

CHILEANS SEEKING CALIFORNIA GOLD (1849-1851)
Contemporary Newspaper Articles — Reports from the goldfields

The Placer (Sacramento), 28 April 1849

Cui bono?—We witnessed a day or two since, the departure of a numerous troop of **Chilean** operatives for the mines. Their masters come to this country provided with a year's supplies, at the end of which time they return to their country enriched by a year's labor in American gold mines. Very justly may it be asked concerning the advantages to our country of such adventurers— cui bono?

The Placer, 12 May 1849

From Juba river we have the following, under date of May 9: —

You notice an extract from my private letter, in which it was stated that this river was deserted. Since that period, in visiting it now, it has resuscitated, and it has from one hundred and fifty to two hundred, including **Chileans** and Californians, of which latter there are only two. The **Chileans** number about fifty. The river is high and the diggings are consequently not overworked. — Health is good, there being not one case of sickness on the river.

Bear creek and dry diggings (distant a few leagues) are worked, and to advantage it is said by those who do work. The country through which the American river flows has been more thoroughly searched since the rise of the waters ; discoveries of rich deposits of gold have been the result. There are probably at work at the new diggings recently discovered, about twenty-five miles from the junction of the North with the South Fork, not less than three hundred people. The gold is found in ravines and is generally large. A piece weighing seventeen ounces and one third, pure gold, and another of eleven ounces, equally free from alloy, came under our observation a day or two since. Both were from the dry diggings of the American. Of these new washings recently opened we shall be better able to speak in a few days. From a correspondent at the Natoma mines we learn the labor is steady and well repaid in that vicinity.- At this point some of the first discoveries of gold were made in June last, and the avocation of the gold washer has been pursued here with uninterrupted success ever since.

The Mokolomne waters, which as we wander southward from stream to stream in pursuit of placer news, now bring us up, offer many inducements to the gold seeker. Here the shining treasure is found at an average distance of one half mile from the river, generally in ravines, and in many places occupied by **Chilean** companies, at a depth of five or six feet from the surface. A great number of these people are employed upon this stream, 500 or more arrived last week. At the richest washings

men turn out from fifty to one hundred dollars each per day, by diligent labor. The Mokelomme is distant thirty-one miles from this place.

Upon all the tributaries of the San Joaquin miners appear to prosper fairly, though nothing that will warrant us in speaking decisively has been received of late. We have heard that a party of Americans ascended the Tawallome, a stream eighteen miles south of the Stanislaus, drove back the hostile Indians who have hitherto rendered themselves formidable to the whites, and were doing well at last accounts.

The Placer, 26 May 1849.

— The feeling against foreign labor in the Placer appears to be pretty strong. It is at this time chiefly directed against the **Chilean** subjects, who are found in great numbers upon the San Joaquin tributaries. They are expert washers and a life of servitude, together with exposure to a hot climate, has well fitted them for labor on the slopes of Sierra Nevada. About forty of these people who had come upon the washing ground of the North Fork were escorted from thence by a party of our countrymen, and informed that their presence would not be tolerated in that vicinity, at least.

Placer Times, 2 June 1849.

Juba river rolls along in its rocky bed as though in a hurry, and the waters though high, do not cover the bars so as to entirely prevent work. We next halted at a **Chilean** camp, and here we saw the labor performed with a right earnest good will. They were a half naked and servile class, who labored under the eye of masters, and performed the greatest drudgery with unshaken confidences in their employers. It was a rare sight for us to see a hundred men busily engaged in gold digging ! Here a dozen picks were tumbling down masses of dirt, and as many shovels turning it into baskets; there a line of laborers bearing baskets on their heads, extended to the water's edge, passing and repassing with loads of earth which was deposited by the sides of the machines. Half leg deep in the water stood some hard at work dashing water on the dirt as it was thrown into the sieve, while others jerked up and down at the levers and rattled the dirt and gravel down the inclined plane into the river to be swept away by its swift, boiling current. We found but few Americans disposed to labor during the continuance of high water, ' for, said they, 'a man can afford to lay over when it comes to ten dollars a-day in California.' The steady and industrious who thought differently, could easily take out twenty dollars a day, and did, so far as my observation enabled me to judge. The Juba river country impressed me favorably with the productiveness of its mines, and while there, even at this high stage of the water, I saw earth washed the yield of which equalled if not exceeded that reported to be the average of the richest portions of the Placer during the summer months.

