could proceed.

The Civil War of 1860-1865 had a great impact upon the American Indian. The army that had been established among the Indians suddenly was drastically reduced, by almost two-thirds. Forts were abandoned and left with only a skeleton crew present. Some forts were totally abandoned. Warfare began between the Anglo-American and the Indian, and between the Indian and Indian enemies.

In 1861 President Abraham Lincoln called upon western states and territories to raise volunteer infantry and cavalry regiments.³ A telegram was dispatched to Brigham Young at Salt Lake asking the Mormons to protect the Oregon Trail from Salt Lake City to Laramie. Mormon troops guarded the telegraph line, escorted mail stages and freight caravans through the troubled zone.⁴ Most of the east-west traffic was being pushed along the northern routes and

³ (Ibid.)

⁴ (Ibid.)

trails. The Confederate cause had basically closed the southern routes.

Col. P. E. Connor and the Second California Volunteer Regiment arrived in Utah the October of 1862. They established themselves in Salt Lake and built Fort Douglas. No attempt was made to rebuild Fort Floyd. Fort Floyd had been abandoned by the army when the Civil War began. It was sold to Brigham Young and the purchasing price for the army when it returned was too high. Fort Douglas was built on the east bench of Salt Lake. This site had more appeal and the army was closer to the Mormons and could keep an eye on them easier.*

"Fort Crittenden (Camp Floyd) is in ruins, except the few buildings of which I send you a description, and for which the owner asks \$15,000. There are also some buildings purchased by and belonging to the Overland Mail Company, and now occupied by them, but which are not for sale. Of the remaining buildings there is nothing left but the adobes, except two or three buildings owned by former settlers, which are in tolerable repair, and could be purchased cheap. If it were designed to establish a permanent post, most of the buildings would have to be torn down and removed, as many of them are half a mile from the officers' quarters, or what was known as headquarters.

"The latter buildings are the only ones in tolerable repair; the others require doors, windows, and considerable work to place them in habitable order. The land is considered a Government reserve, but the post is badly located, being on the edge of the reserve and adjoining a small village, inhabited by a class of persons of questionable character. There is good grazing on the reserve, which is the only redeeming quality, in my opinion, it has. There are sufficient

* Class notes from History 369, fall 1987, BYU.

adobes on the ground to erect such additional building as I may require, but good timber is scarce, and the sawmills are sixty miles distant.

"I found another location, which I like better for various reasons, which I shall explain. It is on a plateau about three miles from Salt Lake City, in the vicinity of good timber and sawmills, and at a point where hay, grain, and other produce can be purchased cheaper than at Fort Crittenden. It is also a point which commands the city, and where one thousand troops would be more efficient than three thousand on the other side of the Jordan. If the General decides that I shall locate there, I intend to quietly intrench my position, and then say to the Saints of Utah, enough of your treason; but if it is intended that I shall merely protect the overland mail and permit the Mormons to act and utter treason, then I had as well locate at Crittenden.

"The Federal officers desire and beg that I will locate near the city. the Governor especially is very urgent in the matter. It is certainly rather late in the season to build quarters, but I believe I could make my command comfortable before very cold weather sets in.

"It is raining here now, and snowing on the surrounding mountains. It is important that I should know the General's decision as soon as possible, as winter is fast approaching. Communication by mail or telegraph will, until my arrival at Salt Lake reach me earlier by being directed to Ruby Valley than to any other point.

"I have the honor to remain, your obedient servant, . . . P. E. Connor."

Several campaigns were made against the Shoshone and Bannocks. In September 1862, Col. Connor dispatched Major Edward McGarry into the City of Rocks area with orders to ". . . destroy every male Indian whom you encounter in the

⁶Hance and Warr, Johnston, Connor and the Mormons, pp. 40-41.

vicinity of the late massacres. This course may seem harsh and severe, but I desire that the order may by rigidly enforced, as I am satisfied that in the end it will prove most merciful." McGarry found no Indians at City of Rocks, but he disarmed and killed twenty-four that were encountered along the Humboldt River in Nevada.'

