

February 12, 1859

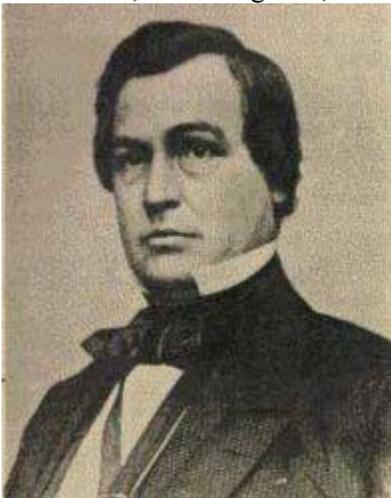
Honorable J.W. Denver¹
Commissioner of Indian Affairs

Sir: In compliance with your instructions of 20th December last, relative to alleged depredations said to have been committed by “stragglings bands” of Chippewa Indians on the property of white settlers along the Red Cedar or Menomonee River, in the State of Wisconsin, I visited that locality, and beg leave to submit the following report.

I was instructed to obtain information on the following points: First, the location or range of these stragglings bands of Indians, for the purpose of determining, if possible, their aggregate number. Second, The particular tribes or bands to which they may belong. Third, The period of time they may have been in Wisconsin. Fourth, All essential facts connected with their movements and operations.

From personal observation and from information derived from reliable sources, I learn that the locality and range of these Indians is principally confined to the counties of Dunn and Chippewa, on the Red Cedar or Menomonee, the Chippeway and Hay rivers – said range being an extent of country some forty miles long from east to west and running north to south from Lake Superior to the mouth of the Red Cedar River. They are scattered through this country in parties numbering from ten to sixty or seventy. Their aggregate number is very difficult to determine but from the most reliable information I could obtain, I should estimate their number

¹ James W. Denver
(October 23, 1817-August 9, 1892)



On April 17, 1857, President James Buchanan appointed him as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. On June 17, 1857, he resigned as Commissioner of Indian Affairs becoming Territorial Governor of Kansas (Bloody Kansas time frame). He retired as territorial governor in November 1858 and was reappointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs, serving until his resignation on March 31, 1859.

on the Red Cedar River of which special complaints have been made at from four to five hundred.

The entire number of Indians in this region are of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of the Chippewas. The first Chief of the band is Aw-ke-wian-ze' or old man, and belonging to the Agency of C.H. Drew, Esquire, locate at Superior.

I could obtain no reliable information as to the period of time they may have been in Wisconsin. Citizens who have lived on the Red Cedar River, say they were there when they settled that place.

In company with Capt. William Wilson, of Menomonee, I traveled up the Red Cedar River to Lake Chitake, about fifty miles from the mouth, which is about the center of the country occupied by the Indians. At this place is located a camp occupied by white men engaged in cutting logs from the pine lands. Near this camp I found a party of Indians encamped, numbering about sixty, among whom were the first Chief Aw-ke-wain-ze, and Wa-be-shag-sheenee, one of the "head men."

I obtained a conference with them in the presence of some twenty of their prominent men, and from them learned that there were about eleven hundred of their band, old and young, male and female, and that there were none of their people either with the tribe or on their reservations, but as they said were scattered through the country hunting – some on Long Lake, Cedar Lake, etc...

On the rivers above named, there are some ten or twelve camps of white men engaged in logging and at each of their camps there are from fifteen to forty white men. These camps are the favorite places of the Indians, and at each of them are to be found quite large parties, where they remain often for weeks and months. They are very poor and destitute of food and clothing; and they, no doubt, are drawn to these places by the opportunity offered them for picking up the offal², and begging provisions of the white men, who find it impossible to resist their importunities. I have no doubt but that it costs them hundreds of dollar to supply these Indians with sufficient food to keep on good terms with them and to avoid serious consequences which would arise if they were refused until pinched by hunger.

In my conference with these Indians, I had no difficulty in convincing them that they were trespassing upon these ground. Both Aw-ke-wain-ze, and Wa-be-shag-sheenee admitted that they were parties to the Treaty of 1854at La Pointe, but they say 'they cannot stay on their grounds as they have nothing to eat and there is no game there.' They seemed very well disposed and with some exceptions, seemed willing to comply with the demands of their Great Father, and remove to their own lands; but when I proposed to them to accompany me they

² **Offal** is the entrails and internal organs of a butchered animal. The word does not refer to a particular list of organs, but includes most internal organs other than muscles or bones.

would not do so, unless I would furnish them provisions for the journey and also supply them with enough to sustain them after they were located. Being satisfied that the numbers were much greater than the department had, from representations anticipated, and that I had neither the means nor the authority to incur debts, much less such an amount as this would require, I of course, declined the proposition, and for the additional reason that I would regard money expended to remove a portion only of them to the place they desired to go, (Lac Courte Oreilles) only forty miles from where they then were, as a useless expenditure from the fact that there is not the least probability of their remaining two weeks.

Considering that it was entirely impracticable to comply with that part of my instructions which contemplated their removal by “moral suasion,³” I proposed to them to accompany me to St. Paul, that I might place them under the charge of Superintendent Cullew. This proposition they did not give a moments consideration by rejected instantly. They did not express any fear of Sioux, but I had no difficulty in understanding that St. Paul was quite too near the range of that tribe to be agreeable to the Chippewas.

The failure of this proposition left me as a last resort, to go to St. Paul and report the facts to William J. Cullew, Superintendent. On my arrival at St. Paul, I found that Colonel Cullew had gone to Washington on official business. Upon consultation with Mr. Bowes, the Chief Clerk, I sent for Mr. C. K. Drew the local Agent of the tribe at Superior. Colonel Drew repaired to St. Paul, and accompanied me to Menomonee, Wisconsin; for the purpose of consulting with Captains Wilson and Washburn, citizens of Dunn County, gentlemen of high character, and deeply interested in removing the Indians, who they very properly as trespassing on the lands of the people, and to whom they are undoubtedly a great annoyance and injury.

After careful considering the whole subject, I am forced to the conclusion that a removal of these Indians from the country immediately on the Red Cedar or Menomonee River, would be of no practical benefit either to the people of that locality or to the government, as their places would soon be filled by those now on the Chippewa, Hay and Yellow Rivers, the Red Cedar being regarded as the best hunting grounds. And if this should not be the case, the citizens on these rivers would soon enter the same complaints and make the same demands of the Government for their removal. Anything short of removal of the whole band from the rivers named above, will be of no practical benefit, and even then I doubt very much if it would be of long duration.

In my judgment, it will be very difficult to remove these Indians to any place within the limits of Wisconsin where they would remain any length of time. It may be however that if they are all to remove to Lake Superior, and placed in charge of their agent, the great body of them may be retained for some considerable time – at least, this is the best disposal that can be made of them, if they are to remain in the State.

³ Suasion - the act of advising, urging, or attempting to persuade; persuasion.

If the removal of these Indians if determined on, and their consent can be obtained peaceably and with reasonable unanimity, it will be absolutely necessary to provide them with provisions while they are being collected, while on their journey, and a supply for them after they are located. Otherwise, those of them who are the most troublesome, will either not go with the band, or wander back into the interior in pursuit of game or plunder, when a repetition of these complaints will be made, and another removal will be inevitable.

From all the information I have been able to obtain, I have no doubt but that the depredations stated to have been committed by these Indians, have been exaggerated, yet their presence on the rivers above named, is a great annoyance to the people, and a very serious embarrassment to the settlement of the country.

Respectfully submitted,
Matthias Martin
Special Agent