

Rogue River Wars: Deliberate Displacement



Tecumtum, or Chief John, was the leader of a band of Native Americans who lived along the Applegate River. After surrendering in 1856, Tecumtum and his followers were forced to the Grand Ronde and then Siletz reservation, where they had no way to support themselves. Natives of the Rogue Valley region were accustomed to surviving with the landscape here, which differs dramatically from the coast.

“During the Rogue Indian Wars of the 1850s, Chief John led a small band of Applegate Rogues in a defiant but unsuccessful attempt to retain their traditional lands.” —Sue Waldron, *Table Rock Sentinel* vol. 9, no. 5, p. 15

BROKEN PROMISES

In surrendering, Native people were promised assistance from the federal government, such as homes, food, money and farming tools. When people began to wander off the Table Rock-area reservation in search of food, more violence ensued, resulting in the extermination campaign of 1855 and the subsequent removal of the Rogue Indians from the region altogether.

The Rogue River Indian Wars were a series of armed conflicts between Native Americans living in or near the Rogue Valley and white settlers, backed by the U.S. government. In 1853, volunteer militia pursued Native people to an area North of Table Rocks, and attacked. Native leaders asked for negotiations and were promised a 100 acre reservation North of the Rogue River (they had asked for about 2,000 acres).

Violent encounters continued in the region however, especially in Northern California, and local politicians used these drum up support in 1855 for a plan to exterminate Native people found living off the reservation. This resulted in the territorial representative, James Lupton, and volunteer fighters raiding Indian villages, and reportedly killing women and children.

Different Native groups responded differently. Some fled, killing white settlers on their way. Others surrendered. Still others went on to fight further. Tecumtum and his followers were last to surrender, in 1856.

Schwartz, A. E. (n.d.). “Rogue River War of 1855-1856.” In *The Oregon Encyclopedia*.

Waldron, Sue (1989). “I am Going to Fight Until I Die.” *Table Rock Sentinel* 9 (5)14-19.