

**CALIFORNIA MILITARY DEPARTMENT HISTORICAL PROGRAM
North Highlands Annex, Joint Forces Headquarters
3900 Roseville Road
North Highlands, California 95660**

**JOHN BIDWELL:
RELUCTANT INDIAN FIGHTER, 1850-1855
By Michele Shover**

Extracted 20 January 2019 from *Dogtown Territorial Quarterly*, Number 36, Winter 1998.

John Bidwell: Reluctant Indian Fighter, 1852-1856

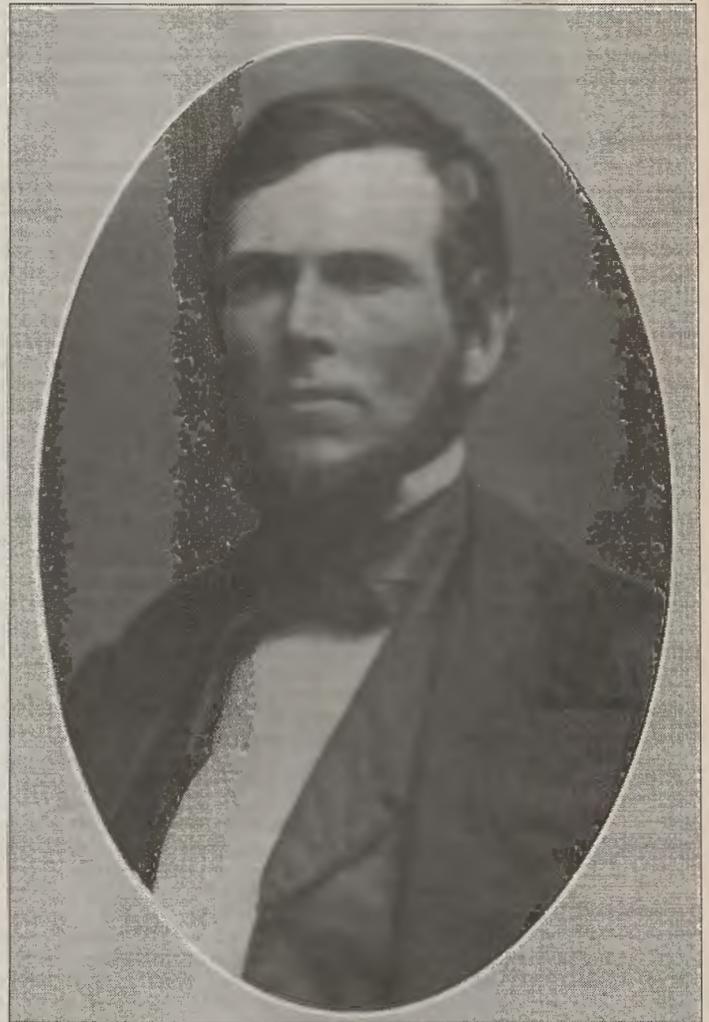
By Michele Shover

Interest in John Bidwell's relationship to Indian and settler conflicts in northern Butte County now focuses on problems after 1860. It is worthwhile to examine events between 1850 and 1856. Not only were those the formative years of Bidwell's Rancho Chico but they were also the years in which men of several Maidu tribelets from the mountains east of Chico employed theft, murder, and arson against Bidwell and his ranch workers. Bidwell's distinctive response to their attacks would arouse disapproval in the settler community with consequences to follow in the 1860s. The mountain Maidus' strategy and tactics reveal their desperation under the pressure of immigrant settlement which rapidly consumed lands upon which they traditionally relied. Of particular interest in the account which follows is the position of the valley Maidus, primarily the Mechoopdas, who composed Bidwell's workforce. While most would adapt to the new discipline in good faith, some would find their loyalties torn. A brief survey of the Chico rancher's experiences with California's native people in the 1840s, identifies influences which would shape his strategies in the crises to come.

While evidence on the early 1850s in northern Butte County is not plentiful, a variety of substantive and evocative sources exist which support the analysis which follows. Of the surviving accounts, John Bidwell's "Dictation" provides the most valuable view of his earliest relations with Indians on and beyond his ranch. This, together with press reports, a Mechoopda oral history, period correspondence, other memoirs, and archival ephemera reveal the complex nature of Bidwell's early relationship with both mountain and valley Maidu tribelets.

Nevertheless, readers should remember that the

California State Library



John Bidwell

subject of this study takes place in a remote place during the earliest period of American immigrant settlement. In order to reconstruct conditions and patterns it has been necessary to rely on the only information available. Consequently, as the narrative or endnotes

will acknowledge, the analysis interweaves materials whose reliability varies. It follows that, in such segments, the analysis must be tentative. In addition, the following account focuses on John Bidwell in relation to Indian conflicts. Readers should keep in mind that, during the same period several other clashes, which are also on record, took place between the mountain Maidus and other area settlers. Finally, for purposes of simplicity, the word "settler" here should be read to include miners and other outsiders of various ethnic descriptions who flocked to and from northern Butte County in the early 1850s.

EARLY EXPERIENCES WITH INDIANS

When John Bidwell launched Rancho Chico in 1849, he was already an old Indian hand. He not only knew what he wanted from Indian workers, but he believed he had special insights about how to get it. As one of California's senior American immigrants, he had engaged with the native population at every stage of the American influx after his 1841 arrival in Mexican territory. On his first unremarkable encounter with native people, unsure of their intentions, he kept his distance. They did the same. With important exceptions, such caution and equanimity would characterize his approach thereafter as well. As he acclimated himself to California agriculture in John Sutter's employ, Bidwell particularly noted the native peoples' value and potential as farm workers. Not only did their adaptability impress him, but he also noted their good will at a time when, because they were still a clear majority, they could have harmed the scattering of settlers. This patience, which particularly described the valley Indians, sharpened his disdain toward settlers who abused them. One instance which shaped his attitude occurred in 1843 at Sutter's Fort where word arrived about Indians who had murdered white men near Red Bluff. Because Bidwell believed those settlers' murder of Indians had provoked the native peoples' vengeance in the first place, he declined to join the party Sutter dispatched to retaliate. It would become characteristic for Bidwell to assign the benefit of the doubt to Indians in clashes with settlers. This inclination, which would at times contradict even his own experience, eventually convinced some other immi-

grants to consider him unsympathetic and, in the 1860s, even dangerous to their interests.¹

John Bidwell first built his expertise about California Indians from his work on John Sutter's "Hock Farm" which relied on Indian labor. In addition, he became familiar with native peoples in his travels throughout the Mexican territory. On one such trip with Peter Lassen, Joe Bruheim and an Indian from Sutter's farm they passed through wide areas of northern California. Along the way, the four men shared and overcame a variety of hardships which included a search for stolen horses. Pursuit of these took them to Big Chico Creek and the Sacramento Valley land which Bidwell would later acquire for his own. While Bidwell and the Indian apparently did not establish a personal bond, the rancher's recollection of him was that of a companion or partner.²

In addition, Bidwell expressed neither offense nor ill effects from his few days' stint in a jail cell with three Indian men at the Mission of San José as the result of an 1841 passport dispute. Then, in 1846, in his brief duty as a magistrate at Mission San Luis Rey, his decision in favor of an Indian worker, the victim of a rancher's abuse, made settlers so angry that the Indians subsequently protected Bidwell from them. These were the earliest experiences which convinced Bidwell that he could win the confidence of California Indians. Such experiences were the source of his proud claim, "I seem to have sort of an intuitive insight into the Indian character."³ The importance of this self-concept cannot be overstated because it provides a psychological clue to Bidwell's approaches to Indian relations. It also helps to explain his sometimes selective memory about them. The San Luis Rey magistracy also seems to have initiated his conviction that a viable criminal justice system would be the key to peace between settlers and Indians.

John Bidwell's early decisions suggest that his major reference points for Rancho Chico's future were Californio ranches and missions rather than the farms he had known in the American East and Midwest. In the first place, the scale of the Mexican land grants transformed his vision of what a farm could be. In Sutter's employ, he had gathered ideas about how a vast property should and should not operate. The chief lesson he took from both the Mexicans and Sutter was

the Indians' importance as farm labor. Sutter's farm, like the Mexican ranches and missions, followed the long experience with Indian workers at New Mexico ranchos. In these places, while some Indian workers made up a resident labor force, other native peoples added harvests to their seasonal rounds in exchange for meager wages. Of particular importance to John Bidwell's lively moral sensibility was John Sutter's double rationale: (1) that his indenture taught Indians work habits they would need in the changing world and (2) that his patronage would protect them from rival tribes and dangerous settlers. But Sutter's operation was in no way as benign as his motives expressed.⁴

For a superior model, Bidwell looked to San Luis Rey Mission where he observed roughly 8,000 Indians who worked the large orchards and huge vineyards. Yet the mission Indians were so apparently contented under Padre Antonio Peyti's supervision that, when he decided to return to Spain, they made unusual efforts to frustrate his departure. This was all the more the case by contrast to what Bidwell had found at Sutter's farm. There, Indians found conditions so harsh that they readily fled, rebelled or hired on with goldminers. In the same vein, according to Bidwell, the "more resolute and daring" Indians' response to Mexican ranchers' abuses had long been "to escape into the wilds of their native haunts."⁵ Those who were less bold responded with deceit. Bidwell would envision that he could earn the loyalty which the mission Indians showed Padre Antonio Peyti. If Indians were treated fairly, he concluded, they would neither flee nor cheat. The lessons of San Luis Rey had revealed to Bidwell not only that he had a special gift with Indians but also how to do the right thing and get rich at the same time.⁶

On his new northern Butte County ranch decent treatment would permit the Indians to maintain their natural simplicity and goodness. By surrendering themselves to his guardianship, they would live securely on their historic lands which he would own, control and utilize for wealth. The power of this vision was such that he would cling to it through the early 1850s when the mountain Maidus regularly challenged both him and the valley Indians.

Peyti's example influenced Bidwell in another respect as well. The priest had taken into his personal service a small Indian boy whom he reared and edu-

cated at the mission. At the time it had become common for settlers to remove Indian children from their families. Bidwell, who admired the Indian boy's Spanish as the most perfect he heard in California, would take "a tiny fellow" he called Rafael from a Feather River Maidu tribelet to his own ranch.⁷ While Rafael became Bidwell's personal servant, the young man's particular virtue for the rancher was his mastery of the surrounding Maidu dialects which he interpreted for his master. Rafael would assist Bidwell over the whole course of his problems both with Indians and with settlers antagonistic to Indians.⁸

When Bidwell purchased his first Butte County property on Little Butte Creek in 1847, he became acquainted with John Potter, whose "primitive" ranch bordered Chico Creek just to the north.⁹ The land on which Potter and his family lived happened to be the old territory of the Mechoopdas, the Maidu tribelet whose members maintained their separate community or rancheria and did occasional work for Potter around his place. In 1848 Bidwell became acquainted with their work as a crew which he, Potter and others took to mine the Feather River. There the native men's grueling labor recovered considerable gold which permitted Bidwell's purchase of the Dickey and Farwell grants that lay directly north across Chico Creek from Potter. When Bidwell moved there in 1849, their camp was set in forested privacy upstream from his new headquarters next to the Oroville-Shasta Road.

