

Papers of the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts



Document Metadata

Document Type	Letter
Date	26 Apr 1870
Brief Description	Bureau of Indian Affairs Commissioner Ely Parker to Secretary of the Interior J.D Cox <i>Commissioner Parker discusses what to do with the Seminole Negroes</i>
Keywords	1870, Appropriation, April 26, BIA, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chief, Co-ah-coo-che, Congress, Cox, Creeks, DeGress, Florida, Fort Duncan, Kibbett (Kibit, Kibbitt, Kivit), Indian Country, Indian Office, Indian Territory, Indians, Kansas, Kickapoo, Legislation, Mexico, Military, Parker, Removal, Rio Grande, Secretary of the Interior Secretary of War, Seminole(s), Texas, United States, War Department, Washita River, Wild Cat, Wichitas

<<SOURCE TEXT BEGIN>>

From Bureau of Indian Affairs Commissioner Ely Parker to Secy of the Interior Cox

Department of the Interior
Indian Office
Washington D. C. April 26, 1870

Sir: -

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the letter of the Hon. Secretary of War, dated 19th instant, referred here by you on the 23rd, inviting your attention to the correspondence (which he encloses) between Bvt. Col. J. D. DeGress, Commanding at Fort Duncan, Texas, and the commanding General of the Department of Texas, relative to a party of Seminole and Kickapoo Indians residing in Mexico who are anxious to return to the United States. An invitation has been sent to them by Col. DeGress to visit his post to have a talk upon the subject, and the question is put by him as to what shall be done in case they should come.

The history of these Indians is briefly and in substance this; about 1849, Co-ah-coo-che, or Wild Cat, a Seminole Chief of notoriety and influence, having become very much dissatisfied with the arrangements made by the Government in regard to his people upon their removal from Florida, with a few followers left the country of the Creeks, upon which the Seminoles were to reside, and went to Texas with the intentions, as he asserted, to settle there.

In 1850 he returned to the Nation and sought to induce all the Seminoles to join him in Texas, but succeeded only in prevailing upon about 100 together with some slaves, to accompany him. With these he returned in that year and eventually settled in Mexico across the Rio Grande. From that time he and his followers ceased to be regarded by the Department as a part of the Seminole Nation, and they have been almost wholly lost sight of for many years past. Wild Cat it is believed is now dead.

These Kickapoos who many years ago separated from their Nation residing in the Country which afterward became Kansas Territory, and went down among the Creeks and other Indians, locating upon or about the Washita River, and who became associated with the Seminoles under Wild Cat, and crossed over the Rio Grande with them into Mexico. At one time the Chief said he had with him 1,600 Kickapoos and at another, 600. They were joined in 1864 by a party of 100 from the Kickapoo Reservation in Kansas, a part of whom subsequently returned to Kansas.



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The number of Seminoles and Kickapoo now in Mexico cannot be stated with certainty by this office. I think it is likely that of the former there may be as many (100) as stated by the Chief John Kibbett to Col. DeGress; and of the latter there may be probably from 600 to 800. A report respecting the removal of the Kickapoos back to the United States was made to the Hon. Secretary of the Interior by this office on the 14th of July 1868, and an estimate submitted of the sum that would be required for the purpose. The subject is referred to in the annual report for that year of my predecessor, pages 20 and 87, and also in my report for 1869 pages 8 and 451. I there suggested that steps be taken as early as practicable to have them brought back and placed somewhere in the Indian Territory and that appropriate legislation be had by Congress in the matter. I will now further remark that this office has not at its disposal the means to effect the removal of these Indians should they cross the Rio Grande and come to the Military Post at Fort Duncan with that object in view. If the Military will arrange for their subsistence and conduct them to the Indian Country, this office can then take charge of them and provide for their settlement in some suitable locality in the Indian Country; the Seminoles, perhaps, among their people from whom they separated, and the Kickapoos upon some part of the leased District, or among the Wichitas and affiliated bands in that District.

Should the War Department consent to such an arrangement, it will be necessary that this office be advised thereof, and before the removal commences, in order that communication may be had with the Seminole Nation to ascertain if they will receive these Seminoles and acknowledge them to be a part of the Nation, and that a home may be selected for the Kickapoos and Congress be asked for an appropriation to subsist and properly care for them.

I return herewith the letter of the Secretary of War and its enclosures.

Very Respectfully,
Your Obedt. Servt.
E. S. Parker
Commissioner

Hon J. D. Cox
Secretary of the Interior

<<SOURCE TEXT END>>

Note: Commissioner Ely S. Parker, himself an Indian, is quite clear that "If the Military will arrange for their subsistence and conduct them to the Indian Country, this office can then take charge of them and provide for their settlement in some suitable locality in the Indian Country; the Seminoles, perhaps, among their people from whom they separated". Although he asks that the Seminole Negroes and Kickapoo not be brought over to the U.S. until money has been appropriated by Congress and a place has been found for them, he urges that "steps be taken as early as practicable", so at this time the BIA was clearly encouraging the return of the Seminole Negroes.



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)
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Department of the Interior
Indian Office
Washington D.C. Apt 26. 1866

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*Very respectfully,
Your obt. servt.
E. S. Parker.
Commissioner.*

*Hon. J. D. Cox.
Secretary of the Interior.*

