

Papers of the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts



Document Metadata

Document Type	Letter
Date	14 July 1870
Brief Description	Major Zenas Bliss, newly Commanding, Fort Duncan to Assistant Adjutant General Clay Wood <i>Bliss requests permission to enlist Seminole Negroes as Indian Scouts.</i>
Keywords	1870, Arkansas, Army, Austin, Bliss, Bob Kibbett (Kibbit, Kivit), Chief, Elm Creek, Enlist, Fort Duncan, Gopher John (John Horse), Guides, Indian, July 14, John Kibbett (Kibbit, Kivit), Lepans (Lipans), Seminole(s), Seminole Negroes, Matamoros, Mexico, Pay, Reservation, Santa Rosa, Scouts, Slavery, Texas, Ton-ka-was, U.S., War Department, Wild Cat, Wood

<<SOURCE TEXT BEGIN>>

Headquarters
Post of Fort Duncan
July 14, 1870

Brevet Colonel H. Clay Wood
Asst. Adj. Genl. Dept. of Texas
Austin, Texas

Sir:

In compliance with instructions from Headquarters, Dept. of Texas, dated Austin, Texas, June 25, 1870, I have the honor to report that I have had frequent conversations with John Kibbett, Chief of the parties of Seminole Negroes, and he states in substance that he belonged to Wild Cat's band of Seminoles and left the U. S. Reservation and went to Mexico with him and Gopher John, and lived on the Mexican Reservation near Santa Rosa; that Wild Cat died in Mexico. In 1858 a nephew of Wild Cat, who remained in Arkansas, went to Mexico by permission of the U. S. authorities, and brought back to the U. S. Reservation several Seminole families, and during the rebellion all the Seminole Indians in Mexico left and went to Arkansas with a son of Wild Cat.

Gopher John, the principal Chief of the Seminole negroes and Kibbett, with their parties, remained in Mexico, being afraid to return on account of slavery which then existed.

About a year ago, "Bob," a son of Kibbett, was on the Seminole Reservation, and they stated to him that they were very anxious to have the Seminole negroes come over and join them, and in consideration of this wish, as expressed by the Seminoles, and the invitation of the Post Commander at Fort Duncan, he crossed into Texas and wishes to go to the Seminole Reservation, or have land given him in Texas which he may cultivate without molestation.

Gopher John is living about two hundred miles south west of Santa Rosa, Mexico, and has with him about 150 Negroes; there are also a party of these Negroes near Matamoros, but how many Kibbett does not know, as he has not seen them in a long time.

Gopher John told Kibbett that he would join him, if possible, at Santa Rosa and come here with him, but in case he did not arrive in time, Kibbett was to come over and the others would join him here. Gopher John and his party have



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not yet arrived, but Kibbett states that he will come soon, or if he does not, he will go after him, he will do so at once.

The Kickapoos are not on any reservation now, but are out in the hills in Mexico, though still at peace with the Mexicans. Kibbett who is apparently a very smart and reliable Negro, states that he had a talk with the Chief of the Kickapoos, and that he stated he would not come in to “talk” with the Commanding Officer of Fort Duncan, as the Mexicans told him the troops here would kill him if he did, also that all the stock the Kickapoos own were stolen from Texas, and they fear, should they cross, they will lose their stock and be punished by the Texans for stealing it. Kibbett is of the opinion that neither promises nor treaties will induce the Kickapoos to come in.

There are at present no Lepans in Mexico.

Kibbett’s men will not enlist in the Army, but are willing and anxious to be employed as Scouts. They know nothing about the country in Texas, neither do they know at what points the Indians cross to make forays on the frontier of Texas, consequently they cannot act in the capacity of guides to water, passes, fords &c, but are good trailers and understand the habits of the Indians perfectly, and would make excellent Scouts. Kibbett and his party are very anxious to get work of some kind, and are perfectly content to remain here on the Reservation, provided they can have land to cultivate, with permission to hunt and labor in the vicinity, and act as Scouts when required by the proper authorities.

Elm Creek – five miles above this Post on the Military Reservation of Fort Duncan is the place he has selected to live on. There is good arable land on the creek.