While Bidwell's views on Indian labor reflected moral considerations, the great business opportunities at every hand were no less important. Even as a new arrival in California, his close observations of Indian labor suggest the early focus of his ambition. He had not travelled so far to become another man's hired hand. Because others arrived with the same idea, California employers found few laborers on the job market. As Bidwell commented, "When I began surveying, not having enough white men, I had to employ Indians."¹⁰ Like Bidwell, the immigrant squatters whom he and his lawyers regularly challenged at Rancho Chico wanted to be farmers; not farmhands nor the cowboys he needed for his huge spread. While farm labor may have been the most common occupation in the country during the 1850s, immigrants to California scorned its low wages. Bidwell realized that his best defense against squatters was to secure enough

workers or renters to utilize all of his property. Indian labor made extensive farming immediately feasible.¹¹

The influence of the Mexican ranchos on Bidwell was apparent not only in the complexion of his workforce but even in his new ranch's architecture. Although its 1850 beginning featured his small log residence, by 1852 he had built a grainery and a sizeable adobe hotel, the saloon of which became a popular gathering point where the Oroville-Shasta Road crossed Big Chico Creek. Beyond the principal building sprawled adobe outbuildings which housed the ranch's single male workers. Contrary to the modern impression that Bidwell's early association with alcohol was his role as a grape grower, he was also Chico's first saloon keeper. While he paid little heed to its day-to-day operations, Bidwell's saloon was a lucrative business which benefited from the heavily traveled road just outside its door. Nothing suggests he made any liquor available to Indians.¹²

In their relationship with Potter, the Mechoopdas had already launched their quiet transition from freedom to vassalage. When Potter died suddenly in 1850, his grown children decided to accept Bidwell's purchase offer and they moved away. Having limited experience with settlers, the easy relationship with Potter and their work in the mining expedition evidently inclined the native elders to be well-disposed toward John Bidwell. According to the Mechoopdas' oral tradition, their chief Sa-wil-le approached Bidwell with whom they negotiated the arrangement by which they would remain on their traditional grounds in exchange for labor on the ranch. What their experience could not have told them was that Bidwell would expect them to invest long, regular hours and grinding labor in order to establish crops and cattle ahead of squatters. The labor the native men and women would have to exert on the sprawling ranch would extend well

Courtesy Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park



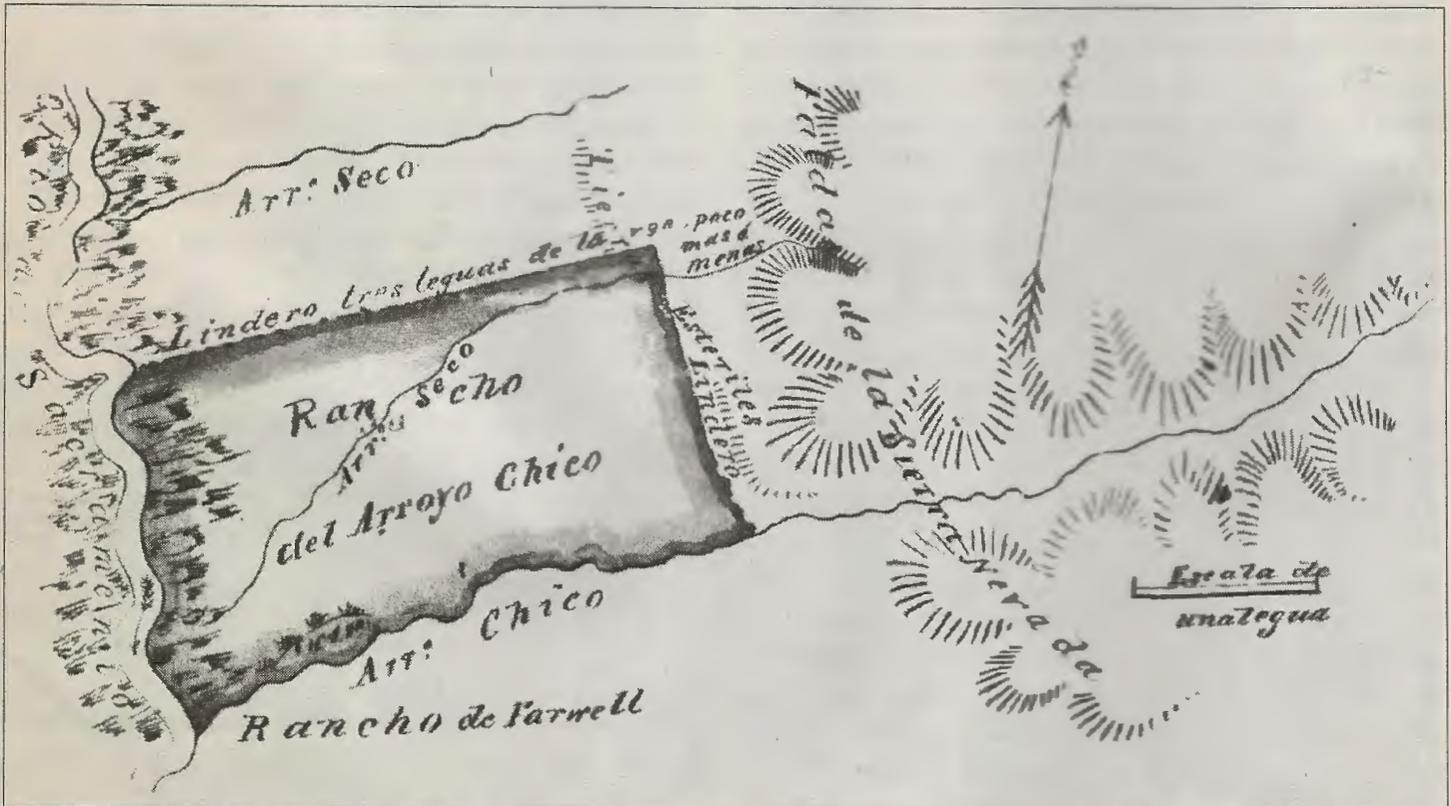
View of John Bidwell's adobe hotel at Rancho Chico, located where the Oroville-Shasta Road crossed Big Chico Creek. The building at the upper left was Bidwell's grainery.

beyond what John Potter had expected from them. Although Bidwell would **leave** much of rancheria life intact, in his new role as "el patron" in 1850 he moved the young native men, his new farmhands, from their family quarters to the bunkhouses traditional to American farms. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that all the Mechoopdas **did not** feel they had advanced themselves. Ensuing events would demonstrate that to be the case.¹³

In fact, the Mechoopda elders had little choice but to link up with Bidwell. For one thing, settlers increasingly surrounded them. For another, they could not resettle east in the mountains because settlers continued to seize that area as well. In addition, the same mountains were the bailiwick of their historical enemies, the Yahis to their north and the mountain Maidu tribelets, all of whom were more warlike and better acclimated to the hardships of the higher regions. Their choice to make the best they could of their valley option supports historian Albert Hurtado's analysis which ascribes similar conduct and rationales to other California Indians in a comparable position.¹⁴

The Mechoopdas' deal with John Bidwell also entailed painful considerations because it threatened their traditional relationships with the other Maidu tribelets. Periodically, valley and mountain Maidus would agree to put aside their rivalries for trade and "big times." Marriages across the Maidu tribelets were common, of course. At other times the same Maidu tribelets warred with one another, both on battlefields and by flash raids at campsites. The Mechoopdas' link with Bidwell disrupted such traditions and aroused resentment because it declared their surrender of lands and resources to an outsider. The shift of lands to Bidwell also cut off the rival Maidus' measured access to a rich area of the Sacramento Valley, the resources of which they had long valued. As an additional consequence, the valley tribelet's alliance with Bidwell undermined the traditional "balance of power" among the Maidu tribelets.

In the past, the Mechoopdas, although not a warlike people, had managed to survive raids by the mountain Maidus and, occasionally, perhaps, by Yahis, the mountain Maidus' fierce neighbors in steep can-



The earliest map which shows Rancho Chico features the creeks which provided a kind of avenue from the foothills onto the ranch headquarters. Source: Special Collections, Meriam Library, California State University, Chico.

yons to their north. In the reports of incidents at Rancho Chico during the 1850s, no available correspondence, press report or other source mentions any attacks by Yahis on Mechoopdas during those years. Similarly, Bidwell's earliest problems at Rancho Chico involved the Maidu tribelets based in mountain locations and, in significant instances, their valley Maidu allies. In political terms, then, the Mechoopdas had done more than to take on an employer. They had made an alliance with John Bidwell, a powerful man in the eyes of both Indians and settlers. This focused and deepened old tribal strains.¹⁵

Those were the latent ideas and conditions which percolated as John Bidwell proceeded to establish his ranch and as the Mechoopdas adapted to his requirements. The rancheria Indians applied themselves in good faith to the regimen Bidwell had observed their counterparts carry out at the missions and at Sutter's farm. On January 19, 1852 a Bidwell supervisor, Alex Barber, reported about their efforts from the ranch's mountain camp: "The boys perform well in fact Joe is a perfect paragon of a rider in fact I think he will surpass Ona in a short time Lafonso is a little timid but is improving fast."¹⁶ While Bidwell and his supervisors demanded much, the Indians imposed just as much stern discipline on themselves. Decades later Bidwell would relate to an audience how the Indians assigned their elderly to camp at the corners of huge wheatfields where their job was to keep cattle from trampling and eating the grain. The old people remained there "during day and night, storm and sunshine, and if they failed to do so would be severely whipped."¹⁷

While Bidwell did not identify this practice with his ranch, neither did he disassociate his ranch from it. For example, in 1855 his 13,000 head of cattle grazed in direct proximity to his 1900 acres of unfenced wheat. The rancheria men and women both had productive work to do. Therefore, the old and unskilled Indians were the most likely candidates to guard wheatfields around-the-clock. The problem was at the least one he recognized. In sum, while the Indians of Rancho Chico were fortunate to have a refuge on their ancient territory, Rancho Chico was no resort.¹⁸

While Bidwell immersed himself in his farm's development during the early 1850s, Indians were also key to his other businesses. For example, they per-

formed hard, even cruel labor on his and others' lucrative gold claims. In order to extract the ore from the Feather River's frigid waters, native men had to work hunched over in odd positions for lengths of time. Following Sutter's practice, he provided them boiled wheat which they ate from a big, common bowl. The best workers' pay was two brightly colored handkerchiefs per day; others earned one handkerchief. When Bidwell learned that his workers had begun to hide gold because they had figured out it had an exchange value, he later recalled how he persuaded them to exchange the gold for sugar.

Like other settlers, he paid Indians in cigars, scissors, clothing and beads. Today, of course, beads seem a particularly cheap and unworthy form of compensation; one the settlers should not have employed. However, by the early 1850s Indians had long used beads as currency and settlers were not quick to disabuse them. Indeed, some Indians refused more valuable alternatives. For example, in 1852 when a Feather River miner, Ananias Pond, wanted to buy a salmon from an Indian but had no beads to satisfy the native man's demand, the Indian refused his offers in turn of gold, silver, a hunting knife and a shirt. The Indian held out for beads. Pond left hungry.¹⁹

For a time Bidwell contracted out Indian labor to other miners. His role in this respect has not won the recognition due its prominence at the time. Speaking of his partners and himself, he referred to "the sway which we hold over the Indians in these regions" as so great that it had begun to antagonize other miners who wanted a share of the Indian labor business and felt he had locked them out of it.²⁰ His characterization of his role in that reference was general. During 1848, he repeated it in a specific instance. When he



NICHOLAS L. BECKER

GENERAL BUILDING CONTRACTOR
CUSTOM HOMES
REMODELING

(530) 877-8397

LIC.#311758

and his partners had sent out an Indian crew to work two mine sites, the contract asserted their "sole control" over the workers.²¹ They claimed half the profits of the job and split the cost of the Indians' board with the mine owners. In addition, the clients agreed to Bidwell's stipulation that they treat the workforce fairly. Bidwell and his Indian workers did not always agree on what was fair, of course. In one instance, after five Indian men had, in his words, "run away" from his mining operation, Bidwell pursued them and urged their return; but without success.²² In exchange for his offer of "some presents," men from another Feather River tribelet agreed to replace them.²³ Bidwell branded as "outrageous" rumors along the Feather River which accused him of having killed two Indian workers. While such brutality is thoroughly inconsistent with Bidwell's values and later treatment of laborers, it bears repeating only to underline that the Indians in his camps worked under stringent condi-

tions.

