

# Lake County Examiner

VOL. XXIV.

LAKEVIEW, LAKE COUNTY, OREGON, THURSDAY, SEPT. 17, 1903.

NO. 37.

## THE BEN WRIGHT RAID

A Tale of the Bloodthirsty Deeds of Indians in Klamath Fifty Years ago—How Revenged

The Ben Wright raid, or Ben Wright massacre, was one of the bloodiest in the early days of Oregon. Indian men, women and children were slaughtered by Ben Wright and his 22 followers like animals, and not one of the white men ever regretted it. Mose Hart, the sole survivor of the famous band of desperate men, who now lives near Westfall, in Malheur County, has grown to be a very old man, is prosperous and is regarded as one of the best citizens in the State, still tells of the bloody massacre in which he took part and says he has never had cause to regret it. They scalped the Indians after killing them irrespective of age and sex and left them scattered on the plains, that the coyotes might devour their bodies.

### HOW INDIGNATION WAS RAISED.

Yreka, in Siskiyou County, California was then the only settlement of note in Southern Oregon and Northern California. It was more than 50 years ago. It was just after the gold excitement had broken out in the great placer districts of the Golden State and many of the miners had become disgusted even with the best gold fields in those days and wandered about the State hunting other Eldoradoes. Yreka was settled upon as a rival to the great Sierra Nevadas and a large number of daring men congregated there and mined and fought and gambled just as they did in all prosperous mining sections. Ben Wright was considered the bravest man in Yreka. He was cool-headed, unacquainted with fear and placed no value on his life or that of others. People from the Idaho country were trying to make their way into the Yreka and Rogue River countries, but hundreds of them were caught on the plains by the Indians and murdered and plundered.

Some more fortunate of the immigrants brought these stories to Yreka almost daily. Occasionally one or more members from an immigrant train would arrive at Yreka and tell of the most cruel Indian massacres and wanton tortures of the immigrants by the Indians. Most of the grievances came from the Klamath country and the outrages were charged to the Plute or Snake Indians.

### RAID ORGANIZED.

Finally an immigrant arrived at Yreka on horseback under whip with the announcement that a small band of immigrants composed of men, women and children were surrounded by hundreds of bloodthirsty warriors on Lost River in the Klamath country. The man who brought the news stated that the whites would be able to hold the enemy at bay for several hours yet, as they were well armed and the few men in the party were excellent marksmen, but that the Indians would eventually overcome them. Ben Wright called the miners together immediately and called for volunteers. When he called for men who would go to the rescue of the immigrants and face death if necessary, 22 young men almost as daring as himself stood up in line, and Mose Hart was one of this number. No

time was lost in arming, equipping and mounting the famous 23. The best horses in the camp were placed at the rescuers' disposal and each carried a Winchester rifle, two dragoon revolvers, several rounds of ammunition and two days' provisions.

### TO THE RESCUE.

The point on Lost River to be reached was 100 miles away. The party left Yreka at noon and rode day and night, only stopping twice to give their horses a moment's rest and for the men to eat a "bite," as Mr. Hart put it. They reached the place just at sunrise on the next morning and were awarded by seeing that the immigrants were still holding their own. A quick investigation disclosed that the whole face of the earth for a complete circuit about the immigrant train was covered with Indians. The whites had been attacked while near a small bridge across the river, and had immediately corralled their horses and wagons, and the men behind these were doing such deadly shooting whenever an opportunity presented itself that the Indians thought it best to remain at a distance until reinforcements, whom they had sent for, arrived.

### THE ATTACK.

Ben Wright took in the situation at a glance. He saw that the Indians had not discovered the arrival of him and his men, and falling back behind a hill, ordered his men to remove their hats and throw them away and tie their big bandana handkerchiefs around their necks. This done they each took a revolver in either hand and dashed down upon the surprised Indians. When the Indians first saw them they gave a shout of welcome and the hearts of the immigrants sank within them for a moment. The bareheaded men in the early morning light looked like Indians, and while the immigrants thought more Indians had arrived to attack them, their enemy thought the miners were the reinforcements for whom they had sent.

### QUICK WORK.

But the object of the miners were soon known by both surprised parties. They charged right into the thickest of the Indians, and they lost no time with their revolvers, and they were all good shots. Completely panic stricken, the Indians ran in every direction, some going over the hills and others plunging into the river. The maddened immigrants from the wagons came out and joined in the execution, and the work was soon over. Mr. Hart reports that there were plenty of "good Indians" lying everywhere after the fight was over, and he said many of the young men scalped them in regular Indian style. The women of the immigrant train prepared a good meal for their rescuers and they left the same day on their way to Yreka under the escort of the miners.

### MINERS NOT SATISFIED.

After the miners escorted the immigrants out of danger they were overtaken by another immigrant who had just escaped another attack of the Indians farther up the valley in the neighborhood of the Lower Klamath Lake. He stated that they were killing, torturing and scalping men, women and children. The men turned their horses' heads and dashed back over the ground which they had just passed. They crossed the river at the bridge where the fight of the previous day had



MRS. FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

Having won much fame as an authoress, Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett has now appeared as a successful dramatist. Her play for children, "The Little Princess," which was recently produced in New York, is making a big hit.

occurred and saw the dead Indians still lying bleaching in the sun. But they hurried on to the scene of the massacre.

