



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
Advancing Knowledge, Driving Change

The Consequences of Reservation Life: Native Californians on the Round Valley Reservation, 1871-1884

Author(s): Todd Benson

Source: *Pacific Historical Review*, May, 1991, Vol. 60, No. 2 (May, 1991), pp. 221-244

Published by: University of California Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3640492>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



University of California Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Pacific Historical Review*

JSTOR

The Consequences of Reservation Life: Native Californians on the Round Valley Reservation, 1871-1884

TODD BENSON

*The author is a doctoral candidate in history
in Stanford University.*

During the past decade, the theme of resistance has dominated American Indian historiography. Scholars have begun portraying indigenous people as historical actors in their own right, rather than depicting them, as did most previous historians, as the passive victims of advancing white civilization. Recent works have thus emphasized initiative, survival, and cultural resilience as central to the American Indian experience.¹

I would like to thank Kathleen O'Connor of the Pacific Sierra Branch of the National Archives for her assistance, and Carl Degler, Becky Lowen, and Jenny Solorio for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

1. Calls for a history emphasizing Indian initiative first appeared two decades ago. (See, for example, Edward H. Spicer, *A Short History of the Indians of the United States* [New York, 1969], 3-4; and Robert Berkhofer, "The Political Context of a New Indian History," *Pacific Historical Review*, XL [1971], 357-382.) As Richard White has noted, in "Race Relations in the American West," *American Quarterly*, XXXIX (1986), 405, scholarship addressing this concern did not begin to appear until relatively recently. See, among others, Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (Lincoln, Neb., 1984); Henry Warner Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict* (Chicago, 1981); Loretta Fowler, *Arapahoe Politics, 1851-1978: Symbols in Crises of Authority* (Lincoln, Neb., 1982); Peter Iverson, *The Navajo Nation* (Westport, Conn., 1981); Clyde A. Milner II, *With Good Intentions: Ouaker Work among the Pawnee, Otos and Omahas in the 1870s* (Lincoln, Neb., 1982); George H. Phillips, *Chiefs and Challengers: Indian Resistance and Cooperation in Southern California* (Berkeley, 1982); and the essays in Clyde A. Milner II and Floyd A. O'Neill, eds., *Churchmen and the Western Indians, 1820-1920* (Norman, Okla., 1985).

Still, historians of the early reservation period have resisted this approach, arguing that removal to reservations represents a watershed experience for American Indians which held devastating consequences for both Indian culture and Indian psychology. Francis Paul Prucha, for example, writes that life on reservations was, for “most” tribal members, “shattering” and “demoralizing.” Robert Utley similarly argues that “the reservation program tore down the traditional culture” and left Indians “beset by more or less cultural disintegration and by feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.”²

It might be argued that if reservation life had a destructive impact on American Indian cultures anywhere, it did so in California, since tribes there experienced unparalleled devastation as a result of contact with whites. Following the discovery of gold in 1848, Euro-American settlers, hungry for wealth, poured into the state by the thousands, bringing with them germs, guns, and, most important, a racist disregard for the value of Indian lives. By 1860, the combined effect of exposure to both white diseases and violence had reduced the Native Californian population from 100,000 to 35,000. Ten years later, the population had dwindled to 30,000, and over half of the survivors, as a result of either forced or voluntary removal, lived on reservations.³

It is, perhaps, not surprising, given the magnitude of this demographic disaster, that the “watershed” thesis remains

2. Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (2 vols., Lincoln, Neb., 1984), II, 656; Robert Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890* (Albuquerque, N.M., 1984), 251.

3. For accounts of the impact of white migration on Native California, see Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven, 1988); James J. Rawls, *Indians of California: The Changing Image* (Norman, Okla., 1984), 81-201; Lynwood Carranco and Estle Beard, *Genocide and Vendetta: The Round Valley Wars of Northern California* (Norman, Okla., 1981), 35-156; Sherburne F. Cook, *The Conflict Between the California Indian and White Civilization* (1943; Berkeley, 1976), 255-361; Virginia P. Miller, *Ukomno'm: The Yuki Indians of Northern California* (Socorro, N.M., 1979), 33-97; Jack Norton, *When Our Worlds Cried: Genocide in Northwestern California* (San Francisco, 1979); and Edward Castillo, “The Impact of Euro-American Exploration and Settlement,” in William C. Sturtevant, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians* (20 vols., Washington, D.C., 1978-), VIII, 107-113. The population figures given are those of Sherburne F. Cook, *The Population of the California Indians, 1769-1970* (Berkeley, 1976), 61-62.

virtually unchallenged by historians of Indians in California. George Harwood Phillips, for example, has attacked the notion of Indian passivity during the earlier mission period, but bases his argument, ironically, on a “perception of Indian passivity by Anglo-Americans who observed Indians after they had been colonized and demoralized” during the late-nineteenth century.⁴ Although Phillips only implicitly blames reservation life as the cause of this alleged demoralization, other historians have argued directly that reservations had a devastating effect on Indian behavior and culture. In his *Indian Survival on the California Frontier*, Albert Hurtado seeks to emphasize the theme of Indian initiative, but ultimately concludes that the labor system employed on California reservations helped to make the native family “a casualty on the California borderland frontier.” Edward Castillo agrees, arguing that removal to reservations “was bound to result in serious social upheaval—the disintegration of both family and community life,” to which Robert Chandler adds that white domination in most cases “doomed” the California Indians to become “emotional and physical cripples.”⁵

This paper challenges such views on the basis of the experiences of the surviving tribal members on one California reservation, the Round Valley agency in Mendocino County, between 1871 and 1884, the period immediately following the worst of the violence directed against northern California's Indians. Round Valley represents an appropriate test case because it served during these years as home to Indian agents of the Methodist church, among the most assimilationist-minded of Protestant denominations, and one which waged an unusually ardent campaign to eradicate Indian cultures.⁶ Round Valley was also the residence of the remnants of sev-

4. George Harwood Phillips, *The Enduring Struggle: Indians in California History* (San Francisco, 1981), 1.

5. Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 251; Castillo, “Impact of Euro-American,” 113; Robert Chandler, “The Failure of Reform: White Attitudes and Indian Response in California During the Civil War Era,” *Pacific Historian*, XXIV (1980), 289.