A third business was John Bidwell's mercantile trade in both the valley and the mountains. Correspondence reflects his sensitivity to consumer preferences—whether for medium pickaxes, sugar or spirits. Despite his close attention to liquor sales, as mentioned previously with regard to the ranch, nothing in his correspondence with mountain vendors suggests attempts to sell alcohol to any Indians. But his interest in developing sales to the Indian market was sensible because they remained the majority of mountain residents. Their potential as customers was important to Bidwell's vision of their integration into the settler mainstream. His thinking assumed that native peoples needed or could learn to want what settlers needed or wanted. Indeed, many Indians did rapidly adopt settler clothing and foods which involved store purchases.

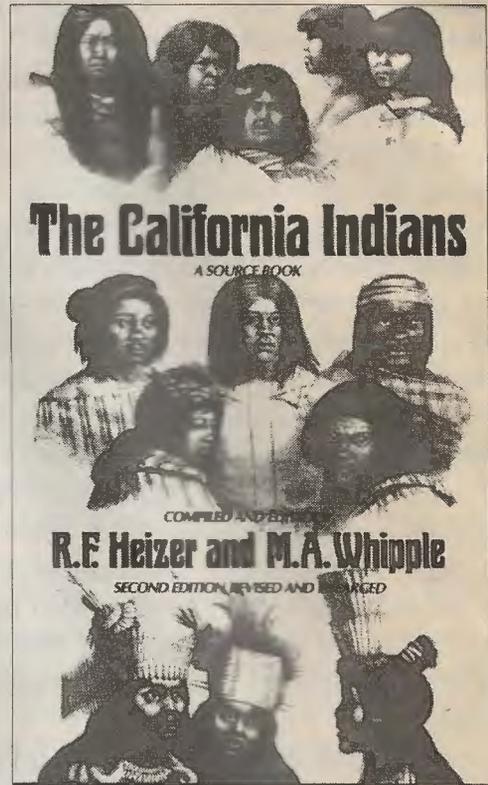
During the late 1840s Bidwell's mercantile business in the goldmining camps relied on itinerant ven-



Chico Store of John Bidwell in 1852 is the first photograph of the Mechoopda Indians who had agreed to become his workforce. Source: Special Collections, Meriam Library, California State University, Chico and Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park.

dors and on sales to established stores. He opened a Chico store in May 1851 and another at a mountain site later that year after he had secured an Indian trading license as an incentive for his help on treaty negotiations. Bidwell assigned an eager young Bostonian, Nelson Blake, to build a dual clientele—miner and Indian—at his new mining district store. When the miners realized Blake had orders to serve Indians in the store, they objected because, they told Blake, the native people carried head lice. Blake advised Bidwell not to worry about this because few Indians came by the store anyway. However, Blake added an “old Chief’s” prediction that, sooner or later, the native peoples would want blankets as well as shirts. He left Bidwell to decide whether they would want them “enough to pay a decent price for them.”²⁴ To Bidwell’s inquiry about whether Blake had on hand enough beads to sell the Indians, his clerk replied “I have a few.”²⁵ At least one vendor whom Bidwell supplied and who still worked the mining camps in the late 1850s, became upset because Indians, with the encouragement of government agents, had stopped buying beads. Bidwell ignored letters from the man who pressed him to take back the beads for credit. He would maintain beads in stock as late as 1860 when his Chico store’s inventory in the Indian expenses category showed six and a half pounds of them. As a merchandiser, then, Bidwell was alive to the Indians’ potential to adapt to the consumer culture which he worked to establish in northeastern Butte County.²⁶

Each role presented Bidwell with challenges to the part of his character he prized most, his “self possession.”²⁷ Evidently sensitive to public perceptions of him as hot-tempered, his memoir in the 1890s reflects a preoccupation with portraying himself as having been cool in crises. History is the beneficiary of this preoccupation because, in order to establish this image, Bidwell repeatedly employed examples of his early relations with Indians. In the “Dictation” he contrasted his calm in Indian crises to the overreactions of others. He also used “self possession” to indicate his courage. In one such example, he described his encounter with hostile Indians who might have taken his life. Another source of Bidwell’s restraint seems to have been an active sense of guilt, a feeling of regret which would also appear in the memoirs of other area men who had confronted Indians in the 1850s and 1860s.



619 Pages/Softcover

This new, expanded edition of *The California Indians* is a more comprehensive and thus more useful book than its predecessor, which first appeared in 1951. The editors have combined the selections, eighteen of which are new, into a general survey of California Indian native cultures. The editors discuss the present-day Indians of California and provide an extensive bibliography listing hundreds of published works arranged by culture areas and subjects. This should prove useful to those interested in a particular tribal culture or topic, such as Indian basketry or place-names or prehistoric rock art.

\$23.50 + \$3 Shipping

California Residents add 7.25% Sales Tax

Paradise Coin & Gift

6848 U Skyway, Paradise, CA 95969

Call Toll Free 1-800-900-3363

As he later explained, "I had for them a regard, a sympathy—knowing that their lands had always been taken from them without compensation."²⁸

Beyond Bidwell's temperament, time constraints also shaped his early approach to Indian issues. Competing demands limited his attention for any one problem. His mail brought regular imperatives from business partners like Samuel Hensley who prodded him to take one or another immediate action before the settlers or competing investors could close their options. His correspondents rarely referred to Indian issues except by incidental comments they appended to lengthy discourses on commercial issues. Because the correspondents typically characterized the outcomes of these as in doubt, they summoned Bidwell's immediate action in order to establish some advantage or another for the future. The resultant business travel in Bidwell's packed schedule, which regularly took him to Sacramento, San Jose and Washington, D.C., left him little time to obsess about Indian raids on his ranch.

Not only the macromanagement of his investment strategy but also ordinary ranch responsibilities constrained Bidwell's responses. Indian issues competed for priority with a myriad of his obligations. Between 1850 and 1853 Bidwell handled travel, title disputes, visitors, squatter claims, local political clashes, national political contacts, service in the State Legislature, job applicants, charitable requests, ranch employee problems, neighbor relations, crop and animal business. Each of these pressed for his opinions, his decisions, or his time. As he juggled it all, he relied on pokey communication and ponderous travel. Persistent distractions, therefore, provide another clue to Bidwell's lack of animus even toward those Indians who wanted him dead and who did their best to undermine the revolution in their world for which, according to Bidwell, they blamed him.²⁹

In sum, John Bidwell brought more than financial assets to his early relationship with northern Butte County Indians. His tactics may have been debatable at times and his motives were certainly mixed, but his strategy, for that time, showed restraint. The strengths he brought to bear between 1850 and 1856 included his focus on the future, his multiple responsibilities, the example of Padre Peyti, and the lessons of his work at the Sutter ranch. In addition, as the next section will

illustrate, he showed neither eagerness nor aptitude for violent conflict.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind before proceeding that John Bidwell was not the only settler who grappled with the campaign which mountain Maidus launched to resist the seizure of their lands in north-eastern Butte County. Goldminer diaries confirm that, during the early 1850s, those Indians had mounted a strategy by which they intended to drive out the invaders. To that end, they kept the Feather River miners under constant surveillance, stole and often slaughtered their livestock, and—no less important—kept the miners in fear for their lives. While the miners employed comparable offensive tactics, the native men's bold strategy, which did drive away the more timorous miners, is the subject here. To the Indians' despair, of course, more outsiders streamed in to take the places of those they had driven away. Bidwell's situation was distinctive, however, as he was one of the few individual settlers who became the object of an Indian campaign, one costly in both lives and property.³⁰

"Now with the Indians I Never Had Any Trouble"

By the 1890s old Californians' histories had begun to attract the attention of historians like Hubert Howe Bancroft and others who rushed to record accounts of the earliest settlement periods. While John Bidwell was one of the early actors in that pageant, evidently no writer had approached him to memorialize his role, while those who had mentioned him had cast him as a bit player. Perhaps to remedy the lapse themselves, Bidwell and his wife, Annie, produced several valuable accounts and set to work on a memoir. Their routine was to sit alongside the creek after lunch as she took notes and he responded to her questions. She would prepare the memoir narrative and he would pencil in corrections or expansions on a typescript. As they worked through one of these afternoons, Bidwell fielded her question about his early Indian relations with a predictable response, as if on impulse: "Now with the Indians I never had any trouble."³¹ That remark sprung from his old dream; not from his early experiences.

Bidwell seems to have caught himself as the words formed because, no sooner had he uttered the denial,

Courtesy Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park



Annie Kennedy Bidwell helped John Bidwell prepare his "Dictation" in the 1890s.

than his memories began to break through to one of the most dramatic but least recorded periods of his life. A variety of anecdotal snippets of his experiences with native peoples during the first two decades of his California years emerged which has a somewhat protective, although not a defensive, tenor. If that is an accurate characterization, the reason may be that his listener to stories of violence and betrayal was his wife, Annie Kennedy Bidwell, a woman so hypersensitive that the energy of Methodist Church services overstimulated her. In addition, John Bidwell was respectful about the years of service she had dedicated to the Indians of the ranch.³²

While Bidwell's "Dictation" focuses on himself, in the process it sets out a unique account of the mountain Maidus' campaign to thwart American settlement in the early 1850s. While the resistance was general and keenly felt by the miners who invaded their homelands, the focus of the resistance directed at John Bidwell stemmed from tribelets which resided along upper Chico and Butte creeks as well as from a neigh-

boring tribelet based on the West Branch of the Feather River.³³

Two early reports about the situation flowed to Washington, D.C. in 1850 from a Captain Day and from Adam Johnston, the first federal Indian agent to visit the Sacramento Valley. Each man, writing from Rancho Chico, echoed Bidwell's position which was to cast most blame on the settlers for their conflicts with the mountain Maidus. The army officer compared the Indians' acceptance of the equivalent to biblical justice: "an eye for an eye ... a tooth for a tooth."³⁴ According to Johnston, "the known custom of the Indians is revenge ... a kind of religious sentiment with them."³⁵ One implication is clear, settlers and Indians, whose interests stood directly opposed, each considered retaliation morally correct. It was a prescription for disaster.

By contrast, Johnston characterized the valley Indians as peaceful and cooperative, "the least war like or savage of any Indians on the face of the globe. They possess no weapons but their bows and arrows—no war clubs, scalping knives or savage tomahawks. They are a mild and ignorant people as yet and, though not

Warehouse & Showroom (530) 872-9070
Office (530) 877-5639

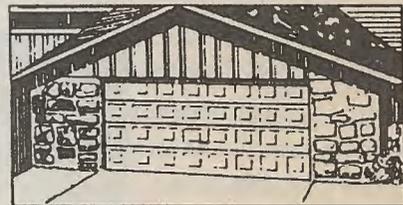
A.J. OVERHEAD DOOR, INC.

