

University of Oklahoma College of Law

University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons

American Indian and Alaskan Native Documents in the Congressional Serial Set: 1817-1899

7-10-1888

**Christina Edson and personal representatives of John Geisel,
deceased.**

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



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

Recommended Citation

H.R. Rep. No. 2836, 50th Cong., 1st Sess. (1888)

This House Report 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 Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu.

CHRISTINA EDSON AND PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES
OF JOHN GEISEL, DECEASED.

JULY 10, 1888.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. HERMANN, from the Select Committee on Indian Depredation Claims, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 2822.]

The Committee on Indian Depredation Claims, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 2822) for the relief of Christina Edson (formerly Geisel) and the personal representatives of John Geisel, deceased, respectfully beg leave to report:

The testimony before us is that of persons who are personally cognizant of the facts to which they testify—neighbors and acquaintances of claimant at the time of the depredations complained of—and these witnesses are persons of repute in the county where they reside. Each item of property taken and destroyed is minutely described and valued, and the values affixed we find to be the actual cash price of like property at the time and place of the depredation. This is proven by various witnesses, and among them the present judge of the court for the county in which the massacre and depredation occurred, and who was at the time one of the settlers who escaped to the forts near by. We condense the long narrative of the witnesses in the following finding:

On the 22d day of February, 1856, there lived on the prairies facing the Pacific Ocean, in Curry County, Oregon, and about 6 miles north of Rogue River, an American citizen, a settler, by the name of John Geisel, who, with his wife, the present claimant, and five children, made their home on the public domain, and earned a livelihood by keeping a wayside inn for the accommodation of the travel on the trails between California and interior Oregon. The husband also mined on the gold beach adjacent. They owned a comfortable two-story dwelling, with twelve rooms, constructed of whip-sawed lumber, made in the mountains and brought to the seaside for use. There was also a building near the dwelling (one-story) which had been used as a store, as this family also kept a small assortment of merchandise for the accommodation of the settlers, gold-miners, and hunters near by. There were also several board cabins on the ocean beach used in connection with the gold mining. These contained shovels, picks, gold-pans, and near them sluice-boxes, toms, copper plates, hose, quicksilver, and flumes used on the beach. On the prairie and around their dwelling were their horses, cattle, hogs, and chickens. In the house were such articles of furniture, provisions, and clothing as is found in the homes of the most com-

fortable families, and far beyond that usually found on the frontier. There were in the house several rifles, revolvers, etc. There was also gold-dust and gold and silver coin on hand.

The Indian tribes in the vicinity were seemingly at peace. A friendly Indian was employed by John Geisel at this time about the premises, and on this particular day had been engaged in looking for some stray hogs on the prairie. Returning about midnight he knocked at the door and asked for admission. Knowing his voice and not expecting treachery or danger, John Geisel left his bed and proceeded to open the door. At once four hostile savages led by the trusted Indian rushed in and made their murderous attack on Geisel. The wife, leaving her infant (fourteen days old), leaped from the bed and went to the aid of her struggling husband. In the struggle the husband received a mortal wound and fell dead at her side; she received a gash in her hand, nearly severing her finger, and was then overpowered and securely bound. The oldest daughter, then but thirteen years old, was dragged from her bed and likewise bound. The little boys were then one by one led forth from their beds, and in presence of the mother brutally murdered, the Indians compelling the mother to witness the fatal blows and the dying agonies. Removing Mrs. Geisel, the daughter, and infant from the house, they then carried out all articles of value and set fire to the house with its remaining contents, including the bodies of the victims. Taking with them various articles they commenced their march, refusing, however, to allow the captives to take with them any clothing, and barefooted and in their night dresses they slowly followed their captors to the Indian village of the "Too-toot-nas," situated about 12 miles distant, on the banks of the Rogue River. During the night march other Indians joined the hostiles, and with them burned and pillaged other houses, and in the presence of the captives massacred the inmates. As they reached the river many dead bodies were found and horribly mutilated.

For fourteen days Mrs. Geisel and her children were held in captivity at the Indian camp, being compelled to perform the most menial labor by the squaws, and being constantly maltreated. They were at the end of that time ransomed by the settlers, who had congregated in a fort near the mouth of the river. On their arrival at the fort they were in wretched condition, destitute of clothing, barefooted, and suffering from hunger and exposure. Everything of value was taken off the Geisel premises except the buildings, and they were all destroyed. We find that the Government had supplied no protection to this outlying settlement, no troops were near, and for some time after the uprising the fort of the settlers was the only place of refuge or protection for many miles around.

The Indian agent, Ben Wright, himself an old Indian fighter and of whom the Indians had great fear—even he assured the settlers that the Indians were well disposed and that no occasion existed for alarm.

These Indians were under the control and supervision of the Government, with its regularly-appointed agent in charge. No annuities are due the tribe guilty of this depredation. We find that no part of the property was ever recovered, and no compensation has ever been paid the claimants, either on the part of the Indians or by the General Government, and that the property lost and destroyed is of the value of \$7,975, as shown to us in the testimony submitted on behalf of claimants, and the United States is liable to the claimants to this extent.

We find that there was neither provocation, aggravation, or negligence on the part of Geisel or his family which could have invited the

terrible consequences of that day. Geisel was an industrious, quiet, and law-abiding citizen, and just in his dealings to all the white community, including the Indians themselves, so far as the evidence discloses. It was a gross and wanton assault, even for savages, and only ended when nineteen of the little community had been massacred and much property destroyed and carried off. The least precaution on the part of the military authorities would have saved all. The valuations and enumerations of the property so lost are testified to with an evident and an unusual conscientious regard for the truth, and we therefore, in view of the facts before us, report the bill back and recommend that it be amended by striking out the words "eight thousand eight hundred and three dollars" wherever it occurs, and inserting the words "seven thousand nine hundred and seventy-five dollars;" and, with this amendment, we recommend that the bill do pass.

○