

Papers of the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts



Document Metadata

Document Type	Letter
Date	17 Mar 1870
Brief Description	Captain Jacob DeGress, Commander, Fort Duncan, to Assistant Adjutant General H. Clay Wood, War Dept. <i>Captain DeGress requests approval for permitting Seminole Negroes to come to the U.S.</i>
Keywords	1870, Arkansas, Blacks, Chief, DeGress, Fort Duncan, John Horse, Kibit (Kibbett, Kibbit, Kivit), Kickapoo(s), March 17, Mexico, Nacimiento, Permission to Cross, Reservation, Riggs, Rosa Fay, Santa Rosa, Seminole(s), Tribe, Tuerpe, Wild Cat, Wood

<<SOURCE TEXT BEGIN>>

Headquarters Post of Fort Duncan
Fort Duncan, Texas March 17, 1870

Brevet Brigadier General H. Clay Wood,
Assistant Adjutant General

Sir:

I have the honor to inform you that the Chief of the remaining Seminoles in Mexico, John Kibit, came to this Post this morning for the purpose of getting permission to move to the Seminole Reservation in Arkansas, and to receive subsistence and forage for his people and horses while in transit. He states that his Tribe, consisting of about one hundred people, is poor, but willing to work.

They are mostly blacks and moved to Mexico under the Seminole Chief Wild Cat.

I have given the Chief a document of which the enclosed is a copy and have promised him rations and forage subject to the approval of the General Commanding while at this post.

This Chief informed me that the Kickapoos were anxious to move back to their Reservations and only waited for permission and protection to do so.

In view of this information, I will send the Deputy Sheriff of this County, Mr. Albert Tuerpe, who speaks the Kickapoo language, to Santa Rosa, Mexico, to invite their Chief, who is now at Santa Rosa, to come to this post for a "talk."

I most respectfully ask the approval of the Major General Commanding of my action so far, and instructions as to what shall be done in case the Seminoles and Kickapoos, or either of them, come over agreeably to my promise.

The enclosed is a copy of letter of authority given Mr. Tuerpe. I have also instructed Mr. Tuerpe to pay special attention to whatever captives the Kickapoos may have, taking description of them if possible.



Papers of the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts

I am Sir,
Very Respectfully,
Your Obt. Servant,
“signed” J. C. DeGress
Captain 9th Cavalry
Brevet Lieutenant Colonel, U. S. A.
Commanding Post

<<SOURCE TEXT END>>

Note: John Kibbetts appears to have been in competition with John Horse for the title of Principal Chief, but it seems that the majority of the Seminole Negroes saw Horse as their primary leader, and the decision to request the move to Indian Territory was probably discussed by the entire community and decided on mutually. Since Kibbetts and his group were in Nacimiento, while John Horse and his group were much deeper in Mexico, the Kibbetts group became the spearhead for the Seminole Negroes coming over to the United States, but oral history collected in the 1940's makes it very clear that while Kibbetts had his followers and became a military leader as Sergeant in the Scouts, he never replaced Horse as Head Chief, even if some military officers saw him that way. Rosa Fay, an elderly Seminole Negro woman who knew both men well said this about it. “John Horse was the only chief of the Seminole after Wild Cat. John Kibbetts was Chief only from Nacimiento to Texas.... If John Kibbetts was ever elected Chief it was because only his followers were voting!”

Kibbetts name has multiple spellings in each piece of correspondence, as did most names in the 19th century when writing was still the province of clerks, and few people wrote their own names. The most common version was Kibbetts, but sometimes it was Kivet, or Kibit as it is here.



National Archives Microfilm Publications Reference

Collection	Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series), 1861-1870
Microcopy Number(s)	M-619
Roll(s)	799 (Papers Relating to the Return of the Kickapoo and the Seminole (Negro) Indians from Mexico to the United States, 1870 – 1914)
Digital Image File(s)	031-032.jpg



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Papers of the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts

Headquarters post at Fort Duval,
Fort Duval, Fla., March 17, 1870.
Respectfully General H. Clay Wood,
Assistant Adjutant General.

Sir:

I have the honor to inform you that the
chief of the remaining Seminoles in all Florida, John Ketchik,
came to this post this morning, for the purpose
of getting permission to move to the Seminole
Reservation in Arkansas, and to receive subsistence
and forage for his people and horses while in
transit. He states that his tribe, consisting of
about one hundred people, is poor, and willing
to work.

They are mostly blacks, and moved to all Florida
under the Seminole Chief Wild Cat.

I have given the Chief a document of which the
original is a copy, and have promised him
subsistence and forage, subject to the approval of
the General Commanding, while at this post.

This Chief informed me that the Kickapoo
were anxious to move back to their Reservation
and only waited for permission and protection
to do so.

In view of this information, I will
send the Deputy Sheriff of this County, etc.



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Albert Suerpe, who speaks the Chickasaw language,
to Santa Rosa, Mexico, to invite their chief, who
is now at Santa Rosa, to come to this post for
a "talk"

I most respectfully ask the approval
of the Major General Commanding of my action
insofar, and instructions as to what shall be
done in case the Seminoles and Chickasaws,
or either of them, come over agreeably to my promise.

The enclosed is a copy of letter of au-
thority given Al Suerpe. I have also instructed
Al Suerpe to pay special attention to whatever
captives the Chickasaws may have, taking descrip-
tions of them if possible.

Lam, etc

Very respectfully

Your Obedt Servant

L. C. DeGaus

Signed

Captain, 9th Cavalry

Branch Lieutenant Colonel, U.S.A.,

Commanding Post

Hooper, Hill Mill & Co

Austin, March 24, 1890

Official

J. C. Wood

Assistant Adjutant General

697 2/11/1890

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