STANLEY[®]

STANLEY STEEL GARAGE DOORS

GENIE

GENIE DOOR OPENERS



Office
384 Circlewood Drive
Paradise, CA 95969

Warehouse & Showroom
13676 Skyway
Magalia, CA 95954

warlike, they will steal and commit murders on individuals, but in my **opinion** it takes little time to remedy these evils."³⁶ **Because Johnston's** sources had less direct experience with the mountain Maidus or the Yahis just north of them, **his report** on them was less confident. However, he **noted** the independence and self sufficiency of their **small** bands which moved throughout the same **wild** regions to which miners swarmed. Already, **Johnston reported**, the **miners' destruction** of fish and **game**, essential to their **diet**, posed a major provocation. **Because settler immigration** promised further pressures on mountain **Indians' slim** resources, **Johnston concluded** that the **situation could go** "any whichway."³⁷ As it happened, **hostilities broke out** as his report reached Washington.

In late October 1850 mountain Indians killed a Mechoopda man, apparently a member of Bidwell's mining crew, in Maidu Kimsheew territory northeast of Chico.³⁸ Bidwell and Michael Nye rode out in a twenty-man pursuit party. The numbers and the rancher's later practices suggest it included Indians from the crew who were skilled trackers. When the pursuers spotted the Indians they considered responsible, a fierce fight ensued on a narrow trail between Butte Creek and the West Branch of the Feather River. Bidwell's party killed "seven or eight," of whom "two or three" were native women. While later attacks on Indians in northern Butte County cost even more native peoples' lives, the death toll in this clash was substantial. The Bidwell party's single casualty—probably an Indian death—by an arrow wound, foretold the disproportion typical of Indian-to-settler losses. Later, when Bidwell recalled his participation in "Indian killing parties," he omitted his role in the dramatic engagement of 1850.³⁹

While the conflict in that remote incident was apparently the product of happenstance, it seems to be the moment at which the mountain Indians first encountered Bidwell's relationship with the valley Indians as an alliance in opposition to them. By their cultural norms, vengeance was in order. While Bidwell did not recognize the alliance as provocative, he would explain their retaliations in terms of a rational calculation. He later explained, "The Indians conceived a great hostility toward me. They seemed to think that if I were out of the way, they would have a free pass to do almost what they wanted. I seemed to be in their way."⁴⁰

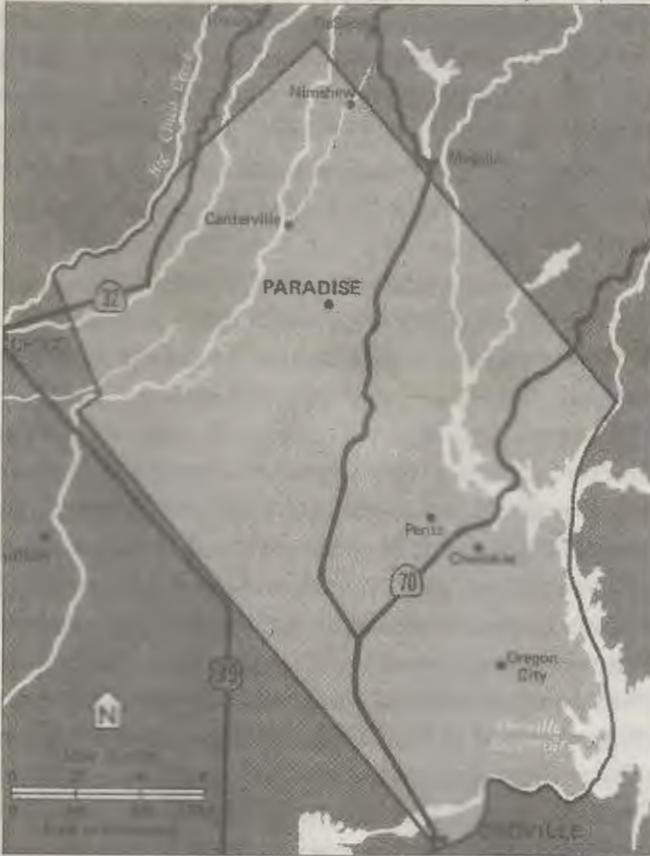
If one can look to motive and circumstance for explanation, the mountain Maidus' anti-Bidwell campaign began in the raid of late 1850.

In mid-summer 1851 Bidwell assisted Oliver Wozencraft, the Indian commissioner who crafted a federal treaty with valley and mountain Maidus of northern Butte County. In exchange for the native people's transfer of Indian lands to the United States, the treaty was to provide them with a twenty square mile reservation which would provide cattle, tools and training. While the valley Indians' participation in the treaty negotiations at Rancho Chico posed no problem, the mountain Maidus' arrival there appeared to be a considerable accomplishment on Bidwell's part, one which added lustre to his reputation as a man who could handle Indians.⁴¹

While this subject will appear more fully elsewhere, in brief, the negotiations proved grueling because the mountain Indians of the Nimsheew, Tigres and Concow tribelets refused to exchange their land rights for a reservation. By contrast, the Mechoopdas and other valley tribelets accepted it. However, the Bidwell ranch Indians' agreement came only after they extracted from the rancher terms so untenable to him that he would secretly attempt to defeat the treaty's Senate ratification. All of this suggests that, while the native peoples were victims, when the opportunity arose, they were also more canny and strong-minded than history has recorded. As Indian Commissioner Redick McKee, with whom Wozencraft divided northern California treaty negotiations, characterized the Indians' response: they "have been greatly underrated, both as to... shrewdness and enterprise."⁴² Even so, when both valley and mountain Indians left the treaty meetings, they expected the treaty terms to take effect.

In November 1851, as the treaty sparked heated debate in the state legislature, a local writer mentioned "a number of murders" in Bidwell's "neighborhood."⁴³ The absence of press coverage and, again, the imprecise language about the identities of multiple homicides suggests that both the victims and culprits were Indians. Were the mountain Indians exacting vengeance for the rancheria Indians' coalition with Bidwell against them in both the 1850 incident and in the treaty? That mountain Indians were the predators gains credibility because the path of risk, about which

The Indians of Chico Rancheria by Dorothy Hill



In 1851 Bidwell helped to negotiate a treaty with local area Indians for a twenty-square-mile reservation near Chico. Later he secretly lobbied the Senate to defeat the treaty.

the writer expressed concern for his traveling brother's safety, continued in the direction of Honcut Creek, a common route from the valley to the mountains. Any link of these crimes to the treaty or to vengeance for the 1850 battle is speculative but motive and circumstances suggest the possibility. In the first place, while the mountain Indians attended the treaty meeting, ostensibly out of attraction to the beef Bidwell offered, it is more likely that they appeared there in order to reconnoiter the Mechoopdas' situation and to size up Bidwell at first hand. The lure of food does not appear to have been the drawing card which Bidwell and Wozencraft assumed for the reason that the same tribes—Nimshews, Concows and Tigres who all faced hunger with winter's near approach—simply ignored Bidwell's next beef bribe meant to lure them to the southern Butte County negotiation where Wozencraft wanted to try again for their treaty approval. The

mountain Indians had left Rancho Chico because they could not accept the treaty land transfer and in disagreement with the valley Indians who had accepted its terms with special inducements only applicable to themselves. A valley chief explained to rancher James Keefer, with regard to a later conflict between valley and mountain Indians, that the mountain bands resented the valley Indians for their decision to live among the valley settlers.⁴⁴

Mountain Maidu raids on Bidwell's place continued while he and the ranch Indians shaped their labor relationship. The hostilities must have been particularly grating to Bidwell because they undermined the Peyti model of Indian loyalty which he meant to establish. The attacks also threatened to undermine his prized reputation as an expert handler of Indians. Because only partial accounts of a few Rancho Chico conflicts appeared in the newspaper several hours' ride away, he suffered no damage on that score even to the end of the twentieth century. In his memoir, while Bidwell continued to discount the seriousness of the raids, he did make his only surviving mention of several incidents. Because within six years these produced

**PRESERVING
OUR COUNTY'S
PAST AND
SECURING
IT'S FUTURE
SINCE 1929!**



7126A Skyway, Paradise 95969
(530) 877-6262
500 Wall Street Chico 95928
(530) 894-2612
1835 Robinson St., Oroville 95965
(530) 533-2414
560 Kentucky St., Gridley 95948
(530) 846-4005

• Four locations in Butte County

deaths, arsons and betrayals, they appear significant in the present account. **Certainly they proved sufficiently dangerous and persistent** to require of Bidwell both a strategy and tactics to meet them.

His mountain **firefight in 1850**, and the deaths in the 1851 raid on the valley seem to have impressed on Bidwell the necessity to establish a government presence which could establish law and order. While he nowhere stated this as his strategy, his determination at this time to integrate the Indians into the new State's economic and legal system represents one element of a pattern in his responses. It is likely, as well, that, because Bidwell grasped that the Indians in effect had already lost the war to hold California, his responses to their hostile actions should be deliberate and not provoke deeper problems.

In roughly the early summer of 1852, word filtered to northeastern California settlers and Indians about the U.S. Senate's rejection of the treaty. As an immediate consequence, few Indians in northeastern California could find refuge from the continuing settler influx. The general effect the treaty failure produced was later stated by Attorney General Robert W. Kenny:

*The results of the rejection of the treaties left the Indians of California exposed, helpless, and largely unprotected to ruthless evictions, unprovoked aggression, bitter persecutions, conscienceless exploitation, dispossessed and despoiled of their property without recourse, to become homeless wanderers in the lands of their fathers. Between 1848 and 1878 they died "in despair" in a "bitter struggle for existence."*⁴⁵

While the U.S. Senate's rejection of the treaties released Bidwell from an unwelcome obligation, their collapse must also have affected his relations with area Indians. He was, of course, in a position to appease the ranch workers in their disappointment at the loss of inducements they had won from him. On the other hand, its failure not only vindicated the mountain Indians in their suspicions about Bidwell's promises but made him appear weak.

John Bidwell became the mountain Maidus' target roughly when word of the treaty's collapse reached the area. That summer the rancher's men—Indian and white—had driven his cattle to grazing grounds in the

cooler mountains east of the ranch. Because the Sacramento Valley's searing summer heat annually desiccated the valley grasses, ranchers would move their cattle to higher regions. Bidwell's vaquero there, James Callen, wrote him from "Mounting House" [Mountain House] on June 15:

*The Indians are doing mischief here more and more every day and are threatening the members of this settlement and something must and will be done ... you will please send me word what you can do when and how.*⁴⁶

Only a month previous, Indian Commissioner Wozencraft had reported an increase of Indians "stealing through necessity" in response to the cutoff of government supplies which attended the treaty failures. Meanwhile, gold miners along the Feather River found themselves closely watched, occasionally killed, and they responded in kind.⁴⁷ Significantly, Callen's appeal to Bidwell made no mention of law enforcement; no effective system was in place. Characteristic settler reactions to Indian crises sprung from the inclinations of those affected to respond as they chose. Bidwell hardly had time to respond to Callen's call for help before a band of native men raided his main ranch where they absconded with "a lot of" valuable cattle which the rancher's men had not yet moved to the mountain meadows.⁴⁸ This was nothing new. In 1850, when Bidwell had received reports about a cattle theft, his response was to ignore it as an ordinary hazard of ranching. By contrast, in 1852 Bidwell had just acquired the subsequently stolen "American cattle," which were worth up to six times more than the common Spanish cattle. Their theft was a provocation he could not ignore.⁴⁹

While not always the work of Indians, of course, cattle and horse theft represented a major Indian tactic in retaliation against the settlers' land seizures. These native men, who quickly grasped the newcomers' dependence on livestock, commonly drove cattle and even rode horses away from the ranches, often leaving their carcasses nearby. While area Indians did not particularly like the flavor of beef, some found horses tasty. According to California Indian scholar, Sherburne F. Cook, between 1830 and 1845 valley Indians further south stole between 25,000 and 75,000

head of cattle from Mexican ranches. This had continued during the American settlement as well, when ranchers sometimes lost "everything, even to their saddle horses."⁵⁰