Weekly Alta California, 2 August 1849

Placer Intelligence.

We have a few days later intelligence from the American river gold washings, from Yuba, and from Feather rivers. The news is unimportant. Many of the deposits of the Rio Americano have become nearly exhausted; but new discoveries every day occur, and since the floods have abated, the researches have in many instances proved flatteringly successful.

Constant accessions to the mining community are taking place, and many of the old washings are entirely occupied by new comers. The miners of the last year form nearly a distinct division of the laboring class, and invariably recede to the newer and more distant deposits before the advance of strangers. The best of feeling prevails, except in the matter of foreign encroachment, for our people are united in the determination to expel the vagrants of other nations from the mines, and the movement is a very general one we are informed. The roads through the country are filled with **Chilenos** and New Mexicans returning from the Placer. No violence has yet been employed to expel these people, and at the date of our last advices, (22d July) all was quiet throughout the gold region.

Daily Alta California, 31 December 1849

Disturbance in the Mines!

By a gentleman who came passenger in the Mint, which left Stockton on Saturday last, we are pained to learn that a disturbance has taken place in the mines on the Calaveras between the **Chilenos** and Americans. The facts, as near as we can get at them are as follows:

On the night of the 26th instant a party of armed **Chilenos**, numbering some 200 attacked an American camp at the Calaveras diggings consisting of about twenty persons. Three Americans were killed, three others severely wounded, and some sixteen taken prisoners. The **Chilenos** said they were acting under orders from the authorities, and they took the wounded men and prisoners in the direction of Stockton, not even allowing the wounds of the unfortunate men to be dressed.

News of the affair had reached Stockton, causing much excitement, and an armed party of some 12 Americans had started in pursuit of the offenders, and it was supposed that many more would follow.

Our informant, in whom we have the greatest confidence, is apprehensive that this outrage will be the signal for a general outbreak between the Americans and foreigners in the mines. We confess we are not without the same fears, though we trust the Americans will only visit just punishment on the real offenders.

Placer Times, 19 January 1850.

THE DISTURBANCE AT THE MINES.

We copy the following account of the disturbances in the San Joaquin Valley, from the correspondence of the Alta California, dated

Stockton, Dec. 31, 1849.

It appears that a number of Americans had, at the commencement of the rainy season, selected a place on the Calaveras River, where they erected log cabins, and made preparations to winter. This was a place in which "dry blowing" for gold was carried on, last summer by **Chileans** or other foreigners. Soon after the Americans settled, a number of **Chileans** arrived, and went to work in the neighborhood; and shortly afterwards, a public meeting was held by the Americans, and a Judge and Military Captain were elected. Notice was then given to all who were not American citizens, to leave within fifteen days. A body of **Chileans** still remained at their old place, about eight miles from the "Iowa Log Cabins," (the American Camp) and abused and drove off three or four Americans, who attempted to dig in the neighborhood. At the expiration of the time specified for the **Chileans** to leave, they were brought before the Judge, (Collier,) and fined one ounce each, and notified to leave by the 25th inst. Little notice was taken of them down to the 25th inst. as it was supposed they would leave. At this time but few of them remained, and those were apparently making preparations to move. On the night of the 27th instant, at about 8 o'clock, a descent was made upon the "Iowa Log Cabins," by about 80 armed **Chileans**. who went from cabin to cabin, seizing the inmates, most of whom were in bed, and binding them with ropes, using the most abusive language, and threatening to shoot them, if they resisted or made the least noise. It should be remarked, that none of the **Chileans** spoke in English, nor did they show any authority for the arrest of the Americans. Having bound the inmates of the "Iowa Log Cabins," and tied some of them to trees, they left them under guard, and proceeded to some other cabins and tents in the neighborhood. In one of those cabins there was a light, and some five or six persons playing cards. This cabin they charged upon, broke open the door, and attacked the inmates with pistols, guns and knives, killing two Americans, one of their own party, and wounding four others. The two men who were killed were aged, one of them leaving a wife and ten children in the States, and the other a wife and five children. I have been unable to ascertain their names in full. One of them is called Starr, originally from New York, but lately from Texas. The **Chileans** then bound with ropes all the Americans in this camp, even those who

