

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

---

7-9-1894

**In the Senate of the United States. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, in response to the Senate resolution of June 5, 1894, transmitting a report relating to the Washington and Oregon Indian Wars of 1855 and 1856, bearing upon the loyalty of the Rogue River Indians during said war; also correspondence had by the Secretary of the Interior with reference to the papers mentioned in said resolution.**

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



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

---

### Recommended Citation

S. Exec. Doc. No. 135, 53rd Cong., 2nd Sess. (1894)

This Senate 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 [Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu](mailto:Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu).

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

IN RESPONSE TO

*The Senate resolution of June 5, 1894, transmitting a report relating to the Washington and Oregon Indian wars of 1855 and 1856, bearing upon the loyalty of the Rogue River Indians during said war; also correspondence had by the Secretary of the Interior with reference to the papers mentioned in said resolution.*

JULY 11, 1894.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
*Washington, July 9, 1894.*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the following resolution of the Senate, dated 5th ultimo:

*Resolved, That the Secretary of the Interior be, and he is hereby, directed to transmit to the Senate copies of the following-described reports, on file in the office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and relating to the Oregon and Washington Indian wars of 1855 and 1856, and bearing upon the question as to the loyalty of the Rogue River tribe of Indians during said war, and none of which reports have heretofore been printed, namely: Three reports of George H. Ambrose, U. S. Indian Agent, to Joel Palmer, superintendent of Indian affairs for Oregon, dated, respectively, October, 20, 1855, October 25, 1855, and June 4, 1856; also the report of Gen. John H. Wool, dated Benicia, Cal., to Assistant Adjt. Gen. Townsend.*

In response thereto, I transmit herewith copy of a communication of 9th ultimo from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, transmitting copy of report of Agent Andrews to Supt. Palmer, dated October 20, 1855.

The commissioner states that he is unable to find Agent Andrews' reports of October 25, 1855, and June 4, 1856.

I also transmit copy of Department letter of the 12th ultimo to the honorable Secretary of War, requesting copy of the letter of Gen. John E. Wool, referred to in the resolution, and of the indorsement thereon by the adjutant-general of the Army.

Very respectfully,

HOKE SMITH,  
*Secretary.*

The PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,

June 9, 1894.

SIR: I am in receipt, by Department reference for report, of a Senate resolution, dated June 5, 1894, which reads as follows:

*Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Interior be, and he is hereby, directed to transmit to the Senate copies of the following described reports, on file in the office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and relating to the Oregon and Washington Indian wars of 1855 and 1856 and bearing upon the question as to the loyalty of the Rogue River tribe of Indians during said war, and none of which reports have heretofore been printed, namely: Three reports of George H. Ambrose, U. S. Indian Agent, to Joel Palmer, superintendent of Indian affairs for Oregon, dated, respectively, October 20, 1855, October 25, 1855, and June 4, 1856; also the report of Gen. John H. Wool, dated Benicia, Cal., to Assistant Adj. Gen. Townsend.

In reply thereto, I have the honor to herewith inclose a copy of a letter from U. S. Indian Agent G. H. Ambrose, dated October 20, 1855, addressed to Joel Palmer, superintendent of Indian affairs for the Territory of Oregon.

Concerning the reports of October 25, 1855, and June 4, 1856, referred to in said Senate resolution, I would state that I have caused a diligent search of the records of this office to be made, and no such reports seem to be on file.

As the report of Gen. John H. Wool referred to has no date, I am at a loss to know what particular report is desired, and am therefore unable to furnish any information in connection therewith. I would suggest, however, that if the date of said report is known that it would be more likely to be found in the War Department than in this office.

The Senate resolution is herewith respectfully returned.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

FRANK C. ARMSTRONG,  
*Acting Commissioner.*

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

---

OFFICE INDIAN AGENT,  
*Rogue River Valley, Oreg., October 20, 1855.*

SIR: Since I informed you of existing hostilities in this valley no important event has occurred not contained in that communication. I have learned reliably that the Shastas, Scotans, Grave Creeks, and many of the Umpquas and Cow Creeks are concerned in these horrid murders and massacres. The Shastas are beyond doubt the leading spirit of the whole expedition. Old Chief John has managed to secure the assistance of all the above-named tribes, together with the Klamaths, and all the surrounding tribes are concerned in this war. Not that there is a general combination of all those tribes to do this, for there is ancient feuds existing among some of these tribes, but they all have their enmity against the white race. The Klamath Lake Indians on the east have been at war for two months past, and those murders which were committed on the Siskiyou Mountain were doubtless done by them. On the south were the Klamath River and Shasta Indians at war for some time past; on the west are the Scotans, Grave Creeks, and Cow Creeks, who were greatly disaffected; hence you will see it would require but little exertion to unite them all in one common war against their white foe, which I apprehend has already been done. The Rogue Rivers alone excepted, who have placed themselves under protection of Capt. Smith, of Fort Lane, all others belonging to this reserve are off, and no doubt nearly all are engaged in this war. There are some, I believe, have gone with those hostile Indians through fear, who do not desire a war.