In 1852 Bidwell decided to establish that predators who harmed him would pay. However, his response to the costly cattle thefts suggests he wanted to avoid a repeat of the bloody raids in 1850 and 1851. Because public law enforcement rarely applied to complaints against Indians, he had few options. This being the case, Bidwell decided on his own to contrive a pseudo-law enforcement approach; in other words, he planned a "citizens' arrest" of the culprits. His situation crystallized one of John Bidwell's keenest desires, which was for Butte County to establish a criminal justice and legal system that would reach the outlying areas and apply fairly to settlers and Indians alike. While both peoples valued justice and both employed retribution in its name, neither settlers nor native peoples had in place an impersonal system equipped to serve them all. While this problem regularly troubled settlers, it proved disastrous for native peoples whom the state denied legal standing. As early as 1851, when a State Senator, Bidwell's priority was to regularize the Indians' place in the law enforcement system. To that end, he proposed that the state legislature make Indians' testimony legally admissible and that Indian agents protect their participation in the regular process. This was an important issue to Bidwell because, without a system clearly fair to all sides, the Indians and settlers who surrounded him would seek justice in vengeance. When the legislature did not enact the policies he recommended, no resolution was available. Therefore, throughout the 1850s the fleeting appearances of military units enroute elsewhere constituted the most visible government authority in rural areas like northern Butte and southern Tehama counties.⁵¹

Soon after California entered the union, elections had filled law enforcement positions. However, because the system amounted to little more than a chart on paper, officers were rarely around when problems arose. In addition, although officers readily arrested available Indians in town scrapes, officials exhibited responsibility neither for the property disputes nor even for the mortal assaults which most exercised both settlers and native peoples. The Indian system of jus-

tice, of course, was of no interest to settlers until they felt its effect as the objects of vengeance. In this situation, civil relations between settlers and native peoples, and often among settlers themselves, continued to be situational. In other words, for years to come, rural justice was largely personal justice. Speaking of the settlers, Chico old-timer D.F. Crowder, a resident from the early 1850s, would recall that, for a time, that approach worked because "everyone was a peace officer in those days when it came to breaking the law of men."⁵²

Crowder initially emphasized that the situation was acceptable through the late 1850s in Butte County because most miscreants were cheaters at cards or wife beaters whom respectable citizens simply expelled. However, he acknowledged a major exception: crimes against property. His example was the lynching of two robbers north of James Keefer's Cohasset ridge ranch. Any attempt to understand the dynamic of Indian and settler conflicts must recognize that execution for property crimes was already a socially, if not legally, acceptable practice in the settlers' west. Because the Sacramento Valley's economy depended on the cattle business, settlers' ranches, most of them marginal, would have failed without livestock for market. This pressure underlay the ranchers' practice of lynching. Taking this light, those who executed Indians for cattle thefts meant to "teach" them a familiar "lesson" long understood in the settler community. In sum, both settlers and Indians who were accused lived at mortal risk to idiosyncratic notions of justice. Of the two peoples, Indians lived at the greatest risk, of course, because, without full standing as persons or as citizens, they were legally helpless.⁵³ Taking these considerations into account and determined to ignore conventional practice, which was retaliation against any likely Indian, in 1852 Bidwell decided to identify the actual thieves. Were he to exact penalties from innocent Indians, he might deepen the hostility. For Bidwell this posed not only a security problem, but his ranch's future depended on the valley Indian laborers' trust. In addition, his new mountain store was to attract trade from the very mountain Maidus who were his antagonists. He tried to turn the situation into one that would vindicate Padré Peyti's example. In this light, he construed the theft as an opportunity to show his good faith; to win over the outlying native people.

To that end, therefore, Bidwell secured the kidnap of two Indians who “came down” to the ranch.⁵⁴ While the Maidu tribelets were often rivals who engaged in deadly hostilities, members also intermarried and traded under ad hoc treaties. With permission, they traditionally moved in and out of one another’s territory. Ranch Indians, who could distinguish among their valley visitors, likely picked out the two men as prospects for questioning. Bidwell subjected each to a separate interrogation from which he learned that one of them had been a party to the theft of his valuable cattle on June 15. Bidwell learned from his hostages the identities of others as well.

With a defendant in hand and suspects in mind, Bidwell was ready to raise a pursuit party fully a month after his cattle disappeared. It proved difficult. As he recalled, “For some time I could not persuade anyone to assist me.” From the position of the men he approached, an arrest attempt was a radical, even foolhardy, notion; one that would expose them to danger from angry Indians who understood force but had no notion, let alone regard for, “legal” procedure. On about July 15 Bidwell led out the informer, thirty rancheria Indians, and “several” settler allies—Charlie Taylor, a “Mr. S_ule” [sic] as well as Bidwell employees Nelson Blake and Amos Frye—on the “arrest attempt,” which Blake would call “that party of the night.”⁵⁵ Bidwell’s search party, despite its ungainly number, tracked the targeted Indians to the head of Chico Creek. After a night of rest, Bidwell planned to lead his party on a surprise visit to the Indian camp early the following morning. There, evidently, he expected them to receive him and hand over the other thieves. He seems to have envisioned the coming encounter as a kind of civics lesson which would persuade the mountain Indians that he knew better than to blame and punish the whole group; that only individuals who harmed him would suffer a penalty.

Before dawn’s arrival, however, a member of Bidwell’s party fired off a gunshot which, he recalled, “betrayed” his party’s hiding place.⁵⁶ While a newspaper would characterize the gunshot as unintentional and in Bidwell’s memoir he repeated that inference, a close reading of Bidwell’s use of “betrayal” reveals a more potent explanation which common sense supports. In the first place, no settler member of that party would have “betrayed” its position to hostile Indians

who outnumbered them by more than twice. In the second place, had their Indian hostages managed to fire the shot, that would not have constituted a betrayal. Those men were not loyal to Bidwell, but were his prisoners. It would at some point become clear to Bidwell, but only in retrospect, that an Indian member of his own party—a ranch Indian, in other words—had fired in order to warn his unwary Maidu brethren. When Bidwell later told his wife that he had never known an Indian who “needed watching,” he overlooked his own account of the particularly interesting exception in 1852, and one he would see the same individual repeat. To Bidwell, who treasured the vision of a special relation with Indians, his position was a difficult one.

These considerations apart, in Chico Creek Canyon that warning shot sparked the roughly one hundred mountain Indians and their allies into an instantaneous pre-dawn assault on Bidwell’s groggy camp. While his men struggled to rally in defense, eleven ranch Indians died.⁵⁷ The Rancho Chico band quickly turned and headed for the plains, as people then called the valley. The lone settler mortality, Amos Frye, was among the first to die. One of Bidwell’s most valued and senior employees, Frye’s death presented a costly loss. Mr. “S_ule,” among the “several” settlers in Bidwell’s party, took an arrow in his hand. The mountain Maudus, who maintained their offensive, pursued Bidwell and his men who had to carry Frye’s body through the steep canyon even as they fended off rearguard Indian attacks.

Bidwell’s “arrest attempt” had turned into his second “Indian killing sortie.” Indeed, the only apparent Indians killed this time were his own allies. Oddly, Bidwell’s recounting of this event concluded by his comment that, while his men were “greatly excited and wanted to kill the Indians, I would not allow it.”⁵⁸ If Bidwell remembered correctly, he had ordered his men to absorb the full attack with no response in kind. How they reacted to such an order under those conditions can only be imagined.

When word of the sortie’s outcome reached area whites, many of whom had doubted his plan in the first place, they blamed Bidwell for the death of Amos Frye, a respected man in an area where settlers rarely died in armed conflicts with Indians, even though the native men had begun to capture and use guns. Set-

tlers had good reason to question Bidwell's plan because, despite their ignorance about Indian culture, they respected the native men as wily and dangerous adversaries. In that light, the Bidwell party's rout raised concerns that Indians would regard settlers as easy prey. Perhaps this reaction was behind Bidwell's temptation to go out after the Indians again. Indeed, from the ranch he immediately inquired of D.M. Bean the whereabouts of "Ned's tribe"—or the Nimshews. Bean told him their camp was about six miles from the Butte Saw Mill.⁵⁹

Despite the pressure, Bidwell decided against a second pursuit. Remarks by D.M. Bean at that saw mill described his situation. After the Chico Canyon rout, Bean, having received a letter from Bidwell, happened to mention the rancher's name within earshot of fifteen Nimshew Indians as they lounged around his doorway. At the sound of Bidwell's name, he reported, the native men immediately became agitated and pressed for information about the Chico man. Masters of concealment in the field but innocent of political deceit, they boasted on two occasions to Bean "they would kill you [Bidwell] the first opportunity." Bean's cautionary letter to Bidwell identified the Nimshews or Ned's Tribe as closely intertwined with two other Maidu mountain tribelets, the Concows and the Tigres, whose settlements were near their upper Butte Creek territory.⁶⁰ Among the tribelets whose leaders Bidwell had coaxed to his ranch in late July of the previous year in order to persuade them to endorse the federal treaty, it was the Tigres, Nimshew and Concow chiefs who had refused. According to a descendant of the Concow chief, Kulmeh, he did not agree to the 1851 treaty because he did not trust the white man. While individual Concows likely participated in one or another action, their role appears to have been less prominent in conflicts with Bidwell than that of the Nimshews and the Tigres, both of whom lived in greater proximity to the Chico ranch. Of the Nimshews whom Bean heard threaten Bidwell, he referred to one as "the captain" or chief and he called the other leader, "Ned." For the rest of the decade "Ned" would become a familiar figure to northern Butte County settlers who, like Bean, linked him to offenses against them.⁶¹ Valley settlers continued wary of Ned a few years later when their main attention had shifted to include other Indian adversaries. Their suspicions

about Ned's collaboration with miners who had begun to link up with Nimshew and Concow women would lead to considerable controversy in 1859.⁶²

While Bidwell would always recognize the seriousness of white provocations to the Indians, he was so convinced of his own benign intentions that he continuously discounted the Indians' threat to himself, to his interests, and to others. On the other hand, Bean, was the neighbor and close observer of Maidus in the vicinity of upper Butte Creek. He observed the native men's anger at first hand and he respected the danger it represented. On the day he wrote Bidwell, he considered it a lucky break that a miner working alone down a nearby trail did not approach his place because the native men who had scattered along the route might have killed him. Likewise, he advised John Bidwell not to enter the mountains without the protection which he suggested James Callan and others could arrange with some notice. Bean returned to his point and referenced Bidwell's recent retreat from Chico Creek Canyon: in order for Bidwell to resurrect his authority with the mountain Indians, he would need to stand and prevail against them in a serious fight:

**Mountain
Mike's
PIZZA**

CALL AHEAD AND WE
WILL HAVE YOUR ORDER
READY FOR YOU!