At the root of the Shoshoni troubles lay the indifference and inattention of the federal government toward these Indians. With a homeland lying on the extreme eastern edge of Washington and Oregon territories, occupying areas at the northern edge of Utah Territory, and extending to the eastern end of Nevada Territory, the Shoshoni were left to their own devices while Indian agents and superintendents quibbled exasperatingly over who had proper jurisdiction. The Nevada superintendent wrote the Commissioner of Indian Affairs asking whether these Indian people were "within the scope" of his superintendence. Major John Owe, from Fort Owen in western Montana, received from his superior at Portland, Oregon, the disconcerting news that the Shoshoni-Bannock were to be placed under his temporary supervision, a grand council was to be held, and food supplies and clothing were to be issued to the Indians. Although hundreds of miles removed them, Owen made numerous attempts to carry out his instructions which proved futile because the promised annuity goods never appeared. Indifferent and unscrupulous government agents farther east effectually stymied attempts to deliver the goods. Owen warned of reports which reached him of Shoshoni-Bannock attacks on emigrant trains: "From my present position you will see that it will not do to delay" the shipment of goods.*

The discovery of mineral deposits in Idaho and Montana in 1862 and 1863 kept the gold-seekers coming. Indians

*Cort Conley, Idaho for the Curious a Guide, p. 363

*Brigham Madsen, "Shoshoni-Bannock Mauraders on the Oregon Trail", Utah Historical Quarterly, vol. 35, no. 1, winter 1967.

attacked the isolated mining and agricultural areas. After the battle at Bear River, Indian power in northern Utah and southern Idaho was destroyed.

Emigrant routes. The emigrants used numerous routes through Idaho to reach their various destinations. Several of these routes travel through and connect in Cassia county. The main ones being: The California-Applegate Trail, The Salt Lake-California Connection, The Salt Lake-Oregon Cutoff, and the Hudspeth Cutoff. (These smaller routes all branched off of the Oregon Trail.)⁹ The main cross-road of the trails was in the City of Rocks near the "Twin Sisters".¹⁰

These emigrant roads became very popular shortly after 1840. "Based upon trappers' and traders' experience, emigrants could discern several critical requirements for a successful wagon route:

- (1) A natural road with a minimum of geographic obstacles (cliffs, rocky canyons, major stream crossings, or excessively steep grades) was essential.
- (2) Water sources, ideally not more than several miles apart to allow for noon and overnight stops, were necessary, although at times wagons could travel

⁹See maps # 2 and 3.

¹⁰See photo # 5.

more than twenty miles between springs.

- (3) Grazing for oxen, horses, and other livestock had to be available at practically every campground.
- (4) As direct a route as possible was needed, because even a few additional miles (at a rate of ten or twelve a day) would lengthen emigrant trips unduly."¹¹

Early emigrants often passed others traveling different directions on their way through the City of Rocks. It became a prominent place.

"The City of Rocks was hub to several trails important to American migration. In 1862 at least 52,000 persons passed along the California Trail (sometimes called the Applegate Trail by settlers who used it to reach the Willamette Valley in Oregon). Established in 1846 as a cutoff from the Oregon Trail, the route came south up the Raft River, west through City of Rocks, then south into Utah at nearby Granite Pass.

Hudspeth's Cutoff, begun in 1849 from the Oregon Trail at Sheep Rock near present Soda Springs, also funneled west into the California Trail at the rock city.

Additionally, the Salt Lake Cutoff, a major thoroughfare, came north from Salt Lake City through Emigrant Canyon, just south of Twin Sisters in City of Rocks, and

¹¹Merle W. Wells, City of Rocks and Granite Pass, p. 15,17.

connected with the California Trail. When the Idaho mines opened in the 1860s, freight from Utah settlements traveled over the Salt Lake Cutoff from Kelton, Utah, through City of Rocks, and north through Oakley's Goose Creek Valley.¹²

By 1862, the Indian leader, Pocatello, had concluded "that emigrant trains would have to be excluded from his lands--an area extending west of American Falls past Raft River and City of Rocks to upper Goose Creek and upper Humboldt deserts in Nevada Pocatello's band retaliated for a long sequence of attacks by emigrants, a few of whom had gone out shooting Indians along their route west through Shoshoni lands." Pocatello's daughter, Jeannette Pocatello Lewis, "gave Pocatello credit for concern with heavy emigrant traffic. he finally sent his people to take away some of their wagons at Massacre Rocks." His attacks at City of Rocks was another part of his resistance to intrusion by emigrant trains.¹³

¹²Cort Conley, Idaho for the Curious a Guide, p. 365-366.

¹³Brigham D. Madsen, Chief Pocatello: The "White Plume", p. 45.