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Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Indian Scalp Bounties

#1

476 FIFTH AVENUE

New York, November 1, 1929

Mr Lawrence C. Hull
120 Broadway
New York

Dear Mr Hull:

Various brief references to Indian scalp bounties will be found in the following book.

Macleod, William Christie
The American Indian frontier. London: Kegan Paul,
1928 [New York: Knopf]. (The history of civilization.)

On page 223 he says: "In 1641, falling out with some of the Raritan Indians (Delawares of Lenape of upper New Jersey), Kieft [Governor of the New Netherlands] offered the first of the notorious head or scalp bounties. He offered, publicly, ten fathoms of wampum... for each head of a Raritan brought in by anyone."

In the chapter entitled "The destruction of the West Coast Tribes," he writes (p. 488): "The last American scalp bounty had been offered by the territory of Indiana in 1814, when a reward of fifty dollars was set 'to offer sufficient encouragement to the enterprise and bravery of our fellow citizens.'"

There is no further mention of bounties in his accounts of Indian troubles during the fifties, sixties and seventies. Macleod's book seems to be a careful, well-documented study, and I should be inclined to accept his statement that the last bounty was offered in 1814. I suppose that it is possible that there may have been instances where unofficial rewards were offered locally for Indian scalps.

The following collection may also be of interest.

Laws of the colonial and state governments relating to Indians and Indian affairs, 1633 to 1830 inclusive, with an appendix containing the proceedings of the Congress of the Confederation and the laws of Congress from 1800 to 1830 on the same subject.
Washington, 1831.

I hope this slight information may help to answer the question.