### AT BLOODY POINT.

At a point near the shore of the Lower Klamath Lake, which has since been called "Bloody Point," the miners saw a sight that was sickening at first, but which soon aroused them to madness for revenge. Men, women and children lay piled up in heaps, their scalps taken, their bodies stripped and lacerated in every possible way by the knives and tomahawks of the Indians. Many of them had been disemboweled and the bodies of both men and women had been desecrated in every way that savage brutality could invent. The Indians had taken this method of revenge against the white race for having been foiled by the miners the previous day. It appears that those who escape the previous day met their reinforcements coming to join them and they soon afterwards came upon the immigrant train and surprised and killed all of the immigrants, except the one who had given the alarm, after having tortured them in every conceivable way.

### ANOTHER MASSACRE.

The miners started out in search of the Indians who had fled without their knowledge on their approach and hidden their women and children, who had joined them, in the high tules bordering the lake, and had also taken refuge in this hiding place themselves. They were soon discovered by Wright and his men, however, but as a marsh lay between the miners and the Indians it was difficult to get to them. The previous days' work of the miners had completely intimidated the Indians and they showed no inclination to fight with the daring men. Wright tried every way possible to get to them, or to get them out without avail. Finally he sent one of his men who could speak their

language and coaxed them out under the promise of a treaty. The men, women and children came forth under this promise.

As soon as they were well out in the open, at a signal, Wright and his men dashed down upon them and they slayed them like wild animals. They did not stop at men and women, but they killed the children. Scarcely one of the whole band escaped. And then the miners scalped their victims and took their departure.

### NO COMPUNCTIONS OF CONSCIENCE.

The miners returned to Yreka satisfied with what they had done and were the heroes of the hour in the mining camp. "Did your conscience not hurt you?" was asked Mr. Hart recently while he was lying almost at death's door. "No, sir," came the reply promptly. "It never did and never has since! If you could have seen that pile of bodies of our own white women and children, butchered and desecrated as they were, you would have been of the same opinion as were we miners, that no kind of savage was fit to live in those days when our people's lives were ever in peril; that the young ones would some day be just as brutal as the old ones—anyway, we didn't torture them. We killed them outright!"—Paul De Laney in the Portland Journal.

### Possibly an Extra Session.

A grave discrepancy in the tax laws of Oregon has been discovered which in all probability will necessitate a special session of the legislature before the close of the present year. Without remedial legislation, attorneys declare that an entire year's taxes will be lost to the state and to every county, city, town and district in Oregon.

The difficulty arises from the attempt of the legislature of 1903 to amend the tax laws so as to change the date of the annual levy from January to September.

## LOOKS LIKE A RAILROAD

Conference With Harriman Expected to Cause the O. R. & N. to Build Toward Lake.

A special to the Oregonian from San Francisco under date of Sept. 9th, says:

From high official sources it is learned that Harriman has taken up the proposition to extend the O. R. & N. line into Central Oregon and has intimated that this will be his next important move on the Pacific Coast. The news leaked out through the recent mysterious departure of A. L. Mohler, president of the O. R. & N.

Mohler, it has been ascertained, went to meet Harriman, who has just returned from Europe, where he had gone to recuperate after the operation performed on him for appendicitis.

The advantages of the O. R. & N. extension would be to permit the Harriman lines to invade the lumber districts and by a direct eastward route avoid the present roundabout way of backhauling to northern points. It is expected that the conference between Harriman and Mohler will result in something definite that will interest the northern railroad.

There are a number of O. R. & N. construction projects on foot and it is thought that Harriman at the present conference will decide what are feasible. The construction of the Columbia Southern has been pending since the magnate retired to Europe. During his absence a comprehensive report on the country the contemplated extension would tap has been prepared and the substance of that report was cabled to Harriman.

There is hardly any doubt, according to reports from the same source, but what the Columbia Southern will eventually be built, and the northerners are provoked at the delay, for they realize that the development of the country has been retarded and that another season must elapse before active operations can be commenced.

Those who claim to be on the inside also state that there is a proposition on foot to run a line from Bellingham Bay to Spokane. If this is done it will mean a great cut off as a short route to Puget Sound. This road, if built, would open up new territory and one that could ably support the railway, but the fact that it would be in more or less direct competition with the Great Northern may have a deterring effect on its being built.

That there are contemplated improvements is evidenced by the fact that over 70 locomotives have been ordered from the Baltimore Locomotive Works by the Harriman lines.

### Forest Reserves Are Bad.

Senator Fulton believes the present system leads to extensive frauds. Information of proposed withdrawals leaks out from Washington, and speculators hasten to take advantage of the lieu land system. The officials in Oregon, Senator Fulton thinks, have been unjustly saddled with the blame for these frauds. The same opinion is held by Senator Fulton regarding state lands, and he points for proof to the extensive filings on school lands just prior to withdrawal.