

**Communication Relative to Indian Tribes on the Upper Brazos
from Capt. H. H. Sibley to Sen. G. W. Hill**
03 Jan 1852

Original Source Document:

Article entitled "State Senate, January 12th, 1852", The Northern Standard.
(Clarksville, Tex.), Vol. 9, No. 25, Ed. 1, Saturday, February 21, 1852, p.3
Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin TX

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STATE SENATE.

January 12th, 1852.

A bill to set apart ten leagues of land for Indian purposes; read.

Mr. Meusebach offered the following amendment, to come in at the end of fourth section:

"Provided, That the location on the waters of the Colorado shall not be made within the limits of the colony of the German emigration company, assignees of Fisher and Miller's grant adopted.

Mr. Hill presented the following communication, which was read.

FORT GRAHAM, Texas, }
January 3, 1852. }

MY DEAR SIR: I have delayed until this moment, making the communication relative to the Indian tribes on the Upper Brazos, which I promised you, for the reason that I wished first to ascertain, with some degree of certainty, the wishes of the principal chief, Jose Maria; and then again, I delayed still further, in hopes of being able to base any suggestions I might venture to make, upon the policy of the new commander of the Department. Having been disappointed in the latter expectation, and receiving little more than the expression of negative desires from Jose Maria, viz: that he could not live contentedly above the mouth of the Clear Fork, I am constrained to submit to you such crude ideas as my limited experience and friendly disposition may suggest.

The tribes inhabiting the Upper Brazos permanently, exclusive of the Tonkawas, are six in number, viz: The Anadacos, Jose Maria being the principal chief, numbering, say 250 have their village, and cultivate corn on the west bank of Brazos, on the upper edge of the "Upper Cross Timbers," nine miles above the "Palo Pinto."

The loneis, Tow-y-ash being the principal chief, numbering, say 200, have their village, and make corn on the east bank of the Brazos, immediately opposite Jose Maria's village.

The Caddos, Ha-de-bah being the principal chief, numbering, say 200, have their village, and make corn on the west bank of the Brazos, about twenty-five miles above Jose Maria's village.

The Keechis, Cha-che-ruck being the principal chief, numbering say, 280 have their village, and make corn on the east bank of the Brazos, immediately opposite the Caddo village.

The Ta-wa-co nies, O-che-das being the principal chief numbering, say 200, have their village, and make corn on the east bank of the Brazos, six or eight miles above the Keechi village.

The Wacos, A-ca-guash being the principal chief, numbering, say 200, have their village, and make corn contiguous to the Ta-wa-conies.

The three tribes first named seem to fraternise, and to have intermarried, to the extent almost, as to have become merged, except among themselves, in the general designation of Caddo, and to recognize the general influence and control of one chief, Jose Maria.

The same remarks apply to the three tribes last named, coming under the general designation of Wacos, and acknowledging the influence and control of one chief, A-ca-guash.

Having visited three tribes in their villages upon several occasions, in the early spring and during the summer, and witnessed their efforts to make a honest living by cultivating the soil, a few remarks under this head may serve to disabuse the public mind, and remove the early and long standing prejudices of those who have suffered from depredations committed years ago.

Each one of these tribes cultivates, in small contiguous patches, about one hundred acres of land, raising corn, pumpkins, beans and melons. With infinite toil and patience, the sod is cut up and removed, with such rude implements as have been picked up in the settlements. This is done by the women, whilst the men are either lounging lazily in their wigwams, or perhaps making a vain endeavor to relieve the hunger of the hour in the uncertain chase.

At the earliest dawn, as I wandered through the "patches" pertaining to the various wigwams, toil and industry, hunger and despair—rather anomalous concomitants, were encountered at every turn. It was indeed a pitiable sight to meet an occasional object of greater compassion than the rest, in some superannuated old woman, who, as I approached would drop her hoe, and by the unmistakable sawing motion with her hand across her stomach, manifest the cravings of hunger, whilst the rich corn, teeming at her feet, promised a plentiful but tardy harvest.

I visited the wigwams, inspected several minutely. No plentiful store of provisions was there to cheer the hours of rest, and brace the body for the next day's toil; all was joyless and desolate—the very dogs had lost the energy to dispute my intrusion.

Such, my dear sir, is an underdrawn picture of the Indian villages in the early spring. — Yet how often do we hear them taxed with being a "lazy beggarly set," unworthy our sympathy or concern—that they are not to be trusted—that the best of them would shoot you down for your horse, &c. I know of no people whom I would sooner trust with my life and property.

I have upon several occasions left in their charge sick men and horses, and have invariably found them faithful, and proud of the confidence reposed in them.

But let us return to them two months later—how changed the scene! Here we have cheerfulness and contentment upon every hand; and independence typified in the smiling countenance of each little urchin, as he struts along, brandishing a half consumed roasting-ear, and how the tables are turned with respect to ourselves; upon the first occasion we eked out to them the pittance we could spare, of meat and bread, from our rations; now, they laid at our feet, unsolicited, the tribute, in corn and melons, of grateful hearts.

But I fear I am growing tiresome; my deep sympathy for these people has made me dwell upon this subject longer than I contemplated—my apology, however, must be in my earnest desire to see their condition ameliorated; and this can only be done by awaking the sympathies of the indifferent, and removing the prejudices of those who have imbibed them in the early years of the Republic.

I have been informed that a bill has already been introduced by yourself and Major Neighbors, granting certain lands to these tribes. The United States having jurisdiction, I would respectfully suggest that six leagues be donated, to be located by a joint commission, composed of an agent of the State, the Indian Agent for this district, and an officer of the army, to be designated by the commanding General of the Department. The main question, it appears to me, would be whether the location should be in one body, or in separate leagues, to cover, for instance, each one of their villages. At all events, I

think it of great importance that the location should not be fixed by the law.

I have not mentioned the Tonkawas in the above enumeration of tribes, for the reason that they have hitherto made no attempt at local habitation, or the culture of the soil.—An impression prevails, too, and I am disposed to credit it, that they are cannibals. I have repeatedly taxed their chiefs with it, but the accusation has been as often denied. I have had a talk with them recently. They say, they have always refused to work and make corn; but hereafter, if land is pointed out to them, they are willing to try. This feeling, I think, should be encouraged. But all these Indians should be fed to a limited extent; and this should be a prime condition exacted from the general government, before the donation is made, else there will be constant begging excursions into the settlements, attended with the same difficulties we are so often annoyed with now.

This will probably be handed to you by the Indian Agent, Mr. Stem, whom I would commend to your special care and attention, as a most worthy gentleman, and one who is devoted to the interests of our red brethren.

With great regard, I am very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
Capt., B't Maj. 2d Drag. H. H. SIBLEY,
Com'g Fort Graham.

Hon. G. W. HILL,

Member State Senate, Austin, Texas.

On motion of Mr. Hill, the bill was postponed until Wednesday next, and made the special order for that day.