ALL YOU CAN EAT PIZZA & SALAD BAR

(WEDNESDAY NIGHTS - 6pm-9pm)

ADULTS \$4.35 plus tax
KIDS UNDER 12 \$2.05 plus tax

DAILY LUNCH SPECIALS
MONDAY - FRIDAY

HOURS:
SUNDAY-THURSDAY
11AM-11PM
FRIDAY & SATURDAY
11AM-12PM

PHONE 872-1991
6626 CLARK ROAD
K-MART SHOPPING CENTER

*If you go out into a fight with these Indians you must go through with it and conquer all of them before you quit other wise I won't have any thing to do with it, the Concous [Konkows] Nimshoos (Nimshews) and Tigers are all the same if you fight one you fight them all—I think I could get 25 or 30 men.*⁶³

Bean's warning, taken in combination with the 1852 "betrayal," lays the groundwork for settlers who would later challenge John Bidwell's assertion that mountain and valley Indians were traditional adversaries who maintained an absolute division. Area settlers would observe the ease with which friendly and unfriendly Indians could pass in and out of settler communities. An important issue in northern Butte and southern Tehama counties in the latter half of the decade, it would embroil Rancho Chico in 1863.⁶⁴

Indian conditions declined anew in 1853 when settler diseases such as cholera devastated the native peoples. In that year alone about eight hundred Maidus died from tuberculosis and influenza. The Indians near D.M. Bean's place lost forty to pneumonia alone. Nevertheless, following a two-pronged strategy, some mountain Indians determined to carry on and to avenge their losses of life and land: their actions suggest they decided to punish the ranch Indians and to destroy Bidwell's foothold. His alliance with the Mechoopdas and others who had joined their rancheria at his place—hereafter called the rancheria Indians—had shifted the balance of power from the mountain to the valley Maidus. This had become nowhere more clear than in 1852 when they had observed ranch Indians "well-armed" against them in the Bidwell sorties.⁶⁵ According to the native peoples' notion of justice, the Bidwell Indians must have owed a price for that treachery alone. In addition, the mountain Maidus were obliged to avenge their dead in the 1850 incident. These mountain Indians' resentment also found fodder in the valley Indians' security on Bidwell's farm; whereas, they could call on no protection from any corner. A variety of conflicts around northern Butte County would unfold during 1853 which cost the Indians dearly and surely deepened their rage as well as their sense of desperation. This situation inevitably drove most of the ranch Indians deeper in their dependence on Bidwell.⁶⁶

No resolution had occurred by May 12, 1853 when Thomas Wright, a rancher south of Chico who was that township's Justice of the Peace, received an urgent appeal from John Bidwell. A murder had been committed at Rancho Chico; he wanted Wright there immediately. Because no murder of settlers on Bidwell's ranch has ever been recorded, it appears that Indians had murdered a ranch Indian. Mechoopda oral history described an incident, which seems to have been this one, in which mountain Indians killed one of Bidwell's most trusted ranch workers. Mountain Indians had long travelled along the creek beds to reach valley sites. Once on Bidwell's ranch, where Big Chico Creek's banks are steep in summer when the water is low, they had only to slip over the creek bank and act, even at the center of the rancheria itself, then instantly they could escape into the foothills.⁶⁷

Bidwell's call for a public official to take charge in this case again points to his desire to put an end to personal justice. However, characteristic of the times, Wright evidenced no responsibility to handle an Indian-on-Indian crime. Rather than refuse officially, however, Wright hedged, then he came up with an excuse:

*I think doubtful if any apprehension of the murder could be affected by my coming up. However I could be up in a few hours ... I have just learned I have no horse up and will not be up as above stated.*⁶⁸

Presumably, Wright, a prominent horseman, dispatched his note by a mounted messenger. Had the crime been settler-on-settler, Wright's casual disregard would have provoked a scandal. Nothing records whether Bidwell rode out to seek vengeance. A decision not to do so may have underlined his appearance of weakness. Ensuing events feed that interpretation.

A mountain Maidu party again made a night raid on Rancho Chico where they caught sight of Dupah, "another one of the General's favorite Indians." They shot the 29-year-old worker in the back and fled. He remained alive with their arrow tip visible where it protruded through his chest.⁶⁹ Because no local doctor could help Dupah, according to the ranch Indians, Bidwell brought a doctor from Sacramento. Because the physician managed to remove the arrow, the farm laborer rallied. According to ranch Indians' descen-

dants, Dupah's recovery angered the aggressors who returned next time for Bidwell himself.

Before an examination of that incident, it is important to consider Thomas Wright's dismissal of the rancher's call for assistance in the Indian attack on the native peoples of Rancho Chico. Typical for the new state's rural areas, understaffed sheriffs treated conflicts between Indians and whites as the responsibility of others—namely, state or federal authorities. Neither of those levels maintained a local presence, however, and both avoided local disputes. In those areas of Butte County where Indian-settler conflicts were most likely to erupt, the sheriff and his deputies made no regular rural patrols. In addition, they made no apparent effort to investigate violent interracial crimes which would require remote pursuits. In the considerable correspondence and newspaper coverage during the period in question, no inference arose that anyone believed sheriffs were derelict or that inadequate department funding was the source of the problem. Without credible law enforcement, therefore, Indians and settlers continued to make up justice as they went along. What is particularly interesting about this situation on the settler side of the equation was that only John Bidwell seems to have treated this as an important dimension of the problem.⁷⁰

Because the Bidwell ranch presented no apparent retaliation for the murder and attempted murder of at least two native workers, it represented an inviting target. That summer the mountain Indians continued their attacks. This time they turned to arson. Although the ranch buildings bordered a creek, during tinder dry valley summers, its limited water flow was of little help to fight a fire. With no fire department and no effective equipment, arson, of course, posed a grave threat. In character with his steady determination to discount the seriousness of any Indian discontent with his operation, the memories Bidwell dictated to his wife minimized the effects of these arsons. Having mentioned briskly in passing that roughly three or four attempts took place, he summarily dismissed them: "we always put (them) out."⁷¹ Here, however, he added the telling detail that, in the Indians' final attempt, which took place while he was in San Francisco, his people only managed to douse the flames after the native men had managed to gut his adobe hotel and the grainery. As he put it, "They burned me out. My

life was in danger (until 1863)."⁷²

Meanwhile, at the ranch's mountain grazing grounds James Callan heard from Bidwell about the fires. The Rancho Chico supervisor had just added a white guard to the livestock's nightwatch because he suspected that the mountain Indians had found an ally among the ranch Indians with whom he worked. Just the year previous D.M. Bean, it will be recalled, had recommended Bidwell rely on Callan in case of trouble with Indians. With his own suspicions in mind, Callan prodded Bidwell to rethink his conviction that "again" the predators were confined to mountain Indians: "Allow me to advise you to looke to those who live neare you if not in your immediate household for your enemies."⁷³ In other words, Callan had reason to believe that the fires were not all the acts of mountain Indians who entered the ranch but were committed or aided by ranch Indians. This may have seemed more likely because, in this crime, Bidwell's own turf—his buildings—and not the native rancheria was the aggressors' object. While the rancheria Indian descendants blamed the mountain tribesmen for the arsons, the question of which Indians were responsible remained a cogent one as later events unfolded.

As the 1852 Chico Creek expedition had revealed, at least one ranch Indian had found he could not place John Bidwell's orders before the lives of other Maidu brethren—even rival brethren. The temptation of individual ranch Indians to align with an Indian rival from outside the ranch appears understandable today. Certainly observers in the later 1850s and the 1860s considered it common knowledge that individual valley Indians occasionally linked up with mountain tribesmen who raided settlers. However, to Bidwell, who placed a high premium on Indian loyalty, such an alliance was unthinkable. Even in his memoir he quickly glided over these attacks on the ranch and with a tone of regret rather than anger. Callan's 1853 letter to Bidwell had prodded him on this very point. As Nelson Blake would write Bidwell's widow over fifty years later, Bidwell was too confiding and unsuspecting, believing everyone to be as honest as he himself was, and as unselfish.⁷⁴

Unpalatable as he found the loyalty issue, Bidwell would confront it again in January 1856. This time not his workers but he himself became the object of an Indian homicide attempt. Its circumstances recalled

James Callan's warning three years previous that Bidwell should not look solely to the mountain Indians but also to his own rancheria's inhabitants for his enemies. Apparently in contradiction to this view, in 1856 Bidwell still held to his view that the troublesome Indians were men who had, in his words, "hated me for a number of years."⁷⁵ In this remark Bidwell connects the 1856 attackers to the Indians with whom he had fought after the failure of the 1851 treaty; the men who had both attacked the ranch Indians and burned Bidwell's first buildings.

Enmities between the Mechoopdas and their mountain Indian tribesmen had deepened in Bidwell's 1852 "arrest attempt" and the murderous raids on the ranch in 1853 had not mended relations. Nevertheless, by 1856 at least some ranch Indians and their mountain counterparts had renewed their contact. Approximately in late December of 1855 these Bidwell Ranch Indians agreed to a secret truce ostensibly, they explained to other ranch Indians, for a meeting to trade with the mountain Indians. Over the long course of enmities among the Maidu tribelets, they had long negotiated such temporary peaces for trade. The ranch Indians traditionally relied on mountain Maidu craftsmen for the bows and, often, the arrows they required.⁷⁶ Questions about the ranch Indians' role in the attempt against John Bidwell arise from the decisions which were clearly mutual ones between rancheria and mountain Indians. In the first place, the two tribelets' leaders agreed to the trade treaty. In the second place, the ranch Indians then permitted the mountain natives to enter the ranch to carry out the trade at the rancheria only steps from John Bidwell's own quarters. It is certain that, in light of Bidwell's costly problems with the mountain Indians, the ranch

Indians knew he would not want them on the property. Conceivably, of course, Bidwell's opinion need not have entered the equation had the meeting been for trade alone because such an exchange could have taken place without discovery at any number of sites on or beyond the sprawling ranch. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider that the meeting was only ostensibly one for trade. The real motive for the meeting was to secure mountain Indian access to the ranch in order to reach John Bidwell himself. Two sources support this interpretation. According to the ranch Indians' descendants, the mountain Indians' intent there was to kill John Bidwell. They did not infer—and, perhaps, did not know about—ranch Indians' cooperation in that objective. In his mention of this 1856 incident in the 1890s, Bidwell revealed that one man had betrayed him and that it was the same man who had fired the warning shot which had betrayed the 1852 party.⁷⁷

On the basis of interweaving John Bidwell's account, the ranch Indians' oral history, and the contemporary press account, therefore, the following appears to represent what happened on the 26th of January in 1856. With trade and a dance their ruse and murder their intent, the mountain Indians had rancheria Indian help as they surreptitiously entered the Bidwell rancheria along Big Chico Creek. There, the later separate accounts of Bidwell and the ranch Indians agreed that the rancheria Indians had conducted the mountain men in secret to the "sweat house" where they may have prepared to trade as they waited for their opportunity. The course of events from that point is unclear. They may have readied themselves and arranged for someone to inform Bidwell of their presence in order to bring him to them. He would approach in the open, in that case, while they were concealed. More likely, someone—likely a ranch Indian loyal to Bidwell—discovered their presence and alerted him to it. However he learned about the gathering, Bidwell's response reveals that he believed the Indians who had gathered meant to do him harm. He quickly collected a party of armed men from those nearest at hand and they headed for the sweathouse. There, the Indian visitors on watch observed the armed party approach and commenced an exchange of fire. Indians were very accurate with bows and arrows. According to the ranch Indian descendants and the press account, their principal target was Bidwell. How-



Pines Jewelry Repair

We Buy Gold
& Estate Jewelry

Custom Designs
Consignments

KEITH & BONNIE INGRAM
530-873-1060

14439D Skyway
Magalia, CA 95954

ever, they saw James Schaeffer, the ranch miller, first and they confused him with Bidwell. They focused their shots on Schaeffer, therefore, and hit him in the lungs, killing him. While lighting, angle, or poor eyesight could explain their confusion, it is equally possible that the shooters were unsure how to tell Schaeffer from Bidwell by sight. Both Indians and settlers had a longstanding problem sorting out who was whom in the other race; in line with conventional wisdom, members of each group tended to look alike to one another.⁷⁸

According to Bidwell, "there was a good deal of shooting." In the exchange of arrows and bullets, the five native men who died included the **only** ranch Indian whom Bidwell was willing to consider the traitor. No source identifies him. However, **both** Bidwell's decision to ignore the man's 1853 betrayal and the man's ability in 1856 to bring Bidwell's **enemy** to his "doorstep" suggest the man was influential **among** the rancheria Indians. While in 1853 Bidwell **had not** expelled the man, perhaps in hope his **exemplary** generosity would win over both him and any **rancheria** al-

lies, in 1856 the rancher had evidently reached the limit of his patience.⁷⁹

The two betrayal incidents must have been particularly painful to Bidwell in light of his early vision, the San Luis **Rey** model. There, when he had found himself at risk, the mission Indians had "stood by me at a very critical **time** and gave me much information about the **insurrection** and the danger to me In fact, I am convinced **that** they would have imperilled their lives had it been **necessary** to defend me while at the mission."⁸⁰ At **another time** he explained Indians' reputation for deceit as a **product** of self-defense against abuses they had **suffered** from the Mexican overseers. Yet, in 1853, in 1856, and perhaps at other times as well, he found that native **men** whom he had trained, protected and maintained **on** his ranch had collaborated with the very **mountain** Indians who not only were manifestly hostile **to him** but had killed their own. The incident defied his **dream** of reciprocal good will as a realistic objective.