6. For the assimilationist zeal of the Methodists, see Bruce Forbes, “John Jasper Methvin: Methodist ‘Missionary to the Western Tribes’ (Oklahoma),” in Milner and O'Neill, eds., *Churchmen and the Western Indians*, 41-73.

eral tribes—the Yuki, Konkow, Nomlaki, Wailaki, Achumawi, Whilkut, and Pomo—which had suffered devastating losses, extending in the case of the Yuki and Wailaki to over ninety percent of precontact population.⁷ The magnitude of this demographic catastrophe, coupled with the intensity of the assimilationist pressures on these tribes, suggests that if cultural disintegration occurred anywhere, it did so at Round Valley. The evidence reveals, however, that Round Valley tribal members not only stoutly resisted white domination, but also pursued their own goal of self-sufficiency.

Two Views of the Reservation

The U.S. government established the Round Valley reservation, together with several others in California, in the 1850s as a solution to what it deemed the state's Indian "problem." According to most whites, California tribes represented a danger to property, safety, and the unhindered development of "white civilization." Removal of native peoples to reservations would, they believed, erase this danger while also protecting tribal members from the threat of violence and their own supposed ignorance.⁸ Indians who failed to learn the ways of white society would be condemned to lives of poverty and suffering, if not to extinction. Reformers saw reservations as schools where individual Indians would learn these ways, thus guaranteeing their survival. California reformers envisioned that Indians would receive this education in part by working on reservation farms, where they would not only learn the work ethic and a sedentary agricultural lifestyle, but also produce profits that would be used to make the reservations self-sustaining.⁹

7. Russell Thornton, "History, Structure, and Survival: A Comparison of the Yuki (*Ukomno'm*) and Tolowa (*Hush*) Indians of Northern California," *Ethnology*, XXV (1984), 122-123, 127; Carranco and Beard, *Genocide and Vendetta*, 126-127.

8. Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 125-150; Rawls, *Indians of California*, 141-170.

9. Robert H. Keller, Jr., *American Protestantism and United States Indian Policy* (Lincoln, Neb., 1984), 150-166; Robert Winston Murdock, *The Reformers and the American Indian* (Columbia, Mo., 1971), 21-29, 54-57; Prucha, *Great Father*, I, 593-597; Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 149; Rawls, *Indians of California*, 148-150.

The plan failed abysmally. Tribal members removed to California reservations in the 1850s and 1860s faced conditions little different from those they had experienced outside reservation boundaries. At Round Valley, settlers coveting land or avenging alleged Indian depredations ignored borders and continued to attack tribal members even after they had come under the agency's protection. Chronic shortages of food and supplies forced Indians to subsist by hunting and gathering their own food, or by performing wage labor off the reservation. As on other reservations, many migrated to the reservation only during periods when jobs, food, and supplies were available there.¹⁰

Corrupt agency administrators aggravated the situation by stealing the reservation's supplies and diverting its resources for their own use. Such profiteering plagued the administration of reservations nationwide, leading President Ulysses S. Grant in 1869 to promulgate a new approach to federal Indian policy. Grant's plan, his so-called Peace Policy, transferred control over the selection of Indian agents from the federal government to the churches. Grant envisioned that these religious organizations would choose as agents individuals known for their integrity and religious beliefs rather than for their political connections. Honest, Christian agents committed to the task of reform, rather than to expanding their personal fortunes, would save the government money and prove more effective than their predecessors at assimilating tribal members. The President granted the power to select Indian agents in California to the Methodist church, whose leaders ultimately chose three agents to serve at Round Valley: Hugh Gibson from 1871 to 1872, James Burchard from 1872 to 1877, and Henry Sheldon from 1877 to 1884. These agents zealously followed the goals of Grant's policy, waging a

10. Castillo, "Impact of Euro-American," 109-113; Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 150-165; Carranco and Beard, *Genocide and Vendetta*, 55-156; Gary Garrett, "The Destruction of the Indian in Mendocino County, 1856-1860" (M.A. thesis, Sacramento State College, 1969); William Hammond, "History of the Round Valley Reservation" (M.A. thesis, Sacramento State College, 1972), 1-64; Virginia P. Miller, "The Yuki: Culture Contact to Allotment" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Davis, 1973), 163-354.

continuous battle to convert Round Valley's tribal members to the ways of white society.¹¹

The agents focused their assimilationist campaign around two objectives. The first was instruction in the Christian religion. The agents proselytized tribal members tirelessly, an activity which, in the case of agent Burchard, appeared to meet with success in 1874. In February of that year nearly five hundred Indians converted to Christianity. By April, Burchard reported that, as a result of the conversions, he had not "known of a quarrel or fight" on the reservation, and that not a single Indian had "had to be punished for disobedience or other faults." This was, he concluded, "the best fruit of the Peace Policy of President U. S. Grant." By the following September, Burchard had admitted almost a thousand Indians to membership in the Methodist church. The effect of the conversions, in his mind, was spectacular. "The Indians," he wrote, had, for the first time, become "quiet, peaceable, orderly, and easily managed."¹² Acceptance of Christianity appeared not only to render tribal members more docile, but also, according to Burchard, to improve their moral and sexual behavior, which he had viewed as suspect. The agent exulted over what he saw as the effects of the mass conversions. "All dancing, swearing, drinking, Gambling, Sabbath Breaking, and all the Pagan practices and habits have been abandoned," he wrote in September 1874. Increasing numbers of Indians, he added a year later, had accepted Christian principles of marital fidelity and taken Christian vows of marriage.¹³

11. Carranco and Beard, *Genocide and Vendetta*, 69-73; Hammond, "History of the Round Valley Reservation," 20-27; Keller, *American Protestantism*, 1-30; Murdock, *Reformers and the American Indian*, 30-66; Prucha, *Great Father*, I, 479-533. See Robert L. Whitner, "Grant's Indian Policy on the Yakima Reservation, 1870-1882," in Richard N. Ellis, ed., *The Western American Indian* (Lincoln, Neb., 1972), 50-60, for a discussion of the assimilationist efforts of agents on another Methodist-administered reservation.

