

In the early summer of 1863, five Indians were hanged at Helltown, on suspicion of their having committed depredations whereby considerable property was destroyed or carried away. - Bloody reprisals have always been freely indulged in by the aborigines, when any real or fancied wrong has been done them, and a few retaliated with fearful effect on their white neighbors when they got an opportunity. The outbreak occurred in the latter part of July, and several men, women and children were inhumanly massacred. Among them may be mentioned Richard Morrison, Mrs. Blüm, and the children of the Lewis family, all of which murders occurred near Pence's ranch. The killing of the Lewis children was a sad affair. They consisted of two small boys and a little girl, and resided three miles northwest of Pence's. As they were returning from school, on the afternoon of the twenty-first, they passed a spring of cool water, and the oldest boy knelt down on his hands and knees to slake his thirst. While in this position a band of Indians approached from behind unnoticed, and a rifle-ball was sent into the stooping body of the youth. Leaving him lying by the water, in the agonies of death, the savages took the two remaining children with them and started for the foothills. The boy was only five years old and the girl nine, yet they were forced to walk along as fast as they could without resting. As the shades of evening were falling, the boy's slight strength began to fail, and he lagged behind. As he retarded their progress, the Indians decided to kill him, and hastened the girl on ahead that she might not witness the murder. Her brother begged her not to leave him, but their captors were inexorable. While some distance ahead she might have escaped easily, but would not go without her brother. While he was out of her sight the helpless child was murdered, and his body thrown on a manzanita bush. She was taken to their camp, and perceiving her brother's absence, knew that they had killed him. Watching her opportunity, while they were making preparations for a meal, she ran behind one of the bushes with which the ground was covered, and though a vigorous pursuit was made, she managed to elude them and make good her escape from their clutches. Thinking she would go towards her home, they followed that trail, while she went in a different direction, and finally reached a house that was occupied. She had only some underclothing on, most of her garments having been appropriated by her captors. The bodies of the two who were murdered were found the next day. The girl who so narrowly escaped death is now Mrs. Winters, and lives near Chico.

The people in that vicinity became greatly alarmed for the safety of their lives and property, and a company of fifty men was organized to hunt red men. The excitement was so intense that it was determined to make an indiscriminate slaughter of Indians without regard to whether they were concerned in the murders or not. There was no doubt in the minds of those who could reason coolly on the matter, that a large majority of the Indians were innocent entirely of the horrible outrages and murders that had been perpetrated, and that punishment should not be meted out to them alike. Many were tame Indians who entertained only friendly feelings towards their white brethren. Yet the difficulty of making a just and proper discrimination between the innocent and the guilty, and the intense desire for revenge which filled the breasts of so many white men, rendered the condition of all the Indians precarious and unsafe. A war of extermination was evidently about to be commenced, and the blood of the savages would soon flow freely if some measures were not adopted to have the whole of them removed from the county.

The question of removing the Indians from Butte county to reservations began to be agitated, and a meeting was called for the twenty-seventh of July, to be held at Pence's ranch, for the purpose of taking effective measures for their removal. Before the meeting occurred, Mr. M. H. Wells, of Yankee Hill, on his own responsibility collected a large number of Indians, three hundred and fifty in all, and disarmed them, preparatory to taking them out of the county. While they were encamped at Yankee Hill, the company of citizens who were in pursuit of Indians came up, and it was with great difficulty