

Historical Society Quiets Disp.

BONUS ON DEAD INDIANS LACKS STATE AUTHORITY

Statement of Mason Brayman, Territorial Governor, Refutes Published Report Idaho Paying \$100 Each For Slain Braves, \$50 for Squaws

How much was a dead Indian worth?

Controversy has ebbed and flowed at various times as to the bounty paid by Idaho for Indian scalps. During the heat of the Indian uprising in Owyhee county there were reports that the standard price authorized by the territorial legislature was \$100 a head. That figure has persisted by word of mouth and in print until it has gained general belief sufficient to establish it as actual.

Occasional reminiscences of the Sheepeater campaign has reference to a bounty ranging from \$50 to \$100 for each destroyed warrior. From other sources there pop up stories of equally substantial rewards for the Redman's thatch.

Local Purses Raised

The state historical society has gone into the matter. The result of that investigation into a somewhat unpalatable but still intriguing subject is the answer that, to the best knowledge of the society, the state price for scalps was precisely nothing, whether it was for a single scalp or a dozen.

Posses of local extent and purse may have encouraged battle against raids of the aborigine by promising cash bonus to men who eliminated prime factors of the menace. In the heat of passion citizens are reliably reported to have subscribed Indian control funds, part of which may have been spent as prizes for the largest "take." The state government frowned on the proposition.

No Idaho territorial or state legislature, as far as the state historical society can determine, ever passed a scalp act. Idaho, in fact, leaned far in the other direction. The Indian was treated with legislative compassion.

Book Causes Trouble

Principal cause of the misconception has been a paragraph in the volume, "The Plains of the Great West and Their Inhabitants," by Lieut.-Col. Irving Dodge of the United States army and published about 1877. The introduction declares that an Idaho legislature:

"Resolved that three men be appointed to select 25 men to go Indian hunting, and all those who fit themselves out shall receive a nominal sum for all scalps that they bring in; and all who cannot fit themselves out be fitted out by the committee, and when they bring in the scalps it shall be deducted out: That for every buck scalp shall be paid \$100 and for every squaw \$50 and \$25 for everything in the shape of an Indian under 10 years: That each scalp shall have the curl of the head, and each man shall make oath that the said scalp was taken by said company."

When Governor Mason Brayman—appointed by President Grant in 1876—learned of the statement he took steps to counteract the misconstruction of facts. He was successful for a time, but the original statement comes to light more frequently than the rebuttal.

Governor Brayman said he had searched the Idaho statutes and he could assure the Indian commission that no such act of legislation, "or anything like it," could be found.

"On the contrary," he declared, "I find without exception that all territorial action has been toward the Indians, considerate and humane, even in times when Indian hostilities and depredations prevailed and the inhabitants had great cause for exasperation."

White Man Convicted

"Some three years ago when the excitement of the Modoc war was still at burning heat, a white

They were conducted to the Overland hotel where they ate a magnificent dinner.

Governor Brayman was toastmaster. The principal address of the evening was delivered by Major Jim, a chief of some importance.

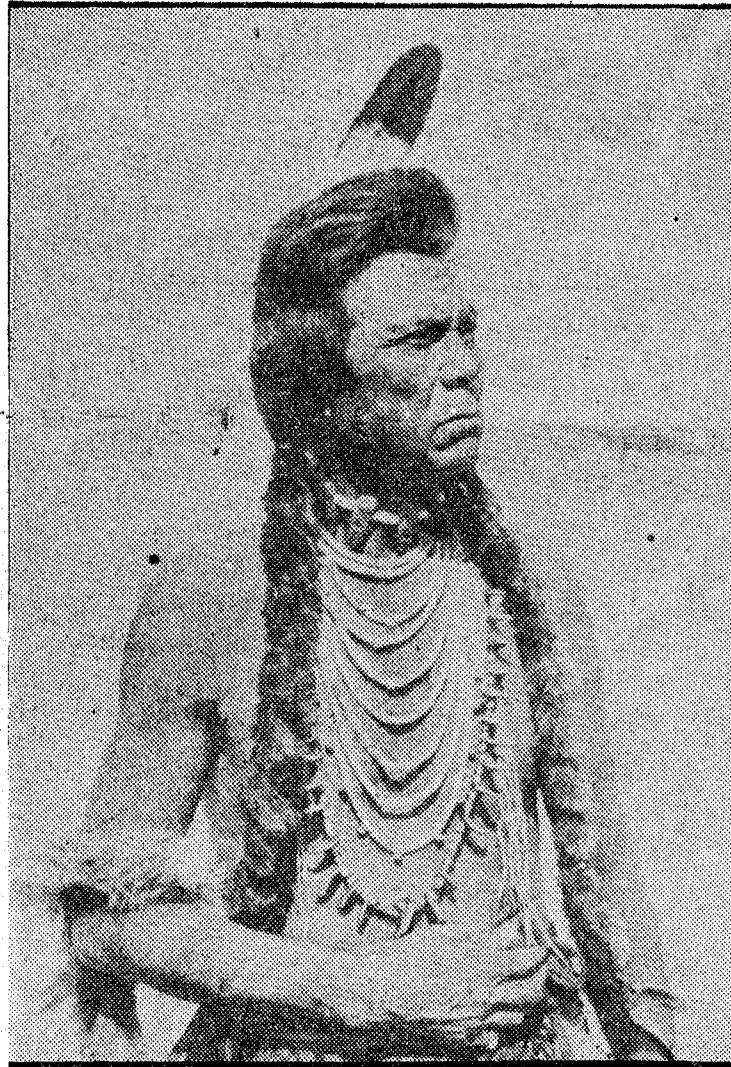
"We have not liked to be thrown off on the Fort Hall reservation," he said. "We go to Montana to hunt buffalo and to get something to trade for food for our little sons. The Indians are like the whites. They do different things to get a living. Our hearts are good. Our brains are good. We like to shake hands with the white men. The Nez Perces who fight are no relations of ours. We do not intend to help them. The Nez Perces who fight will not come to our camps and hunting ground. I do not lie. I tell the truth. Some of your people make farms and raise wheat and potatoes. I wish you would tell me who owns this country."

"I suppose you did first," said the Governor.

"We do not like Fort Hall," continued Major Jim. It is too cold. Nothing will grow there. We wish to have the great Camas prairie put with the Fort Hall reservation. We never sold the Camas prairie or gave it away."

Pondering these troublesome questions, the officials adjourned the feast, scalps and dignity on both sides well intact.

THE 'WHIRLWIND' KEPT HIS SCALP



CHARLIE EAPLISH, or "Whirlwind," was one of the most useful men of the Umatilla Indian scouts in the Sheepeater war in Idaho. "Whirlwind" was a sergeant. Whites valued his scalp highly, providing it remained firm on his head. At no time, state records show, did Idaho pay bounty for an Indian's scalp.

(Photo courtesy of State Historical society)

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