12. Indian Agent James Burchard (hereafter cited as Burchard) to Commissioner of Indian Affairs (hereafter cited as CIA), Feb. 28, 1874, Letter Book, April 1, 1871 to Dec. 11, 1875 (hereafter cited as LB 2), 161, Round Valley Agency, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, Pacific Sierra Branch, National Archives, San Bruno, Calif. (hereafter cited as RG 75, NASB); Burchard to CIA, April 30, 1874, LB 2, 177, RG 75, NASB; Burchard to CIA, Sept. 10, 1874, LB 2, 211, RG 75, NASB.

13. Burchard to CIA, Sept. 9, 1874, LB 2, 209, RG 75, NASB; Burchard to CIA, Sept. 1, 1875, LB 2, 305, RG 75, NASB.

Like other reformers, the Round Valley agents coupled their missionary efforts with instruction in the more secular subject of “civilization,” by which they meant the everyday norms of middle-class European-Americans.¹⁴ This required, first, that they abandon their “dissolute” hunting-and-gathering means of subsistence and learn techniques of sedentary agriculture. It further required that tribal members learn to live in the proper kind of dwelling. The agents constructed over a hundred frame houses with which to replace the traditional native wickiups, which they saw as unhealthy. Many contained bed frames, included so as to allow the Indians to sleep off the ground, a practice the agents believed necessary to prevent the spread of disease.¹⁵ Also included in the assimilationist curriculum was instruction in the theory and practice of American democracy. Burchard held a gala celebration on the nation’s 4th of July centennial, complete with fireworks and the reading of the Declaration of Independence. In addition, he attempted to dismantle the Indians’ hereditary system of chieftainship and institute an open-ballot system whereby tribal elders democratically elected their leaders. At one point he tried to establish an Indian House of Representatives and Senate as tribal legislative bodies. Democracy had its limits, however: the agent installed himself as President of the new reservation republic.¹⁶

That Burchard would attempt to teach tribal members lessons in democratic theory—however imperfect—suggests the comprehensiveness of the agents’ vision. Round Valley, in their minds, represented a social laboratory where Indians

14. Robert Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787–1862* (Lexington, Ken., 1965), 2–15; Forbes, “John Jasper Methvin,” 63–64.

15. Burchard to CIA, Sept. 1, 1876, Letter Book, Dec. 31, 1875 to Oct. 16, 1877 (hereafter cited as LB 3), 65, Round Valley Agency, RG 75, NASB; Indian Agent Henry Sheldon (hereafter cited as Sheldon) to CIA, Aug. 12, 1878, Letter Book, Oct. 1, 1877, to June 9, 1879 (hereafter cited as LB 4), 159, Round Valley Agency, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Dec. 31, 1883, Letter Book, March 7, 1882 to Oct. 30, 1885 (hereafter cited as LB 6), 210, Round Valley Agency, RG 75, NASB; Burchard to CIA, Sept. 12, 1873, LB 2, 135, RG 75, NASB.

16. Burchard to CIA, July 12, 1876, LB 3, 52, RG 75, NASB; Burchard to CIA, Sept. 1, 1876, LB 3, 69–70, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Dec. 31, 1883, LB 6, 201. See also Virginia P. Miller, “The Changing Role of the Chief on a California Indian Reservation,” *American Indian Quarterly*, XIII (1989), 448.

would learn to think and act completely as whites. The Indians themselves saw things differently. To them, the reservation represented an immediate source of supplies and, because of its land resources, a potential hope for economic independence. While achieving these goals might require them to adopt white concepts of land ownership or white methods of agriculture, it did not, contrary to the beliefs of the agents, require that they yield to the agents' demands.

In the short term, tribal members saw the reservation as only a seasonal source of sustenance. The onset of Methodist administration did not end the chronic shortages of food and supplies which had previously plagued the agency, forcing the Indians to continue the seasonal pattern of migration on and off the reservation that they had practiced before the Methodists came to power. Many, during such shortages, moved off the reservation to perform seasonal wage labor for surrounding settlers, the men working in the fields and the women "doing the washing and ironing." Income from such labor, agent Sheldon reported in 1879, was a necessity: the Indians depended on it "to obtain the means of living and clothing." This periodic lack of supplies undoubtedly explains the variations in Round Valley's annual population, which ranged from a high of 1,700 in 1872 to a low of 534 in 1880, as well as the yearly migrations made by Konkow tribal members between the reservation and their homes in Butte County.¹⁷

The most severe supply shortage occurred in the winter of 1877–1878, when outside jobs could not be had. According to agent Sheldon, cold weather in November and December, when coupled with a lack of clothing and blankets, brought "much suffering" to the Indians. By the first week in January, many men had no shirts or worked "nearly barefooted," while women were prostituting themselves for clothes. "Many are nearly naked," reported Sheldon eleven days later, "and the seeds of death are being scattered widely."¹⁸ The agent had no

17. Sheldon to CIA, Jan. 21, 1879, LB 4, 243, RG 75, NASB; Cook, *Population*, 47; Sheldon to CIA, May 11, 1880, Letter Book, June 11, 1879 to Feb. 28, 1882 (hereafter cited as LB 5), 127, Round Valley Agency, RG 75, NASB.

18. Sheldon to CIA, Nov. 11, 1877, LB 4, 13, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Dec. 31, 1877, LB 4, 25–26, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Jan. 8, 1878, LB 4, 28, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Jan. 19, 1878, LB 4, 35, RG 75, NASB.

doubt about the eventual effect of the clothing shortage. Many tribal members, he predicted in February, would leave Round Valley "if the supplies asked for cannot be obtained." His forecast came true the following summer, when many members of the Potter Valley band of Pomo fled the reservation. They were, said Sheldon, "dissatisfied because I had not the clothes to issue to their men and women." More would have fled, he thought, had he not pursued and captured those who first ran away.¹⁹

That Indians remained on the reservation at all during the harsh winter suggests that the alternatives available to them were limited; that some later fled suggests that those alternatives, although limited, did exist, and that tribal members expected the reservation to provide at least a bare minimum of food and goods. Indian actions at Round Valley's annual census reflected this view of the reservation. Tribal members allowed themselves to be counted as wards of the reservation only if they drew issues of reservation supplies. In 1875, agent Burchard experienced difficulties because he did not issue the reservation's annual supply of goods until after the census was finished. Because Indians had "an aversion" to being counted until after they had received their supplies, he acknowledged, it became "impossible to get all present."²⁰

While tribal members' short-term view of the reservation was as a seasonal source of food and clothing, their long-term view of it was as a possible means to independence. Indians whose land had been violently appropriated by white settlers hoped that they could use reservation lands to become self-supporting. "We want land, plow, garden, and work," said James Sherwood, chief of the Little Lake band of Pomo, in 1878. Henry Clay, chief of the Achumawi on the reservation, agreed. "We want our own farms and so help ourselves," he said. "We want home, be somebody," added Peter Hudson, chief of the Huchnom, a tribe closely related to the Yuki. "Don't want be beggars, we don't want to beg. We want get

19. Sheldon to CIA, Feb. 8, 1878, LB 4, 59, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, July 30, 1878, LB 4, 145, RG 75, NASB.

