

Port Orford February the 5<sup>th</sup> 1855

Honored Sir

According to Promise on my Return with pleasure i now make known to you the present state of affairs within this District i am happy to inform that Every thing goes on well at present and a prospect of continuing so for a time at ~~the time~~ ~~at~~ least i Returned from Chetco arrived at this place on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January on my returning trip i visited all the different bands from Chetco to this Place found them all well disposed and Peaceable i found matters at Chetco in rather a Confused State But not so Bad as they might have Been by delay as the Exterminators had not yet Crossed the line they had killed some 40 Indians on the Lagoon near Smith River when they were Stoped by the authorities of Crescent City some of the party then wanted to Cross the line as some of them had heard that the Chetco Indians were preparing for war or that they did not go about the Whites as usual and there must Be something Wrong with them they thought if they were not guilty of some Crime they should not be <sup>much</sup> afraid as they were

on my arrival i first visited the Indians found them willing to do any thing to preserve their lives and expressed great joy on my arrival as they thought themselves saved from the fate they so much dreaded the settlers in that vicinity have no complaints more than their being shy since the difficulty before which was easily settled by explaining the cause which was plain enough

I then visited the exterminating Party who were then located on Smith River 8 miles from Cohetco i also met some of the committee who was Investigating the matter and cause of the Indians being killed on the California side of the line it was ascertained to be unfounded only a cause trumped up by the party themselves in this form a settler from Smith River valley come into Crescent City and stated that the Indians came to his house and ordered him to leave within 3 days if not he and all the settlers in the valley would be killed as the Indians from Rogue River and Cohetco and other bands up the Coast was coming to assist them the same man now denies the charge and says it is their <sup>own</sup> invention i cautioned them against ever attempting to cross the line as it was now my District and should they ever cross and commit any

Depredations <sup>thence</sup> it be followed by fearful consequences  
to them and that i claimed to have the  
management of the Indians in my own  
District and that the Indians should  
not cross the line and commit any  
Depredations on them and should they do it  
at any time to make it known to me  
that i was always ready and willing to  
attend to such matters and it was my duty  
to do so and a right that legally belonged to no  
other person at present  
on my return to Chetco i give the Indians  
Positive orders not to cross the line on no  
occasion whatever which they promised faithfully  
to take my advise in regard to that and  
all other matters i took this opportunity to  
show and explain to them the advantage  
of the Protection they received from  
Government as there was no agent at  
Present City therefore no protection for the  
Indians South of the line to keep them from  
being killed without Cause  
they appeared at once to see their advantage  
and to appreciate it highly  
i then broached the subject of a Removal should  
Government ever advise it this is something that  
the Majority all throughout the District appear  
to be unsettled as to a reply

i have always endeavored to show to them that  
Government feels interested in their welfare and  
how necessary it is for them to be advised as  
well as protected from that source  
and also to show what would be their condition  
without that aid which they cannot fail to  
see by seeing or knowing how things are conducted  
South of the line where the whites are allowed  
to kill the Indians without any restraint  
Though my opinion is that the Indians on  
the Coast will be much harder to persuade  
to give up their homes and country than  
those in the Interior from the fact of their  
traveling so seldom and never more than  
30 or 40 miles therefore their knowledge of any other <sup>place</sup>  
is limited the idea of leaving the houses where  
they were born in and the stream where they have  
fished in all their lives for a home only a  
short distance from them would be something  
that <sup>with</sup> their limited knowledge they would not  
readily sanction unlike those of the Interior who  
have fought their way through and traveled from  
one valley to another their homes sometimes  
in the mountains and sometimes on the rivers  
and not permanent at any time  
I have never spoke to them on positive terms concerning  
their removal only that it might be proposed  
to them and how much it would to their advantage  
to have a country to themselves where they can live  
unmolested by the whites

I first tried to Persuade them to Request  
You ~~through~~ through me to have a Country  
Set apart for them they like the Idea But  
differ in Regard to the Point as to where is.  
Shall Be each Band having their Choice  
But the two most prominent Points with them  
is Shetes or Rouge River But i have never  
Been able to tell them where or anything  
in Relation to it as i have always told them  
that power lay in you alone and that you  
was devoting your whole time for the welfare  
of the different Tribes of Indians and them  
among the rest and that when you arrived  
i wished them to Be Ready to do anything  
which you may propose as it will be to their  
advantage they are all very anxious to see you  
they are also very anxious to engage in farming  
the coming Spring and wish me to assist them  
i have always told them that every thing  
depended on their own Conduct that they  
had to arrive at a certain Point towards  
Civilization Before they could receive any  
assistance from Government in that way  
and that when you visited them that  
would be your Business to see whether they  
were willing to Be governed by your advise and  
whether they were enlightened enough to engage in  
farming and other pursuits they wished for

and if you thought they were you would  
give them all the assistance they required and  
and if not they would have to wait until  
they had become sufficiently enlightened  
this policy is adopted because i did not know  
whether there would be any steps taken by  
Government towards colonizing them the coming  
Spring or not and should it not be done  
they will think the fault is their own  
instead of neglect or inability on the part of  
Government and will induce them to keep trying  
i find the Chetco Indians very easy controlled  
notwithstanding the loss of their favourite Chief  
who was killed by Mr Tuttle and Mr Henry  
Fouel who is now in Marysville Oregon a Sadler  
i have let the matter interesting to do so  
until you arrived i ascertained on my trip  
to Chetco that it was through that Circumstances  
that Mr French of Crescent City was killed  
for which 3 Indians was Hung one was a Chetco  
Indian who was greatly attached to the Chief  
who was killed he then said he would kill  
a white man the present Chetco Chief a brother  
to the one who was killed followed the Indian  
intending to kill him to preserve peace the  
Indian crossed the line and dare not come  
back he there employed the others to assist  
him in killing French and so fulfilled his threat  
the present Chief is a peace man and has great  
respect for this side of the line

from what i can learn there is a man in this  
vicinity who is making it his Business to  
trade fire arms and ammunition to the Indians  
as i have no law to be governed by i do not  
know what course to pursue or how far to  
to go in such a matter he binds the Indians  
to secrecy but they can keep no secrets from me  
since i have changed Interpreters  
i find the Indians both talk and act different  
and are much better satisfied than they  
formerly were and are gaining confidence in  
in government because they understand  
what is said to them instead of hearing  
probably the Reverse  
i can get along very well with the Indians  
and am trying to control some of the whites  
i released two men from the Guard House  
to day who have been there 6 days on  
Bread and water for mistreating Indians  
and forcibly taking their women they came  
out docile i have so far attended every call  
whether made by whites or Indians  
and i can say that they are numerous  
and that it keeps me busy though i believe  
so far i have given satisfaction to all parties  
which is more than ever i expected to do

L M Smith returned on the last steamer  
Speaks of seeing you and Chris though i  
received no mail none since October

i am always anxious to hear from you  
and still more anxious to see you as i  
want to know what is to be done in this  
District anything you wish me to do shall  
be done if in my power all i want is  
is to be instructed how to do and i will  
try the last i wrote before this was only  
half finished as i was to much to write  
at all at the time please write to me as  
after as convenient My respects to Lois  
and all the family

To General Joel Palmer  
Superintendent of  
Indian affairs  
O T

Your Obedient Servant

Ben Wright  
Sub Indian  
Agent

J

J

Received 133/115 2/17.

1853

Letter from Ben Wright  
the Sub Agent on the  
condition of things in  
the Fort Wingard District.