Kibbett asks for compensation for his men and himself while actively employed in the field, will accept the pay of a soldier for each of his men, with (\$25.00) twenty five dollars per month for himself. I could not state positively to him what pay would be allowed him, he now states he is willing to accept the same pay as now allowed the Ton-ka-was. There are about 20 men fit for Scouts in the party now here, and they could be advantageously used at this Post.

I would therefore respectfully recommend that they be given as much ground as they can cultivate on the U.S. Military Reservation on Elm Creek, that they be employed as scouts for the Post, and that they have permission to work in the vicinity of the Post and to hunt within certain limits, to be prescribed by the Commanding Officer of the Post.

Very Respectfully,

Your Obdt. Servant(sgd) Z. R. Bliss

Major 25th Infantry Brevet Lieutenant Colonel U. S. Army Commanding Post

<<SOURCE TEXT END>>

Note: As seen in previous letters, it had already been approved by the War Dept to hire the Seminole Negroes as Indian Scouts, so this letter perhaps was written to make it sound as if the Seminole Negroes had crossed over before they were offered employment as scouts, absolving the War Dept of responsibility for them.



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Microcopy Number(s)	M-619R799
Roll(s)	799 (Papers Relating to the Return of the Kickapoo and the Seminole (Negro) Indians from Mexico to the United States, 1870 – 1914)
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Headquarters Post of Fort Duncan
Fort Duncan, Texas, July 14th 1870.

But. Colonel H. Clay Hood
Assistant Adjutant General
Headquarters Department of Texas.
Austin, Texas.



Sir:

In compliance with instructions from Headquarters Department of Texas, dated Austin Texas, June 29th 1870. I have the honor to report that I have had frequent conversations with John Kibbett, Chief of the party of Seminole Negroes and he states in substance, that he belonged to Wild Cat band of Seminoles, and left the U. S. Reservation, and went to Mexico with him and Gopher John and lived on the Mexican Reservation near Santa Rosa: That Wild Cat died in Mexico. In 1858 a nephew of Wild Cat who remained in Arkansas went to Mexico by permission of the U. S. Authorities, and brought back to the U. S. Reservation, several Seminole families, and during the rebellion all the Seminole Indians in Mexico left and went to Arkansas, with a son of Wild Cat.

Gopher John, the principal Chief of the Seminole Negroes, and Kibbett with their parties remained in Mexico being afraid to return on



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account of slavery, which then existed.

About one year ago "Bob" a son of Kibbett was on the Seminole Reservation, and they stated to him, that they were very anxious to have the Negro Seminoles come over and join them and in consideration of this wish, as expressed by the Seminoles and the invitation of the Post Commander of Fort Duncan, he crossed to Texas and wishes to go to the Seminole Reservation or have land given them in Texas which he may cultivate without molestation.

Gopher John is living about two hundred miles southwest of Santa Rosa, Mexico and has with him about 100 Negroes, there are also a party of these Negroes near Matamoros but how many Kibbett does not know, as he has not seen them in a long time.

Gopher John told Kibbett that he would join him if possible at Santa Rosa and come here with him, but in case he did not arrive in time Kibbett was to come over and the others would join them here. Gopher John and his party have not yet arrived, but Kibbett states that he will come soon, or if he will go after him he will come at once. The Kickapoo are not on any reservation now, but are out in the hills in Mexico, though still at peace with the Mexicans. Kibbett, who



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There are at present no Lafians in Mexico, Kibbett's men will not enlist in the Army, but are willing and anxious to be employed as scouts. They know nothing about the Country in Texas, neither do they know at what points of the River the Mexicans cross to make forays, on the frontier of Texas, consequently they cannot act in the capacity of guides to water passes, ford &c. but are good trailers and understand the habits of Indians perfectly and would make excellent scouts. Kibbett and his party are very anxious to get work of some kind and are perfectly content to remain here on the Reservation, provided they can have land to cultivate with permission to hunt and labor in the vicinity, and act as scouts when required by the proper authorities.



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I would therefore respectfully recommend, that they be given as much ground as they can cultivate, on the U. S. Military Reservation, on Elm Creek that they be employed as scouts for the Post, and that they have permission to work in the vicinity of the Post and to hunt within certain limits, to be prescribed by the Commanding Officer of the Post.



Very respectfully
Your obedient servant,

(sgd) J. R. Bliss,
Major 25th Infantry Reg. Dist. Col. U.S.A.
Commanding Post.