20. Burchard to CIA, Dec. 11, 1875, LB 2, 319, RG 75, NASB.

land, we know we can support ourselves...[and] we want to do something for ourselves.”²¹

Many Indians had been promised land as an incentive to migrate to the reservation. Sustaining these pledges was the passage of a congressional bill in 1873 which extended the reservation's boundaries so that over a hundred thousand acres were available for the Indians' use. The bill also allocated money to compensate nearby settlers for the loss of property located within the new boundaries. But the settlers rejected these payments as insufficient, and over the next two decades, they issued a series of legal challenges to block implementation of the legislation.²²

Tribal members, in the meantime, grew increasingly frustrated over the government's failure to deliver the lands which they had been promised. “A large proportion” of Indians, Sheldon wrote in 1878, were “discontented” because of the government's apparent inactivity. “The Indians are getting tired of waiting,” he added four years later, especially when “they see the horses, cattle, and sheep of the settlers occupying the very lands long ago promised to them.” Earlier that year, Sheldon had stopped using promises of land as an enticement to encourage Indians to migrate to the reservation. By 1883, there was “widespread dissatisfaction” with the government's failure to resolve the settler's claims.²³

By then, as well, many on the reservation had tired of waiting and acted on their own to obtain land. Some tribal members volunteered their labor to local ranchers in exchange for offers of small plots, while others sought to buy land. A chief of the Potter Valley band of Pomo, whom Sheldon called Captain Jack, led a group of Indians, who had apparently decided to remain at Round Valley when others of their

21. Sheldon to CIA, Sept. 7, 1878, LB 4, 182-184, RG 75, NASB.

22. Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 6, 1880, LB 5, 165-166, RG 75, NASB; Cora DuBois, “The 1870 Ghost Dance,” *University of California Anthropological Records*, III (1939), 91. See Carranco and Beard, *Genocide and Vendetta*, 324-336; Garrett, “Destruction of the Indian,” 61-67; and Miller, “The Yuki,” 282-304, for a comprehensive discussion of the land question at Round Valley.

23. Sheldon to CIA, Sept. 11, 1878, LB 4, 187, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 30, 1882, LB 6, 55-56, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, March 7, 1882, LB 6, 1, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, July 25, 1883, LB 6, 13, RG 75, NASB.

band had fled five months earlier, off the reservation in October 1878. With money earned picking hops, they purchased a plot, paying a poll tax to register themselves as its legal owners. Sheldon did not approve of the Indians' action and set out the following month to recapture them. The band refused to return, however, citing the advice of a white lawyer they had hired who instructed them "not to stir a step." Their plan, reported Sheldon, "was should I take any of them, a writ of 'Habeas Corpus' would be issued, and they would be brought before the County Judge, and I was to be arrested for kidnapping."²⁴

The actions of Captain Jack's band demonstrate that the realities of life in a white-dominated world could sometimes force tribal members to modify their traditional ways. By purchasing land, after all, they appeared to have adopted the Euro-American concept of landownership, thus violating the traditional California Indian belief that the earth, as an object of worship, could not be bartered.²⁵ The expressed desire of tribes at Round Valley to cultivate their own land represented a similar adaptation, since sedentary agriculture, far from an indigenous form of subsistence, signified the livelihood which the Indian agents strove to teach tribal members. Contrary to the arguments of the anthropologist Virginia P. Miller, however, who finds in these adaptations evidence of the complete "acculturation" of Indians at Round Valley, acceptance of white notions of property or of how best to subsist did not mean acceptance of white civilization, a point which Sheldon's pursuit of the fleeing band of Pomo suggests he realized.²⁶ Tribal members saw the Round Valley reservation as a possible source of short-term sustenance and, in the long term, of independence. When the reservation failed to fulfill those expectations, the Indians simply pursued them elsewhere. Sheldon and his fellow agents, however, saw the

24.. DuBois, "The 1870 Ghost Dance," 88; Sheldon to CIA, Oct. 17, 1878, LB 4, 196-198, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Nov. 26, 1878, LB 4, 215-218, RG 75, NASB.

25. See, for example, Robert F. Heizer, "Natural Forces and Native World View," in Sturtevant, ed., *Handbook*, VIII, 649-653.

26. Miller, "Changing Role," 452-454.

reservation as indispensable. In their minds, the Indians could not learn the lessons of civilization outside Round Valley's boundaries.

Conflict and Resistance

Different ideas about the reservation's purpose fostered unremitting conflict at Round Valley. Agents and Indians confronted each other as adversaries, each group struggling to achieve its own goals while preventing its opponent from doing likewise. The contest was, in one sense, ironic, since both parties shared a common enemy. Surrounding settlers, who wanted the reservation lands for themselves, saw both agents and Indians as obstacles in their path, and targeted both for intimidation.

