

5. INDIAN TRIBES OF NEW MEXICO.

BY GOVERNOR CHARLES BENT.

GOVERNOR CHARLES BENT, the author of the annexed memoir, who received his authority from General Kearny, fell before the perfidy of the assassins of Taos. New Mexico will long lament the loss of his experience and knowledge of Indian affairs. An extensive acquaintance with the tribes south of the Arkansas and Red Rivers, reaching to the Rio Grande and the regions west of it, had qualified him to make a just estimate of the character and population of the aboriginal tribes who rove over those vast and undefined plains, and mountain fastnesses.

In his estimation of the tribes, the boundaries of New Mexico as known to the Spanish government were exclusively referred to. The subsequent changes made by an Act of Congress, has brought within its extreme western and southern limits, as now established, the elements of a new aboriginal population. Of the region lying in the Valley of the Colorado and north of the Gila, we are too little informed to speak with any degree of precision. The early Spanish adventurers do not profess to have explored it beyond Cibola. Coronada failed in this object of his celebrated expedition. How far the apparently semi-civilized race, to whom the Spanish writers applied the term of "Yumanos," extended north and west into that area, we cannot decide. It may be expected that the Boundary Commissioner engaged in running the lines on that border, will obtain and communicate valuable information respecting the native population and character and resources of that frontier. The establishment of the territory of Utah, and the settlement of the boundary between Texas and New Mexico, affect likewise the estimates of Governor Bent. Respect has been had to these changes in the new estimates of population hereafter submitted.

It is proper to say that this memoir, although dated some months before I commenced my statistical inquiries, was placed in my hands by the Head of the Bureau, as the most authentic document in his possession; a character which, with these changes of boundary, it still preserves.

Santa Fé, New Mexico,
November 10th, 1846.

SIR :

Having been appointed, by Brigadier General Kearny, Governor of the Territory of New Mexico, and, by virtue of that appointment, *ex-officio* Superintendent
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Indian Affairs for said territory, it becomes my duty to lay before you the following information in regard to the different tribes of Indians inhabiting and frequenting this territory.

First I will mention the Apaches, or Jicorillas, a band of about 100 lodges, or 500 souls. The Jicorillas have no permanent residence, but roam through the northern settlements of New Mexico. They are an indolent and cowardly people, living principally by theft committed on the Mexicans, there being but little game in the country through which they range, and their fear of other Indians not permitting them to venture on the plains for buffalo. Their only attempt at manufacture is a species of potter's ware, capable of tolerable resistance to fire, and much used by them and the Mexicans for culinary purposes. This they barter with the Mexicans for the necessaries of life, but in such small quantities as scarcely to deserve the name of trade. The predatory habits of these Indians render them a great annoyance to the New Mexicans.

Second. The Apaches proper, who range through the southern portion of this territory, through the country of the Rio del Norte and its tributaries, and westward about the head-waters of the River Gila, are a warlike people, and number about 900 lodges, or from 5000 to 6000 souls; they know nothing of agriculture or manufactures of any description, but live almost entirely by plundering the Mexican settlements. For many years past they have been in the habit of committing constant depredations upon the lives and property of the inhabitants of this and the adjoining provinces, from which they have carried off an incredible amount of stock of all kinds. The only article of food that grows in their general range is the magney plant, and that spontaneously, and in very small quantities. Several bands of the Apaches have, for some years past, received a bounty of so much per head, per diem, from the Government of the State of Chihuahua, with the object of inducing the Indians to cease their depredations; but without having the desired effect.

Third. The Nabajos are an industrious, intelligent, and warlike tribe of Indians, who cultivate the soil, and raise sufficient grain and fruits of various kinds for their own consumption. They are the owners of large flocks and herds of cattle, sheep, horses, mules and asses. It is estimated that the tribe possesses 30,000 head of horned cattle, 500,000 head of sheep, and 10,000 head of horses, mules, and asses; it is not a rare instance for one individual to possess 5,000 to 10,000 sheep, and 400 to 500 head of other stock. Their horses and sheep are said to be greatly superior to those reared by the New Mexicans. A large portion of their stock has been acquired by marauding expeditions against the settlements of this territory. They manufacture excellent coarse blankets, and coarse woollen goods for wearing apparel. They have no permanent villages or places of residence, but roam over the country between the River San Juan on the north, and the waters of the Gila on the south. The country between these two rivers is about 150 miles wide, consisting of high

table mountains, difficult of access, and affording them, as yet, effectual protection against their enemies. Water is scarce, and difficult to be found by those not acquainted with the country: affording another natural safeguard against invasion.

Their numbers are variously estimated at from 1000 to 2000 families, or from 7000 to 14,000 souls.

The Nabajos, so far as I am informed, are the only Indians on the continent, having intercourse with white men, that are increasing in numbers. They have in their possession many prisoners, men, women, and children, taken from the settlements of this territory, whom they hold and treat as slaves.

Fourth. The Moques are neighbors of the Nabajos, and live in permanent villages, cultivate grain and fruits, and raise all the varieties of stock. They were formerly a very numerous people, the possessors of large flocks and herds; but have been reduced in numbers and possessions by their more warlike neighbors and enemies, the Nabajos. The Moques are an intelligent and industrious people; their manufactures are the same as those of the Nabajos. They number about 350 families, or about 2450 souls.