I have taken the census of those at the fort and find a total of 303 persons.

Principal Chief Sam has of his own and his brother Joe's people, who are now counted as his, the following:

	Men.	Women.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
Sam.....	36	66	35	24	161
Elijah.....	18	33	9	17	77
Sambo.....	16	25	11	13	65
	70	124	55	54	303

There is no possible way by which these people can subsist themselves, it must be done by Government. They can not be permitted to leave the fort in quest of game or subsistence of any kind, and being a very improvident people, they have not laid up their winter supplies; however, this is their usual hunting season, and it is impossible to avail themselves of it, hence you will see no other alternative but to feed or to fight them. I have furnished them supplies the past week, believing it to be the policy of our Government and in the end much less expensive. As I have but a small fund in my hand for the purpose of buying provisions for them I wish to call your attention to that fact and ask your advice as to what I should do.

No longer any doubt exists but that this must be a war of extermination against all the chiefs and leaders of these hostile bands; they have so declared it themselves, and say they are determined to show no quarters. Old Chief John killed the man employed to build him a house, declaring that he "wanted no house but was going to fight till he died;" and the massacre of defenseless women and children, in the most brutal and fiendish manner, show a determination to carry into execution their threat. Quite a number of travelers, miners, and persons passing the road have been killed. I have not learned authentically the number, nor do I know the names of all, consequently I refrain from making the attempt to state it.

Several hundred volunteers are patrolling the country in every direction, besides the regulars, who have been constantly in the saddle since the commencement of difficulties, yet nothing effective has been done. It will certainly require a large force to subdue these savages and save this country from desolation and ruin.

Among some papers found in the office I find the following statistical table, which I subjoin, as it may be of use to you for reference, showing the bands and number of hostile Indians. The table bears date November, 1854.

	Men.	Women.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
Deer Creeks.....	33	42	20	11	106
Gallice Creeks.....	23	26	18	10	77
Kiota Indian.....	4	3	1		8
Grave Creek.....	4	15	6	2	27
Old John.....	4	6	3	2	15
Bute Creek.....	26	32	11	15	84
Applegate John.....	14	24	13	12	63
Applegate Bill.....	14	15	8	9	46
George and Limpy.....	25	38	17	17	97
	147	201	97	78	523

I do not mean to say that all of the above are concerned in this war, but the bands have sided with those that are hostile. I have no doubt many individuals disapprove of the act and would like to be away from their people, but fear of their leaders has restrained them, and they have all gone together.

Yours, respectfully,

G. H. AMBROSE,  
Indian Agent.

JOEL PALMER, ESQ.  
Superintendent Indian Affairs, Dayton, Oreg.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
*Washington, June 12, 1894.*

SIR: I have the honor to request to be furnished with a copy of a report from Gen. John H. Wool, dated Benicia, Cal., to Assistant Adj. Gen. Townsend bearing, I suppose, upon the question as to the loyalty of the Rogue River tribe of Indians during the Indian war of 1855-'56.

This copy is called for by the following resolution of the Senate, dated 5th instant. "Resolved, That the Secretary of the Interior be, and he is hereby, directed to transmit to the Senate copies of the following-described reports, on file in the office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and relating to the Oregon and Washington Indian wars of 1855 and 1856, and bearing upon the question as to the loyalty of the Rogue River tribe of Indians during said war, and none of which reports have heretofore been printed, namely: Three reports of George H. Ambrose, U. S. Indian agent, to Joel Palmer, superintendent of Indian affairs for Oregon, dated respectively, October 20, 1855, October 25, 1855, and June 4, 1856; also the report of Gen. John H. Wool, dated Benicia, Cal., to Assistant Adj. Gen. Townsend."

Very respectfully,

HOKE SMITH,  
*Secretary.*

The SECRETARY OF WAR.

---

[First indorsement.]

ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
*Washington, July 6, 1894.*

Respectfully returned to the Secretary of War.

The records of this office contain no letter from Gen. Wool to Assistant Adj. Gen. Townsend relative to the Rogue River Indians.

In 1855-'56 Maj. Gen. John E. Wool commanded the Department of the Pacific, headquarters Benicia barracks, Cal., and Maj. E. D. Townsend was on duty at same headquarters as assistant-adjutant general. There are many letters covering above-named period from Gen. Wool to Assistant Adj. Gen. Thomas, headquarters of the Army, New York City, in which mention is made of the attitude and conduct of the Indians in Oregon and Washington in general, and in some instances of the Rogue River Indians in particular, most of which letters have been printed in Senate and House Documents, Thirty-fourth Congress, first session. It is impracticable, from the reading of the within resolution, to know what particular letter is desired.

GEO. D. RUGGLES,  
*Adjutant-General.*

WAR DEPARTMENT, *July 6, 1894.*

Respectfully returned to the honorable the Secretary of the Interior, inviting attention to the preceding indorsement of the Adjutant-General.

JOSEPH B. DOE,  
*Assistant Secretary of War.*