Special Collections, Meriam Library, CSU, Chico and Dorothy Hill



This reconstructed Mechoopda Assembly House at Rancho Chico was similar to the "sweat house" where mountain Maidu may have been secreted by rancheria Indians in an attempt to kill Bidwell.

Bidwell's stubborn commitment to his vision of loyal Indians may be one reason he seems to have hedged here and there in the memoir he dictated to his wife. For example, with reference to 1856 he emphasized the trade treaty story the ranch Indians had provided him. Perhaps he felt reluctant to tarnish Annie Bidwell's view of the native people to whom she had dedicated many years. In part, of course, as an expert and well known friend to Indians, the whole incident was an embarrassment to Bidwell. In addition, Bidwell's restraint was also characteristic of his lifelong inclination to look on the positive side. The troublemaker had received his comeuppance; any others who were tempted to follow him had learned a costly lesson, and no more needed be done. But, in the privacy of their community life, the ranch Indians evidently considered what had happened was too remarkable to forget and elders passed along important parts of the story in an oral interview. Like them, when Bidwell was in his final years, he must also have wanted his real life to go on the record. Like the Indians' children, he too set out key parts in an incomplete and self-protective account of what had happened.

The 1856 incident left the Indians of the Bidwell ranch in a sensitive position. When they had allowed the mountain Indians to enter the rancheria, they had acted in defiance of Bidwell's knowledge or approval. When they could not negotiate an acceptable aftermath with the mountain Indians who were angry at the outcome, the ranch Indians again acted independently of Bidwell. In August of that year, the ranch Indians engaged in a formal battle with the mountain Indians. Settlers happened on the scene, which was well away from Bidwell's ranch at a Rock Creek mound. They observed a battle which, while clearly a setpiece, was nevertheless a fierce fight in which poisoned arrows filled the air. The bystanders watched as, by mutual agreement, young children from each side moved back and forth across the battle field to recover projectiles that had missed their marks. By the battle's end the mountain Indians had killed two and wounded about a dozen Indian residents of Bidwell's rancheria. A Maidu tribelet chief who worked at Keefer's Flour Mill, along the roadside to the Cohasset Ridge out of which Rock Creek flows to the valley floor, later talked about the battle with James Keefer. As recounted earlier, he

explained that, while the hostility between the mountain and Valley Indians was longstanding, the impact of the settlers had caused the outland Indians to resent the Valley Indians' patronage by ranchers such as Keefer, Robert Durham and John Bidwell. His explanation reenforces the impression that, the old power balance among the Maidu tribelets having collapsed, the mountain men's raids represented an attempt to reassert their old dominance.⁸¹

As the latter 1850s unfolded, tensions between settlers and native peoples intensified in southern and eastern Tehama County along which Butte County's northern boundaries meander. The later accounts of Indian fighters such as Robert Anderson, Simeon Moak and D.F. Crowder, evidently unaware of Bidwell's problems, all identified the onset of serious settler and Indian conflicts with the period of their own arrivals. Similarly, the first attempt at a comprehensive history of Butte County asserted that after 1853 few incidents of interest occurred in settler-Indian hostilities until about 1857. At that time Indians launched an extensive series of raids on valley ranches which would occupy attention until 1865. These developments, in combination with John Bidwell's efforts to discredit claims that his ranch's Indians had participated, until now have masked the seriousness of the earlier discontent. From the start, while he demanded much from the Indians for his own gain, he grew regularly more sensitive than most of his contemporaries about what they had given up to make his dream possible.⁸²

As the foregoing proposes, John Bidwell, although a reluctant warrior, personally employed serious levels of force against the mountain Maidu Indians on at least three occasions in northern Butte County of the 1850s. His reluctance, which, of course, was relative, stemmed from his personal values, his business circumstances, and his desire to build relations with Indians on the example of Padre Peyti at the Mission at San Luis Rey in the Mexican period. An additional factor which influenced Bidwell was his desire to move settler and Indian differences to the regular law enforcement system; one fair to both settlers and Indians.

Bidwell's approach earned no laurels from the settlers, many of whom relied on aggressive defenses—and, occasionally, on offensives—against the native men who resisted settler expropriations of their his-

toric territories. By the late 1850s, other local men would assume the role settlers sought: those men would become Indian fighters. John Bidwell's relationship with them is another story, one now underway.

About the Author:

Michele Shover is Professor of Political Science at California State University, Chico. She has published numerous articles and monographs on nineteenth century northern Butte County. Several of these apply to the anti-Chinese movement in Chico. The article above is one of two completed and three in process on aspects of what she calls "the politics of Indian fighting."

End Notes

1. John Bidwell, "Draft Manuscript," *Special Collections, Meriam Library, California State University Library*, pp. 20 and 75; _____, "Dictation," *John Bidwell Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley*, pp. 19-20. A study of these problems in the 1860s, which is now underway, will analyze this generalization.
2. Bidwell, "Dictation," pp. 17-18; George Mansfield, *History of Butte County* (Historic Record Company: Los Angeles, 1918), p. 424; John Bidwell, "Address of John Bidwell of November 1, 1897," *California Historical Quarterly* III (March 1926), pp. 9-29. Bill Anderson, "The Settlement of Northern California, Part 3," in *Dogtown Territorial Quarterly*, #12, Winter 1992, p. 10.
3. Bidwell, "Dictation," p. 18, Annie Bidwell, *Rancho Chico Indians*, Dorothy Hill, ed. (Bidwell Mansion Assn.: Chico), p. 19. Mrs. Bidwell referred to this as "when he was in charge of the Mission of San Luis Rey," an overstatement of his role.
4. Albert Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven Yale University, 1988), pp. 103-104.
5. John Bidwell Interview by Annie Bidwell. *Annie Bidwell Collection, California State Library*.
6. John Bidwell, Draft Manuscript, pp. 206-208. *John Bidwell Interview by Annie Bidwell in Annie Bidwell Collection, California State Library, Box 62; Hurtado, 103-104; Fr. Zephyrin*

Engelhardt, *San Luis Rey Mission* (San Francisco: The James H. Barry Co., 1921). While some may think the Indians' plea for Peyti to remain must have been apocryphal and others have set out a different version of how they demonstrated their loyalty, Bidwell's account deserves credit because he was at the mission when the event was well within the memory of his sources. As this is the understanding which influenced him, it is the version included here. Bidwell remembered Peyti as Payto. According to Annie Bidwell's manuscript draft notes, although the Indians learned of Peyti's intentions to leave and surrounded his quarters in hopes to keep him among them, he escaped and left for Spain. While modern scholarship draws more critical conclusions of the Indians' views about mission life, John Bidwell's point of view, is the focus here.

Paradise Tree Service

LIC#CDFA561

FULLY INSURED TO \$1,000,000.00

Covered by Workman's Compensation

EQUIPMENT TO HANDLE ANY JOB

**Specializing in large pines,
mature oak preservation,
view topping, trimming,
hazardous & difficult removals,
fire protection
40 YEARS EXPERIENCE**

CASH FOR TIMBER

876-0817



Kalico Kitchen

- Daily Specials
- Food to go
- Hours 5 am - 9 pm
- Outside Seating
- Friendly, Fast Service
- Reasonable Prices
- Homemade Soups, Pies With Great Portions

7099 Skyway
Paradise
877-1255

2396 Esplanade
Chico
343-3968

VISA

Master Card

Gold Nugget Museum

502 Pearson Road
Paradise, CA 95969

(530) 872-8722

Open Wednesday-Sunday
Noon to 4:00PM



7. Annie Bidwell, *The Chico Rancheria Indians*, pp. 67-68. While in the 1860 census, "Rafael's" age appeared as 28, in an 1850 photograph he appeared about 10-12 years old.

8. According to Julian Dana, there were fifty Indian dialects in the Sacramento Valley. *The Sacramento: River of Gold*. (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1939) p. 19.

9. Mansfield, p. 38.

10. John Bidwell Speech. Annie Bidwell Collection, California State Library.

11. While Bidwell remembered late in life that his shrewdness with problematic people meant he had not had to engage in suits, his extensive correspondence with attorneys documents extensive reliance on lawyers' aid and mentions numerous legal actions they entered on his behalf. Letter. A. Vandorn to John Bidwell, 10 December 1856; Charles Lott to John Bidwell 14 October 1858; and others from George Adams Smith in John Bidwell Ranch Correspondence, Meriam Library, California State University, Chico.

12. His earliest storeroom inventories showed alcohol orders such as one for 13 gals whiskey, 11 gal. gin, 11 gal. brandy, and 1/2 barrel of dark whiskey. Successive inventories recorded regular replenishments. Letter to J.M. McKinstry, 19 July 1849; Account book and garden journal, 1849; John Bidwell Collection, California State Library. In 1849 he ordered his supplier to "Let the cargo consist in a considerable quantity of Liquors, in barrells and cases both." D.F. Crowder, a younger contemporary of Bidwell present in the 1850s, also speaks of Bidwell's ranch-based bar, *Enterprise*, 1918.

13. *Enterprise*. 10 February 1875. The above interpretation of the male laborers' quarters rests on Albert Hurtado's acceptance of census groupings which may have been clustered for convenience. However, Dorothy Hill's understanding was that the men lived with their families.

14. Hurtado, 122; Dorothy Hill, *The Indians of Chico Rancheria* (Sacramento: Ka Ca Ma Press, 1978), p. 48.

15. Bidwell, "Dictation," p. 21. Author's discussion with Frank Bayham, CSU Chico Professor of Anthropology, September 1997; Letter. John Bidwell to James McKinstry, 30 September 1848. John Bidwell Collection, California State Library.

16. *Sic*. Alexander Barber to John Bidwell Collection, California State Library.

17. John Bidwell. "Speech to the Society of California Pioneers," pp. 9-10; Mansfield, p. 168.

18. 1855 Tax Roll Report. John Bidwell Collection. California State Library.

19. Bud Bain, Wintun Indian, interview with Dorothy Hill, p. 32; D.F. Crowder. *Enterprise*, 2 January 1918; Ananias Rogers Pond, Diary, 25 October 1849. Courtesy of Peter Blodgett, Curator of Western Historical Manuscripts at the Huntington Library.

20. Letter. John Bidwell to his partner, James McKinstry. Their third partner was William Dickey.

21. Quoted in Hurtado, 103.

22. John Bidwell, Draft Manuscript, p. 56; Letter. John Bidwell to J.M. McKinstry, 30 Sept 1848; Letters. A.H. Stout to John Bidwell, 9 April and 19 March 1852. The latter was a request for 6-8 Indians to work Shasta mines. John Bidwell Collection, California State Library, Hill, pp. 32-33; D. F. Crowder in *Enterprise* 2 January 1918; Hurtado, p. 103.