Fifth. The Yutas inhabit the country north of the Nabajos, and west of the northern settlements of this territory. They number 800 lodges and about 4000 to 5000 souls. Their range extends from the Nabajo country, in about latitude 35° to 40° north. Their range of country is very mountainous and broken, abounding in deer, elk, bear, and other wild game, which serve them for food and raiment. They are a hardy, warlike people, subsisting by the chase. Several bands of them have been carrying on a predatory war with the New Mexicans for the last two years, and have killed and taken prisoners many of the people, and driven off large amounts of stock. Since General Kearny's arrival, these Indians have sued for peace, and measures are now taking to effect a permanent treaty.

Sixth. The Cheyennes and Arapahoes range through the country of the Arkansas and its tributaries, to the north of this territory. They live almost entirely on the buffalo, and carry on a considerable trade both with the Americans and Mexicans in buffalo robes; for which they obtain all the necessaries not derived from the buffalo. They are a roving people, and have, for many years, been on friendly terms with the New Mexicans. The Arrapahoes number about 400 lodges, or 2000 souls. The Cheyennes number 300 lodges, or 1500 souls.

Seventh. The Comanches range east of the mountains of New Mexico; a numerous and warlike people, subsisting entirely by the chase. Their different bands number in all about 2500 lodges, or 12,000 souls. They have been at peace for many years with the New Mexicans, but have carried on an incessant and destructive war with the states of Chihuahua, Durango, and Coahuila, from which they have carried off, and still hold as slaves, a large number of women and children, and immense herds of horses, mules, and asses.

Eighth. The Kayugas range through a part of the same country. They are similar

habits and customs, and are considered a more brave people than the Comanches. They number about 400 lodges, or 2000 souls.

Below I give a tabular statement of the population of the tribes of Indians ranging over the country within the territory of New Mexico and its borders, made up from the best reliable information that I have been able to obtain during a residence of many years in New Mexico and its vicinity.

Apaches or Jicorillas . . .	100 lodges . . .	500 souls.
Apaches proper	900 "	5,500 "
Yutas, Grando Unita River . . .	600 "	3,000 "
Yutas, (Southern)	200 "	1,400 "
Nabajos	1,000 families . . .	7,000 "
Moques	350 "	2,450 "
Comanches	2,500 lodges . . .	12,000 "
Kayzguas	400 "	2,000 "
Cheyennes	300 "	1,500 "
Arapahoes	400 "	1,600 "
Total		36,950

You will perceive by the above statement, that with New Mexico, nearly 40,000 Indians will fall under the immediate superintendence of the United States government, and it becomes a subject of serious import, how these numerous and savage tribes are to be controlled and managed.

It becomes my duty by virtue of my office, to lay before you all the information I possess in regard to these tribes of Indians, I will also venture to make a few suggestions for your consideration.

Agents and sub-agents are absolutely necessary for the regulation and control of the various tribes of Indians above named.

A very desirable effect might be produced upon these Indians by sending a delegation from each tribe to Washington. They have no idea at this time of the power of the United States, and have been so long in the habit of waging war and committing depredations against the Mexicans with impunity, that they still show a disposition to continue the same kind of warfare, now that the territory is in possession of the United States. I am convinced that a visit to our Capital by some of the principal chiefs of each of these nations, would secure future peace and quiet to the inhabitants of the territory.

I would also suggest the propriety of sending with this delegation of uncivilized Indians, a delegation from the "Pueblas," or civilized Indians, who are by law *citizens* of the territory, and of the United States. They compose a very considerable portion of the population of New Mexico, and, if excited so to do, might cause a good

deal of difficulty. A small expenditure by the government in this manner, *now*, might be the means of avoiding bloodshed hereafter.

You are doubtless aware that presents of goods are indispensable in all friendly communications with Indians. I would respectfully suggest the necessity of goods of this kind, or the means wherewith to purchase them, being placed at the disposition of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for this territory.

I deem it highly necessary to establish stockade forts in the Yuta and Nabajo countries, with sufficient troops to keep these Indians in check, and from continuing their long-accustomed inroads in this territory. One should also be established at some suitable point on the Arkansas River, for the purpose of protecting travellers between this territory and Missouri, and the settlements that may be extended in that direction from the Indians in that vicinity. Another establishment of the kind will be required in the southern part of this territory, to serve as a safeguard against both the Apaches and Mexicans on the frontiers of the adjoining Mexican States, who, it may be confidently expected, will continue to make inroads on this territory from that quarter for many years to come.

I neglected to mention, in the proper place, that Colonel A. W. Doniphan received orders from General Kearny, before leaving the territory for California, to march his regiment against the Nabajos. Overtures of peace had been made to them without effect; they have continued their depredations up to this time. General Kearny, after leaving Santa Fé, wrote to me, advising that full permission should be given to the citizens of New Mexico to march, in independent companies, against these Indians, for the purpose of making reprisals, and for the recovery of property and prisoners. In conformity with his suggestion, I issued a proclamation to that effect.

Colonel Doniphan left here a few days ago, with his command, for the Nabajo country, and I feel confident that, with the aid of the auxiliary war-parties, he will soon compel the nation to sue for peace, and to make restitution of property and prisoners taken since the entrance of the American forces on the 18th of August last.

The existing laws of the United States, regulating trade and intercourse with the Indians, are, doubtless, amply sufficient as applied to the Indians referred to in this communication, and, at your earliest convenience, I solicit your full and particular instructions in reference to the application of these laws in the regulation of the various Indian tribes above mentioned.

By so doing, you will greatly oblige

Your Truly Obedient Servant,

CHARLES BENT.