

William Wyatt Bibb to Andrew Jackson, October 1, 1818, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

THE GOVERNOR OF ALABAMA (WILLIAM W. BIBB) TO JACKSON.¹

¹ William W. Bibb was governor of Alabama 1817 to 1820.

Coosada, October 1, 1818.

Dear sir: Being absent from St Stephens I had not the pleasure of seeing Capt Young or of aiding him in his enquiries respecting the late indian depredations. I have also to regret that, having taken no copy of my letter addressed to you from Fort Crawford, it is not in my power to comply with your request.

That the indians obtained at Pensacola the means of prosecuting their hostile incursions on our frontier I am as perfectly convinced, as that they murdered our inhabitants. I presume however that Capt Young has procured all the evidence which it would be in my power to afford. The fact appeared to be so notorious that I had not supposed a doubt would be entertained upon the subject. I was informed, (and I apprehend it may be clearly established) that the party by which Stokes was murdered within less than twenty miles of Claiborne, were seen soon afterwards at Pensacola disposing of their plunder. Their trace was pursued by the detachment ordered into service at the time, towards the Florida line, and their paths were frequently found leading in the same direction from their hiding places on the Alabama. A circumstance has lately occurred, which furnishes strong proof that the neighboring Spanish territory has hitherto afforded an Assylum for the enemy. Within two months the party which has done most of the mischief in the neighborhood of Fort Dade had acquired an accession of numbers, and a few weeks since a competent militia

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force was ordered against them. In some way they became apprized of the expedition, and instead of retreating to Florida as formerly, they crossed the Alabama and Black Warrior, murdered a family on their route, and are probably on their way to the west side of the Mississippi. This movement I attribute to our possession of Pensacola.

You probably have seen the correspondence which passed between the Governor of Pensacola and Major Youngs, in which the former asserts his total ignorance until that moment, that our frontier had been attacked. The assertion cannot be true. The constant intercourse between our inhabitants and the people of Pensacola, renders it impossible that any one there, should be ignorant on a subject which excited so much concern.²

² The following deposition by William Pierce, of the Fort Stoddert region, Oct. 4, 1818, adds the evidence of an experienced and influential frontiersman to what has already been given on the aid of the Spaniards to the Indians:

“The deposition of William Pierce of the County of Baldwin in the Alabama Territory, taken before Harry Toulmin, one of the Judges of the said Territory, on the 4th day of October in the year 1818.

“About the month of July 1813 we received news that 300 Indians had gone down to Pensacola to obtain ammunition for the purpose of making war. I was requested by my fellow citizens to go down for the purpose of ascertaining the fact. I reached Pensacola and found that there were 300 hostile Indians in that town. I applied to the Indian interpreter to know whether they were to receive ammunition or not. He told me that the Indians had applied to the governor for it, for the purpose of going to war with the United States: and that they were to have the big talk on the next day when it was to be decided whether they should receive ammunition or not. The talk took place. I applied in the evening to the Interpreter, and he told me that the governor had decided that they should have ammunition. After that I left town immediately, in order to inform the citizens that the Indians were to receive ammunition, as it was expected that they would attack the

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settlement immediately. Soon after this event Fort Mims was attacked by the Indians: and no doubt can be entertained but that their success was owing to the supplies they obtained at Pensacola. Some time after this, in the course of the same winter, I was requested by the commanding officer to visit Pensacola again, for the purpose of ascertaining the number of Indians then in that place. I found a number of the war party, and soon learned that about thirty of them had painted themselves, and were leaving town for the purpose of waylaying every path by which I might go from the town to the American settlements.

“I staid there two days, and afterwards in the dead hour of night left Pensacola, under the conduct of a pilot, who took me through the woods, in sight of the Indian fires, but by avoiding paths, conducting me safely beyond their reach. During the following spring, I was in town again and found two or three hundred of them, amongst whom was M'Queen, the prophet Francis and other conspicuous chiefs of the hostile party. It is my full persuasion that they were supplied by the Spaniards through the whole of the war. They were perpetually coming up and committing⁴ depredations on the property of American citizens, particularly destroying and carrying off their cattle, and then returning immediately to Pensacola. This indeed has also been the case since the war. As to any particular instances of countenance given to the Seminolee indians during the present war, none have fallen under my observation: but it is a matter of general notoriety that parties of Indians have destroyed cattle and other property as well as killed our citizens above the Spanish line, and then taken refuge below it.

“Sworn to and subscribed before me this 4th Octr. 1818

“ Harry Toulmin, Judge of the Alaba. Terry.”

I am Sir with high respect.