The Indians, not surprisingly, bore the brunt of this aggression. They sustained frequent losses to their food supplies when settlers drove their hogs and cattle through the reservation fields and into the Indians' gardens. Although not as prevalent as they had been prior to 1865, instances of physical threats and violence also occurred. Surrounding settlers used the threat of violence to drive Indians from their camps, fired upon them while they were gathering acorns just outside the reservation, raped them, and sometimes even murdered them.²⁷ Nor were the agents immune from threats of violence. To furnish the legal authorities with the names of the armed whites who trespassed onto the reservation to buy sex from Indian women, wrote Burchard in 1874, "would put the agent's life in great jeopardy." Four years later Sheldon had a man arrested and charged in the attempted rape of an Indian schoolgirl. The case was dismissed, but as Sheldon left the courtroom, the father and brother of the man he had

27. Indian Agent Hugh Gibson (hereafter cited as Gibson) to B. C. Whiting, California Superintendent of Indian Affairs (hereafter cited as Whiting), Feb. 21, 1872, LB 2, 48, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Dec. 18, 1877, LB 4, 21, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Feb. 1, 1878, LB 4, 48, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Feb. 13, 1878, LB 4, 69, RG 75, NASB; Burchard to CIA, Jan. 20, 1874, LB 2, 156, RG 75, NASB; Burchard to CIA, Nov. 30, 1872, LB 2, 94-95, RG 75, NASB; Burchard to CIA, Aug. 31, 1875, LB 2, 300, RG 75, NASB; Cook, *Conflict*, 339-343.

accused attacked him with a club and repeatedly pistol-whipped him.²⁸

The settlers' attempts to intimidate the agents embodied a certain logic, since the agents, like the Indians, shared the goal of obtaining more land for the reservation, and thus represented a direct threat to the settlers' interests. Indeed, the agents thought it would be impossible for them successfully to civilize tribal members without receipt of the additional lands which had been promised. Sheldon grew frustrated at the continual demands placed on him to demonstrate his success at assimilating the Indians. Complete assimilation, he told the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, could not occur until the reservation received the lands it had been promised. "Please remember," he said, "that it is impossible to make brick, without clay..."²⁹

A shared interest in acquiring land did not, of course, reflect a shared faith in the virtues of assimilation, producing, rather than even the most superficial of alliances, continual confrontations between agents and Indians. The agents' authority gave them a clear advantage in this contest. To ensure that Indians performed the work which was required of them, for example, they tied receipt of reservation rations to the performance of agricultural labor, such as planting, harvesting, or tending stock. A bill passed by Congress in 1875 codified this requirement by outlawing the distribution of rations on federal reservations to able-bodied men who did not work.³⁰

After 1873, the agents also held the power to restrict tribal members' movements. In that year, the Secretary of the Interior issued an order which granted the agents, and their colleagues nationwide, the authority to restrict Indian migrations off the reservations. "Under no pretext," read the order, were tribal members to leave "without a special permit in

28. Burchard to CIA, Aug. 27, 1874, LB 2, 199, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, 28 February 1878, LB 4, 75, RG 75, NASB.

29. Sheldon to CIA, June 6, 1879, LB 4, 313, RG 75, NASB.

30. Circular to Indian Agents, April 1, 1875, Circulars file, 1854-1887, Circulars and Instructions, 1854-1908, Round Valley Agency, RG 75, NASB.

writing from the Agent.” Such permits would not be granted, “except it shall be made to appear to his satisfaction that the issuance of same will inure to the benefit of the applicant.”³¹

At Round Valley, agent Burchard did not wait for official word before he began seeking to control Indian migrations. In 1872 he twice used soldiers stationed at nearby Camp Wright to capture Indians who had fled the reservation. After the military post was disbanded four years later, agent Sheldon used reservation employees to capture fleeing Indians. Since the agents also controlled the administration of justice on the reservation, Indians whom they deemed to have misbehaved, whether because of either unauthorized migrations or other transgressions, might find themselves indefinitely confined to the guardhouse, or worse. Sheldon punished one fifteen-year-old boy, who had continued to visit his girlfriends even after the agent, “for their protection,” had placed them in surrounding white homes, with four weeks of daytime labor while shackled to a ball and chain, and six weeks of night-time confinement. And until 1875, Burchard whipped tribal members whom he found to have seriously misbehaved.³²

The agents’ authority did not inhibit Indian resistance, however. Sheldon, for example, found that confinement in the guardhouse did not deter flights from the reservation, since tribal members viewed incarceration as a luxury. “They get fed,” he wrote, “and don’t have to work.” Once Indians did flee, it was not always possible to capture them. In June 1878, Sheldon succeeded in capturing “only a few” of a “large number” of tribal members who had left the reservation.³³

31. Circular Letter, Oct. 21, 1873, General Correspondence to the Superintendent from the Commissioner and Others (hereafter cited as GCSCO), Round Valley Agency, RG 75, NASB. This legislation remained in effect until 1880.

32. Burchard to Whiting, Oct. 22, 1872, LB 2, 88-89, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, June 30, 1878, LB 4, 129-130, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Dec. 31, 1883, LB 6, 200, RG 75, NASB; Burchard to CIA, Jan. 30, 1875, LB 2, 249, RG 75, NASB; Burchard to CIA, June 30, 1875, LB 2, 283, RG 75, NASB; CIA Edward P. Smith to Burchard, Feb. 19, 1875, GCSCO, RG 75, NASB.

33. Sheldon to CIA, Dec. 15, 1877, LB 4, 17, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, June 30, 1878, LB 4, 129-130, RG 75, NASB. The evidence presented here and in succeeding paragraphs strongly contradicts the arguments presented in Miller, “Changing Role,” 447-454.

Just as the agents' disciplinary powers proved ineffective in deterring Indian migrations, so too their control of the distribution of reservation rations proved inadequate for managing labor. Tribal members could use the threat of withheld labor to force the agent to pay them cash. In 1879, Sheldon began supplementing Indian farm workers' rations with cash payments as an incentive to keep them on the reservation. "They can get higher wages and money," he wrote, "working out side [*sic*]." By 1884, he found it necessary to raise wages in order to attract enough laborers to harvest the reservation hop crop. "Last year," he reported, "we only paid 1¼ cts per lb but others paid 2 cts and we may have to." Skilled Indian workers, such as blacksmith's and carpenter's apprentices, also used the tight local labor market to win higher pay. Wages for outside labor, Sheldon wrote in 1881, were high enough that an Indian apprentice "would laugh at me to offer him less than \$10 per month, and some I can hardly induce to stay at \$15—and without them we could not do our work."³⁴

