

SEVEN VILLAGES

THE STORY OF THE NATIVE TOWNS LOCATED ON THE TEJON INDIAN RESERVATION

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THE EARLY AMERICAN PERIOD

After the Tejon Indians signed their 1851 treaty with the federal government, they settled down to rebuilding their economy on an immense homeland of over one million acres near Bakersfield, California. This research project focused on the seven villages which worked together in a multi-cultural social system.

THE FIVE BOOK SERIES

Sources: These texts utilize extensive field notes from the Smithsonian, state & federal government files, and native depositions taken from the 1850's through the 1940's.

Book 1: "History of the Tejon Indians: 1848-1852"

"After the signing of the Tejon treaty, the influence of the American military in California's Central Valley remained minimal. Hundreds of thousands of foreign miners lived in a state of anarchy, without civilian government or effective federal restraint on their abuses of Miwok and Yokut peoples living nears the mines. American immigrants continued to cross the Mohave desert from Arizona, entering the Central valley over the Tehachapi and Tubatulabal passes which were under the jurisdiction of the Tejon government. With the overthrow of the Mexican colonial government,

invading American troops claimed control of a narrow strip of coastal land while most of the interior remained outside of American dominion. Gold exports continued to be the overriding concern of both the army and the American business sector which continued to agitate for renewed warfare against the natives in the Central valley. At issue were the 1851 treaties, including the Tejon pact, which guaranteed American protection of native land rights throughout the Central valley. Military strategists now were convinced that their numerical superiority over native Californians was so great, that their fears of a native mobilization were no longer justified. With the balance of power changing so rapidly, many army offices shifted their loyalties to the expansionist lobby which was pushing to have the United States Senate break its treaty obligations to the California natives." *[Taken From the 1851 chapter].*

Book 3: "History of the Tejon Indians: 1853-1856."

"This dispatch went to Beale's office in San Francisco. From the day that he received this news his behavior suggested that he targeted the Tejon lands for his future private estate. The army surveyors may not have known Beale's intentions, for their primary interest was professional and military, to continue surveying possible railroad routes out the southern end of the [Central] valley."

[Taken From the 1853 chapter]

Book 3: "History of the Tejon Indians: 1857-1867."

"The events set in motion two years earlier by Bishop's seizure of Chumash lands in lower *Kuw* canyon, came to a head this summer. Without warning the peaceful residents of *Kastac* were surrounded by colonial attackers and driven into the lake where they were shot and left to drown. The heavily mineralized waters preserved their bodies, so that months afterwards passengers on the stage reported the sight of their partially decomposed bodies floating on the surface the lake which had been the source of their livelihoods for so many centuries." *[Taken from the 1860's Chapter]*

Book 4: "History of the Tejon Indians: 1868-1890"

"Beale was not about to sit still, while Baker became rich on Tejon lands across the valley floor. He would emerge from competition with Baker as the second largest land owner in the region, taking full advantage of current weaknesses of native titles. He would soon imitate the best of Baker's schemes, signing contracts with impoverished and gullible colonial immigrants to gain control of at least 20,000 additional acres. This land would be granted to the immigrants by American governments, on the assumption that they would remain on these native lands to personally develop small farms and ranches. Beale was purchasing cheap land from any colonial who would sell title, especially absentee Mexican ranchers whose families lived near the coast and were desperate for cash due to the drought. Suddenly titles began to change hands quickly."

[From a chapter on the land deals of Beale, the Indian agent who gained legal title to the Tejon reservation].

Book 5: "History of the Tejon Indians: 1890-1916."

This final book documents the deteriorating socio/economic situation among the Tejon Indians, whose homesteads were surrounded by the Tejon Ranch. Decade after decade, they suffered abuse from local ranchers and their cowboys without protection of American sheriffs or the courts. Slowly but surely, the last of the homesteads were abandoned as the natives gave up hope of feeding themselves on their land. The Tejon Ranch kept up pressure for relocation, concentrating the die-hard traditionalists on *Kootsetahovie* creek. Here, the linguist and ethnographer John P. Harrington found them and began to make friends with the Tejon. The book called *Starting From Corner Eight* takes up where this text ends.

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