23. Bidwell to McKinstry.

24. Letter. E. N. Blake to John Bidwell, 1 October 1851. John Bidwell Collection, California State Library.

25. *Ibid*.

26. License. Butte County Auditor to A.H. Barber. 1 November 1851; Rancho Chico Account Book, Office Blotter 7 June and 31 October 1860. John Bidwell Collection, California State Library.

27. Bidwell, "Dictation," p. 15ff.

28. John Bidwell, "Dictation," p. 19. A reading of this memoir suggests that our information about Bidwell's earliest relations with Indians stems from his sense as an old man that he was misunderstood or too little appreciated by his community. He also gave examples of his equanimity in the later handling of rebels and anti-Chinese.

29. Bidwell, "Dictation," p. 15ff.

30. William Tell Parker. "Notes by the Way," 1850-1852; Richard C. Harrison, Diary and Receipt Book, 1850-1853; Ananias Rogers Pond, Diary, 1849-1852. The author is grateful for the advice of Peter Blodgett, the Curator of Western Historical Manuscripts of the Huntington Library who identified these sources in its collection.

31. Bidwell, "Dictation," p. 17.

32. Letter. Annie Bidwell to John Bidwell in Chad L. Hoopes, *What Makes a Man* (Fresno Valley Publishers, 1973) p. 59: "I have attended the Methodist Church a few times but the rejoinders, and unrestrained rejoinders so excite me that I believe I should lose my reason were I regularly to attend that Church."

33. The "Dictation" will be available to the general public in Michael Gillis and Michael Magliari. *John Bidwell and California: The Life and Writings of a Pioneer, 1841-1900* (forthcoming).

34. U.S. Senate Misc. Doc'ts. No. 688. 33rd Cong. Spec. Sess. Reports and Executive Data. 91-3 91-8. CI Serial Set.

35. Adam Johnston to Office of Indian Affairs. 6 July 1850. National Archives. Letters Received, 1849-1852. M234-1 Printed in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1850, 31st Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Executive Document 1, pt. 1, vol. 1, 2 Dec 1850, pp. 91-93.

36. *Ibid*.

37. *Ibid*.

38. San Francisco *Alta* 27 October 1850. The *Alta* evidently copied this from the Marysville *Herald* edition which predates archival collections of the *Heralds* now available. Mansfield, p. 185, apparently had access to a fuller but flawed account. The present rendering reconciles the two with other information.

39. Mansfield, p. 185. While Mansfield reported the death as that of Michael Nye, and he may have been the man injured in the fight, he did not die there. Nye had been a member of the party with whom Bidwell had first travelled to California and at this time he was the individual whom Bidwell had blamed for the rumor that he had murdered Indian workers. Correspondence from Nye in Oregon to Bidwell in the early 1860s is in the John Bidwell Collection of the California State Library. In the "Dictation" on p. 21 Bidwell separated himself from the settlers' attitude that "a white man's life by comparison to which 100 Indians' lives was as nothing."

40. Bidwell, "Dictation," p. 18.

41. Michele Shover. "John Bidwell and the Indian Treaty of 1852," Forthcoming.

42. Quoted in Henry Kelsey, "The California Indian Treaty Myth," *Southern California Quarterly*, IV (Fall, 1973), p. 231.

43. Letter. Stephen Blake to John Bidwell. 19 November 1851. Special Collections. Meriam Library, California State University, Chico.

44. D.F. Crowder, *Enterprise*, 22 January 1918; Letters. July 1851. Oliver Wozencraft to John Bidwell and to Luke Lea, Office of Indian Affairs. August and September 1851. Department of the Interior. National Archives. Letters Received, 1849-1850, M234.

45. Robert W. Kenny, *History and Proposed Settlement Claims of California Indians* (Sacramento: State Printing Office, no date) p. 18.

46. Letter. James Callan to John Bidwell, 15 June 1852, John Bidwell Collection, California State Library.

47. Oliver Wozencraft to Luke Lea. 31 May 1852. Office of Indian Affairs. August and September 1851. Department of the Inte-

rior. National Archives. *Letters Received, 1849-1850*, M234.

48. San Francisco *Alta*, 7 July 1852.

49. Paul Gates, *California Ranches and Farms, 1846-1862* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1967), Chapter 1; Letter. Alfred E. Stout to John Bidwell. 22 October 1850. John Bidwell Collection, California State Library.

50. Sherburne Cook, "The Method and Extent of Dietary Adaptation Among California and Nevada Indians," *Ibero-Americana* XXV(1945), p. 26; Robert Anderson, *Fighting the Mill Creeks* (Chico: The Chico Record Press, 1909), p. 7.

51. Regarding Bidwell's efforts to establish Indians' legal standing, see Michael Magliari's essay in Gillis and Magliari, *John Bidwell and California: The Life and Writings of a Pioneer, 1841-1900* (forthcoming).

52. 2 January 1918, *Enterprise*.

53. Crowder, *Enterprise*, 2 and 10 January 1918.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Bidwell, "Dictation," pp. 20-21; Letter. E. Nelson Blake to John Bidwell. 16 October 1853. John Bidwell Collection, Special Collections, Meriam Library, California State University, Chico.

56. Bidwell, "Dictation," p. 20.

57. The eleven Indians who died appeared to be ranch Indians rather than mountain Indians because the newspaper account said of the dead that they were "well armed and died bravely." *Alta* 1 July 1852. Under those circumstances a news account of that time and place would not have described gun toting mountain Indians with regard and sympathy. Annie Bidwell, *Chico Rancheria Indians*, p. 53, "Dictation." p. 21.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

59. Letters. E.N. Blake to John Bidwell, 19 June 1853 and D.M. Bean to John Bidwell. 17 and 20 July 1852. John Bidwell Collection, California State Library; Bidwell, "Dictation," pp. 19-21, *Butte Record* 7 July 1852; San Francisco *Alta* July 1852. Amos Frye became the first person buried in what became the *Chico Cemetery* where a marker later provided him by Chicoan, T.F. Rhinehart, has since disappeared. Sim Moak, *The Last of the Mill Creeks and Early Life in Northern California* (No publisher named. Chico, 1923) p. 11.

60. In 1853 Bidwell wrote Nelson Blake that in late 1852 he had considered riding out "once more" after the mountain Indians. Letter. John Bidwell to E. Nelson Blake. May 13, 1853 John Bidwell Collection. State Library.

61. Bidwell and the Valley Indians would later mention the Piqua or Pica tribelet of the Maidus as "stubborn and warlike." John Bidwell interview by Annie Bidwell. Annie Bidwell Collection, California State Library. A Piqua attack on their Wyami Maidu tribelet orphaned "Indian Charlie" Morrison, who related they had made numerous violent raids on his peaceful valley tribelet. Anna M. Reed, "A Pioneer Mother Who Built Her Own Monument," *Diggins*, XIV (Winter, 1950), p. 5. However, no Piqua role appears in any other data. The Piquas did not attend the treaty meeting at Rancho Chico; Mansfield, p. 186; Henry Azbill, descendant of the Concow, Kulmeh, related that tribelet's reasoning on the treaty to Dorothy Hill, p. 23.

62. Red Bluff *Beacon* 9 June 1858; Robert Anderson, *Fighting the Mill Creeks* (Chico: Chico Record Press, 1909) Chapters 5 and 6.

63. *Sic.* Letter. James Callan to John Bidwell. 20 and 31 July 1852. See also the letter to Bidwell from James Callan on 14 June 1852. John Bidwell Collection, California State Library.

64. Future writers on that conflict should give more credit to the Anderson-Good party's claim in 1859 and after of Yahí collaboration with mountain Maidus and their ties to miners at that time when both tribes were desperately in need of allies and because both had intermittent cross-tribal relations, the claims of the

as yet unborn Ishi to the contrary.

65. San Francisco *Alta*, 7 July 1852.

66. John Bidwell, "Dictation," p. 18. For treatments of other conflicts in the early 1850s, see both Mansfield and Dorothy Hill; Sherburne Cook, "The Conflict Between California Indians and White Civilization," *Ibero-Americana*, Pt. 3, vol. 22-24, p. 23, 67. Annie Bidwell, p. 71. The Indians who related these events placed them in the early mid-1860s but that is a thoroughly documented period in which this event would have appeared. It has been placed here as having taken place in 1853 because it fits Bidwell's call for help from Wright and it fits no other account.

68. Letter. Thomas Wright to John Bidwell. 13 May 1853. John Bidwell Collection; California State Library; While the Wells and Chambers, *History of Butte County* (Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1973) lists the early officeholders, it shows no Justice of the Peace in Chico Township before 1854. However, Bidwell's correspondence with Wright and other legal records identify Wright in that position. With regard to Wright's relationship with Bidwell cf. Shover, "The Doctor, the Lawyer, the Political Chief in the 1850s of Butte County," *The University Journal* (California State University, Chico: Winter, 1982) pp. 1-38.

69. Annie Bidwell, *Rancho Chico Indians*, p. 72. There the name appears as Duka. In Hill's *The Indians of Chico Rancheria*, Duka appears as Dupah on an 1860 census list, p. 20.

70. *Record*, 31 December 1852 and 26 January 1854; Examples of arrests of town Indians appeared in the *Record*, 15 March, 29 June, and 19 July 1856.

71. Bidwell, "Dictation," p. 18-19.

72. *Ibid.* Letter. E.N. Blake to John Bidwell, 16 October 1853. John Bidwell Collection, California State Library; The author recalls, but could not find again an earlier 1850s letter from this collection which, as she recalled said, "I hear they burned your adobe." Because most assume the adobe he built in 1853 was the only one, this made an impression.

73. Letter. James Callan to John Bidwell, 5 July 1853. John Bidwell Collection. California State Library.

74. Bidwell, "Dictation," pp. 17-18; Letter. E. Nelson Blake to John Bidwell. 17 June and 17 July 1853 and 16 October 1853, John Bidwell Collection, California State Library; Letter from Nelson Blake to Annie Bidwell. 29 November 1906. Annie Bidwell Collection, California State Library.

75. Bidwell, "Dictation," p. 18.

76. "Dictation," p. 18.

77. John Bidwell to D.R. Seeper 29 July 1897. Annie Bidwell Collection, California State Library. *Record*, 12 January 1856.

78. Annie Bidwell, p. 70-71; *Record* 12 January 1856.

79. Bidwell, "Dictation," 21; *Record*, *Ibid.*, Annie Bidwell, p. 70.

80. Annie Bidwell's notes for Bidwell's "Dictation." Annie Bidwell Collection, California State Library; Cook, "The American Invasion," *Ibero-Americana*, XXV (1945), p. 21.

81. *Record* 23 August 1856; Crowder, *Enterprise*, 22 January 1918; On page 188, Mansfield described a similar battle that August below Oroville on the Feather River.

82. Wells and Chambers, *History of Butte County*, p. 217. With regard to disturbances, this states of the Bidwell and the Rancho Chico Indians that "nothing serious" involved them during the 1850s; Anderson on p. 9 cited the beginning of problems as 1857; Sim Moak, in *The Last of the Mill Creeks*, mentioned no conflict before that with the "Mill Creeks" which began in roughly 1857; James Keefer cited the start of Indian "degradations"—as opposed to earlier settler abuses—in 1859. Mansfield, p. 195; *Enterprise* 16 January 1918; D. F. Crowder placed the beginning of problems with Indians in 1856 near Deer Creek.