Indians not only could wring higher wages out of the agent, but also could deceive him into misinterpreting their actions. Tribal members did not acculturate as rapidly as the agents believed, most notably in the case of the conversions to Christianity, described earlier in this paper, which occurred during the mid-1870s. Contrary to what agent Burchard had thought, the Indians converted not because they accepted the wisdom of what he taught them, but because conversion furthered their own goals. This became evident as early as 1878, when agent Sheldon reported that most of the earlier religious converts had abandoned their beliefs. He did not explain the cause of the recidivism to his superiors until five years later, however, probably because he did not want to undermine his efforts to expand the reservation's size. The conversions, he recalled, had occurred at a time when the prospects for more land looked excellent. Congress had recently extended the reservation's boundaries, and the Indians "were promised by Commissioners, Inspectors, and Agent,

34. Sheldon to CIA, April 26, 1879, LB 4, 293, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, July 23, 1884, LB 6, 262, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Sept. 27, 1881, LB 5, 324-5.

that if they were 'good' Government would soon give each of them a piece of land." Methodist preachers on the reservation simultaneously were urging the Indians "to become good" in revival meetings. "In their minds," according to Sheldon, "becoming good, became connected with getting lands, and as all wanted lands they *became good*, i.e. joined the Church." As the prospects for land faded, so too did the Indians' enthusiasm for Christianity. "Is all good Christians," said an unidentified Indian living on the reservation, "long as sugar barrel not empty, but timeby sugar all gone, mos' all slide back."³⁵

Unless it served their interest, as in the case of the conversions, Indian acceptance of "civilization" rarely occurred. Native cultures proved remarkably resistant both to the powers of the agents and to the hardships of reservation life. Contrary to the arguments of Edward Castillo and Albert Hurtado, the Indian family at Round Valley remained strong. Sheldon noted that some tribal members would have been able to live quite well off the reservation, "if they only had themselves to support." They did not choose to do so, however: "They all," said the agent, "have relations, and friends, that they will not desert, unless compelled by the direst necessity, and then only for a short time."³⁶

The strength of family bonds created severe administrative problems for the agents. Burchard found that he could not enforce restrictions on Indian movement as long as some tribal members remained at large: reservation Indians "want to go, and see their relations who are living in some other county, they have heard some of them are sick, they *must* go." He also found it necessary to distribute the free rations given to sick Indians only in minuscule quantities: "two or three ounces of tea, four or five ounces of sugar, one fourth of a pound of meat, a teacup full of rice, or the same amount in

35. Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 12, 1878, LB 4, 165, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 10, 1883, LB 6, 156-157, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 12, 1878, LB 4, 164, RG 75, NASB. See also Virginia P. Miller, "The 1870 Ghost Dance and the Methodists: An Unexpected Turn of Events in Round Valley," *Journal of California Anthropology*, III (Winter 1976), 66-74.

36. Sheldon to CIA, Jan. 8, 1878, LB 4, 164, RG 75, NASB; Castillo, "Impact of Euro-American," 113; Hurtado, *Indian Survival*, 251.

syrup.” “If larger quantities were issued,” he explained, “they would divide with their poor relations or friends.”³⁷

The strength of family bonds also undoubtedly contributed to the persistence of Indian culture on the reservation. Gambling games, for example, remained an important social event for tribal members, as they had been in the years before white immigration. Families and relatives living off the reservation travelled great distances to attend these games, which occurred over several consecutive days. Sheldon tried to stop the practice soon after assuming office, directing “all employees to break it up any and all times when found.” The Indians, however, simply “went off into the brush,” or to the nearby town of Covelo, and continued playing.³⁸

Tribal members also persisted in traditional medical practices, rather than relying on the reservation physician. The Indians had a “frequent preference for native doctors,” said Gibson, and native healers continued to draw complaints from agents until as late as 1880.³⁹ Sweathouses, in addition, remained important social institutions on the reservation, as they had been during precontact times. Indian men held contests to see who could withstand the smoke from a fire in the center of the sweathouse and dance the longest.⁴⁰ In 1873, agent Burchard closed down the sweathouses on the reservation. Sweating ceremonies continued at night, however, primarily at two sweathouses operated by Indians who lived and worked on the property of local ranchers. Some of the Yuki Indians, complained Burchard in January 1875, “go to these sweat-houses on week evenings and spend the entire night (and often for several nights in succession) in sweating, gambling, dancing &c., thereby totally unfitting them for work

37. Burchard to CIA, Aug. 31, 1877, LB 3, 170-171, RG 75, NASB; Burchard to CIA, Sept. 28, 1877, LB 3, 179-180, RG 75, NASB.

38. George Foster, “A Summary of Yuki Culture,” *University of California Anthropological Records*, V (1944), 195-196; Miller, *Ukomno'm*, 27; Amelia Susman, “The Round Valley Indians of California: An Unpublished Chapter in ‘Acculturation in Seven (or Eight) American Indian Tribes,’” *Contributions of the University of California Archaeological Research Facility*, No. 31 (Berkeley, 1976), 13-14; Sheldon to CIA, Dec. 31, 1883, LB 6, 204, RG 75, NASB.

39. Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 24, 1880, LB 5, 177, RG 75, NASB; Gibson to CIA, Sept. 7, 1871, LB 2, 29, RG 75, NASB.

40. Foster, “Summary of Yuki Culture,” 194.

when they return, being very sleepy...for days afterward." Two months later he requested permission to destroy the two offending sweathouses. Sweating ceremonies continued, however, drawing complaints from agents until at least 1881.⁴¹

Indians challenged the agents' authority not only by maintaining their traditional ways, but also by abusing reservation property. They obtained household goods, for example, by stealing them from the agency cookhouses, and grain by clandestinely raiding the reservation granaries. And since a broken tool had to be repaired before it could be used again, the Indians at Round Valley became adept at interrupting their work routines by breaking reservation equipment. "It is surprising how skillful they are at breaking tools and machinery," agent Sheldon reported. The reservation harness-maker spent many hours fixing harnesses broken by the Indians. "A great amount of repairing is needed," Sheldon said, "as the Indian drivers are so careless..." In his view, Indian workers needed to be constantly watched, for if they were left unsupervised, "property would be destroyed."⁴²

Indian resistance on one occasion brought economic rewards in addition to a reduced workload. In 1881, Sheldon decided simultaneously to teach tribal members animal husbandry and to accomplish the milking of the cattle herd by entrusting each Indian family with the care of a cow and her calf. The attempt failed. Tribal members responded by "leav[ing] the calf in the corral without food several days, or turn[ing] out cow and calf." The agent ended up having to pay Indian boys to do the milking.⁴³

The Indians reserved their most determined resistance not for increases in their work load, but for the agents' school programs. Efforts to educate Indian children began in 1871, when Gibson's wife opened a day school. A second school

41. Burchard to CIA, Sept. 12, 1873, LB 2, 135, RG 75, NASB; Foster, "Summary of Yuki Culture," 36; Burchard to CIA, Jan. 24, 1875, LB 2, 242, RG 75, NASB; Burchard to CIA, March 31, 1875, LB 2, 267, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, June 6, 1881, LB 5, 296, RG 75, NASB.

