

CHAPTER III.

Volunteers from Rogue River, Oregon, make a trip through the Modoc Country; killing done; joined by Ben Wright and his men.

The Modoc people were driven from place to place, after they left the mountains, and went back to Tule Lake. After they massacred the emigrants at Wa-ga-kan-na, they went to the mountains, and lived there for nearly two years. They were the guilty parties. The Modocs that did not take a hand in the massacre continued to live in the valleys. The chief among them was Schonchin's father.

The whites named the place where the massacre took place, Bloody Point. The massacre at Bloody Point did not stop the white emigrants from coming through the Modoc country. Every little while there would be an Indian killed. It went on thus for some time. No more whites were killed in the Modoc country; some emigrants being killed out in the Pitt River country right along.

About the year 1856, month of June, about thirty-five men started for Tule Lake from Rogue River, Oregon. They came out to Keno, Oregon, and turned and went down the Klamath River and on to Yreka, California. When they got to Yreka they stated they were hunting Indians. There was a man by the name of Ben Wright who told them he would like to hunt Indians. The Oregon volunteers invited Wright to join them and go along; so Wright got some men that liked to hunt Indians to go with him. When they all got together they numbered over one hundred men. They all left Yreka some time in July to hunt down the Modoc Indians. They found some Hot Creek Indians, jumped onto them and killed a few. Wright was ths chosen captain of the company. Wright traveled all through the Klamath Indian country, killing Klamath Indians wherever he could find them. He went through Goose Lake country, killed Paiute Indians wherever he got a chance. He came down Spragues River, Oregon,

THE INDIAN HISTORY

and killed a few Indians some place near where the Openchain ranch¹ is now. In the fall he went to Tule Lake and found some Indians. He did not attack them. He found one that could speak a little white man talk. He told that Indian that he was the Indians' friend. He or his men did not want to hurt any of them. He said he was a peace-maker. Said the Great Father had sent him to the Modoc country to make peace with the Indians. He told them that he would go away tomorrow to get some things for the Indians to eat and then they would have a big talk. Ben Wright and his men made his word good with the Indians. They all left the following day.

The Indian that had the talk with Wright spread the news among the Modocs and Rock Indians or Combutwaush that he had at last found a good friend. A white man with many men had told him he would be back in three or four days with plenty to eat for the Indians while they talked to make peace. The word went from village to village of the big feast and intended council. Three days after Wright and his men had left the Natural Bridge, forty-five men and a few squaws was camped near the Natural Bridge waiting Wright's return. They were anxious to be friends with the white people, and the prospects were good for a big feast. On the fifth day from the day Wright had left, he and his men all returned; all seemed to be very friendly with the Indians. They dismounted a short distance from the Indian camp. While Wright's men were busy pitching tents, Wright walked over to the Indian camp. He told them he would like all the Indians to move over near his camp. Said it would be much better when they would hold their council the next day, for if it kept raining they would be unable to hold an open council. We will have to get in my biggest tent; we will keep dry. The Indians agreed to his wishes. Wright located the camp site for them. He encamped them right on the bank of the river, where the river made a quick bend. Wright's camp was right back of the Indians' camp. They had the Indians hemmed in next to the river. The Natural Bridge was about half a mile southeast of this camp.

¹Near Bly, Oregon.

Wright gave the Indians a whole beef and flour and other foodstuffs. The Indians were very happy. That evening they pulled up sage-brush and built wind-breaks and got tules and built shelters. The Indians and whites were having a jolly good time that night, until near the midnight hour. After midnight, everything was quiet. The whole camp was in slumber. The Indians little thought that that evening would be the last they would enjoy on this earth; their talk was, they were all glad that they had found a friend. Capt. Jack's father said he was tired dodging the whites. He seen a great future for his son and their people.

Long before daylight, if any of the Indians had been on guard they could have seen Ben Wright's men all up and looking after their arms. They could have seen men making their way down the river towards the Natural Bridge, carefully picking their way through the tall sage-brush. A few minutes after these men had left their tents, about forty in number, the Indians could have seen these same men on the north bank of Lost River, opposite their own camp, fingering the triggers of their muskets, assured by their Captain Wright, that they would have a fine morning's sport.

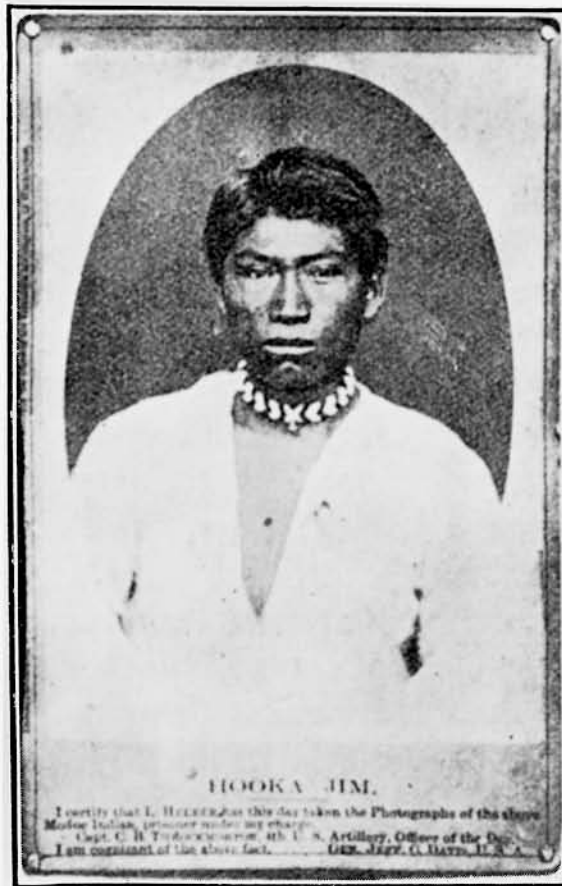
On the south bank of Lost River, where the two camps were, the rest of Wright's men were laying low behind their own tents, anxiously awaiting the brightness of morning to come. The sky begins to fade in the east, it gets quite light. Ben Wright looks along his gun barrel; he turns slowly around to his men and says, "It is not light enough; we will wait till it is good and light. I want to get every mother's son of them Injuns. Boys, don't spare the squaws; get them all!"

The birds began to sing. Capt. Jack's father raises his head; he tells his squaw it is day. "Let's get up," he says; "it is raining. I wonder why the white people are not up?" The Indians begin to show signs of life. Capt. Jack's father was the first one up. He looked to his bow and quiver. It is still unstrung. All the rest of the Indians had unstrung their bows, because it was raining when they retired. Capt. Jack's father went towards his white friends' camp, looking

THE INDIAN HISTORY

for dry twigs, to start a fire. When he got even with the tents, he met Wright face to face. Wright drew his revolver and shot the Indian dead, and he yelled; told his men to be up and at them. The Indians all jumped to their feet, got their bows and offered fight, but could not do anything. The whites shot them down so fast on the south bank, they jumped in the river, thinking if they could make the opposite bank, they possibly could make their escape. When they got about half way across, the whites on the north bank opened fire on them. Only five escaped; every one of them wounded; quite a few squaws were killed. Not a man on the white side was hurt.

After the Indians had been butchered, Wright ordered the camp to hustle. It was not long till the Wright men were all traveling towards Yreka, California, with all kinds of Indian scalps dangling from their shot pouches. The second night after Wright's arrival at Yreka, the citizens gave Wright and his men a big dance. He was the lion of the day, and proclaimed the mighty Indian Hunter, Savage Civilizer, Peace-Maker, etc.



Died at Quapaw Agency, I. T. (Oklahoma), 1879.