

2-21-1876

William P. Ross. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, transmitting, in compliance with a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 15th instant, certified copies of papers and records relating to the complicity of William P. Ross in the alleged Indian-bounty frauds of John W. Wright.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/indianserialset>

 Part of the [Indian and Aboriginal Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

H.R. Exec. Doc. No. 132, 44th Cong., 1st Sess. (1876)

This House Executive Document is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899 by an authorized administrator of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact darinfox@ou.edu.

WILLIAM P. ROSS.

L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING,

In compliance with a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 15th instant, certified copies of papers and records relating to the complicity of William P. Ross in the alleged Indian-bounty frauds of John W. Wright.

FEBRUARY 21, 1876.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

FEBRUARY 25, 1876.—Ordered to be printed and recommitted to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, February 18, 1876.

SIR: In compliance with the request contained in the resolution adopted by the House of Representatives on the 15th instant, I have the honor to transmit herewith certified copies of all papers and records in this Department relating to the complicity of William P. Ross, formerly a Cherokee Indian delegate, in the alleged Indian-bounty frauds of John W. Wright.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. CHANDLER,
Secretary.

Hon. M. C. KERR,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, D. C., February 18, 1876.

I, Z. Chandler, Secretary of the Interior, hereby certify that the papers hereto attached are true copies of the originals now on file in this Department.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto subscribed my name and caused the seal of the Department to be affixed the day and year first above written.

[SEAL.]

Z. CHANDLER,
Secretary of the Interior.

WASHINGTON, *January 15, 1873.*

SIR: One Wm. P. Ross, claiming to be principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, is now a member of the Cherokee delegation present in Washington representing the interests of the nation before the legislative and executive branches of the Government.

This is the same Ross who has been connected with J. W. Wright in the alleged Indian bounty frauds, for which the United States are now prosecuting Mr. Wright.

From the evidence in the case, the records of the Department, and the written and oral reports of Government officers it very clearly appears,

1st. That this W. P. Ross and his brother Daniel H. Ross and other members of the Ross family, together with John W. Wright, arranged the original plan for trading in Indian bounties, which succeeded on the pretense that money or goods had been advanced to the Indians, in diverting from them moneys which should have been paid to them directly, and also resulted in fictitious claims, pretended payments never made, forged evidence, and numerous frauds upon the Indians and the Government.

2. That W. P. Ross and his family associates having arranged with Wright the original plan which resulted in defrauding the Indians and the United States, were principal parties in carrying it out.

a. They helped manufacture original evidence, on which bounty claims were allowed, printed blank affidavits being signed in blank, either with the genuine signatures of dishonest parties or with the forged signatures of witnesses, judges, and clerks of courts, with a seal of court affixed in blank, all before the cross-mark signatures of the Indians whose affidavits were being thus manufactured, were affixed to them, or the body of the affidavits filled up.

b. They received moneys paid by the United States on Indian bounty-claims allowed on evidence like the foregoing, in many cases the drafts negotiated by Wright having upon them forged indorsements of dead Indians.

c. They helped manufacture receipts and vouchers for Wright to file with the United States, and in hundreds of them appear as witnesses to the cross-marks of parties who purport to sign them, in many cases the parties being dead and their cross-marks being unquestionably forged.

3. Having, therefore, every inducement to conceal the frauds committed, W. P. Ross and his family have been potent actors in preventing the accumulation of proof against Wright.

At every stage of the efforts to procure testimony in the Indian country their influence has been adverse. In the late visit of the officers of the Department of Justice to obtain testimony in the Territory, they were partially frustrated by the influence, as they believe, of W. P. Ross, then lately elected Cherokee chief. In all future proceedings to obtain testimony and to correct the wrongs which have (been)? done the Indians, and punish the guilty perpetrators of bounty frauds, his wishes, interests, and action cannot fail to be all against truth and justice, against the interest of his nation and of the United States.