42. Sheldon to CIA, Nov. 11, 1878, LB 4, 214-215, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Jan. 19, 1878, LB 4, 36, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 12, 1878, LB 4, 163, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, April 30, 1879, LB 4, 299, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 16, 1879, LB 5, 32, RG 75, NASB.

43. Sheldon to CIA, July 13, 1881, LB 5, 288, RG 75, NASB.

opened in 1873, but later closed its doors, due to cutbacks in funding.⁴⁴ The purpose of these day schools extended beyond elementary instruction in reading and writing to encompass the agents' entire assimilationist vision. They, like Indian reformers across the country, believed that the best hope for civilizing Indians was through their children. Children were more tractable, more receptive to the teachings of the reformers than were their elders, who had to be dispossessed of customs ingrained over a lifetime. The place to educate Indian children about civilized life was in the schools.⁴⁵

Learning to become civilized, of course, meant learning to become Christians, and Bible readings thus formed an essential part of lessons at the Round Valley day schools. Civilization also meant learning to work. Indian boys, supervised by reservation employees, learned agricultural techniques in Round Valley's fields, while girls stayed inside the school to study domestic arts, such as cooking, sewing, and housework. Agent Sheldon found this regimen insufficient, however. True educational progress, in his view, would not occur so long as children returned from school each day to be with their families. "The associations of the [Indian] camps," he wrote in 1877, "is [*sic*] anything but healthy for their mental, or moral being." He repeated himself two years later: "We greatly need a boarding school so that we can take the children from the corrupting influences of the camps."⁴⁶

Sheldon got his wish when a boarding school opened on the reservation in 1881. He immediately forbade its students

44. Gibson to CIA, June 6, 1871, LB 2, 16, RG 75, NASB; Burchard to CIA, Sept. 12, 1873, LB 2, 135, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 31, 1878, LB 4, 177, RG 75, NASB. See Robert Lee Whitner, "The Methodist Episcopal Church and Grant's Peace Policy: A Study of the Methodist Agencies, 1870-1882" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1959), 22-24, for a summary of the Round Valley agents' educational programs.

45. Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage*, 16-43; Forbes, "John Jasper Methvin," 56; Irving Hendrick, "Federal Policy Affecting the Education of Indians in California, 1849-1934," *History of Education Quarterly*, XVI (1976), 166-167; Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900* (Norman, Okla., 1976), 265-327.

46. Sheldon, handwritten comments on Circular No. 11, March 22, 1878, GCSCO, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, July 31, 1879, LB 5, 18, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, March 29, 1880, LB 5, 107, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Dec. 31, 1877, LB 4, 27, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, March 31, 1879, LB 4, 285, RG 75, NASB.

from having contact with outside friends. "I deemed it absolutely necessary," he recalled two years later, "to keep them as isolated as possible." Such stringent measures did not prevent the school from experiencing difficulties, however. Funding limits set by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs did not allow Sheldon to hire a sufficient number of staff, forcing him to limit the school's operations.⁴⁷

Moreover, the Indian students refused to acquiesce in Sheldon's efforts to "civilize" them. Flights from the school occurred regularly, even if they were not always successful. Sheldon had particular trouble controlling the older students. "I find it difficult to retain the larger boys in school regularly," he noted in June 1882, "as they can earn from 75 cents to \$2 per day shearing sheep and harvesting, and to have them out and in is demoralizing in its effects on the others." By the following November, none of the older boys remained at the school. Their absence sparked dissatisfaction among the eight older girls, five of whom asked the agent for permission to leave. Sheldon strongly opposed their request: the loss of the girls, he wrote, "would be disastrous," because they performed most of the labor that kept the school operating. Yet resistance to his authority had reached a point where the agent required reinforcements: he did not reject their request out of hand, but promised to forward it to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for his consideration. "I think that a word from *you*," he wrote the commissioner, "would show that I am not alone in my earnest purpose to benefit them." The Commissioner obliged shortly thereafter, and the girls agreed to remain in the school.⁴⁸

Resistance to Sheldon's authority continued, however, finally exploding in July 1883. On the night of the twenty-first, the school dining hall and kitchen burned to the

47. Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 31, 1881, LB 5, 320, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, July 30, 1883, LB 6, 140, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Feb. 28, 1882, LB 5, 374, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, March 31, 1882, LB 6, 11-12, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Nov. 1, 1882, LB 6, 73, RG 75, NASB.

48. Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 1, 1882, LB 6, 49-50, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Sept. 2, 1882, LB 6, 61, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, June 10, 1882, LB 6, 41, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Nov. 2, 1882, LB 6, 74-75, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Feb. 1, 1883, LB 6, 96-97, RG 75, NASB.

ground. Two days later, the main school building also burned. Sheldon suspected arson, and in August he arrested five boys, ranging in age from twelve to sixteen, after they confessed to starting the fires. To partially fill the holes which the blazes had left, he quickly opened a new day school on the reservation, hiring one of the boarding school teachers and a nurse to teach Indian girls to sew. He also entrusted the two employees with the twenty-four-hour care of some Indian girls whom he “felt should be kept from the camps at present.” The damage, however, had already been done.⁴⁹

An Indian Victory

Regardless of the determination with which the Indians resisted the agents’ attacks on their culture, the agents themselves remained steadfastly convinced of the virtuousness of their mission. Burchard, for example, knew exactly whom to credit when the Indians began to convert to Christianity. “To God be all the praise for this wonderful change in their character and life,” he wrote. Sheldon in 1879 had declared his intent to do only that which was right. “*I will not*,” he wrote, “*do anything else knowingly*.”⁵⁰

Even as crushing a failure as the burning of the boarding school did not lead Sheldon to doubt his own sense of self-righteousness or inspire him to engage in self-criticism. He simply did not—or could not—consider the possibility that the arson represented a reaction to his own strictness. But if he could not blame himself, neither could he blame the Indians: to do so would have been to admit that he had failed to civilize them. Responsibility for the two blazes, in Sheldon’s mind, rested not with the Indian students who had actually started them, but with whites, both inside and outside the school, who had resisted the agent’s authority.

