

Bounty Laws

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[Handwritten initials]

Prof. W. S. Campbell
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Dear Campbell:

Your letter of May 12th, was received in due course, and as the inquiry you made was rather interesting, I made a very thorough check through the old Territorial Session Laws, as well as those of later years, and was wholly unable to find even the vaguest reference to any bounty on Indian scalps. Apparently the statement to which you refer was based on mis-information or lack of information.

The only statutes relating to Indians that we ever had so far as I have been able to ascertain, prohibited sale of intoxicating liquor, fire arms and ammunition to them, and I also ran across some provisions in the earlier Session Laws which limited the rights of Indians and Negroes as witnesses in certain cases.

Idaho was admitted as a separate Territory by Act of Congress approved March 3, 1863 and prior to that time had been a part, first of the Territory of Oregon, and later a part of Washington Territory. There were some Indian attacks on emigrant trains and the like in the Fifties, and the leader of the first group of prospectors to find gold in the Boise Basin, some thirty or forty miles from this City, was killed by Indians in the summer of '62 or '63, as I recall the history of that time. However, the principal Indian troubles in Idaho occurred from 1876 to 1879, including the Nez Perce or Joseph's War, the Bannock War and some other more or less sporadic uprisings.

During Territorial days, as I gather the system of finance, payments by counties for various purposes were not very carefully supervised, and it is, of course, possible that bounties were offered for bringing in certain outlaws, whether Indian or White, and there were both in those days. My own father came to Idaho in 1869 and from about 1871 was engaged in the cattle business in an isolated section of the then Territory and went through the period of serious Indian trouble which I have mentioned. I have heard him describe some of the occurrences of those days a good many times, but I never heard any mention of a scalp bounty.