

p.119, Office Malheur Agency, Canyon City, Oreg., August 1, 1878, W.V. Rinehart

On the 5th of June, at noon, all the working Indians quit and left the agency without giving notice or assigning cause. On the following day the few remaining ones left in like manner, and, as I learned from my interpreter, all the tribes were then congregating at the fish-traps on Main Malheur River, 20 miles from the agency. At the issue of June 1, forty-six Bannocks were present and asked for rations, which were denied under authority of Circular No. 10. Chief Egan begged me to give them rations as visitors, and upon my refusal he divided his own with them and both parties left at once. No hint of their designs, no evidence of hostile intent, no assurance of their probable course of conduct were imparted by any of them prior to their departure. I had issued beef on the 1st, and it was known by them that the 7th would be the next day for slaughtering. As none returned upon that day to butcher, I concluded they were intent upon mischief, and started teams next morning, with all the white families, to the settlements in John Day Valley, 80 miles away. On the 9th I received a dispatch from the commanding officer at Camp Harney notifying me of rumored depredations by Indians on Malheur River, within 20 miles of the agency. On the 10th I dispatched my clerk, who alone had remained at the agency with me, to turn back some flour teams and the returning agency teams, known to be on their way to the agency, and started myself for Baker City to telegraph the department and military headquarters in relation to the state of affairs. I rode all night and next day, arriving at Baker City on the evening of the 11th, when I made known the abandonment of the agency, and asked for instructions. I also asked for military protection for public property at the agency, which being denied, I waited until the 17th, receiving no reply from the department; and upon the suggestion of the department commander I tried to employ a citizen guard to return with me and my employes to the agency. Finding I could not procure arms for such guard, I abandoned the undertaking. Proceeding to Camp Harney I learned indirectly that a body of troops under Major Stewart, Fourth United States Artillery, was ordered to occupy the agency and remain there for supplies and prisoners. I had informed the military headquarters that considerable quantities of beef, flour, and grain at the agency, and offered the use of the troops, in the hope that they might save it from capture by the hostiles.

I proceeded from Camp Harney toward El Dorado and met Major Stewart's command 20 miles beyond the agency. Returning with the command to the agency, I found all the buildings broken open and the public property badly scattered and damaged. While engaged with Major Stewart in examination of the premises the general commanding arrived, and proceeded at once to give Major Stewart such instructions and to administer to me such a rebuke, by threatening to place me in arrest, as seemed to give free license to the whole command to take such property as could be found, without any regard to my responsibility, receipts for my protection, or previous inventory of the same. Ineffectual attempts were made to procure the services of a military officer in the making of an inventory; but finding that delay was systematically prolonged until it seemed there would soon be nothing left to invoice, I ordered three of my employes to make a complete inventory under oath, which they did, and I then abandoned all property, agency, and crops to the military.

Proceeding to this place, where my records and office-files had been sent, I found the place in the midst of an excitement which in a few hours culminated in a panic. The hostiles were known to be approaching the valley in great numbers. Their first regular engagement with four companies United States cavalry, near old Camp Curry, only a few days previous, had resulted in a drawn battle; but their punishment was severe. All the troops were in their rear, driving the hostiles into the valley. One small company of citizens from this place had met the hostiles and been driven back with considerable loss. A second party of citizens, going to the rescue of the first, were also driven back and hotly pursued. The arrival of this party was the signal for a panic, which involved the whole settlement. Preparations for defense were hastily made, and all the women and children, to the number of about 400, were put into miners' tunnels near town. This state of alarm continued for two days, until the hostiles had passed