were wounded, and hurried them off—some without blankets or even coats—and joining the others, whom they had previously taken, marched the whole sixteen in number, a distance of eight miles on the road towards Stanislaus, to the tent of an Alcalde named Scullion, who, they said, would accompany them to Stockton. This Alcalde refused to see them, or to have any thing to do with them; and after a delay of about an hour, which was spent in endeavoring to hunt up the Alcalde, they marched back to their own camp, a distance of fifteen miles. In passing an American tent, they threatened to shoot the first man who uttered a word. At about 7 or 8 o'clock next morning, they arrived at the Six-Mile Tent, ten miles this side of the Double Springs. Here the **Chileans** had breakfast, and the Americans got a little cold coffee only, They then marched twelve miles farther towards Stockton, and at the tent, late Lemons', had a biscuit each and some cheese. Here they heard that friends were coming to rescue them. Further on the road, at about three o'clock, an American rode by with a gun, who remarked "take care of yourselves, boys." None of the **Chileans** appeared to understand English, and only one of the Americans understood Spanish; but the former suspected something, and leaving the road to Stockton, they marched and countermarched, through mud and water, thickets and plains, over mountains and gulches, until ten o'clock at night, when, completely exhausted from cold, hunger and fatigue, they rested for two hours. During this time, some of the Americans untied their arms, and some of the **Chileans**, it was afterwards found, had either given out or vamosed. It was evident, however, that the greasers had suffered more from the march than their prisoners, and being somewhat afraid of an attempt at rescue, they were willing to come to an understanding with the Americans, and agreed to loosen their arms, and proceed by the regular road to Stockton, provided they would intercede for them in case of an attempt at rescue by other Americans.

They struck the road at a tent, about ten miles from Stockton, at daybreak. It so happened that this tent was full of Americans, who were soon up in arms, and arrested the **Chileans**. The latter, whose numbers had been reduced to eleven, were then tied and had proceeded a short distance on the road towards Stockton, when a number of Americans from the Calaveras arrived and took them from the former prisoners, determined on marching them back to the "Iowa Log Cabins." The Americans who had been taken prisoners arrived in Stockton day before yesterday, and gave themselves up to the authorities. The latter informed them that they did not know whether they were the persons for whose arrest they had issued a writ; for it appears that the Judge of First Instance and Prefect of this place had issued a writ of arrest for the Judge (Collier) and other Americans who had warned off and extorted money from the **Chileans**, the latter having lodged a complaint against the former, accusing them of robbery, &c. It appears that the authorities here endeavored to get Americans to execute the writ, but failing in the endeavor, it fell into the hands of **Chileans**, who, I must say, relied from the beginning, upon others for assistance.

It was rumored in town yesterday evening that the eleven **Chilean** prisoners, unable from exhaustion to proceed to the Calaveras, were hung upon the road. I give this as a rumor. It is thought that the **Chileans** who remain on the Calaveras will fare badly.

Another letter, to the editors of the Alta California, dated Stockton, January 3, 1850, says:

I have just seen four delegates who have been sent from the Calaveras to this place for the purpose of laying before our citizens a correct account of the proceedings in the mines which led to the deplorable occurrences of which I have already given you the particulars. It appears that the **Chileans**, in the endeavor to have Judge Collier and other Americans on the Calaveras arrested, were aided by certain persons who would now wish to shirk all responsibility. A meeting of the citizens of Stockton was held yesterday, for the purpose of hearing the Calaveras delegates; and those gentlemen vindicated in a most able and satisfactory manner, the course pursued by the Americans toward the **Chileans** on the Calaveras. The latter had, by false swearing, procured from the Prefect of this place, a writ for the arrest of Judge Collier and other persons. If this writ had been placed in the hands of a proper officer, its injunctions would have been promptly obeyed. Instead of which it was given to a parcel of the lowest order of **Chileans**—none of whom could speak a word of English—who, instead of presenting it in open daylight, stole upon their unsuspecting victims in the dark, and dragging them from their beds, tied them; murdering all who offered the least resistance. Such were the facts elicited by the meeting held in this place yesterday. The Delegates from the Calaveras, to all of whom I have been introduced, are most respectable and intelligent gentlemen. The following are their names: Robert Hart, Esq of Virginia; Col. J. C. Gilman, of Wisconsin; Dr. L. L. Battle, of Tennessee; S. A. Booker, of Virginia.

The Delegates report that they met the Americans with the **Chilean** prisoners between Stockton and the Calaveras. There is no truth in the rumor that the latter were executed on the road. It is said that the **Chileans** are reinforcing on the Calaveras and there is reason to suspect that they are endeavoring to induce the Indians in the neighborhood to join them.