

COLLECTED DOCUMENTS ON THE CAUSES AND EVENTS
IN THE BLOODY ISLAND MASSACRE OF 1850.

Assembled and edited by Robert F. Heizer

HEIZER, ROBERT F. (ROBERT)
COLLECTED DOCUMENTS ON THE CAUSES
AND EVENTS IN THE BLOODY ISLAND MA
1973.
35253000178164 LAKE

Archaeological Research Facility
Department of Anthropology
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720
1973

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	3
I. Official and semi-official reports	9a
1. Report of Lt. J. W. Davidson, Jan. 6, 1850.....	9a
2. Report of Bvt. Captain N. Lyon, 1850	10
3. Report of Bvt. Major General Persifor F. Smith, 1850	13
4. Statement of John McKee, 1851.....	15
5. Statement of George Gibbs, 1851	16
6. Statement of Peter Campbell, 1851	17
II. Newspaper accounts	18
1. Alta California, May 28, 1850	18
2. Alta California, June 1, 1850	19
3. Sacramento Daily Transcript, Sept. 16, 1850...	21
III. Historical versions	22
1. C. A. Menefee, 1873	22
2. L. L. Palmer, 1881	24
3. A. Carpenter and F. Millberry, 1914	33
IV. Indian versions of the massacre	38
1. Chief Augustine, ca. 1880	38
2. Unidentified Pomo informants, ca. 1906	42
3. Stephen Knight, 1918-1925	46
4. William R. Benson, ca. 1931	47
V. Other versions	56
1. T. Knight, 1879	56
2. C. H. Merriam	57
3. E. A. Sherman	59
4. H. Altschule	61
5. G. Yount	63
Appendix I. The Clear Lake Massacre of 1843	66
1. Statement of J. Bojorges	67
2. C. Brown's account	71
3. E. A. Sherman's account	72
4. T. Hittell's account	74
Appendix II. H. H. Bancroft's Biographical Notes on Stone and Kelsey	75
Appendix III. Supplementary ethnographic information	76
Sketch map	78

COLLECTED DOCUMENTS ON THE CAUSES AND
EVENTS IN THE BLOODY ISLAND MASSACRE OF 1850.

Introduction

This collection of documents was assembled during the year (1972-73) while in residence as a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Palo Alto. I have long known about the killing of Andrew Kelsey and Charles Stone who were the first American settlers in Lake County. My interest in the causes for their demise at the hands of Indians and the retribution which was followed against the Pomo applied by U.S. military forces was reawakened during the course of attending a Center seminar chaired by Professor Percy Cohen, London School of Economics, on dominance and submission which he organized and in which I participated.

Large scale killings of California Indians by Spaniards, Mexicans and Americans happened in the past many times. For some recorded examples see S. F. Cook^{1/} and Heizer and Almquist^{2/}.

Of the various massacres, the most fully reported and therefore most interesting is the one in which United States troops attacked the Pomo on a small island (named at different times Battle Island, Bloody Island and Upper Lake Island) at the upper end of Clear Lake in 1850. The attack was in retaliation for the murder in 1849 of two American settlers, Andrew Kelsey and Charles Stone. Stone, as an individual, does not come into focus as a person to the extent that Kelsey does^{3/}, but it is nevertheless quite clear that Kelsey at least was a cruel and brutal person who badly mistreated the local Indians in the vicinity of Kelseyville where the ranch headquarters were located. Whether or not we deplore or condone the Indians' killing of Stone and Kelsey, it at least seems clear that the natives took the action they did with some justification and provocation.

^{1/} S. F. Cook. The Conflict Between the California Indian and White Civilization: III, The American Invasion, 1848-1870. Ibero-Americana, No. 23, 1943.

^{2/} R. F. Heizer and A. Almquist. The Other Californians. University of California Press, 1971 (pp. 13, 28, 30ff).

^{3/} H. H. Bancroft (see Appendix II, this paper) is uncertain about who Stone was. Gibbs in 1851 says his given name was Charles

This collection of documents (as the reader will see by consulting the Table of Contents) has been divided into several categories. There are two official reports, to which are added several semi-official ones written by persons while serving in some official capacity. These bear the stamp of respectability or authority which enhances their credibility. There are some contemporary newspaper accounts, these being, no doubt, only a small sampling of the total number of such. Then we have the versions of the whole affair written at a later date by historians. These vary in the detail in which the matter is considered, but they are interesting from the standpoint of serving as accounts which must have influenced a wide audience of citizens who were being informed of the incident for the first time. Finally, and most interesting of all, are the versions written by or recorded from Indians who were retelling the story of the massacre, and the reasons why Stone and Kelsey were killed, which they had heard from older people who had been directly involved. In general the various kinds of accounts agree, but in detail the sequence of events, the movements of Indians and military groups, counts of casualties, etc. differ.

Native Americans today are very much interested in American Indian history, by which they mean history written by, or in terms of, Indians themselves. They believe that what we now call Indian history is really the white man's interpretation. As an illustrative example, they could point to the prestigious and "authoritative" Bibliography of the History of California, 1510-1930 by R. E. Cowan and R. G. Cowan (San Francisco, 1933) which neglects to a point that makes it painfully obvious that it was deliberate, that Indians were not officially a significant part of what Cowan and Cowan thought was the real history of California. Here, in this collection of documentary records, is one historical incident for which we have both the native and white versions. For California it is, I believe, unique. Because, as a white scholar, my attempt to reconstruct the actual events - i.e. to try to harmonize the often conflicting details of place, time and action - would be another example of whites writing native history, I have chosen to avoid this and to simply present the records in the hope that some real Indian historian might attempt to unravel the tangled skein of "historical fact". While I am completely sympathetic to the Native Americans' argument that the white version of Indian history is not the native history (as yet unwritten) of their own experience vis-a-vis the whites, it is at the same time difficult to see, at this degree of chronological remove, how Indians can ever write their own "actual", "real", or "objective" interpretation of the history of their early relations with whites when they are forced, as they must necessarily be, to depend upon records made only by whites. Having asked that question, I now say that I believe that it is possible for a still different variant of historiography to emerge - one that will not be a wholly new and different history written from the other side of the frontier, but one which is framed with the Indian, as participant (and all too often, recipient) in the larger scene of the inevitable meeting of Old and New World civilizations, a conjunction which history tells us, turned out to the advantage of the Europeans. If that encounter, still being adjusted to after nearly four centuries of contact, has been for the most part a