

John Greiner, May 19, 1852, Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Luke Lea, Washington D.C., in *Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun while Indian Agent at Santa Fe and Superintendent of Indian Affairs in New Mexico*, ed. Annie Heloise Abel (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1915), 536-537.

John Greiner, "The Journal of John Greiner," ed. by Annie Heloise Abel, *Old Santa Fe: A Magazine of History, Archaeology, Genealogy and Biography*, vol. 3, No. 11 (July 1916), 201.

6. Acting Superintendent of Indian Affairs for New Mexico Territory, John Greiner, conveys to Luke Lea, U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Luján's version of events, May 19, 1852.¹

Document

Superintendency of Indian Affairs

Santa Fe N.M. May 19 1852

Hon. L Lea

Commissioner of Indian Affairs

Sir:

As a number of the Newspapers in the United States, have published charges against his Excellency Governor Calhoun for "licensing traders to buy and sell Indian children," I take the liberty of laying before you the statement of Pedro Leon a Mexican Citizen living in Abiqui who obtained a license from Governor Calhoun to trade with the Utah Indians, giving Bond and security "to comply with all the rules and regulations, adopted by the authority of the United States for the regulation of trade and intercourse with the Indian tribes."

¹ John Greiner, Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Luke Lea, Washington D.C., 19 May 1852, in *Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun while Indian Agent at Santa Fe and Superintendent of Indian Affairs in New Mexico*, ed. Annie Heloise Abel (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1915), 536-537.

Leon with a party of about twenty men arrived in the Utah Territory in September last where he was informed that permission would not be granted him, nor his party to trade with the Indians, unless he procured a license from Governor Young.

He at once applied to the Governor for such license, but his application was refused on the ground that he was not a Mormon, but leave was granted him to trade with the Mormon people.

After trading with them eight days, he returned to his Camp—and learned that the Payutah Indians had stolen eighteen of his animals.

He applied to the Mormon Authorities for liberty to pursue the Indians, and recover his property—which leave was granted him. After following them seven days, he discovered them in Camp about three hundred strong. They refused to give back the animals, but in lieu thereof—agreed to give him nine of their children—four girls and five boys. Seeing that he could do nothing else, he agreed to take the children intending to lay the whole matter before Governor Calhoun, and claim indemnity for the loss of his animals—and place the children at the disposal of the government. After he had left the Camp of the Indians—a complaint was lodged before a Mormon Alcalde that he had stolen the Indian children. The Alcalde at the head of forty men pursued him—and took the whole party prisoners—and lodged them in jail where they remained two months. The case was then investigated by the Courts and Leon & party were set at liberty with a fine of fifty dollars—which fine was at once remitted.

Leon then sued the Mormons for his property and for false imprisonment, and was referred by Gov. Young to Washington for satisfaction. The Indian children were sold to the Mormons as servants, by the Mormon authorities.²

Governor Young treated the whole party with the greatest kindness, while they were in the Country—and when they were ready to return home—he supplied them with flour, meat, and butter sufficient for the journey.

They left on the 6th February on foot and arrived at Abiqui on the 4th of April having suffered a great deal from being caught in the snows in the Mountains—sometimes being compelled to wade in the snow to their armpits. Such is Leon’s statement of the case and I have every confidence in its truth.

The Payutahs are a Band of Utahs speak the Utah language, and are the most destitute and degraded of all the Indian tribes, and they have ever been in the habit of trading off their children, for the means of subsistence. They go nearly naked—live upon snakes, toads, lizards, “and such small gear,” and by way of variety sometimes made ‘Atole’³ of grasshoppers—bugs, fish, worms,--&c &c &c.

The Mexicans in time past carried on quite an extensive trade with these Indians for their children who make excellent house servants, but of late years the custom has been almost discontinued.

As soon as a Payutah child is brought into a Mexican family, he is taught the Mexican language—the Lords prayer, baptized—considered a Christian and adopted—the heads of the family standing Godfather and Godmother for him in Baptism.

² Judge Zerubbabel Snow ordered the Indian captives freed, although historian Sondra Jones believes that they were then fostered out to Mormon families. Because of Snow’s decision in the case, it is unlikely that they were “sold to the Mormons” as Luján claimed. See Jones, *The Trial of Don Pedro León Luján*, 90.

³ A hot soup or drink made with corn flour.

The Mexican laws know no slavery, and any person offering to sell an Indian, after being baptized, not only violates the laws of the land—but the laws of the Church.

The Indian has the right to choose a guardian and upon an order from the Prefect can be released at any time should they complain of ill treatment. These Indians are remarkable for their honesty and fidelity, and after being adopted into a family have seldom if ever been known to return to their own Country and people.

The state of Governor Calhoun's health being such that he has been unable to attend to this matter himself I have felt it incumbent upon me to forward to the Department the true state of the case.

Very Respectfully

John Greiner

Actg Sup't Ind. Aff. New Mexico