Sheldon’s zealousness had, in fact, inspired opposition from some of the school’s white employees. The agent had

49. Sheldon to CIA, July 21, 1883, LB 6, 131, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, July 24, 1883, LB 6, 132, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 6, 1883, LB 6, 150, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Nov. 3, 1883, LB 6, 175, RG 75, NASB.

50. Burchard to CIA, Sept. 10, 1874, LB 2, 211, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Dec. 31, 1883, LB 6, 201, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Feb. 4, 1879, LB 4, 249, RG 75, NASB.

repeatedly enjoined teachers to enforce absolute segregation by sex among the Indian pupils, a practice he deemed necessary to prevent any illicit sexual contact. One of the instructors, a Mr. Reasoner, found the agent's restrictions too severe. Sheldon was furious to learn that Reasoner had allowed boys and girls to play together when the agent and his wife—who also served as a teacher at the school—were absent. He was even more outraged to find that the school's missionary had twice taken a vote among the schoolchildren to determine whether they thought Mrs. Sheldon, who was, like her husband, a strict disciplinarian, should be relieved of her duties. According to Sheldon, the missionary had told the children that the agent should allow them to meet in Sunday school with their outside friends, and had even tried to arrange marriages for two Indian girls—ages fourteen and sixteen—whom Sheldon had forbidden to wed.⁵¹

That even the missionary would balk at implementing Sheldon's demands suggests the strictness with which the agent wielded his authority. Yet in spite of such opposition, the truth remained that Indians, and not white employees, had lit the fires which burned the agency buildings. Sheldon persisted, however, in blaming reservation workers for creating a climate in which the arson could occur. A group of employees who feared that he would fire them, Sheldon reported, had opposed him and had "worked upon" the teachers and "prejudiced" the missionary until they too became set against him. The missionary, in turn, had kindled "a spirit of discontent, and insubordination, which culminated in the burning of both...buildings."⁵² Sharing the blame with the school's employees were the surrounding settlers. The burning of the school, the agent wrote, represented "the outcropping of a spirit of hostility that has been more or less expressed since I began to prepare the buildings for that purpose." Certain settlers were "disappointed that the Agent has staid [*sic*] so long. He knows too much to suit them." Indeed, the arson, far

51. Sheldon to CIA, Dec. 31, 1883, LB 6, 199, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, July 30, 1883, LB 6, 140, RG 75, NASB.

52. Sheldon to CIA, July 30, 1883, LB 6, 137, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Aug. 10, 1883, LB 6, 155, RG 75, NASB.

from illustrating failure, testified to the agent's success. "*The truth is,*" wrote Sheldon three months after identifying the arsonists, "that I have done too much for the Indians to suit the people of this valley."⁵³

In the summer of 1884, U.S. Indian Inspector Paris Folsom spent six weeks investigating conditions at the Round Valley Reservation and then summarized his findings in a report which was sent to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Folsom did not discuss the burning of the school, but he found Sheldon to be neither as successful nor as blameless for the problems of the reservation as the agent had thought. "Nothing whatever," said Folsom, indicated "a healthy condition of affairs at this agency." The agent was guilty of "inexcusable weakness, and gross carelessness in the management of the details of the agency." Folsom asked for, and received, Sheldon's resignation. The administration of the Methodists at Round Valley was over.⁵⁴

In a small, but significant, way, the Indians had defeated the agents. Even after enduring the deprivations, epidemics, and near-genocidal violence which had preceded their removal to Round Valley, they had, far from collapsing culturally or psychologically, resisted the agents' assimilationist attacks. Moreover, they had continued to pursue their own goal of independence, at one point even faking a conversion to Christianity which was intended to win more land. Sheldon had to resign because he failed to address, or to accept, the realities of Indian resistance.

Proponents of the watershed thesis have committed the same mistake. The realities of life in a white-dominated world, to be sure, did require adaptations, as in the case of the Indians' desire to cultivate reservation lands. But adaptation did not mean demoralization or assimilation. Tribal members sought to become farmers, not because they had internalized the agents' assimilationist ideology, but because agriculture represented their best hope for becoming self-

53. Sheldon to CIA, July 25, 1883, LB 6, 133, RG 75, NASB; Sheldon to CIA, Dec. 31, 1883, LB 6, 208, RG 75, NASB.

54. Special Indian Agent Paris Folsom to CIA, June 2, 1884, GCSCO, RG 75, NASB.

sufficient. Rather than a place where they would become *like* whites, Round Valley tribes envisioned the reservation as the place where they could become independent *from* whites.

While the appropriation of assimilationist ideas for their own purposes was not something unique to these Indians, as Frederick Hoxie has demonstrated in the case of the Cheyenne River Sioux,⁵⁵ what was unusual was the slimness of the margin by which they had escaped genocide. That even tribal members who had endured such unimaginable violence could pursue their goal of self-sufficiency while successfully resisting the agents' efforts suggests that the idea of the reservation as a turning point in American Indian history needs revision. Indeed, if the experience of tribal members at Round Valley is representative, the shape of Indian history after the beginning of the reservation period does not fundamentally differ from that of the period which preceded it. Reservations signalled not a pivotal shift from an Indian past of initiative to a future of passivity, but only a change in setting. The circumstances of the struggle may have changed, but the struggle itself did not.

55. Frederick E. Hoxie, "From Prison to Homeland: The Cheyenne River Reservation before WWI," *South Dakota History*, X (1979), 1-24. Peter Iverson, in *Carlos Montezuma and the Changing World of American Indians* (Albuquerque, 1982), 145, suggests that the same conclusion might apply to the Yavapais.