Under these circumstances, I unhesitatingly advise that it is for the interest of the United States to refuse to recognize W. P. Ross as a representative of the Cherokee Nation, or to allow him to have access to or transact any business with the Departments. On the contrary, if possible, after this lapse of time, he should be indicted in Washington,

and tried for his participation in the frauds for which Mr. Wright is being prosecuted.

Very respectfully,

Hon. GEO. H. WILLIAMS,
Attorney-General.

W. E. CHANDLER,
Counsel for the United States.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,
Washington, Feb. 1, 1873.

Hon. C. DELANO,
Secretary of the Interior :

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith for your information, and for such action as you may deem advisable in the premises, a copy of a letter addressed to this Department on the 15th ultimo by Wm. E. Chandler, esq., relative to one Wm. P. Ross, who claims to be principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, and is now a member of a delegation of that nation at present in this city, representing the interests of said nation before the legislative and executive branches of the Government.

Very respectfully,

GEO. H. WILLIAMS,
Attorney-General.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, Feb. 4th, 1873.

SIR: I inclose herewith for your information a copy of a letter addressed to this Department on the 1st inst., by Hon. Geo. H. Williams, Att'y General U. S., transmitting a letter from Hon. W. E. Chandler, dated the 15th ult., a copy of which is also inclosed.

Very respectfully,

C. DELANO,
Secretary.

WM. P. ROSS, Esq.,
Prin. Chief Cherokee Nation.

720 FOURTEENTH STREET,
Washington, Feb'y 4th, 1873.

Hon. COLUMBUS DELANO,
Sec. of the Interior :

SIR: I have just received your note of to-day transmitting, for my information, copies of a letter from the Attorney-General to yourself, dated the 2nd inst., and of one to him from W. E. Chandler, dated the 15th January.

I need not say that the communication of Mr. Chandler fills me with both surprise and indignation; and I forward you this letter at once, to deny his calumnies, and to demand the strictest investigation into my acts in connection with the payment of bounties and pensions to those Cherokees entitled to receive them. I deny every allegation or insinuation of said Chandler that implies any wrong, on my part, in the premises, either in deed or purpose, towards the Government of the United States or towards any of my people. So entirely conscious am I of my

rectitude in these respects, that I beg leave to inform you that I hold myself amenable to any tribunal of justice of competent jurisdiction under your Government or that of the Cherokee Nation, or, if there be none such, to the award of any intelligent and impartial tribunal that you or the President may see proper to institute for the investigation of my conduct.

I do not deny that, in common with others, I have traded in bounties and pensions, but I do deny that I have done so improperly, or that I have been guilty of any fraud or any attempt to smother inquiry or prevent the officers of the Government from obtaining evidence in the Wright investigation.

In regard to the advice which Mr. Chandler sees fit to volunteer to the Government, that it should refuse to recognize me longer as a representative of the Cherokee Nation, I desire only to remark that I am its lawful principal chief, and am duly commissioned as one of its representatives before the Government by its national council, in accordance with the provisions of its constitution and laws; that I have been so recognized, and venture to presume that no action of a different kind will be entertained by you until I shall be found to be unworthy of official recognition in my intercourse with the Government, or unfaithful to the interests of the Cherokee Nation.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WILL. P. ROSS,

Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, February 10th, 1873.

SIR: Your communication of the 1st instant, inclosing a report from Hon. Wm. E. Chandler, making certain charges against Wm. P. Ross, principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, has been received, and a copy of the same, including a copy of the report of Mr. Chandler, was submitted to Mr. Ross, since which I have received from him, under date of the 4th instant, a communication, a copy of which is herewith inclosed.

You will perceive that Mr. Ross denies the charges contained in Mr. Chandler's report. I have respectfully to ask whether, in your opinion, it would be desirable that I cause the charges of Mr. Chandler to be investigated by some competent person of integrity and intelligence.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

C. DELANO,

Secretary.

Hon. GEO. H. WILLIAMS,
Attorney-General, Washington City.